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The Romance of the Forest

Interspersed with some Pieces of Poetry.

Ann Ward Radcliffe

THE UNIVERSITY
of ADELAIDE

CHAPTER 1

“I am a man,
So weary with disasters, tugg’d with fortune,
That I would set my life on any chance,
To mend it, or be rid on’t.”

“When once sordid interest seizes on the heart, it freezes up the source of every warm and liberal feeling; it is an enemy alike to virtue and to taste — this it perverts, and that it annihilates. The time may come, my friend, when death shall dissolve the sinews of avarice, and justice be permitted to resume her rights.”

Such were the words of the Advocate Nemours to Pierre de la Motte, as the latter stept at midnight into the carriage which was to bear him far from Paris, from his creditors and the persecution of the laws. De la Motte thanked him for this last instance of his kindness; the assistance he had given him in escape; and, when the carriage drove away, uttered a sad adieu! The gloom of the hour, and the peculiar emergency of his circumstances, sunk him in silent reverie.

Whoever has read Guyot de Pitaval, the most faithful of those writers who record the proceedings in the Parliamentary Courts of Paris, during the seventeenth century, must surely remember the striking story of Pierre de la Motte, and the Marquis Phillipe de Montalt: let all such, therefore, be informed, that the person here introduced to their notice was that individual Pierre de la Motte.

As Madame de la Motte leaned from the coach window, and gave a last look to the walls of Paris — Paris, the scene of her former happiness, and the residence of many dear friends — the fortitude, which had till now supported her, yielded to the force of grief. “Farewell all!” sighed she, “this last look and we are separated for ever!” Tears followed her words, and, sinking back, she resigned herself to the stillness of sorrow. The recollection of former times pressed heavily upon her heart: a few months before and she was surrounded by friends, fortune, and consequence; now she was deprived of all, a miserable exile from her native place, without home, without comfort — almost without hope. It was not the least of her afflictions that she had been obliged to quit Paris without bidding adieu to her only son, who was now on duty with his regiment in Germany: and such had been the precipitancy of this removal, that had she even known where he was stationed, she had no time to inform him of it, or of the alteration in his father’s circumstances.

Pierre de la Motte was a gentleman, descended from an ancient house of France. He was a man whose passions often overcame his reason, and, for a time, silenced his conscience; but, through the image of virtue, which Nature had impressed upon his heart, was sometimes obscured by the passing influence of vice, it was never wholly obliterated. With strength of mind sufficient to have withstood temptation, he would have been a good man; as it was, he was always a weak, and sometimes a vicious member of society: yet his mind was active, and his imagination vivid, which, co-operating with the force of passion, often dazzled his judgement and subdued principle. Thus he was a man, infirm in purpose and visionary in virtue: in a word, his conduct was suggested by feeling, rather than principle; and his virtue, such as it was, could not stand the pressure of occasion.

Early in life he had married Constance Valentia, a beautiful and elegant woman, attached to her family and beloved by them. Her birth was equal, her fortune superior to his; and their nuptials had been celebrated under the auspices of an approving and flattering world. Her heart was devoted to La Motte, and, for some time, she found in him an affectionate husband; but, allured by the gaieties of Paris, he was soon devoted to its luxuries, and in a few years his fortune and affection were equally lost in dissipation. A false pride had still operated against his interest, and withheld him from honourable retreat while it was yet in his power: the habits, which he had acquired, enchained him to the scene of his former pleasure; and thus he had continued an expensive stile of life till the means of prolonging it were exhausted. He at length awoke from this lethargy of security; but it was only to plunge into new error, and to attempt schemes for the reparation of his fortune, which served to sink him deeper in destruction. The consequence of a transaction, in which he thus engaged, now drove him, with the small wreck of his property, into dangerous and ignominious exile.

It was his design to pass into one of the Southern Provinces, and there seek, near the borders of the kingdom, an asylum in some obscure village. His family consisted of his wife, and two faithful domestics, a man and woman, who followed the fortunes of their master.

The night was dark and tempestuous, and, at about the distance of three leagues from Paris, Peter, who now acted as postillion, having drove for some time over a wild heath where many ways crossed, stopped, and acquainted De la Motte with his perplexity. The sudden stopping of the carriage roused the latter from his reverie, and filled the whole party with the terror of pursuit; he was unable to supply the necessary direction, and the extreme darkness made it dangerous to proceed without one. During this period of distress, a light was perceived at some distance, and after much doubt and hesitation, La Motte, in the hope of obtaining assistance, alighted and advanced towards it; he proceeded slowly, from the fear of unknown pits. The light issued from the window of a small and ancient house, which stood alone on the heath, at the distance of half a mile.

Having reached the door, he stopped for some moments, listening in apprehensive anxiety — no sound was heard but that of the wind, which swept in hollow gusts over the waste. At length he ventured to knock, and, having waited sometime, during which he indistinctly heard several voices in conversation, some one within inquired what he wanted? La Motte answered, that he was a traveller who had lost his way, and desired to be directed to the nearest town.

“That,” said the person, “is seven miles off, and the road bad enough, even if you could see it: if you only want a bed, you may have it here, and had better stay.”

“The “pitiless pelting” of the storm, which, at this time, beat with increasing fury upon La Motte, inclined him to give up the attempt of proceeding farther till day-light; but, desirous of seeing the person with whom he conversed, before he ventured to expose his family by calling up the carriage, he asked to be admitted. The door was now opened by a tall figure with a light, who invited La Motte to enter. He followed the man through a passage into a room almost unfurnished, in one corner of which a bed was spread upon the floor. The forlorn and desolate aspect of this apartment made La Motte shrink involuntarily, and he was turning to go out when the man suddenly pushed him back, and he heard the door locked upon him: his heart failed, yet he made a desperate, though vain, effort to force the door, and called loudly for release. No answer was returned; but he distinguished the voices of men in the room above, and, not doubting but their intention was to rob and murder him, his agitation, at first, overcame his reason. By the light of some almost-expiring embers, he perceived a window, but the hope, which this discovery revived, was quickly lost, when he found the aperture guarded by strong iron bars. Such preparation for security surprized him, and confirmed his worst apprehensions. — Alone, unarmed — beyond the chance of assistance, he saw himself in the power of people, whose trade was apparently rapine! — murder their means! — After revolving every possibility of escape, he endeavoured to await the event with fortitude; but La Motte could boast of no such virtue.

The voices had ceased, and all remained still for a quarter of an hour, when, between the pauses of the wind, he thought he distinguished the sobs and moaning of a female; he listened attentively and became confirmed in his conjecture; it was too evidently the accent of distress. At this conviction, the remains of his courage forsook him, and a terrible surmise darted, with the rapidity of lightning, cross his brain. It was probable that his carriage had been discovered by the people of the house, who, with a design of plunder, had secured his servant, and brought hither Madame de la Motte. he was the more inclined to believe this, by the stillness which had, for sometime, reigned in the house, previous to the sounds he now heard. Or it was possible that the inhabitants were not robbers, but persons to whom he had been betrayed by his friend or servant, and who were appointed to deliver him into the hands of justice. Yet he hardly dared to doubt the integrity of his friend, who had been entrusted with the secret of his flight and the plan of his route, and had procured him the carriage in which he had escaped. “Such depravity,” exclaimed La Motte, “cannot surely exist in human nature; much less in the heart of Nemours!”

This ejaculation was interrupted by a noise in the passage leading to the room: it approached — the door was unlocked — and the man who had admitted La Motte into the house entered, leading, or rather forcibly dragging along, a beautiful girl, who appeared to be about eighteen. Her features were bathed in tears, and she seemed to suffer the utmost distress. The man fastened the lock and put the key in his pocket. He then advanced to La Motte, who had before observed other persons in the passage, and pointing a pistol to his breast, “You are wholly in our power,” said he, “no assistance can reach you: if you wish to save your life, swear that you will convey this girl where I may never see her more; or rather consent to take her with you, for your oath I would not believe, and I can take care you shall not find me again. — Answer quickly, you have no time to lose.”

He now seized the trembling hand of the girl, who shrunk aghast with terror, and hurried her towards La Motte, whom surprize still kept silent. She sunk at his feet, and with supplicating eyes, that streamed with tears, implored him to have pity on her. Notwithstanding his present agitation, he found it impossible to contemplate the beauty and distress of the object before him with indifference. Her youth, her apparent innocence — the artless energy of her manner forcibly assailed his heart, and he was going to speak, when the ruffian, who mistook the silence of astonishment for that of hesitation, prevented him. “I have a horse ready to take you from hence,” said he, “and I will direct you over the heath. If you return within an hour, you die: after then, you are at liberty to come here when you please.”

La Motte, without answering, raised the lovely girl from the floor, and was so much relieved from his own apprehensions, that he had leisure to attempt dissipating hers. “Let us be gone,” said the ruffian, “and have no more of this nonsense; you may think yourself well off it’s no worse. I’ll go and get the horse ready.”

The last words roused La Motte, and perplexed him with new fears; he dreaded to discover his carriage, left its appearance might tempt the banditti to plunder; and to depart on horseback with this man might produce a consequence yet more to be dreaded. Madame La Motte, wearied with apprehension, would, probably, send for her husband to the house, when all the former danger would be incurred, with the additional evil of being separated from his family, and the chance of being detected by the emissaries of justice in endeavouring to recover them. As these reflections passed over his mind in tumultuous rapidity, a noise was again heard in the passage, an uproar and scuffle ensued, and in the same moment he could distinguish the voice of his servant, who had been sent by Madame La Motte in search of him. Being now determined to disclose what could not long be concealed, he exclaimed aloud, that a horse was unnecessary, that he had a carriage at some distance which would convey them from the heath, the man, who was seized, being his servant.

The ruffian, speaking through the door, bid him be patient awhile and he should hear more from him. La Motte now turned his eyes upon his unfortunate companion, who, pale and exhausted, leaned for support against the wall. Her features, which were delicately beautiful, had gained from distress an expression of captivating sweetness: she had

“An eye
As when the blue sky trembles thro’ a cloud
Of purest white.”

A habit of grey camlet, with short flashed sleeves, shewed, but did not adorn, her figure: it was thrown open at the bosom, upon which part of her hair had fallen in disorder, while the light veil hastily thrown on, had, in her confusion, been suffered to fall back. Every moment of farther observation heightened the surprize of La Motte, and interested him more warmly in her favour. Such elegance and apparent resinement, contrasted with the desolation of the house, and the savage manners of its inhabitants, seemed to him like a romance of imagination, rather than an occurrence of real life. He endeavoured to comfort her, and his sense of compassion was too sincere to be misunderstood. Her terror gradually subsided into gratitude and grief. “Ah, Sir,” said she, “Heaven has sent you to my relief, and will surely reward you for your protection: I have no friend in the world, if I do not find one in you.”

La Motte assured her of his kindness, when he was interrupted by the entrance of the ruffian. He desired to be conducted to his family. “All in good time,” replied the latter; “I have taken care of one of them, and will of you, please St. Peter; so be comforted.” These comfortable words renewed the terror of La Motte, who now earnestly begged to know if his family were safe. “O! as for that matter they are safe enough, and you will be with them presently; but don’t stand parlying here all night. Do you chuse to go or stay? you know the conditions.” They now bound the eyes of La Motte and of the young lady, whom terror had hitherto kept silent, and then placing them on two horses, a man mounted behind each, and they immediately gallopped off. They had proceeded in this way near half an hour, when La Motte entreated to know wither he was going? “You will know that bye and bye,” said the ruffian, “so be at peace.” Finding interrogatories useless, La Motte resumed silence till the horses stopped. His conductor then hallooed, and being answered by voices at some distance, in a few moments the sound of carriage wheels was heard, and, presently after, the words of a man directing Peter which way to drive. As the carriage approached, La Motte called, and, to his inexpressible joy, was answered by his wife.

“You are now beyond the borders of the heath, and may go which way you will,” said the ruffian; “if you return within an hour, you will be welcomed by a brace of bullets.” This was a very unnecessary caution to La Motte, whom they now released. The young stranger sighed deeply, as she entered the carriage; and the ruffian, having bestowed upon Peter some directions and more threats, waited to see him drive off. They did not wait long.

La Motte immediately gave a short relation of what had passed at the house, including an account of the manner in which the young stranger had been introduced to him. During this narrative, her deep convulsive sighs frequently drew the attention of Madame La Motte, whose compassion became gradually interested in her behalf, and who now endeavoured to tranquillize her spirits. The unhappy girl answered her kindness in artless and simple expressions, and then relapsed into tears and silence. Madame forbore for the present to ask any questions that might lead to a discovery of her connections, or seem to require an explanation of the late adventure, which now furnishing her with a new subject of reflection, the sense of her own misfortunes pressed less heavily upon her mind. The distress of La Motte was even for a while suspended; he ruminated on the late scene, and it appeared like a vision, or one of those improbable fictions that sometimes are exhibited in a romance: he could reduce it to no principles of probability, or render it comprehensible by any endeavour to analize it. The present charge, and the chance of future trouble brought upon him by this adventure, occasioned some dissatisfaction; but the beauty and seeming innocence of Adeline, united with the pleadings of humanity in her favour, and he determined to protect her.

The tumult of emotions which had passed in the bosom of Adeline, began now to subside; terror was softened into anxiety, and despair into grief. The sympathy so evident in the manners of her companions, particularly in those of Madame La Motte, soothed her heart and encouraged her to hope for better days.

Dismally and silently the night passed on, for the minds of the travellers were too much occupied by their several sufferings to admit of conversation. The dawn, so anxiously watched for at length appeared, and introduced the strangers more fully to each other. Adeline derived comfort from the looks of Madame La Motte, who gazed frequently and attentively at her, and thought she had seldom seen a countenance so interesting, or a form so striking. The languor of sorrow threw a melancholy grace upon her features, that appealed immediately to the heart; and there was a penetrating sweetness in her blue eyes, which indicated an intelligent and amiable mind.

La Motte now looked anxiously from the coach window, that he might judge of their situation, and observe whether he was followed. The obscurity of the dawn confined his views, but no person appeared. The sun at length tinted the eastern clouds and the tops of the highest hills, and soon after burst in full splendour on the scene. The terrors of La Motte began to subside, and the griefs of Adeline to soften. They entered upon a lane confined by high banks and overarched by trees, on whose branches appeared the first green buds of spring glittering with dews. The fresh breeze of the morning animated the spirits of Adeline, whose mind was delicately sensible to the beauties of nature. As she viewed the flowery luxuriance of the turf, and the tender green of the trees, or caught, between the opening banks, a glimpse of the varied landscape, rich with wood, and fading into blue and distant mountains, her heart expanded in momentary joy. With Adeline the charms of external nature were heightened by those of novelty: she had seldom seen the grandeur of an extensive prospect, or the magnificence of a wide horizon — and not often the picturesque beauties of more confined scenery. Her mind had not lost by long oppression that elastic energy, which resists calamity; else, however susceptible might have been her original taste, the beauties of nature would no longer have charmed her thus easily even to temporary repose.

The road, at length, wound down the side of a hill, and La Motte, again looking anxiously from the window, saw before him an open champaign country, through which the road, wholly unsheltered from observation, extended almost in a direct line. The danger of these circumstances alarmed him, for his flight might, without difficulty, be traced for many leagues from the hills he was now descending. Of the first peasant that passed, he inquired for a road among the hills, but heard of none. La Motte now sunk into his former terrors. Madame, notwithstanding her own apprehensions, endeavoured to re-assure him, but, finding her efforts ineffectual, she also retired to the contemplation of her misfortunes. Often, as they went on, did La Motte look back upon the country they had passed, and often did imagination suggest to him the sounds of distant pursuits.

The travellers stopped to breakfast in a village, where the road was at length obscured by woods, and La Motte's spirits again revived. Adeline appeared more tranquil than she had yet been, and La Motte now asked for an explanation of the scene he had witnessed on the preceding night. The inquiry renewed all her distress, and with tears she entreated for the present to be spared on the subject. La Motte pressed it no farther, but he observed that for the greater part of the day she seemed to remember it in melancholy and dejection. They now travelled among the hills and were, therefore, in less danger of observation; but La Motte avoided the great towns, and stopped in obscure ones no longer than to refresh the horses. About two hours after noon, the road wound into a deep valley, watered by a rivulet, and overhung with wood. La Motte called to Peter, and ordered him to drive to a thickly embowered spot, that appeared on the left. Here he alighted with his family, and Peter having spread the provisions on the turf, they seated themselves and partook of a repast, which, in other circumstances, would have been thought delicious. Adeline endeavoured to smile, but the languor of grief was now heightened by indisposition. The violent agitation of mind, and fatigue of body, which she had suffered for the last twenty-four hours, had overpowered her strength, and, when La Motte led her back to the carriage, her whole frame trembled with illness. But she uttered no complaint, and, having long observed the dejection of her companions, she made a feeble effort to enliven them.

They continued to travel throughout the day without any accident or interruption, and, about three hours after sunset, arrived at Monville, a small town where La Motte determined to pass the night. Repose was, indeed, necessary to the whole party, whose pale and haggard looks, as they alighted from the carriage, were but too obvious to pass unobserved by the people of the inn. As soon as beds could be prepared, Adeline withdrew to her chamber, accompanied by Madame La Motte, whose concern for the fair stranger made her exert every effort to soothe and console her. Adeline wept in silence, and taking the hand of Madame, pressed it to her bosom. These were not merely tears of grief — they were mingled with those which flow from the grateful heart, when, unexpectedly, it meets with sympathy. Madame La Motte understood them. After some momentary silence, she renewed her assurances of kindness, and entreated Adeline to confide in her friendship; but she carefully avoided any mention of the subject, which had before so much affected her. Adeline at length found words to express her sense of this goodness, which she did in a manner so natural and sincere, that Madame, finding herself much affected, took leave of her for the night.

In the morning, La Motte rose at an early hour, impatient to be gone. Every thing was prepared for his departure, and the breakfast had been waiting some time, but Adeline did not appear. Madame La Motte went to her chamber, and found her sunk in a disturbed slumber. Her breathing was short and irregular — she frequently started, or sighed, and sometimes she muttered an incoherent sentence. While Madame gazed with concern upon her languid countenance, she awoke, and, looking up, gave her hand to Madame La Motte, who found it burning with fever. She had passed a restless night, and, as she now attempted to rise, her head, which beat with intense pain, grew giddy, her strength failed, and she sunk back.

Madame was much alarmed, being at once convinced that it was impossible she could travel, and that a delay might prove fatal to her husband. She went to inform him of the truth, and his distress may be more easily imagined than described. He saw all the inconvenience and danger of delay, yet he could not so far divest himself of humanity, as to abandon Adeline to the care, or rather, to the neglect of strangers. He sent immediately for a physician, who pronounced her to be in a high fever, and said, a removal in her present state must be fatal. La Motte now determined to wait the event, and endeavoured to calm the transports of terror, which, at times, assailed him. In the mean while, he took such precautions as his situation admitted of, passing the greater part of the day out of the village, in a spot from whence he had a view of the road for some distance; yet to be exposed to destruction by the illness of a girl, whom he did not know, and who had actually been forced upon him, was a misfortune, to which La Motte had not philosophy enough to submit with composure.

Adeline's fever continued to increase during the whole day, and at night, when the physician took his leave, he told La Motte, the event would very soon be decided. La Motte received this intelligence with real concern. The beauty and innocence of Adeline had overcome the disadvantageous circumstances under which she had been introduced to him, and he now gave less consideration to the inconvenience she might hereafter occasion him, than to the hope of her recovery.

Madame La Motte watched over her with tender anxiety, and observed with admiration, her patient sweetness and mild resignation. Adeline amply repaid her, though she thought she could not. "Young as I am," she would say, "and deserted by those upon whom I have a claim for protection, I can remember no connection to make me regret life so much, as that I hoped to form with you. If I live, my conduct will best express my sense of your goodness; — words are but seeble testimonies."

The sweetness of her manners so much attracted Madame La Motte, that she watched the crisis of her disorder, with a solicitude which precluded every other interest. Adeline passed a very disturbed night, and, when the physician appeared in the morning, he gave orders that she should be indulged with whatever she liked, and answered the inquiries of La Motte with a frankness that left him nothing to hope.

In the mean time, his patient, after drinking profusely of some mild liquids, fell asleep, in which she continued for several hours, and so profound was her repose, that her breath alone gave sign of existence. She awoke free from fever, and with no other disorder than weakness, which, in a few days, she overcame so well, as to be able to set out with La Motte for B — a village out of the great road, which he thought it prudent to quit. There they passed the following night, and early the next morning commenced their journey upon a wild and woody tract of country. They stopped about noon at a solitary village, where they took refreshments, and obtained directions for passing the vast forest of Fontanville, upon the borders of which they now were. La Motte wished at first to take a guide, but he apprehended more evil from the discovery he might make of his route, than he hoped for benefit from assistance in the wilds of this uncultivated tract.

La Motte now designed to pass on to Lyons, where he could either seek concealment in its neighbourhood, or embark on the Rhone for Geneva, should the emergency of his circumstances hereafter require him to leave France. It was about twelve o’clock at noon, and he was desirous to hasten forward, that he might pass the forest of Fontanville, and reach the town on its opposite borders, before night fall. Having deposited a fresh stock of provisions in the carriage, and received such directions as were necessary concerning the roads, they again set forward, and in a short time entered upon the forest. It was now the latter end of April, and the weather was remarkably temperate and fine. The balmy freshness of the air, which breathed the first pure essence of vegetation; and the gentle warmth of the sun, whose beams vivified every hue of nature, and opened every floweret of spring, revived Adeline, and inspired her with life and health. As she inhaled the breeze, her strength seemed to return, and, as her eyes wandered through the romantic glades that opened into the forest, her heart was gladdened with complacent delight: but when from these objects she turned her regard upon Monsieur and Madame La Motte, to whose tender attentions she owed her life, and in whose looks she now read esteem and kindness, her bosom glowed with sweet affections, and she experienced a force of gratitude which might be called sublime.

For the remainder of the day they continued to travel, without seeing a hut, or meeting a human being. It was now near sun-set, and, the prospect being closed on all sides by the forest, La Motte began to have apprehensions that his servant had mistaken the way. The road, if a road it could be called, which afforded only a slight track upon the grass, was sometimes over-run by luxuriant vegetation, and sometimes obscured by the deep shades, and Peter at length stopped uncertain of the way. La Motte, who dreaded being benighted in a scene so wild and solitary as this forest, and whose apprehensions of banditti were very sanguine, ordered him to proceed at any rate, and, if he found no track, to endeavour to gain a more open part of the forest. With these orders, Peter again set forwards, but having proceeded some way, and his views being still confined by woody glades and forest walks, he began to despair of extricating himself, and stopped for further orders. The sun was now set, but, as La Motte looked anxiously from the window, he observed upon the vivid glow of the western horison, some dark towers rising from among the trees at a little distance, and ordered Peter to drive towards them. “If they belong to a monastery,” said he, “we may probably gain admittance for the night.”

The carriage drove along under the shade of “melancholy boughs,” through which the evening twilight, which yet coloured the air, diffused a solemnity that vibrated in thrilling sensations upon the hearts of the travellers. Expectation kept them silent. The present scene recalled to Adeline a remembrance of the late terrific circumstances, and her mind responded but too easily to the apprehension of new misfortunes. La Motte alighted at the foot of a green knoll, where the trees again opening to light, permitted a nearer, though imperfect, view of the edifice.

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Last updated Sunday, March 27, 2016 at 11:59

CHAPTER 2

"How these antique towers and vacant courts
Chill the suspended soul! Till expectation
Wears the face of fear: and fear, half ready
To become devotion, mutters a kind
Of mental orison, it knows not wherefore.
What a kind of being is circumstance!"
Horace Walpole.

He approached, and perceived the Gothic remains of an abbey: it stood on a kind of rude lawn, overshadowed by high and spreading trees, which seemed coeval with the building, and diffused a romantic gloom around. The greater part of the pile appeared to be sinking into ruins, and that, which had withstood the ravages of time, shewed the remaining features of the fabric more awful in decay. The lofty battlements, thickly enwreathed with ivy, were half demolished, and become the residence of birds of prey. Huge fragments of the eastern tower, which was almost demolished, lay scattered amid the high grass, that waved slowly to the breeze. "The thistle shook its lonely head; the moss whistled to the wind." A Gothic gate, richly ornamented with fret-work, which opened into the main body of the edifice, but which was now obstructed with brush-wood, remained entire. Above the vast and magnificent portal of this gate arose a window of the same order, whose pointed arches still exhibited fragments of stained glass, once the pride of monkish devotion. La Motte, thinking it possible it might yet shelter some human being, advanced to the gate and lifted a massy knocker. The hollow sounds rung through the emptiness of the place. After waiting a few minutes, he forced back the gate, which was heavy with iron work, and creaked harshly on its hinges.

He entered what appeared to have been the chapel of the abbey, where the hymn of devotion had once been raised, and the tear of penitence had once been shed; sounds, which could now only be recalled by imagination — tears of penitence, which had been long since fixed in fate. La Motte paused a moment, for he felt a sensation of sublimity rising into terror — a suspension of mingled astonishment and awe! He surveyed the vastness of the place, and as he contemplated its ruins, fancy bore him back to past ages. "And these walls," said he, "where once superstition lurked, and austerity anticipated an earthly purgatory, now tremble over the mortal remains of the beings who reared them!"

The deepening gloom now reminded La Motte that he had no time to lose, but curiosity prompted him to explore farther, and he obeyed the impulse. — As he walked over the broken pavement, the sound of his steps ran in echoes through the place, and seemed like the mysterious accents of the dead, reproving the sacrilegious mortal who thus dared to disturb their precincts.

From this chapel he passed into the nave of the great church, of which one window, more perfect than the rest, opened upon a long vista of the forest, through which was seen the rich colouring of evening, melting by imperceptible gradations into the solemn grey of upper air. Dark hills, whose outline appeared distinct upon the vivid glow of the horizon, closed the perspective. Several of the pillars, which had once supported the roof, remained the proud effigies of sinking greatness, and seemed to nod at every murmur of the blast over the fragments of those that had fallen a little before them. La Motte sighed. The comparison between himself and the gradation of decay, which these columns exhibited, was but too obvious and affecting. "A few years," said he, "and I shall become like the mortals on whose reliques I now gaze, and, like them too, I may be the subject of meditation to a succeeding generation, which shall totter but a little while over the object they contemplate, e'er they also sink into the dust."

Retiring from this scene, he walked through the cloisters, till a door, which communicated with the lofty part of the building, attracted his curiosity. He opened this and perceived, across the foot of the stair-case, another door; — but now, partly checked by fear, and partly by the recollection of the surprize his family might feel in his absence, he returned with hasty steps to his carriage, having wasted some of the precious moments of twilight, and gained no information.

Some slight answer to Madame La Motte's inquiries, and a general direction to Peter to drive carefully on, and look for a road, was all that his anxiety would permit him to utter. The night shade fell thick around, which, deepened by the gloom of the forest, soon rendered it dangerous to proceed. Peter stopped, but La Motte, persisting in his first determination, ordered him to go on. Peter ventured to remonstrate, Madame La Motte entreated, but La Motte reproved — commanded, and at length repented; for the hind wheel rising upon the stump of an old tree, which the darkness had prevented Peter from observing, the carriage was in an instant overturned.

The party, as may be supposed, were much terrified, but no one was materially hurt, and having disengaged themselves from their perilous situation, La Motte and Peter endeavoured to raise the carriage. The extent of this misfortune was now discovered, for they perceived that the wheel was broke. Their distress was reasonably great, for not only was the coach disabled from proceeding, but it could not even afford a shelter from the cold dews of the night, it being impossible to preserve it in an upright situation. After a few moment's silence, La Motte proposed that they should return to the ruins which they had just quitted, which lay at a very short distance, and pass the night in the most habitable part of them: that, when morning dawned, Peter should take one of the coach horses, and endeavour to find a road and a town, from whence assistance could be procured for repairing the carriage. This proposal was opposed by Madame La Motte, who shuddered at the idea of passing so many hours of darkness in a place so forlorn as the monastery. Terrors, which she neither endeavoured to examine, or combat, overcame her, and she told La Motte she had rather remain exposed to the unwholesome dews of night, than encounter the desolation of the ruins. La Motte had at first felt an equal reluctance to return to this spot, but having subdued his own feelings, he resolved not to yield to those of his wife.

The horses being now disengaged from the carriage, the party moved towards the edifice. As they proceeded, Peter, who followed them, struck a light, and they entered the ruins by the flame of sticks, which he had collected. The partial gleams thrown across the fabric seemed to make its desolation more solemn, while the obscurity of the greater part of the pile heightened its sublimity, and led fancy on to scenes of horror. Adeline, who had hitherto remained in silence, now uttered an exclamation of mingled admiration and fear. A kind of pleasing dread thrilled her bosom, and filled all her soul. Tears started into her eyes:— she wished, yet feared, to go on; — she hung upon the arm of La Motte, and looked at him with a sort of hesitating interrogation.

He opened the door of the great hall, and they entered: its extent was lost in gloom. "Let us stay here," said Madame de la Motte, "I will go no farther." La Motte pointed to the broken roof, and was proceeding, when he was interrupted by an uncommon noise, which passed along the hall. They were all silent — it was the silence of terror. Madame La Motte spoke first. "Let us quit this spot," said she, "any evil is preferable to the feeling, which now oppresses me. Let us retire instantly." The stillness had for some time remained undisturbed, and La Motte, ashamed of the fear he had involuntarily betrayed, now thought it necessary to affect a boldness, which he did not feel. He, therefore, opposed ridicule to the terror of Madame, and insisted upon proceeding. Thus compelled to acquiesce, she traversed the hall with trembling steps. They came to a narrow passage, and Peter's sticks being nearly exhausted, they awaited here, while he went in search of more.

The almost expiring light flashed faintly upon the walls of the passage, shewing the recess more horrible. Across the hall, the greater part of which was concealed in shadow, the feeble ray spread a tremulous gleam, exhibiting the chasm in the roof, while many nameless objects were seen imperfectly through the dusk. Adeline with a smile, inquired of La Motte, if he believed in spirits. The question was ill-timed, for the present scene impressed its terrors upon La Motte, and, in spite of endeavour, he felt a superstitious dread stealing upon him. He was now, perhaps, standing over the ashes of the dead. If spirits were ever permitted to revisit the earth, this seemed the hour and the place most suitable for their appearance. La Motte remaining silent, Adeline said, "Were I inclined to superstition" — she was interrupted by a return of the noise, which had been lately heard. It sounded down the passage, at whose entrance they stood, and sunk gradually away. Every heart palpitated, and they remained listening in silence. A new subject of apprehension seized La Motte:— the noise might proceed from banditti, and he hesitated whether it would be safe to proceed. Peter now came with the light: Madame refused to enter the passage — La Motte was not much inclined to it; but Peter, in whom curiosity was more prevalent than fear, readily offered his services. La Motte, after some hesitation, suffered him to go, while he awaited at the entrance the result of the inquiry. The extent of the passage soon concealed Peter from view, and the echoes of his footsteps were lost in a sound, which rushed along the avenue, and became fainter and fainter, till it sunk into silence. La Motte now called aloud to Peter, but no answer was returned; at length, they heard the sound of a distant footstep, and Peter soon after appeared, breathless, and pale with fear.

When he came within hearing of La Motte, he called out, "An please your honour, I've done for them, I believe, but I've had a hard bout. I thought I was fighting with the devil." — "What are you speaking of?" said La Motte.

"They were nothing but owls and rooks after all," continued Peter; "but the light brought them all about my ears, and they made such a confounded clapping with their wings, that I thought at first I had been beset with a legion of devils. But I have drove them all out, master, and you have nothing to fear now."

The latter part of the sentence, intimating a suspicion of his courage, La Motte could have dispensed with, and, to retrieve in some degree his reputation, he made a point of proceeding through the passage. They now moved on with alacrity, for, as Peter said, they had "nothing to fear."

The passage led into a large area, on one side of which, over a range of cloisters, appeared the west tower, and a lofty part of the edifice; the other side was open to the woods. La Motte led the way to a door of the tower, which he now perceived was the same he had formerly entered; but he found some difficulty in advancing, for the area was overgrown with brambles and nettles, and the light, which Peter carried, afforded only an uncertain gleam. When he unclosed the door, the dismal aspect of the place revived the apprehensions of Madame La Motte, and extorted from Adeline an inquiry whither they were going. Peter held up the light to shew the narrow stair-case that wound round the tower; but La Motte, observing the second door, drew back the rusty bolts, and entered a spacious apartment, which, from its stile and condition, was evidently of a much later date than the other part of the structure: though desolate and forlorn it was very little impaired by time; the walls were damp, but not decayed; and the glass was yet firm in the windows.

They passed on to a suit of apartments resembling the first they had seen, and expressed their surprise at the incongruous appearance of this part of the edifice with the mouldering walls they had left behind. These apartments conducted them to a winding passage, that received light and air through narrow cavities, placed high in the wall; and was at length closed by a door barred with iron, which being with some difficulty opened, they entered a vaulted room. La Motte surveyed it with a scrutinizing eye, and endeavoured to conjecture for what purpose it had been guarded by a door of such strength; but he saw little within to assist his curiosity. The room appeared to have been built in modern times upon a Gothic plan. Adeline approached a large window that formed a kind of recess raised by one step over the level of the floor; she observed to La Motte that the whole floor was inlaid with Mosaic work; which drew from him a remark, that the style of this apartment was not strictly Gothic. He passed on to a door, which appeared on the opposite side of the apartment, and, unlocking it, found himself in the great hall, by which he had entered the fabric.

He now perceived, what the gloom had before concealed, a spiral stair-case, which led to a gallery above; and which, from its present condition, seemed to have been built with the more modern part of the fabric, though this also affected the Gothic mode of architecture: La Motte had little doubt that these stairs led to apartments, corresponding with those he had passed below, and hesitated whether to explore them; but the entreaties of Madame, who was much fatigued, prevailed with him to defer all farther examination. After some deliberation, in which of the rooms they should pass the night, they determined to return to that which opened from the tower.

A fire was kindled on a hearth, which it is probable had not for many years before afforded the warmth of hospitality; and Peter having spread the provision he had brought from the coach, La Motte and his family, encircled round the fire, partook of a repast, which hunger and fatigue made delicious. Apprehension gradually gave way to confidence, for they now found themselves in something like a human habitation, and they had leisure to laugh at their late terrors; but, as the blast shook the doors, Adeline often started, and threw a fearful glance around. They continued to laugh and talk cheerfully for a time; yet their merriment was transient, if not affected; for a sense of their peculiar and distressed circumstances pressed upon their recollection, and sunk each individual into langour and pensive silence. Adeline felt the forlornness of her condition with energy; she reflected upon the past with astonishment, and anticipated the future with fear. She found herself wholly dependent upon strangers, with no other claim than what distress demands from the common sympathy of kindred beings; sighs swelled her heart, and the frequent tear started to her eye; but she checked it, ere it betrayed on her cheek the sorrow, which she thought it would be ungrateful to reveal.

La Motte, at length, broke this meditative silence, by directing the fire to be renewed for the night, and the door to be secured: this seemed a necessary precaution, even in this solitude, and was effected by means of large stones piled against it, for other fastening there was none. It had frequently occurred to La Motte, that this apparently forsaken edifice might be a place of refuge to banditti. Here was solitude to conceal them; and a wild and extensive forest to assist their schemes of rapine, and to perplex, with its labyrinths, those who might be bold enough to attempt pursuit. These apprehensions, however, he hid within his own bosom, saving his companions from a share of the uneasiness they occasioned. Peter was ordered to watch at the door, and, having given the fire a rousing stir, our desolate party drew round it, and sought in sleep a short oblivion of care.

The night passed on without disturbance. Adeline slept, but uneasy dreams fleeted before her fancy, and she awoke at an early hour: the recollection of her sorrows arose upon her mind, and yielding to their pressure, her tears flowed silently and fast. That she might indulge them without restraint, she went to a window that looked upon an open part of the forest;

all was gloom and silence; she stood for some time viewing the shadowy scene.

The first tender tints of morning now appeared on the verge of the horizon, stealing upon the darkness; — so pure, so fine, so ætherial! it seemed as if Heaven was opening to the view. The dark mists were seen to roll off to the west, as the tints of light grew stronger, deepening the obscurity of that part of the hemisphere, and involving the features of the country below; meanwhile, in the east, the hues became more vivid, darting a trembling lustre far around, till a ruddy glow, which fired all that part of the Heavens, announced the rising sun. At first, a small line of inconceivable splendour emerged on the horizon, which, quickly expanding, the sun appeared in all his glory, unveiling the whole face of nature, vivifying every colour of the landscape, and sprinkling the dewy earth with glittering light. The low and gentle responses of birds, awakened by the morning ray, now broke the silence of the hour; their soft warbling rising by degrees till they swelled the chorus of universal gladness. Adeline's heart swelled too with gratitude and adoration.

The scene before her soothed her mind, and exalted her thoughts to the great Author of Nature; she uttered an involuntary prayer: "Father of good, who made this glorious scene! I resign myself to thy hands: thou wilt support me under my present sorrows, and protect me from future evil."

Thus confiding in the benevolence of God, she wiped the tears from her eyes, while the sweet union of conscience and reflection rewarded her trust; and her mind, losing the feelings which had lately oppressed it, became tranquil and composed.

La Motte awoke soon after, and Peter prepared to set out on his expedition. As he mounted his horse, "An' please you, Master," said he, "I think we had as good look no farther for an habitation till better times turn up; for nobody will think of looking for us here; and when one sees the place by day light, its none so bad, but what a little patching up would make it comfortable enough." La Motte made no reply, but he thought of Peter's words. During the intervals of the night, when anxiety had kept him waking, the same idea had occurred to him; concealment was his only security, and this place afforded it. The desolation of the spot was repulsive to his wishes; but he had only a choice of evils — a forest with liberty was not a bad home for one, who had too much reason to expect a prison. As he walked through the apartments, and examined their condition more attentively, he perceived they might easily be made habitable; and now surveying them under the cheerfulness of morning, his design strengthened; and he mused upon the means of accomplishing it, which nothing seemed so much to obstruct as the apparent difficulty of procuring food.

He communicated his thoughts to Madame la Motte, who felt repugnance to the scheme. La Motte, however, seldom consulted his wife till he had determined how to act; and he had already resolved to be guided in this affair by the report of Peter. If he could discover a town in the neighbourhood of the forest, where provisions and other necessaries could be procured, he would seek no farther for a place of rest.

In the mean time, he spent the anxious interval of Peter's absence in examining the ruin, and walking over the environs; they were sweetly romantic, and the luxuriant woods, with which they abounded, seemed to sequester this spot from the rest of the world. Frequently a natural vista would yield a view of the country, terminated by hills, which retiring in distance, faded into the blue horizon. A stream, various and musical in its course, wound at the foot of the lawn, on which stood the abbey; here it silently glided beneath the shades, feeding the flowers that bloomed on its banks, and diffusing dewy freshness around; there it spread in broad expanse to-day, reflecting the sylvan scene, and the wild deer that tasted its waves. La Motte observed every where a profusion of game; the pheasants scarcely flew from his approach, and the deer gazed mildly at him as he passed. They were strangers to man!

On his return to the abbey, La Motte ascended the stairs that led to the tower. About half way up, a door appeared in the wall; it yielded, without resistance, to his hand; but, a sudden noise within, accompanied by a cloud of dust, made him step back and close the door. After waiting a few minutes, he again opened it, and perceived a large room of the more modern building. The remains of tapestry hung in tatters upon the walls, which were become the residence of birds of prey, whose sudden flight on the opening of the door had brought down a quantity of dust, and occasioned the noise. The windows were shattered, and almost without glass; but he was surprised to observe some remains of furniture; chairs, whose fashion and condition bore the date of their antiquity; a broken table, and an iron grate almost consumed by rust.

On the opposite side of the room was a door, which led to another apartment, proportioned like the first, but hung with arras somewhat less tattered. In one corner stood a small bedstead, and a few shattered chairs were placed round the walls. La Motte gazed with a mixture of wonder and curiosity. " 'Tis strange," said he, "that these rooms, and these alone, should bear the marks of inhabitation: perhaps, some wretched wanderer, like myself, may have here sought refuge from a persecuting world; and here, perhaps, laid down the load of existence: perhaps, too, I have followed his footsteps, but to mingle my dust with his!" He turned suddenly, and was about to quit the room, when he perceived a small door near the bed; it opened into a closet, which was lighted by one small window, and was in the same condition as the apartments he had passed, except that it was destitute even of the remains of furniture. As he walked over the floor, he thought he felt one part of it shake beneath his steps, and, examining, found a trap door. Curiosity prompted him to explore farther, and with some difficulty he opened it. It disclosed a staircase which terminated in darkness. La Motte descended a few steps, but was unwilling to trust the abyss; and, after wondering for what purpose it was so secretly constructed, he closed the trap, and quitted this suit of apartments.

The stairs in the tower above were so much decayed, that he did not attempt to ascend them: he returned to the hall, and by the spiral stair-case, which he had observed the evening before, reached the gallery, and found another suit of apartments entirely unfurnished, very much like those below.

He renewed with Madame La Motte his former conversation respecting the abbey, and she exerted all her endeavours to dissuade him from his purpose, acknowledging the solitary security of the spot, but pleading that other places might be found equally well adapted for concealment and more for comfort. This La Motte doubted: besides, the forest abounded with game, which would, at once, afford him amusement and food, a circumstance, considering his small stock of money, by no means to be overlooked: and he had suffered his mind to dwell so much upon the scheme, that it was become a favourite one. Adeline listened in silent anxiety to the discourse, and waited the issue of Peter's report.

The morning passed, but Peter did not return. Our solitary party took their dinner of the provision they had fortunately brought with them, and afterwards walked forth into the woods. Adeline, who never suffered any good to pass unnoticed, because it came attended with evil, forgot for a while the desolation of the abbey in the beauty of the adjacent scenery. The pleasantness of the shades soothed her heart, and the varied features of the landscape amused her fancy; she almost thought she could be contented to live here. Already she began to feel an interest in the concerns of her companions, and for Madame La Motte she felt more; it was the warm emotion of gratitude and affection.

The afternoon wore away, and they returned to the abbey. Peter was still absent, and his absence now began to excite surprize and apprehension. The approach of darkness also threw a gloom upon the hopes of the wanderers: another night must be passed under the same forlorn circumstances as the preceding one; and, what was still worse, with a very scanty stock of provisions. The fortitude of Madame La Motte now entirely forsook her, and she wept bitterly. Adeline's heart was as mournful as Madame's, but she rallied her drooping spirits, and gave the first instance of her kindness by endeavouring to revive those of her friend.

La Motte was restless and uneasy, and, leaving the abbey, he walked alone the way which Peter had taken. He had not gone far, when he perceived him between the trees, leading his horse. "What news, Peter?" hallooed La Motte. Peter came on, panting for breath, and said not a word, till La Motte repeated the question in a tone of somewhat more authority. "Ah, bless you, Master!" said he, when he had taken breath to answer, "I am glad to see you; I thought I should never have got back again: I've met with a world of misfortunes."

"Well, you may relate them hereafter; let me hear whether you have discovered — "

"Discovered!" interrupted Peter, Yes, I am discovered with a vengeance! If your Honour will look at my arms, you'll see how I am discovered."

"Discoloured! I suppose you mean," said La Motte. "But how came you in this condition?"

"Why, I'll tell you how it was, Sir; your Honour knows I learned a smack of boxing of that Englishman that used to come with his master to our house."

"Well, well — tell me where you have been."

"I scarcely know myself, Master; I've been where I got a sound drubbing, but then it was in your business, and so I don't mind. But if ever I meet with that rascal again!" — "You seem to like your first drubbing so well, that you want another, and unless you speak more to the purpose, you shall soon have one."

Peter was now frightened into method, and endeavoured to proceed: "When I left the old Abbey," said he, I followed the way you directed, and, turning to the right of that grove of trees yonder, I looked this way and that to see if I could see a house, or a cottage, or even a man, but not a soul of them was to be seen, and so I jogged on, near the value of a league, I warrant, and then I came to a track; oh! oh! says I, we have you now; this will do — paths can't be made without feet. However, I was out in my reckoning, for the devil a bit of a soul could I see, and, after following the track this way and that way, for the third of a league, I lost it, and had to find out another."

"Is it impossible for you to speak to the point?" said La Motte: "omit these foolish particulars, and tell whether you have succeeded."

"Well, then, Master, to be short, for that's the nearest way after all, I wandered a long while at random, I did not know where, all through a forest like this, and I took special care to note how the trees stood, that I might find my way back. At last I came to another path, and was sure I should find something now, though I had found nothing before, for I could not be mistaken twice; so, peeping between the trees, I spied a cottage, and I gave my horse a lash, that sounded through the forest, and I was at the door in a minute. They told me there was a town about half a league off, and bade me follow the track and it would bring me there, so it did; and my horse, I believe, smelt the corn in the manger by the rate he went at. I inquired for a wheel-wright, and was told there was but one in the place, and he could not be found. I waited and waited, for I knew it was in vain to think of returning without doing my business. The man at last came home from the country, and I told him how long I had waited; for, says I, I knew it was in vain to return without my business."

"Do be less tedious," said La Motte, if it is in thy nature."

"It is in my nature," answered Peter, and if it was more in my nature, your Honour should have it all. Would you think it, Sir, the fellow had the impudence to ask a louis-d'or for mending the coach wheel! I believe in my conscience he saw I was in a hurry and could not do without him. A louis-d'or! says I, my Master shall give no such price, he sha'n't be imposed upon by no such rascal as you. Whereupon, the fellow looked glum, and gave me a douse o'the chops: with this, I up with my fist and gave him another, and should have beat him presently, if another man had not come in, and then I was obliged to give up."

"And so you are returned as wife as you went?"

"Why, Master, I hope I have too much spirit to submit to a rascal, or let you submit to one either: besides, I have bought some nails to try if I I can't mend the wheel myself — I had always a hand at carpentry."

"Well, I commend your zeal in my cause, but on this occasion it was rather ill-timed. And what have you got in that basket?"

"Why, Master, I bethought me that we could not get away from this place till the carriage was ready to draw us, and in the mean time, says I, nobody can live without victuals, so I'll e'en lay out the little money I have and take a basket with me."

"That's the only wife thing you have done yet, and this, indeed, redeems your blunders."

"Why now, Master, it does my heart good to hear you speak; I knew I was doing for the best all the while: but I've had a hard job to find my way back; and here's another piece of ill luck, for the horse has got a thorn in his foot."

La Motte made inquiries concerning the town, and sound it was capable of supplying him with provision, and what little furniture was necessary to render the abbey habitable. This intelligence almost settled his plans, and he ordered Peter to return on the following morning and make inquiries concerning the abbey. If the answers were favourable to his wishes, he commissioned him to buy a cart and load it with some furniture, and some materials necessary for repairing the modern apartments. Peter stared: "What, does your Honour mean to live here?"

"Why, suppose I do?"

"Why then your Honour has made a wise determination, according to my hint; for your Honour knows I said" — "Well, Peter, it is not necessary to repeat what you said; perhaps, I had determined on the subject before."

"Egad, Master, you're in the right, and I'm glad of it, for, I believe, we shall not quickly be disturbed here, except by the rooks and owls. Yes, yes — I warrant I'll make it a place fit for a king; and as for the town, one may get any thing, I'm sure of that; though they think no more about this place than they do about India or England, or any of those places."

They now reached the abbey, where Peter was received with great joy; but the hopes of his mistress and Adeline were repressed, when they learned that he returned, without having executed his commission, and heard his account of the town. La Motte's orders to Peter were heard with almost equal concern by Madame and Adeline; but the latter concealed her uneasiness, and used all her efforts to overcome that of her friend. The sweetness of her behaviour, and the air of satisfaction she assumed, sensibly affected Madame, and discovered to her a source of comfort, which she had hitherto overlooked. The affectionate attentions of her young friend promised to console her for the want of other society, and her conversation to enliven the hours which might otherwise be passed in painful regret.

The observations and general behaviour of Adeline already bespoke a good understanding and an amiable heart, but she had yet more — she had genius. She was now in her nineteenth year; her figure of the middling size, and turned to the most exquisite proportion; her hair was dark auburn, her eyes blue, and whether they sparkled with intelligence, or melted with tenderness, they were equally attractive: her form had the airy lightness of a nymph, and, when she smiled, her countenance might have been drawn for the younger sister of Hebe: the captivations of her beauty were heightened by the grace and simplicity of her manners, and confirmed by the intrinsic value of a heart

"That might be shrin'd in crystal, And have all its movements scann'd."

Annette now kindled the fire for the night: Peter's basket was opened, and supper prepared. Madame La Motte was still pensive and silent. "There is scarcely any condition so bad," said Adeline, "but we may one time or other wish we had not quitted it. Honest Peter, when he was bewildered in the forest, or had two enemies to encounter instead of one, confesses he wished himself at the abbey. And I am certain, there is no situation so destitute, but comfort may be extracted from it. The blaze of this fire shines yet more cheerfully from the contrasted dreariness of the place; and this plentiful repast is made yet more delicious, from the temporary want we have suffered. Let us enjoy the good and forget the evil."

"You speak, my dear," replied Madame La Motte, "like one, whose spirits have not been often depressed by misfortune, (Adeline sighed) and whose hopes are, therefore, vigorous." Long suffering," said La Motte, has subdued in our minds that elastic energy, which repels the pressure of evil, and dances to the bound of joy. "But I speak in rhapsody, though only from the remembrance of such a time. I once, like you, Adeline, could extract comfort from most situations."

"And may now, my dear Sir," said Adeline. "Still believe it possible, and you will find it is so."

"The illusion is gone — I can no longer deceive myself."

"Pardon me, Sir, if I say, it is now only you deceive yourself, by suffering the cloud of sorrow to tinge every object you look upon."

"It may be so," said La Motte, "but let us leave the subject."

After supper, the doors were secured, as before, for the night, and the wanderers resigned themselves to repose.

On the following morning, Peter again set out for the little town of Auboine, and the hours of his absence were again spent by Madame La Motte and Adeline in much anxiety and some hope, for the intelligence he might bring concerning the abbey might yet release them from the plans of La Motte. Towards the close of day he was descried coming slowly on; and the cart, which accompanied him, too certainly confirmed their fears. He brought materials for repairing the place, and some furniture.

Of the abbey he gave an account, of which the following is the substance:— It belonged, together with a large part of the adjacent forest, to a nobleman, who now resided with his family on a remote estate. He inherited it, in right of his wife, from his father-in-law, who had caused the more modern apartments to be erected, and had resided in them some part of every year, for the purpose of shooting and hunting. It was reported, that some person was, soon after it came to the present possessor, brought secretly to the abbey and confined in these apartments; who, or what he was, had never been conjectured, and what became of him nobody knew. The report died gradually away, and many persons entirely disbelieved the whole of it. But however this affair might be, certain it was, the present owner had visited the abbey only two summers, since his succeeding to it; and the furniture, after some time, was removed.

This circumstance had at first excited surprize, and various reports arose in consequence, but it was difficult to know what ought to be believed. Among the rest, it was said, that strange appearances had been observed at the abbey, and uncommon noises heard; and though this report had been ridiculed by sensible persons as the idle superstition of ignorance, it had fastened so strongly upon the minds of the common people, that for the last seventeen years none of the peasantry had ventured to approach the spot. The abbey was now, therefore, abandoned to decay.

La Motte ruminated upon this account. At first, it called up unpleasant ideas, but they were soon dismissed, and considerations more interesting to his welfare took place: he congratulated himself that he had now found a spot, where he was not likely to be either discovered or disturbed; yet it could not escape him that there was a strange coincidence between one part of Peter's narrative, and the condition of the chambers that opened from the tower above stairs. The remains of furniture, of which the other apartments were void — the solitary bed — the number and connection of the rooms, were circumstances that united to confirm his opinion. This, however, he concealed in his own breast, for he already perceived that Peter's account had not assisted in reconciling his family to the necessity of dwelling at the abbey.

But they had only to submit in silence, and whatever disagreeable apprehension might intrude upon them, they now appeared willing to suppress the expression of it. Peter, indeed, was exempt from any evil of this kind; he knew no fear, and his mind was now wholly occupied with his approaching business. Madame La Motte, with a placid kind of despair, endeavoured to reconcile herself to that, which no effort of understanding could teach her to avoid, and which, an indulgence in lamentation, could only make more intolerable. Indeed, though a sense of the immediate inconveniences to be endured at the abbey, had made her oppose the scheme of living there, she did not really know how their situation could be improved by removal: yet her thoughts often wandered towards Paris, and reflected the retrospect of past times, with the images of weeping friends left, perhaps, for ever. The affectionate endearments of her only son, whom, from the danger of his situation, and the obscurity of hers, she might reasonably fear never to see again, arose upon her memory and overcame her fortitude. "Why — why was I reserved for this hour?" would she say, "and what will be my years to come?"

Adeline had no retrospect of past delight to give emphasis to present calamity — no weeping friends — no dear regretted objects to point the edge of sorrow, and throw a sickly hue upon her future prospects: she knew not yet the pangs of disappointed hope, or the acuter sting of self-accusation; she had no misery, but what patience could assuage, or fortitude overcome.

At the dawn of the following day Peter arose to his labour: he proceeded with alacrity, and, in a few days, two of the lower apartments were so much altered for the better, that La Motte began to exult, and his family to perceive that their situation would not be so miserable as they had imagined. The furniture Peter had already brought was disposed in these rooms, one of which was the vaulted apartment. Madame La Motte furnished this as a sitting room, preferring it for its large Gothic window, that descended almost to the floor, admitting a prospect of the lawn, and the picturesque scenery of the surrounding woods.

Peter having returned to Auboine for a farther supply, all the lower apartments were in a few weeks not only habitable, but comfortable. These, however, being insufficient for the accommodation of the family, a room above stairs was prepared for Adeline: it was the chamber that opened immediately from the tower, and she preferred it to those beyond, because it was less distant from the family, and the windows fronting an avenue of the forest, afforded a more extensive prospect. The tapestry, that was decayed, and hung loosely from the walls, was now nailed up, and made to look less desolate; and, though the room had still a solemn aspect, from its spaciousness and the narrowness of the windows, it was not uncomfortable.

The first night that Adeline retired hither, she slept little: the solitary air of the place affected her spirits; the more so, perhaps, because she had, with friendly consideration, endeavoured to support them in the presence of Madame La Motte. She remembered the narrative of Peter, several circumstances of which had impressed her imagination in spite of her reason, and she found it difficult wholly to subdue apprehension. At one time, terror so strongly seized her mind, that she had even opened the door with an intention of calling Madame La Motte; but, listening for a moment on the stairs of the tower, every thing seemed still; at length, she heard the voice of La Motte speaking cheerfully, and the absurdity of her fears struck her forcibly; she blushed that she had for a moment submitted to them, and returned to her chamber wondering at herself.

❦

CHAPTER 3

“Are not these woods
More free from peril than the envious court?
Here feel we but the penalty of Adam,
The season’s difference, as the icy fang
And churlish chiding of the winter’s wind.”
Shakespeare.

La Motte arranged his little plan of living. His mornings were usually spent in shooting, or fishing, and the dinner, thus provided by his industry; he relished with a keener appetite than had ever attended him at the luxurious tables of Paris. The afternoons he passed with his family: sometimes he would select a book from the few he had brought with him, and endeavour to fix his attention to the words his lips repeated:— but his mind suffered little abstraction from its own cares, and the sentiment he pronounced left no trace behind it. Sometimes he conversed, but oftener sat in gloomy silence, musing upon the past, or anticipating the future.

At these moments, Adeline, with a sweetness almost irresistible, endeavoured to enliven his spirits, and to withdraw him from himself. Seldom she succeeded, but when she did the grateful looks of Madame La Motte, and the benevolent feelings of her own bosom, realized the chearfulness she had at at first only assumed. Adeline’s mind had the happy art, or, perhaps, it were more just to say, the happy nature, of accommodating itself to her situation. Her present condition, though forlorn, was not devoid of comfort, and this comfort was confirmed by her virtues. So much she won upon the affections of her protectors, that Madame La Motte loved her as her child, and La Motte himself, though a man little susceptible of tenderness, could not be insensible to her solicitudes. Whenever he relaxed from the sullenness of misery, it was at the influence of Adeline.

Peter regularly brought a weekly supply of provisions from Auboine, and, on those occasions, always quitted the town by a route contrary to that leading to the abbey. Several weeks having passed without molestation, La Motte dismissed all apprehension of pursuit, and at length became tolerably reconciled to the complection of his circumstances. As habit and effort strengthened the fortitude of Madame La Motte, the features of misfortune appeared to soften. The forest, which at first seemed to her a frightful solitude, had lost its terrific aspect; and that edifice, whose half demolished walls and gloomy desolation had struck her mind with the force of melancholy and dismay, was now beheld as a domestic asylum, and a safe refuge from the storms of power.

She was a sensible and highly accomplished woman, and it became her chief delight to form the rising graces of Adeline, who had, as has been already shown, a sweetness of disposition, which made her quick to repay instruction with improvement, and indulgence with love. Never was Adeline so pleased as when she anticipated her wishes, and never so diligent as when she was employed in her business. The little affairs of the houshold she overlooked and managed with such admirable exactness, that Madame La Motte had neither anxiety, nor care, concerning them. And Adeline formed for herself in this barren situation, many amusements, that occasionally banished the remembrance of her misfortunes. La Motte’s books were her chief consolation. With one of these she would frequently ramble into the forest, where the river, winding through a glade, diffused coolness, and with its murmuring accents, invited repose: there she would seat herself, and, resigned to the illusions of the page, pass many hours in oblivion of sorrow.

Here too, when her mind was tranquilized by the surrounding scenery, she wooed the gentle muse, and indulged in ideal happiness. The delight of these moments she commemorated in the following address

To the Visions of Fancy.

Dear, wild illusions of creative mind! Whose varying hues arise to Fancy’s art, And by her magic force are swift combin’d In forms that please, and scenes that touch the heart:

Oh! whether at her voice ye soft assume The pensive grace of sorrow drooping low; Or rise sublime on terror’s lofty plume, And shake the soul with wildly thrilling woe; Or, sweetly bright, your gayer tints ye spread, Bid scenes of pleasure steal upon my view, Love wave his purple pinions o’er my head, And wake the tender thought to passion true;

O! still — ye shadowy forms! attend my lonely hours, Still chase my real cares with your illusive powers.

Madame La Motte had frequently expressed curiosity concerning the events of Adeline’s life, and by what circumstances she had been thrown into a situation so perilous and mysterious as that in which La Motte had found her.

Adeline had given a brief account of the manner in which she had been brought thither, but had always with tears intreated to be spared for that time from a particular relation of her history. Her spirits were not then equal to retrospection, but now that they were soothed by quiet, and strengthened by confidence, she one day gave Madame La Motte the following narration.

I am the only child, said Adeline, of Louis de St. Pierre, a chevalier of reputable family, but of small fortune, who for many years resided at Paris. Of my mother I have a faint remembrance: I lost her when I was only seven years old, and this was my first misfortune. At her death, my father gave up housekeeping, boarded me in a convent, and quitted Paris. Thus was I, at this early period of my life, abandoned to strangers. My father came sometimes to Paris; he then visited me, and I well remember the grief I used to feel when he bade me farewell. On these occasions, which rung my heart with grief, he appeared unmoved; so that I often thought he had little tenderness for me. But he was my father, and the only person to whom I could look up for protection and love.

In this convent I continued till I was twelve years old. A thousand times I had entreated my father to take me home, but at first motives of prudence, and afterwards of avarice, prevented him. I was now removed from this convent, and placed in another, where I learned my father intended I should take the veil. I will not attempt to express my surprize and grief on this occasion. Too long I had been immured in the walls of a cloister, and too much had I seen of the sullen misery of its votaries, not to feel horror and disgust at the prospect of being added to their number.

The Lady Abbess was a woman of rigid decorum and severe devotion; exact in the observance of every detail of form, and never forgave an offence against ceremony. It was her method, when she wanted to make converts to her order, to denounce and terrify rather than to persuade and allure. Her's were the arts of cunning practised upon fear, not those of sophistication upon reason. She employed numberless stratagems to gain me to her purpose, and they all wore the complection of her character. But in the life to which she would have devoted me, I saw too many forms of real terror, to be overcome by the influence of her ideal host, and was resolute in rejecting the veil. Here I passed several years of miserable resistance against cruelty and superstition. My father I seldom saw; when I did, I entreated him to alter my destination, but he objected that his fortune was insufficient to support me in the world, and at length denounced vengeance on my head if I persisted in disobedience.

You, my dear Madam, can form little idea of the wretchedness of my situation, condemned to perpetual imprisonment, and imprisonment of the most dreadful kind, or to the vengeance of a father, from whom I had no appeal. My resolution relaxed — for some time I paused upon the choice of evils — but at length the horrors of the monastic life rose so fully to my view, that fortitude gave way before them. Excluded from the cheerful intercourse of society — from the pleasant view of nature — almost from the light of day — condemned to silence — rigid formality — abstinence and penance — condemned to forego the delights of a world, which imagination painted in the gayest and most alluring colours, and whose hues were, perhaps, not the less captivating because they were only ideal:— such was the state, to which I was destined. Again my resolution was invigorated: my father's cruelty subdued tenderness, and roused indignation. "Since he can forget," said I, "the affection of a parent, and condemn his child without remorse to wretchedness and despair — the bond of filial and parental duty no longer subsists between us — he has himself dissolved it, and I will yet struggle for liberty and life."

Finding me unmoved by menace, the Lady Abbess had now recourse to more subtle measures: she condescended to smile, and even to flatter; but her's was the distorted smile of cunning, not the gracious emblem of kindness; it provoked disgust, instead of inspiring affection. She painted the character of a vestal in the most beautiful tints of art — its holy innocence — its mild dignity — its sublime devotion. I sighed as she spoke. This she regarded as a favourable symptom, and proceeded on her picture with more animation. She described the serenity of a monastic life — its security from the seductive charms, restless passions, and sorrowful vicissitudes of the world — the rapturous delights of religion, and the sweet reciprocal affection of the sisterhood.

So highly she finished the piece, that the lurking lines of cunning would, to an inexperienced eye, have escaped detection. Mine was too sorrowfully informed. Too often had I witnessed the secret tear and bursting sigh of vain regret, the sullen pinings of discontent, and the mute anguish of despair. My silence and my manner assured her of my incredulity, and it was with difficulty that she preserved a decent composure.

My father, as may be imagined, was highly incensed at my perseverance, which he called obstinacy, but, what will not be so easily believed, he soon after relented, and appointed a day to take me from the convent. O! judge of my feelings when I received this intelligence. The joy it occasioned awakened all my gratitude; I forgot the former cruelty of my father, and that the present indulgence was less the effect of his kindness than of my resolution. I wept that I could not indulge his every wish.

What days of blissful expectation were those that preceded my departure! The world, from which I had been hitherto secluded — the world, in which my fancy had been so often delighted to roam — whose paths were strewn with fadeless roses — whose every scene smiled in beauty and invited to delight — where all the people were good, and all the good happy — Ah! then that world was bursting upon my view. Let me catch the rapturous remembrance before it vanish! It is like the passing lights of autumn, that gleam for a moment on a hill, and then leave it to darkness. I counted the days and hours that with-held me from this fairy land. It was in the convent only that people were deceitful and cruel: it was there only that misery dwelt. I was quitting it all! How I pitied the poor nuns that were to be left behind. I would have given half that world I prized so much, had it been mine, to have taken them out with me.

The long wished for day at last arrived. My father came, and for a moment my joy was lost in the sorrow of bidding farewell to my poor companions, for whom I had never felt such warmth of kindness as at this instant. I was soon beyond the gates of the convent. I looked around me, and viewed the vast vault of heaven no longer bounded by monastic walls, and the green earth extended in hill and dale to the round verge of the horizon! My heart danced with delight, tears swelled in my eyes, and for some moments I was unable to speak. My thoughts rose to Heaven in sentiments of gratitude to the Giver of all good!

At length, I returned to my father; dear Sir, said I, how I thank you for my deliverance, and how I wish I could do every thing to oblige you.

Return, then, to your convent, said he, in a harsh accent. I shuddered; his look and manner jarred the tone of my feelings; they struck discord upon my heart, which had before responded only to harmony. The ardour of joy was in a moment repressed, and every object around me was saddened with the gloom of disappointment. It was not that I suspected my father would take me back to the convent; but that his feelings seemed so very dissonant to the joy and gratitude, which I had but a moment before felt and expressed to him. — Pardon, Madam, a relation of these trivial circumstances; the strong vicissitudes of feeling which they impressed upon my heart, make me think them important, when they are, perhaps, only disgusting.

“No, my dear,” said Madame La Motte, “they are interesting to me; they illustrate little traits of character, which I love to observe. You are worthy of all my regards, and from this moment I give my tenderest pity to your misfortunes, and my affection to your goodness.”

These words melted the heart of Adeline; she kissed the hand which Madame held out, and remained a few minutes silent. At length she said, “May I deserve this goodness! and may I ever be thankful to God, who, in giving me such a friend, has raised me to comfort and hope!

“My father’s house was situated a few leagues on the other side of Paris, and in our way to it, we passed through that city. What a novel scene! Where were now the solemn faces, the demure manners I had been accustomed to see in the convent? Every countenance was here animated, either by business or pleasure; every step was airy, and every smile was gay. All the people appeared like friends; they looked and smiled at me; I smiled again, and wished to have told them how pleased I was. How delightful, said I, to live surrounded by friends!

“What crowded streets! What magnificent hotels! What splendid equipages! I scarcely observed that the streets were narrow, or the way dangerous. What bustle, what tumult, what delight! I could never be sufficiently thankful that I was removed from the convent. Again, I was going to express my gratitude to my father, but his looks forbad me, and I was silent. I am too diffuse; even the faint forms which memory reflects of passed delight are grateful to the heart. The shadow of pleasure is still gazed upon with a melancholy enjoyment, though the substance is fled beyond our reach.”

“Having quitted Paris, which I left with many sighs, and gazed upon till the towers of every church dissolved in distance from my view; we entered upon a gloomy and unfrequented road. It was evening when we reached a wild heath; I looked round in search of a human dwelling, but could find none; and not a human being was to be seen. I experienced something of what I used to feel in the convent; my heart had not been so sad since I left it. Of my father, who still sat in silence, I inquired if we were near home; he answered in the affirmative. Night came on, however, before we reached the place of our destination; it was a lone house on the waste; but I need not describe it to you, Madam. When the carriage stopped, two men appeared at the door, and assisted us to alight; so gloomy were their countenances, and so few their words, I almost fancied myself again in the convent. Certain it is, I had not seen such melancholy faces since I quitted it. Is this a part of the world I have so fondly contemplated? said I.

“The interior appearance of the house was desolate and mean; I was surprised that my father had chosen such a place for his habitation, and also that no woman was to be seen; but I knew that inquiry would only produce a reproof, and was, therefore, silent. At supper, the two men I had before seen sat down with us; they said little, but seemed to observe me much. I was confused and displeased, which, my father noticing, frowned at them with a look, which convinced me he meant more than I comprehended. When the cloth was drawn, my father took my hand and conducted me to the door of my chamber; having sat down the candle, and wished me good night, he left me to my own solitary thoughts.

“How different were they from those I had indulged a few hours before! then expectation, hope, delight, danced before me; now melancholy and disappointment chilled the ardour of my mind, and discoloured my future prospect. The appearance of every thing around conduced to depress me. On the floor lay a small bed without curtains, or hangings; two old chairs and a table were all the remaining furniture in the room. I went to the window, with an intention of looking out upon the surrounding scene, and found it was grated. I was shocked at this circumstance, and, comparing it with the lonely situation, and the strange appearance of the house, together with the countenances and behaviour of the men who had supped with us, I was lost in a labyrinth of conjecture.

“At length I laid down to sleep; but the anxiety of my mind prevented repose; gloomy unpleasing images flitted before my fancy, and I fell into a sort of waking dream: I thought that I was in a lonely forest with my father; his looks were severe, and his gestures menacing: he upbraided me for leaving the convent, and while he spoke, drew from his pocket a mirror, which he held before my face; I looked in it and saw, (my blood now thrills as I repeat it) I saw myself wounded, and bleeding profusely. Then I thought myself in the house again; and suddenly heard these words, in accents so distinct, that for some time after I awoke, I could scarcely believe them ideal, ‘Depart this house, destruction hovers here.’

“I was awakened by a footstep on the stairs; it was my father retiring to his chamber; the lateness of the hour surprised me, for it was past midnight.

“On the following morning, the party of the preceding evening assembled at breakfast, and were as gloomy and silent as before. The table was spread by a boy of my father’s; but the cook and the house-maid, whatever they might be, were invisible.”

“The next morning, I was surprized, on attempting to leave my chamber, to find the door locked; I waited a considerable time before I ventured to call; when I did, no answer was returned; I then went to the window, and called more loudly, but my own voice was still the only sound I heard. Near an hour I passed in a state of surprise and terror not to be described: at length, I heard a person coming up stairs, and I renewed the call; I was answered, that my father had that morning set off for Paris, whence he would return in a few days; in the meanwhile he had ordered me to be confined in my chamber. On my expressing surprise and apprehension at this circumstance, I was assured I had nothing to fear, and that I should live as well as if I was at liberty.”

“The latter part of this speech seemed to contain an odd kind of comfort; I made little reply, but submitted to necessity. Once more I was abandoned to sorrowful reflection; what a day was the one I now passed! alone, and agitated with grief and apprehension. I endeavoured to conjecture the cause of this harsh treatment; and, at length concluded it was designed by my father, as a punishment for my former disobedience. But why abandon me to the power of strangers, to men, whose countenances bore the stamp of villany so strongly as to impress even my inexperienced mind with terror! Surmise involved me only deeper in perplexity, yet I found it impossible to forbear pursuing the subject; and the day was divided between lamentation and conjecture. Night at length came, and such a night! Darkness brought new terrors: I looked round the chamber for some means of fastening my door on the inside, but could perceive none; at last I contrived to place the back of a chair in an oblique direction, so as to render it secure.

“I had scarcely done this, and laid down upon my bed in my cloaths, not to sleep, but to watch, when I heard a rap at the door of the house, which was opened and shut so quickly, that the person who had knocked, seemed only to deliver a letter or message. Soon after, I heard voices at intervals in a room below stairs, sometimes speaking very low, and sometimes rising, all together, as if in dispute. Something more excusable than curiosity made me endeavour to distinguish what was said, but in vain; now and then a word or two reached me, and once I heard my name repeated, but no more.”

"Thus passed the hours till midnight, when all became still. I had laid for some time in a state between fear and hope, when I heard the lock of my door gently moved backward and forward; I started up, and listened; for a moment it was still, then the noise returned, and I heard a whispering without; my spirits died away, but I was yet sensible. Presently an effort was made at the door, as if to force it; I shrieked aloud, and immediately heard the voices of the men I had seen at my father's table: they called loudly for the door to be opened, and on my returning no answer, uttered dreadful execrations. I had just strength sufficient to move to the window, in the desperate hope of escaping thence; but my feeble efforts could not even shake the bars. O! how can I recollect these moments of horror, and be sufficiently thankful that I am now in safety and comfort!

"They remained some time at the door, then they quitted it, and went down stairs. How my heart revived at every step of their departure; I fell upon my knees, thanked God that he had preserved me this time, and implored his farther protection. I was rising from this short prayer, when suddenly I heard a noise in a different part of the room, and, on looking round, I perceived the door of a small closet open, and two men enter the chamber.

"They seized me, and I sunk senseless in their arms; how long I remained in this condition I know not, but on reviving, I perceived myself again alone, and heard several voices from below stairs. I had presence of mind to run to the door of the closet, my only chance of escape; but it was locked! I then recollected it was possible, that the ruffians might have forgot to turn the key of the chamber door, which was held by the chair; but here, also, I was disappointed. I clasped my hands in an agony of despair, and stood for some time immoveable.

"A violent noise from below rouzed me, and soon after I heard people ascending the stairs: I now gave myself up for lost. The steps approached, the door of the closet was again unlocked. I stood calmly, and again saw the men enter the chamber; I neither spoke, nor resisted: the faculties of my soul were wrought up beyond the power of feeling; as a violent blow on the body stuns for awhile the sense of pain. They led me down stairs; the door of a room below was thrown open, and I beheld a stranger; it was then that my senses returned; I shrieked, and resisted, but was forced along. It is unnecessary to say that this stranger was Monsieur La Motte, or to add, that I shall for ever bless him as my deliverer."

Adeline ceased to speak; Madame La Motte remained silent. There were some circumstances in Adeline's narrative, which raised all her curiosity. She asked if Adeline believed her father to be a party in this mysterious affair. Adeline, though it was impossible to doubt that he had been principally and materially concerned in some part of it, thought, or said she thought, he was innocent of any intention against her life. "Yet, what motive," said Madame La Motte, could there be for a degree of cruelty so apparently unprofitable?" Here the inquiry ended; and Adeline confessed she had pursued it, till her mind shrunk from all farther research.

The sympathy which such uncommon misfortune excited, Madame La Motte now expressed without reserve, and this expression of it, strengthened the tye of mutual friendship. Adeline felt her spirits relieved by the disclosure she had made to Madame La Motte; and the latter acknowledged the value of the confidence, by an increase of affectionate attentions.

❦

CHAPTER 4

" — My May of life
Is fall'n into the fear, the yellow leaf."
Macbeth.
"Full oft, unknowing and unknown,
He wore his endless noons alone,
Amid th' autumnal wood:
Oft was he wont in hasty fit,
Abrupt the social board to quit."
Wharton.

La Motte had now passed above a month in this seclusion; and his wife had the pleasure to see him recover tranquillity and even cheerfulness. In this pleasure Adeline warmly participated; and she might justly have congratulated herself, as one cause of his restoration; her cheerfulness and delicate attention had effected what Madame La Motte's greater anxiety had failed to accomplish. La Motte did not seem regardless of her amiable disposition, and sometimes thanked her in a manner more earnest than was usual with him. She, in her turn, considered him as her only protector, and now felt towards him the affection of a daughter.

The time she had spent in this peaceful retirement had softened the remembrance of past events, and restored her mind to its natural tone: and when memory brought back to her view her former short and romantic expectations of happiness, though she gave a sigh to the rapturous illusion, she less lamented the disappointment, than rejoiced in her present security and comfort.

But the satisfaction which La Motte's cheerfulness diffused around him was of short continuance; he became suddenly gloomy and reserved; the society of his family was no longer grateful to him; and he would spend whole hours in the most secluded parts of the forest, devoted to melancholy and secret grief. He did not, as formerly, indulge the humour of his sadness, without restraint, in the presence of others; he now evidently endeavoured to conceal it, and affected a cheerfulness that was too artificial to escape detection.

His servant Peter, either impelled by curiosity or kindness, sometimes followed him, unseen, into the forest. He observed him frequently retire to one particular spot, in a remote part, which having gained, he always disappeared, before Peter, who was obliged to follow at a distance, could exactly notice where. All his endeavours, now prompted by wonder and invigorated by disappointment, were unsuccessful, and he was at length compelled to endure the tortures of unsatisfied curiosity.

This change in the manners and habits of her husband was too conspicuous to pass unobserved by Madame La Motte, who endeavoured, by all the stratagems which affection could suggest, or female invention supply, to win him to her confidence. He seemed insensible to the influence of the first, and withstood the wiles of the latter. Finding all her efforts insufficient to dissipate the glooms which overhung his mind, or to penetrate their secret cause, she desisted from farther attempt, and endeavoured to submit to this mysterious distress.

Week after week elapsed, and the same unknown cause sealed the lips and corroded the heart of La Motte. The place of his visitation in the forest had not been traced. Peter had frequently examined round the spot where his master disappeared, but had never discovered any recess, which could be supposed to conceal him. The astonishment of the servant was at length raised to an insupportable degree, and he communicated to his mistress the subject of it.

The emotion, which this information excited, she disguised from Peter, and reproved him for the means he had taken to gratify his curiosity. But she revolved this circumstance in her thoughts, and comparing it with the late alteration in his temper, her uneasiness was renewed, and her perplexity considerably increased. After much consideration, being unable to assign any other motive for his conduct, she began to attribute it to the influence of illicit passion; and her heart, which now out-ran her judgement, confirmed the supposition, and roused all the torturing pangs of jealousy.

Comparatively speaking, she had never known affliction till now: she had abandoned her dearest friends and connections — had relinquished the gaieties, the luxuries, and almost the necessaries of life; — fled with her family into exile, an exile the most dreary and comfortless; experiencing the evils of reality, and those of apprehension, united: all these she had patiently endured, supported by the affection of him, for whose sake she suffered. Though that affection, indeed, had for some time appeared to be abated, she had borne its decrease with fortitude: but the last stroke of calamity, hitherto withheld, now came with irresistible force — the love, of which she lamented the loss, she now believed was transferred to another.

The operation of strong passion confuses the powers of reason, and warps them to its own particular direction. Her usual degree of judgement, unopposed by the influence of her heart, would probably have pointed out to Madame La Motte some circumstances upon the subject of her distress, equivocal, if not contradictory to her suspicions. No such circumstances appeared to her, and she did not long hesitate to decide, that Adeline was the object of her husband's attachment. Her beauty out of the question, who else, indeed, could it be in a spot thus secluded from the world?

The same cause destroyed, almost at the same moment, her only remaining comfort; and, when she wept that she could no longer look for happiness in the affection of La Motte, she wept also, that she could no longer seek solace in the friendship of Adeline. She had too great an esteem for her to doubt at first, the integrity of her conduct, but, in spite of reason, her heart no longer expanded to her with its usual warmth of kindness. She shrunk from her confidence; and, as the secret broodings of jealousy cherished her suspicions, she became less kind to her, even in manner.

Adeline, observing the change, at first attributed it to accident, and afterwards to a temporary displeasure, arising from some little inadvertency in her conduct. She, therefore, increased her assiduities; but, perceiving, contrary to all expectation, that her efforts to please failed of their usual consequence, and that the reserve of Madame's manner rather increased than abated, she became seriously uneasy, and resolved to seek an explanation. This Madame La Motte as sedulously avoided, and was for some time able to prevent. Adeline, however, too much interested in the event to yield to delicate scruples, pressed the subject so closely, that Madame, at first agitated and confused, at length invented some idle excuse, and laughed off the affair.

She now saw the necessity of subduing all appearance of reserve towards Adeline; and though her art could not conquer the prejudices of passion, it taught her to assume, with tolerable success, the aspect of kindness. Adeline was deceived, and was again at peace. Indeed, confidence in the sincerity and goodness of others was her weakness. But the pangs of stifled jealousy struck deeper to the heart of Madame La Motte, and she resolved, at all events, to obtain some certainty upon the subject of her suspicions.

She now condescended to a meanness, which she had before despised, and ordered Peter to watch the steps of his master, in order to discover, if possible, the place of his visitation! So much did passion win upon her judgement, by time and indulgence, that she sometimes ventured even to doubt the integrity of Adeline, and afterwards proceeded to believe it possible that the object of La Motte's rambles might be an assignation with her. What suggested this conjecture was, that Adeline frequently took long walks alone in the forest, and sometimes was absent from the abbey for many hours. This circumstance, which Madame La Motte had at first attributed to Adeline's fondness for the picturesque beauties of nature, now operated forcibly upon her imagination, and she could view it in no other light, than as affording an opportunity for secret conversation with her husband.

Peter obeyed the orders of his mistress with alacrity, for they were warmly seconded by his own curiosity. All his endeavours were, however, fruitless; he never dared to follow La Motte near enough to observe the place of his last retreat. Her impatience thus heightened by delay, and her passion stimulated by difficulty, Madame La Motte now resolved to apply to her husband for an explanation of his conduct.

After some consideration, concerning the manner most likely to succeed with him, she went to La Motte, but when she entered the room where he sat, forgetting all her concerted address, she fell at his feet, and was, for some moments, lost in tears. Surprized at her attitude and distress, he inquired the occasion of it, and was answered, that it was caused by his own conduct. "My conduct! What part of it, pray?" inquired he.

"Your reserve, your secret sorrow, and frequent absence from the abbey."

"Is it then so wonderful, that a man, who has lost almost every thing, should sometimes lament his misfortunes? or so criminal to attempt concealing his grief, that he must be blamed for it by those, whom he would save from the pain of sharing it?"

Having uttered these words, he quitted the room, leaving Madame La Motte lost in surprize, but somewhat relieved from the pressure of her former suspicions. Still, however, she pursued Adeline with an eye of scrutiny; and the mask of kindness would sometimes fall off, and discover the features of distrust. Adeline, without exactly knowing why, felt less at ease and less happy in her presence than formerly; her spirits drooped, and she would often, when alone, weep at the forlornness of her condition. Formerly, her remembrance of past sufferings was lost in the friendship of Madame La Motte; now, though her behaviour was too guarded to betray any striking instance of unkindness, there was something in her manner which chilled the hopes of Adeline, unable as she was to analyse it. But a circumstance, which soon occurred, suspended, for a while, the jealousy of Madame La Motte, and roused her husband from his state of gloomy stupefaction.

Peter, having been one day to Auboine, for the weekly supply of provisions, returned with intelligence that awakened in La Motte new apprehension and anxiety.

"Oh, Sir! I've heard something that has astonished me, as well it may," cried Peter, "and so it will you, when you come to know it. As I was standing in the blacksmith's shop, while the smith was driving a nail into the horse's shoe (by the bye, the horse lost it in an odd way, I'll tell you, Sir, how it was)" —

"Nay, prithee leave it till another time, and go on with your story."

"Why then, Sir, as I was standing in the blacksmith's shop, comes in a man with a pipe in his mouth, and a large pouch of tobacco in his hand" — "Well — what has the pipe to do with the story?"

"Nay, Sir, you put me out; I can't go on, unless you let me tell it my own way. As I was saying — with a pipe in his mouth — I think I was there, your Honour!"

"Yes, yes."

"He sets himself down on the bench, and, taking the pipe from his mouth, says to the blacksmith — Neighbour, do you know any body of the name of La Motte hereabouts? — Bless your Honour, I turned all of a cold sweat in a minute! — Is not your Honour well, shall I fetch you any thing?"

"No — but be short in your narrative."

"La Motte! La Motte! said the blacksmith, I think I've heard the name." — "Have you?" said I, you're cunning then, for there's no such person hereabouts, to my knowledge."

"Fool! — why did you say that?"

"Because I did not want them to know your Honour was here; and if I had not managed very cleverly, they would have found me out. There is no such person, hereabouts, to my knowledge, says I," — "Indeed! says the blacksmith, you know more of the neighbourhood than I do then." — Aye, says the man with the pipe, that's very true. How came you to know so much of the neighbourhood? I came here twenty-six years ago, come next St. Michael, and you know more than I do. How came you to know so much?"

"With that he put his pipe in his mouth, and gave a whiff full in my face. Lord! your Honour, I trembled from head to foot. Nay, as for that matter, says I, I don't know more than other people, but I'm sure I never heard of such a man as that." — Pray, says the blacksmith, staring me full in the face, an't you the man that was inquiring some time since about Saint Clair's Abbey?" — "Well, what of that? says I, what does that prove?" — "Why, they say, somebody lives in the abbey now, said the man, turning to the other; and, for aught I know, it may be this same La Motte." — "Aye, or for aught I know either, says the man with the pipe, getting up from the bench, and you know more of this than you'll own. I'll lay my life on't, this Monsieur La Motte lives at the abbey." — "Aye, says I, you are out there, for he does not live at the abbey now."

"Confound your folly!" cried La Motte, "but be quick — how did the matter end?"

"My master does not live there now, said I. — Oh! oh! said the man with the pipe; he is your master, then? And pray how long has he left the abbey — and where does he live now?" Hold, said I, not so fast — I know when to speak and when to hold my tongue — but who has been inquiring for him?"

"What! he expected somebody to inquire for him? says the man." — No, says I, he did not, but if he did, what does that prove? — that argues nothing." With that, he looked at the blacksmith, and they went out of the shop together, leaving my horse's shoe undone. But I never minded that, for the moment they were gone, I mounted and rode away as fast as I could. But in my fright, your Honour, I forgot to take the round about way, and so came straight home."

La Motte, extremely shocked at Peter's intelligence, made no other reply than by cursing his folly, and immediately went in search of Madame, who was walking with Adeline on the banks of the river. La Motte was too much agitated to soften his information by preface. "We are discovered!" said he, "the King's officers have been inquiring for me at Auboine, and Peter has blundered upon my ruin." He then informed her of what Peter had related, and bade her prepare to quit the abbey.

"But whither can we fly?" said Madame La Motte, scarcely able to support herself. "Any where!" said he, "to stay here is certain destruction. We must take refuge in Switzerland, I think. If any part of France would have concealed me, surely it had been this!"

"Alas, how are we perfecuted!" rejoined Madame. "This spot is scarcely made comfortable, before we are obliged to leave it, and go we know not whither."

"I wish we may not yet know whither," replied La Motte, "that is the least evil that threatens us. Let us escape a prison, and I care not whither we go. But return to the abbey immediately, and pack up what moveables you can." A flood of tears came to the relief of Madame La Motte, and she hung upon Adeline's arm, silent and trembling. Adeline, though she had no comfort to bestow, endeavoured to command her feelings and appear composed. Come," said La Motte, "we waste time; let us lament hereafter, but at present prepare for flight. Exert a little of that fortitude, which is so necessary for our preservation. Adeline does not weep, yet her state is as wretched as your own, for I know not how long I shall be able to protect her."

Notwithstanding her terror, this reproof touched the pride of Madame La Motte, who dried her tears, but disdained to reply, and looked at Adeline with a strong expression of displeasure. As they moved silently toward the abbey, Adeline asked La Motte if he was sure they were the king's officers, who inquired for him. "I cannot, doubt it," he replied, "who else could possibly inquire for me? Besides, the behaviour of the man, who mentioned my name, puts the matter beyond a question."

"Perhaps not," said Madame La Motte: "let us wait till morning ere we set off. We may then find it will be unnecessary to go."

"We may, indeed; the king's officers would probably by that time have told us as much." La Motte went to give orders to Peter. "Set off in an hour," said Peter, "Lord bless you, master! only consider the coach wheel; it would take me a day at least to mend it, for your Honour knows I never mended one in my life."

This was a circumstance which La Motte had entirely overlooked. When they settled at the abbey, Peter had at first been too busy in repairing the apartments, to remember the carriage, and afterwards, believing it would not quickly be wanted, he had neglected to do it. La Motte's temper now entirely forsook him, and with many execrations he ordered Peter to go to work immediately: but on searching for the materials formerly bought, they were no where to be found, and Peter at length remembered, though he was prudent enough to conceal this circumstance that he had used the nails in repairing the abbey.

It was now, therefore, impossible to quit the forest that night, and La Motte had only to consider the most probable plan of concealment, should the officers of justice visit the ruin before the morning; a circumstance, which the thoughtlessness of Peter in returning from Auboine, by the straight way, made not unlikely.

At first, indeed, it occurred to him, that, though his family could not be removed, he might himself take one of the horses, and escape from the forest before night. But he thought there would still be some danger of detection in the towns through which he must pass, and he could not well bear the idea of leaving his family unprotected, without knowing when he could return to them, or whither he could direct them to follow him. La Motte was not a man of very vigorous resolution, and he was, perhaps, rather more willing to suffer in company than alone.

After much consideration, he recollected the trap-door of the closet belonging to the chambers above. It was invisible to the eye, and, whatever might be its direction, it would securely shelter him, at least, from discovery. Having deliberated farther upon the subject, he determined to explore the recess to which the stairs led, and thought it possible, that for a short time his whole family might be concealed within it. There was little time between the suggestion of the plan and the execution of his purpose, for darkness was spreading around, and, in every murmur of the wind, he thought he heard the voices of his enemies.

He called for a light and ascended alone to the chamber. When he came to the closet, it was some time before he could find the trap-door, so exactly did it correspond with the boards of the floor. At length, he found and raised it. The chill damps of long confined air rushed from the aperture, and he stood for a moment to let them pass, ere he descended. As he stood looking down the abyss, he recollected the report, which Peter had brought concerning the abbey, and it gave him an uneasy sensation. But this soon yielded to more pressing interests.

The stairs were steep, and in many places trembled beneath his weight. Having continued to descend for some time, his feet touched the ground, and he found himself in a narrow passage; but as he turned to pursue it, the damp vapours curled round him and extinguished the light. He called aloud for Peter, but could make nobody hear, and, after some time, he endeavoured to find his way up the stairs. In this, with difficulty, he succeeded, and, passing the chambers with cautious steps, descended the tower.

The security, which the place he had just quitted seemed to promise, was of too much importance to be slightly rejected, and he determined immediately to make another experiment with the light:— having now fixed it in a lanthorn, he descended a second time to the passage. The current of vapours occasioned by the opening of the trap-door, was abated, and the fresh air thence admitted had began to circulate: La Motte passed on unmolested.

The passage was of considerable length, and led him to a door, which was fastened. He placed the lanthorn at some distance to avoid the current of air, and applied his strength to the door. It shook under his hands, but did not yield. Upon examining it more closely, he perceived the wood round the lock was dedecayed, probably by the damps, and this encouraged him to proceed. After some time it gave way to his effort, and he found himself in a square stone room.

He stood for some time to survey it. The walls, which were dripping with unwholesome dews, were entirely bare and afforded not even a window. A small iron grate alone admitted the air. At the further end, near a low recess, was another door. La Motte went towards it, and, as he passed, looked into the recess. Upon the ground within it, stood a large chest, which he went forward to examine, and, lifting the lid, he saw the remains of a human skeleton. Horror struck upon his heart, and he involuntarily stepped back. During a pause of some moments, his first emotions subsided. That thrilling curiosity, which objects of terror often excite in the human mind, impelled him to take a second view of this dismal spectacle.

La Motte stood motionless as he gazed; the object before him seemed to confirm the report that some person had formerly been murdered in the abbey. At length he closed the chest, and advanced to the second door, which also was fastened, but the key was in the lock. He turned it with difficulty, and then found the door was held by two strong bolts. Having undrawn these, it disclosed a flight of steps, which he descended. They terminated in a chain of low vaults, or rather cells, that, from the manner of their construction and present condition, seemed to have been coeval with the most ancient parts of the abbey. La Motte, in his then depressed state of mind, thought them the burial places of the monks, who formerly inhabited the pile above; but they were more calculated for places of penance for the living, than of rest for the dead.

Having reached the extremity of these cells, the way was again closed by a door. La Motte now hesitated whether he should attempt to proceed any farther. The present spot seemed to afford the security he sought. Here he might pass the night unmolested by apprehension of discovery, and it was most probable, that if the officers arrived in the night, and found the abbey vacated, they would quit it before morning, or, at least, before he could have any occasion to emerge from concealment. These considerations restored his mind to a state of greater composure. His only immediate care was to bring his family, as soon as possible, to this place of security, lest the officers should come unawares upon them; and, while he stood thus musing, he blamed himself for delay.

But an irresistible desire of knowing to what this door led, arrested his steps, and he turned to open it. The door, however, was fastened, and, as he attempted to force it, he suddenly thought he heard a noise above. It now occurred to him, that the officers might already have arrived, and he quitted the cells with precipitation, intending to listen at the trap-door.

“There, said he, I may wait in security, and perhaps hear something of what passes. My family will not be known, or, at least, not hurt, and their uneasiness on my account, they must learn to endure.”

These were the arguments of La Motte, in which; it must be owned, selfish prudence was more conspicuous than tender anxiety for his wife. He had by this time reached the bottom of the stairs, when, on looking up, he perceived the trap-door was left open, and ascending in haste to close it, he heard footsteps advancing through the chambers above. Before he could descend entirely out of sight, he again looked up and perceived through the aperture the face of a man looking down upon him. “Master,” cried Peter; — La Motte was somewhat relieved at the sound of his voice, though angry that he had occasioned him so much terror.

“What brings you here, and what is the matter below?”

“Nothing, Sir, nothing’s the matter, only my mistress sent me to see after your Honour.”

“There’s nobody there then,” said La Motte, “setting his foot upon the step.”

“Yes, Sir, there is my mistress and Mademoiselle Adeline and” — “Well — well” said La Motte briskly — “go your ways, I am coming.”

He informed Madame La Motte where he had been, and of his intention of secreting himself, and deliberated upon the means of convincing the officers, should they arrive, that he had quitted the abbey. For this purpose, he ordered all the moveable furniture to be conveyed to the cells below. La Motte himself assisted in this business, and every hand was employed for dispatch. In a very short time, the habitable part of the fabric was left almost as desolate as he had found it. He then bade Peter take the horses to a distance from the abbey, and turn them loose. After farther consideration, he thought it might contribute to mislead them, if he placed in some conspicuous part of the fabric an inscription, signifying his condition, and mentioning the date of his departure from the abbey. Over the door of the tower, which led to the habitable part of the structure, he, therefore, cut the following lines.

“O ye! whom misfortune may lead to this spot, Learn that there are others as miserable as yourselves.”

P— I-M— a wretched exile, sought within these walls a refuge from persecution, on the 27th of April 1658, and quitted them on the 12th of July in the same year, in search of a more convenient asylum.

After engraving these words with a knife, the small stock of provisions remaining from the week’s supply (for Peter, in his fright, had returned unloaded from his last journey) was put into a basket, and, La Motte having assembled his family, they all ascended the stairs of the tower and passed through the chambers to the closet. Peter went first with a light, and with some difficulty found the trap-door. Madame La Motte shuddered as she surveyed the gloomy abyss; but they were all silent.

La Motte now took the light and led the way; Madame followed, and then Adeline. “These old monks loved good wine, as well as other people,” said Peter, who brought up the rear, “I warrant your Honour, now, this was their cellar; I smell the casks already.”

“Peace,” said La Motte, “reserve your jokes for a proper occasion.”

“There is no harm in loving good wine, as your Honour knows.”

“Have done with this buffoonery,” said La Motte, in a tone more authoritative, “and go first.” Peter obeyed.

They came to the vaulted room. The dismal spectacle he had seen here, deterred La Motte from passing the night in this chamber; and the furniture had, by his own order, been conveyed to the cells below. He was anxious that his family should not perceive the skeleton; an object, which would, probably, excite a degree of horror not to be overcome during their stay. La Motte now passed the chest in haste; and Madame La Motte and Adeline were too much engrossed by their own thoughts, to give minute attention to external circumstances.

When they reached the cells, Madame La Motte wept at the necessity which condemned her to a spot so dismal. “Alas,” said she, “are we, indeed, thus reduced! The apartments above, formerly appeared to me a deplorable habitation; but they are a place compared to these.”

“True, my dear,” said La Motte, and let the remembrance of what you once thought them, soothe your discontent now; these cells are also a place, compared to the Bicétre, or the Bastille, and to the terrors of farther punishment, which would accompany them: let the apprehension of the greater evil teach you to endure the less: I am contented if we find here the refuge I seek.”

Madame La Motte was silent, and Adeline, forgetting her late unkindness, endeavoured as much as she could to console her; while her heart was sinking with the misfortunes, which she could not but anticipate, she appeared composed, and even cheerful. She attended Madame La Motte with the most watchful solicitude, and felt so thankful that La Motte was no secreted within this recess, that she almost lost her perception of its glooms and inconveniences.

This she artlessly expressed to him, who could not be insensible to the tenderness it discovered. Madame La Motte was also sensible of it, and it renewed a painful sensation. The effusions of gratitude she mistook for those of tenderness.

La Motte returned frequently to the trap door, to listen if any body was in the abbey; but no sound disturbed the stillness of night; at length they sat down to supper; the repast was a melancholy one. “If the officers do not come hither to night,” said Madame La Motte, sighing, “suppose, my dear, Peter returns to Auboine to-morrow. He may there learn something more of this affair; or, at least, he might procure a carriage to convey us hence.”

“To be sure he might,” said La Motte, peevishly, “and people to attend it also. Peter would be an excellent person to shew the officers the way to the abbey, and to inform them of what they might else be in doubt about, my concealment here.”

“How cruel is this irony!” replied Madame La Motte, “I proposed only what I thought would be for our mutual good; my judgement was, perhaps, wrong, but my intention was certainly right.” Tears swelled into her eyes as she spoke these words. Adeline wished to relieve her; but delicacy kept her silent. La Motte observed the effect of his speech, and something like remorse touched his heart. He approached, and taking her hand, “You must allow for the perturbation of my mind,” said he, “I did not mean to afflict you thus. The idea of sending Peter to Auboine, where he has already done so much harm by his blunders, teased me, and I could not let it pass unnoticed. No, my dear, our only chance of safety is to remain where we are while our provisions last. If the officers do not come here to-night, they probably will to-morrow, or, perhaps, the next day. When they have searched the abbey, without finding me, they will depart; we may then emerge from this recess, and take measures for removing to a distant country.”

Madame La Motte acknowledged the justice of his words, and her mind being relieved by the little apology he had made, she became tolerably cheerful. Supper being ended, La Motte stationed the faithful, though simple Peter, at the foot of the steps that ascended to the closet; there to keep watch during the night. Having done this, he returned to the lower cells, where he had left his little family. The beds were spread, and having mournfully bad each other good night, they laid down, and implored rest.

Adeline’s thoughts were too busy to suffer her to repose, and when she believed her companions were sunk in slumbers, she indulged the sorrow which reflection brought. She also looked forward to the future with the most mournful apprehension. “Should La Motte be seized, what was to become of her? She would then be a wanderer in the wide world; without friends to protect, or money to support her; the prospect was gloomy — was terrible!” She surveyed it and shuddered! The distresses too of Monsieur and Madame La Motte, whom she loved with the most lively affection, formed no inconsiderable part of her’s.

Sometimes she looked back to her father; but in him she only saw an enemy, from whom she must fly: this remembrance heightened her sorrow; yet it was not the recollection of the suffering he had occasioned her, by which she was so much afflicted, as by the sense of his unkindness: she wept bitterly. At length, with that artless piety, which innocence only knows, she addressed the Supreme Being, and resigned herself to his care. Her mind then gradually became peaceful and re-assured, and soon after she sunk to repose.

❦

CHAPTER 5

A Surprize — An Adventure — A Mystery.

The night passed without any alarm; Peter had remained upon his post, and heard nothing that prevented his sleeping. La Motte heard him, long before he saw him, most musically snoring; though it must be owned there was more of the bass, than of any other part of the gamut in his performance. He was soon roused by the bravura of La Motte, whose notes sounded discord to his ears, and destroyed the torpor of his tranquillity.

"God bless you, Master, what's the matter?" cried Peter, waking, "are they come?"

"Yes, for aught you care, they might be come. Did I place you here to sleep, sirrah?"

"Bless you, Master," returned Peter, "sleep is the only comfort to be had here; I'm sure I would not deny it to a dog in such a place as this."

La Motte sternly questioned him concerning any noise he might have heard in the night; and Peter full as solemnly protested he had heard none; an assertion which was strictly true, for he had enjoyed the comfort of being asleep the whole time.

La Motte ascended to the trap-door and listened attentively. No sounds were heard, and, as he ventured to lift it, the full light of the sun burst upon his sight, the morning being now far advanced; he walked softly along the chambers, and looked through a window; no person was to be seen. Encouraged by this apparent security, he ventured down the stairs of the tower, and entered the first apartment. He was proceeding towards the second, when, suddenly recollecting himself, he first peeped through the crevice of the door, which stood half open. He looked, and distinctly saw a person sitting near the window, upon which his arm rested.

The discovery so much shocked him, that for a moment he lost all presence of mind, and was utterly unable to move from the spot. The person, whose back was towards him, arose, and turned his head. La Motte now recovered himself, and quitting the apartment as quickly, and, at the same time, as silently as possible, ascended to the closet. He raised the trap-door, but before he closed it, heard the footsteps of a person entering the outer chamber. Bolts, or other fastening to the trap there was none; and his security depended solely upon the exact correspondence of the boards. The outer door of the stone room had no means of defence; and the fastenings of the inner one were on the wrong side to afford security, even till some means of escape could be found.

When he reached this room, he paused, and heard distinctly, persons waling in the closet above. While he was listening, he heard a voice call him by name, and instantly fled to the cells below, expecting every moment to hear the trap lifted, and the footsteps of pursuit; but he was fled beyond the reach of hearing either. Having thrown himself on the ground, at the farthest extremity of the vaults, he lay for some time breathless with agitation. Madame La Motte and Adeline, in the utmost terror, inquired what had happened. It was some time before he could speak; when he did, it was almost unnecessary, for the distant noises, which sounded from above, informed his family of a part of the truth.

The sounds did not seem to approach, but Madame La Motte, unable to command her terror, shrieked aloud: this redoubled the distress of La Motte. "You have already destroyed me," cried he; "that shriek has informed them where I am." He traversed the cells with clasped hands and quick steps. Adeline stood pale and still as death, supporting Madame La Motte, whom, with difficulty, she prevented from fainting. "O! Dupras! Dupras! you are already avenged!" said he, in a voice that seemed to burst from his heart: there was a pause of silence. "But why should I deceive myself with a hope of escaping?" he resumed, "why do I wait here for their coming? Let me rather end these torturing pangs by throwing myself into their hands at once."

As he spoke, he moved towards the door, but the distress of Madame La Motte arrested his steps. "Stay," said she, "for my sake, stay; do not leave me thus, nor throw yourself voluntarily into destruction!"

"Surely, Sir," said Adeline, "you are too precipitate; this despair is useless, as it is ill-founded. We hear no person approaching; if the officers had discovered the trap-door, they would certainly have been here before now." The words of Adeline stilled the tumult of his mind: the agitation of terror subsided; and reason beamed a feeble ray upon his hopes. He listened attentively, and perceiving that all was silent, advanced with caution to the stone room; and thence to the foot of the stairs that led to the trap-door. It was closed: no sound was heard above.

He watched a long time, and the silence continuing, his hopes strengthened, and, at length, he began to believe that the officers had quitted the abbey; the day, however, was spent in anxious watchfulness. He did not dare to unclose the trap-door; and he frequently thought he heard distant noises. It was evident, however, that the secret of the closet had escaped discovery; and on this circumstance he justly founded his security. The following night was passed, like the day, in trembling hope, and incessant watching.

But the necessities of hunger now threatened them. The provisions, which had been distributed with the nicest economy, were nearly exhausted, and the most deplorable consequences might be expected from their remaining longer in concealment. Thus circumstanced, La Motte deliberated upon the most prudent method of proceeding. There appeared no other alternative, than to send Peter to Auboine, the only town from which he could return within the time prescribed by their necessities. There was game, indeed, in the forest; but Peter could neither handle a gun, or use a fishing rod to any advantage.

It was, therefore, agreed he should go to Auboine for a supply of provisions, and at the same time bring materials for mending the coach wheel, that they might have some ready conveyance from the forest. La Motte forbade Peter to ask any questions concerning the people who had inquired for him, or take any methods for discovering whether they had quitted the country, left his blunders should again betray him. He ordered him to be entirely silent as to these subjects, and to finish his business, and leave the place with all possible dispatch.

A difficulty yet remained to be overcome — Who should first venture abroad into the abbey, to learn, whether it was vacated by the officers of justice? La Motte considered, that if he was again seen, he should be effectually betrayed; which would not be so certain, if one of his family was observed, for they were all unknown to the officers. It was necessary, however, that the person he sent should have courage enough to go through with the inquiry, and wit enough to conduct it with caution. Peter, perhaps, had the first; but was certainly destitute of the last. Annette had neither. La Motte looked at his wife, and asked her, if, for his sake, she dared to venture. Her heart shrunk from the proposal, yet she was unwilling to refuse, or appear indifferent upon a point so essential to the safety of her husband. Adeline observed in her countenance the agitation of her mind, and, surmounting the fears, which had hitherto kept her silent, she offered herself to go.

“They will be less likely to offend me,” said she, “than a man.” Shame would not suffer La Motte to accept her offer; and Madame, touched by the magnanimity of her conduct, felt a momentary renewal of all her former kindness. Adeline pressed her proposal so warmly, and seemed so much in earnest, that La Motte began to hesitate. “You, Sir,” said she, “once preserved me from the most imminent danger, and your kindness has since protected me. Do not refuse me the satisfaction of deserving your goodness by a grateful return of it. Let me go into the abbey, and if, by so doing, I should preserve you from evil, I shall be sufficiently rewarded for what little danger I may incur, for my pleasure will be at least equal to yours.”

Madame La Motte could scarcely refrain from tears as Adeline spoke; and La Motte, sighing deeply, said, “Well, be it so; go, Adeline, and from this moment consider me as your debtor.” Adeline stayed not to reply, but taking a light, quitted the cells, La Motte following to raise the trap-door, and cautioning her to look, if possible, into every apartment, before she entered it. “If you should be seen,” said he, “you must account for your appearance so as not to discover me. Your own presence of mind may assist you, I cannot. — God bless you!”

When she was gone, Madame La Motte’s admiration of her conduct began to yield to other emotions. Distrust gradually undermined kindness, and jealousy raised suspicions. “It must be a sentiment more powerful than gratitude,” thought she, “that could teach Adeline to subdue her fears. What, but Love, could influence her to a conduct so generous!” Madame La Motte, when she found it impossible to account for Adeline’s conduct, without alledging some interested motives for it, however her suspicions might agree with the practice of the world, had surely forgotten how much she once admired the purity and disinterestedness of her young friend.

Adeline, mean while, ascended to the chambers: the cheerful beams of the sun played once more upon her sight, and re-animated her spirits; she walked lightly through the apartments, nor stopped till she came to the stairs of the tower. Here she stood for some time, but no sounds met her ear, save the sighing of the wind among the trees, and, at length, she descended. She passed the apartments below, without seeing any person; and the little furniture that remained, seemed to stand exactly as she had left it. She now ventured to look out from the tower: the only animate objects, that appeared, were the deer, quietly grazing under the shade of the woods. Her favourite little fawn distinguished Adeline, and came bounding towards her with strong marks of joy. She was somewhat alarmed left the animal, being observed, should betray her, and walked swiftly away through the cloisters.

She opened the door that led to the great hall of the abbey, but the passage was so gloomy and dark, that she feared to enter it, and started back. It was necessary, however, that she should examine farther, particularly on the opposite side of the ruin, of which she had hitherto had no view: but her fears returned when she recollected how far it would lead her from her only place of refuge, and how difficult it would be to retreat. She hesitated what to do; but when she recollected her obligations to La Motte, and considered this as, perhaps, her only opportunity of doing him a service, she determined to proceed.

As these thoughts passed rapidly over her mind, she raised her innocent looks to heaven, and breathed a silent prayer. With trembling steps she proceeded over fragments of the ruin, looking anxiously around, and often starting as the breeze rustled among the trees, mistaking it for the whisperings of men. She came to the lawn which fronted the fabric, but no person was to be seen, and her spirits revived. The great door of the hall she now endeavoured to open, but suddenly remembering that it was fastened by La Motte's orders, she proceeded to the north end of the abbey, and, having surveyed the prospect around, as far as the thick foliage of the trees would permit, without perceiving any person, she turned her steps to the tower from which she had issued.

Adeline was now light of heart, and returned with impatience to inform La Motte of his security. In the cloisters she was again met by her little favourite, and stopped for a moment to caress it. The fawn seemed sensible to the sound of her voice, and discovered new joy; but while she spoke, it suddenly started from her hand, and looking up, she perceived the door of the passage, leading to the great hall, open, and a man in the habit of a soldier issue forth.

With the swiftness of an arrow she fled along the cloisters, nor once ventured to look back; but a voice called to her to stop, and she heard steps advancing quick in pursuit. Before she could reach the tower, her breath failed her, and she leaned against a pillar of the ruin, pale and exhausted. The man came up, and gazing at her with a strong expression of surprize and curiosity, he assumed a gentle manner, assured her she had nothing to fear, and inquired if she belonged to La Motte: observing that she still looked terrified and remained silent, he repeated his assurances and his question.

"I know that he is concealed within the ruin," said the stranger; "the occasion of his concealment I also know; but it is of the utmost importance I should see him, and he will then be convinced he has nothing to fear from me." Adeline trembled so excessively, that it was with difficulty she could support herself — she hesitated, and knew not what to reply. Her manner seemed to confirm the suspicions of the stranger, and her consciousness of this increased her embarrassment: he took advantage of it to press her farther. Adeline, at length, replied, that "La Motte had some time since resided at the abbey." "And does still, Madam," said the stranger; "lead me to where he may be found — I must see him, and" — "Never, Sir," replied Adeline, "and I solemnly assure you, it will be in vain to search for him."

"That I must try," resumed he, "since you, Madam, will not assist me. I have already followed him to some chambers above, where I suddenly lost him: thereabouts he must be concealed, and it's plain, therefore, they afford some secret passage."

Without waiting Adeline's reply, he sprung to the door of the tower. She now thought it would betray a consciousness of the truth of his conjecture to follow him, and resolved to remain below. But, upon farther consideration, it occurred to her, that he might steal silently into the closet, and possibly surprize La Motte at the door of the trap. She, therefore, hastened after him, that her voice might prevent the danger she apprehended. He was already in the second chamber, when she overtook him; she immediately began to speak aloud.

This room he searched with the most scrupulous care, but finding no private door, or other outlet, he proceeded to the closet: then it was, that it required all her fortitude to conceal her agitation. He continued the search. "Within these chambers, I know he is concealed," said he, "though hitherto I have not been able to discover how. It was hither I followed a man, whom I believe to be him, and he could not escape without a passage; I shall not quit the place till I have found it."

He examined the walls and the boards, but without discovering the division of the floor, which, indeed, so exactly corresponded, that La Motte himself had not perceived it by the eye, but by the trembling of the floor beneath his feet. "Here is some mystery," said the stranger, "which I cannot comprehend, and perhaps never shall." He was turning to quit the closet, when, who can paint the distress of Adeline, upon seeing the trap-door gently raised, and La Motte himself appeared. "Hah!" cried the stranger, advancing eagerly to him. La Motte sprang forward, and they were locked in each other's arms.

The astonishment of Adeline, for a moment, surpassed even her former distress; but a remembrance darted across her mind, which explained the present scene, and before La Motte could exclaim, “My son!” she knew the stranger as such. Peter, who stood at the foot of the stairs and heard what passed above, flew to acquaint his mistress with the joyful discovery, and, in a few moments, she was folded in the embrace of her son. This spot, so lately the mansion of despair, seemed metamorphosed into the palace of pleasure, and the walls echoed only to the accents of joy and congratulation.

The joy of Peter on this occasion was beyond expression: he acted a perfect pantomime — he capered about, clasped his hands — ran to his young master — shook him by the hand, in spite of the frowns of La Motte; ran every where, without knowing for what, and gave no rational answer to any thing that was said to him.

After their first emotions were subsided, La Motte, as if suddenly recollecting himself, resumed his wonted solemnity: “I am to blame,” said he, thus to give way to joy, when I am still, perhaps, surrounded by danger. Let us secure a retreat while it is yet in our power,” continued he, “in a few hours the King’s officers may search for me again.”

Louis comprehended his father’s words, and immediately relieved his apprehensions by the following relation:

“A letter from Monsieur Nemours, containing an account of your flight from Paris, reached me at Peronne, where I was then upon duty with my regiment. He mentioned, that you was gone towards the south of France, but as he had not since heard from you, he was ignorant of the place of your refuge. It was about this time that I was dispatched into Flanders; and, being unable to obtain farther intelligence of you, I passed some weeks of very painful solicitude. At the conclusion of the campaign, I obtained leave of absence, and immediately set out for Paris, hoping to learn from Nemours, where you had found an asylum.

“Of this, however, he was equally ignorant with myself. He informed me that you had once before written to him from D — upon your second day’s journey from Paris, under an assumed name, as had been agreed upon; and that you then said the fear of discovery would prevent your hazarding another letter. He, therefore, remained ignorant of your abode, but said, he had no doubt you had continued your journey to the southward. Upon this slender information I quitted Paris in search of you, and proceeded immediately to V — where my inquiries, concerning your farther progress, were successful as far as M— . There they told me you had staid some time, on account of the illness of a young lady; a circumstance which perplexed me much, as I could not imagine what young lady would accompany you. I proceeded, however, to L—; but there all traces of you seemed to be lost. As I sat musing at the window of the inn, I observed some scribbling on the glass, and the curiosity of idleness prompted me to read it. I thought I knew the characters, and the lines I read confirmed my conjecture, for I remembered to have heard you often repeat them.

“Here I renewed my inquiries concerning your route, and at length I made the people of the inn recollect you, and traced you as far as Auboine. There I again lost you, till upon my return from a fruitless inquiry in the neighbourhood, the landlord of the little inn where I lodged, told me he believed he had heard news of you, and immediately recounted what had happened at a blacksmith’s shop a few hours before.

“His description of Peter was so exact, that I had not a doubt it was you who inhabited the abbey; and, as I knew your necessity for concealment, Peter’s denial did not shake my confidence. The next morning, with the assistance of my landlord, I found my way hither, and, having searched every visible part of the fabric, I began to credit Peter’s assertion; your appearance, however, destroyed this fear, by proving that the place was still inhabited, for you disappeared so instantaneously, that I was not certain it was you whom I had seen. I continued seeking you till near the close of day, and till then scarcely quitted the chambers whence you had disappeared. I called on you repeatedly, believing that my voice might convince you of your mistake. At length, I retired to pass the night at a cottage near the border of the forest.

“I came early this morning to renew my inquiries, and hoped that, believing yourself safe, you would emerge from concealment. But how was I disappointed to find the abbey as silent and solitary as I had left it the preceding evening! I was returning once more from the great hall, when the voice of this young lady caught my ear, and effected the discovery I had so anxiously sought.”

This little narrative entirely dissipated the late apprehensions of La Motte; but he now dreaded that the inquiries of his son, and his own obvious desire of concealment, might excite a curiosity amongst the people of Auboine, and lead to a discovery of his true circumstances. However, for the present he determined to dismiss all painful thoughts, and endeavour to enjoy the comfort which the presence of his son had brought him. The furniture was removed to a more habitable part of the abbey, and the cells were again abandoned to their own glooms.

The arrival of her son seemed to have animated Madame La Motte with new life, and all her afflictions were, for the present, absorbed in joy. She often gazed silently on him with a mother's fondness, and her partiality heightened every improvement which time had wrought in his person and manner. He was now in his twenty-third year; his person was manly and his air military; his manners were unaffected and graceful, rather than dignified; and though his features were irregular, they composed a countenance, which, having seen it once, you would seek again.

She made eager inquiries after the friends she had left at Paris, and learned, that within the few months of her absence, some had died and others quitted the place. La Motte also learned, that a very strenuous search for him had been prosecuted at Paris; and, though this intelligence was only what he had before expected, it shocked him so much, that he now declared it would be expedient to remove to a distant country. Louis did not scruple to say, that he thought he would be as safe at the abbey as at any other place; and repeated what Nemours had said, that the King's officers had been unable to trace any part of his route from Paris.

"Besides," resumed Louis, "this abbey is protected by a supernatural power, and none of the country people dare approach it."

"Please you, my young master," said Peter who was waiting in the room, we were frightened enough the first night we came here, and I, myself, God forgive me! thought the place was inhabited by devils, but they were only owls, and such like, after all."

"Your opinion was not asked," said La Motte, "learn to be silent."

Peter was abashed. When he had quitted the room, La Motte asked his son with seeming carelessness, what were the reports circulated by the country people? "O! Sir," replied Louis, "I cannot recollect half of them. I remember, however, they said, that, many years ago, a person (but nobody had ever seen him, so we may judge how far the report ought to be credited) a person was privately brought to this abbey, and confined in some part of it, and that there were strong reasons to believe he came unfairly to his end."

La Motte sighed "They farther said," continued Louis, "that the spectre of the deceased had ever since watched nightly among the ruins: and to make the story more wonderful, for the marvellous is the delight of the vulgar, they added, that there was a certain part of the ruin, from whence no person that had dared to explore it, had ever returned. Thus people, who have few objects of real interest to engage their thoughts, conjure up for themselves imaginary ones."

La Motte sat musing. "And what were the reasons," said he, at length awaking from his reverie, "they pretended to assign, for believing the person confined here was murdered?"

"They did not use a term so positive as that," replied Louis.

"True," said La Motte, recollecting himself, "they only said he came unfairly to his end."

"That is a nice distinction," said Adeline.

"Why I could not well comprehend what these reasons were," resumed Louis, "the people indeed say, that the person, who was brought here, was never known to depart, but I do not find it certain that he ever arrived; that there was strange privacy and mystery observed, while he was here, and that the abbey has never since been inhabited by its owner. There seems, however, to be nothing in all this that deserves to be remembered." La Motte raised his head, as if to reply, when the entrance of Madame turned the discourse upon a new subject, and it was not resumed that day.

Peter was now dispatched for provisions, while La Motte and Louis retired to consider how far it was safe for them to continue at the abbey. La Motte, notwithstanding the assurances lately given him, could not but think that Peter's blunders and his son's inquiries might lead to a discovery of his residence. He revolved this in his mind for some time, but at length a thought struck him, that the latter of these circumstances might considerably contribute to his security. "If you," said he to Louis, "return to the inn at Auboine, from whence you were directed here, and without seeming to intend giving intelligence, do give the landlord an account of your having found the abbey uninhabited, and then add, that you had discovered the residence of the person you sought in some distant town, it would suppress any reports that may at present exist, and prevent the belief of any in future. And if, after all this, you can trust yourself for presence of mind and command of countenance, so far as to describe some dreadful apparition, I think these circumstances, together with the distance of the Abbey, and the intricacies of the forest, could entitle me to consider this place as my castle."

Louis agreed to all that his father had proposed, and, on the following day executed his commission with such success, that the tranquillity of the abbey may be then said to have been entirely restored.

Thus ended this adventure, the only one that had occurred to disturb the family, during their residence in the forest. Adeline, removed from the apprehension of those evils, with which the late situation of La Motte had threatened her, and from the depression which her interest in his occasioned her, now experienced, a more than usual complacency of mind. She thought too that she observed in Madame La Motte a renewal of her former kindness, and this circumstance awakened all her gratitude, and imparted to her a pleasure as lively as it was innocent. The satisfaction with which the presence of her son inspired Madame La Motte, Adeline mistook for kindness to herself, and she exerted her whole attention in an endeavour to become worthy of it.

But the joy which his unexpected arrival had given to La Motte quickly began to evaporate, and the gloom of despondency again settled on his countenance. He returned frequently to his haunt in the forest — the same mysterious sadness tinctured his manner and revived the anxiety of Madame La Motte, who was resolved to acquaint her son with this subject of distress, and solicit his assistance to penetrate its source.

Her jealousy of Adeline, however, she could not communicate, though it again tormented her, and taught her to misconstrue with wonderful ingenuity every look and word of La Motte, and often to mistake the artless expressions of Adeline's gratitude and regard for those of warmer tenderness. Adeline had formerly accustomed herself to long walks in the forest, and the design Madame had formed of watching her steps, had been frustrated by the late circumstances, and was now entirely overcome by her sense of its difficulty and danger. To employ Peter in the affair, would be to acquaint him with her fears, and to follow her herself, would most probably betray her scheme, by making Adeline aware of her jealousy. Being thus restrained by pride and delicacy, she was obliged to endure the pangs of uncertainty concerning the greatest part of her suspicions.

To Louis, however, she related the mysterious change in his father's temper. He listened to her account with very earnest attention, and the surprize and concern impressed upon his countenance spoke how much his heart was interested. He was, however, involved in equal perplexity with herself upon this subject, and readily undertook to observe the motions of La Motte, believing his interference likely to be of equal service both to his father and his mother. He, saw in some degree, the suspicions of his mother, but as he thought she wished to disguise her feelings, he suffered her to believe that she succeeded.

He now inquired concerning Adeline, and listened to her little history, of which his mother gave a brief relation, with great apparent interest. So much pity did he express for her condition, and so much indignation at the unnatural conduct of her father, that the apprehensions which Madame La Motte began to form, of his having discovered her jealousy, yielded to those of a different kind. She perceived that the beauty of Adeline had already fascinated his imagination, and she feared that her amiable manners would soon impress his heart. Had her first fondness for Adeline continued, she would still have looked with displeasure upon their attachment, as an obstacle to the promotion and the fortune she hoped to see one day enjoyed by her son. On these she rested all her future hopes of prosperity, and regarded the matrimonial alliance which he might form as the only means of extricating his family from their present difficulties. She, therefore, touched lightly upon Adeline's merit, joined coolly with Louis in compassionating her misfortunes, and with her censure of the father's conduct, mixed an implied suspicion of that of Adeline's. The means she employed to repress the passions of her son, had a contrary effect. The indifference, which she repressed towards Adeline, increased his pity for her destitute condition, and the tenderness, with which she affected to judge the father, heightened his honest indignation at his character.

As he quitted Madame La Motte, he saw his father cross the lawn and enter the deep shade of the forest on the left. He judged this to be a good opportunity of commencing his plan, and, quitting the abbey, slowly followed at a distance. La Motte continued to walk straight forward, and seemed so deeply wrapt in thought, that he looked neither to the right or left, and scarcely lifted his head from the ground. Louis had followed him near half a mile, when he saw him suddenly strike into an avenue of the forest, which took a different direction from the way he had hitherto gone. He quickened his steps that he might not lose sight of him, but, having reached the avenue, found the trees so thickly interwoven, that La Motte was already hid from his view.

He continued, however, to pursue the way before him: it conducted him through the most gloomy part of the forest he had yet seen, till at length it terminated in an obscure recess, overarched with high trees, whose interwoven branches secluded the direct rays of the sun, and admitted only a sort of solemn twilight. Louis looked around in search of La Motte, but he was no where to be seen. While he stood surveying the place, and considering what farther should be done, he observed, through the gloom, an object at some distance, but the deep shadow that fell around prevented his distinguishing what it was.

In advancing, he perceived the ruins of a small building, which, from the traces that remained, appeared to have been a tomb. As he gazed upon it, “Here,” said he, “are probably deposited the ashes of some ancient monk, once an inhabitant of the abbey; perhaps, of the founder, who, after having spent a life of abstinence and prayer, sought in heaven the reward of his forbearance upon earth. Peace be to his soul! but did he think a life of mere negative virtue deserved an eternal reward? Mistaken man! reason, had you trusted to its dictates, would have informed you, that the active virtues, the adherence to the golden rule, ‘Do as you would be done unto,’ could alone deserve the favour of a Deity, whose glory is benevolence.”

He remained with his eyes fixed upon the spot, and presently saw a figure arise under the arch of the sepulchre. It started, as if on perceiving him, and immediately disappeared. Louis, though unused to fear, felt at that moment an uneasy sensation, but almost it immediately struck him that this was La Motte himself. He advanced to the ruin and called him. No answer was returned, and he repeated the call, but all was yet still as the grave. He then went up to the arch-way and endeavoured to examine the place where he had disappeared, but the shadowy obscurity rendered the attempt fruitless. He observed, however, a little to the right, an entrance to the ruin, and advanced some steps down a kind dark of passage, when, recollecting that this place might be the haunt of banditti, his danger alarmed him, and he retreated with precipitation.

He walked toward the abbey by the way he came, and finding no person followed him, and believing himself again in safety, his former surmise returned, and he thought it was La Motte he had seen. He mused upon this strange possibility, and endeavoured to assign a reason for so mysterious a conduct, but in vain. Notwithstanding this, his belief of it strengthened, and he entered the abbey under as full a conviction as the circumstances would admit of, that it was his father who had appeared in the sepulchre. On entering what was now used as a parlour, he was much surprised to find him quietly seated there with Madame La Motte and Adeline, and conversing as if he had been returned some time.

He took the first opportunity of acquainting his mother with his late adventure, and of inquiring how long La Motte had been returned before him, when, learning that it was near half an hour, his surprise increased, and he knew not what to conclude.

Meanwhile, a perception of the growing partiality of Louis co-operated with the canker of suspicion, to destroy in Madame La Motte that affection which pity and esteem had formerly excited for Adeline. Her unkindness was now too obvious to escape the notice of her to whom it was directed, and, being noticed, it occasioned an anguish which Adeline found it very difficult to endure. With the warmth and candour of youth, she sought an explanation of this change of behaviour, and an opportunity of exculpating herself from any intention of provoking it. But this Madame La Motte artfully evaded, while at the same time she threw out hints, that involved Adeline in deeper perplexity, and served to make her present affliction more intolerable.

“I have lost that affection,” she would say, “which was my all. It was my only comfort — yet I have lost it — and this without even knowing my offence. But I am thankful I have not merited unkindness, and, though she has abandoned me, I shall always love her.”

Thus distressed, she would frequently leave the parlour, and, retiring to her chamber, would yield to a despondency, which she had never known till now.

One morning, being unable to sleep, she arose at a very early hour. The faint light of day now trembled through the clouds, and, gradually spreading from the horizon, announced the rising sun. Every feature of the landscape was slowly unveiled, moist with the dews of night, and brightening with the dawn, till at length the sun appeared and shed the full flood of day. The beauty of the hour invited her to walk, and she went forth into the forest to taste the sweets of morning. The carols of new-waked birds saluted her as she passed, and the fresh gale came scented with the breath of flowers, whose tints glowed more vivid through the dew drops that hung on then leaves.

She wandered on without noticing the distance, and, following the windings of the river, came to a dewy glade, whose woods, sweeping down to the very edge of the water, formed a scene so sweetly romantic, that she seated herself at the foot of a tree, to contemplate its beauty. These images insensibly soothed her sorrow, and inspired her with that soft and pleasing melancholy, so dear to the feeling mind. For some time she sat lost in a reverie, while the flowers that grew on the banks beside her seemed to smile in new life, and drew from her a comparison with her own condition. She mused and sighed, and then, in a voice, whose charming melody was modulated by the tenderness of her heart, she sung the following words:

SONNET, To the Lilly.

Soft silken flow'r! that in the dewy vale Unfolds thy modest beauties to the morn, And breath'st thy fragrance on her wand'ring gale, O'er earth's green hills and shadowy vallies born;

When day has closed his dazzling eye, And dying gales sink soft away; When eve steals down the western sky, And mountains, woods, and vales decay;

Thy tender cups, that graceful swell, Droop sad beneath her chilly dews; Thy odours seek their silken cell, And twilight veils thy languid hues.

But soon, fair flow'r! the morn shall rise, And rear again thy pensive head; Again unveil thy snowy dyes, Again thy velvet foliage spread.

Sweet child of Spring! like thee, in sorrow's shade, Full oft I mourn in tears, and droop forlorn: And O! like thine, may light my glooms pervade, And Sorrow fly before Joy's living morn!

A distant echo lengthened out her tones, and she sat listening to the soft response, till repeating the last stanza of the Sonnet, she was answered by a voice almost as tender, and less distant. She looked round in surprise, and saw a young man in a hunter's dress, leaning against a tree, and gazing on her with that deep attention, which marks an enraptured mind.

A thousand apprehensions shot athwart her busy thought; and she now first remembered her distance from the abbey. She rose in haste to be gone, when the stranger respectfully advanced; but, observing her timid looks and retiring steps, he paused. She pursued her way towards the abbey; and, though many reasons made her anxious to know whether she was followed, delicacy forbade her to look back. When she reached the abbey, finding the family was not yet assembled to breakfast, she retired to her chamber, where her whole thoughts were employed in conjectures concerning the stranger; believing that she was interested on this point, no farther than as it concerned the safety of La Motte, she indulged, without scruple, the remembrance of that dignified air and manner which so much distinguished the youth she had seen. After revolving the circumstance more deeply, she believed it impossible that a person of his appearance should be engaged in a stratagem to betray a fellow creature; and though she was destitute of a single circumstance that might assist her surmises of who he was, or what was his business in an unfrequented forest, she rejected, unconsciously, every suspicion injurious to his character. Upon farther deliberation, therefore, she resolved not to mention this little circumstance to La Motte; well knowing, that though his danger might be imaginary, his apprehensions would be real, and would renew all the sufferings and perplexity, from which he was but just released. She resolved, however, to refrain, for some time, walking in the forest.

When she came down to breakfast, she observed Madame La Motte to be more than usually reserved. La Motte entered the room soon after her, and made some trifling observations on the weather; and, having endeavoured to support an effort at cheerfulness, sunk into his usual melancholy. Adeline watched the countenance of Madame with anxiety; and when there appeared in it a gleam of kindness, it was as sunshine to her soul: but she very seldom suffered Adeline thus to flatter herself. Her conversation was restrained, and often pointed at something more than could be understood. The entrance of Louis was a very seasonable relief to Adeline, who almost feared to trust her voice with a sentence, lest its trembling accents should betray her uneasiness.

"This charming morning drew you early from your chamber," said Louis, addressing Adeline. "You had, no doubt, a pleasant companion too," said Madame La Motte, "a solitary walk is seldom agreeable."

"I was alone, Madam," replied Adeline.

"Indeed! your own thoughts must be highly pleasing then."

"Alas!" returned Adeline, a tear, spite of her efforts, starting to her eye, "there are now few subjects of pleasure left for them."

"That is very surprising," pursued Madame La Motte.

"Is it, indeed, surprising, Madam, for those who have lost their last friend to be unhappy?"

Madame La Motte's conscience acknowledged the rebuke and she blushed. "Well," resumed she, after a short pause, "that is not your situation, Adeline;" looking earnestly at La Motte. Adeline, whose innocence protected her from suspicion, did not regard this circumstance; but, smiling through her tears, said, she rejoiced to hear her say so. During this conversation, La Motte had remained absorbed in his own thoughts; and Louis, unable to guess at what it pointed, looked alternately at his mother and Adeline for an explanation. The latter he regarded with an expression so full of tender compassion, that it revealed at once to Madame La Motte the sentiments of his soul; and she immediately replied to the last words of Adeline with a very serious air; "A friend is only estimable when our conduct deserves one; the friendship that survives the merit of its object, is a disgrace, instead of an honour, to both parties."

The manner and emphasis with which she delivered these words, again alarmed Adeline, who mildly said, "she hoped she should never deserve such censure." Madame was silent; but Adeline was so much shocked by what had already passed, that tears sprung from her eyes, and she hid her face with her handkerchief.

Louis now rose with some emotion; and La Motte, roused from his reverie, inquired what was the matter; but, before he could receive an answer, he seemed to have forgot that he had asked the question. "Adeline may give you her own account," said Madam La Motte. "I have not deserved this," said Adeline, rising, "but since my presence is displeasing, I will retire."

She moved toward the door, when Louis, who was pacing the room in apparent agitation, gently took her hand, saying, "Here is some unhappy mistake," and would have led her to the seat; but her spirits were too much depressed to endure longer restraint; and, withdrawing her hand, "Suffer me to go;" said she, "if there is any mistake, I am unable to explain it." Saying this, she quitted the room. Louis followed her with his eyes to the door; when, turning to his mother, "Surely, Madam," said he, "you are to blame: my life on it, she deserves your warmest tenderness."

"You are very eloquent in her cause, Sir," said Madame, "may I presume to ask what has interested you thus in her favour?"

"Her own amiable manners," rejoined Louis, "which no one can observe without esteeming them."

"But you may presume too much on your own observations; it is possible these amiable manners may deceive you."

"Your pardon, Madam; I may, without presumption, affirm they cannot deceive me."

"You have, no doubt, good reasons for this assertion, and I perceive, by your admiration of this artless innocent, she has succeeded in her design of entrapping your heart."

"Without designing it, she has won my admiration, which would not have been the case, had she been capable of the conduct you mention."

Madame La Motte was going to reply, but was prevented by her husband, who, again roused from his reverie, inquired into the cause of dispute; "Away with this ridiculous behaviour," said he, in a voice of displeasure. "Adeline has omitted some household duty I suppose, and an offence so heinous deserves severe punishment, no doubt; but let me be no more disturbed with your petty quarrels; if you must be tyrannical, Madam, indulge your humour in private."

Saying this, he abruptly quitted the room, and Louis immediately following, Madame was left to her own unpleasant reflections. Her ill-humour proceeded from the usual cause. She had heard of Adeline's walk; and La Motte having gone forth into the forest at an early hour, her imagination, heated by the broodings of jealousy suggested that they had appointed a meeting. This was confirmed to her by the entrance of Adeline, quickly followed by La Motte; and her perceptions thus jaundiced by passion, neither the presence of her son, nor her usual attention to good manners, had been able to restrain her emotions. The behaviour of Adeline, in the late scene, she considered as a refined piece of art; and the indifference of La Motte asaffected. So true is it, that

— "Trifles, light as air, Are, to the jealous, confirmations strong As proof of Holy Writ."

And so ingenious was she "to twist the true cause the "wrong way."

Adeline had retired to her chamber to weep. When her first agitations were subsided, she took an ample view of her conduct; and perceiving nothing of which she could accuse herself, she became more satisfied; deriving her best comfort from the integrity of her intentions. In the moment of accusation, innocence may sometimes be oppressed with the punishment due only to guilt; but reflection dissolves the illusion of terror, and brings to the aching bosom the consolations of virtue.

When La Motte quitted the room, he had gone into the forest, which Louis observing, he followed and joined him, with an intention of touching upon the subject of his melancholy. "It is a fine morning, Sir," said Louis, "if you will give me leave, I will walk with you." La Motte, though, dissatisfied, did not object; and after they had proceeded some way, he changed the course of his walk, striking into a path, contrary to that which Louis had observed him take on the foregoing day.

Louis remarked, that the avenue they had quitted was “more shady, and, therefore, more pleasant.” La Motte not seeming to notice this remark, “It leads to a singular spot,” continued he, “which I discovered yesterday.” La Motte raised his head; Louis proceeded to describe the tomb, and the adventure he had met with: during this relation, La Motte regarded him with attention, while his own countenance suffered various changes. When he had concluded, “You were very daring,” said La Motte, “to examine that place, particularly when you ventured down the passage: I would advise you to be more cautious how you penetrate the depths of this forest. I, myself, have not ventured beyond a certain boundary; and am, therefore, uninformed what inhabitants it may harbour. Your account has alarmed me,” continued he, “for if banditti are in the neighbourhood, I am not safe from their their depredations: ’tis true, I have but little to lose, except my life.”

“And the lives of your family,” rejoined Louis, — “Of course,” said La Motte.

“It would be well to have more certainty upon that head,” rejoined Louis, I am considering how we may obtain it.”

“’Tis useless to consider that,” said La Motte, “the inquiry itself brings danger with it; your life would, perhaps, be paid for the indulgence of your curiosity; our only chance of safety is by endeavouring to remain undiscovered. Let us move towards the abbey.”

Louis knew not what to think, but said no more upon the subject. La Motte soon after relapsed into a fit of musing; and his son now took occasion to lament that depression of spirits, which he had lately observed in him. “Rather lament the cause of it,” said La Motte with a sigh; “That I do, most sincerely, whatever it may be. May I venture to inquire, Sir, what is this cause?”

“Are, then, my misfortunes so little known to you,” rejoined La Motte, as to make that question necessary? Am I not driven from my home, from my friends, and almost from my country? And shall it be asked why I am afflicted?” Louis felt the justice of this reproof, and was a moment filent. “That you are afflicted, Sir, does not excite my surprise;” resumed he, “it would, indeed, be strange, were you not.”

“What then does excite your surprise?”

“The air of cheerfulness you wore when I first came hither.”

“You lately lamented that I was afflicted,” said La Motte, “and now seem not very well pleased that I once was cheerful. What is the meaning of this?”

“You much mistake me,” said his son, nothing could give me so much satisfaction as to see that cheerfulness renewed: the same cause of sorrow existed at that time, yet you was then cheerful.”

“That I was then cheerful,” said La Motte, “you might, without flattery, have attributed to yourself; your presence revived me, and I was relieved at the same time from a load of apprehensions.”

“Why, then, as the same cause exists, are you not still cheerful?”

“And why do you not recollect that it is your father you thus speak to?”

“I do, Sir, and nothing but anxiety for my father, could have urged me thus far: it is with inexpressible concern I perceive you have some secret cause of uneasiness; reveal it, Sir, to those who claim a share in all your affliction, and suffer them, by participation, to soften its severity.” Louis looked up, and observed the countenance of his father, pale as death: his lips trembled while he spoke. “Your penetration, however, you may rely upon it, has, in the present instance, deceived you. I have no subject of distress, but what you are already acquainted with, and I desire this conversation may never be renewed.”

“If it is your desire, of course, I obey,” said Louis; “but, pardon me, Sir, if” — “I will not pardon you, Sir,” interrupted La Motte, “let the discourse end here.” Saying this, he quickened his steps, and Louis, not daring to pursue, walked quietly on till he reached the abbey.

Adeline passed the greatest part of the day alone in her chamber, where, having examined her conduct, she endeavoured to fortify her heart against the unmerited displeasure of Madame La Motte. This was a task more difficult than that of self acquittance. She loved her, and had relied on her friendship, which, notwithstanding the conduct of Madame, still appeared valuable to her. It was true, she had not deserved to lose it, but Madame was so averse to explanation, that there was little probability of recovering it, however ill-founded might be the cause of her dislike. At length, she reasoned, or rather, perhaps, persuaded herself into tolerable composure; for to resign a real good with contentment, is less an effort of reason than of temper.

For many hours she busied herself upon a piece of work, which she had undertaken for Madame La Motte; and this she did, without the least intention of conciliating her favour, but because she felt there was something in thus repaying unkindness, which was suitable to her own temper, her sentiments, and her pride. Self-love may be the center, round which the human affections move, for whatever motive conduces to self-gratification may be resolved into self-love; yet some of these affections are in their nature so refined — that though we cannot deny their origin, they almost deserve the name of virtue. Of this species was that of Adeline.

In this employment and in reading Adeline passed as much of the day as possible. From books, indeed, she had constantly derived her chief information and amusement: those belonging to La Motte were few, but well chosen; and Adeline could find pleasure in reading them more than once. When her mind was discomposed by the behaviour of Madame La Motte, or by a retrospection of her early misfortunes, a book was the opiate that lulled it to repose. La Motte had several of the best English poets, a language which Adeline had learned in the convent; their beauties, therefore, she was capable of tasting, and they often inspired her with enthusiastic delight.

At the decline of day, she quitted her chamber to enjoy the sweet evening hour, but strayed no farther than an avenue near the abbey, which fronted the west. She read a little, but, finding it impossible any longer to abstract her attention from the scene around, she closed the book, and yielded to the sweet complacent melancholy which the hour inspired. The air was still, the sun, sinking below the distant hill, spread a purple glow over the landscape, and touched the forest glades with softer light. A dewy freshness was diffused upon the air. As the sun descended, the dusk came silently on, and the scene assumed a solemn grandeur. As she mused, she recollected and repeated the following stanzas:

NIGHT.

Now Ev’ning fades! her pensive step retires, And Night leads on the dews, and shadowy hours; Her awful pomp of planetary fires, And all her train of visionary pow’rs.

These paint with fleeting shapes the dream of sleep, These swell the waking soul with pleasing dread; These through the glooms in forms terrific sweep, And rouse the thrilling horrors of the dead!

Queen of the solemn thought — mysterious Night! Whose step is darkness, and whose voice is fear! Thy shades I welcome with severe delight, And hail thy hollow gales, that sigh so drear!

When, wrapt in clouds, and riding in the blast, Thou roll’st the storm along the sounding shore, I love to watch the whelming billows cast On rocks below, and listen to the roar.

Thy milder terrors, Night, I frequent woo, Thy silent lightnings, and thy meteor’s glare, Thy northern fires, bright with ensanguine hue, That light in heaven’s high vault the fervid air.

But chief I love thee, when thy lucid car Sheds through the fleecy clouds a trembling gleam, And shews the misty mountain from afar, The nearer forest, and the valley’s stream:

And nameless objects in the vale below, That floating dimly to the musing eye, Assume, at Fancy’s touch, fantastic shew, And raise her sweet romantic visions high.

Then let me stand amidst thy glooms profound On some wild woody steep, and hear the breeze That swells in mournful melody around, And faintly dies upon the distant trees.

What melancholy charm steals o’er the mind! What hallow’d tears the rising rapture greet! While many a viewless spirit in the wind, Sighs to the lonely hour in accents sweet!

Ah! who the dear illusions pleas’d would yield, Which Fancy wakes from silence and from shades, For all the sober forms of Truth reveal’d, For all the scenes that Day’s bright eye pervades!

On her return to the abbey she was joined by Louis, who, after some conversation, said, “I am much grieved by the scene to which I was witness this morning, and have longed for an opportunity of telling you so. My mother’s behaviour is too mysterious to be accounted for, but it is not difficult to perceive she labours under some mistake. What I have to request is, that whenever I can be of service to you, you will command me.”

Adeline thanked him for this friendly offer, which she felt more sensibly than she chose to express. “I am unconscious,” said she, “of any offence that may have deserved Madame La Motte’s displeasure, and am, therefore, totally unable to account for it. I have repeatedly sought an explanation, which she has as anxiously avoided; it is better, therefore, to press the subject no farther. At the same time, Sir, suffer me to assure you, I have a just sense of your goodness.” Louis sighed, and was silent. At length, “I wish you would permit me,” resumed he, “to speak with my mother upon this subject. I am sure I could convince her of her error.”

“By no means,” replied Adeline, Madame La Motte’s displeasure has given me inexpressible concern; but to compel her to an explanation, would only increase this displeasure, instead of removing it. Let me beg of you not to attempt it.”

“I submit to your judgement,” said Louis, “but, for once, it is with reluctance. I should esteem myself most happy, if I could be of service to you.” He spoke this with an accent so tender, that Adeline, for the first time, perceived the sentiments of his heart. A mind more fraught with vanity than her’s would have taught her long ago to regard the attentions of Louis, as the result of something more than well-bred gallantry. She did not appear to notice his last words, but remained silent, and involuntarily quickened her pace. Louis said no more, but seemed sunk in thought; and this silence remained uninterrupted, till they entered the abbey.

❦

CHAPTER 6

"Hence, horrible shadow,!
Unreal mockery, hence!"
Macbeth.

Near a month elapsed without any remarkable occurrence: the melancholy of La Motte suffered little abatement; and the behaviour of Madame to Adeline, though somewhat softened, was still far from kind. Louis, by numberless little attentions, testified his growing affection for Adeline, who continued to treat them as passing civilities.

It happened, one stormy night, as they were preparing for rest, that they were alarmed by a trampling of horses near the abbey. The sound of several voices succeeded, and a loud knocking at the great gate of the hall soon after firmed the alarm. La Motte had little doubt that the officers of justice had at length discovered his retreat, and the perturbation of fear almost confounded his senses; he, however, ordered the lights to be extinguished, and a profound silence to be observed, unwilling to neglect even the slightest possibility of security. There was a chance, he thought, that the persons might suppose the place uninhabited, and believe they had mistaken the object of their search. His orders were scarcely obeyed, when the knocking was renewed, and with increased violence. La Motte now repaired to a small grated window in the portal of the gate, that he might observe the number and appearance of the strangers.

The darkness of the night baffled his purpose; he could only perceive a groupe of men on horseback; but, listening attentively, he distinguished a part of their discourse. Several of the men contended, that they had mistaken the place; till a person, who, from his authoritative voice, appeared to be their leader, affirmed, that the lights had issued from this spot, and he was positive there were persons within. Having said this, he again knocked loudly at the gate, and was answered only by hollow echoes. La Motte's heart trembled at the sound, and he was unable to move.

After waiting some time, the strangers seemed as if in consultation, but their discourse was conducted in such a low tone of voice, that La Motte was unable to distinguish its purport. They withdrew from the gate, as if to depart, but he presently thought he heard them amongst the trees on the other side of the fabric, and soon became convinced they had not left the abbey. A few minutes held La Motte in a state of torturing suspence; he quitted the grate, where Louis now stationed himself, for that part of the edifice which overlooked the spot where he supposed them to be waiting.

The storm was now loud, and the hollow blasts, which rushed among the trees, prevented his distinguishing any other sound. Once, in the pauses of the wind, he thought he heard distinct voices; but he was not long left to conjecture, for the renewed knocking at the gate again appalled him; and regardless of the terrors of Madame La Motte and Adeline, he ran to try his last chance of concealment, by means of the trap-door.

Soon after, the violence of the assailants seeming to increase with every gust of the tempest, the gate, which was old and decayed, burst from its hinges, and admitted them to the hall. At the moment of their entrance, a scream from Madame La Motte, who stood at the door of an adjoining apartment, confirmed the suspicions of the principal stranger, who continued to advance, as fast as the darkness would permit him.

Adeline had fainted, and Madame La Motte was calling loudly for assistance, when Peter entered with lights, and discovered the hall filled with men, and his young mistress senseless upon the floor. A chevalier now advanced, and soliciting pardon of Madame for the rudeness of his conduct, was attempting an apology, when perceiving Adeline, he hastened to raise her from the ground, but Louis, who now returned, caught her in his arms, and desired the stranger not to interfere.

The person, to whom he spoke this, wore the star of one of the first orders in France, and had an air of dignity, which declared him to be of superior rank. He appeared to be about forty, but, perhaps, the spirit and fire of his countenance made the impression of time upon his features less perceptible. His softened aspect and insinuating manners, while, regardless of himself, he seemed attentive only to the condition of Adeline, gradually dissipated the apprehensions of Madame La Motte, and subdued the sudden resentment of Louis. Upon Adeline, who was yet insensible, he gazed with an eager admiration, which seemed to absorb all the faculties of his mind. She was, indeed, an object not to be contemplated with indifference.

Her beauty, touched with the languid delicacy of illness, gained from sentiment what it lost in bloom. The negligence of her dress, loosened for the purpose of freer respiration, discovered those glowing charms, which her auburn tresses, that fell in profusion over her bosom, shaded, but could not conceal.

There now entered another stranger, a young Chevalier, who, having spoken hastily to the elder, joined the general groupe that surrounded Adeline. He was of a person, in which elegance was happily blended with strength, and had a countenance animated, but not haughty; noble, yet expressive of peculiar sweetness. What rendered it at present more interesting, was the compassion he seemed to feel for Adeline, who now revived and saw him, the first object that met her eyes, bending over her in silent anxiety.

On perceiving him, a blush of quick surprize passed over her cheek, for she knew him to be the stranger she had seen in the forest. Her countenance instantly changed to the paleness of terror, when she observed the room crowded with people. Louis now supported her into another apartment, where the two Chevaliers, who followed her, again apologized for the alarm they had occasioned. The elder, turning to Madame La Motte, said, "You are, no doubt, Madam, ignorant that I am the proprietor of this abbey." She started: "Be not alarmed, Madam, you are safe and welcome. This ruinous spot has been long abandoned by me, and if it has afforded you a shelter I am happy." Madame La Motte expressed her gratitude for this condescension, and Louis declared his sense of the politeness of the Marquis de Montalt, for that was the name of the noble stranger.

"My chief residence," said the Marquis, "is in a distant province, but I have a chateau near the borders of the forest, and in returning from an excursion, I have been benighted and lost my way. A light, which gleamed through the trees, attracted me hither, and, such was the darkness without, that I did not know it proceeded from the abbey till I came to the door." The noble deportment of the strangers, the splendour of their apparel, and, above all, this speech dissipated every remaining doubt of Madame's, and she was giving orders for refreshments to be set before them, when La Motte, who had listened, and was now convinced he had nothing to fear, entered the apartment.

He advanced towards the Marquis with a complacent air, but, as he would have spoke, the words of welcome faultered on his lips, his limbs trembled, and a ghastly paleness overspread his countenance. The Marquis was little less agitated, and, in the first moment of surprize, put his hand upon his sword, but, recollecting himself, he withdrew it, and endeavoured to obtain a command of features. A pause of agonizing silence ensued. La Motte made some motion towards the door, but his agitated frame refused to support him, and he sunk into a chair, silent and exhausted. The horror of his countenance, together with his whole behaviour, excited the utmost surprize in Madame, whose eyes inquired of the Marquis more than he thought proper to answer: his looks increased, instead of explaining the mystery, and expressed a mixture of emotions, which she could not analyse. Meanwhile, she endeavoured to soothe and revive her husband, but he repressed her efforts, and, averting his face, covered it with his hands.

The Marquis, seeming to recover his presence of mind, stepped to the door of the hall where his people were assembled, when La Motte, starting from his seat, with a frantic air, called on him to return. The Marquis looked back and stopped, but still hesitating whether to proceed; the supplications of Adeline, who was now returned, added to those of La Motte, determined him, and he sat down. "I request of you, my Lord," said La Motte, "that we may converse for a few moments by ourselves."

"The request is bold, and the indulgence, perhaps, dangerous," said the Marquis: "it is more also than I will grant. You can have nothing to say, with which your family are not acquainted — speak your purpose and be brief." La Motte's complection varied to every sentence of this speech. "Impossible, my Lord," said he; "my lips shall close for ever, ere they pronounce before another human being the words reserved for you alone. I entreat — I supplicate of you a few moments private discourse." As he pronounced these words, tears swelled into his eyes, and the Marquis, softened by his distress, consented, though with evident emotion and reluctance, to his request.

La Motte took a light and led the Marquis to a small room in a remote part of the edifice, where they remained near an hour. Madame, alarmed by the length of their absence, went in quest of them: as she drew near, a curiosity, in such circumstances, perhaps not unjustifiable, prompted her to listen. La Motte just then exclaimed — "The phrenzy of despair!" — some words followed, delivered in a low tone, which she could not understand — "I have suffered more than I can express," continued he; "the same image has pursued me in my midnight dream, and in my daily wanderings. There is no punishment, snort of death, which I would not have endured, to regain the state of mind, with which I entered this forest. I again address myself to your compassion."

A loud gust of wind, that burst along the passage where Madame La Motte stood, overpowered his voice and that of the Marquis, who spoke in reply: but she soon after distinguished these words, — "To-morrow, my Lord, if you return to these ruins, I will lead you to the spot."

"That is scarcely necessary, and may be dangerous," said the Marquis. From "you, my Lord, I can excuse these doubts," resumed La Motte; "but I will swear whatever you shall propose. Yes," continued he, "whatever may be the consequence, I will swear to submit to your decree!" The rising tempest again drowned the sound of their voices, and Madame La Motte vainly endeavoured to hear those words, upon which, probably, hung the explanation of this mysterious conduct. They now moved towards the door, and she retreated with precipitation to the apartment where she had left Adeline, with Louis and the young Chevalier.

Hither the Marquis and La Motte soon followed, the first haughty and cool, the latter somewhat more composed than before, though the impression of horror was not yet faded from his countenance. The Marquis passed on to the hall where his retinue awaited: the storm was not yet subsided, but he seemed impatient to be gone, and ordered his people to be in readiness. La Motte observed a sullen silence, frequently pacing the room with hasty steps, and sometimes lost in reverie. Meanwhile, the Marquis, seating himself by Adeline, directed to her his whole attention, except when sudden fits of absence came over is mind and suspended him in silence: at these times the young Chevalier addressed Adeline, who, with diffidence and some agitation, shrunk from the observance of both.

The Marquis had been near two hours at the abbey, and the tempest still continuing, Madame La Motte offered him a bed. A look from her husband made her tremble for the consequence. Her offer was, however, politely declined, the Marquis being evidently as impatient to be gone, as his tenant appeared distressed by his presence. He often returned to the hall, and from the gates raised a look of impatience to the clouds. Nothing was to be seen through the darkness of night — nothing heard but the howlings of the storm.

The morning dawned before he departed. As he was preparing to leave the abbey, La Motte again drew him aside, and held him for a few moments in close conversation. His impassioned gestures, which Madame La Motte observed from a remote part of the room, added to her curiosity a degree of wild apprehension, derived from the obscurity of the subject. Her endeavour to distinguish the corresponding words was baffled by the low voice in which they were uttered.

The Marquis and his retinue at length departed, and La Motte, having himself fastened the gates, silently and dejectedly withdrew to his chamber. The moment they were alone, Madame seized the opportunity of entreating her husband to explain the scene she had witnessed. "Ask me no questions," said La Motte sternly, "for I will answer none. I have already forbade your speaking to me on this subject."

"What subject?" said his wife. La Motte seemed to recollect himself — "No matter — I was mistaken — I thought you had repeated these questions before."

"Ah!" said Madame La Motte, "it is then as I suspected: your former melancholy, and the distress of this night, have the same cause."

"And why should you either suspect or inquire? Am I always to be persecuted with conjectures?"

"Pardon me, I meant not to persecute you; but my anxiety for your welfare will not suffer me to rest under this dreadful uncertainty. Let me claim the privilege of a wife, and share the affliction which oppresses you. Deny me not." — La Motte interrupted her, "Whatever may be the cause of the emotions which you have witnessed, I swear that I will not now reveal it. A time may come, when I shall no longer judge concealment necessary; till then be silent, and desist from importunity; above all, forbear to remark to any one what you may have seen uncommon in me. Bury your surmise in your own bosom, as you would avoid my curse and my destruction." The determined air with which he spoke this, while his countenance was overspread with a livid hue, made his wife shudder; and she forbore all reply.

Madame La Motte retired to bed, but not to rest. She ruminated on the past occurrence; and her surprize and curiosity, concerning the words and behaviour of her husband, were but more strongly stimulated by reflection. One truth, however, appeared; she could not doubt, but the mysterious conduct of La Motte, which had for so many months oppressed her with anxiety, and the late scene with the Marquis originated from the same cause. This belief, which seemed to prove how unjustly she had suspected Adeline, brought with it a pang of self-accusation. She looked forward to the morrow, which would lead the Marquis again to the abbey, with impatience. Wearied nature at length resumed her rights, and yielded a short oblivion of care.

At a late hour, the next day, the family assembled to breakfast. Each individual of the party appeared silent and abstracted, but very different was the aspect of their features, and still more the complection of their thoughts. La Motte seemed agitated by impatient fear, yet the sullenness of despair overspread his countenance. A certain wildness in his eye at times expressed the sudden start of horror, and again his features would sink into the gloom of despondency.

Madame La Motte seemed harrassed with anxiety; she watched every turn of her husband's countenance, and impatiently waited the arrival of the Marquis. Louis was composed and thoughtful. Adeline seemed to feel her full share of uneasiness. She had observed the behaviour of La Motte the preceding night with much surprize, and the happy confidence she had hitherto reposed in him, was shaken. She feared also, lest the exigency of his circumstances should precipitate him again into the world, and that he would be either unable or unwilling to afford her a shelter beneath his roof.

During breakfast, La Motte frequently rose to the window, from whence he cast many an anxious look. His wife understood too well the cause of his impatience, and endeavoured to repress her own. In these intervals, Louis attempted by whispers to obtain some information from his father, but La Motte always returned to the table, where the presence of Adeline prevented farther discourse.

After breakfast, as he walked upon the lawn, Louis would have joined him, but La Motte peremptorily declared he intended to be alone, and soon after, the Marquis having not yet arrived, proceeded to a greater distance from the abbey.

Adeline retired into their usual working room with Madame La Motte, who affected an air of cheerfulness, and even of kindness. Feeling the necessity of offering some reason for the striking agitation of La Motte, and of preventing the surprize, which the unexpected appearance of the Marquis would occasion Adeline, if she was left to connect it with his behaviour of the preceding night, she mentioned that the Marquis and La Motte had long been known to each other, and that this unexpected meeting, after an absence of many years, and under circumstances so altered and humiliating, on the part of the latter, had occasioned him much painful emotion. This had been heightened by a consciousness that the Marquis had formerly misinterpreted some circumstances in his conduct towards him, which had caused a suspension of their intimacy.

This account did not bring conviction to the mind of Adeline, for it seemed inadequate to the degree of emotion, the Marquis and La Motte had mutually betrayed. Her surprize was excited, and her curiosity awakened by the words, which were meant to delude them both. But she forbore to express her thoughts.

Madame proceeding with her plan, said, "The Marquis was now expected, and she hoped whatever differences remained, would be perfectly adjusted." Adeline blushed, and endeavouring to reply, her lips faltered. Conscious of this agitation, and of the observance of Madame La Motte, her confusion increased, and her endeavours to suppress served only to heighten it. Still she tried to renew the discourse, and still she found it impossible to collect her thoughts. Shocked lest Madame should apprehend the sentiment, which had till this moment been concealed almost from herself, her colour fled, she fixed her eyes on the ground, and, for some time, found it difficult to respire. Madame La Motte inquired if she was ill, when Adeline, glad of the excuse, withdrew to the indulgence of her own thoughts, which were now wholly engrossed by the expectation of seeing again the young Chevalier, who had accompanied the Marquis.

As she looked from her room, she saw the Marquis on horseback, with several attendants, advancing at a distance, and she hastened to apprize Madame La Motte of his approach. In a short time, he arrived at the gates, and Madame and Louis went out to receive him, La Motte being not yet returned. He entered the hall, followed by the young Chevalier, and accosting Madame with a sort of stately politeness, inquired for La Motte, whom Louis now went to seek.

The Marquis remained for a few minutes silent, and then asked of Madame La Motte "how her fair daughter did?" Madame understood it was Adeline he meant, and having answered his inquiry, and slightly said that she was not related to them, Adeline, upon some indication of the Marquis's wish, was sent for. She entered the room with a modest blush and a timid air, which seemed to engage all his attention. His compliments she received with a sweet grace, but, when the younger Chevalier approached, the warmth of his manner rendered her's involuntarily more reserved, and she scarcely dared to raise her eyes from the ground, lest they should encounter his.

La Motte now entered and apologized for his absence, which the Marquis noticed only by a slight inclination of his head, expressing at the same time by his looks, both distrust and pride. They immediately quitted the abbey together, and the Marquis beckoned his attendants to follow at a distance. La Motte forbade his son to accompany him, but Louis observed he took the way into the thickest part of the forest. He was lost in a chaos of conjecture concerning this affair, but curiosity and anxiety for his father induced him to follow at some distance.

In the mean time, the young stranger, whom the Marquis addressed by the name of Theodore, remained at the abbey with Madame La Motte and Adeline. The former, with all her address, could scarcely conceal her agitation during this interval. She moved involuntarily to the door, whenever she heard a footstep, and several times she went to the hall door, in order to look into the forest, but as often returned, checked by disappointment. No person appeared. Theodore seemed to address as much of his attention to Adeline, as politeness would allow him to withdraw from Madame La Motte. His manners so gentle, yet dignified, insensibly subdued her timidity, and banished her reserve. Her conversation no longer suffered a painful constraint, but gradually disclosed the beauties of her mind, and seemed to produce a mutual confidence. A similarity of sentiment soon appeared, and Theodore, by the impatient pleasure which animated his countenance, seemed frequently to anticipate the thought of Adeline.

To them the absence of the Marquis was short, though long to Madame La Motte, whose countenance brightened, when she heard the trampling of horses at the gate.

The Marquis appeared but for a moment, and passed on with La Motte to a private room, where they remained for some time in conference, immediately after which he departed. Theodore took leave of Adeline, who, as well as La Motte and Madame, attended them to the gates, with an expression of tender regret, and, often as he went, looked back upon the abbey, till the intervening branches intirely excluded it from his view.

The transient glow of pleasure diffused over the cheek of Adeline disappeared with the young stranger, and she sighed as she turned into the hall. The image of Thedoore pursued her to her chamber; she recollected with exactness every particular of his late conversation — his sentiments so congenial with her own — his manners so engaging — his countenance so animated — so ingenuous and so noble, in which manly dignity was blended with the sweetness of benevolence — these, and every other grace, she recollected, and a soft melancholy stole upon her heart. “I shall see him no more,” said she. A sigh, that followed, told her more of her heart than she wished to know. She blushed, and sighed again, and then suddenly recollecting herself, she endeavoured to divert her thoughts to a different subject. La Motte’s connection with the Marquis for some time engaged her attention, but, unable to develope the mystery that attended it, she sought a refuge from her own reflections in the more pleasing ones to be derived from books.

During this time, Louis, shocked and surprized at the extreme distress which his father had manifested upon the first appearance of the Marquis, addressed him upon the subject. He had no doubt that the Marquis was intimately concerned in the event which made it necessary for La Motte to leave Paris, and he spoke his thoughts without disguise, lamenting at the same time the unlucky chance, which had brought him to seek refuge in a place, of all others, the least capable of affording it — the estate of his enemy. La Motte did not contradict this opinion of his son’s, and joined in lamenting the evil fate which had conducted him thither.

The term of Louis’s absence from his regiment, was now nearly expired, and he took occasion to express his sorrow, that he must soon be obliged to leave his father in circumstances so dangerous as the present. “I should leave you, Sir, with less pain,” continued he, “was I sure I knew the full extent of your misfortunes. At present I am left to conjecture evils, which, perhaps, do not exist. Relieve me, Sir, from this state of painful uncertainty, and suffer me to prove myself worthy of your confidence.”

“I have already answered you on this subject,” said La Motte, “and forbade you to renew it. I am now obliged to tell you, I care not how soon you depart, if I am to be subjected to these inquiries.” La Motte walked abruptly away, and left his son to doubt and concern.

The arrival of the Marquis had dissipated the jealous fears of Madame La Motte, and she awoke to a sense of her cruelty towards Adeline. When she considered her orphan state — the uniform affection which had appeared in her behaviour — the mildness and patience with which she had borne her injurious treatment, she was shocked, and took an early opportunity of renewing her former kindness. But she could not explain this seeming inconsistency of conduct, without betraying her late suspicions, which she now blushed to remember, nor could she apologise for her former behaviour, without giving this explanation.

She contented herself, therefore, with expressing in her manner the regard which was thus revived. Adeline was at first surprized, but she felt too much pleasure at the change to be scrupulous in inquiring its cause.

But, notwithstanding the satisfaction which Adeline received from the revival of Madame La Motte’s kindness, her thoughts frequently recurred to the peculiar and forlorn circumstances of her condition. She could not help feeling less confidence than she had formerly done in the friendship of Madame La Motte, whose character now appeared less amiable than her imagination had represented it, and seemed strongly tinctured with caprice. Her thoughts often dwelt upon the strange introduction of the Marquis at the abbey, and on the mutual emotions and apparent dislike of La Motte and himself; and, under these circumstances, it equally excited her surprize that La Motte should chuse, and that the Marquis should permit him, to remain in his territory.

Her mind returned the oftener, perhaps, to this subject, because it was connected with Theodore; but it returned unconscious of the idea which attracted it. She attributed the interest she felt in the affair to her anxiety for the welfare of La Motte, and for her own future destination, which was now so deeply involved in his. Sometimes, indeed, she caught herself busy in conjecture as to the degree of relationship in which Theodore stood to the Marquis, but she immediately checked her thoughts, and severely blamed herself for having suffered them to stray to an object, which she perceived was too dangerous to her peace.

❦

CHAPTER 7

"Present ills
Are less than horrible imaginings."

A Few days after the occurrence related in the preceding chapter, as Adeline was alone in her chamber, she was roused from a reverie by a trampling of horses near the gate, and, on looking from the casement, she saw the Marquis de Montalt enter the abbey. This circumstance surprized her, and an emotion, whose cause she did not trouble herself to inquire for, made her instantly retreat from the window. The same cause, however, led her thither again as hastily, but the object of her search did not appear, and she was in no haste to retire.

As she stood musing and disappointed, the Marquis came out with La Motte, and, immediately looking up, saw Adeline and bowed. She returned his compliment respectfully, and withdrew from the window, vexed at having been seen there. They went into the forest, but the Marquis's attendants did not, as before, follow them thither. When they returned, which was not till after a considerable time, the Marquis immediately mounted his horse and rode away.

For the remainder of the day, La Motte appeared gloomy and silent, and was frequently lost in thought. Adeline observed him with particular attention and concern; she perceived that he was always more melancholy after an interview with the Marquis, and was now surprized to hear that the latter had appointed to dine the next day at the abbey.

When La Motte mentioned this, he added some high eulogiums on the character of the Marquis, and particularly praised his generosity and nobleness of soul. At this instant, Adeline recollected the anecdotes she had formerly heard concerning the abbey, and they threw a shadow over the brightness of that excellence, which La Motte now celebrated. The account, however, did not appear to deserve much credit; a part of it, as far as a negative will admit of demonstration, having been already proved false; for it had been reported, that the abbey was haunted, and no supernatural appearance had ever been observed by the present inhabitants.

Adeline, however, ventured to inquire, whether it was the present Marquis of whom those injurious reports had been raised? La Motte answered her with a smile of ridicule; "Stories of ghosts and hobgoblins have always been admired and cherished by the vulgar," said he. "I am inclined to rely upon my own experience, at least as much as upon the accounts of these peasants. If you have seen any thing to corroborate these accounts, pray inform me of it, that I may establish my faith."

"You mistake me, Sir," said she, "it was not concerning supernatural agency that I would inquire: I alluded to a different part of the report, which hinted, that some person had been confined here, by order of the Marquis, who was said to have died unfairly. This was alledged as a reason for the Marquis's having abandoned the abbey."

"All the mere coinage of idleness," said La Motte; "a romantic tale to excite wonder: to see the Marquis is alone sufficient to refute this; and if we credit half the number of those stories that spring from the same source, we prove ourselves little superior to the simpletons who invent them. Your good sense, Adeline, I think, will teach you the merit of disbelief."

Adeline blushed and was silent; but La Motte's defence of the Marquis appeared much warmer and more diffuse than was consistent with his own disposition, or required by the occasion. His former conversation with Louis occurred to her, and she was the more surprised at what passed at present.

She looked forward to the morrow with a mixture of pain and pleasure; the expectation of seeing again the young Chevalier occupying her thoughts, and agitating them with a various emotion: now she feared his presence, and now she doubted whether he would come. At length she observed this, and blushed to find how much he engaged her attention. The morrow arrived — the Marquis came — but he came alone; and the sunshine of Adeline's mind was clouded, though she was able to wear her usual air of cheerfulness. The Marquis was polite, affable, and attentive: to manners the most easy and elegant, was added the last refinement of polished life. His conversation was lively, amusing, sometimes even witty; and discovered great knowledge of the world; or, what is often mistaken for it, an acquaintance with the higher circles, and with the topics of the day.

Here La Motte was also qualified to converse with him, and they entered into a discussion of the characters and manners of the age with great spirit, and some humour. Madame La Motte had not seen her husband so cheerful since they left Paris, and sometimes she could almost fancy she was there. Adeline listened, till the cheerfulness, which she had at first only assumed, became real. The address of the Marquis was so insinuating and affable, that her reserve insensibly gave way before it, and her natural vivacity resumed its long lost empire.

At parting, the Marquis told La Motte he rejoiced at having found so agreeable a neighbour. La Motte bowed. "I shall sometimes visit you," continued he, "and I lament that I cannot at present invite Madame La Motte, and her fair friend to my chateau, but it is undergoing some repairs, which make it but an uncomfortable residence."

The vivacity of La Motte disappeared. with his guest, and he soon' relapsed into fits of silence and abstraction. "The Marquis is a very agreeable man," said Madame La Motte. "Very agreeable," replied he. "And seems to have an excellent heart," she resumed. "An excellent one," said La Motte.

"You seem discomposed, my dear; what has disturbed you?"

"Not in the least — I was only thinking, that with such agreeable talents, and such an excellent heart, it was a pity the Marquis should" — "What? my dear," said Madame with impatience: "That the Marquis should — should suffer this abbey to fall into ruins," replied La Motte.

"Is that all!" said Madame with disappointment. — "That is all, upon my honour," said La Motte, and left the room.

Adeline's spirits, no longer supported by the animated conversation of the Marquis, sunk into languor, and, when he departed, she walked pensively into the forest. She followed a little romantic path that wound along the margin of the stream, and was overhung with deep shades. The tranquillity of the scene, which autumn now touched with her sweetest tints, softened her mind to a tender kind of melancholy, and she suffered a tear, which, she knew not wherefore, had stolen into her eye, to tremble there unchecked. She came to a little lonely recess, formed by high trees; the wind sighed mournfully among the branches, and as it waved their lofty heads scattered their leaves to the ground. She seated herself on a bank beneath, and indulged the melancholy reflections that pressed on her mind.

"O! could I dive into futurity and behold the events which await me!" said she; "I should, perhaps, by constant contemplation, be enabled to meet them with fortitude. An orphan in this wide world — thrown upon the friendship of strangers for comfort, and upon their bounty for the very means of existence, what but evil have I to expect! Alas, my father! how could you thus abandon your child — how leave her to the storms of life — to sink, perhaps, beneath them? Alas, I have no friend!"

She was interrupted by a rustling among the fallen leaves; she turned her head, and perceiving the Marquis's young friend, arose to depart. "Pardon this intrusion," said he, "your voice attracted me hither, and your words detained me: my offence, however, brings with it its own punishment, having learned your sorrows — how can I help feeling them myself? would that my sympathy, or my suffering, could rescue you from them!" — He hesitated — "Would that I could deserve the title of your friend, and be thought worthy of it by yourself!"

The confusion of Adeline's thoughts could scarcely permit her to reply; she trembled and gently withdrew her hand, which he had taken, while he spoke. "You have, perhaps, heard, Sir, more than is true: I am, indeed, not happy, but a moment of dejection has made me unjust, and I am less unfortunate than I have represented. When I said I had no friend, I was ungrateful to the kindness of Monsieur and Madame La Motte, who have been more than friends — have been as parents to me."

"If so, I honour them," cried Theodore with warmth; "and if I did not feel it to be presumption, I would ask why you are unhappy? — But" — He paused. Adeline, raising her eyes, saw him gazing upon her with intense and eager anxiety, and her looks were again fixed upon the ground. "I have pained you," said Theodore, "by an improper request. Can you forgive me, and also when I add, that it was an interest in your welfare, which urged my inquiry?"

"Forgiveness, Sir, it is unnecessary to ask. I am certainly obliged by the compassion you express. But the evening is cold, if you please, we will walk towards the abbey." As they moved on, Theodore was for some time silent. At length, "It was but lately that I solicited your pardon," said he, "and I shall now, perhaps, have need of it again; but you will do me the justice to believe, that I have a strong, and, indeed, a pressing reason to inquire how nearly you are related to Monsieur La Motte."

"We are not at all related," said Adeline; "but the service he has done me I can never repay, and I hope my gratitude will teach me never to forget it."

"Indeed!" said Theodore, surprized: "and may I ask how long you have known him?"

"Rather, Sir, let me ask, why these questions should be necessary?"

"You are just," said he, with an air of self-condemnation, "my conduct has deserved this reproof; I should have been more explicit." He looked as if his mind was labouring with something which he was unwilling to express. "But you know not how delicately I am circumstanced," continued he, "yet I will aver, that my questions are prompted by the tenderest interest in your happiness — and even by my fears for your safety." Adeline started. "I fear you are deceived," said he, "I fear there's danger near you."

Adeline stopped, and, looking earnestly at him, begged he would explain himself. She suspected that some mischief threatened La Motte; and Theodore continuing silent, she repeated her request. "If La Motte is concerned in this danger," said she, "let me entreat you to acquaint him with it immediately. He has but too many misfortunes to apprehend."

"Excellent Adeline!" cried Theodore, "that heart must be adamant that would injure you. How shall I hint what I fear is too true, and how forbear to warn you of your danger without" — He was interrupted by a step among the trees, and presently after saw La Motte cross into the path they were in. Adeline felt confused at being thus seen with the Chevalier, and was hastening to join La Motte, but Theodore detained her, and entreated a moment's attention. "There is now no time to explain myself," said he; "yet what I would say is of the utmost consequence to yourself."

"Promise, therefore, to meet me in some part of the forest at about this time to-morrow evening, you will then, I hope, be convinced, that my conduct is directed, neither by common circumstances, nor common regard." Adeline shuddered at the idea of making an appointment; she hesitated, and at length entreated Theodore not to delay till to-morrow an explanation, which appeared to be so important, but to follow La Motte and inform him of his danger immediately. "It is not with La Motte I would speak," replied Theodore; "I know of no danger that threatens him — but he approaches, be quick, lovely Adeline, and promise to meet me."

"I do promise," said Adeline, with a faltering voice; "I will come to the spot where you found me this evening, an hour earlier to-morrow." Saying this, she withdrew her trembling hand, which Theodore had pressed to his lips in token of acknowledgement, and he immediately disappeared.

La Motte now approached Adeline, who, fearing that he had seen Theodore, was in some confusion. "Whither is Louis gone so fast?" said La Motte. She rejoiced to find his mistake, and suffered him to remain in it. They walked pensively towards the abbey, where Adeline, too much occupied by her own thoughts to bear company, retired to her chamber. She ruminated upon the words of Theodore, and, the more she considered them, the more she was perplexed. Sometimes she blamed herself for having made an appointment, doubting whether he had not solicited it for the purpose of pleading a passion; and now delicacy checked this thought, and made her vexed that she had presumed upon having inspired one. She recollected the serious earnestness of his voice and manner, when he entreated her to meet him; and as they convinced her of the importance of the subject, she shuddered at a danger, which she could not comprehend, looking forward to the morrow with anxious impatience.

Sometimes too a remembrance of the tender interest he had expressed for her welfare, and of his correspondent look and air, would steal across her memory, awakening a pleasing emotion and a latent hope that she was not indifferent to him. From reflections like these she was roused by a summons to supper: the repast was a melancholy one, it being the last evening of Louis's stay at the abbey. Adeline, who esteemed him, regretted his departure, while his eyes were often bent on her with a look, which seemed to express that he was about to leave the object of his affection. She endeavoured by her cheerfulness to re-animate the whole party, and especially Madame La Motte, who frequently shed tears.

"We shall soon meet again," said Adeline, "I trust, in happier circumstances." La Motte sighed. The countenance of Louis brightened at her words, "Do you wish it?" said he, with peculiar emphasis. "Most certainly I do," she replied. "Can you doubt my regard for my best friends?"

"I cannot doubt any thing that is good of you," said he.

"You forget you have left Paris," said La Motte to his son, while a faint smile crossed his face, "such a compliment would there be in character with the place — in these solitary woods it is quite outré."

"The language of admiration is not always that of compliment, Sir," said Louis. Adeline, willing to change the discourse, asked, to what part of France he was going. He replied, that his regiment was now at Peronne, and he should go immediately thither. After some mention of indifferent subjects, the family withdrew for the night to their several chambers.

The approaching departure of her son occupied the thoughts of Madame La Motte, and she appeared at breakfast with eyes swoln with weeping. The pale countenance of Louis seemed to indicate that he had rested no better than his mother. When breakfast was over, Adeline retired for a while, that she might not interrupt, by her presence, their last conversation. As she walked on the lawn before the abbey she returned in thought to the occurrence of yesterday evening, and her impatience for the appointed interview increased. She was soon joined by Louis. “It was unkind of you to leave us,” said he, “in the last moments of my stay. Could I hope that you would sometimes remember me, when I am far away, I should depart with less sorrow.” He then expressed his concern at leaving her, and though he had hitherto armed himself with resolution to forbear a direct avowal of an attachment, which must be fruitless, his heart now yielded to the force of passion, and he told what Adeline every moment feared to hear.

“This declaration,” said Adeline, endeavouring to overcome the agitation it excited, “gives me inexpressible concern.”

“O, say not so!” interrupted Louis, “but give me some slender hope to support me in the miseries of absence. Say that you do not hate me — Say” — “That I do most readily say,” replied Adeline, in a tremulous voice; “if it will give you pleasure to be assured of my esteem and friendship — receive this assurance:— as the son of my best benefactors, you are entitled to” — “Name not benefits,” said Louis, “your merits outrun them all: and suffer me to hope for a sentiment less cool than that of friendship, as well as to believe that I do not owe your approbation of me to the actions of others. I have long borne my passion in silence, because I foresaw the difficulties that would attend it, nay, I have even dared to endeavour to overcome it: I have dared to believe it possible, forgive the supposition, that I could forget you — and” — “You distress me,” interrupted Adeline; “this is a conversation which I ought not to hear. I am above disguise, and, therefore, assure you, that, though your virtues will always command my esteem, you have nothing to hope from my love. Were it even otherwise, our circumstances would effectually decide for us. If you are really my friend, you will rejoice that I am spared this struggle between affection and prudence. Let me hope also, that time will teach you to reduce love within the limits of friendship.”

“Never!” cried Louis vehemently: “Were this possible, my passion would be unworthy of its object.” While he spoke, Adeline’s favourite fawn came bounding towards her. This circumstance affected Louis even to tears. “This little animal,” said he, after a short pause, “first conducted me to you: it was witness to that happy moment when I first saw you, surrounded by attractions too powerful for my heart; that moment is now fresh in my memory, and the creature comes even to witness this sad one of my departure.” Grief interrupted his utterance.

When he recovered his voice, he said, “Adeline! when you look upon your little favourite and caress it, remember the unhappy Louis, who will then be far — far from you. Do not deny me the poor consolation of believing this!”

“I shall not require such a monitor to remind me of you,” said Adeline with a smile; “your excellent parents and your own merits have sufficient claim upon my remembrance. Could I see your natural good sense resume its influence over passion, my satisfaction would equal my esteem for you.”

“Do not hope it,” said Louis, “nor will I wish it — for passion here is virtue.” As he spoke, he saw La Motte turn round an angle of the abbey. “The moments are precious,” said he, “I am interrupted. O! Adeline, farewell! and say, that you will sometimes think of me.”

“Farewell,” said Adeline, who was affected by his distress — “farewell! and peace attend you. I will think of you with the affection of a sister.” — He sighed deeply, and pressed her hand; when La Motte, winding round another projection of the ruin, again appeared: Adeline left them together, and withdrew to her chamber, oppressed by the scene. Louis’s passion and her esteem were too sincere not to inspire her with a strong degree of pity for his unhappy attachment. She remained in her chamber till he had quitted the abbey, unwilling to subject him or herself to the pain of a formal parting.

As evening and the hour of appointment drew nigh, Adeline’s impatience increased; yet, when the time arrived, her resolution failed, and she faltered from her purpose. There was something of indelicacy and dissimulation in an appointed interview, on her part, that shocked her. She recollected the tenderness of Theodore’s manner, and several little circumstances which seemed to indicate that his heart was not unconcerned in the event. Again she was inclined to doubt, whether he had not obtained her consent to this meeting upon some groundless suspicion; and she almost determined not to go: yet it was possible Theodore’s assertion might be sincere, and her danger real; the chance of this made her delicate scruples appear ridiculous; she wondered that she had for a moment suffered them to weigh against so serious an interest, and, blaming herself for the delay they had occasioned, hastened to the place of appointment.

The little path, which led to this spot, was silent and solitary, and when she reached the recess, Theodore had not arrived. A transient pride made her unwilling he should find that she was more punctual to his appointment than himself; and she turned from the recess into a track, which wound among the trees to the right. Having walked some way, without seeing any person, or hearing a footstep, she returned; but he was not come, and she again left the place. A second time she came back, and Theodore was still absent. Recollecting the time at which she had quitted the abbey, she grew uneasy, and calculated that the hour appointed was now much exceeded. She was offended and perplexed; but she seated herself on the turf, and was resolved to wait the event. After remaining here till the fall of twilight in fruitless expectation, her pride became more alarmed; she feared that he had discovered something of the partiality he had inspired, and believing that he now treated her with purposed neglect, she quitted the place with disgust and self-accusation.

When these emotions subsided, and reason resumed its influence, she blushed for what she termed this childish effervescence of self-love. She recollected, as if for the first time, these words of Theodore: “I fear you are deceived, and that some danger is near you.” Her judgement now acquitted the offender, and she saw only the friend. The import of these words, whose truth she no longer doubted, again alarmed her. Why did he trouble himself to come from the chateau, on purpose to hint her danger, if he did not wish to preserve her? And if he wished to preserve her, what but necessity could have withheld him from the appointment?

These reflections decided her at once. She resolved to repair on the following day at the same hour to the recess, whither the interest, which she believed him to take in her fate, would no doubt conduct him in the hope of meeting her. That some evil hovered over her she could not disbelieve, but what it might be, she was unable to guess. Monsieur and Madame La Motte were her friends, and who else, removed, as she now thought herself, beyond the reach of her father, could injure her? But why did Theodore say she was deceived? She found it impossible to extricate herself from the labyrinth of conjecture, but endeavoured to command her anxiety till the following evening. In the mean time she engaged herself in efforts to amuse Madame La Motte, who required some relief, after the departure of her son.

Thus oppressed by her own cares and interested by those of Madame La Motte, Adeline retired to rest. She soon lost her recollection, but it was only to fall into harrassed slumbers, such as but too often haunt the couch of the unhappy. At length her perturbed fancy suggested the following dream.

She thought she was in a large old chamber belonging to the abbey, more ancient and desolate, though in part furnished, than any she had yet seen. It was strongly barricadoed, yet no person appeared. While she stood musing and surveying the apartment, she heard a low voice call her, and, looking towards the place whence it came, she perceived by the dim light of a lamp a figure stretched on a bed that lay on the floor. The voice called again, and, approaching the bed, she distinctly saw the features of a man who appeared to be dying. A ghastly paleness overspread his countenance, yet there was an expression of mildness and dignity in it, which strongly interested her.

While she looked on him, his features changed and seemed convulsed in the agonies of death. The spectacle shocked her, and she started back, but he suddenly stretched forth his hand, and seizing her’s, grasped it with violence: she struggled in terror to disengage herself, and again looking on his face, saw a man, who appeared to be about thirty, with the same features, but in full health, and of a most benign countenance. He smiled tenderly upon her and moved his lips, as if to speak, when the floor of the chamber suddenly opened and he sunk from her view. The effort she made to save herself from following awoke her. — This dream had so strongly impressed her fancy, that it was some time before she could overcome the terror it occasioned, or even be perfectly convinced she was in her own apartment. At length, however, she composed herself to sleep; again she fell into a dream.

She thought she was bewildered in some winding passages of the abbey; that it was almost dark, and that she wandered about a considerable time, without being able to find a door. Suddenly she heard a bell toll from above, and soon after a confusion of distant voices. She redoubled her efforts to extricate herself. Presently all was still, and, at length, wearied with the search, she sat down on a step that crossed the passage. She had not been long here, when she saw a light glimmer at a distance on the walls, but a turn in the passage, which was very long, prevented her seeing from what it proceeded. It continued to glimmer faintly for some time and then grew stronger, when she saw a man enter the passage, habited in a long black cloak, like those usually worn by attendants at funerals, and bearing a torch. He called to her to follow him, and led her through a long passage to the foot of a staircase. Here she feared to proceed, and was running back, when the man suddenly turned to pursue her, and with the terror, which this occasioned, she awoke.

Shocked by these visions, and more so by their seeming connection, which now struck her, she endeavoured to continue awake, left their terrific images should again haunt her mind: after some time, however, her harrassed spirits again sunk into slumber, though not to repose.

She now thought herself in a large old gallery, and saw at one end of it a chamber door standing a little open and a light within: she went towards it, and perceived the man she had before seen, standing at the door and beckoning her towards him. With the inconsistency so common in dreams she no longer endeavoured to avoid him, but advancing, followed him into a suite of very ancient apartments, hung with black, and lighted up as if for a funeral. Still he led her on, till she found herself in the same chamber she remembered to have seen in her former dream: a coffin, covered with a pall, stood at the farther end of the room; some lights, and several persons surrounded it, who appeared to be in great distress.

Suddenly, she thought these persons were all gone, and that she was left alone; that she went up to the coffin, and while she gazed upon it, she heard a voice speak, as if from within, but saw nobody. The man she had before seen, soon after stood by the coffin, and, lifting the pall, she saw beneath it a dead person, whom she thought to be the dying Chevalier she had seen in her former dream: his features were sunk in death, but they were yet serene. While she looked at him, a stream of blood gushed from his side, and descending to the floor, the whole chamber was overflowed; at the same time some words were uttered in the voice she heard before; but the horror of the scene so entirely overcame her, that she started and awoke.

When she had recovered her recollection, she raised herself in the bed, to be convinced it was a dream she had witnessed, and the agitation of her spirits was so great, that she feared to be alone, and almost determined to call Annette. The features of the deceased person, and the chamber where he lay, were strongly impressed upon her memory, and she still thought she heard the voice and saw the countenance which her dream represented. The longer she considered these dreams, the more she was surprized: they were so very terrible, returned so often, and seemed to be so connected with each other, that she could scarcely think them accidental; yet, why they should be supernatural, she could not tell. She slept no more that night.

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CHAPTER 8

— "When these prodigies
Do so conjointly meet, let not men say,
These are their reasons; they are natural;
For I believe they are portentous things."
Julius Cæsar.

When Adeline appeared at breakfast, her harrassed and languid countenance struck Madame La Motte, who inquired if she was ill; Adeline, forcing a smile upon her features, said she had not rested well, for that she had had very disturbed dreams: she was about to describe them, but a strong and involuntary impulse prevented her. At the same time, La Motte ridiculed her concern so unmercifully, that she was almost ashamed to have mentioned it, and tried to overcome the remembrance of its cause.

After breakfast, she endeavoured to employ her thoughts by conversing with Madame La Motte; but they were really engaged by the incidents of the last two days; the circumstance of her dreams, and her conjectures concerning the information to be communicated to her by Theodore. They had thus sat for some time, when a sound of voices arose from the great gate of the abbey; and, on going to the casement, Adeline saw the Marquis and his attendants on the lawn below. The portal of the abbey concealed several people from her view, and among these it was possible might be Theodore, who had not yet appeared: she continued to look for him with great anxiety, till the Marquis entered the hall with La Motte, and some other persons, soon after which Madame went to receive him, and Adeline retired to her own apartment.

A message from La Motte, however, soon called her to join the party, where she vainly hoped to find Theodore. The Marquis arose as she approached, and, having paid her some general compliments, the conversation took a very lively turn. Adeline, finding it impossible to counterfeit cheerfulness, while her heart was sinking with anxiety and disappointment, took little part in it: Theodore was not once named. She would have asked concerning him, had it been possible to inquire with propriety; but she was obliged to content herself with hoping, first, that he would arrive before dinner, and then before the departure of the Marquis.

Thus the day passed in expectation and disappointment. The evening was now approaching, and she was condemned to remain in the presence of the Marquis, apparently listening to a conversation, which, in truth, she scarcely heard, while the opportunity was, perhaps, escaping that would decide her fate. She was suddenly relieved from this state of torture, and thrown into one, if possible, still more distressing.

The Marquis inquired for Louis, and being informed of his departure, mentioned that Theodore Peyrou had that morning sat out for his regiment in a distant province. He lamented the loss he should sustain by his absence; and expressed some very flattering praise of his talents. The shock of this intelligence overpowered the long-agitated spirits of Adeline; the blood forsook her cheeks, and a sudden faintness came over her, from which she recovered only to a consciousness of having discovered her emotion, and the danger of relapsing into a second fit.

She retired to her chamber, where, being once more alone, her oppressed heart found relief from tears, in which she freely indulged. Ideas crowded so fast upon her mind, that it was long ere she could arrange them so as to produce any thing like reasoning. She endeavoured to account for the abrupt departure of Theodore. "Is it possible," said she, "that he should take an interest in my welfare, and yet leave me exposed to the full force of a danger, which he himself foresaw? Or am I to believe that he has trifled with my simplicity for an idle frolic, and has now left me to the wondering apprehension he has raised? Impossible! a countenance so noble, and a manner so amiable, could never disguise a heart capable of forming so despicable a design. No! — whatever is reserved for me, let me not relinquish the pleasure of believing that he is worthy of my esteem."

She was awakened from thoughts like these by a peal of distant thunder, and now perceived that the gloominess of evening was deepened by the coming storm; it rolled onward, and soon after the lightning began to flash along the chamber. Adeline was superior to the affectation of fear, and was not apt to be terrified; but she now felt it unpleasant to be alone, and, hoping that the Marquis might have left the abbey, she went down to the sitting room; but the threatening aspect of the Heavens had hitherto detained him, and now the evening tempest made him rejoice that he had not quitted a shelter. The storm continued, and night came on. La Motte pressed his guest to take a bed at the abbey, and he, at length, consented; a circumstance, which threw Madame La Motte into some perplexity, as to the accommodation to be afforded him; after some time, she arranged the affair to her satisfaction; resigning her own apartment to the Marquis, and that of Louis to two of his superior attendants; Adeline, it was farther settled, should give up her room to Monsieur and Madame La Motte, and remove to an inner chamber, where a small bed, usually occupied by Annette, was placed for her.

At supper, the Marquis was less gay than usual; he frequently addressed Adeline, and his look and manner seemed to express the tender interest, which her indisposition, for she still appeared pale and languid, had excited. Adeline, as usual, made an effort to forget her anxiety, and appear happy; but the veil of assumed cheerfulness was too thin to conceal the features of sorrow; and her feeble smiles only added a peculiar softness to her air. The Marquis conversed with her on a variety of subjects, and displayed an elegant mind. The observations of Adeline, which, when called upon, she gave with reluctant modesty, in words at once simple and forceful, seemed to excite his admiration, which he sometimes betrayed by an inadvertent expression.

Adeline retired early to her room, which adjoined on one side to Madame La Motte's, and on the other to the closet formerly mentioned. It was spacious and lofty, and what little furniture it contained was falling to decay; but, perhaps, the present tone of her spirits might contribute more than these circumstances to give that air of melancholy, which seemed to reign in it. She was unwilling to go to bed, left the dreams that had lately pursued her should return; and determined to sit up till she found herself oppressed by sleep, when it was probable her rest would be profound. She placed the light on a small table, and, taking a book, continued to read for above an hour, till her mind refused any longer to abstract itself from its own cares, and she sat for some time leaning pensively on her arm.

The wind was high, and as it whistled through the desolate apartment, and shook the feeble doors, she often started, and sometimes even thought she heard sighs between the pauses of the gust; but she checked these illusions, which the hour of the night and her own melancholy imagination conspired to raise. As she sat musing, her eyes fixed on the opposite wall, she perceived the arras, with which the room was hung, wave backwards and forwards; she continued to observe it for some minutes, and then rose to examine it farther. It was moved by the wind; and she blushed at the momentary fear it had excited: but she observed that the tapestry was more strongly agitated in one particular place than elsewhere, and a noise that seemed something more than that of the wind issued thence. The old bedstead, which La Motte had found in this apartment, had been removed to accommodate Adeline, and it was behind the place where this had stood, that the wind seemed to rush with particular force: curiosity prompted her to examine still farther; she felt about the tapestry, and perceiving the wall behind shake under her hand, she lifted the arras, and discovered a small door, whose loosened hinges admitted the wind, and occasioned the noise she had heard.

The door was held only by a bolt, having undrawn which, and brought the light, she descended by a few steps into another chamber: she instantly remembered her dreams. The chamber was not much like that in which she had seen the dying Chevalier, and afterwards the bier; but it gave her a confused remembrance of one through which she had passed. Holding up the light to examine it more fully, she was convinced by its structure that it was part of the ancient foundation. A shattered casement, placed high from the floor, seemed to be the only opening to admit light. She observed a door on the opposite side of the apartment; and after some moments of hesitation, gained courage, and determined to pursue the inquiry. "A mystery seems to hang over these chambers," said she, "which it is, perhaps, my lot to develope; I will, at least, see to what that door leads."

She stepped forward, and having unclosed it, proceeded with faltering steps along a suite of apartments, resembling the first in style and condition, and terminating in one exactly like that where her dream had represented the dying person; the remembrance struck so forcibly upon her imagination, that she was in danger of fainting; and looking round the room, almost expected to see the phantom of her dream.

Unable to quit the place, she sat down on some old lumber to recover herself, while her spirits were nearly overcome by a superstitious dread, such as she had never felt before. She wondered to what part of the abbey these chambers belonged, and that they had so long escaped detection. The casements were all too high to afford any information from without. When she was sufficiently composed to consider the direction of the rooms, and the situation of the abbey, there appeared not a doubt that they formed an interior part of the original building.

As these reflections passed over her mind, a sudden gleam of moonlight fell upon some object without the casement. Being now sufficiently composed to wish to pursue the inquiry; and believing this object might afford her some means of learning the situation of these rooms, she combated her remaining terrors, and, in order to distinguish it more clearly, removed the light to an outer chamber; but before she could return, a heavy cloud was driven over the face of the moon, and all without was perfectly dark: she stood for some moments waiting a returning gleam, but the obscurity continued. As she went softly back for the light, her foot stumbled over something on the floor, and while she stooped to examine it, the moon again shone, so that she could distinguish, through the casement, the eastern towers of the abbey. This discovery confirmed her former conjectures concerning the interior situation of these apartments. The obscurity of the place prevented her discovering what it was that had impeded her steps, but having brought the light forward, she perceived on the floor an old dagger: with a trembling hand she took it up, and upon a closer view perceived, that it was spotted and stained with rust.

Shocked and surprised, she looked round the room for some object that might confirm or destroy the dreadful suspicion which now rushed upon her mind; but she saw only a great chair, with broken arms, that stood in one corner of the room, and a table in a condition equally shattered, except that in another part lay a confused heap of things, which appeared to be old lumber. She went up to it, and perceived a broken bedstead, with some decayed remnants of furniture, covered with dust and cobwebs, and which seemed, indeed, as if they had not been moved for many years. Desirous, however, of examining farther, she attempted to raise what appeared to have been part of the bedstead, but it slipped from her hand, and, rolling to the floor, brought with it some of the remaining lumber. Adeline started aside and saved herself, and when the noise it made had ceased, she heard a small rustling sound, and as she was about to leave the chamber, saw something falling gently among the lumber.

It was a small roll of paper, tied with a string, and covered with dust. Adeline took it up, and on opening it perceived an handwriting. She attempted to read it, but the part of the manuscript she looked at was so much obliterated, that she found this difficult, though what few words were legible impressed her with curiosity and terror, and induced her to return with it immediately to her chamber.

Having reached her own room, she fastened the private door, and let the arras fall over it as before. It was now midnight. The stillness of the hour, interrupted only at intervals by the hollow sighings of the blast, heightened the solemnity of Adeline’s feelings. She wished she was not alone, and before she proceeded to look into the manuscript, listened whether Madame La Motte was not in her chamber: not the least sound was heard, and she gently opened the door. The profound silence within almost convinced her that no person was there; but willing to be farther satisfied, she brought the light and found the room empty. The lateness of the hour made her wonder that Madame La Motte was not in her chamber, and she proceeded to the top of the tower stairs, to hearken if any person was stirring.

She heard the sound of voices from below, and, amongst the rest, that of La Motte speaking in his usual tone. Being now satisfied that all was well, she turned towards her room, when she heard the Marquis pronounce her name with very unusual emphasis. She paused. “I adore her,” pursued he, “and by heaven” — He was interrupted by La Motte, “My Lord, remember your promise.”

“I do,” replied the Marquis, “and I will abide by it. But we trifle. To-morrow I will declare myself, and I shall then know both what to hope and how to act.” Adeline trembled so excessively, that she could scarcely support herself: she wished to return to her chamber; yet she was too much interested in the words she had heard, not to be anxious to have them more fully explained. There was an interval of silence, after which they conversed in a lower tone. Adeline remembered the hints of Theodore, and determined, if possible, to be relieved from the terrible suspense she now suffered. She stole softly down a few steps, that she might catch the accents of the speakers, but they were so low, that she could only now and then distinguish a few words. “Her father, say you?” said the Marquis. “Yes, my Lord, her father. I am well informed of what I say.” Adeline shuddered at the mention of her father, a new terror seized her, and with increasing eagerness she endeavoured to distinguish their words, but for some time found this to be impossible. “Here is no time to be lost,” said the Marquis, “tomorrow then.” — She heard La Motte rise, and, believing it was to leave the room, she hurried up the steps, and having reached her chamber, sunk almost lifeless in a chair.

It was her father only of whom she thought. She doubted not that he had pursued and discovered her retreat, and, though this conduct appeared very inconsistent with his former behaviour in abandoning her to strangers, her fears suggested that it would terminate in some new cruelty. She did not hesitate to pronounce this the danger of which Theodore had warned her; but it was impossible to surmise how he had gained his knowledge of it, or how he had become sufficiently acquainted with her story, except through La Motte, her apparent friend and protector, whom she was thus, though unwillingly, led to suspect of treachery. Why, indeed, should La Motte conceal from her only his knowledge of her father’s intention, unless he designed to deliver her into his hands? Yet it was long ere she could bring herself to believe this conclusion possible. To discover depravity in those whom we have loved, is one of the most exquisite tortures to a virtuous mind, and the conviction is often rejected before it is finally admitted.

The words of Theodore, which told her he was fearful she was deceived, confirmed this most painful apprehension of La Motte, with another yet more distressing, that Madame La Motte was also united against her. This thought, for a moment, subdued terror and left her only grief; she wept bitterly. “Is this human nature?” cried she. “Am I doomed to find every body deceitful?” An unexpected discovery of vice in those, whom we have admired, inclines us to extend our censure of the individual to the species; we henceforth contemn appearances, and too hastily conclude that no person is to be trusted.

Adeline determined to throw herself at the feet of La Motte, on the following morning, and implore his pity and protection. Her mind was now too much agitated, by her own interests, to permit her to examine the manuscripts, and she sat musing in her chair, till she heard the steps of Madame La Motte, when she retired to bed. La Motte soon after came up to his chamber, and Adeline, the mild, persecuted Adeline, who had now passed two days of torturing anxiety, and one night of terrific visions, endeavoured to compose her mind to sleep. In the present state of her spirits, she quickly caught alarm, and she had scarcely fallen into a slumber, when she was roused by a loud and uncommon noise. She listened, and thought the sound came from the apartments below, but in a few minutes there was a hasty knocking at the door of La Motte’s chamber.

La Motte, who had just fallen asleep, was not easily to be roused, but the knocking increased with such violence, that Adeline, extremely terrified, arose and went to the door that opened from her chamber into his, with a design to call him. She was stopped by the voice of the Marquis, which she now clearly distinguished at the door. He called to La Motte to rise immediately, and Madame La Motte endeavoured at the same time to rouse her husband, who, at length, awoke in much alarm, and soon after, joining the Marquis, they went down stairs together. Adeline now dressed herself, as well as her trembling hands would permit, and went into the adjoining chamber, where she found Madame La Motte extremely surprized and terrified.

The Marquis, in the mean time, told La Motte, with great agitation, that he recollected having appointed some persons to meet him upon business of importance, early in the morning, and it was, therefore, necessary for him to set off for his chateau immediately. As he said this, and desired that his servants might be called, La Motte could not help observing the ashy paleness of his countenance, or expressing some apprehension that his Lordship was ill. The Marquis assured him he was perfectly well, but desired that he might set out immediately. Peter was now ordered to call the other servants, and the Marquis, having refused to take any refreshment, bade La Motte a hasty adieu, and, as soon as his people were ready, left the abbey.

La Motte returned to his chamber, musing on the abrupt departure of his guest, whose emotion appeared much too strong to proceed from the cause assigned. He appeased the anxiety of Madame La Motte, and at the same time excited her surprize by acquainting her with the occasion of the late disturbance. Adeline, who had retired from the chamber, on the approach of La Motte, looked out from her window on hearing the trampling of horses. It was the Marquis and his people, who just then passed at a little distance. Unable to distinguish who the persons were, she was alarmed at observing such a party about the abbey at that hour, and, calling to inform La Motte of the circumstance, was made acquainted with what had passed.

At length she retired to her bed, and her slumbers were this night undisturbed by dreams.

When she arose in the morning, she observed La Motte walking alone in the avenue below, and she hastened to seize the opportunity which now offered of pleading her cause. She approached him with faltering steps, while the paleness and timidity of her countenance discovered the disorder of her mind. Her first words, without entering upon any explanation, implored, his compassion. La Motte stopped, and, looking earnestly in her face, inquired whether any part of his conduct towards her merited the suspicion which her request implied. Adeline for a moment blushed that she had doubted his integrity, but the words she had overheard returned to her memory.

“Your behaviour, Sir,” said she, “I acknowledge to have been kind and generous, beyond what I had a right to expect, but” — and she paused. She knew not how to mention what she blushed to believe. La Motte continued to gaze on her in silent expectation, and at length desired her to proceed and explain her meaning. She entreated that he would protect her from her father. La Motte looked surprised and confused. “Your father!” said he. “Yes, Sir,” replied Adeline; “I am not ignorant that he has discovered my retreat. I have every thing to dread from a parent, who has treated me with such cruelty as you was witness of; and I again implore that you will save me from his hands."

La Motte stood fixed in thought, and Adeline continued her endeavours to interest his pity. "What reason have you to suppose, or, rather, how have you learned, that your father pursues you?" The question confused Adeline, who blushed to acknowledge that she had overheard his discourse, and disdained to invent, or utter a falsity: at length she confessed the truth. The countenance of La Motte instantly changed to a savage fierceness, and, sharply rebuking her for a conduct, to which she had been rather tempted by chance, than prompted by design, he inquired what she had overheard, that could so much alarm her. She faithfully repeated the substance of the incoherent sentences that had met her ear; while she spoke, he regarded her with a fixed attention. "And was this all you heard? Is it from these few words that you draw such a positive conclusion? Examine them, and you will find they do not justify it."

She now perceived, what the fervor of her fears had not permitted her to observe before, that the words, unconnectedly as she heard them, imported little, and that her imagination had filled up the void in the sentences, so as to suggest the evil apprehended. Notwithstanding this, her fears were little abated. "Your apprehensions are, doubtless, now removed," resumed La Motte; "but to give you a proof of the sincerity which you have ventured to question, I will tell you they were just. You seem alarmed, and with reason. Your father has discovered your residence, and has already demanded you. It is true, that from a motive of compassion I have refused to resign you, but I have neither authority to withhold, or means to defend you. When he comes to enforce his demand, you will perceive this. Prepare yourself, therefore, for the evil, which you see is inevitable."

Adeline, for some time, could speak only by her tears. At length, with a fortitude which despair had roused, she said, "I resign myself to the will of Heaven!" La Motte gazed on her in silence, and a strong emotion appeared in his countenance. He forbore, however, to renew the discourse, and withdrew to the abbey, leaving Adeline in the avenue, absorbed in grief.

A summons to breakfast hastened her to the parlour, where she passed the morning in conversation with Madame La Motte, to whom she told all her apprehensions, and expressed all her sorrow. Pity and superficial consolation was all that Madame La Motte could offer, though apparently much affected by Adeline's discourse. Thus the hours passed heavily away, while the anxiety of Adeline continued to increase, and the moment of her fate seemed fast approaching. Dinner was scarcely over, when Adeline was surprized to see the Marquis arrive. He entered the room with his usual ease; and, apologizing for the disturbance he had occasioned on the preceding night, repeated what he had before told La Motte.

The remembrance of the conversation she had overheard, at first gave Adeline some confusion, and withdrew her mind from a sense of the evils to be apprehended from her father. The Marquis, who was, as usual, attentive to Adeline, seemed affected by her apparent indisposition, and expressed much concern for that dejection of spirits, which, notwithstanding every effort, her manner betrayed. When Madame La Motte withdrew, Adeline would have followed her, but the Marquis entreated a few moment's attention, and led her back to her seat. La Motte immediately disappeared.

Adeline knew too well what would be the purport of the Marquis's discourse, and his words soon increased the confusion which her fears had occasioned. While he was declaring the ardour of his passion in such terms, as but too often make vehemence pass for sincerity, Adeline, to whom this declaration, if honourable, was distressing, and if dishonourable, was shocking, interrupted him and thanked him for the offer of a distinction, which, with a modest, but determined air, she said she must refuse. She rose to withdraw. "Stay, too lovely Adeline!" said he, "and if compassion for my sufferings will not interest you in my favour, allow a consideration of your own dangers to do so. Monsieur La Motte has informed me of your misfortunes, and of the evil that now threatens you; accept from me the protection which he cannot afford."

Adeline continued to move towards the door, when the Marquis threw himself at her feet, and, seizing her hand, impressed it with kisses. She struggled to disengage herself. "Hear me, charming Adeline! hear me," cried the Marquis; "I exist but for you. Listen to my entreaties and my fortune shall be yours. Do not drive me to despair by ill-judged rigour, or, because" —

"My Lord," interrupted Adeline, with an air of ineffable dignity, and still affecting to believe his proposal honourable, "I am sensible of the generosity of your conduct, and also flattered by the distinction you offer me. I will, therefore, say something more than is necessary to a bare expression of the denial which I must continue to give. I can not bestow my heart. You can not obtain more than my esteem, to which, indeed, nothing can so much contribute as a forbearance from any similar offers in future."

She again attempted to go, but the Marquis prevented her, and, after some hesitation, again urged his suit, though in terms that would no longer allow her to misunderstand him. Tears swelled into her eyes, but she endeavoured to check them, and with a look, in which grief and indignation seemed to struggle for pre-eminence, she said, "My Lord, this is unworthy of reply, let me pass."

For a moment, he was awed by the dignity of her manner, and he threw himself at her feet to implore forgiveness. But she waved her hand in silence and hurried from the room. When she reached her chamber, she locked the door, and, sinking into a chair, yielded to the sorrow that pressed at her heart. And it was not the least of her sorrow, to suspect that La Motte was unworthy of her confidence; for it was almost impossible that he could be ignorant of the real designs of the Marquis. Madame La Motte, she believed, was imposed upon by a specious pretence of honourable attachment; and thus was she spared the pang which a doubt of her integrity would have added.

She threw a trembling glance upon the prospect around her. On one side was her father, whose cruelty had already been too plainly manifested; and on the other, the Marquis pursuing her with insult and vicious passion. She resolved to acquaint Madame La Motte with the purport of the late conversation, and, in the hope of her protection and sympathy, she wiped away her tears, and was leaving the room just as Madame La Motte entered it. While Adeline related what had passed, her friend wept, and appeared to suffer great agitation. She endeavoured to comfort her, and promised to use her influence in persuading La Motte to prohibit the addresses of the Marquis. "You know, my dear," added Madame, "that our present circumstances oblige us to preserve terms with the Marquis, and you will, therefore, suffer as little resentment to appear in your manner towards him as possible; conduct yourself with your usual ease in his presence, and I doubt not this affair will pass over, without subjecting you to farther solicitation."

"Ah, Madam!" said Adeline, "how hard is the task you assign me! I entreat you that I may never more be subjected to the humiliation of being in his presence, that, whenever he visits the abbey, I may be suffered to remain in my chamber."

"This," said Madame La Motte, "I would most readily consent to, would our situation permit it. But you well know our asylum in this abbey depends upon the good-will of the Marquis, which we must not wantonly lose; and surely such a conduct as you propose would endanger this. Let us use milder measures, and we shall preserve his friendship, without subjecting you to any serious evil. Appear with your usual complacence: the task is not so difficult as you imagine."

Adeline sighed. "I obey you, Madam," said she; "it is my duty to do so; but I may be pardoned for saying — it is with extreme reluctance." Madame La Motte promised to go immediately to her husband, and Adeline departed, though not convinced of her safety, yet somewhat more at ease.

She soon after saw the Marquis depart, and, as there now appeared to be no obstacle to the return of Madame La Motte, she expected her with extreme impatience. After thus waiting near an hour in her chamber, she was at length summoned to the parlour, and there found Monsieur La Motte alone. He arose upon her entrance, and for some minutes paced the room in silence. He then seated himself, and addressed her: "What you have mentioned to Madame La Motte," said he, "would give me much concern, did I consider the behaviour of the Marquis in a light so serious as she does. I know that young ladies are apt to misconstrue the unmeaning gallantry of fashionable manners, and you, Adeline, can never be too cautious in distinguishing between a levity of this kind, and a more serious address."

Adeline was surprized and offended that La Motte should think so lightly both of her understanding and disposition as his speech implied. "Is it possible, Sir," said she, "that you have been apprized of the Marquis's conduct?"

"It is very possible, and very certain," replied La Motte with some asperity; "and very possible, also, that I may see this affair with a judgement less discoloured by prejudice than you do. But, however, I shall not dispute this point. I shall only request, that, since you are acquainted with the emergency of my circumstances, you will conform to them, and not, by an ill-timed resentment, expose me to the enmity of the Marquis. He is now my friend, and it is necessary to my safety that he should continue such; but if I suffer any part of my family to treat him with rudeness, I must expect to see him my enemy. You may surely treat him with complaisance." Adeline thought the term rudeness a harsh one, as La Motte applied it, but she forebore from any expression of displeasure. "I could have wished, Sir," said she, "for the privilege of retiring whenever the Marquis appeared; but since you believe this conduct would affect your interest, I ought to submit."

"This prudence and good-will delight me," said La Motte, "and since you wish to serve me, know that you cannot more effectually do it, than by treating the Marquis as a friend." The word friend, as it stood connected with the Marquis, sounded dissonantly to Adeline's ear; she hesitated and looked at La Motte. "As your friend, Sir," said she; "I will endeavour to" — treat him as mine, she would have said, but she found it impossible to finish the sentence. She entreated his protection from the power of her father.

"What protection I can afford is your's," said La Motte, "but you know how destitute I am both of the right and the means of resisting him, and also how much I require protection myself. Since he has discovered your retreat, he is probably not ignorant of the circumstances which detain me here, and if I oppose him, he may betray me to the officers of the law, as the surest method of obtaining possession of you. We are encompassed with dangers," continued La Motte; "would I could see any method of extricating ourselves!"

"Quit this abbey," said Adeline, and seek an asylum in Switzerland or Germany; you will then be freed from farther obligation to the Marquis and from the persecution you dread. Pardon me for thus offering advice, which is certainly, in some degree, prompted by a sense of my own safety, but which, at the same time, seems to afford the only means of ensuring your's."

"Your plan is reasonable," said La Motte, "had I money to execute it. As it is I must be contented to remain here, as little known as possible, and defending myself by making those who know me my friends. Chiefly I must endeavour to preserve the favour of the Marquis. He may do much, should your father even pursue desperate measures. But why do I talk thus? Your father may ere this have commenced these measures, and the effects of his vengeance may now be hanging over my head. My regard for you, Adeline, has exposed me to this; had I resigned you to his will, I should have remained secure."

Adeline was so much affected by this instance of La Motte's kindness, which she could not doubt, that she was unable to express her sense of it. When she could speak, she uttered her gratitude in the most lively terms. "Are you sincere in these expressions?" said La Motte.

"Is it possible I can be less than sincere?" replied Adeline, weeping at the idea of ingratitude. — "Sentiments are easily pronounced," said La Motte, "though they may have no connection with the heart; I believe them to be sincere so far only as they influence our actions."

"What mean you, Sir?" said Adeline with surprize.

"I mean to inquire, whether, if an opportunity should ever offer of thus proving your gratitude, you would adhere to your sentiments?"

"Name one that I shall refuse," said Adeline with energy.

"If, for instance, the Marquis should hereafter avow a serious passion for you, and offer you his hand, would no petty resentment, no lurking prepossession for some more happy lover prompt you to refuse it?"

Adeline blushed and fixed her eyes on the ground. "You have, indeed, Sir, named the only means I should reject of evincing my sincerity. The Marquis I can never love, nor, to speak sincerely, ever esteem. I confess the peace of one's whole life is too much to sacrifice even to gratitude." — La Motte looked displeased. "'Tis as I thought," said he; "these delicate sentiments make a fine appearance in speech, and render the person who utters them infinitely amiable; but bring them to the test of action, and they dissolve into air, leaving only the wreck of vanity behind."

This unjust sarcasm brought tears to her eyes. "Since your safety, Sir, depends upon my conduct," said she, resign me to my father. I am willing to return to him, since my stay here must involve you in new misfortune. Let me not prove myself unworthy of the protection I have hitherto experienced, by preferring my own welfare to yours. When I am gone, you will have no reason to apprehend the Marquis's displeasure, which you may probably incur if I stay here: for I feel it impossible that I could even consent to receive his addresses, however honourable were his views."

La Motte seemed hurt and alarmed. "This must not be," said he; "let us not harrass ourselves by stating possible evils, and then, to avoid them, fly to those which are certain. No, Adeline, though you are ready to sacrifice yourself to my safety. I will not suffer you to do so. I will not yield you to your father, but upon compulsion. Be satisfied, therefore, upon this point. The only return I ask, is a civil deportment towards the Marquis."

"I will endeavour to obey you, Sir," said Adeline. — Madame La Motte now entered the room, and this conversation ceased. Adeline passed the evening in melancholy thoughts, and retired, as soon as possible, to her chamber, eager to seek in sleep a refuge from sorrow.

CHAPTER 9

"Full many a melancholy night
He watched the slow return of light,
And sought the powers of sleep;
To spread a momentary calm
O'er his sad couch, and in the balm
Of bland oblivion's dews his burning eyes to steep."
WARTON.

The MS. found by Adeline, the preceding night, had several times occurred to her recollection in the course of the day, but she had then been either too much interested by the events of the moment, or too apprehensive of interruption, to attempt a perusal of it. She now took it from the drawer in which it had been deposited, and, intending only to look cursorily over the few first pages, sat down with it by her bed side.

She opened it with an eagerness of inquiry, which the discoloured and almost obliterated ink but slowly gratified. The first words on the page were entirely lost, but those that appeared to commence the narrative were as follows:

> "O! ye, whoever ye are, whom chance, or misfortune, may hereafter conduct to this spot — to ye I speak — to ye reveal the story of my wrongs, and ask ye to avenge them. Vain hope! yet it imparts some comfort to believe it possible that what I now write may one day meet the eye of a fellow creature; that the words, which tell my sufferings, may one day draw pity from the feeling heart.
>
> "Yet stay your tears — your pity now is useless: long since have the pangs of misery ceased; the voice of complaining is passed away. It is weakness to wish for compassion which cannot be felt till I shall sink in the repose of death, and taste, I hope, the happiness of eternity!
>
> "Know then, that on the night of the twelfth of October, in the year 1642, I was arrested on the road to Caux, and on the very spot where a column is erected to the memory of the immortal Henry, by four ruffians, who, after disabling my servant, bore me through wilds and woods to this abbey. Their demeanour was not that of common banditti, and I soon perceived they were employed by a superior power to perpetrate some dreadful purpose. Entreaties and bribes were vainly offered them to discover their employer and abandon their design: they would not reveal even the least circumstance of their intentions.
>
> "But when, after a long journey, they arrived at this edifice, their base employer was at once revealed, and his horrid scheme but too well understood. What a moment was that! All the thunders of Heaven seemed launched at this defenceless head! O fortitude! nerve my heart to" —

Adeline's light was now expiring in the socket, and the paleness of the ink, so feebly shone upon, baffled her efforts to discriminate the letters: it was impossible to procure a light from below, without discovering that she was yet up; a circumstance, which would excite surprize and lead to explanations, such as she did not wish to enter upon. Thus compelled to suspend the inquiry, which so many attendant circumstances had rendered awfully interesting, she retired to her humble bed.

What she had read of the MS. awakened a dreadful interest in the fate of the writer, and called up terrific images to her mind. "In these apartments!" — said she, and she shuddered and closed her eyes. At length, she heard Madame La Motte enter her chamber, and the phantoms of fear beginning to dissipate, left her to repose.

In the morning, she was awakened by Madame La Motte, and found, to her disappointment, that she had slept so much beyond her usual time, as to be unable to renew the perusal of the MS. — La Motte appeared uncommonly gloomy, and Madame wore an air of melancholy, which Adeline attributed to the concern she felt for her. Breakfast was scarcely over, when the sound of horses feet announced the arrival of a stranger; and Adeline, from the oriel recess of the hall, saw the Marquis alight. She retreated with precipitation, and, forgetting the request of La Motte, was hastening to her chamber; but the Marquis was already in the hall, and seeing her leaving it, turned to La Motte with a look of inquiry. La Motte called her back, and by a frown too intelligent, reminded her of her promise. She summoned all her spirits to her aid, but advanced, notwithstanding, in visible emotion, while the Marquis addressed her as usual, the same easy gaiety playing upon his countenance and directing his manner.

Adeline was surprized and shocked at this careless confidence, which, however, by awakening her pride, communicated to her an air of dignity that abashed him. He spoke with hesitation, and frequently appeared abstracted from the subject of discourse. At length arising, he begged Adeline would favour him with a few moments conversation. Monsieur and Madame La Motte were now leaving the room, when Adeline, turning to the Marquis, told him, "she would not hear any conversation, except in the presence of her friends." But she said it in vain, for they were gone; and La Motte, as he withdrew, expressed by his looks how much an attempt to follow would displease him.

She sat for some time in silence, and trembling expectation. "I am sensible," said the Marquis at length, "that the conduct to which the ardour of my passion lately betrayed me, has injured me in your opinion, and that you will not easily restore me to your esteem; but, I trust, the offer which I now make you, both of my title and fortune, will sufficiently prove the sincerity of my attachment, and atone for the transgression which love only prompted."

After this specimen of common place verbosity, which the Marquis seemed to consider as a prelude to triumph, he attempted to impress a kiss upon the hand of Adeline, who, withdrawing it hastily, said, "You are already, my Lord, acquainted with my sentiments upon this subject, and it is almost unnecessary for me now to repeat, that I cannot accept the honour you offer me."

"Explain yourself, lovely Adeline! I am ignorant that till now, I ever made you this offer."

"Most true, Sir," said Adeline, "and you do well to remind me of this, since, after having heard your former proposal, I can listen for a moment to any other." She rose to quit the room. "Stay, Madam," said the Marquis, with a look, in which offended pride struggled to conceal itself; "do not suffer an extravagant resentment to operate against your true interests; recollect the dangers that surround you, and consider the value of an offer, which may afford you at least an honourable asylum."

"My misfortune, my Lord, whatever they are, I have never obtruded upon you; you will, therefore, excuse my observing, that your present mention of them conveys a much greater appearance of insult than compassion." The Marquis, though with evident confusion, was going to reply; but Adeline would not be detained, and retired to her chamber. Destitute as she was, her heart revolted from the proposal of the Marquis, and she determined never to accept it. To her dislike of his general disposition, and the aversion excited by his late offer, was added, indeed, the influence of a prior attachment, and of a remembrance, which she found it impossible to erase from her heart.

The Marquis stayed to dine, and, in consideration of La Motte, Adeline appeared at table, where the former gazed upon her with such frequent and silent earnestness, that her distress became insupportable, and when the cloth was drawn, she instantly retired. Madame La Motte soon followed, and it was not till evening that she had an opportunity of returning to the MS. When Monsieur and Madame La Motte were in their chamber, and all was still, she drew forth the narrative, and, trimming her lamp, sat down to read as follows:

> "The ruffians unbound me from my horse, and led me through the hall up the spiral staircase of the abbey: resistance was useless, but I looked around in the hope of seeing some person less obdurate than the men who brought me hither; some one who might be sensible to pity, and capable, at least, of civil treatment. I looked in vain; no person appeared: and this circumstance confirmed my worst apprehensions. The secrecy of the business foretold a horrible conclusion. Having passed some chambers, they stopped in one hung with old tapestry. I inquired why we did not go on, and was told, I should soon know.
>
> "At that moment, I expected to see the instrument of death uplifted, and silently recommended myself to God. But death was not then designed for me; they raised the arras, and discovered a door, which they then opened. Seizing my arms, they led me through a suite of dismal chambers beyond. Having reached the farthest of these, they again stopped: the horrid gloom of the place seemed congenial to murder, and inspired deadly thoughts. Again I looked round for the instrument of destruction, and again I was respited. I supplicated to know what was designed me; it was now unnecessary to ask who was the author of the design. They were silent to my question, but at length told me, this chamber was my prison. Having said this, and set down a jug of water, they left the room, and I heard the door barred upon me.
>
> "O sound of despair! O moment of unutterable anguish! The pang of death itself is, surely, not superior to that I then suffered. Shut out from day, from friends, from life — for such I must foretell it — in the prime of my years, in the height of my transgressions, and left to imagine horrors more terrible than any, perhaps, which certainty could give — I sink beneath the" —
>
> Here several pages of the manuscript were decayed with damp and totally illegible. With much difficulty Adeline made out the following lines: "Three days have now passed in solitude and silence: the horrors of death are ever before my eyes, let me endeavour to prepare for the dreadful change! When I awake in the morning I think I shall not live to see another night; and, when night returns, that I must never more unclose my eyes on morning. Why am I brought hither — why confined thus rigorously — but for death! Yet what action of my life has deserved this at the hand of a fellow creature? — Of —
>
> "O my children! O friends far distant! I shall never see you more — never more receive the parting look of kindness — never bestow a parting blessing! — Ye know not my wretched state — alas! ye cannot know it by human means. Ye believe me happy, or ye would fly to my relief. I know that what I now write cannot avail me, yet there is comfort in pouring forth my griefs; and I bless that man, less savage than his fellows, who has supplied me these means of recording them. Alas! he knows full well, that from this indulgence he has nothing to fear. My pen can call no friends to succour me, nor reveal my danger ere it is too late. O! ye, who may hereafter read what I now write, give a tear to my sufferings: I have wept often for the distresses of my fellow creatures!"

Adeline paused. Here the wretched writer appealed directly to her heart; he spoke in the energy of truth, and, by a strong illusion of fancy, it seemed as if his past sufferings were at this moment present. She was for some time unable to proceed, and sat in musing sorrow. "In these very apartments," said she, "this poor sufferer was confined — here he" — Adeline started, and thought she heard a sound; but the stillness of night was undisturbed. — "In these very chambers," said she, "these lines were written — these lines, from which he then derived a comfort in believing they would hereafter be read by some pitying eye: this time is now come. Your miseries, O injured being! are lamented, where they were endured. Here, where you suffered, I weep for your sufferings!"

Her imagination was now strongly impressed, and to her distempered senses the suggestions of a bewildered mind appeared with the force of reality. Again she started and listened, and thought she heard "Here" distinctly repeated by a whisper immediately behind her. The terror of the thought, however, was but momentary, she knew it could not be; convinced that her fancy had deceived her, she took up the MS. and again began to read.

> “For what am I reserved! Why this delay? If I am to die — why not quickly? Three weeks have I now passed within these walls, during which time, no look of pity has softened my afflictions; no voice, save my own, has met my ear. The countenances of the ruffians who attend me, are stern and inflexible, and their silence is obstinate. This stillness is dreadful! O! ye, who have known what it is to live in the depths of solitude, who have passed your dreary days without one sound to cheer you; ye, and ye only, can tell what now I feel; and ye may know how much I would endure to hear the accents of a human voice.
>
> “O dire extremity! O state of living death! What dreadful stillness! All around me is dead; and do I really exist, or am I but a statue? Is this a vision? Are these things real? Alas, I am bewildered! — this deathlike and perpetual silence — this dismal chamber — the dread of farther sufferings have disturbed my fancy. O for some friendly breast to lay my weary head on! some cordial accents to revive my soul!
>
> “I write by stealth. He who furnished me with the means, I fear, has suffered for some symptoms of pity he may have discovered for me; I have not seen him for several days: perhaps he is inclined to help me, and for that reason is forbid to come. O that hope! but how vain. Never more must I quit these walls while life remains. Another day is gone, and yet I live; at this time tomorrow night my sufferings may be sealed in death. I will continue my journal nightly, till the hand that writes shall be stopped by death: when the journal ceases, the reader will know I am no more. Perhaps, these are the last lines I shall ever write”

Adeline paused, while her tears fell fast. “Unhappy man!” she exclaimed, “and was there no pitying soul to save thee! Great God! thy ways are wonderful!” While she sat musing, her fancy, which now wandered in the regions of terror, gradually subdued reason. There was a glass before her upon the table, and she feared to raise her looks towards it, lest some other face than her own should meet her eyes: other dreadful ideas, and strange images of fantastic thought now crossed her mind.

A hollow sigh seemed to pass near her. “Holy Virgin, protect me!” cried she, and threw a fearful glance round the room; “this is surely something more than fancy.” Her fears so far overcame her, that she was several times upon the point of calling up part of the family, but unwillingness to disturb them, and a dread of ridicule, withheld her. She was also afraid to move and almost to breathe. As she listened to the wind, that murmured at the casements of her lonely chamber, she again thought she heard a sigh. Her imagination refused any longer the controul of reason, and, turning her eyes, a figure, whose exact form she could not distinguish, appeared to pass along an obscure part of the chamber: a dreadful chillness came over her, and she sat fixed in her chair. At length a deep sigh somewhat relieved her oppressed spirits, and her senses seemed to return.

All remaining quiet, after some time she began to question whether her fancy had not deceived her, and she so far conquered her terror as to desist from calling Madame La Motte: her mind was, however, so much disturbed, that she did not venture to trust herself that night again with the MS.; but, having spent some time in prayer, and in endeavouring to compose her spirits, she retired to bed.

When she awoke in the morning, the cheerful sun-beams played upon the casements, and dispelled the illusions of darkness: her mind, soothed and invigorated by sleep, rejected the mystic and turbulent promptings of imagination. She arose refreshed and thankful; but, upon going down to breakfast, this transient gleam of peace fled upon the appearance of the Marquis, whose frequent visits at the abbey, after what had passed, not only displeased, but alarmed her. She saw that he was determined to persevere in addressing her, and the boldness and insensibility of this conduct, while it excited her indignation, increased her disgust. In pity to La Motte, she endeavoured to conceal these emotions, though she now thought that he required too much from her complaisance, and began seriously to consider how she might avoid the necessity of continuing it. The Marquis behaved to her with the most respectful attention; but Adeline was silent and reserved, and seized the first opportunity of withdrawing.

As she passed up the spiral staircase, Peter entered the hall below, and, seeing Adeline, he stopped and looked earnestly at her: she did not observe him, but he called her softly, and she then saw him make a signal as if he had something to communicate. In the next instant La Motte opened the door of the vaulted room, and Peter hastily disappeared. She proceeded to her chamber, ruminating upon this signal, and the cautious manner in which Peter had given it.

But her thoughts soon returned to their wonted subjects. Three days were now passed, and she heard no intelligence of her father; she began to hope that he had relented from the violent measures hinted at by La Motte, and that he meant to pursue a milder plan: but when she considered his character, this appeared improbable, and she relapsed into her former fears. Her residence at the abbey was now become painful, from the perseverance of the Marquis, and the conduct which La Motte obliged her to adopt; yet she could not think without dread of quitting it to return to her father.

The image of Theodore often intruded upon her busy thoughts, and brought with it a pang, which his strange departure occasioned. She had a confused notion, that his fate was somehow connected with her own; and her struggles to prevent the remembrance of him, served only to shew how much her heart was his.

To divert her thoughts from these subjects, and gratify the curiosity so strongly excited on the preceding night, she now took up the MS. but was hindered from opening it by the entrance of Madame La Motte, who came to tell her the

Marquis was gone. They passed their morning together in work and general conversation; La Motte not appearing till dinner, when he said little, and Adeline less. She asked him, however, if he had heard from her father? “I have not heard from him,” said La Motte; but there is good reason, as I am informed by the Marquis, to believe he is not far off.”

Adeline was shocked, yet she was able to reply with becoming firmness. “I have already, Sir, involved you too much in my distress, and now see that resistance will destroy you, without serving me; I am, therefore, contented to return to my father, and thus spare you farther calamity.”

“This is a rash determination,” replied La Motte, “and if you pursue it, I fear you will severely repent. I speak to you as a friend, Adeline, and desire you will endeavour to listen to me without prejudice. The Marquis, I find, has offered you his hand. I know not which circumstance most excites my surprize, that a man of his rank and consequence should solicit a marriage with a person without fortune, or ostensible connections; or that a person so circumstanced should even for a moment reject the advantages thus offered her. You weep, Adeline, let me hope that you are convinced of the absurdity of this conduct, and will no longer trifle with your good fortune. The kindness I have shewn you must convince you of my regard, and that I have no motive for offering you this advice but your advantage. It is necessary, however, to say, that, should your father not insist upon your removal, I know not how long my circumstances may enable me to afford even the humble pittance you receive here. Still you are silent.”

The anguish which this speech excited, suppressed her utterance, and she continued to weep. At length she said, Suffer me, Sir, to go back to my father; I should, indeed, make an ill return for the kindness you mention, could I wish to stay, after what you now tell me; and to accept the Marquis, I feel to be impossible.” The remembrance of Theodore arose to her mind, and she wept aloud.

La Motte sat for some time musing. “Strange infatuation,” said he; “is it possible that you can persist in this heroism of romance, and prefer a father so inhuman as yours, to the Marquis de Montalt! A destiny so full of danger to a life of splendour and delight!”

“Pardon me,” said Adeline, “a marriage with the Marquis would be splendid, but never happy. His character excites my aversion, and I entreat, Sir, that he may no more be mentioned.”

❦

CHAPTER 10

"Nor are those empty hearted, whose low sound
Reverbs no hollowness."
Lear.

The conversation related in the last chapter was interrupted by the entrance of Peter, who, as he left the room, looked significantly at Adeline and almost beckoned. She was anxious to know what he meant, and soon after went into the hall, where she found him loitering. The moment he saw her, he made a sign of silence and beckoned her into the recess. "Well, Peter, what is it you would say?" said Adeline.

"Hush, Ma'mselle; for Heaven's sake speak lower: if we should be overheard, we are all blown up." — Adeline begged him to explain what he meant. "Yes, Ma'mselle, that is what I have wanted all day long. I have watched and watched for an opportunity, and looked and looked, till I was afraid my master himself would see me: but all would not do; you would not understand."

Adeline entreated he would be quick. "Yes, Ma'am, but I'm so afraid we shall be seen; but I would do much to serve such a good young lady, for I could not bear to think of what threatened you, without telling you of it."

"For God's sake, said Adeline, speak quickly, or we shall be interrupted."

"Well, then; but you must first promise by the Holy Virgin never to say it was I that told you, My master would" —

"I do, I do!" said Adeline.

"Well, then — on Monday evening as I— hark! did not I hear a step? do, Ma'mselle, just step this way to the cloisters. I would not for the world we should be seen. I'll go out at the hall door and you can go through the passage. I would not for the world we should be seen." — Adeline was much alarmed by Peter's words, and hurried to the cloisters. He quickly appeared, and, looking cautiously round, resumed his discourse. "As I was saying, Ma'mselle, Monday night, when the Marquis slept here, you know he sat up very late, and I can guess, perhaps, the reason of that. Strange things came out, but it is not my business to tell all I think."

"Pray do speak to the purpose," said Adeline impatiently, "what is this danger which you say threatens me? Be quick, or we shall be observed."

"Danger enough, Ma'mselle," replied Peter, "if you knew all, and when you do, what will it signify, for you can't help yourself. But that's neither here nor there: I was resolved to tell you, though I may repent it."

"Or rather you are resolved not to tell me," said Adeline; "for you have made no progress towards it. But what do you mean? You was speaking of the Marquis."

"Hush, Ma'am, not so loud. The Marquis, as I said, sat up very late and my master sat up with him. One of his men went to bed in the oak room, and the other stayed to undress his Lord. So as we were sitting together — Lord have mercy! it made my hair stand on end! I tremble yet. So as we were sitting together, — but as sure as I live yonder is my master: I caught a glimpse of him between the trees, if he sees me it is all over with us. I'll tell you another time." So saying, he hurried into the abbey, leaving Adeline in a state of alarm, curiosity, and vexation. She walked out into the forest, ruminating upon Peter's words, and endeavouring to guess to what they alluded; there Madame La Motte joined her, and they conversed on various topics till they reached the abbey.

Adeline watched in vain through that day for an opportunity of speaking with Peter. While he waited at supper, she occasionally observed his countenance with great anxiety, hoping it might afford her some degree of intelligence on the subject of her fears. When she retired, Madame La Motte accompanied her to her chamber, and continued to converse with her for a considerable time, so that she had no means of obtaining an interview with Peter. — Madame La Motte appeared to labour under some great affliction, and when Adeline, noticing this, entreated to know the cause of her dejection, tears started into her eyes, and she abruptly left the room.

This behaviour of Madame La Motte concurred with Peter's discourse, to alarm Adeline, who sat pensively upon her bed, given up to reflection, till she was roused by the sound of a clock which stood in the room below, and which now struck twelve. She was preparing for rest, when she recollected the MS. and was unable to conclude the night without reading it. The first words she could distinguish were the following: Again I return to this poor consolation — again I have been permitted to see another day. It is now midnight! My solitary lamp burns beside me; the time is awful, but to me the silence of noon is as the silence of midnight: a deeper gloom is all in which they differ. The still, unvarying hours are numbered only by my sufferings! Great God! when shall I be released!

But whence this strange confinement? I have never injured him. If death is designed me, why this delay; and for what but death am I brought hither? This abbey — alas!" — Here the MS. was again illegible, and for several pages Adeline could only make out disjointed sentences.

"O bitter draught! when, when shall I have rest! O my friends! will none of ye fly to aid me; will none of ye avenge my sufferings? Ah! when it is too late — when I am gone for ever, ye will endeavour to avenge them.

Once more is night returned to me. Another day has passed in solitude and misery. I have climbed to the casement, thinking the view of nature would refresh my soul, and somewhat enable me to support these afflictions. Alas! even this small comfort is denied me, the windows open towards other parts of this abbey, and admit only a portion of that day which I must never more fully behold. Laft night! laft night! O scene of horror!"

Adeline shuddered. She feared to read the coming sentence, yet curiosity prompted her to proceed. Still she paused: an unaccountable dread came over her. "Some horrid deed has been done here," said she; "the reports of the peasants are true. Murder has been committed." The idea shrilled her with horror. She recollected the dagger which had impeded her steps in the secret chamber, and this circumstance served to confirm her most terrible conjectures. She wished to examine it, but it lay in one of these chambers, and she feared to go in quest of it.

"Wretched, wretched victim!" she exclaimed, "could no friend rescue thee from destruction! O that I had been near! yet what could I have done to save thee? Alas! nothing. I forget that even now, perhaps, I am like thee abandoned to dangers, from which I have no friend to succour me. Too surely I guess the author of thy miseries!" She stopped, and thought she heard a sigh, such as, on the preceding night, had passed along the chamber. Her blood was chilled and she sat motionless. The lonely situation of her room, remote from the rest of the family, (for she was now in her old apartment, from which Madame La Motte had removed) who were almost beyond call, struck so forcibly upon her imagination, that she with difficulty preserved herself from fainting. She sat for a considerable time, but all was still. When she was somewhat recovered, her first design was to alarm the family; but farther reflection again withheld her.

She endeavoured to compose her spirits, and addressed a short prayer to that Being who had hitherto protected her in every danger. While she was thus employed, her mind gradually became elevated and re-assured; a sublime complacency filled her heart, and she sat down once more to pursue the narrative.

Several lines that immediately followed were obliterated. —

> "He had told me I should not be permitted to live long, not more than three days, and bade me chuse whether I would die by poison or the sword. O the agonies of that moment! Great God! thou seest my sufferings! I often viewed, with a momentary hope of escaping, the high grated windows of my prison — all things within the compass of possibility I was resolved to try, and with an eager desperation I climbed towards the casements, but my foot slipped, and falling back to the floor, I was stunned by the blow. On recovering, the first sounds I heard were the steps of a person entering my prison. A recollection of the past returned, and deplorable was my condition. I shuddered at what was to come. The same man approached; he looked at me at first with pity, but his countenance soon recovered its natural ferocity. Yet he did not then come to execute the purposes of his employer: I am reserved to another day — Great God, thy will be done!"

Adeline could not go on. All the circumstances that seemed to corroborate the fate of this unhappy man, crowded upon her mind. The reports concerning the abbey — the dreams, which had forerun her discovery of the private apartments — the singular manner in which she had found the MS. and the apparition, which she now believed she had really seen. She blamed herself for having not yet mentioned the discovery of the manuscript and chambers to La Motte, and resolved to delay the disclosure no longer than the following morning. The immediate cares that had occupied her mind, and a fear of losing the manuscript before she had read it, had hitherto kept her silent.

Such a combination of circumstances she believed could only be produced by some supernatural power, operating for the retribution of the guilty. These reflections filled her mind with a degree of awe, which the loneliness of the large old chamber in which she sat, and the hour of the night, soon heightened into terror. She had never been superstitious, but circumstances so uncommon had hitherto conspired in this affair, that she could not believe them accidental. Her imagination, wrought upon by these reflections, again became sensible to every impression, she feared to look round, lest she should again see some dreadful phantom, and she almost fancied she heard voices swell in the storm, which now shook the fabric.

Still she tried to command her feelings so as to avoid disturbing the family, but they became so painful, that even the dread of La Motte's ridicule had hardly power to prevent her quitting the chamber. Her mind was now in such a state, that she found it impossible to pursue the story in the MS. though, to avoid the tortures of suspense, she had attempted it. She laid it down again, and tried to argue herself into composure. "What have I to fear?" said she, "I am at least innocent, and I shall not be punished for the crime of another."

The violent gust of wind that now rushed through the whole suit of apartments, shook the door that led from her late bedchamber to the private rooms so forcibly, that Adeline, unable to remain longer in doubt, ran to see from whence the noise issued. The arras, which concealed the door, was violently agitated, and she stood for a moment observing it in indescribable terror, till believing it was swayed by the wind, she made a sudden effort to overcome her feelings, and was stooping to raise it. At that instant, she thought she heard a voice. She stopped and listened, but every thing was still; yet apprehension so far overcame her, that she had no power, either to examine, or to leave the chambers.

In a few moments the voice returned, she was now convinced she had not been deceived, for, though low, she heard it distinctly, and was almost sure it repeated her own name. So much was her fancy affected, that she even thought it was the same voice she had heard in her dreams. This conviction entirely subdued the small remains of her courage, and, sinking into a chair, she lost all recollection.

How long she remained in this state she knew not, but when she recovered, she exerted all her strength, and reached the winding staircase, where she called aloud. No one heard her, and she hastened, as fast as her feebleness would permit, to the chamber of Madame La Motte. She tapped gently at the door, and was answered by Madame, who was alarmed at being awakened at so unusual an hour, and believed that some danger threatened her husband. When she understood that it was Adeline, and that she was unwell, she quickly came to her relief. The terror that was yet visible in Adeline's countenance excited her inquiries, and the occasion of it was explained to her.

Madame was so much discomposed by the relation that she called La Motte from his bed, who, more angry at being disturbed than interested for the agitation he witnessed, reproved Adeline for suffering her fancies to overcome her reason. She now mentioned the discovery she had made of the inner chambers and the manuscript, circumstances, which roused the attention of La Motte so much, that he desired to see the MS. and resolved to go immediately to the apartments described by Adeline.

Madame La Motte endeavoured to dissuade him from his purpose; but La Motte, with whom opposition had always an effect contrary to the one designed, and who wished to throw father ridicule upon the terrors of Adeline, persisted in his intention. He called to Peter to attend with a light, and insisted that Madame La Motte and Adeline should accompany him; Madame La Motte desired to be excused, and Adeline, at first, declared she could not go; but he would be obeyed.

They ascended the tower, and entered the first chambers together, for each of the party was reluctant to be the last; in the second chamber all was quiet and in order. Adeline presented the MS. and pointed to the arras which concealed the door: La Motte lifted the arras, and opened the door; but Madame La Motte and Adeline entreated to go no farther — again he called to them to follow. All was quiet in the first chamber; he expressed his surprise that the room should so long have remained undiscovered, and was proceeding to the second, but suddenly stopped. "We will defer our examination till to-morrow," said he, "the damps of these apartments are unwholesome at any time; but they strike one more sensibly at night. I am chilled. Peter, remember to throw open the windows early in the morning, that the air may circulate."

"Lord bless your honour," said Peter, "don't you see, I can't reach them? Besides, I don't believe they are made to open; see what strong iron bars there are; the room looks, for all the world, like a prison; I suppose this is the place the people meant, when they said, nobody that had been in ever came out." La Motte, who, during this speech, had been looking attentively at the high windows, which, if he had seen them at first, he had certainly not observed; now interrupted the eloquence of Peter, and bade him carry the light before them. They all willingly quitted these chambers, and returned to the room below, where a fire was lighted, and the party remained together for some time.

La Motte, for reasons best known to himself, attempted to ridicule the discovery and fears of Adeline, till she, with a seriousness that checked him, entreated he would desist. He was silent, and soon after, Adeline, encouraged by the return of day-light, ventured to her chamber, and, for some hours, experienced the blessing of undisturbed repose.

On the following day, Adeline's first care was to obtain an interview with Peter, whom she had some hopes of seeing as she went down stairs; he, however, did not appear, and she proceeded to the sitting room, where she found La Motte, apparently much disturbed. Adeline asked him if he had looked at the MS. "I have run my eye over it," said he, "but it is so much obscured by time that it can scarcely be decyphered. It appears to exhibit a strange romantic story; and I do not wonder, that after you had suffered its terrors to impress your imagination, you fancied you saw spectres, and heard wondrous noises."

Adeline thought La Motte did not chuse to be convinced, and she, therefore, forbore reply. During breakfast, she often looked at Peter, (who waited) with anxious inquiry; and, from his countenance, was still more assured, that he had something of importance to communicate. In the hope of some conversation with him, she left the room as soon as possible, and repaired to her favourite avenue, where she had not long remained when he appeared. "God bless you! Ma'amselle," said he, "I'm sorry I frighted you so last night."

"Frighted me," said Adeline; "how was you concerned in that?"

He then informed her, that when he thought Monsieur and Madame La Motte were asleep, he had stole to her chamber door, with an intention of giving her the sequel of what he had begun in the morning; that he had called several times as loudly as he dared, but receiving no answer, he believed she was asleep, or did not chuse to speak with him, and he had, therefore, left the door. This account of the voice she had heard relieved Adeline's spirits; she was even surprised that she did not know it, till remembering the perturbation of her mind for some time preceding, this surprise disappeared.

She entreated Peter to be brief in explaining the danger with which she was threatened. "If you'll let me go on my own way, Ma'am, you'll soon know it; but if you hurry me, and ask me questions, here and there, out of their places, I don't know what I am saying."

"Be it so;" said Adeline, "only remember that we may be observed."

"Yes, Ma'amselle, I'm as much afraid of that as you are, for I believe I should be almost as ill off; however, that is neither here nor there, but I'm sure, if you stay in this old abbey another night, it will be worse for you; for, as I said before, I know all about it."

"What mean you, Peter?"

"Why, about this scheme that's going on."

"What, then, is my father?" —

"Your father," interrupted Peter; "Lord bless you, that is all fudge, to frighten you; your father, nor nobody else has ever sent after you; I dare say, he knows no more of you than the Pope does — not he." Adeline looked displeased. "You trifle," said she, "if you have any thing to tell, say it quickly; I am in haste."

"Bless you, young Lady, I meant no harm, I hope you're not angry; but I'm sure you can't deny that your father is cruel. But, as I was saying, the Marquis de Montalt likes you; and he and my master (Peter looked round) have been laying their heads together about you." Adeline turned pale — she comprehended a part of the truth, and eagerly entreated him to proceed.

"They have been laying their heads together about you. This is what Jacques, the Marquis's man, tells me: Says he, Peter, you little know what is going on — I could tell all if I chose it, but it is not for those who are trusted to tell again. I warrant now your master is close enough with you. Upon which I was piqued, and resolved to make him believe I could be trusted as well as he. Perhaps not, says I, perhaps I know as much as you, though I do not chuse to brag on't; and I winked. — Do you so? says he, then you are closer than I thought for. She is a fine girl, says he, meaning you, Ma'amselle; but she is nothing but a poor foundling after all — so it does not much signify." "I had a mind to know farther what he meant — so I did not knock him down. By seeming to know as much as he, I at last made him discover all, and he told me — but you look pale, Ma'amselle, are you ill?

"No," said Adeline, in a tremulous accent, and scarcely able to support herself, "pray proceed."

"And he told me, that the Marquis had been courting you a good while, but you would not listen to him, and had even pretended he would marry you, and all would not do. As for marriage, says I, I suppose she knows the Marchioness is alive; and I'm sure she is not one for his turn upon other terms."

"The Marchioness is really living then!" said Adeline.

"O yes, Ma'amselle! we all know that, and I thought you had known it "too." — "We shall see that, replies Jacques; at least, I believe, that our "master will outwit her." — I stared; I could not help it. — "Aye, says he, you know your master has agreed to give her up to my Lord."

"Good God! what will become of me?" exclaimed Adeline.

"Aye, Ma'amselle, I am sorry for you; but hear me out. When Jacques said this, I quite forgot myself. I'll never believe it, said I; I'll never believe my master would be guilty of such a base action: he'll not give her up, or I'm no Christian." — "Oh! said Jacques, for that matter, I thought you'd known all, else I should not have said a word about it. However, you may soon satisfy yourself by going to the parlour door, as I have done; they're in consultation about it now, I dare say."

"You need not repeat any more of this conversation," said Adeline; "but tell me the result of what you heard from the parlour."

"Why, Ma'amselle, when he said this, I took him at his word and went to the door, where, sure enough, I heard my master and the Marquis talking about you. They said a great deal, which I could make nothing of; but, at last, I heard the Marquis say, You know the terms; on these terms only will I consent to bury the past in ob — ob — oblivion — that was the word. Monsieur La Motte then told the Marquis, if he would return to the abbey upon such a night, meaning this very night, Ma'amselle, every thing should be prepared according to his wishes; Adeline shall then be yours, my Lord, said he, — you are already acquainted with her chamber."

At these words, Adeline clasped her hands and raised her eyes to Heaven in silent despair. — Peter went on. "When I heard this, I could not doubt what Jacques had said. — "Well, said he, what do you think of it now?" — Why, that my master's a rascal, says "I." — "It's well you don't think mine "one too, says he." — "Why, as for that matter, says I" — Adeline, interrupting him, inquired if he had heard any thing farther. "Just then," said Peter, "we heard Madame La Motte come out from another room, and so we made haste back to the kitchen."

"She was not present at this conversation then?" said Adeline. "No, Ma'amselle, but my master has told her of it, I warrant." Adeline was almost as much shocked by this apparent perfidy of Madame La Motte, as by a knowledge of the destruction that threatened her. After musing a few moments in extreme agitation, "Peter," said she, "you have a good heart, and feel a just indignation at your master's treachery — will you assist me to escape?"

"Ah, Ma'amselle! said he, "how can I assist you; besides, where can we go? I have no friends about here, no more than yourself."

"O!" replied Adeline, in extreme emotion, "we fly from enemies; strangers may prove friends: assist me but to escape from this forest, and you will claim my eternal gratitude: I have no fears beyond it."

"Why, as for this forest," replied Peter, "I am weary of it myself; though, when we first came, I thought it would be fine living here, at least, I thought it was very different from any life I had ever lived before. But these ghosts that haunt the abbey, I am no more a coward than other men, but I don't like them: and then there is so many strange reports abroad; and my master — I thought I could have served him to the end of the world, but now I care not how soon I leave him, for his behaviour to you, Ma'amselle."

"You consent, then, to assist me in escaping?" said Adeline with eagerness.

"Why as to that, Ma'amselle, I would willingly if I knew where to go. To be sure, I have a sister lives in Savoy, but that is a great way off: and I have saved a little money out of my wages, but that won't carry us such a long journey."

"Regard not that," said Adeline, "if I was once beyond this forest, I would then endeavour to take care of myself, and repay you for your kindness."

"O! as for that, Madam" —

"Well, well, Peter, let us consider how we may escape. This night, say you, this night — the Marquis is to return?"

"Yes, Ma'amselle, to-night, about dark. I have just thought of a scheme: My master's horses are grazing in the forest, we may take one of them, and send it back from the first stage: but how shall we avoid being seen? besides, if we go off in the day-light, he will soon pursue and overtake us; and if you stay till night, the Marquis will be come, and then there is no chance. If they miss us both at the same time too, they'll guess how it is, and set off directly. Could not you contrive to go first and wait for me till the hurly-burly's over? Then, while they're searching in the place under ground for you, I can slip away, and we should be out of their reach, before they thought of pursuing us."

Adeline agreed to the truth of all this, and was somewhat surprized at Peter's sagacity. She inquired if he knew of any place in the neighbourhood of the abbey, where she could remain concealed till he came with a horse. "Why yes, Madam, there is a place, now I think of it, where you may be safe enough, for nobody goes near: but they say it's haunted, and, perhaps, you would not like to go there." Adeline, remembering the last night, was somewhat startled at this intelligence;

but a sense of her present danger pressed again upon her mind, and overcame every other apprehension. “Where is this place?” said she, “if it will conceal me, I shall not hesitate to go.”

“It is an old tomb that stands in the thickest part of the forest about a quarter of a mile off the nearest way, and almost a mile the other. When my master used to hide himself so much in the forest, I have followed him somewhere thereabouts, but I did not find out the tomb till t’other day. However, that’s neither here nor there; if you dare venture to it, Ma’amselle, I’ll shew you the nearest way.” So saying, he pointed to a winding path on the right. Adeline, having looked round, without perceiving any person near, directed Peter to lead her to the tomb: they pursued the path, till turning into a gloomy romantic part of the forest, almost impervious to the rays of the sun, they came to the spot whither Louis had formerly traced his father.

The stillness and solemnity of the scene struck awe upon the heart of Adeline, who paused and surveyed it for some time in silence. At length, Peter led her into the interior part of the ruin, to which they descended by several steps. “Some old Abbot,” said he, “was formerly buried here, as the Marquis’s people say; and it’s like enough that he belonged to the abbey yonder. But I don’t see why he should take it in his head to walk; he was not murdered, surely?”

“I hope not,” said Adeline.

“That’s more than can be said for all that lies buried at the abbey though, and” — Adeline interrupted him; “Hark! surely, I hear a noise;” said she, “Heaven protect us from discovery!” They listened, but all was still, and they went on. Peter opened a low door, and they entered upon a dark passage, frequently obstructed by loose fragments of stone, and along which they moved with caution. “Whither “are we going?” said Adeline — “I scarcely know myself,” said Peter, for I never was so far before; but the place seems quiet enough.” Something obstructed his way; it was a door, which yielded to his hand, and discovered a kind of cell, obscurely seen by the twilight admitted through a grate above. A partial gleam shot athwart the place, leaving the greatest part of it in shadow.

Adeline sighed as she surveyed it. “This is a frightful spot,” said she, “but if it will afford me a shelter, it is a palace. Remember, Peter, that my peace and honour depend upon your faithfulness; be both discrete and resolute. In the dusk of the evening I can pass from the abbey with least danger of being observed, and in this cell I will wait your arrival. As soon as Monsieur and Madame La Motte are engaged in searching the vaults, you will bring here a horse; three knocks upon the tomb shall inform me of your arrival. For Heaven’s sake be cautious, and be punctual.”

“I will, Ma’amselle, let come what may.”

They re-ascended to the forest, and Adeline, fearful of observation, directed Peter to run first to the abbey, and invent some excuse for his absence, if he had been missed. When she was again alone, she yielded to a flood of tears, and indulged the excess of her distress. She saw herself without friends, without relations, destitute, forlorn, and abandoned to the worst of evils. Betrayed by the very persons, to whose comfort she had so long administered, whom she had loved as her protectors, and revered as her parents! These reflections touched her heart with the most afflicting sensations, and the sense of her immediate danger was for a while absorbed in the grief occasioned by a discovery of such guilt in others.

At length she roused all her fortitude, and turning towards the abbey, endeavoured to await with patience the hour of evening, and to sustain an appearance of composure in the presence of Monsieur and Madame La Motte. For the present she wished to avoid seeing either of them, doubting her ability to disguise her emotions: having reached the abbey, she, therefore, passed on to her chamber. Here she endeavoured to direct her attention to indifferent subjects, but in vain; the danger of her situation, and the severe disappointment she had received, in the character of those whom she had so much esteemed, and even loved, pressed hard upon her thoughts. To a generous mind few circumstances are more afflicting than a discovery of perfidy in those whom we have trusted, even though it may fail of any absolute inconvenience to ourselves. The behaviour of Madame La Motte in thus, by concealment, conspiring to her destruction, particularly shocked her.

“How has my imagination deceived me!” said she; “what a picture did “it draw of the goodness of the world! And must I then believe that every body is cruel and deceitful? No — let me still be deceived, and still suffer, rather than be condemned to a state of such wretched suspicion.” She now endeavoured to extenuate the conduct of Madame La Motte, by attributing it to a fear of her husband. “She dare not oppose his will,” said she, “else she would warn me of my danger, and assist me to escape from it. No — I will never believe her capable of conspiring my ruin. Terror alone keeps her silent.”

Adeline was somewhat comforted by this thought. The benevolence of her heart taught her, in this instance, to sophisticate. She perceived not, that by ascribing the conduct of Madame La Motte to terror, she only softened the degree of her guilt, imputing it to a motive less depraved, but not less selfish. She remained in her chamber till summoned to dinner, when, drying her tears, she descended with faltering steps and a palpitating heart to the parlour. When she saw La Motte, in spite of all her efforts, she trembled and grew pale: she could not behold, even with apparent indifference, the man who she knew had destined her to destruction. He observed her emotion, and inquiring if she was ill, she saw the danger to which her agitation exposed her. Fearful lest La Motte should suspect its true cause, she rallied all her spirits, and, with a look of complacency, answered she was well.

During dinner she preserved a degree of composure, that effectually concealed the varied anguish of her heart. When she looked at La Motte, terror and indignation were her predominant feelings; but when she regarded Madame La Motte, it was otherwise; gratitude for her former tenderness had long been confirmed into affection, and her heart now swelled with the bitterness of grief and disappointment. Madame La Motte appeared depressed, and said little. La Motte seemed anxious to prevent thought, by assuming a fictitious and unnatural gaiety: he laughed and talked, and threw off frequent bumpers of wine: it was the mirth of desperation. Madame became alarmed, and would have restrained him, but he persisted in his libations to Bacchus till reflection seemed to be almost overcome.

Madame La Motte, fearful that in the carelessness of the present moment he might betray himself, withdrew with Adeline to another room. Adeline recollected the happy hours she once passed with her, when confidence banished reserve, and sympathy and esteem dictated the sentiments of friendship: now those hours were gone for ever; she could no longer unbosom her griefs to Madame La Motte; no longer even esteem her. Yet, notwithstanding all the danger to which she was exposed by the criminal silence of the latter, she could not converse with her, consciously for the last time, without feeling a degree of sorrow, which wisdom may call weakness, but to which benevolence will allow a softer name.

Madame La Motte, in her conversation, appeared to labour under an almost equal oppression with Adeline: her thoughts were abstracted from the subject of discourse, and there were long and frequent intervals of silence. Adeline more than once caught her gazing with a look of tenderness upon her, and saw her eyes fill with tears. By this circumstance she was so much affected, that she was several times upon the point of throwing herself at her feet, and imploring her pity and protection. Cooler reflection shewed her the extravagance and danger of this conduct: she suppressed her emotions, but they at length compelled her to withdraw from the presence of Madame La Motte.

❦

CHAPTER 11

Thou! to whom the world unknown
With all its shadowy shapes is shown;
Who seest appall'd th' unreal scene,
While fancy lifts the veil between;
Ah, Fear! ah, frantic Fear!
I see, I see thee near!
I know thy hurry'd step, thy haggard eye!
Like thee I start, like thee disordered fly!
COLLINS.

Adeline anxiously watched from her chamber window the sun set behind the distant hills, and the time of her departure draw nigh: it set with uncommon splendour, and threw a fiery gleam athwart the woods, and upon some scattered fragments of the ruins, which she could not gaze upon with indifference. “Never, probably, again shall I see the sun sink below those hills,” said she, “or illumine this scene! Where shall I be when next it sets — where this time to-morrow? sunk, perhaps, in misery!” She wept to the thought. “A few hours,” resumed Adeline, “and the Marquis will arrive — a few hours, and this abbey will be a scene of confusion and tumult: every eye will be in search of me, every recess will be explored.” These reflections inspired her with new terror, and increased her impatience to be gone.

Twilight gradually came on, and she now thought it sufficiently dark to venture forth; but, before she went, she kneeled down and addressed herself to Heaven. She implored support and protection, and committed herself to the care of the God of mercies. Having done this, she quitted her chamber, and passed with cautious steps down the winding staircase. No person appeared, and she proceeded through the door of the tower into the forest. She looked around; the gloom of the evening obscured every object.

With a trembling heart she sought the path pointed out by Peter, which led to the tomb; having found it, she passed along forlorn and terrified. Often did she start as the breeze shook the light leaves of the trees, or as the bat fli[t]ted by, gamboling in the twilight; and often, as she looked back towards the abbey, thought she distinguished, amid the deepening gloom, the figures of men Having proceeded some way, she suddenly heard the feet of horses, and soon after a sound of voices, among which she distinguished that of the Marquis: they seemed to come from the quarter she was approaching, and evidently advanced. Terror for some minutes arrested her steps; she stood in a state of dreadful hesitation: to proceed was to run into the hands of the Marquis; to return was to fall into the power of La Motte.

After remaining for some time uncertain whither to fly, the sounds suddenly took a different direction, and wheeled towards the abbey. Adeline had a short cessation of terror. She now understood that the Marquis had passed this spot only in his way to the abbey, and she hastened to secrete herself in the ruin. At length, after much difficulty, she reached it, the deep shades almost concealing it from her search. She paused at the entrance, awed by the solemnity that reigned within, and the utter darkness of the place; at length she determined to watch without till Peter should arrive. “If any person approaches,” said she, “I can hear them before they can see me, and I can then secrete myself in the cell.”

She leaned against a fragment of the tomb in trembling expectation, and, as she listened, no found broke the silence of the hour. The state of her mind can only be imagined, by considering that upon the present time turned the crisis of her fate. “They have now,” thought she, “discovered my flight; even now they are seeking me in every part of the abbey. I hear their dreadful voices call me; I see their eager looks.” The power of imagination almost overcame her. While she yet looked around, she saw lights moving at a distance; sometimes they glimmered between the trees, and sometimes they totally disappeared.

They seemed to be in a direction with the abbey; and she now remembered, that in the morning she had seen a part of the fabric through an opening in the forest. She had, therefore, no doubt that the lights she saw proceeded from people in search of her; who, she feared, not finding her at the abbey, might direct their steps towards the tomb. Her place of refuge now seemed too near her enemies to be safe, and she would have fled to a more distant part of the forest, but recollected that Peter would not know where to find her.

While these thoughts passed over her mind, she heard distant voices in the wind, and was hastening to conceal herself in the cell, when she observed the lights suddenly disappear. All was soon after hushed in silence and darkness, yet she endeavoured to find the way to the cell. She remembered the situation of the outer door and of the passage, and having passed these she unclosed the door of the cell. Within it was utterly dark. She trembled violently, but entered; and, having felt about the walls, at length seated herself on a projection of stone.

She here again addressed herself to Heaven, and endeavoured to re-animate her spirits till Peter should arrive. Above half an hour elapsed in this gloomy recess, and no sound foretold his approach. Her spirits sunk, she feared some part of their plan was discovered, or interrupted, and that he was detained by La Motte. This conviction operated sometimes so strongly upon her fears, as to urge her to quit the cell alone, and seek in flight her only chance of escape.

While this design was fluctuating in her mind, she distinguished through the grate above a clattering of hoofs. The noise approached, and at length stopped at the tomb. In the succeeding moment she heard three strokes of a whip; her heart beat, and for some moments her agitation was such, that she made no effort to quit the cell. The strokes were repeated: she now roused her spirits, and, stepping forward, ascended to the forest. She called "Peter;" for the deep gloom would not permit her to distinguish either man or horse. She was quickly answered, "Hush! Ma'amselle, our voices will betray us."

They mounted and rode off as fast as the darkness would permit. Adeline's heart revived at every step they took. She inquired what had passed at the abbey, and how he had contrived to get away. "Speak softly, Ma'amselle; you'll know all by and bye, but I can't tell you now." He had scarcely spoke ere they saw lights move along at a distance; and coming now to a more open part of the forest, he sat off on a full gallop, and continued the pace till the horse could hold it no longer. They looked back, and no lights appearing, Adeline's terror subsided. She inquired again what had passed at the abbey, when her flight was discovered. "You may speak without fear of being heard," said she, "we are gone beyond their reach I hope."

"Why, Ma'amselle," said he, "you had not been gone long before the Marquis arrived, and Monsieur La Motte then found out you was fled. Upon this a great rout there was, and he talked a great deal with the Marquis."

"Speak louder," said Adeline, "I cannot hear you."

"I will, Ma'amselle." —

"Oh! Heavens!" interrupted Adeline, What voice is this? It is not Peter's. For God's sake tell me who you are, and whither I am going?"

"You'll know that soon enough, young lady," answered the stranger, for it was indeed not Peter; "I am taking "you where my master ordered." Adeline, not doubting he was the Marquis's servant, attempted to leap to the ground, but the man, dismounting, bound her to the horse. One feeble ray of hope at length beamed upon her mind: she endeavoured to soften the man to pity, and pleaded with all the genuine eloquence of distress; but he understood his interest too well to yield even for a moment to the compassion, which, in spite of himself, her artless supplication inspired.

She now resigned herself to despair, and, in passive silence, submitted to her fate. They continued thus to travel, till a storm of rain, accompanied by thunder and lightning, drove them to the covert of a thick grove. The man believed this a safe situation, and Adeline was now too careless of life to attempt convincing him of his error. The storm was violent and long, but as soon as it abated they set off on full gallop, and having continued to travel for about two hours, they came to the borders of the forest, and, soon after, to a high lonely wall, which Adeline could just distinguish by the moon-light, which now streamed through the parting clouds.

Here they stopped; the man dismounted, and having opened a small door in the wall, he unbound Adeline, who shrieked, though involuntarily and in vain, as he took her from the horse. The door opened upon a narrow passage, dimly lighted by a lamp, which hung at the farther end. He led her on; they came to another door; it opened and disclosed a magnificent saloon, splendidly illuminated, and fitted up in the most airy and elegant taste.

The walls were painted in fresco, representing scenes from Ovid, and hung above with silk drawn up in festoons and richly fringed. The sofas were of a silk to suit the hangings. From the centre of the ceiling, which exhibited a scene from the Armida of Tasso, descended a silver lamp of Etruscan form: it diffused a blaze of light, that, reflected from large pier glasses, completely illuminated the saloon. Busts of Horace, Ovid, Anacreon, Tibullus, and Petronius Arbiter, adorned the recesses, and stands of flowers, placed in Etruscan vases, breathed the most delicious perfume. In the middle of the apartment stood a small table, spread with a collation of fruits, ices, and liquors. No person appeared. The whole seemed the works of enchantment, and rather resembled the palace of a fairy than any thing of human conformation.

Adeline was astonished, and inquired where she was, but the man refused to answer her questions, and, having desired her to take some refreshment, left her. She walked to the windows, from which a gleam of moon-light discovered to her an extensive garden, where groves and lawns, and water glittering in the moon-beam, composed a scenery of varied and romantic beauty. “What can this mean!” said she: “Is this a charm to lure me to destruction?” She endeavoured, with a hope of escaping; to open the windows, but they were all fastened; she next attempted several doors, and found them also secured.

Perceiving all chance of escape was removed, she remained for some time given up to sorrow and reflection; but was at length drawn from her reverie by the notes of soft music, breathing such dulcet and entrancing sounds, as suspended grief, and waked the soul to tenderness and pensive pleasure. Adeline listened in surprize, and insensibly became soothed and interested; a tender melancholy stole upon her heart, and subdued every harsher feeling: but the moment the strain ceased, the enchantment dissolved, and she returned to a sense of her situation.

Again the music sounded — “music such as charmeth sleep” — and again she gradually yielded to its sweet magic. A female voice, accompanied by a lute, a hautboy, and a few other instruments, now gradually swelled into a tone so exquisite, as raised attention into ecstacy. It sunk by degrees, and touched a few simple notes with pathetic softness, when the measure was suddenly changed, and in a gay and airy melody Adeline distinguished the following words:

SONG.

Life’s a varied, bright illusion, Joy and sorrow — light and shade; Turn from sorrow’s dark suffusion, Catch the pleasures ere they fade.

Fancy paints with hues unreal, Smile of bliss, and sorrow’s mood; If they both are but ideal, Why reject the seeming good?

Hence! no more! ’tis Wisdom calls ye, Bids ye court Time’s present aid; The future trust not — hope enthrals ye, “Catch the pleasures ere they fade.”

The music ceased, but the sound still vibrated on her imagination, and she was sunk in the pleasing languor they had inspired, when the door opened, and the Marquis de Montalt appeared. He approached the sofa where Adeline sat, and addressed her, but she heard not his voice — she had fainted. He endeavoured to recover her, and at length succeeded; but when she unclosed her eyes, and again beheld him, she relapsed into a state of insensibility, and having in vain tried various methods to restore her, he was obliged to call assistance. Two young women entered, and, when she began to revive, he left them to prepare her for his re-appearance. When Adeline perceived that the Marquis was gone, and that she was in the care of women, her spirits gradually returned; she looked at her attendants, and was surprised to see so much elegance and beauty.

Some endeavour she made to interest their pity, but they seemed wholly insensible to her distress, and began to talk of the Marquis in terms of the highest admiration. They assured her it would be her own fault if she was not happy, and advised her to appear so in his presence. It was with the utmost difficulty that Adeline forebore to express the disdain which was rising to her lips, and that she listened to their discourse in silence. But she saw the inconvenience and fruitlessness of opposition, and she commanded her feelings.

They were thus proceeding in their praises of the Marquis, when he himself appeared, and, waving his hand, they immediately quitted the apartment. Adeline beheld him with a kind of mute despair, while he approached and took her hand, which she hastily withdrew, and turning from him with a look of unutterable distress, burst into tears. He was for some time silent, and appeared softened by her anguish. But again approaching, and addressing her in a gentle voice, he entreated her pardon for the step, which despair, and, as he called it, love had prompted. She was too much absorbed in grief to reply, till he solicited a return of his love, when her sorrow yielded to indignation, and she reproached him with his conduct. He pleaded that he had long loved and sought her upon honourable terms, and his offer of those terms he began to repeat, but, raising his eyes towards Adeline, he saw in her looks the contempt which he was conscious he deserved.

For a moment he was confused, and seemed to understand both that his plan was discovered and his person despised; but soon resuming his usual command of feature, he again pressed his suit, and solicited her love. A little reflection shewed Adeline the danger of exasperating his pride, by an avowal of the contempt which his pretended offer of marriage excited; and she thought it not improper, upon an occasion in which the honour and peace of her life was concerned, to yield somewhat to the policy of dissimulation. She saw that her only chance of escaping his designs depended upon delaying them, and she now wished him to believe her ignorant that the Marchioness was living, and that his offers were delusive.

He observed her pause, and, in the eagerness to turn her hesitation to his advantage, renewed his proposal with increased vehemence. — “To-morrow shall unite us, lovely Adeline; tomorrow you shall consent to become the Marchioness de Montalt. You will then return my love and” —

“You must first deserve my esteem, my Lord.”

“I will — I do deserve it. Are you not now in my power, and do I not forbear to take advantage of your situation? Do I not make you the most honourable proposals?” — Adeline shuddered: “If you wish I should esteem you, my Lord, endeavour, if possible, to make me forget by what means I came into your power; if your views are, indeed, honourable, prove them so by releasing me from my confinement.”

“Can you then wish, lovely Adeline, to fly from him who adores you?” replied the Marquis, with a studied air of tenderness. “Why will you exact so severe a proof of my disinterestedness, a disinterestedness which is not consistent with love? No, charming Adeline, let me at least have the pleasure of beholding you, till the bonds of the church shall remove every obstacle to my love. To-morrow” —

Adeline saw the danger to which she was now exposed, and interrupted him. “Deserve my esteem, Sir, and then you will obtain it: as a first step towards which, liberate me from a confinement that obliges me to look on you only with terror and aversion. How can I believe your professions of love, while you shew that you have no interest in my happiness?” Thus did Adeline, to whom the arts and the practice of dissimulation were hitherto equally unknown, condescend to make use of them in disguising her indignation and contempt. But though these arts were adopted only for the purpose of self-preservation, she used them with reluctance, and almost with abhorrence; for her mind was habitually impregnated with the love of virtue, in thought, word, and action, and, while her end in using them was certainly good, she scarcely thought that end could justify the means.

The Marquis persisted in his sophistry. “Can you doubt the reality of that love, which, to obtain you, has urged me to risque your displeasure? But have I not consulted your happiness, even in the very conduct which you condemn? I have removed you from a solitary and desolate ruin to a gay and splendid villa, where every luxury is at your command, and where every person shall be obedient to your wishes.”

“My first wish is to go hence,” said Adeline; “I entreat, I conjure you, my Lord, no longer to detain me. I am a friendless and wretched orphan, exposed to many evils, and, I fear, abandoned to misfortune: I do not wish to be rude; but allow me to say, that no misery can exceed that I shall feel in remaining here, or, indeed, in being any where pursued by the offers you make me!” Adeline had now forgot her policy: tears prevented her from proceeding, and she turned away her face to hide her emotion.

“By Heaven! Adeline, you do me wrong,” said the Marquis, rising from his seat, and seizing her hand; “I love, I adore you; yet you doubt my passion, and are insensible to my vows. Every pleasure possible to be enjoyed within these walls you shall partake, but beyond them you shall not go.” She disengaged her hand, and in silent anguish walked to a distant part of the saloon; deep sighs burst from her heart, and, almost fainting, she leaned on a window-frame for support.

The Marquis followed her; “Why thus obstinately persist in refusing to be happy?” said he; “recollect the proposal I have made you, and accept it, while it is yet in your power. To-morrow a priest shall join our hands — Surely, being, as you are, in my power, it must be your interest to consent to this?” Adeline could answer only by tears; she despaired of softening his heart to pity, and feared to exasperate his pride by disdain. He now led her, and she suffered him, to a seat near the banquet, at which he pressed her to partake of a variety of confectionaries, particularly of some liquors, of which he himself drank freely: Adeline accepted only of a peach.

And now the Marquis, who interpreted her silence into a secret compliance with his proposal, resumed all his gaiety and spirit, while the long and ardent regards he bestowed on Adeline, overcame her with confusion and indignation. In the midst of the banquet, soft music again sounded the most tender and impassioned airs; but its effect on Adeline was now lost, her mind being too much embarrassed and distressed by the presence of the Marquis, to admit even the soothings of harmony. A song was now heard, written with that sort of impotent art, by which some voluptuous poets believe they can at once conceal and recommend the principles of vice. Adeline received it with contempt and displeasure, and the Marquis, perceiving its effect, presently made a sign for another composition, which, adding the force of poetry to the charms of music, might withdraw her mind from the present scene, and enchant it in sweet delirium.

SONG OF A SPIRIT.

In the sightless air I dwell, On the sloping sun-beams play; Delve the cavern’s inmost cell, Where never yet did daylight stray:

Dive beneath the green sea waves, And gambol in the briny deeps; Skim ev'ry shore that Neptune laves, From Lapland's plains to India's steeps.

Oft I mount with rapid force Above the wide earth's shadowy zone; Follow the day-star's flaming course Through realms of space to thought unknown:

And listen oft celestial sounds That swell the air unheard of men, As I watch my nightly rounds O'er woody steep, and silent glen.

Under the shade of waving trees, On the green bank of fountain clear, At pensive eve I sit at ease, While dying music murmurs near.

And oft, on point of airy clift, That hangs upon the western main, I watch the gay tints passing swift, And twilight veil the liquid plain.

Then, when the breeze has sunk away, And ocean scarce is heard to lave, For me the sea-nymphs softly play Their dulcet shells beneath the wave.

Their dulcet shells! I hear them now, Slow swells the strain upon mine ear; Now faintly falls — now warbles low, Till rapture melts into a tear.

The ray that silvers o'er the dew, And trembles through the leafy shade, And tints the scene with softer hue, Calls me to rove the lonely glade;

Or hie me to some ruin'd tower, Faintly shewn by moon-light gleam, Where the lone wanderer owns my power In shadows dire that substance seem;

In thrilling sounds that murmur woe, And pausing silence make more dread; In music breathing from below Sad solemn strains, that wake the dead.

Unseen I move — unknown am fear'd! Fancy's wildest dreams I weave; And oft by bards my voice is heard To die along the gales of eve.

When the voice ceased, a mournful strain, played with exquisite expression, sounded from a distant horn; sometimes the notes floated on the air in soft undulations — now they swelled into full and sweeping melody, and now died faintly into silence: when again they rose and trembled in sounds so sweetly tender, as drew tears from Adeline, and exclamations of rapture from the Marquis; he threw his arm round her, and would have pressed her towards him, but she liberated herself from his embrace, and with a look, on which was impressed the firm dignity of virtue, yet touched with sorrow, she awed him to forbearance. Conscious of a superiority, which he was ashamed to acknowledge, and endeavouring to despise the influence which he could not resist, he stood for a moment the slave of virtue, though the votary of vice. Soon, however, he recovered his confidence, and began to plead his love; when Adeline, no longer animated by the spirit she had lately shewn, and sinking beneath the languor and fatigue which the various and violent agitations of her mind produced, entreated he would leave her to repose.

The paleness of her countenance, and the tremulous tone of her voice, were too expressive to be misunderstood; and the Marquis, bidding her remember to-morrow, with some hesitation, withdrew. The moment she was alone, she yielded to the bursting anguish of her heart, and was so absorbed in grief, that it was some time before she perceived she was in the presence of the young women, who had lately attended her, and had entered the saloon soon after the Marquis quitted it: they came to conduct her to her chamber. She followed them for some time in silence, till, prompted by desperation, she again endeavoured to awaken their compassion: but again the praises of the Marquis were repeated, and perceiving that all attempts to interest them in her favour were in vain, she dismissed them. She secured the door through which they had departed, and then, in the languid hope of discovering some means of escape, she surveyed her chamber. The airy elegance with which it was fitted up, and the luxurious accommodations with which it abounded, seemed designed to fascinate the imagination, and to seduce the heart. The hangings were of straw-coloured silk, adorned with a variety of landscapes and historical paintings, the subjects of which partook of the voluptuous character of the owner; the chimney-piece, of Parian marble, was ornamented with several reposing figures from the antique. The bed was of silk the colour of the hangings, richly fringed with purple and silver, and the head made in form of a canopy. The steps, which were placed near the bed to assist in ascending it, were supported by Cupids, apparently of solid silver. China vases, filled with persume, stood in several of the recesses, upon stands of the same structure as the toilet, which was magnificent, and ornamented with a variety of trinkets.

Adeline threw a transient look upon these various objects, and proceeded to examine the windows, which descended to the floor, and opened into balconies towards the garden she had seen from the saloon. They were now fastened, and her efforts to move them were ineffectual; at length she gave up the attempt. A door next attracted her notice, which she found was not fastened; it opened upon a dressing closet, to which she descended by a few steps: two windows appeared, she hastened towards them; one refused to yield, but her heart beat with sudden joy when the other opened to her touch.

In the transport of the moment, she forgot that its distance from the ground might yet deny the escape she meditated. She returned to lock the door of the closet, to prevent a surprize, which, however, was unnecessary, that of the bedroom being already secured. She now looked out from the window; the garden lay before her, and she perceived that the window, which descended to the floor, was so near the ground, that she might jump from it with ease: almost in the moment she perceived this, she sprang forward and alighted safely in an extensive garden, resembling more an English pleasure ground, than a series of French parterres.

Thence she had little doubt of escaping, either by some broken fence, or low part of the wall; she tripped lightly along, for hope played round her heart. The clouds of the late storm were now dispersed, and the moon-light, which slept on the lawns and spangled the flowerets, yet heavy with rain-drops, afforded her a distinct view of the surrounding scenery: she followed the direction of the high wall that adjoined the chateau, till it was concealed from her sight by a thick wilderness, so entangled with boughs and obscured by darkness, that she feared, to enter, and turned aside into a walk on the right; it conducted her to the margin of a lake overhung with lofty trees.

The moon-beams dancing upon the waters, that with gentle undulation played along the shore, exhibited a scene of tranquil beauty, which would have soothed an heart less agitated than was that of Adeline: she sighed as she transiently surveyed it, and passed hastily on in search of the garden wall, from which she had now strayed a considerable way. After wandering for some time through alleys and over lawns, without meeting with any thing like a boundary to the grounds, she again found herself at the lake, and now traversed its border with the footsteps of despair:— tears rolled down her cheeks. The scene around exhibited only images of peace and delight; every object seemed to repose; not a breath waved the foliage, not a sound stole through the air: it was in her bosom only that tumult and distress prevailed. She still pursued the windings of the shore, till an opening in the woods conducted her up a gentle ascent: the path now wound along the side of a hill, where the gloom was so deep, that it was with some difficulty she found her way: suddenly, however, the avenue opened to a lofty grove, and she perceived a light issue from a recess at some distance.

She paused, and her first impulse was to retreat, but listening and hearing no sound, a faint hope beamed upon her mind, that the person to whom the light belonged, might be won to favour her escape. She advanced, with trembling and cautious steps, towards the recess, that she might secretly observe the person, before she ventured to enter it. Her emotion increased as she approached, and having reached the bower, she beheld, through an open window, the Marquis, reclining on a sofa, near which stood a table, covered with fruit and wine. He was alone, and his countenance was flushed with drinking.

While she gazed, fixed to the spot by terror, he looked up towards the casement; the light gleamed full upon her face, but she stayed not to learn whether he had observed her, for, with the swiftness of sound, she left the place and ran, without knowing whether she was pursued. Having gone a considerable way, fatigue, at length, compelled her to stop, and she threw herself upon the turf, almost fainting with fear and languor. She knew if the Marquis detected her in an attempt to escape, he would, probably, burst the bounds which he had hitherto prescribed to himself, and that she had the most dreadful evils to expect. The palpitations of terror were so strong, that she could with difficulty breathe.

She watched and listened in trembling expectation, but no form met her eye, no sound her ear; in this state she remained a considerable time. She wept, and the tears she shed relieved her oppressed heart. “O my father!” said she, “why did you abandon your child? If you knew the dangers to which you have exposed her, you would, surely, pity and relieve her. Alas! shall I never find a friend; am I destined still to trust and be deceived? — Peter too, could he be treacherous?” She wept again, and then returned to a sense of her present danger, and to a consideration of the means of escaping it — but no means appeared.

To her imagination the grounds were boundless; she had wandered from lawn to lawn, and from grove to grove, without perceiving any termination to the place; the garden wall she could not find, but she resolved neither to return to the chateau, nor to relinquish her search. As she was rising to depart, she perceived a shadow move along at some distance; she stood still to observe it. It slowly advanced and then disappeared, but presently she saw a person emerge from the gloom, and approach the spot where she stood. She had no doubt that the Marquis had observed her, and she ran with all possible speed to the shade of some woods on the left. Footsteps pursued her, and she heard her name repeated, while she in vain endeavoured to quicken her pace.

Suddenly the sound of pursuit turned, and sunk away in a different direction: she paused to take breath; she looked around and no person appeared. She now proceeded slowly along the avenue, and had almost reached its termination, when she saw the same figure emerge from the woods and dart across the avenue; it instantly pursued her and approached. A voice called her, but she was gone beyond its reach, for she had sunk senseless upon the ground: it was long before she revived, when she did, she found herself in the arms of a stranger, and made an effort to disengage herself.

“Fear nothing, lovely Adeline,” said he, “fear nothing: you are in the arms of a friend, who will encounter any hazard for your sake; who will protect you with his life.” He pressed her gently to his heart. “Have you then forgot me?” continued he. She looked earnestly at him, and was now convinced that it was Theodore who spoke. Joy was her first emotion; but, recollecting his former abrupt departure, at a time so critical to her safety, and that he was the friend of the Marquis, a thousand mingled sensations struggled in her breast, and overwhelmed her with mistrust, apprehension, and disappointment.

Theodore raised her from the ground, and while he yet supported her, “Let us immediately fly from this place,” said he; “a carriage waits to receive us; it shall go wherever you direct, and convey you to your friends.” This last sentence touched her heart: “Alas, I have no friends!” said she, “nor do I know whither to go.” Theodore gently pressed her hand between his, and, in a voice of the softest compassion, said, “My friends then shall be yours; suffer me to lead you to them. But I am in agony while you remain in this place; let us hasten to quit it.” Adeline was going to reply, when voices were heard among the trees, and Theodore, supporting her with his arm, hurried her along the avenue: they continued their flight till Adeline, panting for breath, could go no farther.

Having paused a while, and heard no footsteps in pursuit, they renewed their course: Theodore knew that they were now not far from the garden wall; but he was also aware, that in the intermediate space several paths wound from remote parts of the grounds into the walk he was to pass, from whence the Marquis’s people might issue and intercept him. He, however, concealed his apprehensions from Adeline, and endeavoured to soothe and support her spirits.

At length they reached the wall, and Theodore was leading her towards a low part of it, near which stood the carriage, when again they heard voices in the air. Adeline’s spirits and strength were nearly exhausted, but she made a last effort to proceed, and she now saw the ladder at some distance by which Theodore had descended to the garden. “Exert yourself yet a little longer,” said he, “and you will be in safety.” He held the ladder while she ascended; the top of the wall was broad and level, and Adeline, having reached it, remained there till Theodore followed and drew the ladder to the other side.

When they had descended, the carriage appeared in waiting, but without the driver. Theodore feared to call, lest his voice should betray him; he, therefore, put Adeline into the carriage, and went himself in search of the postillion, whom he found asleep under a tree at some distance; having awakened him, they returned to the vehicle, which soon drove furiously away. Adeline did not yet dare to believe herself safe, but, after proceeding a considerable time without interruption, joy burst upon her heart, and she thanked her deliverer in terms of the warmest gratitude. The sympathy expressed in the tone of his voice and manner, proved that his happiness, on this occasion, almost equalled her own.

As reflection gradually stole upon her mind, anxiety superseded joy: in the tumult of the late moments, she thought only of escape, but the circumstances of her present situation now appeared to her, and she became silent and pensive: she had no friends to whom she could fly, and was going with a young Chevalier, almost a stranger to her, she knew not whither. She remembered how often she had been deceived and betrayed where she trusted most, and her spirits sunk: she remembered also the former attention which Theodore had shewn her, and dreaded lest his conduct might be prompted by a selfish passion. She saw this to be possible, but she disdained to believe it probable, and felt that nothing could give her greater pain than to doubt the integrity of Theodore.

He interrupted her reverie, by recurring to her late situation at the abbey. “You would be much surprised,” said he, “and, I fear, offended, that I did not attend my appointment at the abbey, after the alarming hints I had given you in our last interview. That circumstance has, perhaps, injured me in your esteem, if, indeed, I was ever so happy as to possess it:

but my designs were over-ruled by those of the Marquis de Montalt; and I think I may venture to assert, that my distress upon this occasion was, at least, equal to your apprehensions."

Adeline said, "She had been much alarmed by the hints he had given her, and by his failing to afford farther information, concerning the subject of her danger; and" — She checked the sentence that hung upon her lips, for she perceived that she was unwarily betraying the interest he held in her heart. There were a few moments of silence, and neither party seemed perfectly at ease. Theodore, at length, renewed the conversation: "Suffer me to acquaint you," said he, "with the circumstances that withheld me from the interview I solicited; I am anxious to exculpate myself." Without waiting her reply, he proceeded to inform her, that the Marquis had, by some inexplicable means, learned or suspected the subject of their last conversation, and, perceiving his designs were in danger of being counteracted, had taken effectual means to prevent her obtaining farther intelligence of them. Adeline immediately recollected that Theodore and herself had been seen in the forest by La Motte, who had, no doubt, suspected their growing intimacy, and had taken care to inform the Marquis how likely he was to find a rival in his friend.

"On the day following that, on which I last saw you," said Theodore, "the Marquis, who is my colonel, commanded me to prepare to attend my regiment, and appointed the following morning for my journey. This sudden order gave me some surprize, but I was not long in doubt concerning the motive for it: a servant of the Marquis, who had been long attached to me, entered my room soon after I had left his Lord, and expressing concern at my abrupt departure, dropped some hints respecting it, which excited my surprize. I inquired farther, and was confirmed in the suspicions I had for some time entertained of the Marquis's designs upon you.

"Jacques farther informed me, that our late interview had been noticed and communicated to the Marquis. His information had been obtained from a fellow servant, and it alarmed me so much, that I engaged him to send me intelligence from time to time, concerning the proceedings of the Marquis. I now looked forward to the evening which would bring me again to your presence with increased impatience: but the ingenuity of the Marquis effectually counteracted my endeavours and wishes; he had made an engagement to pass the day at the villa of a nobleman some leagues distant, and, notwithstanding all the excuses I could offer, I was obliged to attend him. Thus compelled to obey, I passed a day of more agitation and anxiety than I had ever before experienced. It was midnight before we returned to the Marquis's chateau. I arose early in the morning to commence my journey, and resolved to seek an interview with you before I left the province.

"When I entered the breakfast room, I was much surprized to find the Marquis there already, who, commending the beauty of the morning, declared his intention of accompanying me as far as Chineau. Thus unexpectedly deprived of my last hope, my countenance, I believe, expressed what I felt, for the scrutinizing eye of the Marquis instantly changed from seeming carelessness to displeasure. The distance from Chineau to the abbey was, at least, twelve leagues; yet I had once some intention of returning from thence, when the Marquis should leave me, till I recollected the very remote chance there would even then be of seeing you alone, and also, that if I was observed by La Motte, it would awaken all his suspicions, and caution him against any future plan I might see it expedient to attempt: I, therefore, proceeded to join my regiment.

"Jacques sent me frequent accounts of the operations of the Marquis, but his manner of relating them was so very confused, that they only served to perplex and distress me. His last letter, however, alarmed me so much, that my residence in quarters became intolerable; and, as I found it impossible to obtain leave of absence, I secretly left the regiment, and concealed myself in a cottage about a mile from the chateau, that I might obtain the earliest intelligence of the Marquis's plans. Jacques brought me daily information, and, at last, an account of the horrible plot which was laid for the following night.

"I saw little probability of warning you of your danger. If I ventured near the abbey, La Motte might discover me, and frustrate every attempt on my part to save you: yet I determined to encounter this risk for the chance of seeing you, and towards evening I was preparing to set out for the forest, when Jacques arrived and informed me, that you was to be brought to the chateau. My plan was thus rendered less difficult. I learned also, that the Marquis, by means of those refinements in luxury, with which he is but too well acquainted, designed, now that his apprehension of losing you was no more, to seduce you to his wishes, and impose upon you by a fictitious marriage. Having obtained information concerning the situation of the room allotted you, I ordered a chaise to be in waiting, and with a design of scaling your window, and conducting you thence, I entered the garden at midnight."

Theodore having ceased to speak, "I know not how words can express my sense of the obligations I owe you," said

Adeline, “or my gratitude for your generosity.”

“Ah! call it not generosity,” he replied, “it was love.” He paused. Adeline was silent. After some moments of expressive emotion, he resumed; “But pardon this abrupt declaration; yet why do I call it abrupt, since my actions have already disclosed what my lips have never, till this instant, ventured to acknowledge.” He paused again. Adeline was still silent. “Yet do me the justice to believe, that I am sensible of the impropriety of pleading my love at present, and have been surprized into this confession. I promise also to forbear from a renewal of the subject, till you are placed in a situation, where you may freely accept or refuse, the sincere regards I offer you. If I could, however, now be certain that I possess your esteem, it would relieve me from much anxiety.”

Adeline felt surprized that he should doubt her esteem for him, after the signal and generous service he had rendered her; but she was not yet acquainted with the timidity of love. “Do you then,” said she, in a tremulous voice, believe me ungrateful? It is impossible I can consider your friendly interference in my behalf without esteeming you.” Theodore immediately took her hand and pressed it to his lips in silence. They were both too much agitated to converse, and continued to travel for some miles without exchanging a word.

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CHAPTER 12

“And Hope enchanted smil’d, and wav’d her golden hair;
And longer had she sung — but with a frown,
Revenge impatient rose.”
Ode To The Passions.

The dawn of morning now trembled through the clouds, when the travellers stopped at a small town to change horses. Theodore entreated Adeline to alight and take some refreshment, and to this she at length consented. But the people of the inn were not yet up, and it was some time before the knocking and roaring of the postillion could rouse them.

Having taken some slight refreshment, Theodore and Adeline returned to the carriage. The only subject upon which Theodore could have spoke with interest, delicacy forbade him at this time to notice; and after pointing out some beautiful scenery on the road, and making other efforts to support a conversation, he relapsed into silence. His mind, though still anxious, was now relieved from the apprehension that had long oppressed it. When he first saw Adeline, her loveliness made a deep impression on his heart: there was a sentiment in her beauty, which his mind immediately acknowledged, and the effect of which, her manners and conversation had afterwards confirmed. Her charms appeared to him like those since so finely described by an English poet:

“Oh! have you seen, bath’d in the morning dew, The budding rose its infant bloom display; When first its virgin tints unfold to view, It shrinks and scarcely trusts the blaze of day?

So soft, so delicate, so sweet she came, Youth’s damask glow just dawning on her cheek. I gaz’d, I sigh’d, I caught the tender flame, Felt the fond pang, and droop’d with passion weak.”

A knowledge of her destitute condition, and of the dangers with which she was environed, had awakened in his heart the tenderest touch of pity, and assisted the change of admiration into love. The distress he suffered, when compelled to leave her exposed to these dangers, without being able to warn her of them, can only be imagined. During his residence with his regiment, his mind was the constant prey of terrors, which he saw no means of combating, but by returning to the neighbourhood of the abbey, where he might obtain early intelligence of the Marquis’s schemes, and be ready to give his assistance to Adeline.

Leave of absence he could not request, without betraying his design where most he dreaded it should be known, and, at length, with a generous rashness, which, though it defied law, was impelled by virtue, he secretly quitted his regiment. The progress of the Marquis’s plan he had observed, with trembling anxiety, till the night that was to decide the fate of Adeline and himself roused all his mind to action, and involved him in a tumult of hope and fear — horror and expectation.

Never, till the present hour, had he ventured to believe she was in safety. Now the distance they had gained from the chateau, without perceiving any pursuit, increased his best hopes. It was impossible he could sit by the side of his beloved Adeline, and receive assurances of her gratitude and esteem, without venturing to hope for her love. He congratulated himself as her preserver, and anticipated scenes of happiness when she should be under the protection of his family. The clouds of misery and apprehension disappeared from his mind, and left it to the sunshine of joy. When a shadow of fear would sometimes return, or when he recollected, with compunction, the circumstances under which he had left his regiment, stationed, as it was, upon the frontiers, and in a time of war, he looked at Adeline, and her countenance, with instantaneous magic, beamed peace upon his heart.

But Adeline had a subject of anxiety from which Theodore was exempt; the prospect of her future days was involved in darkness and uncertainty. Again she was going to claim the bounty of strangers — again going to encounter the uncertainty of their kindness; exposed to the hardships of dependance, or to the difficulty of earning a precarious livelihood. These anticipations obscured the joy occasioned by her escape, and by the affection which the conduct and avowal of Theodore had exhibited. The delicacy of his behaviour, in forbearing to take advantage of her present situation to plead his love, increased her esteem, and flattered her pride.

Adeline was lost in meditation upon subjects like these, when the postillion stopped the carriage; and pointing to part of a road, which wound down the side of a hill they had passed, said there were several horsemen in pursuit! Theodore immediately ordered him to proceed with all possible speed, and to strike out of the great road into the first obscure way that offered. The postillion cracked his whip in the air, and sat off as if he was flying for life. In the mean while Theodore endeavoured to re-animate Adeline, who was sinking with terror, and who now thought, if she could only escape from the Marquis, she could defy the future.

Presently they struck into a bye lane, screened and overshadowed by thick trees; Theodore again looked from the window, but the closing boughs prevented his seeing far enough to determine whether the pursuit continued. For his sake Adeline endeavoured to disguise her emotions. “This lane,” said Theodore, “will certainly lead to a town or village, and then we have nothing to apprehend; for, though my single arm could not defend you against the number of our pursuers, I have no doubt of being able to interest some of the inhabitants in our behalf.”

Adeline appeared to be comforted by the hope this reflection suggested, and Theodore again looked back, but the windings of the road closed his view, and the rattling of the wheels overcame every other sound. At length he called to the postillion to stop, and having listened attentively, without perceiving any sound of horses, he began to hope they were now in safety. “Do you know where this road leads?” said he. The postillion answered that he did not, but he saw some houses through the trees at a distance, and believed it led to them. This was most welcome intelligence to Theodore, who looked forward and perceived the houses. The postillion sat off, “Fear nothing, my adored Adeline,” said he, “you are now safe; I will part with you but with life.” Adeline sighed, not for herself only, but for the danger to which Theodore might be exposed.

They had continued to travel in this manner for near half an hour, when they arrived at a small village, and soon after stopped at an inn, the best the place afforded. As Theodore lifted Adeline from the chaise, he again entreated her to dismiss her apprehensions, and spoke with a tenderness, to which she could reply only by a smile that ill concealed her anxiety. After ordering refreshments, he went out to speak with the landlord, but had scarcely left the room, when Adeline observed a party of horsemen enter the inn-yard, and she had no doubt these were the persons from whom they fled. The faces of two of them only were turned towards her, but she thought the figure of one of the others not unlike that of the Marquis.

Her heart was chilled, and for some moments the powers of reason forsook her. Her first design was to seek concealment; but while she considered the means one of the horsemen looked up to the window near which she stood, and speaking to his companions, they entered the inn. To quit the room, without being observed, was impossible; to remain there, alone and unprotected as she was, would almost be equally dangerous. She paced the room in an agony of terror, often secretly calling on Theodore, and often wondering he did not return. These were moments of indescribable suffering. A loud and tumultuous sound of voices now arose from a distant part of the house, and she soon distinguished the words of the disputants. “I arrest you in the King’s name,” said one; “and bid you, at your peril, attempt to go from hence, except under a guard.”

The next minute Adeline heard the voice of Theodore in reply. “I do not mean to dispute the King’s orders,” said he, “and give you my word of honour not to go without you; but first unhand me, that I may return to that room; I have a friend there whom I wish to speak with.” To this proposal they at first objected, considering it merely as an excuse to obtain an opportunity of escaping; but, after much altercation and entreaty, his request was granted. He sprang forwards towards the room where Adeline remained, and while a serjeant and corporal followed him to the door, the two soldiers went out into the yard of the inn, to watch the windows of the apartment.

With an eager hand he unclosed the door, but Adeline hastened not to meet him, for she had fainted almost at the beginning of the dispute. Theodore called loudly for assistance, and the mistress of the inn soon appeared with her stock of remedies, which were administered in vain to Adeline, who remained insensible, and by breathing alone gave signs of her existence. The distress of Theodore was in the mean time heightened by the appearance of the officers, who, laughing at the discovery of his pretended friend, declared they could wait no longer. Saying this, they would have forced him from the inanimate form of Adeline, over whom he hung in unutterable anguish, when fiercely turning upon them, he drew his sword, and swore no power on earth should force him away before the lady recovered.

The men, enraged by the action and the determined air of Theodore, exclaimed, “Do you oppose the King’s orders?” and advanced to seize him, but he presented the point of his sword, and bid them at their peril approach. One of them immediately drew, Theodore kept his guard, but did not advance. “I demand only to wait here till the lady recovers,” said he; “you understand the alternative.” The man, already exasperated by the opposition of Theodore, regarded the latter part of his speech as a threat, and became determined not to give up the point; he pressed forward, and while his comrade called the men from the yard, Theodore wounded him slightly in the shoulder, and received himself the stroke of a sabre on his head.

The blood gushed furiously from the wound; Theodore, staggering to a chair, sunk into it, just as the remainder of the party entered the room, and Adeline unclosed her eyes to see him ghastly pale, and covered with blood. She uttered an involuntary scream, and exclaiming, “they have murdered him,” nearly relapsed. At the sound of her voice he raised his head, and smiling held out his hand to her. “I am not much hurt,” said he saintly, “and shall soon be better, if indeed you are recovered.” She hastened towards him, and gave her hand. “Is nobody gone for a surgeon?” said she, with a look of agony. “Do not be alarmed,” said Theodore, “I am not so ill as you imagine.” The room was now crowded with people, whom the report of the affray had brought together; among these was a man, who acted as physician, apothecary, and surgeon to the village, and who now stepped forward to the assistance of Theodore.

Having examined the wound, he declined giving his opinion, but ordered the patient to be immediately put to bed, to which the officers objected, alledging that it was their duty to carry him to the regiment. “That cannot be done without great danger to his life,” replied the doctor; “and” —

“Oh! his life,” said the serjeant; “we have nothing to do with that, we must do our duty.” Adeline, who had hitherto stood in trembling anxiety, could now no longer be silent. “Since the surgeon,” said she, “has declared it his opinion, that this gentleman cannot be removed in his present condition, without endangering his life, you will remember, that if he dies, yours will probably answer it.”

“Yes,” rejoined the surgeon, who was unwilling to relinquish his patient, “I declare before these witnesses, that he cannot be removed with safety: you will do well, therefore, to consider the consequences. He has received a very dangerous wound, which requires the most careful treatment, and the event is even then doubtful; but, if he travels, a fever may ensue, and the wound will then be mortal.” Theodore heard this sentence with composure, but Adeline could with difficulty conceal the anguish of her heart: she roused all her fortitude to suppress the tears that struggled in her eyes; and though she wished to interest the humanity, or to awaken the fears of the men, in behalf of their unfortunate prisoner, she dared not to trust her voice with utterance.

From this internal struggle she was relieved by the compassion of the people who filled the room, and becoming clamorous in the cause of Theodore, declared the officers would be guilty of murder if they removed him. “Why he must die at any rate,” said the serjeant, “for quitting his post, and drawing upon me in the execution of the King’s orders.” A faint sickness seized the heart of Adeline, and she leaned for support against Theodore’s chair, whose concern for himself was for a while suspended in his anxiety for her. He supported her with his arm, and forcing a smile, said in a low voice, which she only could hear, “This is a misrepresentation; I doubt not, when the affair is inquired into, it will be settled without any serious consequences.”

Adeline knew these words were uttered only to console her, and therefore did not give much credit to them, though Theodore continued to give her similar assurances of his safety. Meanwhile the mob, whose compassion for him had been gradually excited by the obduracy of the officer, were now roused to pity and indignation by the seeming certainty of his punishment, and the unfeeling manner in which it had been denounced. In a short time they became so much enraged, that, partly from a dread of farther consequences, and partly from the shame which their charges of cruelty occasioned, the serjeant consented that he should be put to bed, till his commanding officer might direct what was to be done. Adeline’s joy at this circumstance overcame for a moment the sense of her misfortunes, and of her situation.

She waited in an adjoining room the sentence of the surgeon, who was now engaged in examining the wound; and though the accident would in any other circumstances have severely afflicted her, she now lamented it the more, because she considered herself as the cause of it, and because the misfortune, by illustrating more fully the affection of her lover, drew him closer to her heart, and seemed, therefore, to sharpen the poignancy of her affliction. The dreadful assertion that Theodore, should he recover, would be punished with death, she scarcely dared to consider, but endeavoured to believe that it was no more than a cruel exaggeration of his antagonist.

Upon the whole, Theodore’s present danger, together with the attendant circumstances, awakened all her tenderness, and discovered to her the true state of her affections. The graceful form, the noble, intelligent countenance, and the engaging manners which she had at first admired in Theodore, became afterwards more interesting by that strength of thought, and elegance of sentiment, exhibited in his conversation. His conduct, since her escape, had excited her warmest gratitude, and the danger which he had now encountered in her behalf, called forth her tenderness, and heightened it into love. The veil was removed from her heart, and she saw, for the first time, its genuine emotions.

The surgeon at length came out of Theodore’s chamber into the room where Adeline was waiting to speak with him. She inquired concerning the state of his wound. “You are a relation of the gentleman’s, I presume, Madam; his sister, perhaps.” The question vexed and embarrassed her, and, without answering it, she repeated her inquiry. “Perhaps, Madam, you are more nearly related,” pursued the surgeon, seeming also to disregard her question, “perhaps you are his wife.” Adeline blushed, and was about to reply, but he continued his speech. “The interest you take in his welfare is, at least, very flattering, and I would almost consent to exchange conditions with him, were I sure of receiving such tender compassion from so charming a lady.” Saying this, he bowed to the ground. Adeline assuming a very reserved air, said, “Now, Sir, that you have concluded your compliment, you will, perhaps, attend to my question; I have inquired how you left your patient.”

“That, Madam, is, perhaps, a question very difficult to be resolved; and it is likewise a very disagreeable office to pronounce ill news — I fear he will die.” The surgeon opened his snuff-box and presented it to Adeline. “Die!” she exclaimed in a faint voice, “Die!”

“Do not be alarmed, Madam,” resumed the surgeon, observing her grow pale, “do not be alarmed. It is possible that the wound may not have reached the — ” he stammered; “in that case the — ” stammering again, “is not affected; and if so, the interior membranes of the brain are not touched: in this case the wound may, perhaps, escape inflammation, and the patient may possibly recover. But if, on the other hand, — ”

“I beseech you, Sir, to speak intelligibly,” interrupted Adeline, “and not to trifle with my anxiety. Do you really believe him in danger?

“In danger, Madam,” exclaimed the surgeon, “in danger! yes, certainly, in very great danger.” Saying this, he walked away with an air of chagrin and displeasure. Adeline remained for some moments in the room, in an excess of sorrow, which she found it impossible to restrain, and then drying her tears, and endeavouring to compose her countenance, she went to inquire for the mistress of the inn, to whom she sent a waiter. After expecting her in vain for some time, she rang the bell, and sent another message somewhat more pressing. Still the hostess did not appear, and Adeline, at length, went herself down stairs, where she found her, surrounded by a number of people, relating, with a loud voice and various gesticulations, the particulars of the late accident. Perceiving Adeline, she called out, “Oh! here is Mademoiselle herself,” and the eyes of the assembly were immediately turned upon her. Adeline, whom the crowd prevented from approaching the hostess, now beckoned her, and was going to withdraw, but the landlady, eager in the pursuit of her story, disregarded the signal. In vain did Adeline endeavour to catch her eye; it glanced every where but upon her, who was unwilling to attract the farther notice of the crowd by calling out.

“It is a great pity, to be sure, that he should be shot,” said the landlady, “he’s such a handsome man; but they say he certainly will if he recovers. Poor gentleman! he will very likely not suffer though, for the doctor says he will never go out of this house alive.” Adeline now spoke to a man who stood near, and desiring he would tell the hostess she wished to speak with her, left the place.

In about ten minutes the landlady appeared. “Alas! Madamoiselle,” said she, “your brother is in a sad condition; they fear he won’t get over it.” Adeline inquired whether there was any other medical person in the town than the surgeon whom she had seen. “Lord, Madam, this is a rare healthy place; we have little need of medicine people here; such an accident never happened in it before. The doctor has been here ten years, but there’s very bad encouragement for his trade, and I believe he’s poor enough himself. One of the sort’s quite enough for us.” Adeline interrupted her to ask some questions concerning Theodore, whom the hostess had attended to his chamber. She inquired how he had borne the dressing of the wound, and whether he appeared to be easier after the operation; questions to which the hostess gave no very satisfactory answers. She now inquired whether there was any surgeon in the neighbourhood of the town, and was told there was not.

The distress visible in Adeline’s countenance, seemed to excite the compassion of the landlady, who now endeavoured to console her in the best manner she was able. She advised her to send for her friends, and offered to procure a messenger. Adeline sighed and said it was unnecessary. “I don’t know, Ma’amselle, what you may think necessary,” continued the hostess, “but I know I should think it very hard to die in a strange place with no relations near me, and I dare say the poor gentleman thinks so himself; and, besides, who is to pay for his funeral if he dies?” Adeline begged she would be silent, and, desiring that every proper attention might be given, she promised her a reward for her trouble, and requested pen and ink immediately. “Ay, to be sure, Ma’amselle, that is the proper way; why your friends would never forgive you if you did not acquaint them; I know it by myself. And as for taking care of him, he shall have every thing the house affords, and I warrant there is never a better inn in the province, though the town is none of the biggest." Adeline was obliged to repeat her request for pen and ink, before the loquacious hostess would quit the room.

The thought of sending for Theodore's friends had, in the tumult of the late scenes, never occurred to her, and she was now somewhat consoled by the prospect of comfort which it opened for him. When the pen and ink were brought, she wrote the following note to Theodore.

"In your present condition, you have need of every comfort that can be procured you, and surely there is no cordial more valuable in illness, than the presence of a friend: suffer me, therefore, to acquaint your family with your situation; it will be a satisfaction to me, and, I doubt not, a consolation to you."

In a short time after she had sent the note, she received a message from Theodore, entreating most respectfully, but earnestly, to see her for a few minutes. She immediately went to his chamber, and found her worst apprehensions confirmed, by the languor expressed in his countenance, while the shock she received, together with her struggle to disguise her emotions, almost overcame her. "I thank you for this goodness," said he, extending his hand, which she received, and, sitting down by the bed, burst into a flood of tears. When her agitation had somewhat subsided, and, removing her handkerchief from her eyes, she again looked on Theodore, a smile of the tenderest love expressed his sense of the interest she took in his welfare, and administered a temporary relief to her heart.

"Forgive this weakness," said she; "my spirits have of late been so variously agitated" — Theodore interrupted her — "These tears are most flattering to my heart. But, for my sake, endeavour to support yourself: I doubt not I shall soon be better; the surgeon" — "I do not like him," said Adeline, "but tell me how you find yourself?" He assured her that he was now much easier than he had yet been, and mentioning her kind note, he led to the subject, on account of which he had solicited to see her. "My family," said he, "reside at a great distance from hence, and I well know their affection is such, that, were they informed of my situation, no consideration, however reasonable, could prevent their coming to my assistance; but before they can arrive, their presence will probably be unnecessary," (Adeline looked earnestly at him) "I should probably be well," pursued he, smiling, "before a letter could reach them; it would, therefore, occasion them unnecessary pain, and, moreover, a fruitless journey. For your sake, Adeline, I could wish they were here, but a few days will more fully shew the consequences of my wound: let us wait, at least, till then, and be directed by circumstances."

Adeline forbore to press the subject farther, and turned to one more immediately interesting. "I much wish," said she, "that you had a more able surgeon; you know the geography of the province better than I do; are we in the neighbourhood of any town likely to afford you other advice?"

"I believe not," said he, "and this is an affair of little consequence, for my wound is so inconsiderable, that a very moderate share of skill may suffice to cure it. But why, my beloved Adeline, do you give way to this anxiety? Why suffer yourself to be disturbed by this tendency to forbode the worst? I am willing, perhaps, presumptuously so, to attribute it to your kindness, and suffer me to assure you, that, while it excites my gratitude, it increases my tenderest esteem. O Adeline! since you wish my speedy recovery, let me see you composed: while I believe you to be unhappy I cannot be well." — She assured him she would endeavour to be, at least, tranquil, and fearing the conversation, if prolonged, would be prejudicial to him, she left him to repose.

As she turned out of the gallery, she met the hostess, upon whom certain words of Adeline had operated as a talisman, transforming neglect and impertinence into officious civility. She came to inquire whether the gentleman above stairs had every thing that he liked, for she was sure it was her endeavour that he should. "I have got him a nurse, Ma'amselle, to attend him, and I dare say she will do very well, but I will look to that, for I shall not mind helping him myself sometimes. Poor gentleman! how patiently he bears it! One would not think now that he believes he is going to die; yet the doctor told him so himself, or, at least as good." Adeline was extremely shocked at this imprudent conduct of the surgeon, and dismissed the landlady, after ordering a slight dinner.

Towards evening the surgeon again made his appearance, and, having passed some time with his patient, returned to the parlour, according to the desire of Adeline, to inform her of his condition. He answered Adeline's inquiries with great solemnity. "It is impossible to determine positively, at present, Madam, but I have reason to adhere to the opinion I gave you this morning. I am not apt, indeed, to form opinions upon uncertain grounds. I will give you a singular instance of this: "It is not above a fortnight since I was sent for to a patient at some leagues distance. I was from home when the messenger arrived, and the case being urgent, before I could reach the patient, another physician was consulted, who had ordered such medicines as he thought proper, and the patient had been apparently relieved by them. His friends were congratulating themselves upon his improvement when I arrived, and had agreed in opinion with the physician, that there was no danger in his case. Depend upon it, said I, you are mistaken; these medicines cannot have relieved him; the patient is in the utmost danger. The patient groaned, but my brother physician persisted in affirming that the remedies he had prescribed would not only be certain, but speedy, some good effect having been already produced by them. Upon this I lost all patience, and adhering to my opinion, that these effects were fallacious and the case desperate, I assured the patient himself that his life was in the utmost danger. I am not one of those, Madam, who deceive their patients to the last moment; but you shall hear the conclusion.

“My brother physician was, I suppose, enraged by the firmness of my opposition, for he assumed a most angry look, which did not in the least affect me, and turning to the patient, desired he would decide, upon which of our opinions to rely, for he must decline acting with me. The patient did me the honour,” pursued the surgeon, with a smile of complacency, and smoothing his ruffles, “to think more highly of me than, perhaps, I deserved, for he immediately dismissed my opponent. I could not have believed, said he, as the physician left the room, I could not have believed that a man, who has been so many years in the profession, could be so wholly ignorant of it.

“I could not have believed it either, said I. — I am astonished that he was not aware of my danger, resumed the patient. — I am astonished likewise, replied I— I was resolved to do what I could for the patient, for he was a man of understanding, as you perceive, and I had a regard for him. I, therefore, altered the prescriptions, and myself administered the medicines; but all would not do, my opinion was verified, and he died even before the next morning.” — Adeline, who had been compelled to listen to this long story, sighed at the conclusion of it. “I don’t wonder that you are affected, Madam,” said the surgeon, “the instance I have related is certainly a very affecting one. It distressed me so much, that it was some time before I could think, or even speak concerning it. But you must allow, Madam,” continued he, lowering his voice and bowing with a look of self-congratulation, “that this was a striking instance of the infallibility of my judgement.”

Adeline shuddered at the infallibility of his judgement, and made no reply. “It was a shocking thing for the poor man,” resumed the surgeon. — “It was, indeed, very shocking,” said Adeline. — “It affected me a good deal when it happened,” continued he. — “Undoubtedly, Sir,” said Adeline.

“But time wears away the most painful impressions.”

“I think you mentioned it was about a fortnight since this happened.”

“Somewhere thereabouts,” replied the surgeon, without seeming to understand the observation. — “And will you permit me, Sir, to ask the name of the physician, who so ignorantly opposed you?”

“Certainly, Madam, it is Lafance.”

“He lives in the obscurity he deserves, no doubt,” said Adeline.

“Why no, Madam, he lives in a town of some note, at about the distance of four leagues from hence, and affords one instance, among many others, that the public opinion is generally erroneous. You will hardly believe it, but I assure you it is a fact, that this man comes into a great deal of practice, while I am suffered to remain here, neglected, and, indeed, very little known.”

During his narrative, Adeline had been considering by what means she could discover the name of the physician, for the instance that had been produced to prove his ignorance, and the infallibility of his opponent, had completely settled her opinion concerning them both. She now, more than ever, wished to deliver Theodore from the hands of the surgeon, and was musing on the possibility, when he, with so much self-security, developed the means.

She asked him a few more questions, concerning the state of Theodore’s wound, and was told it was much as it had been, but that some degree of fever had come on. “But I have ordered a fire to be made in the room,” continued the surgeon, “and some additional blankets to be laid on the bed; these, I doubt not, will have a proper effect. In the mean time, they must be careful to keep from him every kind of liquid, except some cordial draughts, which I shall send. He will naturally ask for drink, but it must, on no account, be given to him.”

“You do not approve, then, of the method, which I have somewhere heard of,” said Adeline, “of attending to nature in these cases.”

“Nature, Madam!” pursued he, “Nature is the most improper guide in the world. I always adopt a method directly contrary to what she would suggest; for what can be the use of Art, if she is only to follow Nature? This was my first opinion on setting out in life, and I have ever since strictly adhered to it. From what I have said, indeed, Madam, you may, perhaps, perceive that my opinions may be depended on; what they once are they always are, for my mind is not of that frivolous kind to be affected by circumstances."

Adeline was fatigued by this discourse, and impatient to impart to Theodore her discovery of a physician, but the surgeon seemed by no means disposed to leave her, and was expatiating upon various topics, with new instances of his surprising sagacity, when the waiter brought a message that some person desired to see him. He was, however, engaged upon too agreeable a topic to be easily prevailed upon to quit it, and it was not till after a second message was brought that he made his bow to Adeline and left the room. The moment he was gone she sent a note to Theodore, entreating his permission to call in the assistance of the physician.

The conceited manners of the surgeon had by this time given Theodore a very unfavourable opinion of his talents, and the last prescription had so fully confirmed it, that he now readily consented to have other advice. Adeline immediately inquired for a messenger, but recollecting that the residence of the physician was still a secret, she applied to the hostess, who being really ignorant of it, or pretending to be so, gave her no information. What farther inquiries she made were equally ineffectual, and she passed some hours in extreme distress, while the disorder of Theodore rather increased than abated.

When supper appeared, she asked the boy who waited, if he knew a physician of the name of Lafance, in the neighbourhood. "Not in the neighbourhood, Madam, but I know Doctor Lafance of Chancy, for I come from the town." — Adeline inquired farther, and received very satisfactory answers. But the town was at some leagues distance, and the delay this circumstance must occasion again alarmed her; she, however, ordered a messenger to be immediately dispatched, and, having sent again to inquire concerning Theodore, retired to her chamber for the night.

The continued fatigue she had suffered for the last fourteen hours overcame anxiety, and her harrassed spirits sunk to repose. She slept till late in the morning, and was then awakened by the landlady, who came to inform her, that Theodore was much worse, and to inquire what should be done. Adeline, finding that the physician was not arrived, immediately arose, and hastened to inquire farther concerning Theodore. The hostess informed her, that he had passed a very disturbed night; that he had complained of being very hot, and desired that the fire in his room might be extinguished; but that the nurse knew her duty too well to obey him, and had strictly followed the doctor's orders.

She added, that he had taken the cordial draughts regularly, but had, notwithstanding, continued to grow worse, and at last became light-headed. In the mean time the boy, who had been sent for the physician, was still absent:— "And no wonder," continued the hostess; "why, only consider, it's eight leagues off, and the lad had to find the road, bad as it is, in the dark. But, indeed, Ma'amselle, you might as well have trusted our doctor, for we never want any body else, not we, in the town here; and if I might speak my mind, Jacques had better have been sent off for the young gentleman's friends than for this strange doctor that no body knows."

After asking some farther questions concerning Theodore, the answers to which rather increased than diminished her alarm, Adeline endeavoured to compose her spirits, and await in patience the arrival of the physician. She was now more sensible than ever of the forlornness of her own condition, and of the danger of Theodore's, and earnestly wished that his friends could be informed of his situation; a wish which could not be gratified, for Theodore, who alone could acquaint her with their place of residence, was deprived of recollection.

When the surgeon arrived and perceived the situation of his patient, he expressed no surprize; but having asked some questions, and given a few general directions, he went down to Adeline. After paying her his usual compliments, he suddenly assumed an air of importance, "I am sorry, Madam," said he, "that it is my office to communicate disagreeable intelligence, but I wish you to be prepared for the event, which, I fear, is approaching." Adeline comprehended his meaning, and though she had hitherto given little faith to his judgement, she could not hear him hint at the immediate danger of Theodore without yielding to the influence of fear.

She entreated him to acquaint her with all he apprehended; and he then proceeded to say, that Theodore was, as he had foreseen, much worse this morning than he had been the preceding night; and the disorder having now affected his head, there was every reason to fear it would prove fatal in a few hours. "The worst consequences may ensue," continued he; "if the wound becomes inflamed, there will be very little chance of his recovery."

Adeline listened to this sentence with a dreadful calmness, and gave no utterance to grief, either by words or tears. The gentleman, I suppose, Madam, has friends, and the sooner you inform them of his condition the better. If they reside at any distance, it is indeed too late; but there are other necessary — you are ill, Madam."

Adeline made an effort to speak, but in vain, and the surgeon now called loudly for a glass of water; she drank it, and a deep sigh that she uttered, seemed somewhat to relieve her oppressed heart: tears succeeded. In the mean time, the surgeon perceiving she was better, though not well enough to listen to his conversation, took his leave, and promised to return in an hour. The physician was not yet arrived, and Adeline awaited his appearance with a mixture of fear and anxious hope.

About noon he came, and having been informed of the accident by which the fever was produced, and of the treatment which the surgeon had given it, he ascended to Theodore's chamber: in a quarter of an hour he returned to the room where Adeline expected him. "The gentleman is still delirious," said he, "but I have ordered him a composing draught." — "Is there any hope, Sir?" inquired Adeline. "Yes, Madam, certainly there is hope; the case at present is somewhat doubtful, but a few hours may enable me to judge with more certainty. In the mean time, I have directed that he shall be kept quiet, and be allowed to drink freely of some diluting liquids."

He had scarcely, at Adeline's request, recommended a surgeon, instead of the one at present employed, when the latter gentleman entered the room, and, perceiving the physician, threw a glance of mingled surprize and anger at Adeline, who retired with him to another apartment, where she dismissed him with a politeness, which he did not deign to return, and which he certainly did not deserve.

Early the following morning the surgeon arrived, but either the medicines, or the crisis of the disorder, had thrown Theodore into a deep sleep, in which he remained for several hours. The physician now gave Adeline reason to hope for a favourable issue, and every precaution was taken to prevent his being disturbed. He awoke perfectly sensible and free from fever, and his first words inquired for Adeline, who soon learned that he was out of danger.

In a few days he was sufficiently recovered to be removed from his chamber to a room adjoining, where Adeline met him with a joy, which she found it impossible to repress; and the observance of this lighted up his countenance with pleasure: indeed Adeline, sensible to the attachment he had so nobly testified, and softened by the danger he had encountered, no longer attempted to disguise the tenderness of her esteem, and was at length brought to confess the interest his first appearance had impressed upon her heart.

After an hour of affecting conversation, in which the happiness of a young and mutual attachment occupied all their minds, and excluded every idea not in unison with delight, they returned to a sense of their present embarrassments: Adeline recollected that Theodore was arrested for disobedience of orders, and deserting his post; and Theodore, that he must shortly be torn away from Adeline, who wound be left exposed to all the evils from which he had so lately rescued her. This thought overwhelmed his heart with anguish; and, after a long pause, he ventured to propose, what his wishes had often suggested, a marriage with Adeline before he departed from the village: this was the only means of preventing, perhaps, an eternal separation; and though he saw the many dangerous inconveniences to which she would be exposed, by a marriage with a man circumstanced like himself, yet these appeared so unequal to those she would otherwise be left to encounter alone, that his reason could no longer scruple to adopt what his affection had suggested.

Adeline was, for some time, too much agitated to reply; and though she had little to oppose to the arguments and pleadings of Theodore; though she had no friends to control, and no contrariety of interests to perplex her, she could not bring herself to consent thus hastily to a marriage with a man, of whom she had little knowledge, and to whose family and connections she had no sort of introduction. At length, she entreated he would drop the subject, and the conversation for the remainder of the day was more general, yet still interesting.

That similarity of taste and opinion, which had at first attracted them, every moment now more fully disclosed. Their discourse was enriched by elegant literature, and endeared by mutual regard. Adeline had enjoyed few opportunities of reading, but the books to which she had access, operating upon a mind eager for knowledge, and upon a taste peculiarly sensible of the beautiful and the elegant, had impressed all their excellencies upon her understanding. Theodore had received from nature many of the qualities of genius, and from education all that it could bestow; to these were added, a noble independency of spirit, a feeling heart, and manners, which partook of a happy mixture of dignity and sweetness.

In the evening, one of the officers, who, upon the representation of the serjeant, was sent by the persons employed to prosecute military criminals, arrived at the village, and entering the apartment of Theodore, from which Adeline immediately withdrew, informed him, with an air of infinite importance, that he should set out on the following day for head-quarters. Theodore answered, that he was not able to bear the journey, and referred him to his physician; but the officer replied, htat he should take no such trouble, it being certain that the physician might be instructed what to say, and that he should begin his journey on the morrow. “Here has been delay enough,” said he, “already, and you will have sufficient business on your hands when you reach head-quarters;for the serjeant, whom you have severely wounded, intends to appear against you; and htis, with the offence you have committed by deserting your post”

Theodore’s eyes flashed fire, “Deserting!” said he, rising from his seat and darting a look of menace at his accuser, “who dares brand me with the name of deserter?” But instantly recollecting how much his conduct had appeared to justify the accusation, he endeavoured to stifle his emotions, and with a firm voice and composed manner, said, that when he reached head-quarters, he should be ready to answer whatever might be brought against him, but that till then he should be silent. The boldness of the officer was repressed by the spirit and dignity with which Theodore spoke these words, and muttering a reply, that was scarecly audible, he left the room.

Theodore sat musing on the danger of his situation: he knew that he had much to apprehend from the peculiar circumstances attending his abrupt departure from his regiment, it having been stationed in a garrison town upon the Spanish frontiers; where the discipline was very severe, and from the power of his colonel, the Marquis de Montalt, whom pride and disappointment would now rouse to vengeance, and, probably, render indefatigable in the accomplishment of his destruction. But his thoughts soon fled from his own danger to that of Adeline, and, in the consideration of this, all his fortitude forsook him: he could not support the idea of leaving her exposed to the evils he foreboded, nor, indeed, of a separation so sudden as that which now threatened him; and when she again entered the room, he renewed his solicitations for a speedy marriage, with all the arguments that tenderness and ingenuity could suggest.

Adeline, when she learned that he was to depart on the morrow, felt as if bereaved of her last comfort. All the horrors of his situation arose to her mind, and she turned from him in unutterable anguish. Considering her silence as a favourable presage, he repeated his entreaties that she would consent to be his, and thus give him a surety that their separation should not be eternal. Adeline sighed deeply to these words: “And who can know that our separation will not be eternal,” said she, “even if I could consent to the marriage you propose? But while you hear my determination, forbear to accuse me of indifference, for indifference towards you would, indeed, be a crime, after the services you have rendered me.”

“And is a cold sentiment of gratitude all that I must expect from you?” said Theodore. “I know that you are going to distress me with a proof of your indifference, which you mistake for the suggestions of prudence; and that I shall be compelled to look, without reluctance, upon the evils that may shortly await me. Ah, Adeline! if you mean to reject this, perhaps, the last proposal which I can ever make to you, cease, at least, to deceive yourself with an idea that you love me; that delirium is fading even from my mind.”

“Can you then so soon forget our conversation of this morning?” replied Adeline; “and can you think so lightly of me as to believe I would profess a regard, which I do not feel? If, indeed, you can believe this, I shall do well to forget that I ever made such an acknowledgement, and you, that you heard it.”

“Forgive me, Adeline, forgive the doubts and inconsistencies I have betrayed: let the anxieties of love, and the emergency of my circumstances, plead for me.” Adeline, smiling faintly through her tears, held out her hand, which he seized and pressed to his lips. “Yet do not drive me to despair by a rejection of my suit,” continued Theodore; “think what I must suffer to leave you here destitute of friends and protection.”

“I am thinking how I may avoid a situation so deplorable,” said Adeline. “They say there is a convent, which receives boarders, within a few miles, and thither I wish to go.”

“A convent!” rejoined Theodore, “would you go to a convent? Do you know the persecutions you would be liable to; and that if the Marquis should discover you, there is little probability the superior would resist his authority, or, at least, his bribes?”

“All this I have considered,” said Adeline, “and am prepared to encounter it, rather than enter into an engagement, which, at this time, can be productive only of misery to us both.”

“Ah, Adeline! could you think thus, if you truly loved? I see myself about to be separated, and that, perhaps, for ever, from the object of my tenderest affections — and I cannot but express all the anguish I feel — I cannot forbear to repeat every argument that may afford even the slightest possibility of altering your determination. But you, Adeline, you look with complacency upon a circumstance which tortures me with despair.”

Adeline, who had long strove to support her spirits in his presence, while she adhered to a resolution which reason suggested, but which the pleadings of her heart powerfully opposed, was unable longer to command her distress, and burst into tears. Theodore was in the same moment convinced of his error, and shocked at the grief he had occasioned. He drew his chair towards her, and, taking her hand, again entreated her pardon, and endeavoured in the tenderest accents to soothe and comfort her. — “What a wretch was I to cause you this distress, by questioning that regard with which I can no longer doubt you honour me! Forgive me, Adeline; say but you forgive me, and, whatever may be the pain of this separation, I will no longer oppose it.”

“You have given me some pain,” said Adeline, “but you have not offended me.” — She then mentioned some farther particulars concerning the convent. Theodore endeavoured to conceal the distress which the approaching separation occasioned him, and to consult with her on these plans with composure. His judgement by degrees prevailed over his passions, and he now perceived that the plan she suggested would afford her best chance of security. He considered, what in the first agitation of his mind had escaped him, that he might be condemned upon the charges brought against him, and that his death, should they have been married, would not only deprive her of her protector, but leave her more immediately exposed to the designs of the Marquis, who would, doubtless, attend his trial. Astonished that he had not noticed this before, and shocked at the unwariness by which he might have betrayed her into so dangerous a situation, he became at once reconciled to the idea of leaving her in a convent. He could have wished to place her in the asylum of his own family, but the circumstances under which she must be introduced were so awkward and painful, and, above all, the distance at which they resided, would render a journey so highly dangerous for her, that he forbore to propose it. He entreated only that she would allow him to write to her; but recollecting that his letters might be a means of betraying the place of her residence to the Marquis, he checked himself: “I must deny myself even this melancholy pleasure,” said he, “lest my letters should discover your abode; yet how shall I be able to endure the impatience and uncertainty to which prudence condemns me! If you are in danger, I shall be ignorant of it; though, indeed, did I know it,” said he with a look of despair, “I could not fly to save you. O exquisite misery! ’tis now only I perceive all the horrors of confinement — ’tis now only that I understand all the value of liberty!”

His utterance was interrupted by the violent agitation of his mind; he rose from his chair, and walked with quick paces about the room. Adeline sat, overcome by the description which Theodore had given of his approaching situation, and by the consideration that she might remain in the most terrible suspense concerning his fate. She saw him in a prison — pale — emaciated, and in chains:— she saw all the vengeance of the Marquis descending upon him; and this for his noble exertions in her cause. Theodore, alarmed by the placid despair expressed in her countenance, threw himself into a chair by her’s, and, taking her hand, attempted to speak comfort to her, but the words faltered on his lips, and he could only bathe her hand with tears.

This mournful silence was interrupted by the arrival of the carriage at the inn, and Theodore, arising, went to the window that opened into the yard. The darkness of the night prevented his distinguishing the objects without, but a light now brought from the house shewed him a carriage and four, attended by several servants. Presently he saw a gentleman, wrapped up in a roquelaure, alight and enter the inn, and in the next moment he heard the voice of the Marquis.

He had flown to support Adeline, who was sinking with terror, when the door opened, and the Marquis, followed by the officers and several servants, entered. Fury flashed from his eyes, as they glanced upon Theodore, who hung over Adeline with a look of fearful solicitude

— “Seize that traitor,” said he, turning to the officers; “why have you “suffered him to remain here so long?”

“I am no traitor,” said Theodore, with a firm voice, and the dignity of conscious worth, “but a defender of innocence, of one whom the treacherous Marquis de Montalt would destroy.”

“Obey your orders,” said the Marquis to the officers. Adeline shrieked, held faster by Theodore’s arm, and entreated the men not to part them. “Force only can effect it,” said Theodore, as he looked round for some instrument of defence, but he could see none, and in the same moment they surrounded and seized him. “Dread every thing from my vengeance,” said the Marquis to Theodore, as he caught the hand of Adeline, who had lost all power of resistance, and was scarcely sensible of what passed; “dread every thing from my vengeance; you know you have deserved it.”

“I defy your vengeance,” cried Theodore, “and dread only the pangs of conscience, which your power cannot inflict upon me, though your vices condemn you to its tortures.”

“Take him instantly from the room, and see that he is strongly fettered,” said the Marquis; “he shall soon know what a criminal, who adds insolence to guilt, may suffer.” — Theodore, exclaiming, “Oh Adeline! farewell!” “was now forced out of the room; while Adeline, whose torpid senses were roused by his voice and his last looks, fell at the feet of the Marquis, and with tears of agony implored compassion for Theodore: but her pleadings for his rival served only to irritate the pride and exasperate the hatred of the Marquis. He denounced vengeance on his head, and imprecations too dreadful for the spirits of Adeline, whom he compelled to rise; and then, endeavouring to stifle the emotions of rage, which the presence of Theodore had excited, he began to address her with his usual expressions of admiration.

The wretched Adeline, who, regardless of what he said, still continued to plead for her unhappy lover, was at length alarmed by the returning rage which the countenance of the Marquis expressed, and, exerting all her remaining strength, she sprung from his grasp towards the door of the room; but he seized her hand before she could reach it, and, regardless of her shrieks, bringing her back to her chair, was going to speak, when voices were heard in the passage, and immediately the landlord and his wife, whom Adeline’s cries had alarmed, entered the apartment. The Marquis, turning furiously to them, demanded what they wanted; but not waiting for their answer, he bade them attend him, and quitting the room, she heard the door locked upon her.

Adeline now ran to the windows, which were unfastened, and opened into the inn-yard. All was dark and silent. She called aloud for help, but no person appeared; and the windows were so high, that it was impossible to escape unassisted. She walked about the room in an agony of terror and distress, now stopping to listen, and fancying she heard voices disputing below, and now quickening her steps, as suspense increased the agitation of her mind.

She had continued in this state for near half an hour, when she suddenly heard a violent noise in the lower part of the house, which increased till all was uproar and confusion. People passed quickly through the passages, and doors were frequently opened and shut. She called, but received no answer. It immediately occurred to her, that Theodore, having heard her screams, had attempted to come to her assistance, and that the bustle had been occasioned by the opposition of the officers. Knowing their fierceness and cruelty, she was seized with dreadful apprehensions for the life of Theodore.

A confused uproar of voices now sounded from below, and the screams of women convinced her there was fighting; she even thought she heard the clashing of swords; the image of Theodore, dying by the hands of the Marquis, now rose to her imagination, and the terrors of suspense became almost insupportable. She made a desperate effort to force the door, and again called for help, but her trembling hands were powerless, and every person in the house seemed to be too much engaged even to hear her. A loud shriek now pierced her ears, and, amidst the tumult that followed, she clearly distinguished deep groans. This confirmation of her fears deprived her of all her remaining spirits, and growing faint, she sunk almost lifeless into a chair near the door. The uproar gradually subsided till all was still, but nobody returned to her. Soon after she heard voices in the yard, but she had no power to walk across the room, even to ask the questions she wished, yet feared, to have answered.

About a quarter of an hour elapsed, when the door was unlocked, and the hostess appeared with a countenance as pale as death. “For God’s sake,” said Adeline, “tell me what has happened? Is he wounded? Is he killed?”

“He is not dead, Ma’amselle, but — He is dying then? — tell me where he is — let me go.”

“Stop, Ma’amselle,” cried the hostess, “you are to stay here, I only want the hartshorn out of that cupboard there.” Adeline tried to escape by the door, but the hostess, pushing her aside, locked it, and went down stairs.

Adeline’s distress now entirely overcame her, and she sat motionless, and scarcely conscious that she existed, till roused by a sound of footsteps near the door, which was again opened, and three men, whom she knew to be the Marquis’s servants, entered. She had sufficient recollection to repeat the questions she had asked the landlady, but they answered only that she must come with them, and that a chaise was waiting for her at the door. Still she urged her questions. “Tell me if he lives,” cried she. — “Yes, Ma’amselle, he is alive, but he is terribly wounded, and the surgeon is just come to him.” As they spoke they hurried her along the passage, and without noticing her entreaties and supplications to know whither she was going, they had reached the foot of the stairs, when her cries brought several people to the door. To these the hostess related, that the lady was the wife of a gentleman just arrived, who had overtaken her in her flight with a gallant;

an account which the Marquis’s servants corroborated. “’Tis the gentleman who has just fought the duel,” added the hostess, “and it was on her account.”

Adeline, partly disdaining to take any notice of this artful story, and partly from her desire to know the particulars of what had happened, contented herself with repeating her inquiries; to which one of the spectators at last replied, that the gentleman was desperately wounded. The Marquis’s people would now have hurried her into the chaise, but she sunk lifeless in their arms, and her condition so interested the humanity of the spectators, that, notwithstanding their belief of what had been said, they opposed the effort made to carry her, senseless as she was, into the carriage.

She was at length taken into a room, and, by proper applications, restored to her senses. There she so earnestly besought an explanation of what had happened, that the hostess acquainted her with some particulars of the late rencounter. “When the gentleman that was ill heard your screams, Madam,” said she, “he became quite outrageous, as they tell me, and nothing could pacify him. The Marquis, for they say he is a Marquis, but you know best, was then in the room with my husband and I, and when he heard the uproar, he went down to see what was the matter; and when he came into the room where the Captain was, he found him struggling with the serjeant. Then the Captain was more outrageous than ever; and notwithstanding he had one leg chained, and no sword, he contrived to get the serjeant’s cutlass out of the scabbard, and immediately flew at the Marquis, and wounded him desperately; upon which he was secured.” — “It is the Marquis then who is wounded,” said Adeline; “the other gentleman is not hurt?”

“No, not he,” replied the hostess; but he will smart for it by and bye, for the Marquis swears he will do for him.” Adeline, for a moment, forgot all her misfortunes and all her danger in thankfulness for the immediate escape of Theodore; and she was proceeding to make some farther inquiries concerning him, when the Marquis’s servants entered the room, and declared they could wait no longer. Adeline, now awakened to a sense of the evils with which she was threatened, endeavoured to win the pity of the hostess, who, however, was, or affected to be, convinced of the truth of the Marquis’s story, and, therefore, insensible to all she could urge. Again she addressed his servants, but in vain; they would neither suffer her to remain longer at the inn, or inform her whither she was going; but, in the presence of several persons, already prejudiced by the injurious assertions of the hostess, Adeline was hurried into the chaise, and her conductors mounting their horses, the whole party was very soon beyond the village.

Thus ended Adeline’s share of an adventure, begun with a prospect not only of security, but of happiness; an adventure, which had attached her more closely to Theodore, and shewn him to be more worthy of her love; but which, at the same time, had distressed her by new disappointment, produced the imprisonment of her generous and now-adored lover, and delivered both himself and her into the power of a rival, irritated by delay, contempt, and opposition.

❦

CHAPTER 13

"Nor sea, nor shade, nor shield, nor rock, nor cave,
Nor silent desarts, nor the sullen grave,
Where flame-ey'd Fury means to frown — can save."

The surgeon of the place, having examined the Marquis's wound, gave him an immediate opinion upon it, and ordered that he should be put to bed: but the Marquis, ill as he was, had scarcely any other apprehension than that of losing Adeline, and declared he should be able to begin his journey in a few hours. With this intention, he had began to give orders for keeping horses in readiness, when the surgeon persisting most seriously, and even passionately to exclaim, that his life would be the sacrifice of his rashness, he was carried to a bed-chamber, where his valet alone was permitted to attend him.

This man, the convenient confidant of all his intrigues, had been the chief instrument in assisting his designs concerning Adeline, and was indeed the very person who had brought her to the Marquis's villa on the borders of the forest. To him the Marquis gave his farther directions concerning her; and, foreseeing the inconvenience, as well as the danger of detaining her at the inn, he had ordered him, with several other servants, to carry her away immediately in a hired carriage. The valet having gone to execute his orders, the Marquis was left to his own reflections, and to the violence of contending passions.

The reproaches and continued opposition of Theodore, the favoured lover of Adeline, exasperated his pride, and roused all his malice. He could not for a moment consider this opposition, which was in some respects successful, without feeling an excess of indignation and inveteracy, such as the prospect of a speedy revenge could alone enable him to support.

When he had discovered Adeline's escape from the villa, his surprize at first equalled his disappointment; and, after exhausting the paroxysms of his rage upon his domestics, he dispatched them all different ways in pursuit of her, going himself to the abbey, in the faint hope, that, destitute as she was of other succour, she might have fled thither. La Motte, however, being as much surprized as himself, and as ignorant of the route which Adeline had taken, he returned to the villa, impatient of intelligence, and found some of his servants arrived, without any news of Adeline, and those who came afterwards were as successless as the first.

A few days after, a letter from the Lieutenant–Colonel of the regiment informed him, that Theodore had quitted his company, and had been for some time absent, nobody knew where. This information, confirming a suspicion which had frequently occurred to him, that Theodore had been by some means, or other, instrumental in the escape of Adeline, all his other passions became, for a time, subservient to his revenge, and he gave orders for the immediate pursuit and apprehension of Theodore: but Theodore, in the mean time, had been overtaken and secured.

It was in consequence of having formerly observed the growing partiality between him and Adeline, and of intelligence received from La Motte, who had noticed their interview in the forest, that the Marquis had resolved to remove a rival so dangerous to his love, and so likely to be informed of his designs. He had therefore told Theodore, in a manner as plausible as he could, that it would be necessary for him to join the regiment; a notice which affected him only as it related to Adeline, and which seemed the less extraordinary, as he had already been at the villa a much longer time than was usual with the officers invited by the Marquis. Theodore, indeed, very well knew the character of the Marquis, and had accepted his invitation rather from an unwillingness to shew any disrespect to his Colonel by a refusal, than from a sanguine expectation of pleasure.

From the men who had apprehended Theodore, the Marquis received the information, which had enabled him to pursue and recover Adeline; but, though he had now effected this, he was internally a prey to the corrosive effects of disappointed passion and exasperated pride. The anguish of his wound was almost forgotten in that of his mind, and every pang he felt seemed to increase his thirst of revenge, and to recoil with new torture upon his heart. While he was in this state, he heard the voice of the innocent Adeline imploring protection; but her cries excited in him neither pity or remorse; and when, soon after, the carriage drove away, and he was certain both that she was secured, and Theodore was wretched, he seemed to feel some cessation of mental pain.

Theodore, indeed, did suffer all that a virtuous mind, labouring under oppression so severe, could feel; but he was, at least, free from those inveterate and malignant passions which tore the bosom of the Marquis, and which inflict upon the possessor a punishment more severe than any they can prompt him to imagine for another. What indignation he might feel towards the Marquis, was at this time secondary to his anxiety for Adeline. His captivity was painful, as it prevented his seeking a just and honourable revenge; but it was dreadful, as it withheld him from attempting the rescue of her whom he loved more than life.

When he heard the wheels of the carriage that contained her drive off, he felt an agony of despair which almost overcame his reason. Even the stern hearts of the soldiers who attended him were not wholly insensible to his wretchedness, and by venturing to blame the conduct of the Marquis, they endeavoured to console their prisoner. The physician, who was just arrived, entered the room during this paroxysm of his distress, and, both feeling and expressing much concern at his condition, inquired with strong surprize why he had been thus precipitately removed to a room so very unfit for his reception?

Theodore explained to him the reason of this, of the distress he suffered, and of the chains by which he was disgraced; and perceiving the physician listened to him with attention and compassion, he became desirous of acquainting him with some farther particulars, for which purpose he desired the soldiers to leave the room. The men, complying with his request, stationed themselves on the outside of the door.

He then related all the particulars of the late transaction, and of his connection with the Marquis. The physician attended to his narrative with deep concern, and his countenance frequently expressed strong agitation. When Theodore concluded, he remained for some time silent and lost in thought; at length, awaking from his reverie, he said, “I fear your situation is desperate. The character of the Marquis is too well known to suffer him either to be loved or respected; from such a man you have nothing to hope, for he has scarcely any thing to fear. I wish it was in my power to serve you, but I see no possibility of it.”

“Alas!” said Theodore, “my situation is indeed desperate, and — for that suffering angel” — deep sobs interrupted his voice, and the violence of his agitation would not allow him to proceed. The physician could only express the sympathy he felt for his distress, and entreat him to be more calm, when a servant entered the room from the Marquis, who desired to see the physician immediately. After some time, he said he would attend the Marquis, and having endeavoured to attain a degree of composure, which he found it difficult to assume, he wrung the hand of Theodore and quitted the room, promising to return before he left the house.

He found the Marquis much agitated both in body and mind, and rather more apprehensive for the consequences of the wound than he had expected. His anxiety for Theodore now suggested a plan, by the execution of which he hoped he might be able to serve him. Having felt his patient’s pulse, and asked some questions, he assumed a very serious look, when the Marquis, who watched every turn of his countenance, desired he would, without hesitation, speak his opinion.

“I am sorry to alarm you, my Lord, but here is some reason for apprehension: how long is it since you received the wound?”

“Good God! there is danger then!” cried the Marquis, adding some bitter execrations against Theodore. — “There certainly is danger;” replied the physician, “a few hours may enable me to determine its degree.”

“A few hours, Sir!” interrupted the Marquis; “a few hours!” The physician entreated him to be more calm. Confusion!” cried the Marquis, “A man in health may, with great composure, entreat a dying man to be calm. Theodore will be broke upon the wheel for it, however.”

“You mistake me, Sir,” said the physician, if I believed you a dying man, “or, indeed, very near death, I should not have spoken as I did. But it is of consequence I should know how long the wound has been inflicted.” The Marquis’s terror now began to subside, and he gave a circumstantial account of the affray with Theodore, representing that he had been basely used in an affair, where his own conduct had been perfectly just and humane. The physician heard this relation with great coolness, and when it concluded, without making any comment upon it, told the Marquis he would prescribe a medicine, which he wished him to take immediately.

The Marquis, again alarmed by the gravity of his manner, entreated he would declare most seriously, whether he thought him in immediate danger. The physician hesitated, and the anxiety of the Marquis increased: “It is of consequence,” “said he, “that I should know my exact situation.” The physician then said, that if he had any worldly affairs to settle, it would be as well to attend to them, for that it was impossible to say what might be the event.

He then turned the discourse and said, he had just been with the young officer under arrest, who, he hoped, would not be removed at present, as such a procedure must endanger his life. The Marquis uttered a dreadful oath, and, cursing Theodore for having brought him to his present condition, said, he should depart with the guard that very night. Against the cruelty of this sentence, the physician ventured to expostulate; and endeavouring to awaken the Marquis to a sense of humanity, pleaded earnestly for Theodore. But these entreaties and arguments seemed, by displaying to the Marquis a part of his own character, to rouse his resentment, and re-kindle all the violence of his passions.

The physician at length withdrew in despondency, after promising, at the Marquis's request, not to leave the inn. He had hoped, by aggravating his danger, to obtain some advantages, both for Adeline and Theodore, but the plan had quite a contrary effect; for the apprehension of death, so dreadful to the guilty mind of the Marquis, instead of awakening penitence, increased his desire of vengeance against the man, who had brought him to such a situation. He determined to have Adeline conveyed, where Theodore, should he by any accident escape, could never obtain her; and thus to secure to himself, at least, some means of revenge. He knew, however, that when Theodore was once safely conveyed to his regiment, his destruction was certain, for should he even be acquitted of the intention of deserting, he would be condemned for having assaulted his superior officer.

The physician returned to the room where Theodore was confined. The violence of his distress was now subsided into a stern despair, more dreadful than the vehemence which had lately possessed him. The guard, in compliance with his request, having left the room, the physician repeated to him some part of his conversation with the Marquis. Theodore, after expressing his thanks, said, he had nothing more to hope. For himself he felt little; it was for his family, and for Adeline he suffered. He inquired what route she had taken, and though he had no prospect of deriving advantage from the information, desired the physician to assist him in obtaining it; but the landlord and his wife either were, or affected to be, ignorant of the matter, and it was in vain to apply to any other person.

The serjeant now entered with orders from the Marquis for the immediate departure of Theodore, who heard the message with composure, though the physician could not help expressing his indignation at this precipitate removal, and his dread of the consequences that might attend it. Theodore had scarcely time to declare his gratitude for the kindness of this valuable friend, before the soldiers entered the room to conduct him to the carriage in waiting. As he bade him farewell, Theodore slipped his purse into his hand, and turning abruptly away, told the soldiers to lead on; but the physician stopped him, and refused the present with such serious warmth, that he was compelled to resume it: he wrung the hand of his new friend, and, being unable to speak, hurried away. The whole party immediately set off, and the unhappy Theodore was left to the remembrance of his past hopes and sufferings, to his anxiety for the fate of Adeline, the contemplation of his present wretchedness, and the apprehension of what might be reserved for him in future. For himself, indeed, he saw nothing but destruction, and was only relieved from total despair, by a feeble hope that she, whom he loved better than himself, might one time enjoy that happiness, of which he did not venture to look for a participation.

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CHAPTER 14

"Have you the heart? When your head did but ach,
I knit my handkerchief about your brows,
And with my hand at midnight held up your head;
And, like the watchful minutes to the hour,
Still and anon cheer'd up the heavy time."
KING JOHN.
"If the midnight bell
Did, with his iron tongue, and brazen mouth,
Sound one unto the drowsy race of night;
If this same were a church-yard where we stand,
And thou possessed with a thousand wrongs;
Or if that surly spirit melancholy,
Had baked thy blood and made it heavy, thick;
Then, in despite of broad-eyed watchful day,
I would into thy bosom pour my thoughts."
KING JOHN.

Meanwhile the persecuted Adeline continued to travel, with little interruption, all night. Her mind suffered such a tumult of grief, regret, despair, and terror, that she could not be said to think. The Marquis's valet, who had placed himself in the chaise with her, at first seemed inclined to talk, but her inattention soon silenced him, and left her to the indulgence of her own misery.

They seemed to travel through obscure lanes and bye-ways, along which the carriage drove as furiously as the darkness would permit: when the dawn appeared, she perceived herself on the borders of a forest, and renewed her entreaties to know whither she was going. The man replied, he had no orders to tell, but she would soon see. Adeline, who had hitherto supposed they were carrying her to the villa, now began to doubt it; and as every place appeared less terrible to her imagination than that, her despair began to abate, and she thought only of the devoted Theodore, whom she knew to be the victim of malice and revenge.

They now entered upon the forest, and it occurred to her that she was going to the abbey; for though she had no remembrance of the scenery, through which she passed, it was not the less probable that this was the forest of Fontangville, whose boundaries were by much too extensive to have come within the circle of her former walks. This conjecture revived a terror, little inferior to that occasioned by the idea of going to the villa, for at the abbey she would be equally in the power of the Marquis, and also in that of her cruel enemy, La Motte. Her mind revolted at the picture her fancy drew, and as the carriage moved under the shades, she threw from the window a look of eager inquiry for some object which might confirm, or destroy her present surmise: she did not long look, before an opening in the forest shewed her the distant towers of the abbey — "I am, indeed, lost then!" said she, bursting into tears.

They were soon at the foot of the lawn, and Peter was seen running to open the gate, at which the carriage stopped. When he saw Adeline, he looked surprized and made an effort to speak, but the chaise now drove up to the abbey, where, at the door of the hall, La Motte himself appeared. As he advanced to take her from the carriage, an universal trembling seized her; it was with the utmost difficulty she supported herself, and for some moments she neither observed his countenance, nor heard his voice. He offered his arm to assist her into the abbey, which she at first refused, but having tottered a few paces, was obliged to accept; they then entered the vaulted room, where, sinking into a chair, a flood of tears came to her relief. La Motte did not interrupt the silence, which continued for some time, but paced the room in seeming agitation. When Adeline was sufficiently recovered to notice external objects, she observed his countenance, and there read the tumult of his soul, while he was struggling to assume a firmness, which his better feelings opposed.

La Motte now took her hand, and would have led her from the room, but she stopped, and, with a kind of desperate courage, made an effort to engage him to pity, and to save her. He interrupted her; "It is not in my power," said he, in a voice of emotion; "I am not master of myself, or my conduct; inquire no farther — it is sufficient for you to know that I pity you; more I cannot do." He gave her no time to reply, but, taking her hand, led her to the stairs of the tower, and from thence to the chamber she had formerly occupied.

"Here you must remain for the present," said he, "in a confinement, which is, perhaps, almost as involuntary on my part as it can be on yours. I am willing to render it as easy as possible, and have, therefore, ordered some books to be brought you."

Adeline made an effort to speak, but he hurried from the room, seemingly ashamed of the part he had undertaken, and unwilling to trust himself with her tears. She heard the door of the chamber locked, and then, looking towards the windows, perceived they were secured: the door that led to the other apartments was also fastened. Such preparation for security shocked her, and, hopeless as she had long believed herself, she now perceived her mind sink deeper in despair. When the tears she shed had somewhat relieved her, and her thoughts could turn from the subjects of her immediate concern, she was thankful for the total seclusion allotted her, since it would spare her the pain she must feel in the presence of Monsieur and Madame La Motte, and allow the unrestrained indulgence of her own sorrow and reflection; reflection which, however distressing, was preferable to the agony inflicted on the mind, when agitated by care and fear, it is obliged to assume an appearance of tranquillity.

In about a quarter of an hour, her chamber door was unlocked, and Annette appeared with refreshments and books: she expressed satisfaction at seeing Adeline again, but seemed fearful of speaking, knowing, probably, that it was contrary to the orders of La Motte, who, she said, was waiting at the bottom of the stairs. When Annette was gone, Adeline took some refreshment, which was indeed necessary; for she had tasted nothing since she left the inn. She was pleased, but not surprized, that Madame La Motte did not appear, who, it was evident, shunned her from a consciousness of her own ungenerous conduct, a consciousness, which offered some presumption, that she was still not wholly unfriendly to her. She reflected upon the words of La Motte, “I am not master of myself, or my conduct,” and though they afforded her no hope, she derived some comfort, poor as it was, from the belief that he pitied her. After some time spent in miserable reflection and various conjectures, her long-agitated spirits seemed to demand repose, and she laid down to sleep.

Adeline slept quietly for several hours, and awoke with a mind refreshed and tranquillized. To prolong this temporary peace, and to prevent, therefore, the intrusion of her own thoughts, she examined the books La Motte had sent her: among these she found some that in happier times had elevated her mind and interested her heart; their effect was now weakened, they were still, however, able to soften for a time the sense of her misfortunes.

But this Lethean medicine to a wounded mind was but a temporary blessing; the entrance of La Motte dissolved the illusions of the page, and awakened her to a sense of her own situation. He came with food, and having placed it on the table, left the room without speaking. Again she endeavoured to read, but his appearance had broken the enchantment — bitter reflection returned to her mind, and brought with it the image of Theodore — of Theodore lost to her for ever!

La Motte, mean while, experienced all the terrors that could be inflicted by a conscience not wholly hardened to guilt. He had been led on by passion to dissipation — and from dissipation to vice; but having once touched the borders of infamy, the progressive steps followed each other fast, and he now saw himself the pander of a villain, and the betrayer of an innocent girl, whom every plea of justice and humanity called upon him to protect. He contemplated his picture — he shrunk from it, but he could change its deformity only by an effort too nobly daring for a mind already effeminated by vice. He viewed the dangerous labyrinth into which he was led, and perceived, as if for the first time, the progression of his guilt; from this labyrinth he weakly imagined farther guilt could alone extricate him. Instead of employing his mind upon the means of saving Adeline from destruction, and himself from being instrumental to it, he endeavoured only to lull the pangs of conscience and to persuade himself into a belief that he must proceed in the course he had begun. He knew himself to be in the power of the Marquis, and he dreaded that power more than the sure, though distant punishment that awaits upon guilt. The honour of Adeline and the quiet of his own conscience he consented to barter for a few years of existence.

He was ignorant of the present illness of the Marquis, or he would have perceived that there was a chance of escaping the threatened punishment at a price less enormous than infamy, and he would, perhaps, have endeavoured to save Adeline and himself by flight. But the Marquis, foreseeing the possibility of this, had ordered his servants carefully to conceal the circumstance which detained him, and to acquaint La Motte that he should be at the abbey in a few days, at the same time directing his valet to await him there. Adeline, as he expected, had neither inclination nor opportunity to mention it, and thus La Motte remained ignorant of the circumstance, which might have preserved him from farther guilt and Adeline from misery.

Most unwillingly had La Motte made his wife acquainted with the action, which had made him absolutely dependent upon the will of the Marquis, but the perturbation of his mind partly betrayed him: frequently in his sleep he muttered incoherent sentences, and frequently would start from his slumber and call, in passionate exclamation, upon Adeline. These instances of a disturbed mind had alarmed and terrified Madame La Motte, who watched while he slept and soon gathered from his words a confused idea of the Marquis’s designs.

She hinted her suspicions to La Motte, who reproved her for having entertained them, but his manner, instead of repressing, increased her fears for Adeline; fears, which the conduct of the Marquis soon confirmed. On the night that he slept at the abbey, it had occurred to her, that whatever scheme was in agitation would now most probably be discussed, and anxiety for Adeline made her stoop to a meanness, which, in other circumstances, would have been despicable. She quitted her room, and, concealing herself in an apartment adjoining that in which she had left the Marquis and her husband, listened to their discourse. It turned upon the subject she had expected, and disclosed to her the full extent of their designs. Terrified for Adeline, and shocked at the guilty weakness of La Motte, she was for some time incapable of thinking, or determining how to proceed. She knew her husband to be under great obligation to the Marquis, whose territory thus afforded him a shelter from the world, and that it was in the power of the former to betray him into the hands of his enemies. She believed also that the Marquis would do this, if provoked, yet she thought, upon such an occasion, La Motte might find some way of appeasing the Marquis, without subjecting himself to dishonour. After some farther reflection, her mind became more composed, and she returned to her chamber, where La Motte soon followed. Her spirits, however, were not now in a state to encounter either his displeasure, or his opposition, which she had too much reason to expect, whenever she should mention the subject of her concern, and she, therefore, resolved not to notice it till the morrow.

On the morrow, she told La Motte all he had uttered in his dreams, and mentioned other circumstances, which convinced him it was in vain any longer to deny the truth of her apprehensions. His wife then represented to him how possible it was to avoid the infamy, into which he was about to plunge, by quitting the territories of the Marquis, and pleaded so warmly for Adeline, that La Motte, in sullen silence, appeared to meditate upon the plan. His thoughts were, however, very differently engaged. He was conscious of having deserved from the Marquis a dreadful punishment, and knew that if he exasperated him by refusing to acquiesce with his wishes, he had little to expect from flight, for the eye of justice and revenge would pursue him with indefatigable research.

La Motte meditated how to break this to his wife, for he perceived that there was no other method of counteracting her virtuous compassion for Adeline, and the dangerous consequences to be expected from it, than by opposing it with terror for his safety, and this could be done only by shewing her the full extent of the evils that must attend the resentment of the Marquis. Vice had not yet so entirely darkened his conscience, but that the blush of shame stained his cheek, and his tongue faltered when he would have told his guilt. At length, finding it impossible to mention particulars, he told her that, on account of an affair, which no entreaties should ever induce him to explain, his life was in the power of the Marquis. “You see the alternative,” said he, “take your choice of evils, and, if you can, tell Adeline of her danger, and sacrifice my life to save her from a situation, which many would be ambitious to obtain.” — Madame La Motte, condemned to the horrible alternative of permitting the seduction of innocence, or of dooming her husband to destruction, suffered a distraction of thought, which defied all controul. Perceiving, however, that an opposition to the designs of the Marquis would ruin La Motte and avail Adeline little, she determined to yield and endure in silence.

At the time when Adeline was planning her escape from the abbey, the significant looks of Peter had led La Motte to suspect the truth and to observe them more closely. He had seen them separate in the hall in apparent confusion, and had afterwards observed them conversing together in the cloisters. Circumstances so unusual left him not a doubt that Adeline had discovered her danger, and was concerting with Peter some means of escape. Affecting, therefore, to be informed of the whole affair, he charged Peter with treachery towards himself, and threatened him with the vengeance of the Marquis if he did not disclose all he knew. The menace intimidated Peter, and, supposing that all chance of assisting Adeline was gone, he made a circumstantial confession, and promised to forbear acquainting Adeline with the discovery of the scheme. In this promise he was seconded by inclination, for he feared to meet the displeasure, which Adeline, believing he had betrayed her, might express.

On the evening of the day, on which Adeline’s intended escape was discovered, the Marquis designed to come to the abbey, and it had been agreed that he should then take Adeline to his villa. La Motte had immediately perceived the advantage of permitting Adeline to repair, in the belief of being undiscovered, to the tomb. It would prevent much disturbance and opposition, and spare himself the pain he must feel in her presence, when she should know that he had betrayed her. A servant of the Marquis might go, at the appointed hour, to the tomb, and wrapt in the disguise of night, might take her quietly thence in the character of Peter. Thus, without resistance, she would be carried to the villa, nor discover her mistake till it was too late to prevent its consequence.

When the Marquis did arrive, La Motte, who was not so much intoxicated by the wine he had drank, as to forget his prudence, informed him of what had happened and what he had planned, and the Marquis approving it, his servant was made acquainted with the signal, which afterwards betrayed Adeline to his power.

A deep consciousness of the unworthy neutrality she had observed in Adeline's concerns, made Madame La Motte anxiously avoid seeing her now that she was again in the abbey. Adeline understood this conduct, and she rejoiced that she was spared the anguish of meeting her as an enemy, whom she had once considered as a friend. Several days now passed in solitude, in miserable retrospection, and dreadful expectation. The perilous situation of Theodore was almost the constant subject of her thoughts. Often did she breathe an agonizing wish for his safety, and often look round the sphere of possibility in search of hope: but hope had almost left the horizon of her prospect, and when it did appear, it sprung only from the death of the Marquis, whose vengeance threatened most certain destruction.

The Marquis, mean while, lay at the inn at Baux, in a state of very doubtful recovery. The physician and surgeon, neither of whom he would dismiss, nor suffer to leave the village, proceeded upon contrary principles, and the good effect of what the one prescribed, was frequently counteracted by the injudicious treatment of the other. Humanity alone prevailed on the physician to continue his attendance. The malady of the Marquis was also heightened by the impatience of his temper, the terrors of death, and the irritation of his passions. One moment he believed himself dying, another he could scarcely be prevented from attempting to follow Adeline to the abbey. So various were the fluctuations of his mind, and so rapid the schemes that succeeded each other, that his passions were in a continual state of conflict. The physician attempted to persuade him, that his recovery greatly depended upon tranquillity, and to prevail upon him to attempt, at least, some command of his feelings, but he was soon silenced, in hopeless disgust, by the impatient answers of the Marquis.

At length the servant, who had carried off Adeline, returned, and the Marquis having ordered him into his chamber, asked so many questions in a breath, that the man knew not which to answer. At length he pulled a folded paper from his pocket, which he said had been dropped in the chaise by Mademoiselle Adeline, and as he thought his lordship would like to see it, he had taken care of it. The Marquis stretched forth his hand with eagerness and received a note addressed to Theodore. On perceiving the superscription, the agitation of jealous rage for a moment overcame him, and he held it in his hand unable to open it.

He, however, broke the the seal, and found it to be a note of inquiry, written by Adeline to Theodore during his illness, and which, from some accident she had been prevented from sending him. The tender solicitude it expressed for his recovery stung the soul of the Marquis, and drew from him a comparison of her feelings on the illness of his rival and that of himself. "She could be solicitous for his recovery," said he, "but for mine, she only dreads it." As if willing to prolong the pain this little billet had excited, he then read it again. Again he cursed his fate and execrated his rival, giving himself up, as usual, to the transports of his passion. He was going to throw it from him, when his eyes caught the seal, and he looked earnestly at it. His anger seemed now to have subsided, he deposited the note carefully in his pocket-book, and was, for some time, lost in thought.

After many days of hopes and fears, the strength of his constitution overcame his illness, and he was well enough to write several letters, one of which he immediately sent off to prepare La Motte for his reception. The same policy, which had prompted him to conceal his illness from La Motte, now urged him to say, what he knew would not happen, that he should reach the abbey on the day after his servant. He repeated this injunction, that Adeline should be strictly guarded, and renewed his promises of reward for the future services of La Motte.

La Motte, to whom each succeeding day had brought new surprize and perplexity concerning the absence of the Marquis, received this notice with uneasiness, for he had begun to hope that the Marquis had altered his intentions concerning Adeline, being either engaged in some new adventure, or obliged to visit his estates in some distant province: he would have been willing thus to have got rid of an affair, which was to reflect so much dishonour on himself.

This hope was now vanished, and he directed Madame to prepare for the reception of the Marquis. Adeline passed these days in a state of suspense, which was now cheered by hope, and now darkened by despair. This delay, so much exceeding her expectation, seemed to prove that the illness of the Marquis was dangerous; and when she looked forward to the consequences of his recovery, she could not be sorry that it was so. So odious was the idea of him to her mind, that she would not suffer her lips to pronounce his name, nor make the inquiry of Annette, which was of such consequence to her peace.

It was about a week after the receipt of the Marquis's letter, that Adeline one day saw from her window a party of horsemen enter the avenue, and knew them to be the Marquis and his attendants. She retired from the window in a state of mind not to be described, and, sinking into a chair, was for some time scarcely conscious of the objects around her. When she had recovered from the first terror, which his appearance excited, she again tottered to the window; the party was not in sight, but she heard the trampling of horses, and knew that the Marquis had wound round to the great gate of the abbey. She addressed herself to Heaven for support and protection, and her mind being now somewhat composed, sat down to wait the event.

La Motte received the Marquis with expressions of surprize at his long absence, and the latter, merely saying he had been detained by illness, proceeded to inquire for Adeline. He was told she was in her chamber, from whence she might be summoned if he wished to see her. The Marquis hesitated, and at length excused himself, but desired she might be strictly watched. "Perhaps, my Lord," said La Motte smiling, "Adeline's obstinacy has been too powerful for your passion; you seem less interested concerning her than formerly."

"O! by no means," replied the Marquis; "she interests me, if possible, more than ever; so much, indeed, that I cannot have her too closely guarded; and I, therefore, beg La Motte, that you will suffer no body to attend her, but when you can observe them yourself. Is the room where she is confined sufficiently secure?" La Motte assured him it was; but at the same time expressed his wish that she was removed to the villa. "If by any means," said he, "she should contrive to escape, I know what I must expect from your displeasure; and this reflection keeps my mind in continual anxiety."

"This removal cannot be at present," said the Marquis; "she is safer here, and you do wrong to disturb yourself with any apprehension of her escape, if her chamber is really so secure, as you represent it."

"I can have no motive for deceiving you, my Lord, in this point."

"I do not suspect you of any," said the Marquis; "guard her carefully, and trust me, she will not escape. I can rely upon my valet, and if you wish it, he shall remain here." La Motte thought there could be no occasion for him, and it was agreed that the man should go home.

The Marquis, after remaining about half an hour in conversation with La Motte, left the abbey, and Adeline saw him depart with a mixture of surprize and thankfulness that almost overcame her. She had waited in momentary expectation of being summoned to appear, and had been endeavouring to arm herself with resolution to support his presence. She had listened to every voice that sounded from below, and at every step that crossed the passage, her heart had palpitated with dread, lest it should be La Motte coming to lead her to the Marquis. This state of suffering had been prolonged almost beyond her power of enduring it, when she heard voices under her window, and rising, saw the Marquis ride away. After giving way to the joy and thankfulness that swelled her heart, she endeavoured to account for this circumstance, which, considering what had passed, was certainly very strange. It appeared, indeed, wholly inexplicable, and, after much fruitless inquiry, she quitted the subject, endeavouring to persuade herself that it could only portend good.

The time of La Motte's usual visitation now drew near, and Adeline expected it in the trembling hope of hearing that the Marquis had ceased his persecution; but he was, as usual, sullen and silent, and it was not till he was about to quit the room, that Adeline had the courage to inquire, when the Marquis was expected again? La Motte, opening the door to depart, replied, "On the following day," and Adeline, whom fear and delicacy embarrassed, saw she could obtain no intelligence of Theodore but by a direct question; she looked earnestly, as if she would have spoke, and he stopped, but she blushed and was still silent, till upon his again attempting to leave the room, she faintly called him back.

"I would ask," said she, "after that unfortunate chevalier who has incurred the resentment of the Marquis by endeavouring to serve me. Has the Marquis mentioned him?"

"He has," replied La Motte; "and your indifference towards the Marquis is now fully explained."

"Since I must feel resentment towards those who injure me," said Adeline, "I may surely be allowed to be grateful towards those who serve me. Had the Marquis deserved my esteem, he would, probably, have possessed it."

"Well, well," said La Motte, "this young hero, who, it seems, has been brave enough to lift his arm against his Colonel, is taken care of, and, I doubt not, will soon be sensible of the value of his quixotism." Indignation, grief, and fear, struggled in the bosom of Adeline; she disdained to give La Motte an opportunity of again pronouncing the name of Theodore; yet the uncertainty under which she laboured, urged her to inquire, whether the Marquis had heard of him since he left Caux? "Yes," said La Motte, "he has been safely carried to his regiment, where he is confined till the Marquis can attend to appear against him."

Adeline had neither power nor inclination to inquire farther, and La Motte quitting the chamber, she was left to the misery he had renewed. Though this information contained no new circumstance of misfortune, (for she now heard confirmed what she had always expected) a weight of new sorrow seemed to fall upon her heart, and she perceived that she had unconsciously cherished a latent hope of Theodore's escape before he reached the place of his destination. All hope was now, however, gone; he was suffering the miseries of a prison, and the tortures of apprehension both for his own life and her safety. She pictured to herself the dark damp dungeon where he lay, loaded with chains, and pale with sickness and grief; she heard him, in a voice that thrilled her heart, call upon her name, and raise his eyes to Heaven in silent supplication: she saw the anguish of his countenance, the tears that fell slowly on his cheek, and remembering, at the same time, the generous conduct that had brought him to this abyss of misery, and that it was for her sake he suffered, grief resolved itself into despair, her tears ceased to flow, and she sunk silently into a state of dreadful torpor.

On the morrow the Marquis arrived, and departed as before. Several days then elapsed, and he did not appear, till one evening, as La Motte and his wife were in their usual sitting-room, he entered, and conversed for some time upon general subjects, from which, however, he by degrees fell into a reverie, and, after a pause of silence, he rose and drew La Motte to the window. "I would speak with you alone," said he, "if you are at leisure; if not, another time will do." La Motte, assuring him he was perfectly so, would have conducted him to another room, but the Marquis proposed a walk in the forest. They went out together, and when they had reached a solitary glade, where the spreading branches of the beech and oak deepened the shades of twilight, and threw a solemn obscurity around, the Marquis turned to La Motte, and addressed him: "Your condition, La Motte, is unhappy; this abbey is a melancholy residence for a man like you fond of society, and like you also qualified to adorn it." La Motte bowed. "I wish it was in my power to restore you to the world," continued the Marquis; "perhaps, if I knew the particulars of the affair which has driven you from it, I might perceive that my interest could effectually serve you. I think I have heard you hint it was an affair of honour." La Motte was silent. "I mean not to distress you, however; nor is it common curiosity that prompts this inquiry, but a sincere desire to befriend you. You have already informed me of some particulars of your misfortunes. I think the liberality of your temper led you into expences which you afterwards endeavoured to retrieve by gaming."

"Yes, my Lord," said La Motte, "'tis true that I dissipated the greater part of an affluent fortune in luxurious indulgences, and that I afterwards took unworthy means to recover it: but I wish to be spared upon this subject. I would, if possible, lose the remembrance of a transaction which must for ever stain my character, and the rigorous effect of which, I fear, it is not in your power, my Lord, to soften."

"You may be mistaken on this point," replied the Marquis; "my interest at Court is by no means inconsiderable. Fear not from me any severity of censure; I am not at all inclined to judge harshly of the faults of others. I well know how to allow for the emergency of circumstances; and, I think, La Motte, you have hitherto found me your friend."

"I have, my Lord."

"And when you recollect, that I have forgiven a certain transaction of late date — "

"It is true, my Lord; and allow me to say, I have a just sense of your generosity. The transaction you allude to is by far the worst of my life; and what I have to relate cannot, therefore, lower me in your opinion. When I had dissipated the greatest part of my property in habits of voluptuous pleasure, I had recourse to gaming to supply the means of continuing them. A run of good luck, for some time, enabled me to do this, and encouraging my most sanguine expectations, I continued in the same career of success.

"Soon after this a sudden turn of fortune destroyed my hopes, and reduced me to the most desperate extremity. In one night my money was lowered to the sum of two hundred hundred louis. These I resolved to stake also, and with them my life; for it was my resolution not to survive their loss. Never shall I forget the horrors of that moment on which hung my fate, nor the deadly anguish that seized my heart when my last stake was gone. I stood for some time in a state of stupefaction, till roused to a sense of my misfortune, my passion made me pour forth execrations on my more fortunate rivals, and act all the frenzy of despair. During this paroxysm of madness, a gentleman, who had been a silent observer of all that passed, approached me. — Your are unfortunate, Sir, said he. — I need not be informed of that, Sir, I replied.

"You have, perhaps, been ill used, resumed he. — Yes, Sir, I am ruined, and, therefore, it may be said, I am ill used.

"Do you know the people you have played with?

"No; but I have met them in the first circles.

"Then I am, probably, mistaken, said he, and walked away. His last words roused me, and raised a hope that my money had not been fairly lost. Wishing for farther information, I went in search of the gentleman, but he had left the rooms; I, however, stifled my transports, returned to the table where I had lost my money, placed myself behind the chair of one of the persons who had won it, and closely watched the game. For some time I saw nothing that could confirm my suspicions, but was at length convinced they were just.

"When the game was ended I called one of my adversaries out of the room, and telling him what I had observed, threatened instantly to expose him if he did not restore my property. The man was, for some time, as positive as myself; and, assuming the bully, threatened me with chastisement for my scandalous assertions. I was not, however, in a state of mind to be frightened, and his manner served only to exasperate my temper, already sufficiently inflamed by misfortune. After retorting his threats, I was about to return to the apartment we had left, and expose what had passed, when, with an insidious smile and a softened voice, he begged I would favour him with a few moments attention, and allow him to speak with the gentleman his partner. To the latter part of his request I hesitated, but, in the mean time, the gentleman himself entered the room. His partner related to him, in few words, what had passed between us, and the terror that appeared in his countenance sufficiently declared his consciousness of guilt.

"They then drew aside, and remained a few minutes in conversation together, after which they approached me with an offer, as they phrased it, of a compromise. I declared, however, against any thing of this kind, and swore, nothing less than the whole sum I had lost should content me. — Is it not possible, Monsieur, that you may be offered something as advantageous as the whole? — I did not understand their meaning, but, after they had continued for some time to give distant hints of the same sort, they proceeded to explain.

"Perceiving their characters wholly in my power, they wished to secure my interest to their party, and, therefore, informing me, that they belonged to an association of persons, who lived upon the folly and inexperience of others, they offered me a a share in their concern. My fortunes were desperate, and the proposal now made me would not only produce an immediate supply, but enable me to return to those scenes of dissipated pleasure, to which passion had at first, and long habit afterwards, attached me. I closed with the offer, and thus sunk from dissipation into infamy."

La Motte paused, as if the recollection of these times filled him with remorse. The Marquis understood his feelings. "You judge too rigorously of yourself," said he; "there are few persons, let their appearance of honesty be what it may, who, in such circumstances, would have acted better than you have done. Had I been in your situation, I know not how I might have acted. That rigid virtue which shall condemn you, may dignify itself with the appellation of wisdom, but I wish not to possess it; let it still reside, where it generally is to be found, in the cold bosoms of those, who, wanting feeling to be men, dignify themselves with the title of philosophers. But pray proceed."

"Our success was for some time unlimited, for we held the wheel of fortune, and trusted not to her caprice. Thoughtless and voluptuous by nature, my expences fully kept pace with my income. An unlucky discovery of the practices of our party was at length made by a young nobleman, which obliged us to act for some time with the utmost circumspection. It would be tedious to relate the particulars, which made us at length so suspected, that the distant civility and cold reserve of our acquaintance rendered the frequenting public assemblies both painful and unprofitable. We turned our thoughts to other modes of obtaining money, and a swindling transaction, in which I engaged, to a very large amount, soon compelled me to leave Paris. You know the rest, my Lord."

La Motte was now silent, and the Marquis continued for some time musing. "You perceive, my Lord," at length resumed La Motte, "you perceive that my case is hopeless."

"It is bad, indeed, but not entirely hopeless. From my soul I pity you. Yet, if you should return to the world, and incur the danger of prosecution, I think my interest with the Minister might save you from any severe punishment. You seem, however, to have lost your relish for society, and, perhaps, do not wish to return to it."

"Oh! my Lord, can you doubt this? — But I am overcome with the excess of your goodness; would to Heaven it were in my power to prove the gratitude it inspires."

"Talk not of goodness," said the Marquis; "I will not pretend that my desire of serving you is unalloyed by any degree of self-interest. I will not affect to be more than man, and trust me those who do are less. It is in your power to testify your gratitude, and bind me to your interest for ever." He paused. "Name but the means," cried La Motte, "name but the means, and if they are within the compass of possibility they shall be executed.” The Marquis was still silent. “Do you doubt my sincerity, my Lord, that you are yet silent? Do you fear to repose a confidence in the man whom you have already loaded with obligation? who lives by your mercy, and almost by your means.” The Marquis looked earnestly at him, but did not speak. “I have not deserved this of you, my Lord; speak, I entreat you.”

“There are certain prejudices attached to the human mind,” said the Marquis in a slow and solemn voice, “which it requires all our wisdom to keep from interfering with our happiness; certain set notions, acquired in infancy, and cherished involuntarily by age, which grow up and assume a gloss so plausible, that few minds, in what is called a civilized country, can afterwards overcome them. Truth is often perverted by education. While the refined Europeans boast a standard of honour, and a sublimity of virtue, which often leads them from pleasure to misery, and from nature to error, the simple, uninformed American follows the impulse of his heart, and obeys the inspiration of wisdom.” The Marquis paused, and La Motte continued to listen in eager expectation.

“Nature, uncontaminated by false refinement,” “resumed the Marquis, every where acts alike in the great occurrences of life. The Indian discovers his friend to be perfidious, and he kills him; the wild Asiatic does the same; the Turk, when ambition fires, or revenge provokes, gratifies his passion at the expence of life, and does not call it murder. Even the polished Italian, distracted by jealousy, or tempted by a strong circumstance of advantage, draws his stilletto, and accomplishes his purpose. It is the first proof of a superior mind to liberate itself from prejudices of country, or of education. You are silent, La Motte; are you not of my opinion?”

“I am attending, my Lord, to your reasoning.”

“There are, I repeat it,” said the Marquis, “people of minds so weak, as to shrink from acts they have been accustomed to hold wrong, however advantageous. They never suffer themselves to be guided by circumstances, but fix for life upon a certain standard, from which they will, on no account, depart. Self-preservation is the great law of nature; when a reptile hurts us, or an animal of prey threatens us, we think no farther, but endeavour to annihilate it. When my life, or what may be essential to my life, requires the sacrifice of another, or even if some passion, wholly unconquerable, requires it, I should be a madman to hesitate. La Motte, I think I may confide in you — there are ways of doing certain things — you understand me. There are times, and circumstances, and opportunities — you comprehend my meaning.”

“Explain yourself, my Lord.”

“Kind services that — in short there are services, which excite all our gratitude, and which we can never think repaid. It is in your power to place me in such a situation.”

“Indeed! my Lord, name the means.”

“I have already named them. This abbey well suits the purpose; it is shut up from the eye of observation; any transaction may be concealed within its walls; the hour of midnight may witness the deed, and the morn shall not dawn to disclose it; these woods tell no tales. Ah! La Motte, am I right in trusting this business with you; may I believe you are desirous of serving me, and of preserving yourself?” The Marquis paused, and looked stedfastly at La Motte, whose countenance was almost concealed by the gloom of evening.

“My Lord, you may trust me in any thing; explain yourself more fully.”

“What security will you give me for your faithfulness?”

“My life, my Lord; is it not already in your power?” The Marquis hesitated, and then said, “To-morrow, about this time, I shall return to the abbey, and will then explain my meaning, if, indeed, you shall not already have understood it. You, in the mean time, will consider your own powers of resolution, and be prepared either to adopt the purpose I shall suggest, or to declare you will not.” La Motte made some confused reply. “Farewel till to-morrow,” said the Marquis; “remember that freedom and affluence are now before you.” He moved towards the abbey, and, mounting his horse, rode off with his attendants. La Motte walked slowly home, musing on the late conversation.

❦

CHAPTER 15

"Danger, whose limbs of giant mold
What mortal eye can fix'd behold?
Who stalks his round, an hideous form!
Howling amidst the midnight storm! —
And with him thousand phantoms join'd,
Who prompt to deeds accurs'd the mind! —
On whom that rav'ning brood of Fate,
Who lap the blood of Sorrow wait;
Who, Fear! this ghastly train can see,
And look not madly wild like thee!"
Collins.

The Marquis was punctual to the hour. La Motte received him at the gate, but he declined entering, and said he preferred a walk in the forest. Thither, therefore, La Motte attended him. After some general conversation, "Well," said the Marquis, "have you considered what I said, and are you prepared to decide?"

"I have, my Lord, and will quickly decide, when you shall farther explain yourself. Till then I can form no resolution." The Marquis appeared dissatisfied, and was a moment silent. "Is it then possible," he at length resumed, "that you do not understand? This ignorance is surely affected. La Motte, I expect sincerity. Tell me, therefore, is it necessary I should say more?"

"It is, my Lord," said La Motte immediately. "If you fear to confide in me freely, how can I fully accomplish your purpose?"

"Before I proceed farther," said the Marquis, "let me administer some oath which shall bind you to secrecy. But this is scarcely necessary; for, could I even doubt your word of honour, the remembrance of a certain transaction would point out to you the necessity of being as silent yourself as you must wish me to be." There was now a pause of silence, during which both the Marquis and La Motte betrayed some confusion. "I think, La Motte," said he, "I have given you sufficient proof that I can be grateful: the services you have already rendered me with respect to Adeline have not been unrewarded."

"True, my Lord, I am ever willing to acknowledge this, and am sorry it has not been in my power to serve you more effectually. Your farther views respecting her I am ready to assist."

"I thank you. — Adeline" — the Marquis hesitated. — "Adeline," rejoined La Motte, eager to anticipate his wishes, "has beauty worthy of your pursuit. She has inspired a passion of which she ought to be proud, and, at any rate, she shall soon be yours. Her charms are worthy of" —

"Yes, yes," interrupted the Marquis; "but" — he paused. — "But they have given you too much trouble in the pursuit," said La Motte; "and to be sure, my Lord, it must be confessed they have; but this trouble is all over — you may now consider her as your own."

"I would do so," said the Marquis, fixing an eye of earnest regard upon La Motte — "I would do so."

"Name your hour, my Lord; you shall not be interrupted. — Beauty such as Adeline's" —

"Watch her closely," interrupted the Marquis, "and on no account suffer her to leave her apartment. Where is she now?"

"Confined in her chamber."

"Very well. But I am impatient."

"Name your time, my Lord — to-morrow night."

"To-morrow night," said the Marquis — "to-morrow night. Do you understand me now?"

"Yes, my Lord, this night, if you wish it so. But had you not better dismiss your servants, and remain yourself in the forest. You know the door that opens upon the woods from the west tower. Come thither about twelve — I will be there to conduct you to her chamber. Remember, then, my Lord, that to-night" —

"Adeline dies!" interrupted the Marquis, in a low voice scarcely human. "Do you understand me now?" — La Motte shrunk aghast — "My Lord!"

"La Motte!" said the Marquis. — There was a silence of several minutes, in which La Motte endeavoured to recover himself. — “Let me ask, my Lord, the meaning of this?” said he, when he had breath to speak. “Why should you wish the death of Adeline — of Adeline whom so lately you loved?”

“Make no inquiries for my motive,” said the Marquis; “but it is as certain as that I live that she you name must die. This is sufficient.” The surprise of La Motte equalled his horror. “The means are various,” resumed the Marquis. “I could have wished that no blood might be spilt; and there are drugs sure and speedy in their effect, but they cannot be soon or safely procured. I also with it over

— it must be done quickly — this night.”

“This night, my Lord!”

“Aye, this night, La Motte; if it is to be, why not soon. Have you no convenient drug at hand?”

“None, my Lord.”

“I feared to trust a third person, or I should have been provided,” said the Marquis. “As it is, take this poignard; use it as occasion offers, but be resolute.” La Motte received the poignard with a trembling hand, and continued to gaze upon it for some time, scarcely knowing what he did. “Put it up,” said the Marquis,” and “endeavour to recollect yourself.” La Motte obeyed, but continued to muse in silence.

He saw himself entangled in the web which his own crimes had woven. Being in the power of the Marquis, he knew he must either consent to the commission of a deed, from the enormity of which, depraved as he was, he shrunk in horror, or sacrifice fortune, freedom, probably life itself, to the refusal. He had been led on by slow gradations from folly to vice, till he now saw before him an abyss of guilt which startled even the conscience that so long had slumbered. The means of retreating were desperate — to proceed was equally so.

When he considered the innocence and the helplessness of Adeline, her orphan state, her former affectionate conduct, and her confidence in his protection, his heart melted with compassion for the distress he had already occasioned her, and shrunk in terror from the deed he was urged to commit. But when, on the other hand, he contemplated the destruction that threatened him from the vengeance of the Marquis, and then considered the advantages that were offered him of favour, freedom, and probably fortune, terror and temptation contributed to overcome the pleadings of humanity, and silence the voice of conscience. In this state of tumultuous uncertainty he continued for some time silent, until the voice of the Marquis roused him to a conviction of the necessity of at least appearing to acquiesce in his designs.

“Do you hesitate?” said the Marquis. — “No, my Lord, my resolution is fixed — I will obey you. But methinks it would be better to avoid bloodshed. Strange secrets have been revealed by” —

“Aye, but how avoid it?” interrupted the Marquis. — “Poison I will not venture to procure. I have given you one sure instrument of death. You also may find it dangerous to inquire for a drug.” La Motte perceived that he could not purchase poison without incurring a discovery much greater than that he wished to avoid. “You are right, my Lord, and I will follow your orders implicitly” The Marquis now proceeded, in broken sentences, to give farther directions concerning this dreadful scheme.

“In her sleep,” said he, “at mid-night; the family will then be at rest.” Afterwards they planned a story, which was to account for her disappearance, and by which it was to seem that she had sought an escape in consequence of her aversion to the addresses of the Marquis. The doors of her chamber and of the west tower were to be left open to corroborate this account, and many other circumstances were to be contrived to confirm the suspicion. They farther consulted how the Marquis was to be informed of the event; and it was agreed that he should come as usual to the Abbey on the following day. “To-night, then,” said the Marquis, “I may rely upon your resolution.”

“You may, my Lord.”

“Farewell, then. When we meet again” —

“When we meet again,” said La Motte, “it will be done.” He followed the Marquis to the Abbey, and having seen him mount his horse and wished him a good night, he retired to his chamber, where he shut himself up.

Adeline, mean while, in the solitude of her prison, gave way to the despair which her condition inspired. She tried to arrange her thoughts, and to argue herself into some degree of resignation; but reflection, by representing the past, and reason, by anticipating the future, brought before her mind the full picture of her misfortunes, and she sunk in despondency. Of Theodore, who, by a conduct so noble, had testified his attachment and involved himself in ruin, she thought with a degree of anguish infinitely superior to any she had felt upon any other occasion.

That the very exertions which had deserved all her gratitude, and awakened all her tenderness, should be the cause of his destruction, was a circumstance so much beyond the ordinary bounds of misery, that her fortitude sunk at once before it. The idea of Theodore suffering — Theodore dying — was for ever present to her imagination, and frequently excluding the sense of her own danger, made her conscious only of his. Sometimes the hope he had given her of being able to vindicate his conduct, or at least to obtain a pardon, would return; but it was like the faint beam of an April morn, transient and cheerless. She knew that the Marquis, stung with jealousy, and exasperated to revenge, would pursue him with unrelenting malice.

Against such an enemy what could Theodore oppose? Conscious rectitude would not avail him to ward off the blow which disappointed passion and powerful pride directed. Her distress was considerably heightened by reflecting that no intelligence of him could reach her at the Abbey, and that she must remain she knew not how long in the most dreadful suspence concerning his fate. From the Abbey she saw no possibility of escaping. She was a prisoner in a chamber inclosed at every avenue: she had no opportunity of conversing with any person who could afford her even a chance of relief; and she saw herself condemned to await in passive silence the impending destiny, infinitely more dreadful to her imagination than death itself.

Thus circumstanced, she yielded to the pressure of her misfortunes, and would sit for hours motionless and given up to thought. “Theodore!” she would frequently exclaim, “you cannot hear my voice, you cannot fly to help me; yourself a prisoner and in chains.” The picture was too horrid. The swelling anguish of her heart would subdue her utterance — tears bathed her cheeks — and she became insensible to every thing but the misery of Theodore.

On this evening her mind had been remarkably tranquil; and as she watched from her window, with a still and melancholy pleasure, the setting sun, the fading splendour of the western horizon, and the gradual approach of twilight, her thoughts bore her back to the time when, in happier circumstances, she had watched the same appearances. She recollected also the evening of her temporary escape from the Abbey, when from this same window she had viewed the declining sun — how anxiously she had awaited the fall of twilight — how much she had endeavoured to anticipate the events of her future life — with what trembling fear she had descended from the tower and ventured into the forest. These reflections produced others that filled her heart with anguish and her eyes with tears.

While she was lost in her melancholy reverie she saw the Marquis mount his horse and depart from the gates. The sight of him revived, in all its force, a sense of the misery he inflicted on her beloved Theodore, and a consciousness of the evils which more immediately threatened herself. She withdrew from the window in an agony of tears, which continuing for a considerable time, her frame was, at length, quite exhausted, and she retired early to rest.

La Motte remained in his chamber till supper obliged him to descend. At table his wild and haggard countenance, which, in spite of all his endeavours, betrayed the disorder of his mind, and his long and frequent fits of abstraction surprised as well as alarmed Madame La Motte. When Peter left the room she tenderly inquired what had disturbed him, and he with a distorted smile tried to be gay, but the effort was beyond his art, and he quickly relapsed into silence; or when Madame La Motte spoke, and he strove to conceal the absence of his thoughts, he answered so entirely from the purpose, that his abstraction became still more apparent. Observing this, Madame La Motte appeared to take no notice of his present temper; and they continued to sit in uninterrupted silence till the hour of rest, when they retired to their chamber.

La Motte lay in a state of disturbed watchfulness for some time, and his frequent starts awoke Madame, who, however, being pacified by some trifling excuse, soon went to sleep again. This agitation continued till near midnight, when, recollecting that the time was now passing in idle reflection which ought to be devoted to action, he stole silently from his bed, wrapped himself in his night gown, and, taking the lamp which burned nightly in his chamber, passed up the spiral staircase. As he went he frequently looked back and often started and listened to the hollow sighings of the blast.

His hand shook so violently, when he attempted to unlock the door of Adeline’s chamber, that he was obliged to set the lamp on the ground, and apply both his hands. The noise he made with the key induced him to suppose he must have awakened her; but when he opened the door, and perceived the stillness that reigned within, he was convinced she was asleep. When he approached the bed he heard her gently breathe, and soon after sigh — and he stopped; but silence returning, he again advanced, and then heard her sing in her sleep. As he listened he distinguished some notes of a melancholy little air which, in her happier days, she had often sung to him. The low and mournful accent in which she now uttered them expressed too well the tone of her mind.

La Motte now stepped hastily towards the bed, when, breathing a deep sigh, she was again silent. He undrew the curtain, and saw her laying in a profound sleep, her cheek yet wet with tears, resting upon her arm. He stood a moment looking at her; and as he viewed her innocent and lovely countenance, pale in grief, the light of the lamp, which shone strong upon her eyes, awoke her, and, perceiving a man, she uttered a scream. Her recollection returning, she knew him to be La Motte, and it instantly recurring to her that the Marquis was at hand, she raised herself in bed, and implored pity and protection. La Motte stood looking eagerly at her, but without replying.

The wildness of his looks and the gloomy silence he preserved increased her alarm, and with tears of terror she renewed her supplication. “You once saved me from destruction,” cried she; “O save me now! Have pity upon me — I have no protector but you.”

“What is it you fear?” said La Motte in a tone scarcely articulate. — “O save me — save me from the Marquis!”

“Rise then,” said he, “and dress yourself quickly — I shall be back again in a few minutes.” He lighted a candle that stood on the table, and left the chamber. Adeline immediately arose and endeavoured to dress, but her thoughts were so bewildered that she scarcely knew what she did, and her whole frame so violently agitated that it was with the utmost difficulty she preserved herself from fainting. She threw her clothes hastily on, and then sat down to await the return of La Motte. A considerable time elapsed, yet he did not appear, and, having in vain endeavoured to compose her spirits, the pain of suspence at length became so insupportable, that she opened the door of her chamber, and went to the top of the staircase to listen. She thought she heard voices below; but, considering that if the Marquis was there her appearance could only increase her danger, she checked the step she had almost involuntarily taken to descend. Still she listened, and still thought she distinguished voices. Soon after she heard a door shut, and then footsteps, and she hastened back to her chamber.

Near a quarter of an hour elapsed and La Motte did not appear. When again she thought she heard a murmur of voices below, and also passing steps, and at length her anxiety not suffering her to remain in her room, she moved through the passage that communicated with the spiral staircase; but all was now still. In a few moments, however, a light flashed across the hall, and La Motte appeared at the door of the vaulted room. He looked up, and seeing Adeline in the gallery, beckoned her to descend.

She hesitated and looked towards her chamber; but La Motte now approached the stairs, and, with faultering steps, she went to meet him. “I fear the Marquis may see me,” said she, whispering; “where is he?” La Motte took her hand, and led her on, assuring her she had nothing to fear from the Marquis. The wildness of his looks, however, and the trembling of his hand, seemed to contradict this assurance, and she inquired whither he was leading her. “To the forest,” said La Motte, “that you may escape from the Abbey — a horse waits for you without. I can save you by no other means.” New terror seized her. She could scarcely believe that La Motte, who had hitherto conspired with the Marquis, and had so closely confined her, should now himself undertake her escape, and she at this moment felt a dreadful presentiment, which it was impossible to account for, that he was leading her out to murder her in the forest. Again shrinking back, she supplicated his mercy. He assured her he meant only to protect her, and desired she would not waste time.

There was something in his manner that spoke sincerity, and she suffered him to conduct her to a side door that opened into the forest, where she could just distinguish through the gloom a man on horseback. This brought to her remembrance the night in which she had quitted the tomb, when trusting to the person who appeared she had been carried to the Marquis’s villa. La Motte called, and was answered by Peter, whose voice somewhat re-assured Adeline.

He then told her that the Marquis would return to the Abbey on the following morning, and that this could be her only opportunity of escaping his designs; that she might rely upon his (La Motte’s) word, that Peter had orders to carry her wherever she chose; but as he knew the Marquis would be indefatigable in search of her, he advised her by all means to leave the kingdom, which she might do with Peter, who was a native of Savoy, and would convey her to the house of his sister. There she might remain till La Motte himself, who did not now think it would be safe to continue much longer in France, should join her. He intreated her whatever might happen, never to mention the events which had passed at the Abbey. “To save you, Adeline, I have risked my life; do not increase my danger and your own by any unnecessary discoveries. We may never meet again, but I hope you will be happy; and remember, when you think of me, that I am not quite so bad as I have been tempted to be."

Having said this, he gave her some money, which he told her would be necessary to defray the expences of her journey. Adeline could no longer doubt his sincerity, and her transports of joy and gratitude would scarcely permit her to thank him. She wished to have bid Madame La Motte farewell, and indeed earnestly requested it; but he again told her she had no time to lose, and, having wrapped her in a large cloak, he lifted her upon the horse. She bade him adieu with tears of gratitude, and Peter set off as fast as the darkness would permit.

When they were got some way, "I am glad with all my heart, Ma'amselle," said he, "to see you again. Who would have thought, after all, that my master himself would have bid me take you away! — Well, to be sure, strange things come to pass; but I hope we shall have better luck this time." Adeline, not chusing to reproach him with the treachery of which she feared he had been formerly guilty, thanked him for his good wishes, and said she hoped they should be more fortunate; but Peter, in his usual strain of eloquence, proceeded to undeceive her in this point, and to acquaint her with every circumstance which his memory, and it was naturally a strong one, could furnish.

Peter expressed such an artless interest in her welfare, and such a concern for her disappointment, that she could no longer doubt his faithfulness; and this conviction not only strengthened her confidence in the present undertaking, but made her listen to his conversation with kindness and pleasure. "I should never have staid at the Abbey till this time," said he, "if I could have got away; but my master frighted me so about the Marquis, and I had not money enough to carry me into my own country, so that I was forced to stay. It's well we have got some solid louisd'ors now; for I question, Ma'amselle, whether the people on the road would have taken those trinkets you formerly talked of for money."

"Possibly not," said Adeline: "I am thankful to Monsieur La Motte that we have more certain means of procuring conveniences. What route shall you take when we leave the forest, Peter?" — Peter mentioned very correctly a great part of the road to Lyons: "and then," said he, "we can easily get to Savoy, and that will be nothing. My sister, God bless her! I hope is living; I have not seen her many a year; but if she is not, all the people will be glad to see me, and you will easily get a lodging, Ma'amselle, and every thing you want."

Adeline resolved to go with him to Savoy. La Motte, who knew the character and designs of the Marquis, had advised her to leave the kingdom, and had told her, what her fears would have suggested, that the Marquis would be indefatigable in search of her. His motive for this advice must be a desire of serving her; why else, when she was already in his power, should he remove her to another place, and even furnish her with money for the expences of a journey?

At Leloncourt, where Peter said he was well known, she would be most likely to meet with protection and comfort, even should his sister be dead; and its distance and solitary situation were circumstances that pleased her. These reflections would have pointed out to her the prudence of proceeding to Savoy, had she been less destitute of resources in France; in her present situation they proved it to be necessary.

She inquired farther concerning the route they were to take, and whether Peter was sufficiently acquainted with the road. "When once I get to Thiers, I know it well enough," said Peter, "for I have gone it many a time in my younger days, and any body will tell us the way there." They travelled for several hours in darkness and silence, and it was not till they emerged from the forest that Adeline saw the morning light streak the eastern clouds. The sight cheered and revived her; and as she travelled silently along her mind revolved the events of the past night, and meditated plans for the future. The present kindness of La Motte appeared so very different from his former conduct that it astonished and perplexed her, and she could only account for it by attributing it to one of those sudden impulses of humanity which sometimes operate even upon the most depraved hearts.

But when she recollected his former words, "that he was not master of himself," she could scarcely believe that mere pity could induce him to break the bonds which had hitherto so strongly held him, and then, considering the altered conduct of the Marquis, she was inclined to think that she owed her liberty to some change in his sentiments towards her; yet the advice La Motte had given her to quit the kingdom, and the money with which he had supplied her for that purpose, seemed to contradict this opinion, and involved her again in doubt.

Peter now got directions to Thiers, which place they reached without any accident, and there stopped to refresh themselves. As soon as Peter thought the horse sufficiently rested, they again set forward, and from the rich plains of the Lyonnois Adeline, for the first time, caught a view of the distant alps, whose majestic heads, seeming to prop the vault of heaven, filled her mind with sublime emotions.

In a few hours they reached the vale, in which stands the city of Lyons, whose beautiful environs, studded with villas, and rich with cultivation, withdrew Adeline from the melancholy contemplation of her own circumstances, and her more painful anxiety for Theodore.

When they reached that busy city, her first care was to inquire concerning the passage of the Rhone; but she forbore to make these inquiries of the people of the inn, considering that if the Marquis should trace her thither they might enable him to pursue her route. She, therefore, sent Peter to the quays to hire a boat, while she herself took a slight repast, it being her intention to embark immediately. Peter presently returned, having engaged a boat and men to take them up the Rhone to the nearest part of Savoy, from whence they were to proceed by land to the village of Leloncourt.

Having taken some refreshment, she ordered him to conduct her to the vessel. A new and striking scene presented itself to Adeline, who looked with surprise upon the river gay with vessels, and the quay crowded with busy faces, and felt the contrast which the cheerful objects around bore to herself — to her an orphan, desolate, helpless, and flying from persecution and her country. She spoke with the master of the boat, and having sent Peter back to the inn for the horse, (La Motte's gift to Peter in lieu of some arrears of wages) they embarked.

As they slowly passed up the Rhone, whose steep banks, crowned with mountains, exhibited the most various, wild, and romantic scenery, Adeline sat in pensive reverie. The novelty of the scene through which she floated, now frowning with savage grandeur, and now smiling in fertility, and gay with towns and villages, soothed her mind, and her sorrow gradually softened into a gentle and not unpleasing melancholy. She had seated herself at the head of the boat, where she watched its sides cleave the swift stream, and listened to the dashing of the waters.

The boat, slowly opposing the current, passed along for some hours, and at length the veil of evening was stretched over the landscape. The weather was fine, and Adeline, regardless of the dews that now fell, remained in the open air, observing the objects darken round her, the gay tints of the horizon fade away, and the stars gradually appear, trembling upon the lucid mirror of the waters. The scene was now sunk in deep shadow, and the silence of the hour was broken only by the measured dashing of the oars, and now and then by the voice of Peter speaking to the boatmen. Adeline sat lost in thought: the forlornness of her circumstances came heightened to her imagination.

She saw herself surrounded by the darkness and stillness of night, in a strange place, far distant from any friends, going she scarcely knew whither, under the guidance of strangers, and pursued, perhaps, by an inveterate enemy. She pictured to herself the rage of the Marquis now that he had discovered her flight, and though she knew it very unlikely he should follow her by water, for which reason she had chosen that manner of travelling, she trembled at the portrait her fancy drew. Her thoughts then wandered to the plan she should adopt after reaching Savoy; and much as her experience had prejudiced her against the manners of a convent, she saw no place more likely to afford her a proper asylum. At length she retired to the little cabin for a few hours repose.

She awoke with the dawn, and her mind being too much disturbed to sleep again, she rose and watched the gradual approach of day. As she mused, she expressed the feelings of the moment in the following

SONNET.

Morn's beaming eyes at length unclose, And wake the blushes of the rose, That all night long oppress'd with dews, And veil'd in chilling shade its hues, Reclin'd, forlorn, the languid head, And sadly sought its parent bed; Warmth from her ray the trembling flow'r derives, And, sweetly blushing through its tears, revives.

"Morn's beaming eyes at length unclose," And melt the tears that bend the rose; But can their charms suppress the sigh, Or chace the tear from Sorrow's eye? Can all their lustrous light impart One ray of peace to Sorrow's heart? Ah! no; their fires her fainting soul oppress — Eve's pensive shades more soothe her meek distress!

When Adeline left the Abbey, La Motte had remained for some time at the gate, listening to the steps of the horse that carried her, till the sound was lost in distance; he then turned into the hall with a lightness of heart to which he had long been a stranger. The satisfaction of having thus preserved her, as he hoped, from the designs of the Marquis, overcame for a while all sense of the danger in which this step must involve him. But when he returned entirely to his own situation, the terrors of the Marquis's resentment struck their full force upon his mind, and he considered how he might best escape it.

It was now past midnight — the Marquis was expected early on the following day; and in this interval it at first appeared probable to him that he might quit the forest. There was only one horse; but he considered whether it would be best to set off immediately for Auboine, where a carriage might be procured to convey his family and his moveables from the Abbey, or quietly to await the arrival of the Marquis, and endeavour to impose upon him by a forged story of Adeline's escape.

The time which must elapse before a carriage could reach the Abbey would leave him scarcely sufficient to escape from the forest; what money he had remaining from the Marquis's bounty would not carry him far; and when it was expended he must probably be at a loss for subsistence, should he not before then be detected. By remaining at the Abbey it would appear that he was unconscious of deserving the Marquis's resentment, and though he could not expect to impress a belief upon him that his orders had been executed, he might make it appear that Peter only had been accessary to the escape of Adeline; an account which would seem the more probable from Peter's having been formerly detected in a similar scheme. He believed also that if the Marquis should threaten to deliver him into the hands of justice, he might save himself by a menace of disclosing the crime he had commissioned him to perpetrate.

Thus arguing, La Motte resolved to remain at the Abbey and await the event of the Marquis's disappointment.

When the Marquis did arrive, and was informed of Adeline's flight, the strong workings of his soul, which appeared in his countenance, for a while alarmed and terrified La Motte. He cursed himself and her in terms of such coarseness and vehemence as La Motte was astonished to hear from a man whose manners were generally amiable, whatever might be the violence and criminality of his passions. To invent and express these terms seemed to give him not only relief, but delight; yet he appeared more shocked at the circumstance of her escape than exasperated at the carelessness of La Motte and recollecting at length that he wasted time, he left the Abbey, and dispatched several of his servants in pursuit of her.

When he was gone, La Motte, believing his story had succeeded, returned to the pleasure of considering that he had done his duty, and to the hope that Adeline was now beyond the reach of pursuit. This calm was of short continuance. In a few hours the Marquis returned, accompanied by the officers of justice. The affrighted La Motte, perceiving him approach, endeavoured to conceal himself but was seized and carried to the Marquis, who drew him aside.

"I am not to be imposed upon," said he, "by such a superficial story as you have invented; you know your life is in my hands; tell me instantly where you have secreted Adeline, or I will charge you with the crime you have committed against me; but, upon your disclosing the place of her concealment, I will dismiss the officers, and, if you wish it, assist you to leave the kingdom. You have no time to hesitate, and may know that I will not be trifled with." La Motte attempted to appease the Marquis, and affirmed that Adeline was really fled he knew not whither. "You will remember, my Lord, that your character is also in my power; and that, if you proceed to extremities, you will compel me to reveal in the face of day that you would have made me a murderer."

"And who will believe you?" said the Marquis. "The crimes that banished you from society will be no testimony of your veracity, and that with which I now charge you will bring with it a sufficient presumption that your accusation is malicious. Officers, do your duty."

They entered the room and seized La Motte, whom terror now deprived of all power of resistance, could resistance have availed him, and in the perturbation of his mind he informed the Marquis that Adeline had taken the road to Lyons. This discovery, however, was made too late to serve himself; the Marquis seized the advantage it offered, but the charge had been given, and, with the anguish of knowing that he had exposed Adeline to danger, without benefiting himself, La Motte submitted in silence to his fate. Scarcely allowing him time to collect what little effects might easily be carried with him, the officers conveyed him from the Abbey; but the Marquis, in consideration of the extreme distress of Madame La Motte, directed one of his servants to procure a carriage from Auboine that she might follow her husband.

The Marquis, in the mean time, now acquainted with the route Adeline had taken, sent forward his faithful valet to trace her to her place of concealment, and return immediately with inteligence to the villa.

Abandoned to despair, La Motte and his wife quitted the forest of Fontangville, which had for so many months afforded them an asylum, and embarked once more upon the tumultuous world, where justice would meet La Motte in the form of destruction. They had entered the forest as a refuge, rendered necessary by the former crimes of La Motte, and for some time found in it the security they sought; but other offences, for even in that sequestered spot there happened to be temptation, soon succeeded, and his life, already sufficiently marked by the punishment of vice, now afforded him another instance of this great truth, "That where guilt is, there peace cannot enter."

❦

CHAPTER 16

"Hail awful scenes, that calm the troubled breast,
"And woo the weary to profound repose!"
Beattie.

Adeline, mean while, and Peter proceeded on their voyage, without any accident, and landed in Savoy, where Peter placed her upon the horse, and himself walked beside her. When he came within sight of his native mountains, his extravagant joy burst forth into frequent exclamations, and he would often ask Adeline if she had ever seen such hills in France. "No, no," said he, "the hills there are very well for French hills, but they are not to be named on the same day with ours." Adeline, lost in admiration of the astonishing and tremendous scenery around her, assented very warmly to the truth of Peter's assertion, which encouraged him to expatiate more largely upon the advantages of his country; its disadvantages he totally forgot; and though he gave away his last sous to the children of the peasantry that run barefooted by the side of the horse, he spoke of nothing but the happiness and content of the inhabitants.

His native village, indeed, was an exception to the general character of the country, and to the usual effects of an arbitrary government; it was flourishing, healthy, and happy; and these advantages it chiefly owed to the activity and attention of the benevolent clergyman whose cure it was.

Adeline, who now began to feel the effects of long anxiety and fatigue, much wished to arrive at the end of her journey, and inquired impatiently of Peter concerning it. Her spirits, thus weakened, the gloomy grandeur of the scenes which had so lately awakened emotions of delightful sublimity, now awed her into terror; she trembled at the sound of the torrents rolling among the clifts and thundering in the vale below, and shrunk from the view of the precipices, which sometimes overhung the road, and at others appeared beneath it. Fatigued as she was, she frequently dismounted to climb on foot the steep slinty road, which she feared to travel on horseback.

The day was closing when they drew near a small village at the foot of the Savoy Alps, and the sun, in all his evening splendour, now sinking behind their summits, threw a farewell gleam athwart the landscape, so soft and glowing as drew from Adeline, languid as she was, an exclamation of rapture.

The romantic situation of the village next attracted her notice. It stood at the foot of several stupendous mountains, which formed a chain round a lake at some little distance, and the woods that swept from their summits almost embosomed the village. The lake, unruffled by the lightest air, reflected the vermil tints of the horizon with the sublime scenery on its borders, darkening every instant with the falling twilight.

When Peter perceived the village, he burst into a shout of joy. "Thank God," said he, "we are near home; there is my dear native place. It looks just as it did twenty years ago; and there are the same old trees growing round our cottage yonder, and the huge rock that rises above it. My poor father died there, Ma'amselle. Pray heaven my sister be alive; it is a long while since I saw her." Adeline listened with a melancholy pleasure to these artless expressions of Peter, who, in retracing the scenes of his former days, seemed to live them over again. As they approached the village, he continued to point out various objects of his remembrance. "And there too is the good pastor's chateau; look, Ma'amselle, that white house, with the smoke curling, that stands on the edge of the lake yonder. I wonder whether he is alive yet. He was not old when I left the place, and as much beloved as ever man was; but death spares nobody!"

They had by this time reached the village which was extremely neat, though it did not promise much accommodation. Peter had hardly advanced ten steps before he was accosted by some of his old acquaintance, who shook hands, and seemed not to know how to part with him. He inquired for his sister, and was told she was alive and well. As they passed on, so many of his old friends flocked round him, that Adeline became quite weary of the delay. Many whom he had left in the vigour of life were now tottering under the infirmities of age, while their sons and daughters, whom he had known only in the playfulness of infancy, were grown from his remembrance, and in the pride of youth. At length they approached the cottage, and were met by his sister, who, having heard of his arrival, came and welcomed him with unfeigned joy.

On seeing Adeline, she seemed surprised, but assisted her to alight, and conducting her into a small but neat cottage, received her with a warmth of ready kindness which would have graced a better situation. Adeline desired to speak with her alone, for the room was now crowded with Peter's friends, and then acquanting her with such particulars of her circumstances as it was necessary to communicate, desired to know if she could be accommodated with lodging in the cottage. “Yes, Ma’amselle,” said the good woman, “such as it is, you are heartily welcome. I am only sorry it is not better. But you seem ill, Ma’amselle; what shall I get you?”

Adeline, who had been long struggling with fatigue and indisposition, now yielded to their pressure. She said she was, indeed, ill; but hoped that rest would restore her, and desired a bed might be immediately prepared. The good woman went out to obey her, and soon returning, shewed her to a little cabin, where she retired to a bed, whose cleanliness was its only recommendation.

But, notwithstanding her fatigue, she could not sleep, and her mind, in spite of all her efforts, returned to the scenes that were passed, or presented gloomy and imperfect visions of the future.

The difference between her own condition and that of other persons, educated as she had been, struck her forcibly, and she wept. “They,” said she, “have friends and relations, all striving to save them not only from what may hurt, but what may displease them; watching not only for their present safety, but for their future advantage, and preventing them even from injuring themselves. But during my whole life I have never know a friend; have been in general surrounded by enemies, and very seldom exempt from some circumstance either of danger or calamity. Yet surely I am not born to be for ever wretched; the time will come when” — She began to think she might one time be happy; but recollecting the desperate situation of Theodore, “No,” said she, “I can never hope even for peace!”

Early the following morning the good woman of the house came to inquire how she had rested, and found she had slept little, and was much worse than on the preceeding night. The uneasiness of her mind contributed to heighten the feverish symptoms that attended her, and in the course of the day her disorder began to assume a serious aspect. She observed its progress with composure, resigning herself to the will of God, and feeling little to regret in life. Her kind hostess did every thing in her power to relieve her, and there was neither physician nor apothecary in the village, so that nature was deprived of none of her advantages. Notwithstanding this, the disorder rapidly increased, and on the third day from its first attack she became delirious; after which she sunk into a state of stupefaction.

How long she remained in this deplorable condition she knew not; but, on recovering her senses, she found herself in an apartment very different from any she remembered. It was spacious and almost beautiful, the bed and every thing around being in one stile of elegant simplicity. For some minutes she lay in a trance of surprise, endeavouring to recollect her scattered ideas of the past, and almost fearing to move, lest the pleasing vision should vanish from her eyes.

At length she ventured to raise herself, when she presently heard a soft voice speaking near her, and the bed curtain on one side was gently undrawn by a beautiful girl. As she leaned forward over the bed, and with a smile of mingled tenderness and joy inquired of her patient how she did, Adeline gazed in silent admiration upon the most interesting female countenance she had ever seen, in which the expression of sweetness, united with lively sense and refinement, was chastened by simplicity.

Adeline at length recollected herself sufficiently to thank her kind inquirer, and begged to know to whom she was obliged, and where she was? The lovely girl pressed her hand, “’Tis we who are obliged,” said she. “Oh! how I rejoice to find that you have recovered your recollection.” She said no more, but slew to the door of the apartment, and disappeared. In a few minutes she returned with an elderly lady, who, approaching the bed with an air of tender interest, asked concerning the state of Adeline; to which the latter replied, as well as the agitation of her spirits would permit, and repeated her desire of knowing to whom she was so greatly obliged. “You shall know that hereafter,” said the lady; “at present be assured that you are with those who will think their care much overpaid by your recovery; submit, therefore, to every thing that may conduce to it, and consent to be kept as quiet as possible.”

Adeline gratefully smiled, and bowed her head in silent assent. The lady now quitted the room for a medicine; having given which to Adeline, the curtain was closed, and she was left to repose. But her thoughts were too busy to suffer her to profit by the opportunity. She contemplated the past, and viewed the present, and, when she compared them, the contrast struck her with astonishment. The whole appeared like one of those sudden transitions so frequent in dreams, in which we pass from grief and despair, we know not how, to comfort and delight.

Yet she looked forward to the future with a trembling anxiety, that threatened to retard her recovery, and which, when she remembered the words of her generous benefactress, she endeavoured to suppress. Had she better known the disposition of the persons in whose house she now was, her anxiety, as far as it regarded herself, must in a great measure have been done away; for La Luc, its owner, was one of those rare characters to whom misfortune seldom looks in vain, and whose native goodness, confirmed by principle, is uniform and unassuming in its acts. The following little picture of his domestic life, his family and his manners, will more fully illustrate his character. It was drawn from the life, and its exactness will, it is hoped, compensate for its length.

THE FAMILY OF LA LUC.

"But half mankind, like Handel's fool, destroy, Through rage and ignorance, the strain of joy; Irregularly wild their passions roll Through Nature's finest instrument, the soul: While men of sense, with Handel's happier skill, Correct the taste and harmonize the will; Teach their affections, like his notes, to flow, Nor rais'd too high, nor ever sunk too low; Till ev'ry virtue, measur'd and refin'd, As fits the concert of the master mind, Melts in its kindred sounds, and pours along Th' according music of the moral song." Cawthorne.

In the village of Leloncourt, celebrated for its picturesque situation at the foot of the Savoy Alps, lived Arnaud La Luc, a clergyman, descended from an ancient family of France, whose decayed fortunes occasioned them to seek a retreat in Switzerland, in an age when the violence of civil commotion seldom spared the conquered. He was minister of the village, and equally loved for the piety and benevolence of the Christian as respected for the dignity and elevation of the philosopher. His was the philosophy of nature, directed by common sense. He despised the jargon of the modern schools and the brilliant absurdities of systems, which have dazzled without enlightening, and guided without convincing, their disciples.

His mind was penetrating; his views extensive; and his systems, like his religion, were simple, rational, and sublime. The people of his parish looked up to him as to a father; for while his precepts directed their minds, his example touched their hearts.

In early youth La Luc lost a wife, whom he tenderly loved. This event threw a tincture of soft and interesting melancholy over his character, which remained when time had mellowed the remembrance that occasioned it. Philosophy had strengthened, not hardened, his heart; it enabled him to resist the pressure of affliction, rather than to overcome it.

Calamity taught him to feel with peculiar sympathy the distresses of others. His income from the parish was small, and what remained from the divided and reduced estates of his ancestors did not much increase it; but though he could not always relieve the necessities of the indigent, his tender pity and holy conversation seldom failed in administering consolation to the mental sufferer. On these occasions the sweet and exquisite emotions of his heart have often induced him to say, that could the voluptuary be once sensible of these feelings, he would never after forego "the luxury of doing good." — "Ignorance of true pleasure," he would say, "more frequently than temptation to that which is false, leads to vice."

La Luc had one son and a daughter, who were too young, when their mother died, to lament their loss. He loved them with peculiar tenderness, as the children of her whom he never ceased to deplore; and it was for some time his sole amusement to observe the gradual unfolding of their infant minds, and to bend them to virtue. His was the deep and silent sorrow of the heart; his complaints he never obtruded upon others, and very seldom did he even mention his wife. His grief was too sacred for the eye of the vulgar. Often he retired to the deep solitude of the mountains, and amid their solemn and tremendous scenery would brood over the remembrance of times past, and resign himself to the luxury of grief. On his return from these little excursions he was always more placid and contented. A sweet tranquillity, which arose almost to happiness, was diffused over his mind, and his manners were more than usually benevolent. As he gazed on his children, and fondly kissed them, a tear would sometimes steal into his eye, but it was a tear of tender regret, unmingled with the darker qualities of sorrow, and was most precious to his heart.

On the death of his wife he received into his house a maiden sister, a sensible, worthy woman, who was deeply interested in the happiness of her brother. Her affectionate attention and judicious conduct anticipated the effect of time in softening the poignancy of his distress, and her unremitted care of his children, while it proved the goodness of her own heart, attracted her more closely to his.

It was with inexpressible pleasure that he traced in the infant features of Clara the resemblance of her mother. The same gentleness of manner and the same sweetness of disposition soon displayed themselves, and as she grew up her actions frequently reminded him so strongly of his lost wife as to fix him in reveries, which absorbed all his soul.

Engaged in the duties of his parish, the education of his children, and in philosophic research, his years passed in tranquillity. The tender melancholy with which affliction had tinctured his mind was, by long indulgence, become dear to him, and he would not have relinquished it for the brightest dream of airy happiness. When any passing incident disturbed him, he retired for consolation to the idea of her he so faithfully loved, and yielding to a gentle, and what the world would call a romantic, sadness, gradually reassumed his composure. This was the secret luxary to which he withdrew from temporary disappointment — the solitary enjoyment which dissipated the cloud of care, and blunted the sting of vexation — which elevated his mind above this world, and opened to his view the sublimity of another.

The spot he now inhabited, the surrounding scenery, the romantic beauties of the neighbouring walks, were dear to La Luc, for they had once been loved by Clara; they had been the scenes of her tenderness, and of his happiness.

His chateau stood on the borders of a small lake that was almost enviroued by mountains of stupendous height, which, shooting into a variety of grotesque forms, composed a scenery singularly solemn and sublime. Dark woods, intermingled with bold projections of rock, sometimes barren, and sometimes covered with the purple bloom of wild flowers, impended over the lake, and were seen in the clear mirror of its waters. The wild and alpine heights which rose above were either crowned with perpetual snows, or exhibited tremendous crags and masses of solid rock, whose appearance was continually changing as the rays of light were variously reflected on their surface, and whose summits were often wrapt in impenetrable mists. Some cottages and hamlets, scattered on the margin of the lake, or seated in picturesque points of view on the rocks above, were the only objects that reminded the beholder of humanity.

On the side of the lake, nearly opposite to the chateau, the mountains receded, and a long chain of alps was seen stretching in perspective. Their innumerable tints and shades, some veiled in blue mists, some tinged with rich purple, and others glittering in partial light, gave luxurious and magical colouring to the scene.

The chateau was not large, but it was convenient, and was characterised by an air of elegant simplicity and good order. The entrance was a small hall, which opening by a glass door into the garden, afforded a view of the lake, with the magnificent scenery exhibited on its borders. On the left of the hall was La Luc's study, where he usually passed his mornings; and adjoining was a small room fitted up with chymical apparatus, astronomical instruments, and other implements of science. On the right was the family parlour, and behind it a room which belonged exclusively to Madame La Luc. Here were deposited various medicines and botanical distillations, together with the apparatus for preparing them. From this room the whole village was liberally supplied with physical comfort; for it was the pride of Madame to believe herself skilful in relieving the disorders of her neighbours.

Behind the chateau rose a tuft of pines, and in front a gentle declivity, covered with verdure and flowers, extended to the lake, whose waters flowed even with the grass, and gave freshness to the acacias that waved over its surface. Flowering shrubs, intermingled with mountain ash, cypress, and ever-green oak, marked the boundary of the garden.

At the return of spring it was Clara's care to direct the young shoots of the plants, to nurse the budding flowers, and to shelter them with the luxuriant branches of the shrubs from the cold blasts that descended from the mountains. In summer she usually rose with the sun, and visited her favourite flowers while the dew yet hung glittering on their leaves. The freshness of early day, with the glowing colouring which then touched the scenery, gave a pure and exquisite delight to her innocent heart. Born amid scenes of grandeur and sublimity, she had quickly imbibed a taste for their charms, which taste was heightened by the influence of a warm imagination. To view the sun rising above the alps, tinging their snowy heads with light, and suddenly darting his rays over the whole face of nature — to see the fiery splendour of the clouds reflected in the lake below, and the roseate tints first steal upon the rocks above — were among the earliest pleasures of which Clara was susceptible. From being delighted with the observance of nature, she grew pleased with seeing her finely imitated, and soon displayed a taste for poetry and painting. When she was about sixteen she often selected from her father's library those of the Italian poets most celebrated for picturesque beauty, and would spend the first hours of morning in reading them under the shade of the acacias that bordered the lake. Here too she would often attempt rude sketches of the surrounding scenery, and at length by repeated efforts, assisted by some instruction from her brother, she succeeded so well as to produce twelve drawings in crayon, which were judged worthy of decorating the parlour of the chateau.

Young La Luc played the flute, and she listened to him with exquisite delight, particularly when he stood on the margin of the lake, under her beloved acacias. Her voice was sweet and flexible, though not strong, and she soon learned to modulate it to the instrument. She knew nothing of the intricacies of execution; her airs were simple, and her style equally so, but she soon gave them a touching expression, inspired by the sensibility of her heart, which seldom left those of her hearers unaffected.

It was the happiness of La Luc to see his children happy, and in one of his excursions to Geneva, whither he went to visit some relations of his late wife, he bought Clara a lute. She received it with more gratitude than she could express; and having learned one air, she hastened to her favourite acacias, and played it again and again till she forgot every thing besides. Her little domestic duties, her books, her drawing, even the hour which her father dedicated to her improvement, when she met her brother in the library, and with him partook of knowledge, even this hour passed unheeded by. La Luc suffered it to pass. Madame was displeased that her niece neglected her domestic duties, and wished to reprove her, but La Luc begged she would be silent. “Let experience teach her her error,” said he; “precept seldom brings conviction to young minds.”

Madame objected that experience was a slow teacher. “It is a sure one,” replied La Luc, “and is not unfrequently the quickest of all teachers: when it cannot lead us into serious evil, it is well to trust to it.”

The second day passed with Clara as the first, and the third as the second. She could now play several tunes; she came to her father and repeated what she had learnt.

At supper the cream was not dressed, and there was no fruit on the table. La Luc inquired the reason; Clara recollected it, and blushed. She observed that her brother was absent, but nothing was said. Toward the conclusion of the repast he appeared; his countenance expressed unusual satisfaction, but he seated himself in silence. Clara inquired what had detained him from supper, and learnt that he had been to a sick family in the neighbourhood with the weekly allowance which her father gave them. La Luc had entrusted the care of this family to his daughter, and it was her duty to have carried them their little allowance on the preceding day, but she had forgot every thing but music.

“How did you find the woman?” said La Luc to his son. “Worse, Sir,” he replied, “for her medicines had not been regularly given, and the children had had little or no food today.”

Clara was shocked. “No food to day!” said she to herself, “and I have been playing all day on my lute, under the acacias by the lake!”, Her father did not seem to observe her emotion, but turned to his son. “I left her better,” said the latter; “the medicines I carried eased her pain, and I had the pleasure to see her children make a joyful supper.”

Clara, perhaps for the first time in her life, envied him his pleasure; her heart was full, and she sat silent. “No food to day!” thought she.

She retired pensively to her chamber. The sweet serenity with which she usually went to rest was vanished, for she could no longer reflect on the past day with satisfaction.

“What a pity,” said she, “that what is so pleasing should be the cause of so much pain! This lute is my delight, and my torment!” This reflection occasioned her much internal debate; but before she could come to any resolution upon the point in question, she fell asleep.

She awoke very early the next morning, and impatiently watched the progress of the dawn. The sun at length appearing, she arose, and, determined to make all the atonement in her power for her former neglect, hastened to the cottage.

Here she remained a considerable time, and when she returned to the chateau her countenance had recovered all its usual serenity. She resolved, however, not to touch her lute that day.

Till the hour of breakfast she busied herself in binding up the flowers, and pruning the shoots that were too luxuriant, and she at length found herself, she scarcely knew how, beneath her beloved acacias by the side of the lake. “Ah!” said she, with a sigh, “how sweetly would the song I learned yesterday, sound now over the waters!” But she remembered her determination, and checked the step she was involuntarily taking towards the chateau.

She attended her father in the library at the usual hour, and learned, from his discourse with her brother on what had been read the two preceding days, that she had lost much entertaining knowledge. She requested her father would inform her to what this conversation alluded; but he calmly replied, that she had preferred another amusement at the time when the subject was discussed, and must therefore content herself with ignorance. “You would reap the rewards of study from the amusements of idleness,” said he; “learn to be reasonable — do not expect to unite inconsistencies.”

Clara felt the justness of this rebuke, and remembered her lute. “What mischief has it occasioned!” sighed she. “Yes, I am determined not to touch it at all this day. I will prove that I am able to control my inclinations when I see it is necessary so to do.” Thus resolving, she applied herself to study with more than usual assiduity.

She adhered to her resolution, and towards the close of day went into the garden to amuse herself. The evening was still and uncommonly beautiful. Nothing was heard but the faint shivering of the leaves, which returned but at intervals, making silence more solemn, and the distant murmurs of the torrents that rolled among the cliffs. As she stood by the lake, and watched the sun slowly sinking below the alps, whose summits were tinged with gold and purple; as she saw the last rays of light gleam upon the waters whose surface was not curled by the lightest air, she sighed, “Oh! how enchanting would be the sound of my lute at this moment, on this spot, and when every thing is so still around me!”

The temptation was too powerful for the resolution of Clara: she ran to the chateau, returned with the instrument to her dear acacias, and beneath their shade continued to play till the surrounding objects faded in darkness from her sight. But the moon arose, and, shedding a trembling lustre on the lake, made the scene more captivating than ever.

It was impossible to quit so delightful a spot; Clara repeated her favourite airs again and again. The beauty of the hour awakened all her genius; she never played with such expression before, and she listened with increasing rapture to the tones as they languished over the waters and died away on the distant air. She was perfectly enchanted “No! nothing was ever so delightful as to play on the lute beneath her acacias, on the margin of the lake, by moon-light!”

When she returned to the chateau, supper was over. La Luc had observed Clara, and would not suffer her to be interrupted.

When the enthusiasm of the hour was passed she recollected that she had broken her resolution, and the reflection gave her pain. “I prided myself on controling my inclinations,” said she, “and I have weakly yielded to their direction. But what evil have I incurred by indulging them this evening? I have neglected no duty, for I had none to perform. Of what then have I to accuse myself? It would have been absurd to have kept my resolution, and denied myself a pleasure when there appeared no reason for this self-denial.”

She paused, not quite satisfied with this reasoning. Suddenly resuming her enquiry, “But how,” said she, “am I certain that I should have resisted my inclinations if there had been a reason for opposing them? If the poor family whom I neglected yesterday had been unsupplied to day, I fear I should again have forgotten them while I played on my lute on the banks of the lake.”

She then recollected all that her father had at different times said on the subject of self-command, and she felt some pain.

“No,” said she, “if I do not consider that to preserve a resolution, which I have once solemnly formed, is a sufficient reason to control my inclinations, I fear no other motive would long restrain me. I seriously determined not to touch my lute this whole day, and I have broken my resolution. To-morrow perhaps I may be tempted to neglect some duty, for I have discovered that I cannot rely on my own prudence. Since I cannot conquer temptation, I will fly from it.”

On the following morning she brought her lute to La Luc, and begged he would receive it again, and at least keep it till she had taught her inclinations to submit to control.

The heart of La Luc swelled as she spoke. “No, Clara,” said he, “it is unnecessary that I should receive your lute; the sacrifice you would make proves you worthy of my confidence. Take back the instrument; since you have sufficient resolution to resign it when it leads you from duty, I doubt not that you will be able to control its influence now that it is restored to you.”

Clara felt a degree of pleasure and pride at these words, such as she had never before experienced; but she thought, that to deserve the commendation they bestowed, it was necessary to complete the sacrifice she had begun. In the virtuous enthusiasm of the moment the delights of music were forgotten in those of aspiring to well-earned praise, and when she refused the lute thus offered, she was conscious only of exquisite sensations. “Dear Sir,” said she, tears of pleasure swelling in her eyes, “allow me to deserve the praises you bestow, and then I shall indeed be happy.”

La Luc thought she had never resembled her mother so much as at this instant, and, tenderly kissing her, he for some moments, wept in silence. When he was able to speak, “You do already deserve my praises,” said he, “and I restore your lute as a reward for the conduct which excites them.” This scene called back recollections too tender for the heart of La Luc, and giving Clara the instrument, he abruptly quitted the room.

La Luc’s son, a youth of much promise, was designed by his father for the church, and had received from him an excellent education, which, however, it was thought necessary he should finish at an university. That of Geneva was fixed upon by La Luc. His scheme had been to make his son not a scholar only; he was ambitious that he should also be enviable as a man. From early infancy he had accustomed him to hardihood and endurance, and, as he advanced in youth, he encouraged him in manly exercises, and acquainted him with the useful arts as well as with abstract science.

He was high spirited and ardent in his temper, but his heart was generous and affectionate. He looked forward to Geneva, and to the new world it would disclose, with the sanguine expectations of youth; and in the delight of these expectations was absorbed the regret he would otherwise have felt at a separation from his family.

A brother of the late Madame La Luc, who was by birth an English woman, resided at Geneva with his family. To have been related to his wife was a sufficient claim upon the heart of La Luc, and he had, therefore, always kept up an intercourse with Mr. Audley, though the difference in their characters and manner of thinking would never permit this association to advance into friendship. La Luc now wrote to him, signifying an intention of sending his son to Geneva, and recommending him to his care; to this letter Mr. Audley returned a friendly answer, and a short time after an acquaintance of La Luc's being called to Geneva, he determined that his son should accompany him. The separation was painful to La Luc, and almost insupportable to Clara. Madame was grieved, and took care that he should have a sufficient quantity of medicines put up in his travelling trunk; she was also at some pains to point out their virtues, and the different complaints for which they were requisite; but she was careful to deliver her lecture during the absence of her brother.

La Luc, with his daughter, accompanied his son on horseback to the next town, which was about eight miles from Leloncourt, and there again enforcing all the advice he had formerly given him respecting his conduct and pursuits, and again yielding to the tender weakness of the father, he bade him farewell. Clara wept, and felt more sorrow at this parting than the occasion could justify; but this was almost the first time she had known grief, and she artlessly yielded to its influence.

La Luc and Clara travelled pensively back, and the day was closing when they came within view of the lake, and soon after of the chateau. Never had it appeared gloomy till now; but now Clara wandered forlornly through every deserted apartment where she had been accustomed to see her brother, and recollected a thousand little circumstances which, had he been present, she would have thought immaterial, but on which imagination now stamped a value. The garden, the scenes around, all wore a melancholy aspect, and it was long ere they resumed their natural character and Clara recovered her vivacity.

Near four years had elapsed since this separation, when one evening, as Madame La Luc and her niece were sitting at work together in the parlour, a good woman in the neighbourhood desired to be admitted. She came to ask for some medicines, and the advice of Madame La Luc. “Here is a sad accident happened at our house, Madame,” said she; “I am sure my heart aches for the poor young creature.” — Madame La Luc desired she would explain herself, and the woman proceeded to say, that her brother Peter, whom she had not seen for so many years, was arrived, and had brought a young lady to her cottage, who she verily believed was dying. She described her disorder, and acquainted Madame with what particulars of her mournful story Peter had related, failing not to exaggerate such as her compassion for the unhappy stranger and her love of the marvellous prompted.

The account appeared a very extraordinary one to Madame; but pity for the forlorn condition of the young sufferer induced her to inquire farther into the affair. “Do let me go to her, Madam,” said Clara, who had been listening with ready compassion to the poor woman narrative: “do suffer me to go — she must want comforts, and I wish much to see how she is.” Madame asked some farther questions concerning her disorder, and then, taking off her spectacles, she rose from her chair and said she would go herself. Clara desired to accompany her. They put on their hats and followed the good woman to the cottage, where, in a very small, close room, on a miserable bed, lay Adeline, pale, emaciated, and unconscious of all around her. Madame turned to the woman, and asked how long she had been in this way, while Clara went up to the bed, and taking the almost lifeless hand that lay on the quilt, looked anxiously in her face. “She observes nothing,” said she, “poor creature! I wish she was at the chateau, she would be better accommodated, and I could nurse her there.” The woman told Madame La Luc, that the young lady had lain in that state for several hours. Madame examined her pulse, and shook her head. “This room is very close,” said she. — “Very close indeed,” cried Clara, eagerly; “surely she would be better at the chateau, if she could be moved.”

“We will see about that,” said her aunt. “In the mean time let me speak to Peter; it is some years since I saw him.” She went to the outer room, and the woman ran out of the cottage to look for him. When she was gone, “This is a miserable habitation for the poor stranger,” said Clara; “she will never be well here: do, Madam, let her be carried to our house; I am sure my father would wish it. Besides, there is something in her features, even inanimate as they now are, that prejudices me in her favour.”

"Shall I never persuade you to give up that romantic notion of judging people by their faces," said her aunt. "What sort of a face she has is of very little consequence — her condition is lamentable, and I am desirous of altering it; but I wish first to ask Peter a few questions concerning her."

"Thank you, my dear aunt," said Clara; "she will be removed then." Madame La Luc was going to reply; but Peter now entered, and, expressing great joy at seeing her again, inquired how Monsieur La Luc and Clara did. Clara immediately welcomed honest Peter to his native place, and he returned her salutation with many expressions of surprise at finding her so much grown. "Though I have so often dandled you in my arms, Ma'amselle, I should never have known you again. Young twigs shoot fast, as they say."

Madame La Luc now inquired into the particulars of Adeline's story, and heard as much as Peter knew of it, being only that his late master found her in a very distressed situation, and that he had himself brought her from the Abbey to save her from a French Marquis. The simplicity of Peter's manner would not suffer her to question his veracity, though some of the circumstances he related excited all her surprise, and awakened all her pity. Tears frequently stood in Clara's eyes during the course of his narrative, and when he concluded, she said, "Dear Madam, I am sure when my father learns the history of this unhappy young woman he will not refuse to be a parent to her, and I will be her sister."

"She deserves it all," said Peter, "for she is very good indeed." He then proceeded in a strain of praise, which was very unusual with him. — "I will go home and consult with my brother about her," said Madame La Luc, rising: "she certainly ought to be removed to a more airy room. The chateau is so near, that I think she may be carried thither without much risk."

"Heaven bless you! Madam," cried Peter, rubbing his hands, "for your goodness to my poor young lady."

La Luc had just returned from his evening walk when they reached the chateau. Madame told him where she had been, and related the history of Adeline and her present condition. "By all means have her removed hither," said La Luc, whose eyes bore testimony to the tenderness of his heart. "She can be better attended to here than in Susan's cottage."

"I knew you would say so, my dear father," said Clara: "I will go and order the green bed to be prepared for her."

"Be patient, niece," said Madame La Luc: "there is no occasion for such haste: some things are to be considered first; but you are young and romantic." — La Luc smiled. — "The evening is now closed," resumed Madame; "it will, therefore, be dangerous to remove her before morning. Early to-morrow a room shall be got ready, and she shall be brought here; in the mean time I will go and make up a medicine, which I hope may be of service to her." — Clara reluctantly assented to this delay, and Madame La Luc retired to her closet.

On the following morning Adeline, wrapped in blankets, and sheltered as much as possible from the air, was brought to the chateau, where the good La Luc desired she might have every attention paid her, and where Clara watched over her with unceasing anxiety and tenderness. She remained in a state of torpor during the greater part of the day, but towards evening she breathed more freely; and Clara, who still watched by her bed, had at length the pleasure of perceiving that her senses were restored. It was at this moment that she found herself in the situation from which we have digressed to give this account of the venerable La Luc and his family. The reader will find that his virtues and his friendship to Adeline deserved this notice.

❦

CHAPTER 17

“Still Fancy, to herself unkind,
Awakes to grief the soften’d mind,
And points the bleeding friend.”
Collins.

Adeline, assisted by a fine constitution, and the kind attentions of her new friends, was in a little more than a week so much recovered as to leave her chamber. She was introduced to La Luc, whom she met with tears of gratitude, and thanked for his goodness in a manner so warm, yet so artless, as interested him still more in her favour. During the progress of her recovery, the sweetness of her behaviour had entirely won the heart of Clara, and greatly interested that of her aunt, whose reports of Adeline, together with the praises bestowed by Clara, had excited both esteem and curiosity in the breast of La Luc; and he now met her with an expression of benignity which spoke peace and comfort to her heart. She had acquainted Madame La Luc with such particulars of her story as Peter, either through ignorance or inattention, had not communicated, suppressing only, through a false delicacy, perhaps, an acknowledgement of her attachment to Theodore. These circumstances were repeated to La Luc, who, ever sensible to the sufferings of others, was particularly interested by the singular misfortunes of Adeline.

Near a fortnight had elapsed since her removal to the chateau, when one morning La Luc desired to speak with her alone. She followed him into his study, and then in a manner the most delicate he told her, that, as he found she was so unfortunate in her father, he desired she would henceforth consider him as her parent, and his house as her home. “You and Clara shall be equally my daughters,” continued he; “I am rich in having such children.” The strong emotions of surprise and gratitude for some time kept Adeline silent. “Do not thank me,” said La Luc; “I know all you would say, and I know also that I am but doing my duty. I thank God that my duty and my pleasures are generally in unison.” Adeline wiped away the tears which his goodness had excited, and was going to speak; but La Luc pressed her hand, and, turning away to conceal his emotion, walked out of the room.

Adeline was now considered as a part of the family, and in the parental kindness of La Luc, the sisterly affection of Clara, and the steady and uniform regard of Madame, she would have been happy as she was thankful, had not unceasing anxiety for the fate of Theodore, of whom in this solitude she was less likely than ever to hear, corroded her heart, and embittered every moment of reflection. Even when sleep obliterated for a while the memory of the past, his image frequently arose to her fancy, accompanied by all the exaggerations of terror. She saw him in chains, and struggling in the grasp of ruffians, or saw him led, amidst the dreadful preparations for execution, into the field: she saw the agony of his look, and heard him repeat her name in frantic accents, till the horrors of the scene overcame her, and she awoke.

A similarity of taste and character attached her to Clara, yet the misery that preyed upon her heart was of a nature too delicate to be spoken of, and she never mentioned Theodore even to her friend. Her illness had yet left her weak and languid, and the perpetual anxiety of her mind contributed to prolong this state. She endeavoured, by strong and almost continual efforts, to abstract her thoughts from their mournful subject, and was often successful. La Luc had an excellent library, and the instruction it offered at once gratified her love of knowledge, and withdrew her mind from painful recollections. His conversation too afforded her another refuge from misery.

But her chief amusement was to wander among the sublime scenery of the adjacent country, sometimes with Clara, though often with no other companion than a book. There were indeed times when the conversation of her friend imposed a painful restraint, and, when given up to reflection, she would ramble alone through scenes, whose solitary grandeur assisted and soothed the melancholy of her heart. Here she would retrace all the conduct of her beloved Theodore, and endeavour to recollect his exact countenance, his air, and manner. Now she would weep at the remembrance, and then, suddenly considering that he had perhaps already suffered an ignominious death for her sake, even in consequence of the very action which had proved his love, a dreadful despair would seize her, and, arresting her tears, would threaten to bear down every barrier that fortitude and reason could oppose.

Fearing longer to trust her own thoughts, she would hurry home, and by a desperate effort would try to lose, in the conversation of La Luc, the remembrance of the past. Her melancholy, when he observed it, La Luc attributed to a sense of the cruel treatment she had received from her father; a circumstance which, by exciting his compassion, endeared her more strongly to his heart; while that love of rational conversation, which in her calmer hours so frequently appeared, opened to him a new source of amusement in the cultivation of a mind eager for knowledge, and, susceptible of all the energies of genius. She found a melancholy pleasure in listening to the soft tones of Clara's lute, and would often soothe her mind by attempting to repeat the airs she heard.

The gentleness of her manners, partaking so much of that pensive character which marked La Luc's, was soothing to his heart, and tinctured his behaviour with a degree of tenderness that imparted comfort to her, and gradually won her entire confidence and affection. She saw with extreme concern the declining state of his health, and united her efforts with those of the family to amuse and revive him.

The pleasing society of which she partook, and the quietness of the country, at length restored her mind to a state of tolerable composure. She was now acquainted with all the wild walks of the neighbouring mountains, and, never tired of viewing their astonishing scenery, she often indulged herself in traversing alone their unfrequented paths, where now and then a peasant from a neighbouring village was all that interrupted the profound solitude. She generally took with her a book, that if she perceived her thoughts inclined to fix on the one object of her grief, she might force them to a subject less dangerous to her peace. She had become a tolerable proficient in English while at the convent where she received her education, and the instruction of La Luc, who was well acquainted with the language, now served to perfect her. He was partial to the English; he admired their character, and the constitution of their laws, and his library contained a collection of their best authors, particularly of their philosophers and poets. Adeline found that no species of writing had power so effectually to withdraw her mind from the contemplation of its own misery as the higher kinds of poetry, and in these her taste soon taught her to distinguish the superiority of the English from that of the French. The genius of the language, more perhaps than the genius of the people, if indeed the distinction may be allowed, occasioned this.

She frequently took a volume of Shakespear or Milton, and, having gained some wild eminence, would seat herself beneath the pines, whose low murmurs soothed her heart, and conspired with the visions of the poet to lull her to forgetfulness of grief.

One evening, when Clara was engaged at home, Adeline wandered alone to a favourite spot among the rocks that bordered the lake. It was an eminence which commanded an entire view of the lake, and of the stupendous mountains that environed it. A few ragged thorns grew from the precipice beneath, which descended perpendicularly to the water's edge; and above rose a thick wood of larch, pine, and sir, intermingled with some chesnut and mountain ash. The evening was fine, and the air so still, that it scarcely waved the light leaves of the trees around, or rimpled the broad expanse of the waters below. Adeline gazed on the scene with a kind of still rapture, and watched the sun sinking amid a crimson glow, which tinted the bosom of the lake and the snowy heads of the distant alps. The delight which the scenery inspired,

"Soothing each gust of passion into peace,
All but the swellings of the soften'd heart,
That waken, not disturb, the tranquil mind!"

was now heightened by the tones of a French horn, and, looking on the lake, she perceived at some distance a pleasure boat. As it was a spectacle rather uncommon in this solitude, she concluded the boat contained a party of foreigners come to view the wonderful scenery of the country, or perhaps of Genevois, who chose to amuse themselves on a lake as grand, though much less extensive, than their own; and the latter conjecture was probably just.

As she listened to the mellow and enchanting tones of the horn, which gradually sunk away in distance, the scene appeared more lovely than before, and finding it impossible to forbear attempting to paint in language what was so beautiful in reality, she composed the following.

STANZAS.

How smooth that lake expands its ample breast! Where smiles in soften'd glow the summer sky: How vast the rocks that o'er its surface rest! How wild the scenes its winding shores supply!

Now down the western steep slow sinks the sun, And paints with yellow gleam the tufted woods; While here the mountain-shadows, broad and dun, Sweep o'er the chrystal mirror of the floods.

Mark how his splendour tips with partial light Those shatter'd battlements! that on the brow Of yon bold promontory burst to sight From o'er the woods that darkly spread below.

In the soft blush of light's reflected power, The ridgy rock, the woods that crown its steep, Th' illumin'd battlement, and darker tower, On the smooth wave in trembling beauty sleep.

But lo! the sun recalls his fervid ray, And cold and dim the wat'ry visions fail; While o'er yon cliff, whose pointed craggs decay, Mild Evening draws her thin empurpled veil!

How sweet that strain of melancholy horn! That floats along the slowly-ebbing wave, And up the far-receding mountains borne, Returns a dying close from Echo's cave!

Hail! shadowy forms of still, expressive Eve! Your pensive graces stealing on my heart, Bid all the fine-attun'd emotions live, And Fancy all her loveliest dreams impart.

La Luc observing how much Adeline was charmed with the features of the country, and desirous of amusing her melancholy, which, notwithstanding her efforts, was often too apparent, wished to shew her other scenes than those to which her walks were circumscribed. He proposed a party on horseback to take a nearer view of the Glaciers; to attempt their ascent was a difficulty and fatigue to which neither La Luc, in his present state of health, nor Adeline, were equal. She had not been accustomed to ride single, and the mountainous road they were to pass made the experiment rather dangerous; but she concealed her fears, and they were not sufficient to make her wish to forego an enjoyment such as was now offered her.

The following day was fixed for this excursion. La Luc and his party arose at an early hour, and having taken a slight breakfast, they set out towards the Glacier of Montanvert, which lay at a few leagues distance. Peter carried a small basket of provisions; and it was their plan to dine on some pleasant spot in the open air.

It is unnecessary to describe the high enthusiasm of Adeline, the more complacent pleasure of La Luc, and the transports of Clara, as the scenes of this romantic country shifted to their eyes. Now frowning in dark and gloomy grandeur, it exhibited only tremendous rocks, and cataracts rolling from the heights into some deep and narrow valley, along which their united waters roared and foamed, and burst away to regions inaccessible to mortal foot: and now the scene arose less fiercely wild;

"The pomp of groves and garniture of fields" were intermingled with the ruder features of nature, and while the snow froze on the summit of the mountain, the vine blushed at its foot.

Engaged in interesting conversation, and by the admiration which the country excited, they travelled on till noon, when they looked round for a pleasant spot where they might rest and take refreshment. At some little distance they perceived the ruins of a fabric which had once been a castle; it stood almost on a point of rock that overhung a deep valley; and its broken turrets rising from among the woods that embosomed it, heightened the picturesque beauty of the object.

The edifice invited curiosity, and the shades repose — La Luc and his party advanced.

"Deep struck with awe, they mark'd the dome o'erthrown, Where once the beauty bloom'd, the warrior shone: They saw the castle's mould'ring towers decay'd, The loose stone tott'ring o'er the trembling shade."

They seated themselves on the grass under the shade of some high trees near the ruins. An opening in the woods afforded a view of the distant alps — the deep silence of solitude reigned. For some time they were lost in meditation. Adeline felt a sweet complacency, such as she had long been a stranger to. Looking at La Luc, she perceived a tear stealing down his cheek, while the elevation of his mind was strongly expressed on his countenance. He turned on Clara his eyes, which were now filled with tenderness, and made an effort to recover himself.

"The stillness and total seclusion of this scene," said Adeline, "those stupendous mountains, the gloomy grandeur of these woods, together with that monument of faded glory on which the hand of time is so emphatically impressed, diffuse a sacred enthusiasm over the mind, and awaken sensations truly sublime."

La Luc was going to speak; but Peter coming forward, desired to know whether he had not better open the wallet, as he fancied his honour and the young ladies must be main hungry, jogging on so far up hill and down before dinner. They acknowledged the truth of honest Peter's suspicion, and accepted his hint.

Refreshments were spread on the grass, and having seated themselves under the canopy of waving woods, surrounded by the sweets of wild flowers, they inhaled the pure breeze of the alps, which might be called spirit of air, and partook of a repast which these circumstances rendered delicious.

When they arose to depart, "I am unwilling," said Clara, "to quit this charming spot. How delightful would it be to pass one's life beneath these shades with the friends who are dear to one!" — La Luc smiled at the romantic simplicity of the idea; but Adeline sighed deeply to the image of felicity, and of Theodore, which it recalled, and turned away to conceal her tears.

They now mounted their horses, and soon after arrived at the foot of Montanvert. The emotions of Adeline, as she contemplated in various points of view the astonishing objects around her, surpassed all expression; and the feelings of the whole party were too strong to admit of conversation. The profound stillness which reigned in these regions of solitude inspired awe, and heightened the sublimity of the scenery to an exquisite degree.

“It seems,” said Adeline, “as if we were walking over the ruins of the world, and were the only persons who had survived the wreck. I can scarcely persuade myself that we are not left alone on the globe.”

“The view of these objects,” said La Luc, “lift the soul to their Great Author, and we contemplate with a feeling almost too vast for humanity — the sublimity of his nature in the grandeur of his works.” — La Luc raised his eyes, filled with tears, to heaven, and was for some moments lost in silent adoration.

They quitted these scenes with extreme reluctance; but the hour of the day, and the appearance of the clouds, which seemed gathering for a storm, made them hasten their departure. Could she have been sheltered from its fury, Adeline almost wished to have witnessed the tremendous effect of a thunder storm in these regions.

They returned to Leloncourt by a different route, and the shade of the overhanging precipices was deepened by the gloom of the atmosphere. It was evening when they came within view of the lake, which the travellers rejoiced to see, for the storm so long threatened was now fast approaching; the thunder murmured among the alps; and the dark vapours that rolled heavily along their sides heightened their dreadful sublimity. La Luc would have quickened his pace, but the road winding down the steep side of a mountain made caution necessary. The darkening air and the lightnings that now flashed along the horizon terrified Clara, but she withheld the expression of her fear in consideration of her father. A peal of thunder, which seemed to shake the earth to its foundations, and was reverberated in tremendous echoes from the cliffs, burst over their heads. Clara’s horse took fright at the sound, and, setting off, hurried her with amazing velocity down the mountain towards the lake, which washed its foot. The agony of La Luc, who viewed her progress in the horrible expectation of seeing her dashed down the precipice that bordered the road, is not to be described.

Clara kept her seat, but terror had almost deprived her of sense. Her efforts to preserve herself were mechanical, for she scarcely knew what she did. The horse, however, carried her safely almost to the foot of the mountain, but was making towards the lake, when a gentleman who travelled along the road caught the bridle as the animal endeavoured to pass. The sudden stopping of the horse threw Clara to the ground, and, impatient of restraint, the animal burst from the hand of the stranger, and plunged into the lake. The violence of the fall deprived her of recollection; but while the stranger endeavoured to support her, his servant ran to fetch water.

She soon recovered, and unclosing her eyes, found herself in the arms of a chevalier, who appeared to support her with difficulty. The compassion expressed in his countenance, while he inquired how she did, revived her spirits, and she was endeavouring to thank him for his kindness when La Luc and Adeline came up. The terror impressed on her father’s features was perceived by Clara; languid as she was, she tried to raise herself, and said, with a faint smile, which betrayed, instead of disguising, her sufferings, “Dear Sir, I am not hurt.” Her pale countenance and the blood that trickled down her cheek contradicted her words. But La Luc, to whom terror had suggested the utmost possible evil, now rejoiced to hear her speak; he recalled some presence of mind, and while Adeline applied her salts, he chafed her temples.

When she revived she told him how much she was obliged to the stranger. La Luc endeavoured to express his gratitude; but the former interrupting him, begged he might be spared the pain of receiving thanks for having followed only an impulse of common humanity.

They were now not far from Leloncourt; but the evening was almost shut in, and the thunder murmured deeply among the hills. La Luc was distressed how to convey Clara home.

In endeavouring to raise her from the ground, the stranger betrayed such evident symptoms of pain, that La Luc inquired concerning it. The sudden jerk which the horse had given the arm of the chevalier, in escaping from his hold, had violently sprained his shoulder, and rendered his arm almost useless. The pain was exquisite, and La Luc, whose fears for his daughter were now subsiding, was shocked at the circumstance, and pressed the stranger to accompany him to the village, where relief might be obtained. He accepted the invitation, and Clara, being at length placed on a horse led by her father, was conducted to the chateau.

When Madame, who had been looking out for La Luc some time, perceived the cavalcade approaching, she was alarmed and her apprehensions were confirmed when she saw the situation of her niece. Clara was carried into the house, and La Luc would have sent for a surgeon, but there was none within several leagues of the village, neither were there any of the physical profession within the same distance. Clara was assisted to her chamber by Adeline, and Madame La Luc undertook to examine the wounds. The result restored peace to the family; for though she was much bruised, she had escaped material injury; a slight contusion on the forehead had occasioned the bloodshed which at first alarmed La Luc. Madame undertook to restore her niece in a few days with the assistance of a balsam composed by herself, on the virtues of which she descanted with great eloquence, till La Luc interrupted her by reminding her of the condition of her patient.

Madame having bathed Clara's bruises, and given her a cordial of incomparable efficacy, left her, and Adeline watched in the chamber of her friend till she retired to her own for the night.

La Luc, whose spirits had suffered much perturbation, was now tranquillized by the report his sister made of Clara. He introduced the stranger, and having mentioned the accident he had met with, desired that he might have immediate assistance. Madame hastened to her closet, and it is perhaps difficult to determine whether she felt most concern for the sufferings of her guest or pleasure at the opportunity thus offered of displaying her physical skill. However this might be, she quitted the room with great alacrity, and very quickly returned with a phial containing her inestimable balsam, and having given the necessary directions for the application of it, she left the stranger to the care of his servant.

La Luc insisted that the chevalier, M. Verneuil, should not leave the chateau that night, and he very readily submitted to be detained. His manners during the evening were as frank and engaging as the hospitality and gratitude of La Luc were sincere, and they soon entered into interesting conversation. M. Verneuil conversed like a man who had seen much, and thought more, and if he discovered any prejudice in his opinions, it was evidently the prejudice of a mind which, seeing objects through the medium of its own goodness, tinges them with the hue of its predominant quality. La Luc was much pleased, for in his retired situation he had not often an oppornity of receiving the pleasure which results from a communion of intelligent minds. He found that M. Verneuil had travelled. La Luc having asked some questions relative to England, they fell into discourse concerning the national characters of the French and English.

"If it is the privilege of wisdom," said M. Verneuil, "to look beyond happiness, I own I had rather be without it. When we observe the English their laws, writings, and conversation, and at the same time mark their countenances, manners, and the frequency of suicide among them, we are apt to believe that wisdom and happiness are incompatible. If, on the other hand, we turn to their neighbours, the French, and see [Note: It must be remembered that this was said in the seventeenth century.] their wretched policy, their sparkling, but sophistical discourse, frivolous occupations, and, withal, their gay animated air, we shall be compelled to acknowledge that happiness and folly too often dwell together."

"It is the end of wisdom," said La Luc, "to attain happiness, and I can hardly dignify that conduct or course of thinking which tends to misery with the name of wisdom. By this rule, perhaps, the folly, as we term it, of the French deserves, since its effect is happiness, to be called wisdom. That airy thoughtlessness, which seems alike to contemn reflection and anticipation, produces all the effect of it without reducing its subjects to the mortification of philosophy. But in truth wisdom is an exertion of mind to subdue folly; and as the happiness of the French is less the consequence of mind than of constitution, it deserves not the honours of wisdom."

Discoursing on the variety of opinions that are daily formed on the same conduct, La Luc observed how much that which is commonly called opinion is the result of passion and temper.

"True," said M. Verneuil, "there is a tone of thought, as there is a key note in music, that leads all its weaker affections. Thus where the powers of judging may be equal, the disposition to judge is different, and the actions of men are at least but too often arraigned by whim and caprice, by partial vanity and the humour of the moment."

Here La Luc took occasion to reprobate the conduct of those writers, who, by shewing the dark side only of human nature, and by dwelling on the evils only which are incident to humanity, have sought to degrade man in his own eyes, and to make him discontented with life. "What should we say of a painter," continued La Luc, "who collected in his piece objects of a black hue only, who presented you with a black man, a black horse, a black dog, and tells you that his is a picture of nature, and that nature is black?" — "'Tis true," you would reply, "the objects you exhibit do exist in nature, but they form a very small part of her works. You say that nature is black, and, to prove it, you have collected on your canvass all the animals of this hue that exist. But you have forgot to paint the green earth, the blue sky, the white man, and objects of all those various hues with which creation abounds, and of which black is a very inconsiderable part."

The countenance of M. Verneuil lightened with peculiar animation during the discourse of La Luc. — "To think well of his nature," said he, "is necessary to the dignity and the happiness of man. There is a decent pride which becomes every mind, and is congenial to virtue. That consciousness of innate dignity, which shews him the glory of his nature, will be his best protection from the meanness of vice. Where this consciousness is wanting," continued M. Verneuil, "there can be no sense of moral honour, and consequently none of the higher principles of action. What can be expected of him who says it is his nature to be mean and selfish? Or who can doubt that he who thinks thus, thinks from the experience of his own heart, from the tendency of his own inclinations? Let it always be remembered, that he who would persuade men to be good, ought to shew them that they are great."

"You speak," said La Luc, "with the honest enthusiasm of a virtuous mind; and in obeying the impulse of your heart, you utter the truths of philosophy: and, trust me, a bad heart and a truly philosophic head has never yet been united in the same individual. Vicious inclinations not only corrupt the heart, but the understanding, and thus lead to false reasoning. Virtue only is on the side of truth."

La Luc and his guest, mutually pleased with each other, entered upon the discussion of subjects so interesting to them both, that it was late before they parted for the night.

❦

CHAPTER 18

"'Twas such a scene as gave a kind relief
To memory, in sweetly pensive grief."
Virgil's Tomb.
"Mine be the breezy hill, that skirts the down,
Where a green grassy turf is all I crave,
With here and there a violet bestrown,
And many an evening sun shine sweetly on my grave."
The Minstrel.

Repose had so much restored Clara, that when Adeline, anxious to know how she did, went early in the morning to her chamber, she found her already risen, and ready to attend the family at breakfast. Monsieur Verneuil appeared also, but his looks betrayed a want of rest, and indeed he had suffered during the night a degree of anguish from his arm, which it was an effort of some resolution to endure in silence. It was now swelled and somewhat inflamed, and this might in some degree be attributed to the effect of Madame La Luc's balsam, whose restorative qualities had for once failed. The whole family sympathised with his sufferings, and Madame, at the request of M. Verneuil, abandoned her balsam, and substituted an emollient fomentation.

From an application of this he, in a short time, found an abatement of the pain, and returned to the breakfast table with greater composure. The happiness which La Luc felt at seeing his daughter in safety was very apparent, but the warmth of his gratitude towards her preserver he found it difficult to express. Clara spoke the genuine emotions of her heart with artless, but modest, energy, and testified sincere concern for the sufferings which she had occasioned M. Verneuil.

The pleasure received from the company of his guest, and the consideration of the essential services he had rendered him, co-operated with the natural hospitality of La Luc, and he pressed M. Verneuil to remain some time at the chateau. — "I can never repay the services you have done me," said La Luc; yet I seek to increase my obligations to you by requesting you will prolong your visit, and thus allow me an opportunity of cultivating your acquaintance."

M. Verneuil, who at the time he met La Luc was travelling from Geneva to a distant part of Savoy, merely for the purpose of viewing the country, being now delighted with his host and with every thing around him, willingly accepted the invitation. In this circumstance prudence concurred with inclination, for to have pursued his journey on horseback, in his present situation, would have been dangerous, if not impracticable.

The morning was spent in conversation, in which M. Verneuil displayed a mind enriched with taste, enlightened by science, and enlarged by observation. The situation of the chateau and the features of the surrounding scenery charmed him, and in the evening he found himself able to walk with La Luc and explore the beauties of this romantic region. As they passed through the village, the salutations of the peasants, in whom love and respect were equally blended, and their eager inquiries after Clara, bore testimony to the character of La Luc, while his countenance expressed a serene satisfaction, arising from the consciousness of deserving and possessing their love. — "I live surrounded by my children," said he, turning to M. Verneuil, who had noticed their eagerness, "for such I consider my parishioners. In discharging the duties of my office, I am repaid not only by my own conscience, but by their gratitude. There is a luxury in observing their simple and honest love, which I would not exchange for any thing the world calls blessings."

"Yet the world, Sir, would call the pleasures of which you speak romantic," said M. Verneuil; "for to be sensible of this pure and exquisite delight requires a heart untainted with the vicious pleasures of society — pleasures that deaden its finest feelings and poison the source of its truest enjoyments." — They pursued their way along the borders of the lake, sometimes under the shade of hanging woods, and sometimes over hillocks of turf, where the scene opened in all its wild magnificence. M. Verneuil often stopped in raptures to observe and point out the singular beauties it exhibited, while La Luc, pleased with the delight his friend expressed, surveyed with more than usual satisfaction the objects which had so often charmed him before. But there was a tender melancholy in the tone of his voice and his countenance, which arose from the recollection of having often traced those scenes, and partook of the pleasure they inspired, with her who had long since bade them an eternal farewell.

They presently quitted the lake, and, winding up a steep ascent between the woods, came, after an hour's walk, to a green summit, which appeared, among the savage rocks that environed it, like the blossom on the thorn. It was a spot formed for solitary delight, inspiring that soothing tenderness so dear to the feeling mind, and which calls back to memory the images of passed regret, softened by distance and endeared by frequent recollection. Wild shrubs grew from the crevices of the rocks beneath, and the high trees of pine and cedar that waved above, afforded a melancholy and romantic shade. The silence of the scene was interrupted only by the breeze as it rolled over the woods, and by the solitary notes of the birds that inhabited the cliffs.

From this point the eye commanded an entire view of those majestic and sublime alps whose aspect fills the soul with emotions of indescribable awe, and seems to lift it to a nobler nature. The village, and the chateau of La Luc appeared in the bosom of the mountains, a peaceful retreat from the storms that gathered on their tops. All the faculties of M. Verneuil were absorbed in admiration, and he was for some time quite silent; at length, bursting into a rhapsody, he turned, and would have addressed La Luc, when he perceived him at a distance leaning against a rustic urn, over which dropped, in beautiful luxuriance, the weeping willow.

As he approached, La Luc quitted his position, and advanced to meet him, while M. Verneuil inquired upon what occasion the urn had been crected. La Luc, unable to answer, pointed to it, and walked silently away, and M. Verneuil, approaching the urn, read the following inscription:

TO THE MEMORY OF CLARA LA LUC, THIS URN IS ERECTED ON THE SPOT WHICH SHE LOVED, IN TESTIMONY OF THE AFFECTION OF A HUSBAND.

M. Verneuil now comprehended the whole, and, feeling for his friend, was hurt that he had noticed this monument of his grief. He rejoined La Luc, who was standing on the point of the eminence contemplating the landscape below with an air more placid, and touched with the sweetness of piety and resignation. He perceived that M. Verneuil was somewhat disconcerted, and he sought to remove his uneasiness. “You will consider it,” said he, “as a mark of my esteem that I have brought you to this spot. It is never prophaned by the presence of the unfeeling. “They would deride the faithfulness of an attachment which has so long survived its objects, and which, in their own breasts, would quickly have been lost amidst the dissipation of general society. I have cherished in my heart the remembrance of a woman whose virtues claimed all my love: I have cherished it as a treasure to which I could withdraw from temporary cares and vexations, in the certainty of finding a soothing, though melancholy, comfort.”

La Luc paused. M. Verneuil expressed the sympathy he felt, but he knew the sacredness of sorrow, and soon relapsed into silence. “One of the brightest hopes of a future state,” resumed La Luc, “is, that we shall meet again those whom we have loved upon earth. And perhaps our happiness may be permitted to consist very much in the society of our friends, purified from the frailties of mortality, with the finer affections more sweetly attuned, and with the faculties of mind infinitely more elevated and enlarged. We shall then be enabled to comprehend subjects which are too vast for human conception; to comprehend, perhaps, the sublimity of that Deity who first called us into being. These views of futurity, my friend, elevate us above the evils of this world, and seem to communicate to us a portion of the nature we contemplate.”

“Call them not the illusions of a visionary brain,” proceeded La Luc: I trust in their reality. Of this I am certain, that whether they are illusions or not, a faith in them ought to be cherished for the comfort it brings to the heart, and reverenced for the dignity it imparts to the mind. Such feelings make a happy and an important part of our belief in a future existence: they give energy to virtue, and stability to principle.”

“This,” said M. Verneuil, “is what I have often felt, and what every ingenuous mind must acknowledge.”

La Luc and M. Verneuil continued in conversation till the sun had left the scene. The mountains, darkened by twilight, assumed a sublimer aspect, while the tops of some of the highest alps were yet illumined by the sun’s rays, and formed a striking contrast to the shadowy obscurity of the world below. As they descended through the woods, and traversed the margin of the lake, the stillness and solemnity of the hour diffused a pensive sweetness over their minds, and sunk them into silence.

They found supper spread, as was usual, in the hall, of which the windows opened upon a garden, where the flowers might be said to yield their fragrance in gratitude to the refreshing dews. The windows were embowered with eglantine and other sweet shurubs, which hung in wild luxuriance around, and formed a beautiful and simple decoration. Clara and Adeline loved to pass the evenings in this hall, where they had acquired the first rudiments of astronomy, and from which they had a wide view of the heavens. La Luc pointed out to them the planets and the fixed stars, explained their laws, and from thence taking occasion to mingle moral with scientific instruction, would often ascend towards that great first cause, whose nature soars beyond the grasp of human comprehension.

“No study,” he would sometimes say, “so much enlarges the mind, or impresses it with so sublime an idea of the Diety, as that of astronomy. When the imagination launches into the regions of space, and contemplates the innumerable worlds which are scattered through it, we are lost in astonishment and awe. This globe appears as a mass of atoms in the immensity of the universe, and man a mere insect. Yet how wonderful! that man, whose frame is so diminutive in the scale of being, should have powers which spurn the narrow boundaries of time and place, soar beyond the sphere of his existence, penetrate the secret laws of nature, and calculate their progressive effects.”

“O! how expressively does this prove the spirituality of our Being! Let the materialist consider it, and blush that he has ever doubted.”

In this hall the whole family now met at supper, and during the remainder of the evening the conversation turned upon general subjects, in which Clara joined in modest and judicious remark. La Luc had taught her to familiarize her mind to reasoning, and had accustomed her to deliver her sentiments freely: she spoke them with a simplicity extremely engaging, and which convinced her hearers that the love of knowledge, not the vanity of talking, induced her to converse. M. Verneuil evidently endeavoured to draw forth her sentiments, and Clara, interested by the subjects he introduced, a stranger to affectation, and pleased with the opinions he expressed, answered them with frankness and animation. They retired mutually pleased with each other.

M. Verneuil was about six and thirty; his figure manly, his countenance frank and engaging. A quick penetrating eye, whose fire was softened by benevolence, disclosed the chief traits of his character; he was quick to discern, but generous to excuse, the follies of mankind; and while no one more sensibly felt an injury, none more readily accepted the concession of an enemy.

He was by birth a Frenchman. A fortune lately devolved to him, had enabled him to execute the plan, which his active and inquisitive mind had suggested, of viewing the most remarkable parts of the continent. He was peculiarly susceptible of the beautiful and sublime in nature. To such a taste Switzerland and the adjacent country was, of all others, the most interesting; and he found the scenery it exhibited infinitely surpassing all that his glowing imagination had painted; he saw with the eye of a painter, and felt with the rapture of a poet.

In the habitation of La Luc he met with the hospitality, the frankness, and the simplicity, so characteristic of the country: in his venerable host he saw the strength of philosophy united with the finest tenderness of humanity — a philosophy which taught him to correct his feelings, not to annihilate them; in Clara, the bloom of beauty, with the most perfect simplicity of heart; and in Adeline all the charms of elegance and grace, with a genius deserving of the highest culture. In this family picture the goodness of Madame La Luc was not unperceived or forgotten. The chearfulness and harmony that reigned within the chateau was delightful; but the philanthropy which, flowing from the heart of the pastor, was diffused though the whole village, and united the inhabitants in the sweet and firm bonds of social compact, was divine. The beauty of its situation conspired with these circumstances to make Leloncourt seem almost a Paradise. M. Verneuil sighed that he must so soon quite it. “I ought to seek no farther,” said he, “for here wisdom and happiness dwell together.

The admiration was reciprocal; La Luc and his family found themselves much interested in M. Verneuil, and looked forward to the time of his departure with regret. So warmly they pressed him to prolong his visit, and so powerfully his own inclinations seconded theirs, that he accepted the invitation. La Luc omitted no circumstance which might contribute to the amusement of his guest, who having in a few days recovered the use of his arm, they made several excursions among the mountains. Adeline and Clara, whom the care of Madame had restored to her usual health, were generally of the party.

After spending a week at the chateau, M. Verneuil bade adieu to La Luc and his family; they parted with mutual regret, and the former promised that when he returned to Geneva, he would take Leloncourt in his way. As he said this, Adeline, who had for some time observed, with much alarm, La Luc’s declining health, looked mournfully on his languid countenance, and uttered a secret prayer that he might live to receive the visit of M. Verneuil.

Madame was the only person who did not lament his departure, she saw that the efforts of her brother to entertain his guest were more than his present state of health would admit of, and she rejoiced in the quiet that would now return to him.

But this quiet brought La Luc no respite from illness; the fatigue he had suffered in his late excursions seemed to have encreased his disorder, which in a short time assumed the aspect of a consumption. Yielding to the solicitations of his family, he went to Geneva for advice, and was there recommended to try the air of Nice.

The journey thither, however, was of considerable length, and believing his life to be very precarious, he hesitated whether to go. He was also unwilling to leave the duty of his parish unperformed for so long a period as his health might require; but this was an objection which would not have withheld him from Nice, had his faith in the climate been equal to that of his physicians.

His parishioners felt the life of their pastor to be of the utmost consequence to them. It was a general cause, and they testified at once his worth, and their sense of it, by going in a body to solicit him to leave them. He was much affected by this instance of their attachment. Such a proof of regard, joined with the entreaties of his own family, and a consideration that for their sakes it was a duty to endeavour to prolong his life, was too powerful to be withstood, and be determined to set out for Italy.

It was settled that Clara and Adeline, whose health La Luc thought required change of air and scene, should accompany him, attended by the faithful Peter.

On the morning of his departure, a large body of his parishioners assembled round the door to bid him farewell. It was an affecting scene; they might meet no more. At length, wiping the tears from his eyes, La Luc said, “Let us trust in God, my friends; he has power to heal all disorders both of body and mind. We shall meet again, if not in this world, I hope in a better. Let our conduct be such as to ensure that better.”

The sobs of his people prevented any reply. There was scarcely a dry eye in the village; for there was scarcely an inhabitant of it that was not now assembled in the presence of La Luc. He shook hands with them all, “Farewell, my friends, said he,” “we shall meet again.” “God grant we may,” said they, with one voice of fervent petition.

Having mounted his horse, and Clara and Adeline being ready, they took a last leave of Madame La Luc, and quitted the chateau. The people, unwilling to leave La Luc, the greater part of them accompanied him to some distance from the village. As he moved slowly on he cast a last lingering look at his little home, where he had spent so many peaceful years, and which he now gazed on, perhaps for the last time, and tears rose to his eyes; but he checked them. Every scene of the adjacent country called up, as he passed, some tender remembrance. He looked towards the spot consecrated to the memory of his deceased wife; the dewy vapours of the morning veiled it. La Luc felt the disappointment more deeply, perhaps, than reason could justify; but those who know from experience how much the imagination loves to dwell on any object, however remotely connected with that of our tenderness, will feel with him. This was an object round which the affections of La Luc had settled themselves; it was a memorial to the eye, and the view of it awakened more forcibly in the memory every tender idea that could associate with the primary subject of his regard. In such cases fancy gives to the illusions of strong affection, the stamp of reality, and they are cherished by the heart with romantic fondness.

His people accompanied him for near a mile from the village, and could scarcely then be prevailed on to leave him; at length he once more bade them farewell, and went on his way, followed by their prayers and blessings.

La Luc and his little party travelled slowly on, sunk in pensive silence — a silence too pleasingly sad to be soon relinquished, and which they indulged without fear of interruption. The solitary grandeur of the scenes through which they passed, and the soothing murmur of the pines that waved above, aided this soft luxury of meditation.

They proceeded by easy stages; and after travelling for some days among the romantic mountains and green vallies of Piedmont, they entered the rich country of Nice. The gay and luxuriant views which now opened upon the travellers as they wound among the hills, appeared like scenes of fairy enchantment, or those produced by the lonely visions of the Poets. While the spiral summits of the mountains exhibited the snowy severity of winter, the pine, the cypress, the olive, and the myrtle shaded their sides with the green tints of spring, and groves of orange, lemon, and citron, spread over their feet the full glow of autumn. As they advanced the scenery became still more diversified; and at length, between the receding heights, Adeline caught a glimpse of the distant waters of the Mediterranean, fading into the blue and cloudless horizon. She had never till now seen the ocean; and this transient view of it roused her imagination, and made her watch impatiently for a nearer prospect.

It was towards the close of day when the travellers, winding round an abrupt projection of that range of Alps which crowns the amphitheatre that environs Nice, looked down upon the green hills that stretch to the shores, on the city, and its antient castle, and on the wide waters of the Mediterranean; with the mountains of Corsica in the farthest distance.

Such a sweep of sea and land, so varied with the gay, the magnificient, and the awful, would have fixed any eye in admiration:— for Adeline and Clara novelty and enthusiasm added their charms to the prospect. The soft and salubrious air seemed to welcome La Luc to this smiling region, and the serene atmosphere to promise invariable summer. They at length descended upon the little plain where stands the city of Nice, and which was the most extensive piece of level ground they had passed since they entered the county. Here, in the bosom of the mountains, sheltered from the north and the east, where the western gales alone seemed to breathe, all the blooms of spring and the riches of autumn were united. Trees of myrtle bordered the road, which wound among groves of orange, lemon, and bergamot, whose delicious fragrance came to the sense mingled with the breath of roses and carnations that blossomed in their shade. The gently swelling hills that rose from the plain were covered with vines, and crowned with cypresses, olives and date trees; beyond, there appeared the sweep of lofty mountains whence the travellers had descended, and whence rose the little river Paglion, swoln by the snows that melt on their summits, and which, after meandering through the plain, washes the walls of Nice, where it falls into the Mediterranean. In this blooming region Adeline observed that the countenances of the peasants, meagre and discontented, formed a melancholy contrast to the face of the country, and she lamented again the effects of an arbitrary government, where the bounties of nature, which were designed for all, are monopolized by a few, and the many are suffered to starve tantalized by surrounding plenty.

The city lost much of its enchantment on a nearer approach: its narrow streets and shabby houses but ill answered the expectation which a distant view of its ramparts and its harbour, gay with vessels, seemed to authorise. The appearance of the inn at which La Luc now alighted did not contribute to soften his disappointment; but if he was surprised to find such indifferent accommodation at the inn of a town celebrated as the resort of valetudinarians, he was still more so when he learned the difficulty of procuring furnished lodgings.

After much search he procured apartments in a small but pleasant house, situated a little way out of the town: it had a garden, and a terrace which overlooked the sea, and was distinguished by an air of neatness very unusual in the houses of Nice. He agreed to board with the family, whose table likewise accommodated a gentleman and lady, their lodgers, and thus he became a temporary inhabitant of this charming climate.

On the following morning Adeline rose at an early hour, eager to indulge the new and sublime emotion with which a view of the ocean inspired her, and walked with Clara toward the hills that afforded a more extensive prospect. They pursued their way for some time between high embowering banks, till they arrived at an eminence, whence

“Heaven, earth, ocean, smil’d!”

They sat down on a point of rock, overshadowed by lofty palm-trees, to contemplate at leisure the magnificent scene. The sun was just emerged from the sea, over which his rays shed a flood of light, and darted a thousand brilliant tints on the vapours that ascended the horizon, and floated there in light clouds, leaving the bosom of the waters below clear as chrystal, except where the white surges were seen to beat upon the rocks; and discovering the distant sails of the fishing boats, and the far distant highlands of Corsica, tinted with ætherial blue. Clara, after some time, drew forth her pencil, but threw it aside in despair. Adeline, as they returned home through a romantic glen, when her senses were no longer absorbed in the contemplation of this grand scenery, and when its images floated on her memory, only, in softened colours, repeated the following lines:

SUNRISE: A SONNET.

Oft let me wander, at the break of day, Thro’ the cool vale o’erhung with waving woods, Drink the rich fragrance of the budding May, And catch the murmur of the distant floods; Or rest on the fresh bank of limpid rill, Where sleeps the vi’let in the dewy shade. Where op’ning lilies balmy sweets distill, And the wild musk-rose weeps along the glade:

Or climb the eastern cliff, whose airy head Hangs rudely o’er the blue and misty main; Watch the fine hues of morn through æther spread, And paint with roseate glow the chrystal plain. Oh! who can speak the rapture of the soul When o’er the waves the sun first steals to sight,’ And all the world of waters, as they roll, And Heaven’s vast vault unveils in living light! So life’s young hour to man enchanting smiles, With sparkling health, and joy, and fancy’s fairy wiles!

La Luc in his walks met with some sensible and agreeable companions, who like himself came to Nice in search of health. Of these he soon formed a small but pleasant society, among whom was a Frenchman, whose mild manners, marked with a deep and interesting melancholy, had particularly attracted La Luc. He very seldom mentioned himself, or any circumstance that might lead to a knowledge of his family, but on other subjects conversed with frankness and much intelligence. La Luc had frequently invited him to his lodgings, but he had always declined the invitation, and this in a manner so gentle as to disarm displeasure, and convince La Luc that his refusal was the consequence of a certain dejection of mind which made him reluctant to meet other strangers.

The description which La Luc had given of this foreigner had excited the curiosity of Clara; and the sympathy which the unfortunate feel for each other called forth the commiseration of Adeline; for that he was unfortunate she could not doubt. On their return from an evening walk La Luc pointed out the chavelier, and quickened his pace to overtake him. Adeline was for a moment impelled to follow, but delicacy checked her steps, she knew how painful the presence of a stranger often is to a wounded mind, and forbore to intrude herself on his notice for the sake of only satisfying an idle curiosity. She turned therefore, into another path; but the delicacy which now prevented the meeting, accident in a few days defeated, and La Luc introduced the stranger. Adeline received him with a soft smile, but endeavoured to restrain the expression of pity which her features had involuntarily assumed; she wished him not to know that she observed he was unhappy.

After this interview he no longer rejected the invitations of La Luc, but made him frequent visits, and often accompanied Adeline and Clara in their rambles. The mild and sensible conversation of the former seemed to sooth his mind, and in her presence he frequently conversed with a degree of animation which La Luc till then had not observed in him. Adeline too derived from the similarity of their taste, and his intelligent conversation, a degree of satisfaction which contributed, with the compassion his dejection inspired, to win her confidence, and she conversed with an easy frankness rather unusual to her.

His visits soon became more frequent. He walked with La Luc and his family; he attended them on their little excursions to view those magnificent remains of Roman antiquity which enrich the neighbourhood of Nice. When the ladies sat at home and worked, he enlivened the hours by reading to them, and they had the pleasure to observe his spirits somewhat relieved from the heavy melancholy that had oppressed him.

M. Amand was passionately fond of music. Clara had not forgot to bring her beloved lute: he would sometimes strike the chords in the most sweet and mournful symphonies, but never could be prevailed on to play. When Adeline or Clara played, he would sit in deep reverie, and lost to every object around him, except when he fixed his eyes in mournful gaze on Adeline, and a sigh would sometimes escape him.

One evening Adeline having excused herself from accompanying La Luc and Clara in a visit to a neighbouring family, she retired to the terrace of the garden, which overlooked the sea, and as she viewed the tranquil splendour of the setting sun, and his glories reflected on the polished surface of the waves, she touched the strings of the lute in softest harmony, her voice accompanying it with words which she had one day written after having read that rich effusion of Shakespeare’s genius, “A Midsummer Night’s Dream.”

TITANIA TO HER LOVE.

O! fly with me through distant air To isles that gem the western deep! For laughing Summer revels there, And hangs her wreath on ev’ry steep.

As through the green transparent sea Light floating on its waves we go, The nymphs shall gaily welcome me Far in their coral caves below.

For oft upon their margin sands, When Twilight leads the fresh’ning Hours. I come with all my jocund bands To charm them from their sea-green bow’rs.

And well they love our sports to view, And on the Ocean’s breast to lave; And oft, as we the dance renew, They call up music from the wave.

Swift hie we to that splendid clime, Where gay Jamaica spreads her scene, Lifts the blue mountain — wild — sublime! And smooths her vales of vivid green.

Where throned high, in pomp of shade, The Power of Vegetation reigns, Expanding wide, o’er hill and glade, Shrubs of all growth — fruit of all stains:

She steals the sun-beams’ fervid glow To paint her flow’rs of mingling hue; And o’er the grape the purple throw, Breaking from verdant leaves to view.

There, myrtle bow’rs, and citron grove, O’ercanopy our airy dance; And there the sea-breeze loves to rove When trembles Day’s departing glance.

And when the false moon steals away, Or e'er the chacing morn doth rise, Oft, fearless, we our gambols play By the fire-worm's radiant eyes.

And suck the honey'd reeds that swell In tufted plumes of silver white; Or pierce the cocoa's milky cell, To sip the nectar of delight!

And when the shaking thunders roll, And lightnings strike athwart the gloom, We shelter in the cedar's bole, And revel 'mid the rich perfume! But chief we love beneath the palm, Or verdant plantain's spreading leaf, To hear, upon the midnight calm, Sweet Philomela pour her grief. To mortal sprite such dulcet sound, Such blissful hours, were never known! O! fly with me my airy round, And I will make them all thine own!

Adeline ceased to sing when she immediately heard repeated in a low voice,

"To mortal sprite such dulcet sound,
Such blissful hours, were never known!"

and turning her eyes whence it came, she saw M. Amand. She blushed and laid down the lute, which he instantly took up, and with a tremulous hand drew forth tones

"That might create a soul under the ribs of Death."

In a melodious voice, that trembled with sensibility, he sang the following

SONNET.
How sweet is Love's first gentle sway,
When crown'd with flow'rs he softly smiles!
His blue eyes fraught with tearful wiles,
Where beams of tender transport play:
Hope leads him on his airy way,
And Faith and Fancy still beguiles —
Faith quickly tangled in her toils —
Fancy, whose magic forms so gay
The fair Deceiver's self deceive —
"How sweet is Love's first gentle sway!"
Ne'er would that heart he bids to grieve
From Sorrow's soft enchantments stray —
Ne'er — till the God, exulting in his art,
Relentless frowns, and wings th' envenom'd dart!

Monsieur Amand paused: he seemed much oppressed, and at length, bursting into tears, laid down the instrument and walked abruptly away to the farther end of the terrace. Adeline, without seeming to observe his agitation, rose and leaned upon the wall, below which a group of fishermen were busily employed in drawing a net. In a few moments he returned, with a composed and softened countenance. "Forgive this abrupt conduct," said he; "I know not how to apologize for it but by owning its cause. When I tell you, Madam, that my tears flow to the memory of a lady who strongly resembled you, and who is lost to me for ever, you will know how to pity me." — His voice faultered, and he paused. Adeline was silent. "The lute," he resumed, was her favourite instrument, and when you touched it with such melancholy expression, I saw her very image before me. But alas! why do I distress you with a knowledge of of my sorrows! she is gone, and never to return! And you, Adeline — you" — He checked his speech; and Adeline, turning on him a look of mournful regard, observed a wildness in his eyes which alarmed her. "These recollections are too painful," said she, in a gentle voice; let us return to the house; M. La Luc is probably come home." — "O no!" replied M. Amand; "No — this breeze refreshes me. How often at this hour have I talked with her, as I now talk with you! — Such were the soft tones of her voice — such the ineffable expression of her countenance." — Adeline interrupted him. "Let me beg of you to consider your health — this dewy air cannot be good for invalids." He stood with his hands clasped, and seemed not to hear her. She took up the lute to go, and passed her fingers lightly over the chords. The sounds recalled his scattered senses: he raised his eyes, and fixed them in long unsettled gaze upon hers. "Must I leave you here?" said she, smiling, and standing in an attitude to depart — "I entreat you to play again the air I heard just now," said M. Amand, in a hurried voice. — "Certainly;" and she immediately began to play. He leaned against a palm tree in an attitude of deep attention, and as the sounds languished on the air, his features gradually lost their wild expression, and he melted into tears. He continued to weep silently till the song concluded, and it was some time before he recovered voice enough to say, "Adeline, I cannot thank you for this goodness. My mind has recovered its bias, you have soothed a broken heart. Increase the kindness you have shewn me by promising never to mention what you have witnessed this evening, and I will endeavour never again to wound your sensibility "by a similiar offence." — Adeline gave the required promise; and M. Amand, pressing her hand, with a melancholy smile, hurried from the garden, and she saw him no more that night.

La Luc had been near a fortnight at Nice, and his health, instead of amending, seemed rather to decline, yet he wished to make a longer experiment of the climate. The air, which failed to restore her venerable friend, revived Adeline, and the variety and novelty of the surrounding scenes amused her mind, though, since they could not obliterate the memory of past, or suppress the pang of present affection, they were ineffectual to dissipate the sick languor of melancholy. Company, by compelling her to withdraw her attention from the subject of her sorrow, afforded her a transient relief, but the violence of the exertion generally nerally left her more depressed. It was in the stillness of solitude, in the tranquil observance of beautiful nature, that her mind recovered its tone, and indulging the pensive inclination now become habitual to it, was soothed and fortified. Of all the grand objects which nature had exhibited, the ocean inspired her with the most sublime admiration She loved to wander alone on its shores, and, when she could escape so long from the duties or the forms of society, she would sit for hours on the beach watching the rolling waves, and listening to their dying murmur, till her softened fancy recalled long lost scenes, and restored the image of Theodore, when tears of despondency too often followed those of pity and regret. But these visions of memory, painful as they were, no longer excited that phrenzy of grief they formerly awakened in Savoy; the sharpness of misery was passed, though its heavy influence was not perhaps less powerful. To these solitary indulgences generally succeeded calmness, and what Adeline endeavoured to believe was resignation.

She usually rose early, and walked down to the shore to enjoy, in the cool and silent hours of the morning, the cheering beauty of nature, and inhale the pure sea-breeze. Every object then smiled in fresh and lively colours. The blue sea, the brilliant sky, the distant fishing boats, with their white sails, and the voices of the fishermen borne at intervals on the air, were circumstances which reanimated her spirits, and in one of her rambles, yielding to that taste for poetry which had seldom forsaken her, she repeated the following lines:

MORNING, ON THE SEA SHORE.

What print of fairy feet is here
On Neptune's smooth and yellow sands?
What midnight revel's airy dance,
Beneath the moon-beams' trembling glance,
Has blest these shores? — What sprightly bands
Have chac'd the waves uncheck'd by fear?
Whoe'er they were they fled from morn,
For now all silent and forlorn
These tide-forsaken sands appear —
Return, sweet sprites! the scene to cheer!

In vain the call! — Till moonlight's hour
Again diffuse its softer pow'r,
Titania, nor her fairy loves,
Emerge from India's spicy groves.
Then, when the shad'wy hour returns,
When silence reigns o'er air and earth,
And ev'ry star in æther burns,
They come to celebrate their mirth;
In frolic ringlet trip the ground,
Bid Music's voice on Silence win,
Till magic echoes answer round —
Thus do their festive rites begin.

O fairy forms! so coy to mortal ken,
Your mystic steps to poets only shewn,
O! lead me to the brook, or hallow'd glen,
Retiring far, with winding woods o'ergrown!
Where'er ye best delight to rule;
If in some forest's lone retreat,
Thither conduct my willing feet
To the light brink of fountain cool,
Where, sleeping in the midnight dew,
Lie Spring's young buds of ev'ry hue,
Yielding their sweet breath to the air;
To fold their silken leaves from harm,
And their chill heads in moonshine warm,
To bright Titania's tender care.

There, to the night-bird's plaintive chaunt
Your carols sweet ye love to raise,
With oaten reed and past'ral lays;

And guard with forceful spell her haunt,
Who, when your antic sports are done,
Oft lulls ye in the lily's cell,
Sweet flow'r! that suits your slumbers well,
And shields ye from the rising sun.
When not to India's steeps ye fly
After twilight and the moon,
In honey'd buds ye love to lie,
While reigns supreme Light's fervid noon;
Nor quit the cell where peace pervades
Till night leads on the dews and shades.
    E'en now your scenes enchanted meet my sight!
I see the earth unclose, the palace rise,
The high dome swell, and long arcades of light
Glitter among the deep embow'ring woods,
And glance reflected from the trembling floods!
While to soft lutes the portals wide unfold,
And fairy forms, of fine ætherial dyes,
Advance with frolic step and laughing eyes,
Their hair with pearl, their garments deck'd with gold;
Pearls that in Neptune's briny waves they sought,
And gold from India's deepest caverns brought.
Thus your light visions to my eyes unveil,
Ye sportive pleasures, sweet illusions, hail!
But ah! at morn's first blush again ye fade!
So from youth's ardent gaze life's landscape gay,
And forms in Fancy's summer hues array'd,
Dissolve at once in air at Truth's resplendent day!

During several days succeeding that on which M. Amand had disclosed the cause of his melancholy, he did not visit La Luc. At length Adeline met him in one of her solitary rambles on the shore. He was pale and dejected, and seemed much agitated when he observed her; she therefore endeavoured to avoid him, but he advanced with quickened steps and accosted her. He said it was his intention to leave Nice in a few days. "I have found no benefit from the climate," added M. Amand; Alas! what climate can relieve the sickness of the heart! I go to lose in the varieties of new scenes the remembrance of past happiness; yet the effort is vain; I am every where equally restless and unhappy." Adeline tried to encourage him to hope much from time and change of place. "Time will blunt the sharpest edge of sorrow," said she; "I know it from experience." Yet while she spoke, the tears in her eyes contradicted the assertion of her lips. "You have been unhappy, Adeline! — Yes — I knew it from the first. The smile of pity which you gave me, assured me that you knew what it was to suffer." The desponding air with which he spoke renewed her apprehension of a scene similar to the one she had lately witnessed, and she changed the subject, but he soon returned to it. "You bid me hope much from time! — My wife! — My dear wife!" — his tongue faultered — "It is now many months since I lost her — yet the moment of her death seems but as yesterday." Adeline faintly smiled. "You can scarcely judge of the effect of time yet, you have much to hope for." He shook his head. "But I am again intruding my misfortunes on your notice; forgive this perpetual egotism. There is a comfort in the pity of the good such as nothing else can impart; this must plead my excuse; may you, Adeline, never want it. Ah! those tears — " Adeline hastily dried them. M. Amand forbore to press the subject, and immediately began to converse on indifferent topics. They returned towards the chateau, but La Luc being from home, M. Amand took leave at the door. Adeline retired to her chamber, oppressed by her own sorrows and those of her amiable friend.

Near three weeks had now elapsed at Nice, during which the disorder of La Luc seemed rather to encrease than to abate, when his physician very honestly confessed the little hope he entertained from the climate, and advised him to try the effect of a sea voyage, adding, that if the experiment failed, even the air of Montpellier appeared to him more likely to afford relief than that of Nice. La Luc received this disinterested advice with a mixture of gratitude and disappointment. The circumstances which had made him reluctant to quit Savoy, rendered him yet more so to protract his absence, and encrease his expences; but the ties of affection that bound him to his family, and the love of life, which so seldom leaves us, again prevailed over inferior considerations, and he determined to coast the Mediterranean as far as Languedoc, where, if the voyage did not answer his expectations, he would land and proceed to Montpellier.

When M. Amand learned that La Luc designed to quit Nice in a few days, he determined not to leave it before him. During this interval he had not sufficient resolution to deny himself the frequent conversation of Adeline, though her presence, by reminding him of his lost wife, gave him more pain than comfort. He was the second son of a French gentleman of family, and had been married about a year to a lady to whom he had long been attached when she died in her lying-in. The infant soon followed its mother, and left the disconsolate father abandoned to grief, which had preyed so heavily on his health, that his physician thought it necessary to send him to Nice. From the air of Nice, however, he had derived no benefit, and he now determined to travel farther into Italy, though he no longer felt any interest in those charming scenes which in happier days, and with her whom he never ceased to lament, would have afforded him the highest degree of mental luxury — now he sought only to escape from himself, or rather from the image of her who had once constituted his truest happiness.

La Luc having laid his plan, hired a small vessel, and in a few days embarked, with a sick hope bidding adieu to the shores of Italy and the towering alps, and seeking on a new element the health which had hitherto mocked his pursuit.

M. Amand took a melancholy leave of his new friends, whom he attended to the sea side. When he assisted Adeline on board, his heart was too full to suffer him to say farewell; but he stood long on the beach pursuing with his eyes her course over the waters, and waving his hand, till tears dimmed his sight. The breeze wafted the vessel gently from the coast, and Adeline saw herself surrounded by the undulating waves of the ocean. The shore appeared to recede, its mountains to lessen, the gay colours of its landscape to melt into each other, and in a short time the figure of M. Amand was seen no more: the town of Nice, with its castle and harbour, next faded away in distance, and the purple tint of the mountains was at length all that remained on the verge of the horizon. She sighed as she gazed, and her eyes filled with tears. “So vanished my prospect of happiness,” said she; “and my future view is like the waste of waters that surround me.” Her heart was full, and she retired from observation to a remote part of the deck, where she indulged her tears as she watched the vessel cut its way through the liquid glass. The water was so transparent that she saw the sun-beams playing at a considerable depth, and fish of various colours glance athwart the current. Innumerable marine plants spread their vigorous leaves on the rocks below, and the richness of their verdure formed a beautiful contrast to the glowing scarlet of the coral that branched beside them.

The distant coast, at length, entirely disappeared. Adeline gazed with an emotion the most sub’ime, on the boundless expanse of waters that spread on all sides: she seemed as if launched into a new world; the grandeur and immensity of the view astonished and overpowered her: for a moment she doubted the truth of the compass, and believed it to be almost impossible for the vessel to find its way over the pathless waters to any shore. And when she considered that a plank alone separated her from death, a sensation of unmixed terror superceded that of sublimity, and she hastily turned her eyes from the prospect, and her thoughts from the subject.

❦

CHAPTER 19

"Is there a heart that music cannot melt?
Alas! how is that rugged heart forlorn!
Is there who ne'er the mystic transports felt
Of solitude and melancholy born?
He need not woo the Muse — he is her scorn."
Beattie.

Towards evening the captain, to avoid the danger of encountering a Barbary corsair, steered for the French coast, and Adeline distinguished in the gleam of the setting sun the shores of Provence, feathered with wood and green with pasturage. La Luc, languid and ill, had retired to the cabin, whither Clara attended him. The pilot at the helm, guiding the tall vessel through the sounding waters, and one solitary sailor, leaning with crossed arms against the mast, and now and then singing parts of a mournful ditty, were all of the crew, except Adeline, that remained upon deck — and Adeline silently watched the declining sun, which threw a saffron glow upon the waves, and on the sails, gently swelling in the breeze that was now dying away. The sun, at length, sunk below the ocean, and twilight stole over the scene, leaving the shadowy shores yet visible, and touching with a solemn tint the waters that stretched wide around. She sketched the picture, but it was with a faint pencil.

NIGHT.
O'er the dim breast of Ocean's wave
Night spreads afar her gloomy wings,
And pensive thought, and silence brings,
Save when the distant waters lave;
Or when the mariner's lone voice
Swells faintly in the passing gale,
Or when the screaming sea-gulls poise
O'er the tall mast and swelling sail,
Bounding the gray gleam of the deep,
Where fancy'd forms arouse the mind,
Dark sweep the shores, on whose rude steep
Sighs the sad spirit of the wind.
Sweet is its voice upon the air
At Ev'ning's melancholy close,
When the smooth wave in silence flows!
Sweet, sweet the peace its stealing accents bear!
Blest be thy shades, O Night! and blest the song
Thy low winds breathe the distant shores along!

As the shadows thickened the scene sunk into deeper repose. Even the sailor's song had ceased; no sound was heard but that of the waters dashing beneath the vessel, and their fainter murmur on the pebbly coast. Adeline's mind was in unison with the tranquillity of the hour: lulled by the waves, she resigned herself to a still melancholy, and sat lost in reverie. The present moment brought to her recollection her voyage up the Rhone, when seeking refuge from the terrors of the Marquis de Montalt, she so anxiously endeavoured to anticipate her future destiny. She then, as now, had watched the fall of evening and the fading prospect, and she remembered what a desolate feeling had accompanied the impression which those objects made. She had then no friends — no asylum — no certainty of escaping the pursuit of her enemy. Now she had found affectionate friends — a secure retreat — and was delivered from the terrors she then suffered — but still she was unhappy. The remembrance of Theodore — of Theodore who had loved her so truly, who had encountered and suffered so much for her sake, and of whose fate she was now as ignorant as when she traversed the Rhone, was an incessant pang to her heart. She seemed to be more remote than ever from the possibility of hearing of him. Sometimes a faint hope crossed her that he had escaped the malice of his persecutor; but when she considered the inveteracy and power of the latter, and the heinous light in which the law regards an assault upon a superior officer, even this poor hope vanished, and left her to tears and anguish, such as this reverie, which began with a sensation of only gentle melancholy, now led to. She continued to muse till the moon arose from the bosom of the ocean, and shed her trembling lustre upon the waves, diffusing peace, and making silence more solemn; beaming a soft light on the white fails, and throwing upon the waters the tall shadow of the vessel, which now seemed to glide along unopposed by any current. Her tears had somewhat relieved the anguish of her mind, and she again reposed in placid melancholy, when a strain of such tender and entrancing sweetness stole on the silence of the hour, that it seemed more like celestial than mortal music — so soft, so soothing, it sunk upon her ear, that it recalled her from misery to hope and love. She wept again — but these were tears which she would not have exchanged for mirth and joy. She looked round, but perceived neither ship or boat; and as the undulating sounds swelled on the distant air, she thought they came from the shore. Sometimes the breeze wasted them away, and again returned them in tones of the most languishing softness. The links of the air thus broken, it was music rather than melody that she caught, till, the pilot gradually steering nearer the coast, she distinguished the notes of a song familiar to her ear. She endeavoured to recollect where she had heard it, but in vain; yet her heart beat almost unconsciously with a something resembling hope. Still she listened, till the breeze again stole the sounds. With regret she now perceived that the vessel was moving from them, and at length they trembled faintly on the waves, sunk away at distance, and were heard no more. She remained upon the deck a considerable time, unwilling to relinquish the expectation of hearing them again, and their sweetness still vibrating on her fancy, and at length retired to the cabin oppressed by a degree of disappointment which the occasion did not appear to justify.

La Luc grew better during the voyage, his spirits revived, and when the vessel entered that part of the Mediterranean called the Gulf of Lyons, he was sufficiently animated to enjoy from the deck the noble prospect which the sweeping shores of Provence, terminating in the far distant ones of Languedoc, exhibited. Adeline and Clara, who anxiously watched his looks, rejoiced in their amendment; and the fond wishes of the latter already anticipated his perfect recovery. The expectations of Adeline had been too often checked by disappointment to permit her now to indulge an equal degree of hope with that of her friend, yet she confided much in the effect of this voyage.

La Luc amused himself at intervals with discoursing, and pointing out the situations of considerable ports on the coast, and the mouths of the rivers that, after wandering through Provence, disembogue themselves into the Mediterranean. The Rhone, however, was the only one of much consequence which he passed. On this object, though it was so distant that fancy, perhaps, rather than the sense, beheld it, Clara gazed with peculiar pleasure, for it came from the banks of Savoy; and the wave which she thought she perceived, had washed the feet of her dear native mountains. The time passed with mingled pleasure and improvement as La Luc described to his attentive pupils the manners and commerce of the different inhabitants of the coast, and the natural history of the country; or as he traced in imagination the remote wanderings of rivers to their source and delineated the characteristic beauties of their scenery.

After a pleasant voyage of a few days, the shores of Provence receded, and that of Languedoc, which had long bounded the distance, became the grand object of the scene, and the sailors drew near their port. They landed in the afternoon at a small town situated at the foot of a woody eminence, on the right overlooking the sea, and on the left the rich plains of Languedoc, gay with the purple vine. La Luc determined to defer his journey till the following day, and was directed to a small inn at the extremity of the town, where the accommodation, such as it was, he endeavoured to be contented with.

In the evening the beauty of the hour, and the desire of exploring new scenes, invited Adeline to walk. La Luc was fatigued, and did not go out, and Clara remained with him. Adeline took her way to the woods that rose from the margin of the sea, and climbed the wild eminence on which they hung. Often as she went she turned her eyes to catch between the dark foliage the blue waters of the bay, the white sail that flitted by, and the trembling gleam of the setting sun. When she reached the summit, and looked down over the dark tops of the woods on the wide and various prospect, she was seized with a kind of still rapture impossible to be expressed, and stood unconscious of the flight of time, till the sun had left the scene, and twilight threw its solemn shade upon the mountains. The sea alone reflected the fading splendor of the West; its tranquil surface was partially disturbed by the low wind that crept in tremulous lines along the waters whence rising to the woods, it shivered their light leaves, and died away. Adeline, resigning herself to the luxury of sweet and tender emotions, repeated the following lines:

SUNSET.

Soft o'er the mountain's purple brow
Meek Twilight draws her shadows gray;
From tufted woods, and vallies low,
Light's magic colours steal away.
Yet still, amid the spreading gloom,
Resplendent glow the western waves
That roll o'er Neptune's coral caves,
A zone of light on Ev'ning's dome.
On this lone summit let me rest,
And view the forms to Fancy dear,
Till on the Ocean's darken'd breast
The stars of Ev'ning tremble clear;

Or the moon's pale orb appear,
Throwing her line of radiance wide,
Far o'er the lightly-curling tide,
That seems the yellow sands to chide.
No sounds o'er silence now prevail,
Save of the dying wave below,
Or sailor's song borne on the gale,
Or oar at distance striking slow.
So sweet! so tranquil! may my ev'ning ray
Set to this world — and rise in future day!

Adeline quitted the heights, and followed a narrow path that wound to the beach below: her mind was now particularly sensible to fine impressions, and the sweet notes of the nightingale amid the stillness of the woods again awakened her enthusiasm.

TO THE NIGHTINGALE.

Child of the melancholy song!
O yet that tender strain prolong!

Her lengthen'd shade, when Ev'ning flings,
From mountain-cliffs and forest's green,
And failing slow on silent wings
Along the glimm'ring West is seen;
I love o'er pathless hills to stray,
Or trace the winding vale remote,
And pause, sweet Bird! to hear thy lay
While moon-beams on the thin clouds float,
Till o'er the mountain's dewy head
Pale Midnight steals to wake the dead.

Far through the Heav'ns' ætherial blue,
Wasted on Spring's light airs you come,
With blooms, and flow'rs, and genial dew,
From climes where Summer joys to roam,
O! welcome to your long-lost home!
"Child of the melancholy song!"
Who lov'st the lonely woodland-glade
To mourn, unseen, the boughs among,
When Twilight spreads her pensive shade,
Again thy dulcet voice I hail!
O! pour again the liquid note
That dies upon the ev'ning gale!
For Fancy loves the kindred tone;
Her griefs the plaintive accents own.
She loves to hear thy music float
At solemn Midnight's stillest hour,
And think on friends for ever lost,
On joys by disappointment crost,
And weep anew Love's charmful pow'r!

Then Memory wakes the magic smile,
Th' impassion'd voice, the melting eye,
That won't the trusting heart beguile,
And wakes again the hopeless sigh!
Her skill the glowing tints revive
Of scenes that Time had bade decay;
She bids the soften'd Passions live —
The Passions urge again their sway.
Yet o'er the long-regretted scene
Thy song the grace of sorrow throws;
A melancholy charm serene,
More rare than all that mirth bestows.
Then hail, sweet Bird! and hail thy Pensive tear!
To Taste, to Fancy, and to Virtue, dear!

The spreading dusk at length reminded Adeline of her distance from the inn, and that she had her way to find through a wild and lonely wood: she bade adieu to the syren that had so long detained her, and pursued the path with quick steps. Having followed it for some time, she became bewildered among the thickets, and the increasing darkness did not allow her to judge of the direction she was in. Her apprehensions heightened her difficulties: she thought she distinguished the voices of men at some little distance, and she increased her speed till the found herself on the sea sands over which the woods impended. Her breath was now exhausted — she paused a moment to recover herself, and fearfully listened but instead of the voices of men, she heard faintly swelling in the breeze the notes of mournful music. — Her heart, ever sensible to the impressions of melody, melted with the tones, and her fears were for a moment lulled in sweet enchantment. Surprise was soon mingled with delight when, as the sounds advanced, she distinguished the tone of that instrument, and the melody of that well known air, she had heard a few preceding evenings from the shores of Provence. But she had no time for conjecture — footsteps approached, and she renewed her speed. She was now emerged from the darkness of the woods, and the moon, which shone bright, exhibited along the level sands the town and port in the distance. The steps that had followed now came up with her, and she perceived two men, but they passed in conversation without noticing her, and as they passed she was certain she recollected the voice of him who was then speaking. Its tones were so familiar to her ear, that she was surprised at the imperfect memory which did not suffer her to be assured by whom they were uttered. Another step now followed, and a rude voice called to her to stop. As she hastily turned her eyes she saw imperfectly by the moonlight a man in a sailor's habit pursuing, while he renewed the call. Impelled by terror, she fled along the sands, but her steps were short and trembling — those of her pursuer's strong and quick.

She had just strength sufficient to reach the men who had before passed her, and to implore their protection, when her pursuer came up with them, but suddenly turned into the woods on the lest, and disappeared.

She had no breath to answer the inquiries of the strangers who supported her, till a sudden exclamation, and the sound of her own name, drew her eyes attentively upon the person who uttered them, and in the rays which shone strong upon his features, she distinguished M. Verneuil! — Mutual satisfaction and explanation ensued, and when he learned that La Luc and his daughter were at the inn, he felt an increased pleasure in conducting her thither. He said that he had accidentally met with on old friend in Savoy, whom he now introduced by the name of Mauron, and who had prevailed on him to change his route and accompany him to the shores of the Mediterranean. They had embarked from the coast of Provence only a few preceding days, and had that evening landed in Languedoc on the estate of M. Mauron. Adeline had now no doubt that it was the flute of M. Verneuil, and which had so often delighted her at Leloncourt, that she had heard on the sea.

When they reached the inn they found La Luc under great anxiety for Adeline, in search of whom he had sent several people. Anxiety yielded to surprize and pleasure, when he perceived her with M. Verneuil, whose eyes beamed with unusual animation on seeing Clara. After mutual congratulations, M. Verneuil observed, and lamented, the very indifferent accommodation which the inn afforded his friends, and M. Mauron immediately invited them to his chateau with a warmth of hospitality that overcame every scruple which delicacy or pride could oppose. The woods that Adeline had traversed formed a part of his domain, which extended almost to the inn; but he insisted that his carriage should take his guests to the chateau, and departed to give orders for their reception. The presence of M. Verneuil, and the kindness of his friend, gave to La Luc an unusual flow of spirits; he conversed with a degree of vigour and liveliness to which he had long been unaccustomed, and the smile of satisfaction that Clara gave to Adeline expressed how much she thought he was already benefited by the voyage. Adeline answered her look with a smile of less confidence, for she attributed his present animation to a more temporary cause.

About half an hour after the departure of M. Mauron, a boy who served as waiter brought a message from a chevalier then at the inn, requesting permission to speak with Adeline. The man who had pursued her along the sands instantly occurred to her, and she scarcely doubted that the stranger was some person belonging to the Marquis de Montalt, perhaps the Marquis himself, though that he should have discovered her accidentally, in so obscure a place, and so immediately upon her arrival, seemed very improbable. With trembling lips, and a countenance pale as death, she inquired the name of the chevalier. The boy was not acquainted with it. La Luc asked what sort of a person he was; but the boy, who understood little of the art of describing, gave such a confused account of him, that Adeline could only learn he was not large, but of the middle stature. This circumstance, however, convincing her it was not the Marquis de Montalt who desired to see her, she asked whether it would be agreeable to La Luc to have the stranger admitted. La Luc said, "By all means;" and the waiter withdrew. Adeline sat in trembling expectation till the door opened, and Louis de la Motte entered the room. He advanced with an embarrassed and melancholy air, though his countenance had been enlightened with a momentary pleasure when he first beheld Adeline — Adeline, who was still the idol of his heart. After the first salutations were over, all apprehensions of the Marquis being now dissipated, she inquired when Louis had seen Monsieur and Madame La Motte.

"I ought rather to ask you that question," said Louis, in some confusion, for I believe you have seen them since I have; and the pleasure of meeting you thus is equalled by my surprise. I have not heard from my father for some time, owing probably to my regiment "being removed to new quarters."

He looked as if he wished to be informed with whom Adeline now was; but as this was a subject upon which it was impossible she could speak in the presence of La Luc, she led the conversation to general topics, after having said that Monsieur and Madame La Motte were well when she left them. Louis spoke little, and often looked anxiously at Adeline, while his mind seemed labouring under strong oppression. She observed this, and recollecting the declaration he had made her on the morning of his departure from the Abbey, she attributed his present embarrassment to the effect of a passion yet unsubdued, and did not appear to notice it. After he had sat near a quarter of an hour, under a struggle of feelings which he could neither conquer or conceal, he rose to leave the room, and as he passed Adeline, said, in a low voice, "Do permit me to speak with you alone for five minutes." She hesitated in some confusion, and then saying there were none but friends present, begged he would be seated. — "Excuse me," said he, in the same low accent; "What I would say nearly concerns you, and you only. Do favour me with a few moments attention." He said this with a look that surprized her; and having ordered candles in another room, she went thither.

Louis sat for some moments silent, and seemingly in great perturbation of mind. At length he said, "I know not whether to rejoice or to lament at this unexpected meeting, though, if you are in safe hands, I ought certainly to rejoice, however hard the task that now falls to my lot. I am not ignorant of the dangers and persecutions you have suffered, and cannot forbear expressing my anxiety to know how you are now circumstanced. Are you indeed with friends?" — "I am," said Adeline; "M. la Motte has informed you" — "No," replied Louis, with a deep sigh, "not my father." — He paused. — "But I do indeed rejoice," resumed he, "O! how sincerely rejoice! that you are in safety. Could you know, lovely Adeline, what I have suffered!" — He checked himself. — "I understood you had something of importance to say, Sir," said Adeline; "you must excuse me if I remind you that I have not many moments to spare."

"It is indeed of importance," replied Louis; "yet I know not how to mention it — how to soften — This task is too severe. Alas! my poor friend!"

"Who is it you speak of, Sir!", said Adeline, with quickness. Louis rose from his chair, and walked about the room. "I would prepare you for what I have to say, he resumed, "but upon my soul I am not equal to it."

"I entreat you to keep me no longer in suspence," said Adeline, who had a wild idea that it was Theodore he would speak of. Louis still hesitated. "Is it — O is it? — I conjure you tell me the worst at once," said she, in a voice of agony. "I can bear it — indeed I can."

"My unhappy friend!" exclaimed Louis, "O Theodore!" — "Theodore!" faintly articulated Adeline, "he lives then!" — "He does," said Louis, "but" — He stopped. — "But what?" cried Adeline, trembling violently; "If he is living you cannot tell me worse than my fears suggest; I entreat you, therefore, not to hesitate." — Louis resumed his seat, and, endeavouring to assume a collected air, said, "He is living, Madam, but he is a prisoner, and — for why should I deceive you? I fear he has little to hope in this "world."

"I have long feared so, Sir," said Adeline, in a voice of forced composure; "you have something more terrible than this to relate, and I again intreat you will explain yourself."

"He has every thing to apprehend from the Marquis de Montalt," said Louis. "Alas! why do I say to apprehend? His judgment is already fixed

— he is condemned to die."

At this confirmation of her fears a death-like paleness diffused itself over the countenance of Adeline; she sat motionless, and attempted to sigh, but seemed almost suffocated. Terrified at her situation, and expecting to see her faint, Louis would have supported her, but with her hand she waved him from her, and was unable to speak. He now called for assistance, and La Luc and Clara, with M. Verneuil, informed of Adeline's indisposition, were quickly by her side.

At the sound of their voices she looked up, and seemed to recollect herself, when uttering a heavy sigh she burst into tears. La Luc rejoiced to see her weep, encouraged her tears, which, after some time, relieved her, and when she was able to speak, she desired to go back to La Luc's parlour. Louis attended her thither; when she was better he would have withdrawn, but La Luc begged he would stay.

"You are perhaps a relation of this young lady, Sir," said he, "and may have brought news of her father." — "Not so, Sir," replied Louis, hesitating. — "This gentleman," said Adeline, who had now recollected her dissipated thoughts, "is the son of the M. La Motte, whom you may have heard me mention." — Louis seemed shocked to be declared the son of a man that had once acted so unworthily towards Adeline, who, instantly perceiving the pain her words occasioned, endeavoured to soften their effect by saying that La Motte had saved her from imminent danger, and had afforded her an asylum for many months. Adeline sat in a state of dreadful solitude to know the particulars of Theodore's situation, yet could not acquire courage to renew the subject in the presence of La Luc; she ventured, however, to ask Louis if his own regiment was quartered in the town.

He replied that his regiment lay at Vaceau, a French town on the frontiers of Spain; that he had just crossed a part of the Gulph of Lyons, and was on his way to Savoy, whither he should set out early in the morning.

"We are lately come from thence," said Adeline; "may I ask to what part of Savoy you are going?" — "To Leloncourt," he replied. — "To Leloncourt!" said Adeline, in some surprize. — "I am a stranger to the country," resumed Louis; "but I go to serve my friend. You seem to know Leloncourt." — "I do indeed," said Adeline. — "You probably know then that M. La Luc lives there, and will guess the motive of my journey."

"O heavens! is it possible?" exclaimed Adeline — "is it possible that Theodore Peyrou is a relation of M. La Luc!"

"Theodore! what of my son?" asked La Luc, in surprize and apprehension. — "Your son!" said Adeline, in a trembling voice, "your son!" — The astonishment and anguish depictured on her countenance increased the apprehensions of this unfortunate father, and he renewed his question. But Adeline was totally unable to answer him; and the distress of Louis, on thus unexpectedly discovering the father of his unhappy friend, and knowing that it was his task to disclose the fate of his son, deprived him for some time of all power of utterance, and La Luc and Clara, whose fears were every instant heightened by this dreadful silence, continued to repeat their questions.

At length a sense of the approaching sufferings of the good La Luc overcoming every other feeling, Adeline recovered strength of mind sufficient to try to soften the intelligence Louis had to communicate, and to conduct Clara to another room. Here she collected resolution to tell her, and with much tender consideration, the circumstances of her brother's situation, concealing only her knowledge of his sentence being already pronounced. This relation necessarily included the mention of their attachment, and in the friend of her heart Clara discovered the innocent cause of her brother's destruction. Adeline also learned the occasion of that circumstance which had contributed to keep her ignorant of Theodore's relationship to La Luc; she was told the former had taken the name of Peyrou, with an estate which had been left him about a year before by a relation of his mother's upon that condition. Theodore had been designed for the church, but his disposition inclined him to a more active life than the clerical habit would admit of, and on his accession to this estate he had entered into the service of the French king.

In the few and interrupted interviews which had been allowed them at Caux, Theodore had mentioned his family to Adeline only in general terms, and thus, when they were so suddenly separated, had, without designing it, left her in ignorance of his father's name and place of residence.

The sacredness and delicacy of Adeline's grief, which had never permitted her to mention the subject of it even to Clara, had since contributed to deceive her.

The distress of Clara, on learning the situation of her brother, could endure no restraint; Adeline, who had commanded her feelings so as to impart this intelligence with tolerable composure, only by a strong effort of mind, was now almost overwhelmed by her own and Clara's accumulated suffering. While they wept forth the anguish of their hearts, a scene, if possible, more affecting passed between La Luc and Louis, who perceived it was necessary to inform him, though cautiously and by degrees, of the full extent of his calamity. He therefore told La Luc, that though Theodore had been first tried for the offence of having quitted his post, he was now condemned on a charge of assault made upon his general officer, the Marquis de Montalt, who had brought witnesses to prove that his life had been endangered by the circumstance; and who having pursued the prosecution with the most bitter rancour, had at length obtained the sentence which the law could not withhold, but which every other officer in the regiment deplored.

Louis added, that the sentence was to be executed in less than a fortnight, and that Theodore being very unhappy at receiving no answers to the letters he had sent his father, wishing to see him once more, and knowing that there was now no time to be lost, had requested him to go to Leloncourt and acquaint his father with his situation.

La Luc received the account of his son's condition with a distress that admitted neither of tears or complaint. He asked where Theodore was, and desiring to be conducted to him, he thanked Louis for all his kindness, and ordered post horses immediately.

A carriage was soon ready, and this unhappy father, after taking a mournful leave of M. Verneuil, and sending a compliment to M. Mauron, attended by his family, set out for the prison of his son. The journey was a silent one; each individual of the party endeavoured, in consideration of each other, to suppress the expression of grief, but was unable to do more. La Luc appeared calm and complacent; he seemed frequently to be engaged in prayer; but a struggle for resignation and composure was sometimes visible upon his countenance, notwithstanding the efforts of his mind.

❦

CHAPTER 20

"And venom'd with disgrace the dart of Death."
Seward.

We now return to the Marquis de Montalt, who having seen La Motte safely lodged in the prison of D— y, and learning the trial would not come on immediately, had returned to his villa on the borders of the forest, where he expected to hear news of Adeline. It had been his intention to follow his servants to Lyons; but he now determined to wait a few days for letters, and he had little doubt that Adeline, since her flight had been so quickly purfued, would be overtaken, and probably before she could reach that city. In this expectation he had been miserably disappointed; for his servants informed him, that though they traced her thither, they had neither been able to follow her route beyond, nor to discover her at Lyons. This escape she probably owed to having embarked on the Rhone, for it does not appear that the Marquis's people thought of seeking her on the course of that river.

His presence was soon after required at Vaceau, where the court martial was then sitting; thither, therefore, he went, with passions still more exasperated by his late disappointment, and procured the condemnation of Theodore. The sentence was universally lamented, for Theodore was much beloved in his regiment; and the occasion of the Marquis's personal resentment towards him being known, every heart was interested in his cause.

Louis de la Motte happening at this time to be stationed in the same town, heard an imperfect account of his story, and being convinced that the prisoner was the young chevalier whom he had formerly seen with the Marquis at the Abbey, he was induced partly from compassion, and partly with a hope of hearing of his parents, to visit him. The compassionate sympathy which Louis expressed, and the zeal with which he tendered his services, affected Theodore, and excited in him a warm return of friendship. Louis made him frequent visits, did every thing that kindness could suggest to alleviate his sufferings, and a mutual esteem and confidence ensued.

Theodore at length communicated the chief subject of his concern to Louis, who discovered, with inexpressible grief, that it was Adeline whom the Marquis had thus cruelly persecuted, and Adeline for whose sake the generous Theodore was about to suffer. He soon perceived also that Theodore was his favoured rival; but he generously suppressed the jealous pang this discovery occasioned, and determined that no prejudice of passion should withdraw him from the duties of humanity and friendship. He eagerly inquired where Adeline then resided. "She is yet, I fear, in the power of the Marquis," said Theodore, sighing deeply. "O God! — these chains!" — and he threw an agonizing glance upon them. Louis sat silent and thoughtful; at length starting from his reverie, he said he would go to the Marquis, and immediately quitted the prison. The Marquis was, however, already set off for Paris, where he had been summoned to appear at the approaching trial of La Motte; and Louis, yet ignorant of the late transactions at the Abbey, returned to the prison, where he endeavoured to forget that Theodore was the favoured rival of his love, and to remember him only as the defender of Adeline. So earnestly he pressed his offers of service, that Theodore, whom the silence of his father equally surprized and afflicted, and who was very anxious to see him once again, accepted his proposal of going himself to Savoy. "My letters I strongly suspect to have been intercepted by the Marquis," said Theodore; "if so, my poor father will have the whole weight of this calamity to sustain at once, unless I avail myself of your kindness, and I shall neither see him nor hear from him before I die. Louis! there are moments when my fortitude shrinks from the conflict, and my senses threaten to desert me."

No time was to be lost; the warrant for his execution had already received the king's signature, and Louis immediately set forward for Savoy. The letters of Theodore had indeed been intercepted by order of the Marquis, who, in the hope of discovering the asylum of Adeline, had opened and afterwards deroyed them.

But to return to La Luc, who now drew near Vaceau, and who his family observed to be greatly changed in his looks since he had heard the late calamitous intelligence; he uttered no complaint; but it was too obvious that his disorder had made a rapid progress. Louis, who, during the journey, proved the goodness of his disposition by the delicate attentions he paid this unhappy party, concealed his observation of the decline of La Luc, and, to support Adeline's spirits, endeavoured to convince her that her apprehensions on this subject were groundless. Her spirits did indeed require support, for she was now within a few miles of the town that contained Theodore; and while her increasing perturbation almost overcome her, she yet tried to appear composed. When the carriage entered the town, she cast a timid and anxious glance from the window in search of the prison; but having passed through several streets without perceiving any building which corresponded with her idea of that she looked for, the coach stopped at the inn. The frequent changes in La Luc's countenance betrayed the violent agitation of his mind, and when he attempted to alight, feeble and exhausted, he was compelled to accept the support of Louis, to whom he faintly said, as he passed to the parlour, "I am indeed sick at heart, but I trust the pain will not be long." Louis pressed his hand without speaking, and hastened back for Adeline and Clara, who were already in the passage. La Luc wiped the tears from his eyes, (they were the first he had shed) as they entered the room. "I would go immediately to my poor boy," said he to Louis; "yours, Sir, is a mournful office — be so good as to conduct me to him." He rose to go, but, feeble and overcome with grief, again sat down. Adeline and Clara united in entreating that he would compose himself, and take some refreshment, and Louis urging the necessity of preparing Theodore for the interview, prevailed with him to delay it till his son should be informed of his arrival, and immediately quitted the inn for the prison of his friend. When he was gone, La Luc, as a duty he owed those he loved, tried to take some support, but the convulsions of his throat would not suffer him to swallow the wine he held to his parched lips, and he was now so much disordered, that he desired to retire to his chamber, where alone, and in prayer, he passed the dreadful interval of Louis's absence.

Clara on the bosom of Adeline, who set in calm but deep distress, yielded to the violence of her grief. "I shall lose my dear father too," said she; "I see it; I shall lose my father and my brother together." Adeline wept with her friend for some time in silence; and then attempted to persuade her that La Luc was not so ill as she apprehended.

"Do not mislead me with hope," "she replied, he will not survive the shock of this calamity — I saw it from the first." Adeline knowing that La Luc's distress would be heightened by the observance of his daughter's, and that indulgence would only encrease its poignancy, endeavoured to rouse her to an exertion of fortitude by urging the necessity of commanding her emotion in the presence of her father. "This is possible," added she, "however painful may be the effort. You must know, my dear, that my grief is not inferior to your own, yet I have hitherto been enabled to support my sufferings in silence, for M. La Luc I do, indeed, love and reverence as a parent."

Louis meanwhile reached the prison of Theodore, who received him with an air of mingled surprize and impatience. "What brings you back so soon," said he, "have you heard news of my father?" Louis now gradually unfolded the circumstances of their meeting, and La Luc's arrival at Vaceau. A various emotion agitated the countenance of Theodore on receiving this intelligence. "My poor father!" said he, "he has then followed his son to this ignominious place! Little did I think when last we parted he would meet me in a prison, under condemnation!" This reflection roused an impetuosity of grief which deprived him for some time of speech. "But where is he?" said Theodore, recovering himself; "now he is come, I shrink from the interview I have so much wished for. The sight of his distress will be dreadful to me. Louis! when I am gone — comfort my poor father." His voice was again interrupted by sobs; and Louis, who had been fearful of acquainting him at the same time of the arrival of La Luc, and the discovery of Adeline, now judged it proper to administer the cordial of this latter intelligence.

The glooms of a prison, and of calamity, vanished for a transient moment; those who had seen Theodore would have believed this to be the instant which gave him life and liberty. When his first emotions subsided, "I will not repine," said he; "since I know that Adeline is preserved, and that I shall once more see my father, I will endeavour to die with resignation." He enquired if La Luc was there in the prison; and was told he was at the inn with Clara and Adeline. "Adeline! Is Adeline there too! — This is beyond my hopes. Yet why do I rejoice? I must never see her more: this is no place for Adeline." Again he relapsed into an agony of distress — and again repeated a thousand questions concerning Adeline, till he was reminded by Louis that his father was impatient to see him — when, shocked that he had so long detained his friend, he entreated him to conduct La Luc to the prison, and endeavoured to recollect fortitude for the approaching interview.

When Louis returned to the inn La Luc was still in his chamber, and Clara quitting the room to call him, Adeline seized with trembling impatience the opportunity to enquire more particularly concerning Theodore, than the chose to do in the presence of his unhappy sister. Lewis represented him to be much more tranquil than he really was: Adeline was somewhat soothed by the account; and her tears, hitherto restrained, flowed silently and fast, till La Luc appeared. His countenance had recovered its serenity, but was impressed with a deep and steady sorrow, which excited in the beholder a mingled emotion of pity and reverence. "How is my son? sir," said he as he entered the room. "We will go to him immediately."

Clara renewed the entreaties that had been already rejected, to accompany her father, who persisted in a refusal. "To-morrow you shall see him, added he;" "but our first meeting must be alone. Stay with your friend, my dear; she has need of consolation.” When La Luc was gone, Adeline, unable longer to struggle against the force of grief, retired to her chamber and her bed.

La Luc walked silently towards the prison, resting on the arm of Lewis. It was now night: a dim lamp that hung above shewed them the gates, and Louis rung a bell; La Luc, almost overcome with agitation, leaned against the postern till the porter appeared. He enquired for Theodore, and followed the man; but when he reached the second court yard he seemed ready to faint, and again stopped. Louis desired the porter would fetch some water; but La Luc, recovering his voice, said he should soon be better, and would not suffer him to go. In a few minutes he was able to follow Louis, who led him through several dark passages, and up a flight of steps to a door, which being unbarred, disclosed to him the prison of his son. He was seated at a small table, on which stood a lamp that threw a feeble light across the place sufficient only to shew its desolation and wretchedness. When he perceived La Luc he sprung from his chair, and in the next moment was in his arms. “My father!” said he in a tremulous voice. “My son!” exclaimed La Luc; and they were for some time silent, and locked in each other’s embrace. At length Theodore led him to the only chair the room afforded, and seating himself with Louis at the foot of the bed, had leisure to observe the ravages which illness and calamity had made on the features of his parent. La Luc made several efforts to speak, but unable to articulate, laid his hand upon his breast and sighed deeply. Fearful of the consequence of so affecting a scene on his shattered frame, Lewis endeavoured to call off his attention from the immediate object of his distress, and interrupted the silence; but La Luc shuddering, and complaining he was very cold, sunk back in his chair. His condition roused Theodore from the stupor of despair; and while he flew to support his father, Louis ran out for other assistance. — “I shall soon be better, Theodore,” said La Luc, unclosing his eye, “the faintness is already going off. I have not been well of late; and this sad meeting!” Unable any longer to command himself, Theodore wrung his hand, and the distress which had long struggled for utterance burst in convulsive sobs from his breast. La Luc gradually revived, and exerted himself to calm the transports of his son; but the fortitude of the latter had now entirely forsaken him, and he could only utter exclamation and complaint. “Ah! little did I think we should ever meet under circumstances so dreadful as the present! But I have not deserved them, my father! the motives of my conduct have still been just.”

“That is my supreme consolation,” said La Luc, “and ought to support you in this hour of trial. The Almighty God, who is the judge of hearts, will reward you hereafter. Trust in him, my son; I look to him with no feeble hope, but with a firm reliance on his justice!” La Luc’s voice faultered; he raised his eyes to heaven with an expression of meek devotion, while the tears of humanity fell slowly on his cheek.

Still more affected by his last words, Theodore turned from him, and paced the room with quick steps: the entrance of Louis was a very seasonable relief to La Luc, who, taking a cordial he had brought, was soon sufficiently restored to discourse on the subject most interesting to him. Theodore tried to attain a command of his feelings, and succeeded. He conversed with tolerable composure for above an hour, during which La Luc endeavoured to elevate, by religious hope, the mind of his son, and to enable him to meet with fortitude the aweful hour that approached. But the appearance of resignation which Theodore attained always vanished when he reflected that he was going to leave his father a prey to grief, and his beloved Adeline for ever. When La Luc was about to depart he again mentioned her. “Afflicting as an interview must be in our present circumstances,” said he, I cannot bear the thought of quitting the world without seeing her once again; yet I know not how to ask her to encounter, for my sake, the misery of a parting scene. Tell her that my thoughts never, for a moment, leave her; that” — La Luc interrupted, and assured him, that since he so much wished it, he should see her, though a meeting could serve only to heighten the mutual anguish of a final separation.

“I know it — I know it too well,” said Theodore; “yet I cannot resolve to see her no more, and thus spare her the pain this interview must inflict. O my father! when I think of those whom I must soon leave for ever, my heart breaks. But I will indeed try to profit by your precept and example, and shew that your paternal care has not been in vain. My good Louis, go with my father — he has need of support. How much I owe this generous friend,” added Theodore, “you well know, Sir.” — “I do, in truth,” replied La Luc, “and can never repay his kindness to you. He has contributed to support us all; but you require comfort more than myself — he shall remain with you — I will go alone.”

This Theodore would not suffer; and La Luc no longer opposing him, they affectionately embraced, and separated for the night.

When they reached the inn La Luc consulted with Louis on the possibility of addressing a petition to the sovereign time enough to save Theodore. His distance from Paris, and the short interval before the period fixed for the execution of the sentence, made this design difficult; but believing it was practicable, La Luc, incapable as he appeared of performing so long a journey, determined to attempt it. Louis, thinking that the undertaking would prove fatal to the father, without benefiting the son, endeavoured, though faintly, to dissuade him from it — but his resolution was fixed. — “If I sacrifice the small remains of my life in the service of my child,” said he, “I shall lose little: if I save him, I shall gain every thing. There is no time to be lost — I will set off immediately.”

He would have ordered post horses, but Louis, and Clara, who was now come from the bed-side of her friend, urged the necessity of his taking a few hours repose: he was at length compelled to acknowledge himself unequal to the immediate exertion which parental anxiety prompted, and consented to seek rest.

When he had retired to his chamber, Clara lamented the condition of her father. — “He will not bear the journey,” said she; “he is greatly changed within these few days.” — Louis was so entirely of her opinion, that he could not disguise it, even to flatter her with a hope. She added, what did not contribute to raise his spirits, that Adeline was so much indisposed by her grief for the situation of Theodore, and the sufferings of La Luc, that she dreaded the consequence.

It has been seen that the passion of young La Motte had suffered no abatement from time or absence; on the contrary, the persecution and the dangers which had pursued Adeline awakened all his tenderness, and drew her nearer to his heart. When he had discovered that Theodore loved her, and was beloved again, he experienced all the anguish of jealousy and disappointment; for though she had forbade him to hope, he found it too painful an effort to obey her, and had secretly cherished the flame which he ought to have stisled. His heart was, however, too noble to suffer his zeal for Theodore to abate because he was his favoured rival, and his mind too strong not to conceal the anguish this certainty occasioned. The attachment which Theodore had testified towards Adeline even endeared him to Louis, when he had recovered from the first shock of disappointment, and that conquest over jealousy which originated in principle, and was pursued with difficulty, became afterwards his pride and his glory. When, however, he again saw Adeline — saw her in the mild dignity of sorrow more interesting than ever — saw her, though sinking beneath its pressure, yet tender and solicitous to soften the afflictions of those around her — it was with the utmost difficulty he preserved his resolution, and forbore to express the sentiments she inspired. When he farther considered that her acute sufferings arose from the strength of her affection, he more than ever wished himself the object of a heart capable of so tender a regard, and Theodore in prison and in chains was a momentary object of envy.

In the morning, when La Luc arose from short and disturbed slumbers, he found Louis, Clara, and Adeline, whom indisposition could not prevent from paying him this testimony of respect and affection, assembled in the parlour of the inn to see him depart. After a slight breakfast, during which his feelings permitted him to say little, he bade his friends a sad farewell, and stepped into the carriage, followed by their tears and prayers. — Adeline immediately retired to her chamber which she was too ill to quit that day. In the evening Clara left her friend, and, conducted by Louis, went to visit her brother, whose emotions, on hearing of his father’s departure, were various and strong.

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CHAPTER 21

"'Tis only when with inbred horror smote
At some base act, or done, or to be done,
That the recoiling soul, with conscious dread,
Shrinks back into itself."
Mason.

We return now to Pierre De la Motte, who, after remaining some weeks in the prison of D— y, was removed to take his trial in the courts of Paris, whither the Marquis de Montalt followed to prosecute the charge. Madame De la Motte accompanied her husband to the prison of the Chatelet. His mind sunk under the weight of his misfortunes; nor could all the efforts of his wife rouse him from the t\orpidity of despair which a consideration of his circumstances occasioned. Should he be even acquitted of the charge brought against him by the Marquis, (which was very unlikely) he was now in the scene of his former crimes, and the moment that should liberate him from the walls of his prison would probably deliver him again into the hands of offended justice.

The prosecution of the Marquis was too well founded, and its object of a nature too serious, not to justify the terror of La Motte. Soon after the latter had settled at the Abbey of St. Clair, the small stock of money which the emergency of his circumstances had left him being nearly exhausted, his mind became corroded with the most cruel anxiety concerning the means of his future subsistence. As he was one evening riding alone in a remote part of the forest, musing on his distressed circumstances, and meditating plans to relieve the exigencies which he saw approaching, he perceived among the trees at some distance a chevalier on horseback, who was riding deliberately along, and seemed wholly unattended. A thought darted across the mind of La Motte that he might be spared the evils which threatened him by robbing this stranger. His former practices had passed the boundary of honesty — fraud was in some degree familiar to him — and the thought was not dismissed. He hesitated — every moment of hesitation increased the power of temptation — the opportunity was such as might never occur again. He looked round, and as far as the trees opened saw no person but the chevalier, who seemed by his air to be a man of distinction. Summoning all his courage, La Motte rode forward and attacked him. The Marquis de Montalt, for it was him, was unarmed, but knowing that his attendants were not far off, he refused to yield. While they were struggling for victory, La Motte saw several horsemen enter the extremity of the avenue, and, rendered desperate by opposition and delay, he drew from his pocket a pistol, (which an apprehension of banditti made him usually carry when he rode to a distance from the Abbey) and fired at the Marquis, who staggered and fell senseless to the ground. La Motte had time to tear from his coat a brilliant star, some diamond rings from his fingers, and to rifle his pockets, before his attendants came up. Instead of pursuing the robber, they all, in their first confusion, flew to assist their lord, and La Motte escaped.

He stopped before he reached the Abbey at a little ruin, the tomb formerly mentioned, to examine his booty. It consisted of a purse containing seventy louis d'ors; of a diamond star, three rings of great value, and a miniature set with brilliants of the Marquis himself, which he had intended as a present for his favourite mistress. To La Motte, who but a few hours before had seen himself nearly destitute, the view of this treasure excited an almost ungovernable transport; but it was soon checked when he remembered the means he had employed to obtain it, and that he had paid for the wealth he contemplated the price of blood. Naturally violent in his passions, this reflection sunk him from the summit of exultation to the abyss of despondency. He considered himself a murderer, and startled as one awakened from a dream, would have given half the world, had it been his, to have been as poor, and, comparatively, as guiltless as a few preceding hours had seen him. On examining the portrait he discovered the resemblance, and believing that his hand had deprived the original of life, he gazed upon the picture with unutterable anguish. To the horrors of remorse succeeded the perplexities of fear. Apprehensive of he knew not what, he lingered at the tomb, where he at length deposited his treasure, believing that if his offence should awaken justice, the Abbey might be searched, and these jewels betray him. From Madame La Motte it was easy to conceal his increase of wealth; for as he had never made her acquainted with the exact state of his finances, she had not suspected the extreme poverty which menaced him, and as they continued to live as usual, she believed that their expences were drawn from the usual supply. But it was not so easy to disguise the workings of remorse and horror: his manner became gloomy and reserved, and his frequent visits to the tomb, where he went partly to examine his treasure, but chiefly to indulge in the dreadful pleasure of contemplating the picture of the Marquis, excited curiosity. In the solitude of the forest, where no variety of objects occurred to renovate his ideas, the horrible one of having committed murder was ever present to him. — When the Marquis arrived at the Abbey, the astonishment and terror of La Motte, for at first he scarce knew whether he beheld the shadow or the substance of a human form, were quickly succeeded by apprehension of the punishment due to the crime he had really committed. When his distress had prevailed on the Marquis to retire, he informed him that he was by birth a chevalier: he then touched upon such parts of his misfortunes as he thought would excite pity, expressed such abhorrence of his guilt, and voluntarily uttered such a solemn promise of returning the jewels he had yet in his possession, for he had ventured to dispose only of a small part, that the Marquis at length listened to him with some degree of compassion. This favourable sentiment, seconded by a selfish motive, induced the Marquis to compromise with La Motte. Of quick and inflammable passions, he had observed the beauty of Adeline with an eye of no common regard, and he resolved to spare the life of La Motte upon no other condition than the sacrifice of this unfortunate girl. La Motte had neither resolution or virtue sufficient to reject the terms — the jewels were restored, and he consented to betray the innocent Adeline. But as he was too well acquainted with her heart to believe that she would easily be won to the practice of vice, and as he still felt a degree of pity and tenderness for her, he endeavoured to prevail on the Marquis to forbear precipitate measures, and to attempt gradually to undermine her principles by seducing her affections. He approved and adopted this plan: the failure of his first scheme induced him to employ the strategems he afterwards pursued, and thus to multiply the misfortunes of Adeline.

Such were the circumstances which had brought La Motte to his present deplorable situation. The day of trial was now come, and he was led from prison into the court, where the Marquis appeared as his accuser. When the charge was delivered, La Motte, as is usual, pleaded not guilty, and the Advocate Nemours, who had undertaken to plead for him, afterwards endeavoured to make it appear that the accusation, on the part of the Marquis de Montalt, was false and malicious. To this purpose he mentioned the circumstance of the latter having attempted to persuade his client to the murder of Adeline: he farther urged that the Marquis had lived in habits of intimacy with La Motte for several months immediately preceding his arrest, and that it was not till he had disappointed the designs of his accuser, by conveying beyond his reach the unhappy object of his vengeance, that the Marquis had thought proper to charge La Motte with the crime for which he stood indicted. Nemours urged the improbability of one man's keeping up a friendly intercourse with another from whom he had suffered the double injury of assault and robbery; yet it was certain that the Marquis had observed a frequent intercourse with La Motte for some months following the time specified for the commission of the crime. If the Marquis intended to prosecute, why was it not immediately after his discovery of La Motte? and if not then, what had influenced him to prosecute at so distant a period?

To this nothing was replied on the part of the Marquis; for as his conduct on this point had been subservient to his designs on Adeline, he could not justify it but by exposing schemes which would betray the darkness of his character, and invalidate his cause. He, therefore, contented himself with producing several of his servants as witnesses of the assault and robbery, who swore without scruple to the person of La Motte, though not one of them had seen him otherwise than through the gloom of evening and riding off at full speed. On a cross examination most of them contradicted each other; their evidence was of course rejected; but as the Marquis had yet two other witnessess to produce, whose arrival at Paris had been hourly expected, the event of the trial was postponed, and the court adjourned.

La Motte was re-conducted to his prison under the same pressure of despondency with which he had quitted it. As he walked through one of the avenues he passed a man who stood by to let him proceed, and who regarded him with a fixed and earnest eye. La Motte thought he had seen him before; but the imperfect view he caught of his features through the duskiness of the place made him uncertain as to this, and his mind was' in too perturbed a state to suffer him to feel an interest on the subject. When he was gone the stranger inquired of the keeper of the prison who La Motte was; on being told, and receiving answers to some farther questions he put, he desired he might be admitted to speak with him. The request, as the man was only a debtor, was granted; but as the doors were now shut for the night, the interview was deferred till the morrow.

La Motte found Madame in his room, where she had been waiting for some hours to hear the event of the trial. They now wished more earnestly then ever to see their son; but they were, as he had suspected, ignorant of his change of quarters, owing to the letters which he had, as usual, addressed to them under an assumed name, remaining at the post-house of Auboin. This circumstance occasioned Madame La Motte to address her letters to the place of her son's late residence, and he had thus continued ignorant of his father's misfortunes and removal. Madame La Motte, surprized at receiving no answers to her letters, sent off another, containing an account of the trial as far as it had proceeded, and a request that her son would obtain leave of absence, and set out for Paris instantly. As she was still ignorant of the failure of her letters, and had it been otherwise, would not have known whither to have sent them, she directed this as usual.

Mean while his approaching fate was never absent for a moment from the mind of La Motte, which, feeble by nature, and still more enervated by habits of indulgence, refused to support him at this dreadful period.

While these scenes were passing at Paris, La Luc arrived there without any accident after performing a journey, during which he had been supported almost entirely by the spirit of his resolution. He hastened to throw himself at the feet of the sovereign, and such was the excess of his feeling on presenting the petition which was to decide the fate of his son, that he could only look silently up, and then fainted. The king received the paper, and giving orders for the unhappy father to be taken care of, passed on. He was carried back to his hotel, where he awaited the event of this his final effort.

Adeline, mean while, continued at Vaceau in a state of anxiety too powerful for her long-agitated frame, and the illness in consequence of this, confined her almost wholly to her chamber. Sometimes she ventured to flatter herself with a hope that the journy of La Luc would be successful: but these short and illusive intervals of comfort served only to heighten, by contrast, the despondency that succeeded, and in the alternate extremes of feeling the experienced a state more torturing than that produced either by the sharp sting of unexpected calamity, or the sullen pain of settled despair.

When she was well enough she came down to the parlour to converse with Louis, who brought her frequent accounts of Theodore, and who passed every moment he could snatch from the duty of his profession in endeavours to support and console his afflicted friends. Adeline and Theodore, both looked to him for the little comfort allotted them, for he brought them intelligence of each other, and whenever he appeared a transient melancholy kind of pleasure played round their hearts. He could not conceal from Theodore Adeline's indisposition, since it was necessary to account for her not indulging the earnest wish he repeatedly expressed to see her again. To Adeline he spoke chiefly of the fortitude and resignation of his friend, not however forgetting to mention the tender affection he constantly expressed for her. Accustomed to derive her sole consolation from the presence of Louis, and to observe his unwearied friendship towards him whom she so truly loved, she found her esteem for him ripen into gratitude, and her regard daily increase.

The fortitude with which he had said Theodore supported his calamities was somewhat exaggerated. He could not sufficiently forget those ties which bound him to life to meet his fate with firmness; but though the paroxysms of grief were acute and frequent, he sought, and often attained in the presence of his friends, a manly composure. From the event of his father's journey he hoped little, yet that little was sufficient to keep his mind in the torture of suspence till the issue should appear.

On the day preceding that fixed for the execution of the sentence La Luc reached Vaceau. Adeline was at her chamber window when the carriage drew up to the inn; she saw him alight, and with feeble steps, supported by Peter, enter the house. From the languor of his air she drew no favourable omen, and, almost sinking under the violence of her emotion, she went to meet him. Clara was already with her father when Adeline entered the room. She approached him, but, dreading to receive from his lips a confirmation of the misfortune his countenance seemed to indicate, she looked expressively at him and sat down, unable to speak the question she would have asked. He held out his hand to her in silence, sunk back in his chair, and seemed to be fainting under oppression of heart. His manner confirmed all her fears; at this dreadful conviction her senses failed her, and she sat motionless and stupified.

La Luc and Clara were too much occupied by their own distress to observe her situation; after some time she breathed a heavy sigh, and burst into tears. Relieved by weeping, her spirits gradually returned, and she at length said to La Luc, "It is unnecessary, Sir, to ask the success of your journey; yet, when you can bear to mention the subject, I wish" —

La Luc waved his hand — "Alas!" said he, "I have nothing to tell but what you already guess too well. My poor Theodore!" — His voice was convulsed with sorrow, and some moments of unutterable anguish followed.

Adeline was the first who recovered sufficient recollection to notice the extreme languor of La Luc, and attend to his support. She ordered him refreshments, and entreated he would retire to his bed and suffer her to send for a phycian; adding, that the fatigue he had suffered made repose absolutely necessary. Would that I could find it, my dear "child," said he; "it is not in this world that I must look for it, but in a better, and that better, I trust, I shall soon attain. But where is our good friend, Louis La Motte? He must lead me to my son." — Grief again interrupted his utterance, and the entrance of Louis was a very seasonable relief to them all. Their tears explained the question he would have asked; La Luc immediately inquired for his son, and thanking Louis for all his kindness to him, desired to be conducted to the prison. Louis endeavoured to persuade him to defer his visit till the morning, and Adeline and Clara joined their entreaties with his, but La Luc determined to go that night. — "His time is short," said he; "a few hours and I shall see him no more, at least in this world; let me not neglect these precious moments. Adeline! I had promised my poor boy that he should see you once more; you are not now equal to the meeting. I will try to reconcile him to the disappointment; but if I fail, and you are better in the morning, I know you will exert yourself to sustain the interview." — Adeline looked impatient, and attempted to speak. La Luc rose to depart, but could only reach the door of the room, where, faint and feeble, he sat down in a chair. "I must submit to necessity," said he; "I find I am not able to go farther to-night. Go to him, La Motte, and tell him I am somewhat disordered by my journey, but that I will be with him early in the morning. Do not flatter him with a hope; prepare him for the worst." — There was a pause of silence; La Luc at length recovering himself, desired Clara would order his bed to be got ready, and she willingly obeyed. When he withdrew, Adeline told Louis, what was indeed unnecessary, the event of La Luc's journey. "I own," continued she, "that I had sometimes suffered myself to hope, and I now feel this calamity with double force. I fear too that M. La Luc will sink under its pressure; he is much altered for the worse since he set out for Paris. Tell me your opinion sincerely."

The change was so obvious, that Louis could not deny it, but he endeavoured to sooth her apprehension by ascribing this alteration, in a great measure, to the temporary fatigue of travelling. Adeline declared her resolution of accompanying La Luc to take leave of Theodore in the morning. "I know not how I shall support the interview," said she; "but to see him once more is a duty I owe both to him and myself. The remembrance of having neglected to give him this last proof of affection would pursue me with incessant remorse."

After some farther conversation on this subject Louis withdrew to the prison, ruminating on the best means of imparting to his friend the fatal intelligence he had to communicate. Theodore received it with more composure than he had expected; but he asked, with impatience, why he did not see his father and Adeline, and on being informed that indisposition withheld them, his imagination seized on the worst possibility, and suggested that his father was dead. It was a considerable time before Louis could convince him of the contrary, and that Adeline was not dangerously ill; when, however, he was assured that he should see them in the morning, he became more tranquil. He desired his friend would not leave him that night. "These are the last hours we can pass together," added he; "I cannot sleep! Stay with me and lighten their heavy moments. I have need of comfort, Louis. Young as I am, and held by such strong attachments, I cannot quit the world with resignation. I know not how to credit those stories we hear of philosophic fortitude; wisdom cannot teach us cheerfully to resign a good, and life in my circumstances is surely such."

The night was passed in embarrassed conversation; sometimes interrupted by long fits of silence, and sometimes by the paroxysms of despair; and the morning of that day which was to lead Theodore to death at length dawned through the grates of his prison.

La Luc mean while passed a sleepless and dreadful night. He prayed for fortitude and resignation both for himself and Theodore; but the pangs of nature were powerful in his heart, and not to be subdued. The idea of his lamented wife, and of what she would have suffered had she lived to witness the ignominious death which awaited her son, frequently occurred to him.

It seemed as if a destiny had hung over the life of Theodore, for it is probable that the king might have granted the petition of the unhappy father, had it not happened that the Marquis de Montalt was present at court when the paper was presented. The appearance and singular distress of the petitioner had interested the monarch, and, instead of putting by the paper, he opened it. As he threw his eyes over it, observing that the criminal was of the Marquis de Montalt's regiment: he turned to him and inquired the nature of the offence for which the culprit was about to suffer. The answer was such as might have been expected from the Marquis, and the king was convinced that Theodore was not a proper object of mercy.

But to return to La Luc, who was called, according to his order, at a very early hour. Having passed some time in prayer, he went down to the parlour, where Louis, punctual to the moment, already waited to conduct him to the prison. He appeared calm and collected, but his countenace was impressed with a fixed despair that sensibly affected his young friend. While they waited for Adeline he spoke little, and seemed struggling to attain the fortitude necessary to support him through the approaching scene. Adeline not appearing, he at length sent to hasten her, and was told she had been ill, but was recovering. She had indeed passed a night of such agitation, that her frame had sunk under it, and she was now endeavouring to recover strength and composure sufficient to sustain her in this dreadful hour. Every moment that brought her nearer to it had increased her emotion, and the apprehension of being prevented seeing Theodore had alone enabled her to struggle against the united pressure of illness and grief.

She now, with Clara, joined La Luc, who advanced as they entered the room, and took a hand of each in silence. After some moments he proposed to go, and they stepped into a carriage which conveyed them to the gates of the prison. The crowd had already began to assemble there, and a confused murmur arose as the carriage moved forward; it was a grievous sight to the friends of Theodore. Louis supported Adeline when she alighted, she was scarcely able to walk, and with trembling steps she followed La Luc, whom the keeper led towards that part of the prison where his son was confined. It was now eight o'clock, the sentence was not to be executed till twelve, but a guard of soldiers was already placed in the court, and as this unhappy party passed along the narrow avenues they were met by several officers who had been to take a last farewell of Theodore. As they ascended the stairs that led to his apartment, La Luc's ear caught the clink of chains, and heard him walking above with a quick irregular step. The unhappy father, overcome by the moment which now pressed upon him, stopped, and was obliged to support himself by the bannister. Louis fearing the consequence of his grief might be fatal, shattered as his frame already was, would have gone for assistance, but he made a sign to him to stay. "I am better;" said La Luc, "O God! support me through this hour!" and in a few minutes he was able to proceed.

As the warder unlocked the door, the harsh grating of the key shocked Adeline but in the next moment she was in the presence of Theodore, who sprung to meet her, and caught her in his arms before she sunk to the ground. As her head reclined on his shoulder, he again viewed that countenance so dear to him, which had so often lighted rapture in his heart, and which though pale and inanimate as it now was, awakened him to momentary delight. When at length she unclosed her eyes, she fixed them in long and mournful gaze upon Theodore, who pressing her to his heart could answer her only with a smile of mingled tenderness and despair; the tears he endeavoured to restrain trembled in his eyes, and he forgot for a time every thing but Adeline. La Luc, who had seated himself at the foot of the bed, seemed unconscious of what passed around him, and entirely absorbed in his own grief; but Clara, as she clapsed the hand of her brother, and hung weeping on his arm, expressed aloud all the anguish of her heart, and at length recalled the attention of Adeline, who in a voice scarcely audible entreated she would spare her father. Her words roused Theodore, and supporting Adeline to a chair, he turned to La Luc. "My dear child!" said La Luc, grasping his hand and bursting into tears, "My dear child!" They wept together. After a long interval of silence, he said, "I thought I could have supported this hour, but I am old and feeble. God knows my efforts for resignation, my faith in his goodness!"

Theodore by a strong and sudden exertion assumed a composed and firm countenance, and endeavoured by every gentle argument to sooth and comfort his weeping friends. La Luc at length seemed to conquer his sufferings; drying his eyes, he said, "My son, I ought to have set you a better example, and practised the precepts of fortitude I have so often given you. But it is over; I know, and will perform, my duty." Adeline breathed a heavy sigh, and continued to weep. "Be comforted, my love, we part but for a time," said Theodore as he kissed the tears from her cheek; and uniting her hand with that of his father's, he earnestly recommended her to his protection. "Receive her," added he, as the most precious legacy I can bequeath; consider her as your child. She will console you when I am gone, she will more than supply the loss of your son."

La Luc assured him that he did now, and should continue to, regard Adeline as his daughter. During those afflicting hours he endeavoured to dissipate the terrors of approaching death by inspiring his son with religious confidence. His conversation was pious, rational and consolatory: he spoke not from the cold dictates of the head, but from the feelings of a heart which had long loved and practised the pure precepts of christianity, and which now drew from them a comfort such as nothing earthly could bestow.

"You are young, my son," said he, and are yet innocent of any great crime; you may therefore look on death without terror, for to the guilty only is his approach dreadful. I feel that I shall not long survive you, and I trust in a merciful God that we shall meet in a state where sorrow never comes; where the Son of Righteousness shall come with healing in his wing!" As he spoke he looked up; the tears still trembled in his eyes, which beamed with meek yet fervent devotion, and his countenance glowed with the dignity of a superior being.

"Let us not neglect the awful moments," said La Luc, rising, "let our united prayers ascend to Him who alone can comfort and support us!" They all knelt down, and he prayed with that simple and sublime eloquence which true piety inspires. When he rose he embraced his children separately, and when he came to Theodore he paused, gazed upon him with an earnest, mournful expression, and was for some time unable to speak. Theodore could not bear this; he drew his hand before his eyes, and vainly endeavoured to stifle the deep sobs which convulsed his frame. At length recovering his voice, he entreated his father would leave him. “This misery is too much for us all,” said he, “let us not prolong it. The time is now drawing on — leave me to compose myself. The sharpness of death consists in parting with those who are dear to us; when that is passed, death is disarmed.”

“I will not leave you, my son,” replied La Luc, “My poor girls shall go, but for me, I will be with you in your last moments.” Theodore felt that this would be too much for them both, and urged every argument which reason could suggest to prevail with his father to relinquish his design. But he remained firm in his determination. “I will not suffer a selfish consideration of the pain I may endure,” said La Luc, to tempt me to desert my child when he will most require my support. It is my duty to attend you, and nothing shall withhold me.”

Theodore seized on the words of La Luc — “As you would that I should be supported in my last hour,” said he, I entreat that you will not be witness of it. Your presence, my dear father, would subdue all my fortitude — would destroy what little composure I may otherwise be able to attain. Add not to my sufferings the view of your distress, but leave me to forget, if possible, the dear parent I must quit for ever.” His tears flowed anew. La Luc continued to gaze on him in silent agony; at length he said, “Well, be it so. If indeed my presence would distress you, I will not go.” His voice was broken and interrupted. After a pause of some moments he again embraced Theodore — “We must part,” said he, “we must part, but it is only for a time — we shall soon be re-united in a higher world! — O God! thou seest my heart — thou seest all its feelings in this bitter hour!” — Grief again overcame him. He pressed Theodore in his arms; and at length, seeming to summon all his fortitude, he again said, “We must part — Oh! my son, farewell for ever in this world! — The mercy of Almighty God support and bless you!”

He turned away to leave the prison, but, quite worn out with grief, sunk into a chair near the door he would have opened. Theodore gazed, with a distracted countenance, alternately on his father, on Clara, and on Adeline, whom he pressed to his throbbing heart, and their tears flowed together. “And do I then,” cried he, “for the last time look upon that countenance! — Shall I never — never more behold it? — O! exquisite misery! Yet once again — once more,” continued he, pressing her cheek, but it was insensible and cold as marble.

Louis, who had left the room soon after La Luc arrived, that his presence might not interrupt their farewell grief, now returned. Adeline raised her head, and perceiving who entered, it again sunk on the bosom of Theodore.

Louis appeared much agitated. La Luc arose. “We must go,” said he: “Adeline, my love, exert yourself — Clara — my children, let us depart. — Yet one last — last embrace, and then!” — Louis advanced and took his hand; “My dear Sir, I have something to say; yet I fear to tell it.” — “What do you mean?” said La Luc, with quickness: “No new misfortune can have power to afflict me at this moment. Do not fear to speak.” — “I rejoice that I cannot put you to the proof,” replied Louis; “I have seen you sustain the most trying affliction with fortitude. Can you support the transports of hope?” — La Luc gazed eagerly on Louis — “Speak!” said he, in a faint voice. Adeline raised her head, and, trembling between hope and fear, looked at Louis as if she would have searched his soul. He smiled cheerfully upon her. “Is it — O! is it possible!” she exclaimed, suddenly re-animated — “He lives! He lives!” — She said no more, but ran to La Luc, who sunk fainting in his chair, while Theodore and Clara with one voice called on Louis to relieve them from the tortures of suspence.

He proceeded to inform them that he had obtained from the commanding officer a respite for Theodore till the king’s farther pleasure could be known, and this in consequence of a letter received that morning from his mother, Madame De la Motte, in which she mentioned some very extraordinary circumstances that had appeared in the course of a trial lately conducted at Paris, and which so materially affected the character of the Marquis de Montalt as to render it possible a pardon might be obtained for Theodore.

These words darted with the rapidity of lightning upon the hearts of his hearers. La Luc revived, and that prison so lately the scene of despair now echoed only to the voices of gratitude and gladness. La Luc, raising his clasped hands to Heaven, said, “Great God! support me in this moment as thou hast already supported me! — If my son lives, I die in peace.”

He embraced Theodore, and remembering the anguish of his last embrace, tears of thankfulness and joy flowed to the contrast. So powerful indeed was the effect of this temporary reprieve, and of the hope it introduced, that if an absolute pardon had been obtained, it could scarcely for the moment have diffused a more lively joy. But when the first emotions were subsided, the uncertainty of Theodore’s fate once more appeared. Adeline forbore to express this, but Clara without scruple lamented the possibility that her brother might yet be taken from them, and all their joy be turned to sorrow. A look from Adeline checked her. Joy was, however, so much the predominant feeling of the present moment, that the shade which reflection threw upon their hopes passed away like the cloud that is dispelled by the strength of the sun-beam; and Louis alone was pensive and abstracted.

When they were sufficiently composed, he informed them that the contents of Madame De la Motte's letter obliged him to set out for Paris immediately; and that the intelligence he had to communicate intimately concerned Adeline, who would undoubtedly judge it necessary to go thither also as soon as her health would permit. He then read to his impatient auditors such passages in the letter as were necessary to explain his meaning; but as Madame De la Motte had omitted to mention some circumstances of importance to be understood, the following is a relation of the occurrences that had lately happened at Paris.

It may be remembered, that on the first day of his trial, La Motte, in passing from the courts to his prison, saw a person whose features, though imperfectly seen through the dusk, he thought he recollected; and that this same person, after inquiring the name of La Motte, desired to be admitted to him. On the following day the warder complied with his request, and the surprise of La Motte may be imagined when, in the stronger light of his apartment, he distinguished the countenance of the man from whose hands he had formerly received Adeline.

On observing Madame De la Motte in the room, he said, he had something of consequence to impart, and desired to be left alone with the prisoner. When she was gone, he told De la Motte that he understood he was confined at the suit of the Marquis de Montalt. La Motte assented. — "I know him for a villain," said the stranger boldly. — "Your case is desperate. Do you wish for life?"

"Need the question be asked!"

"Your trial, I understand, proceeds to-morrow. I am now under confinement in this place for debt; but if you can obtain leave for me to go with you into the courts, and a condition from the judge that what I reveal shall not criminate myself, I will make discoveries that shall confound that same Marquis; I will prove him a villain; and it shall then be judged how far his word ought to be taken against you."

La Motte, whose interest was now strongly excited, desired he would explain himself; and the man proceeded to relate a long history of the misfortunes and consequent poverty which had tempted him to become subservient to the schemes of the Marquis, till he suddenly checked himself, and said, "When I obtain from the court the promise I require, I will explain myself fully; till then I cannot say more on the subject."

La Motte could not forbear expressing a doubt of his sincerity, and a curiosity concerning the motive that had induced him to become the Marquis's accuser. — As to my motive, it is a very natural one," replied the man: it is no easy matter to receive ill usage without resenting it, particularly from a villain whom you have served." — La Motte, for his own sake, endeavoured to check the vehemence with which this was uttered. "I care not who hears me," continued the stranger, but at the same time he lowered his voice; I repeat it — the Marquis has used me ill — I have kept his secret long enough. He does not think it worth while to secure my silence, or he would relieve my necessities. I am in prison for debt, and have applied to him for relief: since he does not chuse to give it, let him take the consequence. I warrant he shall soon repent that he has provoked me, and 'tis fit he should."

The doubts of La Motte were now dissipated; the prospect of life again opened upon him, and he assured Du Bosse, (which was the stranger's name) with much warmth, that he would commission his Advocate to do all in his power to obtain leave for his appearance on the trial, and to procure the necessary condition. After some farther conversation they parted.

❦

CHAPTER 22

"Drag forth the legal monster into light,
"Wrench from his hand Oppression's iron rod,
"And bid the cruel feel the pains they give."

Leave was at length granted for the appearance of Du Bosse, with a promise that his words should not criminate him, and he accompanied La Motte into court.

The confusion of the Marquis de Montalt on perceiving this man was observed by many persons present, and particularly by La Motte, who drew from this circumstance a favourable presage for himself.

When Du Bosse was called upon, he informed the court, that on the night of the twenty-first of April, in the preceding year, one Jean d'Aunoy, a man he had known many years, came to his lodging. After they had discoursed for some time on their circumstances, d'Aunoy said he knew a way by which du Bosse might change all his poverty to riches, but that he would not say more till he was certain he would be willing to follow it. The distressed state in which du Bosse then was made him anxious to learn the means which would bring him relief; he eagerly inquired what his friend meant, and after some time d'Aunoy explained himself. He said he was employed by a nobleman, (whom he afterwards told du Bosse was the Marquis de Montalt) to carry off a young girl from a convent, and that she was to be taken to a house at a few leagues distant from Paris. "I knew the house he described "well," said du Bosse, "for I had been there many times with d'Aunoy, who lived there to avoid his creditors, "though he often passed his nights at Paris." He would not tell me more of the scheme, but said he should want assistants, and if I and my brother, who is since dead, would join him, his employer would grudge no money, and we should be well rewarded. I desired him again to tell me more of the plan, but he was obstinate, and after I had told him I would consider of what he said, and speak to my brother, he went away.

"When he called the next night for his answer, my brother and I agreed to engage, and accordingly we went home with him. He then told us that the young lady he was to bring thither was a natural daughter of the Marquis de Montalt, and of a nun belonging to a convent of Ursalines; that his wife had received the child immediately on its birth, and had been allowed a handsome annuity to bring it up as her own, which she had done till her death. The child was then placed in a convent and designed for the veil; but when she was of an age to receive the vows, she had steadily persisted in refusing them. This circumstance had so much exasperated the Marquis, that in his rage he ordered, that if she persisted in her obstinacy she should be removed from the convent, and got rid of any way, since if she lived in the world her birth might be discovered, and in consequence of this, her mother, for whom he had yet a regard, would be condemned to expatiate her crime by a terrible death."

Du Bosse was interrupted in his narrative by the council of the Marquis, who contended that the circumstances alledged tending to criminate his client, the proceeding was both irrelevant and illegal. He was answered that it was not irrelevant, and therefore not illegal, for that the circumstances which threw light upon the character of the Marquis, affected his evidence against La Motte. Du Bosse was suffered to proceed.

"D'Aunoy then said that the Marquis had ordered him to dispatch her, but that as he had been used to see her from her infancy, he could not find in his heart to do it, and wrote to tell him so. The Marquis then commanded him to find those who would, and this was the business for which he wanted us. My brother and I were not so wicked as this came to, and so we told d'Aunoy, and I could not help asking why the Marquis resolved to murder his own child rather than expose her mother to the risque of suffering death. He said the Marquis had never seen his child, and that therefore it could not be supposed he felt much kindness towards it, and still less that he could love it better than he loved its mother."

Du Bosse proceeded to relate how much he and his brother had endeavoured to soften the heart of d'Aunoy towards the Marquis's daughter, and that they prevailed with him to write again and plead for her. D'Aunoy went to Paris to await the answer, leaving them and the young girl at the house on the heath, where the former had consented to remain, seemingly for the purpose of executing the orders they might receive, but really with a design to save the unhappy victim from the sacrifice.

It is probable that Du Bosse, in this instance, gave a false account of his motive, since if he was really guilty of an intention so atrocious as that of murder, he would naturally endeavour to conceal it. However this might be, he affirmed that on the night of the twenty-sixth of April, he received an order from d'Aunoy for the destruction of the girl whom he had afterwards delivered into the hands of La Motte.

La Motte listened to this relation in astonishment; when he knew that Adeline was the daughter of the Marquis, and remembered the crime to which he had once devoted her, his frame thrilled with horror. He now took up the story, and added an account of what had passed at the Abbey between the Marquis and himself concerning a design of the former upon the life of Adeline; and urged, as a proof of the present prosecution originating in malice, that it had commenced immediately after he had effected her escape from the Marquis. He concluded, however, with saying, that as the Marquis had immediately sent his people in pursuit of her, it was possible she might yet have fallen a victim to his vengeance.

Here the Marquis's council again interfered, and their objections were again overruled by the court. The uncommon degree of emotion which his countenance betrayed during the narrations of Du Bosse, and De la Motte, was generally observed. The court suspended the sentence of the latter, ordered that the Marquis should be put under immediate arrest, and that Adeline the (name given by her foster mother), and Jean d'Aunoy should be sought for.

The Marquis was accordingly seized at the suit of the crown, and put under confinement till Adeline should appear, or proof could be obtained that she died by his order, and till d'Aunoy should confirm or destroy the evidence of De la Motte.

Madame, who at length obtained intelligence of her son's residence from the town where he was formerly stationed, had acquainted him with his father's situation, and the proceedings of the trial; and as she believed that Adeline, if she had been so fortunate as to escape the Marquis's pursuit, was still in Savoy, she desired Louis would obtain leave of absence, and bring her to Paris, where her immediate presence was requisite to substantiate the evidence, and probably to save the life of La Motte.

On the receipt of her letter, which happened on the morning appointed for the execution of Theodore, Louis went immediately to the commanding officer to petition for a respite till the king's further pleasure should be known. He founded his plea on the arrest of the Marquis, and shewed the letter he had just received. The commanding officer readily granted a reprieve, and Louis, who, on the arrival of this letter, had forborne to communicate its contents to Theodore, left it should torture him with false hope, now hastened to him with this comfortable news.

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CHAPTER 23

"Low on his fun'ral couch he lies!
No pitying heart, no eye, afford
A tear to grace his obsequies."
Gray.

On learning the purpose of Madame de la Motte's letter, Adeline saw the necessity of her immediate departure for Paris. The life of La Motte, who had more than saved her's, the life, perhaps, of her beloved Theodore, depended on the testimony she should give. And she who had so lately been sinking under the influence of illness and despair, who could scarcely raise her languid head, or speak but in the faintest accents, now reanimated with hope, and invigorated by a sense of the importance of the business before her, prepared to perform a rapid journey of some hundred miles.

Theodore tenderly intreated that she would so far consider her health as to delay this journey for a few days; but with a smile of enchanting tenderness she assured him, that she was now too happy to be ill, and that the same cause which would confirm her happiness would confirm her health. So strong was the effect of hope upon her mind now, that it succeeded to the misery of despair, that it overcame the shock she suffered on believing herself a daughter of the Marquis, and every other painful reflection. She did not even foresee the obstacle that circumstance might produce to her union with Theodore, should he at last be permitted to live.

It was settled that she should set off for Paris in a few hours with Louis, and attended by Peter. These hours were passed by La Luc and his family in the prison.

When the time of her departure arrived the spirits of Adeline again forsook her, and the illusions of joy disappeared. She no longer beheld Theodore as one respited from death, but took leave of him with a mournful pre-sentiment that she should see him no more. So strongly was this presage impressed upon her mind, that it was long before she could summons resolution to bid him farewel; and when she had done so, and even left the apartment, she returned to take of him a last look. As she was once more quitting the room, her melancholy imagination represented Theodore at the place of execution, pale and convulsed in death; she again turned her lingering eyes upon him; but fancy affected her sense, for she thought as she now gazed that his countenance changed, and assumed a ghastly hue. All her resolution vanished, and such was the anguish of her heart, that she resolved to defer her journey till the morrow, though she must by this means lose the protection of Louis, whose impatience to meet his father would not suffer the delay. The triumph of passion, however, was transient; soothed by the indulgence she promised herself, her grief subsided, reason resumed its influence; she again saw the necessity of her immediate departure, and recollected sufficient resolution to submit. La Luc would have accompanied her for the purpose of again soliciting the King in behalf of his son, had not the extreme weakness and lassitude to which he was reduced made travelling impracticable.

At length, Adeline, with a heavy heart, quitted Theodore, notwithstanding his entreaties, that she would not undertake the journey in her present weak state, and was accompanied by Clara and La Luc to the inn. The former parted from her friend with many tears, and much anxiety for her welfare, but under a hope of soon meeting again. Should a pardon be granted to Theodore La Luc designed to fetch Adeline from Paris; but should this be refused, she was to return with Peter. He bade her adieu with a father's kindness, which she repaid with a filial affection, and in her last words conjured him to attend to the recovery of his health: the languid smile he assumed seemed to express that her solicitude was vain, and that he thought his health past recovery.

Thus Adeline quitted the friends so justly dear to her, and so lately found, for Paris, where she was a stranger, almost without protection, and compelled to meet a father, who had pursued her with the utmost cruelty, in a public court of justice. The carriage in leaving Vaceau passed by the prison; she threw an eager look towards it as she passed; its heavy black walls, and narrow-grated windows, seemed to frown upon her hopes — but Theodore was there, and leaning from the window, she continued to gaze upon it till an abrupt turning in the street concealed it from her view. She then sunk back in the carriage, and yielding to the melancholy of her heart, wept in silence. Louis was not disposed to interrupt it; his thoughts were anxiously employed on his father's situation, and the travellers proceeded many miles without exchanging a word.

At Paris, whither we shall now return, the search after Jean d'Aunoy was prosecuted without success. The house on the heath, described by du Bosse, was found uninhabited, and to the places of his usual resort in the city, where the officers of the police awaited him, he no longer came. It even appeared doubtful whether he was living, for he had absented himself from the houses of his customary rendezvous some time before the trial of La Motte; it was therefore certain that his absence was not occasioned by any thing which had passed in the courts.

In the solitude of his confinement the Marquis de Montalt had leisure to reflect on the past, and to repent of his crimes; but reflection and repentance formed as yet no part of his disposition. He turned with impatience from recollections which produced only pain, and looked forward to the future with an endeavour to avert the disgrace and punishment which he saw impending. The elegance of his manners had so effectually veiled the depravity of his heart, that he was a favourite with his Sovereign; and on this circumstance he rested his hope of security. He, however, severely repented that he had indulged the hasty spirit of revenge which had urged him to the prosecution of La Motte, and had thus unexpectedly involved him in a situation dangerous — if not fatal — since if Adeline could not be found he would be concluded guilty of her death. But the appearance of d'Aunoy was the circumstance he most dreaded; and to oppose the possibility of this, he employed secret emissaries to discover his retreat, and to bribe him to his interest. These were, however, as unsuccessful in their research as the officers of police, and the Marquis at length began to hope the man was really dead.

La Motte mean while awaited with trembling impatience the arrival of his son, when he should be relieved, in some degree, from his uncertainty concerning Adeline. On his appearance he rested his only hope of life, since the evidence against him would lose much of its validity from the confirmation she would give of the bad character of his prosecutor; and if the Parliament even condemned La Motte, the clemency of the King might yet operate in his favour.

Adeline arrived at Paris after a journey of several days, during which she was chiefly supported by the delicate attentions of Louis, whom she pitied and esteemed, though she could not love. She was immediately visited at the hotel by Madame La Motte: the meeting was affecting on both sides. A sense of her past conduct excited in the latter an embarrassment which the delicacy and goodness of Adeline would willingly have spared her; but the pardon solicited was given with so much sincerity, that Madame gradually became composed and re-assured. This forgiveness, however, could not have been thus easily granted, had Adeline believed her former conduct was voluntary; a conviction of the restraint and terror under which Madame had acted, alone induced her to excuse the past. In this first meeting they forbore dwelling on particular subjects; Madame La Motte proposed that Adeline should remove from the hotel to her lodgings near the Chatelet, and Adeline, for whom a residence at a public hotel was very improper, gladly accepted the offer.

Madame there gave her a circumstantial account of La Motte's situation, and concluded with saying, that as the sentence of her husband had been suspended till some certainty could be obtained concerning the late criminal designs of the Marquis, and as Adeline could confirm the chief part of La Motte's testimony, it was probable that now she was arrived the Court would proceed immediately. She now learnt the full extent of her obligation to La Motte; for she was till now ignorant that when he sent her from the forest he saved her from death. Her horror of the Marquis, whom she could not bear to consider as her father, and her gratitude to her deliverer, redoubled, and she became impatient to give the testimony so necessary to the hopes of her preserver. Madame then said, she believed it was not too late to gain admittance that night to the Chatelet; and as she knew how anxiously her husband wished to see Adeline, she entreated her consent to go thither. Adeline, though much harassed and fatigued, complied. When Louis returned from M. Nemour's, his father's advocate, whom he had hastened to inform of her arrival, they all set out for the Chatelet. The view of the prison into which they were now admitted so forcibly recalled to Adeline's mind the situation of Theodore, that she with difficulty supported herself to the apartment of La Motte. When he saw her a gleam of joy passed over his countenance; but again relapsing into despondency, he looked mournfully at her, and then at Louis, and groaned deeply. Adeline, in whom all remembrance of his former cruelty was lost in his subsequent kindness, expressed her thankfulness for the life he had preserved, and her anxiety to serve him, in warm and repeated terms. But her gratitude evidently distressed him; instead of reconciling him to himself, it seemed to awaken a remembrance of the guilty designs he had once assisted, and to strike the pangs of conscience deeper in his heart. Endeavouring to conceal his emotions, he entered on the subject of his present danger, and informed Adeline what testimony would be required of her on the trial. After above an hour's conversation with La Motte, she returned to the lodgings of Madame, where, languid and ill, she withdrew to her chamber, and tried to obliviate her anxieties in sleep.

The Parliament which conducted the trial re-assembled in a few days after the arrival of Adeline, and the two remaining witnesses of the Marquis, on whom he now rested his cause against, La Motte, appeared. She was led trembling into the Court, where almost the first object that met her eyes was the Marquis de Montalt, whom she now beheld with an emotion entirely new to her, and which was strongly tinctured with horror. When du Bosse saw her he immediately swore to her identity; his testimony was confirmed by her manner; for on perceiving him she grew pale, and a universal tremor seized her. Jean d'Aunoy could no where be sound, and La Motte was thus deprived of an evidence which essentially affected his interest. Adeline, when called upon, gave her little narrative with clearness and precision; and Peter, who had conveyed her from the Abbey, supported the testimony she offered. The evidence produced was sufficient to criminate the Marquis of the intention of murder, in the minds of most people present; but it was not sufficient to affect the testimony of his two last witnesses, who positively swore to the commission of the robbery, and to the person of La Motte, on whom sentence of death was accordingly pronounced. On receiving this sentence the unhappy criminal fainted, and the compassion of the assembly, whose feelings had been unusually interested in the decision, was expressed in a general groan.

Their attention was quickly called to a new object — it was Jean d'Aunoy who now entered the Court. But his evidence, if it could ever, indeed, have been the means of saving La Motte, came too late. He was re-conducted to prison; but Adeline, who, extremely shocked by his sentence, was much indisposed, received orders to remain in the Court during the examination of d'Aunoy. This man had been at length found in the prison of a provincial town, where some of his creditors had thrown him, and from which even the money which the Marquis had remitted to him for the purpose of satisfying the craving importunities of du Bosse, had been insufficient to release him. Meanwhile the revenge of the latter had been roused against the Marquis by an imaginary neglect, and the money which was designed to relieve his necessities was spent by d'Aunoy in riotous luxury.

He was confronted with Adeline and with du Bosse, and ordered to confess all he knew concerning this mysterious affair, or to undergo the torture. D'Aunoy, who was ignorant how far the suspicions concerning the Marquis extended, and who was conscious that his own words might condemn him, remained for some time obstinately silent; but when the question was administered his resolution gave way, and he confessed a crime of which he had not even been suspected.

It appeared, that in the year 1642 d'Aunoy, together with one Jacques Martigny, and Francis Ballicre, had waylaid, and seized, Henry Marquis de Montalt, half brother to Phillipe; and after having robbed him, and bound his servant to a tree, according to the orders they had received, they conveyed him to the Abbey of St. Clair, in the distant forest of Fontangville. Here he was confined for some time till farther directions were received from Phillipe de Montalt, the present Marquis, who was then on his estates in a northern province of France. These orders were for death, and the unfortunate Henry was assassinated in his chamber in the third week of his confinement at the Abbey.

On hearing this Adeline grew faint; she remembered the MS. she had found, together with the extraordinary circumstances that had attended the discovery; every nerve thrilled with horror, and raising her eyes she saw the countenance of the Marquis overspread with the livid paleness of guilt. She endeavoured, however, to arrest her fleeting spirits while the man proceeded in his confession.

When the murder was perpetrated d'Aunoy had returned to his employer, who gave him the reward agreed upon, and in a few months after delivered into his hands the infant daughter of the late Marquis, whom he conveyed to a distant part of the kingdom, where, assuming the name of St. Pierre, he brought her up as his won child, receiving from the present Marquis a considerable annuity for his secresy.

Adeline, no longer able to struggle with the tumult of emotions that now rushed upon her heart, uttered a deep sigh and fainted away. She was carried from the Court, and, when the confusion occasioned by this circumstance subsided, Jean d'Aunoy went on. He related, that on the death of his wife, Adeline was placed in a convent, from whence she was afterwards removed to another, where the Marquis had destined her to receive the vows. That her determined rejection of them had occasioned him to resolve upon her death, and that she had accordingly been removed to the house on the heath. D'Aunoy added, that by the Marquis's order he had misled du Bosse with a false story of her birth. Having after some time discovered that his comrades had deceived him concerning her death, d'Aunoy separated from them in enmity; but they unanimously determined to conceal her escape from the Marquis that they might enjoy the recompence of their supposed crime. Some months subsequent to this period, however, d'Aunoy received a letter from the Marquis, charging him with the truth, and promising him a large reward if he would confess where he had placed Adeline. In consequence of this letter he acknowledged that she had been given into the hands of a stranger; but who he was, or where he lived, was not known.

Upon these depositions Phillipe ‘de Montalt was committed to take his trial for the murder of Henry; his brother; d’Aunoy was thrown into a dungeon of the Chatelet, and du Bosse was bound to appear as evidence.

The feelings of the Marquis, who, in a prosecution stimulated by revenge, had thus unexpectedly exposed his crimes to the public eye, and betrayed himself to justice, can only be imagined. The passions which had tempted him to the commission of a crime so horrid as that of murder — and what, if possible, heightened its atrocity, the murder of one connected with him by the ties of blood, and by habits of even infantine association — the passions which had stimulated him to so monstrous a deed were ambition, and the love of pleasure. The first was more immediately gratified by the title of his brother; the latter by the riches which would enable him to indulge his voluptuous inclinations.

The late Marquis de Montalt, the father of Adeline, received from his ancestors a patrimony very inadequate to support the splendour of his rank; but he had married the heiress of an illustrious family, whose fortune amply supplied the deficiency of his own. He had the misfortune to lose her, for she was amiable and beautiful, soon after the birth of a daughter, and it was then that the present Marquis formed the diabolical design of destroying his brother. The contrast of their characters prevented that cordial regard between them which their near relationship seemed to demand. Henry was benevolent, mild, and contemplative. In his heart reigned the love of virtue; in his manners the strictness of justness was tempered, not weakened, by mercy; his mind was enlarged by science, and adorned by elegant literature. The character of Philipe has been already delineated in his actions; its nicer shades were blended with some shining tints; but these served only to render more striking by contrast the general darkness of the portrait.

He had married a lady, who, by the death of her brother, inherited considerable estates, of which the Abbey of St. Clair, and the villa on the borders of the forest of Fontangville, were the chief. His passion for magnificence and dissipation, however, soon involved him in difficulties, and pointed out to him the conveniency of possessing his brother’s wealth. His brother and his infant daughter only stood between him and his wishes; how he removed the father has been already related; why he did not employ the same means to secure the child, seems somewhat surprizing, unless we admit that a destiny hung over him on this occasion, and that she was suffered to live as an instrument to punish the murderer of her parent. When a retrospect is taken of the vicissitudes and dangers to which she had been exposed from her earliest infancy, it appears as if her preservation was the effect of something more than human policy, and affords a striking instance that Justice, however long delayed, will overtake the guilty.

While the late unhappy Marquis was suffering at the Abbey, his brother, who, to avoid suspicion, remained in the north of France, delayed the execution of his horrid purpose from a timidity natural to a mind not yet inured to enormous guilt. Before he dared to deliver his final orders he waited to know whether the story he contrived to propagate of his brother’s death would veil his crime from suspicion. It succeeded but too well; for the servant, whose life had been spared that he might relate the tale, naturally enough concluded that his Lord had been murdered by Banditti; and the peasant, who a few hours after found the servant wounded, bleeding, and bound to a tree, and knew also that this spot was infested by robbers, as naturally believed him, and spread the report accordingly.

From this period the Marquis, to whom the Abbey of St. Clair belonged in right of his wife, visited it only twice, and that at distant times, till after an interval of several years he accidentally found La Motte its inhabitant. He resided at Paris, and on his estate in the north, except that once a year he usually passed a month at his delightful villa on the borders of the forest. In the busy scenes of the Court, and in the dissipations of pleasure, he tried to lose the remembrance of his guilt; but there were times when the voice of conscience would be heard, though it was soon again lost in the tumult of the world.

It is probable, that on the night of his abrupt departure from the Abbey, the solitary silence and gloom of the hour, in a place which had been the scene of his former crime, called up the remembrance of his brother with a force too powerful for fancy, and awakened horrors which compelled him to quit the polluted spot. If it was so, it is however certain that the spectres of conscience vanished with the darkness; for on the following day he returned to the Abbey, though it may be observed, he never attempted to pass another night there. But though terror was roused for a transient moment, neither pity or repentance succeeded, since when the discovery of Adeline’s birth excited apprehension for his own life, he did not hesitate to repeat the crime, and would again have stained his soul with human blood. This discovery was effected by means of a seal, bearing the arms of her mother’s family, which was impressed on the note his servant had found, and had delivered to him at Caux. It may be remembered, that having read this note, he was throwing it from him in the fury of jealousy; but that after examining it again, it was carefully deposited in his pocket-book. The violent agitation which a suspicion of this terrible truth occasioned deprived him for a while of all power to act. When he was well enough to write he dispatched a letter to d’Aunoy. the purport of which has been already mentioned. From d’Aunoy he received the confirmation of his fears. Knowing that his life must pay the forfeiture of his crime, should Adeline ever obtain a knowledge of her birth, and not daring again to confide in the secrecy of a man who had once deceived him, he resolved, after some deliberation, on her death. He immediately set out for the Abbey, and gave those directions concerning her which terror for his own safety, still more than a desire of retaining her estates, suggested.

As the history of the seal which revealed the birth of Adeline is rather remarkable, it may not be amiss to mention, that it was stolen from the Marquis, together with a gold watch, by Jean d’Aunoy: the watch was soon disposed of, but the seal had been kept as a pretty trinket by his wife, and at her death went with Adeline among her cloths to the convent. Adeline had carefully preserved it, because it had once belonged to the woman whom she believed to have been her mother.

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CHAPTER 24

"While anxious doubt distracts the tortur'd heart."

We now return to the course of the narrative, and to Adeline, who was carried from the court to the lodging of Madame De la Motte. Madame was, however, at the Chatalet with her husband, suffering all the distress which the sentence pronounced against him might be supposed to inflict. The feeble frame of Adeline, so long harassed by grief and fatigue, almost sunk under the agitation which the discovery of her birth excited. Her feelings on this occasion were too complex to be analysed. From an orphan, subsisting on the bounty of others, without family, with few friends, and pursued by a cruel and powerful enemy, she saw herself suddenly transformed to the daughter of an illustrious house, and the heiress of immense wealth. But she learned also that her father had been murdered — murdered in the prime of his days — murdered by means of his brother, against whom she must now appear, and in punishing the destroyer of her parent doom her uncle to death.

When she remembered the manuscript so singularly found, and considered that when she wept to the sufferings it described, her tears had flowed for those of her father, her emotion cannot easily be imagined. The circumstances attending the discovery of these papers no longer appeared to be a work of chance, but of a Power whose designs are great and just. "O my father!" she would exclaim, "your last wish is fulfilled — the pitying heart you wished might trace your sufferings shall avenge them."

On the return of Madame La Motte Adeline endeavoured, as usual, to suppress her own emotions, that she might sooth the affliction of her friend. She related what had passed in the courts after the departure of La Motte, and thus excited, even in the sorrowful heart of Madame, a momentary gleam of satisfaction. Adeline determined to recover, if possible, the manuscript. On inquiry she learned that La Motte, in the confusion of his departure, had left it among other things at the Abbey. This circumstance much distressed her, the more so because she believed its appearance might be of importance on the approaching trial: she determined, however, if she should recover her rights, to have the manuscript sought for.

In the evening Louis joined this mournful party: he came immediately from his father, whom he left more tranquil than he had been since the fatal sentence was pronounced. After a silent and melancholy supper they separated for the night, and Adeline, in the solitude of her chamber, had leisure to meditate on the discoveries of this eventful day. The sufferings of her dead father, such as she had read them recorded by his own hand, pressed most forcibly to her thoughts. The narrative had formerly so much affected her heart, and interested her imagination, that her memory now faithfully reflected each particular circumstance there disclosed. But when she considered that she had been in the very chamber where her parent had suffered, where even his life had been sacrificed, and that she had probably seen the very dagger, seen it stained with rust, the rust of blood! by which he had fallen, the anguish and horror of her mind defied all control.

On the following day Adeline received orders to prepare for the prosecution of the Marquis de Montalt, which was to commence as soon as the requisite witnesses could be collected. Among these were the Abbess of the Convent, who had received her from the hands of d'Aunoy; Madame La Motte, who was present when Du Bosse compelled her husband to receive Adeline; and Peter, who had not only been witness to this circumstance, but who had conveyed her from the Abbey that she might escape the designs of the Marquis. La Motte, and Theodore La Luc, were incapacitated by the sentence of the law from appearing on the trial.

When La Motte was informed of the discovery of Adeline's birth, and that her father had been murdered at the Abbey of St. Clair, he instantly remembered, and mentioned to his wife, the skeleton he found in the stone room leading to the subterranean cells. Neither of them doubted, from the situation in which it lay, hid in a chest in an obscure room strongly guarded, that La Motte had seen the remains of the late Marquis. Madame, however, determined not to shock Adeline with the mention of this circumstance till it should be necessary to declare it on the trial.

As the time of this trial drew near the distress and agitation of Adeline increased. Though justice demanded the life of the murderer, and though the tenderness and pity which the idea of her father called forth urged her to avenge his death, she could not, without horror, consider herself as the instrument of dispensing that justice which would deprive a fellow being of existence; and there were times when she wished the secret of her birth had never been revealed. If this sensibility was, in her peculiar circumstances, a weakness, it was at least an amiable one, and as such deserves to be reverenced.

The accounts she received from Vaceau of the health of M. La Luc did not contribute to tranquillize her mind. The symptoms described by Clara seemed to say that he was in the last stage of a consumption, and the grief of Theodore and herself on this occasion was expressed in her letters with the lively eloquence so natural to her. Adeline loved and revered La Luc for his own worth, and for the parental tenderness he had shewed her, but he was still dearer to her as the father of Theodore, and her concern for his declining state was not inferior to that of his children. It was increased by the reflection that she had probably been the means of shortening his life, for she too well knew that the distress occasioned him by the situation in which it had been her misfortune to involve Theodore, had shattered his frame to its present infirmity. The same cause also with-held him from seeking in the climate of Montpellier the relief he had formerly been taught to expect there. When she looked round on the condition of her friends, her heart was almost overwhelmed with the prospect; it seemed as if she was destined to involve all those most dear to her in calamity. With respect to La Motte, whatever were his vices, and whatever the designs in which he had formerly engaged against her, she forgot them all in the service he had finally rendered her, and considered it to be as much her duty, as she felt it to be her inclination, to intercede in his behalf. This, however, in her present situation, she could not do with any hope of success; but if the suit, upon which depended the establishment of her rank, her fortune, and consequently her influence, should be decided in her favour, she determined to throw herself at the king's feet, and, when she pleaded the cause of Theodore, ask the life of La Motte.

A few days preceding that of the trial Adeline was informed a stranger desired to speak with her, and on going to the room where he was she found M. Vernueil. Her countenance expressed both surprize and satisfaction at this unexpected meeting, and she inquired, though with little expectation of an affirmative, if he had heard of M. La Luc. "I have seen him," said M. Vernueil; "I am just come from Vaceau. But I am sorry I cannot give you a better account of his health. He is greatly altered since I saw him before."

Adeline could scarcely refrain from tears at the recollection these words revived of the calamities which had occasiond this lamented change. M. Verneuil delivered her a packet from Clara; as he presented it he said, "Beside this introduction to your notice, I have a claim of a different kind, which I am proud to assert, and which will perhaps justify the permission I ask of speaking upon your affairs." — Adeline bowed, and M. Verneuil, with a countenance expressive of the most tender solicitude, added that he had heard of the late proceeding of the parliament of Paris, and of the discoveries that so intimately concerned her. "I know not," continued he, "whether I ought to congratulate or condole with you on this trying occasion. That I sincerely sympathize in all that concerns you I hope you will believe, and I cannot deny myself the pleasure of telling you that I am related, though distantly, to the late Marchioness, your mother, for that she was your mother I cannot doubt."

Adeline rose hastily and advanced towards M. Verneuil; surprize and satisfaction re-animated her features. "Do I indeed see a relation?" said she in a sweet and tremulous voice, "and one whom I can welcome as a friend?" Tears trembled in her eyes; and she received M. Verneuil's embrace in silence. It was some time before her emotion would permit her to speak.

To Adeline, who from her earliest infancy had been abandoned to strangers, a forlorn and helpless orphan; who had never till lately known a relation, and who then found one in the person of an inveterate enemy, to her this discovery was as delightful as unexpected. But after struggling for some time with the various emotions that pressed upon her heart, she begged M. Verneuil permission to withdraw till she could recover composure. He would have taken leave, but she entreated him not to go.

The interest which M. Verneuil took in the concerns of La Luc, which was strengthened by his increasing regard for Clara, had drawn him to Vaceau, where he was informed of the family and peculiar circumstances of Adeline. On receiving this intelligence he immediately set out for Paris to offer his protection and assistance to his newly-discovered relation, and to aid, if possible, the cause of Theodore.

Adeline in a short time returned, and could then bear to converse on the subject of her family. M. Verneuil offered her his support and assistance, if they should be found necessary. "But I trust," added he, "to the justness of your cause, and hope it will not require any adventitious aid. To those who remember the late Marchioness, your features bring sufficient evidence of your birth. As a proof that my judgement in this instance is not biassed by prejudice, the resemblance struck me when I was in Savoy, though I knew the Marchioness only by her portrait; and I believe I mentioned to M. La Luc that you often reminded me of a deceased relation. You may form some judgement of this yourself," added M. Verneuil, taking a miniature from his pocket. “This was your amiable mother.”

Adeline’s countenance changed; she received the picture eagerly, gazed on it for a long time in silence, and her eyes filled with tears. It was not the resemblance she studied, but the countenance — the mild and beautiful countenance of her parent, whose blue eyes, full of tender sweetness, seemed bent upon her’s; while a soft smile played on her lips; Adeline pressed the picture to her’s, and again gazed in silent reverie. At length, with a deep sigh, she said, “This surely was my mother. Had she but lived, O my poor father! you had been spared.” This reflection quite overcame her, and she burst into tears. M. Verneuil did not interrupt her grief but took her hand and sat by her without speaking till she became more composed. Again kissing the picture, she held it out to him with a hesitating look. “No,” said he, “it is already with its true owner.” She thanked him with a smile of ineffable sweetness, and after some conversation on the subject of the approaching trial, on which occasion she requested M. Verneuil would support her by his presence, he withdrew, having begged leave to repeat his visit on the following day.

Adeline now opened her packet, and saw once more the well-know characters of Theodore; for a moment she felt as if in his presence, and the conscious blush overspread her cheek; with a trembling hand she broke the seal, and read the tenderest assurances and solicitudes of his love; she often paused that she might prolong the sweet emotions which these assurances awakened, but while tears of tenderness stood trembling on her eyelids, the bitter recollection of his situation would return, and they fell in anguish on her bosom.

He congratulated her, and with peculiar delicacy, on the prospects of life which were opening to her; said every thing that might tend to animate and support her, but avoid dwelling on his own circumstances, except by expressing his sense of the zeal and kindness of his commanding officer, and adding, that he did not despair of finally obtaining a pardon.

This hope, though but faintly expressed, and written evidently for the purpose of consoling Adeline, did not entirely fail of the desired effect. She yielded to its enchanting influence, and forgot for a while the many subjects of care and anxiety which surrounded her. Theodore said little of his father’s health; what he did say was by no means so discouraging as the accounts of Clara, who, less anxious to conceal a truth that must give pain to Adeline, expressed, without reserve, all her apprehension and concern.

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CHAPTER 25

— "Heaven is just!
And, when the measure of his crimes is full,
Will bare its red right arm, and launch its lightnings."
Mason.

The day of the trial so anxiously awaited, and on which the fate of so many persons depended, at length arrived. Adeline, accompanied by M. Verneuil and Madame la Motte, appeared as the prosecutor of the Marquis de Montalt; and d'Aunoy, du Bosse, Louis de la Motte, and several other persons, as witness in her cause. The judges were some of the most distinguished in France; and the advocates on both sides men of eminent abilities. On a trial of such importance the court, as may be imagined, was crowded with persons of distinction, and the spectacle it presented was strikingly solemn, yet magnificient.

When she appeared before the tribunal, Adeline's emotion surpassed all the arts of disguise, but adding to the natural dignity of her air an expression of soft timidity, and to her downcast eyes a sweet confusion, it rendered her an object still more interesting; and she attracted the universal pity and admiration of the assembly. When she ventured to raise her eyes, she perceived that the Marquis was not yet in the court, and while she awaited his appearance in trembling expectation, a confused murmuring rose in a distant part of the hall. Her spirits now almost forsook her; the certainty of seeing immediately, and consciously, the murderer of her father chilled her with horror, and she was with difficulty preserved from fainting. A low sound now run through the court, and an air of confusion appeared, which was soon communicated to the tribunal itself. Several of the members arose, some left the hall, the whole place exhibited a scene of disorder, and a report at length reached Adeline that the Marquis de Montalt was dying. A considerable time elapsed in uncertainty; but the confusion continued; the Marquis did not appear; and at Adeline's request M. Verneuil went in quest of more positive information.

He followed a crowd which was hurrying towards the Chatalet, and with some difficulty gained admittance into the prison; but the porter at the gate, whom he had bribed for a passport, could give him no certain information on the subject of his enquiry, and not being at liberty to quit his post, furnished M. Verneuil with only a vague direction to the Marquis's apartment. The courts were silent and deserted, but as he advanced a distant hum of voices led him on, still perceiving several persons running towards a staircase which appeared beyond the archway of a long passage, he followed thither, and learned that the Marquis was certainly dying. The staircase was filled with people; he endeavoured to press through the crowd, and after much struggle and difficulty he reached the door of an anti room which communicated with the apartment where the Marquis lay, and whence several persons now issued. Here he learned that the object of his enquiry was already dead. M. Verneuil, however, pressed through the anti-room to the chamber where lay the Marquis on a bed surrounded by officers of the law, and two notaries, who appeared to have been taking down depositions. His countenance was suffused with a black, and deadly hue, and impressed with the horrors of death; M. Verneuil turned away, shocked by the spectacle, and on enquiry heard that the Marquis had died by poison.

It appeared that convinced he had nothing to hope from his trial, he had taken this method of avoiding an ignominious death. In the last hours of life, while tortured with the remembrance of his crime, he resolved to make all the atonement that remained for him, and having swallowed the potion, he immediately sent for a confessor to take a full confession of his guilt, and two notaries, and thus established Adeline beyond dispute in the rights of her birth; and also bequeathed her a considerable legacy.

In consequence of these depositions she was soon after formally acknowledged as the daughter and heiress of Henry Marquis de Montalt, and the rich estates of her father were restored to her. She immediately threw herself at the feet of the king in behalf of Theodore and of La Motte. The character of the former, the cause in which he had risked his life, and the occasion of the late Marquis's enmity towards him, were circumstances so notorious, and so forcible, that it is more than probable the monarch would have granted his pardon to a pleader less irresistible than was Adeline de Montalt. Theodore La Luc not only received an ample pardon, but in consideration of his gallant conduct towards Adeline, he was soon after raised to a post of considerable rank in the army.

For La Motte, who had been condemned for the robbery on full evidence, and who had been also charged with the crime which had formerly compelled him to quit Paris, a pardon could not be obtained; but at the earnest supplication of Adeline, and in consideration of the service he had finally rendered her, his sentence was softened from death to banishment. This indulgence, however, would have availed him little, had not the noble generosity of Adeline silenced other prosecutions that were preparing against him, and bestowed on him a sum more than sufficient to support his family in a foreign country. This kindness operated so powerfully upon his heart, which had been betrayed through weakness rather than natural depravity, and awakened so keen a remorse for the injuries he had once meditated against a benefactress so noble, that his former habits became odious to him, and his character gradually recovered the hue which it would probably always have worn had he never been exposed to the tempting dissipations of Paris.

The passion which Louis had so long owned for Adeline was raised almost to adoration by her late conduct; but he now relinquished even the faint hope which he had hitherto almost unconsciously cherished, and, since the life which was granted to Theodore rendered this sacrifice necessary, he could not repine. He resolved, however, to seek in absence the tranquillity he had lost, and to place his future happiness on that of two persons so deservedly dear to him.

On the eve of his departure La Motte and his family took a very affecting leave of Adeline; he left Paris for England, where it was his design to settle; and Louis, who was eager to fly from her enchantments, set out on the same day for his regiment.

Adeline remained some time at Paris to settle her affairs, where she was introduced by M. V— to the few and distant relations that remained of her family. Among these were the Count and Countess D — and the Mon. Amand, who had so much engaged her pity and esteem at Nice. The lady, whose death he lamented, was of the family of de Montalt; and the resemblance which he had traced between her features and those of Adeline, her cousin, was something more than the effect of fancy. The death of his elder brother had abruptly recalled him from Italy; but Adeline had the satisfaction to observe, that the heavy melancholy which formerly oppressed him, had yielded to a sort of placid resignation, and that his countenance was often enlivened by a transient gleam of cheerfulness.

The Count and Countess D — who were much interested by her goodness and beauty, invited her to make their hotel her residence while she remained at Paris.

Her first care was to have the remains of her parent removed from the Abbey of St. Clair, and deposited in the vault of his ancestors. D'Aunoy was tried, condemned, and hanged, for the murder. At the place of execution he had described the spot where the remains of the Marquis were concealed, which was in the stone room already mentioned, belonging to the Abbey. M. V— accompanied the officers appointed for the search, and attended the ashes of the Marquis to St. Maur, an estate in one of the northern provinces. There they were deposited with the solemn funeral pomp becoming his rank: Adeline attended as chief mourner; and this last duty paid to the memory of her parent, she became more tranquil and resigned. The MS. that recorded his sufferings had been found at the Abbey, and delivered to her by M. V — and she preserved it with the pious enthusiasm so sacred a relique deserved.

On her return to Paris, Theodore La Luc, who was come from Montpelier, awaited her arrival. The happiness of this meeting was clouded by the account he brought of his father, whose extreme danger had alone withheld him from hastening the moment he obtained his liberty to thank Adeline for the life she had preserved. She now received him as the friend to whom she was indebted for her preservation, and as the lover who deserved, and possessed, her tenderest affection. The remembrance of the circumstances under which they had last met, and of their mutual anguish, rendered more exquisite the happiness of the present moments, when no longer oppressed by the horrid prospect of ignominious death and final separation, they looked forward only to the smiling days that awaited them when hand in hand they should tread the flowery scenes of life. The contrast which memory drew of the past with the present, frequently drew tears of tenderness and gratitude to their eyes, and the sweet smile which seemed struggling to dispel from the countenance of Adeline those gems of sorrow, penetrated the heart of Theodore, and brought to his recollection a little song which in other circumstances he had formerly sung to her. He took up a lute that lay on the table, and touching the dulcet chords, accompanied it with the following words:

SONG.

The rose that weeps with morning dew, And glitters in the sunny ray, In tears and smiles resembles you, When Love breaks Sorrow's cloud away.

The dews that bend the blushing flow'r, Enrich the scent — renew the glow; So Love's sweet tears exalt his pow'r, So bliss more brightly shines by woe!

Her affection for Theodore had induced Adeline to reject several suitors which her goodness, beauty, and wealth, had already attracted, and whom, though infinitely his superiors in point of fortune, were many of them inferior to him in family, and all of them in merit.

The various and tumultuous emotions which the late events had called forth in the bosom of Adeline were now subsided; but the memory of her father still tinctured her mind with a melancholy that time only could subdue; and she refused to listen to the supplications of Theodore till the period she had prescribed for her mourning should be expired. The necessity of re-joining his regiment obliged him to leave Paris within the fortnight after his arrival; but he carried with him assurance of receiving her hand soon after she should lay aside her sable habit, and departed therefore with tolerable composure.

M. La Luc's very precarious state was a source of incessant disquietude to Adeline, and she determined to accompany M. V — who was now the declared lover of Clara, to Montpelier, whither La Luc had immediately gone on the liberation of his son. For this journey she was preparing when she received from her friend a flattering account of his amendment; and as some farther settlement of her affairs required her presence at Paris, she deferred her design, and M. V— departed alone.

When Theodore's affairs assumed a more favourable aspect, M. Verneuil had written to La Luc, and communicated to him the secret of his heart respecting Clara. La Luc, who admired and esteemed M. V — and who was not ignorant of his family connections, was pleased with the proposed alliance; Clara thought she had never seen any person whom she was so much inclined to love; and M. V— received an answer favourable to his wishes, and which encouraged him to undertake the present journey to Montpelier.

The restoration of his happiness and the climate of Montpelier did all for the health of La Luc that his most anxious friends could wish, and he was at length so far recovered as to visit Adeline at her estate of St. Maur. Clara and M. V— accompanied him, and a cessation of hostilities between France and Spain soon after permitted Theodore to join this happy party. When La Luc, thus restored to those most dear to him, looked back on the miseries he had escaped, and forward to the blessings that awaited him, his heart dilated with emotions of exquisite joy and gratitude; and his venerable countenance, softened by an expression of complacent delight, exhibited a perfect picture of happy age.

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CHAPTER 26

"Last came Joy's ecstatic trial:
They would have thought who heard the strain,
They saw in Tempe's vale her native maids
Amidst the festal sounding shades,
To some unweary'd minstrel dancing,
While as his flying fingers kiss'd the strings,
Love fram'd with Mirth a gay fantastic round."
Ode to the Passions.

Adeline, in the society of friends so beloved, lost the impression of that melancholy which the fate of her parent had occasioned; she recovered all her natural vivacity; and when she threw off the mourning habit which filial piety had required her to assume, she gave her hand to Theodore. The nuptials, which were celebrated at St. Maur, were graced by the presence of the Count and Countess D — and La Luc had the supreme felicity of confirming on the same day the flattering destinies of both his children. When the ceremony was over he blessed and embraced them all with tears of fatherly affection. "I thank thee, O God! that I have been permitted to see this hour;" said he, "whenever it shall please thee to call me hence, I shall depart in peace."

"Long, very long, may you be spared to bless your children," replied Adeline. Clara kissed her father's hand and wept: "Long, very long," she repeated in a voice scarcely audible. La Luc smiled cheerfully, and turned the conversation to a subject less affecting.

But the time now drew nigh when La Luc thought it necessary to return to the duties of his parish, from which he had so long been absent. Madame La Luc too, who had attended him during the period of his danger at Montpelier, and hence returned to Savoy, complained much of the solitude of her life; and this was with her brother an additional motive for his speedy departure. Theodore and Adeline, who could not support the thought of a separation, endeavoured to persuade him to give up his chateau, and to reside with them in France; but he was held by many ties to Leloncourt. For many years he had constituted the comfort and happiness of his parishioners; they revered and loved him as a father — he regarded them with an affection little short of parental. The attachment they discovered towards him on his departure was not forgotten either; it had made a deep impression on his mind, and he could not bear the thought of forsaking them now that Heaven had showered on him its abundance. "It is sweet to live for them," said he, "and I will also die amongst them." A sentiment also of a more tender nature, — (and let not the stoic prophane it with the name of weakness, or the man of the world scorn it as unnatural) — a sentiment still more tender attracted him to Leloncourt, — the remains of his wife reposed there.

Since La Luc would not reside in France, Theodore and Adeline, to whom the splendid gaieties that courted them at Paris were very inferior temptations to the sweet domestic pleasures and refined society which Leloncourt would afford, determined to accompany La Luc and Mon. and Madame Verneuil abroad. Adeline arranged her affairs so as to render her residence in France unnecessary; and having bade an affectionate adieu to the Count and Countess D — and to M. Amand, who had recovered a tolerable degree of cheerfulness, she departed with her friends for Savoy.

They travelled leisurely, and frequently turned out of their way to view whatever was worthy of observation. After a long and pleasant journey they came once more within view of the Swiss mountains, the sight of which revived a thousand interesting recollections in the mind of Adeline. She remembered the circumstances and the sensations under which she had first seen them — when an orphan, flying from persecution to seek shelter among strangers, and lost to the only person on earth whom she loved — she remembered this, and the contrast of the present moment struck with all its force upon her heart.

The countenance of Clara brightened into smiles of the most animated delight as she drew near the beloved scenes of her infant pleasures; and Theodore, often looking from the windows, caught with patriotic enthusiasm the magnificent and changing scenery which the receding mountains successively disclosed.

It was evening when they approached within a few miles of Leloncourt, and the road winding round the foot of a stupendous cragg, presented them a full view of the lake, and of the peaceful dwelling of La Luc. An exclamation of joy from the whole party announced the discovery, and the glance of pleasure was reflected from every eye. The sun's last light gleamed upon the waters that reposed in "chrystal purity" below, melowed every feature of the landscape, and touched with purple splendour the clouds that rolled along the mountain tops.

La Luc welcomed his family to his happy home, and sent up a silent thanksgiving that he was permitted thus to return to it. Adeline continued to gaze upon each well-known object, and again reflecting on the vicissitudes of grief and joy, and the surprising change of fortune which she had experienced since last she saw them, her heart dilated with gratitude and complacent delight. She looked at Theodore, whom in these very scenes she had lamented as lost to her for ever; who, when found again, was about to be torn from her by an ignominious death, but who now sat by her side her secure and happy husband, the pride of his family and herself; and while the sensibility of her heart flowed in tears from her eyes, a smile of ineffable tenderness told him all she felt. He gently pressed her hand, and answered her with a look of love.

Peter, who now rode up to the carriage with a face full of joy and of importance, interrupted a course of sentiment which was become almost too interesting. “Ah! my dear master!” cried he, “welcome home again. Here is the village, God bless it! It is worth a million such places as Paris. Thank St. Jacques, we are all come safe back again!”

This effusion of honest Peter’s joy was received and answered with the kindness it deserved. As they drew near the lake music sounded over the water, and they presently saw a large party of the villagers assembled on a green spot that sloped to the very margin of the waves, and dancing in all their holiday finery. It was the evening of a festival. The elder peasants sat under the shade of the trees that crowned this little eminence, eating milk and fruits, and watching their sons and daughters frisk it away to the sprightly notes of the tabor and pipe, which was joined by the softer tones of a mandolin.

The scene was highly interesting, and what added to its picturesque beauty was a groupe of cattle that stood, some on the brink, some half in the water, and others reposing on the green bank, while several peasant girls, dressed in the neat simplicity of their country, were dispensing the milky feast. Peter now rode on first, and a crowd soon collected round him, who learning that their beloved master was at hand, went forth to meet and welcome him. Their warm and honest expressions of joy diffused an exquisite satisfaction over the heart of the good La Luc, who met them with the kindness of a father, and who could scarcely forbear shedding tears to this testimony of their attachment. When the younger part of the peasants heard the news of his arrival, the general joy was such, that, led by the tabor and pipe, they danced before his carriage to the chateau, where they again welcomed him and his family with the enlivening strains of music. At the gate of the chateau they were received by Madame La Luc, and a happier party never met.

As the evening was uncommonly mild and beautiful, supper was spread in the garden. When the repast was over, Clara, whose heart was all glee, proposed a dance by moonlight. “It will be delicious,” said she; “the moonbeams are already dancing on the waters. See what a stream of radiance they throw across the lake, and how they sparkle round that little promontory on the left. The freshness of the hour too invites to dancing.”

They all agreed to the proposal. — “And let the good people who have so heartily welcomed us home be called in too,” said La Luc: “they shall all partake our happiness. There is devotion in making others happy, and gratitude ought to make us devout. Peter, bring more wine, and set some tables under the trees.” Peter flew, and, while chairs and tables were placing, Clara ran for her favourite lute, the lute which had formerly afforded her such delight, and which Adeline had often touched with a melancholy expression. Clara’s light hand now ran over the chords, and drew forth tones of tender sweetness, her voice accompanying the following

AIR.

Now at Moonlight’s fairy hour, When faintly gleams each dewy steep, And vale and mountain, lake and bow’r, In solitary grandeur sleep;

When slowly sinks the evening breeze, That lulls the mind in pensive care, And Fancy loftier visions sees, Bid Music wake the silent air.

Bid the merry, merry tabor sound, And with the Fays of lawn or glade, In tripping circlet beat the ground Under the high trees’ trembling shade.

“Now at Moonlight’s fairy hour” Shall Music breathe her dulcet voice, And o’er the waves, with magic pow’r, Call on Echo to rejoice!

Peter, who could not move in a sober step, had already spread refreshments under the trees, and in a short time the lawn was encircled with peasantry. The rural pipe and tabor were placed, at Clara’s request, under the shade of her beloved acacias on the margin of the lake; the merry notes of music sounded, Adeline led off the dance, and the mountains answered only to the strains of mirth and melody.

The venerable La Luc, as he sat among the elder peasants, surveyed the scene — his children and people thus assembled round him in one grand compact of harmony and joy — the frequent tear bedewed his cheek, and he seemed to taste the fulness of an exalted delight.

So much was every heart roused to gladness, that the morning dawn began to peep upon the scene of their festivity, when every cottager returned to his home blessing the benevolence of La Luc.

After passing some weeks with La Luc, M. Verneuil bought a chateau in the village of Leloncourt, and as it was the only one not already occupied, Theodore looked out for a residence in the neighbourhood. At the distance of a few leagues, on the beautiful banks of the lake of Geneva, where the waters retire into a small bay, he purchased a villa. The chateau was characterized by an air of simplicity and taste, rather than of magnificence, which however was the chief trait in the surrounding scene. The chateau was almost encircled with woods, which forming a grand amphitheatre swept down to the water’s edge, and abounded with wild and romantic walks. Here nature was suffered to sport in all her beautiful luxuriance, except where here, and there, the hand of art formed the foliage to admit a view of the blue waters of the lake, with the white sail that glided by, or of the distant mountains. In front of the chateau the woods opened to a lawn, and the eye was suffered to wander over the lake, whose bosom presented an evermoving picture, while its varied margin sprinkled with villas, woods, and towns, and crowned beyond with the snowy and sublime alps, rising point behind point in aweful confusion, exhibited a scenery of almost unequalled magnificence.

Here, contemning the splendour of false happiness, and possessing the pure and rational delights of a love refined into the most tender friendship, surrounded by the friends so dear to them, and visited by a select and enlightened society — here, in the very bosom of felicity, lived Theodore and Adeline La Luc.

The passion of Louis De la Motte yielded at length to the powers of absence and necessity. He still loved Adeline, but it was with the placid tenderness of friendship, and when, at the earnest invitation of Theodore, he visited the villa, he beheld their happiness with a satisfaction unalloyed by any emotions of envy. He afterwards married a lady of some fortune at Geneva, and resigning his commission in the French service, settled on the borders of the lake, and increased the social delights of Theodore and Adeline.

Their former lives afforded an example of trials well endured — and their present, of virtues greatly rewarded; and this reward they continued to deserve — for not to themselves was their happiness contracted, but diffused to all who came within the sphere of their influence. The indigent and unhappy rejoiced in their benevolence, the virtuous and enlightened in their friendship, and their children in parents whose example impressed upon their hearts the precepts offered to their understandings.

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The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne

A Highland Story

Ann Ward Radcliffe

— For justice bares the arm of God,
And the grasp'd vengeance only waits his nod.
CAWTHORN

THE UNIVERSITY
of ADELAIDE

CHAPTER I

ON the north-east coast of Scotland, in the most romantic part of the Highlands, stood the Castle of Athlin; an edifice built on the summit of a rock whose base was in the sea. This pile was venerable from its antiquity, and from its Gothic structure; but more venerable from the virtues which it enclosed. It was the residence of the still beautiful widow, and the children of the noble Earl of Athlin, who was slain by the hand of Malcolm, a neighbouring chief, proud, oppressive, revengeful; and still residing in all the pomp of feudal greatness, within a few miles of the castle of Athlin. Encroachment on the domain of Athlin, was the occasion of the animosity which subsisted between the chiefs. Frequent broils had happened between their clans, in which that of Athlin had generally been victorious. Malcolm, whose pride was touched by the defeat of his people; whose ambition was curbed by the authority, and whose greatness was rivalled by the power of the Earl, conceived for him that deadly hatred which opposition to its favourite passions naturally excites in a mind like his, haughty and unaccustomed to controul; and he meditated his destruction. He planned his purpose with all that address which so eminently marked his character, and in a battle which was attended by the chiefs of each party in person, he contrived, by a curious finesse, to entrap the Earl, accompanied by a small detachment, in his wiles, and there slew him. A general rout of his clan ensued, which was followed by a dreadful slaughter; and a few only escaped to tell the horrid catastrophe to Matilda. Overwhelmed by the news, and deprived of those numbers which would make revenge successful, Matilda forbore to sacrifice the lives of her few remaining people to a feeble attempt at retaliation, and she was constrained to endure in silence her sorrows and her injuries.

Inconsolable for his death, Matilda had withdrawn from the public eye, into this ancient seat of feudal government, and there, in the bosom of her people and her family, had devoted herself to the education of her children. One son and one daughter were all that survived to her care, and their growing virtues promised to repay all her tenderness. Osbert was in his nineteenth year: nature had given him a mind ardent and susceptible, to which education had added refinement and expansion. The visions of genius were bright in his imagination, and his heart, unchilled by the touch of disappointment, glowed with all the warmth of benevolence.

When first we enter on the theatre of the world, and begin to notice its features, young imagination heightens every scene, and the warm heart expands to all around it. The happy benevolence of our feelings prompts us to believe that every body is good, and excites our wonder why every body is not happy. We are fired with indignation at the recital of an act of injustice, and at the unfeeling vices of which we are told. At a tale of distress our tears flow a full tribute to pity: at a deed of virtue our heart unfolds, our soul aspires, we bless the action, and feel ourselves the doer. As we advance in life, imagination is compelled to relinquish a part of her sweet delirium; we are led reluctantly to truth through the paths of experience; and the objects of our fond attention are viewed with a severer eye. Here an altered scene appears; — frowns where late were smiles; deep shades where late was sunshine: mean passions, or disgusting apathy stain the features of the principal figures. We turn indignant from a prospect so miserable, and court again the sweet illusions of our early days; but ah! they are fled for ever! Constrained, therefore, to behold objects in their more genuine hues, their deformity is by degrees less painful to us. The fine touch of moral susceptibility, by frequent irritation becomes callous; and too frequently we mingle with the world, till we are added to the number of its votaries.

Mary, who was just seventeen, had the accomplishments of riper years, with the touching simplicity of youth. The graces of her person were inferior only to those of her mind, which illumined her countenance with inimitable expression.

Twelve years had now elapsed since the death of the Earl, and time had blunted the keen edge of sorrow. Matilda's grief had declined into a gentle, and not unpleasing melancholy, which gave a soft and interesting shade to the natural dignity of her character. Hitherto her attention had been solely directed towards rearing those virtues which nature had planted with so liberal a hand in her children, and which, under the genial influence of her eye, had flourished and expanded into beauty and strength. A new hope, and new solicitudes, now arose in her breast; these dear children were arrived at an age, dangerous from its tender susceptibility, and from the influence which imagination has at that time over the passions. Impressions would soon be formed which would stamp their destiny for life. The anxious mother lived but in her children, and she had yet another cause of apprehension.

When Osbert learned the story of his father's death, his young heart glowed to avenge the deed. The late Earl, who had governed with the real dignity of power, was adored by his clan; they were eager to revenge his injuries; but oppressed by the generous compassion of the Countess, their murmurs sunk into silence: yet they fondly cherished the hope that their young Lord would one day lead them on to conquest and revenge. The time was now come when they looked to see this hope, the solace of many a cruel moment, realized. The tender fears of a mother would not suffer Matilda to risque the chief of her last remaining comforts. She forbade Osbert to engage. He submitted in silence, and endeavored by application to his favourite studies, to stifle the emotions which roused him to aims. He excelled in the various accomplishments of his rank, but chiefly in the martial exercises, for they were congenial to the nobility of his soul, and he had a secret pleasure in believing that they would one time assist him to do justice to the memory of his dead father. His warm imagination directed him to poetry, and he followed where she led. He loved to wander among the romantic scenes of the Highlands, where the wild variety of nature inspired him with all the enthusiasm of his favourite art. He delighted in the terrible and in the grand, more than in the softer landscape; and, wrapt in the bright visions of fancy, would often lose himself in awful solitudes.

It was in one of these rambles, that having strayed for some miles over hills covered with heath, from whence the eye was presented with only the bold outlines of uncultivated nature, rocks piled on rocks, cataracts and vast moors unmarked by the foot of traveller, he lost the path which he had himself made; he looked in vain for the objects which had directed him, and his heart, for the first time, felt the repulse of fear. No vestige of a human being was to be seen, and the dreadful silence of the place was interrupted only by the roar of distant torrents, and by the screams of the birds which flew over his head. He shouted, and his voice was answered only by the deep echoes of the mountains. He remained for some time in a silent dread not wholly unpleasing, but which was soon heightened to a degree of terror not to be endured; and he turned his steps backward, forlorn, and dejected. His memory gave him back no image of the past; having wandered some time, he came to a narrow pass, which he entered, overcome with fatigue and fruitless search: he had not advanced far, when an abrupt opening in the rock suddenly presented him with a view of the most beautifully romantic spot he had ever seen. It was a valley almost surrounded by a barrier of wild rocks, whose base was shaded with thick woods of pine and fir. A torrent, which tumbled from the heights, and was seen between the woods, rushed with amazing impetuosity into a fine lake which flowed through the vale, and was lost in the deep recesses of the mountains. Herds of cattle grazed in the bottom, and the delighted eyes of Osbert were once more blessed with the sight of human dwellings. Far on the margin of the stream were scattered a few neat cottages. His heart was so gladdened at the prospect, that he forgot he had yet the way to find which led to this Elysian vale. He was just awakened to this distressing reality, when his attention was once more engaged by the manly figure of a young Highland peasant, who advanced towards him with an air of benevolence, and, having learned his distress, offered to conduct him to his cottage. Osbert accepted the invitation, and they wound down the hill, through an obscure and intricate path, together. They arrived at one of the cottages which the Earl had observed from the height; they entered, and the peasant presented his guest to a venerable old Highlander, his father. Refreshments were spread on the table by a pretty young girl, and Osbert, after having partook of them and rested awhile, departed, accompanied by Alleyn, the young peasant, who had offered to be his guide. The length of the walk was beguiled by conversation. Osbert was interested by discovering in his companion a dignity of thought, and a course of sentiment similar to his own. On their way, they passed at some distance the castle of Dunbayne. This object gave to Osbert a bitter reflection, and drew from him a deep sigh. Alleyn made observations on the bad policy of oppression in a chief, and produced as an instance the Baron Malcolm. These lands, said he, are his, and they are scarcely sufficient to support his wretched people, who, sinking under severe exactions, suffer to lie uncultivated, tracts which would otherwise add riches to their Lord. His clan, oppressed by their burdens, threaten to rise and do justice to themselves by force of arms. The Baron, in haughty confidence, laughs at their defiance, and is insensible to his danger: for should an insurrection happen, there are other clans who would eagerly join in his destruction, and punish with the same weapon the tyrant and the murderer. Surprized at the bold independence of these words, delivered with uncommon energy, the heart of Osbert beat quick, and “O God! my father!” burst from his lips. Alleyn stood aghast! uncertain of the effect which his speech had produced; in an instant the whole truth flashed upon his mind: he beheld the son of the Lord whom he had been taught to love, and whose sad story had been impressed upon his heart in the early days of childhood; he sunk at his feet, and embraced his knees with a romantic ardor. The young Earl raised him from the ground, and the following words relieved him from his astonishment, and filled his eyes with tears of mingled joy and sorrow: “There are other clans as ready as your own to avenge the wrongs of the noble Earl of Athlin; the Fitz–Henrys were ever friends to virtue.” The countenance of the youth, while he spoke, was overspread with the glow of conscious dignity, and his eyes were animated with the pride of virtue. — The breast of Osbert kindled with noble purpose, but the image of his weeping mother crossed his mind, and checked the ardor of the impulse. “A time may come my friend,” said he, “when your generous zeal will be accepted with the warmth of gratitude it deserves. Particular circumstances will not suffer me, at present, to say more.” The warm attachment of Alleyn to his father sunk deep in his heart.

It was evening before they reached the castle, and Alleyn remained the Earl’s guest for that night.

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Last updated Sunday, March 27, 2016 at 11:59

CHAPTER II

THE following day was appointed for the celebration of an annual festival given by the Earl to his people, and he would not suffer Alleyn to depart. The hall was spread with tables; and dance and merriment resounded through the castle. It was usual on that day for the clan to assemble in arms, on account of an attempt, the memory of which it was meant to perpetuate, made, two centuries before, by an hostile clan to surprize them in their festivity.

In the morning were performed the martial exercises, in which emulation was excited by the honorary rewards bestowed on excellence. The Countess and her lovely daughter beheld, from the ramparts of the castle, the feats performed on the plains below. Their attention was engaged, and their curiosity excited, by the appearance of a stranger who managed the lance and the bow with such exquisite dexterity, as to bear off each prize of chivalry. It was Alleyn. He received the palm of victory, as was usual, from the hands of the Earl; and the modest dignity with which he accepted it, charmed the beholders.

The Earl honoured the feast with his presence, at the conclusion of which, each guest arose, and seizing his goblet with his left hand, and with his right striking his sword, drank to the memory of their departed Lord. The hall echoed with the general voice. Osbert felt it strike upon his heart the alarum of war. The people then joined hands, and drank to the honour of the son of their late master. Osbert understood the signal, and overcome with emotion, every consideration yielded to that of avenging his father. He arose, and harangued the clan with all the fire of youth and indignant virtue. As he spoke, the countenance of his people flashed with impatient joy; a deep murmur of applause ran through the assembly: and when he was silent each man, crossing his sword with that of his neighbour, swore that sacred pledge of union, never to quit the cause in which they now engaged, till the life of their enemy had paid the debt of justice and of revenge.

In the evening, the wives and daughters of the peasantry came to the castle, and joined in the festivity. It was usual for the Countess and her ladies to observe from a gallery of the hall, the various performances of dance and song; and it had been a custom of old for the daughter of the castle to grace the occasion by performing a Scotch dance with the victor of the morning. This victor now was Alleyn, who beheld the lovely Mary led by the Earl into the hall, and presented to him as his partner in the dance. She received his homage with a sweet grace. She was dressed in the habit of a Highland lass, and her fine auburn tresses, which waved in her neck, were ornamented only with a wreath of roses. She moved in the dance with the light steps of the Graces. Profound silence reigned through the hall during the performance, and a soft murmur of applause arose on its conclusion. The admiration of the spectators was divided between Mary and the victorious stranger. She retired to the gallery, and the night concluded in joy to all but the Earl, and to Alleyn; but very different was the source and the complexion of their inquietude. The mind of Osbert revolved the chief occurrences of the day, and his soul burned with impatience to accomplish the purposes of filial piety; yet he dreaded the effect which the communication of his designs might have on the tender heart of Matilda: on the morrow, however, he resolved to acquaint her with them, and in a few days to rise and prosecute his cause with arms.

Alleyn, whose bosom, till now, had felt only for others' pains, began to be conscious of his own. His mind, uneasy and restless, gave him only the image of the high-born Mary; he endeavoured to exclude her idea, but with an effort so faint, that it would still intrude! Pleased, yet sad, he would not acknowledge, even to himself, that he loved; so ingenious are we to conceal every appearance of evil from ourselves. He arose with the dawn, and departed from the castle full of gratitude and secret love, to prepare his friends for the approaching war.

The Earl awoke from broken slumbers, and summoned all his fortitude to encounter the tender opposition of his mother. He entered her apartment with faultering steps, and his countenance betrayed the emotions of his soul. Matilda was soon informed of what her heart had foreboded, and overcome with dreadful sensation, sunk lifeless in her chair. Osbert flew to her assistance, and Mary and the attendants soon recovered her to sense and wretchedness.

The mind of Osbert was torn by the most cruel conflict: filial duty, honour, revenge, commanded him to go; filial love, regret, and pity, entreated him to stay. Mary fell at his feet, and clasping his knees with all the wild energy of grief besought him to relinquish his fatal purpose, and save his last surviving parent. Her tears, her sighs, and the soft simplicity of her air, spoke a yet stronger language than her tongue: but the silent grief of the Countess was still more touching, and in his endeavours to sooth her, he was on the point of yielding his resolution, when the figure of his dying father arose to his imagination, and stamped his purpose irrevocably. The anxiety of a fond mother, presented Matilda with the image of her son bleeding and ghastly; and the death of her Lord was revived in her memory with all the agonizing grief that sad event had impressed upon her heart, the harsher characters of which, the lenient hand of time had almost obliterated. So lovely is Pity in all her attitudes, that fondness prompts us to believe she can never transgress; but she changes into a vice, when she overcomes the purposes of stronger virtue. Sterner principles now nerved the breast of Osbert against her influence and impelled him on to deeds of arms. He summoned a few of the most able and trusty of the clan, and held a council of war; in which it was resolved that Malcolm should be attacked with all the force they could assemble, and with all the speed which the importance of the preparation would allow. To prevent suspicion and alarm to the Baron, it was agreed it should be given out, that these preparations were intended for assistance to the Chief of a distant part. That when they set out on the expedition, they should pursue, for some time, a contrary way, but under favour of the night should suddenly change their route, and turn upon the castle of Dunbayne.

In the mean time, Alleyn was strenuous in exciting his friends to the cause, and so successful in the undertaking, as to have collected, in a few days, a number of no inconsiderable consequence. To the warm enthusiasm of virtue was now added a new motive of exertion. It was no longer simply an attachment to the cause of justice, which roused him to action; the pride of distinguishing himself in the eyes of his mistress, and of deserving her esteem by his zealous services, gave combined force to the first impulse of benevolence. The sweet thought of deserving her thanks, operated secretly on his soul, for he was yet ignorant of its influence there. In this state he again appeared at the castle, and told the Earl, that himself and his friends were ready to follow him whenever the signal should be given. His offer was accepted with the warmth of kindness it claimed, and he was desired to hold himself in readiness for the onset.

In a few days the preparations were completed, Alleyn and his friends were summoned, the clan assembled in arms, and, with the young Earl at their head, departed on their expedition. The parting between Osbert and his family may be easily conceived; nor could all the pride of expected conquest suppress a sigh which escaped from Alleyn when his eyes bade adieu to Mary who, with the Countess, stood on the terrace of the castle, pursuing with aching sight the march of her beloved brother, till distance veiled him from her view; she then turned into the castle weeping, and foreboding future calamity. She endeavoured, however, to assume an appearance of tranquillity, that she might deceive the fears of Matilda, and sooth her sorrow. Matilda, whose mind was strong as her heart was tender, since she could not prevent this hazardous undertaking, summoned all her fortitude to resist the impressions of fruitless grief, and to search for the good which the occasion might present. Her efforts were not vain; she found it in the prospect which the enterprize afforded of honour to the memory of her murdered Lord, and of retribution on the head of the murderer.

It was evening when the Earl departed from the castle; he pursued a contrary route till night favoured his designs, when he wheeled towards the castle of Dunbayne. The extreme darkness of the night assisted their plan, which was to scale the walls, surprize the centinels; burst their way into the inner courts sword in hand, and force the murderer from his retreat. They had trod many miles the dreary wilds, unassisted by the least gleam of light, when suddenly their ears were struck with the dismal note of a watch-bell, which chimed the hour of the night. Every heart beat to the sound. They knew they were near the abode of the Baron. They halted to consult concerning their proceedings, when it was agreed, that the Earl with Alleyn and a chosen few, should proceed to reconnoitre the castle, while the rest should remain at a small distance awaiting the signal of approach. The Earl and his party pursued their march with silent steps; they perceived a faint light, which they guessed to proceed from the watch-tower of the castle, and they were now almost under its walls. They paused awhile in silence to give breath to expectation, and to listen if any thing was stirring. All was involved in the gloom of night, and the silence of death prevailed. They had now time to examine, as well as the darkness would permit, the situation of the castle, and the height of the walls; and to prepare for the assault. The edifice was built with Gothic magnificence upon a high and dangerous rock. Its lofty towers still frowned in proud sublimity, and the immensity of the pile stood a record of the ancient consequence of its possessors. The rock was surrounded by a ditch, broad, but not deep, over which were two draw-bridges, one on the north side, the other on the east; they were both up, but as they separated in the center, one half of the bridge remained on the side of the plains. The bridge on the north led to the grand gateway of the castle; that on the east to a small watch-tower: these were all the entrances. The rock was almost perpendicular with the walls, which were strong and lofty. After surveying the situation, they pitched upon a spot where the rock appeared most accessible, and which was contiguous to the principal gate, and gave signal to the clan. They approached in silence, and gently throwing down the bundles of faggot, which they had brought for the purpose, into the ditch, made themselves a bridge over which they passed in safety, and prepared to ascend the heights. It had been resolved that a party, of which

Alleyn was one, should scale the walls, surprize the centinels, and open the gates to the rest of the clan, which, with the Earl, were to remain without. Alleyn was the first who fixed his ladder and mounted; he was instantly followed by the rest of his party, and with much difficulty, and some hazard, they gained the ramparts in safety. They traversed a part of the platform without hearing the sound of a voice or a step; profound sleep seemed to bury all. A number of the party approached some centinels who were asleep on their post; them they seized; while Alleyn, with a few others, flew to open the nearest gate, and to let down the draw-bridge. This they accomplished; but in the mean time the signal of surprize was given, and instantly the alarm bell rang out, and the castle resounded with the clang of arms. All was tumult and confusion. The Earl, with part of his people, entered the gate; the rest were following, when suddenly the portcullis was dropped, the bridge drawn up, and the Earl and his people found themselves surrounded by an armed multitude, which poured in torrents from every recess of the castle. Surprized, but not daunted, the Earl rushed forward sword in hand, and fought with a desperate valour. The soul of Alleyn seemed to acquire new vigour from the conflict; he fought like a man panting for honour, and certain of victory; wherever he rushed, conquest flew before him. He, with the Earl, forced his way into the inner courts, in search of the Baron, and hoped to have satisfied a just revenge, and to have concluded the conflict with the death of the murderer; but the moment in which they entered the courts, the gates were closed upon them; they were environed by a band of guards; and, after a short resistance, in which Alleyn received a slight wound, they were seized as prisoners of war. The slaughter without was great and dreadful: the people of the Baron inspired with fury, were insatiate for death: many of the Earl's followers were killed in the courts and on the platform; many, in attempting to escape, were thrown from the ramparts, and many were destroyed by the sudden raising of the bridge. A small part, only of the brave and adventurous band who had engaged in the cause of justice, and who were driven back from the walls, survived to carry the dreadful tidings to the Countess. The fate of the Earl remained unknown. The consternation among the friends of the slain is not to be described, and it was heightened by the unaccountable manner in which the victory had been obtained; for it was well known that Malcolm had never, but when war made it necessary, more soldiers in his garrison than feudal pomp demanded; yet on this occasion, a number of armed men rushed from the recesses of his castle, sufficient to overpower the force of a whole clan. But they knew not the secret means of intelligence which the Baron possessed; the jealousy of conscience had armed him with apprehension for his safety; and for some years he had planted spies near the castle of Athlin, to observe all that passed within it, and to give him immediate intelligence of every war-like preparation. A transaction so striking, and so public as that which had occurred on the day of the festival, when the whole people swore to avenge the murder of their Chief, it was not probable would escape the valiant eye of his mercenaries: the circumstance had been communicated to him with all the exaggerations of fear and wonder, and had given him the signal for defence. The accounts sent him of the military preparations which were forming, convinced him that this defence would soon be called for; and, laughing at the idle tales which were told him of distant wars, he hastened to store his garrison with arms and with men, and held himself in readiness to receive the assailants. The Baron had conducted his plans with all that power of contrivance which the secrecy of the business demanded; and it was his design to suffer the enemy to mount his walls, and to put them to the sword, when the purpose of this deep-laid stratagem had been nearly defeated by the drowsiness of the centinels who were posted to give signal of their approach.

The fortitude of Matilda fainted under the pressure of so heavy a calamity; she was attacked with a violent illness, which had nearly terminated her sorrows and her life; and had rendered unavailing all the tender cares of her daughter. These tender cares, however, were not ineffectual; she revived, and they assisted to support her in the severe hours of affliction, which the unknown fate of the Earl occasioned. Mary, who felt all the horrors of the late event, was ill qualified for the office of a comforter; but her generous heart, susceptible of the deep sufferings of Matilda, almost forgot its own distress in the remembrance of her mother's. Yet the idea of her brother, surrounded with the horrors of imprisonment and death, would often obtrude itself on her imagination, with an emphasis which almost overcame her reason. She had also a strong degree of pity for the fate of the brave young Highlander who had assisted, with a disinterestedness so noble, in the cause of her house; she wished to learn his further destiny, and her heart often melted in compassion at the picture which her fancy drew of his sufferings.

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CHAPTER III

THE Earl, after being loaded with fetters, was conducted to the chief prison of the castle, and left alone to the bitter reflections of defeat and uncertain destiny; but misfortune, though it might shake, could not overcome his firmness; and hope had not yet entirely forsaken him. It is the peculiar attribute of great minds, to bear up with increasing force against the shock of misfortune; with them the nerves of resistance strengthen with attack; and they may be said to subdue adversity with her own weapons.

Reflection, at length, afforded him time to examine his prison: it was a square room, which formed the summit of a tower built on the east side of the castle, round which the bleak winds howled mournfully; the inside of the apartment was old and falling to decay: a small mattrass, which lay in one corner of the room, a broken matted chair, and a tottering table, composed its furniture; two small and strongly grated windows, which admitted a sufficient degree of light and air, afforded him on one side a view into an inner court, and on the other a dreary prospect of the wild and barren Highlands.

Alleyn was conveyed through dark and winding passages to a distant part of the castle, where at length a small door, barred with iron, opened, and disclosed to him an abode, whence light and hope were equally excluded. He shuddered as he entered, and the door was closed upon him.

The mind of the Baron, in the mean time, was agitated with all the direful passions of hate, revenge, and exulting pride. He racked imagination for the invention of tortures equal to the force of his feelings; and he at length discovered that the sufferings of suspense are superior to those of the most terrible evils, when once ascertained, of which the contemplation gradually affords to strong minds the means of endurance. He determined, therefore, that the Earl should remain confined in the tower, ignorant of his future destiny; and in the mean while should be allowed food only sufficient to keep him sensible of his wretchedness.

Osbert was immersed in thought, when he heard the door of his prison unbarred, and the Baron Malcolm stood before him. The heart of Osbert swelled high with indignation, and defiance flashed in his eyes. “I am come,” said the insulting victor, “to welcome the Earl of Athlin to my castle; and to shew that I can receive my friends with the hospitality they deserve; but I am yet undetermined what kind of festival I shall bestow on his arrival.”

“Weak tyrant,” returned Osbert, his countenance impressed with the firm dignity of virtue, “to insult the vanquished, is congenial with the cruel meanness of the murderer; nor do I expect, that the man who slew the father, will spare the son; but know, that son is nerved against your wrath, and welcomes all that your fears or your cruelty can impose.”

“Rash youth,” replied the Baron; “your words are air; they fade from sense, and soon your boasted strength shall sink beneath my power. I go to meditate your destiny.” With these words he quitted the prison, enraged at the unbending virtue of the Earl.

The sight of the Baron, roused in the soul of Osbert all those opposite emotions of furious indignation and tender pity which the glowing image of his father could excite, and produced a moment of perfect misery. The dreadful energy of these sensations exasperated his brain almost to madness; the cool fortitude in which he had so lately gloried, disappeared; and he was on the point of resigning his virtue and his life, by means of a short dagger, which he wore concealed under his vest, when the soft notes of a lute surprized his attention. It was accompanied by a voice so enchantingly tender and melodious, that its sounds fell on the heart of Osbert in balmy comfort: it seemed sent by Heaven to arrest his fate:— the storm of passion was hushed within him, and he dissolved in kind tears of pity and contrition. The mournful tenderness of the air declared the person from whom it came to be a sufferer; and Osbert suspected it to proceed from a prisoner like himself. The music ceased. Absorbed in wonder, he went to the grates, in quest of the sweet musician, but no one was to be seen; and he was uncertain whether the sounds arose from within or from without the castle. Of the guard, who brought him his small allowance of food, he inquired concerning what he had heard; but from him he could not obtain the information he sought, and he was constrained to remain in a state of suspense.

In the mean time the castle of Athlin, and its neighbourhood, was overwhelmed with distress. The news of the earl’s imprisonment at length reached the ears of the countess, and hope once more illumined her mind. She immediately sent offers of immense ransom to the baron, for the restoration of her son, and the other prisoners; but the ferocity of his nature disdained an incomplete triumph. Revenge subdued his avarice; and the offers were rejected with the spurn of contempt. An additional motive, however, operated in his mind, and confirmed his purpose. The beauty of Mary had been often reported to him in terms which excited his curiosity; and an incidental view he once obtained of her, raised a passion in his soul, which the turbulence of his character would not suffer to be extinguished. Various were the schemes he had projected to obtain her, none of which had ever been executed: the possession of the earl was a circumstance the most favourable to his wishes; and he resolved to obtain Mary, as the future ransom of her brother. He concealed, for the present, his purpose, that the tortures of anxiety and despair might operate on the mind of the countess, to grant him an easy consent to the exchange, and to resign the victim the wife of her enemy.

The small remains of the clan, unsubdued by misfortune, were eager to assemble; and, hazardous as was the enterprize, to attempt the rescue of their Chief. The hope which this undertaking afforded, once more revived the Countess; but alas! a new source of sorrow was now opened for her: the health of Mary visibly declined; she was silent and pensive; her tender frame was too susceptible of the sufferings of her mind; and these sufferings were heightened by concealment. She was prescribed amusement and gentle exercise, as the best restoratives of peace and health. One day, as she was seeking on horseback these lost treasures, she was tempted by the fineness of the evening to prolong her ride beyond its usual limits: the sun was declining when she entered a wood, whose awful glooms so well accorded with the pensive tone of her mind. The soft serenity of evening, and the still solemnity of the scene, conspired to lull her mind into a pleasing forgetfulness of its troubles; from which she was, ere long, awakened by the approaching sound of horses' feet. The thickness of the foliage limited her view; but looking onward, she thought she perceived through the trees, a glittering of arms; she turned her palfry, and sought the entrance of the wood. The clattering of hoofs advanced in the breeze! her heart, misgave her, and she quickened her pace. Her fears were soon justified; she looked back, and beheld three horsemen armed and disguised advancing with the speed of pursuit. Almost fainting, she flew on the wings of terror; all her efforts were vain; the villains came up; one seized her horse, the others fell upon her two attendants: a stout scuffle ensued, but the strength of her servants soon yielded to the weapons of their adversaries; they were brought to the ground, dragged into the wood, and there left bound to the trees. In the mean time, Mary, who had fainted in the arms of the villain who seized her, was borne away through the intricate mazes of the woods; and her terrors may be easily imagined, when she revived, and found herself in the hands of unknown men. Her dreadful screams, her tears, her supplications, were ineffectual; the wretches were deaf alike to pity and to enquiry; they preserved an inflexible silence, and she saw herself conveying towards the mouth of a horrible cavern, when despair seized her mind, and she lost all signs of existence: in this state she remained some time; but it is impossible to describe her situation, when she unclosed her eyes, and beheld Alleyn, who was watching with the most trembling anxiety her return to life, and whose eyes, on seeing her revive, swam in joy and tenderness. Wonder; fearful joy, and the various shades of mingled emotions, passed in quick succession over her countenance; her surprize was increased, when she observed her own servants standing by, and could discover no one but friends. She scarcely dared to trust her senses, but the voice of Alleyn, tremulous with tenderness, dissolved in a moment the illusions of fear, and confirmed her in the surprising reality. When she was sufficiently recovered, they quitted this scene of gloom: they travelled on in a slow pace, and the shades of night were fallen long before they reached the castle; there distress and confusion appeared. The Countess, alarmed with the most dreadful apprehensions, had dispatched her servants various ways in search of her child, and her transports on again beholding her in safety, prevented her observing immediately that it was Alleyn who accompanied her. Joy, however, soon yielded to its equal wonder, when she perceived him, and in the tumult of contending emotions, she scarce knew which first to interrogate. When she had been told the escape of her daughter, and by whom effected, she prepared to hear, with impatient solicitude, news of her beloved son, and the means by which the brave young Highlander had eluded the vigilance of the Baron. Of the Earl, Alleyn could only inform the Countess, that he was taken prisoner with himself, within the walls of the fortress, as they fought side by side; that he was conducted unwounded, to a tower, situated on the east angle of the castle, where he was still confined. Himself had been imprisoned in a distant part of the pile, and had been able to collect no other particulars of the Earl's situation, than those he had related. Of himself he gave a brief relation of the following circumstances:

After having lain some weeks in the horrible dungeon allotted him, his mind involved in the gloom of despair, and filled with the momentary expectation of death, desperation furnished him with invention, and he concerted the following plan of escape:— He had observed, that the guard who brought him his allowance of food, on quitting the dungeon, constantly sounded his spear against the pavement near the entrance. This circumstance excited his surprize and curiosity. A ray of hope beamed through the gloom of his dungeon. He examined the spot, as well as the obscurity of the place would permit; it was paved with flag stones like the other parts of the cell, and the paving was everywhere equally firm. He, however, became certain, that some means of escape was concealed beneath that part, for the guard was constant in examining it by striking that spot, and treading more firmly on it; and this he endeavoured to do without being observed. One day, immediately after the departure of the guard, Alleyn set himself to unfasten the pavement; this, with much patience and industry, he effected, by means of a small knife which had escaped the search of the soldiers. He found the earth beneath hard, and without any symptoms of being lately disturbed; but after digging a few feet, he arrived at a trap; he trembled with eagerness. It was now almost night, and he overcome with weariness; he doubted whether he should be able to penetrate through the door, and what other obstructions were behind it, before the next day. He therefore, threw the earth again into the hole, and endeavoured to close the pavement; with much difficulty, he trod the earth into the opening, but the pavement he was unable exactly to replace. It was too dark examine the stones; and he found, that even if he should be able to make them fit, the pavement could not be made firm. His mind and body were now overcome, and he threw himself on the ground in an agony of despair. It was midnight, when the return of his strength and spirits produced another effort. He tore the earth up with hasty violence, cut round the lock of the trap door, and raising it, unwilling to hesitate or consider, sprung through the aperture. The vault was of considerable depth, and he was thrown down by the violence of the fall; an hollow echo, which seemed to murmur at a distance, convinced him that the place was of considerable extent. He had no light to direct him, and was therefore obliged to walk with his arms extended, in silent and fearful examination. After having wandered through the void a considerable time, he came to a wall, along which he groped with anxious care; it conducted him onward for a length of way: it turned; he followed, and his hand touched the cold iron work of a barred window. He felt the gentle undulation of the air upon his face; and to him, who had been so long confined among the damp vapours of a dungeon, this was a moment of luxury. The air gave him strength; and the means of escape, which now seemed presented to him, renewed his courage. He set his foot against the wall, and grasping a bar with his hand, found it gradually yield to his strength, and by successive efforts, he entirely displaced it. He attempted another but, it was more firmly fixed, and every effort to loosen it was ineffectual; he found that it was fastened in a large stone of the wall, and to remove this stone, was his only means of displacing the bar; he set himself, therefore, again to work with his knife, and with much patience, loosened the mortar sufficiently to effect his purpose. After some hours, for the darkness made his labour tedious, and sometimes ineffectual, he had removed several of the bars, and had made an opening almost sufficient to permit his escape, when the dawn of light appeared; he now discovered, with inexpressible anguish, that the grate opened into an inner court of the castle, and even while he hesitated, he could perceive soldiers descending slowly into the court, from the narrow staircases which led to their apartments. His heart sickened at the sight. He rested against the wall in a pause of despair, and was on the point of springing into the court, to make a desperate effort at escape, or die in the attempt, when he perceived, by the increasing light which fell across the vault, a massy door in the wall; he ran towards it, and endeavoured to open it; it was fastened by a lock and several bolts. He struck against it with his foot, and the hollow sound which was returned, convinced him that there were vaults beyond; and by the direction of these vaults, he was certain that they must extend to the outer walls of the castle; if he could gain these vaults, and penetrate beyond them in the darkness of the ensuing night, it would be easy to leap the wall, and cross the ditch; but it was impossible to cut away the lock, before the return of his guard, who regularly visited the cell soon after the dawn of day. After some consideration, therefore, he determined to secrete himself in a dark part of the vault, and there await the entrance of the guard, who on observing the deranged bars of the grate, would conclude, that he had escaped through the aperture. He had scarcely placed himself according to his plan, when he heard the door of the dungeon unbolted; this was instantly followed by a loud, voice, which founded down the opening, and "Alleyn" was shouted in a tone of fright and consternation. After repeating the call, a man jumped into the vault. Alleyn, though himself concealed in darkness, could perceive, by the faint light which fell upon the spot, a soldier with a drawn sword in his hand. He approached the grate with execrations, examined it, and proceeded to the door; it was fast, he returned to the grate, and then proceeded along the walls, tracing them with the point of his sword. He at length approached the spot where Alleyn was concealed, who felt the sword strike upon his arm, and instantly grasping the hand which held it, the weapon fell to the ground. A short scuffle ensued. Alleyn threw down his adversary, and standing over him, seized the sword, and presented it to his breast; the soldier called for mercy. Alleyn, always unwilling to take the life of another, and considering that if the soldier was slain, his comrades would certainly follow to the vault, returned him his sword. "Take your life," said he, "your death can avail me nothing; — take it, and if you can, go tell Malcolm, that an innocent man has endeavoured to escape destruction." The guard, struck with his conduct, arose from the ground in silence, he received his sword, and followed Alleyn to the trap door. They returned into the dungeon, where Alleyn was once more left alone. The soldier, undetermined how to act, went to find his comrades; on the way he met Malcolm, who, ever restless and vigilant frequently walked the ramparts at an early hour. He enquired if all was well. The soldier, fearful of discovery, and unaccustomed to dissemble, hesitated at the question; and the stern air assumed by Malcolm, compelled him to relate what had happened. The Baron, with much harshness, reprobated his neglect, and immediately followed him to the dungeon, where he loaded Alleyn with insult. He examined the cell, descended into the vault, and returning to the dungeon stood by, while a chain, which had been fetched from a distant part of the castle, was fixed into the wall; — to this Alleyn was fastened. "We will not long confine you thus," said Malcolm as he quitted the cell, "a few days shall restore you to the liberty you are so fond of; but as a conqueror ought to have spectators of his triumph, you must wait till a number is collected sufficient to witness the death of so great an hero." "I disdain your insults," returned Alleyn, "and am equally able to support misfortune, and to despise a tyrant." Malcolm retired enraged at the boldness of his prisoner, and uttering menaces on the carelessness of the guard, who vainly endeavoured to justify himself. "His safety be upon your head," said the Baron. The soldier was shocked, and turned away in sullen silence. Dread of his prisoner's effecting an escape, now seized his mind; the words of Malcolm filled him with resentment, while gratitude towards Alleyn, for the life he had spared, operated with these sentiments, and he hesitated whether he should obey the Baron, or deliver Alleyn, and fly his oppressor. At noon, he carried him his customary food; Alleyn was not so lost in misery, but that he observed the gloom which hung upon his features; his heart foreboded impending evil: the soldier bore on his tongue the sentence of death. He told Alleyn, that the Baron had appointed the following day for his execution; and his people were ordered to attend. Death, however long contemplated, must be dreadful when it arrives; this was no more than what Alleyn had expected, and on what he had brought his mind to gaze without terror; but his fortitude now sunk before its immediate presence, and every nerve of his frame thrilled with agony. "Be comforted," said the soldier, in a tone of pity, "I, too, am no stranger to misery; and if you are willing to risque the danger of double torture, I will attempt to release both you and myself from the hands of a tyrant." At these words, Alleyn started from the ground in a transport of delightful wonder: "Tell me not of torture," cried he, "all tortures are equal if death is the end, and from death I may now escape; lead me but beyond these walls, and the small possessions I have, shall be yours for ever." "I want them not," replied the generous soldier, "it is enough for me, that I save a fellow creature from destruction." These words overpowered the heart of Alleyn, and tears of gratitude swelled in his eyes. Edric told him, that the door he had seen in the vault below, opened into a chain of vaults, which stretched beyond the wall of the castle, and communicated with a subterraneous way, anciently formed as a retreat from the fortress, and which terminated in the cavern of a forest at some distance. If this door could be opened, their escape was almost certain. They consulted on the measures necessary to be taken. The soldier gave Alleyn a knife larger than the one he had, and directed him to cut round the lock, which was all that with-held their passage. Edric's office of centinel was propitious to their scheme, and it was agreed that at midnight they should descend the vaults. Edric, after having unfastened the chain, left the cell, and Alleyn set himself again to remove the pavement, which had been already re-placed by order of the Baron. The near prospect of deliverance now gladdened his spirits; his knife was better formed for his purpose; and he worked with alacrity and ease. He arrived at the trap door, and once more leaped into the vault. He applied himself to the lock of the door, which was extremely thick, and it was with difficulty he separated them; with trembling hands he undrew the bolts, the door unclosed, and discovered to him the vaults. It was evening when he finished his work. He was but just returned to the dungeon, and had thrown himself on the ground to rest, when the sound of a distant step caught his ear; he listened to its advance with trembling eagerness. At length the door was unbolted; Alleyn, breathless with expectation, started up, and beheld not his soldier, but another; the opening was again discovered, and all was now over. The soldier brought a pitcher of water, and casting round the place a look of sullen scrutiny, departed in silence. The stretch of human endurance was now exceeded, and Alleyn sunk down in a state of torpidity. On recovering, he found himself again enveloped in the horrors of darkness, silence, and despair. Yet amid all his sufferings, he disdained to doubt the integrity of his soldier: we naturally recoil from painful sensations, and it is one of the most exquisite tortures of a noble mind, to doubt the sincerity of those in whom it has confided. Alleyn concluded, that the conversation of the morning had been overheard, and that this guard had been sent to examine the cell, and to watch his movements. He believed that Edric was now, by his own generosity, involved in destruction; and in the energy of this thought, he forgot for a moment his own situation.

Midnight came, but Edric did not appear; his doubts were now confirmed into certainty, and he resigned himself to the horrid tranquillity of mute despair. He heard, from a distance, the clock of the castle strike one; it seemed to sound the knell of death; it roused his benumbed senses, and he rose from the ground in an agony of acutest recollection. Suddenly he heard the steps of two persons advancing down the avenue; he started, and listened. Malcolm and murder arose to his mind; he doubted not that the soldier had reported what he had seen in the evening, and that the persons whom he now heard, were coming to execute the final orders of the Baron. They now drew near the dungeon, when suddenly he remembered the door in the vault. His senses had been so stunned by the appearance of the stranger, and his mind so occupied with a feeling of despair, as to exclude every idea of escape; and in the energy of his sufferings he had forgot this last resource. It now flashed like lightning upon his mind; he sprung to the trap door, and his feet had scarcely touched the bottom of the vault, when he heard the bolts of the dungeon undraw; he had just reached the entrance of the inner vault, when a voice sounded from above. He paused, and knew it to be Edric's. Apprehension so entirely possessed his mind, that he hesitated whether he should discover himself; but a moment of recollection dissipated every ignoble suspicion of Edric's fidelity, and he answered the call. Immediately Edric descended, followed by the soldier whose former appearance had filled Alleyn with despair, and whom Edric now introduced as his faithful friend and comrade, who, like himself, was weary of the oppression of Malcolm, and who had resolved to fly with them, and escape his rigour. This was a moment of happiness too great for thought! Alleyn, in the confusion of his joy, and in his impatience to seize the moment of deliverance, scarcely heard the words of Edric. Edric having returned to fasten the door of the dungeon, to delay pursuit, and given Alleyn a sword which he had brought for him, led the way through the vaults. The profound silence of the place was interrupted only by the echoes of their footsteps, which running through the dreary chasms in confused whisperings, filled their imaginations with terror. In traversing these gloomy and desolate recesses they often paused to listen, and often did their fears give them the distant sounds of pursuit. On quitting the vaults, they entered an avenue, winding, and of considerable length, from whence branched several passages into the rock. It was closed by a low and narrow door, which opened upon a flight of steps, that led to the subterraneous way under the ditch of the castle. Edric knew the intricacies of the place: they entered, and closing the door began to descend, when the lamp which Edric carried in his hand was blown out by the current of the wind, and they were left in total darkness. Their feelings may be more easily imagined than described; they had, however, no way but to proceed, and grope with cautious steps the dark abyss. Having continued to descend for some time, their feet reached the bottom, and they found themselves once more on even ground; but Edric knew they had yet another flight to encounter, before they could gain the subterraneous passage under the fosse, and for which it required their utmost caution to search. They were proceeding with slow and wary steps, when the foot of Alleyn stumbled upon something which clattered like broken armour, and endeavouring to throw it from him, he felt the weight resist his effort: he stooped to discover what it was, and found in his grasp the cold hand of a dead person. Every nerve thrilled with horror at the touch, and he started back in an agony of terror. They remained for some time in silent dismay, unable to return, yet fearful to proceed, when a faint light which seemed to issue from the bottom of the last descent, gleamed upon the walls, and discovered to them the second staircase, and at their feet the pale and disfigured corpse of a man in armour, while at a distance they could distinguish the figures of men. At this sight their hearts died within them, and they gave themselves up for lost. They doubted not but the men whom they saw were the murderers; that they belonged to the Baron; and were in search of some fugitives from the castle. Their only chance of concealment was to remain where they were; but the light appeared to advance, and the faces of the men to turn towards them. Winged with terror, they sought the first ascent, and flying up the steps, reached the door, which they endeavoured to open, that they might hide themselves from pursuit among the intricacies of the rock; their efforts, however, were vain, for the door was fastened by a spring lock, and the key was on the other side. Compelled to give breath to their fears, they ventured to look back, and found themselves again in total darkness; they paused upon the steps, and listening, all was silent. They rested here a considerable time; no footsteps startled them; no ray of light darted through the gloom; every thing seemed hushed in the silence of death: they resolved once more to venture forward; they gained again the bottom of the first descent, and shuddering as they approached the spot where they knew the corpse was laid, they groped to avoid its horrid touch, when suddenly the light again appeared, and in the same place where they had first seen it. They stood petrified with despair. The light, however, moved slowly onward, and disappeared in the windings of the avenue. After remaining a long time in silent suspense, and finding no further obstacle, they ventured to proceed. The light had discovered to them their situation, and the staircase, and they now moved with greater certainty. They reached the bottom in safety, and without any fearful interruption; they listened, and again the silence of the place was undisturbed. Edric knew they were now under the fosse, their way was plain before them, and their hopes were renewed in the belief, that the light and the people they had seen, had taken a different direction, Edric knowing there were various passages branching from the main avenue which led to different openings in the rock. They now stepped on with alacrity, the prospect of deliverance was near, for Edric judged they were now not far from the cavern. An abrupt turning in the passage confirmed at once this supposition, and extinguished the hope which had attended it; for the light of a lamp burst suddenly upon them, and exhibited to their sickening eyes, the figures of four men in an attitude of menace, with their swords pointed ready to receive them. Alleyn drew his sword, and advanced: “We will die hardly,” cried he. At the sound of his voice, the weapons instantly dropped from the hands of his adversaries, and they advanced to meet him in a transport of joy. Alleyn recognized with astonishment, in the faces of the three strangers, his faithful friends and followers; and Edric in that of the fourth, a fellow soldier. The same purpose had assembled them all in the same spot. They quitted the cave together; and Alleyn, in the joyful experience of unexpected deliverance, resolved never more to admit despair. They concluded, that the body which they had passed in the avenue, was that of some person who had perished either by hunger or by the sword in those subterranean labyrinths.

They marched in company till they came within a few miles in of the castle of Athlin, when Alleyn made known his design of collecting his friends, and joining the clan in an attempt to release the Earl; Edric, and the other soldier, having solemnly enlisted in the cause, they parted; Alleyn and Edric pursuing the road to the castle, and the others striking off to a different part of the country. Alleyn and Edric had not proceeded far, when the groans of the wounded servants of Matilda drew them into the wood, in which the preceding dreadful scene had been acted. The surprize of Alleyn was extreme, when he discovered the servants of the Earl in this situation; but surprize soon yielded to a more poignant sensation, when he heard that Mary had been carried off by armed men. He scarcely waited to release the servants, but seized one of their horses which was grazing near, instantly mounted, ordering the rest to follow, and took the way which had been pointed as the course of the ravishers. Fortunately it was the right direction; and Alleyn and the soldier came up with them as they were hastening to the mouth of that cavern, whose frightful aspect had chilled the heart of Mary with a temporary death. Their endeavours to fly were vain; they were overtaken at the entrance; a sharp conflict ensued in which one of the ruffians was wounded and fled: his comrades seeing the servants of the Earl approaching relinquished their prize, and escaped through the recesses of the cave. The eyes of Alleyn were now fixed in horror on the lifeless form of Mary, who had remained insensible during the whole of the affray; he was exerting every effort for her recovery, when she unclosed her eyes, and joy once more illumined his soul.

During the recital of these particulars, which Alleyn delivered with a modest brevity, the mind of Mary had suffered a variety of emotions sympathetic to all the vicissitudes of his situation. She endeavoured to conceal from herself the particular interest she felt in his adventures; but so unequal were her efforts to the strength of her emotions, that when Alleyn related the scene of Dunbayne cavern, her cheek grew pale and she relapsed into a fainting fit. This circumstance alarmed the penetration of the Countess; but the known weakness of her daughter’s frame appeared a probable cause of the disorder, and repressed her first apprehension. It gave to Alleyn a mixed delight of hope and fear, such as he had never known before; for the first time he dared to acknowledge to his own heart that he loved, and that heart for the first time thrilled with the hope of being loved again.

He received from the Countess the warm overflowings of a heart grateful for the preservation of her child, and from Mary a blush which spoke more than her tongue could utter. But the minds of all were involved in the utmost perplexity concerning the rank and the identity of the author of the plan, nor could they discover any clue which would lead them through this intricate maze of wonder, to the villain who had fabricated so diabolical a scheme. Their suspicions, at length, rested upon the Baron Malcolm, and this supposition was confirmed by the appearance of the horsemen, who evidently acted only as the agents of superior power. Their conjectures were indeed just. Malcolm was the author of the scheme. It had been planned, and he had given orders to his people to execute it long before the Earl fell into his hands. They had, however, found no opportunity of accomplishing the design when the castle was surprized, and in the consequent tumult of his mind, the Baron had forgot to withdraw his orders.

Alleyn expressed his design of collecting the small remnant of his friends, and uniting with the clan in attempting the rescue of the Earl. “Noble youth,” exclaimed the Countess, unable longer to repress her admiration, “how can I ever repay your generous services! Am I then to receive both my children at your hands? Go-my clan are now collecting for a second attempt upon the walls of Dunbayne, — go! lead them to conquest, and restore to me my son.” The languid eyes of Mary rekindled at these words, she glowed with the hope of clasping once more to her bosom her long lost brother; but the suffusions of hope were soon chased by the chilly touch of fear, for it was Alleyn who was to lead the enterprize, and it was

Alleyn who might fall in the attempt. These contrary emotions unveiled to her at once the state of her affections, and she saw in the eye of fancy, the long train of inquietudes and sorrows which were likely to ensue. She sought to obliterate from her mind every remembrance of the past, and of the fatal knowledge which was now disclosed; but she sought in vain, for the monitor in her breast constantly presented to her mind the image of Alleyn, adorned with those brave and manly virtues which had so eminently distinguished his conduct; the insignificance of the peasant was lost in the nobility of the character, and every effort at forgetfulness was baffled.

Alleyn passed that night at the castle, and the next morning, after taking leave of the Countess and her daughter, to whom his eyes bade a respectful and mournful adieu, he departed with Edric for his father’s cottage, impatient to acquaint the good old man with his safety, and to rouse to arms his slumbering friends. The breath of love had now raised into flame those sparks of ambition which had so long been kindling in his breast; he was not only eager to avenge the cause of injured virtue, and to rescue from misery and death, the son of the Chief whom he had been ever taught to reverence, but he panted to avenge the insult offered to his mistress, and to achieve some deed of valour worthy her admiration and her thanks.

Alleyn found his father at breakfast, with his niece at his side; his face was darkened with sorrow, and he did not perceive Alleyn, when he entered. The joy of the old man almost overcame him when he beheld his son in safety, for he was the solace of his declining years; and Edric was welcomed with the heartiness of an old friend.

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CHAPTER IV

MEANWHILE the Earl remained a solitary prisoner in the tower; uncertain fate was yet suspended over him; he had, however, a magnanimity in his nature which baffled much of the cruel effort of the Baron. He had prepared his mind by habitual contemplation for the worst, and although that worst was death, he could now look to it even with serenity. Those violent transports which had assailed him on sight of the Baron, were, since he was no longer subject to his presence, reduced within their proper limits; yet he anxiously avoided dwelling on the memory of his father, lest those dreadful sensations should threaten him with returning torture. Whenever he permitted himself to think of the sufferings of the Countess and his sister, his heart melted with a sorrow that almost unnerved him; much he wished to know how they supported this trial, and much he wished that he could convey to them intelligence of his state. He endeavoured to abstract his mind from his situation, and sought to make himself artificial comforts even from the barren objects around him; his chief amusement was in observing the manners and customs of the birds of prey which lodged themselves in the battlements of his tower, and the rapacity of their nature furnished him with too just a parallel to the habits of men.

As he was one day standing at the grate which looked upon the castle, observing the progress of these birds, his ear caught the sound of that sweet lute whose notes had once saved him from destruction; it was accompanied by the same melodious voice he had formerly heard, and which now sung with impassioned tenderness the following air:

When first the vernal morn of life
Beam'd on my infant eye,
Fond I survey'd the smiling scene,
Nor saw the tempest nigh.

Hope's bright illusions touch'd my soul,
My young ideas led;
And Fancy's vivid tints combin'd,
And fairy prospect spread.

My guileless heart expanded wide,
With filial fondness fraught;
Paternal love that heart supplied
With all its fondness sought.

But O! the cruel quick reverse!
Fate all I loved involv'd;
Pale Grief Hope's trembling rays dispers'd,
And Fancy's dreams dissolv'd.

Lost in surprize, Osbert stood for some time looking down upon an inner court, whence the sounds seemed to arise; after a few minutes he observed a young lady enter from that side on which the tower arose; on her arm rested an elder one, in whose face might be traced the lines of decaying beauty; but it was visible, from the melancholy which clouded her features, that the finger of affliction had there anticipated the ravages of time. She was dressed in the habit of a widow, and the black veil which shaded her forehead, and gave a fine expression to her countenance, devolved upon the ground in a length of train, and heightened the natural majesty of her figure; she moved with slow steps, and was supported by the young lady whose veil half disclosed a countenance where beauty was touched with sorrow and inimitable expression; the elegance of her form and the dignity of her air, proclaimed her to be of distinguished rank. On her arm was hung that lute, whose melody had just charmed the attention of the Earl, who was now fixed in wonder at what he beheld, that was equalled only by his admiration. They retired through a gate on the opposite side of the court, and were seen no more. Osbert followed them with his eyes, which for some time remained fixed upon the door through which they had disappeared, almost insensible of their departure. When he returned to himself, he discovered, as if for the first time, that he was in solitude. He conjectured that these strangers were confined by the oppressive power of the Baron, and his eyes were suffused with tears of pity. When he considered that so much beauty and dignity were the unresisting victims of a tyrant, his heart swelled high with indignation, his prison became intolerable to him, and he longed to become at once the champion of virtue, and the deliverer of oppressed innocence. The character of Malcolm arose to his mind black with accumulated guilt, and aggravated the detestation with which he had ever contemplated it: the hateful idea nerved his soul with a confidence of revenge. Of the guard, who entered, he enquired concerning the strangers, but could obtain no positive information; he came to impart other news; to prepare the Earl for death; the morrow was appointed for his execution. He received the intelligence with the firm hardihood of indignant virtue, disdaining to solicit, and disdaining to repine; and his mind yet grasped the idea of revenge. He drove from his thoughts, with precipitation, the tender ideas of his mother and sister; remembrances which would subdue his fortitude without effecting any beneficial purpose. He was told of the escape of Alleyn; this intelligence gave him inexpressible pleasure, and he knew this faithful youth would undertake to avenge his death.

When the news of Alleyn's flight had reached the Baron, his soul was stung with rage, and he called for the guards of the dungeon; they were no where to be found; and after a long search it was known that they were fled with their prisoner; the flight of the other captives was also discovered. This circumstance exasperated the passion of Malcolm to the utmost, and he gave orders that the life of the remaining centinel should be forfeited for the treachery of his comrades, and his own negligence; when recollecting the Earl, whom in the heat of his resentment he had forgot, his heart exulted in the opportunity he afforded of complete revenge; and in the fullness of joy with which he pronounced his sentence, he retracted the condemnation of the trembling guard. The moment after he had dispatched the messenger with his resolve to the Earl, his heart faultered from its purpose. Such is the alternate violence of evil passions, that they never suffer their subjects to act with consistency, but, torn by conflicting energies, the gratification of one propensity is destruction to the enjoyment of another; and the moment in which they imagine happiness in their grasp, is to them the moment of disappointment. Thus it was with the Baron; his soul seemed to attain its full enjoyment in the contemplation of revenge, till the idea of Mary inflamed his heart with an opposite passion; his wishes had caught new ardor from disappointment, for he had heard that Mary had been once in the power of his emissaries; and perhaps the pain which recoils upon the mind from every fruitless effort of wickedness, served to increase the energies of his desires. He spurned the thought of relinquishing the pursuit, yet there appeared to be no method of obtaining its object, but by sacrificing his favourite passion; for he had little doubt of obtaining Mary, when it should be known that he resolved not to grant the life of the Earl upon any other ransom. The balance of these passions hung in his mind in such nice equilibrium, that it was for some time uncertain which would preponderate; revenge, at length, yielded to love; but he resolved to preserve the torture of expected death, by keeping the Earl ignorant of his reprieve till the last moment.

The Earl awaited death with the same stern fortitude with which he received its sentence, and was led from the tower to the platform of the castle, silent and unmoved. He beheld the preparations for his execution, the instruments of death, the guards arranged in files, with an undaunted mind. The glare of externals had no longer power over his imagination. He beheld every object with indifference, but that on which his eye now rested; it was on the murderer, who exhibited himself in all the pride of exulting conquest: he started at the sight, and his soul shrunk back upon itself. Disdaining, however, to appear disconcerted, he endeavoured to resume his dignity, when the remembrance of his mother, overwhelmed with sorrow, rushed upon his mind, and quite unmanned him; the tears started in his eyes, and he sunk senseless on the ground.

On recovering, he found himself in his prison, and he was informed that the Baron had granted him a respite. Malcolm mistaking the cause of disorder in the Earl, thought he had stretched his sufferings to their utmost limits; he therefore had ordered him to be re-conveyed to the tower.

A scene so striking and so public as that which had just been performed at the castle of Dunbayne, was a subject of discourse to the whole country; it was soon reported to the Countess with a variety of additional circumstances, among which it was affirmed, that the Earl had been really executed. Overwhelmed with this intelligence, Matilda relapsed into her former disorder. Sickness had rendered Mary less able to support the shock, and to apply that comfort to the ambitions of her mother, which had once been so successfully administered. The physician pronounced the malady of the Countess to be seated in the mind, and beyond the reach of human skill, when one day a letter was brought to her, the superscription of which was written in the hand of Osbert; she knew the characters, and bursting the seal, read that her son was yet alive, and did not despair of throwing himself once more at her feet. He requested that the remains of his clan might immediately attempt his release. He described in what part of the castle his prison was situated, and thought, that by the assistance of long scaling-ladders and ropes, contrived in the manner he directed, he might be able to effect his escape through the grate. This letter was a reviving cordial to the Countess and to Mary.

Alleyn was indefatigable in collecting followers for the enterprize he had engaged in. On receiving intelligence of the safety of the Earl, he visited the clan, and was strenuous in exhorting them to immediate action. They required little incitement to a cause in which every heart was so much interested, and for which every hand was already busied in preparation. These preparations were at length completed; Alleyn, at the head of his party, joined the assembled clan. The Countess for a second time beheld from the ramparts the departure of her people upon the same hazardous enterprize; the present scene revived in her mind a sad membrance of the past: the same tender fears, and the same prayers for success she now gave to their departure; and when they faded in distance from her sight, she returned into the castle dissolved in tears. The heart of Mary was torn by a complex sorrow, and incapable of longer concealing from herself the interest she took in the departure of Alleyn, her agitation became more apparent. The Countess in vain endeavoured to compose her mind. Mary, affected by her tender concern, and prompted by the natural ingenuousness of her disposition, longed to make her the confidant of her weakness, if weakness that can be termed which arises from gratitude, and from admiration of great and generous qualities; but delicacy and timidity arrested the half-formed sentence, and closed her lips in silence. Her health gradually declined under the secret agitation of her mind; her physician knew her disorder to originate in suppressed sorrow; and advised, as the best cordial, a. confidential friend. Matilda now perceived the cause of her grief; her former passing observations recurred to her memory, and justified her discernment. She strove by every soothing effort to win her to her confidence. Mary, oppressed by the idea of ungenerous concealment, resolved at length to unveil her heart to a mother so tender of her happiness. She told her all her sentiments. The Countess suffered a distress almost equal to that of her daughter; her affectionate heart swelled with equal wishes for her happiness; she admired with warmest gratitude the noble and aspiring virtues of the young Highlander; but the proud nobility of her soul repelled with quick vivacity every idea of union with a youth of such ignoble birth: she regarded the present attachment as the passing impression of youthful fancy, and believed that gentle reasoning, aided by time and endeavour, would conquer the enthusiasm of love. Mary listened with attention to the reasonings of the Countess; her judgment acknowledged their justness, while her heart regretted their force. She resolved, however, to overcome an attachment which would produce so much distress to her family and to herself. Notwithstanding her endeavours to exclude Alleyn from her thoughts, the generous and heroic qualities of his mind burst upon her memory in all their splendor, she could not but be conscious that he loved her; she saw the struggles of his soul, and the delicacy of his passion, which made him ever retire in the most profound and respectful silence from its object. She solicited her mother to assist in expelling the destructive image from her mind. The Countess exerted every effort to amuse her to forgetfulness; every hour, except those which were given to exercises necessary for her health, was devoted to the cultivation of her mind, and the improvement of her various accomplishments. These endeavours were not unsuccessful; the Countess with joy observed the returning health and tranquillity of her daughter; and Mary almost believed she had taught herself to forget. These engagements served also to beguile the tedious moments which must intervene, ere news could arrive from Alleyn concerning the probable success of the enterprize.

Misery yet dwelt in the castle of Dunbayne; for there the virtues were captive, while the vices reigned despotic. The mind of the Baron, ardent and restless, knew no peace: torn by conflicting passions, he was himself the victim of their power.

The Earl knew that his life hung upon the caprice of a tyrant; his mind was nerved for the worst; yet the letter which the compassion of one of his guards, at the risque of his life, had undertaken to convey to the Countess, afforded him a faint hope that his people might yet effect his escape. In this expectation, he spent hour after hour at his grate, wishing, with trembling anxiety, to behold his clan advancing over the distant hills. These hills became at length, in a situation so barren of real comforts, a source of ideal pleasure to him. He was always at the grate, and often, in the fine evenings of summer saw the ladies, whose appearance had so strongly excited his admiration and pity, walk on a terrace below the tower. One very fine evening, under the pleasing impressions of hope for himself, and compassion for them, his sufferings for a time lost their acuteness. He longed to awaken their sympathy, and make known to them that they had a fellow-prisoner. The parting sun trembled on the tops of the mountains, and a softer shade fell upon the distant landscape. The sweet tranquillity of evening threw an air of tender melancholy over his mind: his sorrows for a while were hushed; and under the enthusiasm of the hour, he composed the following stanzas, which, having committed them to paper, he the next evening dropp’d upon the terrace.

SONNET

Hail! to the hallow’d hill, the circling lawn,
The breezy upland, and the mountain stream!
The last tall pine that earliest meets the dawn,
And glistens latest to the western gleam!

Hail! every distant hill, and downland plain!
Your dew-hid beauties Fancy oft unveils;
What time to shepherd’s reed, or poet’s strain,
Sorrowing my heart its destin’d woe bewails.

Blest are the fairy hour, the twilight shade
Of Ev’ning, wand’ring thro’ her woodlands dear,
Sweet the still sound that steals along the glade;
’Tis fancy wafts it, and her vot’ries hear.

’Tis fancy wafts it! — and how sweet the sound!
I hear it now the distant hills uplong;
While fairy echos from their dells around,
And woods, and wilds, the feeble notes prolong!

He had the pleasure to observe that the paper was taken up by the ladies, who immediately retired into the castle.

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CHAPTER V

ONE morning early, the Earl discerned a martial band emerging from the verge of the horizon; his heart welcomed his hopes, which were soon confirmed into certainty. It was his faithful people, led on by Alleyn. It was their design to surround and attack the castle; and though their numbers gave them but little hopes of conquest, they yet believed that, in the tumult of the engagement, they might procure the deliverance of the Earl. With this view they advanced to the walls. The centinels had descried them at a distance; the alarm was given; the trumpets sounded, and the walls of the castle were filled with men. The Baron was present, and directed the preparations. The secret purpose of his soul was fixed. The clan surrounded the fosse, into which they threw bundles of faggots, and gave the signal of attack. Scaling ladders were thrown up to the window of the tower. The Earl, invigorated with hope and joy, had by the force of his arm, almost wrenched from its fastening, one of the iron bars of the grate; his foot was lifted to the stanchion, ready to aid him in escaping through the opening, when he was seized by the guards of the Baron, and conveyed precipitately from the prison. He was led, indignant and desperate, to the lofty ramparts of the castle, from whence he beheld Alleyn and his clan, whose eager eyes were once more blessed with the sight of their Chief; — they were blessed but for a moment; they beheld their Lord in chains, surrounded with guards, and with the instruments of death. Animated, however, with a last hope, they renewed the attack with redoubled fury, when the trumpets of the Baron sounded a parley, and they suspended their arms. The Baron appeared on the ramparts; Alleyn advanced to hear him. “The moment of attack,” cried the Baron, “is the moment of death to your Chief. If you wish to preserve his life, desist from the assault, and depart in peace; and bear this message to the Countess your mistress:— the Baron Malcolm will accept no other ransom for the life and the liberty of the Earl, than her beauteous daughter, whom he now sues to become his wife. If she accedes to these terms, the Earl is instantly liberated, — if she refuses, he dies.” The emotions of the Earl, and of Alleyn on hearing these words, were inexpressible. The Earl spurned, with haughty virtue, the base concession. “Give me death,” cried he with loud impatience; “the house of Athlin shall not be dishonoured by alliance with a murderer: renew the attack, my brave people; since you cannot save the life, revenge the death of your Chief; he dies contented, since his death preserves his family from dishonour.” The guards instantly surrounded the Earl.

Alleyn, whose heart, torn by contending emotions, was yet true to the impulse of honour, on observing this, instantly threw down his arms, refusing to obey the commands of the Earl; a hostage for whose life he demanded, while he hastened to the castle of Athlin with the conditions of the Baron. The clan, following the example of Alleyn, rested on their arms, while a few prepared to depart with him on the embassy. In vain were the remonstrances and the commands of the Earl; his people loved him too well to obey them, and his heart was filled with anguish when he saw Alleyn depart from the walls.

The situation of Alleyn was highly pitiable; all the firm virtues of his soul were called upon to support it. He was commissioned on an embassy, the alternate conditions of which would bring misery on the woman he adored, or death to the friend whom he loved.

When the arrival of Alleyn was announced to the Countess, impatient joy thrilled in her bosom; for she had no doubt that he brought offers of accommodation; and no ransom was presented to her imagination, which she would not willingly give for the restoration of her son. At the sound of Alleyn’s voice, those tumults which had began to subside in the heart of Mary, were again revived, and she awoke to the mournful certainty of hopeless endeavour. Yet she could not repress a strong emotion of joy on again beholding him. The soft blush of her cheek shewed the colours of her mind, while, in endeavouring to shade her feelings, she impelled them into stronger light.

The agitations of Alleyn almost subdued his strength, when he entered the presence of the Countess; and his visage, on which was impressed deep distress, and the paleness of fear, betrayed the inward workings of his soul. Matilda was instantly seized with apprehension for the safety of her son, and in a tremulous voice, enquired his fate. Alleyn told her he was well, proceeding with tender caution to acquaint her with the business of his embassy, and with the scene to which he had lately been witness. The sentence of the Baron fell like the stroke of death upon the heart of Mary, who fainted at the words. Alleyn flew to support her. In endeavouring to revive her daughter, the Countess was diverted for a time from the anguish which this intelligence must naturally impart. It was long ere Mary returned to life, and she returned only to a sense of wretchedness. The critical situation of Matilda can scarcely be felt in its full extent. Torn by the conflict of opposite interests, her brain was the seat of tumult, and wild dismay. Which ever way she looked, destruction closed the view. The murderer of the husband, now sought to murder the happiness of the daughter. On the sentence of the mother hung the final fate of the son. In rejecting these terms, she would give him instant death; in accepting them, her conduct would be repugnant to the feelings of indignant virtue, and to the tender injured memory of her murdered Lord. She would destroy for ever the peace of her daughter, and the honour of her house. To effect his deliverance by force of arms was utterly impracticable, since the Baron had declared, that "the moment of attack should be the moment of death to the Earl." Honour, humanity, parental tenderness, bade her save her son; yet, by a strange contrariety of interests, the same virtues pleaded with a voice equally powerful, for the reverse of the sentence. Hitherto hope had still illumined her mind with a distant ray; she now found herself suddenly involved in the darkness of despair, whose glooms were interrupted only by the gleams of horror which arose from the altar, on which was to be sacrificed one of her beloved children. Her mind shrunk from the idea of uniting her daughter to the murderer of her father. The ferocious character of Malcolm was alone sufficient to blight for ever the happiness of the woman whose fate should be connected with his. To give to the murderer the child of the murdered was a thought too horrid to rest upon. The Countess rejected with force the Baron's offer of exchange, when the bleeding figure of her beloved son, pale and convulsed in death, started on her imagination, and stretched her brain almost to frenzy.

Meanwhile Mary suffered a conflict equally dreadful. Nature had bestowed on her a heart susceptible of all the fine emotions of delicate passion; a heart which vibrated in unison with the sweetest feelings of humanity; a mind, quick in perceiving the nicest lines of moral rectitude, and strenuous in endeavouring to act up to its perceptions. These gifts were unnecessary to make her sensible of the wretchedness of her present situation; of which a common mind would have felt the misery; they served, however, to sharpen the points of affliction, to increase their force, and to disclose, in stronger light, the various horrors of her situation. Fraternal love and pity called loudly upon her to resign herself into the power of the man whom, from the earliest dawn of perception, she had contemplated with trembling aversion and horror. The memory of her murdered parent, every feeling dear to virtue, the tremulous, but forceful voice of love awakened her heart, and each opposed, with wild impetuosity, every other sentiment. Her soul shrunk back with terror from the idea of union with the Baron. Could she bear to receive, in marriage, that hand which was stained with the blood of her father? — The polluted touch would freeze her heart in horror! — could she bear to pass her life with the man, who had for ever blasted the smiling days of him who gave her being? — With the man who would stand before her eyes a perpetual monument of misery to herself, and of dishonour to her family? whose chilling aspect would repel every amiable and generous affection, and strike them back upon her heart only to wound it? To cherish the love of the noble virtues, would be to cherish the remembrance of her dead father, and of her living lover. How wretched must be her situation, when to obliterate from her memory the image of virtue, could alone afford her a chance of obtaining a horrid tranquillity; virtue which is so dear to the human heart, that when her form forsakes us, we pursue her shadow. Wherever in search of comfort she directed her aching sight, Misery's haggard countenance obtruded on her view. Here she beheld herself entombed in the arms of the murderer; — there, the spectacle of her beloved brother, encircled with chains, and awaiting the stroke of death, arose to her imagination; the scene was too affecting; fancy gave her the horrors of reality. The reflection, that through her he suffered, that she yet might save him from destruction, broke with irresistible force upon her mind, and instantly bore away every opposing feeling. — She resolved, that since she must be wretched, she would be nobly wretched; since misery demanded one sacrifice, she would devote herself the victim.

With these thoughts, she entered the apartment of the Countess, whose concurrence was necessary to ratify her resolves, and, having declared them, awaited in trembling expectation her decision. Matilda had suffered a distraction of mind, which the nature of no former trial had occasioned her. On the unfortunate death of a husband tenderly beloved, she had suffered all the sorrow which tenderness, and all the shock which the manner of his death could occasion. The event, however, shocking as it was, did not hang upon circumstances over which she had an influence; it was decided by an higher power; — it was decided, and never could be recalled; she had there no dreadful choice of horrors, no evil ratified by her own voice, to taint with deadly recollections her declining days. This choice, though forced upon her by the power of a tyrant, she would still consider as in part her own; and the thought that she was compelled to doom to destruction one of her children, harrowed up her soul almost to frenzy.

Her mind, at length exhausted with excess of feeling, was now fallen into a state of cold and silent despair; she became insensible to the objects around her, almost to the sense of her own sufferings, and the voice, and the proposal of her daughter, scarcely awakened her powers of perception. “He shall live,” said Mary, in a voice broken and tender; “He shall live, I am ready to become the sacrifice.” Tears prevented her proceeding. At the word “live,” the Countess raised her eyes, and threw round her a look of wildness, which settling on the features of Mary, softened into an expression of ineffable tenderness, she waved her head, and turned to the window. A few tears bedewed her cheek; they fell like the drops of Heaven upon the withered plant, reviving and expanding its dying foliage; they were the first her eyes had known since the fatal news had reached her. Recovering herself a little, she sent for Alleyn, who was still in the castle. She wished to consult with him, whether there was not yet a possibility of effecting the escape of the Earl. In afflictions of whatever degree, where death has not already fixed the events in certainty, the mind shoots almost beyond the sphere of possibility in search of hope, and seldom relinquishes the fond illusion, till the stroke of reality dissolves the enchantment. Thus it was with Matilda; after the grief produced by the first stroke of this disaster was somewhat abated, she was inclined to think that her situation might not prove so desperate as she imagined; and her heart was warmed by a remote hope, that there might yet be devised some method of procuring the escape of the Earl. Alleyn came; he came in the trembling expectation of receiving the decision of the Countess, and in the intention of offering to engage in any enterprize, however hazardous, for the enlargement of the Earl. He repelled, with instant force, every idea of Mary’s becoming the wife of Malcolm; the thought was too full of agony to be endured, and he threw the sensation from his heart as a poison which would destroy the pulse of life. To preserve Mary from a misery so exquisite, and to save the life of the Earl, he was willing to encounter any hazard; to meet death itself as an evil which appeared less dreadful than either of the former. He came prepared with this resolution, and it served to support that fortitude which affliction had disturbed, though it could not subdue. When he came again to the Countess, his distress was heightened by the scene before him; he beheld her leaning on a sofa, pale and silent; her unconscious eyes were fixed on an opposite window; her countenance was touched with a wildness expressive of the disorder of her mind, and she remained for some time insensible of his approach. Such is the fluctuation of a mind overcome by distress, that if for a moment a ray of hope cheers its darkness, it vanishes at the touch of recollection. Mary was standing near the Countess, whose hand she held to her bosom. Her present sorrow had heightened the natural pensiveness of her countenance, and shaded her features with an interesting langour, more enchanting than the vivacity of blooming health; her eyes sought to avoid Alleyn, as an object dangerous to the resolution she had formed. Matilda remained absorbed in thought. Mary wished to repeat the purpose of her soul, but her voice trembled, and the half-formed sentence died away on her lips. Alleyn enquired the commands of the Countess. “I am ready,” said Mary, at length, in a low and tremulous voice, “to give myself the victim to the Baron’s revenge. — I will save my brother.” At these words, the heart of Alleyn grew cold. Mary, overcome by the effort which they had occasioned her, scarcely finished the sentence; her nerves shook, a mist fell over her eyes, and she sunk on the sofa by which she had stood. Alleyn hung over the couch in silent agony, watching her return to life. By the assistance of those about her, she soon revived. Alleyn, in the joy which he felt at her recovery, forgot for a moment his situation, and pressed with ardor her hand to his bosom. Mary, whose senses were yet scarcely recollected, yielded unconsciously to the softness of her heart, and betrayed its situation by a smile so tender, as to thrill the breast of Alleyn with the sweet certainty of being loved. Hitherto his passion had been chilled by the despair which the vast superiority of her birth occasioned, and by the modesty which forbade him to imagine that he had merit sufficient to arrest the eye of the accomplished Mary. Perhaps, too, the diffidence natural to genuine love, might contribute to deceive him. It was not till this moment, that he experienced that certainty which awakened in his heart a sense of delight hitherto unknown to him. For a moment he forgot the distresses of the castle, and his own situation; every idea faded from his mind, but the one he had so lately acquired; and in that moment he seemed to taste perfect felicity. Recollection, however, with all its train of black dependancies soon returned, and plunged him in a misery as poignant as the joy from which he was now precipitated.

The Countess was now sufficiently composed to enter on the subject nearest her heart. Alleyn caught, with eagerness, her mention of attempting the deliverance of the Earl, for the possibility of accomplishing which, he declared himself willing to encounter any danger: he seconded so warmly the design, and spoke with such flattering probability of success, that the spirits of Matilda began once more to revive; yet she trembled to encourage hopes which hung on such perilous uncertainty. It was agreed, that Alleyn should consult with the most able and trusty of the clan, whom age or infirmity had detained from battle, on the means most likely to ensure success, and then proceed immediately on the expedition: having first delivered to the Baron a message from the Countess, requiring time for deliberation upon a choice so important, and importing that an answer should be returned at the expiration of a fortnight.

Alleyn accordingly assembled those whom he judged most worthy of the council: various schemes were proposed, none of which appeared likely to succeed; when it was recollected that the Earl might possibly have been removed from the tower to some new place of confinement, which it would be necessary first to discover, that the plan might be adapted to the situation. It was therefore concluded to suspend further consultation till Alleyn had obtained the requisite information; and that in the mean time he should deliver to Malcolm the message of the Countess: for these purposes Alleyn immediately set out for the castle.

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CHAPTER VI

THE castle of Dunbayne was still the scene of triumph, and of wretchedness. Malcolm, exulting in his scheme, already beheld Mary at his feet, and the Earl retiring in an anguish more poignant than that of death. He was surprized that his invention had not before supplied him with this means of torture: for the first time he welcomed love, as the instrument of his revenge; and the charms of Mary were heightened to his imagination by the ardent colours of this passion. He was confirmed in his resolves, never to relinquish the Earl, but on the conditions he had offered; and thus for ever would he preserve the house of Athlin a monument of his triumph.

Osbert, for greater security, was conveyed from the tower into a more centrical part of the castle, to an apartment spacious but gloomy, whose gothic windows partly excluding light, threw a solemnity around, which chilled the heart almost to horror. He heeded not this; his heart was occupied with horrors of its own. He was now involved in a misery more intricate, and more dreadful, than his imagination had yet painted. To die, was to him, who had so long contemplated the near approach of death, a familiar and transient evil; but to see, even in idea, his family involved in infamy, and in union with the murderer, was the stroke which pierced his heart to its center. He feared that the cruel tenderness of the mother would tempt Matilda to accept the offers of the Baron; and he scarcely doubted, that the noble Mary would resign herself the price of his life. He would have written to the Countess to have forbidden her acceptance of the terms, and to have declared his fixed resolution to die, but that he had no means of conveying to her a letter; the soldier who had so generously undertaken the conveyance of his former one, having soon after disappeared from his station. The manly fortitude which had supported him through his former trials, did not desert him in this hour of darkness; habituated so long to struggle with opposing feelings, he had acquired the art of managing them; his mind attained a confidence in its powers; resistance served only to increase its strength, and to confirm the magnanimity of its nature.

Alleyn had now joined the clan, and was ardent in pursuit of the necessary intelligence. He learned that the Earl had been removed from the tower, but in what part of the castle he was now confined he could not discover; on this point all was vague conjecture. That he was alive, was only judged from the policy of the Baron, whose ardent passion for Mary was now well understood. Alleyn employed every stratagem his invention could suggest, to discover the prison of the Earl, but without success: at length compelled to deliver to Malcolm the message of the Countess, he demanded as a preliminary, that the Earl should be shewn to his people from the ramparts, that they might be certain he was still alive. Alley hoped that his appearance would lead to a discovery of the place of his imprisonment, purposing to observe narrowly the way by which he should retire.

The Earl appeared in safety on the ramparts, amid the shouts and acclamations of his people; the Baron frowning defiance, was seen at his side. Alleyn advanced to the walls, and delivered the message of Matilda. Osbert started at its purpose; he foresaw that deliberation portended compliance:— stung with the thought, he swore aloud he never would survive the infamy of the concession; and addressing himself to Alleyn, commanded him instantly to return to the Countess, and bid her spurn the base compliance, as she feared to sacrifice both her children to the murderer of their father. At these words, a smile of haughty triumph marked the features of the Baron, and he turned from Osbert in silent joy and exultation. The Earl was led off by the guards. Alleyn endeavoured in vain to mark the way they took; the lofty walls soon concealed them from his view.

Alleyn now experienced how strenuously a vigorous mind protects its favourite hope; wayward circumstances may shock, disappointment may check it; but it rises superior to opposition and traverses the sphere of possibility to accomplish its purpose. Alleyn did not yet despair, but he was perplexed in what manner to proceed.

In his way from the ramparts, Osbert was surprized by the appearance of two ladies at a window near which he passed: the agitation of his mind did not prevent his recognizing them as the same he had observed from the grates of the tower, with such lively admiration, and who had excited in his mind so much pity and curiosity: In the midst of his distress, his thoughts had often dwelt on the sweet graces of the younger, and he had sighed to obtain the story of her sorrows; for the melancholy which hung upon her features proclaimed her to be unfortunate. They now stood observing Osbert as he passed, and their eyes expressed the pity which his situation inspired. He gazed earnestly and mournfully upon them, and when he entered his prison, again enquired concerning them, but the same inflexible silence was preserved on the subject.

As the Earl sat one day musing in his prison, his eyes involuntarily fixed upon a pannel in the opposite wainscot; — he observed that it was differently formed from the rest, and that its projection was somewhat greater; a hope started into his mind, and he quitted his seat to examine it. He perceived that it was surrounded by a small crack, and on pushing it with his hands it shook under them. Certain that it was something more than a pannel, he exerted all his strength against it, but without producing any new effect. Having tried various means to move it without success, he gave up the experiment, and returned to his seat melancholy and disappointed. Several days passed without any further notice being taken of the wainscot; unwilling, however, to relinquish a last hope, he returned to the examination, when, in endeavouring to remove the pannel, his foot accidentally hit against one corner, and it suddenly flew open. It had been contrived that a spring which was concealed within, and which fastened the partition, should receive its impulse from the pressure of a certain part of the pannel, which was now touched by the foot of the Earl. His joy on the discovery cannot be expressed. An apartment wide and forlorn, like that which formed his prison, now lay before him; the windows, which were high and arched, were decorated with painted glass; the floor was paved with marble; and it seemed to be the deserted remains of a place of worship. Osbert traversed, with hesitating steps, its dreary length, towards a pair of folding doors, large and of oak, which closed the apartment: these he opened; a gallery, gloomy and vast, appeared beyond; the windows, which were in the same style of Gothic architecture with the former, were shaded by thick ivy that almost excluded the light. Osbert stood at the entrance uncertain whether to proceed; he listened, but heard no footstep in his prison, and determined to go on. The gallery terminated on the left in a large winding stair-case, old and apparently neglected, which led to a hall below; on the right was a door, low, and rather obscure. Osbert, apprehensive of discovery, passed the staircase, and opened the door, when a suite of noble apartments, magnificently furnished, was disclosed to his wondering eyes. He proceeded onward without perceiving any person, but having passed the second room, heard the faint sobs of a person weeping; he stood for a moment, undetermined whether to proceed; but an irresistible curiosity impelled him forward, and he entered an apartment, in which were seated the beautiful strangers, whose appearance had so much interested his feelings. The elder of the ladies was dissolved in tears and a casket and some papers lay open on a table beside her. The younger was so intent upon a drawing, which she seemed to be finishing, as not to observe the entrance of the Earl; the elder lady, on perceiving him, arose in some confusion, and the surprize in her eyes seemed to demand an explanation of so unaccountable a visit. The Earl, surprized at what he beheld, stepped back with an intention of retiring; but recollecting that the intrusion demanded an apology, he returned. The grace with which he excused himself, confirmed the impression which his figure had already made on the mind of Laura, which was the name of the younger lady; who on looking up, discovered a countenance in which dignity and sweetness were happily blended. She appeared to be about twenty, her person was of the middle stature, extremely delicate, and very elegantly formed. The bloom of her youth was shaded by a soft and pensive melancholy, which communicated an expression to her fine blue eyes, extremely interesting. Her features were partly concealed by the beautiful luxuriance of her auburn hair, which curling round her face, descended in tresses on her bosom; every feminine grace played around her; and the simple dignity of her air declared the purity and the nobility of her mind. On perceiving the Earl, a faint blush animated her cheek, and she involuntarily quitted the drawing upon which she had been engaged.

If the former imperfect view he had caught of Laura had given an impression to the heart of Osbert, it now received a stronger character from the opportunity afforded him of contemplating her beauty. He concluded that the Baron, attracted by her charms, had entrapped her into his power, and detained her in the castle an unwilling prisoner. In this conjecture he was confirmed by the mournful cast of her countenance, and by the mystery which appeared to surround her. Fired by this idea, he melted in compassion for her sufferings; which compassion was tinctured and increased by the passion which now glowed in his heart. At that moment he forgot the danger of his present situation; he forgot even that he was a prisoner; and awake only to the wish of alleviating her sorrows, he rejected cold and useless delicacy, and resolved, if possible, to learn the cause of her misfortunes. Addressing himself to the Baroness, “if, Madam,” said he, “I could by any means soften the affliction which I cannot affect not to perceive, and which has so warmly interested my feelings, I should regard this as one of the most happy moments of my life; a life marked alas! too strongly with misery! but misery has not been useless, since it has taught me sympathy.” The Baroness was no stranger to the character and the misfortunes of the Earl. Herself the victim of oppression, she knew how to commiserate the sufferings of others. She had ever felt a tender compassion for the misfortunes of Osbert, and did not now with-hold sincere expressions of sympathy, and of gratitude, for the interest which he felt in her sorrow. She expressed her surprize at seeing him thus at liberty; but observing the chains which encircled his hands, she shuddered, and guessed a part of the truth. He explained to her the discovery of the pannel, by which circumstance he had found his way into that apartment. The idea of aiding him to escape, rushed upon the mind of the Baroness, but was repressed by the consideration of her own confined situation; and she was compelled, with mournful reluctance, to resign that thought which reverence for the character of the late Earl, and compassion for the misfortunes of the present, had inspired. She lamented her inability to assist him, and informed him that herself and her daughter were alike prisoners with himself; that the walls of the castle were the limits of their liberty; and that they had suffered the pressure of tyranny for fifteen years. The Earl expressed the indignation which he felt at this recital, and solicited the Baroness to confide in his integrity; and, if the relation would not be too painful to her, to honour him so far as to acquaint him by what cruel means she fell into the power of Malcolm. The Baroness, apprehensive for his safety reminded him of the risk of discovery by a longer absence from his prison; and, thanking him again for the interest he took in her sufferings, assured him of her warmest wishes for his deliverance, and that if an opportunity ever offered, she would acquaint him with the sad particulars of her story. The eyes of Osbert made known that gratitude which it was difficult for his tongue to utter. Tremulously he solicited the consolation of sometimes revisiting the apartments of the Baroness; a permission which would give him some intervals of comfort amid the many hours of torment to which he was condemned. The Baroness, in compassion to his sufferings, granted the request. The Earl departed, gazing on Laura with eyes of mournful tenderness; yet he was pleased with what had passed, and retired to his prison in one of those peaceful intervals which are known even to the wretched. He found all quiet, and closing the pannel in safety, sat down to consider the past, and anticipate the future. He was flattered with hopes, that the discovery of the pannel might aid him to escape; the glooms of despondence which had lately enveloped his mind, gradually disappeared, and joy once more illumined his prospects; but it was the sunshine of an April morn, deceitful and momentary. He recollected that the castle was beset with guards, whose vigilance was insured by the severity of the Baron; he remembered that the strangers, who had taken so kind an interest in his fate, were prisoners like himself; and that he had no generous soldier to teach him the secret windings of the castle, and to accompany him in flight. His imagination was haunted by the image of Laura; vainly he strove to disguise from himself the truth; his heart constantly belied the sophistry of his reasonings. Unwarily be had drank the draught of love, and he was compelled to acknowledge the fatal indiscretion. He could not, however, resolve to throw from his heart the delicious poison; he could not resolve to see her no more.

The painful apprehension for his safety, which his forbearing to renew the visit he had so earnestly solicited, would occasion the Baroness; the apparent disrespect it would convey; the ardent curiosity with which he longed to obtain the history of her misfortunes; the lively interest he felt in learning the situation of Laura, with respect to the Baron; and the hope, — the wild hope, with which he deluded his reason, that he might be able to assist them, determined him to repeat the visit. Under these illusions, the motive which principally impelled him to the interview was concealed.

In the mean time Alleyn had returned to the castle of Athlin with the resolutions of the Earl; whose resolves served only to aggravate the distress of its fair inhabitants. Alleyn, however, unwilling to crush a last hope, tenderly concealed from them the circumstance of the Earl’s removal from the tower: silently and almost hopelessly meditating to discover his prison; and administered that comfort to the Countess, and to Mary, which his own expectation would not suffer him to participate. He retired in haste to the veterans whom he had before assembled, and acquainted them with the removal of the Earl; which circumstance must for the present suspend their consultations. He left them, therefore, and instantly returned to the clan: there to prosecute his enquiries. Every possible exertion was made to obtain the necessary intelligence, but without success. The moment in which the Baron would demand the answer of the Countess, was now fast approaching, and every heart sunk in despair, when one night the centinels of the camp were alarmed by the approach of men, who hailed them in unknown voices; fearful of surprize, they surrounded the strangers, and led them to Alleyn; to whom they related, that they fled from the capricious tyranny of Malcolm, and sought refuge in the camp of his enemy; whose misfortunes they bewailed, and in whose cause they enlisted. Rejoiced at the circumstance, yet doubtful of its truth, Alleyn interrogated the soldiers concerning the prison of the Earl. From them he learned, that Osbert was confined in a part of the castle extremely difficult of access; and that any plan of escape must be utterly impracticable without the assistance of one well acquainted with the various intricacies of the pile. An opportunity of success was now presented, with which the most sanguine hopes of Alleyn had never flattered him. He received from the soldiers strong assurance of assistance; from them, likewise, he learned, that discontent reigned, among the people of the Baron; who, impatient of the yoke of tyranny, only waited a favourable opportunity to throw it off, and resume the rights of nature. That the vigilant suspicions of Malcolm excited him to punish with the harshest severity every appearance of inattention; that being condemned to suffer a very heavy punishment for a slight offence, they had eluded the impending misery, and the future oppression of their Chief, by desertion.

Alleyn immediately convened a council, before whom the soldiers were brought; they repeated their former assertions; and one of the fugitives added, that he had a brother, whose place of guard over the person of the Earl on that night, had made it difficult to elude observation, and had prevented his escaping with them; that on the night of the morrow he stood guard at the gate of the lesser draw-bridge, where the centinels were few; that he was himself willing to risque the danger of conversing with him; and had little doubt of gaining him to assist in the deliverance of the Earl. At these words, the heart of Alleyn throbbed with joy. He promised large rewards to the brave soldier and to his brother, if they undertook the enterprize. His companion was well acquainted with the subterraneous passages of the rock, and expressed himself desirous of being useful. The hopes of Alleyn every instant grew stronger; and he vainly wished, at that moment, to communicate to the Earl's unhappy family the joy which dilated his heart.

The eve of the following day was fixed upon to commence their designs; when James should endeavour to gain his brother to their purpose. Having adjusted these matters, they retired to rest for the remainder of the night; but sleep had fled the eyes of Alleyn; anxious expectation filled his mind; and he saw, in the waking visions of fancy, the meeting of the Earl with his family: he anticipated the thanks he should receive from the lovely Mary; and sighed at the recollection, that thanks were all for which he could ever dare to hope.

At length the dawn appeared, and waked the clan to hopes and prospects far different from those of the preceding morn. The hours hung heavily on the expectation of Alleyn, whose mind was filled with solicitude for the event of the meeting between the brothers. Night at length came to his wishes. The darkness was interrupted only by the faint light of the moon moving through the watery and broken clouds, which enveloped the horizon. Tumultuous gusts of wind broke at intervals the silence of the hour. Alleyn watched the movements of the castle; he observed the lights successively disappear. The bell from the watch-tower chimed one; all was still within the walls; and James ventured forth to the draw-bridge. The draw-bridge divided in the center, and the half next the plains was down; he mounted it, and in a low yet firm voice called on Edmund. No answer was returned; and he began to fear that his brother had already quitted the castle. He remained some time in silent suspense before he repeated the call, when he heard the gate of the draw-bridge gently unbarred, and Edmund appeared. He was surprized to see James, and bade him instantly fly the danger that surrounded him. The Baron, incensed at the frequent desertion of his soldiers, had sent out people in pursuit, and had promised considerable rewards for the apprehension of the fugitives. James, undaunted by what he heard, kept his ground, resolved to urge his purpose to the point. Happily the centinels who stood guard with Edmund, overcome with the effect of a potion he had administered to favour his escape, were sunk in sleep, and the soldiers conducted their discourse in a low voice without interruption.

Edmund was unwilling to defer his flight, and possessed not resolution sufficient to encounter the hazard of the enterprize, till the proffered reward consoled his self-denial, and roused his slumbering courage. He was well acquainted with the subterraneous avenues of the castle; the only remaining difficulty, was that of deceiving the vigilance of his fellow-centinels, whose watchfulness made it impossible for the Earl to quit his prison unperceived. The soldiers who were to mount guard with him on the following night, were stationed in a distant part of the castle, till the hour of their removal to the door of the prison; it was, therefore, difficult to administer to them that draught which had steeped in forgetfulness the senses of his present associates. To confide to their integrity, and endeavour to win them to his purpose, was certainly to give his life into their hands, and probably to aggravate the disastrous fate of the Earl. This scheme was beset too thick with dangers to be hazarded, and their invention could furnish them with none more promising. It was, however, agreed, that on the following night, Edmund should seize the moment of opportunity to impart to the Earl the designs of his friends, and to consult on the means of accomplishing them. Thus concluding, James returned in safety to the tent of Alleyn, where the most considerable of the clan were assembled, there awaiting with impatient solicitude, his arrival. The hopes of Alleyn were somewhat chilled by the report of the soldier; from the vigilance which beset the doors of the prison, escape from thence appeared impracticable. He was condemned, however, to linger in suspense till the third night from the present, when the return of Edmund to his station at the bridge would enable him again to commune with his brother. But Alleyn was unsuspicious of a circumstance which would utterly have defeated his hopes, and whose consequence threatened destruction to all their schemes. A centinel on duty upon that part of the rampart which surmounted the draw-bridge, had been alarmed by hearing the gate unbar, and approaching the wall, had perceived a man standing on the half of the bridge which was dropped, and in converse with some person on the castle walls. He drew as near as the wall would permit, and endeavoured to listen to their discourse. The gloom of night prevented his recognizing the person on the bridge; but he could clearly distinguish the voice of Edmund in that of the man who was addressed. Excited by new wonder, he gave all his attention to discover the subject of their conversation. The distance occasioned between the brothers by the suspended half of the bridge, obliged them to speak in a somewhat higher tone than they would otherwise have done; and the centinel gathered sufficient from their discourse, to learn that they were concerting the rescue of the Earl; that the night of Edmund's watch at the prison was to be the night of enterprize; and that some friends of the Earl were to await him in the environs of the castle. All this he carefully treasured up, and the next morning communicated it to his comrades.

On the following evening the Earl, yielding to the impulse of his heart, once more unclosed his partition, and sought the apartments of the Baroness. She received him with expressions of satisfaction; while the artless pleasure which lighted up the countenance of Laura, awakened the pulse of rapture in that heart which had long throbbed only to misery. The Earl reminded the Baroness of her former promise, which the desire of exciting sympathy in those we esteem, and the melancholy pleasure which the heart finds in lingering among the scenes of former happiness, had induced her to give. She endeavoured to compose her spirits, which were agitated by the remembrance of past sufferings, and gave him a relation of the following circumstances.

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CHAPTER VII

LOUISA, Baroness Malcolm, was the descendant of an ancient and honourable house in Switzerland. Her father, the Marquis de St. Claire, inherited all those brave qualities, and that stern virtue, which had so eminently distinguished his ancestors. Early in life he lost a wife whom he tenderly loved, and he seemed to derive his sole consolation from the education of the dear children she had left behind. His son, whom he had brought up to the arms himself so honourably bore, fell before he reached his nineteenth year, in the service of his country; an elder daughter died in infancy; Louisa was his sole surviving child. His chateau was situated in one of those delightful vallies of the Swiss cantons, in which the beautiful and the sublime are so happily united; where the magnificent features of the scenery are contrasted, and their effect heightened by the blooming luxuriance of woods and pasturage, by the gentle winding of the stream, and the peaceful aspect of the cottage. The Marquis was now retired from the service, for grey age had overtaken him. His residence was the resort of foreigners of distinction, who, attracted by the united talents of the soldier and the philosopher, under his roof partook of the hospitality so characteristic of his country. Among the visitors of this description was the late Baron Malcolm, brother to the present Chief, who then travelled through Switzerland. The beauty of Louisa, embellished by the elegance of a mind highly cultivated, touched his heart, and he solicited her hand in marriage. The manly sense of the Baron, and the excellencies of his disposition, had not passed unobserved, or unapproved by the Marquis; while the graces of his person, and of his mind, had anticipated for him, in the heart of Louisa, a pre-eminence over every other suitor. The Marquis had but one objection to the marriage; this was likewise the objection of Louisa: neither the one nor the other could endure the idea of the distance which was to separate them. Louisa was to the Marquis the last prop of his declining years; the Marquis was to Louisa the father and the friend to whom her heart had hitherto been solely devoted, and from whom it could not now be torn but with an anguish equal to its attachment. This remained an insurmountable obstacle, till it was removed by the tenderness of the Baron, who entreated the Marquis to quit Switzerland, and reside with his daughter in Scotland. The attachment of the Marquis to his natal land, and the pride of hereditary dominion, was too powerful to suffer him to acquiesce in the proposal without much struggle of contending feelings. The desire of securing the happiness of his child, by a union with a character so excellent as the Baron's, and of seeing her settled before death should deprive her of the protection of a father, at length subdued every other consideration, and he resigned the hand of his daughter to the Baron Malcolm. The Marquis adjusted his affairs, and consigning his estates to the care of trusty agents, bade a last adieu to his beloved country; that country which, during sixty years, had been the principal scene of his happiness, and of his regrets. The course of years had not obliterated from his heart the early affections of his youth: he took a sad farewell of that grave which enclosed the reliques of his wife, from which it was not his least effort to depart, and whither he ordered that his remains should be conveyed. Louisa quitted Switzerland with a concern scarcely less acute than that of her father; the poignancy of which, however, was greatly softened by the tender assiduities of her Lord, whose affectionate attentions hourly heightened her esteem, and encreased her love.

They arrived at Scotland without any accident, where the Baron welcomed Louisa as the mistress of his domains. The Marquis de St. Claire had apartments in the castle, where the evening of his days declined in peaceful happiness. Before his death, he had the pleasure of seeing his race renewed in the children of the Baroness, in a son who was called by the name of the Marquis, and in a daughter who now shared with her mother the sorrows of confinement. On the death of the Marquis it was necessary for the Baron to visit Switzerland, in order to take possession of his estates, and to adjust some affairs which a long absence had deranged. He attended the remains of the Marquis to their last abode. The Baroness, desirous of once more beholding her native country, and anxious to pay a last respect to the memory of her father, entrusted her children to the care of a faithful old servant, whom she had brought with her from the Vallois, and who had been the nurse of her early childhood, and accompanied the Baron to the continent. Having deposited the remains of the Marquis according to his wish in the tomb of his wife, and arranged their affairs, they returned to Scotland, where the first intelligence they received on their arrival at the castle, was of the death of their son, and of the old nurse his attendant. The servant had died soon after their departure; the child only a fortnight before their return. This disastrous event affected equally the Baron and his lady, who never ceased to condemn herself for having entrusted her son to the care of servants. Time, however subdued the poignancy of this affliction, but came fraught with another yet more acute; this was the death of the Baron, who, in the pride of youth, constituting the felicity of his family, and of his people, was killed by a fall from his horse, which he received in hunting. He left the Baroness and an only daughter to bewail with unceasing sorrow his loss.

The paternal estates devolved of course to his only brother, the present Baron, whose character formed a mournful and striking contrast to that of the deceased Lord. All his personal property, which was considerable, with the estates in Switzerland, he bequeathed to his beloved wife and daughter. The new Baron, immediately on the demise of his brother, took possession of the castle, but allowed the Baroness, with a part of her suit, to remain its inhabitant till the expiration of the year. The Baroness, absorbed in grief, still loved to recall, in the scene of her late felicity, the image of her Lord, and to linger in his former haunts. This motive, together with the necessity of preparation for a journey to Switzerland, induced her to accept the offer of the Baron.

The memory of his brother had quickly faded from the mind of Malcolm, whose attention appeared to be wholly occupied by schemes of avarice and ambition, His arrogance, and boundless love of power, embroiled him with the neighbouring Chiefs, and engaged him in continual hostility. He seldom visited the Baroness; when he did, his manner was cold, and even haughty. The Baroness, shocked to receive such treatment from the brother of her deceased Lord, and reduced to feel herself an unwelcome guest in that castle which she had been accustomed to consider as her own, determined to set off for the continent immediately, and seek, in the solitudes of her native mountains, an asylum from the frown of insulting power. The contrast of character between the brothers drew many a sigh of bitter recollection from her heart, and added weight to the sorrows which already oppressed it. She gave orders, therefore, to her domestics, to prepare for immediate departure; but was soon after told that the Baron had forbade them to obey the command. Astonished at this circumstance, she had not time to demand an explanation, ere a message from Malcolm required a few moments private conversation. The messenger was followed almost instantly by the Baron, who entered the apartment with hurried steps, his countenance overspread with the dark purposes of his soul. “I come, Madam,” said he, in a voice stern and determined, “to inform you, that you quit not this castle. The estates which you call yours, are mine; and; think not that I shall neglect to prosecute my claim. The frequent and ill-timed generosities of my brother, have diminished the value of the lands which are mine by inheritance; and I have therefore an indispensable right to repay myself from those estates which he acquired with you. In point of justice, he possessed not the right of devising these estates, and I shall not suffer myself to be deceived by the evasions of the law; resign, therefore, the will, which remains only a record of unjust wishes, and ineffectual claims. When the receipts from your estates have satisfied my demands, they shall again be yours. The apartments you now inhabit shall remain your own; but beyond the wall of this castle you shall not pass; for I will not, by suffering your departure, afford you an opportunity of contesting those rights which I can enforce without opposition.”

Overcome with astonishment and dread, the Baroness was for some time deprived of all power of reply. At length, roused by the spirit of indignation, “I am too well informed, my Lord,” said she, “of my just claims to the lands in question; and know also too well the value of that integrity which is now no more, to credit your bold assertions; they serve only to unveil to me the darkness of a character, cruel and rapacious; whose boundless avarice, trampling on the barriers of justice and humanity, seizes on the right of the defenceless widow, and on the portion of the unresisting orphan. This, my Lord, you are permitted to do; they have no means of resistance; but think not to impose on me by a sophistical assertion of right, or to gloss the villainy of your conduct with the colours of justice; the artifice is beneath the desperate force of your character, and is not sufficiently specious to deceive the discernment of virtue. From being your prisoner I have no means of escaping; but never, my Lord, will I resign into your hands that will which is the efficient bond of my rights, and the last sad record of the affection of my departed Lord.” Grief closed her lips. The Baron denouncing vengeance on her resistance, his features inflamed with rage, quitted the apartment. The Baroness was left to lament, with deepening anguish, the stroke which had deprived her of a beloved husband; and reflection gave her the wretchedness of her situation in yet more lively colours. She was now a stranger in a foreign land, deprived by him, of whom she had a right to demand protection, of all her possessions; a prisoner in his castle, without one friend to vindicate her cause, and far remote from any means of appeal to the laws of the country. She wept over the youthful Laura, and while she pressed her with mournful fondness to her bosom, she was confirmed in her resolution never to relinquish that will, by which alone the rights of her injured child could ever be ascertained.

The Baron, bold in iniquity, obtained, by forged powers, the revenues of the foreign estates; and by this means, effectually kept the Baroness in his power, and deprived her of her last resource. Secure in the possession of the estates, and of the Baroness, he no longer regarded the will as an object of importance; and as she did not attempt any means of escape, or the recovery of her rights, he suffered her to remain undisturbed, and in quiet possession of the will.

The Baroness now passed her days in unvaried sorrow, except in those intervals when she forced her mind from its melancholy subject, and devoted herself to the education of her daughter. The artless efforts of Laura, to assuage the sorrows of her mother, only fixed them in her heart in deeper impression, since they gave to her mind, in stronger tints, the cruelty and oppression to which her tender years were condemned. The progress which she made in music and drawing, and in the lighter subjects of literature, while it pleased the Baroness, who was her sole instructress, brought with it the bitter apprehension, that these accomplishments would probably be buried in the obscurity of a prison; still, however, they were not useless, since they served at present to cheat affliction of many a weary moment, and would in future delude the melancholy hours of solitude. Laura was particularly fond of the lute, which she touched with exquisite sensibility, and whose tender notes were so sweetly in unison with the chords of sorrow, and with those plaintive tones with which she loved to accompany it. While she sung, the Baroness would sit absorbed in recollection, the tears fast falling from her eyes, and she might be said to taste in those moments the luxury of woe.

Malcolm, stung with a sense of guilt, avoided the presence of his injured captive, and sought an asylum from conscience in the busy scenes of war.

Eighteen years had now elapsed since the death of the Baron, and the confinement of Louisa. Time had blunted the point of affliction, though it still retained its venom; but she seldom dared to hope for that which for eighteen years had been with-held. She derived her only consolation from the improvement and the tender sympathy of her daughter, who endeavoured, by every soothing attention, to alleviate the sorrows of her parent.

It was at this period that the Baroness communicated to the Earl the story of her calamities.

The Earl listened with deep attention to the recital. His soul burned with indignation against the Baron, while his heart gave to the sufferings of the fair mourners all that sympathy could ask. Yet he was relieved from a very painful sensation, when he learned that the beauty of Laura had not influenced the conduct of the Baron. Her oppressed situation struck upon his heart the finest touch of pity; and the passion which her beauty and her simplicity had inspired, was strengthened and meliorated by her misfortunes. The fate of his father, and the idea of his own injuries, rushed upon his mind; and, combining with the sufferings of the victims now before him, roused in his soul a storm of indignation, little inferior to that he had suffered in his first interview with the Baron. Every consideration sunk before the impulse of a just revenge; his mind, occupied with the hateful image of the murderer was hardened against danger, and in the first energies of his resentment he would have rushed to the apartment of Malcolm, and striking the sword of justice in his heart, have delivered the earth from a monster, and have resigned himself the willing sacrifice of the action. “Shall the monster live?” cried he, rising from his seat. His step was hurried, and his countenance was stamped with a stern virtue. The Baroness was alarmed, and following him to the door of her apartment, which he had half opened, conjured him to pause for a moment on the dangers that surrounded him. The voice of reason, in the accents of the Baroness, interrupted the hurried tumult of his soul; the illusions of passion disappeared; he recollected that he was ignorant of the apartment of the Baron, and that he had no weapon to assist his purpose; and he found himself as a traveller on enchanted ground, when the wand of the magician suddenly dissolves the airy scene, and leaves him environed with the horrors of solitude and of darkness.

The Earl returned to his seat hopeless and dejected, and lost to every thing but to the bitterness of disappointment. He forgot where he was, and the lateness of the hour, till reminded by the Baroness of the dangers of a longer stay, when he mournfully bade her good night; and advancing to Laura with timid respect, pressed her hand tenderly to his lips, and retired to his prison.

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CHAPTER VIII

HE had now opened the partition, and was entering the room, when by the faint gleam which the fire threw across the apartment, he perceived indistinctly the figure of a man, and in the same instant heard the sound of approaching armour. Surprize and horror thrilled through every nerve; he remained fixed to the spot, and for some moments hesitated whether to retire. A fearful silence ensued; the person whom he thought he had seen, disappeared in the darkness of the room; the noise of armour was heard no more; and he began to think that the figure he had seen, and the sound he had heard were the phantoms of a sick imagination, which the agitation of his spirits, the solemnity of the hour, and the wide desolation of the place, had conjured up. The low sounds of an unknown voice now started upon his ear; it seemed to be almost close beside him; he sprung onward, and his hand grasped the steely coldness of armour, while the arm it enclosed struggled to get free. "Speak! what wretch art thou?" cried Osbert, when a sudden blaze of light from the fire discovered to him a soldier of the Baron. His agitation for some time prevented his observing that there was more of alarm than of design expressed in the countenance of the man; but the apprehension of the Earl was quickly lost in astonishment, when he beheld the guard at his feet. It was Edmund who had entered the prison under pretense of carrying fuel to the fire, but secretly for the purpose of conferring with Osbert. When the Earl understood he came from Alleyn, his bosom glowed with gratitude towards that generous youth, whose steady and active zeal had never relaxed since the hour in which he first engaged in his cause. The transport of his heart may be easily imagined, when he learned the schemes that were planning for his deliverance. The circumstance which had nearly defeated the warm hopes of his friends, was by him disregarded, since the knowledge of the secret door opened to him, with the assistance of a guide through the intricacies of the castle, a certain means of escape. Edmund was well acquainted with all these. The Earl told him of the discovery of the false panel; bade him return to Alleyn with the joyful intelligence, and on his next night of watch prepare to aid him in escape. Edmund knew well the apartments which Osbert described, and the great staircase which led into a part of the castle that had long been totally forsaken, and from whence it was easy to pass unobserved into the vaults which communicated with the subterraneous passages in the rock.

Alleyn heard the report of James with a warm and generous joy, which impelled him to hasten immediately to the castle of Athlin, and dispel the sorrows that inhabited there; but the consideration that his sudden absence from the camp might create suspicion, and invite discovery, checked the impulse; and he yielded with reluctance to the necessity which condemned the Countess and Mary to the horrors of a lengthened suspense.

The Countess, meanwhile, whose designs, strengthened by the steady determination of Mary, were unshaken by the message of the Earl, which she considered as only the effect of a momentary impulse, watched the gradual departure of those days which led to that which enveloped the fate of her children, with agony and fainting hope. She received no news from the camp; no words of comfort from Alleyn; and she saw the confidence which had nourished her existence slowly sinking in despair. Mary sought to administer that comfort to the afflictions of her mother, which her own equally demanded; she strove, by the fortitude with which she endeavoured to resign herself, to soften the asperity of the sufferings which threatened the Countess, and she contemplated the approaching storm with the determined coolness of a mind aspiring to virtue as the chief good. But she sedulously sought to exclude Alleyn from her mind; his disinterested and noble conduct excited emotions dangerous to her fortitude, and which rendered yet more poignant the tortures of the approaching sacrifice.

Anxious to inform the Baroness of his approaching deliverance, to assure her of his best services, to bid adieu to Laura, and to seize the last opportunity he might ever possess of disclosing to her his admiration and his love, the Earl revisited the apartments of the Baroness. She felt a lively pleasure on the prospect of his escape; and Laura, in the joy which animated her on hearing this intelligence, forgot the sorrows of her own situation; forgot that of which her heart soon reminded her-that Osbert was leaving the place of her confinement, and that she should probably see him no more. This thought cast a sudden shade over her features, and from the enlivening expression of joy, they resumed their wonted melancholy. Osbert marked the momentary change, and his heart spoke to him the occasion. "My cup of joy is dashed with bitterness," said he, "for amid the happiness of approaching deliverance, I quit not my prison without some pangs of keen regret; — pangs which it were probably useless to make known, yet which my feeling will not suffer me at this moment to conceal. Within these walls, from whence I fly with eagerness, I leave a heart fraught with the most tender passion; a heart which, while it beats with life, must ever unite the image of Laura with the fondness of love. Could I hope that she were not insensible to my attachment I should depart in peace, and would defy the obstacles which bid me despair. Were I even certain that she would repel my love with cold indifference, I would yet, if she accept my services, effect her rescue, or give my life the forfeiture." Laura was silent; she wished to speak her gratitude, yet feared to tell her love; but the soft timidity of her eye, and the tender glow of her cheek, revealed the secret that trembled on her lips. The Baroness observed her confusion, and thanking the Earl for the noble service he offered, declined accepting it. She besought him to involve no further the peace of his family and of himself, by attempting an enterprize so crowded with dangers, and which might probably cost him his life. The arguments of the Baroness fell forceless when opposed to the feelings of the Earl; so warmly he urged his suit, and dwelt so forcibly on his approaching departure, that the Baroness ceased to oppose, and the silence of Laura yielded acquiescence. After a tender farewell, with many earnest wishes for his safety, the Earl quitted the apartment elated with hope. But the Baron had been informed of his projected escape, and had studied the means of counteracting it. The centinel had communicated his discovery to some of his comrades, who, without virtue or courage sufficient to quit the service of the Baron, were desirous of obtaining his favour and failed not to seize on an opportunity so flattering as the present, to accomplish their purpose they communicated to their Chief the intelligence they had received.

Malcolm, careful to conceal his knowledge of the scheme, from a design to entrap those of the clan who were to meet the Earl, had suffered Edmund to return to his station at the prison, where he had placed the informers as secret guards, and had taken such other precautions as were necessary to intercept their flight, should they elude the vigilance of the soldiers, and likewise to secure those of his people who should be drawn toward the castle in expectation of their Chief. Having done this, he prided himself in security, and in the certainty of exulting over his enemies, thus entangled in their own stratagem.

After many weary moments of impatience to Alleyn, and of expectation to the Earl, the night at length arrived on which hung the event of all their hopes. It was agreed that Alleyn, with a chosen few, should await the arrival of the Earl in the cavern where terminated the subterraneous avenue. Alleyn parted from James with extreme agitation, and returned to his tent to compose his mind.

It was now the dead of night; profound sleep reigned through the castle of Dunbayne, when Edmund gently unbolted the prison door, and hailed the Earl. He sprung forward, and instantly unclosed the pannel, which they fastened after them to prevent discovery, and passing with fearful steps the cold and silent apartments, descended the great staircase into the hall, whose wide and dark desolation was rendered visible only by the dim light of the taper which Edmund carried in his hand, and whose vaulted ceiling re-echoed their steps. After various windings they descended into the vaults; in passing their dreary length they often paused in fearful silence, listening to the hollow blasts which burst suddenly through the passages, and which seemed to bear in the sound the footsteps of pursuit. At length they reached the extremity of the vaults, where Edmund searched for a trapdoor which lay almost concealed in the dirt and darkness; after some time they found, and with difficulty raised it, for it was long since it had been opened; and it was besides heavy with iron work. They entered, and letting the door fall after them, descended a narrow flight of steps which conducted them to a winding passage closed by a door that opened into the main avenue whence Alleyn had before made his escape. Having gained this, they stepped on with confidence, for they were now not far from the cavern where Alleyn and his companions were awaiting their arrival. The heart of Alleyn now swelled with joy, for he perceived a gleam of distant light break upon the walls of the avenue, and at the same time thought he heard the faint sound of approaching footsteps. Impatient to throw himself at the feet of the Earl, he entered the avenue. The light grew stronger upon the walls; but a point of rock, whose projection caused a winding in the passage, concealed from his view the persons his eyes so eagerly sought. The sound of steps was now fast approaching, and Alleyn gaining the rock, suddenly turned upon three soldiers of the Baron. They instantly seized him their prisoner. Astonishment for a while overcame every other sensation; but as they led him along, the horrid reverse of the moment struck upon his heart with all its consequences, and he had no doubt that the Earl had been seized and carried back to his prison. As he marched along, absorbed in this reflection, a light appeared at some distance, from a door that opened upon the avenue, and discovered the figures of two men, who on perceiving the party, they retreated with precipitation, and closed the door after them. Alleyn knew the Earl in the person of one of them. Two of the soldiers quitting Alleyn, pursued the fugitives, and quickly disappeared through a door. Alleyn finding himself alone with the guard, seized the moment of opportunity, and made a desperate effort to regain his sword. He succeeded; and in the suddenness of the attack, obtained also the weapon of his adversary, who, unarmed, fell at his feet, and called for mercy. Alleyn gave him his life. The soldier, grateful for the gift, and fearful of the Baron's vengeance, desired to fly with him, and enlist in his service. They quitted the subterraneous way together. On entering the cavern, Alleyn found it vacated by his friends, who on hearing the clash of armour, and the loud and menacing voices of the soldiers, understood his fate, and apprehensive of numbers, had fled to avoid a similar disaster. Alleyn returned to his tent, shocked with disappointment, and lost in despair. Every effort which he had made for the deliverance of the Earl, had proved unsuccessful; and this scheme, on which was suspended his last hope, had been defeated at the very moment when he exulted in its completion. He threw himself on the ground, and lost in bitter thought, observed not the curtain of his tent undraw, till recalled by a sudden noise, he looked up, and beheld the Earl. Terror fixed him to the spot, and for a moment he involuntarily acknowledged the traditionary visions of his nation. The well-known voice of Osbert, however, awakened him to truth, and the ardor with which he embraced his knees, immediately convinced him that he clasped reality.

The soldiers, in the eagerness of pursuit, had mistaken the door by which Osbert had retired, and had entered one below it, which, after engaging them in a fruitless search through various intricate passages, had conducted them to a remote part of the castle, from whence, after much perplexity and loss of time, they were at length extricated. The Earl, who had retreated on sight of the soldiers, had fled in the mean time to regain the trap-door; but the united strength of himself and of Edmund was in vain exerted to open it. Compelled to encounter the approaching evil, the Earl took the sword of his companion, resolving to meet the approach of his adversaries, and to effect his deliverance, or yield his life and his misfortunes to the attempt. With this design he advanced deliberately along the passage, and arriving at the door, stopped to discover the motions of his pursuers: all was profoundly silent. After remaining some time in this situation, he opened the door, and examining the avenue with a firm yet anxious eye as far as the light of his taper threw its beams, discovered no human being. He proceeded with cautious firmness towards the cavern, every instant expecting the soldiers to start suddenly upon him from some dark recess. — With astonishment he reached the cave without interruption; and unable to account for his unexpected deliverance, hastened with Edmund to join his faithful people.

The soldiers who watched the prison, being ignorant of any other way by which the Earl could escape, than the door which they guarded, had suffered Edmund to enter the apartment without fear. It was some time before they discovered their error; surprized at the length of his stay, they opened the door of the prison, which to their utter astonishment, they found empty. The grates were examined; they remained as usual; every corner was explored; but the false pannel remained unknown; and having finished their examination without discovering any visible means by which the Earl had quitted the prison, they were seized with terror, concluding it to be the work of a supernatural power, and immediately alarmed the castle. The Baron, roused by the tumult, was informed of the fact, and dubious of the integrity of his guards, ascended to the apartment; which having himself examined without discovering any means of escape, he no longer hesitated to pronounce the centinels accessary to the Earl's enlargement. The unfeigned terror which they exhibited was mistaken for artifice, and their supposed treachery was admitted and punished in the same moment. They were thrown into the dungeon of the castle. Soldiers were immediately dispatched in pursuit; but the time which had elapsed ere the guards had entered the prison, had given the Earl an opportunity of escape. When the certainty of this was communicated to the Baron, every passion whose single force is misery, united in his breast to torture him; and his brain, exasperated almost to madness, gave him only direful images of revenge.

The Baroness and Laura, awakened by the tumult, had been filled with apprehension for the Earl, till they were informed of the cause of the general confusion; and hope and dubious joy were ere long confirmed into certainty, for they were told of the fruitless search of the pursuers.

It was now the last day of the term in which the Countess had stipulated to return her answer; she had yet heard nothing from Alleyn; for Alleyn had been busied in schemes, of the event of which he could send no account, for their success had been yet undetermined. Every hope of the Earl's deliverance was now expired, and in the anguish of her heart, the Countess prepared to give that answer which would send the devoted Mary to the arms of the murderer. Mary, who assumed a fortitude not her own, strove to abate the rigor of her mother's sufferings, but vainly strove; they were of a nature which defied consolation. She wrote the fatal agreement, but delayed till the last moment delivering it into the hands of the messenger. It was necessary, however, that the Baron should receive it on the following morn, lest the impatience of revenge should urge him to seize on the life of the Earl as the forfeiture of delay. She sent, therefore, for the messenger, who was a veteran of the clan, and with extreme agitation delivered to him her answer; grief interrupted her voice; she was unable to speak to him; and he was awaiting her orders, when the door of the apartment was thrown open, and the Earl, followed by Alleyn, threw himself at her feet. A faint scream was uttered by the Countess, and she sunk in her chair. Mary, not daring to trust herself with the delightful vision, endeavoured to restrain the tide of joy, which hurried to her heart, and, threatened to overwhelm her.

The castle of Athlin resounded with tumultuous joy on this happy event; the courts were filled with those of the clan who had been disabled from attending the field, and whom the report of the Earl's return, which had circulated with astonishing rapidity, had brought thither. The hall re-echoed with voices; and the people could hardly be restrained from rushing into the presence of their Chief, to congratulate him on his escape.

When the first transports of the meeting were subsided, the Earl presented Alleyn to his family as his friend and deliverer; whose steady attachment he could never forget, and whose zealous service he could never repay. The cheek of Mary glowed with pleasure and gratitude at this tribute to the worth of Alleyn; and the smiling approbation of her eyes rewarded him for his noble deeds. The Countess received him as the deliverer of both her children, and related to Osbert the adventure in the wood. The Earl embraced Alleyn, who received the united acknowledgments of the family, with unaffected modesty. Osbert hesitated not to pronounce the Baron the author of the plot; his heart swelled to avenge the repeated injuries of his family, and he secretly resolved to challenge the enemy to single combat. To renew the siege he considered as a vain project; and this challenge, though a very inadequate mode of revenge, was the only honourable one that remained for him. He forbore to mention his design to the Countess, well knowing that her tenderness would oppose the measure, and throw difficulties in his way, which would embarrass, without preventing his purpose. He mentioned the misfortunes of the Baroness, and the loveliness of her daughter, and excited the esteem and the commiseration of his hearers.

The clamours of the people to behold their Lord, now arose to the apartment of the Countess, and he descended into the hall, accompanied by Alleyn, to gratify their zeal. An universal shout of joy resounded through the walls on his appearance. A noble pleasure glowed on the countenance of the Earl at sight of his faithful people; and in the delight of that moment his heart bore testimony to the superior advantages of an equitable government. The Earl, impatient to testify his gratitude, introduced Alleyn to the clan, as his friend and deliverer, and immediately presented his father with a lot of land, where he might end his days in peace and plenty. Old Alleyn thanked the Earl for his offered kindness, but declined accepting it; alleging, that he was attached to his old cottage, and that he had already sufficient for the comforts of his age.

On the following morning, a messenger was privately dispatched to the Baron, with the challenge of the Earl. The challenge was couched in terms of haughty indignation, and expressed, that nothing but the failure of all other means could have urged him to the condescension of meeting the assassin of his father, on terms of equal combat.

Happiness was once more restored to Athlin. The Countess, in the unexpected preservation of her children, seemed to be alive only to joy. The Earl was now for a time secure in the bosom of his family, and, though his impatience to avenge the injuries of those most dear to him, and to snatch from the hand of oppression the fair sufferers at Dunbayne, would not allow him to be tranquil, yet he assumed a gaiety unknown to his heart, and the days were spent in festivals and joy.

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CHAPTER IX

IT was at this period, that, one stormy evening, the Countess was sitting with her family in a room, the windows of which looked upon the sea. The winds burst in sudden squalls over the deep, and dashed the foaming waves against the rocks with inconceivable fury. The spray, notwithstanding the high situation of the castle, flew up with violence against the windows. The Earl went out upon the terrace beneath to contemplate the storm. The moon shone faintly by intervals, through broken clouds upon the waters, illumining the white foam which burst around, and enlightening the scene sufficiently to render it visible. The surges broke on the distant shores in deep resounding murmurs, and the solemn pauses between the stormy gusts filled the mind with enthusiastic awe. As the Earl stood wrapt in the sublimity of the scene, the moon, suddenly emerging from a heavy cloud, shewed him at some distance a vessel driven by the fury of the blast towards the coast. He presently heard the signals of distress; and soon after shrieks of terror, and a confused uproar of voices were borne on the wind. He hastened from the terrace to order his people to go out with boats to the assistance of the crew, for he doubted not that the vessel was wrecked; but the sea ran so high as to make the adventure impracticable. The sound of voices ceased, and he concluded that the wretched mariners were lost, when the screams of distress again struck his ear, and again were lost in the tumult of the storm; in a moment after, the vessel struck upon the rock beneath the castle; an universal shriek ensued. The Earl, with his people, hastened to the assistance of the crew; the fury of the gust was now abated, and the Earl, jumping into a boat with Alleyn and some others, rowed to the ship, where they rescued a part of the drowning people. They were conducted to the castle, and every comfort was liberally administered to them. Among those, whom the Earl had received into his boat, was a stranger, whose dignified aspect and manners bespoke him to be of rank; he had several people belonging to him, but they were foreigners, and ignorant of the language of the country. He thanked his deliverer with a noble frankness, that charmed him. In the hall they were met by the Countess and her daughter, who received the stranger with the warm welcome, which compassion for his situation had inspired. He was conducted to the supper room, where the magnificence of the board exhibited only the usual hospitality of his host. The stranger spoke English fluently, and displayed in his conversation a manly and vigorous mind, acquainted with the sciences, and with life; and the cast of his observations seemed to characterize the benevolence of his heart. The Earl was so much pleased with his guest, that he pressed him to remain at his castle till another vessel could be procured; his guest equally pleased with the Earl, and a stranger to the country, accepted the invitation.

New distress now broke upon the peace of Athlin; several days had expired, and the messenger, who had been sent to Malcolm, did not appear. It was almost evident, that the Baron, disappointed and enraged at the escape of his prisoner, and eager for a sacrifice, had seized this man as the subject of a paltry revenge. The Earl, however, resolved to wait a few days, and watch the event.

The struggles of latent tenderness and assumed indifference, banished tranquillity from the bosom of Mary, and pierced it with many sorrows. The friendship and honours bestowed by the Earl on Alleyn, who now resided solely at the castle, touched her heart with a sweet pride; but alas! these distinctions served only to confirm her admiration of that worth, which had already attached her affections, and afforded him opportunities of exhibiting, in brighter colours, the various excellencies of a heart noble and expansive, and of a mind, whose native elegance meliorated and adorned the bold vigour of its flights. The langour of melancholy, notwithstanding the efforts of Mary, would at intervals steal from beneath the disguise of cheerfulness, and diffuse over her beautiful features an expression extremely interesting. The stranger was not insensible to its charms, and it served to heighten the admiration, with which he had first beheld her, into something more tender and more powerful. The modest dignity, with which she delivered her sentiments, which breathed the purest delicacy and benevolence, touched his heart, and he felt an interest concerning her, which he had never before experienced.

Alleyn, whose heart amid the anxieties and tumults of the past scenes, had still sighed to the image of Mary; — that image, which fancy had pictured in all the charms of the original, and whose glowing tints were yet softened and rendered more interesting by the shade of melancholy with which absence and a hopeless passion had surrounded them, found, amid the leisure of peace, and the frequent opportunities which were afforded him of beholding the object of his attachment, his sighs redouble, and the glooms of sorrow thicken. In the presence of Mary, a soft sadness clouded his brow; he endeavoured to assume a cheerfulness foreign to his heart; but endeavoured in vain. Mary perceived the change in his manners; and the observation did not contribute to enliven her own. The Earl, too, observed that Alleyn had lost much of his wonted spirits, and bantered him on the change, but thought not of his sister.

Alleyn wished to quit a place so destructive to his peace as the castle of Athlin; he formed repeated resolutions of withdrawing himself from those walls, which held him in a sort of fascination, and rendered ineffectual every half-formed wish, and every weak endeavour. When he could no longer behold Mary, he would frequently retire to the terrace, which was overlooked by the windows of her apartment, and spend half the night in traversing, with silent, mournful steps, that spot, which afforded him the melancholy pleasure of being near the object of his love.

Matilda wished to question Alleyn concerning some circumstances of the late events, and for this purpose ordered him one day to attend her in her closet. As he passed the outer apartment of the Countess, he perceived something lying near the door, through which she had before gone, and, examining it, discovered a bracelet, to which was attached a miniature of Mary. His heart beat quick at the sight; the temptation was too powerful to be resisted; he concealed it in his bosom, and passed on. On quitting the closet, he sought, with breathless impatience, a spot, where he might contemplate at leisure that precious portrait, which chance had so kindly thrown in his way. He drew it trembling from his bosom, and beheld again that countenance, whose sweet expression had touched his heart with all the delightful agonies of love. As he pressed it with impassioned tenderness to his lips, the tear of rapture trembled in his eye, and the romantic ardour of the moment was scarcely heightened by the actual presence of the beloved object, whose light step now stole upon his ear, and half turning he beheld not the picture, but the reality! — Surprized! — confused! — The picture fell from his hand. Mary, who had accidentally strolled to that spot, on observing the agitation of Alleyn, was retiring, when he, in whose heart had been awakened every tender sensation, losing in the temptation of the moment the fear of disdain, and forgetting the resolution which he had formed of eternal silence, threw himself at her feet, and pressed her hand to his trembling lips. His tongue would have told her that he loved, but his emotion, and the repulsive look of Mary, prevented him. She instantly disengaged herself with an air of offended dignity, and casting on him a look of mingled anger and concern, withdrew in silence. Alleyn remained fixed to the spot; his eyes pursuing her retiring steps, insensible to every feeling but those of love and despair. So absorbed was he in the transition of the moment, that he almost doubted whether a visionary illusion had not crossed his sight to blast his only remaining comfort-the consciousness of deserving, and of possessing the esteem of her he loved. He left the place with anguish in his heart, and, in the perturbation of his mind, forgot the picture.

Mary had observed her mother’s bracelet fall from his hand, and was no longer in perplexity concerning her miniature; but in the confusion which his behavior occasioned her, she forgot to demand it of him. The Countess had missed it almost immediately after his departure from the closet, and had caused a search to be made, which proving fruitless, her suspicions wavered upon him. The Earl, who soon after passed the spot whence Alleyn had just departed, found the miniature. It was not long ere Alleyn recollected the treasure he had dropped, and returned in search of it. Instead of the picture, he found the Earl: a conscious blush crossed his cheek; the confusion of his countenance informed Osbert of a part of the truth; who, anxious to know by what means he had obtained it, presented him the picture, and demanded if he knew it. The soul of Alleyn knew not to dissemble; he acknowledged that he had found, and concealed it; prompted by that passion, the confession of which, no other circumstance than the present could have wrung from his heart. The Earl listened to him with a mixture of concern and pity; but hereditary pride chilled the warm feelings of friendship and of gratitude, and extinguished the faint spark of hope which the discovery had kindled in the bosom of Alleyn. “Fear not, my Lord,” said he, “the degradation of your house from one who would sacrifice his life in its defence; never more shall the passion which glows in my heart escape from my lips. I will retire from the spot where I have buried my tranquillity.” “No,” replied the Earl, “you shall remain here; I can confide in your honour. O! that the only reward which is adequate to your worth and to your services, it should be impossible for me to bestow.” His voice faultered, and he turned away to conceal his emotion, with a suffering little inferior to that of Alleyn.

The discovery which Mary had made, did not contribute to restore peace to her mind. Every circumstance conspired to assure her of that ardent passion which filled the bosom of him whom all her endeavours could not teach her to forget; and this conviction served only to heighten her malady, and consequently her wretchedness.

The interest which the stranger discovered, and the attention he paid to Mary, had not passed unobserved by Alleyn. Love pointed to him the passion which was rising in his heart, and whispered that the vows of his rival would be propitious. The words of Osbert confirmed him in the torturing apprehension; for though his humble birth had never suffered him to hope, yet he thought he discovered in the speech of the Earl, something more than mere hereditary pride.

The stranger had contemplated the lovely form of Mary with increasing admiration, since the first hour he beheld her; this admiration was now confirmed into love; — and he resolved to acquaint the Earl with his birth, and with his passion. For this purpose, he one morning drew him aside to the terrace of the castle, where they could converse without interruption; and pointing to the ocean, over which he had so lately been borne, thanked the Earl, who had thus softened the horrors of shipwreck, and the desolation of a foreign land, by the kindness of his hospitality. He informed him that he was a native of Switzerland, where he possessed considerable estates, from which he bore the title of Count de Santmorin; that enquiry of much moment to his interests had brought him to Scotland, to a neighbouring port of which he was bound, when the disaster from which he had been so happily rescued, arrested the progress of his designs. He then related to the Earl, that his voyage was undertaken upon a report of the death of some relations, at whose demise considerable estates in Switzerland became his inheritance. That the income of these estates had been hitherto received upon the authority of powers, which, if the report was true, were become invalid.

The Earl listened to this narrative in silent astonishment, and enquired, with much emotion, the name of the Count's relations. "The Baroness Malcolm," returned he. The Earl clasped his hands in extasy. The Count, surprized at his agitation, began to fear that the Earl was disagreeably interested in the welfare of his adversaries, and regretted that he had disclosed the affair, till he observed the pleasure which was diffused through his features. Osbert explained the cause of his emotion, by relating his knowledge of the Baroness; in the progress of whose story, the character of Malcolm was sufficiently elucidated. He told the cause of his hatred towards the Baron, and the history of his imprisonment; and also confided to his honour the secret of his challenge.

The indignation of the Count was strongly excited; he was, however, prevailed on by Osbert to forego any immediate effort of revenge, awaiting for awhile the movements of Malcolm.

The Count was so absorbed in wonder and in new sensations, that he had almost forgot the chief object of the interview. Recollecting himself, he discovered his passion, and requested permission of the Earl to throw himself at the feet of Mary. The Earl listened to the declaration with a mixture of pleasure and concern; the remembrance of Alleyn saddened his mind; but the wish of an equal connection, made him welcome the offers of the Count, whose alliance, he told him, would do honour to the first nobility of his nation. If he found the sentiments of his sister in sympathy with his own on this point, he would welcome him to his family with the affection of a brother; but he wished to discover the situation of her heart, ere his noble friend disclosed to her his prepossession.

The Earl on his return to the castle enquired for Mary, whom he found in the apartment of her mother. He opened to them the history of the Count; his relationship with the Baroness Malcolm, with the object of his expedition, and closed the narrative with discovering the attachment of his friend to Mary, and his offers of alliance with his family. Mary grew pale at this declaration; there was a pang in her heart which would not suffer her to speak; she threw her eyes on the ground, and burst into tears. The Earl took her hand tenderly in his; "My beloved sister," said he, "knows me too well to doubt my affection, or to suppose I can wish to influence her upon a subject so material to her future happiness; and where her heart ought to be the principal directress. Do me the justice to believe, that I make known to you the offers of the Count as a friend, not as a director. He is a man, who from the short period of our acquaintance, I have judged to be deserving of particular esteem. His mind appears to be noble; his heart expansive; his rank is equal with your own; and he loves you with an attachment warm and sincere. But with all these advantages, I would not have my sister give herself to the man who does not meet an interest in her heart to plead his cause."

The gentle soul of Mary swelled with gratitude towards her brother; she would have thanked him for the tenderness of these sentiments, but a variety of emotions were struggling at her heart, and suppressed her utterance; tears and a smile, softly clouded with sorrow, were all she could give him in reply. He could not but perceive that some secret cause of grief preyed upon her mind, and he solicited to know, and to remove it. "My dear brother will believe the gratitude which his kindness-" She would have finished the sentence, but the words died away upon her lips, and she threw herself on the bosom of her mother, endeavouring to conceal her distress, and wept in silence. The Countess too well understood the grief of her daughter; she had witnessed the secret struggles of her heart, which all her endeavours were not able to overcome, and which rendered the offers of the Count disgusting, and dreadful to her imagination. Matilda knew how to feel for her sufferings; but the affection of the mother extended her views beyond the present temporary evil, to the future welfare of her child; and in the long perspective of succeeding years, she beheld her united to the Count, whose character diffused happiness, and the mild dignity of virtue to all around him: she received the thanks of Mary for her gentle guidance to the good she possessed; the artless looks of the little ones around her, smiled their thanks; and the luxury of that scene recalled the memory of times for ever passed, and mingled with the tear of rapture the sigh of fond regret. The surest method of erasing that impression which threatened serious evil to the peace of her child if suffered to continue, and to secure her permanent felicity, was to unite her to the Count; whose amiable disposition would soon win her affections, and obliterate from her heart every improper remembrance of Alleyn. She determined, therefore, to employ argument and gentle persuasion, to guide her to her purpose. She knew the mind of Mary to be delicate and candid; easy of conviction, and firm to pursue what her judgment approved; and she did not despair of succeeding.

The Earl still pressed to know the cause of that emotion which afflicted her. “I am unworthy of your solicitude,” said Mary, “I cannot teach my heart to submit.” “To submit! — Can you suppose your friends can wish your heart to submit on a point so material to its happiness, to aught that is repugnant to its feelings? If the offers of the Count are displeasing to you, tell me so; and I will return him his answer. Believe that my first wish is to see you happy.” “Generous Osbert! How can I repay the goodness of such a brother! I would accept in gratitude the hand of the Count, did not my feelings assure me I should be miserable. I admire his character, and esteem his goodness; but alas! — why should I conceal it from you? — My heart is another’s-is another’s, whose noble deeds have won its involuntary regards; and who is yet unconscious of my distinction, one who shall for ever remain in ignorance of it.” The idea of Alleyn flashed into the mind of the Earl, and he no longer doubted to whom her heart was engaged. “My own sentiments,” said he, “sufficiently inform me of the object of your admiration. You do well to remember the dignity of your sex and of your rank; though I must lament with you, that worth like Alleyn’s is not empowered by fortune to take its standard with nobility.” At Alleyn’s name, the blushes of Mary confirmed Osbert in his discovery. “My child,” said the Countess, “will not resign her tranquillity to a vain and ignoble attachment. She may esteem merit wherever it is found, but she will remember the duty which she owes to her family and to herself, in contracting an alliance which is to support or diminish the ancient consequence of her house. The offers of a man endowed with so much apparent excellence as the Count, and whose birth is equal to your own, affords a prospect too promising of felicity, to be hastily rejected. We will hereafter converse more largely on this subject.” “Never shall you have reason to blush for your daughter,” said Mary, with a modest pride; “but pardon me, Madam, if I entreat that we no more renew a subject so painful to my feelings, and which cannot be productive of good; — for never will I give my hand where my heart does not accompany it.” This was not a time to press the topic; the Countess for the present desisted, and the Earl left the apartment with a heart divided between pity and disappointment. Hope, however, whispered to his wishes, that Mary might in time be induced to admit the addresses of the Count, and he determined not wholly to destroy his hopes.

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CHAPTER X

THE Count was walking on the ramparts of the castle, involved in thought, when Osbert approached; whose lingering step and disappointed air spoke to his heart the rejection of his suit. He told the Count that Mary did not at present feel for him those sentiments of affection which would justify her in accepting his proposals. This information, though it shocked the hopes of the Count, did not entirely destroy them; for he yet believed that time and assiduity might befriend his wishes. While these Noblemen were leaning on the walls of the castle, engaged in earnest conversation, they observed on a distant hill a cloud emerging from the verge of the horizon, whose dusky hue glittered with sudden light; in an instant they descried the glance of arms, and a troop of armed men poured in long succession over the hill, and hurried down its side to the plains below. The Earl thought he recognized the clan of the Baron. It was the Baron himself who now advanced at the head of his people, in search of that revenge which had been hitherto denied him; and who, determined on conquest, had brought with him an host which he thought more than sufficient to overwhelm the castle of his enemy.

The messenger, who had been sent with the challenge, had been detained a prisoner by Malcolm; who in the mean time had hastened his preparations to surprize the castle of Athlin. The detention of his servant had awakened the suspicions of the Earl, and he had taken precautions to guard against the designs of his enemy. He had summoned his clan to hold themselves in readiness for a sudden attack, and had prepared his castle for the worst emergency. He now sent a messenger to the clan with such orders as he judged expedient, arranged his plans within the walls, and took his station on the ramparts to observe the movements of his enemy. The Count, clad in arms, stood by his side. Alleyn was posted with a party within the great gate of the castle.

The Baron advanced with his people, and quickly surrounded the walls. Within all was silent; the castle seemed to repose in security; and the Baron, certain of victory, congratulated himself on the success of the enterprize, when observing the Earl, whose person was concealed in armour, he called to him to surrender himself and his Chief to the arms of Malcolm. The Earl answered the summons with an arrow from his bow, which missing the Baron, pierced one of his attendants. The archers who had been planted behind the walls, now discovered themselves, and discharged a shower of arrows; at the same time every part of the castle appeared thronged with the soldiers of the Earl, who hurled on the heads of the astonished besiegers, lances and other missile weapons with unceasing rapidity. The alarum bell now rung out the signal to that part of the clan without the walls, and they immediately poured upon the enemy, who, confounded by this unexpected attack, had scarcely time to defend themselves. The clang of arms resounded through the air, with the shouts of the victors, and the groans of the dying. The fear of the Baron, which had principally operated on the minds of his people, was now overcome by surprize, and the fear of death; and on the first repulse, they deserted from the ranks in great numbers, and fled to the distant hills. In vain the Baron endeavoured to rally his soldiers, and keep them to the charge; they yielded to a stronger impulse than the menace of their Chief, who was now left with less than half his number at the foot of the walls. The Baron, to whom cowardice was unknown, disdaining to retreat, continued the attack. At length the gates of the castle were thrown open, and a party issued upon the assailants, headed by the Earl and the Count, who divided in quest of Malcolm. The Count fought in vain, and the search of Osbert was equally fruitless; their adversary was no where to be found. Osbert, apprehensive of his gaining admittance to the castle by stratagem, was returning in haste to the gates, when he received the stroke of a sword upon his shoulder; his armour had broke the force of the blow, and the wound it had given was slight. He turned his sword, and facing his enemy, discovered a soldier of Malcolm's who attacked him with a desperate courage. The encounter was furious and long; dexterity and equal valour seemed to animate both the combatants. Alleyn, who observed from his post the danger of the Earl, flew instantly to his assistance; but the crisis of the scene was past ere he arrived; the weapon of Osbert had pierced the side of his adversary, and he fell to the ground. The Earl disarmed him, and holding over him his sword, bade him ask his life. "I have no life to ask," said Malcolm, whose fainting voice the Earl now discovered, "if I had, 'tis death only I would accept from you. O! cursed-" He would have finished the sentence, but his wound flowed apace, and he fainted with loss of blood. The Earl threw down his sword, and calling a party of his people, he committed to them the care of the Baron, and ordered them to proceed and seize the castle of Dunbayne. Understanding their Chief was mortally wounded, the remains of Malcolm's army had fled from the walls. The people of the Earl proceeded without interruption, and took possession of the castle without opposition.

The wounds of the Baron were examined when he reached Dunbayne, and a dubious sentence of the event was pronounced. His countenance marked the powerful workings of his mind, which seemed labouring with an unknown evil; he threw his eyes eagerly round the apartment, as if in search of some object which was not present. After several attempts to speak, “Flatter me not,” said he, “with hopes of life; it is flitting fast away; but while I have breath to speak, let me see the Baroness.” She came, and hanging over his couch in silent horror, received his words: “I have injured you, Madam, I fear beyond reparation. In these last few moments let me endeavour to relieve my conscience by discovering to you my guilt and my remorse.” The Baroness started, fearful of the coming sentence. “You had a son.” “What of my son?” “You had a son, whom my boundless ambition doomed to exile from his parents and his heritage, and who I caused you to believe died in your absence.” “Where is my child!” exclaimed the Baroness. “I know not,” resumed Malcolm, “I committed him to the care of a man and woman who then lived on a remote part of my lands, but a few years after they disappeared, and I have never heard of them since. The boy passed for a foundling whom I had saved from perishing. One servant only I entrusted with the secret; the rest were imposed upon. Thus far I tell you, Madam, to prompt you to enquiry, and to assuage the agonies of a bleeding conscience. I have other deeds-” The Baroness could hear no more; she was carried insensible from the apartment. Laura, shocked at her condition, was informed of its cause, and filial tenderness watched over her with unwearied attention.

In the mean time the Earl, on quitting Malcolm, had returned immediately to the castle, and was the first messenger of that event which would probably avenge the memory of his father, and terminate the distresses of his family. The sight of Osbert, and the news he brought, revived the Countess and Mary, who had retired during the assault into an inner apartment of the castle for greater security, and who had suffered, during that period, all the terrors which their situation could inspire. They were soon after joined by the Count and by Alleyn, whose conduct did not pass unnoticed by the Earl. The cheek of Mary glowed at the relation of this new instance of his worth; and it was Alleyn’s sweet reward to observe her emotion. There was a sentiment in the heart of Osbert which struggled against the pride of birth; he wished to reward the services and the noble spirit of the youth, with the virtues of Mary; but the authority of early prejudice silenced the grateful impulse, and swept from his heart the characters of truth.

The Earl, accompanied by the Count, now hastened to the castle of Dunbayne, to cheer the Baroness and her daughter with their presence. As they approached the castle, the stillness and desolation of the scene bespoke the situation of its lord; his people were entirely dispersed, a few only of his centinels wandered before the eastern gate; who, having made no opposition, were suffered by the Earl’s people to remain. Few of the Baron’s people were to be seen; those few were unarmed, and appeared the effigies of fallen greatness. As the Earl crossed the platform, the remembrance of the past crowded upon his mind. The agonies which he had there suffered, — the image of death which glared upon his sight, aggravated by the bitter and ignominious circumstances which attended his fate; the figure of Malcolm, mighty in injustice, and cruel in power; whose countenance, smiling horribly in triumphant revenge, sent to his heart the stroke of anguish; — each circumstance of torture arose to his imagination in the glowing colours of truth; he shuddered as he passed; and the contrast of the present scene touched his heart with the most affecting sentiments. He saw the innate and active power of justice, which pervades all the circumstances even of this life like vital principle, and shines through the obscurity of human actions to the virtuous, the pure ray of Heaven; — to the guilty, the destructive glare of lightning.

On enquiring for the Baroness, they were told she was in the apartment of Malcolm, whose moment of dissolution was now approaching. The name of the Count was delivered to the Baroness, and overheard by the Baron, who desired to see him. Louisa went out to receive her noble relation with all the joy which a meeting so desirable and so unlooked for, could inspire. On seeing Osbert, her tears flowed fast, and she thanked him for his generous care, in a manner that declared a deep sense of his services. Leaving him, she conducted the Count to Malcolm, who lay on his couch surrounded with the stillness and horrors of death. He raised his languid head, and discovered a countenance wild and terrific, whose ghastly aspect was overspread with the paleness of death. The beauteous Laura, overcome by the scene, hung like a drooping lily over his couch, dropping fast her tears. “My lord,” said Malcolm, in a low tone, “you see before you a wretch, anxious to relieve the agony of a guilty mind. My vices have destroyed the peace of this lady, — have robbed her of a son-but she will disclose to you the secret guilt, which I have now no time to tell: I have for some years received, as you now well know, the income of those foreign lands which are her due; as a small reparation for the injuries she has sustained, I bequeath to her all the possessions which I lawfully inherit, and resign her into your protection. To ask oblivion of the past of you, Madam, and of you, my Lord, is what I dare not do; yet it would be some consolation to my departing spirit, to be assured of your forgiveness.” The Baroness was too much affected to reply but by a look of assent; the Count assured him of forgiveness, and besought him to compose his mind for his approaching fate. “Composure, my Lord, is not for me; my Life has been marked with vice, and my death with the bitterness of fruitless remorse. I have understood virtue, but I have loved vice. I do not now lament that I am punished, but that I have deserved punishment.” The Baron sunk on his couch, and in a few moments after expired in a strong sigh. Thus terminated the life of a man, whose understanding might have reached the happiness of virtue, but whose actions displayed the features of vice.

From this melancholy scene, the Baroness, with the Count and Laura, retired to her apartment, where the Earl awaited their return with anxious solicitude. The sternness of justice for a moment relaxed when he heard of Malcolm’s death; his heart would have sighed with compassion, had not the remembrance of his father crossed his mind, and checked the impulse. “I can now, Madam,” said he, addressing the Baroness, “restore you a part of those possessions which were once your Lord’s, and which ought to have been the inheritance of your son; this castle from henceforth is yours; I resign it to its lawful owner.” The Baroness was overcome with the remembrance of his services, and could scarcely thank him but with her tears. The servant whom the Baron had mentioned as the confidant of his iniquities, was sent for, and interrogated concerning the infant he had charge of. From him, however, little comfort was received; for he could only tell that he had conveyed the child, by the orders of his master, to a cottage on the furthest borders of his estates, where he had delivered it to the care of a woman, who there lived with her husband. These people received at the same time a sum of money for its support, with a promise of future supplies. For some years he had been punctual in the payment of the sums entrusted to him by the Baron, but at length he yielded to the temptation of withholding them for his own use; and on enquiring for the people some years after, he found they were gone from the place. The conditions of the Baroness’s pardon to the man depended on his endeavours to repair the injury he had promoted, by a strict search for the people to whom he had committed her child. She now consulted with her friends on the best means to be pursued in this business, and immediately sent off messengers to different parts of the country to gather information.

The Baroness was now released from oppression and imprisonment; she was reinstated in her ancient possessions, to which were added all the hereditary lands of Malcolm, together with his personal fortune: she was surrounded by those whom she most loved, and in the midst of a people who loved her; yet the consequence of the Baron’s guilt had left in her heart one drop of gall which embittered each source of happiness, and made her life melancholy and painful.

The Count was now her visitor; she was much consoled by his presence; and Laura’s hours were often enlivened by the conversation of the Earl, to whom her heart was tenderly attached, and whose frequent visits to the castle were devoted to love and her.

The felicity of Matilda now appeared as perfect and as permanent as is consistent with the nature of sublunary beings. Justice was done to the memory of her Lord, and her beloved son was spared to bless the evening of her days. The father of Laura had ever been friendly to the house of Athlin, and her delicacy felt no repugnance to the union which Osbert solicited. But her happiness, whatever it might appear, was incomplete; she saw the settled melancholy of Mary, for love still corroded her heart and notwithstanding her efforts, shaded her countenance. The Countess wished to produce those nuptials with the Count which she thought would re-establish the peace of her child, and insure her future felicity. She omitted no opportunity of pressing his suit, which she managed with a delicacy that rendered it less painful to Mary; whose words, however, were few in reply, and who could seldom bear that the subject should ever be long continued. Her settled aversion to the addresses of the Count, at length baffled the expectations of Matilda, and shewed her the fallacy of her efforts. She thought it improper to suffer the Count any longer to nourish in his heart a vain hope; and she reluctantly commissioned the Earl to undeceive him on this point.

With the Baroness, month after month still elapsed in fruitless search of her son; the people with whom he had been placed were no where to be found, and no track was discovered which might lead to the truth. The distress of the Baroness can only be imagined; she resigned herself, in calm despair, to mourn in silence the easy confidence which had entrusted her child to the care of those who had betrayed him. Though happiness was denied her, she was unwilling to withhold it from those whom it awaited; and at length yielded to the entreaties of the Earl, and became its advocate with Laura, for the nuptials which were to unite their fate.

The Earl introduced the Countess and Mary to the castle of Dunbayne. Similarity of sentiment and disposition united Matilda and the Baroness in a lasting friendship. Mary and Laura were not less pleased with each other. The dejection of the Count at sight of Mary, declared the ardour of his passion, and would have awakened in her breast something more than compassion, had not her heart been pre-occupied. Alleyn, who could think of Mary only, wandered through the castle of Athlin a solitary being, who fondly haunts the spot where his happiness lies buried. His prudence formed resolutions, which his passion as quickly broke; and cheated by love, though followed by despair, he delayed his departure from day to day, and the illusion of yesterday continued to be the illusion of the morrow. The Earl, attached to his virtues, and grateful for his services, would have bestowed on him every honour but that alone which could give him happiness, and which his pride would have suffered him to accept. Yet the honours which he refused, he refused with a grace so modest, as to conciliate kindness rather than wound generosity.

In a gallery on the North side of the castle, which was filled with pictures of the family, hung a portrait of Mary. She was drawn in the dress which she wore on the day of the festival, when she was led by the Earl into the hall, and presented as the partner of Alleyn. The likeness was striking, and expressive of all the winning grace of the original. As often as Alleyn could steal from observation, be retired to this gallery, to contemplate the portrait of her who was ever present to his imagination: here he could breath that sigh which her presence restrained, and shed those tears which her presence forbade to flow. As he stood one day in this place wrapt in melancholy musing, his ear was struck with the notes of sweet music; they seemed to issue from the bottom of the gallery. The instrument was touched with an exquisite expression, and in a voice whose tones floated on the air in soft undulations, he distinguished the following words, which he remembered to be an ode composed by the Earl, and presented to Mary, who had set it to music the day before.

MORNING

Darkness! through thy chilling glooms
Weakly trembles twilight grey;
Twilight fades-and Morning comes,
And melts thy shadows swift away!

She comes in her ætherial car,
Involv'd in many a varying hue;
And thro' the azure shoots afar,
Spirit-light-and life anew!

Her breath revives the drooping flowers,
Her ray dissolves the dews of night;
Recalls the sprightly-moving hours.
And the green scene unveils in light!

Her's the fresh gale that wanders wild
O'er mountain top, and dewy glade;
And fondly steals the breath, beguil'd,
Of ev'ry flow'r in every shade.

Mother of Roses-bright Aurora! — hail!
Thee shall the chorus of the hours salute,
And song of early birds from ev'ry vale,
And blithesome horn, and fragrant zephyr mute!

And oft as rising o'er the plain,
Thou and thy roseate Nymphs appear,
This simple song in choral strain,
From rapturing Bards shall meet thine ear.

CHORUS

Dance ye lightly-lightly on!
'Tis the bold lark thro' the air,
Hails your beauties with his song;
Lightly-lightly fleeting fair!

Entranced in the sweet sounds, he had proceeded some steps down the gallery, when the music ceased. He stopped. After a short pause it returned, and as he advanced he distinguished these words, sung in a low voice mournfully sweet:

In solitude I mourn thy reign,
Ah! youth beloved-but loved in vain!

The voice was broken and lost in sobs; the chords of the lute were wildly struck: and in a few moments silence ensued. He stepped on towards the spot whence the sounds had proceeded, and through a door which was left open, he discovered Mary hanging over her lute dissolved in tears. He stood for some moments absorbed in mute admiration, and unobserved by Mary, who was lost in her tears, till a sigh which escaped him, recalled her to reality; she raised her eyes, and beheld the object of her secret sorrows. She arose in confusion; the blush on her cheek betrayed her heart; she was retiring in haste from Alleyn, who remained at the entrance of the room the statue of despair, when she was intercepted by the Earl, who entered by the door she was opening; her eyes were red with weeping; he glanced on her a look of surprize and displeasure, and passed on to the gallery followed by Alleyn, who was now awakened from his trance. “From you Alleyn,” said the Earl, in a tone of displeasure, “I expected other conduct; on your word I relied, and your word has deceived me.” “Hear me, my Lord,” returned the youth, “your confidence I have never abused; hear me.” “I have now no time for parley,” replied Osbert, “my moments are precious; some future hour of leisure may suffice.” So saying, he walked away, with an abrupt haughtiness, which touched the soul of Alleyn, who disdained to pursue him with further explanation. He was now completely wretched. The same accident which had unveiled to him the heart of Mary, and the full extent of that happiness which fate with-held, confirmed him in despair. The same accident had exposed the delicacy of her he loved to a cruel shock, and had subjected his honour to suspicion; and to a severe rebuke from him, by whom it was his pride to be respected, and for whose safety he had suffered imprisonment, and encountered death.

Mary had quitted the closet distressed and perplexed. She perceived the mistake of the Earl, and it shocked her. She wished to undeceive him; but he was gone to the castle of Dunbayne, to pay one of those visits which were soon to conclude in the nuptials, and whence he did not return till evening. The scene which he had witnessed in the morning, involved him in tumult of distress. He considered the mutual passion which filled the bosom of his sister and Alleyn; he had surprized them in a solitary apartment; he had observed the tender and melancholy air of Alleyn, and the tears and confusion of Mary; and he at first did not hesitate to believe that the interview had been appointed. In the heat of his displeasure he had rejected the explanation of Alleyn with a haughty resentment, which the late scene alone could have excited, and which the delusion it had occasioned alone could excuse. Cooler consideration however, brought to his mind the delicacy and the amiable pride of Mary, and the integrity of Alleyn; and he accused himself of a too hasty decision. The zealous services of Alleyn came to his heart; he repented that he had treated him so rigorously; and on his return enquired for him, that he might hear an explanation, and that he might soften the asperity of his former behaviour.

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CHAPTER XI

ALLEYN was no where to be found. The Earl went himself in quest of him, but without success. As he returned from the terrace, chagrined and disappointed, he observed two persons cross the platform at some distance before him; and he could perceive by the dim moon-light which fell upon the spot, that they were not of the castle. He called to them: no answer was returned; but at the sound of his voice they quickened their pace and almost instantly disappeared in the darkness of the ramparts. Surprized at this phenomenon, the Earl followed with hasty steps, and endeavoured to pursue the way they had taken. He walked on silently, but there was no sound to direct his steps. When he came to the extremity of the rampart, which formed the North angle of the castle, he stopped to examine the spot, and to listen if any thing was stirring. No person was to be seen, and all was hushed. After he had stood some time surveying the rampart, he heard the low restrained voice of a person unknown, but the distance prevented his distinguishing the subject of the conversation. The voice seemed to approach the place where he stood. He drew his sword, and watched in silence their motions. They continued to advance, till, suddenly stopping, they turned, and took a long survey of the fabric. Their discourse was conducted in a low tone; but the Earl could discover by the vehemence of their gesture, and the caution of their steps, that they were upon some design dangerous to the peace of the castle. Having finished their examination, they turned again towards the place where the Earl still remained; the shade of a high turret concealed him from their view, and they continued to approach till they arrived within a short space of him, when they turned through a ruined arch-way of the castle, and were lost in the dark recesses of the pile. Astonished at what he had seen, Osbert hastened to the castle, whence he dispatched some of his people in search of the unknown fugitives; he accompanied some of his domestics to the spot where they had last disappeared. They entered the arch-way, which led to a decayed part of the castle; they followed over broken pavement the remains of a passage, which was closed by a low obscure door almost concealed from sight by the thick ivy which overshadowed it. On opening this door, they descended a flight of steps which led under the castle, so extremely narrow and broken as to make the descent both difficult and dangerous. The powerful damps of long pent-up vapours extinguished their light, and the Earl and his attendants were compelled to remain in utter darkness, while one of them went round to the habitable part of the castle to relume the lamp. While they awaited in silence the return of light, a short breathing was distinctly heard at intervals, near the place where they stood. The servants shook with fear, and the Earl was not wholly unmoved. They remained entirely silent, listening its return, when a sound of footsteps slowly stealing through the vault, startled them. The Earl demanded who passed; — he was answered only by the deep echoes of his voice. They clashed their swords and had advanced, when the steps hastily retired before them. The Earl rushed forward, pursuing the sound, till overtaking the person who fled, he seized him; a short scuffle ensued; the strength of Osbert was too powerful for his antagonist, who was nearly overcome, when the point of a sword from an unknown hand pierced his side, he relinquished his grasp, and fell to the ground. His domestics, whom the activity of their master had outran, now came up; but the assassins, whoever they were, had accomplished their escape, for the sound of their steps was quickly lost in the distance of the vaults. They endeavored to raise the Earl, who lay speechless on the ground; but they knew not how to convey him from that place of horror, for they were yet in total darkness, and unacquainted with the place. In this situation, every moment of delay seemed an age. Some of them tried to find their way to the entrance, but their efforts were defeated by the darkness, and the ruinous situation of the place. The light at length appeared, and discovered the Earl insensible, and weltering in his blood. He was conveyed into the castle, where the horror of the Countess on seeing him borne into the hall, may be easily imagined. By the help of proper applications he was restored to life; his wound was examined, and found to be dangerous; he was carried to bed in a state which gave very faint hopes of recovery. The astonishment of the Countess, on hearing the adventure, was equalled only by her distress. All her conjectures concerning the designs, and the identity of the assassin, were vague and uncertain. She knew not on whom to fix the stigma; nor could discover any means by which to penetrate this mysterious affair. The people who had remained in the vaults to pursue the search, now returned to Matilda. Every recess of the castle, and every part of the ramparts, had been explored, yet no one could be found; and the mystery of the proceeding was heightened by the manner in which the men had effected their escape.

Mary watched over her brother in silent anguish, yet she strove to conceal her distress, that she might encourage the Countess to hope. The Countess endeavoured to resign herself to the event with a kind of desperate fortitude. There is a certain point of misery, beyond which the mind becomes callous, and acquires a sort of artificial calm. Excess of misery may be said to blast the vital powers of feeling, and by a natural consequence consumes its own principle. Thus it was with Matilda; a long succession of trials had reduced her to a state of horrid tranquillity, which followed the first shock of the present event. It was not so with Laura; young in misfortune, and gay in hope, she saw happiness fade from her grasp, with a warmth of feeling untouched by the chill of disappointment. When the news of the Earl's situation reached her, she was overcome with affliction, and pined in silent anguish. The Count hastened to Osbert, but grief sat heavy at his heart, and he had no power to offer to others the comfort which he wanted himself.

A fever, which was the consequence of his wounds, added to the danger of the Earl, and to the despair of his family. During this period, Alleyn had not been seen at the castle; and his absence at this time, raised in Mary a variety of distressing apprehensions. Osbert enquired for him, and wished to see him. The servant who had been sent to his father's cottage, brought word that it was some days since he had been there, and that nobody knew whither he was gone. The surprize was universal; but the effect it produced was various and opposite. A collection of strange and concomitant circumstances, now forced a suspicion on the mind of the Countess, which her heart, and the remembrance of the former conduct of Alleyn, at once condemned. She had heard of what passed between the Earl and him in the gallery; his immediate absence, the event which followed, and his subsequent flight, formed a chain of evidence which compelled her, with the utmost reluctance, to believe him concerned in the affair which had once more involved her house in misery. Mary had too much confidence in her knowledge of his character, to admit a suspicion of this nature. She rejected, with instant disdain, the idea of uniting Alleyn with dishonour; and that he should be guilty of an action so base as the present, soared beyond all the bounds of possibility. Yet she felt a strange solicitude concerning him, and apprehension for his safety tormented her incessantly. The anguish in which he had quitted the apartment, her brother's injurious treatment, and his consequent absence, all conspired to make her fear that despair had driven him to commit some act of violence on himself.

The Earl, in the delirium of the fever, raved continually of Laura and of Alleyn; they were the sole subjects of his ramblings. Seizing one day the hand of Mary, who sat mournfully by his bed-side, and looking for some time pensively in her face, "weep not, my Laura," said he, "Malcolm, nor all the powers on earth shall tear you from me; his walls-his guards-what are they? I'll wrest you from his hold, or perish. I have a friend whose valour will do much for us; — a friend-O! name him not; these are strange times; beware of trusting. I could have given him my very life-but not-I will not name him." Then starting to the other side of the bed, and looking earnestly towards the door with an expression of sorrow not to be described, "not all the miseries which my worst enemy has heaped upon me; not all the horrors of imprisonment and death, have ever touched my soul with a sting so sharp as thy unfaithfulness." Mary was so much shocked by this scene, that she left the room and retired to her own apartment to indulge the agony of grief it occasioned.

The situation of the Earl grew daily more alarming; and the fever, which had not yet reached its crisis, kept the hopes and fears of his family suspended. In one of his lucid intervals, addressing himself to the Countess in the most pathetic manner, he requested, that as death might probably soon separate him for ever from her he most loved, he might see Laura once again before he died. She came, and weeping over him, a scene of anguish ensued too poignant for description. He gave her his last vows; she took of him a last look; and with a breaking heart tearing herself away, was carried to Dunbayne in a state of danger little inferior to his.

The agitation he had suffered during this interview, caused a return of phrenzy more violent than any fit he had yet suffered; exhausted by it, he at length sunk into a sleep, which continued without interruption for near four and twenty hours. During this time his repose was quiet and profound, and afforded the Countess and Mary, who watched him alternately, the consolations of hope. When he awoke he was perfectly sensible, and in a very altered state from that he had been in a few hours before. The crisis of the disorder was now past, and from that time it rapidly declined till he was restored to perfect health.

The joy of Laura, whose health gradually returned with returning peace, and that of his family, was such as the merits of the Earl deserved. This joy, however, suffered a short interruption from the Count of Santmorin, who, entering one morning the apartment of the Baroness, with letters in his hand, came to acquaint her that he had just received news of the death of a distant relation, who had bequeathed him some estates of value, to which it was necessary he should immediately lay claim; and that he was, therefore, obliged, however reluctantly, to set off for Switzerland without delay. Though the Baroness rejoiced with all his friends, at his good fortune, she regretted, with them, the necessity of his abrupt departure. He took leave of them, and particularly of Mary, for whom his passion was still the same, with much emotion;

and it was some time ere the space he had left in their society was filled up, and ere they resumed their wonted cheerfulness.

Preparations were now making for the approaching nuptials, and the day of their celebration was at length fixed. The ceremony was to be performed in a chapel belonging to the castle of Dunbayne, by the chaplain of the Baroness. Mary only was to attend as bride-maid; and the Countess also, with the Baroness, was to be present. The absence of the Count was universally regretted; for from his hand the Earl was to have received his bride. The office was now to be supplied by a neighbouring Laird, whom the family of the Baroness had long esteemed. At the earnest request of Laura, Mary consented to spend the night preceding the day of marriage, at the castle of Dunbayne. The day so long and so anxiously expected by the Earl at length arrived. The morning was extremely fine, and the joy which glowed in his heart seemed to give additional splendour to the scene around him. He set off, accompanied by the Countess, for the castle of Dunbayne. He anticipated the joy with which he should soon retrace the way he then travelled, with Laura by his side, whom death alone could then separate from him. On their arrival they were received by the Baroness, who enquired for Mary; and the Countess and Osbert were thrown into the utmost consternation, when they learned that she had not been seen at the castle. The nuptials were again deferred; the castle was a scene of universal confusion. The Earl returned home instantly to dispatch his people in search of Mary. On enquiry, he learned that the servants who had attended her, had not been heard of since their departure with their lady. Still more alarmed by this intelligence he rode himself in pursuit, yet not knowing which course to take. Several days were employed in a fruitless search; no footstep of her flight could be traced.

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CHAPTER XII

MARY, in the mean time, suffered all the terror which her situation could excite. On her way to Dunbayne, she had been overtaken by a party of armed men, who seized her bridle, and after engaging her servants in a feigned resistance, carried her off senseless. On recovering, she found herself travelling through a forest, whose glooms were deepened by the shades of night. The moon, which was now up, glancing through the trees, served to shew the dreary aspect of the place, and the number of men who surrounded her; and she was seized with a terror that almost deprived her of reason. They travelled all night, during which a profound silence was observed. At the dawn of day she found herself on the skirts of a heath, to whose wide desolation her eye could discover no limits. Before they entered on the waste, they halted at the entrance of a cave, formed in a rock, which was overhung with pine and fir; where, spreading their breakfast on the grass, they offered refreshments to Mary, whose mind was too much distracted to suffer her to partake of them. She implored them in the most moving accents, to tell her from whom they came, and whither they were carrying her; but they were insensible to her tears and her entreaties, and she was compelled to await, in silent terror, the extremity of her fate. They pursued their journey over the wilds, and towards the close of day approached the ruins of an abbey, whose broken arches and lonely towers arose in gloomy grandeur through the obscurity of evening. It stood the solitary inhabitant of the waste, — a monument of mortality and of ancient superstition, and the frowning majesty of its aspect seemed to command silence and veneration. The chilly dews fell thick, and Mary, fatigued in body, and harassed in mind, lay almost expiring on her horse, when they stopped under an arch of the ruin. She was not so ill as to be insensible to the objects around her; the awful solitude of the place. and the solemn aspect of the fabric, whose effect was heightened by the falling glooms of evening, chilled her heart with horror; and when they took her from the horse, she shrieked in the agonies of a last despair. They bore her over loose stones to a part of the building, which had been formerly the cloisters of the abbey, but which was now fallen to decay, and overgrown with ivy. There was, however, at the extremity of these cloisters a nook, which had withstood with hardier strength the ravages of time; the roof was here entire, and the shattered stanchions of the casements still remained. Hither they carried Mary, and laid her almost lifeless on the grassy pavement, while some of the ruffians hastened to light a fire of the heath and sticks they could pick up. They took out their provisions, and placed themselves round the fire, where they had not long been seated, when the sound of distant thunder foretold an approaching storm. A violent storm, accompanied with peals which shook the pile, came on. They were sheltered from the heaviness of the rain; but the long and vivid flashes of lightning which glanced through the casements, alarmed them all. The shrieks of Mary were loud and continued; and the fears of the ruffians did not prevent their uttering dreadful imprecations at her distress. One of them, in the fury of his resentment, swore she should be gagged; and seizing her resistless hands to execute the purpose, her cries redoubled. The servants who had betrayed her, were not yet so entirely lost to the feelings of humanity, as to stand regardless of her present distress; though they could not resist the temptations of a bribe, they were unwilling their lady should be loaded with unnecessary misery. They opposed the ruffians; a dispute ensued; and the violence of the contest arose so high, that they determined to fight for the decision. Amid the peals of thunder, the oaths and execrations of the combatants, added terror to the scene. The strength of the ruffians were superior to that of their opponents; and Mary; beholding victory deciding against herself, uttered a loud scream, when the attention of the whole party was surprized by the sound of a footstep in the cloister. Immediately after a man rushed into the place, and drawing his sword, demanded the cause of the tumult. Mary, who lay almost expiring on the ground, now raised her eyes; but what were her sensations, when she raised them to Alleyn-who now stood before her petrified with horror. Before he could fly to her assistance, the attacks of the ruffians obliged him to defend himself; he parried their blows for some time, but he must inevitably have yielded to the force of numbers, had not the trampling of feet, which fast approached, called off for a moment their attention. In an instant the place was filled with men. The astonishment of Alleyn was, if possible, now increased; for the Earl, followed by a party, now entered. The Earl, when he perceived Alleyn, stood at the entrance, aghast. — But resuming his firmness, he bade him defend himself. The loud voice of Osbert re-called Mary, and observing their menacing attitudes, she collected just strength sufficient to throw herself between them. Alleyn dropped his sword, and raised her from the ground; when the Earl rudely pushed him away, and snatched her to his heart. “Hear me, Osbert,” was all she could say. “Declare who brought her hither,” said the Earl sternly to Alleyn. “I know not,” replied he, “you must ask those men whom your people have secured. If my life is hateful to you, strike! and spare me the anguish of defending it against the brother of Mary." The Earl hesitated in surprize, and the generosity of Alleyn called a blush into his face. He was going to have replied, but was interrupted by some of his men, who had been engaged in a sharp contest with the ruffians, two of whom they had secured, and now brought to their lord; the rest were fled. In the person of one of them, the Earl discovered his own servant, who sinking in his presence with conscious guilt, fell on his knees imploring mercy. "Wretch," said the Earl, seizing him, and holding his sword over his head, "declare by whose authority you have acted, and all you know of the affair; — remember your life depends on the truth of your assertions." "I'll tell the truth, my Lord," replied the trembling wretch, "and nothing else as I hope for mercy. About three weeks ago, — no, it is not so much; about a fortnight ago, when I was sent on a message to the lady Malcolm, the Count de Santmorin's gentleman-" "The Count de Santmorin!" re-echoed the whole company. "But proceed," said Osbert. "The Count de Santmorin's gentleman called me into a private room, where he told me to wait for his master, who would soon be there." "Be quick," said the Earl, "proceed to facts." "I will, my lord; the Count came, and said to me, 'Robert, I have observed you, and I think you can be faithful,' he said so, my lord, — God forgive me!" "Well-well, proceed." "Where was I?" — 'Oh! he said, "I think you can be faithful."' — "Good God! this is beyond endurance; you trifle, rascal, with my patience, to give your associates time for escape; be brief, or you die." "I will, my lord, as I hope for life. He took from his pocket a handful of gold, which he gave me; — 'can you be secret, Robert?' said he, — 'yes, my lord Count,' said I, God forgive me! — 'Then observe what I say to you. You often attend your young lady in her rides to Dunbayne.'" — "What, then it was the Count de Santmorin who commissioned you to undertake this scheme!" "Not me only, my lord." "Answer my question; was the Count the author of this plot?" "He was, my lord." "And where is he?" said Osbert, in a stern voice. "I know not, as I am a living creature. He embarked, as you know, my lord, not far from the castle of Dunbayne, and we were travelling to a distant part of the coast to meet him, when we were all to have set sail for Switzerland." "You cannot be ignorant of the place of your destination," said the Earl, turning to the other prisoner; "where is your employer?" "That is not for me to tell," said he, in a sullen tone. "Reveal the truth," said the Earl, turning towards him the point of his sword, "or we will find a way to make you." "The place where we were to meet the Count, had no name." "You know the way to it." "I do." "Then lead me thither." "Never!" — "Never! Your life shall answer the refusal," said Osbert, pointing the sword to his breast. "Strike!" said the Count, throwing off the cloak which had concealed him; "strike! and rid me of a being which passion has made hateful to me; — strike! — and make the first moment of my entering this place, the last of my guilt." A faint scream was uttered by Mary; the small remains of her strength forsook her, and she sunk on the pavement. The Earl started a few steps back, and stood suspended in wonder. The looks of the whole group defy description. "Take a sword," said the Earl, recovering himself, "and defend your life." "Never, my lord, never! Though I have been hurried by the force of passion to rob you of a sister, I will not aggravate my guilt by the murder of the brother. Your life has already been once endangered through my means, though not by my design; Heaven knows the anguish which that accident cost me. The impetuosity of passion impelled me onward with irresistible fury; it urged me to violate the sacred duties of gratitude, of friendship-and of humanity. To live in shame, and in the consciousness of guilt, is a living death. With your sword do justice to yourself and virtue; and spare me the misery of long comparing what I am, with what I was." "Away, you trifle," said the Earl, "defend yourself." The Count repeated his refusal. "And you, villain," said Osbert, turning to the man who had confessed the plot, "you pretended ignorance of the presence of the Count; your perfidy shall be rewarded." "As I now plead for mercy, my lord, I knew not he was here." "The fellow speaks truth," said the Count, "he was ignorant of the place where he was to meet me. I was approaching this spot to discover myself to the dear object of my passion, when your people surprized and took me." Mary confirmed the testimony of the Count, by declaring that she had not till that moment seen him since she quitted the castle of Dunbayne. She pleaded for his life, and also for the servants, who had opposed the cruelty of their comrades. "I am no assassin," said the Earl, "let the Count take a sword, and fight me on equal terms." — "Shall virtue be reduced to an equality with vice?" said the Count, "No, my lord, — plunge your sword in my heart, and expiate my guilt." The Earl still urged him to defence; and the Count still persisted in refusal. Touched by the recollection of past friendship, and grieved that a soul like the Count's should ever be under the dominion of vice, Osbert threw down his sword, and, overcome with a sort of tenderness-"Go, my lord, your person is safe; and if it is necessary to your peace, — stretching forth his hand, — take my forgiveness." The Count, overcome by his generosity, and by a sense of his own unworthiness, shrunk back: "Forbear, my lord, to wound by your goodness, a mind already too sensible of its own debasement; nor excite, by your generosity, a remorse too keen to be endured. Your reproaches I can bear, — your vengeance I solicit! — but your kindness inflicts a torture too exquisite for my soul." "Never, my lord," continued he, the big tear swelling in his eye, "never more shall your friendship be polluted by my unworthiness. Since you will not satisfy justice, by taking my life, I go to lose it in the obscurity of distant regions. Yet, ere I go, suffer me to make one last request to you, and to that dear lady whom I have thus injured, and on whom my eyes now gaze for the last time, — suffer me to hope that you will blot from your memory the existence of Santmorin." He concluded the sentence with a groan, which vibrated upon the hearts of all present; and without waiting for a reply, hurried from the scene. The Earl had turned away his head in pity, and when he again looked round to reply, perceived that the Count was departed; he followed his steps through the cloister, — he called-but he was gone.

Alleyn had observed the Count with a mixture of pity and admiration; and he sighed for the weakness of human nature. "How," said the Earl, returning eagerly to Alleyn, — "how can I recompense you for my injurious suspicions, and my injurious treatment? — How can you forgive, or I forget, my injustice? But the mystery of this affair, and the doubtful appearance of circumstances, must speak for me." "O! let us talk no more of this, my lord," replied Alleyn; with emotion; "let us only rejoice at the safety of our dear lady, and offer her the comfort she is so much in want of." The fire was re-kindled, and the Earl's servants laid before him some wine, and other provisions. Mary, who had not tasted any food since she left the castle, now took some wine; it revived her, and enabled her to take other nourishment. She enquired, what happy circumstance had enabled the Earl to trace her route. "Ever since I discovered your flight," said he, "I have been in pursuit of you. Chance directed me over these wilds, when I was driven by the storm to seek shelter among these ruins. The light, and an uproar of voices, drew me to the cloister, where, to my unutterable astonishment, I discovered you and Alleyn: Spare me the remembrance of what followed." Mary wished to enquire what brought Alleyn to the place; but delicacy kept her silent. Osbert, however, whose anxiety for his sister had hitherto allowed him to attend only to her, now relieved her from the pain of lengthened suspense. "By what strange accident was you brought hither?" said he to Alleyn, "and what motive has induced you so long to absent yourself from the castle?" At the last question, Alleyn blushed, and an involuntary sigh escaped him. Mary understood the blush and the sigh, and awaited his reply in trembling emotion. "I fled, my lord, from your displeasure, and to tear myself from an object too dangerous, alas! for my peace. I sought to wear away in absence, a passion which must ever be hopeless, but which, I now perceive, is interwoven with my existence. — But forgive, my lord, the intrusion of a subject which is painful to us all. With some money, and a few provisions, I left my father's cottage; and since that time have wandered over the country a forlorn and miserable being, passing my nights in the huts which chance threw in my way, and designing to travel onward, and to enlist myself in the service of my country. Night overtook me on these wastes, and as I walked on comfortless and bewildered, I was alarmed by distant cries of distress. I quickened my pace; but the sound which should have directed my steps was ceased, and chilling silence ensued. As I stood musing, and uncertain which course to take, I observed a feeble light break through the gloom; I endeavoured to follow its rays; it led me to these ruins, whose solemn appearance struck me with a momentary dread. A confused murmur of voices from within struck my ear; as I stood hesitating whether to enter, I again heard those shrieks which had alarmed me. I followed the sound; it led me to the entrance of this cloister, at the extremity of which I discovered a party of men engaged in fight; I drew my sword and rushed forward; and the sensations which I felt, on perceiving the lady Mary, cannot be expressed!" "Still-still Heaven destines you the deliverer of Mary!" said the Earl, gratitude swelling in his eyes; "O! that I could remove that obstacle which withholds you from your just reward." A responsive sigh stole from Alleyn, and he remained silent. Never was the struggle of opposing feelings more violent, than that which now agitated the bosom of the Earl. The worth of Alleyn arose more conspicuously bright from every shade with which misfortune had veiled it. His noble and disinterested enthusiasm in the cause of justice, had attached him to the Earl, and had engaged him in a course of enterprizes and of dangers, which it required valour to undertake, and skill and perseverance to perform; and which had produced services for which no adequate reward could be found. He had rescued the Earl from captivity and death; and had twice preserved Mary in dangers. All these circumstances arose in strong reflection to the mind of Osbert; but the darkness of prejudice and ancient pride, opposed their influence, and weakened their effect.

The joy which Mary felt on seeing Alleyn in safety, and still worthy of the esteem she had ever bore him, was dashed by the bitterness of reflection; and reflection imparted a melancholy which added to the langour of illness. At the dawn of day they quitted the abbey, and set forward on their return to the castle; the Earl insisting upon Alleyn's accompanying them. On the way, the minds of the party were variously and silently engaged. The Earl ruminated on the conduct of Alleyn, and the late scene. Mary dwelt chiefly on the virtues of her lover, and on the dangers she had escaped; and Alleyn mused on his defeated purposes, and anticipated future trials. The Earl's thoughts, however, were not so wholly occupied, as to prevent his questioning the servant who had been employed by the Count, concerning the further particulars of his scheme. The words of the Count, importing that he had once already endangered his life, had not escaped the notice of the Earl; though they were uttered in a moment of too much distraction to suffer him to demand an explanation. He now enquired of the man, concerning the mysterious scene of the vaults. “You, I suppose, are not ignorant who were the persons from whom I received my wound.” “I, my lord, had no concern in that affair; wicked as I am, I could not raise my hands against your life.” “But you know who did.” “I— I— ye-yes, my lord, I was afterwards told. But they did not mean to hurt your lordship.” “Not mean to hurt me! — What then were their designs, and who were the people?” “That accident happened long before the Count ever spoke to me of his purpose. Indeed, my lord, I had no hand in it; and Heaven knows how I grieved for your lordship; and-” “Well-well, inform me, who were the persons in the vaults, and what were their design.” “I was told by a fellow servant; but he made me promise to be secret; but it is proper your lordship should know all; and I hope your lordship will forgive me for having listened to it, — ‘Robert,’ said he, as we were talking one day of what had happened, — ‘Robert,’ said he, ‘there is more in this matter than you, or any body thinks; but it is not for me to tell all I know.’ With that, I begged he would tell me what he knew; he still kept refusing. I promised him faithfully I would not tell; and so at last he told me-‘Why, there is my lord Count there, he is in love with our young lady; and to be sure as sweet a lady she is, as ever eyes looked upon; but she don’t like him; and so finding himself refused, he is determined to marry her at any rate; and means some night to get into the castle, and carry her off.’” “What, then! — was it the Count who wounded me? — Be quick in your relation.” “No, my lord, it was not the Count himself-but two of his people, whom he had sent to examine the castle; and particularly the windows of my young lady’s apartment, from whence he designed to have carried her, when every thing was ready for execution. Those men were let within the walls through a way under ground, which leads into the vaults, by my fellow servant, as I afterwards was told; and they escaped through the same way. Their meeting with your lordship was accidental, and they fought only in self-defence; for they had no orders to attack any body.” “And who is the villain that connived at this scheme!” “It was my fellow servant, who fled with the Count’s people, whom he himself let within the ramparts. Forgive me, my lord; but I did not dare tell; he threatened my life, if I betrayed the secret.”

After a journey of fatigue and unpleasant reflections, they arrived, on the second morning at the castle of Athlin. The Countess, during the absence of her son, had endured a state of dreadful suspense. The Baroness, in her friendship, had endeavoured to soothe her distress, by her constant presence; she was engaged in this amiable office when the trampling of horses in the court reached the ears of Matilda. “It is my son,” said she, rising from her chair! — “it is my son; he brings me life or death!” She said no more, but rushed into the hall, and in a moment after clasped her almost expiring daughter to her bosom. The transport of the scene repelled utterance; sobs and tears were all that could be given. The general joy, however, was suddenly interrupted by the Baroness, who had followed Matilda into the hall; and who now fell senseless to the ground; delight yielded to surprize, and to the business of assisting the object of it. On recovering, the Baroness looked wildly round her; — “Was it a vision that I saw, or a reality?” The whole company moved their eyes round the hall, but could discover nothing extraordinary. “It was himself; his very air, his features; that benign countenance which I have so often contemplated in imagination!” Her eyes still seemed in search of some ideal object; and they began to doubt whether a sudden phrenzy had not seized her brain. “Ah! again!” said she, and instantly relapsed. Their eyes were now turned towards the door, on which she had gazed; it was Alleyn who entered, with water which he had brought for the Countess, and on whom the attention of all present was centered. He approached ignorant of what had happened; and his surprize was great, when the Baroness, reviving, fixed her eyes mournfully upon him, and asked him to uncover his arm. — “It is, — it is my Philip!” said she, with strong emotion; “I have, indeed, found my long lost child; that strawberry on his arm confirms the decision. Send for the man who calls himself your father, and for my servant Patrick.” The sensations of the mother and the son may be more easily conceived than described; those of Mary were little inferior to theirs; and the whole company awaited with trembling eagerness the arrival of the two persons whose testimony was to decide this interesting affair. They came. “This young man you call your son?” said the Baroness. “I do, an’ please your ladyship,” he replied, with a degree of confusion which belied his words. When Patrick came, his instant surprize on seeing the old man, declared the truth. “Do you know this person?” said the Baroness to Patrick. “Yes, my lady, I know him too well; it was to him I gave your infant son.” The old man started with surprize-“Is that youth the son of your ladyship?” “Yes!” “Then God forgive me for having thus long detained him from you! but I was ignorant of his birth, and received him into my cottage as a foundling succoured by lord Malcolm’s compassion.” The whole company crowded round them. Alleyn fell at the feet of his mother, and bathed her hand with his tears. — “Gracious God; for what hast thou reserved me!” He could say no more. The Baroness raised him, and again pressed him in transport to her heart. It was some time before either of them could speak; and all present were too much affected to interrupt the silence. At length, the Baroness presented Laura to her brother.

“Such a mother! and have I such a sister!” said he. Laura wept silently upon his neck the joy of her heart. The Earl was the first who recovered composure sufficient to congratulate Alleyn; and embracing him-“O happy moment, when I can indeed embrace you as my brother!” The whole company now poured forth their joy and their congratulations; — all but Mary, whose emotions almost overcame her, and were too powerful for utterance.

The company now adjourned to the drawing-room; and Mary withdrew to take that repose she so much required. She was sufficiently recovered in a few hours to join her friends in the banquetting-room.

After the transports of the scene were subsided-“I have yet much to hope, and much to fear,” said Philip Malcolm, who was yet Alleyn in every thing but in name, “You madam,” addressing the Baroness, — “you will willingly become my advocate with her whom I have so long and so ardently loved.” “May I hope,” continued he, taking tenderly the hand of Mary, who stood trembling by, — “that you have not been insensible to my long attachment, and that you will confirm the happiness which is now offered me?” A smile of ineffable sweetness broke through the melancholy which had long clouded her features, and which even the present discovery had not been able entirely to dissipate, and her eye gave the consent which her tongue refused to utter.

The conversation, for the remainder of the day, was occupied by the subject of the discovery, and with a recital of Mary’s adventure. It was determined that on the morrow the marriage of the Earl should be concluded.

On this happy discovery, the Earl ordered the gates of the castle to be thrown open; mirth and festivity resounded through the walls, and the evening closed in universal rejoicings.

On the following morn, the chapel of the castle was decorated for the marriage of the Earl; who with Laura, came attended by Philip, now Baron Malcolm, by Mary, and the whole family. When they approached the altar, the Earl, addressing himself to his bride, — “Now, my Laura,” said he, “we may celebrate those nuptials which have twice been so painfully interrupted, and which are to crown me with felicity. This day shall unite our families in a double marriage, and reward the worth of my friend. It is now seen, that those virtues which stimulated him to prosecute for another the cause of justice mysteriously urged him to the recovery of his rights. Virtue may for a time be pursued by misfortune, — and justice be obscured by the transient triumphs of vice, — but the power whose peculiar attributes they are, clears away the clouds of error, and even in this world reveals his THRONE OF JUSTICE.”

The Earl stepped forward, and joining the hands of Philip and Mary, — “Surely,” said he, “this is a moment of perfect happiness! — I can now reward those virtues which I have ever loved; and those services to which every gift must be inadequate, but this I now bestow.”

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FICTION

THE TURN OF THE SCREW
& THE ASPERN PAPERS

BY HENRY JAMES

HENRY JAMES, born in New York on 15th April 1843, the elder brother of William James, the philosopher. Educated at Harvard and in England, France, and Switzerland. Settled at Rye, England, in 1869 and became naturalized as a British subject in 1915. Died on 28th February 1916.

THE TURN OF THE SCREW

THE ASPERN PAPERS

HENRY JAMES

LONDON: J. M. DENT & SONS LTD.

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Printed by Odhams (Watford) Ltd.
for
J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd.
Aldine House Bedford St. London
First published in this edition 1935
Last reprinted 1947

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

The two stories by Henry James in this volume show him in his characteristic personal manner of tale-telling, but to entirely different effect, the one leading to tragedy, the other to subtle and delicate comedy. The scene of the first, *The Turn of the Screw*, is laid in an English country house, and the characters are two tragic children, two intermediary grown-ups (one the narrator of the tale), and two ghosts. We must remember that Henry James, like his master Balzac, had a taste for mystery and the macabre which he did not often indulge so cruelly. The second story, *The Aspern Papers*, has its scene in Venice, that Venice to which he often returned in his real and fictive European wanderings. One may recall a letter of his, dated from Palazzo Barbaro, Venice, 23rd June 1907, in which he wrote: '. . . For myself, in this paradise of great household spaces, I kind of feel that even the bribe of the Canal Grande and a *giardinetto* together wouldn't quite reconcile me to the purgatory of a very small, *really* (and not merely relatively) small house. . . .' The fact is, he had every inclination to be housed in a palace, if not one quite so forlorn as that of *The Aspern Papers*. The chief characters there, the two derelict American ladies, and their very alert fellow-countryman with 'the literary heart' who wants to get hold of Jasper Aspern's relics, are perfectly conceived to suit the purpose or plot of the story and educe the other character—the old palace itself! For James was a master in depicting the power, or, if you will, the spirit, of place. Places to him were as significant as the people who lived in them; he was an epicure in old cities, in palaces, and in American, English, or foreign vistas.

In the year when *The Aspern Papers* was written, James was writing a series of critical appreciations of his favourite novelists and tale-tellers, especially the

French, among them Balzac, Flaubert, Stendhal, and Guy de Maupassant. Those who are curious about literary affinities and artistic derivations may find it worth while to trace the influence on him of these masters and follow up the clues afforded by his studies of Balzac, 'that Benedictine of the actual,' and Flaubert, 'the profane anchorite.' Beside that French evidence, we can gain reminders from nearer home. The personal style of the governess's tale in *The Turn of the Screw* recalls that of Dickens's Esther in *Bleak House*, and there are pages in *The Aspern Papers* that have a savour both of Thackeray (in his more intimate vein) and of the Russian master Turgenev. Fielding, Dickens, Thackeray, George Eliot, and his own countryman Hawthorne are cited by him in his Balzac study among 'the living painters of a living time,' 'painters of manners and fashions,' genuine historians even if they do not 'don the uniform.' In that respect Henry James was a true historian too, first among those who lived and wrote as Anglo-American authors. Indeed, he holds a place of his own in the chart of the Modern Novel, which is now making a concerted entry into *Everyman's Library* —a chart he outlined critically as long ago as 1914.[1]

E. R.

The following is a list of the chief works of Henry James, with the date of their first appearance in book form:

A Passionate Pilgrim and Other Tales, 1875; *Transatlantic Sketches*, 1875; *Roderick Hudson*, 1876 (rev. ed. 1879); *The American*, 1877; *Watch and Ward*, 1878; *French Poets and Novelists*, 1878; *The Europeans*, 1878; *Daisy Miller*, 1879; *An International Episode*, 1879; *Four Meetings*, 1879 (published with the two previous works in a two-volume edition); *Hawthorne*, 1879 (English Men of Letters); *The Madonna of the Future and Other Tales*, 1879; *The Diary of a Man of Fifty and A Bundle of Letters*, 1880 (the first of these had appeared in the preceding collection); *Confidence*, 1880; *Washington Square, The Pension Beaurepas, etc.*, 1881; *The Portrait of a Lady*, 1881 (dramatized 1883); *The Siege of London, The Point of View*,

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[1] See his essay on 'The New Novel,' printed in *The Times Literary Supplement* and reprinted in his book, *Notes on Novelists*, that same year.

etc., 1883; *Portraits of Places*, 1883; *Notes on a Collection of Drawings by George Du Maurier*, 1884; *Tales of Three Cities*, 1884; *A Little Tour in France*, 1885; *Stories Revived*, 3 vols., 1885; *The Bostonians*, 1886; *The Princess Casamassima*, 1886; *Partial Portraits*, 1888; *The Aspern Papers, Louisa Pallant, The Modern Warning*, 1888; *The Reverberator*, 1888; *A London Life, The Patagonia, The Lion, Mrs. Temperley*, 1889; *The Tragic Muse*, 1890; *The Lesson of the Master, The Marriages, The Pupil, Brooksmith, The Solution, Sir Edmund Orme*, 1892; *The Private Life, Lord Beaupré, The Visits*, 1893; *The Wheel of Time, Collaboration, Owen Wingrave*, 1893; *The Real Thing and Other Tales*, 1893; *Picture and Text*, 1893; *Essays in London and Elsewhere*, 1893; Theatricals (two comedies): *Tenants, Disengaged*, 1894; *Second Series, The Album, The Reprobate* (*and Theatricals*), 1895; *Terminations, The Death of the Lion, The Coxon Fund, The Middle Years, The Altar of the Dead*, 1895; *Embarrassments, The Figure in the Carpet, Glasses, The Next Time, The Way it came*, 1896; *The Other House*, 1896; *The Spoils of Poynton*, 1897; *What Maisie knew*, 1897; *The Two Magics, The Turn of the Screw, Covering End*, 1898; *In the Cage*, 1898; *The Awkward Age*, 1899; *The Soft Side*, 1900; *The Sacred Fount*, 1901; *The Wings of the Dove*, 1902; *William Wetmore*, 1903; *The Better Sort*, 1903; *The Ambassadors*, 1903; *The Golden Bowl*, 1904; *The Question of Our Speech, The Lesson of Balzac*, 1905; *English Hours*, 1905; *The American Scene*, 1907; *Views and Reviews*, 1908 (a collection of early literary studies); *Julia Bride*, 1909; *Italian Hours*, 1909; *The Finer Grain*, 1910; *The Outcry*, 1911; *A Small Boy and Others*, 1913; *Notes on Novelists*, 1914 (literary studies, chiefly of the nineties); *Notes of a Son and Brother*, 1914; *The Ivory Tower*, 1917; *The Sense of the Past*, 1917; *The Middle Years*, 1917; *Within the Rim and Other Essays*, 1918; *Gabrielle de Bergerac*, 1918 (*Atlantic Monthly*, 1869); *Travelling Companions, etc.*, 1919 (early stories); *The Letters of Henry James*, edited by Percy Lubbock, 1920; *Notes and Reviews* (early literary notes), 1921. Another volume of letters was published as *Theatre and Friendship*, with a commentary by Elizabeth Robins, 1932.

Practically all the above first appeared in periodical form shortly before their reappearance in book form. The journals to which James chiefly contributed were *The North American Review, The Atlantic Monthly, The Nation, The Galaxy, New York Tribune, The Cornhill Magazine, Macmillan's Magazine, Harper's Magazine and Weekly, The Century Magazine, The Parisian*, and *Longman's Magazine*.

Collected editions of his works appeared in 1883 (14 vols.), 1907–17 (26 vols.), 1915–19 (14 vols.), 1921–3 (35 vols.).

Studies or Lives of James have been written by Rebecca West, 1916; F. M. Hueffer, 1916; Pelham Edgar, 1927; Van Wyck Brooks, 1928; Morley Roberts, 1929. A revised form of an early bibliography of James's works by R. Le Roy was published in 1930.

The Turn of the Screw and *The Aspern Papers* are reprinted in Everyman's Library by permission of Martin Secker Ltd. and the Executors of Henry James.

THE TURN OF THE SCREW

'The story will tell,' I took upon myself to reply.

'Oh, I can't wait for the story!'

'The story *won't* tell,' said Douglas; 'not in any literal, vulgar way.'

'More 's the pity then. That 's the only way I ever understand.'

'Won't *you* tell, Douglas?' somebody else inquired.

He sprang to his feet again. 'Yes—to-morrow. Now I must go to bed. Good night.' And, quickly catching up a candlestick, he left us slightly bewildered. From our end of the great brown hall we heard his step on the stair; whereupon Mrs. Griffin spoke. 'Well, if I don't know who she was in love with I know who *he* was.'

'She was ten years older,' said her husband.

'*Raison de plus*—at that age! But it 's rather nice, his long reticence.'

'Forty years!' Griffin put in.

'With this outbreak at last.'

'The outbreak,' I returned, 'will make a tremendous occasion of Thursday night'; and every one so agreed with me that in the light of it we lost all attention for everything else. The last story, however incomplete and like the mere opening of a serial, had been told; we handshook and 'candlestuck,' as somebody said, and went to bed.

I knew the next day that a letter containing the key had, by the first post, gone off to his London apartments; but in spite of—or perhaps just on account of—the eventual diffusion of this knowledge we quite let him alone till after dinner, till such an hour of the evening in fact as might best accord with the kind of emotion on which our hopes were fixed. Then he became as communicative as we could desire, and indeed gave us his best reason for being so. We had it from him again before the fire in the hall, as we had had our mild wonders of the previous night. It appeared that the narrative he had promised to read us really required for a proper intelligence a few words of prologue. Let me say here distinctly, to have done with it, that this narrative, from an exact transcript of my own made much later, is what I shall presently give. Poor Douglas, before his death—when it was in sight—committed to me the manuscript that reached him on the third of these days and that, on the same spot, with immense effect, he began to read to our hushed little circle on the night of the fourth. The departing ladies who had said they would stay didn't, of course, thank heaven, stay: they departed, in consequence of arrangements made, in a rage of curiosity, as they professed, produced by the touches with which he had already worked us up. But that only made his little final auditory more compact and select, kept it round the hearth subject to a common thrill.

The first of these touches conveyed that the written statement took up the date at a point after it had, in a manner, begun. The fact to be in possession of was therefore that his old friend, the youngest of several daughters of a poor country parson, had at the age of twenty, on taking service for the first time in the schoolroom, come up to London, in trepidation, to answer in person an advertisement that had already placed her in brief correspondence with the advertiser. This person proved, on her presenting herself for judgment at a house in Harley Street that impressed her as vast and imposing—this prospective patron proved a gentleman, a bachelor in the prime of life, such a figure as had never risen, save in a dream or an old novel, before a fluttered, anxious girl out of a Hampshire vicarage. One could easily fix his type; it never, happily, dies out. He was handsome and bold and pleasant, off-hand and gay and kind. He struck her, inevitably, as gallant and splendid, but what took her most of all and gave her the courage she afterwards showed was that he put the whole thing to her as a favour, an obligation he should gratefully incur. She figured him as rich, but as fearfully extravagant—saw him all in a glow of high fashion, of good looks, of expensive habits, of charming ways with women. He had for his town residence a big house filled with the spoils of travel and the trophies of the chase; but it was to his country home, an old family place in Essex, that he wished her immediately to proceed.

He had been left, by the death of their parents in India, guardian to a small nephew and a small niece, children of a younger, a military brother whom he had lost two years before. These children were, by the strangest of chances for a man in his position—a lone man without the right sort of experience or a grain of patience—very heavy on his hands. It had all been a great worry and, on his own part doubtless, a series of blunders, but he immensely pitied the poor chicks and had done all he could; had in particular sent them down to his other house, the proper place for them being of course the country, and kept them there from the first with the best people he could find to look after them, parting even with his own servants to wait on them and going down himself, whenever he might, to see how they were doing. The awkward thing was that they had practically no other relations and that his own affairs took up all his time. He had put them in possession of Bly, which was healthy and secure, and had placed at the head of their little establishment—but belowstairs only—an excellent woman, Mrs. Grose, whom he was sure his visitor would like and who had formerly been maid to his mother. She was now housekeeper and was also acting for the time as superintendent to the little girl, of whom, without children of her own, she was by good luck extremely fond. There were plenty of people to help, but of course the young lady who should go down as governess would be in supreme authority. She would also have, in holidays, to look after the small boy, who had been for a term at school—young as he was to be sent, but what else could be done?—and who, as the holidays were about to begin, would be back from one day to the other. There had been for the two children at first a young lady whom they had had the misfortune to lose. She had done for them quite beautifully—she was a most respectable person—till her death, the great awkwardness of which had, precisely, left no alternative but the school for little Miles. Mrs. Grose, since then, in the way of manners and things, had done as she could for Flora; and there were further, a cook, a housemaid, a dairywoman, an old pony, an old groom and an old gardener, all likewise thoroughly respectable.

So far had Douglas presented his picture when someone put a question. 'And what did the former governess die of? Of so much respectability?'

Our friend's answer was prompt. 'That will come out. I don't anticipate.'

'Pardon me—I thought that was just what you *are* doing.'

'In her successor's place,' I suggested, 'I should have wished to learn if the office brought with it:'

'Necessary danger to life?' Douglas completed my thought. 'She did wish to learn, and she did learn. You shall hear to-morrow what she learnt. Meanwhile of course the prospect struck her as slightly grim. She was young, untried, nervous: it was a vision of serious duties and little company, of really great loneliness. She hesitated—took a couple of days to consult and consider. But the salary offered much exceeded her modest measure, and on a second interview she faced the music, she engaged.' And Douglas, with this, made a pause that, for the benefit of the company, moved me to throw in:

'The moral of which was of course the seduction exercised by the splendid young man. She succumbed to it.'

He got up and, as he had done the night before, went to the fire, gave a stir to a log with his foot, then stood a moment with his back to us. 'She saw him only twice.'

'Yes, but that 's just the beauty of her passion.'

A little to my surprise, on this, Douglas turned round to me. 'It *was* the beauty of it. There were others,' he went on, 'who hadn't succumbed. He told her frankly all his difficulty—that for several applicants the conditions had been prohibitive. They were somehow simply afraid. It sounded dull—it sounded strange; and all the more so because of his main condition.'

'Which was——?'

'That she should never trouble him—but never, never: neither appeal nor complain nor write about anything; only meet all questions herself, receive all moneys from his solicitor, take the whole thing over and let him alone. She promised to do this, and she mentioned to me that when, for a moment, disburdened, delighted, he held her hand, thanking her for the sacrifice, she already felt rewarded.'

'But was that all her reward?' one of the ladies asked.

'She never saw him again.'

'Oh!' said the lady; which, as our friend immediately again left us, was the only other word of importance contributed to the subject till, the next night, by the corner of the hearth, in the best chair, he opened the faded red cover of a thin, old-fashioned, gilt-edged album. The whole thing took indeed more nights than one, but on the first occasion the same lady put another question. 'What 's your title?'

'I haven't one.'

'Oh, *I* have!' I said. But Douglas, without heeding me, had begun to read with a fine clearness that was like a rendering to the ear of the beauty of his author's hand.

I

I REMEMBER the whole beginning as a succession of flights and drops, a little see-saw of the right throbs and the wrong. After rising, in town, to meet his appeal I had at all events a couple of very bad days—found all my doubts bristle again, felt indeed sure I had made a mistake. In this state of mind I spent the long hours of bumping swinging coach that carried me to the stopping-place at which I was to be met by a vehicle from the house. This convenience, I was told, had been ordered, and I found, toward the close of the June afternoon, a commodious fly in waiting for me. Driving at that hour, on a lovely day, through a country the summer sweetness of which served as a friendly welcome, my fortitude revived and, as we turned into the avenue, took a flight that was probably but a proof of the point to which it had sunk. I suppose I had expected, or had dreaded, something so dreary that what greeted me was a good surprise. I remember as a thoroughly pleasant impression the broad, clear front, its open windows and fresh curtains and the pair of maids looking out; I remember the lawn and the bright flowers and the crunch of my wheels on the gravel and the clustered tree-tops over which the rooks circled and cawed in the golden sky. The scene had a greatness that made it a different affair from my own scant home, and there immediately appeared at the door, with a little girl in her hand, a civil person who dropped me as decent a curtsy as if I had been the mistress or a distinguished visitor. I had received in Harley Street a narrower notion of the place, and that, as I recalled it, made me think the proprietor still more of a gentleman, suggested that what I was to enjoy might be a matter beyond his promise.

I had no drop again till the next day, for I was carried triumphantly through the following hours by my introduction to the younger of my pupils. The little girl who accompanied Mrs. Grose affected me on the spot as a creature too charming not to make it a great fortune to have to do with her. She was the most beautiful child I had ever seen, and I afterwards wondered why my employer hadn't made more of a point to me of this. I slept little that night—I was too much excited; and this astonished me too, I recollect, remained with me, adding to my sense of the liberality with which I was treated. The large, impressive room, one of the best in the house, the great state bed as I almost felt it, the figured full draperies, the long glasses in which, for the first time, I could see myself from head to foot, all struck me—like the wonderful appeal of my small charge—as so many things thrown in. It was thrown in as well, from the first moment, that I should get on with Mrs. Grose in a relation over which, on my way, in the coach, I fear I had rather brooded. The one appearance indeed that in this early outlook might have made me shrink again was that of her being so inordinately glad to see me. I felt within half an hour that she was so glad—stout, simple, plain, clean, wholesome woman—as to be positively on her guard against showing it too much. I wondered even then a little why she should wish *not* to show it, and that, with reflection, with suspicion, might of course have made me uneasy.

But it was a comfort that there could be no uneasiness in a connection with anything so beatific as the radiant image of my little girl, the vision of whose angelic beauty had probably more than anything else to do with the restlessness that, before morning, made me several times rise and wander about my room to take in the whole picture and prospect; to watch from my open window the faint summer dawn, to look at such stretches of the rest of the house as I could catch, and to listen, while in the fading dusk the first birds began to twitter, for the possible recurrence of a sound or two, less natural and not without but within, that I had fancied I heard. There had been a moment when I believed I recognized, faint and far, the cry of a child; there had been another when I found myself just consciously starting as at the passage, before my door, of a light footstep. But these fancies were not marked enough not to be thrown off, and it is only in the light, or the gloom, I should rather say, of other and subsequent matters that they now come back to me. To watch, teach, 'form' little Flora would too evidently be the making of a happy and useful life. It had been agreed between us downstairs that after this first occasion I should have her as a matter of course at night, her small white bed being already arranged, to that end, in my room. What I had undertaken was the whole care of her, and she had remained just this last time with Mrs. Grose only as an effect of our consideration for my inevitable strangeness and her natural timidity. In spite of this timidity—which the child herself, in the oddest way in the world, had been perfectly frank and brave about, allowing it, without a sign of uncomfortable consciousness, with the deep, sweet serenity indeed of one of Raphael's holy infants, to be discussed, to be imputed to her and to determine us—I felt quite sure she would presently like me. It was part of what I already liked Mrs. Grose herself for, the pleasure I could see her feel in my admiration and wonder as I sat at supper with four tall candles and with my pupil, in a high chair and a bib, brightly facing me between them over bread and milk. There were naturally things that in Flora's presence could pass between us only as prodigious and gratified looks, obscure and roundabout allusions.

'And the little boy—does he look like her? Is he, too, so very remarkable?'

One wouldn't, it was already conveyed between us, too grossly flatter a child. 'Oh, miss, *most* remarkable. If you think well of this one!'—and she stood there with a plate in her hand, beaming at our companion, who looked from one of us to the other with placid, heavenly eyes that contained nothing to check us.

'Yes; if I do——?'

'You *will* be carried away by the little gentleman!'

'Well, that, I think, is what I came for—to be carried away. I 'm afraid, however,' I remember feeling the impulse to add, 'I 'm rather easily carried away. I was carried away in London!'

I can still see Mrs. Grose's broad face as she took this in. 'In Harley Street?'

found myself, to meet my friend the better, offering it, on the spot, sarcastically. 'To his poor little innocent mates!'

'It 's too dreadful,' cried Mrs Grose, 'to say such cruel things! Why, he 's scarce ten years old.'

'Yes, yes; it would be incredible.

She was evidently grateful for such a profession. 'See him, miss, first. *Then* believe it!' I felt forthwith a new impatience to see him; it was the beginning of a curiosity that, all the next hours, was to deepen almost to pain. Mrs. Grose was aware, I could judge, of what she had produced in me, and she followed it up with assurance. 'You might as well believe it of the little lady. Bless her,' she added the next moment—'*look* at her!'

I turned and saw that Flora, whom, ten minutes before, I had established in the schoolroom with a sheet of white paper, a pencil and a copy of nice 'round O's,' now presented herself to view at the open door. She expressed in her little way an extraordinary detachment from disagreeable duties, looking at me, however, with a great childish light that seemed to offer it as a mere result of the affection she had conceived for my person, which had rendered necessary that she should follow me. I needed nothing more than this to feel the full force of Mrs. Grose's comparison, and, catching my pupil in my arms, covered her with kisses in which there was a sob of atonement.

None the less, the rest of the day, I watched for further occasion to approach my colleague, especially as, toward evening, I began to fancy she rather sought to avoid me. I overtook her, I remember, on the staircase; we went down together and at the bottom I detained her, holding her there with a hand on her arm. 'I take what you said to me at noon as a declaration that *you 've* never known him to be bad.'

She threw back her head; she had clearly by this time, and very honestly, adopted an attitude. 'Oh, never known him—I don't pretend *that*!'

I was upset again. 'Then you *have* known him——?'

'Yes indeed, miss, thank God!'

On reflection I accepted this. 'You mean that a boy who never is——?'

'Is no boy for *me*!'

I held her tighter. 'You like them with the spirit to be naughty?' Then, keeping pace with her answer, 'So do I!' I eagerly brought out. 'But not to the degree to contaminate——'

'To contaminate?'—my big word left her at a loss. I explained it. 'To corrupt.'

She stared, taking my meaning in; but it produced in her an odd laugh. 'Are you afraid he 'll corrupt *you*?' She put the question with such a fine bold humour that with a laugh, a little silly doubtless, to match her own, I gave way for the time to the apprehension of ridicule.

But the next day, as the hour for my drive approached, I cropped up in another place. 'What was the lady who was here before?'

'The last governess? She was also young and pretty—almost as young and almost as pretty, miss, even as you.'

'Ah, then I hope her youth and her beauty helped her!' I recollect throwing off. 'He seems to like us young and pretty!'

'Oh, he *did,*' Mrs. Grose assented; 'It was the way he liked every one!' She had no sooner spoken, indeed, than she caught herself up. 'I mean that 's *his* way—the master's.'

I was struck. 'But of whom did you speak first?'

She looked blank, but she coloured. 'Why, of *him.*'

'Of the master?'

'Of who else?'

There was so obviously no one else that the next moment I had lost my impression of her having accidentally said more than she meant; and I merely asked what I wanted to know. 'Did *she* see anything in the boy——?'

'That wasn't right? She never told me.'

I had a scruple, but I overcame it. 'Was she careful—particular?'

Mrs. Grose appeared to try to be conscientious. 'About some things—yes.'

'But not about all?'

Again she considered. 'Well, miss—she 's gone. I won't tell tales.'

'I quite understand your feeling,' I hastened to reply; but I thought it after an instant not opposed to this concession to pursue: 'Did she die here?'

'No—she went off.'

I don't know what there was in this brevity of Mrs. Grose's that struck me as ambiguous. 'Went off to die?' Mrs. Grose looked straight out of the window, but I felt that, hypothetically, I had a right to know what young persons engaged for Bly were expected to do. 'She was taken ill, you mean, and went home?'

'She was not taken ill, so far as appeared, in this house. She left it, at the end of the year, to go home, as she said, for a short holiday, to which the time she had put in had certainly given her a right. We had then a young woman—a nursemaid who had stayed on and who was a good girl and clever; and *she* took the children altogether for the interval. But our young lady never came back, and at the very moment I was expecting her I heard from the master that she was dead.'

I turned this over. 'But of what?'

'He never told me! But please, miss,' said Mrs. Grose, 'I must get to my work.'

III

HER thus turning her back on me was fortunately not, for my just preoccupations, a snub that could check the growth of our mutual esteem. We met, after I had brought home little Miles, more intimately than ever on the ground of my stupefaction, my general emotion: so monstrous was I then ready to pronounce it that such a child as had now been revealed to me should be under an interdict. I was a little late on the scene of his arrival, and I felt, as he stood wistfully looking out for me before the door of the inn at which the coach had put him down, that I had seen him on the instant, without and within, in the great glow of freshness, the same positive fragrance of purity, in which I had from the first moment seen his little sister. He was incredibly beautiful, and Mrs. Grose had put her finger on it: everything but a sort of passion of tenderness for him was swept away by his presence. What I then and there took him to my heart for was something divine that I have never found to the same degree in any child—his indescribable little air of knowing nothing in the world but love. It would have been impossible to carry a bad name with a greater sweetness of innocence, and by the time I had got back to Bly with him I remained merely bewildered—so far, that is, as I was not outraged—by the sense of the horrible letter locked up in one of the drawers in my room. As soon as I could compass a private word with Mrs. Grose I declared to her that it was grotesque.

She promptly understood me. 'You mean the cruel charge——?'

'It doesn't live an instant. My dear woman, *look* at him!'

She smiled at my pretension to have discovered his charm. 'I assure you, miss, I do nothing else! What will you say then?' she immediately added.

'In answer to the letter?' I had made up my mind. 'Nothing at all.'

'And to his uncle?'

I was incisive. 'Nothing at all.'

'And to the boy himself?'

I was wonderful. 'Nothing at all.'

She gave with her apron a great wipe to her mouth. 'Then I'll stand by you. We'll see it out.'

'We'll see it out!' I ardently echoed, giving her my hand to make it a vow.

She held me there a moment, then whisked up her apron again with her detached hand. 'Would you mind, miss, if I used the freedom——'

'To kiss me? No!' I took the good creature in my arms and, after we had embraced like sisters, felt still more fortified and indignant.

This, at all events, was for the time: a time so full that as I recall the way it went it reminds me of all the art I now need to make it a little distinct. What I look back at with amazement is the situation I accepted. I had undertaken, with my companion, to see it out, and I was under a charm apparently that could smooth away the extent and the far and difficult connections of such an effort.

I was lifted aloft on a great wave of infatuation and pity. I found it simple, in my ignorance, my confusion and perhaps my conceit, to assume that I could deal with a boy whose education for the world was all on the point of beginning. I am unable even to remember at this day what proposal I framed for the end of his holidays and the resumption of his studies. Lessons with me indeed, that charming summer, we all had a theory that he was to have; but I now feel that for weeks the lessons must have been rather my own. I learnt something—at first certainly—that had not been one of the teachings of my small, smothered life; learnt to be amused, and even amusing, and not to think for the morrow. It was the first time, in a manner, that I had known space and air and freedom, all the music of summer and all the mystery of nature. And then there was consideration—and consideration was sweet. Oh, it it was a trap—not designed but deep—to my imagination, to my delicacy, perhaps to my vanity; to whatever in me was most excitable. The best way to picture it all is to say that I was off my guard. They gave me so little trouble—they were of a gentleness so extraordinary. I used to speculate—but even this with a dim disconnectedness—as to how the rough future (for all futures are rough!) would handle them and might bruise them. They had the bloom of health and happiness; and yet, as if I had been in charge of a pair of little grandees, of princes of the blood, for whom everything, to be right, would have to be fenced about and ordered and arranged, the only form that in my fancy the after-years could take for them was that of a romantic, a really royal extension of the garden and the park. It may be of course above all what suddenly broke into this gives the previous time a charm of stillness—that hush in which something gathers or crouches. The change was actually like the spring of a beast.

In the first weeks the days were long; they often, at their finest, gave me what I used to call my own hour, the hour when, for my pupils, tea-time and bed-time having come and gone, I had before my final retirement a small interval alone. Much as I liked my companions this hour was the thing in the day I liked most; and I liked it best of all when, as the light faded—or rather, I should say, the day lingered and the last calls of the last birds sounded, in a flushed sky, from the old trees—I could take a turn into the grounds and enjoy, almost with a sense of property that amused and flattered me, the beauty and dignity of the place. It was a pleasure at these moments to feel myself tranquil and justified; doubtless perhaps also to reflect that by my discretion, my quiet good sense and general high propriety, I was giving pleasure—if he ever thought of it!—to the person to whose pressure I had yielded. What I was doing was what he had earnestly hoped and directly asked of me, and that I *could*, after all, do it proved even a greater joy that I had expected. I dare say I fancied myself, in short, a remarkable young woman and took comfort in the faith that this would more publicly appear. Well, I needed to be remarkable to offer a front to the remarkable things that presently gave their first sign.

It was plump, one afternoon, in the middle of my very hour: the children were tucked away and I had come out for my stroll. One of the thoughts that, as I don't in the least shrink now from noting, used to be with me in these wanderings was that it would be as charming as a charming story suddenly to meet someone. Someone would appear there at the turn of a path and would stand before me and smile and approve. I didn't ask more than that—I only asked that he should *know*; and the only way to be sure he knew would be to see it, and the kind light of it, in his handsome face. That was exactly present to me—by which I mean the face was—when, on the first of these occasions at the end of a long June day, I stopped short on emerging from one of the plantations and coming into view of the house. What arrested me on the spot—and with a shock much greater than any vision had allowed for—was the sense that my imagination had, in a flash, turned real. He did stand there!—but high up, beyond the lawn and at the very top of the tower to which, on that first morning, little Flora had conducted me. This tower was one of a pair—square, incongruous, crenellated structures—that were distinguished, for some reason, though I could see little difference, as the new and the old. They flanked opposite ends of the house and were probably architectural absurdities, redeemed in a measure, indeed, by not being wholly disengaged nor of a height too pretentious, dating, in their ginger-bread antiquity, from a romantic revival that was already a respectable past. I admired them, had fancies about them, for we could all profit in a degree, especially when they loomed through the dusk, by the grandeur of their actual battlements; yet it was not at such an elevation that the figure I had so often invoked seemed most in place.

It produced in me, this figure, in the clear twilight, I remember, two distinct gasps of emotion, which were, sharply, the shock of my first and that of my second surprise. My second was a violent perception of the mistake of my first: the man who met my eyes was not the person I had precipitately supposed. There came to me thus a bewilderment of vision of which, after these years, there is no living view that I can hope to give. An unknown man in a lonely place is a permitted object of fear to a young woman privately bred; and the figure that faced me was—a few more seconds assured me—as little any one else I knew as it was the image that had been in my mind. I had not seen it in Harley Street—I had not seen it anywhere. The place, moreover, in the strangest way in the world, had on the instant and by the very fact of its appearance become a solitude. To me at least, making my statement here with a deliberation with which I have never made it, the whole feeling of the moment returns. It was as if, while I took in what I did take in, all the rest of the scene had been stricken with death. I can hear again, as I write, the intense hush in which the sounds of evening dropped. The rooks stopped cawing in the golden sky and the friendly hour lost for the unspeakable minute all its voice. But there was no other change in nature, unless indeed it were a change that I saw with a stranger sharpness. The gold was still in the sky, the clearness in the air, and the man who looked at me over the battlements was as definite as a picture in a frame. That 's how I thought, with extraordinary quickness, of each person he might have been and that he wasn't. We were confronted across our distance quite long enough for me to ask myself with intensity who then he was and to feel, as an effect of my inability to say, a wonder that in a few seconds more became intense.

The great question, or one of these, is afterwards, I know, with regard to certain matters, the question of how long they have lasted. Well, this matter of mine, think what you will of it, lasted while I caught at a dozen possibilities, none of which made a difference for the better, that I could see in there having been in the house—and for how long, above all?—a person of whom I was in ignorance. It lasted while I just bridled a little with the sense of how my office seemed to require that there should be no such ignorance and no such person. It lasted while this visitant, at all events—and there was a touch of the strange freedom, as I remember, in the sign of familiarity of his wearing no hat—seemed to fix me, from his position, with just the question, just the scrutiny through the fading light, that his own presence provoked. We were too far apart to call to each other, but there was a moment at which, at shorter range, some challenge between us, breaking the hush, would have been the right result of our straight mutual stare. He was in one of the angles, the one away from the house, very erect, as it struck me, and with both hands on the ledge. So I saw him as I see the letters I form on this page; then, exactly, after a minute, as if to add to the spectacle, he slowly changed his place—passed, looking at me hard all the while, to the opposite corner of the platform. Yes, it was intense to me that during this transit he never took his eyes from me, and I can see at this moment the way his hand as he went, moved from one of the crenellations to the next. He stopped at the other corner, but less long, and even as he turned away still markedly fixed me. He turned away; that was all I knew.

IV

It was not that I didn't wait, on this occasion, for more, since I was as deeply rooted as shaken. Was there a 'secret' at Bly—a mystery of Udolpho or an insane, an unmentionable relative kept in unsuspected confinement? I can't say how long I turned it over, or how long, in a confusion of curiosity and dread, I remained where I had had my collision; I only recall that when I re-entered the house darkness had quite closed in. Agitation, in the interval, certainly had held me and driven me, for I must, in circling about the place, have walked three miles; but I was to be later on so much more overwhelmed that this mere dawn of alarm was a comparatively human chill. The most singular part of it, in fact—singular as the rest had been—was the part I became, in the hall, aware of in meeting Mrs. Grose. This picture comes back to me in the general train—the impression, as I received it on my return, of the wide white panelled space, bright in the lamplight and with its portraits and red carpets, and of the good surprised look of my friend, which immediately told me she had missed me. It came to me straightway, under her contact, that, with plain heartiness, mere relieved anxiety at my appearance, she knew nothing whatever that could bear upon the incident I had there ready for her. I had not suspected in advance that her comfortable face would pull me up, and I somehow measured the importance of what I had seen by my thus finding myself hesitate to mention it. Scarce anything in the whole history seems to me so odd as this fact that my real beginning of fear was one, as I may say, with the instinct of sparing my companion. On the spot, accordingly, in the pleasant hall and with her eyes on me, I, for a reason that I couldn't then have phrased, achieved an inward revolution—offered a vague pretext for my lateness and, with the idea of the beauty of the night and of the heavy dew and wet feet, went as soon as possible to my room.

Here it was another affair; here, for many days after, it was a queer affair enough. There were hours, from day to day—or at least there were moments, snatched even from clear duties—when I had to shut myself up to think. It wasn't so much yet that I was more nervous than I could bear to be as that I was remarkably afraid of becoming so; for the truth I had now to turn over was simply and clearly the truth that I could arrive at no account whatever of the visitor with whom I had been so inexplicably and yet, as it seemed to me, so intimately concerned. It took me little time to see that I might easily sound, without forms of inquiry and without exciting remark, any domestic complication. The shock I had suffered must have sharpened all my senses; I felt sure, at the end of three days and as the result of mere closer attention, that I had not been practised upon by the servants nor made the object of any 'game.' Of whatever it was that I knew nothing was known around me. There was but one sane inference: someone had taken a liberty rather monstrous. That was what, repeatedly, I dipped into my room and locked the door to say to myself. We had been, collectively, subject to an intrusion; some unscrupulous traveller, curious in old houses, had made his way in unobserved, enjoyed the prospect from the best point of view and then stolen out as he came. If he had given me such a bold, hard stare, that was but a part of his indiscretion. The good thing, after all, was that we should surely see no more of him.

This was not so good a thing, I admit, as not to leave me to judge that what, essentially, made nothing else much signify was simply my charming work. My charming work was just my life with Miles and Flora, and through nothing could I so like it as through feeling that to throw myself into it was to throw myself out of my trouble. The attraction of my small charges was a constant joy, leading me to wonder afresh at the vanity of my original fears, the distaste I had begun by entertaining for the probable grey prose of my office. There was to be no grey prose, it appeared, and no long grind; so how could work not be charming that presented itself as daily beauty? It was all the romance of the nursery and the poetry of the schoolroom. I don't mean by this, of course, that we studied only fiction and verse; I mean that I can express no otherwise the sort of interest my companions inspired. How can I describe that except by saying that instead of growing deadly used to them—and it 's a marvel for a governess: I call the sisterhood to witness!—I made constant fresh discoveries. There was one direction, assuredly, in which these discoveries stopped: deep obscurity continued to cover the region of the boy's conduct at school. It had been promptly given me, I have noted, to face that mystery without a pang. Perhaps even it would be nearer the truth to say that —without a word—he himself had cleared it up. He had made the whole charge absurd. My conclusion bloomed there with the real rose-flush of his innocence: he was only too fine and fair for the little horrid, unclean school-world, and he had paid a price for it. I reflected acutely that the sense of such individual differences, such superiorities of quality, always, on the part of the majority—which could include even stupid sordid head masters—turns infallibly to the vindictive.

Both the children had a gentleness—it was their only fault, and it never made Miles a muff—that kept them (how shall I express it?) almost impersonal and certainly quite unpunishable. They were like those cherubs of the anecdote who had—morally, at any rate—nothing to whack! I remember feeling with Miles in especial as if he had had, as it were, nothing to call even an infinitesimal history. We expect of a small child scant enough 'antecedents,' but there was in this beautiful little boy something extraordinarily sensitive, yet extraordinarily happy, that, more than in any creature of his age I have seen, struck me as beginning anew each day. He had never for a second suffered. I took this as a direct disproof of his having really been chastised. If he had been wicked he would have 'caught' it, and I should have caught it by the rebound—I should have found the trace, should have felt the wound and the dishonour. I could reconstitute nothing at all, and he was therefore an angel. He never spoke of his school, never mentioned a comrade or a master; and I, for my part, was quite too much disgusted to allude to them. Of course I was under the spell, and the wonderful part is that, even at the time, I perfectly knew I was. But I gave myself up to it; it was an antidote to any pain, and I had more pains than one. I was in receipt in these days of disturbing letters from home, where things were not going well. But with this joy of my children what things in the world mattered? That was the question I used to put to my scrappy retirements. I was dazzled by their loveliness

There was a Sunday—to get on—when it rained with such force and for so many hours that there could be no procession to church; in consequence of which, as the day declined, I had arranged with Mrs. Grose that, should the evening show improvement, we would attend together the late service. The rain happily stopped, and I prepared for our walk, which, through the park and by the good road to the village, would be a matter of twenty minutes. Coming downstairs to meet my colleague in the hall, I remembered a pair of gloves that had required three stitches and that had received them—with a publicity perhaps not edifying—while I sat with the children at their tea, served on Sundays, by exception, in that cold clean temple of mahogany and brass, the 'grown-up' dining-room. The gloves had been dropped there, and I turned in to recover them. The day was grey enough, but the afternoon light still lingered, and it enabled me, on crossing the threshold, not only to recognize, on a chair near the wide window, then closed, the articles I wanted, but to become aware of a person on the other side of the window and looking straight in. One step into the room had sufficed; my vision was instantaneous;

it was all there. The person looking straight in was the person who had already appeared to me. He appeared thus again with I won't say greater distinctness, for that was impossible, but with a nearness that represented a forward stride in our intercourse and made me, as I met him, catch my breath and turn cold. He was the same—he was the same, and seen, this time, as he had been seen before, from the waist up, the window, though the dining-room was on the ground-floor, not going down to the terrace on which he stood. His face was close to the glass, yet the effect of this better view was, strangely, just to show me how intense the former had been. He remained but a few seconds—long enough to convince me he also saw and recognized; but it was as if I had been looking at him for years and had known him always. Something, however, happened this time that had not happened before; his stare into my face, through the glass and across the room, was as deep and hard as then, but it quitted me for a moment during which I could still watch it, see it fix successively several other things. On the spot there came to me the added shock of a certitude that it was not for me he had come. He had come for someone else.

The flash of this knowledge—for it was knowledge in the midst of dread—produced in me the most extraordinary effect, starting, as I stood there, a sudden vibration of duty and courage. I say courage because I was beyond all doubt already far gone. I bounded straight out of the door again, reached that of the house, got in an instant upon the drive and, passing along the terrace as fast as I could rush, turned a corner and came full in sight. But it was in sight of nothing now—my visitor had vanished. I stopped, almost dropped, with the real relief of this; but I took in the whole scene—I gave him time to reappear. I call it time, but how long was it? I can't speak to the purpose to-day of the duration of these things. That kind of measure must have left me: they couldn't have lasted as they actually appeared to me to last. The terrace and the whole place, the lawn and the garden behind it, all I could see of the park, were empty with a great emptiness There were shrubberies and big trees, but I remember the clear assurance I felt that none of them concealed him. He was there or was not there: not there if I didn't see him. I got hold of this; then, instinctively, instead of returning as I had come, went to the window. It was confusedly present to me that I ought to place myself where he had stood I did so; I applied my face to the pane and looked, as he had looked, into the room. As if, at this moment, to show me exactly what his range had been, Mrs. Grose, as I had done for himself just before, came in from the hall. With this I had the full image of a repetition of what had already occurred. She saw me as I had seen my own visitant; she pulled up short as I had done; I gave her something of the shock that I had received. She turned white, and this made me ask myself if I had blanched as much. She stared, in short, and retreated just on *my* lines, and I knew she had then passed out and come round to me and that I should presently meet her. I remained where I was, and while I waited I thought of more things than one. But there 's only one I take space to mention. I wondered why *she* should be scared.

V

OH, she let me know as soon as, round the corner of the house, she loomed again into view. 'What in the name of goodness is the matter——?' She was now flushed and out of breath.

I said nothing till she came quite near. 'With me?' I must have made a wonderful face. 'Do I show it?'

'You 're as white as a sheet. You look awful.'

I considered; I could meet on this, without scruple, any degree of innocence. My need to respect the bloom of Mrs. Grose's had dropped, without a rustle, from my shoulders, and if I wavered for the instant it was not with what I kept back. I put out my hand to her and she took it; I held her hard a little, liking to feel her close to me. There was a kind of support in the shy heave of her surprise. 'You came for me for church, of course, but I can't go.'

'Has anything happened?'

'Yes. You must know now. Did I look very queer?'

'Through this window? Dreadful!'

'Well,' I said, 'I 've been frightened.' Mrs. Grose's eyes expressed plainly that *she* had no wish to be, yet also that she knew too well her place not to be ready to share with me any marked inconvenience. Oh, it was quite settled that she *must* share! 'Just what you saw from the dining-room a minute ago was the effect of that. What *I* saw—just before—was much worse.'

Her hand tightened. 'What was it?'

'An extraordinary man. Looking in.'

'What extraordinary man?'

'I haven't the least idea.'

Mrs. Grose gazed round us in vain. 'Then where is he gone?'

'I know still less.'

'Have you seen him before?'

'Yes—once. On the old tower.'

She could only look at me harder. 'Do you mean he 's a stranger?'

'Oh, very much!'

'Yet you didn't tell me?'

'No — for reasons. But now that you 've guessed——'

Mrs. Grose's round eyes encountered this charge. 'Ah, I haven't guessed!' she said very simply. 'How can I if *you* don't imagine?'

'I don't in the very least.'

'You 've seen him nowhere but on the tower?'

'And on this spot just now.'

Mrs. Grose looked round again. 'What was he doing on the tower?'

'Only standing there and looking down at me.'

She thought a minute. 'Was he a gentleman?'

I found I had no need to think. 'No.' She gazed in deeper wonder. 'No.'

'Then nobody about the place? Nobody from the village?'

'Nobody—nobody. I didn't tell you, but I made sure.'

She breathed a vague relief: this was, oddly, so much to the good. It only went indeed a little way. 'But if he isn't a gentleman——'

'What *is* he? He 's a horror.'

'A horror?'

'He 's—God help me if I know *what* he is!'

Mrs. Grose looked round once more; she fixed her eyes on the duskier distance and then, pulling herself together, turned to me with full inconsequence. 'It 's time we should be at church.'

'Oh, I 'm not fit for church!'

'Won't it do you good?'

'It won't do *them*——!' I nodded at the house.

'The children?'

'I can't leave them now.'

'You 're afraid——?'

I spoke boldly. 'I 'm afraid of *him*.'

Mrs. Grose's large face showed me, at this, for the first time, the far-away faint glimmer of a consciousness more acute: I somehow made out in it the delayed dawn of an idea I myself had not given her and that was as yet quite obscure to me. It comes back to me that I thought instantly of this as something I could get from her; and I felt it to be connected with the desire she presently showed to know more. 'When was it—on the tower?'

'About the middle of the month. At this same hour.'

'Almost at dark,' said Mrs. Grose.

'Oh, no, not nearly. I saw him as I see you.'

'Then how did he get in?'

'And how did he get out?' I laughed. 'I had no opportunity to ask him! This evening, you see,' I pursued, 'he has not been able to get in.'

'He only peeps?'

'I hope it will be confined to that!' She had now let go my hand; she turned away a little. I waited an instant; then I brought out: 'Go to church. Good-bye. I must watch.'

Slowly she faced me again. 'Do you fear for them?'

We met in another long look. 'Don't *you*?' Instead of answering she came nearer to the window and, for a minute, applied her face to the glass. 'You see how he could see,' I meanwhile went on.

She didn't move. 'How long was he here?'

'Till I came out. I came to meet him.'

Mrs. Grose at last turned round, and there was still more in her face. '*I* couldn't have come out.'

'Neither could I!' I laughed again. 'But I did come. I 've my duty.'

'So have I mine,' she replied; after which she added: 'What 's he like?'

'I 've been dying to tell you. But he 's like nobody.'

'Nobody?' she echoed.

'He has no hat.' Then seeing in her face that she already, in this, with a deeper dismay, found a touch of picture, I quickly added stroke to stroke. 'He has red hair, very red, close-curling, and a pale face, long in shape, with straight, good features and little, rather queer whiskers that are as red as his hair. His eyebrows are somehow darker; they look particularly arched and as if they might move a good deal. His eyes are sharp, strange—awfully; but I only know clearly that they 're rather small and very fixed. His mouth 's wide and his lips are thin, and except for his little whiskers he 's quite clean-shaven. He gives me a sort of sense of looking like an actor.'

'An actor!' It was impossible to resemble one less, at least, than Mrs. Grose at that moment.

'I 've never seen one, but so I suppose them. He 's tall, active, erect,' I continued, 'but never—no, never!—a gentleman.'

My companion's face had blanched as I went on; her round eyes started and her mild mouth gaped. 'A gentleman?' she gasped, confounded, stupefied: 'a gentleman *he*?'

'You know him then?'

She visibly tried to hold herself. 'But he *is* handsome?'

I saw the way to help her. 'Remarkably!'

'And dressed——?'

'In somebody's clothes. They 're smart, but they 're not his own.'

She broke into a breathless affirmative groan. 'They 're the master's!'

I caught it up. 'You *do* know him?'

She faltered but a second. 'Quint!' she cried.

'Quint?'

'Peter Quint—his own man, his valet, when he was here!'

'When the master was?'

Gaping still, but meeting me, she pieced it all together. 'He never wore his hat, but he did wear—well, there were waistcoats missed! They were both here—last year. Then the master went, and Quint was alone.'

I followed, but halting a little. 'Alone?'

'Alone with *us*.' Then as from a deeper depth, 'In charge,' she added.

'And what became of him?'

She hung fire so long that I was still more mystified. 'He went too,' she brought out at last.

'Went where?'

Her expression, at this, became extraordinary. 'God knows where! He died.'

'Died?' I almost shrieked.

She seemed fairly to square herself, plant herself more firmly to express the wonder of it. 'Yes. Mr. Quint 's dead.'

VI

It took of course more than that particular passage to place us together in presence of what we had now to live with as we could, my dreadful liability to impressions of the order so vividly exemplified, and my companion's knowledge henceforth—a knowledge half consternation and half compassion—of that liability. There had been this evening, after the revelation that left me for an hour so prostrate—there had been for either of us no attendance on any service but a little service of tears and vows, of prayers and promises, a climax to the series of mutual challenges and pledges that had straightway ensued on our retreating together to the schoolroom and shutting ourselves up there to have everything out. The result of our having everything out was simply to reduce our situation to the last rigour of its elements. She herself had seen nothing, not the shadow of a shadow, and nobody in the house but the governess was in the governess's plight; yet she accepted without directly impugning my sanity the truth as I gave it to her, and ended by showing me on this ground an awestricken tenderness, a deference to my more than questionable privilege, of which the very breath has remained with me as that of the sweetest of human charities.

What was settled between us accordingly that night was that we thought we might bear things together; and I was not even sure that in spite of her exemption it was she who had the best of the burden. I knew at this hour, I think, as well as I knew later, what I was capable of meeting to shelter my pupils; but it took me some time to be wholly sure of what my honest comrade was prepared for to keep terms with so stiff an agreement. I was queer company enough—quite as queer as the company I received; but as I trace over what we went through I see how much common ground we must have found in the one idea that, by good fortune, *could* steady us It was the idea, the second movement, that led me straight out, as I may say, of the inner chamber of my dread. I could take the air in the court, at least, and there Mrs. Grose could join me. Perfectly can I recall now the particular way strength came to me before we separated for the night. We had gone over and over every feature of what I had seen.

'He was looking for someone else, you say—someone who was not you?'

'He was looking for little Miles.' A portentous clearness now possessed me. '*That* 's whom he was looking for.'

'But how do you know?'

'I know, I know, I know!' My exaltation grew. 'And *you* know, my dear!'

She didn't deny this, but I required, I felt, not even so much telling as that. She took it up again in a moment. 'What if *he* should see him?'

'Little Miles? That 's what he wants!'

She looked immensely scared again. 'The child?'

'Heaven forbid! The man. He wants to appear to *them*.' That he might was an awful conception, and yet somehow I could keep it at bay; which moreover, as we lingered there, was what I succeeded in practically proving. I had an absolute certainty that I should see again what I had already seen, but something within me said that by offering myself bravely as the sole subject of such experience, by accepting, by inviting, by surmounting it all, I should serve as an expiatory victim and guard the tranquillity of the rest of the household. The children in especial I should thus fence about and absolutely save. I recall one of the last things I said that night to Mrs. Grose.

'It does strike me that my pupils have never mentioned——!'

She looked at me hard as I musingly pulled up. 'His having been here and the time they were with him?'

'The time they were with him, and his name, his presence, his history, in any way. They 've never alluded to it.'

'Oh, the little lady doesn't remember. She never heard or knew.'

'The circumstances of his death?' I thought with some intensity. 'Perhaps not. But Miles would remember—Miles would know.'

'Ah, don't try him!' broke from Mrs. Grose.

I returned her the look she had given me. 'Don't be afraid.' I continued to think. 'It *is* rather odd.'

'That he has never spoken of him?'

'Never by the least reference. And you tell me they were "great friends"?'

'Oh, it wasn't *him*!' Mrs. Grose with emphasis declared. 'It was Quint's own fancy. To play with him, I mean—to spoil him.' She paused a moment; then she added: 'Quint was much too free.'

This gave me, straight from my vision of his face—*such* a face!—a sudden sickness of disgust. 'Too free with *my* boy?'

'Too free with every one!'

I forbore for the moment to analyse this description further than by the reflection that a part of it applied to several of the members of the household, of the half-dozen maids and men who were still of our small colony. But there was everything, for our apprehension, in the lucky fact that no discomfortable legend, no perturbation of scullions, had ever, within any one's memory, attached to the kind old place. It had neither bad name nor ill fame, and Mrs. Grose, most apparently, only desired to cling to me and to quake in silence. I even put her, the very last thing of all, to the test It was when, at midnight, she had her hand on the schoolroom door to take leave. 'I *have* it from you, then—for it 's of great importance—that he was definitely and admittedly bad?'

'Oh, not admittedly. *I* knew it—but the master didn't.'

'And you never told him?'

'Well, he didn't like tale-bearing—he hated complaints. He was terribly short with anything of that kind, and if people were all right to *him*——'

'He wouldn't be bothered with more?' This squared well enough with my impression of him: he was not a trouble-loving gentleman, nor so very particular perhaps about some of the company he himself kept. All the same, I pressed my informant. 'I promise you *I* would have told!'

She felt my discrimination. 'I dare say I was wrong. But really I was afraid.'

'Afraid of what?'

'Of things that man could do. Quint was so clever—he was so deep.'

I took this in still more than I probably showed. 'You weren't afraid of anything else? Not of his effect——?'

'His effect?' she repeated with a face of anguish and waiting while I faltered.

'On innocent little precious lives. They were in your charge.'

'No, they weren't in mine!' she roundly and distressfully returned. 'The master believed in him and placed him here because he was supposed not to be quite in health and the country air so good for him. So he had everything to say. Yes'—she let me have it—'even about *them*.'

'Them—that creature?' I had to smother a kind of howl. 'And you could bear it?'

'No. I couldn't—and I can't now!' And the poor woman burst into tears.

A rigid control, from the next day, was, as I have said, to follow them; yet how often and how passionately, for a week, we came back together to the subject! Much as we had discussed it that Sunday night, I was, in the immediate later hours in especial—for it may be imagined whether I slept—still haunted with the shadow of something she had not told me. I myself had kept back nothing, but there was a word Mrs. Grose had kept back. I was sure, moreover, by morning that this was not from a failure of frankness, but because on every side there were fears. It seems to me indeed, in raking it all over, that by the time the morrow's sun was high I had restlessly read into the facts before us almost all the meaning they were to receive from subsequent and more cruel occurrences. What they gave me, above all, was just the sinister figure of the living man—the dead one would keep awhile!— and of the months he had continuously passed at Bly, which, added up, made a formidable stretch. The limit of this evil time had arrived only when, on the dawn of a winter's morning, Peter Quint was found, by a labourer going to early work, stone dead on the road from the village: a catastrophe explained—superficially at least—by a visible wound to his head; such a wound as might have been produced (and as, on the final evidence, *had* been) by a fatal slip, in the dark and after leaving the public-house, on the steepish icy slope, a wrong path altogether, at the bottom of which he lay. The icy slope, the turn mistaken at night and in liquor, accounted for much—practically, in the end and after the inquest and boundless chatter, for everything; but there had been matters in his life—strange passages and perils, secret disorders, vices more than suspected, that would have accounted for a good deal more.

I scarce know how to put my story into words that shall be a credible picture of my state of mind; but I was in these days literally able to find a joy in the extraordinary flight of heroism the occasion demanded of me. I now saw that I had been asked for a service admirable and difficult; and there would be a greatness in letting it be seen—oh, in the right quarter!—that I could succeed where many another girl might have failed. It was an immense help to me—I confess I rather applaud myself as I look back!—that I saw my response so strongly and so simply. I was there to protect and defend the little creatures in the world the most bereaved and the most lovable, the appeal of whose helplessness had suddenly become only too explicit, a deep, constant ache of one's own engaged affection. We were cut off, really, together; we were united in our danger. They had nothing but me, and I—well, I had *them*. It was, in short, a magnificent chance. This chance presented itself to me in an image richly material. I was a screen—I was to stand before them. The more I saw the less they would. I began to watch them in a stifled suspense, a disguised tension, that might well, had it continued too long, have turned to something like madness. What saved me, as I now see, was that it turned to another matter altogether. It didn't last as suspense—it was superseded by horrible proofs. Proofs, I say, yes—from the moment I really took hold.

This moment dated from an afternoon hour that I happened to spend in the grounds with the younger of my pupils alone. We had left Miles indoors, on the red cushion of a deep window-seat; he had wished to finish a book, and I had been glad to encourage a purpose so laudable in a young man whose only defect was a certain ingenuity of restlessness. His sister, on the contrary, had been alert to come out, and I strolled with her half an hour, seeking the shade, for the sun was still high and the day exceptionally warm. I was aware afresh with her, as we went, of how, like her brother, she contrived—it was the charming thing in both children—to let me alone without appearing to drop me and to accompany me without appearing to oppress. They were never importunate and yet never listless. My attention to them all really went to seeing them amuse themselves immensely without me: this was a spectacle they seemed actively to prepare and that employed me as an active admirer. I walked in a world of their invention—they had no occasion whatever to draw upon mine; so that my time was taken only with being for them some remarkable person or thing that the game of the moment required and that was merely, thanks to my superior, my exalted stamp, a happy and highly distinguished sinecure. I forget what I was on the present occasion; I only remember that I was something very important and very quiet and that Flora was playing very hard. We were on the edge of the lake, and, as we had lately begun geography, the lake was the Sea of Azof.

Suddenly, amid these elements, I became aware that on the other side of the Sea of Azof we had an interested spectator The way this knowledge gathered in me was the strangest thing in the world—the strangest, that is, except the very much stranger in which it quickly merged itself. I had sat down with a piece of work—for I was something or other that could sit—on the old stone bench which overlooked the pond; and in this position I began to take in with certitude and yet without direct vision the presence, a good way off, of a third person. The old trees, the thick shrubbery, made a great and pleasant shade, but it was all suffused with the brightness of the hot, still hour. There was no ambiguity in anything; none whatever, at least, in the conviction I from one moment to another found myself forming as to what I should see straight before me and across the lake as a consequence of raising my eyes. They were attached at this juncture to the stitching in which I was engaged, and I can feel once more the spasm of my effort not to move them till I should so have steadied myself as to be able to make up my mind what to do. There was an alien object in view—a figure whose right of presence I instantly and passionately questioned. I recollect counting over perfectly the possibilities, reminding myself that nothing was more natural, for instance, than the appearance of one of the men about the place, or even of a messenger, a postman or a tradesman's boy, from the village. That reminder had as little effect on my practical certitude as I was conscious — still even without looking — of its having upon the character and attitude of our visitor. Nothing was more natural than that these things should be the other things they absolutely were not.

Of the positive identity of the apparition I would assure myself as soon as the small clock of my courage should have ticked out the right second; meanwhile, with an effort that was already sharp enough, I transferred my eyes straight to little Flora, who, at the moment, was about ten yards away. My heart had stood still for an instant with the wonder and terror of the question whether she too would see; and I held my breath while I waited for what a cry from her, what some sudden innocent sign either of interest or of alarm, would tell me. I waited, but nothing came; then in the first place —and there is something more dire in this, I feel, than in anything I have to relate—I was determined by a sense that within a minute all spontaneous sounds from her had dropped; and in the second by the circumstance that also within the minute she had, in her play, turned her back to the water. This was her attitude when I at last looked at her—looked with the confirmed conviction that we were still, together, under direct personal notice. She had picked up a small, flat piece of wood which happened to have in it a little hole that had evidently suggested to her the idea of sticking in another fragment that might figure as a mast and make the thing a boat. This second morsel, as I watched her, she was very markedly and intently attempting to tighten in its place. My apprehension of what she was doing sustained me so that after some seconds I felt I was ready for more. Then I again shifted my eyes—I faced what I had to face.

VII

I GOT hold of Mrs. Grose as soon after this as I could; and I can give no intelligible account of how I fought out the interval. Yet I still hear myself cry as I fairly threw myself into her arms: 'They *know*—it 's too monstrous: they know, they know!'

'And what on earth——?' I felt her incredulity as she held me.

'Why, all that *we* know—and heaven knows what more besides!' Then as she released me I made it out to her, made it out perhaps only now with full coherency even to myself. 'Two hours ago, in the garden'—I could scarce articulate—'Flora *saw*!'

Mrs. Grose took it as she might have taken a blow in the stomach. 'She has told you?' she panted.

'Not a word—that 's the horror. She kept it to herself! The child of eight, *that* child!' Unutterable still for me was the stupefaction of it.

Mrs. Grose of course could only gape the wider. 'Then how do you know?'

'I was there—I saw with my eyes: saw she was perfectly aware.'

'Do you mean aware of *him*?'

'No—of *her*.' I was conscious as I spoke that I looked prodigious things, for I got the slow reflection of them in my companion's face. 'Another person—this time; but a figure of quite as unmistakable horror and evil: a woman in black, pale and dreadful—with such an air also, and such a face!—on the other side of the lake. I was there with the child—quiet for the hour; and in the midst of it she came.'

'Came how—from where?'

'From where they come from! She just appeared and stood there—but not so near.'

'And without coming nearer?'

'Oh, for the effect and the feeling she might have been as close as you!'

My friend, with an odd impulse, fell back a step. 'Was she someone you 've never seen?'

'Never. But someone the child has. Someone *you* have.' Then to show how I had thought it all out: 'My predecessor—the one who died.'

'Miss Jessel?'

'Miss Jessel. You don't believe me?' I pressed.

She turned right and left in her distress. 'How can you be sure?'

This drew from me, in the state of my nerves, a flash of impatience. 'Then ask Flora—*she 's* sure!' But I had no sooner spoken than I caught myself up. 'No, for God's sake, *don't*. She 'll say she isn't—she 'll lie!'

Mrs. Grose was not too bewildered instinctively to protest. 'Ah, how *can* you?'

'Because I 'm clear. Flora doesn't want me to know.'

'It 's only then to spare you.'

'No, no—there are depths, depths! The more I go over it the more I see in it, and the more I see in it the more I fear. I don't know what I *don't* see—what I *don't* fear!'

Mrs. Grose tried to keep up with me. 'You mean you 're afraid of seeing her again?'

'Oh, no; that 's nothing—now!' Then I explained. 'It 's of *not* seeing her.'

But my companion only looked wan. 'I don't understand.'

'Why, it 's that the child may keep it up—and that the child assuredly *will*—without my knowing it.'

At the image of this possibility Mrs. Grose for a moment collapsed, yet presently to pull herself together again as from the positive force of the sense of what, should we yield an inch, there would really be to give way to. 'Dear, dear—we must keep our heads! And after all, if she doesn't mind it——!' She even tried a grim joke. 'Perhaps she likes it!'

'Like *such* things—a scrap of an infant!'

'Isn't it just a proof of her blest innocence?' my friend bravely inquired.

She brought me, for the instant, almost round. 'Oh, we must clutch at *that*—we must cling to it! If it isn't a proof of what you say, it 's a proof of —God knows what! For the woman 's a horror of horrors.'

Mrs. Grose, at this, fixed her eyes a minute on the ground; then at last raising them, 'Tell me how you know,' she said.

'Then you admit it 's what she was?' I cried.

'Tell me how you know,' my friend simply repeated.

'Know? By seeing her! By the way she looked.'

'At you, do you mean—so wickedly?'

'Dear me, no—I could have borne that. She gave me never a glance. She only fixed the child.'

Mrs. Grose tried to see it. 'Fixed her?'

'Ah, with such awful eyes!'

She stared at mine as if they might really have resembled them. 'Do you mean of dislike?'

'God help us, no. Of something much worse.'

'Worse than dislike?'—this left her indeed at a loss.

'With a determination—indescribable. With a kind of fury of intention.'

I made her turn pale. 'Intention?'

'To get hold of her.' Mrs. Grose—her eyes just lingering on mine—gave a shudder and walked to the window; and while she stood there looking out I completed my statement. '*That's* what Flora knows.'

After a little she turned round. 'The person was in black, you say?'

'In mourning—rather poor, almost shabby. But—yes—with extraordinary beauty.' I now recognized to what I had at last, stroke by stroke, brought the victim of my confidence, for she quite visibly weighed this. 'Oh, handsome—very, very,' I insisted; 'wonderfully handsome. But infamous.'

She slowly came back to me. 'Miss Jessel—*was* infamous.' She once more took my hand in both her own, holding it as tight as if to fortify me against the increase of alarm I might draw from this disclosure. 'They were both infamous,' she finally said.

So for a little we faced it once more together; and I found absolutely a degree of help in seeing it now so straight. 'I appreciate,' I said, 'the great decency of your not having hitherto spoken; but the time has certainly come to give me the whole thing.' She appeared to assent to this, but still only in silence; seeing which I went on: 'I must have it now. Of what did she die? Come, there was something between them.'

'There was everything.'

'In spite of the difference——?'

'Oh, of their rank, their condition'—she brought it woefully out. '*She* was a lady.'

I turned it over; I again saw. 'Yes—she was a lady.'

'And he so dreadfully below,' said Mrs. Grose.

I felt that I doubtless needn't press too hard, in such company, on the place of a servant in the scale; but there was nothing to prevent an acceptance of my companion's own measure of my predecessor's abasement. There was a way to deal with that, and I dealt; the móre readily for my full vision—on the evidence—of our employer's late good-looking 'own' man; impudent, assured, spoiled, depraved. 'The fellow was a hound.'

Mrs. Grose considered as if it were perhaps a little a case for a sense of shades. 'I 've never seen one like him. He did what he wished.'

'With *her*?'

'With them all.'

It was as if now in my friend's own eyes Miss Jessel had again appeared. I seemed at any rate for an instant to trace their evocation of her as distinctly as I had seen her by the pond; and I brought out with decision: 'It must have been also what *she* wished!'

Mrs. Grose's face signified that it had been indeed, but she said at the same time: 'Poor woman—she paid for it!'

'Then you do know what she died of?' I asked.

'No—I know nothing. I wanted not to know; I was glad enough I didn't; and I thanked heaven she was well out of this!'

'Yet you had then your idea——'

'Of her real reason for leaving Oh, yes—as to that. She couldn't have stayed. Fancy it here—for a governess! And afterwards I imagined—and I still imagine. And what I imagine is dreadful.'

'Not so dreadful as what *I* do,' I replied; on which I must have shown her—as I was indeed but too conscious—a front of miserable defeat. It brought out again all her compassion for me, and at the renewed touch of her kindness my power to resist broke down. I burst, as I had the other time made her burst, into tears; she took me to her motherly breast, and my lamentation overflowed. 'I don't do it!' I sobbed in despair; 'I don't save or shield them! It's far worse than I dreamed. They're lost!'

VIII

WHAT I had said to Mrs. Grose was true enough. there were in the matter I had put before her depths and possibilities that I lacked resolution to sound, so that when we met once more in the wonder of it we were of a common mind about the duty of resistance to extravagant fancies. We were to keep our heads if we should keep nothing else—difficult indeed as that might be in the face of all that, in our prodigious experience, seemed least to be questioned. Late that night, while the house slept, we had another talk in my room; when she went all the way with me as to its being beyond doubt that I had seen exactly what I had seen. I found that to keep her thoroughly in the grip of this I had only to ask her how, if I had 'made it up,' I came to be able to give, of each of the persons appearing to me, a picture disclosing, to the last detail, their special marks—a portrait on the exhibition of which she had instantly recognized and named them. She wished, of course—small blame to her!—to sink the whole subject; and I was quick to assure her that my own interest in it had now violently taken the form of a search for the way to escape from it. I closed with her cordially on the article of the likelihood that with recurrence—for recurrence we took for granted—I should get used to my danger; distinctly professing that my personal exposure had suddenly become the least of my discomforts. It was my new suspicion that was intolerable; and yet even to this complication the later hours of the day had brought a little ease.

On leaving her, after my first outbreak, I had of course returned to my pupils, associating the right remedy for my dismay with that sense of their charm which I had already recognized as a resource I could positively cultivate and which had never failed me yet. I had simply, in other words, plunged afresh into Flora's special society and there become aware—it was almost a luxury!—that she could put her little conscious hand straight upon the spot that ached. She had looked at me in sweet speculation and then had accused me to my face of having 'cried.' I had supposed the ugly signs of it brushed away; but I could literally—for the time, at all events—rejoice, under this fathomless charity, that they had not entirely disappeared. To gaze into the depths of blue of the child's eyes and pronounce their loveliness a trick of premature cunning was to be guilty of a cynicism in preference to which I naturally preferred to abjure my judgment and, so far as might be, my agitation. I couldn't abjure for merely wanting to, but I could repeat to Mrs. Grose—as I did there, over and over, in the small hours—that with our small friends' voices in the air, their pressure on one's heart and their fragrant faces against one's cheek, everything fell to the ground but their incapacity and their beauty. It was a pity that, somehow, to settle this once for all, I had equally to re-enumerate the signs of subtlety that, in the afternoon, by the lake, had made a miracle of my show of self-possession. It was a pity to be obliged to reinvestigate the certitude of the moment itself and repeat how it had come to me as a revelation that the inconceivable communion I then surprised must have been for both parties a matter of habit. It was a pity I should have had to quaver out again, the reasons for my not having, in my delusion, so much as questioned that the little girl saw our visitant even as I actually saw Mrs. Grose herself, and that she wanted, by just so much as she did thus see, to make me suppose she didn't, and at the same time, without showing anything, arrive at a guess as to whether I myself did! It was a pity I needed to recapitulate the portentous little activities by which she sought to divert my attention—the perceptible increase of movement, the greater intensity of play, the singing, the gabbling of nonsense and the invitation to romp.

Yet if I had not indulged, to prove there was nothing in it, in this review, I should have missed the two or three dim elements of comfort that still remained to me. I shouldn't, for instance, have been able to asseverate to my friend that I was certain —which was so much to the good—that *I* at least had not betrayed myself. I shouldn't have been prompted, by stress of need, by desperation of mind —I scarce know what to call it—to invoke such further aid to intelligence as might spring from pushing my colleague fairly to the wall. She had told me, bit by bit, under pressure, a great deal; but a small shifty spot on the wrong side of it all still sometimes brushed my brow like the wing of a bat; and I remember how on this occasion—for the sleeping house and the concentration alike of our danger and our watch seemed to help—I felt the importance of giving the last jerk to the curtain. 'I don't believe anything so horrible,' I recollect saying; 'no, let us put it definitely, my dear, that I don't. But if I did, you know, there 's a thing I should require now, just without sparing you the least bit more—oh, not a scrap, come!—to get out of you. What was it you had in mind when, in our distress, before Miles came back, over the letter from his school, you said, under my insistence, that you didn't pretend for him he hadn't literally *ever* been "bad"? He has *not*, truly, "ever," in these weeks that I myself have lived with him and so closely watched him; he has been an imperturbable little prodigy of delightful, lovable goodness. Therefore you might perfectly have made the claim for him if you had not, as it happened, seen an exception to take. What was your exception, and to what passage in your personal observation of him did you refer?'

It was a straight question enough, but levity was not our note, and in any case I had before the grey dawn admonished us to separate got my answer. What my friend had had in mind proved immensely to the purpose. It was neither more nor less than the particular fact that for a period of several months Quint and the boy had been perpetually together. It was, indeed, the very appropriate item of evidence of her having ventured to criticize the propriety, to hint at the incongruity, of so close an alliance, and even to go so far on the subject as a frank overture to Miss Jessel would take her. Miss Jessel had, with a very high manner about it, requested her to mind her business, and the good woman had on this directly approached little Miles. What she had said to him, since I pressed, was that *she* liked to see young gentlemen not forget their station.

I pressed again, of course, the closer for that.

'You reminded him that Quint was only a base menial?'

'As you might say! And it was his answer, for one thing, that was bad.'

'And for another thing?' I waited. 'He repeated your words to Quint?'

'No, not that. It 's just what he *wouldn't*!' she could still impress on me. 'I was sure, at any rate,' she added, 'that he didn't. But he denied certain occasions.'

'What occasions?'

'When they had been about together quite as if Quint were his tutor—and a very grand one—and Miss Jessel only for the little lady. When he had gone off with the fellow, I mean, and spent hours with him.'

'He then prevaricated about it—he said he hadn't?' Her assent was clear enough to cause me to add in a moment: 'I see. He lied.'

'Oh!' Mrs. Grose mumbled. This was a suggestion that it didn't matter; which indeed she backed up by a further remark. 'You see, after all, Miss Jessel didn't mind. She didn't forbid him.'

I considered. 'Did he put that to you as a justification?'

At this she dropped again. 'No, he never spoke of it.'

'Never mentioned her in connection with Quint?'

She saw, visibly flushing, where I was coming out. 'Well, he didn't show anything. He denied,' she repeated; 'he denied.'

Lord, how I pressed her now! 'So that you could see he knew what was between the two wretches?'

'I don't know—I don't know!' the poor woman wailed.

'You do know, you dear thing,' I replied; 'only you haven't my dreadful boldness of mind, and you keep back, out of timidity, and modesty and delicacy, even the impression that in the past, when you had, without my aid, to flounder about in silence, most of all made you miserable. But I shall get it out of you yet! There was something in the boy that suggested to you,' I continued, 'his covering and concealing their relation.'

'Oh, he couldn't prevent——'

'Your learning the truth? I dare say! But, heavens,' I fell, with vehemence, a-thinking, 'what it shows that they must, to that extent, have succeeded in making of him!'

'Ah, nothing that 's not nice *now*!' Mrs. Grose lugubriously pleaded.

'I don't wonder you looked queer,' I persisted, 'when I mentioned to you the letter from his school!'

'I doubt if I looked as queer as you!' she retorted with homely force. 'And if he was so bad then as that comes to, how is he such an angel now?'

'Yes, indeed—and if he was a fiend at school! How, how, how? Well,' I said in my torment, 'you must put it to me again, though I shall not be able to tell you for some days. Only put it to me again!' I cried in a way that made my friend stare. 'There are directions in which I mustn't for the present let myself go.' Meanwhile I returned to her first example—the one to which she had just previously referred—of the boy's happy capacity for an occasional slip. 'If Quint—on your remonstrance at the time you speak of—was a base menial, one of the things Miles said to you, I find myself guessing, was that you were another.' Again her admission was so adequate that I continued: 'And you forgave him that?'

'Wouldn't *you*?'

'Oh, yes!' And we exchanged there, in the stillness, a sound of the oddest amusement. Then I went on: 'At all events, while he was with the man——'

'Miss Flora was with the woman. It suited them all!'

It suited me too, I felt, only too well; by which I mean that it suited exactly the particular deadly view I was in the very act of forbidding myself to entertain. But I so far succeeded in checking the expression of this view that I will throw, just here, no further light on it than may be offered by the mention of my final observation to Mrs. Grose. 'His having lied and been impudent are, I confess, less engaging specimens than I had hoped to have from you of the outbreak in him of the little natural man. Still,' I mused, 'they must do, for they make me feel more than ever that I must watch.'

It made me blush, the next minute, to see in my friend's face how much more unreservedly she had forgiven him than her anecdote struck me as pointing out to my own tenderness any way to do. This was marked when, at the schoolroom door, she quitted me. 'Surely you don't accuse *him*——'

'Of carrying on an intercourse that he conceals from me? Ah, remember that, until further evidence, I now accuse nobody.' Then before shutting her out to go by another passage to her own place. 'I must just wait,' I wound up.

IX

I WAITED and waited, and the days took as they elapsed something from my consternation. A very few of them, in fact, passing, in constant sight of my pupils, without a fresh incident, sufficed to give to grievous fancies and even to odious memories a kind of brush of the sponge. I have spoken of the surrender to their extraordinary childish grace as a thing I could actively promote in myself, and it may be imagined if I neglected now to apply at this source for whatever balm it would yield. Stranger than I can express, certainly, was the effort to struggle against my new lights. It would doubtless have been a greater tension still, however, had it not been so frequently successful. I used to wonder how my little charges could help guessing that I thought strange things about them; and the circumstance that these things only made them more interesting was not by itself a direct aid to keeping them in the dark. I trembled lest they should see that they *were* so immensely more interesting. Putting things at the worst, at all events, as in meditation I so often did, any clouding of their innocence could only be—blameless and foredoomed as they were—a reason the more for taking risks. There were moments when I knew myself to catch them up by an irresistible impulse and press them to my heart. As soon as I had done so I used to wonder: 'What will they think of that? Doesn't it betray too much?' It would have been easy to get into a sad, wild tangle about how much I might betray; but the real account, I feel, of the hours of peace I could still enjoy was that the immediate charm of my companions was a beguilement still effective even under the shadow of the possibility that it was studied. For if it occurred to me that I might occasionally excite suspicion by the little outbreaks of my sharper passion for them, so too I remember asking if I mightn't see a queerness in the traceable increase of their own demonstrations.

They were at this period extravagantly and preternaturally fond of me; which, after all, I could reflect, was no more than a graceful response in children perpetually bowed down over and hugged. The homage of which they were so lavish succeeded in truth for my nerves quite as well as if I never appeared to myself, as I may say, literally to catch them at a purpose in it. They had never, I think, wanted to do so many things for their poor protectress; I mean—though they got their lessons better and better, which was naturally what would please her most—in the way of diverting, entertaining, surprising her; reading her passages, telling her stories, acting her charades, pouncing out at her, in disguises, as animals and historical characters, and above all, astonishing her by the 'pieces' they had secretly got by heart and could interminably recite. I should never get to the bottom—were I to let myself go even now—of the prodigious private commentary, all under still more private correction, with which I in these days overscored their full hours. They had shown me from the first a facility for everything, a general faculty which, taking a fresh start, achieved remarkable flights. They got their little tasks as if they loved them; they indulged, from the mere exuberance of the gift, in the most unimposed little miracles of memory. They not only popped out at me as tigers and as Romans, but as Shakespearians, astronomers, and navigators. This was so singularly the case that it had presumably much to do with the fact as to which, at the present day, I am at a loss for a different explanation: I allude to my unnatural composure on the subject of another school for Miles. What I remember is that I was content for the time not to open the question, and that contentment must have sprung from the sense of his perpetually striking show of cleverness. He was too clever for a bad governess, for a parson's daughter, to spoil; and the strangest if not the brightest thread in the pensive embroidery I just spoke of was the impression I might have got, if I had dared to work it out, that he was under some influence operating in his small intellectual life as a tremendous incitement.

If it was easy to reflect, however, that such a boy could postpone school, it was at least as marked that for such a boy to have been 'kicked out' by a schoolmaster was a mystification without end. Let me add that in their company now—and I was careful almost never to be out of it—I could follow no scent very far. We lived in a cloud of music and affection and success and private theatricals. The musical sense in each of the children was of the quickest, but the elder in especial had a marvellous knack of catching and repeating. The schoolroom piano broke into all gruesome fancies; and when that failed there were confabulations in corners, with a sequel of one of them going out in the highest spirits in order to 'come in' as something new. I had had brothers myself, and it was no revelation to me that little girls could be slavish idolaters of little boys. What surpassed everything was that there was a little boy in the world who could have for the inferior age, sex, and intelligence so fine a consideration. They were extraordinarily at one, and to say that they never either quarrelled or complained is to make the note of praise coarse for their quality of sweetness. Sometimes perhaps indeed (when I dropped into coarseness) I came across traces of little understandings between them by which one of them should keep me occupied while the other slipped away. There is a naïf side, I suppose, in all diplomacy; but if my pupils practised upon me it was surely with the minimum of grossness. It was all in the other quarter that, after a lull, the grossness broke out.

I find that I really hang back; but I must take my horrid plunge. In going on with the record of what was hideous at Bly I not only challenge the most liberal faith—for which I little care; but (and this is another matter) I renew what I myself suffered, I again push my dreadful way through it to the end. There came suddenly an hour after which, as I look back, the business seems to me to have been all pure suffering; but I have at least reached the heart of it, and the straightest road out is doubtless to advance. One evening—with nothing to lead up or prepare it—I felt the cold touch of the impression that had breathed on me the night of my arrival and which, much lighter then as I have mentioned, I should probably have made little of in memory had my subsequent sojourn been less agitated. I had not gone to bed; I sat reading by a couple of candles. There was a roomful of old books at Bly—last-century fiction some of it, which, to the extent of a distinctly depreciated renown, but never to so much as that of a stray specimen, had reached the sequestered home and appealed to the unavowed curiosity of my youth. I remember that the book I had in my hand was Fielding's *Amelia*; also that I was wholly awake. I recall further both a general conviction that it was horribly late and a particular objection to looking at my watch. I figure finally that the white curtain draping, in the fashion of those days, the head of Flora's little bed, shrouded, as I had assured myself long before, the perfection of childish rest. I recollect in short that though I was deeply interested in my author I found myself, at the turn of a page and with his spell all scattered, looking straight up from him and hard at the door of my room. There was a moment during which I listened, reminded of the faint sense I had had, the first night, of there being something undefinably astir in the house, and noted the soft breath of the open casement just move the half-drawn blind. Then, with all the marks of a deliberation that must have seemed magnificent had there been any one to admire it, I laid down my book, rose to my feet and, taking a candle, went straight out of the room and, from the passage, on which my light made little impression, noiselessly closed and locked the door.

I can say now neither what determined nor what guided me, but I went straight along the lobby, holding my candle high, till I came within sight of the tall window that presided over the great turn of the staircase. At this point I precipitately found myself aware of three things. They were practically simultaneous, yet they had flashes of succession. My candle, under a bold flourish, went out, and I perceived, by the uncovered window, that the yielding dusk of earliest morning rendered it unnecessary. Without it, the next instant, I knew that there was a figure on the stair. I speak of sequences, but I required no lapse of seconds to stiffen myself for a third encounter with Quint. The apparition had reached the landing half-way up and was therefore on the spot nearest the window, where, at sight of me, it stopped short and fixed me exactly as it had fixed me from the tower and from the garden. He knew me as well as I knew him; and so, in the cold, faint twilight, with a glimmer in the high glass and another on the polish of the oak stair below, we faced each other in our common intensity. He was absolutely, on this occasion, a living, detestable, dangerous presence. But that was not the wonder of wonders; I reserve this distinction for quite another circumstance: the circumstance that dread had unmistakably quitted me and that there was nothing in me unable to meet and measure him.

I had plenty of anguish after that extraordinary moment, but I had, thank God, no terror. And he knew I hadn't—I found myself at the end of an instant magnificently aware of this. I felt, in a fierce rigour of confidence, that if I stood my ground a minute I should cease—for the time at least—to have him to reckon with; and during the minute, accordingly, the thing was as human and hideous as a real interview: hideous just because it *was* human, as human as to have met alone, in the small hours, in a sleeping house, some enemy, some adventurer, some criminal. It was the dead silence of our long gaze at such close quarters that gave the whole horror, huge as it was, its only note of the unnatural. If I had met a murderer in such a place and at such an hour we still at least would have spoken. Something would have passed, in life, between us; if nothing had passed one of us would have moved. The moment was so prolonged that it would have taken but little more to make me doubt if even *I* were in life. I can't express what followed it save by saying that the silence itself—which was indeed in a manner an attestation of my strength—became the element into which I saw the figure disappear; in which I definitely saw it turn, as I might have seen the low wretch to which it had once belonged turn on receipt of an order, and pass, with my eyes on the villainous back that no hunch could have more disfigured, straight down the staircase and into the darkness in which the next bend was lost.

X

I REMAINED awhile at the top of the stair, but with the effect presently of understanding that when my visitor had gone, he had gone; then I returned to my room. The foremost thing I saw there by the light of the candle I had left burning was that Flora's little bed was empty; and on this I caught my breath with all the terror that, five minutes before, I had been able to resist. I dashed at the place in which I had left her lying and over which—for the small silk counterpane and the sheets were disarranged—the white curtains had been deceivingly pulled forward; then my step, to my unutterable relief, produced an answering sound: I noticed an agitation of the window-blind, and the child, ducking down, emerged rosily from the other side of it. She stood there in so much of her candour and so little of her night-gown, with her pink bare feet and the golden glow of her curls. She looked intensely grave, and I had never had such a sense of losing an advantage acquired (the thrill of which had just been so prodigious) as on my consciousness that she addressed me with a reproach: 'You naughty: where *have* you been?' Instead of challenging her own irregularity I found myself arraigned and explaining. She herself explained, for that matter, with the loveliest, eagerest simplicity. She had known suddenly, as she lay there, that I was out of the room, and had jumped up to see what had become of me.

I had dropped, with the joy of her reappearance, back into my chair—feeling then, and then only, a little faint; and she had pattered straight over to me, thrown herself upon my knee, given herself to be held with the flame of the candle full in the wonderful little face that was still flushed with sleep. I remember closing my eyes an instant, yieldingly, consciously, as before the excess of something beautiful that shone out of the blue of her own. 'You were looking for me out of the window?' I said. 'You thought I might be walking in the grounds?'

'Well, you know, I thought someone was'—she never blanched as she smiled out that at me.

Oh, how I looked at her now! 'And did you see any one?'

'Ah, *no*!' she returned almost (with the full privilege of childish inconsequence) resentfully, though with a long sweetness in her little drawl of the negative.

At the moment, in the state of my nerves, I absolutely believed she lied; and if I once more closed my eyes it was before the dazzle of the three or four possible ways in which I might take this up. One of these for a moment tempted me with such singular force that, to resist it, I must have gripped my little girl with a spasm that, wonderfully, she submitted to without a cry or a sign of fright. Why not break out at her on the spot and have it all over?—give it to her straight in her lovely little lighted face? 'You see, you see, you *know* that you do and that you already quite suspect I believe it; therefore why not frankly confess it to me, so that we may at least live with it together and learn perhaps, in the strangeness of our fate, where we are and what it means?' This solicitation dropped, alas, as it came: if I could immediately have succumbed to it I might have spared myself —well, you 'll see what. Instead of succumbing I sprang again to my feet, looked at her bed and took a helpless middle way. 'Why did you pull the curtain over the place to make me think you were still there?'

Flora luminously considered; after which, with her little divine smile: 'Because I don't like to frighten you!'

'But if I had, by your idea, gone out——?'

She absolutely declined to be puzzled; she turned her eyes to the flame of the candle as if the question were as irrelevant, or at any rate as impersonal, as Mrs. Marcet or nine-times-nine. 'Oh, but you know,' she quite adequately answered, 'that you might come back, you dear, and that you *have*!' And after a little, when she had got into bed, I had, a long time, by almost sitting on her for the retention of her hand, to show how I recognized the pertinence of my return.

You may imagine the general complexion, from that moment, of my nights. I repeatedly sat up till I didn't know when; I selected moments when my room-mate unmistakably slept, and, stealing out, took noiseless turns in the passage. I even pushed as far as to where I had last met Quint. But I never met him there again, and I may as well say at once that I on no other occasion saw him in the house. I just missed, on the staircase, nevertheless, a different adventure. Looking down it from the top I once recognized the presence of a woman seated on one of the lower steps with her back presented to me, her body half-bowed and her head, in an attitude of woe, in her hands. I had been there but an instant, however, when she vanished without looking round at me. I knew, for all that, exactly what dreadful face she had to show; and I wondered whether, if instead of being above I had been below, I should have had the same nerve for going up that I had lately shown Quint. Well, there continued to be plenty of call for nerve. On the eleventh night after my latest encounter with that gentleman—they were all numbered now—I had an alarm that perilously skirted it and that indeed, from the particular quality of its unexpectedness, proved quite my sharpest shock. It was precisely the first night during this series, that, weary with vigils, I had conceived I might again without laxity lay myself down at my old hour. I slept immediately and, as I afterwards knew, till about one o'clock; but when I woke it was to sit straight up as completely roused as if a hand had shaken me. I had left a light burning, but it was now out, and I felt an instant certainty that Flora had extinguished it. This brought me to my feet and straight, in the darkness, to her bed, which I found she had left. A glance at the window enlightened me further, and the striking of a match completed the picture.

The child had again got up—this time blowing out the taper, and had again, for some purpose of observation or response, squeezed in behind the blind and was peering out into the night. That she now saw as she had not, I had satisfied myself, the previous time—was proved to me by the fact that she was disturbed neither by my re-illumination nor by the haste I made to get into slippers and into a wrap.

Hidden, protected, absorbed, she evidently rested on the sill—the casement opened forward—and gave herself up. There was a great still moon to help her, and this fact had counted in my quick decision. She was face to face with the apparition we had met at the lake, and could now communicate with it as she had not then been able to do. What I, on my side, had to care for was, without disturbing her, to reach, from the corridor, some other window turned to the same quarter. I got to the door without her hearing me; I got out of it, closed it, and listened from the other side for some sound from her. While I stood in the passage I had my eyes on her brother's door, which was but ten steps off and which, indescribably, produced in me a renewal of the strange impulse that I lately spoke of as my temptation. What if I should go straight in and march to *his* window?—what if, by risking to his boyish bewilderment a revelation of my motive, I should throw across the rest of the mystery the long halter of my boldness?

This thought held me sufficiently to make me cross to his threshold and pause again. I preternaturally listened; I figured to myself what might portentously be; I wondered if his bed were also empty and he also secretly at watch. It was a deep soundless minute, at the end of which my impulse failed. He was quiet; he might be innocent; the risk was hideous; I turned away. There was a figure in the grounds—a figure prowling for a sight, the visitor with whom Flora was engaged; but it wasn't the visitor most concerned with my boy. I hesitated afresh, but on other grounds and only a few seconds; then I had made my choice. There were empty rooms enough at Bly, and it was only a question of choosing the right one. The right one suddenly presented itself to me as the lower one—though high above the gardens—in the solid corner of the house that I have spoken of as the old tower. This was a large, square chamber, arranged with some state as a bedroom, the extravagant size of which made it so inconvenient that it had not for years, though kept by Mrs. Grose in exemplary order, been occupied. I had often admired it and I knew my way about in it; I had only, after just faltering at the first chill gloom of its disuse, to pass across it and unbolt in all quietness one of the shutters. Achieving this transit I uncovered the glass without a sound and, applying my face to the pane, was able, the darkness without being much less than within, to see that I commanded the right direction. Then I saw something more. The moon made the night extraordinarily penetrable and showed me on the lawn a person, diminished by distance, who stood there motionless and as if fascinated, looking up to where I had appeared—looking, that is, not so much straight at me as at something that was apparently above me. There was clearly another person above me—there was a person on the tower; but the presence on the lawn was not in the least what I had conceived and had confidently hurried to meet. The presence on the lawn—I felt sick as I made it out—was poor little Miles himself.

XI

It was not till late next day that I spoke to Mrs. Grose; the rigour with which I kept my pupils in sight making it often difficult to meet her privately; the more as we each felt the importance of not provoking—on the part of the servants quite as much as on that of the children—any suspicion of a secret flurry or of a discussion of mysteries. I drew a great security in this particular from her mere smooth aspect. There was nothing in her fresh face to pass on to others the least of my horrible confidences. She believed me, I was sure, absolutely: if she hadn't I don't know what would have become of me, for I couldn't have borne the strain alone. But she was a magnificent monument to the blessing of a want of imagination, and if she could see in our little charges nothing but their beauty and amiability, their happiness and cleverness, she had no direct communication with the sources of my trouble. If they had been at all visibly blighted or battered she would doubtless have grown, on tracing it back, haggard enough to match them; as matters stood, however, I could feel her, when she surveyed them with her large white arms folded and the habit of serenity in all her look, thank the Lord's mercy that if they were ruined the pieces would still serve. Flights of fancy gave place, in her mind, to a steady fireside glow, and I had already begun to perceive how, with the development of the conviction that—

as time went on without a public accident—our young things could, after all, look out for themselves, she addressed her greatest solicitude to the sad case presented by their deputy-guardian. That, for myself, was a sound simplification I could engage that, to the world, my face should tell no tales, but it would have been, in the conditions, an immense added worry to find myself anxious about hers.

At the hour I now speak of she had joined me, under pressure, on the terrace, where, with the lapse of the season, the afternoon sun was now agreeable; and we sat there together while before us and at a distance, yet within call if we wished, the children strolled to and fro in one of their most manageable moods. They moved slowly, in unison, below us, over the lawn, the boy, as they went, reading aloud from a story-book and passing his arm round his sister to keep her quite in touch. Mrs. Grose watched them with positive placidity; then I caught the suppressed intellectual creak with which she conscientiously turned to take from me a view of the back of the tapestry. I had made her a receptacle of lurid things, but there was an odd recognition of my superiority—my accomplishments and my function—in her patience under my pain. She offered her mind to my disclosures as, had I wished to mix a witch's broth and proposed it with assurance, she would have held out a large, clean saucepan. This had become thoroughly her attitude by the time that, in my recital of the events of the night, I reached the point of what Miles had said to me when, after seeing him, at such a monstrous hour, almost on the very spot where he happened now to be, I had gone down to bring him in; choosing then, at the window, with a concentrated need of not alarming the house, rather that method than any noisier process. I had left her meanwhile in little doubt of my small hope of representing with success even to her actual sympathy my sense of the real splendour of the little inspiration with which, after I had got him into the house, the boy met my final articulate challenge. As soon as I appeared in the moonlight on the terrace he had come to me as straight as possible; on which I had taken his hand without a word and led him, through the dark spaces, up the staircase where Quint had so hungrily hovered for him, along the lobby where I had listened and trembled, and so to his forsaken room.

Not a sound, on the way, had passed between us, and I had wondered—oh, *how* I had wondered! —if he were groping about in his dreadful little mind for something plausible and not too grotesque. It would tax his invention certainly, and I felt, this time, over his real embarrassment, a curious thrill of triumph. It was a sharp trap for any game hitherto successful. He could play no longer at perfect propriety, nor could he pretend to it; so how the deuce would he get out of the scrape? There beat in me indeed, with the passionate throb of this question, an equal dumb appeal as to how the deuce *I* should. I was confronted at last, as never yet, with all the risk attached even now to sounding my own horrid note. I remember, in fact, that as we pushed into his little chamber, where the bed had not been slept in at all and the window, uncovered to the moonlight, made the place so clear that there was no need of striking a match—I remember how I suddenly dropped, sank upon the edge of the bed from the force of the idea that he must know how he really, as they say, 'had' me. He could do what he liked, with all his cleverness to help him, so long as I should continue to defer to the old tradition of the criminality of those caretakers of the young who minister to superstitions and fears. He 'had' me indeed, and in a cleft stick; for who would ever absolve me, who would consent that I should be unhung, if, by the faintest tremor of an overture, I were the first to introduce into our perfect intercourse an element so dire? No, no: it was useless to attempt to convey to Mrs. Grose, just as it is scarcely less so to attempt to suggest here, how, during our short, stiff brush there in the dark, he fairly shook me with admiration. I was of course thoroughly kind and merciful; never, never yet had I placed on his small shoulders hands of such tenderness as those with which, while I rested against the bed, I held him there well under fire. I had no alternative but, in form at least, to put it to him.

'You must tell me now—and all the truth. What did you go out for? What were you doing there?'

I can still see his wonderful smile, the whites of his beautiful eyes and the uncovering of his clear teeth, shine to me in the dusk. 'If I tell you why, will you understand?' My heart, at this, leaped into my mouth. *Would* he tell me why? I found no sound on my lips to press it, and I was aware of answering only with a vague, repeated, grimacing nod. He was gentleness itself, and while I wagged my head at him he stood there more than ever a little fairy prince. It was his brightness indeed that gave me a respite. Would it be so great if he were really going to tell me? 'Well,' he said at last, 'just exactly in order that you should do this.'

'Do what?'

'Think me—for a change—*bad*!' I shall never forget the sweetness and gaiety with which he brought out the word, nor how, on top of it, he bent forward and kissed me. It was practically the end of everything. I met his kiss and I had to make, while I folded him for a minute in my arms, the most stupendous effort not to cry. He had given exactly the account of himself that permitted least my going behind it, and it was only with the effect of confirming my acceptance of it that, as I presently glanced about the room, I could say:

'Then you didn't undress at all?'

He fairly glittered in the gloom. 'Not at all. I sat up and read.'

'And when did you go down?'

'At midnight. When I 'm bad I *am* bad!'

'I see, I see—it 's charming. But how could you be sure I should know it?'

'Oh, I arranged that with Flora.' His answers rang out with a readiness! 'She was to get up and look out.'

'Which is what she did do.' It was I who fell into the trap!

'So she disturbed you, and, to see what she was looking at, you also looked—you saw.'

'While you,' I concurred, 'caught your death in the night air!'

He literally bloomed so from this exploit that he could afford radiantly to assent. 'How othèrwise should I have been bad enough?' he asked. Then, after another embrace, the incident and our interview closed on my recognition of all the reserves of goodness that, for his joke, he had been able to draw upon.

XII

THE particular impression I had received proved in the morning light, I repeat, not quite successfully presentable to Mrs. Grose, though I re-enforced it with the mention of still another remark that he had made before we separated. 'It all lies in half a dozen words,' I said to her, 'words that really settle the matter. "Think, you know, what I *might* do!" He threw that off to show me how good he is. He knows down to the ground what he "might do." That 's what he gave them a taste of at school.'

'Lord, you do change!' cried my friend.

'I don't change—I simply make it out. The four, depend upon it, perpetually meet. If on either of these last nights you had been with either child you 'd clearly have understood. The more I 've watched and waited the more I 've felt that if there were nothing else to make it sure it would be made so by the systematic silence of each. *Never*, by a slip of the tongue, have they so much as alluded to either of their old friends, any more than Miles has alluded to his expulsion. Oh, yes, we may sit here and look at them, and they may show off to us there to their fill; but even while they pretend to be lost in their fairy-tale they 're steeped in their vision of the dead restored to them. He 's not reading to her,' I declared; 'they 're talking of *them*—they 're talking horrors! I go on, I know, as if I were crazy; and it 's a wonder I 'm not. What I 've seen would have made *you* so; but it has only made me more lucid, made me get hold of still other things.'

My lucidity must have seemed awful, but the charming creatures who were victims of it, passing and repassing in their interlocked sweetness, gave my colleague something to hold on by; and I felt how tight she held as, without stirring in the breath of my passion, she covered them still with her eyes. 'Of what other things have you got hold?'

'Why, of the very things that have delighted, fascinated and yet, at bottom, as I now so strangely see, mystified and troubled me. Their more than earthly beauty, their absolutely unnatural goodness. It 's a game,' I went on; 'it 's a policy and a fraud!'

'On the part of little darlings——?'

'As yet mere lovely babies? Yes, mad as that seems!' The very act of bringing it out really helped me to trace it—follow it all up and piece it all together. 'They haven't been good—they 've only been absent. It has been easy to live with them because they 're simply leading a life of their own. They 're not mine—they 're not ours. They 're his and they 're hers!'

'Quint's and that woman's?'

'Quint's and that woman's. They want to get to them.'

Oh, how, at this, poor Mrs. Grose appeared to study them! 'But for what?'

'For the love of all the evil that, in those dreadful days, the pair put into them. And to ply them with that evil still, to keep up the work of demons, is what brings the others back.'

'Laws!' said my friend under her breath. The exclamation was homely, but it revealed a real acceptance of my further proof of what, in the bad time—for there had been a worse even than this!—must have occurred. There could have been no such justification for me as the plain assent of her experience to whatever depth of depravity I found credible in our brace of scoundrels. It was in obvious submission of memory that she brought out after a moment: 'They *were* rascals! But what can they now do?' she pursued.

'Do?' I echoed so loud that Miles and Flora, as they passed at their distance, paused an instant in their walk and looked at us. 'Don't they do enough?' I demanded in a lower tone, while the children, having smiled and nodded and kissed hands to us, resumed their exhibition. We were held by it a minute; then I answered: 'They can destroy them!' At this my companion did turn, but the appeal she launched was a silent one, the effect of which was to make me more explicit. 'They don't know as yet quite how—but they 're trying hard. They 're seen only across, as it were, and beyond—in strange places and on high places, the top of towers, the roof of houses, the outside of windows, the further edge of pools; but there 's a deep design on either side, to shorten the distance and overcome the obstacle: so the success of the tempters is only a question of time. They 've only to keep to their suggestions of danger.'

'For the children to come?'

'And perish in the attempt!' Mrs. Grose slowly got up, and I scrupulously added: 'Unless, of course, we can prevent!'

Standing there before me while I kept my seat, she visibly turned things over. 'Their uncle must do the preventing. He must take them away.'

'And who 's to make him?'

She had been scanning the distance, but she now dropped on me a foolish face. 'You, miss.'

'By writing to him that his house is poisoned and his nephew and niece mad?'

'But if they *are*, miss?'

'And if I am myself, you mean? That 's charming news to be sent him by a person enjoying his confidence and whose prime undertaking was to give him no worry.'

Mrs. Grose considered, following the children again. 'Yes, he do hate worry. That was the great reason——'

'Why those fiends took him in so long? No doubt, though his indifference must have been awful. As I 'm not a fiend, at any rate, I shouldn't take him in.'

My companion, after an instant and for all answer, sat down again and grasped my arm. 'Make him at any rate come to you.'

I stared. 'To *me*?' I had a sudden fear of what she might do. '"Him?"'

'He ought to *be* here—he ought to help.'

I quickly rose and I think I must have shown her a queerer face than ever yet. 'You see me asking him for a visit?' No, with her eyes on my face she evidently couldn't. Instead of it even—as a woman reads another—she could see what I myself saw: his derision, his amusement, his contempt for the breakdown of my resignation at being left alone and for the fine machinery I had set in motion to attract his attention to my slighted charms. She didn't know—no one knew—how proud I had been to serve him and to stick to our terms; yet she none the less took the measure, I think, of the warning I now gave her. 'If you should so lose your head as to appeal to him for me——'

She was really frightened. 'Yes, miss?'

'I would leave, on the spot, both him and you.'

XIII

It was all very well to join them, but speaking to them proved quite as much as ever an effort beyond my strength—offered, in close quarters, difficulties as insurmountable as before. This situation continued a month, and with new aggravations and particular notes, the note above all, sharper and sharper, of the small ironic consciousness on the part of my pupils. It was not, I am as sure to-day as I was sure then, my mere infernal imagination: it was absolutely traceable that they were aware of my predicament and that this strange relation made, in a manner, for a long time, the air in which we moved. I don't mean that they had their tongues in their cheeks or did anything vulgar, for that was not one of their dangers: I do mean, on the other hand, that the element of the unnamed and untouched became, between us, greater than any other, and that so much avoidance couldn't have been made successful without a great deal of tacit arrangement. It was as if, at moments, we were perpetually coming into sight of subjects before which we must stop short, turning suddenly out of alleys that we perceived to be blind, closing with a little bang that made us look at each other—for, like all bangs, it was something louder than we had intended—the doors we had indiscreetly opened. All roads lead to Rome, and there were times when it might have struck us that almost every branch of study or subject of conversation skirted forbidden ground. Forbidden ground was the question of the return of the dead in general and of whatever, in especial, might survive, for memory, of the friends little children had lost. There were days when I could have sworn that one of them had, with a small invisible nudge, said to the other: 'She thinks she 'll do it this time—but she *won't!*' To 'do it' would have been to indulge, for instance—and for once in a way—in some direct reference to the lady who had prepared them for my discipline. They had a delightful endless appetite for passages in my own history to which I had again and again treated them; they were in possession of everything that had ever happened to me, had had, with every circumstance, the story of my smallest adventures and of those of my brothers and sisters and of the cat and the dog at home, as well as many particulars of the whimsical bent of my father, of the furniture and arrangement of our house and of the conversation of the old women of our village. There were things enough, taking one with another, to chatter about, if one went very fast and knew by instinct when to go round. They pulled with an art of their own the strings of my invention and my memory; and nothing else perhaps, when I thought of such occasions afterwards, gave me so the suspicion of being watched from under cover. It was in any case over *my* life, *my* past and *my* friends alone that we could take anything like our ease; a state of affairs that led them sometimes without the least pertinence to break out into sociable reminders. I was invited—with no visible connection—to repeat afresh Goody Gosling's celebrated *mot* or to confirm the details already supplied as to the cleverness of the vicarage pony.

It was partly at such junctures as these and partly at quite different ones that, with the turn my matters had now taken, my predicament, as I have called it, grew most sensible. The fact that the days passed for me without another encounter ought, it would have appeared, to have done something toward soothing my nerves. Since the light brush, that second night on the upper landing, of the presence of a woman at the foot of the stair, I had seen nothing, whether in or out of the house, that one had better not have seen. There was many a corner round which I expected to come upon Quint, and many a situation that, in a merely sinister way, would have favoured the appearance of Miss Jessel. The summer had turned, the summer had gone; the autumn had dropped upon Bly and had blown out half our lights. The place, with its grey sky and withered garlands, its bared spaces and scattered dead leaves, was like a theatre after the performance—all strewn with crumpled playbills. There were exactly states of the air, conditions of sound and of stillness, unspeakable impressions of the *kind* of ministering moment, that brought back to me, long enough to catch it, the feeling of the medium in which, that June evening out of doors, I had had my first sight of Quint, and in which too, at those other instants, I had, after seeing him through the window, looked for him in vain in the circle of shrubbery. I recognized the signs, the portents—I recognized the moment, the spot. But they remained unaccompanied and empty, and I continued unmolested; if unmolested one could call a young woman whose sensibility had, in the most extraordinary fashion, not declined but deepened. I had said in my talk with Mrs. Grose on that horrid scene of Flora's by the lake—and had perplexed her by so saying—that it would from that moment distress me much more to lose my power than to keep it. I had then expressed what was vividly in my mind: the truth that, whether the children really saw or not—since, that is, it was not yet definitely proved—I greatly preferred, as a safeguard, the fullness of my own exposure. I was ready to know the very worst that was to be known. What I had then had an ugly glimpse of was that my eyes might be sealed just while theirs were most opened. Well, my eyes *were* sealed, it appeared, at present—a consummation for which it seemed blasphemous not to thank God. There was, alas, a difficulty about that: I would have thanked Him with all my soul had I not had in a proportionate measure this conviction of the secret of my pupils.

How can I retrace to-day the strange steps of my obsession? There were times of our being together when I would have been ready to swear that, literally, in my presence, but with my direct sense of it closed, they had visitors who were known and were welcome. Then it was that, had I not been deterred by the very chance that such an injury might prove greater than the injury to be averted, my exaltation would have broken out. 'They 're here, they 're here, you little wretches,' I would have cried, 'and you can't deny it now!' The little wretches denied it with all the added volume of their sociability and their tenderness, just in the crystal depths of which —like the flash of a fish in a stream—the mockery of their advantage peeped up. The shock had in truth sunk into me still deeper than I knew on the night when, looking out either for Quint or for Miss Jessel under the stars, I had seen there the boy over whose rest I watched and who had immediately brought in with him—had straightway there turned on me—the lovely upward look with which, from the battlements above us, the hideous apparition of Quint had played. If it was a question of a scare my discovery on this occasion had scared me more than any other, and it was essentially in the scared state that I drew my actual conclusions. They harassed me so that sometimes, at odd moments, I shut myself up audibly to rehearse—it was at once a fantastic relief and a renewed despair—the manner in which I might come to the point. I approached it from one side and the other while, in my room, I flung myself about, but I always broke down in the monstrous utterances of names. As they died away on my lips I said to myself that I should indeed help them to represent something infamous if by pronouncing them I should violate as rare a little case of instinctive delicacy as any schoolroom probably had ever known. When I said to myself: '*They* have the manners to be silent, and you, trusted as you are, the baseness to speak!' I felt myself crimson and covered my face with my hands. After these secret scenes I chattered more than ever, going on volubly enough till one of our prodigious, palpable hushes occurred — I can call them nothing else — the strange, dizzy lift or swim (I try for terms!) into a stillness, a pause of all life, that had nothing to do with the more or less noise we at the moment might be engaged in making and that I could hear through any intensified mirth or quickened recitation or louder strum of the piano. Then it was that the others, the outsiders, were there. Though they were not angels they 'passed,' as the French say, causing me, while they stayed, to tremble with the fear of their addressing to their younger victims some yet more infernal message or more vivid image than they had thought good enough for myself.

What it was least possible to get rid of was the cruel idea that, whatever I had seen, Miles and Flora saw *more*—things terrible and unguessable and that sprang from dreadful passages of intercourse in the past. Such things naturally left on the surface, for the time, a chill that we vociferously denied we felt; and we had all three, with repetition, got into such splendid training that we went, each time, to mark the close of the incident, almost automatically through the very same movements. It was striking of the children at all events to kiss me inveterately with a wild irrelevance and never to fail—one or the other—of the precious question that had helped us through many a peril. 'When do you think he *will* come? Don't you think we *ought* to write?'—there was nothing like that inquiry, we found by experience, for carrying off an awkwardness. 'He,' of course, was their uncle in Harley Street; and we lived in much profusion of theory that he might at any moment arrive to mingle in our circle. It was impossible to have given less encouragement than he had administered to such a doctrine, but if we had not had the doctrine to fall back upon we should have deprived each other of some of our finest exhibitions. He never wrote to them—that may have been selfish, but it was a part of the flattery of his trust of myself; for the way in which a man pays his highest tribute to a woman is apt to be put by the more festal celebration of one of the sacred laws of his comfort. So I held that I carried out the spirit of the pledge given not to appeal to him when I let our young friends understand that their own letters were but charming literary exercises. They were too beautiful to be posted; I kept them myself; I have them all to this hour. This was a rule, indeed, which only added to the satiric effect of my being plied with the supposition that he might at any moment be among us. It was exactly as if our young friends knew how almost more awkward than anything else that might be for me. There appears to me, moreover, as I look back no note in all this more extraordinary than the mere fact that, in spite of my tension and of their triumph, I never lost patience with them. Adorable they must in truth have been, I now feel, since I didn't in these days hate them! Would exasperation, however, if relief had longer been postponed, finally have betrayed me? It little matters, for relief arrived. I call it relief though it was only the relief that a snap brings to a strain or the burst of a thunderstorm to a day of suffocation. It was at least change, and it came with a rush.

XIV

WALKING to church a certain Sunday morning, I had little Miles at my side and his sister, in advance of us and at Mrs. Grose's, well in sight. It was a crisp, clear day, the first of its order for some time; the night had brought a touch of frost and the autumn air, bright and sharp, made the church bells almost gay. It was an odd accident of thought that I should have happened at such a moment to be particularly and very gratefully struck with the obedience of my little charges. Why did they never resent my inexorable, my perpetual society? Something or other had brought nearer home to me that I had all but pinned the boy to my shawl, and that in the way our companions were marshalled before me I might have appeared to provide against some danger of rebellion. I was like a jailer with an eye to possible surprises and escapes. But all this belonged—I mean their magnificent little surrender—just to the special array of the facts that were most abysmal. Turned out for Sunday by his uncle's tailor, who had had a free hand and a notion of pretty waistcoats and of his grand little air, Miles's whole title to independence, the rights of his sex and situation, were so stamped upon him that if he had suddenly struck for freedom I should have had nothing to say. I was by the strangest of chances wondering how I should meet him when the revolution unmistakably occurred. I call it a revolution because I now see how, with the word he spoke, the curtain rose on the last act of my dreadful drama and the catastrophe was precipitated. 'Look here, my dear, you know,' he charmingly said, 'when in the world, please, am I going back to school?'

Transcribed here the speech sounds harmless enough, particularly as uttered in the sweet, high, casual pipe with which, at all interlocutors, but above all at his eternal governess, he threw off intonations as if he were tossing roses. There was something in them that always made one 'catch,' and I caught at any rate now so effectually that I stopped as short as if one of the trees of the park had fallen across the road. There was something new, on the spot, between us, and he was perfectly aware I recognized it, though to enable me to do so he had no need to look a whit less candid and charming than usual. I could feel in him how he already, from my at first finding nothing to reply, perceived the advantage he had gained. I was so slow to find anything that he had plenty of time, after a minute, to continue with his suggestive but inconclusive smile: 'You know, my dear, that for a fellow to be with a lady *always*——!' His 'my dear' was constantly on his lips for me, and nothing could have expressed more the exact shade of the sentiment with which I desired to inspire my pupils than its fond familiarity. It was so respectfully easy.

But oh, how I felt that at present I must pick my own phrases! I remember that, to gain time, I tried to laugh, and I seemed to see in the beautiful face with which he watched me how ugly and queer I looked. 'And always with the same lady?' I returned.

He neither blenched nor winked. The whole thing was virtually out between us. 'Ah, of course she 's a jolly "perfect" lady; but after all I 'm a fellow, don't you see? who 's—well, getting on.'

I lingered there with him an instant ever so kindly. 'Yes, you 're getting on.' Oh, but I felt helpless!

I have kept to this day the heartbreaking little idea of how he seemed to know that and to play with it. 'And you can't say I 've not been awfully good, can you?'

I laid my hand on his shoulder, for though I felt how much better it would have been to walk on, I was not yet quite able. 'No, I can't say that, Miles.'

'Except just that one night, you know——!'

'That one night?' I couldn't look as straight as he.

'Why, when I went down—went out of the house.'

'Oh, yes. But I forget what you did it for.'

'You forget?'—he spoke with the sweet extravagance of childish reproach. 'Why, it was just to show you I could!'

'Oh, yes—you could.'

'And I can again.'

I felt I might perhaps after all succeed in keeping my wits about me. 'Certainly. But you won't.'

'No, not *that* again. It was nothing.'

'It was nothing,' I said. 'But we must go on.'

He resumed our walk with me, passing his hand into my arm. 'Then when *am* I going back?'

I wore, in turning it over, my most responsible air. 'Were you very happy at school?'

He just considered. 'Oh, I'm happy enough anywhere!'

'Well, then,' I quavered, 'if you 're just as happy here——!'

'Ah, but that isn't everything! Of course *you* know a lot——'

'But you hint that you know almost as much?' I risked as he paused.

'Not half I want to!' Miles honestly professed. 'But it isn't so much that.'

'What is it, then?'

'Well—I want to see more life.'

'I see; I see.' We had arrived within sight of the church and of various persons, including several of the household of Bly, on their way to it and clustered about the door to see us go in. I quickened our step; I wanted to get there before the question between us opened up much further; I reflected hungrily that he would have for more than an hour to be silent; and I thought with envy of the comparative dusk of the pew and of the almost spiritual help of the hassock on which I might bend my knees. I seemed literally to be running a race with some confusion to which he was about to reduce me, but I felt he had got in first when, before we had entered the churchyard, he threw out:

'I want my own sort!'

It literally made me bound forward. 'There aren't many of your own sort, Miles!' I laughed. 'Unless perhaps dear little Flora!'

'You really compare me to a baby girl?'

This found me singularly weak. 'Don't you then *love* our sweet Flora?'

'If I didn't—and you too; if I didn't——!' he repeated as if retreating for a jump, yet leaving his thought so unfinished that, after we had come into the gate, another stop, which he imposed on me by the pressure of his arm, had become inevitable. Mrs. Grose and Flora had passed into the church, the other worshippers had followed and we were, for the minute, alone among the old, thick graves. We had paused, on the path from the gate, by a low, oblong, table-like tomb.

'Yes, if you didn't——?'

He looked, while I waited, about at the graves. 'Well, you know what!' But he didn't move, and he presently produced something that made me drop straight down on the stone slab as if suddenly to rest. 'Does my uncle think what *you* think?'

I markedly rested. 'How do you know what I think?'

'Ah, well, of course I don't; for it strikes me you never tell me. But I mean does *he* know?'

'Know what, Miles?'

'Why, the way I 'm going on.'

I recognized quickly enough that I could make, to this inquiry, no answer that wouldn't involve something of a sacrifice of my employer. Yet it struck me that we were all, at Bly, sufficiently sacrificed to make that venial. 'I don't think your uncle much cares.'

Miles, on this, stood looking at me. 'Then don't you think he can be made to?'

'In what way?'

'Why, by his coming down.'

'But who 'll get him to come down?'

'*I* will!' the boy said with extraordinary brightness and emphasis. He gave me another look charged with that expression and then marched off alone into church.

XV

THE business was practically settled from the moment I never followed him. It was a pitiful surrender to agitation, but my being aware of this had somehow no power to restore me. I only sat there on my tomb and read into what our young friend had said to me the fullness of its meaning; by the time I had grasped the whole of which I had also embraced, for absence, the pretext that I was ashamed to offer my pupils and the rest of the congregation such an example of delay. What I said to myself, above all, was that Miles had got something out of me and that the gauge of it for him would be just this awkward collapse. He had got out of me that there was something I was much afraid of, and that he should probably be able to make use of my fear to gain, for his own purpose, more freedom. My fear was of having to deal with the intolerable question of the grounds of his dismissal from school, since that was really but the question of the horrors gathered behind. That his uncle should arrive to treat with me of these things was a solution that, strictly speaking, I ought now to have desired to bring on; but I could so little face the ugliness and the pain of it that I simply procrastinated and lived from hand to mouth. The boy, to my deep discomposure, was immensely in the right, was in a position to say to me: 'Either you clear up with my guardian the mystery of this interruption of my studies, or you cease to expect me to lead with you a life that 's so unnatural for a boy.' What was so unnatural for the particular boy I was concerned with was this sudden revelation of a consciousness and a plan.

That was what really overcame me, what prevented my going in. I walked round the church, hesitating, hovering; I reflected that I had already, with him, hurt myself beyond repair. Therefore I could patch up nothing and it was too extreme an effort to squeeze beside him into the pew: he would be so much more sure than ever to pass his arm into mine and make me sit there for an hour in close silent contact with his commentary on our talk. For the first minute since his arrival I wanted to get away from him. As I paused beneath the high east window and listened to the sounds of worship I was taken with an impulse that might master me, I felt, and completely, should I give it the least encouragement. I might easily put an end to my ordeal by getting away altogether. Here was my chance; there was no one to stop me; I could give the whole thing up—turn my back and bolt. It was only a question of hurrying again, for a few preparations, to the house which the attendance at church of so many of the servants would practically have left unoccupied. No one, in short, could blame me if I should just drive desperately off. What was it to get away if I should get away only till dinner? That would be in a couple of hours, at the end of which—I had the acute prevision—my little pupils would play at innocent wonder about my non-appearance in their train.

'What *did* you do, you naughty bad thing? Why in the world, to worry us so—and take our thoughts off too, don't you know?—did you desert us at the very door?' I couldn't meet such questions nor, as they asked them, their false little lovely eyes; yet it was all so exactly what I should have to meet that, as the prospect grew sharp to me, I at last let myself go.

I got, so far as the immediate moment was concerned, away; I came straight out of the churchyard and, thinking hard, retraced my steps through the park. It seemed to me that by the time I reached the house I had made up my mind to cynical flight. The Sunday stillness both of the approaches and of the interior, in which I met no one, fairly stirred me with a sense of opportunity. Were I to get off quickly this way I should get off without a scene, without a word. My quickness would have to be remarkable, however, and the question of a conveyance was the great one to settle. Tormented, in the hall, with difficulties and obstacles, I remember sinking down at the foot of the staircase—suddenly collapsing there on the lowest step and then, with a revulsion, recalling that it was exactly where, more than a month before, in the darkness of night and just so bowed with evil things, I had seen the spectre of the most horrible of women. At this I was able to straighten myself; I went the rest of the way up; I made, in my turmoil, for the schoolroom, where there were objects belonging to me that I should have to take. But I opened the door to find again, in a flash, my eyes unsealed. In the presence of what I saw I reeled straight back upon resistance.

Seated at my own table in the clear noonday light I saw a person whom, without my previous experience, I should have taken at the first blush for some housemaid who might have stayed at home to look after the place and who, availing herself of rare relief from observation and of the schoolroom table and my pens, ink, and paper, had applied herself to the considerable effort of a letter to her sweetheart. There was an effort in the way that, while her arms rested on the table, her hands, with evident weariness, supported her head; but at the moment I took this in I had already become aware that, in spite of my entrance, her attitude strangely persisted. Then it was—with the very act of its announcing itself—that her identity flared up in a change of posture. She rose, not as if she had heard me, but with an indescribable grand melancholy of indifference and detachment, and, within a dozen feet of me, stood there as my vile predecessor. Dishonoured and tragic, she was all before me; but even as I fixed and, for memory, secured it, the awful image passed away. Dark as midnight in her dark dress, her haggard beauty and her unutterable woe, she had looked at me long enough to appear to say that her right to sit at my table was as good as mine to sit at hers. While these instants lasted indeed I had the extraordinary chill of a feeling that it was I who was the intruder. It was as a wild protest against it that, actually addressing her—'You terrible, miserable woman!'—I heard myself break into a sound that, by the open door, rang through the long passage and the empty house. She looked at me as if she heard me, but I had recovered myself and cleared the air. There was nothing in the room the next minute but the sunshine and the sense that I must stay.

XVI

I HAD so perfectly expected the return of the others to be marked by a demonstration that I was freshly upset at having to find them merely dumb and discreet about my desertion. Instead of gaily denouncing and caressing me they made no allusion to my having failed them, and I was left, for the time, on perceiving that she too said nothing, to study Mrs. Grose's odd face. I did this to such purpose that I made sure they had in some way bribed her to silence; a silence that, however, I would engage to break down on the first private opportunity. This opportunity came before tea: I secured five minutes with her in the housekeeper's room, where, in the twilight, amid a smell of lately-baked bread, but with the place all swept and garnished, I found her sitting in pained placidity before the fire. So I see her still, so I see her best: facing the flame from her straight chair in the dusky, shining room, a large, clean picture of the 'put away'—of drawers closed and locked and rest without a remedy.

'Oh, yes, they asked me to say nothing; and to please them—so long as they were there—of course I promised. But what had happened to you?'

'I only went with you for the walk,' I said. 'I had then to come back to meet a friend.'

She showed her surprise. 'A friend—*you?*'

'Oh, yes, I 've a couple!' I laughed. 'But did the children give you a reason?'

'For not alluding to your leaving us? Yes; they said you 'd like it better. *Do* you like it better?'

My face had made her rueful. 'No, I like it worse!' But after an instant I added: 'Did they say why I should like it better?'

'No; Master Miles only said, "We must do nothing but what she likes"!'

'I wish indeed he would! And what did Flora say?'

'Miss Flora was too sweet. She said, "Oh, of course, of course!"—and I said the same.'

I thought a moment. 'You were too sweet, too—I can hear you all. But none the less, between Miles and me, it 's now all out.'

'All out?' My companion stared. 'But what, miss?'

'Everything. It doesn't matter. I 've made up my mind. I came home, my dear,' I went on, 'for a talk with Miss Jessel.'

I had by this time formed the habit of having Mrs. Grose literally well in hand in advance of my sounding that note; so that even now, as she bravely blinked under the signal of my word, I could keep her comparatively firm. 'A talk! Do you mean she spoke?'

'It came to that. I found her, on my return, in the schoolroom.'

'And what did she say?' I can hear the good woman still, and the candour of her stupefaction.

'That she suffers the torments——!'

It was this, of a truth, that made her, as she filled out my picture, gape. 'Do you mean,' she faltered '—of the lost?'

'Of the lost. Of the damned. And that 's why, to share them——' I faltered myself with the horror of it.

But my companion, with less imagination, kept me up. 'To share them——?'

'She wants Flora.' Mrs. Grose might, as I gave it to her, fairly have fallen away from me had I not been prepared. I still held her there, to show I was. 'As I 've told you, however, it doesn't matter.'

'Because you 've made up your mind? But to what?'

'To everything.'

'And what do you call "everything"?'

'Why, to sending for their uncle.'

'Oh, miss, in pity do,' my friend broke out.

'Ah, but I will, I *will*! I see it 's the only way. What 's "out," as I told you, with Miles is that if he thinks I 'm afraid to—and has ideas of what he gains by that—he shall see he 's mistaken. Yes, yes; his uncle shall have it here from me on the spot (and before the boy himself if necessary) that if I 'm to be reproached with having done nothing again about more school——'

'Yes, miss——' my companion pressed me.

'Well, there 's that awful reason.'

There were now clearly so many of these for my poor colleague that she was excusable for being vague. 'But—a—which?'

'Why, the letter from his old place.'

'You 'll show it to the master?'

'I ought to have done so on the instant.'

'Oh, no!' said Mrs. Grose with decision.

'I 'll put it before him,' I went on inexorably, 'that I can't undertake to work the question on behalf of a child who has been expelled——'

'For we 've never in the least known what!' Mrs. Grose declared.

'For wickedness. For what else—when he 's so clever and beautiful and perfect? Is he stupid? Is he untidy? Is he infirm? Is he ill-natured? He 's exquisite—so it can be only *that*; and that would open up the whole thing. After all,' I said, 'it 's their uncle's fault. If he left here such people——!'

'He didn't really in the least know them. The fault's mine.' She had turned quite pale.

'Well, you shan't suffer,' I answered.

'The children shan't!' she emphatically returned.

I was silent awhile; we looked at each other. 'Then what am I to tell him?'

'You needn't tell him anything. *I 'll* tell him.'

I measured this. 'Do you mean you 'll write—?' Remembering she couldn't, I caught myself up. 'How do you communicate?'

'I tell the bailiff. *He* writes.'

'And should you like him to write our story?'

My question had a sarcastic force that I had not fully intended, and it made her after a moment inconsequently break down. The tears were again in her eyes. 'Ah, miss, *you* write!'

'Well—to-night,' I at last returned; and on this we separated.

XVII

I WENT so far, in the evening, as to make a beginning. The weather had changed back, a great wind was abroad, and beneath the lamp, in my room, with Flora at peace beside me, I sat for a long time before a blank sheet of paper and listened to the lash of the rain and the batter of the gusts. Finally I went out, taking a candle; I crossed the passage and listened a minute at Miles's door. What, under my endless obsession, I had been impelled to listen for was some betrayal of his not being at rest, and I presently caught one, but not in the form I had expected. His voice tinkled out. 'I say, you there —come in.' It was gaiety in the gloom!

I went in with my light and found him in bed, very wide awake but very much at his ease. 'Well, what are *you* up to?' he asked with a grace of sociability in which it occurred to me that Mrs. Grose, had she been present, might have looked in vain for proof that anything was 'out.'

I stood over him with my candle. 'How did you know I was there?'

'Why, of course, I heard you. Did you fancy you made no noise? You 're like a troop of cavalry!' he beautifully laughed.

'Then you weren't asleep?'

'Not much! I lie awake and think.'

I had put my candle, designedly, a short way off, and then, as he held out his friendly old hand to me, had sat down on the edge of his bed. 'What is it,' I asked, 'that you think of?'

'What in the world, my dear, but *you*?'

'Ah, the pride I take in your appreciation doesn't insist on that! I had so far rather you slept.'

'Well, I think also, you know, of this queer business of ours.'

I marked the coolness of his firm little hand. 'Of what queer business, Miles?'

'Why, the way you bring me up. And all the rest!'

I fairly held my breath a minute, and even from my glimmering taper there was light enough to show how he smiled up at me from his pillow. 'What do you mean by all the rest?'

'Oh, you know, you know!'

I could say nothing for a minute, though I felt as I held his hand and our eyes continued to meet that my silence had all the air of admitting his charge and that nothing in the whole world of reality was perhaps at that moment so fabulous as our actual relation. 'Certainly you shall go back to school,' I said, 'if it be that that troubles you. But not to the old place—we must find another, a better. How could I know it did trouble you, this question, when you never told me so, never spoke of it at all?' His clear listening face, framed in its smooth whiteness, made him for the minute as appealing as some wistful patient in a children's hospital; and I would have given, as the resemblance came to me, all I possessed on earth really to be the nurse or the sister of charity who might have helped to cure him. Well, even as it was I perhaps might help! 'Do you know you 've never said a word to me about your school—I mean the old one; never mentioned it in any way?'

He seemed to wonder; he smiled with the same loveliness. But he clearly gained time; he waited, he called for guidance. 'Haven't I?' It wasn't for *me* to help him—it was for the thing I had met!

Something in his tone and the expression of his face, as I got this from him, set my heart aching with such a pang as it had never yet known; so unutterably touching was it to see his little brain puzzled and his little resources taxed to play, under the spell laid on him, a part of innocence and consistency. 'No, never—from the hour you came back. You 've never mentioned to me one of your masters, one of your comrades, nor the least little thing that ever happened to you at school. Never, little Miles — no, never — have you given me an inkling of anything that *may* have happened there. Therefore you can fancy how much I 'm in the dark. Until you came out, that way, this morning, you had since the first hour I saw you scarce even made a reference to anything in your previous life. You seemed so perfectly to accept the present.' It was extraordinary how my absolute conviction of his secret precocity—or whatever I might call the poison of an influence that I dared but half-phrase—made him, in spite of the faint breath of his inward trouble, appear as accessible as an older person, forced me to treat him as an intelligent equal. 'I thought you wanted to go on as you are.'

It struck me that at this he just faintly coloured. He gave, at any rate, like a convalescent slightly fatigued, a languid shake of his head. 'I don't—I don't. I want to get away.'

'You 're tired of Bly?'

'Oh, no, I like Bly.'

'Well, then——?'

'Oh, *you* know what a boy wants!'

I felt I didn't know so well as Miles, and I took temporary refuge. 'You want to go to your uncle?'

Again, at this, with his sweet ironic face, he made a movement on the pillow. 'Ah, you can't get off with that!'

I was silent a little, and it was I now, I think, who changed colour. 'My dear, I don't want to get off!'

'You can't even if you do. You can't, you can't!'—he lay beautifully staring. 'My uncle must come down and you must completely settle things.'

'If we do,' I returned with some spirit, 'you may be sure it will be to take you quite away.'

'Well, don't you understand that that 's exactly what I 'm working for? You 'll have to *tell* him—about the way you 've let it all drop: you 'll have to tell him a tremendous lot!'

The exultation with which he uttered this helped me somehow for the instant to meet him rather more. 'And how much will *you*, Miles, have to tell him? There are things he 'll ask you!'

He turned it over. 'Very likely. But what things?'

'The things you 've never told me. To make up his mind what to do with you. He can't send you back——'

'I don't want to go back!' he broke in. 'I want a new field.'

He said it with admirable serenity, with positive, unimpeachable gaiety; and doubtless it was that very note that most evoked for me the poignancy, the unnatural childish tragedy, of his probable reappearance at the end of three months with all this bravado and still more dishonour. It overwhelmed me now that I should never be able to bear that, and it made me let myself go. I threw myself upon him and in the tenderness of my pity I embraced him. 'Dear little Miles, dear little Miles——!'

My face was close to his, and he let me kiss him, simply taking it with indulgent good-humour. 'Well, old lady?'

'Is there nothing—nothing at all that you want to tell me?'

He turned off a little, facing round toward the wall and holding up his hand to look at as one had seen sick children look. 'I 've told you—I told you this morning.'

Oh, I was sorry for him! 'That you just want me not to worry you?'

He looked round at me now as if in recognition of my understanding him; then ever so gently, 'To let me alone,' he replied.

There was even a strange little dignity in it, something that made me release him, yet, when I had slowly risen, linger beside him. God knows *I* never wished to harass him, but I felt that merely, at this, to turn my back on him was to abandon or, to put it more truly, to lose him. 'I 've just begun a letter to your uncle,' I said.

'Well, then, finish it!'

I waited a minute. 'What happened before?'

He gazed up at me again. 'Before what?'

'Before you came back. And before you went away.'

For some time he was silent, but he continued to meet my eyes. 'What happened?'

It made me, the sound of the words, in which it seemed to me I caught for the very first time a small faint quaver of consenting consciousness—it made me drop to my knees beside the bed and seize once more the chance of possessing him. 'Dear little Miles, dear little Miles, if you *knew* how I want to help you! It 's only that, it 's nothing but that, and I 'd rather die than give you a pain or do you a wrong—I 'd rather die than hurt a hair of you. Dear little Miles'—oh I brought it out now even if I *should* go too far—'I just want you to help me to save you!' But I knew in a moment after this that I had gone too far. The answer to my appeal was instantaneous, but it came in the form of an extraordinary blast and chill, a gust of frozen air and a shake of the room as great as if, in the wild wind, the casement had crashed in. The boy gave a loud, high shriek which, lost in the rest of the shock of sound, might have seemed, indistinctly, though I was so close to him, a note either of jubilation or of terror. I jumped to my feet again and was conscious of darkness. So for a moment we remained, while I stared about me and saw the drawn curtains unstirred and the window tight. 'Why, the candle 's out!' I then cried.

'It was I who blew it, dear!' said Miles.

XVIII

THE next day, after lessons, Mrs. Grose found a moment to say to me quietly: 'Have you written, miss?'

'Yes—I 've written.' But I didn't add—for the hour—that my letter, sealed and directed, was still in my pocket. There would be time enough to send it before the messenger should go to the village. Meanwhile there had been on the part of my pupils no more brilliant, more exemplary morning. It was exactly as if they had both had at heart to gloss over any recent little friction. They performed the dizziest feats of arithmetic, soaring quite out of *my* feeble range, and perpetrated, in higher spirits than ever, geographical and historical jokes. It was conspicuous of course in Miles in particular that he appeared to wish to show how easily he could let me down. This child, to my memory, really lives in a setting of beauty and misery that no words can translate; there was a distinction all his own in every impulse he revealed; never was a small natural creature, to the uninformed eye all frankness and freedom, a more ingenious, a more extraordinary little gentleman. I had perpetually to guard against the wonder of contemplation into which my initiated view betrayed me; to check the irrelevant gaze and discouraged sigh in which I constantly both attacked and renounced the enigma of what such a little gentleman could have done that deserved a penalty. Say that, by the dark prodigy I knew, the imagination of all evil *had* been opened up to him: all the justice within me ached for the proof that it could ever have flowered into an act.

He had never at any rate been such a little gentleman as when, after our early dinner on this dreadful day, he came round to me and asked if I shouldn't like him for half an hour to play to me. David playing to Saul could never have shown a finer sense of the occasion. It was literally a charming exhibition of tact, of magnanimity, and quite tantamount to his saying outright: 'The true knights we love to read about never push an advantage too far. I know what you mean now: you mean that—to be let alone yourself and not followed up—you 'll cease to worry and spy upon me, won't keep me so close to you, will let me go and come. Well, I "come," you see—but I don't go! There 'll be plenty of time for that. I do really delight in your society and I only want to show you that I contended for a principle.' It may be imagined whether I resisted this appeal or failed to accompany him again, hand in hand, to the schoolroom. He sat down at the old piano and played as he had never played; and if there are those who think he had better have been kicking a football I can only say that I wholly agree with them. For at the end of a time that under his influence I had quite ceased to measure I started up with a strange sense of having literally slept at my post. It was after luncheon, and by the schoolroom fire, and yet I hadn't really in the least slept; I had only done something much worse—I had forgotten. Where all this time was Flora? When I put the question to Miles he played on a minute before answering, and then could only say: 'Why, my dear, how do *I* know?'—breaking moreover into a happy laugh which immediately after, as if it were a vocal accompaniment, he prolonged into incoherent, extravagant song.

I went straight to my room, but his sister was not there; then, before going downstairs, I looked into several others. As she was nowhere about she would surely be with Mrs. Grose, whom in the comfort of that theory I accordingly proceeded in quest of. I found her where I had found her the evening before, but she met my quick challenge with blank scared ignorance. She had only supposed that, after the repast, I had carried off both the children; as to which she was quite in her right, for it was the very first time I had allowed the little girl out of my sight without some special provision. Of course now indeed she might be with the maids, so that the immediate thing was to look for her without an air of alarm. This we promptly arranged between us; but when, ten minutes later and in pursuance of our arrangement, we met in the hall, it was only to report on either side that after guarded inquiries we had altogether failed to trace her. For a minute there, apart from observation, we exchanged mute alarms, and I could feel with what high interest my friend returned me all those I had from the first given her.

'She 'll be above,' she presently said—'in one of the rooms you haven't searched.'

'No; she 's at a distance.' I had made up my mind. 'She has gone out.'

Mrs. Grose stared. 'Without a hat!'

I naturally also looked volumes. 'Isn't that woman always without one?'

'She 's with *her*?'

'She 's with *her*!' I declared. 'We must find them.'

My hand was on my friend's arm, but she failed for the moment, confronted with such an account of the matter, to respond to my pressure. She communed on the contrary, where she stood, with her uneasiness. 'And where 's Master Miles?'

'Oh, *he 's* with Quint. They 'll be in the schoolroom.'

'Lord, miss!' My view, I was myself aware—and therefore I suppose my tone—had never yet reached so calm an assurance.

'The trick 's played,' I went on; 'they 've successfully worked their plan. He found the most divine little way to keep me quiet while she went off.'

'"Divine"?' Mrs. Grose bewilderedly echoed.

'Infernal, then!' I almost cheerfully rejoined. 'He has provided for himself as well. But come!'

She had helplessly gloomed at the upper regions. 'You leave him——?'

'So long with Quint? Yes—I don't mind that now.'

She always ended at these moments by getting possession of my hand, and in this manner she could at present still stay me. But after gasping an instant at my sudden resignation, 'Because of your letter?' she eagerly brought out.

I quickly, by way of answer, felt for my letter, drew it forth, held it up, and then, freeing myself, went and laid it on the great hall-table. 'Luke will take it,' I said as I came back. I reached the house-door and opened it; was already on the steps.

My companion still demurred: the storm of the night and the early morning had dropped, but the afternoon was damp and grey. I came down to the drive while she stood in the doorway. 'You go with nothing on?'

'What do I care when the child has nothing? I can't wait to dress,' I cried, 'and if you must do so I leave you. Try meanwhile yourself upstairs.'

'With *them*?' Oh, on this the poor woman promptly joined me!

XIX

WE went straight to the lake, as it was called at Bly, and I dare say rightly called, though it may have been a sheet of water less remarkable than my untravelled eyes supposed it. My acquaintance with sheets of water was small, and the pool of Bly, at all events on the few occasions of my consenting, under the protection of my pupils, to affront its surface in the old flat-bottomed boat moored there for our use, had impressed me both with its extent and its agitation. The usual place of embarkation was half a mile from the house, but I had an intimate conviction that, wherever Flora might be, she was not near home. She had not given me the slip for any small adventure, and, since the day of the very great one that I had shared with her by the pond, I had been aware, in our walks, of the quarter to which she most inclined. This was why I had now given to Mrs. Grose's steps so marked a direction—a direction making her, when she perceived it, oppose a resistance that showed me she was freshly mystified. 'You 're going to the water, miss?——you think she 's *in*——?'

'She may be, though the depth is, I believe, nowhere very great. But what I judge most likely is that she 's on the spot from which, the other day, we saw together what I told you.'

'When she pretended not to see——?'

'With that astounding self-possession! I've always been sure she wanted to go back alone. And now her brother has managed it for her.'

Mrs. Grose still stood where she had stopped. 'You suppose they really *talk* of them?'

I could meet this with an assurance! 'They say things that, if we heard them, would simply appal us.'

'And if she *is* there——?'

'Yes?'

'Then Miss Jessel is?'

'Beyond a doubt. You shall see.'

'Oh, thank you!' my friend cried, planted so firm that, taking it in, I went straight on without her. By the time I reached the pool, however, she was close behind me, and I knew that, whatever, to her apprehension, might befall me, the exposure of sticking to me struck her as her least danger. She exhaled a moan of relief as we at last came in sight of the greater part of the water without a sight of the child. There was no trace of Flora on that nearer side of the bank where my observation of her had been most startling, and none on the opposite edge, where, save for a margin of some twenty yards, a thick copse came down to the water. This expanse, oblong in shape, was so narrow compared to its length that, with its ends out of view, it might have been taken for a scant river. We looked at the empty stretch, and then I felt the suggestion in my friend's eyes. I knew what she meant and I replied with a negative headshake.

'No, no; wait! She has taken the boat.'

My companion stared at the vacant mooring-place and then again across the lake. 'Then where is it?'

'Our not seeing it is the strongest of proofs. She has used it to go over, and then has managed to hide it.'

'All alone—that child?'

'She 's not alone, and at such times she 's not a child: she 's an old, old woman.' I scanned all the visible shore while Mrs. Grose took again, into the queer element I offered her, one of her plunges of submission; then I pointed out that the boat might perfectly be in a small refuge formed by one of the recesses of the pool, an indentation masked, for the hither side, by a projection of the bank and by a clump of trees growing close to the water.

'But if the boat 's there, where on earth 's *she*?' my colleague anxiously asked.

'That 's exactly what we must learn.' And I started to walk further.

'By going all the way round?'

'Certainly, far as it is. It will take us but ten minutes, yet it 's far enough to have made the child prefer not to walk. She went straight over.'

'Laws!' cried my friend again; the chain of my logic was ever too strong for her. It dragged her at my heels even now, and when we had got half-way round—a devious tiresome process, on ground much broken and by a path choked with overgrowth—I paused to give her breath. I sustained her with a grateful arm, assuring her that she might hugely help me; and this started us afresh, so that in the course of but few minutes more we reached a point from which we found the boat to be where

I had supposed it. It had been intentionally left as much as possible out of sight and was tied to one of the stakes of a fence that came, just there, down to the brink and that had been an assistance to disembarking. I recognized, as I looked at the pair of short, thick oars, quite safely drawn up, the prodigious character of the feat for a little girl; but I had by this time lived too long among wonders and had panted to too many livelier measures. There was a gate in the fence, through which we passed, and that brought us after a trifling interval more into the open. Then 'There she is!' we both exclaimed at once.

Flora, a short way off, stood before us on the grass and smiled as if her performance had now become complete. The next thing she did, however, was to stoop straight down and pluck—quite as if it were all she was there for—a big, ugly spray of withered fern. I at once felt sure she had just come out of the copse. She waited for us, not herself taking a step, and I was conscious of the rare solemnity with which we presently approached her. She smiled and smiled, and we met; but it was all done in a silence by this time flagrantly ominous. Mrs. Grose was the first to break the spell: she threw herself on her knees and, drawing the child to her breast, clasped in a long embrace the little, tender, yielding body. While this dumb convulsion lasted I could only watch it—which I did the more intently when I saw Flora's face peep at me over our companion's shoulder. It was serious now—the flicker had left it; but it strengthened the pang with which I at that moment envied Mrs. Grose the simplicity of *her* relation. Still, all this while, nothing more passed between us save that Flora had let her foolish fern again drop to the ground. What she and I had virtually said to each other was that pretexts were useless now. When Mrs. Grose finally got up she kept the child's hand, so that the two were still before me; and the singular reticence of our communion was even more marked in the frank look she addressed me. 'I 'll be hanged,' it said, 'if *I 'll* speak!'

It was Flora who, gazing all over me in candid wonder, was the first. She was struck with our bare-headed aspect. 'Why, where are your things?'

'Where yours are, my dear!' I promptly returned.

She had already got back her gaiety and appeared to take this as an answer quite sufficient. 'And where 's Miles?' she went on.

There was something in the small valour of it that quite finished me: these three words from her were in a flash like the glitter of a drawn blade, the jostle of the cup that my hand for weeks and weeks had held high and full to the brim and that now, even before speaking, I felt overflow in a deluge. 'I 'll tell you if you 'll tell *me*——' I heard myself say, then heard the tremor in which it broke.

'Well, what?'

Mrs. Grose's suspense blazed at me, but it was too late now, and I brought the thing out handsomely. 'Where, my pet, is Miss Jessel?'

XX

JUST as in the churchyard with Miles, the whole thing was upon us. Much as I had made of the fact that this name had never once, between us, been sounded, the quick smitten glare with which the child's face now received it fairly likened my breach of the silence to the smash of a pane of glass. It added to the interposing cry, as if to stay the blow, that Mrs. Grose at the same instant uttered over my violence—the shriek of a creature scared, or rather wounded, which, in turn, within a few seconds, was completed by a gasp of my own. I seized my colleague's arm. 'She 's there, she 's there!'

Miss Jessel stood before us on the opposite bank exactly as she had stood the other time, and I remember, strangely, as the first feeling now produced in me, my thrill of joy at having brought on a proof. She was there, so I was justified; she was there, so I was neither cruel nor mad. She was there for poor scared Mrs. Grose, but she was there most for Flora; and no moment of my monstrous time was perhaps so extraordinary as that in which I consciously threw out to her—with the sense that, pale and ravenous demon as she was, she would catch and understand it—an inarticulate message of gratitude. She rose erect on the spot my friend and I had lately quitted, and there wasn't in all the long reach of her desire an inch of her evil that fell short. This first vividness of vision and emotion were things of a few seconds, during which Mrs. Grose's dazed blink across to where I pointed struck me as showing that she too at last saw, just as it carried my own eyes precipitately to the child. The revelation then of the manner in which Flora was affected startled me in truth far more than it would have done to find her also merely agitated, for direct dismay was of course not what I had expected. Prepared and on her guard as our pursuit had actually made her, she would repress every betrayal; and I was therefore at once shaken by my first glimpse of the particular one for which I had not allowed. To see her, without a convulsion of her small pink face, not even feign to glance in the direction of the prodigy I announced, but only, instead of that, turn at *me* an expression of hard, still gravity, an expression absolutely new and unprecedented and that appeared to read and accuse and judge me—this was a stroke that somehow converted the little girl herself into a figure portentous. I gaped at her coolness even though my certitude of her thoroughly seeing was never greater than at that instant, and then, in the immediate need to defend myself, I called her passionately to witness. 'She's there, you little unhappy thing—there, there, *there*, and you know it as well as you know me!' I had said shortly before to Mrs. Grose that she was not at these times a child, but an old, old woman, and my description of her couldn't have been more strikingly confirmed than in the way in which, for all notice of this, she simply showed me, without an expressional concession or admission, a countenance of deeper and deeper, of indeed suddenly quite fixed reprobation. I was by this time—if I can put the whole thing at all together—more appalled at what I may properly call her manner than at anything else, though it was quite simultaneously that I became aware of having Mrs. Grose also, and very formidably, to reckon with. My elder companion, the next moment, at any rate, blotted out everything but her own flushed face and her loud shocked protest, a burst of high disapproval. 'What a dreadful turn, to be sure, miss! Where on earth do you see anything?'

I could only grasp her more quickly yet, for even while she spoke the hideous plain presence stood undimmed and undaunted. It had already lasted a minute, and it lasted while I continued, seizing my colleague, quite thrusting her at it and presenting her to it, to insist with my pointing hand. 'You don't see her exactly as *we* see?—you mean to say you don't now—*now*? She 's as big as a blazing fire! Only look, dearest woman, *look*——!' She looked, just as I did, and gave me, with her deep groan of negation, repulsion, compassion—the mixture with her pity of her relief at her exemption—a sense, touching to me even then, that she would have backed me up if she had been able. I might well have needed that, for with this hard blow of the proof that her eyes were hopelessly sealed I felt my own situation horribly crumble, I felt—I *saw*—my livid predecessor press, from her position, on my defeat, and I took the measure, more than all, of what I should have from this instant to deal with in the astounding little attitude of Flora. Into this attitude Mrs. Grose immediately and violently entered, breaking, even while there pierced through my sense of ruin a prodigious private triumph, into breathless reassurance.

'She isn't there, little lady, and nobody 's there—and you never see nothing, my sweet! How can poor Miss Jessel—when poor Miss Jessel 's dead and buried? *We* know, don't we, love?'—and she appealed, blundering in, to the child. 'It 's all a mere mistake and a worry and a joke—and we 'll go home as fast as we can!'

Our companion, on this, had responded with a strange quick primness of propriety, and they were again, with Mrs. Grose on her feet, united, as it were, in shocked opposition to me. Flora continued to fix me with her small mask of disaffection, and even at that minute I prayed God to forgive me for seeming to see that, as she stood there holding tight to our friend's dress, her incomparable childish beauty had suddenly failed, had quite vanished. I 've said it already—she was literally, she was hideously hard; she had turned common and almost ugly. 'I don't know what you mean. I see nobody. I see nothing. I never *have*. I think you 're cruel. I don't like you!' Then, after this deliverance, which might have been that of a vulgarly pert little girl in the street, she hugged Mrs. Grose more closely and buried in her skirts the dreadful little face. In this position she launched an almost furious wail. 'Take me away, take me away—oh, take me away from *her*!'

'From *me*?' I panted.

'From you—from you!' she cried.

Even Mrs. Grose looked across at me dismayed, while I had nothing to do but communicate again with the figure that, on the opposite bank, without a movement, as rigidly still as if catching, beyond the interval, our voices, was as vividly there for my disaster as it was not there for my service. The wretched child had spoken exactly as if she had got from some outside source each of her stabbing little words, and I could therefore, in the full despair of all I had to accept, but sadly shake my head at her. 'If I had ever doubted all my doubt would at present have gone. I 've been living with the miserable truth, and now it has only too much closed round me. Of course I 've lost you: I 've interfered, and you 've seen, under *her* dictation'—with which I faced, over the pool again, our infernal witness—'the easy and perfect way to meet it. I 've done my best, but I 've lost you. Good-bye.' For Mrs. Grose I had an imperative, an almost frantic 'Go, go!' before which, in infinite distress, but mutely possessed of the little girl and clearly convinced, in spite of her blindness, that something awful had occurred and some collapse engulfed us, she retreated, by the way we had come, as fast as she could move.

Of what first happened when I was left alone I had no subsequent memory. I only knew that at the end of, I suppose, a quarter of an hour, an odorous dampness and roughness, chilling and piercing my trouble, had made me understand that I must have thrown myself, on my face, to the ground and given way to a wildness of grief. I must have lain there long and cried and wailed, for when I raised my head the day was almost done. I got up and looked a moment, through the twilight, at the grey pool and its blank haunted edge, and then I took, back to the house, my dreary and difficult course. When I reached the gate in the fence the boat, to my surprise, was gone, so that I had a fresh reflection to make on Flora's extraordinary command of the situation. She passed that night, by the most tacit and, I should add, were not the word so grotesque a false note, the happiest of arrangements, with Mrs. Grose. I saw neither of them on my return, but on the other hand I saw, as by an ambiguous compensation, a great deal of Miles. I saw—I can use no other phrase—so much of him that it fairly measured more than it had ever measured. No evening I had passed at Bly was to have had the portentous quality of this one; in spite of which—and in spite also of the deeper depths of consternation that had opened beneath my feet—there was literally, in the ebbing actual, an extraordinarily sweet sadness. On reaching the house I had never so much as looked for the boy; I had simply gone straight to my room to change what I was wearing and to take in, at a glance, much material testimony to Flora's rupture. Her little belongings had all been removed. When later, by the schoolroom fire, I was served with tea by the usual maid, I indulged, on the article of my other pupil, in no inquiry whatever. He had his freedom now—he might have it to the end! Well, he did have it; and it consisted—in part at least—of his coming in at about eight o'clock and sitting down with me in silence. On the removal of the tea-things I had blown out the candles and drawn my chair closer: I was conscious of a mortal coldness and felt as if I should never again be warm. So when he appeared I was sitting in the glow with my thoughts. He paused a moment by the door as if to look at me; then—as if to share them—came to the other side of the hearth and sank into a chair. We sat there in absolute stillness; yet he wanted, I felt, to be with me.

XXI

BEFORE a new day, in my room, had fully broken, my eyes opened to Mrs. Grose, who had come to my bedside with worse news. Flora was so markedly feverish that an illness was perhaps at hand; she had passed a night of extreme unrest, a night agitated above all by fears that had for their subject not in the least her former but wholly her present governess It was not against the possible re-entrance of Miss Jessel on the scene that she protested—it was conspicuously and passionately against mine. I was at once on my feet, and with an immense deal to ask; the more that my friend had discernibly now girded her loins to meet me afresh. This I felt as soon as I had put to her the question of her sense of the child's sincerity as against my own. 'She persists in denying to you that she saw, or has ever seen, anything?'

My visitor's trouble truly was great. 'Ah, miss, it isn't a matter on which I can push her. Yet it isn't either, I must say, as if I much needed to. It has made her, every inch of her, quite old.'

'Oh, I see her perfectly from here. She resents, for all the world like some high little personage, the imputation on her truthfulness and, as it were, her respectability. "Miss Jessel indeed—*she*!" Ah, she 's "respectable," the chit! The impression she gave me there yesterday was, I assure you, the very strangest of all; it was quite beyond any of the others. I *did* put my foot in it! She 'll never speak to me again.'

Hideous and obscure as it all was, it held Mrs. Grose briefly silent; then she granted my point with a frankness which, I made sure, had more behind it. 'I think indeed, miss, she never will. She do have a grand manner about it!'

'And that manner'—I summed it up—'is practically what 's the matter with her now.'

Oh, that manner, I could see in my visitor's face, and not a little else besides! 'She asks me every three minutes if I think you 're coming in.'

'I see—I see.' I too, on my side, had so much more than worked it out. 'Has she said to you since yesterday—except to repudiate her familiarity with anything so dreadful—a single other word about Miss Jessel?'

'Not one, miss. And of course, you know,' my friend added, 'I took it from her by the lake that just then and there at least there *was* nobody.'

'Rather! And naturally you take it from her still.'

'I don't contradict her. What else can I do?'

'Nothing in the world! You 've the cleverest little person to deal with. They 've made them—their two friends, I mean—still cleverer even than nature did; for it was wondrous materia to play on! Flora has now her grievance, and she 'll work it to the end.'

'Yes, miss; but to *what* end?'

'Why, that of dealing with me to her uncle. She 'll make me out to him the lowest creature——!'

I winced at the fair show of the scene in Mrs. Grose's face; she looked for a minute as if she sharply saw them together. 'And him who thinks so well of you!'

'He has an odd way—it comes over me now,' I laughed, '—of proving it! But that doesn't matter. What Flora wants of course is to get rid of me.'

My companion bravely concurred. 'Never again to so much as look at you.'

'So that what you 've come to me now for,' I asked, 'is to speed me on my way?' Before she had time to reply, however, I had her in check. 'I 've a better idea—the result of my reflections. My going *would* seem the right thing, and on Sunday I was terribly near it. Yet that won't do. It 's *you* who must go. You must take Flora.'

My visitor, at this, did speculate. 'But where in the world——?'

'Away from here. Away from *them*. Away, even most of all, now, from me. Straight to her uncle.'

'Only to tell on you——?'

'No, not "only"! To leave me, in addition, with my remedy.'

She was still vague. 'And what *is* your remedy?'

'Your loyalty, to begin with. And then Miles's.'

She looked at me hard. 'Do you think he——?'

'Won't, if he has the chance, turn on me? Yes, I venture still to think it. At all events I want to try. Get off with his sister as soon as possible and leave me with him alone.' I was amazed, myself, at the spirit I had still in reserve, and therefore perhaps a trifle the more disconcerted at the way in which, in spite of this fine example of it, she hesitated. 'There 's one thing, of course,' I went on: 'they mustn't, before she goes, see each other for three seconds.' Then it came over me that, in spite of Flora's presumable sequestration from the instant of her return from the pool, it might already be too late. 'Do you mean,' I anxiously asked, 'that they *have* met?'

At this she quite flushed. 'Ah, miss, I 'm not such a fool as that! If I 've been obliged to leave her three or four times, it has been each time with one of the maids, and at present, though she 's alone, she 's locked in safe. And yet—and yet!' There were too many things.

'And yet what?'

'Well, are you so sure of the little gentleman?'

'I 'm not sure of anything but *you*. But I have, since last evening, a new hope. I think he wants to give me an opening. I do believe that—poor little exquisite wretch!—he wants to speak. Last evening, in the firelight and the silence, he sat with me for two hours as if it were just coming.'

Mrs. Grose looked hard through the window at the grey gathering day. 'And did it come?'

'No, though I waited and waited I confess it didn't, and it was without a breach of the silence, or so much as a faint allusion to his sister's condition and absence, that we at last kissed for good night. All the same,' I continued, 'I can't, if her uncle sees her, consent to his seeing her brother without my having given the boy—and most of all because things have got so bad—a little more time.'

My friend appeared on this ground more reluctant than I could quite understand. 'What do you mean by more time?'

'Well, a day or two—really to bring it out. He 'll then be on *my* side—of which you see the importance.

If nothing comes I shall only fail, and you at the worst have helped me by doing on your arrival in town whatever you may have found possible.' So I put it before her, but she continued for a little so lost in other reasons that I came again to her aid. 'Unless indeed,' I wound up, 'you really want *not* to go.'

I could see it, in her face, at last clear itself; she put out her hand to me as a pledge. 'I 'll go—I 'll go. I 'll go this morning.'

I wanted to be very just. 'If you *should* wish still to wait I 'd engage she shouldn't see me.'

'No, no: it 's the place itself. She must leave it.' She held me a moment with heavy eyes, then brought out the rest. 'Your idea 's the right one. I myself, miss——'

'Well?'

'I can't stay.'

The look she gave me with it made me jump at possibilities. 'You mean that, since yesterday you *have* seen——?'

She shook her head with dignity. 'I 've *heard*——!'

'Heard?'

'From that child—horrors! There!' she sighed with tragic relief. 'On my honour, miss, she says things——!' But at this evocation she broke down; she dropped with a sudden cry upon my sofa and, as I had seen her do before, gave way to all the anguish of it.

It was in quite another manner that I for my part let myself go. 'Oh, thank God!'

She sprang up again at this, drying her eyes with a groan. '"Thank God"?'

'It so justifies me!'

'It does that, miss!'

I couldn't have desired more emphasis, but I just waited. 'She 's so horrible?'

I saw my colleague scarce knew how to put it. 'Really shocking.'

'And about me?'

'About you, miss—since you must have it. It 's beyond everything, for a young lady; and I can't think wherever she must have picked up——'

'The appalling language she applies to me? I can, then!' I broke in with a laugh that was doubtless significant enough.

It only in truth left my friend still more grave. 'Well, perhaps I ought to also—since I 've heard some of it before! Yet I can't bear it,' the poor woman went on while with the same movement she glanced, on my dressing-table, at the face of my watch. 'But I must go back.'

I kept her, however. 'Ah, if you can't bear it——!'

'How can I stop with her, you mean? Why, just *for* that: to get her away. Far from this,' she pursued, 'far from *them*——'

'She may be different? she may be free?' I seized her almost with joy. 'Then in spite of yesterday you *believe*——'

'In such doings?' Her simple description of them required, in the light of her expression, to be carried no further, and she gave me the whole thing as she had never done. 'I believe.'

Yes, it was a joy, and we were still shoulder to shoulder: if I might continue sure of that I should care but little what else happened. My support in the presence of disaster would be the same as it had been in my early need of confidence, and if my friend would answer for my honesty I would answer for all the rest. On the point of taking leave of her, none the less, I was to some extent embarrassed. 'There 's one thing of course—it occurs to me—to remember. My letter, giving the alarm, will have reached town before you.'

I now felt still more how she had been beating about the bush and how weary at last it had made her. 'Your letter won't have got there. Your letter never went.'

'What then became of it?'

'Goodness knows! Master Miles——'

'Do you mean *he* took it?' I gasped.

She hung fire, but she overcame her reluctance. 'I mean that I saw yesterday, when I came back with Miss Flora, that it wasn't where you had put it. Later in the evening I had the chance to question Luke, and he declared that he had neither noticed nor touched it.' We could only exchange, on this, one of our deeper mutual soundings, and it was Mrs. Grose who first brought up the plumb with an almost elate 'You see!'

'Yes, I see that if Miles took it instead he probably will have read it and destroyed it.'

'And don't you see anything else?'

I faced her a moment with a sad smile. 'It strikes me that by this time your eyes are open even wider than mine.'

They proved to be so indeed, but she could still almost blush to show it. 'I make out now what he must have done at school.' And she gave, in her simple sharpness, an almost droll disillusioned nod. 'He stole!'

I turned it over—I tried to be more judicial. 'Well—perhaps.'

She looked as if she found me unexpectedly calm. 'He stole *letters*!'

She couldn't know my reason for a calmness after all pretty shallow; so I showed them off as I might. 'I hope then it was to more purpose than in this case! The note, at all events, that I put on the table yesterday,' I pursued, 'will have given him so scant an advantage—for it contained only the bare demand for an interview—that he 's already much ashamed of having gone so far for so little, and that what he had on his mind last evening was precisely the need of confession.' I seemed to myself for the instant to have mastered it, to see it all. 'Leave us, leave us'—I was already, at the door, hurrying her off. 'I 'll get it out of him. He 'll meet me. He 'll confess. If he confesses he 's saved. And if he 's saved——'

'Then *you* are?' The dear woman kissed me on this, and I took her farewell. 'I 'll save you without him!' she cried as she went.

XXII

YET it was when she had got off—and I missed her on the spot—that the great pinch really came. If I had counted on what it would give me to find myself alone with Miles I quickly recognized that it would give me at least a measure. No hour of my stay in fact was so assailed with apprehensions as that of my coming down to learn that the carriage containing Mrs. Grose and my younger pupil had already rolled out of the gates. Now I *was*, I said to myself, face to face with the elements, and for much of the rest of the day, while I fought my weakness, I could consider that I had been supremely rash. It was a tighter place still than I had yet turned round in; all the more that, for the first time, I could see in the aspect of others a confused reflection of the crisis. What had happened naturally caused them all to stare; there was too little of the explained, throw out whatever we might, in the suddenness of my colleague's act. The maids and the men looked blank; the effect of which on my nerves was an aggravation until I saw the necessity of making it a positive aid. It was in short by just clutching the helm that I avoided total wreck; and I dare say that, to bear up at all, I became that morning very grand and very dry. I welcomed the consciousness that I was charged with much to do, and I caused it to be known as well that, left thus to myself, I was quite remarkably firm. I wandered with that manner, for the next hour or two, all over the place and looked, I have no doubt, as if I were ready for any onset. So, for the benefit of whom it might concern, I paraded with a sick heart.

The person it appeared least to concern proved to be, till dinner, little Miles himself. My perambulations had given me meanwhile no glimpse of him, but they had tended to make more public the change taking place in our relation as a consequence of his having at the piano, the day before, kept me, in Flora's interest, so beguiled and befooled. The stamp of publicity had of course been fully given by her confinement and departure, and the change itself was now ushered in by our non-observance of the regular custom of the schoolroom. He had already disappeared when, on my way down, I pushed open his door, and I learned below that he had breakfasted—in the presence of a couple of the maids—with Mrs. Grose and his sister. He had then gone out, as he said, for a stroll; than which nothing, I reflected, could better have expressed his frank view of the abrupt transformation of my office. What he would now permit this office to consist of was yet to be settled: there was at least a queer relief—I mean for myself in especial—in the renouncement of one pretension. If so much had sprung to the surface I scarce put it too strongly in saying that what had perhaps sprung highest was the absurdity of our prolonging the fiction that I had anything more to teach him. It sufficiently stuck out that, by tacit little tricks in which even more than myself he carried out the care for my dignity, I had had to appeal to him to let me off straining to meet him on the ground of his true capacity. He had at any rate his freedom now; I was never to touch it again; as I had amply shown, moreover, when, on his joining me in the schoolroom the previous night, I uttered, in reference to the interval just concluded, neither challenge nor hint. I had too much, from this moment, my other ideas. Yet when he at last arrived the difficulty of applying them, the accumulations of my problem, were brought straight home to me by the beautiful little presence on which what had occurred had as yet, for the eye, dropped neither stain nor shadow.

To mark, for the house, the high state I cultivated I decreed that my meals with the boy should be served, as we called it, downstairs; so that I had been awaiting him in the ponderous pomp of the room outside the window of which I had had from Mrs. Grose, that first scared Sunday, my flash of something it would scarce have done to call light. Here at present I felt afresh—for I had felt it again and again—how my equilibrium depended on the success of my rigid will, the will to shut my eyes as tight as possible to the truth that what I had to deal with was, revoltingly, against nature. I could only get on at all by taking 'nature' into my confidence and my account, by treating my monstrous ordeal as a push in a direction unusual, of course, and unpleasant, but demanding after all, for a fair front, only another turn of the screw of ordinary human virtue. No attempt, none the less, could well require more tact than just this attempt to supply, oneself, *all* the nature. How could I put even a little of that article into a suppression of reference to what had occurred? How on the other hand could I make a reference without a new plunge into the hideous obscure? Well, a sort of answer, after a time, had come to me, and it was so far confirmed as that I was met, incontestably, by the quickened vision of what was rare in my little companion. It was, indeed, as if he had found even now—as he had so often found at lessons—still some other delicate way to ease me off. Wasn't there light in the fact which, as we shared our solitude, broke out with a specious glitter it had never yet quite worn?—the fact that (opportunity aiding, precious opportunity which had now come) it would be preposterous, with a child so endowed, to forgo the help one might wrest from absolute intelligence? What had his intelligence been given him for but to save him? Mightn't one, to reach his mind, risk the stretch of a stiff arm across his character? It was as if, when we were face to face in the dining-room, he had literally shown me the way. The roast mutton was on the table, and I had dispensed with attendance. Miles, before he sat down, stood a moment with his hands in his pockets and looked at the joint, on which he seemed on the point of passing some humorous judgment. But what he presently produced was: 'I say, my dear, is she really very awfully ill?'

'Little Flora? Not so bad but that she'll presently be better. London will set her up. Bly had ceased to agree with her. Come here and take your mutton.'

He alertly obeyed me, carried the plate carefully to his seat and, when he was established, went on. 'Did Bly disagree with her so terribly all at once?'

'Not so suddenly as you might think. One had seen it coming on.'

'Then why didn't you get her off before?'

'Before what?'

'Before she became too ill to travel.'

I found myself prompt. 'She 's *not* too ill to travel: she only might have become so if she had stayed. This was just the moment to seize. The journey will dissipate the influence'—oh, I was grand!—'and carry it off.'

'I see, I see'—Miles, for that matter, was grand too. He settled to his repast with the charming little 'table manner' that, from the day of his arrival, had relieved me of all grossness of admonition. Whatever he had been expelled from school for, it wasn't for ugly feeding. He was irreproachable, as always, to-day; but was unmistakably more conscious. He was discernibly trying to take for granted more things than he found, without assistance, quite easy; and he dropped into peaceful silence while he felt his situation. Our meal was of the briefest—mine a vain pretence, and I had the things immediately removed. While this was done Miles stood again with his hands in his little pockets and his back to me—stood and looked out of the wide window through which, that other day, I had seen what pulled me up. We continued silent while the maid was with us—as silent, it whimsically occurred to me, as some young couple who, on their wedding-journey, at the inn, feel shy in the presence of the waiter. He turned round only when the waiter had left us. 'Well—so we 're alone!'

XXIII

'Oh, more or less.' I imagine my smile was pale. 'Not absolutely. We shouldn't like that!' I went on.

'No—I suppose we shouldn't Of course, we 've the others.'

'We 've the others—we 've, indeed, the others,' I concurred.

'Yet even though we have them,' he returned, still with his hands in his pockets and planted there in front of me, 'they don't much count, do they?'

I made the best of it, but I felt wan. 'It depends on what you call "much"!'

'Yes'—with all accommodation—'everything depends!' On this, however, he faced to the window again and presently reached it with his vague, restless, cogitating step. He remained there awhile with his forehead against the glass, in contemplation of the stupid shrubs I knew and the dull things of November. I had always my hypocrisy of 'work,' behind which I now gained the sofa. Steadying myself with it there as I had repeatedly done at those moments of torment that I have described as the moments of my knowing the children to be given to something from which I was barred, I sufficiently obeyed my habit of being prepared for the worst. But an extraordinary impression dropped on me as I extracted a meaning from the boy's embarrassed back—none other than the impression that I was not barred now. This inference grew in a few minutes to sharp intensity and seemed bound up with the direct perception that it was positively *he* who was. The frames and squares of the great window were a kind of image, for him, of a kind of failure. I felt that I saw him, in any case, shut in or shut out. He was admirable but not comfortable: I took it in with a throb of hope. Wasn't he looking through the haunted pane for something he couldn't see?—and wasn't it the first time in the whole business that he had known such a lapse? The first, the very first: I found it a splendid portent. It made him anxious, though he watched himself; he had been anxious all day and, even while in his usual sweet little manner he sat at table, had needed all his small strange genius to give it a gloss. When he at last turned round to meet me it was almost as if this genius had succumbed. 'Well, I think I 'm glad Bly agrees with me!'

'You 'd certainly seemed to have seen, these twenty-four hours, a good deal more of it than for some time before. I hope,' I went on bravely, 'that you 've been enjoying yourself.'

'Oh, yes, I 've been ever so far; all round about—miles and miles away. I 've never been so free.'

He had really a manner of his own, and I could only try to keep up with him. 'Well, do you like it?'

He stood there smiling; then at last he put into two words—'Do *you*?'—more discrimination than I had ever heard two words contain. Before I had time to deal with that, however, he continued as if with the sense that this was an impertinence to be softened. 'Nothing could be more charming than the way you take it, for of course if we 're alone together now it 's you that are alone most. But I hope,' he threw in, 'you don't particularly mind!'

'Having to do with you?' I asked. 'My dear child, how can I help minding? Though I 've renounced all claim to your company—you 're so beyond me—I at least greatly enjoy it. What else should I stay on for?'

He looked at me more directly, and the expression of his face, graver now, struck me as the most beautiful I had ever found in it. 'You stay on just for *that*?'

'Certainly. I stay on as your friend and from the tremendous interest I take in you till something can be done for you that may be more worth your while. That needn't surprise you.' My voice trembled so that I felt it impossible to suppress the shake. 'Don't you remember how I told you, when I came and sat on your bed the night of the storm, that there was nothing in the world I wouldn't do for you?'

'Yes, yes!' He, on his side, more and more visibly nervous, had a tone to master; but he was so much more successful than I that, laughing out through his gravity, he could pretend we were pleasantly jesting. 'Only that, I think, was to get me to do something for *you*!'

'It was partly to get you to do something,' I conceded. 'But, you know, you didn't do it.'

'Oh, yes,' he said with the brightest superficial eagerness, 'you wanted me to tell you something.'

'That 's it. Out, straight out. What you have on your mind, you know.'

'Ah, then is *that* what you 've stayed over for?'

He spoke with a gaiety through which I could still catch the finest little quiver of resentful passion; but I can't begin to express the effect upon me of an implication of surrender even so faint. It was as if what I had yearned for had come at last only to astonish me. 'Well, yes—I may as well make a clean breast of it. It was precisely for that.'

He waited so long that I supposed it for the purpose of repudiating the assumption on which my action had been founded; but what he finally said was: 'Do you mean now—here?'

'There couldn't be a better place or time.' He looked round him uneasily, and I had the rare—oh, the queer!—impression of the very first symptom I had seen in him of the approach of immediate fear. It was as if he were suddenly afraid of me—which struck me, indeed, as perhaps the best thing to make him. Yet in the very pang of the effort I felt it vain to try sternness, and I heard myself the next instant so gentle as to be almost grotesque. 'You want so to go out again?'

'Awfully!' He smiled at me heroically, and the touching little bravery of it was enhanced by his actually flushing with pain. He had picked up his hat, which he had brought in, and stood twirling it in a way that gave me, even as I was just nearly reaching port, a perverse horror of what I was doing. To do it in *any* way was an act of violence, for what did it consist of but the obtrusion of the idea of grossness and guilt on a small, helpless creature who had been for me a revelation of the possibilities of beautiful intercourse? Wasn't it base to create for a being so exquisite a mere alien awkwardness? I suppose I now read into our situation a clearness it couldn't have had at the time, for I seem to see our poor eyes already lighted with some spark of a prevision of the anguish that was to come. So we circled about with terrors and scruples, fighters not daring to close. But it was for each other we feared! That kept us a little longer suspended and unbruised. 'I 'll tell you everything,' Miles said—'I mean I 'll tell you anything you like. You 'll stay on with me, and we shall both be all right, and I *will* tell you—I *will* But not now.'

'Why not now?'

My resistance turned him from me and kept him once more at his window in a silence during which, between us, you might have heard a pin drop. Then he was before me again with the air of a person for whom, outside, someone who had frankly to be reckoned with was waiting. 'I have to see Luke.'

I had not yet reduced him to quite so vulgar a lie, and I felt proportionately ashamed. But, horrible as it was, his lies made up my truth. I achieved thoughtfully a few loops of my knitting.

'Well, then go to Luke, and I 'll wait for what you promise. Only in return for that satisfy, before you leave me, one very much smaller request.'

He looked as if he felt he had succeeded enough to be able still a little to bargain. 'Very much smaller——?'

'Yes, a mere fraction of the whole. Tell me'—oh, my work preoccupied me, and I was offhand!—'if, yesterday afternoon, from the table in the hall, you took, you know, my letter.'

XXIV

My grasp of how he received this suffered for a minute from something that I can describe only as a fierce split of my attention—a stroke that at first, as I sprang straight up, reduced me to the mere blind movement of getting hold of him, drawing him close and, while I just fell for support against the nearest piece of furniture, instinctively keeping him with his back to the window. The appearance was full upon us that I had already had to deal with here: Peter Quint had come into view like a sentinel before a prison. The next thing I saw was that, from outside, he had reached the window, and then I knew that, close to the glass and glaring in through it, he offered once more to the room his white face of damnation. It represents but grossly what took place within me at the sight to say that on the second my decision was made; yet I believe that no woman so overwhelmed ever in so short a time recovered her command of the *act*. It came to me in the very horror of the immediate presence that the act would be, seeing and facing what I saw and faced, to keep the boy himself unaware. The inspiration—I can call it by no other name—was that I felt how voluntarily, how transcendently, I *might*. It was like fighting with a demon for a human soul, and when I had fairly so appraised it I saw how the human soul—held out, in the tremor of my hands, at arms' length—had a perfect dew of sweat on a lovely childish forehead. The face that was close to mine was as white as the face against the glass, and out of it presently came a sound, not low nor weak, but as if from much further away, that I drank like a waft of fragrance.

'Yes—I took it.'

At this, with a moan of joy, I enfolded, I drew him close; and while I held him to my breast, where I could feel in the sudden fever of his little body the tremendous pulse of his little heart, I kept my eyes on the thing at the window and saw it move and shift its posture. I have likened it to a sentinel, but its slow wheel, for a moment, was rather the prowl of a baffled beast. My present quickened courage, however, was such that, not too much to let it through, I had to shade, as it were, my flame. Meanwhile the glare of the face was again at the window, the scoundrel fixed as if to watch and wait. It was the very confidence that I might now defy him, as well as the positive certitude, by this time, of the child's unconsciousness, that made me go on. 'What did you take it for?'

'To see what you said about me.'

'You opened the letter?'

'I opened it.'

My eyes were now, as I held him off a little again, on Miles's own face, in which the collapse of mockery showed me how complete was the ravage of uneasiness. What was prodigious was that at last, by my success, his sense was sealed and his communication stopped: he knew that he was in presence, but knew not of what, and knew still less that I also was and that I did know. And what did this strain of trouble matter when my eyes went back to the window only to see that the air was clear again and—by my personal triumph—the influence quenched? There was nothing there. I felt that the cause was mine and that I should surely get *all*. 'And you found nothing!'—I let my elation out.

He gave me the most mournful, thoughtful little headshake. 'Nothing.'

'Nothing, nothing!' I almost shouted in my joy.

'Nothing, nothing,' he sadly repeated.

I kissed his forehead; it was drenched. 'So what have you done with it?'

'I 've burnt it.'

'Burnt it?' It was now or never. 'Is that what you did at school?'

Oh, what this brought up! 'At school?'

'Did you take letters?—or other things?'

'Other things?' He appeared now to be thinking of something far off and that reached him only through the pressure of his anxiety. Yet it did reach him. 'Did I *steal*?'

I felt myself redden to the roots of my hair as well as wonder if it were more strange to put to a gentleman such a question or to see him take it with allowances that gave the very distance of his fall in the world. 'Was it for that you mightn't go back?'

The only thing he felt was rather a dreary little surprise. 'Did you know I mightn't go back?'

'I know everything.'

He gave me at this the longest and strangest look. 'Everything?'

'Everything. Therefore *did* you——?' But I couldn't say it again.

Miles could, very simply. 'No. I didn't steal.'

My face must have shown him I believed him utterly; yet my hands—but it was for pure tenderness—shook him as if to ask him why, if it was all for nothing, he had condemned me to months of torment. 'What then did you do?'

He looked in vague pain all round the top of the room and drew his breath, two or three times over, as if with difficulty. He might have been standing at the bottom of the sea and raising his eyes to some faint green twilight. 'Well—I said things.'

'Only that?'

'They thought it was enough!'

'To turn you out for?'

Never, truly, had a person 'turned out' shown so little to explain it as this little person! He appeared to weigh my question, but in a manner quite detached and almost helpless. 'Well, I suppose I oughtn't.'

'But to whom did you say them?'

He evidently tried to remember, but it dropped—he had lost it. 'I don't know!'

He almost smiled at me in the desolation of his surrender, which was, indeed, practically, by this time, so complete that I ought to have left it there. But I was infatuated—I was blind with victory, though even then the very effect that was to have brought him so much nearer was already that of added separation. 'Was it to every one?' I asked.

'No; it was only to——' But he gave a sick little headshake. 'I don't remember their names.'

'Were they then so many?'

'No—only a few. Those I liked.'

Those he liked? I seemed to float not into clearness, but into a darker obscure, and within a minute there had come to me out of my very pity the appalling alarm of his being perhaps innocent. It was for the instant confounding and bottomless, for if he *were* innocent what then on earth was *I*? Paralysed, while it lasted, by the mere brush of the question, I let him go a little, so that, with a deep-drawn sigh, he turned away from me again; which, as he faced toward the clear window, I suffered, feeling that I had nothing now there to keep him from. 'And did they repeat what you said?' I went on after a moment.

He was soon at some distance from me, still breathing hard and again with the air, though now without anger for it, of being confined against his will. Once more, as he had done before, he looked up at the dim day as if, of what had hitherto sustained him, nothing was left but an unspeakable anxiety. 'Oh, yes,' he nevertheless replied—'they must have repeated them. To those *they* liked,' he added.

There was somehow less of it than I had expected; but I turned it over. 'And these things came round——?'

'To the masters?, Oh, yes!' he answered very simply. 'But I didn't know they'd tell.'

'The masters? They didn't—they've never told. That's why I ask you.'

He turned to me again his little beautiful fevered face. 'Yes, it was too bad.'

'Too bad?'

'What I suppose I sometimes said. To write home.'

I can't name the exquisite pathos of the contradiction given to such a speech by such a speaker; I only know that the next instant I heard myself throw off with homely force: 'Stuff and nonsense!' But the next after that I must have sounded stern enough. 'What *were* these things?'

My sternness was all for his judge, his executioner; yet it made him avert himself again, and that movement made *me*, with a single bound and an irrepressible cry, spring straight upon him. For there again, against the glass, as if to blight his confession and stay his answer, was the hideous author of our woe—the white face of damnation. I felt a sick swim at the drop of my victory and all the return of my battle, so that the wildness of my veritable leap only served as a great betrayal. I saw him, from the midst of my act, meet it with a divination, and on the perception that even now he only guessed, and that the window was still to his own eyes free, I let the impulse flame up to convert the climax of his dismay into the very proof of his liberation. 'No more, no more, no more!' I shrieked to my visitant as I tried to press him against me.

'Is she *here*?' Miles panted as he caught with his sealed eyes the direction of my words. Then as his strange 'she' staggered me and, with a gasp, I echoed it, 'Miss Jessel, Miss Jessel!' he with sudden fury gave me back.

I seized, stupefied, his supposition—some sequel to what we had done to Flora, but this made me only want to show him that it was better still than that. 'It 's not Miss Jessel! But it 's at the window—straight before us. It 's *there*—the coward horror, there for the last time!'

At this, after a second in which his head made the movement of a baffled dog's on a scent and then gave a frantic little shake for air and light, he was at me in a white rage, bewildered, glaring vainly over the place and missing wholly, though it now, to my sense, filled the room like the taste of poison, the wide overwhelming presence. 'It 's *he*?'

I was so determined to have all my proof that I dashed into ice to challenge him. 'Whom do you mean by "he"?'

'Peter Quint—you devil!' His face gave again, round the room, its convulsed supplication. '*Where?*'

They are in my ears still, his supreme surrender of the name and his tribute to my devotion. 'What does he matter now, my own?—what will he *ever* matter? *I* have you,' I launched at the beast, 'but he has lost you for ever!' Then, for the demonstration of my work, 'There, *there*!' I said to Miles.

But he had already jerked straight round, stared, glared again, and seen but the quiet day. With the stroke of the loss I was so proud of he uttered the cry of a creature hurled over an abyss, and the grasp with which I recovered him might have been that of catching him in his fall. I caught him, yes, I held him—it may be imagined with what a passion; but at the end of a minute I began to feel what it truly was that I held. We were alone with the quiet day, and his little heart, dispossessed, had stopped.

THE ASPERN PAPERS

I

I HAD taken Mrs. Prest into my confidence; without her in truth I should have made but little advance, for the fruitful idea in the whole business dropped from her friendly lips. It was she who found the short cut and loosed the Gordian knot. It is not supposed easy for women to rise to the large free view of anything, anything to be done; but they sometimes throw off a bold conception—such as a man wouldn't have risen to—with singular serenity. 'Simply make them take you in on the footing of a lodger'—I don't think that unaided I should have risen to that. I was beating about the bush, trying to be ingenious, wondering by what combination of arts I might become an acquaintance, when she offered this happy suggestion that the way to become an acquaintance was first to become an intimate. Her actual knowledge of the Misses Bordereau was scarcely larger than mine, and indeed, I had brought with me from England some definite facts that were new to her. Their name had been mixed up ages before with one of the greatest names of the century, and they now lived obscurely in Venice, lived on very small means, unvisited, unapproachable, in a sequestered and dilapidated old palace: this was the substance of my friend's impression of them. She herself had been established in Venice some fifteen years and had done a great deal of good there; but the circle of her benevolence had never embraced the two shy, mysterious and, as was somehow supposed, scarcely respectable Americans—they were believed to have lost in their long exile all national quality, besides being as their name implied of some remoter French affiliation—who asked no favours and desired no attention. In the early years of her residence she had made an attempt to see them, but this had been successful only as regards the little one, as Mrs. Prest called the niece; though in fact I afterwards found her the bigger of the two in inches. She had heard Miss Bordereau was ill and had a suspicion she was in want, and had gone to the house to offer aid, so that if there were suffering, American suffering in particular, she shouldn't have it on her conscience. The 'little one' had received her in the great cold tarnished Venetian *sala*, the central hall of the house, paved with marble and roofed with dim cross-beams, and hadn't even asked her to sit down. This was not encouraging for me, who wished to sit so fast, and I remarked as much to Mrs. Prest. She replied, however, with profundity: 'Ah, but there's all the difference: I went to confer a favour and you'll go to ask one. If they're proud you'll be on the right side.' And she offered to show me their house to begin with—to row me thither in her gondola. I let her know I had already been to look at it half a dozen times; but I accepted her invitation, for it charmed me to hover about the place. I had made my way to it the day after my arrival in Venice—it had been described to me in advance by the friend in England to whom I owed definite information as to their possession of the papers—laying siege to it with my eyes while I considered my plan of campaign. Jeffrey Aspern had never been in it that I knew of, but some note of his voice seemed to abide there by a roundabout implication and in a 'dying fall.'

Mrs. Prest knew nothing about the papers, but was interested in my curiosity, as always in the joys and sorrows of her friends. As we went, however, in her gondola, gliding there under the sociable hood with the bright Venetian picture framed on either side by the movable window, I saw how my eagerness amused her and that she found my interest in my possible spoil a fine case of monomania. 'One would think you expected from it the answer to the riddle of the universe,' she said; and I denied the impeachment only by replying that if I had to choose between that precious solution and a bundle of Jeffrey Aspern's letters I knew, indeed, which would appear to me the greater boon. She pretended to make light of his genius and I took no pains to defend him. One doesn't defend one's god: one's god is in himself a defence. Besides, to-day, after his long comparative obscuration, he hangs high in the heaven of our literature for all the world to see; he 's a part of the light by which we walk. The most I said was that he was no doubt not a woman's poet; to which she rejoined aptly enough that he had been at least Miss Bordereau's. The strange thing had been for me to discover in England that she was still alive: it was as if I had been told Mrs. Siddons was, or Queen Caroline, or the famous Lady Hamilton, for it seemed to me that she belonged to a generation as extinct. 'Why, she must be tremendously old—at least a hundred,' I had said;

but on coming to consider dates I saw it not strictly involved that she should have far exceeded the common span. None the less she was of venerable age and her relations with Jeffrey Aspern had occurred in her early womanhood. 'That 's her excuse,' said Mrs. Prest half sententiously and yet also somewhat as if she were ashamed of making a speech so little in the real tone of Venice. As if a woman needed an excuse for having loved the divine poet! He had been not only one of the most brilliant minds of his day—and in those years, when the century was young, there were, as every one knows, many—but one of the most genial men and one of the handsomest.

The niece, according to Mrs. Prest, was of minor antiquity, and the conjecture was risked that she was only a grand-niece. This was possible; I had nothing but my share in the very limited knowledge of my English fellow-worshipper John Cumnor, who had never seen the couple. The world, as I say, had recognized Jeffrey Aspern, but Cumnor and I had recognized him most. The multitude to-day flocked to his temple, but of that temple he and I regarded ourselves as the appointed ministers. We held, justly, as I think, that we had done more for his memory than any one else, and had done it simply by opening lights into his life. He had nothing to fear from us because he had nothing to fear from the truth, which alone at such a distance of time we could be interested in establishing. His early death had been the only dark spot, as it were, on his fame, unless the papers in Miss Bordereau's hands should perversely bring out others. There had been an impression about 1825 that he had 'treated her badly,' just as there had been an impression that he had 'served,' as the London populace says, several other ladies in the same masterful way. Each of these cases Cumnor and I had been able to investigate, and we had never failed to acquit him conscientiously of any grossness. I judged him perhaps more indulgently than my friend; certainly, at any rate, it appeared to me that no man could have walked straighter in the given circumstances. These had been almost always difficult and dangerous. Half the women of his time, to speak liberally, had flung themselves at his head, and while the fury raged—the more that it was very catching—accidents, some of them grave, had not failed to occur. He was not a woman's poet, as I had said to Mrs. Prest, in the modern phase of his reputation; but the situation had been different when the man's own voice was mingled with his song. That voice, by every testimony, was one of the most charming ever heard. 'Orpheus and the Maenads!' had been of course my foreseen judgment when first I turned over his correspondence. Almost all the Maenads were unreasonable and many of them unbearable. It struck me that he had been kinder and more considerate than in his place—if I could imagine myself in any such box—I should have found the trick of.

It was certainly strange beyond all strangeness, and I shall not take up space with attempting to explain it, that whereas among all these other relations and in these other directions of research we had to deal with phantoms and dust, the mere echoes, the one living source of information that had lingered on into our time had been unheeded by us. Every one of Aspern's contemporaries had, according to our belief, passed away; we had not been able to look into a single pair of eyes into which his had looked or to feel a transmitted contact in any aged hand that his hand had touched. Most dead of all did poor Miss Bordereau appear, and yet she alone had survived. We exhausted in the course of months our wonder that we had not found her out sooner, and the substance of our explanation was that she had kept so quiet. The poor lady on the whole had had reason for doing so. But it was a revelation to us that self-effacement on such a scale had been possible in the latter half of the nineteenth century—the age of newspapers and telegrams and photographs and interviewers. She had taken no great trouble for it either—hadn't hidden herself away in an undiscovered hole, had boldly settled down in a city of exhibition. The one apparent secret of her safety had been that Venice contained so many much greater curiosities. And then accident had somehow favoured her, as was shown for example in the fact that Mrs. Prest had never happened to name her to me, though I had spent three weeks in Venice—under her nose as it were—five years before. My friend, indeed, had not named her much to any one; she appeared almost to have forgotten the fact of her continuance. Of course Mrs. Prest hadn't the nerves of an editor. It was meanwhile no explanation of the old woman's having eluded us to say that she lived abroad, for our researches had again and again taken us—not only by correspondence but by personal inquiry—to France, to Germany, to Italy, in which countries, not counting his important stay in England, so many of the too few years of Aspern's career had been spent. We were glad to think at least that in all our promulgations—some people now consider I believe that we have overdone them—we had only touched in passing and in the most discreet manner on Miss Bordereau's connection. Oddly enough, even if we had had the material—and we had often wondered what could have become of it—this would have been the most difficult episode to handle.

The gondola stopped, the old palace was there; it was a house of the class which in Venice carries even in extreme dilapidation the dignified name. 'How charming! It 's grey and pink!' my companions exclaimed; and that is the most comprehensive description of it. It was not particularly old, only two or three centuries; and it had an air not so much of decay as of quiet discouragement, as if it had rather missed its career. But its wide front, with a stone balcony from end to end of the *piano nobile* or most important floor, was architectural enough, with the aid of various pilasters and arches; and the stucco with which in the intervals it had long ago been endued was rosy in the April afternoon. It overlooked a clean, melancholy, rather lonely canal, which had a narrow *riva* or convenient footway on either side. 'I don't know why—there are no brick gables,' said Mrs. Prest, 'but this corner has seemed to me before more Dutch than Italian, more like Amsterdam than like Venice. It 's eccentrically neat, for reasons of its own; and though you may pass on foot scarcely any one ever thinks of doing so. It 's as negative—considering *where* it is—as a Protestant Sunday. Perhaps the people are afraid of the Misses Bordereau. I dare say they have the reputation of witches.'

I forget what answer I made to this—I was given up to two other reflections. The first of these was that if the old lady lived in such a big and imposing house she couldn't be in any sort of misery and, therefore, wouldn't be tempted by a chance to let a couple of rooms. I expressed this fear to Mrs. Prest, who gave me a very straight answer. 'If she didn't live in a big house how could it be a question of her having rooms to spare? If she were not amply lodged you 'd lack ground to approach her. Besides, a big house here, and especially in this *quartier perdu*, proves nothing at all: it 's perfectly consistent with a state of penury. Dilapidated old *palazzi*, if you 'll go out of the way for them, are to be had for five shillings a year. And as for the people who live in them—no, until you 've explored Venice socially as much as I have, you can form no idea of their domestic desolation. They live on nothing, for they 've nothing to live on.' The other idea that had come into my head was connected with a high blank wall which appeared to confine an expanse of ground on one side of the house. Blank I call it, but it was figured over with the patches that please a painter, repaired breaches, crumblings of plaster, extrusions of brick that had turned pink with time; while a few thin trees, with the poles of certain rickety trellises, were visible over the top. The place was a garden and apparently attached to the house. I suddenly felt that so attached it gave me my pretext.

I sat looking out on all this with Mrs. Prest (it was covered with the golden glow of Venice) from the shade of our *felze*, and she asked me if I would go in then, while she waited for me, or come back another time. At first I couldn't decide—it was doubtless very weak of me. I wanted still to think I *might* get a footing, and was afraid to meet failure, for it would leave me, as I remarked to my companion, without another arrow for my bow. 'Why not another?' she inquired as I sat there hesitating and thinking it over; and she wished to know why even now and before taking the trouble of becoming an inmate—which might be wretchedly uncomfortable after all, even if it succeeded—I hadn't the resource of simply offering them a sum of money down. In that way I might get what I wanted without bad nights.

'Dearest lady,' I exclaimed, 'excuse the impatience of my tone when I suggest that you must have forgotten the very fact—surely I communicated it to you—which threw me on your ingenuity. The old woman won't have her relics and tokens so much as spoken of; they 're personal, delicate, intimate, and she hasn't the feelings of the day, God bless her! If I should sound that note first I should certainly spoil the game. I can arrive at my spoils only by putting her off her guard, and I can put her off her guard only by ingratiating diplomatic arts. Hypocrisy, duplicity are my only chance. I 'm sorry for it, but there 's no baseness I wouldn't commit for Jeffrey Aspern's sake. First I must take tea with her—then tackle the main job.' And I told over what had happened to John Cumnor on his respectfully writing to her. No notice whatever had been taken of his first letter, and the second had been answered very sharply, in six lines, by the niece. 'Miss Bordereau requested her to say that she couldn't imagine what he meant by troubling them. They had none of Mr. Aspern's "literary remains," and if they *had* had wouldn't have dreamed of showing them to any one on any account whatever. She couldn't imagine what he was talking about and begged he would let her alone.' I certainly didn't want to be met that way.

'Well,' said Mrs. Prest after a moment and all provokingly, 'perhaps they really haven't anything. If they deny it flat how are you sure?'

'John Cumnor 's sure, and it would take me long to tell you how his conviction, or his very strong presumption—strong enough to stand against the old lady's not unnatural fib—has built itself up. Besides, he makes much of the internal evidence of the niece's letter.'

'The internal evidence?'

'Her calling him "Mr. Aspern."'

'I don't see what that proves.'

'It proves familiarity, and familiarity implies the possession of mementoes, of tangible objects. I can't tell you how that "Mr." affects me—how it bridges over the gulf of time and brings our hero near to me—nor what an edge it gives to my desire to see Juliana. You don't say "Mr." Shakespeare.'

'Would I, any more, if I had a box full of his letters?'

'Yes, if he had been your lover and someone wanted them!' And I added that John Cumnor was so convinced, and so all the more convinced by Miss Bordereau's tone, that he would have come himself to Venice on the undertaking were it not for the obstacle of his having, for any confidence, to disprove his identity with the person who had written to them, which the old ladies would be sure to suspect in spite of dissimulation and a change of name. If they were to ask him point-blank if he were not their snubbed correspondent it would be too awkward for him to lie; whereas I was fortunately not tied in that way. I was a fresh hand—I could protest without lying.

'But you 'll have to take a false name,' said Mrs. Prest. 'Juliana lives out of the world as much as it is possible to live, but she has none the less probably heard of Mr. Aspern's editors. She perhaps possesses what you 've published.'

'I 've thought of that,' I returned; and I drew out of my pocket-book a visiting card neatly engraved with a well-chosen *nom de guerre*.

'You 're very extravagant—it adds to your immorality. You might have done it in pencil or ink,' said my companion.

'This looks more genuine.'

'Certainly you 've the courage of your curiosity. But it will be awkward about your letters; they won't come to you in that mask.'

'My banker will take them in and I shall go every day to get them. It will give me a little walk.'

'Shall you depend all on that?' asked Mrs. Prest. 'Aren't you coming to see me?'

'Oh, you 'll have left Venice for the hot months long before there are any results. I 'm prepared to roast all summer—as well as through the long hereafter perhaps you 'll say! Meanwhile John Cumnor will bombard me with letters addressed, in my feigned name, to the care of the *padrona*.'

'She 'll recognize his hand,' my companion suggested.

'On the envelope he can disguise it.'

'Well, you 're a precious pair! Doesn't it occur to you that even if you 're able to say you 're not Mr. Cumnor in person they may still suspect you of being his emissary?'

'Certainly, and I see only one way to parry that.'

'And what may that be?'

I hesitated for a moment. 'To make love to the niece.'

'Ah,' cried my friend, 'wait till you see her!'

II

'I MUST work the garden—I must work the garden,' I said to myself five minutes later and while I waited, upstairs, in the long, dusky *sala*, where the bare scagliola floor gleamed vaguely in a chink of the closed shutters. The place was impressive, yet looked somehow cold and cautious. Mrs. Prest had floated away, giving me a rendezvous at the end of half an hour by some neighbouring water-steps; and I had been let into the house, after pulling the rusty bell-wire, by a small red-headed and white-faced maid-servant, who was very young and not ugly and wore clicking pattens and a shawl in the fashion of a hood. She had not contented herself with opening the door from above by the usual arrangement of a creaking pulley, though she had looked down at me first from an upper window, dropping the cautious challenge which in Italy precedes the act of admission. I was so irritated as a general thing by this survival of medieval manners, though as so fond, if yet so special, an antiquarian I suppose I ought to have liked it; but, with my resolve to be genial from the threshold at any price, I took my false card out of my pocket and held it up to her smiling as if it were a magic token. It had the effect of one indeed, for it brought her, as I say, all the way down. I begged her to hand it to her mistress, having first written on it in Italian the words: 'Could you very kindly see a gentleman, a travelling American, for a moment?' The little maid wasn't hostile—even that was perhaps something gained. She coloured, she smiled, and looked both frightened and pleased. I could see that my arrival was a great affair, that visits in such a house were rare, and that she was a person who would have liked a bustling place. When she pushed forward the heavy door behind me I felt my foot in the citadel and promised myself ever so firmly to keep it there. She pattered across the damp, stony lower hall and I followed her up the high staircase—stonier still, as it seemed—without an invitation. I think she had meant I should wait for her below, but such was not my idea, and I took up my station in the *sala*. She flitted, at the far end of it, into impenetrable regions, and I looked at the place with my heart beating as I had known it to do in dentists' parlours. It had a gloomy grandeur, but owed its character almost all to its noble shape and to the fine architectural doors, as high as those of grand frontages, which, leading into the various rooms, repeated themselves on either side at intervals. They were surmounted with old, faded, painted escutcheons, and here and there in the spaces between them hung brown pictures, which I noted as speciously bad, in battered and tarnished frames that were yet more desirable than the canvases themselves. With the exception of several straw-bottomed chairs that kept their backs to the wall the grand obscure vista contained little else to minister to effect. It was evidently never used save as a passage, and scantly even as that. I may add that by the time the door through which the maid-servant had escaped opened again my eyes had grown used to the want of light.

I hadn't meanwhile meant by my private ejaculation that I must myself cultivate the soil of the tangled enclosure which lay beneath the windows, but the lady who came toward me from the distance over the hard, shining floor might have supposed as much from the way in which, as I went rapidly to meet her, I exclaimed, taking care to speak Italian: 'The garden, the garden—do me the pleasure to tell me if it 's yours!'

She stopped short, looking at me with wonder; and then, 'Nothing here is mine,' she answered in English, coldly and sadly.

'Oh, you 're English; how delightful!' I ingenuously cried. 'But surely the garden belongs to the house.'

'Yes, but the house doesn't belong to me.' She was a long, lean, pale person, habited apparently in a dull-coloured dressing-gown, and she spoke very simply and mildly. She didn't ask me to sit down, any more than years before—if she were the niece—she had asked Mrs. Prest, and we stood face to face in the empty, pompous hall.

'Well, then, would you kindly tell me to whom I must address myself? I 'm afraid you will think me horribly intrusive, but you know I *must* have a garden—upon my honour I must!'

Her face was not young, but it was candid; it was not fresh, but it was clear. She had large eyes which were not bright, and a great deal of hair which was not 'dressed,' and long fine hands which were—possibly—not clean. She clasped these members almost convulsively as, with a confused, alarmed look, she broke out: 'Oh, don't take it away from us; we like it ourselves!'

'You have the use of it then?'

'Oh, yes. If it wasn't for that——!' And she gave a wan, vague smile.

'Isn't it a luxury, precisely? That 's why, intending to be in Vence some weeks, possibly all summer, and having some literary work, some reading and writing to do, so that I must be quiet and yet if possible a great deal in the open air—that 's why I 've felt a garden to be really indispensable. I appeal to your own experience,' I went on with as sociable a smile as I could risk. 'Now can't I look at yours?'

'I don't know, I don't understand,' the poor woman murmured, planted there and letting her weak wonder deal—helplessly enough, as I felt—with my strangeness.

'I mean only from one of those windows—such grand ones as you have here—if you 'll let me open the shutters.' And I walked toward the back of the house. When I had advanced half-way I stopped and waited as in the belief she would accompany me. I had been of necessity quite abrupt, but I strove at the same time to give her the impression of extreme courtesy. 'I 've looked at furnished rooms all over the place, and it seems impossible to find any with a garden attached. Naturally in a place like Venice gardens are rare. It 's absurd if you like, for a man, but I can't live without flowers.'

'There are none to speak of down there.' She came nearer, as if, though she mistrusted me, I had drawn her by an invisible thread. I went on again, and she continued as she followed me:

'We 've a few, but they 're very common. It costs too much to cultivate them; one has to have a man.'

'Why shouldn't I be the man?' I asked. 'I 'll work without wages; or rather I 'll put in a gardener. You shall have the sweetest flowers in Venice.'

She protested against this with a small quaver of sound that might have been at the same time a gush of rapture for my free sketch. Then she gasped: 'We don't know you—we don't know you.'

'You know me as much as I know you; or rather much more, because you know my name. And if you 're English I 'm almost a countryman.'

'We 're not English,' said my companion watching me in practical submission while I threw open the shutters of one of the divisions of the wide high window.

'You speak the language so beautifully: might I ask what you are?' Seen from above the garden was in truth shabby, yet I felt at a glance that it had great capabilities. She made no rejoinder, she was so lost in her blankness and gentleness, and I exclaimed: 'You don't mean to say you 're also by chance American?'

'I don't know. We used to be.'

'Used to be? Surely you haven't changed?'

'It 's so many years ago. We don't seem to be anything now.'

'So many years that you 've been living here? Well, I don't wonder at that; it 's a grand old house. I suppose you all use the garden,' I went on, 'but I assure you I shouldn't be in your way. I 'd be very quiet and stay quite in one corner.'

'We all use it?' she repeated after me vaguely, not coming close to the window but looking at my shoes. She appeared to think me capable of throwing her out.

'I mean all your family—as many as you are.'

'There 's only one other than me. She 's very old. She never goes down.'

I feel again my thrill at this close identification of Juliana; in spite of which, however, I kept my head. 'Only one other in all this great house!' I feigned to be not only amazed but almost scandalized. 'Dear lady, you must have space then to spare!'

'To spare?' she repeated—almost as for the rich unwonted joy of her spoken words.

'Why you surely don't live (two quiet women—I see *you* are quiet, at any rate) in fifty rooms!' Then with a burst of hope and cheer I put the question straight: 'Couldn't you for a good rent *let* me two or three? That would set me up!'

I had now struck the note that translated my purpose, and I needn't reproduce the whole of the tune I played. I ended by making my entertainer believe me an undesigning person, though of course, I didn't even attempt to persuade her I was not an eccentric one. I repeated that I had studies to pursue; that I wanted quiet; that I delighted in a garden and had vainly sought one up and down the city; that I would undertake that before another month was over the dear old house should be smothered in flowers. I think it was the flowers that won my suit, for I afterwards found that Miss Tina—for such the name of this high tremulous spinster proved somewhat incongruously to be—had an insatiable appetite for them. When I speak of my suit as won I mean that before I left her she had promised me she would refer the question to her aunt. I invited information as to who her aunt might be and she answered 'Why, Miss Bordereau!' with an air of surprise, as if I might have been expected to know. There were contradictions like this in Miss Tina which, as I observed later, contributed to make her rather pleasingly incalculable and interesting. It was the study of the two ladies to live so that the world shouldn't talk of them or touch them, and yet they had never altogether accepted the idea that it didn't hear of them. In Miss Tina at any rate a grateful susceptibility to human contact had not died out, and contact of a limited order there would be if I should come to live in the house.

'We 've never done anything of the sort; we 've never had a lodger or any kind of inmate.' So much as this she made a point of saying to me. 'We 're very poor, we live very badly—almost on nothing. The rooms are very bare—those you might take; they 've nothing at all in them. I don't know how you 'd sleep, how you 'd eat.'

'With your permission I could easily put in a bed and a few tables and chairs. *C'est la moindre des choses* and the affair of an hour or two. I know a little man from whom I can hire for a trifle what I should so briefly want, what I should use; my gondolier can bring the things round in his boat. Of course, in this great house you must have a second kitchen, and my servant who 's a wonderfully handy fellow'—this personage was an evocation of the moment—'can easily cook me a chop there. My tastes and habits are of the simplest; I live on flowers!' And then I ventured to add that if they were very poor it was all the more reason they should let their rooms. They were bad economists—I had never heard of such a waste of material.

I saw in a moment my good lady had never before been spoken to in any such fashion—with a humorous firmness that didn't exclude sympathy, that was quite founded on it. She might easily have told me that my sympathy was impertinent, but this by good fortune didn't occur to her. I left her with the understanding that she would submit the question to her aunt and that I might come back the next day for their decision.

'The aunt will refuse; she 'll think the whole proceeding very *louche*!' Mrs. Prest declared shortly after this, when I had resumed my place in her gondola. She had put the idea into my head and now—so little are women to be counted on—she appeared to take a despondent view of it. Her pessimism provoked me and I pretended to have the best hopes; I went so far as to boast of a distinct prevision of success. Upon this Mrs. Prest broke out: 'Oh, I see what 's in your head! You fancy you 've made such an impression in five minutes that she 's dying for you to come and can be depended on to bring the old one round. If you do get in you 'll count it as a triumph.'

I did count it as a triumph, but only for the commentator—in the last analysis—not for the man, who had not the tradition of personal conquest. When I went back on the morrow the little maid-servant conducted me straight through the long *sala*—it opened there as before in large perspective and was lighter now, which I thought a good omen—into the apartment from which the recipient of my former visit had emerged on that occasion. It was a spacious, shabby parlour with a fine old painted ceiling under which a strange figure sat alone at one of the windows. They come back to me now almost with the palpitation they caused, the successive states marking my consciousness that as the door of the room closed behind me I was really face to face with the Juliana of some of Aspern's most exquisite and most renowned lyrics. I grew used to her afterwards, though never completely; but as she sat there before me my heart beat as fast as if the miracle of resurrection had taken place for my benefit. Her presence seemed somehow to contain and express his own, and I felt nearer to him at that first moment of seeing her than I ever had been before or ever have been since. Yes, I remember my emotions in their order, even including a curious little tremor that took me when I saw the niece not to be there. With her, the day before, I had become sufficiently familiar, but it almost exceeded my courage—much as I had longed for the event—to be left alone with so terrible a relic as the aunt. She was too strange, too literally resurgent. Then came a check from the perception that we weren't really face to face, inasmuch as she had over her eyes a horrible green shade which served for her almost as a mask. I believed for the instant that she had put it on expressly, so that from underneath it she might take me all in without my getting at herself. At the same time it created a presumption of some ghastly death's-head lurking behind it. The divine Juliana as a grinning skull—the vision hung there until it passed. Then it came to me that she *was* tremendously old—so old that death might take her at any moment, before I should have time to compass my end. The next thought was a correction to that; it lighted up the situation. She would die next week, she would die to-morrow—then I could pounce on her possessions and ransack her drawers. Meanwhile she sat there neither moving nor speaking. She was very small and shrunken, bent forward with her hands in her lap. She was dressed in black and her head was wrapped in a piece of old black lace which showed no hair.

My emotion keeping me silent she spoke first, and the remark she made was exactly the most unexpected.

III

'OUR house is very far from the centre, but the little canal is very *comme il faut*.

'It 's the sweetest corner of Venice and I can imagine nothing more charming,' I hastened to reply. The old lady's voice was very thin and weak, but it had an agreeable, cultivated murmur and there was wonder in the thought that that individual note had been in Jeffrey Aspern's ear.

'Please do sit down there. I hear very well,' she said quietly, as if perhaps I had been shouting; and the chair she pointed to was at a certain distance. I took possession of it, assuring her I was perfectly aware of my intrusion and of my not having been properly introduced, and that I could but throw myself on her indulgence. Perhaps the other lady, the one I had had the honour of seeing the day before, would have explained to her about the garden. That was literally what had given me courage to take a step so unconventional. I had fallen in love at sight with the whole place—she herself was probably so used to it that she didn't know the impression it was capable of making on a stranger—and I had felt it really a case to risk something. Was her own kindness in receiving me a sign that I was not wholly out in my calculation? It would make me extremely happy to think so. I could give her my word of honour that I was a most respectable, inoffensive person and that as a co-tenant of the palace, so to speak, they would be barely conscious of my existence. I would conform to any regulations, any restrictions, if they would only let me enjoy the garden. Moreover I should be delighted to give her references, guarantees; they would be of the very best, both in Venice and in England, as well as in America.

She listened to me in perfect stillness, and I felt her look at me with great penetration, though I could see only the lower part of her bleached and shrivelled face. Independently of the refining process of old age it had a delicacy which once must have been great. She had been very fair, she had had a wonderful complexion. She was silent a little after I had ceased speaking; then she began: 'If you 're so fond of a garden why don't you go to *terra firma*, where there are so many far better than this?'

'Oh, it 's the combination!' I answered, smiling; and then with rather a flight of fancy: 'It 's the idea of a garden in the middle of the sea.'

'This isn't the middle of the sea; you can't so much as see the water.'

I stared a moment, wondering if she wished to convict me of fraud. 'Can't see the water? Why, dear madam, I can come up to the very gate in my boat.'

She appeared inconsequent, for she said vaguely in reply to this: 'Yes, if you 've got a boat. I haven't any; it 's many years since I have been in one of the *gondole*.' She uttered these words as if they designed a curious far-away craft known to her only by hearsay.

'Let me assure you of the pleasure with which

I would put mine at your service!' I returned. I had scarcely said this, however, before I became aware that the speech was in questionable taste and might also do me the injury of making me appear too eager, too possessed of a hidden motive. But the old woman remained impenetrable and her attitude worried me by suggesting that she had a fuller vision of me than I had of her. She gave me no thanks for my somewhat extravagant offer, but remarked that the lady I had seen the day before was her niece; she would presently come in. She had asked her to stay away a little on purpose—had had her reasons for seeing me first alone. She relapsed into silence and I turned over the fact of these unmentioned reasons and the question of what might come yet; also that of whether I might venture on some judicious remark in praise of her companion. I went so far as to say I should be delighted to see our absent friend again: she had been so very patient with me, considering how odd she must have thought me—a declaration which drew from Miss Bordereau another of her whimsical speeches.

'She has very good manners; I bred her up myself!' I was on the point of saying that that accounted for the easy grace of the niece, but I arrested myself in time, and the next moment the old woman went on: 'I don't care who you may be—I don't want to know; it signifies very little to-day.' This had all the air of being a formula of dismissal, as if her next words would be that I might take myself off now that she had had the amusement of looking on the face of such a monster of indiscretion. Therefore I was all the more surprised when she added in her soft, venerable quaver: 'You may have as many rooms as you like—if you 'll pay me a good deal of money.'

I hesitated but an instant, long enough to measure what she meant in particular by this condition. First it struck me that she must have really a large sum in her mind; then I reasoned quickly that her idea of a large sum would probably not correspond to my own. My deliberation, I think, was not so visible as to diminish the promptitude with which I replied: 'I will pay with pleasure and of course in advance whatever you may think it proper to ask me.'

'Well, then, a thousand francs a month,' she said instantly, while her baffling green shade continued to cover her attitude.

The figure, as they say, was startling and my logic had been at fault. The sum she had mentioned was, by the Venetian measure of such matters, exceedingly large; there was many an old palace in an out-of-the-way corner that I might on such terms have enjoyed the whole of by the year. But so far as my resources allowed I was prepared to spend money, and my decision was quickly taken. I would pay her with a smiling face what she asked, but in that case I would make it up by getting hold of my 'spoils' for nothing. Moreover, if she had asked five times as much I should have risen to the occasion, so odious would it have seemed to me to stand chaffering with Aspern's Juliana. It was queer enough to have a question of money with her at all. I assured her that her views perfectly met my own and that on the morrow I should have the pleasure of putting three months' rent into her hand. She received this announcement with apparent complacency and with no discoverable sense that after all it would become her to say that I ought to see the rooms first. This didn't occur to her, and indeed, her serenity was mainly what I wanted. Our little agreement was just concluded when the door opened and the younger lady appeared on the threshold. As soon as Miss Bordereau saw her niece she cried out almost gaily 'He 'll give three thousand—three thousand to-morrow!'

Miss Tina stood still, her patient eyes turning from one of us to the other; then she brought out scarcely above her breath: 'Do you mean francs?'

'Did you mean francs or dollars?' the old woman asked of me at this.

'I think francs were what you said,' I sturdily smiled.

'That 's very good,' said Miss Tina, as if she had felt how overreaching her own question might have looked.

'What do *you* know? You 're ignorant,' Miss Bordereau remarked; not with acerbity but with a strange soft coldness.

'Yes, of money—certainly of money!' Miss Tina hastened to concede.

'I 'm sure you 've your own fine branches of knowledge,' I took the liberty of saying genially. There was something painful to me, somehow, in the turn the conversation had taken, in the discussion of dollars and francs.

'She had a very good education when she was young. I looked into that myself,' said Miss Bordereau. Then she added: 'But she has learned nothing since.'

'I have always been with *you,*' Miss Tina rejoined very mildly, and of a certainty with no intention of an epigram.

'Yes, but for that——!' her aunt declared with more satirical force. She evidently meant that but for this her niece would never have got on at all; the point of the observation, however, being lost on Miss Tina, though she blushed at hearing her history revealed to a stranger. Miss Bordereau went on, addressing herself to me: 'And what time will you come to-morrow with the money?'

'The sooner the better. If it suits you I 'll come at noon.'

'I am always here, but I have my hours,' said the old woman as if her convenience were not to be taken for granted.

'You mean the times when you receive?'

'I never receive. But I 'll see you at noon, when you come with the money.'

'Very good, I shall be punctual.' To which I I added: 'May I shake hands with you on our contract?' I thought there ought to be some little form; it would make me really feel easier, for I was sure there would be no other. Besides, though Miss Bordereau couldn't to-day be called personally attractive and there was something even in her wasted antiquity that bade one stand at one's distance, I felt an irresistible desire to hold in my own for a moment the hand Jeffrey Aspern had pressed.

For a minute she made no answer, and I saw that my proposal failed to meet with her approbation. She indulged in no movement of withdrawal which I half expected; she only said coldly:

'I belong to a time when that was not the custom.'

I felt rather snubbed. I exclaimed good-humouredly to Miss Tina: 'Oh, you 'll do as well!' I shook hands with her while she assented with a small flutter. 'Yes, yes, to show it 's all arranged!'

'Shall you bring the money in gold?' Miss Bordereau demanded as I was turning to the door.

I looked at her a moment. 'Aren't you a little afraid, after all, of keeping such a sum as that in the house?' It was not that I was annoyed at her avidity, but was truly struck with the disparity between such a treasure and such scanty means of guarding it.

'Whom should I be afraid of if I 'm not afraid of you?' she asked with her shrunken grimness.

'Ah, well,' I laughed, 'I shall be in point of fact a protector and I 'll bring gold if you prefer.'

'Thank you,' the old woman returned with dignity and with an inclination of her head which evidently signified my dismissal. I passed out of the room, thinking how hard it would be to circumvent her. As I stood in the *sala* again I saw that Miss Tina had followed me, and I supposed that as her aunt had neglected to suggest I should take a look at my quarters it was her purpose to repair the omission. But she made no such overture; she only stood there with a dim, though not a languid smile, and with an effect of irresponsible, incompetent youth almost comically at variance with the faded facts of her person. She was not infirm, like her aunt, but struck me as more deeply futile, because her inefficiency was inward, which was not the case with Miss Bordereau's. I waited to see if she would offer to show me the rest of the house, but I didn't precipitate the question, inasmuch as my plan was from the moment to spend as much of my time as possible in her society. A minute, indeed, elapsed before I committed myself.

'I 've had better fortune than I hoped. It was very kind of her to see me. Perhaps you said a good word for me.'

'It was the idea of the money,' said Miss Tina.

'And did you suggest that?'

'I told her you 'd perhaps pay largely.'

'What made you think that?'

'I told her I thought you were rich.'

'And what put that into your head?'

'I don't know; the way you talked.'

'Dear me, I must talk differently now,' I returned. 'I 'm sorry to say it 's not the case.'

'Well,' said Miss Tina, 'I think that in Venice the *forestieri* in general often give a great deal for something that after all isn't much.' She appeared to make this remark with a comforting intention, to wish to remind me that if I had been extravagant I wasn't foolishly singular. We walked together along the *sala*, and as I took its magnificent measure I said that I was afraid it wouldn't form part of my *quartiere*. Were my rooms by chance to be among those that opened into it? 'Not if you go above—to the second floor,' she answered as if she had rather taken for granted I would know my proper place.

'And I infer that that 's where your aunt would like me to be.'

'She said your apartments ought to be very distinct.'

'That certainly would be best.' And I listened with respect while she told me that above I should be free to take whatever I might like; that there was another staircase, but only from the floor on which we stood, and that to pass from it to the garden-level or to come up to my lodging I should have to cross the great hall. This was an immense point gained; I foresaw that it would constitute my whole leverage in my relations with the two ladies. When I asked Miss Tina how I was to manage at present to find my way up she replied with an access of that sociable shyness which constantly marked her manner:

'Perhaps you can't. I don't see—unless I should go with you.' She evidently hadn't thought of this before.

We ascended to the upper floor and visited a long succession of empty rooms. The best of them looked over the garden; some of the others had above the opposite rough-tiled house-tops a view of the blue lagoon. They were all dusty and even a little disfigured with long neglect, but I saw that by spending a few hundred francs I should be able to make three or four of them habitable enough. My experiment was turning out costly, yet now that I had all but taken possession I ceased to allow this to trouble me. I mentioned to my companion a few of the things I should put in, but she replied rather more precipitately than usual that I might do exactly what I liked: she seemed to wish to notify me that the Misses Bordereau would take none but the most veiled interest in my proceedings. I guessed that her aunt had instructed her to adopt this tone, and I may as well say now that I came afterwards to distinguish perfectly (as I believed) between the speeches she made on her own responsibility and those the old woman imposed upon her. She took no notice of the unswept condition of the rooms and indulged neither in explanations nor in apologies. I said to myself that this was a sign Juliana and her niece—disenchanting idea!—were untidy persons with a low Italian standard; but I afterwards recognized that a lodger who had forced an entrance had no *locus standi* as a critic. We looked out of a good many windows, for there was nothing within the rooms to look at, and still I wanted to linger. I asked her what several different objects in the prospect might be, but in no case did she appear to know. She was evidently not familiar with the view—it was as if she had not looked at it for years—and I presently saw that she was too preoccupied with something else to pretend to care for it. Suddenly she said—the remark was not suggested:

'I don't know whether it will make any difference to you, but the money is for me.'

'The money——?'

'The money you 're going to bring.'

'Why, you 'll make me wish to stay here two or three years!' I spoke as benevolently as possible, though it had begun to act on my nerves that these women so associated with Aspern should so constantly bring the pecuniary question back.

'That would be very good for me,' she answered almost gaily.

'You put me on my honour!'

She looked as if she failed to understand this, but went on: 'She wants me to have more. She thinks she 's going to die.'

'Ah, not soon I hope!' I cried with genuine feeling. I had perfectly considered the possibility of her destroying her documents on the day she should feel her end at hand. I believed that she would cling to them till then, and I was as convinced of her reading Aspern's letters over every night or at least pressing them to her withered lips. I would have given a good deal for some view of these solemnities. I asked Miss Tina if her venerable relative were seriously ill, and she replied that she was only very tired—she had lived so extraordinarily long. That was what she said herself—she wanted to die for a change. Besides, all her friends had been dead for ages; either they ought to have remained or she ought to have gone. That was another thing her aunt often said: she was not at all resigned—resigned, that is, to life.

'But people don't die when they like, do they?' Miss Tina inquired. I took the liberty of asking why, if there was actually enough money to maintain both of them, there would not be more than enough in case of her being left alone. She considered this difficult problem a moment and then said: 'Oh, well, you know, she takes care of me. She thinks that when I 'm alone I shall be a great fool and shan't know how to manage.'

'I should have supposed rather that you took care of *her*. I 'm afraid she 's very proud.'

'Why, have you discovered that already?' Miss Tina cried with a dimness of glad surprise.

'I was shut up with her there for a considerable time and she struck me, she interested me extremely. It didn't take me long to make my discovery. She won't have much to say to me while I 'm here.'

'No, I don't think she will,' my companion averred.

'Do you suppose she has some suspicion of me?'

Miss Tina's honest eyes gave me no sign I had touched a mark. 'I shouldn't think so—letting you in after all so easily.'

'You call it easily? She has covered her risk,' I said. 'But where is it one could take an advantage of her?'

'I oughtn't to tell you if I knew, ought I?' And Miss Tina added, before I had time to reply to this, smiling dolefully: 'Do you think we 've any weak points?'

'That 's exactly what I 'm asking. You 'd only have to mention them for me to respect them religiously.'

She looked at me hereupon with that air of timid but candid and even gratified curiosity with which she had confronted me from the first; after which she said: 'There 's nothing to tell. We 're terribly quiet. I don't know how the days pass. We 've no life.'

'I wish I might think I should bring you a little.'

'Oh, we know what we want,' she went on. 'It 's all right.'

There were twenty things I desired to ask her: how in the world did they live; whether they had any friends or visitors, any relations in America or in other countries. But I judged such probings premature; I must leave it to a later chance. 'Well, don't *you* be proud,' I contented myself with saying. 'Don't hide from me altogether.'

'Oh, I must stay with my aunt,' she returned without looking at me. And at the same moment, abruptly, without any ceremony of parting, she quitted me and disappeared, leaving me to make my own way downstairs. I stayed awhile longer, wandering about the bright desert—the sun was pouring in—of the old house, thinking the situation over on the spot. Not even the pattering little *serva* came to look after me, and I reflected that after all this treatment showed confidence.

IV

PERHAPS it did, but all the same, six weeks later, towards the middle of June, the moment when Mrs. Prest undertook her annual migration, I had made no measurable advance. I was obliged to confess to her that I had no results to speak of. My first step had been unexpectedly rapid, but there was no appearance it would be followed by a second. I was a thousand miles from taking tea with my hostesses—that privilege of which, as I reminded my good friend, we both had had a vision. She reproached me with lacking boldness and I answered that even to be bold you must have an opportunity: you may push on through a breach, but you can't batter down a dead wall. She returned that the breach I had already made was big enough to admit an army and accused me of wasting precious hours in whimpering in her *salon* when I ought to have been carrying on the struggle in the field. It is true that I went to see her very often—all on the theory that it would console me (I freely expressed my discouragement) for my want of success on my own premises. But I began to feel that it didn't console me to be perpetually chaffed for my scruples, especially since I was really so vigilant; and I was rather glad when my ironic friend closed her house for the summer. She had expected to gather amusement from the drama of my intercourse with the Misses Bordereau, and was disappointed that the intercourse, and consequently the drama, had not come off. 'They 'll lead you on to your ruin,' she said before she left Venice. 'They 'll get all your money without showing you a scrap.' I think I settled down to my business with more concentration after her departure.

It was a fact that up to that time I had not, save on a single brief occasion, had even a moment's contact with my queer hostesses. The exception had occurred when I carried them according to my promise the terrible three thousand francs. Then I found Miss Tina awaiting me in the hall, and she took the money from my hand with a promptitude that prevented my seeing her aunt. The old lady had promised to receive me, yet apparently thought nothing of breaking that vow. The money was contained in a bag of chamois leather, of respectable dimensions, which my banker had given me, and Miss Tina had to make a big fist to receive it. This she did with extreme solemnity, though I tried to treat the affair a little as a joke. It was in no jocular strain, yet it was with a clearness akin to a brightness that she inquired, weighing the money in her two palms: 'Don't you think it 's too much?' To which I replied that this would depend on the amount of pleasure I should get for it. Hereupon she turned away from me quickly, as she had done the day before, murmuring in a tone different from any she had used hitherto: 'Oh, pleasure, pleasure—there 's no pleasure in this house!'

After that, for a long time, I never saw her, and I wondered the common chances of the day shouldn't have helped us to meet. It could only be evident that she was immensely on her guard against them; and in addition to this the house was so big that for each other we were lost in it. I used to look out for her hopefully as I crossed the *sala* in my comings and goings, but I was not rewarded with a glimpse of the tail of her dress. It was as if she never peeped out of her aunt's apartment. I used to wonder what she did there week after week and year after year. I had never met so stiff a policy of seclusion; it was more than keeping quiet—it was like hunted creatures feigning death. The two ladies appeared to have no visitors whatever and no sort of contact with the world. I judged at least that people couldn't have come to the house and that Miss Tina couldn't have gone out without my catching some view of it. I did what I disliked myself for doing—considering it but as once in a way: I questioned my servant about their habits and let him infer that I should be interested in any information he might glean. But he gleaned amazingly little for a knowing Venetian: it must be added that where there is a perpetual fast there are very few crumbs on the floor. His ability in other ways was sufficient, if not quite all I had attributed to him on the occasion of my first interview with Miss Tina. He had helped my gondolier to bring me round a boat-load of furniture; and when these articles had been carried to the top of the palace and distributed according to our associated wisdom he organized my household with such dignity as answered to its being composed exclusively of himself. He made me in short as comfortable as I could be with my indifferent prospects. I should have been glad if he had fallen in love with Miss Bordereau's maid or, failing this, had taken her in aversion; either event might have brought about some catastrophe, and a catastrophe might have led to some parley. It was my idea that she would have been sociable, and I myself on various occasions saw her flit to and fro on domestic errands, so that I was sure she was accessible. But I tasted of no gossip from that fountain, and I afterwards learned that Pasquale's affections were fixed upon an object that made him heedless of other women. This was a young lady with a powdered face, a yellow cotton gown and much leisure, who used often to come to see him. She practised, at her convenience, the art of a stringer of beads—these ornaments are made in Venice to profusion; she had her pocket full of them and I used to find them on the floor of my apartment—and kept an eye on the possible rival in the house. It was not for me, of course, to make the domestics tattle, and I never said a word to Miss Bordereau's cook.

It struck me as a proof of the old woman's resolve to have nothing to do with me that she should never have sent me a receipt for my three months' rent. For some days I looked out for it and then, when I had given it up, wasted a good deal of time in wondering what her reason had been for neglecting so indispensable and familiar a form. At first I was tempted to send her a reminder; after which I put by the idea—against my judgment as to what was right in the particular case—on the general ground of wishing to keep quiet. If Miss Bordereau suspected me of ulterior aims she would suspect me less if I should be businesslike, and yet I consented not to be. It was possible she intended her omission as an impertinence, a visible irony, to show how she could overreach people who attempted to overreach her. On that hypothesis it was well to let her see that one didn't notice her little tricks. The real reading of the matter, I afterwards gathered, was simply the poor lady's desire to emphasize the fact that I was in the enjoyment of a favour as rigidly limited as it had been liberally bestowed. She had given me part of her house, but she wouldn't add to that so much as a morsel of paper with her name on it. Let me say that even at first this didn't make me too miserable, for the whole situation had the charm of its oddity. I foresaw that I should have a summer after my own literary heart, and the sense of playing with my opportunity was much greater after all than any sense of being played with. There could be no Venetian business without patience, and since I adored the place I was much more in the spirit of it for having laid in a large provision. That spirit kept me perpetual company and seemed to look out at me from the revived immortal face—in which all his genius shone—of the great poet who was my prompter. I had invoked him and he had come; he hovered before me half the time; it was as if his bright ghost had returned to earth to assure me he regarded the affair as his own no less than as mine and that we should see it fraternally and fondly to a conclusion. It was as if he had said: 'Poor dear, be easy with her; she had some natural prejudices; only give her time. Strange as it may appear to you she was very attractive in 1820. Meanwhile aren't we in Venice together, and what better place is there for the meeting of dear friends? See how it glows with the advancing summer; how the sky and the sea and the rosy air and the marble of the palaces all shimmer and melt together.' My eccentric private errand became a part of the general romance and the general glory—I felt even a mystic companionship, a moral fraternity with all those who in the past had been in the service of art. They had worked for beauty, for a devotion; and what else was I doing? That element was in everything that Jeffrey Aspern had written, and I was only bringing it to light.

I lingered in the *sala* when I went to and fro; I used to watch—as long as I thought decent—the door that led to Miss Bordereau's part of the house. A person observing me might have supposed I was trying to cast a spell on it or attempting some odd experiment in hypnotism. But I was only praying it might open or thinking what treasure probably lurked behind it. I hold it singular, as I look back, that I should never have doubted for a moment that the sacred relics were there; never have failed to know the joy of being beneath the same roof with them. After all they were under my hand—they had not escaped me yet; and they made my life continuous, in a fashion, with the illustrious life they had touched at the other end. I lost myself in this satisfaction to the point of assuming—in my quiet extravagance—that poor Miss Tina also went back, and still went back, as I used to phrase it. She did indeed, the gentle spinster, but not quite so far as Jeffrey Aspern, who was simple hearsay to her quite as he was to me. Only she had lived for years with Juliana, she had seen and handled all mementoes and—

even though she was stupid—some esoteric knowledge had rubbed off on her. That was what the old woman represented—esoteric knowledge; and this was the idea with which my critical heart used to thrill. It literally beat faster often, of an evening when I had been out, as I stopped with my candle in the re-echoing hall on my way up to bed. It was as if at such a moment as that, in the stillness and after the long contradiction of the day, Miss Bordereau's secrets were in the air, the wonder of her survival more vivid. These were the acute impressions. I had them in another form, with more of a certain shade of reciprocity, during the hours I sat in the garden looking up over the top of my book at the closed windows of my hostess. In these windows no sign of life ever appeared; it was as if, for fear of my catching a glimpse of them, the two ladies passed their days in the dark. But this only emphasized their having matters to conceal; which I had wished to prove. Their motionless shutters became as expressive as eyes consciously closed, and I took comfort in the probability that, though invisible themselves, they kept me in view between the lashes.

I made a point of spending as much time as possible in the garden, to justify the picture I had originally given of my horticultural passion. And I not only spent time, but (hang it! as I said) spent precious money. As soon as I had got my rooms arranged and could give the question proper thought I surveyed the place with a clever expert and made terms for having it put in order. I was sorry to do this, for personally, I liked it better as it was, with its weeds and its wild rich tangle, its sweet characteristic Venetian shabbiness. I had to be consistent, to keep my promise that I would smother the house in flowers. Moreover I clung to the fond fancy that by flowers I should make my way—I should succeed by big nosegays. I would batter the old women with lilies—I would bombard their citadel with roses. Their door would have to yield to the pressure when a mound of fragrance should be heaped against it. The place in truth had been brutally neglected. The Venetian capacity for dawdling is of the largest, and for a good many days unlimited litter was all my gardener had to show for his ministrations. There was a great digging of holes and carting about of earth, and after a while I grew so impatient that I had thoughts of sending for my 'results' to the nearest stand. But I felt sure my friends would see through the chinks of their shutters where such tribute *couldn't* have been gathered, and might so make up their minds against my veracity. I possessed my soul and finally, though the delay was long, perceived some appearances of bloom. This encouraged me and I waited serenely enough till they multiplied. Meanwhile the real summer days arrived and began to pass, and as I look back upon them they seem to me almost the happiest of my life. I took more and more care to be in the garden, whenever it was not too hot. I had an arbour arranged and a low table and an arm-chair put into it; and I carried out books and portfolios—I had always some business of writing in hand—and worked and waited and mused and hoped, while the golden hours elapsed and the plants drank in the light and the inscrutable old palace turned pale and then, as the day waned, began to recover and flush and my papers rustled in the wandering breeze of the Adriatic.

Considering how little satisfaction I got from it at first it is wonderful I shouldn't have grown more tired of trying to guess what mystic rites of ennui the Misses Bordereau celebrated in their darkened rooms; whether this had always been the tenor of their life and how in previous years they had escaped elbowing their neighbours. It was supposable they had then had other habits, forms, and resources; that they must once have been young or at least middle-aged. There was no end to the questions it was possible to ask about them and no end to the answers it was not possible to frame. I had known many of my country-people in Europe and was familiar with the strange ways they were liable to take up there; but the Misses Bordereau formed altogether a new type of the American absentee. Indeed, it was clear the American name had ceased to have any application to them—I had seen this in the ten minutes spent in the old woman's room. You could never have said whence they came from the appearance of either of them; wherever it was they had long ago shed and unlearned all native marks and notes. There was nothing in them one recognized or fitted, and, putting the question of speech aside, they might have been Norwegians or Spaniards. Miss Bordereau, after all, had been in Europe nearly three-quarters of a century; it appeared by some verses addressed to her by Aspern on the occasion of his own second absence from America—verses of which Cumnor and I had after infinite conjecture established solidly enough the date—that she was even then, as a girl of twenty, on the foreign side of the sea. There was a profession in the poem —I hope not just for the phrase—that he had come back for her sake. We had no real light on her circumstances at that moment, any more than we had upon her origin, which we believed to be of the sort usually spoken of as modest. Cumnor had a theory that she had been a governess in some family in which the poet visited and that, in consequence of her position, there was from the first something unavowed, or rather something quite clandestine, in their relations. I on the other hand had hatched a little romance according to which she was the daughter of an artist, a painter or a sculptor, who had left the Western world, when the century was fresh, to study in the ancient schools. It was essential to my hypothesis that this amiable man should have lost his wife, should have been poor and unsuccessful, and should have had a second daughter of a disposition quite different from Juliana's. It was also indispensable that he should have been accompanied to Europe by these young ladies and should have established himself there for the remainder of a struggling, saddened life. There was a further implication that Miss Bordereau had had in her youth a perverse and reckless, albeit a generous and fascinating character, and that she had braved some wondrous chances. By what passions had she been ravaged, by what adventures and sufferings had she been blanched, what store of memories had she laid away for the monotonous future?

I asked myself these things as I sat spinning theories about her in my arbour and the bees droned in the flowers. It was incontestable that, whether for right or for wrong, most readers of certain of Aspern's poems (poems not as ambiguous as the sonnets—scarcely more divine, I think—of Shakespeare) had taken for granted that Juliana had not always adhered to the steep footway of renunciation. There hovered about her name a perfume of impenitent passion, an intimation that she had not been exactly as the respectable young person in general. Was this a sign that her singer had betrayed her, had given her away, as we say nowadays, to posterity? Certain it is that it would have been difficult to put one's finger on the passage in which her fair name suffered injury. Moreover, was not any fame fair enough that was so sure of duration and was associated with works immortal through their beauty? It was a part of my idea that the young lady had had a foreign lover—and say an unedifying tragical rupture — before her meeting with Jeffrey Aspern. She had lived with her father and sister in a queer, old-fashioned, expatriated, artistic Bohemia of the days when the aesthetic was only the academic and the painters who knew the best models of *contadina* and *pifferaro* wore peaked hats and long hair. It was a society less awake than the coteries of to-day—in its ignorance of the wonderful chances, the opportunities of the early bird, with which its path was strewn—to tatters of old stuff and fragments of old crockery; so that Miss Bordereau appeared not to have picked up or have inherited many objects of importance. There was no enviable *bric-à-brac,* with its provoking legend of cheapness, in the room in which I had seen her. Such a fact as that suggested bareness, but none the less it worked happily into the sentimental interest I had always taken in the early movement of my countrymen as visitors to Europe. When Americans went abroad in 1820 there was something romantic, almost heroic in it, as compared with the perpetual ferryings of the present hour, the hour at which photography and other conveniences have annihilated surprise. Miss Bordereau had sailed with her family on a tossing brig in the days of long voyages and sharp differences; she had had her emotions on the top of yellow diligences, passed the night at inns where she dreamed of travellers' tales, and was most struck, on reaching the Eternal City, with the elegance of Roman pearls and scarfs and mosaic brooches. There was something touching to me in all that, and my imagination frequently went back to the period. If Miss Bordereau carried it there, of course Jeffrey Aspern had at other times done so with greater force. It was a much more important fact, if one was looking at his genius critically, that he had lived in the days before the general transfusion. It had happened to me to regret that he had known Europe at all; I should have liked to see what he would have written without that experience, by which he had incontestably been enriched. But as his fate had ruled otherwise I went with him—I tried to judge how the general old order would have struck him. It was not only there, however, I watched him; the relations he had entertained with the special new had even a livelier interest. His own country after all had had most of his life, and his muse, as they said at that time, was essentially American. That was originally what I had prized him for; that at a period when our native land was nude and crude and provincial, when the famous 'atmosphere' it is supposed to lack was not even missed, when literature was lonely there and art and form almost impossible, he had found means to live and write like one of the first; to be free and general and not at all afraid; to feel, understand, and express everything.

V

I WAS seldom at home in the evening, for when I attempted to occupy myself in my apartments the lamplight brought in a swarm of noxious insects, and it was too hot for closed windows. Accordingly I spent the late hours either on the water—the moonlights of Venice are famous—or in the splendid square which serves as a vast forecourt to the strange old church of Saint Mark. I sat in front of Florian's café eating ices, listening to music, talking with acquaintances: the traveller will remember how the immense cluster of tables and little chairs stretches like a promontory into the smooth lake of the Piazza. The whole place, of a summer's evening, under the stars and with all the lamps, all the voices and light footsteps on marble—the only sounds of the immense arcade that encloses it—is an open-air saloon dedicated to cooling drinks and to a still finer degustation, that of the splendid impressions received during the day. When I didn't prefer to keep mine to myself there was always a stray tourist, disencumbered of his Baedeker, to discuss them with, or some domesticated painter rejoicing in the return of the season of strong effects. The great basilica, with its low domes and bristling embroideries, the mystery of its mosaic and sculpture, looked ghostly in the tempered gloom, and the sea-breeze passed between the twin columns of the Piazzetta, the lintels of a door no longer guarded, as gently as if a rich curtain swayed there. I used sometimes on these occasions to think of the Misses Bordereau and of the pity of their being shut up in apartments which in the Venetian July even Venetian vastness couldn't relieve of some stuffiness. Their life seemed miles away from the life of the Piazza, and no doubt it was really too late to make the austere Juliana change her habits. But poor Miss Tina would have enjoyed one of Florian's ices, I was sure; sometimes I even had thoughts of carrying one home to her. Fortunately my patience bore fruit and I was not obliged to do anything so ridiculous.

One evening about the middle of July I came in earlier than usual—I forget what chance had led to this—and instead of going up to my quarters made my way into the garden. The temperature was very high; it was such a night as one would gladly have spent in the open air, and I was in no hurry to go to bed. I had floated home in my gondola, listening to the slow splash of the oar in the dark, narrow canals, and now the only thought that occupied me was that it would be good to recline at one's length in the fragrant darkness on a garden bench. The odour of the canal was doubtless at the bottom of that aspiration, and the breath of the garden, as I entered it, gave consistency to my purpose. It was delicious—just such an air as must have trembled with Romeo's vows when he stood among the thick flowers and raised his arms to his mistress's balcony. I looked at the windows of the palace to see if by chance the example of Verona—Verona being not far off—had been followed; but everything was dim, as usual, and everything was still. Juliana might on the summer nights of her youth have murmured down from open windows at Jeffrey Aspern, but Miss Tina was not a poet's mistress any more than I was a poet. This, however, didn't prevent my gratification from being great as I became aware on reaching the end of the garden that my younger *padrona* was seated in one of the bowers. At first I made out but an indistinct figure, not in the least counting on such an overture from one of my hostesses; it even occurred to me that some enamoured maidservant had stolen in to keep a tryst with her sweetheart. I was going to turn away, not to frighten her, when the figure rose to its height and I recognized Miss Bordereau's niece. I must do myself the justice that I didn't wish to frighten her either, and much as I had longed for some such accident I should have been capable of retreating. It was as if I had laid a trap for her by coming home earlier than usual and by adding to that oddity my invasion of the garden. As she rose she spoke to me, and then I guessed that perhaps, secure in my almost inveterate absence, it was her nightly practice to take a lonely airing. There was no trap in truth, because I had had no suspicion. At first I took the words she uttered for an impatience of my arrival; but as she repeated them—I hadn't caught them clearly—I had the surprise of hearing her say: 'Oh, dear, I'm so glad you've come!' She and her aunt had in common the property of unexpected speeches. She came out of the arbour almost as if to throw herself in my arms.

I hasten to add that I escaped this ordeal and that she didn't even then shake hands with me. It was an ease to her to see me and presently she told me why—because she was nervous when out of doors at night alone. The plants and shrubs looked so strange in the dark, and there were all sorts of queer sounds—she couldn't tell what they were—like the noises of animals. She stood close to me, looking about her with an air of greater security but without any demonstration of interest in me as an individual. Then I felt how little nocturnal prowlings could have been her habit, and I was also reminded—I had been afflicted by the same in talking with her before I took possession—that it was impossible to allow too much for her simplicity.

'You speak as if you were lost in the backwoods,' I cheeringly laughed. 'How you manage to keep out of this charming place when you 've only three steps to take to get into it is more than I 've yet been able to discover. You hide away amazingly so long as I 'm on the premises, I know; but I had a hope you peeped out a little at other times. You and your poor aunt are worse off than Carmelite nuns in their cells. Should you mind telling me how you exist without air, without exercise, without any sort of human contact? I don't see how you carry on the common business of life.'

She looked at me as if I had spoken a strange tongue, and her answer was so little of one that I felt it made for irritation. 'We go to bed very early—earlier than you 'd believe.' I was on the point of saying that this only deepened the mystery, but she gave me some relief by adding:

'Before you came we weren't so private. But I 've never been out at night.'

'Never in these fragrant alleys, blooming here under your nose?'

'Ah,' said Miss Tina, 'they were never nice till now!' There was a finer sense in this and a flattering comparison, so that it seemed to me I had gained some advantage. As I might follow that further by establishing a good grievance I asked her why, since she thought my garden nice, she had never thanked me in any way for the flowers I had been sending up in such quantities for the previous three weeks. I had not been discouraged—there had been, as she would have observed, a daily armful; but I had been brought up in the common forms and a word of recognition now and then would have touched me in the right place.

'Why, I didn't know they were for me!'

'They were for both of you. Why should I make a difference?'

Miss Tina reflected as if she might be thinking of a reason for that, but she failed to produce one. Instead of this she asked abruptly: 'Why in the world do you want so much to know us?'

'I ought, after all, to name a difference,' I replied. 'That question 's your aunt's; it isn't yours. You wouldn't ask it if you hadn't been put up to it.'

'She didn't tell me to ask you,' Miss Tina replied without confusion. She was, indeed, the oddest mixture of shyness and straightness.

'Well, she has often wondered about it herself and expressed her wonder to you. She has insisted on it, so that she had put the idea into your head that I 'm insufferably pushing. Upon my word, I think I 've been very discreet. And how completely your aunt must have lost every tradition of sociability, to see anything out of the way in the idea that respectable, intelligent people, living as we do under the same roof, should occasionally exchange a remark! What could be more natural? We are of the same country and have at least some of the same tastes, since, like you, I 'm intensely fond of Venice.'

My friend seemed incapable of grasping more than one clause in any proposition, and she now spoke quickly, eagerly, as if she were answering my whole speech: 'I 'm not in the least fond of Venice. I should like to go far away!'

'Has she always kept you back so?' I went on, to show her I could be as irrelevant as herself.

'She told me to come out to-night; she has told me very often,' said Miss Tina. 'It is I who wouldn't come. I don't like to leave her.'

'Is she too weak, is she really failing?' I demanded, with more emotion, I think, than I meant to betray. I measured this by the way her eyes rested on me in the darkness. It embarrassed me a little, and to turn the matter off I continued genially: 'Do let us sit down together comfortably somewhere—while you tell me all about her.'

Miss Tina made no resistance to this. We found a bench less secluded, less confidential, as it were, than the one in the arbour; and we were still sitting there when I heard midnight ring out from those clear bells of Venice which vibrate with a solemnity of their own over the lagoon and hold the air so much more than the chimes of other places. We were together more than an hour and our interview gave, as it struck me, a great lift to my undertaking. Miss Tina accepted the situation without a protest; she had avoided me for three months, yet now she treated me almost as if these three months had made me an old friend. If I had chosen I might have gathered from this that though she had avoided me she had given a good deal of consideration to doing so. She paid no attention to the flight of time—never worried at my keeping her so long away from her aunt. She talked freely, answering questions and asking them and not even taking advantage of certain longish pauses by which they were naturally broken to say she thought she had better go in. It was almost as if she were waiting for something—something I might say to her—and intended to give me my opportunity. I was the more struck by this as she told me how much less well her aunt had been for a good many days, and in a way that was rather new. She was markedly weaker; at moments she showed no strength at all; yet more than ever before she wished to be left alone. That was why she had told her to come out—not even to remain in her own room, which was alongside; she pronounced poor Miss Tina 'a worry, a bore, and a source of aggravation.' She sat still for hours together, as if for long sleep; she had always done that, musing and dozing; but at such times formerly she gave, in breaks, some small sign of life, of interest, liking her companion to be near her with her work. This sad personage confided to me that at present her aunt was so motionless as to create the fear she was dead; moreover, she scarce ate or drank—one couldn't see what she lived on. The great thing was that she still on most days got up; the serious job was to dress her, to wheel her out of her bedroom. She clung to as many of her old habits as possible and had always, little company as they had received for years, made a point of sitting in the great parlour.

I scarce knew what to think of all this—of Miss Tina's sudden conversion to sociability and of the strange fact that the more the old woman appeared to decline to her end the less she should desire to be looked after. The story hung indifferently together, and I even asked myself if it mightn't be a trap laid for me, the result of a design to make me show my hand. I couldn't have told why my companions (as they could only by courtesy be called) should have this purpose—why they should try to trip up so lucrative a lodger. But at any hazard I kept on my guard, so that Miss Tina shouldn't have occasion again to ask what I might really be 'up to.' Poor woman, before we parted for the night my mind was at rest as to what *she* might be. She was up to nothing at all.

She told me more about their affairs than I had hoped; there was no need to be prying, for it evidently drew her out simply to feel me listen and care. She ceased wondering why I *should*, and at last, while describing the brilliant life they had led years before, she almost chattered. It was Miss Tina who judged it brilliant; she said that when they first came to live in Venice, years and years back—I found her essentially vague about dates and the order in which events had occurred—there was never a week they hadn't some visitor or didn't make some pleasant *passeggio* in the town. They had seen all the curiosities; they had even been to the Lido in a boat—she spoke as if I might think there was a way on foot; they had had a collation there, brought in three baskets and spread out on the grass. I asked her what people she had known and she said, Oh, very nice ones—the Cavaliere Bombicci and the Contessa Altemura, with whom they had had a great friendship! Also English people—the Churtons and the Goldies and Mrs. Stock-Stock, whom they had loved dearly; she was dead and gone, poor dear. That was the case with most of their kind circle—this expression was Miss Tina's own; though a few were left, which was a wonder, considering how they had neglected them. She mentioned the names of two or three Venetian old women; of a certain doctor, very clever, who was so attentive—he came as a friend, he had really given up practice; of the *avvocato* Pochintesta, who wrote beautiful poems and had addressed one to her aunt. These people came to see them without fail every year, usually at the *capo d'anno*, and of old her aunt used to make them some little present—her aunt and she together: small things that she, Miss Tina turned out with her own hand, paper lamp-shades, or mats for the decanters of wine at dinner, or those woollen things that in cold weather are worn on the wrists. The last few years there hadn't been many presents; she couldn't think what to make and her aunt had lost interest and never suggested. But the people came all the same; if the good Venetians liked you once they liked you for ever.

There was affecting matter enough in the good faith of this sketch of former social glories; the picnic at the Lido had remained vivid through the ages and poor Miss Tina evidently was of the impression that she had had a dashing youth. She had in fact had a glimpse of the Venetian world in its gossiping, home-keeping, parsimonious professional walks; for I noted for the first time how nearly she had acquired by contact the trick of the familiar soft-sounding, almost infantile prattle of the place. I judged her to have imbibed this invertebrate dialect from the natural way the names of things and people—most purely local—rose to her lips. If she knew little of what they represented she knew still less of anything else. Her aunt had drawn in —the failure of interest in the table-mats and lamp-shades was a sign of that—and she hadn't been able to mingle in society or to entertain it alone; so that her range of reminiscence struck one as an old world altogether. Her tone, hadn't it been so decent, would have seemed to carry one back to the queer rococo Venice of Goldoni and Casanova. I found myself mistakenly thinking of her, too, as one of Jeffrey Aspern's contemporaries; this came from her having so little in common with my own. It was possible, I indeed reasoned, that she hadn't even heard of him; it might very well be that Juliana had forborne to lift for innocent eyes the veil that covered the temple of her glory. In this case she perhaps wouldn't know of the existence of the papers, and I welcomed that presumption—it made me feel more safe with her—till I remembered we had believed the letter of disavowal received by Cumnor to be in the handwriting of the niece. If it had been dictated to her she had of course to know what it was about; though the effect of it withal was to repudiate the idea of any connection with the poet. I held it probable, at all events, that Miss Tina hadn't read a word of his poetry. Moreover if, with her companion, she had always escaped invasion and research, there was little occasion for her having got it into her head that people were 'after' the letters. People had not been after them, for people hadn't heard of them. Cumnor's fruitless feeler would have been a solitary accident.

When midnight sounded Miss Tina got up; but she stopped at the door of the house only after she had wandered two or three times with me round the garden. 'When shall I see you again?' I asked before she went in; to which she replied with promptness that she should like to come out the next night. She added, however, that she shouldn't come—she was so far from doing everything she liked.

'You might do a few things *I* like,' I quite sincerely sighed.

'Oh, you—I don't believe you!' she murmured at this, facing me with her simple solemnity.

'Why don't you believe me?'

'Because I don't understand you.'

'That 's just the sort of occasion to have faith.' I couldn't say more, though I should have liked to, as I saw I only mystified her; for I had no wish to have it on my conscience that I might pass for having made love to her. Nothing less should I have seemed to do had I continued to beg a lady to 'believe in me' in an Italian garden on a midsummer night. There was some merit in my scruples, for Miss Tina lingered and lingered: I made out in her the conviction that she shouldn't really soon come down again and the wish, therefore, to protract the present. She insisted, too, on making the talk between us personal to ourselves; and altogether her behaviour was such as would have been possible only to a perfectly artless and a considerably witless woman.

'I shall like the flowers better now that I know them also meant for me.'

'How could you have doubted it? If you 'll tell me the kind you like best I 'll send a double lot.'

'Oh, I like them all best!' Then she went on familiarly: 'Shall you study—shall you read and write—when you go up to your rooms?'

'I don't do that at night—at this season. The lamplight brings in the animals.'

'You might have known that when you came.'

'I did know it!'

'And in winter do you work at night?'

'I read a good deal, but I don't often write.' She listened as if these details had a rare interest, and suddenly a temptation quite at odds with all the prudence I had been teaching myself glimmered at me in her plain, mild face. Ah, yes, she was safe and I could make her safer! It seemed to me from one moment to another that I couldn't wait longer—that I really must take a sounding. So I went on: 'In general before I go to sleep (very often in bed; it 's a bad habit, but I confess to it) I read some great poet. In nine cases out of ten it 's a volume of Jeffrey Aspern.'

I watched her well as I pronounced that name, but I saw nothing wonderful. Why should I, indeed? Wasn't Jeffrey Aspern the property of the human race?

'Oh, *we* read him—we *have* read him,' she quietly replied.

'He 's my poet of poets—I know him almost by heart.'

For an instant Miss Tina hesitated; then her sociability was too much for her. 'Oh, by heart—that 's nothing'; and, though dimly, she quite lighted. 'My aunt used to know him—to know him'—she paused an instant and I wondered what she was going to say—'to know him as a visitor.'

'As a visitor?' I guarded my tone.

'He used to call on her and take her out.'

I continued to stare. 'My dear lady, he died a hundred years ago!'

'Well,' she said amusingly, 'my aunt 's a hundred and fifty.'

'Mercy on us!' I cried; 'why didn't you tell me before? I should like so to ask her about him.'

'She wouldn't care for that—she wouldn't tell you,' Miss Tina returned.

'I don't care what she cares for! She *must* tell me—it 's not a chance to be lost.'

'Oh, you should have come twenty years ago. Then she still talked about him.'

'And what did she say?' I eagerly asked.

'I don't know—that he liked her immensely.'

'And she—didn't she like *him*?'

'She said he was a god.' Miss Tina gave me this information flatly, without expression; her tone might have made it a piece of trivial gossip. But it stirred me deeply as she dropped the words into the summer night; their sound might have been the light rustle of an old unfolded love-letter.

'Fancy, fancy!' I murmured. And then: 'Tell me this, please—has she got a portrait of him? They 're distressingly rare.'

'A portrait? I don't know,' said Miss Tina;

and now there was discomfiture in her face. 'Well, good night!' she added; and she turned into the house.

I accompanied her into the wide, dusky, stone-paved passage that corresponded on the ground floor with our grand *sala*. It opened at one end into the garden, at the other upon the canal, and was lighted now only by the small lamp always left for me to take up as I went to bed. An extinguished candle which Miss Tina apparently had brought down with her stood on the same table with it. 'Good night, good night!' I replied, keeping beside her as she went to get her light. 'Surely you 'd know, shouldn't you, if she had one?'

'If she had what?' the poor lady asked, looking at me queerly over the flame of her candle.

'A portrait of the god. I don't know what I wouldn't give to see it.'

'I don't know what she has got. She keeps her things locked up.' And Miss Tina went away toward the staircase with the sense evidently of having said too much.

I let her go—I wished not to frighten her—and I contented myself with remarking that Miss Bordereau wouldn't have locked up such a glorious possession as that: a thing a person would be proud of and hang up in a prominent place on the parlour-wall. Therefore of course she hadn't any portrait. Miss Tina made no direct answer to this and, candle in hand, with her back to me mounted two or three degrees. Then she stopped short and turned round, looking at me across the dusky space.

'Do you write—do you write?' There was a shake in her voice—she could scarcely bring it out.

'Do I write? Oh, don't speak of my writing on the same day with Aspern's!'

'Do you write about *him*—do you pry into his life?'

'Ah, that 's your aunt's question; it can't be yours!' I said in a tone of slightly wounded sensibility.

'All the more reason, then, that you should answer it. Do you, please?'

I thought I had allowed for the falsehoods I should have to tell, but I found that in fact when it came to the point I hadn't. Besides, now that I had an opening there was a kind of relief in being frank. Lastly—it was perhaps fanciful, even fatuous—I guessed that Miss Tina personally wouldn't in the last resort be less my friend. So after a moment's hesitation I answered: 'Yes, I 've written about him and I 'm looking for more material. In heaven's name have you got any?'

'*Santo Dio!*' she exclaimed, without heeding my question; and she hurried upstairs and out of sight. I might count upon her in the last resort, but for the present she was visibly alarmed. The proof of it was that she began to hide again, so that for a fortnight I kept missing her. I found my patience ebbing, and after four or five days of this I told the gardener to stop the 'floral tributes.'

VI

ONE afternoon, at last however, as I came down from my quarters to go out, I found her in the *sala*; it was our first encounter on that ground since I had come into the house. She put on no air of being there by accident; there was an ignorance of such arts in her honest, angular diffidence. That I might be quite sure she was waiting for me she mentioned it at once, but telling me with it that Miss Bordereau wished to see me: she would take me into the room at that moment if I had time. If I had been late for a love-tryst I would have stayed for this, and I quickly signified that I should be delighted to wait on my benefactress. 'She wants to talk with you—to know you,' Miss Tina said, smiling as if she herself appreciated that idea; and she led me to the door of her aunt's apartment. I stopped her a moment before she had opened it, looking at her with some curiosity. I told her that this was a great satisfaction to me and a great honour; but all the same I should like to ask what had made Miss Bordereau so markedly and suddenly change. It had been only the other day that she wouldn't suffer me near her. Miss Tina was not embarrassed by my question; she had as many little unexpected serenities, plausibilities, almost, as if she told fibs, but the odd part of them was that they had on the contrary their source in her truthfulness. 'Oh, my aunt varies,' she answered; 'it 's so terribly dull—I suppose she 's tired.'

'But you told me she wanted more and more to be alone.'

Poor Miss Tina coloured as if she found me too pushing. 'Well, if you don't believe she wants to see you, I haven't invented it! I think people often are capricious when they 're very old.'

'That 's perfectly true. I only wanted to be clear as to whether you 've repeated to her what I told you the other night.'

'What you told me!'

'About Jeffrey Aspern—that I 'm looking for materials.'

'If I had told her, do you think she 'd have sent for you?'

'That 's exactly what I want to know. If she wants to keep him to herself she might have sent for me to tell me so.'

'She won't speak of him,' said Miss Tina. Then as she opened the door she added in a lower tone: 'I told her nothing.'

The old woman was sitting in the same place in which I had seen her last, in the same position, with the same mystifying bandage over her eyes. Her welcome was to turn her almost invisible face to me and show me that while she sat silent she saw me clearly. I made no motion to shake hands with her; I now felt too well that this was out of place for ever. It had been sufficiently enjoined—too venerable to touch. There was something so grim in her aspect—it was partly the accident of her green shade—as I stood there to be measured, that I ceased on the spot to doubt her suspecting me, though I didn't in the least myself suspect that Miss Tina hadn't betrayed me, but the old woman's brooding instinct had served her; she had turned me over and over in the long, still hours and had guessed. The worst of it was that she looked terribly like an old woman who at a pinch would, even like Sardanapalus, burn her treasure. Miss Tina pushed a chair forward, saying to me: 'This will be a good place for you to sit.' As I took possession of it I asked after Miss Bordereau's health; expressed the hope that in spite of the very hot weather it was satisfactory. She answered that it was good enough—good enough; that it was a great thing to be alive.

'Oh, as to that, it depends upon what you compare it with!' I returned with a laugh.

'I don't compare—I don't compare. If I did that I should have given everything up long ago.'

I liked to take this for a subtle allusion to the rapture she had known in the society of Jeffrey Aspern—though it was true that such an allusion would have accorded ill with the wish I imputed to her to keep him buried in her soul. What it accorded with was my constant conviction that no human being had ever had a happier social gift than his, and what it seemed to convey was that nothing in the world was worth speaking of if one pretended to speak of that. But one didn't pretend! Miss Tina sat down beside her aunt, looking as if she had reason to believe some wonderful talk would come off between us.

'It 's about the beautiful flowers,' said the old lady; 'you sent us so many—I ought to have thanked you for them before. But I don't write letters and I receive company but at long intervals.'

She hadn't thanked me while the flowers continued to come, but she departed from her custom so far as to send for me as soon as she began to fear they wouldn't come any more. I noted this; I remembered what an acquisitive propensity she had shown me when when it was a question of extracting gold from me, and I privately rejoiced at the happy thought I had had in suspending my tribute. She had missed it and was willing to make a concession to bring it back. At the first sign of this concession I could only go to meet her. 'I'm afraid you haven't had many, of late, but they shall begin again immediately—to-morrow, to-night.'

'Oh, do send us some to-night!' Miss Tina cried as if it were a great affair.

'What else should you do with them? It isn't a manly taste to make a bower of your room,' the old woman remarked.

'I don't make a bower of my room, but I'm exceedingly fond of growing flowers, of watching their ways. There's nothing unmanly in that: it has been the amusement of philosophers, of statesmen in retirement; even, I think, of great captains.'

'I suppose you know you can sell them—those you don't use,' Miss Bordereau went on. 'I dare say they wouldn't give you much for them; still, you could make a bargain.'

'Oh, I've never in my life made a bargain, as you ought pretty well to have gathered. My gardener disposes of them and I ask no questions.'

'I'd ask a few, I can promise you!' said Miss Bordereau; and it was so I first heard the strange sound of her laugh, which was as if the faint 'walking' ghost of her old-time tone had suddenly cut a caper. I couldn't get used to the idea that this vision of pecuniary profit was most what drew out the divine Juliana.

'Come into the garden yourself and pick them; come as often as you like; come every day. The flowers are all for you,' I pursued, addressing Miss Tina and carrying off this veracious statement by treating it as an innocent joke. 'I can't imagine why she doesn't come down,' I added for Miss Bordereau's benefit.

'You must make her come; you must come up and fetch her,' the old woman said to my satisfaction. 'That odd thing you 've made in the corner will do very well for her to sit in.'

The allusion to the most elaborate of my shady coverts, a sketchy 'summer-house,' was irreverent; it confirmed the impression I had already received that there was a flicker of impertinence in Miss Bordereau's talk, a vague echo of the boldness or the archness of her adventurous youth and which had somehow automatically outlived passions and faculties. None the less, I asked: 'Wouldn't it be possible for you to come down there yourself? Wouldn't it do you good to sit there in the shade and the sweet air?'

'Oh, sir, when I move out of this it won't be to sit in the air, and I 'm afraid that any that may be stirring around me won't be particularly sweet! It will be a very dark shade indeed. But that won't be just yet,' Miss Bordereau continued cannily, as if to correct any hopes this free glance at the last receptacle of her mortality might lead me to entertain. 'I 've sat here many a day and have had enough of arbours in my time. But I 'm not afraid to wait till I 'm called.'

Miss Tina had expected, as I felt, rare conversation, but perhaps she found it less gracious on her aunt's side—considering I had been sent for with a civil intention—than she had hoped. As to give the position a turn that would put our companion in a light more favourable she said to me: 'Didn't I tell you the other night that she had sent me out? You see I can do what I like!'

'Do you pity her—do you teach her to pity herself?' Miss Bordereau demanded, before I had time to answer this appeal. 'She has a much easier life than I had at her age.'

'You must remember it has been quite open to me,' I said, 'to think you rather inhuman.'

'Inhuman? That 's what the poets used to call the women a hundred years ago. Don't try that; you won't do as well as they!' Juliana went on. 'There 's no more poetry in the world—that *I* know of, at least. But I won't bandy words with you,' she said, and I well remember the old-fashioned, artificial sound she gave the speech. 'You make me talk, talk, talk! It isn't good for me at all.' I got up at this and told her I would take no more of her time; but she detained me to put a question: 'Do you remember, the day I saw you about the rooms, that you offered us the use of your gondola?' And when I assented, promptly struck again with her disposition to make a 'good thing' of my being there and wondering what she now had in her eye, she produced: 'Why don't you take that girl out in it and show her the place?'

'Oh, dear aunt, what do you want to do with me?' cried the 'girl,' with a piteous quaver. 'I know all about the place!'

'Well, then, go with him and explain!' said Miss Bordereau, who gave an effect of cruelty to her implacable power of retort. This showed her as a sarcastic, profane, cynical old woman. 'Haven't we heard that there have been all sorts of changes in all these years? You ought to see them, and at your age—I don't mean because you 're so young—you ought to take the chances that come. You 're old enough, my dear, and this gentleman won't hurt you. He 'll show you the famous sunsets, if they still go on—*do* they go on? The sun set for me so long ago. But that 's not a reason. Besides, I shall never miss you; you think you 're too important. Take her to the Piazza; it used to be very pretty,' Miss Bordereau continued, addressing herself to me. 'What have they done with the funny old church? I hope it hasn't tumbled down. Let her look at the shops; she may take some money, she may buy what she likes.'

Poor Miss Tina had got up, discountenanced and helpless, and as we stood there before her aunt it would certainly have struck a spectator of the scene that our venerable friend was making rare sport of us. Miss Tina protested in a confusion of exclamations and murmurs; but I lost no time in saying that if she would do me the honour to accept the hospitality of my boat I would engage she really shouldn't be bored. Or if she didn't want so much of my company, the boat itself, with the gondolier, was at her service; he was a capital oar and she might have every confidence. Miss Tina, without definitely answering this speech, looked away from me and out of the window quite as if about to weep, and I remarked that once we had Miss Bordereau's approval we could easily come to an understanding. We would take an hour, whichever she liked, one of the very next days. As I made my obeisance to the old lady I asked her if she would kindly permit me to see her again.

For a moment she kept me; then she said: 'Is it very necessary to your happiness?'

'It diverts me more than I can say.'

'You 're wonderfully civil. Don't you know it almost kills *me*?'

'How can I believe that when I see you more animated, more brilliant than when I came in?'

'That 's very true, aunt,' said Miss Tina. 'I think it does you good.'

'Isn't it touching, the solicitude we each have that the other shall enjoy himself?' sneered Miss Bordereau. 'If you think me brilliant to-day you don't know what you are talking about; you 've never seen an agreeable woman. What do you people know about good society?' she cried; but before I could tell her, 'Don't try to pay me a compliment; I 've been spoiled,' she went on. 'My door 's shut, but you may sometimes knock.'

With this she dismissed me and I left the room. The latch closed behind me, but Miss Tina, contrary to my hope, had remained within. I passed slowly across the hall and, before taking my way downstairs, waited a little. My hope was answered; after a minute my conductress followed me. 'That 's a delightful idea about the Piazza,' I said. 'When will you go—to-night, to-morrow?'

She had been disconcerted, as I have mentioned, but I had already perceived, and I was to observe again, that when Miss Tina was embarrassed she didn't—as most women would have in like case—turn away, floundering and hedging, but came closer, as it were, with a deprecating, a clinging appeal to be spared, to be protected. Her attitude was a constant prayer for aid and explanation, and yet no woman in the world could have been less of a comedian. From the moment you were kind to her she depended on you absolutely; her self-consciousness dropped and she took the greatest intimacy, the innocent intimacy that was all she could conceive, for granted. She didn't know, she now declared, what possessed her aunt, who had changed so quickly, who had got some idea. I replied that she must catch the idea and let me have it: we would go and take an ice together at Florian's and she should report while we listened to the band.

'Oh, it will take me a long time to be able to "report"!' she said rather ruefully; and she could promise me this satisfaction neither for that night nor for the next. I was patient now, however, for I felt I had only to wait; and in fact at the end of the week, one lovely evening after dinner, she stepped into my gondola, to which in honour of the occasion I had attached a second oar.

We swept in the course of five minutes into the Grand Canal; whereupon she uttered a murmur of ecstasy as fresh as if she had been a tourist just arrived. She had forgotten the splendour of the great water-way on a clear summer evening, and how the sense of floating between marble palaces and reflected lights disposed the mind to freedom and ease. We floated long and far, and though my friend gave no high-pitched voice to her glee I was sure of her full surrender. She was more than pleased, she was transported; the whole thing was an immense liberation. The gondola moved with slow strokes, to give her time to enjoy it, and she listened to the plash of the oars, which grew louder and more musically liquid as we passed into narrow canals, as if it were a revelation of Venice. When I asked her how long it was since she had thus floated, she answered: 'Oh, I don't know; a long time—not since my aunt began to be ill.' This was not the only show of her extreme vagueness about the previous years and the line marking off the period of Miss Bordereau's eminence. I was not at liberty to keep her out long, but we took a considerable *giro* before going to the Piazza. I asked her no questions, holding off by design from her life at home and the things I wanted to know; I poured, rather, treasures of information about the objects before and around us into her ears, describing also Florence and Rome, discoursing on the charms and advantages of travel. She reclined, receptive, on the deep leather cushion, turned her eyes conscientiously to everything I noted and never mentioned to me till some time afterwards that she might be supposed to know Florence better than I, as she had lived there for years with her kinswoman. At last she said with the shy impatience of a child: 'Are we not really going to the Piazza? That 's what I want to see!' I immediately gave the order that we should go straight, after which we sat silent with the expectation of arrival. As some time still passed, however, she broke out of her own movement: 'I 've found out what 's the matter with my aunt: she 's afraid you 'll go!'

I quite gasped. 'What has put that into her head?'

'She has had an idea you 've not been happy. That 's why she is different now.'

'You mean, she wants to make me happier?'

'Well, she wants you not to go. She wants you to stay.'

'I suppose you mean on account of the rent,' I remarked candidly.

Miss Tina's candour but profited. 'Yes, you know; so that I shall have more.'

'How much does she want you to have?' I asked with all the gaiety I now felt. 'She ought to fix the sum, so that I may stay till it 's made up.'

'Oh, that wouldn't please me,' said Miss Tina. 'It would be unheard of, your taking that trouble.'

'But suppose I should have my own reasons for staying in Venice?'

'Then it would be better for you to stay in some other house.'

'And what would your aunt say to that?'

'She wouldn't like it at all. But I should think you 'd do well to give up your reasons and go away altogether.'

'Dear Miss Tina,' I said, 'it 's not so easy to give up my reasons!'

She made no immediate answer to this, but after a moment broke out afresh: 'I think I know what your reasons are!'

'I dare say, because the other night I almost told you how I wished you 'd help me to make them good.'

'I can't do that without being false to my aunt.'

'What do you mean by being false to her?'

'Why, she would never consent to what you want. She has been asked, she has been written to. It makes her fearfully angry.'

'Then she *has* papers of value?' I precipitately cried.

'Oh, she has everything!' sighed Miss Tina, with a curious weariness, a sudden lapse into gloom.

These words caused all my pulses to throb, for I regarded them as precious evidence. I felt them too deeply to speak, and in the interval the gondola approached the Piazzetta. After we had disembarked I asked my companion if she would rather walk round the square or go and sit before the great café; to which she replied that she would do whichever I liked best—I must only remember again how little time she had. I assured her there was plenty to do both, and we made the circuit of the long arcades. Her spirits revived at the sight of the bright shop-windows, and she lingered and stopped, admiring or disapproving of their contents, asking me what I thought of things, theorizing about prices. My attention wandered from her; her words of a while before, 'Oh, she has everything!' echoed so in my consciousness. We sat down at last in the crowded circle at Florian's, finding an unoccupied table among those that were ranged in the square. It was a splendid night and all the world out of doors; Miss Tina couldn't have wished the elements more auspicious for her return to society. I saw she felt it all even more than she told, but her impressions were wellnigh too many for her. She had forgotten the attraction of the world and was learning that she had for the best years of her life been rather mercilessly cheated of it. This didn't make her angry; but as she took in the charming scene her face had, in spite of its smile of appreciation, the flush of a wounded surprise. She didn't speak, sunk in the sense of opportunities, for ever lost, that ought to have been easy; and this gave me a chance to say to her: 'Did you mean a while ago, that your aunt has a plan of keeping me on by admitting me occasionally to her presence?'

'She thinks it will make a difference with you if you sometimes see her. She wants you so much to stay that she 's willing to make that concession.'

'And what good does she consider I think it will do me to see her?'

'I don't know; it must be interesting,' said Miss Tina simply. 'You told her you found it so.'

'So I did; but every one doesn't think that.'

'No, of course not, or more people would try.'

'Well, if she 's capable of making that reflection she 's capable also of making this further one,' I went on: 'that I must have a particular reason for not doing as others do, in spite of the interest she offers—for not leaving her alone.' Miss Tina looked as if she failed to grasp this rather complicated proposition; so I continued: 'If you 've not told her what I said to you the other night may she not at least have guessed it?'

'I don't know—she 's very suspicious.'

'But she hasn't been made so by indiscreet curiosity, by persecution?'

'No, no; it isn't that,' said Miss Tina, turning on me a troubled face. 'I don't know how to say it; it 's on account of something—ages ago, before I was born—in her life.'

'Something? What sort of thing?'—I asked it as if I could have no idea.

'Oh, she has never told me.' And I was sure my friend spoke the truth.

Her extreme limpidity was almost provoking, and I felt for the moment that she would have been more satisfactory if she had been less ingenuous. 'Do you suppose it 's something to which Jeffrey Aspern's letters and papers—I mean the things in her possession—have reference?'

'I dare say it is!' my companion exclaimed as if this were a very happy suggestion. 'I 've never looked at any of those things.'

'None of them? Then how do you know what they are?'

'I don't,' said Miss Tina placidly. 'I 've never had them in my hands. But I 've seen them when she has had them out.'

'Does she have them out often?'

'Not now, but she used to. She 's very fond of them.'

'In spite of their being compromising?'

'Compromising?' Miss Tina repeated as if vague to what that meant. I felt almost as one who corrupts the innocence of youth.

'I allude to their containing painful memories.'

'Oh, I don't think anything 's painful.'

'You mean there's nothing to affect her reputation?'

An odder look even than usual came at this into the face of Miss Bordereau's niece—a confession, it seemed, of helplessness, an appeal to me to deal fairly, generously with her. I had brought her to the Piazza, placed her among charming influences, paid her an attention she appreciated, and now I appeared to show it all as a bribe—a bribe to make her turn in some way against her aunt. She was of a yielding nature and capable of doing almost anything to please a person markedly kind to her; but the greatest kindness of all would be not to presume too much on this. It was strange enough, as I afterwards thought, that she had not the least air of resenting my want of consideration for her aunt's character, which would have been in the worst possible taste if anything less vital—from my point of view—had been at stake. I don't think she really measured it. 'Do you mean she ever did something bad?' she asked in a moment.

'Heaven forbid I should say so, and it 's none of my business. Besides, if she did,' I agreeably put it, 'that was in other ages, in another world. But why shouldn't she destroy her papers?'

'Oh, she loves them too much.'

'Even now, when she may be near her end?'

'Perhaps when she 's sure of that she will.'

'Well, Miss Tina,' I said, 'that 's just what I should like you to prevent.'

'How can I prevent it?'

'Couldn't you get them away from her?'

'And give them to you?'

This put the case, superficially, with sharp irony, but I was sure of her not intending that. 'Oh, I mean that you might let me see them and look them over. It isn't for myself, or that I should want them at any cost to any one else. It 's simply that they would be of such immense interest to the public, such immeasurable importance as a contribution to Jeffrey Aspern's history.'

She listened to me in her usual way, as if I abounded in matters she had never heard of, and I felt almost as base as the reporter of a newspaper who forces his way into a house of mourning. This was marked when she presently said: 'There was a gentleman who some time ago wrote to her in very much those words. He also wanted her papers.'

'And did she answer him?' I asked, rather ashamed of not having my friend's rectitude.

'Only when he had written two or three times. He made her very angry.'

'And what did she say?'

'She said he was a devil,' Miss Tina replied categorically.

'She used that expression in her letter?'

'Oh, no; she said it to me. She made me write to him.'

'And what did you say?'

'I told him there were no papers at all.'

'Ah, poor gentleman!' I groaned.

'I knew there were, but I wrote what she bade me.'

'Of course, you had to do that. But I hope I shan't pass for a devil.'

'It will depend upon what you ask me to do for you,' my companion smiled.

'Oh, if there 's a chance of *your* thinking so my affair 's in a bad way! I shan't ask you to steal for me, nor even to fib—for you *can't* fib, unless on paper. But the principal thing is this—to prevent her destroying the papers.'

'Why, I 've no control of her,' said Miss Tina. 'It 's she who controls me.'

'But she doesn't control her own arms and legs, does she? The way she would naturally destroy her letters would be to burn them. Now she can't burn them without fire, and she can't get fire unless you give it to her.'

'I 've always done everything she has asked,' my poor friend pleaded. 'Besides, there 's Olimpia.'

I was on the point of saying that Olimpia was probably corruptible, but I thought it best not to sound that note. So I simply put it that this frail creature might perhaps be managed.

'Every one can be managed by my aunt,' said Miss Tina. And then she remembered that her holiday was over; she must go home.

I laid my hand on her arm, across the table, to stay her a moment. 'What I want of you is a general promise to help me.'

'Oh, how *can* I, how *can* I?' she asked, wondering and troubled. She was half-surprised, half-frightened at my attaching that importance to her, at my calling on her for action.

'This is the main thing: to watch our friend carefully and warn me in time, before she commits that dreadful sacrilege.'

'I can't watch her when she makes me go out.'

'That 's very true.'

'And when you do too.'

'Mercy on us—do you think she 'll have done anything to-night?'

'I don't know. She 's very cunning.'

'Are you trying to frighten me?' I asked.

I felt this question sufficiently answered when my companion murmured in a musing, almost envious way: 'Oh, but she loves them—she loves them!'

This reflection, repeated with such emphasis, gave me great comfort; but to obtain more of that balm

I said: 'If she shouldn't intend to destroy the objects we speak of before her death she 'll probably have made some disposition by will.'

'By will?'

'Hasn't she made a will for your benefit?'

'Ah, she has so little to leave That 's why she likes money,' said Miss Tina.

'Might I ask, since we 're really talking things over, what you and she live on?'

'On some money that comes from America, from a gentleman—I think a lawyer—in New York. He sends it every quarter. It isn't much!'

'And won't she have disposed of that?'

My companion hesitated—I saw she was blushing. 'I believe it 's mine,' she said; and the look and tone which accompanied these words betrayed so the absence of the habit of thinking of herself that I almost thought her charming. The next instant she added: 'But she had in an *avvocato* here once, ever so long ago. And some people came and signed something.'

'They were probably witnesses And you weren't asked to sign? Well then,' I argued, rapidly and hopefully, 'it 's because you 're the legatee. She must have left all her documents to you!'

'If she has it 's with very strict conditions,' Miss Tina responded, rising quickly, while the movement gave the words a small character of decision. They seemed to imply that the bequest would be accompanied with a proviso that the articles bequeathed should remain concealed from every inquisitive eye, and that I was very much mistaken if I thought her the person to depart from an injunction so absolute.

‘Oh, of course, you ’ll have to abide by the terms,’ I said; and she uttered nothing to mitigate the rigour of this conclusion. None the less, later on, just before we disembarked at her own door after a return which had taken place almost in silence, she said to me abruptly: ‘I ’ll do what I can to help you.’ I was grateful for this—it was very well so far as it went; but it didn’t keep me from remembering that night in a worried waking hour that I now had her word for it to re-enforce my own impression that the old woman was full of craft.

VII

THE fear of what this side of her character might have led her to do made me nervous for days afterwards. I waited for an intimation from Miss Tina; I almost read it as her duty to keep me informed, to let me know definitely whether or no Miss Bordereau had sacrificed her treasures. But as she gave no sign I lost patience and determined to put the case to the very touch of my own senses. I sent late one afternoon to ask if I might pay the ladies a visit, and my servant came back with surprising news. Miss Bordereau could be approached without the least difficulty; she had been moved out into the *sala* and was sitting by the window that overlooked the garden. I descended and found this picture correct; the old lady had been wheeled forth into the world and had a certain air, which came mainly perhaps from some brighter element in her dress, of being prepared again to have converse with it. It had not yet, however, begun to flock about her; she was perfectly alone and, though the door stood open, I had at first no glimpse of Miss Tina. The window at which she sat had the afternoon shade and, one of the shutters having been pushed back, she could see the pleasant garden, where the summer sun had by this time dried up too many of the plants—she could see the yellow light and the long shadows.

'Have you come to tell me you 'll take the rooms for six months more?' she asked as I approached her, startling me by something coarse in her cupidity almost as much as if she hadn't already given me a specimen of it. Juliana's desire to make our acquaintance lucrative had been, as I have sufficiently indicated, a false note in my image of the woman who had inspired a great poet with immortal lines; but I may say here definitely that I after all recognized large allowance to be made for her. It was I who had kindled the unholy flame; it was I who had put into her head that she had the means of making money. She appeared never to have thought of that; she had been living wastefully for years, in a house five times too big for her, on a footing that I could explain only by the presumption that, excessive as it was, the space she enjoyed cost her next to nothing and that, small as were her revenues, they left her, for Venice, an appreciable margin. I had descended on her one day and taught her to calculate, and my almost extravagant comedy on the subject of the garden had presented me irresistibly in the light of a victim. Like all persons who achieve the miracle of changing their point of view late in life, she had been intensely converted; she had seized my hint with a desperate, tremulous clutch.

I invited myself to go and get one of the chairs that stood, at a distance, against the wall—she had given herself no concern as to whether I should sit or stand; and while I placed it near her I began gaily: 'Oh, dear madam, what an imagination you have, what an intellectual sweep! I 'm a poor devil of a man of letters who lives from day to day. How can I take palaces by the year? My existence is precarious. I don't know whether six months hence I shall have bread to put in my mouth. I 've treated myself for once; it has been an immense luxury. But when it comes to going on——!'

'Are your rooms too dear? If they are you can have more for the same money,' Juliana responded. 'We can arrange, we can *combinare*, as they say here.'

'Well, yes, since you ask me, they 're too dear, much too dear,' I said. 'Evidently you suppose me richer than I am.'

She looked at me as from the mouth of her cave. 'If you write books don't you sell them?'

'Do you mean don't people buy them? A little, a very little—not so much as I could wish. Writing books, unless one be a great genius—and even then! —is the last road to fortune. I think there 's no more money to be made by good letters.'

'Perhaps you don't choose nice subjects. What do you write about?' Miss Bordereau implacably pursued.

'About the books of other people. I 'm a critic, a commentator, an historian, in a small way.' I wondered what she was coming to.

'And what other people now?'

'Oh, better ones than myself: the great writers mainly—the great philosophers and poets of the past; those who are dead and gone and can't, poor darlings, speak for themselves.'

'And what do you say about them?'

'I say they sometimes attached themselves to very clever women!' I replied as for pleasantness. I had measured, as I thought, my risk, but as my words fell upon the air they were to strike me as imprudent. However, I had launched them and I wasn't sorry, for perhaps after all the old woman would be willing to treat. It seemed tolerably obvious that she knew my secret; why, therefore, drag the process out? But she didn't take what I had said as a confession; she only asked:

'Do you think it 's right to rake up the past?'

'I don't feel that I know what you mean by raking it up. How can we get at it unless we dig a little? The present has such a rough way of treading it down.'

'Oh, I like the past, but I don't like critics,' my hostess declared with her hard complacency.

'Neither do I, but I like their discoveries.'

'Aren't they mostly lies?'

'The lies are what they sometimes discover,' I said, smiling at the quiet impertinence of this. 'They often lay bare the truth.'

'The truth is God's, it isn't man's; we had better leave it alone. Who can judge of it?—who can say?'

'We 're terribly in the dark, I know,' I admitted; 'but if we give up trying what becomes of all the fine things? What becomes of the work I just mentioned, that of the great philosophers and poets? It 's all vain words if there 's nothing to measure it by.'

'You talk as if you were a tailor,' said Miss Bordereau whimsically; and then she added quickly and in a different manner: 'This house is very fine; the proportions are magnificent. To-day I wanted to look at this part again. I made them bring me out here. When your man came just now to learn if I would see you I was on the point of sending for you to ask if you didn't mean to go on. I wanted to judge what I 'm letting you have. This *sala* is very grand,' she pursued like an auctioneer, moving a little, as I guessed, her invisible eyes. 'I don't believe you often have lived in such a house, eh?'

'I can't afford to!' I said.

'Well, then, how much will you give me for six months?'

I was on the point of exclaiming—and the air of excruciation in my face would have denoted a moral fact—'Don't, Juliana; for *his* sake, don't!' But I controlled myself and asked less passionately: 'Why should I remain so long as that?'

'I thought you liked it,' said Miss Bordereau, with her shrivelled dignity.

'So I thought I should.'

For a moment she said nothing more, and I left my own words to suggest to her what they might. I half expected her to say, coldly enough, that if I had been disappointed we needn't continue the discussion, and this in spite of the fact that I believed her now to have in her mind—however it had come there—what would have told her that my disappointment was natural. But to my extreme surprise she ended by observing: 'If you don't think we've treated you well enough perhaps we can discover some way of treating you better.' This speech was somehow so incongruous that it made me laugh again, and I excused myself by saying that she talked as if I were a sulky boy pouting in the corner and having to be 'brought round.' I hadn't a grain of complaint to make; and could anything have exceeded Miss Tina's graciousness in accompanying me a few nights before to the Piazza? At this the old woman went on: 'Well, you brought it on yourself!' And then in a different tone: 'She 's a very fine girl.' I assented cordially to this proposition, and she expressed the hope that I did so not merely to be obliging, but that I really liked her. Meanwhile I wondered still more what Miss Bordereau was coming to. 'Except for me, to-day,' she said, 'she hasn't a relation in the world.' Did she, by describing her niece as amiable and unencumbered, wish to represent her as a *parti*?

It was perfectly true that I couldn't afford to go on with my rooms at a fancy price and that I had already devoted to my undertaking almost all the hard cash I had set apart for it. My patience and my time were by no means exhausted, but I should be able to draw upon them only on a more usual Venetian basis. I was willing to pay the precious personage with whom my pecuniary dealings were such a discord twice as much as any other *padrona di casa* would have asked, but I wasn't willing to pay her twenty times as much. I told her so plainly, and my plainness appeared to have some success, for she exclaimed: 'Very good; you 've done what I asked you—you 've made an offer!'

'Yes, but not for half a year. Only by the month.'

'Oh, I must think of that, then.' She seemed disappointed that I wouldn't tie myself to a period, and I guessed that she wished both to secure me and to discourage me; to say severely: 'Do you dream that you can get off with less than six months? Do you dream that even by the end of that time you 'll be appreciably nearer your victory?' What was most in my mind was that she had a fancy to play me the trick of making me engage myself when in fact she had sacrificed her treasure. There was a moment when my suspense on the point was so acute that I all but broke out with the question, and what kept it back was but an instinctive recoil—lest it should be a mistake—from the last violence of self-exposure. She was such a subtle old witch that one could never tell where one stood with her. You may imagine whether it cleared up the puzzle when, just after she had said she would think of my proposal and without any formal transition, she drew out of her pocket with an embarrassed hand a small object wrapped in a crumpled white paper. She held it there a moment and then resumed: 'Do you know much about curiosities?'

'About curiosities?'

'About antiquities, the old gimcracks that people pay so much for to-day. Do you know the kind of price they bring?'

I thought I saw what was coming, but I said ingenuously: 'Do you want to buy something?'

'No, I want to sell. What would an amateur give me for that?' She unfolded the white paper and made a motion for me to take from her a small oval portrait. I possessed myself of it with fingers of which I could only hope that they didn't betray the intensity of their clutch, and she added: 'I would part with it only for a good price.'

At the first glance I recognized Jeffrey Aspern, and was well aware that I flushed with the act. As she was watching me, however, I had the consistency to exclaim: 'What a striking face! Do tell me who it is.'

'He 's an old friend of mine, a very distinguished man in his day. He gave it me himself, but I 'm afraid to mention his name, lest you never should have heard of him, critic and historian as you are. I know the world goes fast and one generation forgets another. He was all the fashion when I was young.'

She was perhaps amazed at my assurance, but I was surprised at hers; at her having the energy, in her state of health and at her time of life, to wish to sport with me to that tune simply for her private entertainment—the humour to test me and practise on me and befool me. This at least was the interpretation that I put upon her production of the relic, for I couldn't believe she really desired to sell it or cared for any information I might give her. What she wished was to dangle it before my eyes and put a prohibitive price on it. 'The face comes back to me, it torments me,' I said, turning the object this way and that and looking at it very critically. It was a careful but not a supreme work of art, larger than the ordinary miniature and representing a young man with a remarkably handsome face, in a high-collared green coat and a buff waistcoat. I felt in the little work a virtue of likeness and judged it to have been painted when the model was about twenty-five. There are, as all the world knows, three other portraits of the poet in existence, but none of so early a date as this elegant image. 'I 've never seen the original, clearly a man of a past age, but I 've seen other reproductions of this face,' I went on. 'You expressed doubt of this generation's having heard of the gentleman, but he strikes me for all the world as a celebrity. Now who is he? I can't put my finger on him—I can't give him a label. Wasn't he a writer? Surely, he 's a poet.' I was determined that it should be she, not I, who should first pronounce Jeffrey Aspern's name.

My resolution was taken in ignorance of Miss Bordereau's extremely resolute character, and her lips never formed in my hearing the syllables that meant so much for her. She neglected to answer my question, but raised her hand to take back the picture, using a gesture which though impotent was in a high degree peremptory. 'It 's only a person who should know for himself that would give me my price,' she said with a certain dryness.

'Oh, then you have a price? I didn't restore the charming thing; not from any vindictive purpose, but because I instinctively clung to it. We looked at each other hard while I retained it.

'I know the least I would take. What it occurred to me to ask you about is the most I shall be able to get.'

She made a movement, drawing herself together as if, in a spasm of dread at having lost her prize, she had been impelled to the immense effort of rising to snatch it from me. I instantly placed it in her hand again, saying as I did so: 'I should like to have it myself, but with your ideas it would be quite beyond my mark.'

She turned the small oval plate over in her lap, with its face down, and I heard her catch her breath as after a strain or an escape. This, however, did not prevent her saying in a moment: 'You 'd buy a likeness of a person you don't know by an artist who has no reputation?'

'The artist may have no reputation, but that thing 's wonderfully well painted,' I replied, to give myself a reason.

'It 's lucky you thought of saying that, because the painter was my father.'

'That makes the picture indeed precious!' I returned with gaiety; and I may add that a part of my cheer came from this proof I had been right in my theory of Miss Bordereau's origin. Aspern had, of course, met the young lady on his going to her father's studio as a sitter. I observed to Miss Bordereau that if she would entrust me with her property for twenty-four hours I should be happy to take advice on it; but she made no other reply than to slip it in silence into her pocket. This convinced me still more that she had no sincere intention of selling it during her lifetime, though she may have desired to satisfy herself as to the sum her niece, should she leave it to her, might expect eventually to obtain for it. 'Well, at any rate, I hope you won't offer it without giving me notice,' I said as she remained irresponsive. 'Remember me as a possible purchaser.'

'I should want your money first!' she returned with unexpected rudeness; and then, as if she bethought herself that I might well complain of such a tone and wished to turn the matter off, asked abruptly what I talked about with her niece when I went out with her that way of an evening.

'You speak as if we had set up the habit,' I replied. 'Certainly I should be very glad if it were to become our pleasant custom. But in that case I should feel a still greater scruple at betraying a lady's confidence.'

'Her confidence? Has my niece confidence?'

'Here she is—she can tell you herself,' I said; for Miss Tina now appeared on the threshold of the old woman's parlour. 'Have you confidence, Miss Tina? Your aunt wants very much to know.'

'Not in her, not in her!' the younger lady declared, shaking her head with a dolefulness that was neither jocular nor affected. 'I don't know what to do with her; she has fits of horrid imprudence. She 's so easily tired—and yet she has begun to roam, to drag herself about the house.' And she looked down at her yoke-fellow of long years with a vacancy of wonder, as if all their contact and custom hadn't made her perversities, on occasion, any more easy to follow.

'I know what I 'm about. I 'm not losing my mind. I dare say you 'd like to think so,' said Miss Bordereau with a crudity of cynicism.

'I don't suppose you came out here yourself. Miss Tina must have had to lend you a hand,' I interposed for conciliation.

'Oh, she insisted we should push her; and when she insists!' said Miss Tina, in the same tone of apprehension; as if there were no knowing what service she disapproved of her aunt might force her next to render.

'I 've always got most things done I wanted, thank God! The people I 've lived with have humoured me,' the old woman continued, speaking out of the white ashes of her vanity.

I took it pleasantly up. 'I suppose you mean they 've obeyed you.'

'Well, whatever it is—when they like one.'

'It 's just because I like you that I want to resist,' said Miss Tina with a nervous laugh.

'Oh, I expect you 'll bring Miss Bordereau upstairs next to pay me a visit,' I went on; to which the old lady replied:

'Oh, no; I can keep an eye on you from here!'

'You 're very tired; you 'll certainly be ill to-night!' cried Miss Tina.

'Nonsense, dear; I feel better at this moment than I 've done for a month. To-morrow I shall come out again. I want to be where I can see this clever gentleman.'

'Shouldn't you perhaps see me better in your sitting-room?' I asked.

'Don't you mean shouldn't you have a better chance at *me*?' she returned, fixing me a moment with her green shade.

'Ah, I haven't that anywhere! I look at you but don't see you.'

'You agitate her dreadfully—and that 's not good,' said Miss Tina, giving me a reproachful, deterrent headshake.

'I want to watch you—I want to watch you!' Miss Bordereau went on.

'Well, then, let us spend as much of our time together as possible—I don't care where. That will give you every facility.'

'Oh, I 've seen you enough for to-day. I 'm satisfied. Now I 'll go home,' Juliana said. Miss Tina laid her hands on the back of the wheeled-chair and began to push, but I begged her to let me take her place. 'Oh, yes, you may move me this way—you shan't in any other!' the old woman cried as she felt herself propelled firmly and easily over the smooth, hard floor. Before we reached the door of her own apartment she bade me stop, and she took a long last look up and down the noble *sala*. 'Oh, it 's a prodigious house!' she murmured; after which I pushed her forward. When we had entered the parlour Miss Tina let me know she should now be able to manage, and at the same moment the little red-haired *donna* came to meet her mistress. Miss Tina's idea was evidently to get her aunt immediately back to bed. I confess that in spite of this urgency I was guilty of the indiscretion of lingering; it held me there to feel myself so close to the objects I coveted—which would be probably put away somewhere in the faded unsociable room. The place had indeed a bareness that suggested no hidden values; there were neither dusky nooks nor curtained corners, neither massive cabinets nor chests with iron bands. Moreover it was possible, it was perhaps even likely, that the old lady had consigned her relics to her bedroom, to some battered box that was shoved under the bed, to the drawer of some lame dressing-table, where they would be in the range of vision by the dim night-lamp. None the less I turned an eye on every article of furniture, on every conceivable cover for a hoard, and noticed that there were half a dozen things with drawers, and in particular a tall old secretary with brass ornaments of the style of the Empire—a receptacle somewhat infirm but still capable of keeping rare secrets. I don't know why this article so engaged me, small purpose as I had of breaking into it; but I stared at it so hard that Miss Tina noticed me and changed colour. Her doing this made me think I was right and that, wherever they might have been before, the Aspern papers at that moment languished behind the peevish little lock of the secretary. It was hard to turn my attention from the dull mahogany front when I reflected that a plain panel divided me from the goal of my hopes; but I gathered up my slightly scattered prudence and with an effort took leave of my hostess. To make the effort graceful I said to her that I should certainly bring her an opinion about the little picture.

'The little picture?' Miss Tina asked in surprise.

'What do *you* know about it, my dear?' the old woman demanded. 'You needn't mind. I 've fixed my price.'

'And what may that be?'

'A thousand pounds.'

'Oh, Lord!' cried poor Miss Tina irrepressibly.

'Is that what she talks to you about?' said Miss Bordereau.

'Imagine your aunt's wanting to know!' I had to separate from my younger friend with only those words, though I should have liked immensely to add: 'For heaven's sake meet me to-night in the garden!'

VIII

As it turned out, the precaution had not been needed, for three hours later, just as I had finished my dinner, Miss Tina appeared, unannounced, in the open doorway of the room in which my simple repasts were served. I remember well that I felt no surprise at seeing her; which is not a proof of my not believing in her timidity. It was immense, but in a case in which there was a particular reason for boldness it never would have prevented her from running up to my floor. I saw that she was now quite full of a particular reason; it threw her forward—made her seize me, as I rose to meet her, by the arm.

'My aunt 's very ill; I think she 's dying!'

'Never in the world,' I answered bitterly. 'Don't you be afraid!'

'Do go for a doctor—do, do! Olimpia' s gone for the one we always have, but she doesn't come back; I don't know what has happened to her. I told her that if he wasn't at home she was to follow him where he had gone; but apparently she 's following him all over Venice. I don't know what to do—she looks as if she were sinking.'

'May I see her, may I judge?' I asked. 'Of course I shall be delighted to bring someone; but hadn't we better send my man instead, so that I may stay with you?'

Miss Tina assented to this and I dispatched my servant for the best doctor in the neighbourhood. I hurried downstairs with her, and on the way she told me than an hour after I quitted them in the afternoon Miss Bordereau had had an attack of 'oppression,' a terrible difficulty in breathing. This had subsided, but had left her so exhausted that she didn't come up: she seemed all spent and gone. I repeated that she wasn't gone, that she wouldn't go yet; whereupon Miss Tina gave me a sharper sidelong glance than she had ever favoured me withal and said: 'Really, what do you mean? I suppose you don't accuse her of making-believe!' I forget what reply I made to this, but I fear that in my heart I thought the old woman capable of any weird manœuvre. Miss Tina wanted to know what I had done to her; her aunt had told her I had made her so angry. I declared I had done nothing whatever—I had been exceedingly careful; to which my companion rejoined that our friend had assured her she had had a scene with me—a scene that had upset her. I answered with some resentment that the scene had been of *her* making—that I couldn't think what she was angry with me for unless for not seeing my way to give a thousand pounds for the portrait of Jeffrey Aspern. 'And did she show you that? Oh, gracious—oh, deary me!' groaned Miss Tina, who seemed to feel the situation pass out of her control and the elements of her fate thicken round her. I answered her I'd give anything to possess it, yet that I had no thousand pounds; but I stopped when we came to the door of Miss Bordereau's room. I had an immense curiosity to pass it, but I thought it my duty to represent to Miss

Tina that if I made the invalid angry she ought perhaps to be spared the sight of me. 'The sight of you? Do you think she can *see*?' my companion demanded, almost with indignation. I did think so but forbore to say it, and I softly followed my conductress.

I remember that what I said to her as I stood for a moment beside the old woman's bed was: 'Does she never show you her eyes, then? Have you never seen them?' Miss Bordereau had been divested of her green shade, but—it was not my fortune to behold Juliana in her nightcap—the upper half of her face was covered by the fall of a piece of dingy lacelike muslin, a sort of extemporized hood which, wound round her head, descended to the end of her nose, leaving nothing visible but her white, withered cheeks and puckered mouth, closed tightly and, as it were, consciously. Miss Tina gave me a glance of surprise, evidently not seeing a reason for my impatience. 'You mean she always wears something? She does it to preserve them.'

'Because they 're so fine?'

'Oh, to-day, to-day!' And Miss Tina shook her head, speaking very low. 'But they used to be magnificent!'

'Yes, indeed—we 've Aspern's word for that.' And as I looked again at the old woman's wrappings I could imagine her not having wished to allow any supposition that the great poet had overdone it. But I didn't waste my time in considering Juliana, in whom the appearance of respiration was so slight as to suggest that no human attention could ever help her more. I turned my eyes once more all over the room, rummaging with them the closets, the chests of drawers, the tables. Miss Tina at once noted their direction and read, I think, what was in them; but she didn't answer it, turning away restlessly, anxiously, so that I felt rebuked, with reason, for an appetite wellnigh indecent in the presence of our dying companion. All the same, I took another view, endeavouring to pick out mentally the receptacle to try first, for a person who should wish to put his hand on Miss Bordereau's papers directly after her death. The place was a dire confusion; it looked like the dressing-room of an old actress. There were clothes hanging over chairs, odd-looking shabby bundles here and there, and various paste-board boxes piled together battered, bulging, and discoloured, which might have been fifty years old. Miss Tina after a moment noticed the direction of my eyes again, and, as if she guessed how I judged such appearances—forgetting I had no business to judge them at all—said, perhaps to defend herself from the imputation of complicity in the disorder:

'She likes it this way; we can't move things. There are old bandboxes she has had most of her life.' Then she added, half-taking pity on my real thought: 'Those things were *there.*' And she pointed to a small, low trunk which stood under a sofa that just allowed room for it. It struck me as a queer, superannuated coffer, of painted wood, with elaborate handles and shrivelled straps and with the colour—it had last been endued with a coat of light green—much rubbed off. It evidently had travelled with Juliana in the olden time—in the days of her adventures, which it had shared. It would have made a strange figure arriving at a modern hotel.

'*Were* there—they aren't now?' I asked, startled by Miss Tina's implication.

She was going to answer, but at that moment the doctor came in—the doctor whom the little maid had been sent to fetch and whom she had at last overtaken. My servant, going on his own errand, had met her with her companion in tow, and in the sociable Venetian spirit, retracing his steps with them, had also come up to the threshold of the *padrona's* room, where I saw him peep over the doctor's shoulder. I motioned him away the more instantly that the sight of his prying face reminded me how little I myself had to do there—an admonition confirmed by the sharp way the little doctor eyed me, his air of taking me for a rival who had the field before him. He was a short, fat, brisk gentleman who wore the tall hat of his profession and seemed to look at everything but his patient. He kept me still in range, as if it struck him I too should be better for a dose, so that I bowed to him and left him with the women, going down to smoke a cigar in the garden. I was nervous; I couldn't go further; I couldn't leave the place. I don't know exactly what I thought might happen, but I felt it important to be there. I wandered about the alleys—the warm night had come on—smoking cigar after cigar and studying the light in Miss Bordereau's windows. They were open now, I could see; the situation was different. Sometimes the light moved, but not quickly; it didn't suggest the hurry of a crisis. Was the old woman dying or was she already dead? Had the doctor said that there was nothing to be done at her tremendous age but to let her quietly pass away? or had he simply announced with a look a little more conventional that the end of the end had come? Were the other two women just going and coming over the offices that follow in such a case? It made me uneasy not to be nearer, as if I thought the doctor himself might carry away the papers with him. I bit my cigar hard while it assailed me again that perhaps there were now no papers to carry!

I wandered about an hour and more. I looked out for Miss Tina at one of the windows, having a vague idea that she might come there to give me some sign. Wouldn't she see the red tip of my cigar in the dark and feel sure I was hanging on to know what the doctor had said? I 'm afraid it 's a proof of the grossness of my anxieties that I should have taken in some degree for granted at such an hour, in the midst of the greatest change that could fall on her, poor Miss Tina's having also a free mind for them. My servant came down and spoke to me; he knew nothing save that the doctor had gone after a visit of half an hour. If he had stayed half an hour then Miss Bordereau was still alive: it couldn't have taken so long to attest her decease. I sent the man out of the house; there were moments when the sense of his curiosity annoyed me, and this was one of them. *He* had been watching my cigar-tip from an upper window, if Miss Tina hadn't; he couldn't know what I was after and I couldn't tell him, though I suspected in him fantastic private theories about me which he thought fine and which, had I more exactly known them, I should have thought offensive.

I went upstairs at last, but I mounted no higher than the *sala*. The door of Miss Bordereau's apartment was open, showing from the parlour the dimness of a poor candle. I went towards it with a light tread, and at the same moment Miss Tina appeared and stood looking at me as I approached. 'She 's better, she 's better,' she said even before I had asked. 'The doctor has given her something; she woke up, came back to life while he was there. He says there 's no immediate danger.'

'No immediate danger? Surely he thinks her condition serious!'

'Yes, because she had been excited. That affects her dreadfully.'

'It will do so again then, because she works herself up. She did so this afternoon.'

'Yes, she mustn't come out any more,' said Miss Tina with one of her lapses into a deeper detachment.

'What 's the use of making such a remark as that,' I permitted myself to ask, 'if you begin to rattle her about again the first time she bids you?'

'I won't—I won't do it any more.'

'You must learn to resist her,' I went on.

'Oh, yes, I shall; I shall do so better if you tell me it 's right.'

'You mustn't do it for me—you must do it for yourself. It all comes back to you, if you 're scared and upset.'

'Well, I 'm not upset now,' said Miss Tina placidly enough. 'She 's very quiet.'

'Is she conscious again—does she speak?'

'No, she doesn't speak, but she takes my hand. She holds it fast.'

'Yes,' I returned, 'I can see what force she still has by the way she grabbed that picture this afternoon. But if she holds you fast how comes it that you 're here?'

Miss Tina waited a little; though her face was in deep shadow—she had her back to the light in the parlour and I had put down my own candle far off, near the door of the *sala*—I thought I saw her smile ingenuously. 'I came on purpose—I had heard your step.'

'Why, I came on tiptoe, as soundlessly as possible.'

'Well, I had heard you,' said Miss Tina.

'And is your aunt alone now?'

'Oh, no—Olimpia sits there.'

On my side I debated. 'Shall we then pass in there?' And I nodded at the parlour; I wanted more and more to be on the spot.

'We can't talk there—she 'll hear us.'

I was on the point of replying that in that case we 'd sit silent, but I felt too much this wouldn't do, there was something I desired so immensely to ask her. Thus I hinted we might walk a little in the *sala*, keeping more at the other end, where we shouldn't disturb our friend. Miss Tina assented unconditionally; the doctor was coming again, she said, and she would be there to meet him at the door. We strolled through the fine superfluous hall, where on the marble floor—particularly as at first we said nothing—our footsteps were more audible than I had expected. When we reached the other end—the wide window, inveterately closed, connecting with the balcony that overhung the canal—I submitted that we had best remain there, as she would see the doctor arrive the sooner. I opened the window and we passed out on the balcony. The air of the canal seemed even heavier, hotter than that of the *sala*.

The place was hushed and void; the quiet neighbourhood had gone to sleep. A lamp here and there, over the narrow black water glimmered in double; the voice of a man going homeward singing, his jacket on his shoulder and his hat on his ear, came to us from a distance. This didn't prevent the scene from being very *comme il faut*, as Miss Bordereau had called it the first time I saw her Presently a gondola passed along the canal with its slow, rhythmical splash, and as we listened we watched it in silence. It didn't stop, it didn't carry the doctor; and after it had gone on I said to Miss Tina:

'And where are they now—the things that were in the trunk?'

'In the trunk?'

'That green box you pointed out to me in her room. You said her papers had been there; you seemed to mean she had transferred them.'

'Oh, yes; they 're not in the trunk,' said Miss Tina.

'May I ask if you 've looked?'

'Yes, I 've looked—for you.'

'How for me, dear Miss Tina? Do you mean you 'd have given them to me if you had found them?'—and I fairly trembled with the question.

She delayed to reply and I waited. Suddenly she broke out: 'I don't know what I 'd do—what I wouldn't!'

'Would you look again—somewhere else?'

She had spoken with a strange, unexpected emotion, and she went on in the same tone: 'I can't—I can't—while she lies there. It isn't decent.'

'No, it isn't decent,' I replied gravely. 'Let the poor lady rest in peace.' And the words on my lips were not hypocritical, for I felt reprimanded and shamed.

Miss Tina added in a moment, as if she had guessed this and were sorry for me, but at the same time wished to explain that I did push her, or at least harp on the chord, too much: 'I can't deceive her that way. I can't deceive her—perhaps on her death-bed.'

'Heaven forbid I should ask you, though I 've been guilty myself!'

'You 've been guilty?'

'I 've sailed under false colours.' I felt now I must make a clean breast of it, must tell her I had given her an invented name on account of my fear her aunt would have heard of me and so refuse to take me in I explained this as well as that I had really been a party to the letter addressed them by John Cumnor months before.

She listened with great attention, almost in fact gaping for wonder, and when I had made my confession she said: 'Then your real name—what is it?' She repeated it over twice when I had told her, accompanying it with the exclamation: 'Gracious, gracious!' Then she added: 'I like your own best.'

'So do I'—and I felt my laugh rueful. 'Ouf! it 's a relief to get rid of the other.'

'So it was a regular plot—a kind of conspiracy?'

'Oh, a conspiracy—we were only two,' I replied, leaving out, of course, Mrs. Prest.

She considered; I thought she was perhaps going to pronounce us very base. But this was not her way, and she remarked after a moment, as in candid, impartial contemplation: 'How much you must want them!'

'Oh, I do, passionately!' I grinned, I fear to admit. And this chance made me go on, forgetting my compunction of a moment before. 'How can she possibly have changed their place herself? How can she walk? How can she arrive at that sort of muscular exertion? How can she lift and carry things?'

'Oh, when one wants and when one has so much will!' said Miss Tina as if she had thought over my question already herself and had simply had no choice but that answer—the idea that in the dead of night, or at some moment when the coast was clear, the old woman had been capable of a miraculous effort.

'Have you questioned Olimpia? Hasn't she helped her—hasn't she done it for her?' I asked; to which my friend replied promptly and positively that their servant had had nothing to do with the matter, though without admitting definitely that she had spoken to her. It was as if she were a little shy, a little ashamed now, of letting me see how much she had entered into my uneasiness and had me on her mind. Suddenly she said to me without any immediate relevance:

'I rather feel you a new person, you know, now that you 've a new name.'

'It isn't a new one; it 's a very good old one, thank fortune!'

She looked at me a moment. 'Well, I do like it better.'

'Oh, if you didn't I would almost go on with the other!'

'Would you really?'

I laughed again, but I returned for all answer:

'Of course if she can rummage about that way she can perfectly have burnt them.'

'You must wait — you must wait,' Miss Tina mournfully moralized; and her tone ministered little to my patience, for it seemed, after all, to accept that wretched possibility. I would teach myself to wait, I declared nevertheless; because in the first place I couldn't do otherwise, and in the second I had her promise, given me the other night, that she would help me.'

'Of course if the papers are gone that 's no use,' she said; not as if she wished to recede, but only to be conscientious.

'Naturally. But if you could only find out!' I groaned, quivering again.

'I thought you promised you 'd wait.'

'Oh, you mean wait even for that?'

'For what, then?'

'Ah, nothing,' I answered rather foolishly, being ashamed to tell her what had been implied in my acceptance of delay—the idea that she would perhaps do more for me than merely find out.

I know not if she guessed this; at all events she seemed to bethink herself of some propriety of showing me more rigour. 'I didn't promise to deceive, did I? I don't think I did.'

'It doesn't much matter whether you did or not, for you couldn't!'

Nothing is more possible than that she wouldn't have contested this even hadn't she been diverted by our seeing the doctor's gondola shoot into the little canal and approach the house. I noted that he came as fast as if he believed our proprietress still in danger. We looked down at him while he disembarked and then went back into the *sala* to meet him. When he came up, however, I naturally left Miss Tina to go off with him alone, only asking her leave to come back later for news.

I went out of the house and walked far, as far as the Piazza, where my restlessness declined to quit me. I was unable to sit down; it was very late now though there were people still at the little table in front of the cafés: I could but uneasily revolve, and I did so half a dozen times. The only comfort, none the less, was in my having told Miss Tina who I really was. At last I took my way home again, getting gradually and all but inextricably lost, as I did whenever I went out in Venice: so that it was considerably past midnight when I reached my door. The *sala* upstairs was as dark as usual, and my lamp as I crossed it found nothing satisfactory to show me. I was disappointed, for I had notified Miss Tina that I would come back for a report, and I thought she might have left a light there as a sign. The door of the ladies' apartment was closed; which seemed a hint that my faltering friend had gone to bed in impatience of waiting for me. I stood in the middle of the place, considering, hoping she would hear me and perhaps peep out, saying to myself too that she would never go to bed with her aunt in a state so critical; she would sit up and watch—she would be in a chair, in her dressing-gown. I went nearer the door; I stopped there and listened. I heard nothing at all, and at last I tapped gently. No answer came, and after another minute I turned the handle. There was no light in the room; this ought to have prevented my entrance, but it had no such effect. If I have frankly stated the importunities, the indelicacies, of which my desire to possess myself of Jeffrey Aspern's papers had made me capable I needn't shrink, it seems to me, from confessing this last indiscretion. I regard it as the worst thing I did, yet there were extenuating circumstances. I was deeply though doubtless not disinterestedly anxious for more news of Juliana, and Miss Tina had accepted from me, as it were, a rendezvous which it might have been a point of honour with me to keep. It may be objected that her leaving the place dark was a positive sign that she released me, and to this I can only reply that I wished not to be released.

The door of Miss Bordereau's room was open and I could see beyond it the faintness of a taper. There was no sound—my footstep caused no one to stir. I came further into the room; I lingered there, lamp in hand. I wanted to give Miss Tina a chance to come to me if, as I couldn't doubt, she were still with her aunt. I made no noise to call her; I only waited to see if she wouldn't notice my light. She didn't, and I explained this—I found afterwards I was right—by the idea that she had fallen asleep. If she had fallen asleep her aunt was not on her mind, and my explanation ought to have led me to go out as I had come. I must repeat again that it didn't, for I found myself at the same moment given up to something else. I had no definite purpose, no bad intention, but felt myself held to the spot by an acute, though absurd, sense of opportunity. Opportunity for what I couldn't have said, inasmuch as it wasn't in my mind that I might proceed to thievery. Even had this tempted me I was confronted with the evident fact that Miss

Bordereau didn't leave her secretary, her cupboard, and the drawers of her table gaping. I had no keys, no tools, and no ambition to smash her furniture. None the less it came to me that I was now, perhaps alone, unmolested, at the hour of freedom and safety, nearer to the source of my hopes than I had ever been. I held up my lamp, let the light play on the different objects as if it could tell me something. Still there came no movement from the other room. If Miss Tina was sleeping she was sleeping sound. Was she doing so—generous creature—on purpose to leave me the field? Did she know I was there and was she just keeping quiet to see what I would do—what I *could* do? Yet might I, when it came to that? She herself knew even better than I how little.

I stopped in front of the secretary, gaping at it vainly and no doubt grotesquely; for what had it to say to me after all? In the first place it was locked, and in the second it almost surely contained nothing in which I was interested. Ten to one the papers had been destroyed, and even if they hadn't the keen old woman wouldn't have put them in such a place as that after removing them from the green trunk—wouldn't have transferred them, with the idea of their safety on her brain, from the better hiding-place to the worse. The secretary was more conspicuous, more exposed in a room in which she could no longer mount guard. It opened with a key, but there was a small brass handle, like a button as well; I saw this as I played my lamp over it. I did something more for the climax of my crisis; I caught a glimpse of the possibility that Miss Tina wished me really to understand. If she didn't so wish me, if she wished me to keep away, why hadn't she locked the door of communication between the sitting-room and the *sala*? That would have been a definite sign that I was to leave them alone. If I didn't leave them alone she meant me to come for a purpose—a purpose now represented by the super-subtle inference that to oblige me she had unlocked the secretary. She hadn't left the key, but the lid would probably move if I touched the button. This possibility pressed me hard and I bent very close to judge. I didn't propose to do anything, not even—not in the least—to let down the lid; I only wanted to test my theory, to see if the cover *would* move. I touched the button with my hand—a mere touch would tell me; and as I did so—it is embarrassing for me to relate it—I looked over my shoulder. It was a chance, an instinct, for I had really heard nothing. I almost let my luminary drop and certainly I stepped back, straightening myself up at what I saw. Juliana stood there in her night-dress, by the doorway of her room, watching me; her hands were raised, she had lifted the everlasting curtain that covered half her face, and for the first, the last, the only time I beheld her extraordinary eyes. They glared at me; they were like the sudden drench, for a caught burglar, of a flood of gaslight; they made me horribly ashamed. I never shall forgot her strange little bent, white, tottering figure, with its lifted head, her attitude, her expression; neither shall I forget the tone in which as I turned, looking at her, she hissed out passionately, furiously:

'Ah, you publishing scoundrel!'

I can't now say what I stammered to excuse myself, to explain; but I went toward her to tell her I meant no harm. She waved me off with her old hands, retreating before me in horror; and the next thing I knew she had fallen back with a quick spasm, as if death had descended on her, into Miss Tina's arms.

IX

I LEFT Venice the next morning, directly on learning that my hostess had not succumbed, as I feared at the moment, to the shock I had given her—the shock I may also say she had given me. How in the world could I have supposed her capable of getting out of bed by herself? I failed to see Miss Tina before going; I only saw the *donna*, whom I entrusted with a note for her younger mistress. In this note I mentioned that I should be absent but a few days. I went to Treviso, to Bassano, to Castelfranco; I took walks and drives and looked at musty old churches with ill-lighted pictures; I spent hours seated smoking at the doors of cafés, where there were flies and yellow curtains, on the shady side of sleepy little squares. In spite of these pastimes, which were mechanical and perfunctory, I scantily enjoyed my travels: I had had to gulp down a bitter draught and couldn't get rid of the taste. It had been devilish awkward, as the young men say, to be found by Juliana in the dead of night examining the attachment of her bureau; and it had not been less so to have to believe for a good many hours after that it was highly probable I had killed her. My humiliation galled me, but I had to make the best of it, had, in writing to Miss Tina, to minimize it, as well as account for the posture in which I had been discovered. As she gave me no word of answer

I couldn't know what impression I made on her. It rankled for me that I had been called a publishing scoundrel, since certainly I did publish and no less certainly hadn't been very delicate. There was a moment when I stood convinced that the only way to purge my dishonour was to take myself straight away on the instant; to sacrifice my hopes and relieve the two poor women for ever of the oppression of my intercourse. Then I reflected that I had better try a short absence first, for I must already have had a sense (unexpressed and dim) that in disappearing completely it wouldn't be merely my own hopes I should condemn to extinction. It would perhaps answer if I kept dark long enough to give the elder lady time to believe herself rid of me. That she would wish to be rid of me after this—if I wasn't rid of her—was now not to be doubted; that midnight monstrosity would have cured her of the disposition to put up with my company for the sake of my dollars. I said to myself that after all I couldn't abandon Miss Tina, and I continued to say this even while I noted that she quite ignored my earnest request—I had given her two or three addresses, at little towns, *poste restante*—for some sign of her actual state. I would have made my servant write me news but that he was unable to manage a pen. Couldn't I measure the scorn of Miss Tina's silence—little disdainful as she had ever been? Really the soreness pressed; yet if I had scruples about going back I had others about not doing so, and I wanted to put myself on a better footing. The end of it was that I did return to Venice on the twelfth day; and as my gondola gently bumped against the place steps a fine palpitation of suspense showed me the violence my absence had done me.

I had faced about so abruptly that I hadn't even telegraphed to my servant. He was therefore not at the station to meet me, but he poked out his head from an upper window when I reached the house. 'They have put her into earth, *quella vecchia*,' he said to me in the lower hall while he shouldered my valise; and he grinned and almost winked as if he knew I should be pleased with his news.

'She 's dead!' I cried, giving a very different look.

'So it appears, since they 've buried her.'

'It 's all over then? When was the funeral?'

'The other yesterday. But a funeral you could scarcely call it, signore: *roba da niente—un piccolo passeggio brutto* of two gondolas. *Poveretta!*' the man continued, referring apparently to Miss Tina. His conception of funerals was that they were mainly to amuse the living.

I wanted to know about Miss Tina, how she might be and generally where; but I asked him no more questions till we had got upstairs. Now that the fact had met me I took a bad view of it, especially of the idea that poor Miss Tina had had to manage by herself after the end. What did she know about such arrangements, about the steps to take in such a case? *Poveretta* indeed! I could only hope the doctor had given her support and that she hadn't been neglected by the old friends of whom she had told me, the little band of the faithful whose fidelity consisted in coming to the house once a year. I elicited from my servant that two old ladies and an old gentleman had in fact rallied round Miss Tina and had supported her—they had come for her in a gondola of their own—during the journey to the cemetery, the little red-walled island of tombs which lies to the north of the town and on the way to Murano. It appeared from these signs that the Misses Bordereau were Catholics a discovery I had never made, as the old woman couldn't go to church and her niece, so far as I perceived, either didn't, or went only to early mass in the parish before I was stirring. Certainly even the priests respected their seclusion; I had never caught the whisk of the *curato's* skirt. That evening, an hour later, I sent my servant down with five words on a card to ask if Miss Tina would see me for a few moments. She was not in the house; where he had sought her, he told me when he came back, but in the garden walking about to refresh herself and picking the flowers quite as if they belonged to her. He had found her there and she would be happy to see me.

I went down and passed half an hour with poor Miss Tina. She had always had a look of musty mourning, as if she were wearing out old robes of sorrow that wouldn't come to an end; and in this particular she made no different show. But she clearly had been crying, crying a great deal—simply, satisfyingly, refreshingly, with a primitive, retarded sense of solitude and violence. But she had none of the airs or graces of grief, and I was almost surprised to see her stand there in the first dusk with her hands full of admirable roses and smile at me with reddened eyes. Her white face, in the frame of her mantilla, looked longer, leaner than usual. I hadn't doubted her being irreconcilably disgusted with me, her considering I ought to have been on the spot to advise her, to help her; and, though I believed there was no rancour in her composition and no great conviction of the importance of her affairs, I had prepared myself for a change in her manner, for some air of injury and estrangement, which should say to my conscience: 'Well, you 're a nice person to have professed things!' But historic truth compels me to declare that this poor lady's dull face ceased to be dull, almost ceased to be plain, as she turned it gladly to her late aunt's lodger. That touched him extremely and he thought it simplified his situation until he found it didn't. I was as kind to her that evening as I knew how to be, and I walked about the garden with her as long as seemed good. There was no explanation of any sort between us; I didn't ask her why she hadn't answered my letter. Still less did I repeat what I had said to her in that communication; if she chose to let me suppose she had forgotten the position in which Miss Bordereau had surprised me and the effect of the discovery on the old woman, I was quite willing to take it that way: I was grateful to her for not treating me as if I had killed her aunt.

We strolled and strolled, though really not much passed between us save the recognition of her bereavement, conveyed in my manner and in the expression she had of depending on me now, since I let her see I still took an interest in her. Miss Tina's was no breast for the pride or the pretence of independence; she didn't in the least suggest that she knew at present what would become of her. I forbore to press on that question, however, for I certainly was not prepared to say that I would take charge of her. I was cautious; not ignobly, I think, for

I felt her knowledge of life to be so small that in her unsophisticated vision there would be no reason why—since I seemed to pity her –I shouldn't somehow look after her. She told me how her aunt had died, very peacefully at the last, and how everything had been done afterwards by the care of her good friends—fortunately, thanks to me, she said, smiling, there was money in the house. She repeated that when once the 'nice' Italians like you they are your friends for life, and when we had gone into this she asked me about my *giro*, my impressions, my adventures, the places I had seen. I told her what I could, making it up partly, I 'm afraid, as in my disconcerted state I had taken little in; and after she had heard me she exclaimed, quite as if she had forgotten her aunt and her sorrow: 'Dear, dear, how much I should like to do such things—to take an amusing little journey!' It came over me for the moment that I ought to propose some enterprise, say I would accompany her anywhere she liked; and I remarked at any rate that a pleasant excursion—to give her a change—might be managed: we would think of it, talk it over. I spoke never a word of the Aspern documents, asked no questions as to what she had ascertained or what had otherwise happened with regard to them before Juliana's death. It wasn't that I wasn't on pins and needles to know, but that I thought it more decent not to show greed again so soon after the catastrophe. I hoped she herself would say something, but she never glanced that way, and I thought this natural at the time. Later on, however, that night, it occurred to me that her silence was matter for suspicion; since if she had talked of my movements, of anything so detached as the Giorgione at Castelfranco, she might have alluded to what she could easily remember was in my mind. It was not to be supposed that the emotion produced by her aunt's death had blotted out the recollection that I was interested in that lady's relics, and I fidgeted afterwards as it came to me that her reticence might very possibly just mean that no relics survived. We separated in the garden—it was she who said she must go in; now that she was alone on the *piano nobile* I felt that (judged at any rate by Venetian ideas) I was on rather a different footing in regard to the invasion of it. As I shook hands with her for good night I asked her if she had some general plan, had thought over what she had best do. 'Oh yes, oh yes, but I haven't settled anything yet,' she replied quite cheerfully. Was her cheerfulness explained by the impression that I would settle for her?

I was glad the next morning that we had neglected practical questions, as this gave me a pretext for seeing her again immediately. There was a practical enough question now to be touched on. I owed it to her to let her know formally that of course I didn't expect her to keep me on as a lodger, as also to show some interest in her own tenure, what she might have on her hands in the way of a lease. But I was not destined, as befell, to converse with her for more than an instant on either of these points. I sent her no message; I simply went down to the *sala* and walked to and fro there. I knew she would come out; she would promptly see me accessible. Somehow I preferred not to be shut up with her; gardens and big halls seemed better places to talk. It was a splendid morning, with something in the air that told of the waning of the long Venetian summer; a freshness from the sea that stirred the flowers in the garden and made a pleasant draught in the house, less shuttered and darkened now than when the old woman was alive. It was the beginning of autumn, of the end of the golden months. With this it was the end of my experiment—or would be in the course of half an hour, when I should really have learned that my dream had been reduced to ashes. After that there would be nothing left for me but to go to the station; for seriously—and as it struck me in the morning light—I couldn't linger there to act as guardian to a piece of middle-aged female helplessness. If she hadn't saved the papers wherein should I be indebted to her? I think I winced a little as I asked myself how much, if she *had* saved them, I should have to recognize and, as it were, reward such a courtesy. Mightn't that service after all saddle me with a guardianship? If this idea didn't make me more uncomfortable as I walked up and down it was because I was convinced I had nothing to look to. If the old woman hadn't destroyed everything before she pounced on me in the parlour she had done so the next day.

It took Miss Tina rather longer than I had expected to act on my calculation; but when at last she came out she looked at me without surprise. I mentioned I had been waiting for her and she asked why I hadn't let her know. I was glad a few hours later on that I had checked myself before remarking that a friendly intuition might have told her; it turned to comfort for me that I hadn't played even to that mild extent on her sensibility.

What I did say was virtually the truth—that I was too nervous, since I expected her now to settle my fate.

'Your fate?' said Miss Tina, giving me a queer look; and as she spoke I noticed a rare change in her. Yes, she was other than she had been the evening before—less natural and less easy. She had been crying the day before and was not crying now, yet she struck me as less confident. It was as if something had happened to her during the night, or at least as if she had thought of something that troubled her—something in particular that affected her relations with me, made them more embarrassing and more complicated. Had she simply begun to feel that her aunt's not being there now altered my position?

'I mean about our papers. *Are* there any? You must know now.'

'Yes, there are a great many; more than I supposed.' I was struck with the way her voice trembled as she told me this.

'Do you mean you've got them in there—and that I may see them?'

'I don't think you can see them,' said Miss Tina, with an extraordinary expression of entreaty in her eyes, as if the dearest hope she had in the world now was that I wouldn't take them from her. But how could she expect me to make such a sacrifice as that after all that had passed between us? What had I come back to Venice for but to see them, to take them? My joy at learning they were still in existence was such that if the poor woman had gone down on her knees to beseech me never to mention them again I would have treated the proceeding as a bad joke. 'I 've got them but I can't show them,' she lamentably added.

'Not even to me? Ah, Miss Tina!' I broke into a tone of infinite remonstrance and reproach.

She coloured and the tears came back to her eyes; I measured the anguish it cost her to take such a stand which a dreadful sense of duty had imposed on her. It made me quite sick to find myself confronted with that particular obstacle; all the more that it seemed to me I had been distinctly encouraged to leave it out of account. I quite held Miss Tina to have assured me that if she had no greater hindrance than that——! 'You don't mean to say you made her a death-bed promise? It was precisely against your doing anything of that sort that I thought I was safe. Oh, I would rather she had burnt the papers outright than have to reckon with such a treachery as that.'

'No, it isn't a promise,' said Miss Tina.

'Pray what is it, then?'

She hung fire, but finally said: 'She tried to burn them, but I prevented it. She had hid them in her bed.'

'In her bed——?'

'Between the mattresses. That 's where she put them when she took them out of the trunk. I can't understand how she did it, because Olimpia didn't help her. She tells me so, and I believe her. My aunt only told her afterwards, so that she shouldn't undo the bed—anything but the sheets. So it was very badly made,' added Miss Tina simply.

'I should think so! And how did she try to burn them?'

'She didn't try much; she was too weak those last days. But she told me—she charged me. Oh, it was terrible! She couldn't speak after that night. She could only make signs.'

'And what did you do?'

'I took them away. I locked them up.'

'In the secretary?'

'Yes, in the secretary,' said Miss Tina, reddening again.

'Did you tell her you'd burn them?'

'No, I didn't—on purpose.'

'On purpose to gratify me?'

'Yes, only for that.'

'And what good will you have done me if after all you won't show them?'

'Oh, none. I know that—I know that,' she dismally sounded.

'And did she believe you had destroyed them?'

'I don't know what she believed at the last. I couldn't tell—she was too far gone.'

'Then if there was no promise and no assurance I can't see what ties you.'

'Oh, she hated it so—she hated it so! She was so jealous. But here's the portrait—you may have that,' the poor woman announced, taking the little picture, wrapped up in the same manner in which her aunt had wrapped it, out of her pocket.

'I may have it—do you mean you give it to me?' I gasped as it passed into my hand.

'Oh, yes.'

'But it's worth money—a large sum.'

'Well!' said Miss Tina, still with her strange look.

I didn't know what to make of it, for it could scarcely mean that she wanted to bargain like her aunt. She spoke as for making me a present. 'I can't take it from you as a gift,' I said, 'and yet I can't afford to pay you for it according to the idea Miss Bordereau had of its value. She rated it at a thousand pounds.

'Couldn't we sell it?' my friend threw off.

'God forbid! I prefer the picture to the money.'

'Well, then, keep it.'

'You 're very generous.'

'So are you.'

'I don't know why you should think so,' I returned; and this was true enough, for the good creature appeared to have in her mind some rich reference that I didn't in the least seize.

'Well, you 've made a great difference for me,' she said.

I looked at Jeffrey Aspern's face in the little picture, partly in order not to look at that of my companion, which had begun to trouble me, even to frighten me a little—it had taken so very odd, so strained and unnatural a cast. I made no answer to this last declaration; I but privately consulted Jeffrey Aspern's delightful eyes with my own—they were so young and brilliant and yet so wise and so deep; I asked him what on earth was the matter with Miss Tina. He seemed to smile at me with mild mockery; he might have been amused at my case. I had got into a pickle for him—as if he needed it! He was unsatisfactory for the only moment since I had known him. Nevertheless, now that I held the little picture in my hand I felt it would be a precious possession. 'Is this a bribe to make me give up the papers?' I presently and all perversely asked. 'Much as I value this, you know, if I were to be obliged to choose the papers are what I should prefer. Ah, but ever so much!'

'How can you choose—how can you choose?' Miss Tina returned slowly and woefully.

'I see! Of course there 's nothing to be said if you regard the interdiction that rests on you as quite insurmountable. In this case it must seem to you that to part with them would be an impiety of the worst kind, a simple sacrilege!'

She shook her head, only lost in the queerness of her case. 'You 'd understand if you had known her. I 'm afraid,' she quavered suddenly—'I 'm afraid! She was terrible when she was angry.'

'Yes, I saw something of that, that night. She was terrible. Then I saw her eyes. Lord, they were fine!'

'I see them—they stare at me in the dark!' said Miss Tina.

'You 've grown nervous with all you 've been through.'

'Oh, yes, very—very!'

'You mustn't mind; that will pass away,' I said kindly. Then I added resignedly, for it really seemed to me that I must accept the situation: 'Well, so it is, and it can't be helped. I must renounce.' My friend, at this, with her eyes on me, gave a low soft moan, and I went on: 'I only wish to goodness she had destroyed them; then there would be nothing more to say. And I can't understand why, with her ideas, she didn't.'

'Oh, she lived on them!' said Miss Tina.

'You can imagine whether that makes me want less to see them,' I returned not quite so desperately. 'But don't let me stand here as if I had it in my soul to tempt you to anything base. Naturally, you understand, I give up my rooms. I leave Venice immediately.' And I took up my hat, which I had placed on a chair. We were still rather awkwardly on our feet in the middle of the *sala*. She had left the door of the apartments open behind her, but had not led me that way.

A strange spasm came into her face as she saw me take my hat. 'Immediately—do you mean to-day?' The tone of the words was tragic—they were a cry of desolation.

'Oh, no; not so long as I can be of the least service to you.'

'Well, just a day or two more—just two or three days,' she panted. Then, controlling herself, she added in another manner: 'She wanted to say something to me—the last day—something very particular. But she couldn't.'

'Something very particular?'

'Something more about the papers.'

'And did you guess—have you any idea?'

'No, I 've tried to think—but I don't know. I 've thought all kinds of things.'

'As for instance?'

'Well, that if you were a relation it would be different.'

I wondered. 'If I were a relation——?'

'If you weren't a stranger. Then it would be the same for you as for me. Anything that 's mine would be yours, and you could do what you like. I shouldn't be able to prevent you—and you 'd have no responsibility.'

She brought out this droll explanation with a nervous rush and as if speaking words got by heart.

They gave me an impression of a subtlety which at first I failed to follow. But after a moment her face helped me to see further, and then the queerest of lights came to me. It was embarrassing, and I bent my head over Jeffrey Aspern's portrait. What an odd expression was in his face! 'Get out of it as you can, my dear fellow!' I put the picture into the pocket of my coat and said to Miss Tina: 'Yes, I 'll sell it for you. I shan't get a thousand pounds by any means, but I shall get something good.'

She looked at me through pitiful tears, but seemed to try to smile as she returned: 'We can divide the money.'

'No, no, it shall be all yours.' Then I went on: 'I think I know what your poor aunt wanted to say. She wanted to give directions that her papers should be buried with her.'

Miss Tina appeared to weigh this suggestion; after which she answered with striking decision: 'Oh, no, she wouldn't have thought that safe!'

'It seems to me nothing could be safer.'

'She had an idea that when people want to publish they 're capable——!' And she paused, very red.

'Of violating a tomb? Mercy on us, what must she have thought of me!'

'She wasn't just, she wasn't generous!' my companion cried with sudden passion.

The light that had come into my mind a moment before spread further. 'Ah, don't say that, for we *are* a dreadful race.' Then I pursued: 'If she left a will that may give you some idea.'

'I 've found nothing of the sort—she destroyed it. She was very fond of me,' Miss Tina added with an effect of extreme inconsequence. 'She wanted me to be happy. And if any person should be kind to me—she wanted to speak of that.'

I was almost awestricken by the astuteness with which the good lady found herself inspired, transparent astuteness as it was and stitching, as the phrase is, with white thread. 'Depend upon it, she didn't want to make any provision that would be agreeable to *me*.'

'No, not to you, but quite to me. She knew I should like it if you could carry out your idea. Not because she cared for you, but because she did think of me,' Miss Tina went on with her unexpected, persuasive volubility. 'You could see the things—you could use them.' She stopped, seeing I grasped the sense of her conditional—stopped long enough for me to give some sign that I didn't give. She must have been conscious, however, that though my face showed the greatest embarrassment ever painted on a human countenance it was not set as a stone, it was also full of compassion. It was a comfort to me a long time afterwards to consider that she couldn't have seen in me the smallest symptom of disrespect. 'I don't know what to do; I'm too tormented. I'm too ashamed!' she continued with vehemence. Then, turning away from me and burying her face in her hands, she burst into a flood of tears. If she didn't know what to do it may be imagined whether I knew better. I stood there dumb, watching her while her sobs resounded in the great empty hall. In a moment she was up at me again with her streaming eyes. 'I'd give you everything, and she'd understand, where she is—she'd forgive me!'

'Ah, Miss Tina—ah, Miss Tina,' I stammered for all reply. I didn't know what to do, as I say, but at a venture I made a wild, vague movement in consequence of which I found myself at the door. I remember standing there and saying: 'It wouldn't do, it wouldn't do!'—saying it pensively, awkwardly, grotesquely, while I looked away to the opposite end of the *sala* as at something very interesting. The next thing I remember is that I was downstairs and out of the house. My gondola was there and my gondolier, reclining on the cushions, sprang up as soon as he saw me. I jumped in, and to his usual '*Dove commanda?*' replied, in a tone that made him stare: 'Anywhere, anywhere; out into the lagoon!'

He rowed me away and I sat there prostrate, groaning softly to myself, my hat pulled over my brow. What in the name of the preposterous did she mean if she didn't mean to offer me her hand? That was the price—that was the price! And did she think I wanted it, poor deluded, infatuated, extravagant lady? My gondolier, behind me, must have seen my ears red as I wondered, motionless there under the fluttering *tenda* with my hidden face, noticing nothing as we passed—wondered whether her delusion, her infatuation had been my own reckless work. Did she think I had made love to her even to get the papers? I hadn't, I hadn't; I repeated that over to myself for an hour, for two hours, till I was wearied if not convinced. I don't know where, on the lagoon, my gondolier took me; we floated aimlessly and with slow, rare strokes. At last I became conscious that we were near the Lido, far up, on the right hand, as you turn your back to Venice, and I made him put me ashore. I wanted to walk, to move, to shed some of my bewilderment. I crossed the narrow strip and got to the sea-beach—I took my way toward Malamocco. But presently I flung myself down again on the warm sand, in the breeze, on the coarse, dry grass. It took it out of me to think I had been so much at fault, that I had unwittingly but none the less deplorably trifled. But I hadn't given her cause—distinctly I hadn't. I had said to Mrs. Prest that I would make love to her; but it had been a joke without consequences and I had never said it to my victim. I had been as kind as possible because I really liked her; but since when had that become a crime where a woman of such an age and such an appearance was concerned? I am far from remembering clearly the succession of events and feelings during this long day of confusion, which I spent entirely in wandering about, without going home, until late at night; it only comes back to me that there were moments when I pacified my conscience and others when I lashed it into pain. I didn't laugh all day—that I do recollect; the case, however it might have struck others, seemed to me so little amusing. I should have been better employed perhaps in taking the comic side of it. At any rate, whether I had given cause or not, there was no doubt whatever that I couldn't pay the price. I couldn't accept the proposal. I couldn't, for a bundle of tattered papers, marry a ridiculous, pathetic, provincial old woman. It was a proof of how little she supposed the idea would come to me that she should have decided to suggest it herself in that practical, argumentative, heroic way—with the timidity, however, so much more striking than the boldness, that her reasons appeared to come first and her feelings afterward.

As the day went on I grew to wish I had never heard of Aspern's relics, and I cursed the extravagant curiosity that had put John Cumnor on the scent of them. We had more than enough material without them, and my predicament was the just punishment of that most fatal of human follies, our not having known when to stop. It was very well to say it was no predicament, that the way out was simple, that I had only to leave Venice by the first train in the morning, after addressing Miss Tina a note which should be placed in her hand as soon as I got clear of the house; for it was strong proof of my quandary that when I tried to make up the note to my taste in advance—I would put it on paper as soon as I got home, before going to bed—I couldn't think of anything but 'How can I thank you for the rare confidence you 've placed in me?' That would never do; it sounded exactly as if an acceptance were to follow. Of course I might get off without writing at all, but that would be brutal, and my idea was still to exclude brutal solutions. As my confusion cooled I lost myself in wonder at the importance I had attached to Juliana's crumpled scraps; the thought of them became odious to me and I was as vexed with the old witch for the superstition that had prevented her from destroying them as I was with myself for having already spent more money than I could afford in attempting to control their fate. I forgot what I did, where I went after leaving the Lido, and at what hour or with what recovery of composure I made my way back to my boat. I only know that in the afternoon, when the air was aglow with the sunset, I was standing before the church of Saints John and Paul and looking up at the small square-jawed face of Bartolommeo Colleoni, the terrible *condottiere* who sits so sturdily astride of his huge bronze horse on the high pedestal on which Venetian gratitude maintains him. The statue is incomparable, the finest of all mounted figures, unless that of Marcus Aurelius, who rides benignant before the Roman Capitol, be finer; but I was not thinking of that; I only found myself staring at the triumphant captain as if he had an oracle on his lips. The western light shines into all his grimness at that hour and makes it wonderfully personal. But he continued to look far over my head, at the red immersion of another day—he had seen so many go down into the lagoon through the centuries—and if he were thinking of battles and stratagems they were of a different quality from any I had to tell him of. He couldn't direct me what to do, gaze up at him as I might. Was it before this or after that I wandered about for an hour in the small canals, to the continued stupefaction of my gondolier, who had never seen me so restless and yet so void of a purpose and could extract from me no order but 'Go anywhere—everywhere—all over the place'? He reminded me that I had not lunched and expressed, therefore, respectfully the hope that I would dine earlier. He had had long periods of leisure during the day, when I had left the boat and rambled, so that I was not obliged to consider him, and I told him that till the morrow, for reasons, I should touch no meat. It was an effect of poor Miss Tina's proposal, not altogether auspicious, that

I had quite lost my appetite. I don't know why it happened that on this occasion I was more than ever struck with that queer air of sociability, of cousinship and family life, which makes up half the expression of Venice. Without streets and vehicles, the uproar of wheels, the brutality of horses, and with its little winding ways where people crowd together, where voices sound as in the corridors of a house, where the human step circulates as if it skirted the angles of furniture and shoes never wear out, the place has the character of an immense collective apartment, in which Piazza San Marco is the most ornamented corner and palaces and churches, for the rest, play the part of great divans of repose, tables of entertainment, expanses of decoration. And somehow the splendid common domicile, familiar, domestic and resonant, also resembles a theatre with its actors clicking over bridges and, in straggling processions, tripping along fondamentas. As you sit in your gondola the footways that in certain parts edge the canals assume to the eye the importance of a stage, meeting it at the same angle, and the Venetian figures, moving to and fro against the battered scenery of their little houses of comedy, strike you as members of an endless dramatic troupe.

I went to bed that night very tired and without being able to compose an address to Miss Tina. Was this failure the reason why I became conscious the next morning as soon as I awoke of a determination to see the poor lady again the first moment she would receive me? That had something to do with it, but what had still more was the fact that during my sleep the oddest revulsion had taken place in my spirit. I found myself aware of this almost as soon as I opened my eyes: it made me jump out of my bed with the movement of a man who remembers that he had left the house-door ajar or a candle burning under a shelf. Was I still in time to save my goods? That question was in my heart; for what had now come to pass was that in the unconscious cerebration of sleep I had swung back to a passionate appreciation of Juliana's treasure. The pieces composing it were now more precious than ever and a positive ferocity had come into my need to acquire them. The condition Miss Tina had attached to that act no longer appeared an obstacle worth thinking of, and for an hour this morning my repentant imagination brushed it aside. It was absurd I should be able to invent nothing; absurd to renounce so easily and turn away helpless from the idea that the only way to become possessed was to unite myself to her for life. I mightn't untie myself, yet I might still have what she had. I must add by the time I sent down to ask if she would see me I had invented no alternative, though in fact I drew out my dressing in the interest of my wit. This failure was humiliating, yet what could the alternative be? Miss Tina sent back word I might come; and as I descended the stairs and crossed the *sala* to her door—this time she received me in her aunt's forlorn parlour—I hoped she wouldn't think my announcement was to be 'favourable.' She certainly would have understood my recoil of the day before.

As soon as I came into the room I saw that she had done so, but I also saw something which had not been in my forecast. Poor Miss Tina's sense of failure had produced a rare alteration in her, but

I had been too full of stratagems and spoils to think of that. Now I took it in; I can scarcely tell how it startled me. She stood in the middle of the room with a face of mildness bent upon me, and her look of forgiveness, of absolution, made her angelic. It beautified her; she was younger; she was not a ridiculous old woman. This trick of her expression, this magic of her spirit, transfigured her, and while I still noted it I heard a whisper somewhere in the depths of my conscience: 'Why not, after all—why not?' It seemed to me I *could* pay the price. Still more distinctly, however, than the whisper I heard Miss Tina's own voice. I was so struck with the different effect she made on me that at first I wasn't clearly aware of what she was saying; then I recognized she had bade me good-bye—she said something about hoping I should be very happy.

'Good-bye—good-bye?' I repeated with an inflection interrogative and probably foolish.

I saw she didn't feel the interrogation, she only heard the words; she had strung herself up to accepting our separation and they fell upon her ear as a proof. 'Are you going to-day?' she asked. 'But it doesn't matter, for whenever you go I shall not see you again. I don't want to.' And she smiled strangely, with an infinite gentleness. She had never doubted my having left her the day before in horror. How *could* she, since I hadn't come back before night to contradict, even as a simple form, even as an act of common humanity, such an idea? And now she had the force of soul—Miss Tina with a force of soul was a new conception—to smile at me in her abjection.

'What shall you do—where shall you go?' I asked.

'Oh, I don't know. I 've done the great thing. I 've destroyed the papers.'

'Destroyed them?' I waited.

'Yes; what was I to keep them for? I burnt them last night, one by one in the kitchen.'

'One by one?' I coldly echoed it.

'It took a long time—there were so many.' The room seemed to go round me as she said this, and a real darkness for a moment descended on my eyes. When it passed, Miss Tina was there still, but the transfiguration was over and she had changed back to a plain, dingy, elderly person. It was in this character she spoke as she said: 'I can't stay with you longer, I can't'; and it was in this character she turned her back upon me, as I had turned mine upon her twenty-four hours before, and moved to the door of her room. Here she did what I hadn't done when I quitted her—she paused long enough to give me one look. I have never forgotten it and I sometimes still suffer from it, though it was not resentful. No, there was no resentment, nothing hard or vindictive in poor Miss Tina; for when, later, I sent her, as the price of the portrait of Jeffrey Aspern, a larger sum of money than I had hoped to gather for her, writing to her that I had sold the picture, she kept it with thanks; she never sent it back. I wrote her that I had sold the picture, but I admitted to Mrs. Prest at the time—I met this other friend in London that autumn—that it hangs above my writing-table When I look at it I can scarcely bear my loss—I mean of the precious papers.

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LONDON: J. M. DENT & SONS LTD.
NEW YORK: E. P. DUTTON & CO. INC

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The Italian

or the Confessional of the Black Penitents.
A Romance.

Ann Radcliffe

This web edition published by eBooks@Adelaide.

Last updated Wednesday, December 17, 2014 at 14:21.

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INTRODUCTION

About the year 1764, some English travellers in Italy, during one of their excursions in the environs of Naples, happened to stop before the portico of the Santa Maria del Pianto, a church belonging to a very ancient convent of the order of the Black Penitents. The magnificence of this portico, though impaired by time, excited so much admiration, that the travellers were curious to survey the structure to which it belonged, and with this intention they ascended the marble steps that led to it.

Within the shade of the portico, a person with folded arms, and eyes directed towards the ground, was pacing behind the pillars the whole extent of the pavement, and was apparently so engaged by his own thoughts, as not to observe that strangers were approaching. He turned, however, suddenly, as if startled by the sound of steps, and then, without further pausing, glided to a door that opened into the church, and disappeared.

There was something too extraordinary in the figure of this man, and too singular in his conduct, to pass unnoticed by the visitors. He was of a tall thin figure, bending forward from the shoulders; of a sallow complexion, and harsh features, and had an eye, which, as it looked up from the cloke that muffled the lower part of his countenance, seemed expressive of uncommon ferocity.

The travellers, on entering the church, looked round for the stranger, who had passed thither before them, but he was no where to be seen, and, through all the shade of the long aisles, only one other person appeared. This was a friar of the adjoining convent, who sometimes pointed out to strangers the objects in the church, which were most worthy of attention, and who now, with this design, approached the party that had just entered.

The interior of this edifice had nothing of the shewy ornament and general splendor, which distinguish the churches of Italy, and particularly those of Naples; but it exhibited a simplicity and grandeur of design, considerably more interesting to persons of taste, and a solemnity of light and shade much more suitable to promote the sublime elevation of devotion.

When the party had viewed the different shrines and whatever had been judged worthy of observation, and were returning through an obscure aisle towards the portico, they perceived the person who had appeared upon the steps, passing towards a confessional on the left, and, as he entered it, one of the party pointed him out to the friar, and enquired who he was; the friar turning to look after him, did not immediately reply, but, on the question being repeated, he inclined his head, as in a kind of obeisance, and calmly replied, ‘He is an assassin.’

‘An assassin!’ exclaimed one of the Englishmen; ‘an assassin and at liberty!’

An Italian gentleman, who was of the party, smiled at the astonishment of his friend.

‘He has sought sanctuary here,’ replied the friar; ‘within these walls he may not be hurt.’

‘Do your altars, then, protect the murderer?’ said the Englishman.

‘He could find shelter no where else,’ answered the friar meekly.

‘This is astonishing!’ said the Englishman; ‘of what avail are your laws, if the most atrocious criminal may thus find shelter from them? But how does he contrive to exist here! He is, at least, in danger of being starved?’

‘Pardon me,’ replied the friar; ‘there are always people willing to assist those, who cannot assist themselves; and as the criminal may not leave the church in search of food, they bring it to him here.’

‘Is this possible!’ said the Englishman, turning to his Italian friend.

‘Why, the poor wretch must not starve,’ replied the friend; ‘which he inevitably would do, if food were not brought to him! But have you never, since your arrival in Italy, happened to see a person in the situation of this man? It is by no means an uncommon one.’

‘Never!’ answered the Englishman, ‘and I can scarcely credit what I see now!’

‘Why, my friend,’ observed the Italian, ‘if we were to shew no mercy to such unfortunate persons, assassinations are so frequent, that our cities would be half depopulated.’

In notice of this profound remark, the Englishman could only gravely bow.

‘But observe yonder confessional,’ added the Italian, ‘that beyond the pillars on the left of the aisle, below a painted window. Have you discovered it? The colours of the glass throw, instead of light, a shade over that part of the church, which, perhaps, prevents your distinguishing what I mean!'

The Englishman looked whither his friend pointed, and observed a confessional of oak, or some very dark wood, adjoining the wall, and remarked also, that it was the same, which the assassin had just entered. It consisted of three compartments, covered with a black canopy. In the central division was the chair of the confessor, elevated by several steps above the pavement of the church; and on either hand was a small closet, or box, with steps leading up to a grated partition, at which the penitent might kneel, and, concealed from observation, pour into the ear of the confessor, the consciousness of crimes that lay heavy on his heart.

'You observe it?' said the Italian.

'I do,' replied the Englishman; 'it is the same, which the assassin has passed into; and I think it one of the most gloomy spots I ever beheld; the view of it is enough to strike a criminal with despair!'

'We, in Italy, are not so apt to despair,' replied the Italian smilingly.

'Well, but what of this confessional?' enquired the Englishman. 'The assassin entered it!'

'He has no relation, with what I am about to mention,' said the Italian; 'but I wish you to mark the place, because some very extraordinary circumstances belong to it.'

'What are they?' said the Englishman.

'It is now several years since the confession, which is connected with them, was made at that very confessional,' added the Italian; 'the view of it, and the sight of this assassin, with your surprize at the liberty which is allowed him, led me to a recollection of the story. When you return to the hotel, I will communicate it to you, if you have no pleasanter way of engaging your time.

'I have a curiosity to hear it,' replied the Englishman, 'cannot you relate it now?'

'It is much too long to be related now; that would occupy a week; I have it in writing, and will send you the volume. A young student of Padua, who happened to be at Naples soon after this horrible confession became public —'

'Pardon me,' interrupted the Englishman, 'that is surely very extraordinary? I thought confessions were always held sacred by the priest, to whom they were made.'

'Your observation is reasonable,' rejoined the Italian; 'the faith of the priest is never broken, except by an especial command from an higher power; and the circumstances must even then be very extraordinary to justify such a departure from the law. But, when you read the narrative, your surprise on this head will cease. I was going to tell you, that it was written by a student of Padua, who, happening to be here soon after the affair became public, was so much struck with the facts, that, partly as an exercise, and partly in return for some trifling services I had rendered him, he committed them to paper for me. You will perceive from the work, that this student was very young, as to the arts of composition, but the facts are what you require, and from these he has not deviated. But come, let us leave the church.'

'After I have taken another view of this solemn edifice,' replied the Englishman, 'and particularly of the confessional you have pointed to my notice!'

While the Englishman glanced his eye over the high roofs, and along the solemn perspectives of the Santa del Pianto, he perceived the figure of the assassin stealing from the confessional across the choir, and, shocked on again beholding him, he turned his eyes, and hastily quitted the church.

The friends then separated, and the Englishman, soon after returning to his hotel, received the volume. He read as follows:

❦

CHAPTER 1

> "What is this secret sin; this untold tale,
> That art cannot extract, nor penance cleanse?"
> Mysterious Mother.

It was in the church of San Lorenzo at Naples, in the year 1758, that Vincentio di Vivaldi first saw Ellena Rosalba. The sweetness and fine expression of her voice attracted his attention to her figure, which had a distinguished air of delicacy and grace; but her face was concealed in her veil. So much indeed was he fascinated by the voice, that a most painful curiosity was excited as to her countenance, which he fancied must express all the sensibility of character that the modulation of her tones indicated. He listened to their exquisite expression with a rapt attention, and hardly withdrew his eyes from her person till the matin service had concluded; when he observed her leave the church with an aged lady, who leaned upon her arm, and who appeared to be her mother.

Vivaldi immediately followed their steps, determined to obtain, if possible, a view of Ellena's face, and to discover the home to which she should retire. They walked quickly, looking neither to the right or left, and as they turned into the Strada di Toledo he had nearly lost them; but quickening his pace, and relinquishing the cautious distance he had hitherto kept, he overtook them as they entered on the Terrazzo Nuovo, which runs along the bay of Naples, and leads towards the Gran Corso. He overtook them; but the fair unknown still held her veil close, and he knew not how to introduce himself to her notice, or to obtain a view of the features, which excited his curiosity. He was embarrassed by a respectful timidity, that mingled with his admiration, and which kept him silent, notwithstanding his wish to speak.

In descending the last steps of the Terrazzo, however, the foot of the elder lady faltered, and, while Vivaldi hastened to assist her, the breeze from the water caught the veil, which Ellena had no longer a hand sufficiently disengaged to confine, and, wafting it partially aside, disclosed to him a countenance more touchingly beautiful than he had dared to image. Her features were of the Grecian outline, and, though they expressed the tranquillity of an elegant mind, her dark blue eyes sparkled with intelligence. She was assisting her companion so anxiously, that she did not immediately observe the admiration she had inspired; but the moment her eyes met those of Vivaldi, she became conscious of their effect, and she hastily drew her veil.

The old lady was not materially hurt by her fall, but, as she walked difficultly, Vivaldi seized the opportunity thus offered, and insisted that she should accept his arm. She refused this with many acknowledgments; but he pressed the offer so repeatedly and respectfully, that, at length, she accepted it, and they walked towards her residence together.

On the way thither, he attempted to converse with Ellena, but her replies were concise, and he arrived at the end of the walk while he was yet considering what he could say, that might interest and withdraw her from this severe reserve. From the style of their residence, he imagined that they were persons of honourable, but moderate independence. The house was small, but exhibited an air of comfort, and even of taste. It stood on an eminence, surrounded by a garden and vineyards, which commanded the city and bay of Naples, an ever-moving picture, and was canopied by a thick grove of pines and majestic date-trees; and, though the little portico and collonade in front were of common marble, the style of architecture was elegant. While they afforded a shelter from the sun, they admitted the cooling breezes that rose from the bay below, and a prospect of the whole scope of its enchanting shores.

Vivaldi stopped at the little gate, which led into the garden, where the elder lady repeated her acknowledgments for his care, but did not invite him to enter; and he, trembling with anxiety and sinking with disappointment, remained for a moment gazing upon Ellena, unable to take leave, yet irresolute what to say that might prolong the interview, till the old lady again bade him good-day. He then summoned courage enough to request he might be allowed to enquire after her health, and, having obtained her permission, his eyes bade adieu to Ellena, who, as they were parting, ventured to thank him for the care he had taken of her aunt. The sound of her voice, and this acknowledgment of obligation, made him less willing to go than before, but at length he tore himself away. The beauty of her countenance haunting his imagination, and the touching accents of her voice still vibrating on his heart, he descended to the shore below her residence, pleasing himself with the consciousness of being near her, though he could no longer behold her; and sometimes hoping that he might again see her, however distantly, in a balcony of the house, where the silk awning seemed to invite the breeze from the sea. He lingered hour after hour, stretched beneath the umbrageous pines that waved over the shore, or traversing, regardless of the heat, the base of the cliffs that crowned it; recalling to his fancy the enchantment of her smile, and seeming still to listen to the sweetness of her accents.

In the evening he returned to his father's palace at Naples, thoughtful yet pleased, anxious yet happy; dwelling with delightful hope on the remembrance of the thanks he had received from Ellena, yet not daring to form any plan as to his future conduct. He returned time enough to attend his mother in her evening ride on the Corso, where, in every gay carriage that passed, he hoped to see the object of his constant thought; but she did not appear. His mother, the Marchesa di Vivaldi, observed his anxiety and unusual silence, and asked him some questions, which she meant should lead to an explanation of the change in his manners; but his replies only excited a stronger curiosity, and, though she forbore to press her enquiries, it was probable that she might employ a more artful means of renewing them.

Vincentio di Vivaldi was the only son of the Marchese di Vivaldi, a nobleman of one of the most ancient families of the kingdom of Naples, a favourite possessing an uncommon share of influence at Court, and a man still higher in power than in rank. His pride of birth was equal to either, but it was mingled with the justifiable pride of a principled mind; it governed his conduct in morals as well as in the jealousy of ceremonial distinctions, and elevated his practice as well as his claims. His pride was at once his vice and his virtue, his safeguard and his weakness.

The mother of Vivaldi, descended from a family as ancient as that of his father, was equally jealous of her importance; but her pride was that of birth and distinction, without extending to morals. She was of violent passions, haughty, vindictive, yet crafty and deceitful; patient in stratagem, and indefatigable in pursuit of vengeance, on the unhappy objects who provoked her resentment. She loved her son, rather as being the last of two illustrious houses, who was to re-unite and support the honour of both, than with the fondness of a mother.

Vincentio inherited much of the character of his father, and very little of that of his mother. His pride was as noble and generous as that of the Marchese; but he had somewhat of the fiery passions of the Marchesa, without any of her craft, her duplicity, or vindictive thirst of revenge. Frank in his temper, ingenuous in his sentiments, quickly offended, but easily appeased; irritated by any appearance of disrespect, but melted by a concession, a high sense of honor rendered him no more jealous of offence, than a delicate humanity made him ready for reconciliation, and anxious to spare the feelings of others.

On the day following that, on which he had seen Ellena, he returned to the villa Altieri, to use the permission granted him of enquiring after the health of Signora Bianchi. The expectation of seeing Ellena agitated him with impatient joy and trembling hope, which still encreased as he approached her residence, till, having reached the garden-gate, he was obliged to rest for a few moments to recover breath and composure.

Having announced himself to an old female servant, who came to the gate, he was soon after admitted to a small vestibule, where he found Signora Bianchi winding balls of silk, and alone; though from the position of a chair which stood near a frame for embroidery, he judged that Ellena had but just quitted the apartment. Signora Bianchi received him with a reserved politeness, and seemed very cautious in her replies to his enquiries after her niece, who, he hoped, every moment, would appear. He lengthened his visit till there was no longer an excuse for doing so; till he had exhausted every topic of conversation, and till the silence of Signora Bianchi seemed to hint, that his departure was expected. With a heart saddened by disappointment, and having obtained only a reluctant permission to enquire after the health of that lady on some future day, he then took leave.

On his way through the garden he often paused to look back upon the house, hoping to obtain a glimpse of Ellena at a lattice; and threw a glance around him, almost expecting to see her seated beneath the shade of the luxuriant plantains; but his search was every where vain, and he quitted the place with the slow and heavy step of despondency.

The day was employed in endeavours to obtain intelligence concerning the family of Ellena, but of this he procured little that was satisfactory. He was told, that she was an orphan, living under the care of her aunt, Signora Bianchi; that her family, which had never been illustrious, was decayed in fortune, and that her only dependence was upon this aunt. But he was ignorant of what was very true, though very secret, that she assisted to support this aged relative, whose sole property was the small estate on which they lived, and that she passed whole days in embroidering silks, which were disposed of to the nuns of a neighbouring convent, who sold them to the Neapolitan ladies, that visited their grate, at a very high advantage. He little thought, that a beautiful robe, which he had often seen his mother wear, was worked by Ellena; nor that some copies from the antique, which ornamented a cabinet of the Vivaldi palace, were drawn by her hand. If he had known these circumstances, they would only have served to encrease the passion [tenderness], which, since they were proofs of a disparity of fortune, that would certainly render his family repugnant to a connection with hers, it would have been prudent to discourage.

Ellena could have endured poverty, but not contempt; and it was to protect herself from this effect of the narrow prejudices of the world around her, that she had so cautiously concealed from it a knowledge of the industry, which did honor to her character. She was not ashamed of poverty, or of the industry which overcame it, but her spirit shrunk from the senseless smile and humiliating condescension, which prosperity sometimes gives to indigence. Her mind was not yet strong enough, or her views sufficiently enlarged, to teach her a contempt of the sneer of vicious folly, and to glory in the dignity of virtuous independence. Ellena was the sole support of her aunt's declining years; was patient to her infirmities, and consoling to her sufferings; and repaid the fondness of a mother with the affection of a daughter. Her mother she had never known, having lost her while she was an infant, and from that period Signora Bianchi had performed the duties of one for her.

Thus innocent and happy in the silent performance of her duties and in the veil of retirement, lived Ellena Rosalba, when she first saw Vincentio di Vivaldi. He was not of a figure to pass unobserved when seen, and Ellena had been struck by the spirit and dignity of his air, and by his countenance, so frank, noble, and full of that kind of expression, which announces the energies of the soul. But she was cautious of admitting a sentiment more tender than admiration, and endeavoured to dismiss his image from her mind, and by engaging in her usual occupations, to recover the state of tranquillity, which his appearance had somewhat interrupted.

Vivaldi, mean while, restless from disappointment, and impatient from anxiety, having passed the greater part of the day in enquiries, which repaid him only with doubt and apprehension, determined to return to the villa Altieri, when evening should conceal his steps, consoled by the certainty of being near the object of his thoughts, and hoping, that chance might favour him once more with a view, however transient, of Ellena.

The Marchesa Vivaldi held an assembly this evening, and a suspicion concerning the impatience he betrayed, induced her to detain him about her person to a late hour, engaging him to select the music for her orchestra, and to superintend the performance of a new piece, the work of a composer whom she had brought into fashion. Her assemblies were among the most brilliant and crowded in Naples, and the nobility, who were to be at the palace this evening, were divided into two parties as to the merits of the musical genius, whom she patronized, and those of another candidate for fame. The performance of the evening, it was expected, would finally decide the victory. This, therefore, was a night of great importance and anxiety to the Marchesa, for she was as jealous of the reputation of her favourite composer as of her own, and the welfare of her son did but slightly divide her cares.

The moment he could depart unobserved, he quitted the assembly, and, muffling himself in his cloak, hastened to the villa Altieri, which lay at a short distance to the west of the city. He reached it unobserved, and, breathless with impatience, traversed the boundary of the garden; where, free from ceremonial restraint, and near the object of his affection, he experienced for the few first moments a joy as exquisite as her presence could have inspired. But this delight faded with its novelty, and in a short time he felt as forlorn as if he was separated for ever from Ellena, in whose presence he but lately almost believed himself.

The night was far advanced, and, no light appearing from the house, he concluded the inhabitants had retired to rest, and all hope of seeing her vanished from his mind. Still, however, it was sweet to be near her, and he anxiously sought to gain admittance to the gardens, that he might approach the window where it was possible she reposed. The boundary, formed of trees and thick shrubs, was not difficult to be passed, and he found himself once more in the portico of the villa.

It was nearly midnight, and the stillness that reigned was rather soothed than interrupted by the gentle dashing of the waters of the bay below, and by the hollow murmurs of Vesuvius, which threw up, at intervals its sudden flame on the horizon, and then left it to darkness. The solemnity of the scene accorded with the temper of his mind, and he listened in deep attention for the returning sounds, which broke upon the ear like distant thunder muttering imperfectly from the clouds. The pauses of silence, that succeeded each groan of the mountain, when expectation listened for the rising sound, affected the imagination of Vivaldi at this time with particular awe, and, rapt in thought, he continued to gaze upon the sublime and shadowy outline of the shores, and on the sea, just discerned beneath the twilight of a cloudless sky. Along its grey surface many vessels were pursuing their silent course, guided over the deep waters only by the polar star, which burned with steady lustre. The air was calm, and rose from the bay with most balmy and refreshing coolness; it scarcely stirred the heads of the broad pines that overspread the villa; and bore no sounds but of the waves and the groans of the far-off mountain, — till a chaunting of deep voices swelled from a distance. The solemn character of the strain engaged his attention; he perceived that it was a requiem, and he endeavoured to discover from what quarter it came. It advanced, though distantly, and then passed away on the air. The circumstance struck him; he knew it was usual in some parts of Italy to chaunt this strain over the bed of the dying; but here the mourners seemed to walk the earth, or the air. He was not doubtful as to the strain itself; — once before he had heard it, and attended with circumstances which made it impossible that he should ever forget it. As he now listened to the choral voices softening in distance, a few pathetic notes brought full upon his remembrance the divine melody he had heard Ellena utter in the church of San Lorenzo. Overcome by the recollection, he started away, and, wandering over the garden, reached another side of the villa, where he soon heard the voice of Ellena herself, performing the midnight hymn to the Virgin, and accompanied by a lute, which she touched with most affecting and delicate expression. He stood for a moment entranced, and scarcely daring to breathe, lest he should lose any note of that meek and holy strain, which seemed to flow from a devotion almost saintly. Then, looking round to discover the object of his admiration, a light issuing from among the bowery foliage of a clematis led him to a lattice, and shewed him Ellena. The lattice had been thrown open to admit the cool air, and he had a full view of her and the apartment. She was rising from a small altar where she had concluded the service; the glow of devotion was still upon her countenance as she raised her eyes, and with a rapt earnestness fixed them on the heavens. She still held the lute, but no longer awakened it, and seemed lost to every surrounding object. Her fine hair was negligently bound up in a silk net, and some tresses that had escaped it, played on her neck, and round her beautiful countenance, which now was not even partially concealed by a veil. The light drapery of her dress, her whole figure, air, and attitude, were such as might have been copied for a Grecian nymph.

Vivaldi was perplexed and agitated between the wish of seizing an opportunity, which might never again occur, of pleading his love, and the fear of offending, by intruding upon her retirement at so sacred an hour; but, while he thus hesitated, she placed herself in a chair and touching her lute in a sweet symphony, presently accompanied it with her voice in a little air beautiful for its simplicity and pathos. When she had concluded, he heard her sigh, and then with a sweetness peculiar to her accent, pronounce his name. During the trembling anxiety, with which he listened to what might follow this mention of his name, he disturbed the clematis that surrounded the lattice, and she turned her eyes towards the window; but Vivaldi was entirely concealed by the foliage. She, however, rose to close the lattice; as she approached which, Vivaldi, unable any longer to command himself, appeared before her. She stood fixed for an instant, while her countenance changed to an ashy paleness; and then, with trembling haste closing the lattice, quitted the apartment. Vivaldi felt as if all his hopes had vanished with her.

After lingering in the garden for some time without perceiving a light in any other part of the building, or hearing a sound proceed from it, he took his melancholy way to Naples. He now began to ask himself some questions, which he ought to have urged before, and to enquire wherefore he sought the dangerous pleasure of seeing Ellena, since her family was of such a condition as rendered the consent of his parent to a marriage with her unattainable.

He was lost in revery on this subject, sometimes half resolved to seek her no more, and then shrinking from a conduct, which seemed to strike him with the force of despair, when, as he emerged from the dark arch of a ruin, that extended over the road, his steps were crossed by a person in the habit of a monk, whose face was shrouded by his cowl still more than by the twilight. The stranger, addressing him by his name, said, “Signor! your steps are watched; beware how you revisit Altieri!” Having uttered this, he disappeared, before Vivaldi could return the sword he had half drawn into the scabbard, or demand an explanation of the words he had heard. He called loudly and repeatedly, conjuring the unknown person to appear, and lingered near the spot for a considerable time; but the vision came no more.

Vivaldi arrived at home with a mind occupied by this incident, and tormented by the jealousy to which it gave rise; for, after indulging various conjectures, he concluded with believing the notice, of which he had been warned, to be that of a rival, and that the danger which menaced him, was from the poniard of jealousy. This belief discovered to him at once the extent of his passion, and of the imprudence, which had thus readily admitted it; yet so far was this new prudence from overcoming his error, that, stung with a torture more exquisite than he had ever known, he resolved, at every event, to declare his love, and sue for the hand of Ellena. Unhappy young man, he knew not the fatal error, into which passion was precipitating him!

On his arrival at the Vivaldi palace, he learned, that the Marchesa had observed his absence, had repeatedly enquired for him, and had given orders that the time of his return should be mentioned to her. She had, however, retired to rest; but the Marchese, who had attended the King on an excursion to one of the royal villas on the bay, returned home soon after

Vincentio; and, before he had withdrawn to his apartment, he met his son with looks of unusual displeasure, but avoided saying any thing, which either explained or alluded to the subject of it; and, after a short conversation, they separated.

Vivaldi shut himself in his apartment to deliberate, if that may deserve the name of deliberation, in which a conflict of passions, rather than an exertion of judgment, prevailed. For several hours he traversed his suit of rooms, alternately tortured by the remembrance of Ellena, fired with jealousy, and alarmed for the consequence of the imprudent step, which he was about to take. He knew the temper of his father, and some traits of the character of his mother, sufficiently to fear that their displeasure would be irreconcilable concerning the marriage he meditated; yet, when he considered that he was their only son, he was inclined to admit a hope of forgiveness, notwithstanding the weight which the circumstance must add to their disappointment. These reflexions were frequently interrupted by fears lest Ellena had already disposed of her affections to this imaginary rival. He was, however, somewhat consoled by remembering the sigh she had uttered, and the tenderness, with which she had immediately pronounced his name. Yet, even if she were not averse to his suit, how could he solicit her hand, and hope it would be given him, when he should declare that this must be in secret? He scarcely dared to believe that she would condescend to enter a family who disdained to receive her; and again despondency overcame him.

The morning found him as distracted as the night had left him; his determination, however, was fixed; and this was, to sacrifice what he now considered as a delusive pride of birth, to a choice which he believed would ensure the happiness of his life. But, before he ventured to declare himself to Ellena, it appeared necessary to ascertain whether he held an interest in her heart, or whether she had devoted it to the rival of his love, and who this rival really was. It was so much easier to wish for such information than to obtain it, that, after forming a thousand projects, either the delicacy of his respect for Ellena, or his fear of offending her, or an apprehension of discovery from his family before he had secured an interest in her affections, constantly opposed his views of an enquiry.

In this difficulty he opened his heart to a friend, who had long possessed his confidence, and whose advice he solicited with somewhat more anxiety and sincerity than is usual on such occasions. It was not a sanction of his own opinion that he required, but the impartial judgment of another mind. Bonarmo, however little he might be qualified for the office of an adviser, did not scruple to give his advice. As a means of judging whether Ellena was disposed to favour Vivaldi's addresses, he proposed that, according to the custom of the country, a serenade should be given; he maintained, that, if she was not disinclined towards him, some sign of approbation would appear; and if otherwise, that she would remain silent and invisible. Vivaldi objected to this coarse and inadequate mode of expressing a love so sacred as his, and he had too lofty an opinion of Ellena's mind and delicacy, to believe, that the trifling homage of a serenade would either flatter her self-love, or interest her in his favour; nor, if it did, could he venture to believe, that she would display any sign of approbation.

His friend laughed at his scruples and at his opinion of what he called such romantic delicacy, that his ignorance of the world was his only excuse for having cherished them. But Vivaldi interrupted this raillery, and would neither suffer him for a moment to speak thus of Ellena, or to call such delicacy romantic. Bonarmo, however, still urged the serenade as at least a possible means of discovering her disposition towards him before he made a formal avowal of his suit; and Vivaldi, perplexed and distracted with apprehension and impatience to terminate his present state of suspense, was at length so far overcome by his own difficulties, rather than by his friend's persuasion, that he consented to make the adventure of a serenade on the approaching night. This was adopted rather as a refuge from despondency, than with any hope of success; for he still believed that Ellena would not give any hint, that might terminate his uncertainty.

Beneath their cloaks they carried musical instruments, and, muffling up their faces, so that they could not be known, they proceeded in thoughtful silence on the way to the villa Altieri. Already they had passed the arch, in which Vivaldi was stopped by the stranger on the preceding night, when he heard a sudden sound near him, and, raising his head from the cloak, he perceived the same figure! Before he had time for exclamation, the stranger crossed him again. "Go not to the villa Altieri," said he in a solemn voice, "lest you meet the fate you ought to dread."

"What fate?" demanded Vivaldi, stepping back; "Speak, I conjure you!"

But the monk was gone, and the darkness of the hour baffled observation as to the way of his departure.

"Dio mi guardi!" exclaimed Bonarmo, "this is almost beyond belief! but let us return to Naples; this second warning ought to be obeyed."

“it is almost beyond endurance,” exclaimed Vivaldi; “which way did he pass?”

“He glided by me,” replied Bonarmo, “and he was gone before I could cross him!”

“I will tempt the worst at once,” said Vivaldi; “if I have a rival, it is best to meet him. Let us go on.”

Bonarmo remonstrated, and represented the serious danger that threatened from so rash a proceeding. “It is evident that you have a rival,” said he; “and your courage cannot avail you against hired bravos.” Vivaldi’s heart swelled at the mention of a rival. “If you think it dangerous to proceed, I will go alone,” said he.

Hurt by this reproof, Bonarmo accompanied his friend in silence, and they reached without interruption the boundary of the villa. Vivaldi led to the place by which he had entered on the preceding night, and they passed unmolested into the garden.

“Where are these terrible bravos of whom you warned me?” said Vivaldi, with taunting exultation.

“Speak cautiously,” replied his friend; “we may, even now, be within their reach.”

“They also may be within ours,” observed Vivaldi.

At length, these adventurous friends came to the orangery, which was near the house, when, tired by the ascent, they rested to recover breath, and to prepare their instruments for the serenade. The night was still, and they now heard, for the first time, murmurs as of a distant multitude; and then the sudden splendor of fireworks broke upon the sky. These arose from a villa on the western margin of the bay, and were given in honour of the birth of one of the royal princes. They soared to an immense height, and, as their lustre broke silently upon the night, it lightened on the thousand up-turned faces of the gazing crowd, illumined the waters of the bay, with every little boat that skimmed its surface, and shewed distinctly the whole sweep of its rising shores, the stately city of Naples on the strand below, and, spreading far among the hills, its terraced roofs crowded with spectators, and the Corso tumultuous with carriages and blazing with torches.

While Bonarmo surveyed this magnificent scene, Vivaldi turned his eyes to the residence of Ellena, part of which looked out from among the trees, with a hope that the spectacle would draw her to a balcony; but she did not appear, nor was there any light, that might indicate her approach.

While they still refted on the turf of the orangery, they heard a sudden rustling of the leaves, as if the branches were disturbed by some person who endeavoured to make his way between them, when Vivaldi demanded who passed. No answer was returned, and a long silence followed.

“We are observed,” said Bonarmo, at length, “and are even now, perhaps, almost beneath the poinard of the assassin: let us be gone.”

“O that my heart were as secure from the darts of love, the assassin of my peace,” exclaimed Vivaldi, “as yours is from those of bravos! My friend, you have little to interest you, since your thoughts have so much leisure for apprehension.”

“My fear is that of prudence, not of weakness,” retorted Bonarmo, with acrimony; “you will find, perhaps, that I have none, when you most wish me to possess it.”

“I understand you,” replied Vivaldi; “let us finish this business, and you shall receive reparation, since you believe yourself injured: I am as anxious to repair an offence, as jealous of receiving one.”

“Yes,” replied Bonarmo, “you would repair the injury you have done your friend with his blood.”

“Oh! never, never!” said Vivaldi, falling on his neck. “Forgive my hasty violence; allow for the distraction of my mind.”

Bonarmo returned the embrace. “It is enough,” said he; “no more, no more! I hold again my friend to my heart.”

While this conversation passed, they had quitted the orangery, and reached the walls of the villa, where they took their station under a balcony that overhung the lattice, through which Vivaldi had seen Ellena on the preceding night. They tuned their instruments, and opened the serenade with a duet.

Vivaldi’s voice was a fine tenor, and the same susceptibility, which made him passionately fond of music, taught him to modulate its cadence with exquisite delicacy, and to give his emphasis with the most simple and pathetic expression. His soul seemed to breathe in the sounds, — so tender, so imploring, yet so energetic. On this night, enthusiasm inspired him with the highest eloquence, perhaps, which music is capable of attaining; what might be its effect on Ellena he had no means of judging, for she did not appear either at the balcony or the lattice, nor gave any hint of applause. No sounds stole on the stillness of the night, except those of the serenade, nor did any light from within the villa break upon the obscurity without; once, indeed, in a pause of the instruments, Bonarmo fancied he distinguished voices near him, as of persons who feared to be heard, and he listened attentively, but without ascertaining the truth. Sometimes they seemed to sound heavily in his ear, and then a death-like silence prevailed. Vivaldi affirmed the sound to be nothing more than the confused murmur of the distant multitude on the shore, but Bonarmo was not thus easily convinced.

The musicians, unsuccessful in their first endeavour to attract attention, removed to the opposite side of the building, and placed themselves in front of the portico, but with as little success; and, after having exercised their powers of harmony and of patience for above an hour, they resigned all further effort to win upon the obdurate Ellena. Vivaldi, notwithstanding the feebleness of his first hope of seeing her, now suffered an agony of disappointment; and Bonarmo, alarmed for the consequence of his despair, was as anxious to persuade him that he had no rival, as he had lately been pertinacious in affirming that he had one.

At length, they left the gardens, Vivaldi protesting that he would not rest till he had discovered the stranger, who so wantonly destroyed his peace, and had compelled him to explain his ambiguous warnings; and Bonarmo remonstrating on the imprudence and difficulty of the search, and representing that such conduct would probably be the means of spreading a report of his attachment, where most he dreaded it should be known.

Vivaldi refused to yield to remonstrance or considerations of any kind. “We shall see,” said he, “whether this demon in the garb of a monk, will haunt me again at the accustomed place; if he does, he shall not escape my grasp; and if he does not, I will watch as vigilantly for his return, as he seems to have done for mine. I will lurk in the shade of the ruin, and wait for him, though it be till death!”

Bonarmo was particularly struck by the vehemence with which he pronounced the last words, but he no longer opposed his purpose, and only bade him consider whether he was well armed, “For,” he added, “you may have need of arms there, though you had no use for them at the villa Altieri. Remember that the stranger told you that your steps were watched.”

“I have my sword,” replied Vivaldi, “and the dagger which I usually wear; but I ought to enquire what are your weapons of defence.”

“Hush!” said Bonarmo, as they turned the foot of a rock that overhung the road, “we are approaching the spot; yonder is the arch!” It appeared duskily in the perspective, suspended between two cliffs, where the road wound from sight, on one of which were the ruins of the Roman fort it belonged to, and on the other, shadowing pines, and thickets of oak that tufted the rock to its base.

They proceeded in silence, treading lightly, and often throwing a suspicious glance around, expecting every instant that the monk would steal out upon them from some recess of the cliffs. But they passed on unmolested to the arch-way. “We are here before him, however,” said Vivaldi as they entered the darkness. “Speak low, my friend,” said Bonarmo, “others besides ourselves may be shrouded in this obscurity. I like not the place.”

“Who but ourselves would chuse so dismal a retreat?” whispered Vivaldi, “unless indeed, it were banditti; the savageness of the spot would, in truth, suit their humour, and it suits well also with my own.”

“It would suit their purpose too, as well as their humour,” observed Bonarmo. “Let us remove from this deep shade, into the more open road, where we can as closely observe who passes.”

Vivaldi objected that in the road they might themselves be observed, “and if we are seen by my unknown tormentor, our design is defeated, for he comes upon us suddenly, or not at all, lest we should be prepared to detain him.”

Vivaldi, as he said this, took his station within the thickest gloom of the arch, which was of considerable depth, and near a flight of steps that was cut in the rock, and ascended to the fortress. His friend stepped close to his side. After a pause of silence, during which Bonarmo was meditating, and Vivaldi was impatiently watching, “Do you really believe,” said the former, “that any effort to detain him would be effectual? He glided past me with a strange facility, it was surely more than human!”

“What is it you mean? enquired Vivaldi.

“Why, I mean that I could be superstitious. This place, perhaps, infests my mind with congenial gloom, for I find that, at this moment, there is scarcely a superstition too dark for my credulity.”

Vivaldi smiled. “And you must allow,” added Bonarmo, “that he has appeared under circumstances somewhat extraordinary. How should he know your name, by which, you say, he addressed you at the first meeting? How should he know from whence you came, or whether you designed to return? By what magic could he become acquainted with your plans?”

“Nor am I certain that he is acquainted with them,” observed Vivaldi; “but if he is, there was no necessity for superhuman means to obtain such knowledge.”

“The result of this evening surely ought to convince you that he is acquainted with your designs,” said Bonarmo. “Do you believe it possible that Ellena could have been insensible to your attentions, if her heart had not been pre-engaged, and that she would not have shewn herself at a lattice?”

“You do not know Ellena,” replied Vivaldi, “and therefore I once more pardon you the question. Yet had she been disposed to accept my addresses, surely some sign of approbation,” — he checked himself.

“The stranger warned you not to go to the villa Altieri,” resumed Bonarmo, “he seemed to anticipate the reception, which awaited you, and to know a danger, which hitherto you have happily escaped.”

“Yes, he anticipated too well that reception,” said Vivaldi, losing his prudence in passionate exclamation; “and he is himself, perhaps, the rival, whom he has taught me to suspect. He has assumed a disguise only the more effectually to impose upon my credulity, and to deter me from addressing Ellena. And shall I tamely lie in wait for his approach? Shall I lurk like a guilty assassin for this rival?”

“For heaven’s sake!” said Bonarmo, “moderate these transports; consider where you are. This surmise of yours is in the highest degree improbable.” He gave his reasons for thinking so, and these convinced Vivaldi, who was prevailed upon to be once more patient.

They had remained watchful and still for a considerable time, when Bonarmo saw a person approach the end of the arch-way nearest to Altieri. He heard no step, but he perceived a shadowy figure station itself at the entrance of the arch, where the twilight of this brilliant climate was, for a few paces, admitted. Vivaldi’s eyes were fixed on the road leading towards Naples, and he, therefore, did not perceive the object of Bonarmo’s attention, who, fearful of his friend’s precipitancy, forbore to point out immediately what he observed, judging it more prudent to watch the motions of this unknown person, that he might ascertain whether it really were the monk. The size of the figure, and the dark drapery in which it seemed wrapt, induced him, at length, to believe that this was the expected stranger; and he seized Vivaldi’s arm to direct his attention to him, when the form gliding forward disappeared in the gloom, but not before Vivaldi had understood the occasion of his friend’s gesture and significant silence. They heard no footstep pass them, and, being convinced that this person, whatever he was, had not left the arch-way, they kept their station in watchful stillness. Presently they heard a rustling, as of garments, near them, and Vivaldi, unable longer to command his patience, started from his concealment, and with arms extended to prevent any one from escaping, demanded who was there.

The sound ceased, and no reply was made. Bonarmo drew his sword, protesting he would stab the air till he found the person who lurked there; but that if the latter would discover himself, he should receive no injury. This assurance Vivaldi confirmed by his promise. Still no answer was returned; but as they listened for a voice, they thought something passed them, and the avenue was not narrow enough to have prevented such a circumstance. Vivaldi rushed forward, but did not perceive any person issue from the arch into the highway, where the stronger twilight must have discovered him.

“Somebody certainly passed,” whispered Bonarmo, “and I think I hear a sound from younder steps, that lead to the fortress.”

“Let us follow,” cried Vivaldi, and he began to ascend. “Stop, for heaven’s sake stop!” said Bonarmo; “consider what you are about! Do not brave the utter darkness of these ruins; do not pursue the assassin to his den!”

“It is the monk himself!” exclaimed Vivaldi, still ascending; “he shall not escape me!”

Bonarmo paused a moment at the foot of the steps, and his friend disappeared; he hesitated what to do, till ashamed of suffering him to encounter danger alone, he sprang to the flight, and not without difficulty surmounted the rugged steps.

Having reached the summit of the rock, he found himself on a terrace, that ran along the top of the arch-way and had once been fortified; this, crossing the road, commanded the defile each way. Some remains of massy walls, that still exhibited loops for archers, were all that now hinted of its former use. It led to a watch-tower almost concealed in thick pines, that crowned the opposite cliff, and had thus served not only for a strong battery over the road, but, connecting the opposite sides of the defile, had formed a line of communication between the fort and this out-post.

Bonarmo looked round in vain for his friend, and the echoes of his own voice only, among the rocks, replied to his repeated calls. After some hesitation whether to enter the walls of the main building, or to cross to the watch-tower, he determined on the former, and entered a rugged area, the walls of which, following the declivities of the precipice, could scarcely now be traced. The citadel, a round tower, of majestic strength, with some Roman arches scattered near, was all that remained of this once important fortress; except, indeed, a mass of ruins near the edge of the cliff, the construction of which made it difficult to guess for what purpose it had been designed.

Bonarmo entered the immense walls of the citadel, but the utter darkness within checked his progress, and, contenting himself with calling loudly on Vivaldi, he returned to the open air.

As he approached the mass of ruins, whose singular form had interested his curiosity, he thought he distinguished the low accents of a human voice, and while he listened in anxiety, a person rushed forth from a doorway of the ruin, carrying a drawn sword. It was Vivaldi himself. Bonarmo sprang to meet him; he was pale and breathless, and some moments elapsed before he could speak, or appeared to hear the repeated enquiries of his friend.

“Let us go,” said Vivaldi, “let us leave this place!”

“Most willingly,” replied Bonarmo, “but where have you been, and who have you seen, that you are thus affected.”

“Ask me no more questions, let us go,” repeated Vivaldi.

They descended the rock together, and when, having reached the arch-way, Bonarmo enquired, half sportively, whether they should remain any longer on the watch, his friend answered, “No!” with an emphasis that startled him. They passed hastily on the way to Naples, Bonarmo repeating enquiries which Vivaldi seemed reluctant to satisfy, and wondering no less at the cause of this sudden reserve, than anxious to know whom he had seen.

“It was the monk, then,” said Bonarmo; “you secured him at last?”

“I know not what to think,” replied Vivaldi, “I am more perplexed than ever.”

“He escaped you then?”

“We will speak of this in future,” said Vivaldi; “but be it as it may, the business rests not here. I will return in the night of to-morrow with a torch; dare you venture yourself with me?”

“I know not,” replied Bonarmo, “whether I ought to do so, since I am not informed for what purpose.”

“I will not press you to go,” said Vivaldi; “my purpose is already known to you.”

“Have you really failed to discover the stranger — have you still doubts concerning the person you pursued?”

“I have doubts, which to-morrow night, I hope, will dissipate.”

“This is very strange!” said Bonarmo, “It was but now that I witnessed the horror, with which you left the fortress of Paluzzi, and already you speak of returning to it! And why at night — why not in the day, when less danger would beset you?”

“I know not as to that,” replied Vivaldi, “you are to observe that day-light never pierces within the recess, to which I penetrated; we must search the place with torches at whatsoever hour we would examine it.”

“Since this is necessary,” said Bonarmo, “how happens it that you found your way in total darkness?”

“I was too much engaged to know how; I was led on, as by an invisible hand.”

“We must, notwithstanding,” observed Bonarmo, “go in day-time, if not by day-light, provided I accompany you. It would be little less than insanity to go twice to a place, which is probably infested with robbers, and at their own hour of midnight.”

“I shall watch again in the accustomed place,” replied Vivaldi, “before I use my last resource, and this cannot be done during the day. Besides, it is necessary that I should go at a particular hour, the hour when the monk has usually appeared.”

“He did escape you, then?” said Bonarmo, “and you are still ignorant concerning who he is?”

Vivaldi rejoined only with an enquiry whether his friend would accompany him.

“If not,” he added, “I must hope to find another companion.”

Bonarmo said, that he must consider of the proposal, and would acquaint him with his determination before the following evening.

While this conversation concluded, they were in Naples, and at the gates of the Vivaldi palace, where they separated for the remainder of the night.

CHAPTER 2

Olivia.
"Why what would you?"
Viola.
"Make me a willow cabin at your gate,
And call upon my soul within the house;
Write loyal cantos of contemned love,
And sing them loud even in the dead of night:
Halloo your name to the reverberate hills,
And make the babbling gossip of the air
Cry out, Olivia! O! you should not rest
Between the elements of air and earth,
But you should pity me."
Twelfth Night.

Since Vivaldi had failed to procure an explanation of the words of the monk, he determined to relieve himself from the tortures of suspence, respecting a rival, by going to the villa Altieri, and declaring his pretensions. On the morning immediately following his late adventure, he went thither, and on enquiring for Signora Bianchi, was told that she could not be seen. With much difficulty he prevailed upon the old house-keeper to deliver a request that he might be permitted to wait upon her for a few moments. Permission was granted him, when he was conducted into the very apartment where he had formerly seen Ellena. It was unoccupied and he was told that Signora Bianchi would be there presently.

During this interval, he was agitated at one moment with quick impatience, and at another with enthusiastic pleasure, while he gazed on the altar whence he had seen Ellena rise, and where, to his fancy, she still appeared; and on every object, on which he knew her eyes had lately dwelt. These objects, so familiar to her, had in the imagination of Vivaldi acquired somewhat of the sacred character she had impressed upon his heart, and affected him in some degree as her presence would have done. He trembled as he took up the lute she had been accustomed to touch, and, when he awakened the chords, her own voice seemed to speak. A drawing, half-finished, of a dancing nymph remained on a stand, and he immediately understood that her hand had traced the lines. It was a copy from Herculaneum, and, though a copy, was touched with the spirit of original genius. The light steps appeared almost to move, and the whole figure displayed the airy lightness of exquisite grace. Vivaldi perceived this to be one of a set that ornamented the apartment, and observed with surprise, that they were the particular subjects, which adorned his father's cabinet, and which he had understood to be the only copies permitted from the originals in the royal museum.

Every object, on which his eyes rested, seemed to announce the presence of Ellena; and the very flowers that so gaily embellished the apartment, breathed forth a perfume, which fascinated his senses and affected his imagination. Before Signora Bianchi appeared, his anxiety and apprehension had encreased so much, that, believing he should be unable to support himself in her presence, he was more than once upon the point of leaving the house. At length, he heard her approaching step from the hall, and his breath almost forsook him. The figure of Signora Bianchi was not of an order to inspire admiration, and a spectator might have smiled to see the perturbation of Vivaldi, his faultering step and anxious eye, as he advanced to meet the venerable Bianchi, as he bowed upon her faded hand, and listened to her querulous voice. She received him with an air of reserve, and some moments passed before he could recollect himself sufficiently to explain the purpose of his visit; yet this, when he discovered it, did not apparently surprise her. She listened with composure, though with somewhat of a severe countenance, to his protestations of regard for her niece, and when he implored her to intercede for him in obtaining the hand of Ellena, she said, "I cannot be ignorant that a family of your rank must be averse to an union with one ofmine; nor am I unacquainted that a full sense of the value of birth is a marking feature in the characters of the Marchese and Marchesa di Vivaldi. This proposal must be disagreeable or, at least, unknown to them; and I am to inform you, Signor, that, though Signora di Rosalba is their inferior in rank, she is their equal in pride."

Vivaldi disdained to prevaricate, yet was shocked to own the truth thus abruptly. The ingenuous manner, however, with which he at length did this, and the energy of a passion too eloquent to be misunderstood, somewhat soothed the anxiety of Signora Bianchi, with whom other considerations began to arise. She considered that from her own age and infirmities she must very soon, in the course of nature, leave Ellena a young and friendless orphan; still somewhat dependent upon her own industry, and entirely so on her discretion. With much beauty and little knowledge of the world, the dangers of her future situation appeared in vivid colours to the affectionate mind of Signora Bianchi; and she sometimes thought that it might be right to sacrifice considerations, which in other circumstances would be laudable, to the obtaining for her niece the protection of a husband and a man of honour. If in this instance she descended from the lofty integrity, which ought to have opposed her consent that Ellena should clandestinely enter any family, her parental anxiety may soften the censure she deserved.

But, before she determined upon this subject, it was necessary to ascertain that Vivaldi was worthy of the confidence she might repose in him. To try, also, the constancy of his affection, she gave little present encouragement to his hopes. His request to see Ellena she absolutely refused, till she should have considered further of his proposals; and his enquiry whether he had a rival, and, if he had, whether Ellena was disposed to favour him, she evaded, since she knew that a reply would give more encouragement to his hopes, than it might hereafter be proper to confirm.

Vivaldi, at length, took his leave, released, indeed, from absolute despair, but scarcely encouraged to hope; ignorant that he had a rival, yet doubtful whether Ellena honoured himself with any share of her esteem.

He had received permission to wait upon Signora Bianchi on a future day, but till that day should arrive time appeared motionless; and, since it seemed utterly impossible to endure this interval of suspence, his thoughts on the way to Naples were wholy engaged in contriving the means of concluding it, till he reached the well-known arch, and looked round, though hopelessly, for his mysterious tormentor. The stranger did not appear; and Vivaldi pursued the road, determined to re-visit the spot at night, and also to return privately to villa Altieri, where he hoped a second visit might procure for him some relief from his present anxiety.

When he reached home he found that the Marchese, his father, had left an order for him to await his arrival; which he obeyed; but the day passed without his return. The marchesa, when she saw him, enquired, with a look that expressed much, how he had engaged himself of late, and completely frustrated his plans for the evening, by requiring him to attend her to Portici. Thus he was prevented from receiving Bonarmo’s determination, from watching at Paluzzi, and from revisiting Ellena’s residence.

He remained at Portici the following evening, and, on his return to Naples, the Marchese being again absent, he continued ignorant of the intended subject of the interview. A note from Bonarmo brought a refusal to accompany him to the fortress, and urged him to forbear so dangerous a visit. Being for this night unprovided with a companion for the adventure, and unwilling to go alone, Vivaldi deferred it to another evening; but no consideration could deter him from visiting the villa Altieri. Not chusing to solicit his friend to accompany him thither, since he had refused his first request, he took his solitary lute, and reached the garden at an earlier hour than usual.

The sun had been set above an hour, but the horizon still retained somewhat of a saffron brilliancy, and the whole dome of the sky had an appearance of transparency, peculiar to this enchanting climate, which seemed to diffuse a more soothing twilight over the reposing world. In the south-east the outline of Vesuvius appeared distinctly, but the mountain itself was dark and silent.

Vivaldi heard only the quick and eager voices of some Lazaroni at a distance on the shore, as they contended at the simple game of maro. From the bowery lattices of a small pavilion within the orangery, he perceived a light, and the sudden hope, which it occasioned, of seeing Ellena, almost overcame him. It was impossible to resist the opportunity of beholding her, yet he checked the impatient step he was taking, to ask himself, whether it was honorable thus to steal upon her retirement, and become an unsuspected observer of her secret thoughts. But the temptation was too powerful for this honorable hesitation; the pause was momentary; and, stepping lightly towards the pavilion, he placed himself near an open lattice, so as to be shrouded from observation by the branches of an orange-tree, while he obtained a full view of the apartment. Ellena was alone, sitting in a thoughtful attitude and holding her lute, which she did not play. She appeared lost to a consciousness of surrounding objects, and a tenderness was on her countenance, which seemed to tell him that her thoughts were engaged by some interesting subject. Recollecting that, when last he had seen her thus, she pronounced his name, his hope revived, and he was going to discover himself and appear at her feet, when she spoke, and he paused.

“Why this unreasonable pride of birth!” said she; “A visionary prejudice destroys our peace. Never would I submit to enter a family averse to receive me; they shall learn, at least, that I inherit nobility of soul. O! Vivaldi! but for this unhappy prejudice!” —

Vivaldi, while he listened to this, was immovable; he seemed as if entranced; the sound of her lute and voice recalled him, and he heard her sing the first stanza of the very air, with which he had opened the serenade on a former night, and with such sweet pathos as the composer must have felt when he was inspired with the idea.

She paused at the conclusion of the first stanza, when Vivaldi, overcome by the temptation of such an opportunity for expressing his passion, suddenly struck the chords of the lute, and replied to her in the second. The tremor of his voice, though it restrained his tones, heightened its eloquence. Ellena instantly recollected it; her colour alternately faded and returned; and, before the verse concluded, she seemed to have lost all consciousness. Vivaldi was now advancing into the pavilion, when his approach recalled her; she waved him to retire, and before he could spring to her support, she rose and would have left the place, had he not interrupted her and implored a few moments attention.

"It is impossible," said Ellena.

"Let me only hear you say that I am not hateful to you," rejoined Vivaldi; "that this intrusion has not deprived me of the regard, with which but now you acknowledged you honoured me." —

"Oh, never, never!" interrupted Ellena, impatiently; "forget that I ever made such acknowledgement; forget that you ever heard it; I know not what I said."

"Ah, beautiful Ellena! do you think it possible I ever can forget it? It will be the solace of my solitary hours, the hope that shall sustain me." —

"I cannot be detained Signor," interrupted Ellena, still more embarrassed, "or forgive myself for having permitted such a conversation;" but as she spoke the last words, an involuntary smile seemed to contradict their meaning. Vivaldi believed the smile in spite of the words; but, before he could express the lightning joy of conviction, she had left the pavilion; he followed through the garden — but she was gone.

From this moment Vivaldi seemed to have arisen into a new existence; the whole world to him was Paradise; that smile seemed impressed upon his heart for ever. In the fulness of present joy, he believed it impossible that he could ever be unhappy again, and defied the utmost malice of future fortune. With footsteps light as air, he returned to Naples, nor once remembered to look for his old monitor on the way.

The Marchese and his mother being from home, he was left at his leisure to indulge the rapturous recollection, that pressed upon his mind, and of which he was impatient of a moment's interruption. All night he either traversed his apartment with an agitation equal to that, which anxiety had so lately inflicted, or composed and destroyed letters to Ellena; sometimes fearing that he had written too much, and at others feeling that he had written too little; recollecting circumstances which he ought to have mentioned, and lamenting the cold expression of a passion, to which it appeared that no language could do justice.

By the hour when the domestics had risen, he had, however, completed a letter somewhat more to his satisfaction, and he dispatched it to the villa Altieri by a confidential person; but the servant had scarcely quitted the gates, when he recollected new arguments, which he wished to urge, and expressions to change of the utmost importance to enforce his meaning, and he would have given half the world to have recalled the messenger.

In this state of agitation he was summoned to attend the Marchese, who had been too much engaged of late to keep his own appointment. Vivaldi was not long in doubt as to the subject of this interview.

"I have wished to speak with you," said the Marchese, assuming an air of haughty severity, "upon a subject of the utmost importance to your honour and happiness; and I wished, also, to give you an opportunity of contradicting a report, which would have occasioned me considerable uneasiness, if I could have believed it. Happily I had too much confidence in my son to credit this; and I affirmed that he understood too well what was due both to his family and himself, to take any step derogatory from the dignity of either. My motive for this conversation, therefore, is merely to afford you a moment for refuting the calumny I shall mention, and to obtain for myself authority for contradicting it to the persons who have communicated it to me."

Vivaldi waited impatiently for the conclusion of this exordium, and then begged to be informed of the subject of the report.

"It is said," resumed the Marchese, "that there is a young woman, who is called Ellena Rosalba, — I think that is the name; — do you know any person of the name?"

"Do I know!" exclaimed Vivaldi, "but pardon me, pray proceed, my Lord."

The Marchese paused, and regarded his son with sternness, but without surprize.

"It is said, that a young person of this name has contrived to fascinate your affections, and" —

"It is most true, my Lord, that Signora Rosalba has won my affections," interrupted Vivaldi with honest impatience, "but without contrivance."

"I will not be interrupted," said the Marchese, interrupting in his turn. "It is said that she has so artfully adapted her temper to yours, that, with the assistance of a relation who lives with her, she has reduced you to the degrading situation of her devoted suitor."

"Signora Rosalba has, my Lord, exalted me to the honour of being her suitor [has not yet allowed me to assume that honourable title]," said Vivaldi, unable longer to command his feelings. He was proceeding, when the Marchese abruptly checked him, "You avow your folly then!"

"My Lord, I glory in my choice."

"Young man," rejoined his father, "as this is the arrogance and romantic enthusiasm of a boy, I am willing to forgive it for once, and observe me, only for once. If you will acknowledge your error, instantly dismiss this new favourite." —

"My Lord!"

"You must instantly dismiss her," repeated the Marchese with sterner emphasis; "and, to prove that I am more merciful than just, I am willing, on this condition, to allow her a small annuity as some reparation for the depravity, into which you have assisted to sink her."

"My Lord!" exclaimed Vivaldi aghast, and scarcely daring to trust his voice, "my Lord! — depravity?" struggling for breath. "Who has dared to pollute her spotless fame by insulting your ears with such infamous falsehood? Tell me, I conjure you, instantly tell me, that I may hasten to give him his reward. Depravity! — an annuity — an annuity! O Ellena! Ellena!" As he pronounced her name tears of tenderness mingled with those of indignation.

"Young man," said the Marchese, who had observed the violence of his emotion with strong displeasure and alarm, "I do not lightly give faith to report, and I cannot suffer myself to doubt the truth of what I have advanced. You are deceived, and your vanity will continue the delusion, unless I condescend to exert my authority, and tear the veil from your eyes. Dismiss her instantly, and I will adduce proof of her former character which will stagger even your faith, enthusiastic as it is."

"Dismiss her!" repeated Vivaldi, with calm yet stern energy, such as his father had never seen him assume; "My Lord, you have never yet doubted my word, and I now pledge you that honourable word, that Ellena is innocent. Innocent! O heavens, that it should ever be necessary to affirm so, and, above all, that it should ever be necessary for me to vindicate her!"

"I must indeed lament that it ever should," replied the Marchese coldly. "You have pledged your word, which I cannot question. I believe, therefore, that you are deceived; that you think her virtuous, notwithstanding your midnight visits to her house. And grant she is, unhappy boy! what reparation can you make her for the infatuated folly, which has thus stained her character? What" —

"By proclaiming to the world, my Lord, that she is worthy of becoming my wife," replied Vivaldi, with a glow of countenance, which announced the courage and the exultation of a virtuous mind.

"Your wife!" said the Marchese, with a look of ineffable disdain, which was instantly succeeded by one of angry alarm. — "If I believed you could so far forget what is due to the honour of your house, I would for ever disclaim you as my son."

"O! why," exclaimed Vivaldi, in an agony of conflicting passions, "why should I be in danger of forgetting what is due to a father, when I am only asserting what is due to innocence; when I am only defending her, who has no other to defend her! Why may not I be permitted to reconcile duties so congenial! But, be the event what it may, I will defend the oppressed, and glory in the virtue, which teaches me, that it is the first duty of humanity to do so. Yes, my Lord, if it must be so, I am ready to sacrifice inferior duties to the grandeur of a principle, which ought to expand all hearts and impel all actions. I shall best support the honour of my house by adhering to its dictates."

"Where is the principle," said the Marchese, impatiently, "which shall teach you to disobey a father; where is the virtue which shall instruct you to degrade your family?"

"There can be no degradation, my Lord, where there is no vice," replied Vivaldi; "and there are instances, pardon me, my Lord, there are some few instances in which it is virtuous to disobey."

"This paradoxical morality," said the Marchese, with passionate displeasure, "and this romantic language, sufficiently explain to me the character of your associates, and the innocence of her, whom you defend with so chivalric an air. Are you to learn, Signor, that you belong to your family, not your family to you; that you are only a guardian of its honour, and not at liberty to dispose of yourself? My patience will endure no more!"

Nor could the patience of Vivaldi endure this repeated attack on the honor of Ellena. But, while he yet asserted her innocence, he endeavoured to do so with the temper, which was due to the presence of a father; and, though he maintained the independence of a man, he was equally anxious to preserve inviolate the dutie of a son. But unfortunately the Marchese and Vivaldi differed in opinion concerning the limits of these duties; the first extending them to passive obedience, and the latter conceiving them to conclude at a point, wherein the happiness of an individual is so deeply concerned as in marriage. They parted mutually inflamed; Vivaldi unable to prevail with his father to mention the name of his infamous informant, or to acknowledge himself convinced of Ellena's innocence; and the Marchese equally unsuccessful in his endeavours to obtain from his son a promise that he would see her no more.

Here then was Vivaldi, who only a few short hours before had experienced a happiness so supreme as to efface all impressions of the past, and to annihilate every consideration of the future; a joy so full that it permitted him not to believe it possible that he could ever again taste of misery; he, who had felt as if that moment was as an eternity, rendering him independent of all others, — even he was thus soon fallen into the region of time and of suffering.

The present conflict of passion appeared endless; he loved his father, and would have been more shocked to consider the vexation he was preparing for him, had he not been resentful of the contempt he expressed for Ellena. He adored Ellena; and, while he felt the impractability of resigning his hopes, was equally indignant of the slander, which affected her name, and impatient to avenge the insult upon the original defamer.

Though the displeasure of his father concerning a marriage with Ellena had been already foreseen, the experience of it was severer and more painful than he had imagined; while the indignity offered to Ellena was as unexpected as intolerable. But this circumstance furnished him with an additional argument for addressing her; for, if it had been possible that his love could have paused, his honour seemed now engaged in her behalf; and, since he had been a means of sullying her fame, it became his duty to restore it. Willingly listening to the dictates of a duty so plausible, he determined to persevere in his original design. But his first efforts were directed to discover her slanderer, and recollecting, with surprize, those words of the Marchese, which had confessed a knowledge of his evening visits to the villa Altieri, the doubtful warnings of the monk seemed explained. He believed that this man was at once the spy of his steps, and the defamer of his love, till the inconsistency of such conduct with the seeming friendliness of his admonitions, struck Vivaldi and compelled him to believe the contrary.

Meanwhile, the heart of Ellena had been little less tranquil. It was divided by love and pride; but had she been acquainted with the circumstances of the late interview between the Marchese and Vivaldi, it would have been divided no longer, and a just regard for her own dignity would instantly have taught her to subdue, without difficulty, this infant affection.

Signora Bianchi had informed her niece of the subject of Vivaldi's visit; but she had softened the objectionable circumstances that attended his proposal, and had, at first, merely hinted that it was not to be supposed his family would approve a connection with any person so much their inferior in rank as herself. Ellena, alarmed by this suggestion, replied, that, since she believed so, she had done right to reject Vivaldi's suit; but her sigh, as she said this, did not escape the observation of Signora Bianchi, who ventured to add, that she had not absolutely rejected his offers.

While in this and future conversations, Ellena was pleased to perceive her secret admiration thus justified by an approbation so indisputable as that of her aunt, and was willing to believe that the circumstance, which had alarmed her just pride, was not so humiliating as she at first imagined, Bianchi was careful to conceal the real considerations, which had induced her to listen to Vivaldi, being well assured that they would have no weight with Ellena, whose generous heart and inexperienced mind would have revolted from mingling any motives of interest with an engagement so sacred as that of marriage. When, however, from further deliberation upon the advantages, which such an alliance must secure for her niece, Signora Bianchi determined to encourage his views, and to direct the mind of Ellena, whose affections were already engaged on her side, the opinions of the latter were found less ductile than had been expected. She was shocked at the idea of entering clandestinely the family of Vivaldi. But Bianchi, whose infirmities urged her wishes, was now so strongly convinced of the prudence of such an engagement for her niece, that she determined to prevail over her reluctance, though she perceived that this must be by means more gradual and persuasive than she had believed necessary. On the evening, when Vivaldi had surprised from Ellena an acknowledgment of her sentiments, her embarrassment and vexation, on her returning to the house, and relating what had occurred, sufficiently expressed to Signora Bianchi the exact situation of her heart. And when, on the following morning, his letter arrived, written with the simplicity and energy of truth, the aunt neglected not to adapt her remarks upon it, to the character of Ellena, with her usual address.

Vivaldi, after the late interview with the Marchese, passed the remainder of the day in considering various plans, which might discover to him the person, who had abused the credulity of his father; and in the evening he returned once more to the villa Altieri, not in secret, to serenade the dark balcony of his mistress, but openly, and to converse with Signora Bianchi, who now received him more courteously than on his former visit. Attributing the anxiety in his countenance to the uncertainty, concerning the disposition of her niece, she was neither surprised or offended, but ventured to relieve him from a part of it, by encouraging his hopes. Vivaldi dreaded lest she should enquire further respecting the sentiments of his family, but she spared both his delicacy and her own on this point; and, after a conversation of considerable length, he left the villa Altieri with a heart somewhat soothed by approbation, and lightened by hope, although he had not obtained a sight of Ellena. The disclosure she had made of her sentiments on the preceding evening, and the hints she had received as to those of his family, still wrought upon her mind with too much effect to permit an interview.

Soon after his return to Naples, the Marchesa, whom he was surprised to find disengaged, sent for him to her closet, where a scene passed similar to that which had occurred with his father, except that the Marchesa was more dexterous in her questions, and more subtle in her whole conduct; and that Vivaldi, never for a moment, forgot the decorum which was due to a mother. Managing his passions, rather than exasperating them, and deceiving him with respect to the degree of resentment she felt from his choice, she was less passionate than the Marchese in her observations and menaces, perhaps, only because she entertained more hope than he did of preventing the evil she contemplated.

Vivaldi quitted her, unconvinced — by her arguments, unsubdued by her prophecies, and unmoved in his designs. He was not alarmed, because he did not sufficiently understand her character to apprehend her purposes. Despairing to effect these by open violence, she called in an auxiliary of no mean talents, and whose character and views well adapted him to be an instrument in her hands. It was, perhaps, the baseness of her own heart, not either depth of reflexion or keenness of penetration, which enabled her to understand the nature of his; and she determined to modulate that nature to her own views.

There lived in the Dominican convent of the Spirito Santo, at Naples, a man called father Schedoni; an Italian, as his name imported, but whose family was unknown, and from some circumstances, it appeared, that he wished to throw an impenetrable veil over his origin. For whatever reason, he was never heard to mention a relative, or the place of his nativity, and he had artfully eluded every enquiry that approached the subject, which the curiosity of his associates had occasionally prompted. There were circumstances, however, which appeared to indicate him to be a man of birth, and of fallen fortune; his spirit, as it had sometimes looked forth from under the disguise of his manners, seemed lofty; it shewed not, however, the aspirings of a generous mind, but rather the gloomy pride of a disappointed one. Some few persons in the convent, who had been interested by his appearance, believed that the peculiarities of his manners, his severe reserve and unconquerable silence, his solitary habits and frequent penances, were the effect of misfortunes preying upon a haughty and disordered spirit; while others conjectured them the consequence of some hideous crime gnawing upon an awakened conscience.

He would sometimes abstract himself from the society for whole days together, or when with such a disposition he was comelled to mingle with it, he seemed unconscious where he was, and continued shrouded in meditation and silence till he was again alone. There were times when it was unknown whither he had retired, notwithstanding that his steps had been watched, and his customary haunts examined. No one ever heard him complain. The elder brothers of the convent said that he had talents, but denied him learning; they applauded him for the profound subtlety which he occasionally discovered in argument, but observed that he seldom perceived truth when it lay on the surface; he could follow it through all the labysinths of disquisition, but overlooked it, when it was undisguised before him. In fact he cared no for truth, nor sought it by bold and broad argument, but loved to exert the wily cunning of his nature in hunting it through artificial perplexities. At length, from a habit of intricacy and suspicion, his vitiated mind could receive nothing for truth, which was simple and easily comprehended.

Among his associates no one loved him, many disliked him, and more feared him. His figure was striking, but not so from grace; it was tall, and, though extremely thin, his limbs were large and uncouth, and as he stalked along, wrapt in the black garments of his order, there was something terrible in its air; something almost superhuman. His cowl, too, as it threw a shade over the livid paleness of his face, encreased its severe character, and gave an effect to his large melancholy eye, which approached to horror. His was not the melancholy of a sensible and wounded heart, but apparently that of a gloomy and ferocious disposition. There was something in his physiognomy extremely singular, and that can not easily be defined. It bore the traces of many passions, which seemed to have fixed the features they no longer animated. An habitual gloom and severity prevailed over the deep lines of his countenance; and his eyes were so piercing that they seemed to penetrate, at a single glance into the hearts of men, and to read their most secret thoughts; few persons could support their scrutiny, or even endure to meet them twice. Yet, notwithstanding all this gloom and austerity, some rare occasions of interest had called forth a character upon his countenance entirely different; and he could adapt himself to the tempers and passions of persons, whom he wished to conciliate, with astonishing facility, and generally with complete triumph. This monk, this Schedoni, was the confessor and secret adviser of the Marchesa di Vivaldi. In the first effervescence of pride and indignation, which the discovery of her son’s intended marriage occasioned, she consulted him on the means of preventing it, and she soon perceived that his talents promised to equal her wishes. Each possessed, in a considerable degree, the power of assisting the other; Schedoni had subtlety with ambition to urge it; and the Marchesa had inexorable pride, and courtly influence; the one hoped to obtain a high benefice for his services, and the other to secure the imaginary dignity of her house, by her gifts. Prompted by such passions, and allured by such views, they concerted in private, and unknown even to the Marchese, the means of accomplishing their general end.

Vivaldi, as he quitted his mother’s closet, had met Schedoni in the corridor leading thither. He knew him to be her confessor, and was not much surprised to see him, though the hour was an unusual one. Schedoni bowed his head, as he passed, and assumed a meek and holy countenance; but Vivaldi, as he eyed him with a penetrating glance, now recoiled with involuntary emotion; and it seemed as if a shuddering presentiment of what this monk was preparing for him, had crossed his mind.

❦

Chapter 3

> — "Art thou any thing?
> Art thou some God, some Angel, or some Devil
> That mak'st my blood cold, and my hair to stand?
> Speak to me, what thou art."
> Julius Cæsar.

Vivaldi, from the period of his last visit to Altieri, was admitted a frequent visitor to Signora Bianchi, and Ellena was, at length, prevailed upon to join the party, when the conversation was always on indifferent topics. Bianchi, understanding the disposition of her niece's affections, and the accomplished mind and manners of Vivaldi, judged that he was more likely to succeed by silent attentions than by a formal declaration of his sentiments. By such declaration, Ellena, till her heart was more engaged in his cause, would, perhaps, have been alarmed into an absolute rejection of his addresses, and this was every day less likely to happen, so long as he had an opportunity of conversing with her.

Signora Bianchi had acknowledged to Vivaldi that he had no rival to apprehend; that Ellena had uniformly rejected every admirer who had hitherto discovered her within the shade of her retirement, and that her present reserve proceeded more from considerations of the sentiments of his family than from disapprobation of himself. He forbore, therefore, to press his suit, till he should have secured a stronger interest in her heart, and in this hope he was encouraged by Signora Bianchi, whose gentle remonstrances in his favour became every day more pleasing and more convincing.

Several weeks passed away in this kind of intercourse, till Ellena, yielding to the representations of Signora Bianchi, and to the pleadings of her own heart, received Vivaldi as an acknowledged admirer, and the sentiments of his family were no longer remembered, or, if remembered, it was with a hope that they might be overcome by considerations more powerful.

The lovers, with Signora Bianchi and a Signor Giotto, a distant relation of the latter, frequently made excursions in the delightful environs of Naples; for Vivaldi was no longer anxious to conceal his attachment, but wished to contradict any report injurious to his love, by the publicity of his conduct; while the consideration, that Ellena's name had suffered by his late imprudence, contributed, with the unsuspecting innocence and sweetness of her manners towards him, who had been the occasion of her injuries, to mingle a sacred pity with his love, which obliterated all family politics from his mind, and bound her irrecoverably to his heart.

These excursions sometimes led them to Puzzuoli, Baia, or the woody cliffs of Pausilippo, and as, on their return, they glided along the moon-light bay, the melodies of Italian strains seemed to give enchantment to the scenery of its shore. At this cool hour, the voices of the vine-dressers were frequently heard in trio, as they reposed, after the labour of the day, on some pleasant promontory, under the shade of poplars; or the brisk music of the dance from fishermen, on the margin of the waves below. The boatmen rested on their oars, while their company listened to voices modulated by sensibility to finer eloquence, than is in the power of art alone to display; and at others, while they observed the airy natural grace, which distinguishes the dance of the fishermen and peasants of Naples. Frequently as they glided round a promontory, whose shaggy masses impended far over the sea, such magic scenes of beauty unfolded, adorned by these dancing groups on the bay beyond, as no pencil could do justice to. The deep clear waters reflected every image of the landscape, the cliffs, branching into wild forms, crowned with groves, whose rough foliage often spread down their steeps in picturesque luxuriance; the ruined villa on some bold point, peeping through the trees; peasants cabins hanging on the precipices, and the dancing figures on the strand — all touched with the silvery tint and soft shadows of moon-light. On the other hand, the sea trembling with a long line of radiance, and shewing in the clear distance the sails of vessels stealing in every direction along its surface, presented a prospect as grand as the landscape was beautiful.

One evening that Vivaldi sat with Ellena and Signora Bianchi, in the very pavilion where he had overheard that short but interesting soliloquy, which assured him of her regard, he pleaded with more than his usual earnestness for a speedy marriage. Bianchi did not oppose his arguments; she had been unwell for some time, and, believing herself to be declining fast, was anxious to have their nuptials concluded. She surveyed with languid eyes, the scene that spread before the pavilion. The strong effulgence which a setting-sun threw over the sea, shewing innumerable gaily painted ships, and fishing-boats returning from Santa Lucia into the port of Naples, had no longer power to cheer her. Even the Roman tower that terminated the mole below, touched as it was with the slanting rays; and the various figures of fishermen, who lay smoking beneath its walls, in the long shadow, or stood in the sunshine on the beach, watching the approaching boats of their comrades, combined a picture which was no longer interesting. “Alas!” said she, breaking from meditative silence, “this sun so glorious, which lights up all the various colouring of these shores, and the glow of those majestic mountains; alas! I feel that it will not long shine for me — my eyes must soon close upon the prospect for ever!”

To Ellena’s tender reproach for this melancholy suggestion Bianchi replied only by expressing an earnest wish to witness the certainty of her being protected; adding, that this must be soon, or she should not live to see it. Ellena, extremely shocked both by this presage of her aunt’s fate, and by the direct reference made to her own condition in the presence of Vivaldi, burst into tears, while he, supported by the wishes of Signora Bianchi, urged his suit with encreased interest.

“This is not a time for fastidious scruples,” said Bianchi, “now that a solemn truth calls out to us. My dear girl, I will not disguise my feelings; they assure me I have not long to live. Grant me then the only request I have to make, and my last hours will be comforted.”

After a pause she added, as she took the hand of her niece, “This will, no doubt, be an awful separation to us both; and it must also be a mournful one, Signor,” turning to Vivaldi, “for she has been as a daughter to me, and I have, I trust, fulfilled to her the duties of a mother. Judge then, what will be her feelings when I am no more. But it will be your care to sooth them.”

Vivaldi looked at Ellena, and would have spoken; her aunt, however, proceeded. “My own feelings would now be little less poignant, if I did not believe that I was confiding her to a tenderness, which cannot diminish; that I should prevail with her to accept the protection of a husband. To you, Signor, I commit the legacy of my child. Watch over her future moments, guard her from inquietude as vigilantly as I have done, and, if possible, from misfortune! I have yet much to say, but my spirits are exhausted.”

While he listened to this sacred charge, and recollected the injury Ellena had already sustained for his sake, by the cruel obliquy which the Marchese had thrown upon her character, he suffered a degree of generous indignation, f which he scarcely could conceal the cause, and a succeeding tenderness that almost melted him to tears; and he secretly vowed to defend her fame and protect her peace, at the sacrifice of every other consideration.

Bianchi, as she concluded her exhortation, gave Ellena’s hand to Vivaldi, who received it with emotion such as his countenance, only, could express, and with solemn fervour raising his eyes to heaven, vowed that he never would betray the confidence thus reposed in him, but would watch over the happiness of Ellena with a care as tender, as anxious, and as unceasing as her own; that from this moment he considered himself bound by ties not less sacred than those which the church confers, to defend her as his wife, and would do so to the latest moment of his existence. As he said this, the truth of his feelings appeared in the energy of his manner.

Ellena, still weeping, and agitated by various considerations, spoke not, but with drawing the handkerchief from her face, she looked at him through her tears, with a smile so meek, so affectionate, so timid, yet so confiding, as expressed all the mingled emotions of her heart, and appealed more eloquently to his, than the most energetic language could have done.

Before Vivaldi left the villa, he had some further conversation with Signora Bianchi, when it was agreed that the nuptials should be solemnized on the following week, if Ellena could be prevailed on to confirm her consent so soon; and that when he returned the next day, her determination would probably be made known to him.

He departed for Naples once more with the lightly-bounding steps of joy, which, however, when he arrived there, was somewhat alloyed by a message from the Marchese, demanding to see him in his cabinet. Vivaldi anticipated the subject of the interview, and obeyed the summons with reluctance.

He found his father so absorbed in thought, that he did not immediately perceive him. On raising his eyes from the floor, where discontent and perplexity seemed to have held them, he fixed a stern regard on Vivaldi. “I understand,” said he, “that you persist in the unworthy pursuit against which I warned you. I have left you thus long to your own discretion, because I was willing to afford you an opportunity of retracting with grace the declaration, which you have dared to make me of your principles and intentions; but your conduct has not therefore been the less observed. I am informed that your visits have been as frequent at the residence of the unhappy young woman, who was the subject of our former conversation, as formerly, and that you are as much insatuated.”

“If it is Signora Rosalba, whom your lordship means,” said Vivaldi, “she is not unhappy; and I do not scruple to own, that I am as sincerely attached to her as ever. Why, my dear father,” continued he, subduing the feelings which this degrading mention of Ellena had aroused, “why will you persist in opposing the happiness of your son; and above all, why will you continue to think unjustly of her, who deserves your admiration, as much as my love?”

“As I am not a lover,” replied the Marchese, “and that the age of boyish credulity is past with me, I do not wilfully close my mind against examination, but am directed by proof and yield to conviction.”

“What proof is it, my Lord, that has thus easily convinced you?” said Vivaldi; “Who is it that persists in abusing your confidence, and in destroying my peace?”

The Marchese haughtily reproved his son for such doubts and questions, and a long conversation ensued, which seemed neither to reconcile the interests or the opinions of either party. The Marchese persisted in accusation and menace; and Vivaldi in defending Ellena, and in affirming, that his affections and intentions were irrecoverable.

Not any art of persuasion could prevail with the Marchese to adduce his proofs, or deliver up the name of his informer; nor any menace awe Vivaldi into a renunciation of Ellena; and they parted mutually dissatisfied. The Marchese had failed on this occasion to act with his usual policy, for his menaces and accusations had aroused spirit and indignation, when kindness and gentle remonstrance would certainly have awakened filial affection, and might have occasioned a contest in the breast of Vivaldi, Now, no struggle of opposing duties divided his resolution. He had no hesitation on the subject of their dispute; but, regarding his father as a haughty oppressor who would rob him of his most sacred right; and as one who did not scruple to stain the name of the innocent and the defenceless, when his interest required it, upon the doubtful authority of a base informer, he suffered neither pity or remorse to mingle with the resolution of asserting the freedom of his nature; and was even more anxious than before, to conclude a marriage which he believed would secure his own happiness, and the reputation of Ellena.

He returned, therefore, on the following day to the villa Altieri, with encreased impatience to learn the result of Signora Bianchi’s further conversation with her niece, and the day on which the nuptials might be solemnized. On the way thither, his thoughts were wholly occupied by Ellena, and he proceeded mechanically, and without observing where he was, till the shade which the well-known arch threw over the road recalled him to local circumstances, and a voice instantly arrested his attention. It was the voice of the monk, whose figure again passed before him. “Go not to the villa Altieri,” it said solemnly, “for death is in the house!”

Before Vivaldi could recover from the dismay into which this abrupt assertion and sudden appearance had thrown him, the stranger was gone. He had escaped in the gloom of the place, and seemed to have retired into the obscurity, from which he had so suddenly emerged, for he was not seen to depart from under the archway. Vivaldi pursued him with his voice, conjuring him to appear, and demanding who was dead; but no voice replied.

Believing that the stranger could not have escaped unseen from the arch by any way, but that leading to the fortress above, Vivaldi began to ascend the steps, when, considering that the more certain means of understanding this awful assertion would be, to go immediately to the villa Altieri, he left this portentous ruin, and hastened thither.

An indifferent person would probably have understood the words of the monk to allude to Signora Bianchi, whose infirm state of health rendered her death, though sudden, not improbable; but to the affrighted fancy of Vivaldi, the dying Ellena only appeared. His fears, however probabilities might sanction, or the event justify them, were natural to ardent affection; but they were accompanied by a presentiment as extraordinary as it was horrible; — it occurred to him more than once, that Ellena was murdered. He saw her wounded, and bleeding to death; saw her ashy countenance, and her wasting eyes, from which the spirit of life was fast departing, turned piteously on himself, as if imploring him to save her from the fate that was dragging her to the grave. And, when he reached the boundary of the garden, his whole frame trembled so, with horrible apprehension, that he rested a while, unable to venture further towards the truth. At length, he summoned courage to dare it, and, unlocking a private gate, of which he had lately received the key, because it spared him a considerable distance of the road to Naples, he approached the house. Every place around it was silent and forsaken; many of the lattices were closed, and, as he endeavoured to collect from every trivial circumstance some conjecture, his spirits still sunk as he advanced, till, having arrived within a few paces of the portico, all his fears were confirmed. He heard from within a feeble sound of lamentation, and then some notes of that solemn and peculiar kind of recitative, which is in some parts of Italy the requiem of the dying. The sounds were so low and distant that they only murmured on his ear;

but, without pausing for information, he rushed into the portico, and knocked loudly at the folding doors, now closed against him.

After repeated summonses, Beatrice, the old house-keeper, appeared. She did not wait for Vivaldi's enquiries. "Alas! Signor," said she, "alas-a-day! who would have thought it; who would have expected such a change as this! It was only yester-evening that you was here, — she was then as well as I am; who would have thought that she would be dead to-day?"

"She is dead, then!" exclaimed Vivaldi, struck to the heart; "she is dead!" staggering towards a pillar of the hall, and endeavouring to support himself against it. Beatrice, shocked at his condition, would have gone for assistance, but he waved her to stay. "When did she die," said he, drawing breath with difficulty, "how and where?"

"Alas! here in the villa, Signor," replied Beatrice, weeping; "who would have thought that I should live to see this day! I hoped to have laid down my old bones in peace."

"What has caused her death?" interrupted Vivaldi impatiently, "and when did she die?"

"About two of the clock this morning, Signor; about two o'clock. O miserable day, that I should live to see it!"

"I am better," said Vivaldi, raising himself; "lead me to her apartment, — I must see her. Do not hesitate, lead me on."

"Alas! Signor, it is a dismal sight; why should you wish to see her? Be persuaded; do not go, Signor; it is a woeful sight!"

"Lead me on," repeated Vivaldi sternly; "or if you refuse, I will find the way myself."

Beatrice, terrified by his look and gesture, no longer opposed him, begging only that he would wait till she had informed her lady of his arrival; but he followed her closely up the staircase and along a corridor that led round the west side of the house, which brought him to a suite of chambers darkened by the closed lattices, through which he passed towards the one where the body lay. The requiem had ceased, and no sound disturbed the awful stillness that prevailed in these deserted rooms. At the door of the last apartment, where he was compelled to stop, his agitation was such, that Beatrice, expecting every instant to see him sink to the floor, made an effort to support him with her feeble aid, but he gave a signal for her to retire. He soon recovered himself and passed into the chamber of death, the solemnity of which might have affected him in any other state of his spirits; but these were now too severely pressed upon by real suffering to feel the influence of local circumstances. Approaching the bed on which the corpse was laid, he raised his eyes to the mourner who hung weeping over it, and beheld — Ellena! who, surprized by this sudden intrusion, and still more by the agitation of Vivaldi, repeatedly demanded the occasion of it. But he had neither power or inclination to explain a circumstance, which must deeply would the heart of Ellena, since it would have told that the same event, which excited her grief, accidentally inspired his joy.

He did not long intrude upon the sacredness of sorrow, and the short time he remained was employed in endeavours to command his own emotion and to soothe her's.

When he left Ellena, he had some conversation with Beatrice, as to the death of Signora Bianchi, and understood that she had retired to rest on the preceding night apparently in her usual state of health. "It was about one in the morning, Signor," continued Beatrice, "I was waked out of my first sleep by a noise in my lady's chamber. It is a grievous thing to me, Signor, to be waked from my first sleep, and I, Santa Maria forgive me! was angry at being disturbed! So I would not get up, but laid my head upon the pillow again, and tried to sleep; but presently I heard the noise again; nay now, says I, somebody must be up in the house, that's certain. I had scarcely said so, Signor, when I heard my young lady's voice calling 'Beatrice! Beatrice!'Ah! poor young lady! she was indeed in a sad fright, as well she might. She was at my door in an instant, and looked as pale as death, and trembled so!'Beatrice,' said she,'rise this moment; my aunt is dying.'She did not stay for my answer, but was gone directly. Santa Maria protect me! I thought I should have swooned outright."

"Well, but your lady?" said Vivaldi, whose patience the tedious circumlocution of old Beatrice had exhausted.

"Ah! my poor lady! Signor, I thought I never should have been able to reach her room; and when I got there, I was scarcely more alive than herself. — There she lay on her bed! O it was a grievous sight to see! there she lay, looking so piteously; I saw she was dying. She could not speak, though she tried often, but she was sensible, for she would look so at Signora Ellena, and then try again to speak; it almost broke one's heart to see her. Something seemed to lie upon her mind, and she tried almost to the last to tell it; and as she grasped Signora Ellena's hand, she would still look up in her face with such doleful expression as no one who had not a heart of stone could bear. My poor young mistress was quite overcome by it, and cried as if her heart would break. Poor young lady! she has lost a friend indeed, such a one as she must never hope to see again."

"But she shall find one as firm and affectionate as the last!" exclaimed Vivaldi fervently.

"The good Saint grant it may prove so!" replied Beatrice, doubtingly. "All that could be done for our dear lady," she continued, "was tried, but with no avail. She could not swallow what the Doctor offered her. She grew fainter and fainter, yet would often utter such deep sighs, and then would grasp my hand so hard! At last she turned her eyes from Signora Ellena, and they grew duller and fixed, and she seemed not to see what was before her. Alas! I knew then she was going; her hand did not press mine as it had done a minute or two before, and a deadly coldness was upon it. Her face changed so too in a few minutes! This was about two o'clock, and she died before her confessor could administer."

Beatrice ceased to speak, and wept; Vivaldi almost wept with her, and it was some time before he could command his voice sufficiently to enquire, what were the symptoms of Signora Bianchi's disorder, and whether she had ever been thus suddenly attacked before.

"Never, Signor!" replied the old housekeeper; "and though, to be sure, she has long been very infirm, and going down, as one may say, yet," —

"What is it you mean?" said Vivaldi. "Why, Signor, I do not know what to think about my lady's death. To be sure, there is nothing certain; and I may only get scoffed at, if I speak my mind abroad, for nobody would believe me, it is so strange, yet I must have my own thoughts, for all that."

"Do speak intelligibly," said Vivaldi, "you need not apprehend censure from me."

"Not from you, Signor, but if the report should get abroad, and it was known that I had set it a-going."

"That never shall be known from me," said Vivaldi, with encreased impatience, "tell me, without fear, all that you conjecture."

"Well then, Signor, I will own, that I do not like the suddenness of my lady's death, no, nor the manner of it, nor her appearance after death!"

"Speak explicitly, and to the point," said Vivaldi.

"Nay, Signor, there are some folks that will not understand if you speak ever so plain, I am sure I speak plain enough. If I might tell my mind, — I do not believe she came fairly by her death at last!"

"How!" said Vivaldi, "your reasons?"

"Nay, Signor, I have given them already; I said I did not like the suddenness of her death, nor her appearance after, nor" —

"Good heaven!" interrupted Vivaldi, "you mean poison!"

"Hush, Signor, hush! I do not say that; but she did not seem to die naturally."

"Who has been at the villa lately?" said Vivaldi, in a tremulous voice.

"Alas! Signor, nobody has been here; she lived so privately that she saw nobody."

"Not one person?" said Vivaldi, "consider well, Beatrice, had she no visitor?"

"Not of a long while, Signor, no visitors but yourself and her cousin Signor Giotto. The only other person that has been within these walls for many weeks, to the best of my remembrance, is a sister of the Convent, who comes for the silks my young lady embroiders."

"Embroiders! What convent?"

"The Santa Maria della Pieta, yonder, Signor; if you will step this way to the window, I will shew it you. Yonder, among the woods on the hill-side, just above those gardens that stretch down to the bay. There is an olive ground close beside it, and observe, Signor, there is a red and yellowish ridge of rocks rises over the woods higher still, and looks as if it would fall down upon those old spires. Have you found it, Signor?"

"How long is it since this sister came here?" said Vivaldi.

"Three weeks at least, Signor."

"And you are certain that no other person has called within that time?"

"No other, Signor, except the fisherman and the gardener, and a man who brings maccaroni, and such sort of things; for it is such a long way to Naples, Signor, and I have so little time.

“Three weeks, say you! You said three weeks, I think? Are you certain as to this?”

“Three weeks, Signor! Santa della Pieta! Do you believe, Signor, that we could fast for three weeks! Why, they call almost every day.”

“I speak of the nun,” said Vivaldi.

“O yes, Signor,” replied Beatrice; “it is that, at least, since she was here.”

“This is strange!” said Vivaldi, musing,

“but I will talk with you some other time. Meanwhile, I wish you could contrive that I should see the face of your deceased lady, without the knowledge of Signora Ellena. And, observe me, Beatrice, be strictly silent as to your surmises concerning her death: do not suffer any negligence to betray your suspicions to your young mistress. Has she any suspicions herself of the same nature.”

Beatrice replied, that she believed Signora Ellena had none; and promised faithfully to observe his injunctions.

He then left the villa, meditating on the circumstances he had just learned, and on the prophetic assertion of the monk, between whom, and the cause of Bianchi’s sudden death, he could not forbear surmising there was some connection; and it now occurred to him, and for the first time, that this monk, this mysterious stranger, was no other than Schedoni, whom he had observed of late going more frequently than usual, to his mother’s apartment. He almost started, in horror of the suspicion, to which this conjecture led, and precipitately rejected it, as a poison that would destroy his own peace for ever. But though he instantly dismissed the suspicion, the conjecture returned to his mind, and he endeavoured to recollect the voice and figure of the stranger, that he might compare them with those of the confessor. The voices were, he thought, of a different tone, and the persons of a different height and proportion. This comparison, however, did not forbid him to surmise that the stranger was an agent of the confessor’s; that he was, at least, a secret spy upon his actions, and the defamer of Ellena; while both, if indeed there were two persons concerned, appeared to be at the command of his parents. Fired with indignation of the unworthy arts that he believed to have been employed against him, and impatient to meet the slanderer of Ellena, he determined to attempt some decisive step towards a discovery of the truth, and either to compel the confessor to reveal it to him, or to search out his agent, who, he fancied, was occasionally a resident within the ruins of Paluzzi.

The inhabitants of the convent, which Beatrice had pointed out, did not escape his consideration, but no reason appeared for supposing them the enemies of his Ellena, who, on the contrary, he understood had been for some years amicably connected with them. The embroidered silks, of which the old servant had spoken, sufficiently explained the nature of the connection, and discovering more fully the circumstances of Ellena’s fortune, her conduct heightened the tender admiration, with which he had hitherto regarded her.

The hints for suspicion which Beatrice had given respecting the cause of her mistress’s decease, incessantly recurred to him; and it appeared extraordinary, and sometimes in the highest degree improbable, that any person could be sufficiently interested in the death of a woman apparently so blameless, as to administer poison to her. What motive could have prompted so horrible a deed, was still more inexplicable. It was true that she had long been in a declining state; yet the suddenness of her departure and the singularity of some circumstances preceding as well as some appearances that had followed it, compelled Vivaldi to doubt as to the cause. He believed, however, that, after having seen the corpse, his doubts must vanish; and Beatrice had promised, that, if he could return in the evening, when Ellena had retired to rest, he should be permitted to visit the chamber of the deceased. There was something repugnant to his feelings, in going thus secretly, or, indeed, at all, to the residence of Ellena at this delicate period, yet it was necessary he should introduce there some medical professor, on whose judgment he could rest, respecting the occasion of Bianchi’s death; and as he believed he should so soon acquire the right of vindicating the honour of Ellena, that consideration did not so seriously affect him as otherwise it would have done. The enquiry which called him thither was, besides, of a nature too solemn and important to be lightly resigned; he had, therefore, told Beatrice he would be punctual to the hour she appointed. His intention to search for the monk was thus again interrupted.

❦

Chapter 4

> "Unfold th' impenetrable mystery,
> That sets your soul and you at endless discord."
> Mysterious Mother.

When Vivaldi returned to Naples, he enquired for the Marchesa, of whom he wished to ask some questions concerning Schedoni, which, though he scarcely expected they would be explicitly answered, might yet lead to part of the truth he sought for.

The Marchesa was in her closet, and Vivaldi found the confessor with her. "This man crosses me, like my evil genius," said he to himself as he entered, "but I will know whether he deserves my suspicions before I leave the room."

Schedoni was so deeply engaged in conversation, that he did not immediately perceive Vivaldi, who stood for a moment examining his countenance, and tracing subjects for curiosity in its deep lines. His eyes, while he spoke, were cast downward, and his features were fixed in an expression at once severe and crafty. The Marchesa was listening with deep attention, her head inclined towards him, as if to catch the lowest murmur of his voice, and her face picturing the anxiety and vexation of her mind. This was evidently a conference, not a confession.

Vivaldi advancing, the monk raised his eyes; his countenance suffered no change, as they met those of Vivaldi. He rose, but did not take leave, and returned the slight and somewhat haughty salutation of Vivaldi, with an inclination of the head, that indicated a pride without pettishness, and a firmness bordering on contempt.

The Marchesa, on perceiving her son, was somewhat embarrassed, and her brow, before slightly contracted by vexation, now frowned with severity. Yet it was an involuntary emotion, for she endeavoured to chace the expression of it with a smile. Vivaldi liked the smile still less than the frown.

Schedoni seated himself quietly, and began, with almost the ease of a man of the world, to converse on general topics. Vivaldi, however, was reserved and silent; he knew not how to begin a conversation, which might lead to the knowledge he desired, and the Marchesa did not relieve him from the difficulty. His eye and his ear assisted him to conjecture at least, if not to obtain the information he wished; and, as he listened to the deep tones of Schedoni's voice, he became almost certain, that they were not the accents of his unknown adviser, though he considered, at the same moment, that it was not difficult to disguise, or to feign a voice. His stature seemed to decide the question more reasonably; for the figure of Schedoni appeared taller than that of the stranger; and though there was something of resemblance in their air, which Vivaldi had never observed before, he again considered, that the habit of the same order, which each were, might easily occasion an artificial resemblance. Of the likeness, as to countenance, he could not judge, since the stranger's had been so much shrouded by his cowl, that Vivaldi had never distinctly seen a single feature. Schedoni's hood was now thrown back, so that he could not compare even the air of their heads under similar circumstances; but as he remembered to have seen the confessor on a former day approaching his mother's closet with the cowl shading his face, the same gloomy severity seemed to characterize both, and nearly the same terrible portrait was drawn on his fancy. Yet this again might be only an artificial effect, a character which the cowl alone gave to the head; and any face seen imperfectly beneath its dark shade, might have appeared equally severe. Vivaldi was still extremely perplexed in his opinion. One circumstance, however, seemed to throw some light on his judgment. The stranger had appeared in the habit of a monk, and, if Vivaldi's transient observation might be trusted, he was of the very same order with that of Schedoni. Yet if he were Schedoni, or even his agent, it was not probable that he would have shewn himself in a dress that might lead to a discovery of his person. That he was anxious for concealment, his manner had strongly proved; it seemed then, that this habit of a monk was only a disguise, assumed for the purpose of misleading conjecture. Vivaldi, however, determined to put some questions to Schedoni, and at the same time to observe their effect on his countenance. He took occasion to notice some drawings of ruins, which ornamented the cabinet of the Marchesa, and to say that the fortress of Paluzzi was worthy of being added to her collection. "You have seen it lately, perhaps, reverend father," added Vivaldi, with a penetrating glance.

"It is a striking relique of antiquity," replied the confessor. "That arch," resumed Vivaldi, his eye still fixed on Schedoni, "that arch suspended between two rocks, the one overtopped by the towers of the fortress, the other shadowed with pine and broad oak, has a fine effect. But a picture of it would want human figures. Now either the grotesque shapes of banditti lurking within the ruin, as if ready to start out upon the traveller, or a friar rolled up in his black garments, just stealing forth from under the shade of the arch, and looking like some supernatural messenger of evil, would finish the piece."

The features of Schedoni suffered no change during this speech. "Your picture is complete," said he, "and I cannot but admire the facility with which you have classed the monks together with banditti."

"Your pardon, holy father," said Vivaldi, "I did not draw a parallel between them."

"O! no offence, Signor," replied Schedoni, with a smile somewhat ghastly.

During the latter part of this conversation, if conversation it may be called, the Marchesa had followed a servant, who had brought her a letter, out of the apartment, and as the confessor appeared to await her return, Vivaldi determined to press his enquiry. "It appears, however," said he, "that Palluzzi, if not haunted by robbers, is at least frequented by ecclesiastics; for I have seldom passed it without seeing one of the order, and that one has appeared so suddenly, and vanished so suddenly, that I have been almost compelled to believe he was literally a spiritual being!"

"The convent of the Black Penitents is not far distant," observed the confessor.

"Does the dress of this convent resemble that of your order, reverend father? for I observed that the monk I speak of was habited like yourself; aye, and he was about your stature, and very much resembled you."

"That well may be, Signor," replied the confessor calmly; "there are many brethren who, no doubt, resemble each other; but the brothers of the Black Penitents are clothed in sackcloth; and the death's head on the garment, the peculiar symbol of this order, would not have escaped your observation; it could not, therefore, be a member of their society whom you have seen."

"I am not inclined to think that it was," said Vivaldi; "but be it who it may, I hope soon to be better acquainted with him, and to tell him truths so strong, that he shall not be permitted even to affect the misunderstanding of them."

"You will do right, if you have cause of complaint against him," observed Schedoni.

"And only if I have cause of complaint, holy father? Are strong truths to be told only when there is direct cause of complaint? Is it only when we are injured that we are to be sincere?" He believed that he had now detected Schedoni, who seemed to have betrayed a consciousness that Vivaldi had reason for complaint against the stranger.

"You will observe, reverend father, that I have not said I am injured," he added. "If you know that I am, this must be by other means than by my words; I have not even expressed resentment."

"Except by your voice and eye, Signor," replied Schedoni drily. "When a man is vehement and disordered, we usually are inclined to suppose he feels resentment, and that he has cause of complaint, either real or imaginary. As I have not the honour of being acquainted with the subject you allude to, I cannot decide to which of the two your cause belongs."

"I have never been in doubt as to that," said Vivaldi haughtily; "and if I had, you will pardon me, holy father, but I should not have requested your decision. My injuries are, alas! too real; and I now think it is also too certain to whom I may attribute them. The secret adviser, who steals into the bosom of a family only to poison its repose, the informer — the base asperser of innocence, stand revealed in one person before me."

Vivaldi delivered these words with a tempered energy, at once dignified and pointed, which seemed to strike directly to the heart of Schedoni; but, whether it was his conscience or his pride that took the alarm, did not certainly appear. Vivaldi believed the former. A dark malignity overspread the features of the monk, and at that moment Vivaldi thought he beheld a man, whose passions might impel him to the perpetration of almost any crime, how hideous soever. He recoiled from him, as if he had suddenly seen a serpent in his path, and stood gazing on his face, with an attention so wholly occupied as to be unconscious that he did so.

Schedoni almost instantly recovered himself; his features relaxed from their first expression, and that portentous darkness passed away from his countenance; but with a look that was still stern and haughty, he said, "Signor, however ignorant I may be of the subject of your discontent, I can not misunderstand that your resentment is, to some extent or other, directed against myself as the cause of it. Yet I will not suppose, Signor; I say I will not suppose," raising his voice significantly, "that you have dared to brand me with the ignominious titles you have just uttered; but" —

"I have applied them to the author of my injuries," interrupted Vivaldi; "you, father, can best inform me whether they applied to yourself."

"I have then nothing to complain of," said Schedoni, adroitly, and with a sudden calmness, that surprised Vivaldi. "If you directed them against the author of your injuries, whatever they may be, I am satisfied."

The chearful complacency, with which he spoke this, renewed the doubts of Vivaldi, who thought it nearly impossible that a man conscious of guilt could assume, under the very charge of it, the tranquil and dignified air, which the confessor now displayed. He began to accuse himself of having condemned him with passionate rashness, and gradually became shocked at the indecorum of his conduct towards a man of Schedoni's age and sacred profession. Those expressions of countenance, which had so much alarmed him, he was now inclined to think the effect of a jealous and haughty honour, and he almost forgot the malignity, which had mingled with Schedoni's pride, in sorrow for the offence that had provoked it. Thus, not less precipitate in his pity than his anger, and credulous alike to the passion of the moment, he was now as eager to apologize for his error, as he had been hasty in committing it. The frankness, with which he apologized and lamented the impropriety of his conduct, would have won an easy forgiveness from a generous heart. Schedoni listened with apparent complacency and secret contempt. He regarded Vivaldi as a rash boy, who was swayed only by his passions; but while he suffered deep resentment for the evil in his character, he felt neither respect nor kindness for the good, for the sincerity, the love of justice, the generosity, which threw a brilliancy even on his foibles. Schedoni, indeed, saw only evil in human nature.

Had the heart of Vivaldi been less generous, he would now have distrusted the satisfaction, which the confessor assumed, and have discovered the contempt and malignity, that lurked behind the smile thus imperfectly masking his countenance. The confessor perceived his power, and the character of Vivaldi lay before him as a map. He saw, or fancied he saw every line and feature of its plan, and the relative proportions of every energy and weakness of its nature. He believed, also, he could turn the very virtues of this young man against himself, and he exulted, even while the smile of good-will was yet upon his countenance, in anticipating the moment that should avenge him for the past outrage, and which, while Vivaldi was ingenuously lamenting it, he had apparently forgotten.

Schedoni was thus ruminating evil against Vivaldi, and Vivaldi was considering how he might possibly make Schedoni atonement for the affront he had offered him, when the Marchesa returned to the apartment; and perceived in the honest countenance of Vivaldi some symptoms of the agitation which had passed over it; his complexion was flushed, and his brow slightly contracted. The face of Schedoni told nothing but complacency, except that now and then when he looked at Vivaldi, it was with half-shut eyes, that indicated treachery, or, at least, cunning, trying to conceal exasperated pride.

The Marchesa, with displeasure directed against her son, enquired the reason of his emotion; but he, stung with consciousness of his conduct towards the monk, could neither endure to explain it, or to remain in her presence, and saying that he would confide his honour to the discretion of the holy father, who would speak only too favourably of his fault, he abruptly left the room.

When he had departed, Schedoni gave, with seeming reluctance, the explanation which the Marchesa required, but was cautious not to speak too favourably of Vivaldi's conduct, which, on the contrary, he represented as much more insulting than it really was; and, while he aggravated the offensive part of it, he suppressed all mention of the candour and self-reproach, which had followed the charge. Yet this he managed so artfully that he appeared to extenuate Vivaldi's errors, to lament the hastiness of his temper, and to plead for a forgiveness from his irritated mother. "He is very young," added the monk, when he perceived that he had sufficiently exasperated the Marchesa against her son; "he is very young, and youth is warm in its passions and precipitate in its judgments. He was, besides, jealous, no doubt, of the friendship, with which you are pleased to honour me; and it is natural that a son should be jealous of the attention of such a mother."

"You are too good, father," said the Marchesa.

Her resentment encreasing towards Vivaldi in proportion as Schedoni displayed his artificial candour and meekness. "It is true," continued the confessor, "that I perceive all the inconveniences to which my attachment, I should say my duty to your family exposes me; but I willingly submit to these, while it is yet possible that my advice may be a means of preserving the honour of your house unsullied, and of saving this inconsiderate young man from future misery and unavailing repentance." During the warmth of this sympathy in resentment, the Marchesa and Schedoni mutually, and sincerely, lost their remembrance of the unworthy motives, by which each knew the other to be influenced, as well as that disgust which those who act together to the same bad end, can seldom escape from feeling towards their associates. The Marchesa, while she commended the fidelity of Schedoni, forgot his views and her promises as to a rich benefice; while the confessor imputed her anxiety for the splendor of her son's condition to a real interest in his welfare, not a care of her own dignity. After mutual compliments had been exchanged, they proceeded to a long consultation concerning Vivaldi, and it was agreed, that their efforts for what they termed his preservation should no longer be confined to remonstrances.

Chapter V

'What if it be a poison, which the friar
Subtly hath ministered?' —
SHAKESPEARE[1]

Vivaldi, when his first feelings of pity and compunction for having insulted an aged man, the member of a sacred profession, were past, and when he looked with a more deliberate eye upon some circumstances of the confessor's conduct, perceived that suspicion was again gathering on his mind. But, regarding this as a symptom of his own weakness, rather than as a hint of truth, he endeavoured, with a magnanimous disdain, to reject every surmise that boded unfavourably of Schedoni.

When evening arrived, he hastened towards Villa Altieri, and, having met without the city, according to appointment, a physician, upon whose honor and judgment he thought he might rely, they proceeded on their way together. Vivaldi had forgotten, during the confusion of his last interview with Ellena, to deliver up the key of the garden-gate, and he now entered it as usual, though he could not entirely overcome the reluctance, which he felt on thus visiting, in secret and at night, the dwelling of Ellena. Under no other circumstances, however, could the physician, whose opinion was so necessary to his peace, be introduced without betraying a suspicion, which must render her unhappy, perhaps for ever.

Beatrice, who had watched for them in the portico, led the way to the chamber where the corpse was laid out; and Vivaldi, though considerably affected when he entered, soon recovered composure enough to take his station on one side of the bed, while the physician placed himself on the other. Unwilling to expose his emotion to the observation of a servant, and desirous also of some private conversation with the physician, he took the lamp from Beatrice and dismissed her. As the light glared upon the livid face of the corpse, Vivaldi gazed with melancholy surprise, and an effort of reason was necessary to convince him, that this was the same countenance which only one evening preceding was animated like his own; which had looked upon him in tears, while, with anxiety the most tender, Bianchi had committed the happiness of her niece to his care, and had, alas! too justly predicted her approaching dissolution. The circumstances of that scene now appeared to him like a vision, and touched every fibre of his heart. He was fully sensible of the importance of the trust committed to him, and, as he now hung over the pale and deserted form of Bianchi, he silently renewed his solemn vows to Ellena, to deserve the confidence of her departed guardian.

Before Vivaldi had courage enough to ask the opinion of the physician, who was still viewing the face of the deceased with very earnest attention and a disapproving countenance, his own suspicions strengthened from some circumstances of her appearance; and particularly from the black tint that prevailed over her complexion, it seemed to him, that her death had been by poison. He feared to break a silence, which prolonged his hope of the contrary, feeble though it was; and the physician, who probably was apprehensive for the consequence of delivering his real thought, did not speak.

'I read your opinion,' said Vivaldi, at length, 'it coincides with my own.'

'I know not as to that, Signor,' replied the physician, 'though I think I perceive what is yours. Appearances are unfavourable, yet I will not take upon me to decide from them, that it is as you suspect. There are other circumstances, under which similar appearances might occur.' He gave his reasons for this assertion, which were plausible even to Vivaldi, and concluded with requesting to speak with Beatrice, 'for I wish to understand,' said he, 'what was the exact situation of this lady for some hours previous to her decease.'

After a conversation of some length with Beatrice, whatever might be the opinion resulting from his enquiries, he adhered nearly to his former assertions; pronouncing that so many contradictory circumstances appeared, as rendered it impossible for him to decide, whether Bianchi had died by poison, or otherwise. He stated more fully than he had done before, the reasons which must render the opinion of any medical person, on this subject, doubtful. But, whether it was that he feared to be responsible for a decision, which would accuse some person of murder, or that he really was inclined to believe that Bianchi died naturally, it is certain he seemed disposed to adopt the latter opinion; and that he was very anxious to quiet the suspicions of Vivaldi. He so far succeeded, indeed, as to convince him that it would be unavailing to pursue the enquiry, and, at length, almost compelled him to believe, that she had departed according to the common course of nature.

Vivaldi, having lingered awhile over the death-bed of Bianchi, and taken a last farewell of her silent form, quitted the chamber and the house as softly as he had approached, and unobserved, as he believed, by Ellena or any other person. The morning dawned over the sea, when he returned into the garden, and a few fishermen, loitering on the beach, or putting off their little boats from the shore, were the only persons visible at this early hour. The time, however, was passed for renewing the enquiry he had purposed at Paluzzi, and the brightening dawn warned him to retire. To Naples, therefore, he returned, with spirits somewhat soothed by a hope, that Bianchi had not fallen prematurely, and by the certainty that Ellena was well. On the way thither, he passed the fort without interruption, and, having parted with the physician, was admitted into his father's mansion by a confidential servant.

CHAPTER 6

> — "For here have been
> Some six or seven, who did hide their faces
> Even from darkness."
> Shakespeare.

Ellena, on thus suddenly losing her aunt, her only relative, the friend of her whole life, felt as if left alone in the world. But it was not in the first moments of affliction that this feeling occurred. Her own forlorn situation was not even observed, while affection, pity, and irresistible grief for Bianchi, occupied her heart.

Bianchi was to be interred in the church belonging to the convent of Santa Maria della Pieta. The body attired according to the custom of the country, and decorated with flowers, was carried on an open bier to the place of interment, attended only by priests and torch-bearers. But Ellena could not endure thus lightly to part with the reliques of a beloved friend, and being restrained by custom from following the corpse to the grave, she repaired first to the convent, to attend the funeral service. Her sorrow did not allow her to join in the choral symphonies of the nuns, but their sacred solemnity was soothing to her spirits, and the tears she shed while she listened to the lengthening notes, assuaged the force of grief.

When the service concluded, she withdrew to the parlour of the lady Abbess, who mingled with her consolations many entreaties that Ellena would make the convent her present asylum; and her affliction required little persuasion on this subject. It was her wish to retire hither, as to a sanctuary, which was not only suitable to her particular circumstances, but especially adapted to the present state of her spirits. Here she believed that she should sooner acquire resignation, and regain tranquillity, than in a place less consecrated to religion; and, before she took leave of the Abbess, it was agreed, that she should be received as a boarder. To acquaint Vivaldi with her intention was, indeed, her chief motive for returning to the villa Altieri, after this her resolution had been taken. Her affection and esteem had been gradual in their progress, and had now attained a degree of strength, which promised to decide the happiness or misery of her whole life. The sanction given by her aunt to this choice, and particularly the very solemn manner in which, on the evening preceding her death, she bequeathed Ellena to his care, had still endeared him to her heart, and imparted a sacredness to the engagement, which made her consider Vivaldi as her guardian and only surviving protector. The more tenderly she lamented her deceased relative, the more tenderly she thought of Vivaldi; and her love for the one was so intimately connected with her affection for the other, that each seemed strengthened and exalted by the union.

When the funeral was over, they met at Altieri. He was neither surprized or averse to her withdrawing a while to a convent, for there was a propriety in retiring, during the period of her grief, from a home where she had no longer a guardian, which delicacy seemed to demand. He only stipulated, that he might be permitted to visit her in the parlour of the convent, and to claim, when decorum should no longer object to it, the hand, which Bianchi had resigned to him.

Notwithstanding that he yielded to this arrangement without complaining, it was not entirely without repining; but being assured by Ellena of the worthiness of the Abbess of the Santa Maria della Pieta, he endeavoured to silence the secret murmurs of his heart with the conviction of his judgment.

Meanwhile, the deep impression made by his unknown tormentor, the monk, and especially by his prediction of the death of Bianchi, remained upon his mind, and he once more determined to ascertain, if possible, the true nature of this portentous visitant, and what were the motives which induced him thus to haunt his footsteps and interrupt his peace. He was awed by the circumstances which had attended the visitations of the monk, if monk it was; by the suddenness of his appearance, and departure; by the truth of his prophecies, and, above all, by the solemn event which had verified his last warning; and his imagination, thus elevated by wonder and painful curiosity, was prepared for something above the reach of common conjecture, and beyond the accomplishment of human agency. His understanding was sufficiently clear and strong to teach him to detect many errors of opinion, that prevailed around him, as well as to despise the common superstitions of his country, and, in the usual state of his mind, he probably would not have paused for a moment on the subject before him; but his passions were now interested and his fancy awakened, and, though he was unconscious of this propensity, he would, perhaps, have been somewhat disappointed to have descended suddenly from the region of fearful sublimity, to which he had soared — the world of terrible shadows — to the earth, on which he daily walked, and to an explanation simply natural.

He designed to visit again, at midnight, the fortress of Paluzzi, and not to watch for the appearance of the stranger, but to carry torches into every recess of the ruin, and discover, at least, whether it was haunted by other human beings than himself. The chief difficulty, which had hitherto delayed him, was that of finding a person, in whom he could confide, to accompany him in the search, since his former adventure had warned him never to renew it alone. Signor Bonarmo persisted absolutely, and, perhaps, wisely, to refuse his request on this subject; and, as Vivaldi had no other acquaintance, to whom he chose to give so much explanation of the affair as might induce compliance, he at length determined to take with him Paulo, his own servant. On the evening, previous to the day of Ellena's departure to the Santa della Pieta, Vivaldi went to Altieri, to bid her adieu. During this interview his spirits were more than usually depressed; and, though he knew that her retirement was only for a short period, and had as much confidence in the continuance of her affection, as is, perhaps, possible to a lover, Vivaldi felt as if he was parting with her for ever. A thousand vague and fearful conjectures, such as he had never till this moment admitted, assailed him, and amongst them, it appeared probable, that the arts of the nuns might win her from the world, and sacrifice her to the cloister. In her present state of sorrow this seemed to be even more than probable, and not all the assurances which Ellena gave him, and in these parting moments she spoke with less reserve than she had hitherto done, could entirely re-assured his mind. "It should seem Ellena, by these boding fears," said he, imprudently, "that I am parting with you for ever; I feel a weight upon my heart, which I cannot throw off. Yet I consent that you shall withdraw awhile to this convent, convinced of the propriety of the step; and I ought, also, to know that you will soon return; that I shall soon take you from its walls as my wife, never more to leave me, never more to pass from my immediate care and tenderness. I ought to feel assured of all this; yet so apt are my fears that I cannot confide in what is probable, but rather apprehend what is possible. And is it then possible that I yet may lose you; and is it only probable that you may be mine for ever? How, under such circumstances, could I weakly consent to your retirement? Why did I not urge you to bestow immediately those indissoluble bands, which no human force can burst asunder? How could I leave the destiny of all my peace within the reach of a possibility, which it was once in my power to have removed. Which it was in my power! — It is, perhaps, still in my power. O Ellena! let the severities of custom yield to the security of my happiness. If you do go to the Santa Maria, let it be only to visit its altar!"

Vivaldi delivered this expostulation with a rapidity, that left no pause for Ellena to interrupt him. When, at length, he concluded, she gently reproached him for doubting the continuance of her regard, and endeavoured to sooth his apprehensions of misfortune, but would not listen to his request. She represented, that not only the state of her spirits required retirement, but that respect to the memory of her aunt demanded it; and added gravely, that if he had so little confidence in the steadiness of her opinions, as to doubt the constancy of her affection, and for so short a period, unless her vows were secured to him, he had done imprudently to elect her for the companion of his whole life.

Vivaldi, then ashamed of the weakness he had betrayed, besought her forgiveness, and endeavoured to appease apprehensions which passion only made plausible, and which reason reproved; notwithstanding which, he could recover neither tranquillity nor confidence; nor could Ellena, though her conduct was supported and encouraged by justness of sentiment, entirely remove the oppression of spirits she had felt from almost the first moment of this interview. They parted with many tears; and Vivaldi, before he finally took his leave, frequently returned to claim some promise, or to ascertain some explanation, till Ellena remarked with a forced smile, that these resembled eternal adieus, rather than those of only a few days; an observation which renewed all his alarm, and furnished an excuse for again delaying his departure. At length he tore himself away, and left the villa Altieri; but as the time was yet too early to suit his purposed enquiry at Paluzzi, he returned to Naples.

Ellena, meanwhile, endeavouring to dissipate melancholy recollections by employment, continued busied in preparation for her departure on the following day, till a late hour of the night. In the prospect of quitting, though only for so short a period, the home where she had passed almost every day since the dawn of her earliest remembrance, there was something melancholy, if not solemn. In leaving these well-known scenes, where, it might be said, the shade of her deceased relative seemed yet to linger, she was quitting all vestige of her late happiness, all note of former years and of present consolation; and she felt as if going forth into a new and homeless world. Her affection for the place encreased as the passing time diminished, and it seemed as if the last moment of her stay would be precisely that, in which the villa Altieri would be most valued.

In her favourite apartments she lingered for a considerable time; and in the room where she had supped on the night immediately preceding the death of Signora Bianchi, she indulged many tender and mournful recollections, and probably would have continued to indulge them much longer, had not her attention been withdrawn by a sudden rustling of the foliage that surrounded the window, when, on raising her eyes, she thought she perceived some person pass quickly from before it. The lattices had, as usual, been left open to admit the fresh breeze from the bay below, but she now rose with some alarm to close them, and had scarcely done so when she heard a distant knocking from the portico, and in the next instant the screams of Beatrice in the hall.

Alarmed for herself, Ellena had, however, the courage to advance to the assistance of her old servant, when, on entering the passage leading to the hall, three men, masked and muffled up in cloaks, appeared, advancing from the opposite extremity. While she fled, they pursued her to the apartment she had quitted. Her breath and her courage were gone, yet she struggled to sustain herself, and endeavoured to ask with calmness what was their errand. They gave no reply, but threw a veil over her face, and, seizing her arms, led her almost unresisting, but supplicating, towards the portico. In the hall, Ellena perceived Beatrice bound to a pillar; and another ruffian, who was also masked, watching over and menacing her, not by words, but gestures. Ellena's shrieks seemed to recall the almost lifeless Beatrice, for whom she supplicated as much as for herself; but entreaty was alike unavailing for each, and Ellena was borne from the house and through the garden. All consciousness had now forsaken her. On recovering, she perceived herself in a carriage, which was driven with great rapidity, and that her arms were within the grasp of some persons, whom, when her recollection returned more fully, she believed to be the men, who had carried her from the villa. The darkness prevented her from observing their figures, and to all her questions and entreaties a death-like silence was observed.

During the whole night the carriage proceeded rapidly, stopping only while the horses were changed, when Ellena endeavoured to interest by her cries the compassion of the people at the post-houses, and by her cries only, for the blinds were closely drawn. The postilions, no doubt, imposed on the credulity of these people, for they were insensible to her distress, and her immediate companions soon overcame the only means that had remained by which she could make it known.

For the first hours, a tumult of terror and amazement occupied her mind, but, as this began to subside, and her understanding to recover its clearness, grief and despondency mingled with her fears. She saw herself separated from Vivaldi, probably for ever, for she apprehended that the strong and invisible hand which governed her course, would never relinquish its grasp till it had placed her irrecoverably beyond the reach of her lover. A conviction that she should see him no more came, at intervals, with such overwhelming force, that every other consideration and emotion disappeared before it; and at these moments she lost all anxiety as to the place of her destination, and all fear as to her personal safety.

As the morning advanced and the heat encreased, the blinds were let down a little to admit air, and Ellena then perceived, that only two of the men, who had appeared at the villa Altieri, were in the carriage, and that they were still disguised in cloaks and visors. She had no means of judging through what part of the country she was travelling, for above the small openings which the blinds left she could see only the towering tops of mountains, or sometimes the veiny precipices and tangled thickets, that closely impended over the road.

About noon, as she judged from the excessive heat, the carriage stopped at a post-house, and ice-water was handed through the window, when, as the blind was lowered to admit it, she perceived herself on a wild and solitary plain, surrounded by mountains and woods. The people at the door of the post-house seemed "unused to pity or be pitied." The lean and sallow countenance of poverty stared over their gaunt bones, and habitual discontent had fixed the furrows of their cheeks. They regarded Ellena with only a feeble curiosity, though the affliction in her looks might have interested almost any heart that was not corroded by its own sufferings; nor did the masked faces of her companions excite a much stronger attention.

Ellena accepted the cool refreshment offered her, the first she had taken on the road. Her companions having emptied their glasses drew up the blind, and, notwithstanding the almost intolerable heat of noon, the carriage proceeded. Fainting under its oppression, Ellena entreated that the windows might be open, when the men, in compliance with their own necessity rather than with her request, lowered the blinds, and she had a glimpse of the lofty region of the mountains, but of no object that could direct her conjecture concerning where she was. She saw only pinnacles and vast precipices of various-tinted marbles, intermingled with scanty vegetation, such as stunted pinasters, dwarf oak and holly, which gave dark touches to the many-coloured cliffs, and sometimes stretched in shadowy masses to the deep vallies, that, winding into obscurity, seemed to invite curiosity to explore the scenes beyond. Below these bold precipices extended the gloomy region of olive-trees, and lower still other rocky steeps sunk towards the plains, bearing terraces crowned with vines, and where often the artificial soil was propped by thickets of juniper, pomegranate and oleander.

Ellena, after having been so long shut in darkness, and brooding over her own alarming circumstances, found temporary, though feeble, relief in once more looking upon the face of nature; till, her spirits being gradually revived and elevated by the grandeur of the images around her, she said to herself, “If I am condemned to misery, surely I could endure it with more fortitude in scenes like these, than amidst the tamer landscapes of nature! Here, the objects seem to impart somewhat of their own force, their own sublimity, to the soul. It is scarcely possible to yield to the pressure of misfortune while we walk, as with the Deity, amidst his most stupendous works!”

But soon after the idea of Vivaldi glancing athwart her memory, she melted into tears; the weakness however was momentary, and during the rest of the journey she preserved a strenuous equality of mind.

It was when the heat and the light were declining that the carriage entered a rocky defile, which shewed, as through a telescope reversed, distant plains, and mountains opening beyond, lighted up with all the purple splendor of the setting sun. Along this deep and shadowy perspective a river, which was seen descending among the cliffs of a mountain, rolled with impetuous force, fretting and foaming amidst the dark rocks in its descent, and then flowing in a limpid lapse to the brink of other precipices, whence again it fell with thundering strength to the abyss, throwing its misty clouds of spray high in the air, and seeming to claim the sole empire of this solitary wild. Its bed took up the whole breadth of the chasm, which some strong convulsion of the earth seemed to have formed, not leaving space even for a road along its margin. The road, therefore, was carried high among the cliffs, that impended over the river, and seemed as if suspended in air; while the gloom and vastness of the precipices, which towered above and sunk below it, together with the amazing force and uproar of the falling waters, combined to render the pass more terrific than the pencil could describe, or language can express. Ellena ascended it, not with indifference but with calmness; she experienced somewhat of a dreadful pleasure in looking down upon the irresistible flood; but this emotion was heightened into awe, when she perceived that the road led to a slight bridge, which, thrown across the chasm at an immense height, united two opposite cliffs, between which the whole cataract of the river descended. The bridge, which was defended only by a slender railing, appeared as if hung amidst the clouds. Ellena, while she was crossing it, almost forgot her misfortunes. Having reached the opposite side of the glen, the road gradually descended the precipices for about half a mile, when it opened to extensive prospects over plains and towards distant mountains — the sunshine landscape, which had long appeared to bound this shadowy pass. The transition was as the passage through the vale of death to the bliss of eternity; but the idea of its resemblance did not long remain with Ellena. Perched high among the cliffs of a mountain, which might be said to terminate one of the jaws of this terrific gorge, and which was one of the loftiest of a chain that surrounded the plains, appeared the spires and long terraces of a monastery; and she soon understood that her journey was to conclude there.

At the foot of this mountain her companions alighted, and obliged her to do the same, for the ascent was too steep and irregular to admit of a carriage. Ellena followed unresistingly, like a lamb to the sacrifice, up a path that wound among the rocks, and was cooly overshadowed by thickets of almond trees, figs, broad-leaved myrtle, and ever-green rose bushes, intermingled with the strawberry tree, beautiful in fruit and blossoms, the yellow jasmine, the delightful acacia mimosa, and a variety of other fragrant plants. These bowers frequently admitted glimpses of the glowing country below, and sometimes opened to expansive views bounded by the snowy mountains of Abruzzo. At every step were objects which would have afforded pleasure to a tranquil mind; the beautifully variegated marbles, that formed the cliffs immediately above, their fractured masses embossed with mosses and flowers of every vivid hue that paints the rainbow; the elegance of the shrubs that tufted, and the majestic grace of the palms which waved over them, would have charmed almost any other eye than Ellena’s, whose spirit was wrapt in care, or than those of her companions, whose hearts were dead to feeling. Partial features of the vast edifice she was approaching, appeared now and then between the trees; the tall west window of the cathedral with the spires that overtopped it; the narrow pointed roofs of the cloisters; angles of the insurmountable walls, which fenced the garden from the precipices below, and the dark portal leading into the chief court; each of these, seen at intervals beneath the gloom of cypress and spreading cedar, seemed as if menacing the unhappy Ellena with hints of future suffering. She passed several shrines and images half hid among the shrubs and the cliffs; and, when she drew near the monastery, her companions stopped at a little chapel which stood beside the path, where, after examining some papers, an act which she observed with surprise, they drew aside, as if to consult respecting herself. Their conversation was delivered in voices so low, that she could not catch a single tone distinctly, and it is probable that if she could, this would not have assisted her in conjecturing who they were; yet the profound silence they had hitherto observed had much encreased her curiosity, now that they spoke.

One of them soon after quitted the chapel and proceeded alone to the monastery, leaving Ellena in the custody of his comrade, whose pity she now made a last, though almost hopeless, effort to interest. He replied to all her entreaties only by a waving of the hand, and an averted face; and she endeavoured to meet with fortitude and to endure with patience, the evil which she could neither avoid nor subdue. The spot where she awaited the return of the ruffian, was not of a character to promote melancholy, except, indeed, that luxurious and solemn kind of melancholy, which a view of stupendous objects inspires. It overlooked the whole extent of plains, of which she had before caught partial scenes, with the vast chain of mountains, which seemed to form an insurmountable rampart to the rich landscape at their feet. Their towering and fantastic summits, crowding together into dusky air, like flames tapering to a point, exhibited images of peculiar grandeur, while each minuter line and feature withdrawing, at this evening hour from observation, seemed to resolve itself into the more gigantic masses, to which the dubious tint, the solemn obscurity, that began to prevail over them, gave force and loftier character. The silence and deep repose of the landscape, served to impress this character more awfully on the heart, and while Ellena sat wrapt in the thoughtfulness it promoted, the vesper-service of the monks breathing softly from the cathedral above, came to her ear; it was a music which might be said to win on silence, and was in perfect unison with her feelings; solemn, deep, and full, it swelled in holy peels, and rolled away in murmurs, which attention pursued to the last faint note that melted into air. Ellena's heart owned the power of this high minstrelsy; and while she caught for a moment the sweeter voices of the nuns mingling in the chorus, she indulged a hope that they would not be wholly insensible to her sufferings, and that she should receive some consolation from sympathy as soft as these tender-breathing strains appeared to indicate.

She had rested nearly half an hour on the turfy slope before the chapel, when she perceived through the twilight, two monks descending from the monastery towards the spot where she sat. As they drew near, she distinguished their dress of grey stuff, the hood, the shaven head, where only a coronet of white hair was left, and other ensigns of their particular order. On reaching the chapel they accosted her companion, with whom they retired a few paces, and conversed. Ellena heard, for the first time, the sound of her conductor's voice, and though this was but faintly, she marked it well. The other ruffian did not yet appear, but it seemed evident that these friars had left the convent in consequence of his information; and sometimes, when she looked upon the taller of the two, she fancied she saw the person of the very man whose absence she had remarked, a conjecture which strengthened while she more accurately noticed him. The portrait had certainly much resemblance in height and bulk; and the same gaunt awkwardness, which even the cloak of the ruffian had not entirely shrouded, obtruded itself from under the folded garments of the recluse. If countenance, too, might be trusted, this same friar had a ruffian's heart, and his keen and cunning eye seemed habitually upon the watch for prey. His brother of the order shewed nothing strongly characteristic either in his face or manner.

After a private conversation of some length, the friars approached Ellena, and told her, that she must accompany them to the convent; when her disguised conductor, having resigned her to them, immediately departed and descended the mountain.

Not a word was uttered by either of the party as they pursued the steep tract leading to the gates of this secluded edifice, which were opened to them by a lay-brother, and Ellena entered a spacious court. Three sides of this were enclosed by lofty buildings, lined with ranges of cloisters; the fourth opened to a garden, shaded with avenues of melancholy cypress, that extended to the cathedral, whose fretted windows and ornamented spires appeared to close the perspective. Other large and detached buildings skirted the gardens on the left, while, on the right, spacious olive-grounds and vineyards spread to the cliffs that formed a barrier to all this side of the domain of the convent.

The friar, her conductor, crossed the court to the north wing, and there ringing a bell, a door was opened by a nun, into whose hands Ellena was given. A significant look was exchanged between the devotees, but no words; the friar departed, and the nun, still silent, conducted her through many solitary passages, where not even a distant foot-fall echoed, and whose walls were roughly painted with subjects indicatory of the severe superstitions of the place, tending to inspire melancholy awe. Ellena's hope of pity vanished as her eyes glanced over these symbols of the disposition of the inhabitants, and on the countenance of the nun characterised by a gloomy malignity which seemed ready to inflict upon others some portion of the unhappiness she herself suffered. As she glided forward with soundless step, her white drapery, floating along these solemn avenues, and her hollow features touched with the mingled light and shadow which the partial rays of a taper she held occasioned, she seemed like a spectre newly risen from the grave, rather than a living being. These passages terminated in the parlour of the Abbess, where the nun paused, and, turning to Ellena, said, "It is the hour of vespers; you will wait here till our lady of the convent leaves the church; she would speak with you."

"To what saint is the convent dedicated," said Ellena, "and who, sister, presides over it?"

The nun gave no reply, and after having eyed the forlorn stranger for a moment, with inquisitive ill-nature, quitted the room. The unhappy Ellena had not been left long to her own reflections, when the Abbess appeared; a stately lady, apparently occupied with opinions of her own importance, and prepared to receive her guest with rigour and supercilious haughtiness. This Abbess, who was herself a woman of some distinction, believed that of all possible crimes, next to that of sacrilege, offences against persons of rank were least pardonable. It is not surprising, therefore, that, supposing Ellena, a young woman of no family, to have sought clandestinely to unite herself with the noble house of Vivaldi, she should feel for her, not only disdain, but indignation, and that she should readily consent, not only to punish the offender, but at the same time, to afford means of preserving the ancient dignity of the offended.

"I understand," said the Abbess, on whose appearance the alarmed Ellena had arisen, "I understand," said she, without making any signal for her to be seated, "that you are the young person who is arrived from Naples."

"My name is Ellena di Rosalba," said her auditor, recovering some degree of courage from the manner which was designed to depress her.

"I know nothing of your name," replied the Superior; "I am informed only that you are sent here to acquire a knowledge of yourself and of your duties. Till the period shall be passed, for which you are given into my charge, I shall scrupulously observe the obligations of the troublesome office, which my regard for the honour of a noble family, has induced me to undertake."

By these words, the author and the motives of this extraordinary transaction were at once revealed to Ellena, who was for some moments almost overwhelmed by the sudden horrors that gathered on her mind, and stood silent and motionless. Fear, shame, and indignation, alternately assailed her; and the sting of offended honour, on being suspected, and thus accused of having voluntarily disturbed the tranquillity, and sought the alliance of any family, and especially of one who disdained her, struck forcibly to her heart, till the pride of conscious worth revived her courage and fortified her patience, and she demanded by whose will she had been torn from her home, and by whose authority she was now detained, as it appeared, a prisoner.

The Abbess, unaccustomed to have her power opposed, or her words questioned, was for a moment too indignant to reply; and Ellena observed, but no longer with dismay, the brooding tempest ready to burst over her head. "It is I only, who am injured," said she to herself, "and shall the guilty oppressor triumph, and the innocent sufferer sink under the shame that belongs only to guilt! Never will I yield to a weakness so contemptible. The consciousness of deserving well will recall my presence of mind, which, permitting me to estimate the characters of my oppressors by their actions, will enable me also to despise their power."

"I must remind you," said the Abbess, at length, "that the questions you make are unbecoming in your situation; and that contrition and humility are the best extenuations of error. You may withdraw."

"Most true," replied Ellena, bowing with dignity to the Superior; "and I most willingly resign them to my oppressors."

Ellena forbore to make further enquiry or remonstrance, and perceiving that reproach would not only be useless, but degrading to herself, she immediately obeyed the mandate of the Abbess, and determined, since she must suffer, to suffer, if possible, with firmness and dignity.

She was conducted from the parlour by the nun who had admitted her, and as she passed through the refectory where the nuns, just returned from vespers, were assembled, their inquisitive glances, their smiles and busy whispers, told her, that she was not only an object of curiosity, but of suspicion, and that little sympathy could be expected from hearts, which even the offices of hourly devotion had not purified from the malignant envy, that taught them to exalt themselves upon the humiliation of others.

The little room, to which Ellena was led, and where, to her great satisfaction, she was left alone, rather deserved the denomination of a cell than of a chamber; since, like those of the nuns, it had only one small lattice; and a mattress, one chair, and a table, with a crucifix and a prayer book were all its furniture. Ellena, as she surveyed her melancholy habitation, suppressed a rising sigh, but she could not remain unaffected by recollections, which, on this view of her altered state, crowded to her mind; nor think of Vivaldi far away, perhaps for ever, and probably, even ignorant of her destination, without bitter tears. But she dried them, as the idea of the Marchesa obtruded on her thoughts, for other emotions than those of grief possessed her. It was to the Marchesa that she especially attributed her present situation; and it now appeared, that the family of Vivaldi had not only been reluctant, but absolutely averse to a connection with hers, contrary to the suggestions of Signora Bianchi, who had represented, that it might be supposed only, from their known character, that they would disapprove of the alliance, but would of course be reconciled to an event, which their haughtiest displeasure never could revoke. This discovery of their absolute rejection awakened all the proper pride, which the mistaken prudence of her aunt, and her affection for Vivaldi had lulled to rest; and she now suffered the most acute vexation and remorse, for having yielded her consent to enter clandestinely into any family. The imaginary honours of so noble an alliance vanished, when the terms of obtaining them were considered; and now, that the sound mind of Ellena was left to its own judgment, she looked with infinitely more pride and preference upon the industrious means, which had hitherto rendered her independent, than on all distinction which might be relunctantly conferred. The consciousness of innocence, which had supported her in the presence of the Superior, began to falter. “Her accusation was partly just!” said Ellena, “and I deserve punishment, since I could, even for a moment, submit to the humiliation of desiring an alliance, which I knew would be unwillingly conferred. But it is not yet too late to retrieve my own esteem by asserting my independence, and resigning Vivaldi for ever. By resigning him! by abandoning him who loves me, — abandoning him to misery! Him, whom I cannot even think of without tears, — to whom my vows have been given, — who may claim me by the sacred remembrance of my dying friend, — him, to whom my whole heart is devoted! O! miserable alternative! — that I can no longer act justly, but at the expence of all my future happiness! Justly! And would it then be just to abandon him who is willing to resign every thing for me, — abandon him to ceaseless sorrow, that the prejudices of his family may be gratified?”

Poor Ellena perceived that she could not obey the dictates of a just pride, without such opposition from her heart as she had never experienced before. Her affections were now too deeply engaged to permit her to act with firmness, at the price of long suffering. The consideration of resigning Vivaldi was so very grievous, that she could scarcely endure to pause upon it for a moment; yet, on the other hand, when she thought of his family, it appeared that she never could consent to make a part of it. She would have blamed the erroneous judgment of Signora Bianchi, whose persuasions had so much assisted in reducing her to the present alternative, had not the tenderness with which she cherished her memory, rendered this impossible. All, that now remained for her, was to endeavour patiently to endure present evils, which she could not conquer; for, to forsake Vivaldi as the price of liberty, should liberty be offered her on such terms, or to accept him in defiance of honourable pride, should he ever effect her release, appeared to her distracted thoughts almost equally impracticable. But, as the probability of his never being able to discover her abode, returned to her consideration, the anguish she suffered told how much more she dreaded to lose than to accept Vivaldi, and that love was, after all, the most powerful affection of her heart.

❦

Chapter 7

> "The bell then beating one!"
> Shakespeare.

Vivaldi, meanwhile, ignorant of what had occurred at villa Altieri, repaired as he had proposed, to Paluzzi, attended by his servant Paulo. It was deep night before he left Naples, and so anxious was he to conceal himself from observation, that though Paulo carried a torch, he did not permit it to be lighted, till after he should have remained some time within the arch-way, thinking it most prudent to watch a while in secret for his unknown adviser, before he proceeded to examine the fort.

His attendant, Paulo, was a true Neapolitan, shrewd, inquisitive, insinuating, adroit; possessing much of the spirit of intrigue, together with a considerable portion of humour, which displayed itself not so much in words, as in his manner and countenance, in the archness of his dark, penetrating eye, and in the exquisite adaptation of his gesture to his idea. He was a distinguished favourite with his master, who, if he had not humour himself, had a keen relish of it in others, and who certainly did possess wit, with all its lively accompaniments, in an eminent degree. Vivaldi had been won by the naïveté and humour of this man, to allow him an unusual degree of familiarity in conversation; and, as they now walked together towards Paluzzi, he unfolded to Paulo as much of his former adventure there as he judged necessary to interest his curiosity and excite his vigilance. The relation did both. Paulo, however, naturally courageous, was incredulous to superstition of any kind; and, having quickly perceived that his master was not altogether indisposed to attribute to a supernatural cause the extraordinary occurrences at Paluzzi, he began, in his manner, to rally him; but Vivaldi was not in temper to endure jesting; his mood was grave, even to solemnity, and he yielded, though reluctantly, to the awe which, at intervals, returned upon him with the force of a magical spell, binding up all his faculties to sternness, and fixing them in expectation. While he was nearly regardless of defence against human agency, his servant was, however, preparing for that alone; and very properly represented the imprudence of going to Paluzzi in darkness. Vivaldi observed that they could not watch for the monk otherwise than in darkness, since the torch which lighted them would also warn him, and he had very particular reasons for watching before he proceeded to examine. He added, that after a certain time had elapsed, the torch might be lighted at a neighbouring cottage. Paulo objected, that in the meanwhile, the person for whom they watched might escape; and Vivaldi compromised the affair. The torch was lighted, but concealed within a hollow of the cliffs, that bordered the road, and the centinels took their station in darkness, within the deep arch, near the spot where Vivaldi had watched with Bonarmo. As they did this, the distant chime of a convent informed Vivaldi that midnight was turned. The sound recalled to his mind the words of Schedoni, concerning the vicinity of the convent of the Black Penitents, to Paluzzi, and he asked Paulo whether this was the chime of that convent. Paulo replied that it was, and that a remarkable circumstance had taught him to remember the Santa del Pianto, or Our Lady of Tears. "The place, Signor, would interest you," said Paulo; "for there are some odd stories told of it; and I am inclined to think, this unknown monk must be one of that society, his conduct is so strange."

"You believe then, that I am willing to give faith to wonderful stories," said Vivaldi, smiling. "But what have you heard, that is so extraordinary, respecting this convent? Speak low, or we may be discovered."

"Why, Signor, the story is not generally known," said Paulo in a whisper; "I half promised never to reveal it."

"If you are under any promise of secresy," interrupted Vivaldi, "I forbid you to tell this wonderful tale, which, however, seems somewhat too big to rest within your brain."

"The story would fain expand itself to your's, Signor," said Paulo; "and, as I did not absolutely promise to conceal it, I am very willing to reveal it."

"Proceed, then," said Vivaldi; "but let me once more caution you to speak low."

"You are obeyed, Signor. You must know, then, Maestro, that it was on the eve of the festival of Santo Marco, and about six years since" —

"Peace!" said Vivaldi. They were silent; but every thing remaining still, Paulo, after some time, ventured to proceed, though in a yet lower whisper. "It was on the eve of the Santo Marco, and when the last bell had rung, that a person" — He stopped again, for a rustling sound passed near him.

"You are too late," said a sudden voice beside Vivaldi, who instantly recognized the thrilling accents of the monk. — "It is past midnight; she departed an hour ago. Look to your steps!"

Though thrilled by this well-known voice, Vivaldi scarcely yielded to his feelings for a moment, but, checking the question which would have asked "who departed?" he, by a sudden spring, endeavoured to seize the intruder, while Paulo, in the first hurry of his alarm, fired a pistol, and then hastened for the torch. So certainly did Vivaldi believe himself to have leaped upon the spot whence the voice proceeded, that, on reaching it, he instantly extended his arms, and searching around, expected every moment to find his enemy in his grasp. Darkness again baffled his attempt.

"You are known," cried Vivaldi; "you shall see me at the Santa dell Pianto! What, oh! Paulo, the torch! — the torch!"

Paulo, swift as the wind, appeared with it. "He passed up those steps in the rock, Signor; I saw the skirts of his garments ascending!"

"Follow me, then," said Vivaldi, mounting the steps. "Away, away, Maestro!" said Paulo, impatiently; "but, for Heaven's sake, name no more the convent of the Santa dell Pianto; our lives may answer it!"

He followed to the terrace above, where Vivaldi, holding high the torch, looked round for the monk. The place, however, as far as his eye could penetrate, was for saken and silent. The glare of the torch enlightened only the rude walls of the citadel, some points of the cliff below, and some tall pines that waved over them, leaving in doubtful gloom many a recess of the ruin, and many a tangled thicket, that spread among the rocks beyond.

"Do you perceive any person, Paulo?" said Vivaldi, waving the torch in the air to rouse the flame. "Among those arches on the left, Signor, those arches that stand duskily beyond the citadel, I thought I saw a shadowy sort of a figure pass. He might be a ghost, by his silence, for aught I know, Maestro; but he seems to have a good mortal instinct in taking care of himself, and to have as swift a pair of heels to assist in carrying him off, as any Lazaro in Naples need desire."

"Fewer words, and more caution!" said Vivaldi, lowering the torch, and pointing it towards the quarter which Paulo had mentioned. "Be vigilant, and tread lightly."

"You are obeyed, Signor; but their eyes will inform them, though their ears refuse, while we hold a light to our own steps."

"Peace, with this buffoonery!" said Vivaldi, somewhat sternly; "follow in silence, and be on your guard."

Paulo submitted, and they proceeded towards the range of arches, which communicated with the building, whose singular structure had formerly arrested the attention of Bonarmo, and whence Vivaldi himself had returned with such unexpected precipitancy and consternation.

On perceiving the place he was approaching, he suddenly stopped, and Paulo observing his agitation, and probably not relishing the adventure, endeavoured to dissuade him from further research: "For we know not who may inhabit this gloomy place, Signor, or their numbers, and we are only two of us after all! Besides, Signor, it was through that door, yonder;" and he pointed to the very spot whence Vivaldi had so fearfully issued; "through that door, that I fancied, just now, I saw something pass."

"Are you certain as to this?" said Vivaldi, with increased emotion. "What was its form?"

"It was so dusky thereabout, Maestro, that I could not distinguish." Vivaldi's eyes were fixed upon the building, and a violent conflict of feelings seemed to shake his soul. A few seconds decided it. "I will go on," said he, "and terminate, at any hazard, this state of intolerable anxiety. Paulo, pause a moment, and consider well whether you can depend on your courage, for it may be severely tried. If you can, descend with me in silence, and I warn you to be wary; if you cannot, I will go alone."

"It is too late now, Signor, to ask myself that question," replied Paulo, with a submissive air; "and if I had not settled it long ago, I should not have followed you thus far. My courage, Signor, you never doubted before."

"Come on then," said Vivaldi. He drew his sword, and entering the narrow door-way, the torch, which he had now resigned to Paulo, shewed a stone passage, that was, however, interminable to the eye.

As they proceeded, Paulo observed, that the walls were stained in several places with what appeared to be blood, but prudently forbore to point this out to his master, observing the strict injunction of silence he had received.

Vivaldi stepped cautiously, and often paused to listen, after which he went on with a quicker pace, making signs only to, Paulo to follow, and be vigilant. The passage terminated in a stair-case, that seemed to lead to vaults below. Vivaldi remembered the light which had formerly appeared there, and, as recollection of the past gathered on his mind, he faultered in his purpose.

Again he paused, looked back upon Paulo, but was going forward, when Paulo himself seized his arm. “Stop! Signor,” said he in a low voice. “Do you not distinguish a figure standing yonder, in the gloom?”

Vivaldi looked onward, and perceived, indistinctly, something as of human form, but motionless and silent. It stood at the dusky extremity of the avenue, near the stair-case. Its garments, if garments they were, were dark; but its whole figure was so faintly traced to the eye, that it was impossible to ascertain whether this was the monk. Vivaldi took the light, and held it forward, endeavouring to distinguish the object before he ventured further; but the enquiry was useless, and, resigning the torch to Paulo, he rushed on. When he reached the head of the stair-case, however, the form, whatever it might be, was gone. Vivaldi had heard no footstep. Paulo pointed out the exact spot where it had stood, but no vestige of it appeared. Vivaldi called loudly upon the monk, but he heard only the lengthening echoes of his own voice revolving among the chambers below, and, after hesitating a while on the head of the stairs, he descended.

Paulo had not followed down many steps, when he called out, “It is there! Signor; I see it again! and now it flits away through the door that opens to the vaults!”

Vivaldi pursued so swiftly, that Paulo could scarcely follow fast enough with the light; and, as at length he rested to take breath, he perceived himself in the same spacious chamber to which he had formerly descended. At this moment Paulo perceived his countenance change. “You are ill, Signor,” said he. “In the name of our holy Saint, let us quit this hideous place. Its inhabitants can be nothing good, and no good can come of our remaining here.”

Vivaldi made no reply; he drew breath with difficulty, and his eyes remained fixed on the ground, till a noise, like the creaking of a heavy hinge, rose in a distant part of the vault. Paulo turned his eyes, at the same instant, towards the place whence it came, and they both perceived a door in the wall slowly opened, and immediately closed again, as if the person within had feared to be discovered. Each believed, from the transient view he had of it, that this was the same figure which had appeared on the stair-case, and that it was the monk himself. Reanimated by this belief, Vivaldi’s nerves were instantly rebraced, and he sprang to the door, which was unfastened, and yielded immediately to his impetuous hand. “You shall not deceive me now,” cried he, as he entered; “Paulo! keep guard at the door!”

He looked round the second vault, in which he now found himself, but no person appeared; he examined the place, and particularly the walls, without discovering any aperture, either of door or window, by which the figure could have quitted the chamber; a strongly-grated casement, placed near the roof, was all that admitted air, and probably light. Vivaldi was astonished! “Have you seen any thing pass?” said he Paulo.

“Nothing, Maestro,” replied the servant.

“This is almost incredible,” exclaimed Vivaldi; “’tis certain, this form can be nothing human!”

“If so, Signor,” observed Paulo, “why should it fear us? as surely it does; or why should it have fled?”

“That is not so certain,” rejoined Vivaldi; “it may have fled only to lead us into evil. But bring hither the torch; here is something in the wall which I would examine.”

Paulo obeyed. It was merely a ruggedness in the stones, not the partition of a door, that had excited his curiosity. “This is inexplicable!” exclaimed Vivaldi, after a long pause. “What motive could any human being have for thus tormenting me.”

“Or any being superhuman, either, my Signor?” said Paulo.

“I am warned of evils that await me,” continued Vivaldi, musing; “of events that are regularly fulfilled; the being who warns me, crosses my path perpetually, yet, with the cunning of a demon, as constantly eludes my grasp, and baffles my pursuit! It is incomprehensible, by what means he glides thus away from my eye, and fades, as if into air, at my approach! He is repeatedly in my presence, yet is never to be found!”

“It is most true, Signor,” said Paulo, “that he is never to be found, and therefore let me entreat you to give up the pursuit. This place is enough to make one believe in the horrors of purgatory! Let us go, Signor.”

“What but spirit could have quitted this vault so mysteriously,” continued Vivaldi, not attending to Paulo; “what but spirit!” —

“I would fain prove,” said the servant, “that substance can quit it as easily; I would fain evaporate through that door myself.”

He had scarcely spoken the words, when the door closed, with a thundering clap that echoed through all the vaults; and Vivaldi and Paulo stood for a moment aghast! and then both hastened to open it, and to leave the place. Their consternation may be easily conceived, when they found that all their efforts at the door were ineffectual. The thick wood was inlaid with solid bars of iron; and was of such unconquerable strength, that it evidently guarded what had been designed for a prison, and appeared to be the keep or dungeon of the ancient fort.

“Ah, Signor mio!” said Paulo, “if this was a spirit, ’tis plain he knew we were not so, by his luring us hither. Would we could exchange natures with him for a moment; for I know not how, as mere mortal men, we can ever squeeze ourselves out of this scrape. You must allow, Maestro, that this was not one of the evils he warned you of; or, if he did, it was through my organs, for I entreated you.” —

“Peace, good Signor Buffo!” said Vivaldi; “a truce with this nonsense, and assist in searching for some means of escape.”

Vivaldi again examined the walls, and as unsuccessfully as before; but in one corner of the vault lay an object, which seemed to tell the fate of one who had been confined here, and to hint his own: it was a garment covered with blood. Vivaldi and his servant discovered it at the same instant; and a dreadful foreboding of their own destiny fixed them, for some moments, to the spot. Vivaldi first recovered himself, when instead of yielding to despondency, all his faculties were aroused to devise some means for escaping; but Paulo’s hopes seemed buried beneath the dreadful vestments upon which he still gazed. “Ah, my Signor!” said he, at length, in a faultering accent, “who shall dare to raise that garment? What if it should conceal the mangled body whose blood has stained it!”

Vivaldi, shudderingly, turned to look on it again.

“It moves!” exclaimed Paulo; “I see it move!” as he said which, he started to the opposite side of the chamber. ‘Vivaldi stepped a few paces back, and as quickly returned; when; determined to know the event at once, he raised the garment upon the point of his sword, and perceived, beneath, other remains of dress, heaped high together, while even the floor below was stained with gore.

Believing that fear had deceived the eyes of Paulo, Vivaldi watched this horrible spectacle for some time, but without perceiving the least motion; when he became convinced, that not any remains of life were shrouded beneath it, and that it contained only articles of dress, which had belonged to some unfortunate person, who had probably been decoyed hither for plunder, and afterwards murdered. This belief, and the repugnance he felt to dwell upon the spectacle, prevented him from examining further, and he turned away to a remote part of the vault. A conviction of his own fate, and of his servant’s, filled his mind for a while with despair. It appeared that he had been ensnared by robbers, till, as he recollected the circumstances which had attended his entrance, and the several peculiar occurrences connected with the arch-way, this conjecture seemed highly improbable. It was unreasonable, that robbers should have taken the trouble to decoy, when they might at first have seized him; still more so, that they would have persevered so long in the attempt; and most of all, that when he had formerly been in their power, they should have neglected their opportunity, and suffered him to leave the ruin unmolested. Yet, granting that all this, improbable as it was, were, however, possible, the solemn warnings and predictions of the monk, so frequently delivered, and so faithfully fulfilled, could have no connection with the schemes of banditti. It appeared, therefore, that Vivaldi was not in the hands of robbers; or, if he were, that the monk, at least, had no connection with them; yet it was certain that he had just heard the voice of this monk beneath the arch; that his servant had said, he saw the vestments of one ascending the steps of the fort; and that they had both reason, afterward, to believe it was his shadowy figure, which they had pursued to the very chamber where they were now confined.

As Vivaldi considered all these circumstances, his perplexity encreased, and he was more than ever inclined to believe, that the form, which had assumed the appearance of a monk, was something superhuman.

“If this being had appeared only,” said he to himself, “I should, perhaps, have thought it the perturbed spirit of him, who doubtless has been murdered here, and that it led me hither to discover the deed, that his bones might be removed to holy ground; but this monk, or whatever it is, was neither silent, nor apparently anxious concerning himself; he spoke only of events connected with my peace, and predicted of the future, as well as reverted to the past! If he had either hinted of himself, or had been wholly silent, his appearance, and manner of eluding pursuit, is so extraordinary, that I should have yielded, for once, perhaps, to the tales of our grandfathers, and thought he was the spectre of a murdered person.”

As Vivaldi expressed his incredulity, however, he returned to examine the garment once more, when, as he raised it, he observed, what had before escaped his notice, black drapery mingled with the heap beneath; and, on lifting this also on the point of his sword, he perceived part of the habiliment of a monk! He started at the discovery, as if he had seen the apparition, which had so long been tempting his credulity. Here were the vest and scapulary, rent and stained with blood! Having gazed for a moment, he let them drop upon the heap; when Paulo, who had been silently observing him, exclaimed, “Signor! that should be the garment of the demon who led us hither. Is it a winding-sheet for us, Maestro? Or was it one for the body he inhabited while on earth!” “Neither, I trust,” replied Vivaldi, endeavouring to command the perturbation he suffered, and turning from the spectacle; “therefore we will try once more to regain our liberty.”

This was a design, however, beyond his accomplishment; and, having again attacked the door, raised Paulo to the grated window, and vociferated for release with his utmost strength, in which he was very ably seconded by Paulo, he abandoned, for the present, all further attempts, and, weary and desponding, threw himself on the ground of the dungeon.

Paulo bitterly lamented his master’s rashness in penetrating to this remote spot, and bewailed the probability of their being famished.

“For, supposing, Signor, that we were not decoyed hither for plunder and butchery, and supposing that we are not surrounded by malicious spirits, which San Januarius forbid I should take upon me to affirm is impossible! supposing all this, Signor, yet still there remains almost a certainty of our being starved to death; for how is it possible that any body can hear our cries, in a place so remote from all resort, and buried, as one may say, under ground, as this is?”

“Thou art an excellent comforter,” said Vivaldi, groaning.

“You must allow, Signor, that you are even with me,” replied Paulo; “and that you are as excellent a conductor.”

Vivaldi gave no answer, but lay on the ground, abandoned to agonizing thought. He had now leisure to consider the late words of the monk, and to conjecture, for he was in a mood for conjecturing the worst, that they not only alluded to Ellena, but that his saying “she had departed an hour ago,” was a figurative manner of telling that she had died then. This was a conjecture which dispelled almost all apprehension for himself. He started from the ground, and paced his prison with quick and unequal steps; it was now no longer a heavy despondency that oppressed him, but an acute anxiety that stung him, and, with the tortures of suspense, brought also those of passionate impatience and horror concerning the fate of Ellena. The longer he dwelt upon the possibility of her death, the more probable it appeared. This monk had already forewarned him of the death of Bianchi; and when he recollected the suspicious circumstances which had attended it, his terrors for Ellena increased. The more he yielded to his feelings, the more violent they became, till, at length, his ungovernable impatience and apprehensions arose almost to frenzy.

Paulo forgot, for a while, his own situation in the superior sufferings of his master, and now, at least, endeavoured to perform the offices of a comforter, for he tried to calm Vivaldi’s mind, by selecting the fairest circumstances for hope which the subject admitted, and he passed without noticing, or, if noticing, only lightly touched upon, the most prominent possibilities of evil. His master, however, was insensible to all he said, till he mentioned again the convent del Pianto; and this subject, as it seemed connected with the monk, who had hinted the fate of Ellena, interested the unhappy Vivaldi, who withdrew awhile from his own reflections, to listen to a recital which might assist his conjectures.

Paulo complied with his command, but not without reluctance. He looked round the empty vault, as if he feared that some person might be lurking in the obscurity, who would overhear, and even answer him.

“We are tolerably retired here too, Signor,” said he, recollecting himself; “one may venture to talk secrets with little danger of being discovered. However, Maestro, it is best to make matters quite sure; and therefore, if you will please to take a seat on the ground, I will stand beside you and relate all I know of the convent of Our Lady of Tears, which is not much after all.”

Vivaldi, having seated himself, and bidden Paulo do the same, the servant began in a low voice — “It was on the vigil of the Santo Marco, just after the last vesper-bell had tolled — You never was at the Santa Maria del Pianto, Signor, or you would know what a gloomy old church it has. — It was in a confessional in one of the side ailes of this church, and just after the last bell had ceased, that a person, so muffled up, that neither face nor shape could be distinguished, came and placed himself on the steps of one of the boxes adjoining the confessional chair; but if he had been as airily dressed as yourself, Signor, he might have been just as well concealed; for that dusky aisle is lighted only by one lamp, which hangs at the end next the painted window, except when the tapers at the shrine of San Antonio happen to be burning at the other extremity, and even then the place is almost as gloomy as this vault. But that is, no doubt, contrived for the purpose, that people may not blush for the sins they confess; and, in good faith, this is an accommodation which may bring more money to the poor's box, for the monks have a shrewd eye that way, and" —

"You have dropt the thread of your story," said Vivaldi.

"True, Signor, let me recollect where I lost it. — Oh! at the steps of the confessional; — the stranger knelt down upon them, and for some time poured such groans into the ear of the confessor, as were heard all along the aisle. You are to know, Signor, that the brothers of Santa del Pianto are of the order of Black Penitents; and people who have more sins than ordinary to confess, sometimes go there, to consult with the grand penitentiary what is to be done. Now it happened, that Father Ansaldo, the grand penitentiary himself, was in the chair, as is customary on the vigil of the Santo Marco; and he gently reproved the penitent for bewailing so loud, and bade him take comfort; when the other replied only by a groan deeper than before, but it was not so loud, and then proceeded to confess. But what he did confess, Signor, I know not; for the confessor, you know, never must divulge, except, indeed, on very extraordinary occasions. It was, however, something so very strange and horrible, that the grand penitentiary suddenly quitted the chair, and before he reached the cloisters he fell into strong convulsions. On recovering himself, he asked the people about him, whether the penitent, who had visited such a confessional, naming it, was gone; adding, that if he was still in the church, it was proper he should be detained. He described, at the same time, as well as he could, the sort of figure he had dimly seen approaching the confessional just before he had received the confession, at recollecting which, he seemed ready to go off again into his convulsions. One of the fathers, who had crossed the aisle, on his way to the cloisters, upon the first alarm of Ansaldo's disorder, remembered that a person, such as was described, had passed him hastily. He had seen a tall figure, muffled up in the habit of a white friar, gliding swiftly along the aisle, towards the door which opened into the outer court of the convent; but he was himself too much engaged to notice the stranger particularly. Father Ansaldo thought this must be the person; and the porter was summoned, and asked whether he had observed such an one pass. He affirmed that he had not seen any person go forth from the gate within the last quarter of an hour; which might be true enough, you know, Signor, if the rogue had been off his post. But he further said, that no one had entered, during the whole evening, habited in white, as the stranger was described to be: so the porter proved himself to be a vigilant watchman; for he must have been fast asleep too, or how could this personage have entered the convent, and left it again, without being seen by him!"

"In white, was he?" said Vivaldi; "if he had been in black, I should have thought this must have been the monk, my tormentor."

"Why, you know, Signor, that occurred to me before," observed Paulo, "and a man might easily change his dress, if that were all."

"Proceed," said Vivaldi.

"Hearing this account from the porter," continued Paulo, "the fathers believed, one and all, that the stranger must be secreted within the walls; and the convent, with every part of the precincts, was searched; but no person was found!"

"This must certainly be the monk," said Vivaldi, "notwithstanding the difference of his habit; there surely cannot be two beings in the world, who would conduct themselves in this same mysterious manner!"

He was interrupted by a low sound, which seemed, to his distracted fancy, to proceed from a dying person. Paulo also heard it; he started, and they both listened with intense and almost intolerable expectation.

"Ah!" said Paulo, at length, "it was only the wind."

"It was no more," said Vivaldi; "proceed therefore."

"From the period of this strange confession," resumed Paulo, "Father Ansaldo was never properly himself; he" —

"Doubtless the crime confessed related to himself," observed Vivaldi.

"Why, no, Signor, I never heard that that was the case; and some remarkable circumstances, which followed, seemed to prove it otherwise. About a month after the time I have mentioned, on the evening of a sultry day, when the monks were retiring from the last service." —

"Hark!" cried Vivaldi.

"I hear whispers," said Paulo, whispering himself.

"Be still!" said Vivaldi.

They listened attentively, and heard a murmuring, as of voices; but could not ascertain whether they came from the adjoining vault, or arose from beneath the one in which they were. The sound returned at intervals; and the persons who conversed, whatever they were, seemingly restrained their voices, as if they feared to be heard. Vivaldi considered whether it were better to discover himself, and call for assistance, or to remain still.

“Remember, Signor,” said Paulo, “what a chance we have of being starved, unless we venture to discover ourselves to these people, or whatever they are.”

“Venture!” exclaimed Vivaldi. “What has such a wretch as I to do with fear? O, Ellena, Ellena!”

He instantly called loudly to the person whom he believed he had heard, and was seconded by Paulo; but their continued vociferations availed them nothing; no answer was returned; and even the indistinct sounds, which had awakened their attention, were heard no more.

Exhausted by their efforts, they laid down on the floor of the dungeon, abandoning all further attempts at escape till the morning light might assist them. Vivaldi had no further spirits to enquire for the remainder of Paulo’s narrative. Almost despairing for himself, he could not feel an interest concerning strangers; for he had already perceived, that it could not afford him information connected with Ellena; and Paulo, who had roared himself hoarse, was very willing to be silent.

❦

Chapter 8

> Who may she be that steals through yonder cloister,
> And, as the beam of evening tints her veil,
> Unconsciously discloses saintly features,
> Inform'd with the high soul of saintly virtue?

During several days after Ellena's arrival at the monastery of San Stefano, she was not permitted to leave the room. The door was locked upon her, and not any person appeared except the nun, who brought her a scanty portion of food, and who was the same, that had first admitted her into that part of the convent appropriated to the abbess.

On the fourth day, when, probably, it was believed that her spirits were subdued by confinement, and by her experience of the suffering she had to expect from resistance, she was summoned to the parlour. The abbess was alone, and the air of austerity, with which she regarded Ellena, prepared the latter to endure.

After an exordium on the heinousness of her offence, and the necessity there was for taking measures to protect the peace and dignity of a noble family, which her late conduct had nearly destroyed; the abbess informed her, that she must determine either to accept the veil, or the person whom the Marchesa di Vivaldi had, of her great goodness, selected for her husband.

"You never can be sufficiently grateful," added the abbess, "for the generosity the Marchesa displays, in allowing you a choice on the subject. After the injury you have endeavoured to inflict upon her and her family, you could not expect that any indulgence would be shewn you. It was natural to suppose, that the Marchesa would have punished you with severity; instead of which, she allows you to enter into our society; or, if you have not strength of mind sufficient to enable you to renounce a sinful world, she permits you to return into it, and gives you a suitable partner to support you through its cares and toils, — a partner much more suitable to your circumstances than him, to whom you had the temerity to lift your eye."

Ellena blushed at this coarse appeal to her pride, and persevered in a disdainful silence. Thus to give to injustice the colouring of mercy, and to acts most absolutely tyrannical the softening tints of generosity, excited her honest indignation. She was not, however, shocked by a discovery of the designs formed against her, since, from the moment of her arrival at San Stefano, she had expected something terribly severe, and had prepared her mind to meet it with fortitude; for she believed, that, so supported, she should weary the malice of her enemies, and finally triumph over misfortune. It was only when she thought of Vivaldi that her courage failed, and that the injuries she endured seemed too heavy to be long sustained.

"You are silent!" said the abbess, after a pause of expectation. "Is it possible, then, that you can be ungrateful for the generosity of the Marchesa? But, though you may at present be insensible to her goodness, I will forbear to take advantage of your indiscretion, and will still allow you liberty of choice. You may retire to your chamber, to consider and to decide. But remember, that you must abide by the determination you shall avow; and, that you will be allowed no appeal from the alternatives, which are now placed before you. — If you reject the veil, you must accept the husband who is offered you."

"It is unnecessary," said Ellena, with an air of dignified tranquillity, "that I should withdraw for the purposes of considering and deciding. My resolution is already taken, and I reject each of the offered alternatives. I will neither condemn myself to a cloister, or to the degradation, with which I am threatened on the other hand. Having said this, I am prepared to meet whatever suffering you shall inflict upon me; but be assured, that my own voice never shall sanction the evils to which I may be subjected, and that the immortal love of justice, which fills all my heart, will sustain my courage no less powerfully than the sense of what is due to my own character. You are now acquainted with my sentiments and my resolutions; I shall repeat them no more."

The abbess, whose surprise had thus long suffered Ellena to speak, still fixed upon her a stern regard, as she said, "Where is it that you have learned these heroics, and acquired the rashness which thus prompts you to avow them! — the boldness which enables you to insult your Superior, a priestess of your holy religion, even in her sanctuary!"

"The sanctuary is prophaned," said Ellena, mildly, but with dignity: "it is become a prison. It is only when the Superior ceases to respect the precepts of that holy religion, the precepts which teach her justice and benevolence, that she herself is no longer respected. The very sentiment which bids us revere its mild and beneficent laws, bids us also reject the violators of them: when you command me to reverence my religion, you urge me to condemn yourself."

“Withdraw!” said the abbess, rising impatiently from her chair; “your admonition, so becomingly delivered, shall not be forgotten.”

Ellena willingly obeyed, and was led back to her cell, where she sat down pensively, and reviewed her conduct. Her judgment approved of the frankness, with which she had asserted her rights, and of the firmness, with which she had reproved a woman, who had dared to demand respect from the very victim of her cruelty and oppression. She was the more satisfied with herself, because she had never, for an instant, forgotten her own dignity so far, as to degenerate into the vehemence of passion, or to faulter with the weakness of fear. Her conviction of the abbess’s unworthy character was too clear to allow Ellena to feel abashed in her presence; for she regarded only the censure of the good, to which she had ever been as tremblingly alive, as she was obdurately insensible to that of the vicious.

Ellena, having now asserted her resolutions, determined to avoid, if possible, all repetition of scenes like the last, and to repel by silence only, whatever indignity might be offered her. She knew that she must suffer, and she resolved to endure. Of the three evils, which were placed before her, that of confinement, with all its melancholy accompaniments, appeared considerably less severe, than either the threatened marriage, or a formal renunciation of the world; either of which would devote her, during life, to misery, and that by her own act. Her choice, therefore, had been easy, and the way was plain before her. If she could endure with calmness the hardships which she could not avoid, half their weight would be unfelt; and she now most strenuously endeavoured to attain the strength of mind, which was necessary to support such equanimity.

For several days after the late interview with the abbess, she was kept a close prisoner; but on the fifth evening she was permitted to attend vespers. As she walked through the garden to the chapel, the ordinary freshness of the open air, and the verdure of the trees and shrubs were luxuries to her, who had so long been restricted from the common blessings of nature. She followed the nuns to a chapel where they usually performed their devotions, and was there seated among the novices. The solemnity of the service, and particularly of those parts, which were accompanied by music, touched all her heart, and soothed and elevated her spirit.

Among the voices of the choir, was one whose expression immediately fixed her attention; it seemed to speak a loftier sentiment of devotion than the others, and to be modulated by the melancholy of an heart, that had long since taken leave of this world. Whether it swelled with the high peal of the organ, or mingled in low and trembling accents with the sinking chorus, Ellena felt that she understood all the feelings of the breast from which it flowed; and she looked to the gallery where the nuns were assembled, to discover a countenance, that might seem to accord with the sensibility expressed in the voice. As no strangers were admitted to the chapel, some of the sisters had thrown back their veils, and she saw little that interested her in their various faces; but the figure and attitude of a nun, kneeling in a remote part of the gallery, beneath a lamp, which threw its rays aslant her head, perfectly agreed with the idea she had formed of the singer, and the sound seemed to approach immediately from that direction. Her face was concealed by a black veil, whose transparency, however, permitted the fairness of her complexion to appear; but the air of her head, and the singularity of her attitude, for she was the only person who remained kneeling, sufficiently indicated the superior degree of fervency and penitence, which the voice had expressed.

When the hymn had ceased, she rose from her knees, and Ellena, soon after, observing her throw back her veil, discovered, by the lamp, which shed its full light upon her features, a countenance, that instantly confirmed her conjecture. It was touched with a melancholy kind of resignation; yet grief seemed still to occasion the paleness, and the air of languor, that prevailed over it, and which disappeared only when the momentary energy of devotion seemed to lift her spirit above this world, and to impart to it somewhat of a seraphic grandeur. At those moments her blue eyes were raised towards Heaven, with such meek, yet servent love, such sublime enthusiasm as the heads of Guido sometimes display, and which renewed, with Ellena, all the enchanting effects of the voice she had just heard.

While she regarded the nun with a degree of interest which rendered her insensible to every other object in the chapel, she fancied she could perceive the calmness in her countenance to be that of despair, rather than of resignation; for, when her thoughts were not elevated in prayer, there was frequently a fixedness in her look, too energetic for common suffering, or for the temper of mind, which may lead to perfect resignation. It had, however, much that attached the sympathy of Ellena, and much that seemed to speak a similarity of feeling. Ellena was not only soothed, but in some degree comforted, while she gazed upon her; a selfishness which may, perhaps, be pardoned, when it is considered, that she thus knew there was one human being, at least, in the convent, who must be capable of feeling pity, and willing to administer consolation.

Ellena endeavoured to meet her eye, that she might inform her of the regard she had inspired, and express her own unhappiness; but the nun was so entirely engaged by devotion, that she did not succeed.

As they left the chapel, however, the nun passed close by Ellena, who threw back her veil, and fixed upon her a look so supplicating and expressive, that the nun paused, and in her turn regarded the novice, not with surprize only, but with a mixture of curiosity and compassion. A faint blush crossed her cheek, her spirits seemed to faulter, and she was unwilling to withdraw her eyes from Ellena: but it was necessary that she should continue in the procession, and, bidding her farewel by a smile of ineffable pity, she passed on to the court, while Ellena followed with attention still fixed upon the sister, who soon disappeared beyond the doorway of the Abbess's apartment, and Ellena had nearly reached her own, before her thoughts were sufficiently disengaged to permit her to enquire the name of the stranger.

"It is sister Olivia whom you mean, perhaps," said her conductress.

"She is very handsome," said Ellena.

"Many of the sisters are so," replied Margaritone, with an air of pique.

"Undoubtedly," said Ellena; "but she, whom I mean, has a most touching countenance; frank, noble, full of sensibility; and there is a gentle melancholy in her eye, which cannot but interest all who observe her."

Ellena was so fascinated by this interesting nun, that she forgot she was describing her to a person, whose callous heart rendered her insensible to the influence of any countenance, except, perhaps, the commanding one of the lady abbess; and to whom, therefore, a description of the fine traits, which Ellena felt, was as unintelligible as would have been an Arabic inscription.

"She is passed the bloom of youth," continued Ellena, still anxious to be understood; "but she retains all its interesting graces, and adds to them the dignity of." —

"If you mean that she is of middle age," interrupted Margaritone, peevishly, "it is sister Olivia you mention, for we are all younger than she is."

Ellena, raising her eyes almost unconsciously, as the nun spoke this, fixed them upon a face fallow, meagre, seemingly near fifty years an inhabitant of this world; and she could scarcely suppress the surprize she felt, on perceiving such wretched vanity lingering among the chilled passions of so repulsive a frame, and within the sequestered shade of a cloister. Margaritone, still jealous of the praise bestowed on Olivia, repelled all further enquiry, and, having attended Ellena to her cell, locked her up for the night.

On the following evening Ellena was again permitted to attend vespers, and, on the way to the chapel, the hope of seeing her interesting favourite reanimated her spirits. In the same part of the gallery; as on the preceding night, she again appeared, and kneeling, as before, beneath the lamp, in private orison, for the service was not begun.

Ellena endeavoured to subdue the impatience she felt to express her regard, and to be noticed by the holy sister, till she should have finished. When the nun rose, and observed Ellena, she lifted her veil, and, fixing on her the same enquiring eye, her countenance brightened into a smile so full of compassion and intelligence, that Ellena, forgetting the decorums of the place, left her seat to approach her; it seemed as if the soul, which beamed forth in that smile, had long been acquainted with hers. As she advanced, the nun dropped her veil, a reproof which she immediately understood, and she withdrew to her seat; but her attention remained fixed on the nun during the whole service.

At the conclusion, when they left the chapel, and she saw Olivia pass without noticing her, Ellena could scarcely restrain her tears; she returned in deep dejection to her room. The regard of this nun was not only delightful, but seemed necessary to her heart, and she dwelt, with fond perseverance, on the smile that had expressed so much, and which threw one gleam of comfort, even through the bars of her prison.

Her reverie was soon interrupted by a light step, that approached her cell, and in the next moment the door was unlocked, and Olivia herself appeared. Ellena rose with emotion to meet her; the nun held forth her hand to receive hers.

"You are unused to confinement," said she, curtsying mournfully, and placing on the table a little basket containing refreshment, "and our hard fare" —

"I understand you," said Ellena, with a look expressive of her gratitude; "you have a heart that can pity, though you inhabit these walls; — you have suffered too, and know the delicate generosity of softening the sorrows of others, by any attention that may tell them your sympathy. O! if I could express how much the sense of this affects me!"

Tears interrupted her. Olivia pressed her hand, looked steadily upon her face, and was somewhat agitated, but she soon recovered apparent tranquillity, and said, with a serious smile, "You judge rightly, my sister, respecting my sentiments, however you may do concerning my sufferings. My heart is not insensible to pity, nor to you, my child. You were designed for happier days than you can hope to find within these cloisters!"

She checked herself as if she had allowed too much, and then added, "But you may, perhaps, be peaceful; and since it consoles you to know that you have a friend near you, believe me that friend — but believe it in silence. I will visit you when I am permitted — but do not enquire for me; and if my visits are short, do not press me to lengthen them."

"How good this is!" said Ellena, in a faultering voice. "How sweet too it is! you will visit me, and I am pitied by you!"

"Hush!" said the nun, expressively; "no more; I may be observed. Good night, my sister; may your slumbers be light!"

Ellena's heart sunk. She had not spirits to say, "Good night!" but her eyes, covered with tears, said more. The nun turned her own away suddenly, and, pressing her hand in silence, left the cell. Ellena, firm and tranquil under the insults of the abbess, was now melted into tears by the kindness of a friend. These gentle tears were refreshing to her long-oppressed spirits, and she indulged them. Of Vivaldi she thought with more composure than she had done since she left the villa Altieri; and something like hope began to revive in her heart, though reflection offered nothing to support it.

On the following morning, she perceived that the door of her cell had not been closed. She rose impatiently, and, not without a hope of liberty, immediately passed it. The cell, opening upon a short passage, which communicated with the main building, and which was shut up by a door, was secluded, and almost insulated from every other chamber; and this door being now secured, Ellena was as truly a prisoner as before. It appeared then, that the nun had omitted to fasten the cell only for the purpose of allowing her more space to walk in the passage, and she was grateful for the attention. Still more she was so, when, having traversed it, she perceived one extremity terminate in a narrow stair case, that appeared to lead to other chambers.

She ascended the winding steps hastily, and found they led only to a door, opening into a small room, where nothing remarkable appeared, till she approached the windows, and beheld thence an horizon, and a landscape spread below, whose grandeur awakened all her heart. The consciousness of her prison was lost, while her eyes ranged over the wide and freely-sublime scene without. She perceived that this chamber was within a small turret, projecting from an angle of the convent over the walls, and suspended, as in air, above the vast precipices of granite, that formed part of the mountain. These precipices were broken into cliffs, which, in some places, impended far above their base, and, in others, rose, in nearly-perpendicular lines, to the walls of the monastery, which they supported. Ellena, with a dreadful pleasure, looked down them, shagged as they were with larch, and frequently darkened by lines of gigantic pine bending along the rocky ledges, till her eye rested on the thick chesnut woods that extended over their winding base, and which, softening to the plains, seemed to form a gradation between the variegated cultivation there, and the awful wildness of the rocks above. Round these extensive plains were tumbled the mountains, of various shape and altitude, which Ellena had admired on her approach to San Stefano; some shaded with forests of olive and almond trees, but the greater part abandoned to the flocks, which, in summer, feed on their aromatic herbage, and on the approach of winter, descend to the sheltered plains of the Tavogliere di Puglia.

On the left opened the dreadful pass which she had traversed, and the thunder of whose waters now murmured at a distance. The accumulation of overtopping points, which the mountains of this dark perspective exhibited, presented an image of grandeur superior to any thing she had seen while within the pass itself.

To Ellena, whose mind was capable of being highly elevated, or sweetly soothed, by scenes of nature, the discovery of this little turret was an important circumstance. Hither she could come, and her soul, refreshed by the views it afforded, would acquire strength to bear her, with equanimity, thro' the persecutions that might await her. Here, gazing upon the stupendous imagery around her, looking, as it were, beyond the awful veil which obscures the features of the Deity, and conceals Him from the eyes of his creatures, dwelling as with a present God in the midst of his sublime works; with a mind thus elevated, how insignificant would appear to her the transactions, and the sufferings of this world! How poor the boasted power of man, when the fall of a single cliff from these mountains would with ease destroy thousands of his race assembled on the plains below! How would it avail them, that they were accoutred for battle, armed with all the instruments of destruction that human invention ever fashioned? Thus man, the giant who now held her in captivity, would shrink to the diminutiveness of a fairy; and she would experience, that his utmost force was unable to enchain her soul, or compel her to fear him, while he was destitute of virtue.

Ellena's attention was recalled from the scene without by a sound from within the gallery, and she then heard a key turning in the door of the passage. Fearing that it was sister Margaritone who approached, and who, informed by her absence of the consolatory turret she had discovered, would perhaps debar her from ever returning to it, Ellena descended with a palpitating heart, and found that nun in the cell. Surprize and severity were in her countenance, when she enquired by what means Ellena had unclosed the door, and whither she had been.

Ellena answered without any prevarication, that she had found the door unfastened, and that she had visited the turret above; but she forbore to express a wish to return thither, judging that such an expression would certainly exclude her in future. Margaritone, after sharply rebuking her for prying beyond the passage, and setting down the breakfast she had brought, left the room, the door of which she did not forget to secure. Thus Ellena was at once deprived of so innocent a means of consolation as her pleasant turret had afforded.

During several days, she saw only the austere nun, except when she attended vespers; where, however, she was so vigilantly observed, that she feared to speak with Olivia, even by her eyes. Olivia's were often fixed upon her face, and with a kind of expression which Ellena, when she did venture to look at her, could not perfectly interpret. It was not only of pity, but of anxious curiosity, and of something also like fear. A blush would sometimes wander over her cheek, which was succeeded by an extreme paleness, and by an air of such universal languor as precedes a fainting fit; but the exercises of devotion seemed frequently to recal her fleeting spirits, and to elevate them with hope and courage.

When she left the chapel, Ellena saw Olivia no more that night; but on the following morning she came with breakfast to the cell. A character of peculiar sadness was on her brow.

"O! how glad I am to see you!" said Ellena; "and how much I have regretted your long absence! I was obliged to remember constantly what you had enjoined, to forbear enquiring after you."

The nun replied with a melancholy smile, "I come in obedience to our lady abbess," said she, as she seated herself on Ellena's mattress.

"And did you not wish to come?" said Ellena, mournfully.

"I did wish it," replied Olivia; "but" — and she hesitated.

"Whence then this reluctance?" enquired Ellena.

Olivia was silent a moment.

"You are a messenger of evil news:!" said Ellena; "you are only reluctant to afflict me."

"It is as you say," replied Olivia; "I am only reluctant to afflict you; and I fear you have too many attachments to the world, to allow you to receive, without sorrow, what I have to communicate. I am ordered to prepare you for the vows, and to say, that, since you have rejected the husband which was proposed to you, you are to accept the veil; that many of the customary forms are to be dispensed with; and that the ceremony of taking the black veil, will follow without delay that of receiving the white one."

The nun paused; and Ellena said, "You are an unwilling bearer of this cruel message; and I reply only to the lady abbess, when I declare, that I never will accept either; that force may send me to the altar, but that it never shall compel me to utter vows which my heart abhors; and if I am constrained to appear there, it shall be only to protest against her tyranny, and against the form intended to sanction it:"

To Olivia this answer was so far from being displeasing, that it appeared to give her satisfaction.

"I dare not applaud you resolution," said she; "but I will not condemn it. You have, no doubt, connections in the world which would render a seclusion from it afflicting. You have relations, friends, from whom it would be dreadful to part?"

"I have neither," said Ellena, sighing.

"No! Can that be possible? and yet you are so unwilling to retire!"

"I have only one friend," replied Ellena, "and it is of him they would deprive me!"

"Pardon, my love, the abruptness of these enquiries," said Olivia; "yet, while I entreat your forgiveness, I am inclined to offend again, and to ask your name."

"That is a question I will readily answer, My name is Ellena di Rosalba."

"How?" said Olivia, with an air of deliberation; "Ellena di" —

“Di Rofalba,” repeated her companion; “and permit me to ask your motive for the enquiry: do you know any person of my name?”

“No,” replied the nun, mournfully; “but your features have some resemblance to those of a friend I once had.”

As she said this, her agitation was apparent, and she rose to go. “I must not lengthen my visit, left I should be forbidden to repeat it,” said she. “What answer shall I give to the abbess? If you are determined to reject the veil, allow me to advise you to soften your refusal as much as possible. I am, perhaps, better acquainted with her character than you are; and O, my sister! I would not see you pining away your existence in this solitary cell.”

“How much I am obliged by the interest you express for my welfare,” said Ellena, “and by the advice you offer! I will yield my judgment in this instance to yours; you shall modulate my refusal as you think proper: but remember that it must be absolute; and beware, lest the abbess should mistake gentleness for irresolution.”

“Trust me, I will be cautious in all that relates to you,” said Olivia. “Farewell! I will visit you, if possible, in the evening. In the mean time the door shall be left open, that you may have more air and prospect than this cell affords. That staircase leads to a pleasant chamber.”

“I have visited it already,” replied Ellena, “and have to thank you for the goodness, which permitted me to do so. To go thither will greatly soothe my spirits; if I had some book, and my drawing-instruments, I could almost forget my sorrows there.”

“Could you so?” said the nun, with an affectionate smile. “Adieu! I will endeavour to see you in the evening. If sister Margaritone returns, be careful not to enquire for me; nor once ask her for the little indulgence I give you.”

Olivia withdrew, and Ellena retired to the chamber above, where she lost for a while all sense of sorrow amidst the great scenery, which its windows exhibited.

At noon, the step of Margaritone summoned Ellena from her retreat, and she was surprised that no reproof followed this second discovery of her absence. Margaritone only said, that the abbess had the goodness to permit Ellena to dine with the novices, and that she came to conduct her to their table.

Ellena did not rejoice in this permission, preferring to remain in her solitary turret, to the being exposed to the examining eyes of strangers; and she followed dejectedly, through the silent passages to the apartment where they were assembled. She was not less surprised than embarrassed to observe, in the manners of young people residing in a convent, an absence of that decorum, which includes beneath its modest shade every grace that ought to adorn the female character, like the veil which gives dignity to their air and softness to their features. When Ellena entered the room, the eyes of the whole company were immediately fixed upon her; the young ladies began to whisper and smile, and shewed, by various means, that she was the subject of conversation, not otherwise than censorious. No one advanced to meet and to encourage her, to welcome her to the table, or still less display one of those nameless graces, with which a generous and delicate mind delights to reanimate the modest and the unfortunate.

Ellena took a chair in silence; and, though she had at first felt forlorn and embarrassed by the impertinent manners of her companions, a consciousness of innocence gradually revived her spirits, and enabled her to resume an air of dignity, which repressed this rude presumption.

Ellena returned to her cell, for the first time, with eagerness. Margaritone did not fasten the door of it, but she was careful to secure that of the passage; and even this small indulgence she seemed to allow with a furly reluctance, as if compelled to obey the command of a superior. The moment she was gone, Ellena withdrew to her pleasant turret, where, after having suffered from the coarse manners of the novices, her gratitude was the more lively, when she perceived the delicate attention of her beloved nun. It appeared that she had visited the chamber in Ellena’s absence, and had caused to be brought thither a chair and a table, on which were placed some books, and a knot of fragrant flowers. Ellena did not repress the grateful tears, which the generous feelings of Olivia excited; and she forbore, for some moments, to examine the books, that the pleasing emotions she experienced might not be interrupted.

On looking into these books, however, she perceived, that some of them treated of mystical subjects, which she laid aside with disappointment; but in others she observed a few of the best Italian poets, and a volume or two of Guicciardini’s history. She was somewhat surprised, that the poets should have found their way to the library of a nun, but was too much pleased with the discovery to dwell on the enquiry.

Having arranged her books, and set her little room in order, she seated herself at a window, and, with a volume of

Tasso, endeavoured to banish every painful remembrance from her mind. She continued wandering in the imaginary scenes of the poet, till the fading light recalled her to those of reality. The sun was set, but the mountain-tops were still lighted up by his beams, and a tint of glorious purple coloured all the west, and began to change the snowy points on the horizon. The silence and repose of the vast scene, promoted the tender melancholy that prevailed in her heart; she thought of Vivaldi, and wept — of Vivaldi, whom she might, perhaps, never see again, though she doubted not that he would be indefatigable in searching for her. Every particular of their last conversation, when he had so earnestly lamented the approaching separation, even while he allowed of its propriety, came to her mind; and, while she witnessed, in imagination, the grief and distraction, which her mysterious departure and absence must have occasioned him, the fortitude, with which she had resisted her own sufferings, yielded to the picture of his.

The vesper-bell, at length, summoned her to prepare for mass, and she descended to her cell to await the arrival of her conductress. It was Margaritone, who soon appeared; but in the chapel she, as usual, saw Olivia, who, when the service had concluded, invited her into the garden of the convent. There, as she walked beneath the melancholy cypresses, that, ranged on either side the long walks, formed a majestic canopy, almost excluding the evening twilight, Olivia conversed with her on serious, but general, topics, carefully avoiding any mention of the abbess, and of the affairs of Ellena. The latter, anxious to learn the effect of her repeated rejection of the veil, ventured to make some enquiries, which the nun immediately discouraged, and as cautiously checked the grateful effusions of her young friend for the attentions she had received.

Olivia accompanied Ellena to her cell, and there no longer scrupled to relieve her from uncertainty. With a mixture of frankness and discretion, she related as much of the conversation, that had passed between herself and the abbess, as it appeared necessary for Ellena to know, from which it seemed that the former was as obstinate, as the latter was firm.

“Whatever may be your resolution,” added the nun, “I earnestly advise you, my sister, to allow the Superior some hope of compliance, lest she proceed to extremities.”

“And what extremity can be more terrible,” replied Ellena, “than either of those, to which she would now urge me? Why should I descend to practice dissimulation?”

“To save yourself from undeserved sufferings,” said Olivia mournfully.

“Yes, but I should then incur deserved ones,” observed Ellena; “and forfeit such peace of mind as my oppressors never could restore to me.” As she said this, she looked at the nun with an expression of gentle reproach and disappointment.

“I applaud the justness of your sentiment,” replied Olivia, regarding her with tenderest compassion. “Alas! that a mind so noble should be subjected to the power of injustice and depravity!”

“Not subjected,” said Ellena, “do not say subjected. I have accustomed myself to contemplate those sufferings; I have chosen the least of such as were given to my choice, and I will endure them with fortitude; and can you then say that I am subjected?”

“Alas, my sister! you know not what you promise,” replied Olivia; “you do not comprehend the sufferings which may be preparing for you.”

As she spoke, her eyes filled with tears, and she withdrew them from Ellena, who, surprised at the extreme concern on her countenance, entreated she would explain herself.

“I am not certain, myself, as to this point,” said Olivia; “and if I were, I should not dare to explain it.”

“Not dare!” repeated Ellena, mournfully. “Can benevolence like yours know fear, when courage is necessary to prevent evil?”

“Enquire no further!” said Olivia; but no blush of conscious duplicity stained her cheek. “It is sufficient that you understand the consequence of open resistance to be terrible, and that you consent to avoid it.”

“But how avoid it, my beloved friend, without incurring a consequence which, in my apprehension, would be yet more dreadful? How avoid it, without either subjecting myself to a hateful marriage, or accepting the vows? Either of these events would be more terrible to me, than any thing with which I may be menaced.”

“Perhaps not,” said the nun. “Imagination cannot draw the horrors of — But, my sister, let me repeat, that I would save you! O, how willingly save you from the evils preparing! and that the only chance of doing so is, by prevailing with you to abandon at least the appearance of resistance.”

“Your kindness deeply affects me,” said Ellena; “and I am fearful of appearing insensible of it, when I reject your advice; yet I cannot adopt it. The very dissimulation, which I should employ in self-defence, might be a means of involving me in destruction.”

As Ellena concluded, and her eyes glanced upon the nun, unaccountable suspicion occurred to her, that Olivia might be insincere, and that, at this very moment, when she was advising dissimulation, she was endeavouring to draw Ellena into some snare, which the abbess had laid. She sickened at this dreadful supposition, and dismissed it without suffering herself to examine its probability. That Olivia, from whom she had received so many attentions, whose countenance and manners announced so fair a mind, and for whom she had conceived so much esteem and affection, should be cruel and treacherous, was a suspicion that gave her more pain, than the actual imprisonment in which she suffered; and when she looked again upon her face, Ellena was consoled by a clear conviction, that she was utterly incapable of perfidy.

“If it were possible that I could consent to practise deceit,” resumed Ellena, after a long pause, “what could it avail me? I am entirely in the power of the abbess, who would soon put my sincerity to the proof; when a discovery of my duplicity would only provoke her vengeance, and I should be punished even for having sought to avoid injustice.”

“If deceit is at any time excusable,” replied Olivia, reluctantly, “it is when we practise it in self-defence. There are some rare situations, when it may be resorted to without our incurring ignominy, and yours is one of those. But I will acknowledge, that all the good I expect is from the delay which temporizing may procure you. The Superior, when she understands there is a probability of obtaining your consent to her wishes, may be willing to allow you the usual time of preparation for the veil, and meanwhile something may occur to rescue you from your present situation.”

“Ah! could I but believe so!” said Ellena; “but, alas! what power can rescue me? And I have not one relative remaining even to attempt my deliverance. To what possibility do you allude?”

“The Marchesa may relent.”

“Does, then, your possibility of good rest with her, my dear friend? If so, I am in despair again; for such a chance of benefit, there would certainly be little policy in forfeiting one’s integrity.”

“There are also other possibilities, my sister,” said Olivia; “but hark! what bell is that? It is the chime which assembles the nuns in the apartment of the abbess, where she dispenses her evening benediction. My absence will be observed. Good night, my sister. Reflect on what I have advised; and remember, I conjure you, to consider, that the consequence of your decision must be solemn, and may be fatal.”

The nun spoke this with a look and emphasis so extraordinary, that Ellena at once wished and dreaded to know more; but before she had recovered from her surprize, Olivia had left the room.

❦

Chapter 9

— "He, like the tenant
Of some night-haunted ruin, bore an aspect
Of horror, worn to habitude."
Mysterious Mother.

The adventurous Vivaldi, and his servant Paulo, after passing the night of Ellena's departure from villa Altieri in one of the subterraneous chambers of the fort of Paluzzi, and yielding, at length, to exhausted nature, awoke in terror and utter darkness, for the flambeau had expired. When a recollection of the occurrences of the preceding evening returned, they renewed their efforts for liberty with ardour. The grated window was again examined, and being found to overlook only a confined court of the fortress, no hope appeared of escaping.

The words of the monk returned with Vivaldi's first recollections, to torture him with apprehension, that Ellena was no more; and Paulo, unable either to console or to appease his master, sat down dejectedly beside him. Paulo had no longer a hope to suggest, or a joke to throw away; and he could not forbear seriously remarking, that to die of hunger was one of the most horrible means of death, or lamenting the rashness which had made them liable to so sad a probability.

He was in the midst of a very pathetic oration, of which, however, his master did not hear a single word, so wholly was his attention engaged by his own melancholy thoughts, when on a sudden he became silent, and then, starting to his feet, exclaimed, "Signor, what is yonder? Do you see nothing?"

Vivaldi looked round.

"It is certainly a ray of light," continued Paulo; "and I will soon know where it comes from."

As he said this he sprung forward, and his surprize almost equalled his joy when he discovered that the light issued through the door of the vault, which stood a little open. He could scarcely believe his senses, since the door had been strongly fastened on the preceding night, and he had not heard its ponderous bolts undrawn. He threw it widely open, but recollecting himself, stopped to look into the adjoining vault before he ventured forth; when Vivaldi darted past him, and bidding him follow instantly, ascended to the day. The courts of the fortress were silent and vacant, and Vivaldi reached the arch-way without having observed a single person, breathless with speed, and scarcely daring to believe that he had regained his liberty.

Beneath the arch he stopped to recover breath, and to consider whether he should take the road to Naples, or to the villa Altieri, for it was yet early morning, and at an hour when it appeared improbable that Ellena's family would be risen. The apprehension of her death had vanished as Vivaldi's spirits revived, which the pause of hesitation sufficiently announced: but even this was the pause only of an instant; a strong anxiety concerning her determined him to proceed to the villa Altieri, notwithstanding the unsuitableness of the hour, since he could, at least, reconnoitre her residence, and await till some sign of the family having risen should appear.

"Pray, Signor," said Paulo, while his master was deliberating, "do not let us stop here lest the enemy should appear again; and do, Signor, take the road which is nearest to some house where we may get breakfast, for the fear of starving has taken such hold upon me, that it has nearly anticipated the reality of it already."

Vivaldi immediately departed for the villa. Paulo, as he danced joyfully along, expressed all the astonishment that filled his mind, as to the cause of their late imprisonment and escape; but Vivaldi, who had now leizure to consider the subject, could not assist him in explaining it. The only certainty that appeared, was, that he had not been confined by robbers; and what interest any person could have in imprisoning him for the night, and suffering him to escape in the morning, did not appear.

On entering the garden at Altieri, he was surprized to observe that several of the lower lattices were open at this early hour, but surprize changed to terror, when, on reaching the portico, he heard a moaning of distress from the hall, and when, after loudly calling, he was answered by the piteous cries of Beatrice. The hall door was fastened, and, Beatrice being unable to open it, Vivaldi, followed by Paulo, sprang through one of the unclosed lattices; when on reaching the hall, he found the housekeeper bound to a pillar, and learned that Ellena had been carried off during the night by armed men.

For a moment he was almost stupified by the shock of this intelligence, and then asked Beatrice a thousand questions concerning the affair, without allowing her time to answer one of them. When, however, he had patience to listen, he learned that the ruffians were four in number; that they were masked; that two of them had carried Ellena through the garden, while the others, after binding Beatrice to a pillar, threatening her with death if she made any noise, and watching over her till their comrades had secured their prize, left her a prisoner. This was all the information she could give respecting Ellena.

Vivaldi, when he could think coolly, believed he had discovered the instigators and the design of the whole affair, and the cause, also, of his late confinement. It appeared that Ellena had been carried off by order of his family, to prevent the intended

marriage, and that he had been decoyed into the fort of Paluzzi, and kept a prisoner there, to prevent him from intercepting the scheme, which his presence at the villa Altieri would effectually have done. He had himself spoken of his former adventure at Paluzzi; and it now appeared, that his family had taken advantage of the curiosity he had expressed, to lead him into the vaults. The event of this design was the more certain, since, as the fort lay in the direct road to the villa Altieri, Vivaldi could not go thither without being observed by the creatures of the Marchesa, who, by an artful manoeuvre, might make him their prisoner, without employing violence.

As he considered these circumstanes, it appeared certain, also, that father Schedoni was in truth the monk who had so long haunted his steps; that he was the secret adviser of his mother, and one of the authors of the predicted misfortunes, which, it seemed, he possessed a too certain means of fulfilling. Yet Vivaldi, while he admitted the probability of all this, reflected with new astonishment on the conduct of Schedoni, during his interview with him in the Marchesa's cabinet; — the air of dignified innocence, with which he had repressed accusation, the apparent simplicity, with which he had pointed out circumstances respecting the stranger, that seemed to make against himself; and Vivaldi's opinion of the confessor's duplicity began to waver. “Yet what other person,” said he, “could be so intimately acquainted with my concerns, or have an interest sufficiently strong for thus indefatigably thwarting me, except this confessor, who is, no doubt, well rewarded for his perseverance? The monk can be no other than Schedoni, yet it is strange that he should have forborn to disguise his person, and should appear in his mysterious office in the very habit he usually wears!”

Whatever might be the truth as to Schedoni, it was evident that Ellena had been carried away by order of Vivaldi's family, and he immediately returned towards Naples with an intention of demanding her at their hands, not with any hope of their compliance, but believing that they might accidentally afford him some lights on the subject. If, however, he should fail to obtain any hint that might assist him in traceing the route she had been carried, he determined to visit Schedoni, accuse him of perfidy, urge him to a full explanation of his conduct, and, if possible, obtain from him a knowledge of Ellena's place of confinement.

When, at length, he obtained an interview with the Marchese, and, throwing himself at his feet, supplicated that Ellena might be restored to her home, the unaffected surprize of his father overwhelmed him with astonishment and despair. The look and manner of the Marchese could not be doubted; Vivaldi was convinced that he was absolutely ignorant of any step which had been taken against Ellena.

“However ungraciously you have conducted yourself,” said the Marchese, “my honour has never yet been fullied by duplicity; however I may have wished to break the unworthy connection you have formed, I should disdain to employ artifice as the means. If you really design to marry this person, I shall make no other effort to prevent such a measure, than by telling you the consequence you are to expect; — from thenceforth I will disown you for my son.”

The Marchese quitted the apartment when he had said this, and Vivaldi made no attempt to detain him. His words expressed little more than they had formerly done, yet Vivaldi was shocked by the absolute menace now delivered. The stronger passion of his heart, however, soon overcame their effect; and this moment, when he began to fear that he had irrecoverably lost the object of his dearest affections, was not the time, in which he could long feel remoter evils, or calculate the force of misfortunes which never might arrive. The nearer interest pressed solely upon his mind, and he was conscious only to the loss of Ellena.

The interview, which followed with his mother, was of a different character from that, which had occurred with the Marchese. The keen dart of suspicion, however, sharpened as it was by love and by despair, pierced beyond the veil of her duplicity; and Vivaldi as quickly detected her hypocrisy as he had yielded his conviction to the sincerity of the Marchese. But his power rested here; he possessed no means of awakening her pity or actuating her justice, and could not obtain even a hint, that might guide him in his search of Ellena.

Schedoni, however, yet remained to be tried; Vivaldi had no longer a doubt as to his having caballed with the Marchesa, and that he had been an agent in removing Ellena. Whether he was the person who haunted the ruins of Paluzzi, still remained to be proved, for, though several circumstances seemed to declare that he was, others, not less plausible, asserted the contrary.

On leaving the Marchesa's apartment, Vivaldi repaired to the convent of the Spirito Santo, and enquired for father Schedoni. The lay-brother who opened the gate, informed him that the father was in his cell, and Vivaldi stepped impatiently into the court requesting to be shewn thither.

"I dare not leave the gate, Signor," said the brother, "but if you cross the court, and ascend that stair-case which you see yonder beyond the door-way on your right, it will lead you to a gallery, and the third door you will come to is father Schedoni's."

Vivaldi passed on without seeing another human being, and not a found disturbed the silence of this sanctuary, till, as he ascended the stairs, a feeble note of lamentation proceeded from the gallery, and he concluded it was uttered by some penitent at confession.

He stopped, as he had been directed, at the third door, when, as he gently knocked, the sound ceased, and the same profound silence returned. Vivaldi repeated his summons, but, receiving no answer, he ventured to open the door. In the dusky cell within no person appeared, but he still looked round, expecting to discover some one in the dubious gloom. The chamber contained little more than a mattress, a chair, a table, and a crucifix; some books of devotion were upon the table, one or two of which were written in unknown characters; several instruments of torture lay beside them. Vivaldi shuddered as he hastily examined these, though he did not comprehend the manner of their application, and he left the chamber, without noticing any other object, and returned to the court. The porter said, that since father Schedoni was not in his cell, he was probably either in the church or in the gardens, for that he had not passed the gates during the morning.

"Did he pass yester-evening?" said Vivaldi, eagerly.

"Yes, he returned to vespers," replied the brother with surprize.

"Are you certain as to that, my friend?" rejoined Vivaldi, "are you certain that he slept in the convent last night?"

"Who is it that asks the question?" said the lay-brother, with displeasure, "and what right has he to make it? You are ignorant of the rules of our house, Signor, or you would perceive such questions to be unnecessary; any member of our community is liable to be severely punished if he sleep a night without these walls, and father Schedoni would be the last among us so to trespass. He is one of the most pious of the brotherhood; few indeed have courage to imitate his severe example. His voluntary sufferings are sufficient for a saint. He pass the night abroad? Go, Signor, yonder is the church, you will find him there, perhaps."

Vivaldi did not linger to reply. "The hypocrite!" said he to himself as he crossed to the church, which formed one side of the quadrangle; "but I will unmask him."

The church, which he entered, was vacant and silent like the court. "Whither can the inhabitants of this place have withdrawn themselves?" said he; "wherever I go, I hear only the echoes of my own footsteps; it seems as if death reigned here over all! But, perhaps, it is one of the hours of general mediation, and the monks have only retired to their cells."

As he paced the long aisles, he suddenly stopped to catch the startling found that murmured through the lofty roof; but it seemed to be only the closing of a distant door. Yet he often looked forward into the sacred gloom, which the painted windows threw over the remote perspective, in the expectation of perceiving a monk. He was not long disappointed; a person appeared, standing silently in an obscure part of the cloister, cloathed in the habit of this society, and he advanced towards him.

The monk did not avoid Vivaldi, or even turn to observe who was approaching, but remained in the same attitude, fixed like a statue. This tall and gaunt figure had, at a distance, reminded him of Schedoni, and Vivaldi, as he now looked under the cowl, discovered the ghastly countenance of the confessor.

"Have I found you at last?" said Vivaldi. "I would speak with you, father, in private. This is not a proper place for such discourse as we must hold."

Schedoni made no reply, and Vivaldi, once again looking at him, observed that his features were fixed, and his eyes bent towards the ground. The words of Vivaldi seemed not to have reached his understanding, nor even to have made any impression on his senses.

He repeated them in a louder tone, but still not a single line of Schedoni's countenance acknowledged their influence. "What means this mummery?" said he, his patience exhausted, and his indignation aroused; "This wretched subterfuge shall not protect you, you are detected, your stratagems are known! Restore Ellena di Rosalba to her home, or confess where you have concealed her."

Schedoni was still silent and unmoved. A respect for his age and profession with-held Vivaldi from seizing and compelling him to answer; but the agony of impatience and indignation which he suffered, formed a striking contrast to the death-like apathy of the monk. "I now also know you," continued Vivaldi, "for my tormentor at Paluzzi, the prophet of evils, which you too well practised the means of fulfilling, the predictor of the death of Signora Bianchi." Schedoni frowned. "The forewarner of Ellena's departure; the phantom who decoyed me into the dungeons of Paluzzi; the prophet and the artificer of all my misfortunes."

The monk raised his eyes from the ground, and fixed them with terrible expression upon Vivaldi, but was still silent.

"Yes, father," added Vivaldi, "I know and will proclaim you to the world. I will strip you of the holy hypocrisy in which you shroud yourself; announce to all your society the despicable artifices you have employed, and the misery you have occasioned. Your character shall be announced aloud."

While Vivaldi spoke, the monk had withdrawn his eyes, and fixed them again on the ground. His countenance had resumed its usual expression.

"Wretch! restore to me Ellena di Rosalba!" cried Vivaldi, with the sudden anguish of renewed despair. "Tell me at least, where she may be found, or you shall be compelled to do so. Whither, whither have you conveyed her?"

As he pronounced this in loud and passionate accents, several ecclesiastics entered the cloisters, and were passing on to the body of the church, when his voice arrested their attention. They paused, and perceiving the singular attitude of Schedoni, and the frantic gesticulations of Vivaldi, hastily advanced towards them. "Forbear!" said one of the strangers, as he seized the cloak of Vivaldi, "do you not observe!"

"I observe a hypocrite," replied Vivaldi, stepping back and disengaging himself, "I observe a destroyer of the peace, it was his duty to protect. I" —

"Forbear this desperate conduct," said the priest, "lest it provoke the just vengeance of Heaven! Do you not observe the holy office in which he is engaged?" pointing to the monk, "Leave the church while you are permitted to do so in safety; you suspect not the punishment you may provoke."

"I will not quit the spot till you answer my enquiries," said Vivaldi to Schedoni, without deigning even to look upon the priest; "Where, I repeat, is Ellena di Rosalba?" The confessor was still silent and unmoved.

"This is beyond all patience, and all belief," continued Vivaldi. "Speak! Answer me, or dread what I may unfold. Yet silent! Do you know the convent del Pianto? Do you know the confessional of the Black Penitents?"

Vivaldi thought he perceived the countenance of the monk suffer some change. "Do you remember that terrible night," he added, "when, on the steps of that confessional, a tale was told?" —

Schedoni raised his eyes, and fixing them once more on Vivaldi, with a look that seemed intended to strike him to the dust, "Avaunt!" cried he in a tremendous voice; "avaunt! sacrilegious boy! Tremble for the consequence of thy desperate impiety!"

As he concluded, he started from his position, and gliding with the silent swiftness of a shadow along the cloister, vanished in an instant. Vivaldi, when attempting to pursue him, was seized by the surrounding monks. Insensible to his sufferings, and exasperated by his assertions, they threatened, that if he did not immediately leave the convent, he should be confined, and undergo the severe punishment to which he had become liable, for having disturbed and even insulted one of their holy order while performing an act of penance.

"He has need of such acts," said Vivaldi; "but when can they restore the happiness his treachery has destroyed? Your order is disgraced by such a member, reverend fathers; your" —

"Peace!" cried a monk, "he is the pride of our house; he is severe in his devotion, and in self-punishment terrible beyond the reach of — But I am throwing away my commendations, I am talking to one who is not permitted to value or to understand the sacred mysteries of our exercises."

"Away with him to the Padre Abbate!" cried an enraged priest; "away with him to the dungeon!"

“Away! away!” repeated his companions, and they endeavoured to force Vivaldi through the cloisters. But with the sudden strength which pride and indignation lent him, he burst from their united hold, and, quitting the church by another door, escaped into the street.

Vivaldi returned home in a state of mind that would have engaged the pity of any heart, which prejudice or self-interest had not hardened. He avoided his father, but sought the Marchesa, who, triumphant in the success of her plan, was still insensible to the sufferings of her son.

When the Marchesa had been informed of his approaching marriage, she had, as usual, consulted with her confessor on the means of preventing it, who had advised the scheme she adopted, a scheme which was the more easily carried into effect, since the Marchesa had early in life been acquainted with the abbess of San Stefano, and knew, therefore, enough of her character and disposition to confide, without hesitation, the management of this important affair to her discretion. The answer of the abbess to her proposal, was not merely acquiescent, but zealous, and it appeared that she too faithfully justified the confidence reposed in her. After this plan had been so successfully prosecuted, it was not to be hoped that the Marchesa would be prevailed upon to relinquish it by the tears, the anguish, or all the varied sufferings of her son. Vivaldi now reproved the easiness of his own confidence in having hoped it, and quitted her cabinet with a despondency that almost reached despair.

The faithful Paulo obeyed the hasty summons of his master, but he had not succeeded in obtaining intelligence of Ellena; and Vivaldi, having dismissed him again on the same enquiry, retired to his apartment, where the excess of grief, and a feeble hope of devising some successful mode of remedy, alternately agitated and detained him.

In the evening, restless and anxious for change, though scarcely knowing whither to bend his course, he left the palace, and strolled down to the sea-beach. A few fishermen and lazzaroni only were loitering along the strand, waiting for boats from St. Lucia. Vivaldi, with folded arms, and his hat drawn over his face to shade his sorrow from observation, paced the edge of the waves, listening to their murmur, as they broke gently at his feet, and gazing upon their undulating beauty, while all consciousness was lost in melancholy reverie concerning Ellena. Her late residence appeared at a distance, rising over the shore. He remembered how often from thence they had together viewed this lovely scene! Its features had now lost their charm; they were colourless and uninteresting, or impressed only mournful ideas. The sea fluctuating beneath the setting sun, the long mole and its light-house tipped with the last rays, fishermen reposing in the shade, little boats skimming over the smooth waters, which their oars scarcely dimpled; these were images that brought to his recollection the affecting evening when he had last seen this picture from the villa Altieri, when, seated in the orangery with Ellena and Bianchi, on the night preceding the death of the latter, Ellena herself had so solemnly been given to his care, and had so affectingly consented to the dying request of her relative. The recollection of that scene came to Vivaldi with all the force of contrast, and renewed all the anguish of despair; he paced the beach with quicker steps, and long groans burst from his heart. He accused himself of indifference and inactivity, for having been thus long unable to discover a single circumstance which might direct his search; and though he knew not whither to go, he determined to leave Naples immediately, and return no more to his father’s mansion till he should have rescued Ellena.

Of some fishermen who were conversing together upon the beach, he enquired whether they could accommodate him with a boat, in which he meant to coast the bay; for it appeared probable that Ellena had been conveyed from Altieri by water, to some town or convent on the shore, the privacy and facility of such a mode of conveyance being suitable to the designs of her enemies.

“I have but one boat, Signor,” said a fisherman, “and that is busy enough in going to and fro between here and Santa Lucia, but my comrade, here, perhaps can serve you. What, Carlo, can you help the Signor to your little skiff? the other, I know, has enough to do in the trade.”

His comrade, however, was too much engaged with a party of three or four men, who were listening in deep attention round him, to reply; Vivaldi advancing to urge the question, was struck by the eagerness with which he delivered his narrative, as well as the uncouthness of his gesticulation; and he paused a moment in attention. One of the auditors seemed to doubt of something that had been asserted. “I tell you,” replied the narrator, “I used to carry fish there, two and three times a week, and very good sort of people they were; they have laid out many a ducat with me in their time. But as I was saying, when I got there, and knocked upon the door, I heard, all of a sudden, a huge groaning, and presently I heard the voice of the old housekeeper herself, roaring out for help; but I could give her none, for the door was fastened; and, while I ran away for assistance to old Bartoli, you know old Bartoli, he lives by the road side as you go to Naples; well, while

I ran to him, comes a Signor, and jumps through the window and sets her at liberty at once. So then, I heard the whole story.” —

“What story?” said Vivaldi, “and of whom do you speak?”

“All in good time, Maestro, you shall hear,” said the fisherman, who looking at him for a moment, added, “Why, Signor, it should be you I saw there, you should be the very Signor that let Beatrice loose.”

Vivaldi, who had scarcely doubted before, that it was Altieri of which the man had spoken, now asked a thousand questions respecting the route the ruffians had taken Ellena, but obtained no relief to his anxiety.

“I should not wonder,” said a Lazzaro who had been listening to the relation; “I should not wonder if the carriage that passed Bracelli early on the same morning, with the blinds drawn up, though it was so hot that people could scarcely breathe in the open air, should prove to be it which carried off the lady!”

This hint was sufficient to reanimate Vivaldi, who collected all the information the Lazzaro could give, which was, however, little more than that a carriage, such as he described, had been seen by him, driving furiously through Bracelli, early on the morning mentioned as that of Signora di Rosalba’s departure. Vivaldi had now no doubt as to its being the one which conveyed her away, and he determined to set out immediately for that place, where he hoped to obtain from the post-master further intelligence concerning the road she had pursued.

With this intention he returned once more to his father’s mansion, not to acquaint him with his purpose, or to bid him farewel, but to await the return of his servant Paulo, who he meant should accompany him in the search. Vivaldi’s spirits were now animated with hope, slender as were the circumstances that supported it; and, believing his design to be wholly unsuspected by those who would be disposed to interrupt it, he did not guard either against the measures, which might impede his departure from Naples, or those which might overtake him on his journey.

❦

CHAPTER 10

> "What, would'st thou have a serpent sting thee twice?"
> Shakespear.

The Marchesa, alarmed at some hints dropped by Vivaldi in the late interview between them, and by some circumstances of his latter conduct, summoned her constant adviser, Schedoni. Still suffering with the insult he had received in the church of the Spirito Santo, he obeyed with sullen reluctance, yet not without a malicious hope of discovering some opportunity for retaliation. That insult, which had pointed forth his hypocrisy, and ridiculed the solemn abstraction he assumed, had sunk deep in his heart, and, fermenting the direst passions of his nature, he meditated a terrible revenge. It had subjected him to mortifications of various kinds. Ambition, it has already appeared, was one of his strongest motives of action, and he had long since assumed a character of severe sanctity, chiefly for the purposes of lifting him to promotion. He was not beloved in the society of which he was a member; and many of the brotherhood, who had laboured to disappoint his views, and to detect his errors, who hated him for his pride, and envied him for his reputed sanctity, now gloried in the mortification he had received, and endeavoured to turn the circumstance to their own advantage. They had not scrupled already to display by insinuation and pointed sneers, their triumph, and to menace his reputation; and Schedoni, though he deserved contempt, was not of a temper to endure it.

But above all, some hints respecting his past life, which had fallen from Vivaldi, and which occasioned him so abruptly to leave the church, alarmed him. So much terror, indeed, had they excited, that it is not improbable that he would have sealed his secret in death, devoting Vivaldi to the grave, had he not been restrained by the dreaded vengeance of the Vivaldi family. Since that hour he had known no peace, and had never slept; he had taken scarcely any food, and was almost continually on his knees upon the steps of the high altar. The devotees who beheld him, paused and admired; such of the brothers as disliked him, sneered and passed on. Schedoni appeared alike insensible to each; lost to this world, and preparing for a higher.

The torments of his mind and the severe penance he had observed, had produced a surprising change in his appearance, so that he resembled a spectre rather than a human being. His visage was wan and wasted, his eyes were sunk and become nearly motionless, and his whole air and attitudes exhibited the wild energy of something — not of this earth.

When he was summoned by the Marchesa, his conscience whispered this to be the consequence of circumstances, which Vivaldi had revealed; and, at first, he had determined not to attend her; but, considering that if it was so, his refusal would confirm suspicion, he resolved to trust once more to the subtilty of his address for deliverance.

With these apprehensions, tempered by this hope, he entered the Marchesa's closet. She almost started on observing him, and could not immediately withdraw her eyes from his altered visage, while Schedoni was unable wholly to conceal the perturbation which such earnest observation occasioned. "Peace rest with you, daughter!" said he, and he seated himself, without lifting his eyes from the floor.

"I wished to speak with you, father, upon affairs of moment," said the Marchesa gravely, "which are probably not unknown to you." She paused, and Schedoni bowed his head, awaiting in anxious expectation what was to follow.

"You are silent, father," resumed the Marchesa. "What am I to understand by this?"

"That you have been misinformed," replied Schedoni, whose apt conscience betrayed his discretion.

"Pardon me," said the Marchesa, "I am too well informed, and should not have requested your visit if any doubt had remained upon my mind."

"Signora! be cautious of what you credit," said the confessor imprudently; "you know not the consequence of a hasty credulity."

"Would that mine were a rash credulity!" replied the Marchesa; "but — we are betrayed."

"We?" repeated the monk, beginning to revive: "What has happened?"

The Marchesa informed him of Vivaldi's absence, and inferred from its length, for it was now several days since his departure, that he had certainly discovered the place of Ellena's confinement, as well as the authors of it.

Schedoni differed from her, but hinted, that the obedience of youth was hopeless, unless severer measures were adopted.

"Severer!" exclaimed the Marchesa; "good father, is it not severe enough to confine her for life?"

"I mean severer with respect to your son, lady," replied Schedoni. "When a young man has so far overcome all reverence for an holy ordinance as publicly to insult its professors, and yet more, when that professor is in the very performance of his duties, it is time he should be controlled with a strong hand. I am not in the practice of advising such measures, but the conduct of Signor Vivaldi is such as calls aloud for them. Public decency demands it. For myself, indeed, I should have endured patiently the indignity which has been offered me, receiving it as a salutary mortification, as one of those inflictions that purity the soul from the pride which even the holiest men may unconsciously cherish. But I am no longer permitted to consider myself; the public good requires that an example should be made of the horrible impiety of which your son, it grieves me, daughter, to disclose it! — your son, unworthy of such a mother! has been guilty."

It is evident that in the style, at least, of this accusation, Schedoni suffered the force of his resentment to prevail over the usual subtilty of his address, the deep and smooth insinuation of his policy.

"To what do you allude, righteous father?" enquired the astonished Marchesa; "what indignity, what impiety has my son to answer for? I entreat you will speak explicitly, that I may prove I can lose the mother in the strict severity of the judge."

"That is spoken with the grandeur of sentiment, which has always distinguished you, my daughter! Strong minds perceive that justice is the highest of the moral attributes, mercy is only the favourite of weak ones."

Schedoni had a view in this commendation beyond that of confirming the Marchesa's present resolution against Vivaldi. He wished to prepare her for measures, which might hereafter be necessary to accomplish the revenge he meditated, and he knew that by flattering her vanity, he was most likely to succeed. He praised her, therefore, for qualities he wished her to possess, encouraged her to reject general opinions by admiring as the symptoms of a superior understanding, the convenient morality upon which she had occasionally acted; and, calling sternness justice, extolled that for strength of mind, which was only callous insensibility.

He then described to her Vivaldi's late conduct in the church of the Spirito Santo, exaggerated some offensive circumstances of it, invented others, and formed of the whole an instance of monstrous impiety and unprovoked insult.

The Marchesa listened to the relation with no less indignation than surprize, and her readiness to adopt the confessor's advice allowed him to depart with renovated spirits and most triumphant hopes.

Meanwhile, the Marchese remained ignorant of the subject of the conference with Schedoni. His opinions had formerly been sounded, and having been found decidedly against the dark policy it was thought expedient to practise, he was never afterwards consulted respecting Vivaldi. Parental anxiety and affection began to revive as the lengthened absence of his son was observed. Though jealous of his rank, he loved Vivaldi; and, though he had never positively believed that he designed to enter into a sacred engagement with a person, whom the Marchese considered to be so much his inferior as Ellena, he had suffered doubts, which gave him considerable uneasiness. The present extraordinary absence of Vivaldi renewed his alarm. He apprehended that if she was discovered at this moment, when the fear of losing her for ever, and the exasperation, which such complicated opposition occasioned, had awakened all the passions of his son, this rash young man might be prevailed upon to secure her for his own by the indissoluble vow. On the other hand, he dreaded the effect of Vivaldi's despair, should he fail in the pursuit; and thus, fearing at one moment that for which he wished in the next, the Marchese suffered a tumult of mind inferior only to his son's.

The instructions, which he delivered to the servants whom he sent in pursuit of Vivaldi, were given under such distraction of thought, that scarcely any person perfectly understood his commission; and, as the Marchesa had been careful to conceal from him her knowledge of Ellena's abode, he gave no direction concerning the route to San Stefano.

While the Marchese at Naples was thus employed, and while Schedoni was forming further plans against Ellena, Vivaldi was wandering from village to village, and from town to town, in pursuit of her, whom all his efforts had hitherto been unsuccessful to recover. From the people at the post-house at Bracelli, he had obtained little information that could direct him; they only knew that a carriage, such as had been already described to Vivaldi, with the blinds drawn up, changed horses there on the morning, which he remembered to be that of Ellena's departure, and had proceeded on the road to Morgagni.

When Vivaldi arrived thither, all trace of Ellena was lost; the master of the post could not recollect a single circumstance connected with the travellers, and, even if he had noticed them, it would have been insufficient for Vivaldi's purpose, unless he had also observed the road they followed; for at this place several roads branched off into opposite quarters of the country; Vivaldi, therefore, was reduced to chuse one of these, as chance or fancy directed; and, as it appeared probable that the Marchesa had conveyed Ellena to a convent, he determined to make enquiries at every one on his way.

He had now passed over some of the wildest tracts of the Apennine, among scenes, which seemed abandoned by civilized society to the banditti who haunted their recesses. Yet even here amidst wilds that were nearly inaccessible, convents, with each its small dependent hamlet, were scattered, and, shrouded from the world by woods and mountains, enjoyed unsuspectedly many of its luxuries, and displayed, unnoticed, some of its elegance. Vivaldi, who had visited several of these in search of Ellena, had been surprized at the refined courtesy and hospitality, with which he was received.

It was on the seventh day of his journey, and near sun-set, that he was bewildered in the woods of Rugieri. He had received a direction for the road he was to take at a village some leagues distant, and had obeyed it confidently till now, when the path was lost in several tracts that branched out among the trees. The day was closing, and Vivaldi's spirits began to fail, but Paulo, light of heart and ever gay, commended the shade and pleasant freshness of the woods, and observed, that if his master did lose his way, and was obliged to remain here for the night, it could not be so very unlucky, for they could climb up among the branches of a chestnut, and find a more neat and airy lodging than any inn had yet afforded them.

While Paulo was thus endeavouring to make the best of what might happen, and his master was sunk in reverie, they suddenly heard the sound of instruments and voices from a distance. The gloom, which the trees threw around, prevented their distinguishing objects afar off, and not a single human being was visible, nor any trace of his art, beneath the shadowy scene. They listened to ascertain from what direction the sounds approached, and heard a chorus of voices, accompanied by a few instruments, performing the evening service.

"We are near a convent, Signor," said Paulo, "listen! they are at their devotions."

"It is as you say," replied Vivaldi; "and we will make the best of our way towards it."

"Well, Signor! I must say, if we find as good doings here as we had at the Capuchin's, we shall have no reason to regret our beds al-fresco among the chestnut branches."

"Do you perceive any walls or spires beyond the trees?" said Vivaldi, as he led the way.

"None, Signor," replied Paulo; "yet we draw nearer the sounds. Ah, Signor! do you hear that note? How it dies away! And those instruments just touched in symphony! This is not the music of peasants; a convent must be near, though we do not see it."

Still as they advanced, no walls appeared. and soon after the music ceased; but other sounds led Vivaldi forward to a pleasant part of the woods, where, the trees opening, he perceived a party of pilgrims seated on the grass. They were laughing and conversing with much gaiety, as each spread before him the supper, which he drew from his scrip; while he, who appeared to be the Father-director of the pilgrimage, sat with a jovial countenance in the midst of the company, dispensing jokes and merry stories, and receiving in return a tribute from every scrip. Wines of various sorts were ranged before him, of which he drank abundantly, and seemed not to refuse any dainty that was offered.

Vivaldi, whose apprehensions were now quieted, stopped to observe the groupe, as the evening rays, glancing along the skirts of the wood, threw a gleam upon their various countenances, shewing, however, in each a spirit of gaiety that might have characterized the individuals of a party of pleasure, rather than those of a pilgrimage. The Father-director and his flock seemed perfectly to understand each other; the Superior willingly resigned the solemn austerity of his office, and permitted the company to make themselves as happy as possible, in consideration of receiving plenty of the most delicate of their viands; yet somewhat of dignity was mingled with his condescensions, that compelled them to receive even his jokes with a degree of deference, and perhaps they laughed at them less for their spirit than because they were favors.

Addressing the Superior, Vivaldi requested to be directed how he might regain his way. The father examined him for a moment before he replied, but observing the elegance of his dress, and a certain air of distinction; and perceiving, also, that Paulo was his servant, he promised his services, and invited him to take a seat at his right hand, and partake of the supper.

Vivaldi, understanding that the party was going his road, accepted the invitation; when Paulo, having fastened the horses to a tree, soon became busy with the supper. While Vivaldi conversed with the father, Paulo engrossed all the attention of the pilgrims near him; they declared he was the cleverest and the merriest fellow they had ever seen, and often expressed a wish that he was going as far with them as to the shrine in a convent of Carmelites, which terminated their pilgrimage. When Vivaldi understood that this shrine was in the church of a convent, partly inhabited by nuns, and that it was little more than a league and a half distant, he determined to accompany them, for it was as possible that Ellena was confined there as in any other cloister; and of her being imprisoned in some convent, he had less doubt, the more he considered the character and views of his mother. He set forward, therefore, with the pilgrims, and on foot, having resigned his horse to the weary Father-director.

Darkness closed over them long before they reached the village where they designed to pass the night; but they beguiled the way with songs and stories, now and then, only, stopping at command of the Father, to repeat some prayer or sing a hymn. But, as they drew near a village, at the base of the mountain on which the shrine stood, they halted to arrange themselves in procession; and the Superior having stopped short in the midst of one of his best jokes, dismounted Vivaldi's horse, placed himself at their head, and beginning a loud strain, they proceeded in full chorus of melancholy music.

The peasants, hearing their sonorous voices, came forth to meet and conduct them to their cabins. The village was already crowded with devotees, but these poor peasants, looking up to them with love and reverence, made every possible contrivance to accommodate all who came; notwithstanding which, when Paulo soon after turned into his bed of straw, he had more reasons than one to regret his chestnut mattress.

Vivaldi passed an anxious night, waiting impatiently for the dawning of that day, which might possibly restore to him Ellena. Considering that a pilgrim's habit would not only conceal him from suspicion, but allow him opportunities for observation, which his own dress would not permit, he employed Paulo to provide him one. The address of the servant, assisted by a single ducat, easily procured it, and at an early hour he set forward on his enquiry.

❦

CHAPTER 11

Bring roses, violets, and the cold snow-drop,
Beautiful in tears, to strew the path-way
Of our saintly sister.

A few devotees only had begun to ascend the mountain, and Vivaldi kept aloof even from these, pursuing a lonely track, for his thoughtful mind desired solitude. The early breeze sighing among the foliage, that waved high over the path, and the hollow dashing of distant waters, he listened to with complacency, for these were sounds which soothed yet promoted his melancholy mood; and he some times rested to gaze upon the scenery around him, for this too was in harmony with the temper of his mind. Disappointment had subdued the wilder energy of the passions, and produced a solemn and lofty state of feeling; he viewed with pleasing sadness the dark rocks and precipices, the gloomy mountains and vast solitudes, that spread around him; nor was the convent he was approaching a less sacred feature of the scene, as its gray walks and pinnacles appeared beyond the dusky groves. “Ah! if it should enclose her!” said Vivaldi, as he caught a first glimpse of its hall. “Vain hope! I will not invite your illusions again, I will not expose myself to the agonies of new disappointment; I will search, but not expect. Yet, if she should be there!”

Having reached the gates of the convent, he passed with hasty steps into the court; where his emotion encreased as he paused a moment and looked round its silent cloisters. The porter only appeared, when Vivaldi, fearful lest he should perceive him not to be a pilgrim, drew his hood over his face, and, gathering up his garments still closer in his folded arms, passed on without speaking, though he knew not which of the avenues before him led to the shrine. He advanced, however, towards the church, a stately edifice, detached, and at some little distance, from the other parts of the convent. Its highly vaulted aisles, extending in twilight perspective, where a monk, or a pilgrim only, now and then crossed, whose dark figures, passing without sound, vanished like shadows; the universal stillness of the place, the gleam of tapers from the high altar, and of lamps, which gave a gloomy pomp to every shrine in the church:— all these circumstances conspired to impress a sacred awe upon his heart.

He followed some devotees through a side aisle to a court, that was overhung by a tremendous rock, in which was a cave, containing the shrine of our Lady of Mount Carmel. This court was enclosed by the rock, and by the choir of the church, except that to the south a small opening led the eye to a glimpse of the landscape below, which, seen beyond the dark jaws of the cliff, appeared free, and light, and gaily coloured, melting away into the blue and distant mountains.

Vivaldi entered the cave, where, enclosed within a filigree screen of gold, lay the image of the saint, decorated with flowers and lighted up by innumerable lamps and tapers. The steps of the shrine were thronged with kneeling pilgrims, and Vivaldi, to avoid singularity, kneeled also; till a high peal of the organ, at a distance, and the deep voices of choiristers announced that the first mass was begun. He left the cave, and, returning into the church, loitered at an extremity of the aisles, where he listened awhile to the solemn harmony pealing along the roofs, and softening away in distance. It was such full and entrancing music as frequently swells in the high festivals of the Sicilian church, and is adapted to inspire that sublime enthusiasm, which sometimes elevates its disciples. Vivaldi, unable to endure long the excess of feeling, which this harmony awakened, was leaving the church, when suddenly it ceased, and the tolling of a bell sounded in its stead. This seemed to be the knel of death, and it occurred to him, that a dying person was approaching to receive the last sacrament; when he head remotely a warbling of female voices, mingling with the deeper tones of the monks, and with the hollow note of the bell, as it struck at intervals. So sweetly, so plaintively, did the strain grow on the air, that those, who listened, as well as those, who sung, were touched with sorrow, and seemed equally to mourn for a departing friend.

Vivaldi hastened to the choir, the pavement of which was strewn with palm-branches and fresh flowers. A pall of black velvet lay upon the steps of the altar, where several priests were silently attending. Every where appeared the ensigns of solemn pomp and ceremony, and in every countenance the stillness and observance of expectation. Meanwhile the sounds drew nearer, and Vivaldi perceived a procession of nuns approaching from a distant aisle.

As they advanced, he distinguished the lady abbess leading the train, dressed in her pontifical robes, with the mitre on her head; and well he marked her stately step, moving in time to the slow minstrelsy, and the air of proud yet graceful dignity, with which she characterized herself. Then followed the nuns, according to their several orders, and last came the novices, carrying lighted tapers, and surrounded by other nuns, who were distinguished by a particular habit.

Having reached a part of the church appropriated for their reception, they arranged themselves in order. Vivaldi with a palpitating heart enquired the occasion of this ceremony, and was told that a nun was going to be professed.

“You are informed, no doubt, brother,” added the prior who gave him this intelligence, “that on the morning of our high festival, our lady’s day, it is usual for such as devote themselves to heaven, to receive the veil. Stand bye a while, and you will see the ceremony.”

“What is the name of the novice who is now to receive it?” said Vivaldi, in a voice whose tremulous accents betrayed his emotion.

The friar glanced an eye of scrutiny upon him, as he replied, “I know not her name, but if you will step a little this way, I will point her out to you.”

Vivaldi, drawing his hood over his face, obeyed in silence.

“It is she on the right of the abbess,” said the stranger, “who leans on the arm of a nun, she is covered with a white veil, and is taller than her companions.”

Vivaldi observed her with a fearful eye, and, though he did not recognize the person of Ellena, yet, whether it was that his fancy was possessed with her image, or that there was truth in his surmise, he thought he perceived a resemblance of her. He enquired how long the novice had resided in the convent, and many other particulars, to which the stranger either could not or dared not reply.

With what anxious solicitude did Vivaldi endeavour to look through the veils of the several nuns in search of Ellena, whom he believed the barbarous policy of his mother might already have devoted to the cloister! With a solicitude still stronger, he tried to catch a glimpse of the features of the novices, but their faces were shaded by hoods, and their white veils, though thrown half back, were disposed in such artful folds that they concealed them from observation, as effectually as did the pendant lawn the features of the nuns.

The ceremony began with the exhortation of the Father–Abbot, delivered with solemn energy; then the novice kneeling before him, made her profession, for which Vivaldi listened with intense attention, but it was delivered in such low and trembling accents, that he could not ascertain even the tone. But during the anthem that mingled with the ensuing part of the service, he thought he distinguished the voice of Ellena, that touching and well-known voice, which in the church of San Lorenzo had first attracted his attention. He listened, scarcely daring to draw breath, lest he should lose a note; and again he fancied her voice spoke in a part of the plaintive response delivered by the nuns.

Vivaldi endeavoured to command his emotion, and to await with patience some further unfolding of the truth; but when the priest prepared to withdraw the white veil from the face of the novice, and throw the black one over her, a dreadful expectation that she was Ellena seized him, and he with difficulty forbore stepping forward and discovering himself on the instant.

The veil was at length withdrawn, and a very lovely face appeared, but not Ellena’s. Vivaldi breathed again, and waited with tolerable composure, for the conclusion of the ceremony; till, in the solemn strain that followed the putting on of the black veil, he heard again the voice, which he was now convinced was her’s. Its accents were low, and mournful, and tremulous, yet his heart acknowledged instantaneously their magic influence.

When this ceremony had concluded, another began; and he was told it was that of a noviciation. A young woman, supported by two nuns, advanced to the altar, and Vivaldi thought he beheld Ellena. The priest was beginning the customary exhortation, when she lifted her half-veil, and, shewing a countenance where meek sorrow was mingled with heavenly sweetness, raised her blue eyes, all bathed in tears, and waved her hand as if she would have spoken. — It was Ellena herself.

The priest attempted to proceed.

“I protest in the presence of this congregation,” said she solemnly, “that I am brought hither to pronounce vows which my heart disclaims. I protest” —

A confusion of voices interrupted her, and at the same instant she perceived Vivaldi rushing towards the altar. Ellena gazed for a moment, and then, stretching forth her supplicating hands towards him, closed her eyes, and sunk into the arms of some persons round her, who vainly endeavoured to prevent him from approaching and assisting her. The anguish, with which he bent over her lifeless form, and called upon her name, excited the commiseration even of the nuns, and especially of Olivia, who was most assiduous in efforts to revive her young friend.

When Ellena unclosed her eyes, and looking up, once more beheld Vivaldi, the expression, with which she regarded him, told that her heart was unchanged, and that she was unconscious of the miseries of inprisonment while he was with her. She desired to withdraw, and, assisted by Vivaldi and Olivia, was leaving the church, when the abbess ordered that she should be attended by the nuns only; and, retiring from the altar, she gave directions that the young stranger should be conducted to the parlour of the convent.

Vivaldi, though he refused to obey an imperious command, yielded to the entreaties of Ellena, and to the gentle remonstrances of Olivia; and, bidding Ellena farewell for a while, he repaired to the parlour of the abbess. He was not without some hope of awakening her to a sense of justice, or of pity; but he found that her notions of right were inexorably against him, and that pride and resentment usurped the influence of every other feeling. She began her lecture with expressing the warm friendship she had so long cherished for the Marchesa, proceeded to lament that the son of a friend, whom she so highly esteemed, should have forgotten his duty to his parents, and the observance due to the dignity of his house, so far as to seek connection with a person of Ellena di Rosalba's inferior station; and concluded with a severe reprimand for having disturbed the tranquillity of her convent and the decorum of the church by his intrusion.

Vivaldi listened with submitting patience to this mention of morals and decorum from a person, who, with the most perfect self-applause, was violating some of the plainest obligations of humanity and justice; who had conspired to tear an orphan from her home, and who designed to deprive her for life of liberty, with all the blessings it inherits. But, when she proceeded to speak of Ellena with the caussice of severe reprobation, and to hint at the punishment, which her public rejection of the vows had incurred, the patience of Vivaldi submitted no longer; indignation and contempt rose high against the Superior, and he exhibited a portrait of herself in the strong colours of truth. But the mind, which compassion could not persuade, reason could not appal; selfishness had hardened it alike to the influence of each; her pride only was affected, and she retaliated the mortification she suffered by menance and denunciation.

Vivaldi, on quitting her apartment, had no other resource than an application to the Abate, whose influence, at least, if not his authority, might assuage the severity of her power. In this Abate, a mildness of temper, and a gentleness of manner were qualities of less value than is usually and deservedly imputed to them; for, being connected with feebleness of mind, they were but the pleasing merits of easy times, which in an hour of difficulty never assumed the character of virtues, by inducing him to serve those, for whom he might feel. And thus, with a temper and disposition directly opposite to those of the severe and violent abbess, he was equally selfish, and almost equally culpable, since by permiting evil, he was nearly as injurious in his conduct as those who planned it. Indolence and timidity, a timidity the consequence of want of clear perception, deprived him of all energy of character; he was prudent rather than wise, and so fearful of being thought to do wrong that he seldom did right.

To Vivaldi's temperate representations and earnest entreaties that he would exert some authority towards liberating Ellena, he listened with patience; acknowledged the hardships of her situation; lamented the unhappy divisions between Vivaldi and his family, and then declined advancing a single step in so delicate an affair. Signora di Rosalba, he said, was in the care of the abbess, over whom he had no right of control in matters relative to her domestic concerns. Vivaldi then supplicated, that, though he possessed no authority, he would, at least, intercede or remonstrate against so unjust a procedure as that of detaining Ellena a prisoner, and assist in restoring her to the home, from which she had been forcibly carried.

"And this, again," replied the Abate, "does not come within my jurisdiction; and I make it a rule never to encroach upon that of another person."

"And can you endure, holy father," said Vivaldi, "to witness a flagrant act of injustice and not endeavour to counteract it? not even step forward to rescue the victim when you perceive the preparation for the sacrifice?"

"I repeat, that I never interfere with the authority of others," replied the Superior; "having asserted my own, I yield to them in their sphere, the obedience which I require in mine."

"Is power then," said Vivaldi, "the infallible test of justice? Is it morality to obey where the command is criminal? The whole world have a claim upon the fortitude, the active fortitude of those who are placed as you are, between the alternative of confirming a wrong by your consent, or preventing it by your resistance. Would that your heart expanded towards that world, reverend father!"

"Would that the whole world were wrong that you might have the glory of setting it right!" said the Abate, smiling.

"Young man! you are an enthusiast, and I pardon you. You are a knight of chivalry, who would go about the earth fighting with every body by way of proving your right to do good; it is unfortunate that you are born somewhat too late."

"Enthusiasm in the cause of humanity" — said Vivaldi, but he checked himself; and despairing of touching a heart so hardened by selfish prudence, and indignant at beholding an apathy so vicious in its consequence, he left the Abate without other effort. He perceived that he must now have recourse to further stratagem, a recourse which his frank and noble mind detested, but he had already tried, without success, every other possibility of rescuing the innocent victim of the Marchesa's prejudice and pride.

Ellena meanwhile had retired to her cell, agitated by a variety of considerations, and contrary emotions, of which, however, those of joy and tenderness were long predominant. Then came anxiety, apprehension, pride, and doubt, to divide and torture her heart. It was true that Vivaldi had discovered her prison, but, if it were possible, that he could release her, she must consent to quit it with him; a step from which a mind so tremblingly jealous of propriety as hers, recoiled with alarm, though it would deliver her from captivity. And how, when she considered the haughty character of the Marchese di Vivaldi, the imperious and vindictive nature of the Marchesa, and, still more, their united repugnance to a connection with her, how could she endure to think, even for a moment, of intruding herself into such a family! Pride, delicacy, good sense seemed to warn her against a conduct so humiliating and vexatious in its consequences, and to exhort her to preserve her own dignity by independence; but the esteem, the friendship, the tender affection, which she had cherished for Vivaldi, made her pause, and shrink with emotions, of little less than horror, from the eternal renunciation, which so dignified a choice required. Though the encouragement, which her deceased relative had given to this attachment, seemed to impart to it a sacred character, that considerably soothed the alarmed delicacy of Ellena, the approbation thus implied, had no power to silence her own objections, and she would have regretted the mistaken zeal, which had contributed to lead her into the present distressing situation, had she revered the memory of her aunt, or loved Vivaldi, less. Still, however, the joy, which his presence had occasioned, and which the consciousness that he was still near her had prolonged, was not subdued, though it was frequently obscured, by such anxious considerations. With jealous and indiscreet solicitude, she now recollected every look, and the accent of every word, which had told that his affection was undiminished, thus seeking, with inconsistent zeal, for a conviction of the very tenderness, which but a moment before she had thought it would be prudent to lament, and almost necessary to renounce.

She awaited with extreme anxiety the appearance of Olivia, who might probably know the result of Vivaldi's conference with the abbess, and whether he was yet in the convent.

In the evening Olivia came, a messenger of evil; and Ellena, informed of the conduct of the abbess, and the consequent departure of Vivaldi, perceived all her courage, and all the half-formed resolutions, which a consideration of his family had suggested, faulter and expire. Sensible only of grief and despondency, she ascertained, for the first time, the extent of her affection and the severity of her situation. She perceived, also, that the injustice, which his family had exercised towards her, absolved her from all consideration of their displeasure, otherwise than as it might affect herself; but this was a conviction, which it were now probably useless to admit.

Olivia not only expressed the tenderest interest in her welfare, but seemed deeply affected with her situation; and, whether it was, that the nun's misfortunes bore some resemblance to Ellena's, or from whatever cause, it is remarkable that her eyes were often filled with tears, while she regarded her young friend, and she betrayed so much emotion that Ellena noticed it with surprise. She was, however, too deliate to hint any curiosity on the subject; and too much engaged by a nearer interest, to dwell long upon the circumstance.

When Olivia withdrew, Ellena retired to her turret, to soothe her spirits with a view of serene and majestic nature, a recourse which seldom failed to elevate her mind and soften the asperities of affliction. It was to her like sweet and solemn music, breathing peace over the soul — like the oaten stop of Milton's Spirit,

"Who with his soft pipe, and smooth-dittied song, Well knew to still the wild winds when they roar And hush the waving woods."

While she sat before a window, observing the evening light beaming up the valley, and touching all the distant mountains with misty purple, a reed as sweet, though not as fanciful, sounded from among the rocks below. The instrument and the character of the strain were such as she had been unaccustomed to hear within the walls of San Stefano, and the tone diffused over her spirits a pleasing melancholy, that rapt all her attention. The liquid cadence, as it trembled and sunk away, seemed to tell the dejection of no vulgar feelings, and the exquisite taste, with which the complaining notes were again swelled, almost convinced her, that the musician was Vivaldi.

On looking from the lattice, she perceived a peson perched on a point of the cliff below, whither it appeared almost impracticable for any human step to have climbed, and preserved from the precipice only by some dwarf shrubs that fringed the brow. The twilight did not permit her immediately to ascertain whether it was Vivaldi, and the situation was so dangerous that she hoped it was not he. Her doubts were removed, when, looking up, he perceived Ellena, and she heard his voice.

Vivaldi had learned from a lay-brother of the convent, whom Paulo had bribed, and who, when he worked in the garden, had sometimes seen Ellena at the window, that she frequented this remote turret; and, at the hazard of his life, he had now ventured thither, with a hope of conversing with her,

Ellena, alarmed at his tremendous situation, refused to listen to him, but he would not leave the spot till he had communicated a plan concerted for her escape, and, entreating that she would confide herself to his care, assured her she would be conducted wherever she judged proper. It appeared that the brother had consented to assist his views, in consideration of an ample reward, and to admit him within the walls on this evening, when, in his pilgrim’s habit, he might have an opportunity of again seeing Ellena. He conjured her to attend, if possible, in the convent parlour during supper, explaining, in a few words, the motive for this request, and the substance of the following particulars:

The Lady-abbess, in observance of the custom upon high festivals, gave a collation to the Padre-abate, and such of the priests as had assisted at the vesper-service. A few strangers of distinction and pilgrims were also to partake of the entertainments of this night, among which was included a concert to be performed by the nuns. At the collation was to be displayed a profusion of delicacies, arranged by the sisters, who had been busy in preparing the pastry and confectionary during several days, and who excelled in these articles no less than in embroidery and other ingenious arts. This supper was to be given in the abbess’s outer parlour, while she herslf, attended by some nuns of high rank, and a few favourites, was to have a table in the inner apartment, where, separated only by the grate, she could partake of the conversation of the holy fathers. The tables were to be ornamented with artificial flowers, and a variety of other fanciful devices upon which the ingenuity of the sisters had been long employed, who prepared for these festivals with as much vanity, and expected them to dissipate the gloomy monotony of their usual life, with as much eagerness of delight, as a young beauty anticipates a first ball.

On this evening, therefore, every member of the convent would be engaged either by amusement or business, and to Vivaldi, who had been careful to inform himself of these circumstances, it would be easy, with the assistance of the brother, to obtain admittance, and mingle himself among the spectators, disguised in his pilgrim’s habit. He entreated, therefore, that Ellena would contrive to be in the abbess’s apartment this evening, when he would endeavour to convey to her some further particulars of the plan of escape, and would have mules in waiting at the foot of the mountain, to conduct her to the villa Altieri, or to the neighbouring convent of the Santa della Pieta. Vivaldi secretly hoped that she might be prevailed with to give him her hand on quitting San Stefano, but he forbore to mention this hope, lest it should be mistaken for a condition, and that Ellena might be either reluctant to accept his assistance, or, accepting it, might consider herself bound to grant a hasty consent.

To his mention of escape she listened with varying emotion; at one moment attending to it with hope and joy, as promising her only chance of liberation from an imprisonment, which was probably intended to last for her life, and of restoring her to Vivaldi; and at another, recoiling from the thought of departing with him, while his family was so decidedly averse to their marriage. Thus, unable to form any instant resolution on the subject, and entreating that he would leave his dangerous station before the thickening twilight should encrease the hazard of his descent, Ellena added, that she would endeavour to obtain admittance to the apartment of the abbess, and to acquaint him with her final determination. Vivaldi understood all the delicacy of her scruples, and though they afflicted him, he honoured the good sense and just pride that suggested them.

He lingered on the rock till the last moments of departing light, and then, with a heart fluttering with hopes and fears, bade Ellena farewel, and descended; while she watched his progress through the silent gloom, faintly distinguishing him gliding along ledges of the precipice, and making his adventurous way from cliff to cliff, till the winding thickets concealed him from her view. Still anxious, she remained at the lattice, but he appeared no more; no voice announced disaster; and, at length, she returned to her cell, to deliberate on the subject of her departure.

Her considerations were interrupted by Olivia, whose manner indicated something extraordinary; the usual tranquillity of her countenance was gone, and an air of grief mingled with apprehension appeared there. Before she spoke, she examined the passage and looked round the cell. “It is as I feared,” said she abruptly; “my suspicions are justified, and you, my child, are sacrificed, unless it were possible for you to quit the convent this night.”

“What is it that you mean?” said the alarmed Ellena.

“I have just learned,” resumed the nun, “that your conduct this morning, which is understood to have thrown a premeditated insult upon the abbess, is to be punished with what they call imprisonment; alas! why should I soften the truth, — with what I believe is death itself, for who ever returned alive from that hideous chamber.”

“With death!” said Ellena, aghast; “Oh, heavens! how have I deserved death?”

“That is not the question, my daughter, but how you may avoid it. Within the deepest recesses of our convent, is a stone chamber, secured by doors of iron, to which such of the sisterhood as have been guilty of any heinous offence have, from time to time, been consigned. This condemnation admits of no reprieve, the unfortunate captive is left to languish in chains and darkness, receiving only an allowance of bread and water just sufficient to prolong her sufferings, till nature, at length, sinking under their intolerable pressure, obtains refuge in death. Our records relate several instances of such horrible punishment, which has generally been inflicted upon nuns, who, weary of the life which they have chosen under the first delusions of the imagination, or which they have been comelled to accept by the rigour or avarice of parents, have been detected in escaping from the convent.”

The nun paused, but Ellena remaining wrapt in silent thought, she resumed: “One miserable instance of this severity has occurred within my memory. I saw the wretched victim enter that apartment — never more to quit it alive! I saw, also, her poor remains laid at rest in the convent garden! During nearly two years she languished upon a bed of straw, denied even the poor consolation of conversing through the grate with such of the sisters as pitied her; and who of us was there that did not pity her! A severe punishment was threatened to those, who should approach with any compassionate intention; thank God! I incurred it, and I endured it, also, with secret triumph.”

A gleam of satisfaction passed over Olivia’s countenance as she spoke this; it was the sweetest that Ellena had ever observed there. With a sympathetic emotion, she threw herself on the bosom of the nun, and wept; for some moments they were both silent. Olivia, at length said, “Do you not believe, my child, that the officious and offended abbess will readily seize upon the circumstance of your disobedience, as a pretence for confining you in that fatal chamber? The wishes of the Marchesa will thus surely be accomplished, without the difficulty of exacting your obedience to the vows. Alas! I have received proof too absolute of her intention, and that to-morrow is assigned as the day of your sacrifice; you may, perhaps, be thankful that the business of the festival has obliged her to defer executing the sentence even till tomorrow.”

Ellena replied only with a groan, as her head still drooped upon the shoulder of the nun; she was not now hesitating whether to accept the assistance of Vivaldi, but desponding lest his utmost efforts for her deliverance should be vain.

Olivia, who mistook the cause of her silence, added, “Other hints I could give, which are strong as they are dreadful, but I will forbear. Tell me how it is possible I may assist you; I am willing to incur a second punishment, in endeavouring to relieve a second sufferer.”

Ellena’s tears flowed fast at this new instance of the nun’s generosity. “But if they should discover you in assisting me to leave the convent,” she said, in a voice convulsed by her gratitude, — “O! if they should discover you!” —

“I can ascertain the punishment,” Olivia replied with firmness, “and do not fear to meet it.”

“How nobly generous this is!” said the weeping Ellena; “I ought not to suffer you to be thus careless of yourself!”

“My conduct is not wholly disinterested,” the nun modestly replied; “for I think I could endure any punishment with more fortitude than the sickening anguish of beholding such suffering as I have witnessed. What are bodily pains in comparison with the subtle, the exquisite tortures of the mind! Heaven knows I can support my own afflictions, but not the view of those of others when they are excessive. The instruments of torture I believe I could endure, if my spirit was invigorated with the consciousness of a generous purpose; but pity touches upon a nerve that vibrates instantly to the heart, and subdues resistance. Yes, my child, the agony of pity is keener than any other, except that of remorse, and even in remorse, it is, perhaps, the mingling unavailing pity, that points the sting. But, while I am indulging this egotism, I am perhaps, increasing your danger of the suffering I deprecate.”

Ellena, thus encouraged by the generous sympathy of Olivia, mentioned Vivaldi’s purposed visit of this evening; and consulted with her on the probability of procuring admittance for herself to the abbess’s parlour. Reanimated by this intelligence, Olivia advised her to repair not only to the supper-room, but to attend the previous concert, to which several strangers would be admitted, among whom might probably be Vivaldi. When to this, Ellena objected her dread of the abbess’s observation, and of the immediate seclusion that would follow, Olivia soothed her fears of discovery, by offering her the disguise of a nun’s veil, and promising not only to conduct her to the apartment, but to afford her every possible assistance towards her escape.

“Among the crowd of nuns, who will attend in that spacious apartment,” Olivia added, “it is improbable you would be distinguished, even if the sisters were less occupied by amusement, and the abbess were at leisure to scrutinize. As it is, you will hazard little danger of discovery; the Superior, if she thinks of you at all, will believe that you are still a prisoner in your cell, but this is an evening of too much importance to her vanity, for any consideration, distinct from that emotion, to divide her attention. Let hope, therefore, support you, my child, and do you prepare a few lines to acquaint Vivaldi with your consent to his proposal, and with the urgency of your circumstances; you may, perhaps, find an opportunity of conveying them through the grate.”

They were still conversing on this subject, when a particular chime sounded, which Olivia said summoned the nuns to the concert-room; and she immediately hastened for a black veil, while Ellena wrote the few lines that were necessary for Vivaldi.

❦

CHAPTER 12

That lawn conceals her beauty
As the thin cloud, just silver'd by the rays,
The trembling moon: think ye 'tis shrouded from
The curious eye?

Wrapt in Olivia's veil, Ellena descended to the music-room, and mingled with the nuns, who were assembled within the grate. Among the monks and pilgrims without it, were some strangers in the usual dress of the country, but she did not perceive any person who resembled Vivaldi; and she considered, that, if he were present, he would not venture to discover himself, while her nun's veil concealed her as effectually from him as from the lady Abbess. It would be necessary, therefore, to seek an opportunity of withdrawing it for a moment at the grate, an expedient, which must certainly expose her to the notice of strangers.

On the entrance of the lady Abbess, Ellena's fear of observation rendered her insensible to every other consideration; she fancied, that the eyes of the Superior were particularly directed upon herself. The veil seemed an insufficient protection from their penetrating glances, and she almost sunk with the terror of instant discovery.

The Abbess, however, passed on, and, having conversed for a few moments with the padre Abate and some visitors of distinction, took her chair; and the performance immediately opened with one of those solemn and impressive airs, which the Italian nuns know how to give with so much taste and sweetness. It rescued even Ellena for a moment from a sense of danger, and she resigned herself to the surrounding scene, of which the coup-d' oeil was striking and grand. In a vaulted apartment of considerable extent, lighted by innumerable tapers, and where even the ornaments, though pompous, partook of the solemn character of the institution, were assembled about fifty nuns, who, in the interesting habit of their order, appeared with graceful plainness. The delicacy of their air, and their beauty, softened by the lawn that thinly veiled it, were contrasted by the severe majesty of the lady Abbess, who, seated on an elevated chair, apart from the audience, seemed the Empress of the scene, and by the venerable figures of the father Abate and his attendant monks, who were arranged without that screen of wire-work, extending the whole breadth of the apartment, which is called the grate. Near the holy father were placed the strangers of distinction, dressed in the splendid Neapolitan habit, whose gay colouring and airy elegance opposed well with the dark drapery of the ecclesiastics; their plumed hats lostily overtopping the half-cowled heads and grey locks of the monks. Nor was the contrast of countenances less striking; the grave, the austere, the solemn, and the gloomy, intermingling with the light, the blooming, and the debonaire, expressed all the various tempers, that render life a blessing or a burden, and, as with the spell of magic, transform this world into a transient paradise or purgatory. In the back ground of the picture stood some pilgrims, with looks less joyous and more demure than they had worn on the road the preceding day; and among them were some inferior brothers and attendants of the convent. To this part of the chamber Ellena frequently directed her attention, but did not distinguish Vivaldi; and, though she had taken a station near the grate, she had not courage indecorously to withdraw her veil before so many strangers. And thus, if he even were in the apartment, it was not probable he would venture to come forward.

The concert concluded without his having been discovered by Ellena; and she withdrew to the apartment, where the collation was spread, and where the Abbess and her guests soon after appeared. Presently, she observed a stranger, in a pilgrim's habit, station himself near the grate; his face was partly muffled in his cloak, and he seemed to be a spectator rather than a partaker of the feast.

Ellena, who understood this to be Vivaldi, was watchful for an opportunity of approaching, unseen by the Abbess, the place where he had fixed himself. Engaged in conversation with the ladies around her, the Superior soon favoured Ellena's wish, who, having reached the grate, ventured to lift her veil for one instant. The stranger, letting his cloak fall, thanked her with his eyes for her condescension, and she perceived, that he was not Vivaldi! Shocked at the interpretation, which might be given to a conduct apparently so improper, as much as by the disappointment, which Vivaldi's absence occasioned, she was hastily retiring, when another stranger approached with quick steps, whom she instantly knew, by the grace and spirit of his air, to be Vivaldi; but, determined not to expose herself a second time to the possibility of a mistake, she awaited for some further signal of his identity, before she discovered herself. His eyes were fixed upon her in earnest attention for some moments, before he drew aside the cloak from his face. But he soon did so; — and it was Vivaldi himself.

Ellena, perceiving that she was known, did not raise her veil, but advanced a few steps towards the grate. Vivaldi there deposited a small folded paper and before she could venture to deliver her own billet; he had retired among the crowd. As she stepped forward to secure his letter, she observed a nun hastily approach the spot where he had laid it, and she paused. The garment of the Reluctant wasted it from the place where it had been partly concealed; and when Ellena perceived the nun's foot rest upon the paper, she with difficulty disguised her apprehensions.

A friar, who from without the grate addressed the sister, seemed with much earnestness, yet with a certain air of secresy, communicating some important intelligence. The fears of Ellena suggested that he had observed the action of Vivaldi, and was making known his suspicions; and she expected, every instant, to see the nun lift up the paper, and deliver it to the Abbess.

From this immediate apprehension, however, she was released when the sister pushed it gently aside, without examination, a circumstance that not less surprized than relieved her. But, when the conference broke up, and the friar, hastily retreating among the crowd, disappeared from the apartment, and the nun approached and whispered the Superior, all her terrors were renewed. She scarcely doubted, that Vivaldi was detected, and that his letter was designedly left where it had been deposited, for the purpose of alluring her to betray herself. Trembling, dismayed, and almost sinking with apprehension, she watched the countenance of the Abbess, while the nun addressed her, and thought she read her own fate in the frown that appeared there.

Whatever might be the intentions or the directions of the Superior, no active measure was at present employed; the Recluse, having received an answer, retired quietly among the sisters, and the Abbess resumed her usual manner. Ellena, however, supposing she was now observed, did not dare to seize the paper, though she believed it contained momentous information, and feared that the time was now escaping, which might facilitate her deliverance. Whenever she ventured to look round, the eyes of the Abbess seemed pointed upon her, and she judged from the position of the nun, for the veil concealed her face, that she also was vigilantly regarding her.

Above an hour had elapsed in this state of anxious suspense, when the collation concluded, and the assembly broke up; during the general bustle of which, Ellena ventured to the grate, and secured the paper. As she concealed it in her robe, she scarcely dared to enquire by a hasty glance whether she had been observed, and would have withdrawn immediately to examine the contents, had she not perceived, at the same instant, the Abbess quitting the apartment. On looking round for the nun, Ellena discovered that she was gone.

Ellena followed distantly in the Abbess's train; and, as she drew nearer to Olivia, gave a signal, and passed on to her cell. There, once more alone, and having secured the door, she sat down to read Vivaldi's billet, trying to command her impatience, and to understand the lines, over which her sight rapidly moved, when in the eagerness of turning over the paper, the lamp dropt from her trembling hand and expired. Her distress now nearly reached despair. To go forth into the convent for a light was utterly impracticable, since it would betray that she was no longer a prisoner, and not only would Olivia suffer from a discovery of the indulgence she had granted, but she herself would be immediately confined. Her only hope rested upon Olivia's arrival before it might be too late to practice the instructions of Vivaldi, if, indeed, they were still practicable; and she listened with intense solicitude for an approaching footstep, while she yet held, ignorant of its contents, the billet, that probably would decide her fate. A thousand times she turned about the eventful paper, endeavoured to trace the lines with her fingers, and to guess their import, thus enveloped in mystery; while she experienced all the various torture that the consciousness of having in her very hand the information, on a timely knowledge of which her life, perhaps, depended, without being able to understand it, could inflict.

Presently she heard advancing steps, and a light gleamed from the passage before she considered they might be some other than Olivia's; and that it was prudent to conceal the billet she held. The consideration, however, came too late to be acted upon; for, before the rusting paper was disposed of, a person entered the cell, and Ellena beheld her friend. Pale, trembling, and silent, she took the lamp from the nun, and, eagerly running over Vivaldi's note, learned, that at the time it was written, brother Jeronimo was in waiting with out the gate of the nun's garden, where Vivaldi designed to join him immediately, and conduct her by a private way beyond the walls. He added, that horses were stationed at the foot of the mountain, to convey her where-ever she should judge proper; and conjured her to be expeditious, since other circumstances, besides the universal engagement of the Recluses, were at that moment particularly favourable to an escape.

Ellena, desponding and appalled, gave the paper to Olivia, requesting she would read it hastily, and advise her how to act. It was now an hour and a half since Vivaldi had said, that success depended upon expedition, and that he had probably watched at the appointed place; in such an interval, how many circumstances might have occurred to destroy every possibility of a retreat, which it was certain the engagement of the Abbess and the sisters no longered favoured!

The generous Olivia, having read the billet, partook of all her young friend's distress, and was as willing, as Ellena was anxious, to dare every danger for the chance of obtaining deliverance.

Ellena could feel gratitude for such goodness even at this moment of agonizing apprehension. After a pause of deep consideration, Olivia said, "In every avenue of the convent we are now liable to meet some of the nuns; but my veil, though thin, has hitherto protected you, and we must hope it may still assist your purpose. It will be necessary, however, to pass through the refectory, where such of the sisters as did not partake of the collation, are assembled at supper, and will remain so, till the first mattin calls them to the chapel. If we wait till then, I fear it will be to no purpose to go at all."

Ellena's fears perfectly agreed with those of Olivia; and entreating that another moment might not be lost in hesitation, and that she would lead the way to the nun's garden, they quitted the cell together.

Several of the sisters passed them, as they descended to the refectory, but without particularly noticing Ellena; who; as she drew near that alarming apartment, wrapt her veil closer, and leaned with heavier pressure upon the arm of her faithful friend. At the door they were met by the Abbess, who had been overlooking the nuns assembled at supper, and missing Olivia had enquired for her. Ellena shrunk back to elude observation, and to let the Superior pass; but Olivia was obliged to answer to the summons. Having, however, unveiled herself, she was permitted to proceed; and Ellena, who had mingled with the crowd that surrounded the Abbess, and thus escaped detection, followed. Olivia with faltering steps, through the refectory. The nuns were luckily too much engaged by the entertainment, at this moment, to look round them, and the fugitive reached, unsuspected, an opposite door.

In the hall, to which they descended, the adventurers were frequently crossed by servants bearing dishes from the refectory to the kitchen; and, at the very moment when they were opening the door, that led into the garden a sister, who had observed them, demanded whether they had yet heard the mattin-bell, since they were going towards the chapel.

Terrified at this critical interruption, Ellena pressed Olivia's arm, in signal of silence, and was hastening forward, when the latter, more prudent, paused, and calmly answering the question, was then suffered to proceed.

As they crossed the garden towards the gate, Ellena's anxiety left Vivaldi should have been compelled to leave it, encreased so much, that she had scarcely power to proceed. "O if my strength should fail before I reach it!" she said softly to Olivia, "or if I should reach it too late!"

Olivia tried to cheer her, and pointed out the gate, on which the moonlight fell; "At the end of this walk only," said Olivia, "see! — where the shadows of the trees open, is our goal."

Encouraged by the view of it, Ellena fled with lighter steps along the alley; but the gate seemed to mock her approach, and to retreat before her. Fatigue overtook her in this long alley, before she could overtake the spot so anxiously fought, and, breathless and exhausted, she was once more compelled to stop, and once more in the agony of terror exclaimed — "O, if my strength should fail before I reach it! — O, if I should drop even while it is within my view."

The pause of a moment enabled her to proceed, and she stopped not again till she arrived at the gate; when Olivia suggested the prudence of ascertaining who was without, and of receiving an answer to the signal, which Vivaldi had proposed, before they ventured to make themselves known. She then struck upon the wood, and, in the anxious pause that followed, whispering voices were distinctly heard from without, but no signal spoke in reply to the nun's.

"We are betrayed!" said Ellena softly, "but I will know the worst at once; and she repeated the signal, when, to her unspeakable joy, it was answered by three smart raps upon the gate. Olivia, more distrustful, would have checked the sudden hope of her friend, till some further proof had appeared, that it was Vivaldi who waited without, but her precaution came too late; a key already grated in the lock; the door opened, and two persons mussled in their garments appeared at it. Ellena was hastily retreating, when a well-known voice recalled her, and she perceived, by the rays of a half-hooded lamp, which Jeronimo held, Vivaldi.

"O heavens!" he exclaimed, in a voice tremulous with joy, as he took her hand, "is it possible that you are again my own! If you could but know what I have suffered during this last hour!" — Then observing Olivia, he drew back, till Ellena expressed her deep sense of obligation to the nun.

"We have no time to lose," said Jeronimo sullenly; "we have stayed too long already, as you will find, perhaps."

"Farewel, dear Ellena!" said Olivia, "may the protection of heaven never leave you!"

The fears of Ellena now gave way to affectionate sorrow, as, weeping on the bosom of the nun, she said "farewel! O farewel, my dear, my tender friend! I must never, never see you more, but I shall always love you; and you have promised, that I shall hear from you; remember the convent della Pieta!"

"You should have settled this matter within," said Jeronimo, "we have been here these two hours already."

"Ah Ellena!" said Vivaldi, as he gently disengaged her from the nun, "do I then hold only the second place in your heart?"

Ellena, as she dismissed her tears, replied with a smile more eloquent than words; and when, she had again and again bade adieu to Olivia, she gave him her hand; and quitted the gate.

"It is moonlight," observed Vivaldi to Jeronimo, "your lamp is useless, and may betray us."

"It will be necessary in the church," replied Jeronimo, "and in some circuitous, avenues we must pass, for I dare not lead you out through the great gates, Signor; as you well know."

"Lead on; then," replied Vivaldi, and they reached one of the cypress walks; that extended to the church; but, before they entered it; Ellena paused and looked back to the garden gate, that she might see Olivia once again. The nun was still there, and Ellena perceived her faintly in the moonlight, waving her hand in signal of a last adieu. Ellena's heart was full; she wept, and lingered, and returned the signal, till the gentle violence of Vivaldi withdrew her from the spot.

"I envy your friend those tears," said he, "and feel jealous of the tenderness that excites them. Weep no more, my Ellena."

"If you knew her worth," replied Ellena, "and the obligations I owe her!" — Her voice was lost in sighs, and Vivaldi only pressed her hand in silence.

As they traversed the gloomy walk, that led to the church, Vivaldi said, "Are you certain, father, that not any of the brothers are doing penance at the shrines in our way?"

"Doing penance on a festival, Signor! they are more likely, by this time, to be taking down the ornaments."

"That would be equally unfortunate for us," said Vivaldi; "cannot we avoid the church, father?"

Jeronimo assured him, that this was impossible; and they immediately entered one of its lonely aisles, where he unhooded the lamp, for the tapers, which had given splendour, at an earlier hour, to the numerous shrines, had expired, except those at the high altar, which were so remote, that their rays faded into twilight long before they reached the part of the church where the fugitives passed. Here and there, indeed, a dying lamp shot a tremulous gleam upon the shrine below, and vanished again, serving to mark the distances in the long perspective of arches, rather than to enlighten the gloomy solitude; but no found, not even of a whisper, stole along the pavement.

They crossed to a side door communicating with the court, and with the rock, which enshrined the image of our Lady of mount Carmel. There, the sudden glare of tapers issuing from the cave, alarmed the fugitives, who had begun to retreat, when Jeronimo, stepping forward to examine the place, assured them, there was no symptom of any person being within, and that lights burned day and night around the shrine.

Revived by this explanation, they followed into the cave, where their conductor opened a part of the wire-work enclosing the saint, and led them to the extremity of the vault, sunk, deep within which appeared a small door. While Ellena trembled with apprehension, Jeronimo applied a key, and they perceived, beyond the door, a narrow passage winding away into the rock. The monk was leading on, but Vivaldi, who had the suspicions of Ellena, paused at the entrance, and demanded whither he was conducting them.

To the place of your destination," replied the brother, in a hollow voice, an answer which alarmed Ellena, and did not satisfy Vivaldi. "I have given myself to your guidance," he said, "and have confided to you what is dearer to me than existence. Your life," pointing to the short sword concealed beneath his pilgrim's vest, "your life, you may rely upon my word, shall answer for your treachery. If your purpose is evil, pause a moment, and repent, or you shall not quit this passage alive."

"Do you menace me!" replied the brother, his countenance darkening. "Of what service would be my death to you? Do you not know that every brother in the convent would rise to avenge it?"

"I know only that I will make sure of one traitor, if there be one," said Vivaldi, "and desend this lady against your host of monks; and, since you also know this, proceed accordingly."

At this instant it occurring to Ellena, that the passage in question probably led to the prison-chamber, which Olivia had described as situated within some deep recess of the convent, and that Jeronimo had certainly betrayed them, she refused to go further. “If your purpose is honest,” said she, “why do you not conduct us through some direct gate of the convent; why are we brought into these subterraneous labysinths?”

“There is no direct gate but that of the portal,” Jeronimo replied, “and this is the only other avenue leading beyond the walls.” “And why can we not go out through the portal?” Vivaldi asked.

“Because it is beset with pilgrims, and lay brothers,” replied Jeronimo, “and though you might pass them safely enough, what is to become of the lady? But all this you knew before, Signor; and was willing enough to trust me, then. The passage we are entering opens upon the cliffs, at some distance. I have run hazard enough already, and will waste no more time; so if you do not chuse to go forward, I will leave you, and you may act as you please.”

He concluded with a laugh of derision, and was re-locking the door, when Vivaldi, alarmed for the probable consequence of his resentment, and somewhat re-assured by the indifference he discovered as to their pursuing the avenue or not, endeavoured to appease him, as well as to encourage Ellena; and he succeeded in both.

As he followed in silence through the gloomy passage, his doubts were, however, not so wholly vanquished, but that he was prepared for attack, and while he supported Ellena with one hand, he held his sword in the other.

The avenue was of considerable length, and before they reached its extremity, they heard music from a distance, winding along the rocks. “Hark!” cried Ellena, “Whence come those founds? Listen!”

“From the cave we have left,” replied Jeronimo, “and it is midnight by that; it is the last chaunt of the pilgrims at the shrine of our Lady. Make haste, Signor, I shall be called for.”

The fugitives now perceived, that all retreat was cut off, and that, if they had lingered only a few moments longer in the cave, they should have been surprized by those devotees, some one of whom, however, it appeared possible might wander into this avenue, and still interrupt their escape. When Vivaldi told his apprehensions, Jeronimo, with an arch sneer, affirmed there was no danger of that, “for the passage,” he added, “is known only to the brothers of the convent.”

Vivaldi’s doubts vanished when he further understood, that the avenue led only from the cliffs without to the cave, and was used for the purpose of conveying secretly to the shrine, such articles as were judged necessary to excite the superstitious wonder of the devotees.

While he proceeded in thoughtful silence, a distant chime sounded hollowly through the chambers of the rock. “The mattin-bell strikes!” said Jeronimo, in seeming alarm, “I am summoned. Signora quicken your steps;” an unnecessary request, for Ellena already passed with her utmost speed; and she now rejoiced on perceiving a door in the remote winding of the passage, which she believed would emancipate her from the convent. But, as she advanced, the avenue appeared extending beyond it; and the door, which stood a little open allowed her a glimpse of a chamber in the cliff, duskily lighted.

Vivaldi, alarmed by the light, enquired, when he had passed, whether any person was in the chamber, and received an equivocal answer from Jeronimo, who, however, soon after pointed to an arched gate that terminated the avenue. They proceeded with lighter steps, for hope now cheared their hearts, and, on reaching the gate, all apprehension vanished. Jeronimo gave the lamp to Vivaldi, while he began to unbar and unlock the door, and Vivaldi had prepared to reward the brother for his fidelity, before they perceived that the door refused to yield. A dreadful imagination seized on Vivaldi. Jeronimo turning round, coolly said, “I fear we are betrayed; the second lock is shot! I have only the key of the first.”

“We are betrayed,” said Vivaldi, in a resolute tone, “but do not suppose, that your dissimulation conceals you. I understand by whom we are betrayed. Recollect my late assertion, and consider once more, whether it is your interest to intercept us.”

“My Signor,” replied Jeronimo, “I do not deceive you when I protest by our holy Saint, that I have not caused this gate to be fastened, and that I would open it if I could. The lock, which holds it, was not shot an hour ago. I am the more surprized at what has happened, because this place is seldom passed, even by the holiest footstep; and I fear, whoever has passed now, has been led hither by suspicion, and comes to intercept your flight.”

“Your wily explanation, brother, may serve you for an inferior occasion, but not on this,” replied Vivaldi, “either, therefore, unclose the gate, or prepare for the worst. You are not now to learn, that, however flightly I may estimate my own life, I will never abandon this lady to the horrors, which your community have already prepared for her.”

Ellena, summoning her fleeting spirits, endeavoured to calm the indignation of Vivaldi, and to prevent the consequence of his suspicions, as well as to prevail with Jeronimo, to unfasten the gate. Her efforts were, however, followed by a long altereation; but, at length, the art or the innocence of the brother, appeased Vivaldi, who now endeavoured to force the gate, while Jeronimo in vain represented its strength, and the certain ruin, that must fall upon himself, if it should be discovered he had concurred in destroying it.

The gate was immoveable; but, as no other chance of escaping appeared, Vivaldi was not easily prevailed with to desist; all possibility of retreating too was gone, since the church and the cave were now crowded with devotees, attending the mattin service.

Jeronimo, however, seemingly did not despair of effecting their release, but he acknowledged that they would probably be compelled to remain concealed in this gloomy avenue all night, and perhaps the next day. At length, it was agreed, that he should return to the church, to examine whether a possibility remained of the fugitives passing unobserved to the great portal; and, having conducted them back to the chamber, of which they had taken a passing glimpse, he proceeded to the shrine.

For a considerable time after his departure, they were not without hope; but, their confidence diminishing as his delay encreased, their uncertainty at length became terrible; and it was only for the sake of Vivaldi, from whom she scrupulously concealed all knowledge of the particular fate, which she was aware must await her in the convent, that Ellena appeared to endure it with calmness. Notwithstanding the plausibility of Jeronimo, suspicion of his treachery returned upon her mind. The cold and earthy air of this chamber was like that of a sepulchre; and when she looked round, it appeared exactly to correspond with the description given by Olivia of the prison where the nun had languished and expired. It was walled and vaulted with the rock, had only one small grated aperture in the roof to admit air, and contained no furniture, except one table, a bench, and the lamp, which dimly shewed the apartment. That a lamp should be found burning in a place so remote and solitary, amazed her still more when she recollected the assertion of Jeronimo, — that even holy steps seldom passed this way; and when she considered also, that he had expressed no surprize at a circumstance, according to his own assertion, so unusual. Again it appeared, that she had been betrayed into the very prison, designed for her by the Abbess; and the horror, occasioned by this supposition, was so great, that she was on the point of disclosing it to Vivaldi, but an apprehension of the distraction, into which his desperate courage might precipitate him, restrained her.

While these considerations occupied Ellena, and it appeared that any certainty would be less painful than this suspense, she frequently looked round the chamber in search of some object, which might contradict or confirm her suspicion, that this was the death-room of the unfortunate nun. No such circumstance appeared, but as her eyes glanced, with almost phrenzied eagerness, she perceived something shadowy in a remote corner of the floor; and on approaching, discovered what seemed a dreadful hieroglyphic, a mattrass of straw, in which she thought she beheld the death-bed of the miserable recluse; nay more, that the impression it still retained, was that which her form had left there.

While Vivaldi was yet entreating her to explain the occasion of the horror she betrayed, the attention of each was withdrawn by a hollow sigh, that rose near them. Ellena caught unconsciously the arm of Vivaldi, and listened, aghast, for a return of the found, but all remained still.

“It surely was not fancied!” said Vivaldi, after a long pause, “you heard it also?”

“I did!” replied Ellena.

“It was a sigh, was it not?” he added.

“O yes, and such a sigh!”

“Some person is concealed near us,” observed Vivaldi, looking round; “but be not alarmed, Ellena, I have a sword.”

“A sword! alas! you know not — But hark! there, again!”

“That was very near us!” said Vivaldi. “This lamp burns so sickly!” — and he held it high, endeavouring to penetrate the furthest gloom of the chamber. “Hah! who goes there?” he cried, and stepped suddenly forward; but no person appeared, and a silence as of the tomb, returned.

“If you are in sorrow, speak!” Vivaldi, at length, said; “from fellow-sufferers you will meet with sympathy. If your designs are evil — tremble, for you shall find I am desperate.”

Still no answer was returned, and he carried forward the lamp to the opposite end of the chamber, where he perceived a small door in the rock. At the same instant he heard from within, a low tremulous sound, as of a person in prayer, or in agony. He pressed against the door, which, to his surprize, yielded immediately, and discovered a figure kneeling before a crucifix, with an attention so wholly engaged, as not to observe the presence of a stranger, till Vivaldi spoke. The person then rose from his knees, and turning, shewed the silvered temples and pale features of an aged monk. The mild and sorrowful character of the countenance, and the lambent lustre of eyes, which seemed still to retain somewhat of the fire of genius, interested Vivaldi, and encouraged Ellena, who had followed him.

An unaffected surprize appeared in the air of the monk; but Vivaldi, notwithstanding the interesting benignity of his countenance, feared to answer his enquiries, till the father hinted to him, that an explanation was necessary, even to his own safety. Encouraged by his manner, rather than intimidated by this hint, and perceiving, that his situation was desperate, Vivaldi consided to the friar some partial knowledge of his embarrassment.

While he spoke, the father listened with deep attention, looked with compassion alternately upon him and Ellena; and some harassing objection seemed to contend with the pity, which urged him to assist the strangers. He enquired how long Jeronimo had been absent, and shook his head significantly when he learned that the gate of the avenue was fastened by a double lock. “You are betrayed, my children,” said he, “you have trusted with the simplicity of youth, and the cunning of age has deceived you.”

The terrible conviction affected Ellena to tears; and Vivaldi, scarcely able to command the indignation which a view of such treachery excited, was unable to offer her any consolation.

“You, my daughter, I remember to have seen in the church this morning,” observed the friar; “I remember too, that you protested against the vows you were brought thither to seal. Alas! my child, was you aware of the consequence of such a proceeding?”

“I had only a choice of evils,” Ellena replied.

“Holy father,” said Vivaldi, “I will not believe, that you are one of those who either assisted in or approved the persecution of innocence. If you were acquainted with the misfortunes of this lady, you would pity, and save her; but there is now no time for detail; and I can only conjure you, by every sacred consideration; to assist her to leave the convent! If there were leisure to inform you of the unjustifiable means, which have been employed to bring her within these walls — if you knew that she was taken, an orphan, from her home at midnight — that armed ruffians brought her hither — and at the command of strangers — that she has not a single relation surviving to assert her right of independence; or reclaim her of her persecutors, — O! holy father, if you knew all this!” — Vivaldi was unable to proceed.

The friar again regarded Ellena with compassion, but still in thoughtful silence. “All this may be very true,” at length he said, “but” — and he hesitated.

“I understand you, father,” said Vivaldi — “you require proof; but how can proof be adduced here? You must rely upon the honour of my word. And, if you are inclined to assist us, it must be immediately!

> — while you hesitate, we are lost. Even now I think I hear the footsteps of Jeronimo.”

He stepped softly to the door of the chamber, but all was yet still. The friar, too, listened, but he also deliberated; while Ellena, with clasped hands and a look of eager supplication and terror, awaited his decision.

“No one is approaching,” said Vivaldi, “it is not yet too late! — Good father! if you would serve us, dispatch.”

“Poor innocent!” said the friar, half to himself, “in this chamber — in this fatal place!” —

“In this chamber!” exclaimed Ellena, anticipating his meaning. “It was in this chamber, then, that a nun was suffered to perish! and I, no doubt, am conducted hither to undergo a similar fate!”

“In this chamber!” re-echoed Vivaldi, in a voice of desperation. “Holy father, if you are indeed disposed to assist us, let us act this instant; the next, perhaps, may render your best intentions unavailing!”

The friar, who had regarded Ellena while she mentioned the nun, with the utmost surprize, now withdrew his attention; a few tears fell on his cheek, but he hastily dried them, and seemed struggling to overcome some grief, that was deep in his heart.

Vivaldi, finding that entreaty had no power to hasten his decision, and expecting every moment to hear the approach of Jeronimo, paced the chamber in agonizing perturbation, now pausing at the door to listen, and then calling, though almost hopelessly, upon the humanity of the friar. While Ellena, looking round the room in shuddering horror, repeatedly exclaimed, “On this very spot! in this very chamber! O what sufferings have these walls witnessed! what are they yet to witness!”

Vivaldi now endeavoured to soothe the spirits of Ellena, and again urged the friar to employ this critical moment in saving her; “O heaven!” said he, “if she is now discovered, her fate is certain!”

“I dare not say what that fate would be,” interrupted the father, “or what my own, should I consent to assist you; but, though I am old, I have not quite forgotten to feel for others! They may oppress the few remaining years of my age, but the blooming days of youth should flourish; and they shall flourish, my children, if my power can aid you. Follow me to the gate; we will see whether my key cannot unfasten all the locks that hold it.”

Vivaldi and Ellena immediately followed the feeble steps of the old man, who frequently stopped to listen whether Jeronimo, or any of the brothers, to whom the latter might have betrayed Ellena’s situation, were approaching; but not an echo wandered along the lonely avenue, till they reached the gate, when distant footsteps beat upon the ground.

“They are approaching, father!” whispered Ellena. “O, if the key should not open these locks instantly, we are lost! Hark! now I hear their voices — they call upon my name! Already they have discovered we have left the chamber.”

While the friar, with trembling hands, applied the key, Vivaldi endeavoured at once to assist him, and to encourage Ellena.

The locks gave way, and the gate opened at once upon the moonlight mountains. Ellena heard once more, with the joy of liberty, the midnight breeze passing among the pensile branches of the palms, that loftily overshadowed a rude platform before the gate, and rustling with fainter sound among the pendent shrubs of the surrounding cliffs.

“There is no leisure for thanks, my children,” said the friar, observing they were about to speak. “I will fasten the gate, and endeavour to delay your pursuers, that you may have time to escape. My blessing go with you!”

Ellena and Vivaldi had scarcely a moment to bid him “farewel!” before he closed the door, and Vivaldi, taking her arm, was hastening towards the place where he had ordered Paulo to wait with the horses, when, on turning an angle of the convent wall, they perceived a long train of pilgrims issuing forth from the portal, at a little distance.

Vivaldi drew back; yet dreading every moment, that he lingered near the monastery, to hear the voice of Jeronimo, or other persons, from the avenue, he was sometimes inclined to proceed at any hazard. The only practicable path leading to the base of the mountain, however, was now occupied by these devotees, and to mingle with them was little less than certain destruction. A bright moonlight shewed distinctly every figure, that moved in the scene, and the fugitives kept within the shadow of the walls, till, warned by an approaching footstep, they crossed to the feet of the cliffs that rose beyond some palmy hillocks on the right, whose dusky recesses promised a temporary shelter. As they passed with silent steps along the winding rocks, the tranquillity of the landscape below afforded an affecting contrast with the tumult and alarm of their minds.

Being now at some distance from the monastery, they rested under the shade of the cliffs, till the procession of devotees, which were traced descending among the thickets and hollows of the mountain, should be sufficiently remote. Often they looked back to the convent, expecting to see lights issue from the avenue, or the portal; and attended in mute anxiety for the sullen murmurs of pursuit; but none came on the breeze; nor did any gleaming lamp betray the steps of a spy.

Released, at length, from immediate apprehension, Ellena listened to the mattin-hymn of the pilgrims, as it came upon the still air and ascended towards the cloudless heavens. Not a sound mingled with the holy strain, and even in the measured pause of voices only the trembling of the foliage above was distinguished. The responses, as they softened away in distance, and swelled again on the wasting breeze, appeared like the music of spirits, watching by night upon the summits of the mountains, and answering each other in celestial airs, as they walk their high boundary, and overlook the sleeping world.

“How often, Ellena, at this hour,” said Vivaldi, “have I lingered round your dwelling, consoled by the consciousness of being near you! Within those walls, I have said, she reposes; they enclose my world, all without is to me a desart. Now, I am in your presence! O Ellena! now that you are once more restored to me, suffer not the caprice of possibility again to separate us! Let me lead you to the first altar that will confirm our vows.”

Vivaldi forgot, in the anxiety of a stronger interest, the delicate silence he had resolved to impose upon himself, till Ellena should be in a place of safety.

“This is not a moment,” she replied, with hesitation, “for conversation; our situation is yet perilous, we tremble on the very brink of danger."

Vivaldi immediately rose; "Into what imminent danger," said he, "had my selfish folly nearly precipitated you! We are lingering in this alarming neighbourhood, when that feeble strain indicates the pilgrims to be sufficiently remote to permit us to proceed!"

As he spoke, they descended cautiously among the cliffs, often looking back to the convent, where, however, no light appeared, except what the moon shed over the spires and tall windows of its cathedral. For a moment, Ellena fancied she saw a taper in her favourite turret, and a belief, that the nuns, perhaps the Abbess herself, were searching for her there, renewed her terror and her speed. But the rays were only those of the moon, striking through opposite casements of the chamber; and the fugitives reached the base of the mountain without further alarm, where Paulo appeared with horses. "Ah! Signormio," said the servant, "I am glad to see you alive and merry; I began to fear, by the length of your stay, that the monks had clapped you up to do penance for life. How glad I am to see you Maestro!"

"Not more so than I am to see you, good Paulo. But where is the pilgrim's cloak I bade you provide?"

Paulo displayed it, and Vivaldi, having wrapt it round Ellena, and placed her on horseback, they took the road towards Naples, Ellena designing to take refuge in the convent della Pieta. Vivaldi, however, apprehending that their enemies would seek them on this road, proposed leaving it as soon as practicable, and reaching the neighbourhood of Villa Altieri by a circuitous way.

They soon after arrived at the tremendous pass, through which Ellena had approached the monastery, and whose horrors were considerably heightened at this dusky hour, for the moonlight fell only partially upon the deep barriers of the gorge, and frequently the precipice, with the road on its brow, was entirely shadowed by other cliffs and woody points that rose above it. But Paulo, whose spirits seldom owned the influence of local scenery, jogged merrily along, frequently congratulating himself and his master on their escape, and carolling briskly to the echoes of the rocks, till Vivaldi, apprehensive for the consequence of this loud gaiety, desired him to desist.

"Ah Signormio! I must obey you," said he, "but my heart was never so full in my life; and I would fain sing, to unburden it of some of this joy. That scrape we got into in the dungeon there, at what's the name of the place? was bad enough, but it was nothing to this, because here I was left out of it; and you, Maestro, might have been murdered again and again, while I, thinking of nothing at all, was quietly airing myself on the mountain by moonlight.

But what is that yonder in the sky, Signor? It looks for all the world like a bridge; only it is perched so high, that nobody would think of building one in such an out-of-the-way place, unless to cross from cloud to cloud, much less would take the trouble of clambering up after it, for the pleasure of going over.

Vivaldi looked forward, and Ellena perceived the Alpine bridge, she had formerly crossed with so much alarm, in the moonlight perspective, airily suspended between tremendous cliffs, with the river far below, tumbling down the rocky chasm. One of the supporting cliffs, with part of the bridge, was in deep shade, but the other, feathered with foliage, and the rising surges at its foot, were strongly illumined; and many a thicket wet with the spray, sparkled in contrast to the dark rock it overhung. Beyond the arch, the long-drawn prospect faded into misty light.

"Well, to be sure!" exclaimed Paulo, "to see what curiosity will do! If there are not some people have found their way up to the bridge already."

Vivaldi now perceived figures upon the slender arch, and, as their indistinct forms glided in the moonshine, other emotions than those of wonder disturbed him, lest these might be pilgrims going to the shrine of our Lady, and who would give information of his route. No possibility, however, appeared of avoiding them, for the precipices that rose immediately above, and fell below, forbade all excursion, and the road itself was so narrow, as scarcely to admit of two horses passing each other.

"They are all off the bridge now, and without having broken their necks, perhaps!" said Paulo, "where, I wonder, will they go next! Why surely, Signor, this road does not lead to the bridge yonder; we are not going to pick our way in the air too? The roar of those waters has made my head dizzy already; and the rocks here are as dark as midnight, and seem ready to tumble upon one; they are enough to make one despair to look at them; you need not have checked my mirth, Signor."

"I would fain check your loquacity," replied Vivaldi. "Do, good Paulo, be silent and circumspect, those people may be near us, though we do not yet see them."

"The road does lead to the bridge, then Signor!" said Paulo dolourously. "And see! there they are again; winding round that rock, and coming towards us."

"Hush! they are pilgrims," whispered Vivaldi," we will linger under the shade of these rocks, while they pass. Remember, Paulo, that a single indiscreet word may be fatal; and that if they hail us, I alone am to answer."

"You are obeyed, Signor."

The fugitives drew up close under the cliffs, and proceeded slowly, while the words of the devotees, as they advanced, became audible.

"It gives one some comfort," said Paulo, to hear cheerful voices, in such a place as this. Bless their merry hearts! theirs seems a pilgrimage of pleasure; but they will be demure enough, I warrant, by and bye. I wish I" —

"Paulo! have you so soon forgot?" said Vivaldi sharply.

The devotees, on perceiving the travellers, became suddenly silent; till he who appeared to be the Father-director, as they passed, said "Hail! in the name of Our Lady of Mount Carmel!" and they repeated the salutation in chorus.

"Hail!" replied Vivaldi, "the first mass is over," and he passed on.

"But if you make haste, you may come in for the second," said Paulo, jogging after.

"You have just left the shrine, then?" said one of the party, "and can tell us" —

"Poor pilgrims, like yourselves," replied Paulo, "and can tell as little. Good morrow, fathers, yonder peeps the dawn!"

He came up with his master, who had hurried forward with Ellena, and who now severely reproved his indiscretion; while the voices of the Carmelites, singing the mattin-hymn, sunk away among the rocks, and the quietness of solitude returned.

"Thank heaven! we are quit of this adventure," said Vivaldi.

"And now we have only the bridge to get over," rejoined Paulo, "and, I hope, we shall all be safe."

They were now at the entrance of it; as they passed the trembling planks, and looked up the glen, a party of people appeared advancing on the road the sugitives had left, and a chorus of other voices than those of the Carmelites, were heard mingling with the hollow sound of the waters.

Ellena, again alarmed, hastened forward, and Vivaldi, though he endeavoured to appease her apprehension of pursuit, encouraged her speed.

"These are nothing but more pilgrims Signora," said Paulo, "or they would not send such loud shouts before them; they must needs think we can hear."

The travellers proceeded as fast as the broken road would permit; and were soon beyond the reach of the voices; but as Paulo turned to look whether the party was within sight, he perceived two persons, wrapt in cloaks, advancing under the brow of the cliffs, and within a few paces of his horse's heels. Before he could give notice to his master, they were at his side.

"Are you returning from the shrine of our Lady?" said one of them.

Vivaldi, startled by the voice, looked round, and demanded who asked the question?

"A brother pilgrim," replied the man, "one who has toiled up these steep rocks, till his limbs will scarcely bear him further. Would that you would take compassion on him, and give him a ride."

However compassionate Vivaldi might be to the sufferings of others, this was not a moment when he could indulge his disposition, without endangering the safety of Ellena; and he even fancied the stranger spoke in a voice of dissimulation. His suspicions strengthened when the traveller, not repulsed by a refusal, enquired the way he was going, and proposed to join his party; "For these mountains, they say, are infested with banditti," he added, "and a large company is less likely to be attacked than a small one."

"If you are so very weary, my friend," said Vivaldi, "how is it possible you can keep pace with our horses?" though I acknowledge you have done wonders in overtaking them."

"The fear of these banditti," replied the stranger, "urged us on."

"You have nothing to apprehend from robbers," said Vivaldi, "if you will only moderate your pace; for a large company of pilgrims are on the road, who will soon overtake you."

He then put an end to the conversation, by clapping spurs to his horse, and the strangers were soon left far behind.

The inconsistency of their complaints with their ability, and the whole of their manner, were serious subjects of alarm to the fugitives; but when they had lost sight of them, they lost also their apprehensions; and having, at length, emerged from the pass, they quitted the high road to Naples, and struck into a solitary one that led westward towards Aquila.

❦

Chapter 13

> "Thus sang th' unletter'd Swain to th' oaks and rills,
> While the still morn went forth with sandals gray,
> And now the sun had stretch'd out all the hills,
> And now was dropt into the western bay." —
> Milton.

From the summit of a mountain, the morning light shewed the travellers the distant lake of Celano, gleaming at the feet of other lofty mountains of the Appennine, far in the south. Thither Vivaldi judged it prudent to direct his course, for the lake lay so remote from the immediate way to Naples, and from the neighbourhood of San Stefano, that it's banks promised a secure retreat. He considered, also, that among the convents scattered along those delightful banks, might easily be found a priest, who would solemnize their nuptials, should Ellena consent to an immediate marriage.

The travellers descended among olive woods, and soon after were directed by some peasants at work, into a road that leads from Aquila to the town of Celano, one of the very few roads which intrudes among the wild mountains, that on every side sequester the lake. As they approached the low grounds, the scent of orange blossoms breathed upon the morning air, and the spicy myrtle sent forth all its fragrance from among the cliffs, which it thickly tusted. Bowers of lemon and orange spread along the valley; and among the cabins of the peasants, who cultivated them, Vivaldi hoped to obtain repose and refreshment for Ellena.

The cottages, however, at which Paulo enquired were unoccupied, the owners being all gone forth to their labour: and the travellers, again ascending, found themselves soon after among mountains inhabited by the flocks, where the scent of the orange was exchanged for the aromatic perfume of the pasturage.

"My Signor!" said Paulo, "is not that a shepherd's horn sounding at a distance? If so, the Signora may yet obtain some refreshment."

While Vivaldi listened, a hautboy and a pastoral drum were heard considerably nearer.

They followed the sound over the turf, and came within view of a cabin, sheltered from the sun by a tust of almond trees. It was a dairy-cabin belonging to some shepherds, who at a short distance were watching their flocks, and, stretched beneath the shade of chestnuts, were amusing themselves by playing upon these rural instruments; a scene of Arcadian manners frequent at this day, upon the mountains of Abruzzo. The simplicity of their appearance, approaching to wildness, was tempered by a hospitable spirit. A venerable man, the chief shepherd, advanced to meet the strangers; and, learning their wants, conducted them into his cool cabin, where cream, cheese made of goat's milk, honey extracted from the delicious herbage of the mountains, and dried figs were quickly placed before them.

Ellena, overcome with the fatigue of anxiety, rather than that of travelling, retired, when she had taken breakfast, for an hour's repose; while Vivaldi rested on the bench before the cottage, and Paulo, keeping watch, discussed his breakfast, together with the circumstances of the late alarm, under the shade of the almond trees.

When Ellena again appeared, Vivaldi proposed, that they should rest here during the intense heat of the day; and, since he now considered her to be in a place of temporary safety, he ventured to renew the subject nearest his heart; to represent the evils, that might overtake them, and to urge an immediate solemnization of their marriage.

Thoughtful and dejected, Ellena attended for some time in silence to the arguments and pleadings of Vivaldi. She secretly acknowledged the justness of his representations, but she shrunk, more than ever, from the indelicacy, the degradation of intruding herself into his family; a family, too, from whom she had not only received proofs of strong dislike, but had suffered terrible injustice, and been menaced with still severer cruelty. These latter circumstances, however, released her from all obligations of delicacy or generosity, so far as concerned only the authors of her suffering; and she had now but to consider the happiness of Vivaldi and herself. Yet she could not decide thus precipitately on a subject, which so solemnly involved the fortune of her whole life; nor forbear reminding Vivaldi, affectionately, gratefully, as she loved him, of the circumstances which with-held her decision.

"Tell me yourself," said she, "whether I ought to give my hand, while your family — your mother" — She paused, and blushed, and burst into tears.

"Spare me the view of those tears," said Vivaldi, "and a recollection of the circumstances that excite them. O, let me not think of my mother, while I see you weep! Let me not remember, that her injustice and cruelty destined you to perpetual sorrow!"

Vivaldi's features became slightly convulsed, while he spoke; he rose, paced the room with quick steps, and then quitted it, and walked under the shade of the trees in front of the cabin.

In a few moments, however, he commanded his emotion and returned. Again he placed himself on the bench beside Ellena, and taking her hand, said solemnly, and in a voice of extreme sensibility, "Ellena, you have long witnessed how dear you are to me; you cannot doubt my love; you have long since promised — solemnly promised, in the presence of her who is now no more, but whose spirit may even at this moment look down upon us, — of her, who bequeathed you to my tenderest care, to be mine for ever. By these sacred truths, by these affecting recollections! I conjure you, abandon me not to despair, nor in the energy of a just resentment, sacrifice the son to the cruel and mistaken policy of the mother! You, nor I, can conjecture the machinations, which may be spread for us, when it shall be known that you have left San Stefano. If we delay to exchange our vows, I know, and I feel — that you are lost to me for ever!"

Ellena was affected, and for some moments unable to reply. At length, drying her tears, she said tenderly, "Resentment can have no influence on my conduct towards you; I think I feel none towards the Marchesa — for she is your mother. But pride, insulted pride, has a right to dictate, and ought to be obeyed; and the time is now, perhaps, arrived when, if I would respect myself, I must renounce you." —

"Renounce me!" interrupted Vivaldi, "renounce me! And is it, then, possible you could renounce me?" he repeated, his eyes still fixed upon her face with eagerness and consternation. "Tell me at once, Ellena, is it possible?"

"I fear it is not," she replied.

"You fear! alas! if you fear, it is too possible, and I have lost you already! Say, O! say but, that you hope it is not, and I, too, will hope again."

The anguish, with which he uttered this, awakened all her tenderness, and, forgetting the reserve she had imposed upon herself, and every half-formed resolution, she said, with a smile of ineffable sweetness, "I will neither fear nor hope in this instance; I will obey the dictates of gratitude, of affection, and will believe that I never can renounce you, while you are unchanged."

"Believe!" repeated Vivaldi, "only believe! And why that mention of gratitude; and why that unnecessary reservation? Yet even this assurance, feebly as it sustains my hopes, is extorted; you see my misery, and from pity, from gratitude, not affection, would assuage it. Besides, you will neither fear, nor hope! Ah, Ellena! did love ever yet exist without fear — and without hope? O! never, never! I fear and hope with such rapid transition; every assurance, every look of yours gives such force either to the one, or to the other, that I suffer unceasing anxiety. Why, too, that cold, that heart-breaking mention of gratitude? No, Ellena! it is too certain that you do not love me! — My mother's cruelty has estranged your heart from me!"

"How much you mistake!" said Ellena. "You have already received sacred testimonies of my regard; if you doubt their sincerity, pardon me, if I so far respect myself as to forbear entreating you will believe them."

"How calm, how indifferent, how circumspect, how prudent!" exclaimed Vivaldi in tones of mournful reproach. "But I will not distress you; forgive me for renewing this subject at this time. It was my intention to be silent till you should have reached a place of more permanent security than this; but how was it possible, with such anxiety pressing upon my heart, to persevere in that design. And what have I gained by departing from it? — increase of anxiety — of doubt — of fear!"

"Why will you persist in such self-in-flictions?" said Ellena. "I cannot endure that you should doubt my affection, even for a moment. And how can you suppose it possible, that I ever can become insensible of your's; that I can ever forget the imminent danger you have voluntarily incurred for my release, or, remembering it, can cease to feel the warmest gratitude?"

"That is the very word which tortures me beyond all others!" said Vivaldi; "is it then, only a sense of obligation you own for me? O! rather say you hate me, than suffer me to deceive my hopes with assurances of a sentiment so cold, so circumscribed, so dutiful as that of gratitude!"

"With me the word has a very different acceptation," replied Ellena smiling. "I understand it to imply all that is tender and generous in affection; and the sense of duty which you say it includes, is one of the sweetest and most sacred feelings of the human heart."

"Ah Ellena! I am too willing to be deceived, to examine your definition rigorously; yet I believe it is your smile, rather than the accuracy of your explanation, that persuades me to a confidence in your affection; and I will trust, that the gratitude you feel is thus tender and comprehensive. But, I beseech you, name the word no more! Its sound is like the touch of the Torpedo, I perceive my confidence chilled even while I listen to my own pronunciation of it.”

The entrance of Paulo interrupted the conversation, who advancing with an air of mystery and alarm, said in a low voice,

“Signor! as I kept watch under the almond trees, who should I see mounting up the road from the valley yonder, but the two bare-footed Carmelites, that overtook us in the pass of Chiari! I lost them again behind the woods, but I dare say they are coming this way, for the moment they spy out this dairy-hut, they will guess something good is to be had here; and the shepherds would believe their flocks would all die, if” — “I see them at this moment emerging from the woods,” said Vivaldi, “and now, they are leaving the road and crossing this way. Where is our host, Paulo!

“He is without, at a little distance, Signor. Shall I call him?”

“Yes,” replied Vivaldi, “or, stay; I will call him myself. Yet, if they see me” — “Aye, Signor; or, for that matter, if they see me. But we cannot help ourselves now; for if we call the host, we shall betray ourselves, and, if we do not call him, he will betray us; so they must find us out, be it as it may.”

“Peace! peace! let me think a moment,” said Vivaldi. While Vivaldi undertook to think, Paulo was peeping about for a hiding place, if occasion should require one.

“Call our host immediately,” said Vivaldi, “I must speak with him.”

“He passes the lattice at this instant,” said Ellena.

Paulo obeyed, and the shepherd entered the cabin.

“My good friend,” said Vivaldi, “I must entreat that you will not admit those friars, whom you see coming this way, nor suffer them to know what guests you have. They have been very troublesome to us already, on the road; I will reward you for any loss their sudden departure may occasion you.”

“Nay for that matter, friend,” said Paulo, “it is their visit only that can occasion you loss, begging the Signor’s pardon; their departure never occasioned loss to any body. And to tell you the truth, for my master will not speak out, we were obliged to look pretty sharply about us, while they bore us company, or we have reason to think our pockets would have been the lighter. They are designing people, friend, take my word for it; banditti, perhaps, in disguise. The dress of a Carmelite would suit their purpose, at this time of the pilgrimage. So be pretty blunt with them, if they want to come in here; and you will do well, when they go, to send somebody to watch which way they take, and see them clear off, or you may lose a stray lamb, perhaps.”

The old shepherd lifted up his eyes and hands, “To see how the world goes!” said he. “But thank you, Maestro, for your warning; they shall not come within my threshold, for all their holy seeming, and its the first time in my life I ever said nay to one of their garb, and mine has been a pretty long one, as you may guess, perhaps, by my face. How old, Signor, should you take me to be? I warrant you will guess short of the matter tho’; for on these high mountains” — “I will guess when you have dismissed the travellers,” said Vivaldi, “after having given them some hasty refreshment without; they must be almost at the door, by this time. Dispatch, friend.”

“If they should fall foul upon me, for refusing them entrance,” said the shepherd, “you will come out to help me, Signor? for my lads are at some distance.”

Vivaldi assured him that they would, and he left the cabin.

Paulo ventured to peep at the lattice, on what might be going forward without. “They are gone round to the door, Signor, I fancy,” said he, “for I see nothing of them this way; if there was but another window! What foolish people to build a cottage with no window near the door! But I must listen.”

He stepped on tip-toe to the door, and bent his head in attention.

“They are certainly spies from the monastery,” said Ellena to Vivaldi, “they follow us so closely! If they were pilgrims, it is improbable, too, that their way should be through this unfrequented region, and still more so, that they should not travel in a larger party. When my absence was discovered, these people were sent, no doubt, in pursuit of me, and having met the devotees whom we passed, they were enabled to follow our route.”

“We shall do well to act upon this supposition,” replied Vivaldi, “but, though I am inclined to believe them emissaries from San Stefano, it is not improbable that they are only Carmelites returning to some convent on the lake of Celano."

"I cannot hear a syllable, Signor," said Paulo. "Pray do listen yourself! and there is not a single chink in this door to afford one consolation. Well! if ever I build a cottage, there shall be a window near — " "Listen!" said Vivaldi.

"Not a single word, Signor!" cried Paulo, after a pause, "I do not even hear a voice! — But now I hear steps, and they are coming to the door, too; they shall find it no easy matter to open it, though;" he added, placing himself against it. "Ay, ay, you may knock, friend, till your arm aches, and kick and lay about you — no matter for that."

"Silence! let us know who it is," said Vivaldi; and the old shepherd's voice was heard without. "They are gone, Signors," said he, "you may open the door."

"Which way did they go?" asked Vivaldi, when the man entered. "I cannot say, as to that, Signor, because I did not happen to see them at all; and I have been looking all about, too."

"Why, I saw them myself, crossing this way from the wood yonder," said Paulo.

"And there is nothing to shelter them from our view between the wood, and this cottage, friend," added Vivaldi; "What can they have done with themselves?"

"For that matter, gone into the wood again, perhaps," said the shepherd.

Paulo gave his master a significant look, and added, "It is likely enough, friend; and you may depend upon it they are lurking there for no good purpose, You will do well to send somebody to look after them; your flocks will suffer for it, else. Depend upon it, they design no good."

"We are not used to such sort of folks in these parts," replied the shepherd, "but if they mean any harm, they shall find we can help ourselves." As he concluded, he took down a horn from the roof, and blew a shrill blast that made the mountains echo; when immediately the younger shepherds were seen running from various quarters towards the cottage.

"Do not be alarmed, friend," said Vivaldi, "these travellers mean you no harm, I dare say, whatever they may design against us. But, as I think them suspicious persons, and should not like to overtake them on the road, I will reward one of your lads if you will let him go a little ways towards Celano, and examine whether they are lurking on that route."

The old man consented, and, when the shepherds came up, one of them received directions from Vivaldi.

"And be sure you do not return, till you have found them," added Paulo.

"No master," replied the lad, "and I will bring them safe here, you may trust me."

"If you do, friend, you will get your head broke for your trouble. You are only to discover where they are, and to watch where they go," said Paulo.

Vivaldi, at length, made the lad comprehend what was required of him, and he departed; while the old shepherd went out to keep guard.

The time of his absence was passed in various conjectures by the party in the cabin, concerning the Carmelites. Vivaldi still inclined to believe they were honest people returning from a pilgrimage, but Paulo was decidedly against this opinion. "They are waiting for us on the road, you may depend upon it, Signor," said the latter. "You may be certain they have some great design in hand, or they would never have turned their steps from this dairy-house when once they had spied it, and that they did spy it, we are sure."

"But if they have in hand the great design you speak of, Paulo," said Vivaldi, "it is probable that they have spied us also, by their taking this obscure road. Now it must have occurred to them when they saw a dairy-hut, in so solitary a region, that we might probably be found within — yet they have not examined. It appears, therefore, they have no design against us. What can you answer to this Paulo? I trust the apprehensions of Signora di Rosalba are unfounded.

"Why! do you suppose, Signor, they would attack us when we were safe housed, and had these good shepherds to lend us a helping hand? No, Signor, they would not even have shewn themselves, if they could have helped it; and being once sure we were here, they would skulk back to the woods, and lurk for us in the road they knew we must go, since, as it happens, there is only one."

"How is it possible," said Ellena, "that they can have discovered us here, since they did not approach the cabin to enquire."

"They came near enough for their purpose, Signora, I dare say; and, if the truth were known, they spied my face looking at them through the lattice."

“Come, come,” said Vivaldi, “you are an ingenious tormentor, indeed, Paulo. Do you suppose they saw enough of thy face last night by moonlight, in that dusky glen, to enable them to recollect it again at a distance of forty yards? Revive, my Ellena, I think every appearance is in our favour.”

“Would I could think so too!” said she, with a sigh.

“O! for that matter, Signora,” rejoined “Paulo, there is nothing to be afraid of; they should find tough work of it, if they thought proper to attack us, lady.”

“It is not an open attack that we have to fear,” replied Ellena, “but they may surround us with their snares, and defy resistance.”

However Vivaldi might accede to the truth of this remark, he would not appear to do so; but tried to laugh away her apprehensions; and Paulo was silenced for a while, by a significant look from his master.

The shepherd’s boy returned much sooner than they had expected, and he probably saved his time, that he might spare his labour, for he brought no intelligence of the Carmelites. “I looked for them among the woods along the road side in the hollow, yonder, too,” said the lad, “and then I mounted the hill further on, but I could see nothing of them far or near, nor of a single soul, except our goats, and some of them do stray wide enough, sometimes; they lead me a fine dance often. They sometimes, Signor, have wandered as far as Monte Nuvola, yonder, and got to the top of it, up among the clouds, and the crags, where I should break my neck if I climbed; and the rogues seemed to know it, too, for when they have seen me coming, scrambling up, pussing and blowing, they have ceased their capering, and stood peeping over a crag so fly, and so quiet, it seemed as if they were laughing at me; as much as to say, “Catch us if you can.”

Vivaldi, who during the latter part of this speech had been consulting with Ellena, whether they should proceed on their way immediately, asked the boy some further questions concerning the Carmelites; and becoming convinced that they had either not taken the road to Celano, or, having taken it, were at a considerable distance, he proposed setting out, and proceeding leisurely, “For I have now little apprehension of these people,” he added, “and a great deal lest night should overtake us before we reach the place of our destination, since the road is mountainous and wild, and, further, we are not perfectly acquainted with it.”

Ellena approving the plan, they took leave of the good shepherd, who could with difficulty be prevailed with to accept any recompence for his trouble, and who gave them some further directions as to the road; and their way was long cheered by the sound of the tabor and the sweetness of the hautboy, wafted over the wild.

When they descended into the woody hollow mentioned by the boy, Ellena sent forth many an anxious look beneath the deep shade; while Paulo, sometimes silent, and at others whistling and singing loudly, as if to overcome his fears, peeped under every bough that crossed the road, expecting to discover his friends the Carmelites lurking within its gloom.

Having emerged from this valley, the road lay over mountains covered with flocks, for it was now the season when they had quitted the plains of Apulia, to feed upon the herbage for which this region is celebrated; and it was near sun-set, when, from a summit to which the travellers had long been ascending, the whole lake of Celano, with its vast circle of mountains, burst at once upon their view.

“Ah Signor!” exclaimed Paulo, “what a prospect is here! It reminds me of home; it is almost as pleasant as the bay of Naples! I should never love it like that though, if it were an hundred times finer.

The travellers stopped to admire the scene, and to give their horses rest, after the labour of the ascent. The evening sun, shooting athwart a clear expanse of water, between eighteen and twenty leagues in circumference, lighted up all the towns and villages, and towered castles, and spiry convents, that enriched the rising shores; brought out all the various tints of cultivation, and coloured with beamy purple the mountains which on every side formed the majestic background of the landscape. Vivaldi pointed out to Ellena the gigantic Velino in the north, a barrier mountain, between the territories of Rome and Naples. Its peaked head towered far above every neighbouring summit, and its white precipices were opposed to the verdant points of the Majella, snow crowned, and next in altitude, loved by the socks. Westward, near woody hills, and rising immediately from the lake, appeared Monte Salviano, covered with wild sage, as its name imports, and once pompous with forests of chestnuts, a branch from the Appemine extended to meet it. “See,” said Vivaldi, “where Monte Corno stands like a ruffian, huge, feared, threatening, and horrid! — and in the south, where the sullen mountain of San Nicolo shoots up, barren and rocky! From inhence, mark how other overtopping ridges of the mighty Aperinine darken the horizon far along the east, and to circle approach the Vehinon the north!” “Mark too,” said Ellena, “how sweetly the banks and undulating plains repose at the feet of the mountains, what an image of beauty and elegance they oppose to the awful grandeur that overlooks and guards them! Observe, too, how many a delightful valley, opening from the lake, spreads its rice and corn fields, shaded with groves of the almond, far among the winding hills; how gaily vineyards and olives alternately chequer the anclivities, and how gracefully the lofty palms bend over the higher cliffs."

"Ay, Signora!" exclaimed Paulo, "and have the goodness to observe how like are the fishing boats, that sail towards the hamlet below, to those one sees upon the bay of Naples. They are worth all the rest of the prospect, except indeed this fine sheet of water, which is almost as good as the bay, and that mountain, with its sharp head, which is almost as good as Vesuvius — if it would but throw out fire!"

"We must despair of finding a mountain in this neighbourhood, so good as to do that, Paulo," said Vivaldi, smiling at this stroke of nationality; "though, perhaps, many that we now see, have once been volcanic."

"I honour them for that, Signor; and look at them with double satisfaction; but our mountain is the only mountain in the world. O! to see it of a dark night! what a blazing it makes! and what a height it will shoot to! and what a light it throws over the sea! No other mountain can do so. It seems as if the waves were all on fire. I have seen the reflection as far off as Capri, trembling all across the gulf, and shewing every vessel as plain as at noon day; ay, and every sailor on the deck. You never saw such a sight, Signor."

"Why you do, indeed, seem to have forgotten that I ever did, Paulo, and also that a volcano can do any mischief. But let us return, Ellena, to the scene before us. Yonder, a mile or two within the shore, is the town of Celano, whither we are going."

The clearness of an Italian atmosphere permitted him to discriminate the minute through very distant features of the landscape; and on an eminence rising from the plains of a valley opening to the west, he pointed out the modern Alba, crowned with the ruins of its ancient castle, still visible upon the splendor of the horizon, the prison and tomb of many a Prince, who, "fallen from his high estate," was sent from Imperial Rome to finish here the sad reverse of his days; to gaze from the bars of his tower upon solitudes where beauty or grandeur administered no assuaging feelings to him, whose life had passed amidst the intrigues of the world, and the feverish contentions of disappointed ambition; to him, with whom reflection brought only remorse, and anticipation despair; whom "no horizontal beam enlivened in the crimson evening of life's dusty day."

"And to such a scene as this," said Vivaldi, "a Roman Emperor came, only for the purpose of witnessing the most barbarous exhibition; to indulge the most savage delights! Here, Claudius celebrated the accomplishment of his arduous work, an aqueduct to carry the overflowing waters of the Celano to Rome, by a naval fight, in which hundreds of wretched slaves perished for his amusement! Its pure and polished surface was stained with human blood, and roughened by the plunging bodies of the slain, while the gilded gallies of the Emperor floated gaily around, and these beautiful shores were made to echo with applauding yells, worthy of the furies!"

"We scarcely dare to trust the truth of history, in some of its traits of human nature," said Ellena.

"Signor," cried Paulo, "I have been thinking that while we are taking the air, so much at our ease, here, those Carmelites may be spying at us from some hole or corner that we know nothing of, and may swoop upon us, all of a sudden, before we can help ourselves. Had we not better go on, Signor?"

"Our horses are, perhaps, sufficiently rested," replied Vivaldi, "but, if I had not long since dismissed all suspicion of the evil intention of those strangers, I should not willingly have stopped for a moment."

"But pray let us proceed," said Ellena.

"Ay, Signora, it is best to be of the safe side," observed Paulo. "Yonder, below, is Celano, and I hope we shall get safe housed there, before it is quite dark, for here we have no mountain, that will light us on our way! Ah! if we were but within twenty miles of Naples, now, — and it was an illumination night!" —

As they descended the mountain, Ellena, silent and dejected, abandoned herself to reflection. She was too sensible of the difficulties of her present situation, and too apprehensive of the influence, which her determination must have on all her future life, to be happy, though escaped from the prison of San Stefano, and in the presence of Vivaldi, her beloved deliverer and protector. He observed her dejection with grief, and, not understanding all the finer scruples that distressed her, interpreted her reserve into indifference towards himself. But he forbore to disturb her again with a mention of his doubts, or fears; and he determined not to urge the subject of his late entreaties, till he should have placed her in some secure asylum, where she might feel herself at perfect liberty to accept or to reject his proposal. By acting with an honour so delicate, he unconsciously adopted a certain means of increasing her esteem and gratitude, and deserved them the more, since he had to endure the apprehension of losing her by the delay thus occasioned to their nuptials.

They reached the town of Celano before the evening closed; when Vivaldi was requested by Ellena to enquire for a convent, where she might be lodged for the night. He left her at the inn, with Paulo for her guard, and proceeded on his search. The first gate he knocked upon belonged to a convent of Carmelites. It appeared probable, that the pilgrims of that order, who had occasioned him so much disquietude, were honest brothers of this house; but as it was probable also, that if they were emissaries of the Abbess of San Stefano, and came to Celano, they would take up their lodging with a society of their own class, in preference to that of any other, Vivaldi thought it prudent to retire from their gates without making himself known. He passed on, therefore, and soon after arrived at a convent of Dominicans, where he learned, that there were only two houses of nuns in Celano, and that these admitted no other boarders than permanent ones.

Vivaldi returned with this intelligence to Ellena, who endeavoured to reconcile herself to the necessity of remaining where she was; but Paulo, ever active and zealous, brought intelligence, that at a little fishing town, at some distance, on the bank of the lake, was a convent of Ursalines, remarkable for their hospitality to strangers. The obscurity of so remote a place, was another reason for preferring it to Celano, and Vivaldi proposing to remove thither, if Ellena was not too weary to proceed, she readily assented and they immediately set off.

“It happens to be a fine night,” said Paulo, as they left Celano, “and so, Signor, we cannot well lose our way; besides, they say, there is but one. The town we are going to lies yonder on the edge of the lake, about a mile and a half off. I think I can see a gray steeple or two, a little to the right of that wood where the water gleams so.”

“No, Paulo,” replied Vivaldi, after looking attentively. “I perceive what you mean; but those are not the points of steeples, they are only the tops of some tall cypresses.”

“Pardon me, Signor, they are too tapering for trees; that must surely be the town. This road, however, will lead us right, for there is no other to puzzle us, as they say,”

“This cool and balmy air revives me,” said Ellena; “and what a soothing shade prevails over the scene! How softened, yet how distinct, is every near object; how sweetly dubious the more removed ones; while the mountains beyond character themselves sublimely upon the still glowing horizon.”

“Observe, too,” said Vivaldi, “how their broken summits, tipt with the beams that have set to our lower region, exhibit the portraiture of towers and castles, and embattled ramparts, which seemed designed to guard them against the enemies, that may come by the clouds.”

“Yes,” replied Ellena, “the mountains themselves display a sublimity, that seems to belong to a higher world; their besiegers ought not to be of this earth; they can be only spirits of the air.”

“They can be nothing else, Signora,” said Paulo, “for nothing of this earth can reach them. See! lady, they have some of the qualities of your spirits, too; see! how they change their shapes and colours, as the sun-beams sink. And now, how gray and dim they grow! See but how fast they vanish!”

“Every thing reposes,” said Vivaldi. “who would willingly travel in the day, when Italy has such nights as this!”

“Signor, that is the town before us,” said Paulo, “for now I can discern, plain enough, the spires of convents; and there goes a light! Hah, hah! and there is a bell, too, chiming from one of the spires! The monks are going to mass; would we were going to supper, Signor!”

“That chime is nearer than the place you point to, Paulo, and I doubt whether it comes from the same quarter.”

“Hark! Signor, the air wafts the sound! and now it is gone again.”

“Yes, I believe you are right, Paulo, and that we have not far to go.”

The travellers descended the gradual slopes, towards the shore; and Paulo, some time after, exclaimed, “See, Signor, where another light glides along! See! it is reflected on the lake.”

“I hear the faint dashing of waves, now,” said Ellena, “and the sound of oars, too. But observe, Paulo, the light is not in the town, it is in the boat that moves yonder.”

“Now it retreats, and trembles in a lengthening line upon the waters,” said Vivaldi. “We have been too ready to believe what we wish and have yet far to go.”

The shore they were approaching formed a spacious bay for the lake, immediately below. Dark woods seemed to spread along the banks, and ascend among the cultivated slopes towards the mountains; except where, here and there, cliffs, bending over the water, were distinguished through the twilight by the whiteness of their limestone precipices. Within the bay, the town became gradually visible; lights twinkled between the trees, appearing and vanishing; like the stars of a cloudy night; and, at length was heard the melancholy song of boatmen, who were fishing near the shore.

Other sounds soon after struck the ear. “O, what merry notes!” exclaimed Paulo, “they make my heart dance. See! Signora, there is a group, footing it away so gaily on the bank of the lake, yonder, by those trees. O, what a merry set! Would I were among them! that is, I mean, if you, Maestro, and the Signora were not here.”

“Well corrected, Paulo.”

“It is a festival, I fancy,” observed Vivaldi. “These peasants of the lake can make the moments sly as gaily as the voluptuaries of the city, it seems.”

“O! what merry music!” repeated Paulo. “Ah! how often I have footed it as joyously on the beach at Naples, after sunset, of a fine night, like this; with such a pleasant fresh breeze to cool one! Ah! there are none like the fishermen of Naples for a dance by moonlight; how lightly they do trip it! O! if I was but there now! That is, I mean, if you, Maestro, and the Signora were there too. O! what merry notes!”

“We thank you, good Signor Paulo,” said Vivaldi, “and I trust we shall all be there soon; when you shall trip it away, with as joyous an heart as the best of them.”

The travellers now entered the town, which consisted of one street, straggling along the margin of the lake; and having enquired for the Ursaline convent, were directed to its gates! The portress appeared immediately upon the ringing of the bell, and carried a message to the Abbess, who as quickly returned an invitation to Ellena. She alighted, and followed the portress to the parlour, while Vivaldi remained at the gate, till he should know whether she approved of her new lodging. A second invitation induced him, also, to alight; he was admitted to the grate, and offered refreshment, which, however, he declined staying to accept, as he had yet a lodging to seek for the night. The Abbess, on learning this circumstance, courteously recommended him to a neighbouring society of Benedictines, and desired him to mention her name to the Abbot.

Vivaldi then took leave of Ellena, and, though it was only for a few hours, he left her with dejection, and with some degree of apprehension for her safety, which, though circumstances could not justify him in admitting, he could not entirely subdue. She shared his dejection, but not his fears, when the door closed after him, and she found herself once more among strangers. The forlornness of her feelings could not be entirely overcome by the attentions of the Abbess; and there was a degree of curiosity, and even of scrutiny, expressed in the looks of some of the sisters, which seemed more than was due to a stranger. From such examination she eagerly escaped to the apartment allotted for her, and to the repose from which she had so long been withheld.

Vivaldi, meanwhile, had found an hospitable reception with the Benedictines, whose sequestered situation made the visit of a stranger a pleasurable novelty to them. In the eagerness of conversation, and, yielding to the satisfaction which the mind receives from exercising ideas that have long slept in dusky indolence, and to the pleasure of admitting new ones, the Abbot and a few of the brothers sat with Vivaldi to a late hour. When, at length, the traveller was suffered to retire, other subjects than those, which had interested his host, engaged his thoughts; and he revolved the means of preventing the misery that threatened him, in a serious separation from Ellena. Now, that she was received into a respectable asylum, every motive for silence upon this topic was done away. He determined, therefore, that on the following morning, he would urge all his reasons and entreaties for an immediate marriage; and among the brothers of the Benedictine, he had little doubt of prevailing with one to solemnize the nuptials, which he believed would place his happiness and Ellena’s peace, beyond the influence of malignant possibilities.

❦

Chapter 14

> "I under fair pretence of friendly ends,
> And well-placed words of glozing courtesy,
> Baited with reasons not unplausible,
> Wind me into the easy-hearted man,
> And hug him into snares."
> Milton.

While Vivaldi and Ellena were on the way from San Stefano, the Marchese Vivaldi was suffering the utmost vexation, respecting his son; and the Marchesa felt not less apprehension, that the abode of Ellena might be discovered; yet this fear did not withhold her from mingling in all the gaieties of Naples. Her assemblies were, as usual, among the most brilliant of that voluptuous city, and she patronized, as zealously as before, the strains of her favourite composer. But, notwithstanding this perpetual dissipation, her thoughts frequently withdrew themselves from the scene, and dwelt on gloomy forebodings of disappointed pride.

A circumstance, which rendered her particularly susceptible to such disappointment at this time, was, that overtures of alliance had been lately made to the Marchese, by the father of a lady, who was held suitable, in every consideration, to become his daughter; and whose wealth rendered the union particularly desirable at a time, when the expences of such an establishment as was necessary to the vanity of the Marchesa, considerably exceeded his income, large as it was.

The Marchesa's temper had been thus irritated by the contemplation of her son's conduct in an affair, which so materially affected the fortune, and, as she believed, the honour of his family; when a courier from the Abbess of San Stefano brought intelligence of the flight of Ellena with Vivaldi. She was in a disposition, which heightened disappointment into fury; and she forfeited, by the transports to which she yielded, the degree of pity that otherwise was due to a mother, who believed her only son to have sacrificed his family and himself to an unworthy passion. She believed, that he was now married, and irrecoverably lost. Scarcely able to endure the agony of this conviction, she sent for her ancient adviser Schedoni, that she might, at least, have the relief of expressing her emotions; and of examining whether there remained a possibility of dissolving these long-dreaded nuptials. The phrenzy of passion, however, did not so far overcome her circumspection as to compel her to acquaint the Marchese with the contents of the Abbess's letter, before she had consulted with her Confessor. She knew that the principles of her husband were too just, upon the grand points of morality, to suffer him to adopt the measures she might judge necessary; and she avoided informing him of the marriage of his son, until the means of counteracting it should have been suggested and accomplished, however desperate such means might be.

Schedoni was not to be found. Trifling circumstances encrease the irritation of a mind in such a state as was her's. The delay of an opportunity for unburthening her heart to Schedoni, was hardly to be endured; another and another messenger were dispatched to her Confessor.

"My mistress has committed some great sin, truely!" said the servant, who had been twice to the convent within the last half hour. "It must lie heavy on her conscience, in good truth, since she cannot support it for one half hour. Well! the rich have this comfort, however, that, let them be ever so guilty, they can buy themselves innocent again, in the twinkling of a ducat. Now a poor man might be a month before he recovered his innocence, and that, too, not till after many about of hard flogging."

In the evening Schedoni came, but it was only to confirm her worst fear. He, too, had heard of the escape of Ellena, as well as that she was on the lake of Celano, and was married to Vivaldi. How he had obtained this information he did not chuse to disclose, but he mentioned so many minute circumstances in confirmation of it's truth, and appeared to be so perfectly convinced of the facts he related, that the Marchesa believed them, as implicitly as himself; and her passion and despair transgressed all bounds of decorum.

Schedoni observed, with dark and silent pleasure, the turbulent excess of her feelings; and perceived that the moment was now arrived, when he might command them to his purpose, so as to render his assistance indispensable to her repose; and probably so as to accomplish the revenge he had long meditated against Vivaldi, without hazarding the favour of the Marchesa. So far was he from attempting to sooth her sufferings, that he continued to irritate her resentment, and exasperate her pride; effecting this, at the same time, with such imperceptible art, that he appeared only to be palliating the conduct of Vivaldi, and endeavouring to console his distracted mother.

“This is a rash step, certainly,” said the Confessor; but he is young, very young, and, therefore, does not foresee the consequence to which it leads. He does not perceive how seriously it will affect the dignity of his house; — how much it will depreciate his consequence with the court, with the nobles of his own rank, and even with the plebeians, with whom he has condescended to connect himself. Intoxicated with the passions of youth, he does not weigh the value of those blessings, which wisdom and the experience of maturer age know how to estimate. He neglects them only because he does not perceive their influence in society, and that lightly to resign them, is to degrade himself in the view of almost every mind. Unhappy young man! he is to be pitied fully as much as blamed.”

“Your excuses, reverend father,” said the tortured Marchesa, “prove the goodness of your heart; but they illustrate, also, the degeneracy of his mind, and detail the full extent of the effects which he has brought upon his family. It affords me no consolation to know, that this degradation proceeds from his head, rather than his heart; it is sufficient that he has incurred it, and that no possibility remains of throwing off the misfortune.”

“Perhaps that is affirming too much,” observed Schedoni.

“How, father!” said the Marchesa.

“Perhaps a possibility does remain,” said he.

“Point it out to me, good father! I do not perceive it.”

“Nay, my lady,” replied the subtle Schedoni, correcting himself, “I am by no means assured, that such possibility does exist. My solicitude for your tranquillity, and for the honour of your house, makes me so unwilling to relinquish hope, that, perhaps, I only imagine a possibility in your favour. Let me consider. — Alas! the misfortune, severe as it is, must be endured; — there remain no means of escaping from it.”

“It was cruel of you, father, to suggest a hope which you could not justify,” observed the Marchesa.

“You must excuse my extreme solicitude, then,” replied the Confessor. “But how is it possible for me to see a family of your ancient estimation brought into such circumstances; its honours blighted by the folly of a thoughtless boy, without feeling sorrow and indignation, and looking round for even some desperate means of delivering it from disgrace.” He paused.

“Disgrace!” exclaimed the Marchesa, “father, you — you — Disgrace! — The word is a strong one, but — it is, alas! just. And shall we submit to this? — Is it possible we can submit to it?”

“There is no remedy,” said Schedoni, coolly.

“Good God!” exclaimed the Marchesa, “that there should be no law to prevent, or, at least, to punish such criminal marriages!”

“It is much to be lamented,” replied Schedoni.

“The woman who obtrudes herself upon a family, to dishonour it,” continued the Marchesa, “deserves a punishment nearly equal to that of a state criminal, since she injures those who best support the state. She ought to suffer” — .

“Not nearly, but quite equal,” interrupted the Confessor, “she deserves — death!”

He paused, and there was a moment of profound silence, till he added — “for death only can obliviate the degradation she has occasioned; her death alone can restore the original splendor of the line she would have sullied.”

He paused again, but the Marchesa still remaining silent, he added, “I have often marvelled that our lawgivers should have failed to perceive the justness, nay the necessity, of such punishment!”

“It is astonishing,” said the Marchesa, thoughtfully, “that a regard for their own honour did not suggest it.”

“Justice does not the less exist, because her laws are neglected,” observed Schedoni. A sense of what she commands lives in our breasts; and when we fail to obey that sense, it is to weakness, not to virtue, that we yield.”

“Certainly,” replied the Marchesa, “that truth never yet was doubted.”

“Pardon me, I am not so certain as to that,” said the Confessor, “when justice happens to oppose prejudice, we are apt to believe it virtuous to disobey her. For instance, though the law of justice demands the death of this girl, yet because the law of the land forbears to enforce it, you, my daughter, even you! though possessed of a man’s spirit, and his clear perceptions, would think that virtue bade her live, when it was only fear!”

“Hah!” exclaimed the Marchesa, in a low voice, “What is that you mean? You shall find I have a man’s courage also.”

“I speak without disguise,” replied Schedoni, “my meaning requires none.”

The Marchesa mused, and remained silent.

“I have done my duty,” resumed Schedoni, at length. “I have pointed out the only way that remains for you to escape dishonour. If my zeal is displeasing — but I have done.”

“No, good father, no,” said the Marchesa; you mistake the cause of my emotion. New ideas, new prospects, open! — they confuse, they distract me! My mind has not yet attained sufficient strength to encounter them; some woman’s weakness still lingers at my heart.”

“Pardon my inconfiderate zeal,” said Schedoni, with affected humility, “I have been to blame. If your’s is a weakness, it is, at least, an amiable one, and, perhaps, deserves to be encouraged, rather than conquered.”

“How, father! If it deserves encouragement, it is not a weakness, but a virtue.”

“Be it so,” said Schedoni, coolly, “the interest I have felt on this subject, has, perhaps, misled my judgment, and has made me unjust. Think no more of it, or, if you do, let it be only to pardon the zeal I have testified.”

“It does not deserve pardon, but thanks,” replied the Marchesa, “not thanks only, but reward. Good father, I hope it will some time be in my power to prove the sincerity of my words.”

The Confessor bowed his head.

“I trust that the services you have rendered me, shall be gratefully repaid — rewarded, I dare not hope, for what benefit could possibly reward a service so vast, as it may, perhaps, be in your power to confer upon my family! What recompence could be balanced against the benefit of having rescued the honour of an ancient house!”

“Your goodness is beyond my thanks, or my desert,” said Schedoni, and he was again silent.

The Marchesa wished him to lead her back to the point, from which she herself had deviated, and he seemed determined, that she should lead him thither. She mused, and hesitated. Her mind was not yet familiar with atrocious guilt; and the crime which Schedoni had suggested, somewhat alarmed her. She feared to think, and still more to name it; yet, so acutely susceptible was her pride, so stern her indignation, and so profound her desire of vengeance, that her mind was tossed as on a tempestuous ocean, and these terrible feelings threatened to overwhelm all the residue of humanity in her heart. Schedoni observed all its progressive movements, and, like a gaunt tyger, lurked in silence, ready to spring forward at the moment of opportunity.

“It is your advice, then, father,” resumed the Marchesa, after a long pause, — “it is your opinion — that Ellena.” — She hesitated, desirous that Schedoni should anticipate her meaning; but he chose to spare his own delicacy rather than that of the Marchesa.

“You think, then, that this insidious girl deserves” — She paused again, but the Confessor, still silent, seemed to wait with submission for what the Marchesa should deliver.

“I repeat, father, that it is your opinion this girl deserves severe punishment.” —

“Undoubtedly,” replied Schedoni, “Is it not also your own?”

“That not any punishment can be too severe?” continued the Marchesa. “That justice, equally with necessity, demands — her life? Is not this your opinion too?”

“O! pardon me,” said Schedoni, “I may have erred; that only was my opinion; and when I formed it, I was probably too much under the influence of zeal to be just. When the heart is warm, how is it possible that the judgment can be cool.”

“It is not then, your opinion, holy father,” said the Marchesa with displeasure.

“I do not absolutely say that,” replied the Confessor. — But I leave it to your better judgment to decide upon its justness.”

As he said this, he rose to depart. The Marchesa was agitated and perplexed, and requested he would stay; but he excused himself by alledging, that it was the hour when he must attend a particular mass.

“Well then, holy father, I will occupy no more of your valuable moments at present; but you know how highly I estimate your advice, and will not refuse, when I shall at some future time request it.

“I cannot refuse to accept an honour,” replied the Confessor, with an air of meekness, “but the subject you allude to is delicate” — .

“And therefore I must value, and require your opinion upon it,” rejoined the Marchesa.

“I would wish you to value your own,” replied Schedoni; “you cannot have a better director.”

“You flatter, father.”

“I only reply, my daughter.”

“On the evening of to-morrow,” said the Marchesa, gravely, “I shall be at vespers in the church of San Nicolo; if you should happen to be there, you will probably see me, when the service is over, and the congregation is departed, in the north cloister. We can there converse on the subject nearest my heart, and without observation.

— Farewell!”

“Peace be with you, daughter! and wisdom council your thoughts!” said Schedoni, “I will not fail to visit San Nicolo.”

He folded his hands upon his breast, bowed his head, and left the apartment with the silent footstep, that indicates weariness and conscious duplicity.

The Marchesa remained in her closet, shaken by ever-varying passions, and everfluctuating opinions; meditating misery for others, and inflicting it only upon herself.

❦

Chapter 15

Along the roofs sounds the low peal of Death,
And Conscience trembles to the boding note;
She views his dim form floating o'er the aisles,
She hears mysterious murmurs in the air,
And voices, strange and potent, hint the crime
That dwells in thought, within her secret soul.

The Marchesa repaired, according to her appointment, to the church of San Nicolo, and, ordering her servants to remain with the carriage at a side-door, entered the choir, attended only by her woman.

When vespers had concluded, she lingered till nearly every person had quitted the choir, and then walked through the solitary aisles to the north cloister. Her heart was as heavy as her step; for when is it that peace and evil passions dwell together? As she slowly paced the cloisters, she perceived a monk passing between the pillars, who, as he approached, listed his cowl, and she knew him to be Schedoni.

He instantly observed the agitation of her spirits, and that her purpose was not yet determined, according to his hope. But, though his mind became clouded, his countenance remained unaltered; it was grave and thoughtful. The sternness of his vulture-eye was, however, somewhat softened, and its lids were contracted by subtlety.

The Marchesa bade her woman walk apart, while she conferred with her Confessor.

"This unhappy boy," said she, when the attendant was at some distance, "How much suffering does his folly inflict upon his family! My good father, I have need of all your advice and consolation. My mind is perpetually haunted by a sense of my misfortune; it has no respite; awake or in my dream, this ungrateful son alike pursues me! The only relief my heart receives is when conversing with you — my only counsellor, my only disinterested friend."

The Confessor bowed. "The Marchese is, no doubt, equally afflicted with yourself," said he; "but he is, notwithstanding, much more competent to advise you on this delicate subject than I am."

"The Marchese has prejudices, father, as you well know; he is a sensible man, but he is sometimes mistaken, and he is incorrigible in error. He has the faults of a mind that is merely well disposed; he is destitute of the discernment and the energy which would make it great. If it is necessary to adopt a conduct, that departs in the smallest degree from those common rules of morality which he has cherished, without examining them, from his infancy, he is shocked, and shrinks from action. He cannot discriminate the circumstances, that render the same action virtuous or vicious. How then, father, are we to suppose he would approve of the bold inflictions we meditate?"

"Most true!" said the artful Schedoni, with an air of admiration.

"We, therefore, must not consult him," continued the Marchesa," left he should now, as formerly, advance and maintain objections, to which we cannot yield. What passes in conversation with you, father, is sacred, it goes no farther."

"Sacred as a confession!" said Schedoni, crossing himself.

"I know not," — resumed the Marchesa, and hesitated; "I know not" — she repeated in a yet lower voice, "how this girl may be disposed of; and this it is which distracts my mind."

"I marvel much at that," said Schedoni. "With opinions so singularly just, with a mind so accurate, yet so bold as you have displayed, is it possible that you can hesitate as to what is to be done! You, my daughter, will not prove yourself one of those ineffectual declaimers, who can think vigorously, but cannot act so! One way, only, remains for you to pursue, in the present instance; it is the same which your superior sagacity pointed out, and taught me to approve. Is it necessary for me to persuade her, by whom I am convinced! There is only one way."

"And on that I have been long meditating," replied the Marchesa, "and, shall I own my weakness? I cannot yet decide."

"My daughter! can it be possible that you should want courage to soar above vulgar prejudice, in action, though not in opinion?" said Schedoni, who, perceiving that his assistance was necessary to fix her fluctuating mind, gradually began to steal forth from the prudent reserve, in which he had taken shelter.

"If this person was condemned by the law," he continued, "you would pronounce her sentence to be just; yet you dare not, I am humbled while I repeat it, you dare not dispense justice yourself!"

The Marchesa, after some hesitation, said, "I have not the shield of the law to protect me, father: and the boldest virtue may pause, when it reaches the utmost verge of safety."

"Never!" replied the Confessor, warmly; "virtue never trembles; it is her glory, and sublimest attribute to be superior to danger; to despise it. The best principle is not virtue till it reaches this elevation."

A philosopher might, perhaps, have been surprized to hear two persons seriously defining the limits of virtue, at the very moment in which they mediated the most atrocious crime; a man of the world would have considered it to be mere hypocrisy; a supposition which might have disclosed his general knowledge of manners, but would certainly have betrayed his ignorance of the human heart.

The Marchesa was for some time silent and thoughtful, and then repeated deliberately, "I have not the shield of the law to protect me."

"But you have the shield of the church," replied Schedoni; "you should not only have protection, but absolution."

"Absolution! — Does virtue — justice, require absolution, father?"

"When I mentioned absolution for the action which you perceive to be so just and necessary," replied Schedoni, "I accommodated my speech to vulgar prejudice, and to vulgar weakness. And, forgive me, that since you, my daughter, descended from the loftiness of your spirit to regret the shield of the law, I endeavoured to console you, by offering a shield to conscience. But enough of this; let us return to argument. This girl is put out of the way of committing more mischief, of injuring the peace and dignity of a distinguished family; she is sent to an eternal sleep, before her time. — Where is the crime, where is the evil of this? On the contrary, you perceive, and you have convinced me, that it is only strict justice, only self-defence."

The Marchesa was attentive, and the Confessor added, "She is not immortal; and the few years more, that might have been allotted her, she deserves to forfeit, since she would have employed them in cankering the honour of an illustrious house."

"Speak low, father," said the Marchesa, though he spoke almost in a whisper; "the cloister appears solitary, yet some person may lurk behind those pillars. Advise me how this business may be managed; I am ignorant of the particular means."

"There is some hazard in the accomplishment of it, I grant," replied Schedoni; "I know not whom you may confide in. — The men who make a trade of blood" — "Hush!" said the Marchesa, looking round through the twilight — "a step!"

"It is the Friar's, yonder, who crosses to the choir," replied Schedoni.

They were watchful for a few moments, and then he resumed the subject. "Mercenaries ought not to be trusted," —

"Yet who but mercenaries" — interrupted the Marchesa, and instantly checked herself. But the question thus implied, did not escape the Confessor.

"Pardon my astonishment," said he, "at the inconsistency, or, what shall I venture to call it? of your opinions! After the acuteness you have displayed on some points, is it possible you can doubt, that principle may both prompt and perform the deed? Why should we hesitate to do what we judge to be right?"

"Ah! reverend father," said the Marchesa, with emotion, "but where shall we find another like yourself — another, who not only can perceive with justness, but will act with energy."

Schedoni was silent.

"Such a friend is above all estimation; but where shall we seek him?"

"Daughter!" said the Monk, emphatically, "my zeal for your family is also above all calculation."

"Good father," replied the Marchesa, comprehending his full meaning, "I know not how to thank you."

"Silence is sometimes eloquence," said Schedoni, significantly.

The Marchesa mused; for her conscience also was eloquent. She tried to overcome its voice, but it would be heard; and sometimes such starts of horrible conviction came over her mind, that she felt as one who, awaking from a dream, opens his eyes only to measure the depth of the precipice on which he totters. In such moments she was astonished, that she had paused for an instant upon a subject so terrible as that of murder. The sophistry of the Confessor, together with the inconsistencies which he had betrayed, and which had not escaped the notice of the Marchesa, even at the time they were uttered, though she had been unconscious of her own, then became more strongly apparent, and she almost determined to suffer the poor Ellena to live. But returning passion, like a wave that has recoiled from the shore, afterwards came with recollected energy, and swept from her feeble mind the barriers, which reason and conscience had begun to rear.

"This confidence with which you have thought proper to honour me," said Schedoni, at length, and paused; "This affair, so momentous" — "Ay, this affair," interrupted the Marchesa, in a hurried manner, — "but when, and where, good father? Being once convinced, I am anxious to have it settled."

"That must be as occasion offers," replied the Monk, thoughtfully. — "On the shore of the Adriatic, in the province of Apulia, not far from Manfredonia, is a house that might suit the purpose. It is a lone dwelling on the beach, and concealed from travellers, among the forests, which spread for many miles along the coast."

"And the people?" said the Marchesa.

"Ay, daughter, or why travel so far as Apulia? It is inhabited by one poor man, who sustains a miserable existence by fishing. I know him, and could unfold the reasons of his solitary life; — but no matter, it is sufficient that I know him."

"And would trust him, father?"

"Ay, lady, with the life of this girl — though scarcely with my own."

"How! If he is such a villain he may not be trusted! think further. But now, you objected to a mercenary, yet this man is one!"

"Daughter, he may be trusted, when it is in such a case; he is safe and sure. I have reason to know him."

"Name your reasons, father."

The Confessor was silent, and his countenance assumed a very peculiar character; it was more terrible than usual, and overspread with a dark, cadaverous hue of mingled anger and guilt. The Marchesa started involuntarily as, passing by a window, the evening gleam that fell there, discovered it; and for the first time she wished, that she had not committed herself so wholly to his power. But the die was now cast; it was too late to be prudent; and she again demanded his reasons.

"No matter," said Schedoni, in a stifled voice — "she dies!"

"By his hands?" asked the Marchesa, with strong emotion. "Think, once more, father."

They were both again silent and thoughtful. The Marchesa, at length, said, "Father, I rely upon your integrity and prudence;" and she laid a very flattering emphasis upon the word integrity. "But I conjure you to let this business be finished quickly, suspense is to me the purgatory of this world, and not to trust the accomplishment of it to a second person." She paused, and then added, "I would not willingly owe so vast a debt of obligation to any other than yourself."

"Your request, daughter, that I would not confide this business to a second person," said Schedoni, with displeasure, "cannot be accorded to. Can you suppose, that I, myself" — "Can I doubt that principle may both prompt and perform the deed," interrupted the Marchesa with quickness, and anticipating his meaning, while she retorted upon him his former words. "Why should we hesitate to do what we judge to be right?"

The silence of Schedoni alone indicated his displeasure, which the Marchesa immediately understood.

"Consider, good father," she added significantly, "how painful it must be to me, to owe to infinite an obligation to a stranger, or to any other than so highly valued a friend as yourself."

Schedoni, while he detected her meaning, and persuaded himself that he despised the flattery, with which she so thinly veiled it, unconsciously suffered his self-love to be soothed by the compliment. He bowed his head, in signal of consent to her wish.

"Avoid violence, if that be possible," she added, immediately comprehending him, "but let her die quickly! The punishment is due to the crime."

The Marchesa happened, as she said this, to cast her eyes upon the inscription over a Confessional, where appeared, in black letters, these awful words, "God hears thee!" It appeared an awful warning. Her countenance changed; it had struck upon her heart. Schedoni was too much engaged by his own thoughts to observe, or understand her silence. She soon recovered herself; and considering that this was a common inscription for Confessionals, disregarded what she had at first considered as a peculiar admonition; yet some moments elapsed, before she could renew the subject.

"You was speaking of a place, father," resumed the Marchesa — "you mentioned a" — "Ay," muttered the Confessor, still musing, — "in a chamber of that house there is" — "What noise is that?" said the Marchesa, interrupting him. They listened. A few low and querulous notes of the organ sounded at a distance, and stopped again.

"What mournful music is that?" said the Marchesa in a faultering voice, "It was touched by a fearful hand! Vespers were over long ago!"

"Daughter," said Schedoni, somewhat sternly, "you said you had a man's courage. Alas! you have a woman's heart."

"Excuse me, father; I know not why I feel this agitation, but I will command it. That chamber?" —

"In that chamber," resumed the Confessor, "is a secret door, constructed long ago." —

"And for what purpose constructed?" said the fearful Marchesa.

"Pardon me, daughter; 'tis sufficient that it is there; we will make a good use of it. Through that door — in the night — when she sleeps" — "I comprehend you," said the Marchesa, "I comprehend you. But why, you have your reasons, no doubt, but why the necessity of a secret door in a house which you say is so lonely — inhabited by only one person?"

"A passage leads to the sea," continued Schedoni, without replying to the question. "There, on the shore, when darkness covers it; there, plunged amidst the waves, no stain shall hint of" — "Hark!" interrupted the Marchesa, starting, "that note again!"

The organ sounded saintly from the choir, and paused, as before. In the next moment, a slow chaunting of voices was heard, mingling with the rising peal, in a strain particularly melancholy and solemn.

"Who is dead? said the Marchesa, changing countenance; "it is a requiem!"

"Peace be with the departed!" exclaimed Schedoni, and crossed himself; "Peace rest with his soul!"

"Hark! to that chaunt!" said the Marchesa, in a trembling voice; "it is a first requiem; the soul has but just quitted the body!"

They listened in silence. The Marchesa was much affected; her complexion varied at every instant; her breathings were short and interrupted, and she even shed a few tears, but they were those of despair, rather than of sorrow. "That body is now cold," said she to herself, "which but an hour ago was warm and animated! Those fine senses are closed in death! And to this condition would I reduce a being like myself! Oh, wretched, wretched mother! to what has the folly of a son reduced thee!"

She turned from the Confessor, and walked alone in the cloister. Her agitation encreased; she wept without restraint, for her veil and the evening gloom concealed her, and her sighs were lost amidst the music of the choir.

Schedoni was scarcely less disturbed, but his were emotions of apprehension and contempt. "Behold, what is woman!" said he — "The slave of her passions, the dupe of her senses! When pride and revenge speak in her breast, she defies obstacles, and laughs at crimes! Assail but her senses, let music, for instance, touch some feeble chord of her heart, and echo to her fancy, and lo! all her perceptions change:— she shrinks from the act she had but an instant before believed meritorious, yields to some new emotion, and sinks — the victim of a sound! O, weak and contemptible being!"

The Marchesa, at least, seemed to justify his observations. The desperate passions, which had resisted every remonstrance of reason and humanity, were vanquished only by other passions; and, her senses touched by the mournful melody of music, and her superstitious fears awakened by the occurrence of a requiem for the dead, at the very moment when she was planning murder, she yielded, for a while, to the united influence of pity and terror. Her agitation did not subside; but she returned to the Confessor.

"We will converse on this business at some future time," said she; "at present, my spirits are disordered. Good night, father! Remember me in your orisons."

"Peace be with you, lady!" said the Confessor, bowing gravely, "You shall not be forgotten. Be resolute, and yourself."

The Marchesa beckoned her woman to approach, when, drawing her veil closer, and leaning upon the attendant's arm, she left the cloister. Schedoni remained for a moment on the spot, looking after her, till her figure was lost in the gloom of the long perspective; he then, with thoughtful steps, quitted the cloister by another door. He was disappointed, but he did not despair.

❦

Chapter 16

> “The lonely mountains o’er,
> And the resounding shore,
> A voice of weeping heard, and loud lament!
> From haunted spring, and dale,
> Edg’d with poplar pale,
> The parting genius is with sighing sent;
> With flower-inwoven tresses torn
> The nymphs in twilight shade of tangled thicket mourn.”
> Milton.

While the Marchesa and the Monk were thus meditating conspiracies against Ellena, she was still in the Ursaline convent on the lake of Celano. In this obscure sanctuary, indisposition, the consequence of the long and severe anxiety she had suffered, compelled her to remain. A fever was on her spirits, and an universal lassitude prevailed over her frame; which became the more effectual, from her very solicitude to conquer it. Every approaching day she hoped she should be able to pursue her journey homeward, yet everyday found her as incapable of travelling as the last, and the second week was already gone, before the fine air of Celano, and the tranquillity of her asylum, began to revive her. Vivaldi, who was her daily visitor at the grate of the convent; and who, watching over her with intense solicitude, had hitherto forbore to renew a subject, which, by agitating her spirits, might affect her health, now, that her health strengthened, ventured gradually to mention his fears lest the place of her retreat should be discovered, and left he yet might irrecoverably lose her, unless she would approve of their speedy marriage. At every visit he now urged the subject, represented the dangers that surrounded them, and repeated his arguments and entreaties; for now, when he believed that time was pressing forward fatal evils, he could no longer attend to the delicate scruples, that bade him be sparing in entreaty. Ellena, had she obeyed the dictates of her heart, would have rewarded his attachment and his services, by a frank approbation of his proposal; but the objections which reason exhibited against such a concession, she could neither overcome or disregard.

Vivaldi, after he had again represented their present dangers, and claimed the promise of her hand, received in the presence of her deceased relative, Signora Bianchi, gently ventured to remind her, that an event as sudden as lamentable, had first deferred their nuptials, and that if Bianchi had lived, Ellena would have bestowed, long since, the vows he now solicited. Again he intreated her, by every sacred and tender recollection, to conclude the fearful uncertainty of their fate, and to bestow upon him the right to protect her, before they ventured forth from this temporary asylum.

Ellena immediately admitted the sacredness of the promise, which she had formerly given, and assured Vivaldi that she considered herself as indissolubly bound to wed him as if it had been given at the altar; but she objected to a confirmation of it, till his family should seem willing to receive her for their daughter; when, forgetting the injuries she had received from them, she would no longer refuse their alliance. She added, that Vivaldi ought to be more jealous of the dignity of the woman, whom he honoured with his esteem, than to permit her making a greater concession.

Vivaldi felt the full force of this appeal; he recollected, with anguish, circumstances of which she was happily ignorant, but which served to strengthen with him the justness of her reproof. And, as the aspersions which the Marchese had thrown upon her name, crowded to his memory, pride and indignation swelled his heart, and so far overcame apprehension of hazard, that he formed a momentary resolution to abandon every other consideration, to that of asserting the respect which was due to Ellena, and to forbear claiming her for his wife, till his family should make acknowledgment of their error, and willingly admit her in the rank of their child. But this resolution was as transient as plausible; other considerations, and former fears pressed upon him. He perceived the strong improbability, that they would ever make a voluntary sacrifice of their pride to his love; or yield mistakes, nurtured by prejudice and by willing indulgence, to truth and a sense of justice. In the mean time, the plans, which would be formed for separating him from Ellena, might succeed, and he should lose her for ever. Above all, it appeared, that the best, the only method, which remained for confuting the daring aspersions that had affected her name, was, by proving the high respect he himself felt for her, and presenting her to the world in the sacred character of his wife. These considerations quickly determined him to persevere in his suit; but it was impossible to urge them to Ellena, since the circumstances they must unfold, would not only shock her delicacy and afflict her heart, but would furnish the proper pride she cherished with new arguments against approaching a family, who had thus grossly insulted her.

While these considerations occupied him, the emotion they occasioned did not escape Ellena's observation; it encreased, as he reflected on the impossibility of urging them to her, and on the hopelessness of prevailing with her, unless he could produce new arguments in his favour. His unaffected distress awakened all her tenderness and gratitude; she asked herself whether she ought any longer to assert her own rights, when by doing so, she sacrificed the peace of him, who had incurred so much danger for her sake, who had rescued her from severe oppression, and had so long and so well proved the strength of his affection.

As she applied these questions, she appeared to herself an unjust and selfish being, unwilling to make any sacrifice for the tranquillity of him, who had given her liberty, even at the risk of his life. Her very virtues, now that they were carried to excess, seemed to her to border upon vices; her sense of dignity, appeared to be narrow pride; her delicacy weakness; her moderated affection cold ingratitude; and her circumspection, little less than prudence degenerated into meanness.

Vivaldi, as apt in admitting hope as fear, immediately perceived her resolution beginning to yield, and he urged again every argument which was likely to prevail over it. But the subject was too important for Ellena, to be immediately decided upon; he departed with only a saint assurance of encouragement; and she forbade him to return till the following day, when she would acquaint him with her final determination.

This interval was, perhaps, the most painful he had ever experienced. Alone, and on the banks of the lake, he passed many hours in alternate hope and fear, in endeavouring to anticipate the decision, on which seemed suspended all his future peace, and abruptly recoiling from it, as often as imagination represented it to be adverse.

Of the walls, that enclosed her, he scarcely ever lost sight; the view of them seemed to cherish his hopes, and, while he gazed upon their rugged surface, Ellena alone was pictured on his fancy; till his anxiety to learn her disposition towards him arose to agony, and he would abruptly leave the spot. But an invisible spell still seemed to attract him back again, and evening found him pacing flowly beneath the shade of those melancholy boundaries that concealed his Ellena.

Her day was not more tranquil. Whenever prudence and decorous pride forbade her to become a member of the Vivaldi family, as constantly did gratitude, affection, irresistible tenderness plead the cause of Vivaldi. The memory of past times returned; and the very accents of the deceased seemed to murmur from the grave, and command her to fulfil the engagement, which had foothed the dying moments of Bianchi.

On the following morning, Vivaldi was at the gates of the convent, long before the appointed hour, and he lingered in dreadful impatience, till the clock struck the signal for his entrance.

Ellena was already in the parlour; she was alone, and rose in disorder on his approach. His steps faultered, his voice was lost, and his eyes only, which he fixed with a wild earnestness on her's, had power to enquire her resolution. She observed the paleness of his countenance, and his emotion, with a mixture of concern and approbation. At that moment, he perceived her smile, and hold out her hand to him; and fear, care, and doubt vanished at once from his mind. He was incapable of thanking her, but sighed deeply as he pressed her hand, and, overcome with joy, supported himself against the grate that separated them.

"You are, then, indeed my own!" said Vivaldi, at length recovering his voice — "We shall be no more parted — you are mine for ever! But your countenance changes! O heaven! surely I have not mistaken! Speak! I conjure you, Ellena; relieve me from these terrible doubts!"

"I am yours, Vivaldi," replied Ellena faintly, "oppression can part us no more."

She wept, and drew her veil over her eyes.

"What mean those tears?" said Vivaldi, with alarm. "Ah! Ellena," he added in a softened voice, "should tears mingle with such moments as these! Should your tears fall upon my heart now! They tell me, that your consent is given with reluctance — with grief; that your love is feeble, your heart — yes Ellena! that your whole heart is no longer mine!"

"They ought rather to tell you," replied Ellena, "that it is all your own; that my affection never was more powerful than now, when it can overcome every consideration with respect to your family, and urge me to a step which must degrade me in their eyes, — and, I fear, in my own."

"O retract that cruel assertion!" interrupted Vivaldi, "Degrade you in your own! — degrade you in their eyes!" He was much agitated; his countenance was flushed, and an air of more than usual dignity dilated his figure.

"The time shall come, my Ellena," he added with energy, "when they shall understand your worth, and acknowledge your excellence. O! that I were an Emperor, that I might shew to all the world how much I love and honour you!"

Ellena gave him her hand, and, withdrawing her veil, smiled on him through her tears, with gratitude and reviving courage.

Before Vivaldi retired to the convent, he obtained her consent to consult with an aged Benedictine, whom he had engaged in his interest, as to the hour at which the marriage might be solemnized with least observation. The priest informed him, that at the conclusion of the vesper-service, he should be disengaged for several hours; and that, as the first hour after sun-set was more solitary than almost any other, the brotherhood being then assembled in the refectory, he would meet Vivaldi and Ellena at that time, in a chapel on the edge of the lake, a short distance from the Benedictine convent, to which it belonged, and celebrate their nuptials.

With this proposal, Vivaldi immediately returned to Ellena; when it was agreed that the party should assemble at the hour mentioned by the priest. Ellena, who had thought it proper to mention her intention to the Abbess of the Urfalines, was, by her permission, to be attended by a lay-sister; and Vivaldi was to meet her without the walls, and conduct her to the altar. When the ceremony was over, the fugitives were to embark in a vessel, hired for the purpose, and, crossing the lake, proceed towards Naples. Vivaldi again withdrew to engage a boat, and Ellena to prepare for the continuance of her journey.

As the appointed hour drew near, her spirits sunk, and she watched with melancholy foreboding, the sun retiring amidst stormy clouds, and his rays fading from the highest points of the mountains, till the gloom of twilight prevailed over the scene. She then left her apartment, took a grateful leave of the hospitable Abbess, and, attended by the lay-sister, quitted the convent.

Immediately without the gate she was met by Vivaldi, whose look, as he put her arm within his, gently reproached her for the dejection of her air.

They walked in silence towards the chapel of San Sebastian. The scene appeared to sympathize with the spirits of Ellena. It was a gloomy evening, and the lake, which broke in dark waves upon the shore, mingled its hollow sounds with those of the wind, that bowed the lofty pines, and swept in gusts among the rocks. She observed with alarm the heavy thunder clouds, that rolled along the sides of the mountains, and the birds circling swiftly over the waters, and scudding away to their nests among the cliffs; and she noticed to Vivaldi, that, as a storm seemed approaching, she wished to avoid crossing the lake. He immediately ordered Paulo to dismiss the boat, and to be in waiting with a carriage, that, if the weather should become clear, they might not be detained longer than was otherwise necessary.

As they approached the chapel, Ellena fixed her eyes on the mournful cypresses which waved over it, and sighed. “Those,” she said, “are funereal mementos — not such as should grace the altar of marriage! Vivaldi, I could be superstitious. — Think you not they are portentous of future misfortune? But forgive me; my spirits are weak.”

Vivaldi endeavoured to soothe her mind, and tenderly reproached her for the sadness she indulged. Thus they entered the chapel. Silence, and a kind of gloomy sepulchral light, prevailed within. The venerable Benedictine, with a brother, who was to serve as guardian to the bride, were already there, but they were kneeling, and engaged in prayer.

Vivaldi led the trembling Ellena to the altar, where they waited till the Benedictines should have finished, and these were moments of great emotion. She often looked round the dusky chapel, in fearful expectation of discovering some lurking observer; and, though she knew it to be very improbable, that any person in this neighbourhood could be interested in interrupting the ceremony, her mind involuntarily admitted the possibility of it. Once, indeed, as her eyes glanced over a casement, Ellena fancied she distinguished a human face laid close to the glass, as if to watch what was passing within; but when she looked again, the apparition was gone. Not withstanding this, she listened with anxiety to the uncertain sounds without, and sometimes started as the surges of the lake dashed over the rock below, almost believing she heard the steps and whispering voices of men in the avenues of the chapel. She tried, however, to subdue apprehension, by considering, that if this were true, an harmless curiosity might have attracted some inhabitants of the convent hither, and her spirits became more composed, till she observed a door open a little way, and a dark countenance looking from behind it. In the next instant it retreated, and the door was closed.

Vivaldi, who perceived Ellena’s complexion change, as she laid her hand on his arm, followed her eyes to the door, but, no person appearing, he enquired the cause of her alarm.

“We are observed,” said Ellena, “some person appeared at that door!”

“And if we are observed, my love,” replied Vivaldi, “who is there in this neighbourhood whose observation we can have reason to fear? Good father, dispatch," he added, turning to the priest, "you forget that we are waiting."

The officiating priest made a signal that he had nearly concluded his orison; but the other brother rose immediately, and spoke with Vivaldi, who desired that the doors of the chapel might be fastened to prevent intrusion.

"We dare not bar the gates of this holy temple," replied the Benedictine, "it is a sanctuary, and never may be closed."

"But you will allow me to repress idle curiosity," said Vivaldi, "and to enquire who watches beyond that door? The tranquillity of this lady demands thus much."

The brother assented, and Vivaldi stepped to the door; but perceiving no person in the obscure passage beyond it, he returned with lighter steps to the altar, from which the officiating priest now rose.

"My children," said he, "I have made you wait, — but an old man's prayers are not less important than a young man's vows, though this is not a moment when you will admit that truth."

"I will allow whatever you please, good father," replied Vivaldi, "if you will administer those vows, without further delay; — time presses."

The venerable priest took his station at the altar, and opened the book. Vivaldi placed himself on his right hand, and with looks of anxious love, endeavoured to encourage Ellena, who, with a dejected countenance, which her veil but ill concealed, and eyes fixed on the ground, leaned on her attendant sister. The figure and homely features of this sister; the tall stature and harsh visage of the brother, clothed in the gray habit of his order; the silvered head and placid physiognomy of the officiating priest, enlightened by a gleam from the lamp above, opposed to the youthful grace and spirit of Vivaldi, and the milder beauty and sweetness of Ellena, formed altogether a group worthy of the pencil.

The priest had begun the ceremony, when a noise from without again alarmed Ellena, who observed the door once more cautiously opened, and a man bend forward his gigantic figure from behind it. He carried a torch, and its glare, as the door gradually unclosed, discovered other persons in the passage beyond, looking forward over his shoulder into the chapel. The fierceness of their air, and the strange peculiarity of their dress, instantly convinced Ellena that they were not inhabitants of the Benedictine convent, but some terrible messengers of evil, Her half-stifled shriek alarmed Vivaldi, who caught her before she fell to the ground; but, as he had not faced the door, he did not understand the occasion of her terror, till the sudden rush of footsteps made him turn, when he observed several men armed, and very singularly habited, advancing towards the altar.

"Who is he that intrudes upon this sanctuary?" he demanded sternly, while he half rose from the ground where Ellena had sunk.

"What sacrilegious footsteps," cried the priest, "thus rudely violate this holy place?"

Ellena was now insensible; and the men continuing to advance, Vivaldi drew his sword to protect her.

The priest and Vivaldi now spoke together, but the words of neither could be distinguished, when a voice, tremendous from its loudness, like bursting thunder, dissipated the cloud of mystery.

"You Vincentio di Vivaldi, and of Naples," it said, "and you Ellena di Rosalba, of Villa Altieri, we summon you to surrender, in the name of the most holy Inquisition!"

"The Inquisition!" exclaimed Vivaldi, scarcely believing what he heard. "Here is some mistake!"

The official repeated the summons, without deighing to reply.

Vivaldi, yet more astonished, added, "Do not imagine you can so far impose upon my credulity, as that I can believe myself to have fallen within the cognizance of the Inquisition."

"You may believe what you please, Signor," replied the chief officer, "but you and that lady are our prisoners."

"Begone, impostor!" said Vivaldi, springing from the ground, where he had supported Ellena, "or my sword shall teach you to repent your audacity!"

"Do you insult an officer of the Inquisition!" exclaimed the ruffian. "That holy Community will inform you what you incur by resisting it's mandate."

The priest interrupted Vivaldi's retort, "If you are really officers of that tremendous tribunal," he said, "produce some proof of your office. Remember this place is sanctified, and tremble for the consequence of imposition. You do wrong to believe, that I will deliver up to you persons who have taken refuge here, without an unequivocal demand from that dread power."

“Produce your form of summons,” demanded Vivaldi, with haughty impatience.

“It is here,” replied the official, drawing forth a black scroll, which he delivered to the priest, “Read, and be satisfied!”

The Benedictine started the instant he beheld the scroll, but he received and deliberately examined it. The kind of parchment, the impression of the seal, the particular form of words, the private signals, understood only by the initiated — all announced this to be a true instrument of arrestation from the Holy Office. The scroll dropped from his hand, and he fixed his eyes, with surprize and unutterable compassion, upon Vivaldi, who stooped to reach the parchment, when it was snatched by the official.

“Unhappy young man!” said the priest, “it is too true; you are summoned by that awful power, to answer to your crime, and I am spared from the commission of a terrible offence!”

Vivaldi appeared thunderstruck. “For what crime, holy father, am I called upon to answer? This is some bold and artful imposture, since it can delude even you! What crime — what offence?”

“I did not think you had been thus hardened in guilt!” replied the priest, “Forbear! add not the audacity of falsehood, to the headlong passions of youth. You understand too well your crime.”

“Falsehood!” retorted Vivaldi, “But your years, old man, and those sacred vestments, protect you. For these ruffians, who have dared to implicate that innocent victim,” pointing to Ellena, “in the charge, they shall have justice from my vengeance.”

“Forbear! forbear!” said the priest, seizing his arm, “have pity on yourself and on her. Know you not the punishment you incur from resistance?”

“I know nor care not,” replied Vivaldi, “but I will desend Ellena di Rosalba to the last moment. Let them approach if they dare.”

“It is on her, on her who lies senseless at your feet,” said the priest, “that they will wreck their vengeance for these insults; on her — the partner of your guilt.”

“The partner of my guilt!” exclaimed Vivaldi, with mingled astonishment and indignation — “of my guilt!”

“Rash young man! does not the very veil she wears betray it? I marvel how it could pass my observation!”

“You have stolen a nun from her convent,” said the chief officer, “and must answer for the crime. When you have wearied yourself with these heroics, Signor, you must go with us; our patience is wearied already.”

Vivaldi observed, for the first time, that Ellena was shrouded in a nun’s veil; it was the one which Olivia had lent, to conceal her from the notice of the Abbess, on the night of her departure from San Stefano, and which, in the hurry of that departure, she had forgotten to leave with the nun. During this interval, her mind had been too entirely occupied by cares and apprehension to allow her once to notice, that the veil she wore was other than her usual one; but it had been too well observed by some of the Ursaline sisters.

Though he knew not how to account for the circumstance of the veil, Vivaldi began to perceive others which gave colour to the charge brought against him, and to ascertain the wide circumference of the share that was spread around him. He fancied, too, that he perceived the hand of Schedoni employed upon it, and that his dark spirit was now avenging itself for the exposure he had suffered in the church of the Spirito Santo, and for all the consequent mortifications. As Vivaldi was ignorant of the ambitious hopes which the Marchesa had encouraged in father Schedoni, he did not see the improbability, that the Confessor would have dared to hazard her favour by this arrest of her son; much less could he suspect, that Schedoni, having done so, had secrets in his possession, which enabled him safely to defy her resentment, and bind her in silence to his decree.

With the conviction, that Schedoni’s was the master-hand that directed the present manoeuvre, Vivaldi stood aghast, and gazing in silent unutterable anguish on Ellena, who, as she began to revive, stretched forth her helpless hands, and called upon him to save her, “Do not leave me,” said she in accents the most supplicating, “I am safe while you are with me.”

At the sound of her voice, he started from his trance, and turning fiercely upon the ruffians, who stood in sullen watchfulness around, bade them depart, or prepare for his fury. At the same instant they all drew their swords, and the shrieks of Ellena, and the supplications of the officiating priest, were lost amidst the tumult of the combatants.

Vivaldi, most unwilling to shed blood, stood merely on the defensive, till the violence of his antagonists compelled him to exert all his skill and strength. He then disabled one of the ruffians; but his skill was insufficient to repel the other two, and he was nearly overcome, when steps were heard approaching, and Paulo rushed into the chapel. Perceiving his master beset, he drew his sword, and came furiously to his aid. He fought with unconquerable audacity and fierceness, till nearly at the moment when his adversary fell, other ruffians entered the chapel, and Vivaldi with his faithful servant was wounded, and, at length, disarmed.

Ellena, who had been withheld from throwing herself between the combatants, now, on observing that Vivaldi was wounded, renewed her efforts for liberty, accompanied by such agony of supplication and complaint, as almost moved to pity the hearts of the surrounding ruffians.

Disabled by his wounds, and also held by his enemies, Vivaldi was compelled to witness her distress and danger, without a hope of rescuing her. In frantic accents he called upon the old priest to protect her.

"I dare not oppose the orders of the Inquisition," replied the Benedictine, "even if I had sufficient strength to defy it's officials. Know you not, unhappy young man, that it is death to resist them?"

"Death!" exclaimed Ellena, "death!"

"Ay lady, too surely so!"

"Signor, it would have been well for you," said one of the officers, "if you had taken my advice; you will pay dearly for what you have done," pointing to the ruffian, who lay severely wounded on the ground.

"My master will not have that to pay for, friend," said Paulo, "for if you must know, that is a piece of my work; and, if my arms were now at liberty, I would try if I could not match it among one of you, though I am so slashed."

"Peace, good Paulo! the deed was mine," said Vivaldi; then addressing the official, "For myself I care not, I have done my duty — but for her! — Can you look upon her, innocent and helpless as she is, and not relent! Can you, will you, barbarians! drag her, also, to destruction, upon a charge too so daringly false?"

"Our relenting would be of no service to her," replied the official, "we must do our duty. Whether the charge is true or false, she must answer to it before her judges."

"What charge?" demanded Ellena.

"The charge of having broken your nun's vows," replied the priest.

Ellena raised her eyes to heaven; "Is it even so!" she exclaimed.

"You hear she acknowledges the crime," said one of the ruffians.

"She acknowledges no crime," replied Vivaldi; "she only perceives the extent of the malice that persecutes her. O! Ellena, must I then abandon you to their power! leave you for ever!"

The agony of this thought re-animated him with momentary strength; he burst from the grasp of the officials, and once more clasped Ellena to his bosom, who, unable to speak, wept, with the anguish of a breaking heart, as her head sunk upon his shoulder. The ruffians around them so far respected their grief, that, for a moment, they did not interrupt it.

Vivaldi's exertion was transient; faint from sorrow, and from loss of blood, he became unable to support himself, and was compelled again to relinquish Ellena.

"Is there no help?" said she, with agony; "will you suffer him to expire on the ground?"

The priest directed, that he should be conveyed to the Benedictine convent, where his wounds might be examined, and medical aid administered. The disabled ruffians were already carried thither; but Vivaldi refused to go, unless Ellena might accompany him. It was contrary to the rules of the place, that a woman should enter it, and before the priest could reply, his Benedictine brother eagerly said, that they dared not transgress the law of the convent.

Ellena's fears for Vivaldi entirely overcame those for herself, and she entreated, that he would suffer himself to be conveyed to the Benedictines; but he could not be prevailed with to leave her. The officials, however, prepared to separate them; Vivaldi in vain urged the useless cruelty of dividing him from Ellena, if, as they had hinted, she also was to be carried to the Inquisition; and as ineffectually demanded, whither they really designed to take her.

"We shall take good care of her, Signor," said an officer, "that is sufficient for you. It signifies nothing whether you are going the same way, you must not go together."

"Why, did you ever hear, Signor, of arrested persons being suffered to remain in company?" said another ruffian, "Fine plots they would lay; I warrant they would not contradict each other's evidence a tittle."

“You shall not separate me from my master, though,” vociferated Paulo; “I demand to be sent to the Inquisition with him, or to the devil, but all is one for that.”

“Fair and softly,” replied the officer; “you shall be sent to the Inquisition first, and to the devil afterwards; you must be tried before you are condemned.”

“But waste no more time,” he added to his followers, and pointing to Ellena, “away with her.”

As he said this, they listed Ellena in their arms. “Let me loose!” cried Paulo, when he saw they were carrying her from the place, “let me loose, I say!” and the violence of his struggles burst asunder the cords which held him; a vain release, for he was instantly seized again.

Vivaldi, already exhausted by the loss of blood and the anguish of his mind, made, however, a last effort to save her; he tried to raise himself from the ground, but a sudden film came over his sight, and his senses forsook him, while yet the name of Ellena faultered on his lips.

As they bore her from the chapel, she continued to call upon Vivaldi, and alternately to supplicate that she might once more behold him, and take one last adieu. The ruffians were inexorable, and she heard his voice no more, for he no longer heard — no longer was able to reply to her’s.

“O! once again!” she cried in agony, “One word, Vivaldi! Let me hear the sound of your voice yet once again!” But it was silent.

As she quitted the chapel, with eyes still bent towards the spot where he lay, she exclaimed, in the piercing accents of despair, “Farewel, Vivaldi! — O! for ever — ever, farewel!”

The tone, in which she pronounced the last “farewel!” was so touching, that even the cold heart of the priest could not resist it; but he impatiently wiped away the few tears, that rushed into his eyes, before they were observed. Vivaldi heard it — it seemed to arouse him from death! — he heard her mournful voice for the last time, and, turning his eyes, saw her veil floating away through the portal of the chapel. All suffering, all effort, all resistance were vain; the ruffians bound him, bleeding as he was, and conveyed him to the Benedictine convent, together with the wounded Paulo, who unceasingly vociferated on the way thither, “I demand to be sent to the Inquision! I demand to be sent to the Inquision!”

❦

Chapter 17

> "In earliest Greece to thee, with partial choice,
> The grief full Muse address'd her infant tongue;
> The maids and matrons on her awful voice,
> Silent and pale, in wild amazement hung."
> Collins's Ode to Fear.

The wounds of Vivaldi, and of his servant, were pronounced, by the Benedictine who had examined and dressed them, to be not dangerous, but those of one of the ruffians were declared doubtful. Some few of the brothers displayed much compassion and kindness towards the prisoners; but the greater part seemed fearful of expressing any degree of sympathy for persons who had fallen within the cognizance of the Holy Office, and even kept aloof from the chamber, in which they were confined. To this self-restriction, however, they were not long subjected; for Vivaldi and Paulo were compelled to begin their journey as soon as some short rest had sufficiently revived them. They were placed in the same carriage, but the presence of two officers prevented all interchange of conjecture as to the destination of Ellena, and with respect to the immediate occasion of their misfortune. Paulo, indeed, now and then hazarded a surmise, and did not scruple to affirm, that the Abbess of San Stesano was their chief enemy; that the Carmelite friars, who had overtaken them on the road, were her agents; and that, having traced their route, they had given intelligence where Vivaldi and Ellena might be found.

"I guessed we never should escape the Abbess," said Paulo, "though I would not disturb you, Signor mio, nor the poor lady Ellena, by saying so. But your Abbesses are as cunning as Inquisitors, and are so fond of governing, that they had rather, like them, send a man to the devil, than send him no where."

Vivaldi gave Paulo a significant look, which was meant to repress his imprudent loquacity, and then sunk again into silence and the abstractions of deep grief. The officers, mean while, never spoke, but were observant of all that Paulo said, who perceived their watchfulness, but because he despised them as spies, he thoughtlessly despised them also as enemies, and was so far from concealing opinions, which they might repeat to his prejudice, that he had a pride in exaggerating them, and in daring the worst, which the exasperated tempers of these men, shut up in the same carriage with him, and compelled to hear whatever he chose to say against the institution to which they belonged, could effect. Whenever Vivaldi, recalled from his abstractions by some bold assertion, endeavoured to check his imprudence, Paulo was contented to solace his conscience, instead of protecting himself, by saying, "It is their own fault; they would thrust themselves into my company; let them have enough of it; and, if ever they take me before their reverences, the Inquisitors, they shall have enough for it too. I will play up such a tune in the Inquisition as is not heard there every day. I will jingle all the bells on their fool's caps, and tell them a little honest truth, if they make me smart for it ever so."

Vivaldi, aroused once more, and seriously alarmed for the consequences which honest Paulo might be drawing upon himself, now insisted on his silence, and was obeyed.

They travelled during the whole night, stopping only to change horses. At every post house, Vivaldi looked for a carriage that might inclose Ellena, but none appeared, nor any found of wheels told him that she followed.

With the morning light he perceived the dome of St. Peter, appearing faintly over the plains that surrounded Rome, and he understood, for the first time, that he was going to the prisons of the Inquisition in that city. The travellers descended upon the Campania, and then rested for a few hours at a small town on its borders.

When they again set forward, Vivaldi perceived that the guard was changed, the officer who had remained with him in the apartment of the inn only appearing among the new faces which surrounded him. The dress and manners of these men differed considerably from those of the other. Their conduct was more temperate, but their countenances expressed a darker cruelty, mingled with a sly demureness, and a solemn self-importance, that announced them at once as belonging to the Inquisition. They were almost invariably silent; and when they did speak, it was only in a few sententious words. To the abounding questions of Paulo, and the few earnest entreaties of his master, to be informed of the place of Ellena's destination, they made not the least reply; and listened to all the flourishing speeches of the servant against Inquisitors and the Holy Office with the most profound gravity.

Vivaldi was struck with the circumstance of the guard being changed, and still more with the appearance of the party, who now composed it. When he compared the manners of the late, with those of the present guard, he thought he discovered in the first the mere ferocity of ruffians; but in the latter, the principles of cunning and cruelty, which seemed particularly to characterize Inquisitors; he was inclined to believe, that a stratagem had enthralled him, and that now, for the first time, he was in the custody of the Holy Office.

It was near midnight when the prisoners entered the Porto del Popolo, and found themselves in the midst of the Carnival at Rome. The Corso, through which they were obliged to pass, was crowded with gay carriages and marks, with processions of musicians, monks, and mountebanks, was lighted up with innumerable flambeaux, and resounded with the heterogeneous ratthing of wheels, the music of serenaders, and the jokes and laughter of the revellers, as they sportively threw about their sugar-plumbs. The heat of the weather made it necessary to have the windows of the coach open; and the prisoners, therefore, saw all that passed without. It was a scene, which contrasted cruelly with the feelings and circumstances of Vivaldi; torn as he was from her he most loved, in dreadful uncertainty as to her fate, and himself about to be brought before a tribunal, whose mysterious and terrible proceedings appalled even the bravest spirits. Altogether, this was one of the most striking examples, which the chequer-work of human life could shew, or human feelings endure, Vivaldi sickened as he looked upon the splendid crowd, while the carriage made its way slowly with it; but Paulo, as he gazed, was reminded of the Corso of Naples, such as it appeared at the time of Carnival, and, comparing the present scene with his native one, he found fault with every thing he beheld. The dresses were tasteless, the equipages without splendor, the people without spirit; yet, such was the propensity of his heart to sympathize with whatever was gay, that, for some moments, he forgot that he was a prisoner on his way to the Inqusition; almost forgot that he was a Neapolitan; and, while he exclaimed against the dullness of a Roman carnival, would have sprung through the carriage window to partake of its spirit, if his fetters and his wouries had not with-held him. A deep sigh from Vivaldi recalled his wandering imagination; and, when he noticed again the sorrow in his master's look, all his lightly joyous spirits fled.

“My maestro, my dear maestro!” — he said, and knew not how to finish what he wished to express.

At that moment they passed the theatre of San Carlo, the doors of which were thronged with equipages, where Roman ladies, in their gala habits, courtiers in their fantastic dresses, and makes of all descriptions, were hastening to the opera. In the midst of this gay bustle, where the carriage was unable to proceed, the officials of the Inquisition looked on in solemn silence, not a muscle of their features relaxing in sympathy, or yielding a single wrinkle of the self-importance that lifted their brows; and, while they regarded with secret contempt those, who could be thus lightly pleased, the people, in return, more wisely, perhaps, regarded with contempt the proud moroseness, that refused to partake of innocent pleasures, because they were trifling, and shrunk from countenances furrowed with the sternness of cruelty. But, when their office was distinguished, part of the crowd pressed back from the carriage in affright, while another part advanced with curiosity; though, as the majority retreated, space was left for the carriage to move on. After quitting the Corso, it proceeded for some miles through dark and deserted streets, where only here and there a lamp, hung on high before the image of a saint, shed it's glimmering light, and where a melancholy and universal silence prevailed. At intervals, indeed, the moon, as the clouds passed away, shewed, for a moment, some of those mighty monuments of Rome's eternal name, those sacred ruins, those gigantic skeletons, which once enclosed a soul, whose energies governed a world! Even Vivaldi could not behold with indifference the grandeur of these reliques, as the rays fell upon the hoary walls and columns, or pass among these scenes of ancient story, without feeling a melancholy awe, a sacred enthusiasm, that withdrew him from himself. But the illusion was transient; his own missortunes pressed too heavily upon him to be long unfelt, and his enthusiasm vanished like the moonlight.

A returning gleam lighted up, soon after, the rude and extensive area, which the carriage was crossing. It appeared, from it's desolation, and the ruins scattered distantly along its skirts, to be a part of the city entirely abandoned by the modern inhabitants to the reliques of its former grandeur. Not even the shadow of a human being crossed the waste, nor any building appeared, which might be supposed to shelter one. The deep tone of a bell, however, rolling on the silence of the night, announced the haunts of man to be not far off; and Vivaldi perceived in the distance, to which he was approaching, an extent of losty walls and towers, that, as far as the gloom would permit his eye to penetrate, bounded the horizon. He judged these to be the prisons of the Inquisition. Paulo pointed them out at the same moment. “Ah, Signor!” said he despondingly, “that is the place! what strength! If, my Lord, the Marchese were but to see where we are going! Ah!” —

He concluded with a deep sigh, and sunk again into the state of apprehension and mute expectation, which he had suffered from the moment that he quitted the Gorso.

The carriage having reached the walls, followed their bendings to a considerable extent. These walls, of immense height, and strengthened by innumerable massy bulwarks, exhibited neither window or grate, but a vast and dreary blank; a small round tower only, perched here and there upon the summit, breaking their inonotony.

The prisoners passed what seemed to be the principal entrance, from the grandeur of its portal, and the gigantic loftiness of the towers that rose over it; and soon after the carriage stopped at an arch-way in the walls, strongly barricadoed. One of the escort alighted, and, having struck upon the bars, a folding door within was immediately opened, and a man bearing a torch appeared behind the barricado, whose countenance, as he looked through it, might have been copied for the

"Grim-visaged comfortless Despair" of the Poet.

No words were exchanged between him and the guard; but on perceiving who were without, he opened the iron gate, and the prisoners, having alighted, passed with the two officials beneath the arch, the guard following with a torch. They descended a flight of broad steps, at the foot of which another iron gate admitted them to a kind of hall; such, however, it at first appeared to Vivaldi, as his eyes glanced through its gloomy extent, imperfectly ascertaining it by the lamp, which hung from the centre of the roof. No person appeared, and a death-like silence prevailed; for neither the officials nor the guard yet spoke; nor did any distant sound contradict the notion, that they were traversing the chambers of the dead. To Vivaldi it occurred, that this was one of the burial vaults of the victims, who suffered in the Inquisition, and his whole frame thrilled with horror. Several avenues, opening from the apartment, seemed to lead to distant quarters of this immense fabric, but still no footstep whispering along the pavement, or voice murmuring through the arched roofs, indicated it to be the residence of the living.

Having entered one of the passages, Vivaldi perceived a person clothed in black, and who bore a lighted taper, crossing silently in the remote perspective; and he understood too well from his habit, that he was a member of this dreadful tribunal.

The found of footsteps seemed to reach the stranger, for he turned, and then paused, while the officers advanced. They then made signs to each other, and exchanged a few words, which neither Vivaldi or his servant could understand, when the stranger, pointing with his taper along another avenue, passed away. Vivaldi followed him with his eyes, till a door at the extremity of the passage opened, and he saw the Inquisitor enter an apartment, whence a great light proceeded, and where several other figures, habited like himself, appeared waiting to receive him. The door immediately closed; and, whether the imagination of Vivaldi was affected, or that the founds were real, he thought, as it closed, he distinguished half-stifled groans, as of a person in agony.

The avenue, through which the prisoners passed, opened, at length, into an apartment gloomy like the first they had entered, but more extensive. The roof was supported by arches, and long arcades branched off from every side of the chamber, as from a central point, and were lost in the gloom, which the rays of the small lamps, suspended in each, but feebly penetrated.

They rested here, and a person soon after advanced, who appeared to be the jailor, into whose hands Vivaldi and Paulo were delivered. A few mysterious words having been exchanged, one of the officials crossed the hall, and ascended a wide staircase, while the other, with the jailor and the guard, remained below, as if awaiting his return.

A long interval elapsed, during which the stillness of the place was sometimes interrupted by a closing door, and, at others, by indistinct founds, which yet appeared to Vivaldi like lamentations and extorted groans. Inquisitors, in their long black robes, issued, from time, to time from the passages, and crossed the hall to other avenues. They eyed the prisoners with curiosity, but without pity. Their visages, with few exceptions, seemed stamped with the characters of demons. Vivaldi could not look upon the grave cruelty, or the serocious impatience, their countenances severally expressed, without reading in them the fate of some fellow creature, the fate, which these men seemed going, even at this moment, to confirm; and, as they passed with soundless steps, he shrunk from observation, as if their very looks possessed some supernatural power, and could have struck death. But he followed their fleeting figures, as they proceeded on their work of horror, to where the last glimmering ray faded into darkness, expecting to see other doors of other chambers open to receive them. While meditating upon these horrors, Vivaldi lost every selfish consideration in astonishment and indignation of the sufferings, which the frenzied wickedness of man prepares for man, who, even at the moment of infliction, insults his victim with assertions of the justice and necessity of such procedure. "Is this possible!" said Vivaldi internally, "Can this be in human nature! — Can such horrible perversion of right be permitted! Can man, who calls himself endowed with reason, and immeasurably superior to every other created being, argue himself into the commission of such horrible folly, such inveterate cruelty, as exceeds all the acts of the most irrational and ferocious brute. Brutes do not deliberately slaughter their species; it remains for man only, man, proud of his prerogative of reason, and boasting of his sense of justice, to unite the most terrible extremes of folly and wickedness!"

Vivaldi had been no stranger to the existence of this tribunal; he had long understood the nature of the establishment, and had often received particular accounts of its customs and laws; but, though he had believed before, it was now only that conviction appeared to impress his understanding. A new view of human nature seemed to burst, at once, upon his mind, and he could not have experienced greater astonishment, if this had been the first moment, in which he had heard of the institution. But, when he thought of Ellena, considered that she was in the power of this tribunal, and that it was probable she was at this moment within the same dreadful walls, grief, indignation, and despair irritated him almost to frenzy. He seemed suddenly animated with supernatural strength, and ready to attempt impossibilities for her deliverance. It was by a strong effort for self command, that he forbore bursting the bonds, which held him, and making a desperate attempt to seek her through the vast extent of these prisons. Reflection, however, had not so entirely forsaken him, but that he saw the impossibility of succeeding in such an effort, the moment he had conceived it, and he forbore to rush upon the certain destruction, to which it must have led. His passions, thus restrained, seemed to become virtues, and to display themselves in the energy of his courage and his fortitude. His soul became stern and vigorous in despair, and his manner and countenance assumed a calm dignity, which seemed to awe, in some degree, even his guards. The pain of his wounds was no longer felt; it appeared as if the strength of his intellectual self had subdued the infirmities of the body, and, perhaps, in these moments of elevation, he could have endured the torture without shrinking.

Paulo, meanwhile, mute and grave, was watchful of all that passed; he observed the revolutions in his master's mind, with grief first, and then with surprize, but he could not imitate the noble fortitude, which now gave weight and steadiness to Vivaldi's

thoughts. And when he looked on the power and gloom around him, and on the visages of the passing Inquisitors, he began to repent, that he had so freely delivered his opinion of this tribunal, in the presence of its agents, and to perceive, that if he played up the kind of tune he had threatened, it would probably be the last he should ever be permitted to perform in this world.

At length, the chief officer descended the stair-case, and immediately bade Vivaldi follow him. Paulo was accompanying his master, but was withheld by the guard, and told he was to be disposed of in a different way. This was the moment of his severest trial; he declared he would not be separated from his master.

"What did I demand to be brought here for," he cried, "if it was not that I might go shares with the Signor in all his troubles? This is not a place to come to for pleasure, I warrant; and I can promise ye, gentlemen, I would not have come within an hundred miles of you, if it had not been for my master's sake."

The guards roughly interrupted him, and were carrying him away, when Vivaldi's commanding voice arrested them. He returned to speak a few words of consolation to his faithful servant, and, since they were to be separated, to take leave of him.

Paulo embraced his knees, and, while he wept, and his words were almost stifled by sobs, declared no force should drag him from his master, while he had life; and repeatedly appealed to the guards, with — "What did I demand to be brought here for? Did ever any body come here to seek pleasure? What right have you to prevent my going shares with my master in his troubles?"

"We do not intend to deny you that pleasure, friend," replied one of the guards!

"Don't you? Then heaven bless you!" cried Paulo, springing from his knees, and shaking the man by the hand with a violence, that would nearly have dislocated the shoulder of a person less robust.

"So come with us," added the guard, drawing him away from Vivaldi. Paulo now became outrageous, and, struggling with the guards, burst from them, and again fell at the feet of his master, who raised and embraced him, endeavouring to prevail with him to submit quietly to what was inevitable, and to encourage him with hope.

"I trust that our separation will be short," said Vivaldi, "and that we shall meet in happier circumstances. My innocence must soon appear."

"We shall never, never meet again, Signormio, in this world," said Paulo, sobbing violently, "so don't make me hope so.

That old Abbess knows what she is about too well to let us escape; or she would not have catched us up so cunningly as she did; so what signifies innocence! O! if my old lord, the Marchese, did but know where we are!"

Vivaldi interrupted him, and turning to the guards said, "I recommend my faithful servant to your compassion; he is innocent. It will some time, perhaps, be in my power to recompence you for any indulgence you may allow him, and I shall value it a thousand times more highly, than any you could shew to myself! Farewell, Paulo, — farewel! Officer, I am ready."

"O stay! Signor, for one moment — stay!" said Paulo.

"We can wait no longer," said the guard, and again drew Paulo away, who looking piteously after Vivaldi, alternately repeated, Farewel, dear maestro! farewel dear, dear maestro!" and "What did I demand to be brought here for? What did I demand to be brought here for? — what was it for, if not to go shares with my maestro?" till Vivaldi was beyond the reach of sight and of hearing.

Vivaldi, having followed the officer up the stair-case, passed through a gallery to an anti-chamber, where, being delivered into the custody of some persons in waiting, his conductor disappeared beyond a folding door, that led to an inner apartments. Over this door was an inscription in Hebrew characters, traced in blood-colour. Dante's inscription on the entrance of the infernal regions, would have been suitable to a place, where every circumstance and feature seemed to say, "Hope, that comes to all, comes not here!"

Vivaldi conjectured, that in this chamber they were preparing for him the instruments, which were to extort a confession; and though he knew little of the regular proceedings of this tribunal, he had always understood, that the torture was inflicted upon the accused person, till he made confession of the crime, of which he was suspected. By such a mode of proceeding, the innocent were certain of suffering longer than the guilty; for, as they had nothing to confess, the Inquisitor, mistaking innocence for obstinacy, persevered in his inflictions, and it frequently happened that he compelled the innocent to become criminal, and assert a falsehood, that they might be released from anguish, which they could no longer sustain. Vivaldi considered this circumstance undauntedly; every faculty of his soul was bent up to firmness and endurance. He believed that he understood the extent of the charge, which would be brought against him, a charge as false, as a specious confirmation of it, would be terrible in it's consequence both to Ellena and himself. Yet every art would be practised to bring him to an acknowledgment of having carried off a nun, and he knew also, that, since the prosecutor and the witnesses are never confronted with the prisoner in cases of severe accusation, and since their very names are concealed from him, it would be scarcely possible for him to prove his innocence. But he did not hesitate an instant whether to sacrifice himself for Ellena, determining rather to expire beneath the merciless inflictions of the Inquisitors, than to assert a falsehood, which must involve her in destruction.

The officer, at length, appeared, and, having beckoned Vivaldi to advance, uncovered his head, and bared his arms. He then led him forward through the folding door into the chamber; having done which, he immediately withdrew, and the door, which shut out Hope, closed after him.

Vivaldi found himself in a spacious apartment, where only two persons were visible, who were seated at a large table, that occupied the centre of the room. They were both habited in black; the one, who seemed by his piercing eye, and extraordinary physiognomy, to be an Inquisitor, wore on his head a kind of black turban, which heightened the natural ferocity of his visage; the other was uncovered, and his arms bared to the elbows. A book, with some instruments of singular appearance, lay before him. Round the table were several unoccupied chairs, on the backs of which appeared figurative signs, at the upper end of the apartment, a gigantic crucifix stretched nearly to the vaulted roof; and, at the lower end, suspended from an arch in the wall, was a dark curtain, but whether it veiled a window, or shrowded some object or person, necessary to the designs of the Inquisitor, there were little means of judging. It was, however, suspended from an arch such as sometimes contains a casement, or leads to a deep recess.

The Inquisitor called on Vivaldi to advance, and, when he had reached the table, put a book into his hands, and bade him swear to reveal the truth, and keep for ever secret whatever he might see or hear in the apartment.

Vivaldi hesitated to obey so unqualified a command. The Inquisitor reminded him, by a look, not to be mistaken, that he was absolute here; but Vivaldi still hesitated. "Shall I consent to my own condemnation?" said he to himself, "The malice of demons like these may convert the most innocent circumstances into matter of accusation, for my destruction, and I must answer whatever questions they choose to ask. And shall I swear, also, to conceal whatever I may witness in this chamber, when I know that the most diabolical cruelties are hourly practised here?"

The Inquisitor, in a voice which would have made a heart less fortified than was Vivaldi's tremble, again commanded him to swear; at the same time, he made a signal to the person, who sat at the opposite end of the table, and who appeared to be an inferior officer.

Vivaldi was still silent, but he began to consider that, unconscious as he was of crime, it was scarcely possible for his words to be tortured into a self-accusation; and that, whatever he might witness, no retribution would be prevented, no evil withheld by the oath, which bound him to secresy, since his most severe denunciation could avail nothing against the supreme power of this tribunal. As he did not perceive any good, which could arise from refusing the oath; and saw much immediate evil from resistance, he consented to receive it. Notwithstanding this, when he put the book to his lips, and uttered the tremendous vow prescribed to him, hesitation and reluctance returned upon his mind, and an icy coldness struck to his heart. He was so much affected, that circumstances, apparently the most trivial, had at this moment influence upon his imagination. As he accidentally threw his eyes upon the curtain, which he had observed before without emotion, and now thought it moved, he almost started in expectation of seeing some person, an Inquisitor perhaps, as terrific as the one before him, or an Accuser as malicious as Schedoni, steal from behind it.

The Inquisitor having administered the oath, and the attendant having noted it in his book, the examination began. After demanding, as is usual, the names and titles of Vivaldi and his family, and his place of residence, to which he fully replied, the Inquisitor asked, whether he understood the nature of the accusation on which he had been arrested.

"The order for my arrestation informed me." replied Vivaldi.

"Look to your words!" said the Inquisitor, "and remember your oath. What was the ground of accusation?"

"I understood;" said Vivaldi, "that I was accused of having stolen a nun from her sanctuary."

A faint degree of surprise appeared on the brow of the Inquisitor. "You confess it, then?" he said, after the pause of a moment, and making a signal to the Secretary, who immediately noted Vivaldi's words.

"I solemnly deny it," replied Vivaldi, "the accusation is false and malicious."

"Remember the oath you have taken!" repeated the Inquisitor, "learn also, that mercy is shewn to such as make full confession; but that the torture is applied to those, who have the folly and the obstinacy to withhold the truth."

"If you torture me till I acknowledge the justness of this accusation," said Vivaldi, "I must expire under your inflictions, for suffering never shall compel me to assert a falsehood. It is not the truth, which you seek; it is not the guilty, whom you punish; the innocent, having no crimes to confess, are the victims of your cruelty, or, to escape from it, become criminal, and proclam a lie."

"Recollect yourself," said the Inquisitor, sternly. "You are not brought hither to accuse, but to answer accusation. You say you are innocent; yet acknowledge yourself to be acquainted with the subject of the charge which is to be urged against you! How could you know this, but from the voice of conscience?"

"From the words of your own summons," replied Vivaldi, "and from those of your officials who arrested me."

"How!" exclaimed the Inquisitor, note that," pointing to the Secretary; he says by the words of our summons; now we know, that you never read that summons. He says also by the words of our officials; — it appears, then, he is ignorant, that death would follow such a breach of confidence."

"It is true, I never did read the summons," replied Vivaldi, "and as true, that I never asserted I did; the friar, who read it, told of what it accused me, and your officials confirmed the testimony."

"No more of this equivocation!" said the Inquisitor, "Speak only to the question."

"I will not suffer my assertions to be misrepresented," replied Vivaldi, "or my words to be perverted against myself. I have sworn to speak the truth only; since you believe I violate my oath, and doubt my direct and simple words, I will speak no more."

The Inquisitor half rose from his chair, and his countenance grew paler. "Audacious heretic!" he said, "will you dispute, insult, and disobey, the commands of our most holy tribunal! You will be taught the consequence of your desperate impiety. — To the torture with him!"

A stern smile was on the features of Vivaldi, his eyes were calmly fixed on the Inquisitor, and his attitude was undaunted and firm. His courage, and the cool contempt, which his looks expressed, seemed to touch his examiner, who perceived that he had not a common mind to operate upon. He abandoned, therefore, for the present, terrific measures, and, resuming his usual manner, proceeded in the examination.

“Where were you arrested?”

“At the chapel of San Sebastian, on the lake of Celano.”

“You are certain as to this?” asked the Inquisitor, “you are sure it was not at the village of Legano, on the high road between Celano and Rome?”

Vivaldi, while he confirmed his assertion, recollected with some surprize that Legano was the place where the guard had been changed, and he mentioned the circumstance. The Inquisitor, however, proceeded in his questions, without appearing to notice it. “Was any person arrested with you?”

“You cannot be ignorant,” replied Vivaldi, “that Signora di Rosalba, was seized at the same time, upon the false charge of being a nun, who had broken her vows, and eloped from her convent; nor that Paulo Mendrico, my faithful servant! was also made a prisoner, though upon what pretence he was arrested I am utterly ignorant.”

The Inquisitor remained for some moments in thoughtful silence, and then enquired slightly concerning the family of Ellena, and her usual place of residence. Vivaldi, fearful of making some assertion that might be prejudicial to her, referred him to herself; but the inquiry was repeated.

“She is now within these walls,” replied Vivaldi, hoping to learn from the manner of his examiner, whether his fears were just, “and can answer these questions better than myself.”

The Inquisitor merely bade the Notary write down her name, and then remained for a few moments meditating. At length, he said, “Do you know where you now are?”

Vivaldi, smiling at the question, replied, “I understand that I am in the prisons of the Inquisition, at Rome.”

“Do you know what are the crimes that subject persons to the cognizance of the Holy Office?”

Vivaldi was silent.

“Your conscience informs you, and your silence confirms me. Let me admonish you, once more, to make a full confession of your guilt; remember that this is a merciful tribunal, and shews favour to such as acknowledge their crimes?”

Vivaldi smiled; but the Inquisitor proceeded.

“It does not resemble some severe, yet just courts, where immediate execution follows the confession of a criminal. No! it is merciful, and though it punishes guilt, it never applies the torture but in cases of necessity, when the obstinate silence of the prisoner requires such a measure. You see, therefore, what you may avoid, and what expect.”

“But if the prisoner has nothing to confess?” said Vivaldi, — “Can your tortures make him guilty? They may force a weak mind to be guilty of falsehood; to escape present anguish, a man may unwarily condemn himself to the death! You will find that I am not such an one.”

“Young man,” replied the Inquisitor, “you will understand too soon, that we never act, but upon sure authority; and will wish, too late, that you had made an honest confession. Your silence cannot keep from us a knowledge of your offences; we are in possession of facts; and your obstinacy can neither wrest from us the truth, or pervert it. Your most secret offences are already written on the tablets of the Holy Office; your conscience cannot reflect them more justly. — Tremble, therefore, and revere. But understand, that, though we have sufficient proof of your guilt, we require you to confess; and that the punishment of obstinacy is as certain, as that of any other offence.”

Vivaldi made no reply, and the Inquisitor, after a momentary silence, added, “Was you ever in the church of the Spirito Santo, at Naples?”

“Before I answer the question,” said Vivaldi, “I require the name of my accuser.”

“You are to recollect that you have no right to demand any thing in this place,” observed the Inquisitor, “nor can you be ignorant that the name of the Informer is always kept sacred from the knowledge of the Accused. Who would venture to do his duty, if his name was arbitrarily to be exposed to the vengeance of the criminal against whom he informs? It is only in a particular process that the Accuser is brought forward,” “The names of the Witnesses?” demanded Vivaldi. The same justice conceals them also from the knowledge of the Accused, replied the Inquisitor.

“And is no justice left for the Accused?” said Vivaldi. “Is he to be tried and condemned without being confronted with either his Prosecutor, or the Witnesses!”

“Your questions are too many,” said the Inquisitor, and your answers too few. The Informer is not also the Prosecutor;

the Holy Office, before which the information is laid, is the Prosecutor, and the dispenser of justice; its Public Accuser lays the circumstances, and the testimonies of the Witnesses, before the Court. But too much of this.”

“How!” exclaimed Vivaldi, “is the tribunal at once the Prosecutor, Witness, and Judge! What can private malice wish for more, than such a court of justice, at which to arraign it’s enemy? The stiletto of the Assassin is not so sure, or so fatal to innocence. I now perceive, that it avails me nothing to be guiltless; a single enemy is sufficient to accomplish my destruction.”

“You have an enemy then?” observed the Inquisitor.

Vivaldi was too well convinced that he had one, but there was not sufficient proof, as to the person of this enemy, to justify him in asserting that it was Schedoni. The circumstance of Ellena having been arrested, would have compelled him to suspect another person as being at least accessary to the designs of the Confessor, had not credulity started in horror from the supposition, that a mother’s resentment could possibly betray her son into the prisons of the Inquisition, though this mother had exhibited a temper of remorseless cruelty towards a stranger, who had interrupted her views for that son.

“You have an enemy then?” repeated the Inquisitor.

“That I am here sufficiently proves it,” replied Vivaldi. “But I am so little any man’s enemy, that I know not who to call mine.”

“It is evident, then, that you have no enemy,” observed the subtle Inquisitor, “and that this accusation is brought against you by a respecter of truth, and a faithful servant of the Roman interest.”

Vivaldi was shocked to perceive the insidious art, by which he had been betrayed into a declaration apparently so harmless, and the cruel dexterity with which it had been turned against him. A lofty and contemptuous silence was all that he opposed to the treachery of his examiner, on whose countenance appeared a smile of triumph and self-congratulation, the life of a fellow creature being, in his estimation, of no comparative importance with the self-applauses of successful art, the art, too, upon which he most valued himself — that of his profession.

The Inquisitor proceeded, “You persist, then, in withholding the truth?” He paused, but Vivaldi making no reply, he resumed.

“Since it is evident, from your own declaration, that you have no enemy, whom private resentment might have instigated to accuse you; and, from other circumstances which have occurred in your conduct, that you are conscious of more than you have confessed, — it appears, that the accusation which has been urged against you, is not a malicious slander. I exhort you, therefore, and once more conjure you, by our holy faith, to make an ingenuous confession of your offences, and to save yourself from the means, which must of necessity be enforced to obtain a confession before your trial commences. I adjure you, also, to consider, that by such open conduct only, can mercy be won to soften the justice of this most righteous tribunal!”

Vivaldi, perceiving that it was now necessary for him to reply, once more solemnly asserted his innocence of the crime alledged against him in the summons, and of the consciousness of any act, which might lawfully subject him to the notice of the Holy Office.

The Inquisitor again demanded what was the crime alledged, and, Vivaldi having repeated the accusation, he again bade the Secretary note it, as he did which, Vivaldi thought he perceived upon his features something of a malignant satisfaction, for which he knew not how to account. When the Secretary had finished, Vivaldi was ordered to subscribe his name and quality to the depositions, and he obeyed.

The Inquisitor then bade him consider of the admonition he had received, and prepare either to confess on the morrow, or to undergo the question. As he concluded, he gave a signal, and the officer, who had conducted Vivaldi into the chamber, immediately appeared.

“You know your orders,” said the Inquisitor, “receive your prisoner, and see that they are obeyed.”

The official bowed, and Vivaldi followed him from the apartment in melancholy silence.

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Chapter 18

> Call up the Spirit of the ocean, bid
> Him raise the storm! The waves begin to heave,
> To curl, to foam; the white surges run far
> Upon the dark'ning waters, and mighty
> Sounds of strise are heard. Wrapt in the midnight
> Of the clouds, sits Terror, meditating
> Woe. Her doubtful form appears and sades,
> Like the shadow of Death, when he mingles
> With the gloom of the sepulchre, and broods
> In lonely silence. Her spirits are abroad!
> They do her bidding! Hark, to that shriek!
> The echoes of the shore have heard!

Ellena, meanwhile, when she had been carried from the chapel of San Sebastian, was placed upon a horse in waiting, and, guarded by the two men who had seized her, commenced a journey, which continued with little interruption during two nights and days. She had no means of judging whither she was going, and listened in vain expectation, for the feet of horses, and the voice of Vivaldi, who, she had been told, was following on the same road.

The steps of travellers seldom broke upon the silence of these regions, and, during the journey, she was met only by some market-people passing to a neighbouring town, or now and then by the vine-dressers or labourers in the olive grounds; and she descended upon the vast plains of Apulia, still ignorant of her situation. An encampment, not of warriors, but of shepherds, who were leading their flocks to the mountains of Abruzzo, enlivened a small tract of these levels, which were shadowed on the north and east by the mountainous ridge of the Garganus, stretching from the Apennine far into the Adriatic.

The appearance of the shepherds was nearly as wild and savage as that of the men, who conducted Ellena; but their pastoral instruments of flageolets and tabors spoke of more civilized feelings, as they sounded sweetly over the desert. Her guards rested, and refreshed themselves with goats milk, barley cakes, and almonds, and the manners of these shepherds, like those she had formerly met with on the mountains, proved to be more hospitable than their air had indicated.

After Ellena had quitted this pastoral camp, no vestige of a human residence appeared for several leagues, except here and there the towers of a decayed fortress, perched upon the lofty acclivities she was approaching, and half concealed in the woods. The evening of the second day was drawing on, when her guards drew near the forest, which she had long observed in the distance, spreading over the many-rising steeps of the Garganus. They entered by a track, a road it could not be called, which led among oaks and gigantic chestnuts, apparently the growth of centuries, and so thickly interwoven, that their branches formed a canopy which seldom admitted the sky. The gloom which they threw around, and the thickets of cystus, juniper, and lenticus, which flourished beneath the shade, gave a character of fearful wildness to the scene.

Having reached an eminence, where the trees were more thinly scattered, Ellena perceived the forests spreading on all sides among hills and vallies, and descending towards the Adriatic, which bounded the distance in front. The coast, bending into a bay, was rocky and bold. Lofty pinnacles, wooded to their summits, rose over the shores, and cliffs of naked marble of such gigantic proportions, that they were awful even at a distance, obtruded themselves far into the waves, breasting their eternal fury. Beyond the margin of the coast, as far as the eye could reach, appeared pointed mountains, darkened with forests, rising ridge over ridge in many successions. Ellena, as she surveyed this wild scenery, felt as if she was going into eternal banishment from society. She was tranquil, but it was with the quietness of exhausted grief, not of resignation; and she looked back upon the past, and awaited the future, with a kind of out-breathed despair.

She had travelled for some miles through the forest, her guards only now and then uttering to each other a question, or an observation concerning the changes which had taken place in the bordering scenery, since they last passed it, when night began to close in upon them.

Ellena perceived her approach to the sea, only by the murmurs of its surge upon the rocky coast, till, having reached an eminence, which was, however, no more than the base of two woody mountains that towered closely over it, she saw dimly it's gray surface spreading in the bay below. She now ventured to ask how much further she was to go, and whether she was to be taken on board one of the little vessels, apparently fishing smacks, that she could just discern at anchor.

"You have not far to go now," replied one of the guards, surlily; "you will soon be at the end of your journey, and at rest.”

They descended to the shore, and presently came to a lonely dwelling, which stood so near the margin of the sea, as almost to be washed by the waves. No light appeared at any of the lattices; and, from the silence that reigned within, it seemed to be uninhabited. The guard had probably reason to know otherwise, for they halted at the door, and shouted with all their strength. No voice, however, answered to their call, and, while they persevered in efforts to rouse the inhabitants, Ellena anxiously examined the building, as exactly as the twilight would permit. It was of an ancient and peculiar structure, and, though scarcely important enough for a mansion, had evidently never been designed for the residence of peasants.

The walls, of unhewn marble, were high, and strengthened by bastions; and the edifice had turretted corners, which, with the porch in front, and the sloping roof, were falling fast into numerous symptoms of decay. The whole building, with it’s dark windows and soundless avenues, had an air strikingly forlon and solitary. A high wall surrounded the small court in which it stood, and probably had once served as a defence to the dwelling; but the gates, which should have closed against intruders, could no longer perform their office; one of the folds had dropped from it’s fastenings, and lay on the ground almost concealed in a deep bed of weeds, and the other creaked on its hinges to every blast, at each swing seeming ready to follow the fate of it’s companion.

The repeated calls of the guard, were, at length, answered by a rough voice from within; when the door of the porch was lazily unbarred, and opened by a man, whose visage was so misery-struck, that Ellena could not look upon it with indifference, though wrapt in misery of her own. The lamp he held threw a gleam athwart it, and shewed the gaunt ferocity of famine, to which the shadow of his hollow eyes added a terrific wildness. Ellena shrunk while she gazed. She had never before seen villainy and suffering so strongly pictured on the same face, and she observed him with a degree of thrilling curiosity, which for a moment excluded from her mind all consciousness of the evils to be apprehended from him.

It was evident that this house had not been built for his reception; and she conjectured, that he was the servant of some cruel agent of the Marchesa di Vivaldi.

From the porch, she followed into an old hall, ruinous, and destitute of any kind of furniture. It was not extensive but lofty, for it seemed to ascend to the roof of the edifice, and the chambers above opened around it into a corridor.

Some half-sullen salutations were exchanged between the guard and the stranger, whom they called Spalatro, as they passed into a chamber, where, it appeared that he had been sleeping on a mattress laid in a corner. All the other furniture of the place, were two or three broken chairs and a table. He eyed Ellena with a shrewd contracted brow, and then looked significantly at the guard, but was silent, till he desired them all to sit down, adding, that he would dress some fish for supper. Ellena discovered that this man was the master of the place; it appeared also that he was the only inhabitant; and, when the guard soon after informed her their journey concluded here, her worst apprehensions were confirmed. The efforts she made to sustain her spirits, were no longer successful. It seemed that she was brought hither by ruffians to a lonely house on the sea-shore, inhabited by a man, who had “villain” engraved in every line of his face, to be the victim of inexorable pride and an insatiable desire of revenge. After considering these circumstances, and the words, which had just told her, she was to go no further, conviction struck like lightning upon her heart; and, believing she was brought hither to be assassinated, horror chilled all her frame, and her senses forsook her.

On recovering, she found herself surrounded by the guard and the stranger, and she would have supplicated for their pity, but that she feared to exasperate them by betraying her suspicions. She complained of fatigue, and requested to be shewn to her room. The men looked upon one another, hesitated, and then asked her to partake of the fish that was preparing. But Ellena having declined the invitation with as good a grace as she could assume, they consented that she should withdraw. Spalatro, taking the lamp, lighted her across the hall, to the corridor above, where he opened the door of a chamber, in which he said she was to sleep.

“Where is my bed?” said the afflicted Ellena, fearfully as she looked round.

“It is there — on the floor,” replied Spalatro, pointing to a miserable mattress, over which hung the tattered curtains of what had once been a canopy. “If you want the lamp,” he added, “I will leave it, and come for it in a minute or two.”

“Will you not let me have a lamp for the night,” she said in a supplicating and timid voice.

“For the night!” said the man gruffly; “What! to set fire to the house.”

Ellena still entreated that he would allow her the comfort of a light.

“Ay, ay,” replied Spalatro, with a look she could not comprehend, “it would be a great comfort to you, truly! You do not know what you ask."

"What is it that you mean?" said Ellena, eagerly; "I conjure you, in the name of our holy church, to tell me!"

Spalatro stepped suddenly back, and looked upon her with surprise, but without speaking.

"Have mercy on me!" said Ellena, greatly alarmed by his manner; "I am friendless, and without help!"

"What do you fear," said the man, recovering himself; and then, without waiting her reply, added — "Is it such an unmerciful deed to take away a lamp?"

Ellena, who again feared to betray the extent of her suspicions, only replied, that it would be merciful to leave it, for that her spirits were low, and she required light to cheer them in a new abode.

"We do not stand upon such conceits here," replied Spalatro, "we have other matters to mind. Besides, it's the only lamp in the house, and the company below are in darkness while I am losing time here. I will leave it for two minutes, and no more." Ellena made a sign for him to put down the lamp; and, when he left the room, she heard the door barred upon her.

She employed these two minutes in examining the chamber, and the possibility it might afford of an escape. It was a large apartment, unfurnished and unswept of the cobweps of many years. The only door she discovered was the one, by which she had entered, and the only window a lattice, which was grated. Such preparation for preventing escape seemed to hint how much there might be to escape from.

Having examined the chamber, without finding a single circumstance to encourage hope, tried the strength of the bars, which she could not shake, and sought in vain for an inside fastening to her door, she placed the lamp beside it, and awaited the return of Spalatro. In a few moments he came, and offered her a cup of four wine with a slice of bread; which, being somewhat soothed by this attention, she did not think proper to reject.

Spalatro then quitted the room, and the door was again barred. Left once more alone, she tried to overcome apprehension by prayer; and after offering up her vespers with a fervent heart, she became more confiding and composed.

But it was impossible that she could so far forget the dangers of her situation, as to seek sleep, however wearied she might be, while the door of her room remained unsecured against the intrusion of the ruffians below; and, as she had no means of fastening it, she determined to watch during the whole night. Thus left to solitude and darkness, she seated herself upon the mattress to await the return of morning, and was soon lost in sad reflection; every minute occurrence of the past day, and of the conduct of her guards, moved in review before her judgment; and, combining these with the circumstances of her present situation, scarcely a doubt as to the fate designed for her remained. It seemed highly improbable, that the Marchesa di Vivaldi had sent her hither merely for imprisonment, since she might have confined her in a convent, with much less trouble; and still more so, when Ellena considered the character of the Marchesa, such as she had already experienced it. The appearance of this house, and of the man who inhabited it, with the circumstance of no woman being found residing here, each and all of these signified, that she was brought hither, not for long imprisonment, but for death. Her utmost efforts for fortitude or resignation could not overcome the cold tremblings, the sickness of heart, the faintness and universal horror, that assailed her. How often, with tears of mingled terror and grief, did she call upon Vivaldi — Vivaldi, alas! far distant — to save her; how often exclaim in agony, that she should never, never see him more!

She was spared, however, the horror of believing that he was an inhabitant of the Inquisition. Having detected the imposition, which had been practised towards herself, and that she was neither on the way to the Holy Office, nor conducted by persons belonging to it, she concluded, that the whole affair of Vivaldi's arrest, had been planned by the Marchesa, merely as a pretence for confining him, till she should be placed beyond the reach of his assistance. She hoped, therefore, that he had only been sent to some private residence belonging to his family, and that, when her fate was decided, he would be released, and she be the only victim. This was the sole consideration, that afforded any degree of assuagement to her sufferings.

The people below sat till a late hour. She listened often to their distant voices, as they were distinguishable in the pauses of the surge, that broke loud and hollow on the shore; and every time the creaking hinges of their room door moved, apprehended they were coming to her. At length, it appeared they had left the apartment, or had fallen asleep there, for a profound stilness reigned whenever the murmur of the waves sunk. Doubt did not long deceive her, for, while she yet listened, she distinguished footsteps ascending to the corridor. She heard them approach her chamber, and stop at the door; she heard, also, the low whisperings of their voices, as they seemed consulting on what was to be done, and she scarcely ventured to draw breath, while she intensely attended to them. Not a word, however, distinctly reached her, till, as one of them was departing, another called out in a half-whisper, “It is below on the table, in my girdle; make haste.” The man came back, and said something in a lower voice, to which the other replied, “she sleeps,” or Ellena was deceived by the hissing consonants of some other words. He then descended the stairs; and in a few minutes she perceived his comrade also pass away from the door; she listened to his retreating steps, till the roaring of the sea was alone heard in their stead.

Ellena’s terrors were relieved only for a moment. Considering the import of the words, it appeared that the man who had descended, was gone for the stiletto of the other, such an instrument being usually worn in the girdle, and from the assurance, “she sleeps,” he seemed to fear that his words had been overheard; and she listened again for their steps; but they came no more.

Happily for Ellena’s peace, she knew not that her chamber had a door, so contrived as to open without sound, by which assassins might enter unsuspectedly at any hour of the night. Believing that the inhabitants of this house had now retired to rest, her hopes and her spirits began to revive; but she was yet sleepless and watchful. She measured the chamber with unequal steps, often starting as the old boards shook and groaned where she passed; and often pausing to listen whether all was yet still in the corridor. The gleam, which a rising moon threw between the bars of her window, now began to shew many shadowy objects in the chamber, which she did not recollect to have observed while the lamp was there. More than once, she fancied she saw something glide along towards the place where the mattress was laid, and, almost congealed with terror, she stood still to watch it; but the illusion, if such it was, disappeared where the moon-light faded, and even her fears could not give shape to it beyond. Had she not known that her chamber-door remained strongly barred, she would have believed this was an assassin stealing to the bed where it might be supposed she slept. Even now the thought occurred to her, and vague as it was, had power to strike an anguish, almost deadly, through her heart, while she considered that her immediate situation was nearly as perilous as the one she had imaged. Again she listened, and scarcely dared to breathe; but not the lightest sound occurred in the pauses of the waves, and she believed herself convinced that no person except herself was in the room. That she was deceived in this belief, appeared from her unwillingness to approach the mattress, while it was yet involved in shade. Unable to overcome her reluctance, she took her station at the window, till the strengthening rays should allow a clearer view of the chamber, and in some degree restore her confidence; and she watched the scene without as it gradually became visible. The moon, rising over the ocean, shewed it’s restless surface spreading to the wide horizon; and the waves, which broke in foam upon the rocky beach below, retiring in long white lines far upon the waters. She listened to their measured and solemn sound, and, somewhat soothed by the solitary grandeur of the view, remained at the lattice till the moon had risen high into the heavens; and even till morning began to dawn upon the sea, and purple the eastern clouds.

Re-assured, by the light that now pervaded her room, she returned to the mattress; where anxiety at length yielded to her weariness, and she obtained a short repose.

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Chapter 19

> And yet I fear you; for you are fatal then,
> When your eyes roll so.
> Alas! why gnaw you so your nether lip?
> Some bloody passion shakes your very frame:
> These are portents; but yet I hope, I hope,
> They do not point on me.”
> Shakspeare.

Ellena was awakened from profound sleep, by a loud noise at the door of her chamber; when, starting from her mattress, she looked around her with surprise and dismay, as imperfect recollections or the past began to gather on her mind. She distinguished the undrawing of iron bars, and then the countenance of Spalatro at her door, before she had a clear remembrance of her situation — that she was a prisoner in a house on a lonely shore, and that this man was her jailor. Such sickness of the heart returned with these convictions, such saintness and terror, that unable to support her trembling frame, she sunk again upon the mattress, without demanding the reason of this abrupt intrusion.

“I have brought you some breakfast,” said Spalatro, “if you are awake to take it; but you seem to be asleep yet. Surely you have had sleep sufficient for one night; you went to rest soon enough,”

Ellena made no reply, but, deeply affected with a sense of her situation, looked with beseeching eyes at the man, who advanced, holding forth an oaten cake and a bason of milk. “Where shall I set them?” said he, “you must needs be glad of them, since you had no supper.”

Ellena thanked him, and desired he would place them on the floor, for there was neither table nor chair in the room. As he did this, she was struck with the expression of his countenance, which exhibited a strange mixture of archness and malignity. He seemed congratulating himself upon his ingenuity, and anticipating some occasion of triumph; and she was so much interested, that her observation never quitted him while he remained in the room. As his eyes accidentally met her’s, he turned them away, with the abruptness of a person who is conscious of evil intentions, and fears lest they should be detected; nor once looked up till he hastily left the chamber, when she heard the door secured as formerly.

The impression, which his look had left on her mind, so wholly engaged her in conjecture, that a considerable time elapsed before she remembered that he had brought the refreshment she so much required; but, as she now listed it to her lips, a horrible suspicion arrested her hand; it was not, however, before she had swallowed a small quantity of the milk. The look of Spalatro, which occasioned her surprise, had accompanied the setting down of the breakfast, and it occurred to her, that poison was infused in this liquid. She was thus compelled to refuse the sustenance, which was become necessary to her, for she feared to taste even of the oaten cake, since Spalatro had offered it, but the little milk she had unwarily taken, was so very small that she had no apprehension concerning it.

The day, however, was passed in terror, and almost in despondency; she could neither doubt the purpose, for which she had been brought hither, nor discover any possibility of escaping from her persecutors; yet that propensity to hope, which buoys up the human heart, even in the severest hours of trial, sustained, in some degree, her fainting spirits.

During these miserable hours of solitude and suspense, the only alleviation to her suffering arose from a belief, that Vivaldi was safe, at least from danger, though not from grief; but she now understood too much of the dexterous contrivances of the Marchesa, his mother, to think it was practicable for him to escape from her designs, and again restore her to liberty.

All day Ellena either leaned against the bars of her window, lost in reverie, while her unconscious eyes were fixed upon the ocean, whose murmurs she no longer heard; or she listened for some sound from within the house, that might assist her conjectures, as to the number of persons below, or what might be passing there. The house, however, was profoundly still, except when now and then a footstep sauntered along a distant passage, or a door was heard to close; but not the hum of a single voice arose from the lower rooms, nor any symptom of there being more than one person, beside herself, in the dwelling. Though she had not heard her former guards depart, it appeared certain that they were gone, and that she was left alone in this place with Spalatro. What could be the purport of such a proceeding, Ellena could not imagine; if her death was designed, it seemed strange that one person only should be left to the hazard of the deed, when three must have rendered the completion of it certain. But this surprise vanished, when her suspicion of poison returned; for it was probable, that these men had believed their scheme to be already nearly accomplished, and had abandoned her to die alone, in a chamber from whence escape was impracticable, leaving Spalatro to dispose of her remains. All the incongruities she had separately observed in their conduct, seemed now to harmonize and unite in one plan; and her death, designed by poison, and that poison to be conveyed in the disguise of nourishment, appeared to have been the object of it. Whether it was that the strength of this conviction affected her fancy, or that the cause was real, Ellena, remembering at this moment that she had tasted the milk, was seized with an universal shuddering, and thought she felt that the poison had been sufficiently potent to affect her, even in the inconsiderable quantity she might have taken.

While she was thus agitated, she distinguished footsteps loitering near her door, and attentively listening, became convinced, that some person was in the corridor. The steps moved softly, sometimes stopping for an instant, as if to allow time for listening, and soon after passed away.

“It is Spalatro!” said Ellena; “he believes that I have taken the poison, and he comes to listen for my dying groans! Alas! he is only come somewhat too soon, perhaps!”

As this horrible supposition occurred, the shuddering returned with encreased violence, and she sunk, almost fainting, on the mattress; but the fit was not of long continuance. When it gradually left her, and recollection revived, she perceived, however, the prudence of suffering Spalatro to suppose she had taken the beverage he brought her, since such belief would at least procure some delay of further schemes, and every delay afforded some possibility for hope to rest upon. Ellena, therefore, poured through the bars of her window, the milk, which she believed Spalatro had designed should be fatal in its consequence.

It was evening, when she again fancied footsteps were lingering near her door, and the suspicion was confirmed, when, on turning her eyes, she perceived a shade on the floor, underneath it, as of some person stationed without. Presently the shadow glided away, and at the same time she distinguished departing steps treading cautiously.

“It is he!” said Ellena; “he still listens for my moans!”

This further confirmation of his designs affected her nearly as much as the first; when anxiously turning her looks towards the corridor, the shadow again appeared beneath the door, but she heard no step. Ellena now watched it with intense solicitude and expectation; fearing every instant that Spalatro would conclude her doubts by entering the room. “And O! when he discovers that I live,” thought she, “what may I not expect during the first moments of his disappointment! What less than immediate death!”

The shadow, after remaining a few minutes stationary, moved a little, and then glided away as before. But it quickly returned, and a low sound followed, as of some person endeavouring to unfasten bolts without noise. Ellena heard one bar gently undrawn, and then another; she observed the door begin to move, and then to give way, till it gradually unclosed, and the face of Spalatro presented itself from behind it. Without immediately entering, he threw a glance round the chamber, as if he wished to ascertain some circumstance before he ventured further. His look was more than usually haggard as it rested upon Ellena, who apparently reposed on her mattress.

Having gazed at her for an instant, he ventured towards the bed with quick and unequal steps; his countenance expressed at once impatience, alarm, and the consciousness of guilt. When he was within a few paces, Ellena raised herself, and he started back as if a sudden spectre had crossed him. The more than usual wildness and wanness of his looks, with the whole of his conduct, seemed to confirm all her former terrors; and, when he roughly asked her how she did, Ellena had not sufficient presence of mind to answer that she was ill. For some moments, he regarded her with an earnest and sullen attention, and then a sly glance of scrutiny, which he threw round the chamber, told her that he was enquiring whether she had taken the poison. On perceiving that the bason was empty, he lifted it from the floor, and Ellena fancied a gleam of satisfaction passed over his visage.

“You have had no dinner.” said he, “I forgot you; but supper will soon be ready; and you may walk up the beach till then, if you will.”

Ellena, extremely surprised and perplexed by this offer of a seeming indulgence, knew not whether to accept or reject it. She suspected that some treachery lurked within it. The invitation appeared to be only a stratagem to lure her to destruction, and she determined to decline accepting it; when again she considered, that to accomplish this, it was not necessary to withdraw her from the chamber, where she was already sufficiently in the power of her persecutors. Her situation could not be more desperate than it was at present, and almost any change might make it less so.

As she descended from the corridor, and passed through the lower part of the house, no person appeared but her conductor; and she ventured to enquire, whether the men who had brought her hither were departed. Spalatro did not return an answer, but led the way in silence to the court, and, having passed the gates, he pointed toward the west, and said she might walk that way.

Ellena bent her course towards the "many-sounding waves," followed at a short distance by Spalatro, and, wrapt in thought, pursued the windings of the shore, scarcely noticing the objects around her; till, on passing the foot of a rock, she lifted her eyes to the scene that unfolded beyond, and observed some huts scattered at a considerable distance, apparently the residence of fishermen. She could just distinguish the dark sails of some skiffs turning the cliffs, and entering the little bay, where the hamlet margined the beach; but, though she saw the sails lowered, as the boats approached the shore, they were too far off to allow the figures of the men to appear. To Ellena, who had believed that no human habitation, except her prison, interrupted the vast solitudes of these forests and shores, the view of the huts, remote as they were, imparted a feeble hope, and even somewhat of joy. She looked back, to observe whether Spalatro was near; he was already within a few paces; and, casting a wistful glance forward to the remote cottages, her heart sunk again.

It was a lowering evening, and the sea was dark and swelling; the screams of the sea-birds too, as they wheeled among the clouds, and sought their high nests in the rocks, seemed to indicate an approaching storm. Ellena was not so wholly engaged by selfish sufferings, but that she could sympathise with those of others, and she rejoiced that the fishermen, whose boats she had observed, had escaped the threatening tempest, and were safely sheltered in their little homes, where, as they heard the loud waves break along the coast, they could look with keener pleasure upon the social circle, and the warm comforts around them. From such considerations however, she returned again to a sense of her own forlorn and friendless situation.

"Alas!" said she, "I have no longer a home, a circle to smile welcomes upon me! I have no longer even one friend to support, to rescue me! I— a miserable wanderer on a distant shore! tracked, perhaps, by the footsteps of the assassin, who at this instant eyes his victim with silent watchfulness, and awaits the moment of opportunity to sacrifice her!"

Ellena shuddered as she said this, and turned again to observe whether Spalatro was near. He was not within view; and, while she wondered, and congratulated herself on a possibility of escaping, she perceived a Monk walking silently beneath the dark rocks that overbrowed the beach. His black garments were folded round him; his face was inclined towards the ground, and he had the air of a man in deep meditation.

"His, no doubt, are worthy musings!" said Ellena, as she observed him, with mingled hope and surprise. "I may address myself, without fear, to one of his order. It is probably as much his wish, as it is his duty, to succour the unfortunate. Who could have hoped to find on this sequestered shore so sacred a protector! his convent cannot be far off."

He approached, his face still bent towards the ground, and Ellena advanced slowly, and with trembling steps, to meet him. As he drew near, he viewed her askance, without lifting his head, but she perceived his large eyes looking from under the shade of his cowl, and the upper part of his peculiar countenances. Her confidence in his protection began to fail, and she faulted, unable to speak, and scarcely daring to meet his eyes. The Monk stalked past her in silence, the lower part of his visage still muffled in his drapery, and as he passed her looked neither with curiosity, nor surprise.

Ellena paused, and determined, when he should be at some distance, to endeavour to make her way to the hamlet, and throw herself upon the humanity of it's inhabitants, rather than solicit the pity of this forbidding stranger. But in the next moment she heard a step behind her, and, on turning, saw the Monk again approaching. He stalked by as before, surveying her, however, with a sly and scrutinizing glance from the corners of his eyes. His air and countenance were equally repulsive, and still Ellena could not summon courage enough to attempt engaging his compassion; but shrunk as from an enemy. There was something also terrific in the silent stalk of so gigantic a form; it announced both power and treachery. He passed slowly on to some distance, and disappeared among the rocks.

Ellena turned once more with an intention of hastening towards the distant hamlet, before Spalatro should observe her, whose strange absence she had scarcely time to wonder at; but she had not proceeded far, when suddenly she perceived the Monk again at her shoulder. She started, and almost shrieked; while he regarded her with more attention than before. He paused a moment, and seemed to hesitate; after which he again passed on in silence. The distress of Ellena encreased; he was gone the way she had designed to run, and she feared almost equally to follow him, and to return to her prison. Presently he turned, and passed her again, and Ellena hastened forward. But, when fearful of being pursued, she again looked back, she observed him conversing with Spalatro. They appeared to be in consultation, while they slowly advanced, till, probably observing her rapid progress, Spalatro called on her to stop, in a voice that echoed among all the rocks. It was a voice, which would not be disobeyed. She looked hopelessly at the still distant cottages, and slackened her stops. Presently the Monk again passed before her, and Spalatro had again disappeared. The frown, with which the former now regarded Ellena, was so terrific, that she shrunk trembling back, though she knew him not for her persecutor, since she had never consciously seen Schedoni. He was agitated, and his look became darker.

"Whither go you?" said he in a voice that was stifled by emotion.

"Who is it, father, that asks the question?" said Ellena, endeavouring to appear composed.

"Whither go you, and who are you?" repeated the Monk more sternly.

"I am an unhappy orphan," replied Ellena, sighing deeply, "If you are, as your habit denotes, a friend to the charities, you will regard me with compassion."

Schedoni was silent, and then said — "Who, and what is it that you fear?"

"I fear — even for my life," replied Ellena, with hesitation. She observed a darker shade pass over his countenance. "For your life!" said he, with apparent surprise, "who is there that would think it worth the taking."

Ellena was struck with these words.

"Poor insect!" added Schedoni, "who would crush thee?"

Ellena made no reply; she remained with her eyes fixed in amazement upon his face. There was something in his manner of pronouncing this, yet more extraordinary than in the words themselves. Alarmed by his manner, and awed by the encreasing gloom, and swelling surge, that broke in thunder on the beach, she at length turned away, and again walked towards the hamlet which was yet very remote.

He soon overtook her; when rudely seizing her arm, and gazing earnestly on her face, "Who is it, that you fear?" said he, "say who!"

"That is more than I dare say," replied Ellena, scarcely able to sustain herself.

"Hah! is it even so!" said the Monk; with encreasing emotion. His visage now became so terrible, that Ellena struggled to liberate her arm, and supplicated that he would not detain her. He was silent, and still gazed upon her, but his eyes, when she had ceased to struggle, assumed the fixt and vacant glare of a man, whose thoughts have retired within themselves, and who is no longer conscious to surrounding objects.

"I beseech you to release me!" repeated Ellena, "it is late, and I am far from home."

"That is true," muttered Schedoni, still grasping her arm, and seeming to reply to his own thoughts rather than to her words, — "that is very true."

"The evening is closing fast," continued Ellena, "and I shall be overtaken by the storm."

Schedoni still mused, and then muttered — "The storm, say you? Why ay, let it come."

As he spoke, he suffered her arm to drop, but still held it, and walked slowly towards the house. Ellena, thus compelled to accompany him, and yet more alarmed both by his looks, his incoherent answers, and his approach to her prison, renewed her supplications and her efforts for liberty, in a voice of piercing distress, adding, "I am far from home, father; night is coming on. See how the rocks darken! I am far from home, and shall be waited for."

"That is false!" said Schedoni, with emphasis; "and you know it to be so."

"Alas! I do," replied Ellena, with mingled shame and grief, "I have no friends to wait for me!"

"What do those deserve, who deliberately utter falsehoods," continued the Monk, "who deceive, and slatter young men to their destruction?"

"Father!" exclaimed the astonished Ellena.

"Who disturb the peace of families — who trepan, with wanton arts, the heirs of noble houses — who — hah! what do such deserve?"

Overcome with astonishment and terror, Ellena remained silent. She now understood that Schedoni, so far from being likely to prove a protector, was an agent of her worst, and as she had believed her only enemy; and an apprehension of the immediate and terrible vengeance, which such an agent seemed willing to accomplish, subdued her senses; she tottered, and sunk upon the beach. The weight, which strained the arm Schedoni held, called his attention to her situation.

As he gazed upon her helpless and faded form, he became agitated. He quitted it, and traversed the beach in short turns, and with hasty steps; came back again, and bent over it — his heart seemed sensible to some touch of pity. At one moment, he stepped towards the sea, and taking water in the hollows of his hands, threw it upon her face; at another, seeming to regret that he had done so, he would stamp with sudden fury upon the shore, and walk abruptly to a distance. The conflict between his design and his conscience was strong, or, perhaps, it was only between his passions. He, who had hitherto been insensible to every tender feeling, who, governed by ambition and resentment had contributed, by his artful instigations, to fix the baleful resolution of the Marchesa di Vivaldi, and who was come to execute her purpose, — even he could not now look upon the innocent, the wretched Ellena, without yielding to the momentary weakness, as he termed it, of compassion.

While he was yet unable to baffle the new emotion by evil passions, he despised that which conquered him. “And shall the weakness of a girl,” said he, “subdue the resolution of a man! Shall the view of her transient sufferings unnerve my firm heart, and compel me to renounce the lofty plans I have so ardently, so laboriously imagined, at the very instant when they are changing into realities! Am I awake! Is one spark of the fire, which has so long smouldered within my bosom, and consumed my peace, alive! Or am I tame and abject as my fortunes? hah! as my fortunes! Shall the spirit of my family yield for ever to circumstances? The question rouses it, and I feel it’s energy revive within me.”

He stalked with hasty steps towards Ellena, as if he feared to trust his resolution with a second pause. He had a dagger concealed beneath his Monk’s habit; as he had also an assassin’s heart shrouded by his garments. He had a dagger — but he hesitated to use it, the blood which it might spill, would be observed by the peasants of the neighbouring hamlet, and might lead to a discovery. It would be safer, he considered, and easier, to lay Ellena, senseless as she was, in the waves; their coldness would recal her to life, only at the moment before they would suffocate her.

As he stooped to lift her, his resolution faultered again, on beholding her innocent face, and in that moment she moved. He started back, as if she could have known his purpose, and, knowing it, could have avenged herself. The water, which he had thrown upon her face, had gradually revived her; she unclosed her eyes, and, on perceiving him, shrieked, and attempted to rise. His resolution was subdued, so tremblingly fearful is guilt in the moment when it would execute it’s atrocities. Overcome with apprehensions, yet agitated with shame and indignation against himself for being so, he gazed at her for an instant in silence, and then abruptly turned away his eyes and left her. Ellena listened to his departing steps, and, raising herself, observed him retiring among the rocks that led towards the house. Astonished at his conduct, and surprised to find that she was alone, Ellena renewed all her efforts to sustain herself, till she should reach the hamlet so long the object of her hopes; but she had proceeded only a few paces, when Spalatro again appeared swiftly approaching. Her utmost exertion availed her nothing; her feeble steps were soon overtaken, and Ellena perceived herself again his prisoner. The look with which she resigned herself, awakened no pity in Spalatro, who uttered some taunting jest upon the swiftness of her flight, as he led her back to her prison, and proceeded in sullen watchfulness. Once again, then, she entered the gloomy walls of that fatal mansion, never more, she now believed, to quit them with life, a belief, which was strengthened when she remembered that the Monk, on leaving her, had taken the way hither; for, though she knew not how to account for his late forbearance, she could not suppose that he would long be merciful. He appeared no more, however, as she passed to her chamber, where Spalatro left her again to solitude and terror, and she heard that fateful door again barred upon her. When his retreating steps had ceased to sound, a stilness, as of the grave, prevailed in the house; like the dead calm, which sometimes precedes the horrors of a tempest.

❦

Chapter 20

> "I am settled, and bend up
> Each corporal agent to this terrible seat."
> Shakspeare.

Schedoni had returned from the beach to the house, in a state of perturbation, that defied the controul of even his own stern will. On the way thither he met Spalatro, whom, as he dispatched him to Ellena, he strictly commanded not to approach his chamber till he should be summoned.

Having reached his apartment, he secured the door, though not any person, except himself, was in the house, nor any one expected, but those who he knew would not dare to intrude upon him. Had it been possible to have shut out all consciousness of himself, also, how willingly would he have done so! He threw himself into a chair, and remained for a considerable time motionless and lost in thought, yet the emotions of his mind were violent and contradictory. At the very instant when his heart reproached him with the crime he had meditated, he regretted the ambitious views he must relinquish if he failed to perpetrate it, and regarded himself with some degree of contempt for having hitherto hesitated on the subject. He considered the character of his own mind with astonishment, for circumstances had drawn forth traits, of which, till now, he had no suspicion. He knew not by what doctrine to explain the inconsistencies, the contradictions, he experienced, and, perhaps, it was not one of the least that in these moments of direful and conflicting passions, his reason could still look down upon their operations, and lead him to a cool, though brief examination of his own nature. But the subtlety of self-love still eluded his enquiries, and he did not detect that pride was even at this instant of self-examination, and of critical import, the master-spring of his mind. In the earliest dawn of his character this passion had displayed its predominancy, whenever occasion permitted, and it's influence had led to some of the chief events of his life.

The Count di Marinella, for such had formerly been the title of the Confessor, was the younger son of an ancient family, who resided in the duchy of Milan, and near the feet of the Tyrolean Alps, on such estates of their ancestors, as the Italian wars of a former century had left them. The portion, which he had received at the death of his father, was not large, and Schedoni was not of a disposition to improve his patrimony by slow diligence, or to submit to the restraint and humiliation, which his narrow finances would have imposed. He disdained to acknowledge an inferiority of fortune to those, with whom he considered himself equal in rank; and, as he was destitute of generous feeling, and of sound judgment, he had not that loftiness of soul, which is ambitious of true grandeur. On the contrary, he was satisfied with an ostentatious display of pleasures and of power, and, thoughtless of the consequence of dissipation, was contented with the pleasures of the moment, till his exhausted resources compelled him to pause, and to reflect. He perceived, too late for his advantage, that it was necessary for him to dispose of part of his estate, and to confine himself to the income of the remainder. Incapable of submitting with grace to the reduction, which his folly had rendered expedient, he endeavoured to obtain by cunning, the luxuries that his prudence had failed to keep, and which neither his genius or his integrity could command. He withdrew, however, from the eyes of his neighbours, unwilling to submit his altered circumstances to their observation.

Concerning several years of his life, from this period, nothing was generally known; and, when he was next discovered, it was in the Spirito Santo convent at Naples, in the habit of a Monk, and under the assumed name of Schedoni. His air and countenance were as much altered as his way of life; his looks had become gloomy and severe, and the pride, which had mingled with the gaiety of their former expression, occasionally discovered itself under the disguise of humility, but more frequently in the austerity of silence, and in the barbarity of penance.

The person who discovered Schedoni, would not have recollected him, had not his remarkable eyes first fixed his attention, and then revived remembrance. As he examined his features, he traced the faint resemblance of what Marinella had been, to whom he made himself known.

The Confessor affected to have forgotten his former acquaintance, and assured him, that he was mistaken respecting himself, till the stranger so closely urged some circumstances, that the former was no longer permitted to dissemble. He retired, in some emotion, with the stranger, and, whatever might be the subject of their conference, he drew from him, before he quited the convent, a tremendous vow, to keep secret from the brotherhood his knowledge of Schedoni's family, and never to reveal without those walls, that he had seen him. These requests he had urged in a manner, that at once surprised and awed the stranger, and which at the same time that it manifested the weight of Schedoni's fears, bade the former tremble for the consequence of disobedience; and he shuddered even while he promised to obey. Of the first part of the promise he was probably strictly observant; whether he was equally so of the second, does not appear; it is certain, that after this period, he was never more seen or heard of at Naples.

Schedoni, ever ambitious of distinction, adapted his manners to the views and prejudices of the society with whom he resided, and became one of the most exact observers of their outward forms, and almost a prodigy for self-denial and severe discipline. He was pointed out by the fathers of the convent to the juniors as a great example, who was, however, rather to be looked up to with reverential admiration, than with an hope of emulating his sublime virtues. But with such panegyrics their friendship for Schedoni concluded. They found it convenient to applaud the austerities, which they declined to practise; it procured them a character for sanctity, and saved them the necessity of earning it by mortifications of their own; but they both feared and hated Schedoni for his pride and his gloomy austerities, too much, to gratify his ambition by any thing further than empty praise. He had been several years in the society, without obtaining any considerable advancement, and with the mortification of seeing persons, who had never emulated his severity, raised to high offices in the church. Somewhat too late he discovered, that he was not to expect any substantial favour from the brotherhood, and then it was that his restless and disappointed spirit first sought preferment by other avenues. He had been some years Confessor to the Marchesa di Vivaldi, when the conduct of her son awakened his hopes, by showing him, that he might render himself not only useful but necessary to her, by his councils. It was his custom to study the characters of those around him, with a view of adapting them to his purposes, and, having ascertained that of the Marchesa, these hopes were encouraged. He perceived that her passions were strong, her judgment weak; and he understood, that, if circumstances should ever enable him to be serviceable in promoting the end at which any one of those passions might aim, his fortune would be established.

At length, he so completely insinuated himself into her confidence, and became so necessary to her views, that he could demand his own terms, and this he had not failed to do, though with all the affected delicacy and finesse that his situation seemed to require. An office of high dignity in the church, which had long vainly excited his ambition, was promised him by the Marchesa, who had sufficient influence to obtain it; her condition was that of his preserving the honour of her family, as she delicately termed it, which she was careful to make him understand could be secured only by the death of Ellena. He acknowledged, with the Marchesa, that the death of this fascinating young woman was the only means of preserving that honour, since, if she lived, they had every evil to expect from the attachment and character of Vivaldi, who would discover and extricate her from any place of confinement, however obscure or difficult of access, to which she might be conveyed. How long and how arduously the Confessor had aimed to oblige the Marchesa, has already appeared. The last scene was now arrived, and he was on the eve of committing that atrocious act, which was to secure the pride of her house, and to satisfy at once his ambition and his desire of vengeance; when an emotion new and surprising to him, had arrested his arm, and compelled his resolution to falter. But this emotion was transient, it disappeared almost with the object that had awakened it; and now, in the silence and retirement of his chamber, he had leisure to recollect his thoughts, to review his schemes, to re-animate his resolution, and to wonder again at the pity, which had almost won him from his purpose. The ruling passion of his nature once more resumed it's authority, and he determined to earn the honour, which the Marchesa had in store for him.

After some cool, and more of tumultuous, consideration, he resolved that Ellena should be assassinated that night, while she slept, and afterwards conveyed through a passage of the house communicating with the sea, into which the body might be thrown and buried, with her sad story, beneath the waves. For his own sake, he would have avoided the danger of shedding blood, had this appeared easy; but he had too much reason to know she had suspicions of poison, to trust to a second attempt by such means; and again his indignation rose against himself, since by yielding to a momentary compassion, he had lost the opportunity afforded him of throwing her unresistingly into the surge.

Spalatro, as has already been hinted, was a former confident of the Confessor, who knew too truly, from experience, that he could be trusted, and had, therefore, engaged him to assist on this occasion. To the hands of this man he cosigned the fate of the unhappy Ellena, himself recoiling from the horrible act he had willed; and intending by such a step to involve Spalatro more deeply in the guilt, and thus more effectually to secure his secret.

The night was far advanced before Schedoni's final resolution was taken, when he summoned Spalatro to his chamber to instruct him in his office. He bolted the door, by which the man had entered, forgetting that themselves were the only persons in the house, except the poor Ellena, who, unsuspicious of what was conspiring, and her spirits worn out by the late scene, was sleeping peacefully on her mattress above. Schedoni moved softly from the door he had secured, and, beckoning Spalatro to approach, spoke in a low voice, as if he feared to be overheard. “Have you perceived any sound from her chamber lately?” said he, “Does she sleep, think you?”

“No one has moved there for this hour past, at least,” replied Spalatro, “I have been watching in the corridor, till you called, and should have heard if she had stirred, the old floor shakes so with every step.”

“Then hear me, Spalatro,” said the Confessor. “I have tried, and found thee faithful, or I should not trust thee in a business of confidence like this. Recollect all I said to thee in the morning, and be resolute and dexterous, as I have ever found thee.”

Spalatro listened in gloomy attention, and the Monk proceeded, “It is late; go, therefore, to her chamber; be certain that she sleeps. Take this,” he added, “and this,” giving him a dagger and a large cloak — “You know how you are to use them.”

He paused, and fixed his penetrating eyes on Spalatro, who held up the dagger in silence, examined the blade, and continued to gaze upon it, with a vacant stare, as if he was unconscious of what he did.

“You know your business,” repeated Schedoni, authoritatively, “dispatch! time wears; and I must set off early.”

The man made no reply.

“The morning dawns already,” said the Confessor, still more urgently, “Do you faulter? do you tremble? Do I not know you?”

Spalatro put up the poinard in his bosom without speaking, threw the cloak over his arm, and moved with a loitering step towards the door.

“Dispatch!” repeated the Confessor, “why do you linger?”

“I cannot say I like this business, Signor,” said Spalatro surlily. “I know not why I should always do the most, and be paid the least.”

“Sordid villain!” exclaimed Schedoni, “you are not satisfied then!”

“No more a villain than yourself, Signor,” retorted the man, throwing down the cloak, “I only do your business; and ’tis you that are sordid, for you would take all the reward, and I would only have a poor man have his dues. Do the work yourself, or give me the greater profit.”

“Peace!” said Schedoni, “dare no more to insult me with the mention of reward. Do you imagine I have sold myself! ’Tis my will that she dies; this is sufficient; and for you — the price you have asked has been granted.”

“It is too little,” replied Spalatro, and besides, I do not like the work. — What harm has she done me?”

“Since when is it, that you have taken upon you to moralize?” said the Confessor, “and how long are these cowardly scruples to last? This is not the first time you have been employed; what harm

had others done you! You forget that I know you, you forget the past.”

“No, Signor, I remember it too well, I wish I could forget; I remember it too well. — I have never been at peace since. The bloody hand is always before me! and often of a night, when the sea roars, and storms shake the house, they have come, all gashed as I left them, and stood before my bed! I have got up and ran out upon the shore for safety!”

“Peace!” repeated the Confessor, “where is this frenzy of fear to end? To what are these visions, painted in blood, to lead? I thought I was talking with a man, but find I am speaking only to a baby, possessed with his nurse’s dreams! Yet I understand you, — you shall be satisfied.”

Schedoni, however, had for once misunderstood this man, when he could not believe it possible that he was really averse to execute what he had undertaken. Whether the innocence and beauty of Ellena had softened his heart, or that his conscience did torture him for his past deeds, he persisted in refusing to murder her. His conscience, or his pity, was of a very peculiar kind however; for, though he refused to execute the deed himself, he consented to wait at the foot of a back stair-case, that communicated with Ellena’s chamber, while Schedoni accomplished it, and afterward to assist in carrying the body to the shore. “This is a compromise between conscience and guilt, worthy of a demon,” muttered Schedoni, who appeared to be insensible that he had made the same compromise with himself not an hour before; and whose extreme reluctance at this moment, to perpetrate with his own hand, what he had willingly designed for another, ought to have reminded him of that compromise.

Spalatro, released from the immediate office of an executioner, endured silently the abusive, yet half-stifled, indignation of the Confessor, who also bade him remember, that, though he now shrunk from the most active part of this transaction, he had not always been restrained, in offices of the same nature, by equal compunction; and that not only his means of subsistence, but his very life itself, was at his mercy. Spalatro readily acknowledged that it was so; and Schedoni knew, too well, the truth of what he had urged, to be restrained from his purpose, by any apprehension of the consequence of a discovery from this ruffian.

“Give me the dagger, then,” said the Confessor, after a long pause, “take up the cloak, and follow to the stair-case. Let me see, whether your valour will carry you thus far.”

Spalatro resigned the stiletto, and threw the cloak again over his arm. The Confessor stepped to the door, and, trying to open it, “It is fastened!” said he in alarm, “some person has got into the house, — it is fastened!”

“That well may be, Signor,” replied Spalatro, calmly, “for I saw you bolt it yourself, after I came into the room.”

“True,” said Schedoni, recovering himself; “that is true.”

He opened it, and proceeded along the silent passages, towards the private stair-case, often pausing to listen, and then stepping more lightly; — the terrific Schedoni, in this moment of meditative guilt, feared even the feeble Ellena. At the foot of the stair-case, he again stopped to listen. “Do you hear any thing?” said he in a whisper.

“I hear only the sea,” replied the man.

“Hush! it is something more!” said Schedoni; “that is the murmur of voices!”

They were silent. After a pause of some length, “It is, perhaps, the voice of the spectres I told you of, Signor,” said Spalatro, with a sneer. “Give me the dagger,” said Schedoni.

Spalatro, instead of obeying, now grasped the arm of the Confessor, who, looking at him for an explanation of this extraordinary action, was still more surprised to observe the paleness and horror of his countenance. His starting eyes seemed to follow some object along the passage, and Schedoni, who began to partake of his feelings, looked forward to discover what occasioned this dismay, but could not perceive any thing that justified it. “What is it you fear?” said he at length.

Spalatro’s eyes were still moving in horror, “Do you see nothing!” said he pointing. Schedoni looked again, but did not distinguish any object in the remote gloom of the passage, whither Spalatro’s sight was now fixed.

“Come, come,” said he, ashamed of his own weakness, “this is not a moment for such fancies. Awake from this idle dream.”

Spalatro withdrew his eyes, but they retained all their wildness. “It was no dream,” said he, in the voice of a man who is exhausted by pain, and begins to breathe somewhat more freely again. “I saw it as plainly as I now see you.”

“Dotard! what did you see!” enquired the Confessor.

“It came before my eyes in a moment, and shewed itself distinctly and outspread.”

“What shewed itself?” repeated Schedoni.

“And then it beckoned — yes, it beckoned me, with that blood-stained finger! and glided away down the passage, still beckoning — till it was lost in the darkness.”

“This is very frenzy!” said Schedoni, excessively agitated. “Arouse yourself, and be a man!”

“Frenzy! would it were, Signor. I saw that dreadful hand — I see it now — it is there again! — there!”

Schedoni, shocked, embarrassed, and once more infected with the strange emotions of Spalatro, looked forward expecting to discover some terrific object, but still nothing was visible to him, and he soon recovered himself sufficiently to endeavour to appease the fancy of this conscience-struck ruffian. But Spalatro was insensible to all he could urge, and the Confessor, fearing that his voice, though weak and stifled, would awaken Ellena, tried to withdraw him from the spot, to the apartment they had quitted.

“The wealth of San Loretto should not make me go that way, Signor,” replied he, shuddering — “that was the way it beckoned, it vanished that way!”

Every emotion now yielded with Schedoni, to that of apprehension left Ellena, being awakened, should make his task more horrid by a struggle, and his embarrassment encreased at each instant, for neither command, menace, or entreaty could

prevail with Spalatro to retire, till the Monk luckily remembered a door, which opened beyond the stair-case, and would conduct them by another way to the opposite side of the house. The man consented so to depart, when, Schedoni unlocking a suit of rooms, of which he had always kept the keys, they passed in silence through an extent of desolate chambers, till they reached the one, which they had lately left.

Here, relieved from apprehension respecting Ellena, the Confessor expostulated more freely with Spalatro, but neither argument or menace could prevail, and the man persisted in refusing to return to the stair-case, though protesting, at the same time, that he would not remain alone in any part of the house; till the wine, with which the Confessor abundantly supplied him, began to overcome the terrors of his imagination. At length, his courage was so much re-animated, that he consented to resume his station, and await at the foot of the stairs the accomplishment of Schedoni's dreadful errand, with which agreement they returned thither by the way they had lately passed. The wine, with which Schedoni also had found it necessary to strengthen his own resolution, did not secure him from severe emotion, when he found himself again near Ellena; but he made a strenuous effort for self-subjection, as he demanded the dagger of Spalatro.

"You have it already, Signor," replied the man.

"True," said the Monk; "ascend softly, or our steps may awaken her."

"You said I was to wait at the foot of the stairs, Signor, while you" —

"True, true, true!" muttered the Confessor, and had begun to ascend, when his attendant desired him to stop. "You are going in darkness, Signor, you have forgotten the lamp. I have another here."

Schedoni took it angrily, without speaking, and was again ascending, when he hesitated, and once more paused. "The glare will disturb her," thought he, "it is better to go in darkness. — Yet — ". He considered, that he could not strike with certainty without light to direct his hand, and he kept the lamp, but returned once more to charge Spalatro not to stir from the foot of the stairs till he called, and to ascend to the chamber upon the first signal.

"I will obey, Signor, if you, on your part, will promise not to give the signal till all is over."

"I do promise," replied Schedoni. "No more!"

Again he ascended, nor stopped till he reached Ellena's door, where he listened for a sound; but all was as silent as if death already reigned in the chamber. This door was, from long disuse, difficult to be opened; formerly it would have

yielded without sound, but now Schedoni was fearful of noise from every effort he made to move it. After some difficulty, however, it gave way, and he perceived, by the stilness within the apartment, that he had not disturbed Ellena. He shaded the lamp with the door for a moment, while he threw an enquiring glance forward, and when he did venture farther, held part of his dark drapery before the light, to prevent the rays from spreading through the room.

As he approached the bed, her gentle breathings informed him that she still slept, and the next moment he was at her side. She lay in deep and peaceful slumber, and seemed to have thrown herself upon the mattress, after having been wearied by her griefs; for, though sleep pressed heavily on her eyes, their lids were yet wet with tears.

While Schedoni gazed for a moment upon her innocent countenance, a saint smile stole over it. He stepped back. "She smiles in her murderer's face!" said he, shuddering, "I must be speedy."

He searched for the dagger, and it was some time before his trembling hand could disengage it from the solds of his garment; but, having done so, he again drew near, and prepared to strike. Her dress perplexed him; it would interrupt the blow, and he stooped to examine whether he could turn her robe aside, without waking her. As the light passed over her face, he perceived that the smile had vanished — the visions of her sleep were changed, for tears stole from beneath her eye-lids, and her features suffered a slight convulsion. She spoke! Schedoni, apprehending that the light had disturbed her, suddenly drew back, and, again irresolute, shaded the lamp, and concealed himself behind the curtain, while he listened. But her words were inward and indistinct, and convinced him that she still slumbered.

His agitation and repugnance to strike encreased with every moment of delay, and, as often as he prepared to plunge the poinard in her bosom, a shuddering horror restrained him. Astonished at his own feelings, and indignant at what he termed a dastardly weakness, he found it necessary to argue with himself, and his rapid thoughts said, "Do I not feel the necessity of this act! Does not what is dearer to me than existence — does not my consequence depend on the execution of it? Is she not also beloved by the young Vivaldi? — have I already forgotten the church of the Spirito Santo?" This consideration re-animated him; vengeance nerved his arm, and drawing aside the lawn from her bosom, he once more raised it to strike; when, after gazing for an instant, some new cause of horror seemed to seize all his frame, aud he stood for some moments aghast and motionless like a statue. His respiration was short and laborious, chilly drops stood on his forehead, and all his faculties of mind seemed suspended. When he recovered, he stooped to examine again the miniature, which had occasioned this revolution, and which had lain concealed beneath the lawn that he withdrew. The terrible certainty was almost confirmed, and forgetting, in his impatience to know the truth, the imprudence of suddenly discovering himself to Ellena at this hour of the night, and with a dagger at his feet, he called loudly "Awake! awake! Say, what is your name? Speak! speak quickly!"

Ellena, aroused by a man's voice, started from her mattress, when, perceiving Schedoni, and by the pale glare of the lamp, his haggard countenance, she shrieked, and sunk back on the pillow. She had not fainted; and believing that he came to murder her, she now exerted herself to plead for mercy. The energy of her feelings enabled her to rise and throw herself at his feet, "Be merciful, O father! be merciful!" said she, in a trembling voice.

"Father!" interrupted Schedoni, with earnestness; and then, seeming to restrain himself, he added, with unaffected surprise, "Why are you thus terrified?" for he had lost, in new interests and emotions, all consciousness of evil intention, and of the singularity of his situation. "What do you fear?" he repeated.

"Have pity, holy father!" exclaimed Ellena in agony.

"Why do you not say whose portrait that is?" demanded he, forgetting that he had not asked the question before.

"Whose portrait?" repeated the Confessor in a loud voice.

"Whose portrait!" said Ellena, with extreme surprise.

"Ay, how came you by it? Be quick — whose resemblance is it?"

"Why should you wish to know?" said Ellena.

"Answer my question," repeated Schedoni, with encreasing sternness.

"I cannot part with it, holy father," replied Ellena, pressing it to her bosom, "you do not wish me to part with it!"

"Is it impossible to make you answer my question!" said he, in extreme perturbation, and turning away from her, "has fear utterly confounded you!" Then, again stepping towards her, and seizing her wrist, he repeated the demand in a tone of desperation.

"Alas! he is dead! or I should not now want a protector," replied Ellena, shrinking from his grasp, and weeping.

"You trifle," said Schedoni, with a terrible look, "I once more demand an answer — whose picture?" —

Ellena lifted it, gazed upon it for a moment, and then pressing it to her lips said, "This was my father."

"Your father!" he repeated in an inward voice, "your father!" and shuddering, turned away.

Ellena looked at him with surprise.

"I never knew a father's care," she said, "nor till lately did I perceive the want of it. — But now." —

"His name?" interrupted the Confessor.

"But now" continued Ellena — "if you are not as a father to me — to whom can I look for protection?"

"His name? "repeated Schedoni, with sterner emphasis.

"It is sacred," replied Ellena, "for he was unfortunate!"

"His name?" demanded the Confessor, furiously.

"I have promised to conceal it, father."

"On your life, I charge you tell it; remember, on your life!"

Ellena trembled, was silent, and with supplicating looks implored him to desist from enquiry, but he urged the question

more irresistibly. "His name then," said she, "was Marinella."

Schedoni groaned and turned away; but in a few seconds, struggling to command the agitation that shattered his whole frame, he returned to Ellena, and raised her from her knees, on which she had thrown herself to implore mercy.

"The place of his residence?" said the Monk.

"It was far from hence," she replied; but he demanded an unequivocal answer, and she reluctantly gave one.

Schedoni turned away as before, groaned heavily, and paced the chamber without speaking; while Ellena, in her turn, enquired the motive of his questions, and the occasion of his agitation. But he seemed not to notice any thing she said, and, wholly given up to his feelings, was inflexibly silent, while he stalked, with measured steps, along the room, and his face, half hid by his cowl, was bent towards the ground.

Ellena's terror began to yield to astonishment, and this emotion encreased, when, Schedoni approaching her, she perceived tears swell in his eyes, which were fixt on her's, and his countenance soften from the wild disorder that had marked it. Still he could not speak. At length he yielded to the fulness of his heart, and Schedoni, the stern Schedoni, wept and sighed! He seated himself on the mattress beside Ellena, took her hand, which she affrighted attempted to withdraw, and when he could command his voice, said, "Unhappy child! — behold your more unhappy father!" As he concluded, his voice was overcome by groans, and he drew the cowl entirely over his face.

"My father!" exclaimed the astonished and doubting Ellena — "my father!" and fixed her eyes upon him. He gave no reply, but when, a moment after, he lifted his head, "Why do you reproach me with those looks!" said the conscious Schedoni.

"Reproach you! — reproach my father!" repeated Ellena, in accents softening into tenderness, Why should I reproach my father!"

"Why!" exclaimed Schedoni, starting from his seat, "Great God!"

As he moved, he stumbled over the dagger at his foot; at that moment it might be said to strike into his heart. He pushed it hastily from sight. Ellena had not observed it; but she observed his labouring breast, his distracted looks, and quick steps, as he walked to and fro in the chamber; and she asked, with the most soothing accents of compassion, and looks of anxious gentleness, what made him so unhappy, and tried to assuage his sufferings. They seemed to encrease with every wish she expressed to dispel them; at one moment he would pause to gaze upon her and in the next would quit her with a frenzied start.

"Why do you look so piteously upon me, father?" Ellena said, "why are you so unhappy? Tell me, that I may comfort you."

This appeal renewed all the violence of remorse and grief, and he pressed her to his bosom, and wetted her cheek with his tears. Ellena wept to see him weep, till her doubts began to take alarm. Whatever might be the proofs, that had convinced Schedoni of the relationship between them, he had not explained these to her, and, however strong was the eloquence of nature which she witnessed, it was not sufficient to justify an entire confidence in the assertion he had made, or to allow her to permit his caresses without trembling. She shrunk, and endeavoured to disengage herself; when, immediately understanding her, he said, "Can you doubt the cause of these emotions? these signs of paternal affection?"

"Have I not reason to doubt," replied Ellena, timidly, "since I never witnessed them before?"

He withdrew his arms, and, fixing his eyes earnestly on hers, regarded her for some moments in expressive silence. "Poor Innocent!" said he, at length, "you know not how much your words convey! — It is too true, you never have known a father's tenderness till now!"

His countenance darkened while he spoke, and he rose again from his seat. Ellena, meanwhile, astonished, terrified and oppressed by a variety of emotions, had no power to demand his reasons for the belief that so much agitated him, or any explanation of his conduct; but she appealed to the portrait, and endeavoured, by tracing some resemblance between it and Schedoni, to decide her doubts. The countenance of each was as different in character as in years. The miniature displayed a young man rather handsome, of a gay and smiling countenance; yet the smile expressed triumph, rather than sweetness, and his whole air and features were distinguished by a consciousness of superiority that rose even to haughtiness.

Schedoni, on the contrary, advanced in years, exhibited a severe physiognomy, furrowed by thought, no less than by time, and darkened by the habitual indulgence of morose passions. He looked as if he had never smiled since the portrait was drawn; and it seemed as if the painter, prophetic of Schedoni's future disposition, had arrested and embodied that smile, to prove hereafter that cheerfulness had once played upon his features.

Though the expression was so different between the countenance, which Schedoni formerly owned, and that he now wore, the same character of haughty pride was visible in both; and Ellena did trace a resemblance in the bold outline of the features, but not sufficient to convince her, without farther evidence, that each belonged to the same person, and that the Confessor had ever been the young cavalier in the portrait. In the first tumult of her thoughts, she had not had leisure to dwell upon the singularity of Schedoni's visiting her at this deep hour of the night, or to urge any questions, except vague ones, concerning the truth of her relationship to him. But now, that her mind was somewhat recollected, and that his looks were less terrific, she ventured to ask a fuller explanation of these circumstances, and his reasons for the late extraordinary assertion. "It is past midnight, father," said Ellena, "you may judge then how anxious I am to learn, what motive led you to my chamber at this lonely hour?"

Schedoni made no reply.

"Did you come to warn me of danger?" she continued, "had you discovered the cruel designs of Spalatro? Ah! when I supplicated for your compassion on the shore this evening, you little thought what perils surrounded me! or you would — "

"You say true!" interrupted he, in a hurried manner, "but name the subject no more. Why will you persist in returning to it?"

His words surprized Ellena, who had not even alluded to the subject till now; but the returning wildness of his countenance, made her fearful of dwelling upon the topic, even so far as to point out his error.

Another deep pause succeeded, during which Schedoni continued to pace the room, sometimes stopping for an instant, to fix his eyes on Ellena, and regarding her with an earnestness that seemed to partake of frenzy, and then gloomily withdrawing his regards, and sighing heavily, as he turned away to a distant part of the room. She, meanwhile, agitated with astonishment at his conduct, as well as at her own circumstances, and with the fear of offending him by further questions, endeavoured to summon courage to solicit the explanation which was so important to her tranquillity. At length she asked, how she might venture to believe a circumstance so surprinsing, as that of which he had just assured her, and to remind him that he had not yet disclosed his reason for admitting the belief.

The Confessor's feelings were eloquent in reply; and, when at length they were sufficiently subdued, to permit him to talk coherently, he mentioned some circumstances concerning Ellena's family, that proved him at least to have been intimately acquainted with it; and others, which she believed were known only to Bianchi and herself, that removed every doubt of his identity.

This, however, was a period of his life too big with remorse, horror, and the first pangs of parental affection, to allow him to converse long; deep solitude was necessary for his soul. He wished to plunge where no eye might restrain his emotions, or observe the overflowing anguish of his heart. Having obtained sufficient proof to convince him that Ellena was indeed his child, and assured her that she should be removed from this house on the following day, and be restored to her home, he abruptly left the chamber.

As he descended the stair-case, Spalatro stepped forward to meet him, with the cloak which had been designed to wrap the mangled form of Ellena, when it should be carried to the shore. "Is it done?" said the ruffian, in a stifled voice, "I am ready;" and he spread forth the cloak, and began to ascend.

"Hold! villain, hold!" said Schedoni, lifting up his head for the first time, "Dare to enter that chamber, and your life shall answer for it."

"What!" exclaimed the man, shrinking back astonished — "will not her's satisfy you!"

He trembled for the consequence of what he had said, when he observed the changing countenance of the Confessor. But Schedoni spoke not: the tumult in his breast was too great for utterance, and he pressed hastily forward. Spalatro followed. "Be pleased to tell me what I am to do," said he, again holding forth the cloak.

"Avaunt!" exclaimed the other, turning fiercely upon him; "leave me."

"How!" said the man, whose spirit was now aroused, "has your courage failed too, Signor? If so, I will prove myself no dastard, though you called me one; I'll do the business myself."

"Villain! fiend!" cried Schedoni, seizing the ruffian by the throat, with a grasp that seemed intended to annihilate him; when, recollecting that the fellow was only willing to obey the very instructions he had himself but lately delivered to him, other emotions succeeded to that of rage; he slowly liberated him, and in accents broken, and softening from sternness, bade him retire to rest. "Tomorrow," he added, "I will speak further with you. As for this night — I have changed my purpose. Begone!"

Spalatro was about to express the indignation, which astonishment and fear had hitherto overcome, but his employer repeated his command in a voice of thunder, and closed the door of his apartment with violence, as he shut out a man, whose presence was become hateful to him. He felt relieved by his absence, and began to breathe more freely, till, remembering that this accomplice had just boasted that he was no dastard, he dreaded left, by way of proving the assertion, he should attempt to commit the crime, from which he had lately shrunk. Terrified at the possibility, and even apprehending that it might already have become a reality, he rushed from the room, and found Spalatro in the passage leading to the private stair-case; but, whatever might have been his purpose, the situation and looks of the latter were sufficiently alarming. At the approach of Schedoni, he turned his sullen and malignant countenance towards him, without answering the call, or the demand as to his business there; and with slow steps obeyed the order of his master, that he should withdraw to his room. Thither Schedoni followed, and, having locked him in it for the night, he repaired to the apartment of Ellena, which he secured from the possibility of intrusion. He then returned to his own, not to sleep, but to abandon himself to the agonies of remorse and horror; and he yet shuddered like a man, who has just recoiled from the brink of a precipice, but who still measures the gulf with his eye.

❦

CHAPTER 21

— But their way
Lies through the perplexed paths of this drear wood,
The nodding horror of whose shady brows
Threats the forlorn and wandering passenger.
Milton.

Ellena, when Schedoni had left her, recollected all the particulars, which he had thought proper to reveal concerning her family, and, comparing them with such circumstances as the late Bianchi had related on the same subject, she perceived nothing that was contradictory between the two accounts. But she knew not even yet enough of her own story, to understand why Bianchi had been silent as to some particulars, which had just been disclosed. From Bianchi she had always understood, that her mother had married a nobleman of the duchy of Milan, and of the house of Marinella; that the marriage had been unfortunate; and that she herself, even before the death of the Countess, had been committed to the care of Bianchi, the only sister of that lady. Of this event, or of her mother, Ellena had no remembrance; for the kindness of Bianchi had obliterated from her mind the loss and the griefs of her early infancy; and she recollected only the accident which had discovered to her, in Bianchi's cabinet, after the death of the latter, the miniature and the name of her father. When she had enquired the reason of this injunction, Bianchi replied, that the degraded fortune of her house rendered privacy desirable; and answered her further questions concerning her father, by relating, that he had died while she was an infant. The picture, which Ellena had discovered, Bianchi had found among the trinkets of the departed Countess, and designed to present it at some future period to Ellena, when her discretion might be trusted with a knowledge of her family. This was the whole of what Signora Bianchi had judged it necessary to explain, though in her last hours it appeared that she wished to reveal more; but it was then too late.

Though Ellena perceived that many circumstances of the relations given by Schedoni, and by Signora Bianchi, coincided, and that none were contradictory, except that of his death, she could not yet subdue her amazement at this discovery, or even the doubts which occasionally recurred to her as to it's truth. Schedoni, on the contrary, had not even appeared surprised, when she assured him, that she always understood her father had been dead many years; though when she asked if her mother too was living, both his distress and his assurances confirmed the relation made by Bianchi.

When Ellena's mind became more tranquil, she noticed again the singularity of Schedoni's visit to her apartment at so sacred an hour; and her thoughts glanced back involuntarily to the scene of the preceding evening on the sea-shore, and the image of her father appeared in each, in the terrific character of an agent of the Marchesa di Vivaldi. The suspicions, however, which she had formerly admitted, respecting his designs, were now impatiently rejected, for she was less anxious to discover truth, than to release herself from horrible suppositions; and she willingly believed that Schedoni, having misunderstood her character, had only designed to assist in removing her beyond the reach of Vivaldi. The ingenuity of hope suggested also, that, having just heard from her conductors, or from Spalatro, some circumstances of her story, he had been led to a suspicion of the relationship between them, and that in the first impatience of parental anxiety, he had disregarded the hour, and come, though at midnight, to her apartment to ascertain the truth.

While she soothed herself with this explanation of a circumstance, which had occasioned her considerable surprise, she perceived on the floor the point of a dagger peeping from beneath the curtains! Emotions almost too horrible to be sustained, followed this discovery; she took the instrument, and gazed upon it aghast and trembling, for a suspicion of the real motive of Schedoni's visit glanced upon her mind. But it was only for a moment; such a supposition was too terrible to be willingly endured; she again believed that Spalatro alone had meditated her destruction, and she thanked the Confessor her deliverer, instead of shrinking from him as an assassin. She now understood that Schedoni, having discovered the ruffian's design, had rushed into the chamber to save a stranger from his murderous poniard, and had unconsciously rescued his own daughter, when the portrait at her bosom informed him of the truth. With this conviction Ellena's eyes overflowed with gratitude, and her heart was hushed to peace.

Schedoni, meanwhile, shut up in his chamber, was agitated by feelings of a very opposite nature. When their first excess was exhausted, and his mind was calm enough to reflect, the images that appeared on it struck him with solemn wonder. In pursuing Ellena at the criminal instigation of the Marchesa di Vivaldi, it appeared that he had been persecuting his own child; and in thus consenting to conspire against the innocent, he had in the event been only punishing the guilty, and preparing mortification for himself on the exact subject to which he had sacrificed his conscience. Every step that he had taken with a view of gratifying his ambition was retrograde, and while he had been wickedly intent to serve the Marchesa and himself, by preventing the marriage of Vivaldi and Ellena, he had been laboriously counteracting his own fortune. An alliance with the illustrious house of Vivaldi, was above his loftiest hope of advancement, and this event he had himself nearly prevented by the very means which had been adoped, at the expence of every virtuous consideration, to obtain an inferior promotion. Thus by a singular retribution, his own crimes had recoiled upon himself.

Schedoni perceived the many obstacles, which lay between him and his newly awakened hopes, and that much was to be overcome before those nuptials could be publicly solemnized, which he was now still more anxious to promote, than he had lately been to prevent. The approbation of the Marchesa was, at least, desirable, for she had much at her disposal, and without it, though his daughter might be the wife of Vivaldi, he himself would be no otherwise benefited at present than by the honour of the connection. He had some peculiar reasons for believing, that her consent might be obtained, and, though there was hazard in delaying the nuptials till such an experiment had been made, he resolved to encounter it, rather than forbear to solicit her concurrence. But, if the Marchesa should prove inexorable, he determined to bestow the hand of Ellena, without her knowledge, and in doing so, he well knew that he incurred little danger from her resentment, since he had secrets in his possession, the consciousness of which must awe her into a speedy neutrality. The consent of the Marchese, as he despaired of obtaining it, he did not mean to solicit, and the influence of the Marchesa was such, that Schedoni did not regard that as essential.

The first steps, however, to be taken, were those that might release Vivaldi from the Inquisition, the tremendous prison into which Schedoni himself, little foreseeing that he should so soon wish for his liberation, had caused him to be thrown. He had always understood, indeed, that if the Informer forbore to appear against the Accused in this Court, the latter would of course be liberated; and he also believed, that Vivaldi’s freedom could be obtained whenever he should think proper to apply to a person at Naples, whom he knew to be connected with the Holy Office of Rome. How much the Confessor had suffered his wishes to deceive him, may appear hereafter. His motives for having thus confined Vivaldi, were partly those of self-defence. He dreaded the discovery and the vengeance, which might follow the loss of Ellena, should Vivaldi be at liberty immediately to pursue his enquiries. But he believed that all trace of her must be lost, after a few weeks had elapsed, and that Vivaldi’s sufferings from confinement in the Inquisition would have given interests to his mind, which must weaken the one he felt for Ellena. Yet, though in this instance self-defence had been a principal motive with Schedoni, a desire of revenging the insult he had received in the church of the Spirito Santo, and all the consequent mortifications he experienced, had been a second; and, such was the blackness of his hatred, and the avarice of his revenge, that he had not considered the suffering, which the loss of Ellena would occasion Vivaldi, as sufficient retaliation.

In adopting a mode of punishment so extraordinary as that of imprisonment in the Inquisition, it appears, therefore, that Schedoni was influenced, partly by the difficulty of otherwise confining Vivaldi, during the period for which confinement was absolutely necessary to the success of his own schemes, and partly by a desire of inflicting the tortures of terror. He had also been encouraged by his discovery of this opportunity for conferring new obligations on the Marchesa. The very conduct, that must have appeared to the first glance of an honest mind fatal to his interests, he thought might be rendered beneficial to them, and that his dexterity could so command the business, as that the Marchesa should eventually thank him as the deliverer of her son, instead of discovering and execrating him as his Accuser; a scheme favoured by the unjust and cruel rule enacted by the tribunal he approached, which permitted anonymous Informers.

To procure the arrestation of Vivaldi, it had been only necessary to send a written accusation, without a name, to the Holy Office, with a mention of the place where the accused person might be seized; but the suffering in consequence of this did not always proceed further than the question; since, if the Informer failed to discover himself to the Inquisitors, the prisoner, after many examinations, was released, unless he happened unwarily to criminate himself. Schedoni, as he did not intend to prosecute, believed, therefore, that Vivaldi would of course be discharged after a certain period, and supposing it also utterly impossible that he could ever discover his Accuser, the Confessor determined to appear anxious and active in effecting his release. This character of a deliverer, he knew he should be the better enabled to support by menas of a person officially connected with the Holy Office, who had already unconsciously assisted his views. In the apartment of this man, Schedoni had accidentally seen a formula of arrestation against a person suspected of Heresy, the view of which had not only suggested to him the plan he had since adopted, but had in some degree assisted him to carry it into effect. He had seen the scroll only for a short time, but his observations were so minute, and his memory so clear, that he was able to copy it with at least sufficient exactness to impose upon the Benedictine priest, who had, perhaps, seldom or never seen a real instrument of this kind. Schedoni had employed this artifice for the purpose of immediately securing Vivaldi, apprehending that, while the Inquisitors were slowly deliberating upon his arrest, he might quit Celano, and elude discovery. If the deception succeeded, it would enable him also to seize Ellena, and to mislead Vivaldi respecting her destination. The charge of having carried off a nun might appear to be corroborated by many circumstances, and Schedoni would probably have made these the subject of real denunciation, had he not foreseen the danger and the trouble in which it might implicate himself; and that, as the charge could not be substantiated, Ellena would finally escape. As far as his plan now went, it had been successful; some of the bravoes whom he hired to personate officials, had conveyed Vivaldi to the town, where the real officers of the Inquisition were appointed to receive him; while the others carried Ellena to the shore of the Adriatic. Schedoni had much applauded his own ingenuity, in thus contriving, by the matter of the forged accusation, to throw an impenetrable veil over the fate of Ellena, and to secure himself from the suspicions or vengeance of Vivaldi, who, it appeared, would always believe that she had died, or was still confined in the unsearchable prisons of the Inquisition.

Thus he had betrayed himself in endeavouring to betray Vivaldi, whose release, however, he yet supposed could be easily obtained; but how much his policy had, in this instance, outrun his sagacity, now remained to be proved.

The subject of Schedoni's immediate perplexity was, the difficulty of conveying Ellena back to Naples; since, not chusing to appear at present in the character of her father, he could not decorously accompany her thither himself, nor could he prudently entrust her to the conduct of any person, whom he knew in this neighbourhood. It was, however, necessary to form a speedy determination, for he could neither endure to pass another day in a scene, which must continually impress him with the horrors of the preceding night, nor that Ellena should remain in it; and the morning light already gleamed upon his casements.

After some further deliberation, he resolved to be himself her conductor, as far at least as through the forests of the Garganus, and at the first town where conveniencies could be procured, to throw aside his Monk's habit, and, assuming the dress of a layman, accompany her in this disguise towards Naples, till he should either discover some secure means of sending her dorward to that city, or a temporary asylum for her in a convent on the way.

His mind was scarcely more tranquil, after having formed this determination, than before, and he did not attempt to repose himself even for a moment. The circumstances of the late discovery were almost perpetually recurring to his affrighted conscience, accompanied by a fear that Ellena might suspect the real purpose of his midnight visit; and he alternately formed and rejected plausible falsehoods, that might assuage her curiosity, and delude her apprehension.

The hour arrived, however, when it was necessary to prepare for departure, and found him still undecided as to the explanation he should form.

Having released Spalatro from his chamber, and given him directions to procure horses and a guide immediately from the neighbouring hamlet, he repaired to Ellena's room, to prepare her for this hasty removal. On approaching it, a remembrance of the purpose, with which he had last passed through these same passages and stair-case, appealed so powerfully to his feelings, that he was unable to proceed, and he turned back to his own apartment to recover some command over himself. A few moments restored to him his usual address, though not his tranquillity, and he again approached the chamber; it was now, however, by way of the corridor. As he unbarred the door, his hand trembled; but, when he entered the room, his countenance and manner had resumed their usual solemnity, and his voice only would have betrayed, to an attentive observer, the agitation of his mind.

Ellena was considerably affected on seeing him again, and he examined with a jealous eye the emotions he witnessed. The smile with which she met him was tender, but he perceived it pass away from her features, like the aërial colouring that illumines a mountain's brow; and the gloom of doubt and apprehension again overspread them. As he advanced, he held forth his hand for her's, when, suddenly perceiving the dagger he had left in the chamber, he involuntarily withdrew his proffered courtesy, and his countenance changed. Ellena, whose eyes followed his to the object that attracted them, pointed to the instrument, took it up, and approaching him said, "This dagger I found last night in my chamber! O my father!" —

"That dagger!" said Schedoni, with affected surprize.

"Examine it," continued Ellena, while she held it up, "Do you know to whom it belongs? and who brought it hither?"

“What is it you mean?” asked Schedoni, betrayed by his feelings.

“Do you know, too, for what purpose it was brought?” said Ellena mournfully.

The Confessor made no reply, but irresolutely attempted to seize the instrument.

“O yes, I perceive you know too well,” continued Ellena, “here, my father, while I slept” —

“Give me the dagger,” interrupted Schedoni, in a frightful voice.

“Yes, my father, I will give it as an offering of my gratitude,” replied Ellena, but as she raised her eyes, filled with tears, his look and fixed attitude terrified her, and she added with a still more persuasive tenderness, “Will you not accept the offering of your child, for having preserved her from the poniard of an assassin?”

Schedoni’s looks became yet darker; he took the dagger in silence, and threw it with violence to the furthest end of the chamber, while his eyes remained fixed on her’s. The force of the action alarmed her; “Yes, it is in vain that you would conceal the truth,” she added, weeping unrestrainedly, “your goodness cannot avail; I know the whole.” —

The last words aroused Schedoni again from his trance, his features became convulsed, and his look furious. “What do you know?” he demanded in a subdued voice, that seemed ready to burst in thunder.

“All that I owe you,” replied Ellena, “that last night, while I slept upon this mattress, unsuspicious of what was designed against me, an assassin entered the chamber with that instrument in his hand, and — ”

A stifled groan from Schedoni checked Ellena; she observed his rolling eyes, and trembled; till, believing that his agitation was occasioned by indignation against the assassin, she resumed, “Why should you think it necessary to conceal the danger which has threatened me, since it is to you that I owe my deliverance from it? O! my father, do not deny me the pleasure of shedding these tears of gratitude, do not refuse the thanks, which are due to you! While I slept upon that couch, while a ruffian stole upon my slumber — it was you, yes! can I ever forget that it was my father, who saved me from his poniard!”

Schedoni’s passions were changed, but they were not less violent; he could scarcely controul them, while he said in a tremulous tone — “It is enough, say no more;” and he raised Ellena, but turned away without embracing her.

His strong emotion, as he paced in silence the furthest end of the apartment, excited her surprize, but she then attributed it to a remembrance of the perilous moment, from which he had rescued her.

Schedoni, meanwhile, to whom her thanks were daggers, was trying to subdue he feelings of remorse that tore his heart; and was so enveloped in a world of his own, as to be for some time unconscious of all around him. He continued to stalk in gloomy silence along the chamber, till the voice of Ellena, entreating him rather to rejoice that he had been permitted to save her, than so deeply to consider dangers which were past, again touched the chord that vibrated to his conscience, and recalled him to a sense of his situation. He then bade her prepare for immediate departure, and abruptly quitted the room.

Vainly hoping that in flying from the scene of his meditated crime, he should leave with it the acuteness of remembrance, and the agonizing stings of remorse, he was now more anxious than ever to leave this place. Yet he should still be accompanied by Ellena, and her innocent looks, her affectionate thanks, inflicted an anguish, which was scarcely endurable. Sometimes, thinking that her hatred, or what to him would be still severer, her contempt, must be more tolerable than this gratitude, he almost resolved to undeceive her respecting his conduct, but as constantly and impatiently repelled the thought with horror, and finally determined to suffer her to account for his late extraordinary visit in the way she had chosen.

Spalatro, at length, returned from the hamlet with horses, but without having procured a guide to conduct the travellers through a tract of the long-devolving forests of the Garganus, which it was necessary for them to pass. No person had been willing to undertake so arduous a task; and Spalatro, who was well acquainted with all the labyrinths of the way, now offered his services.

Schedoni, though he could scarcely endure the presence of this man, had no alternative but to accept him, since he had dismissed the guide who had conducted him hither. Of personal violence Schedoni had no apprehension, though he too well understood the villainy of his proposed companion; for he considered that he himself should be well armed, and he determined to ascertain that Spalatro was without weapons; he knew also, that in case of a contest, his own superior stature would easily enable him to overcome such an antagonist.

Every thing being now ready for departure, Ellena was summoned, and the Confessor led her to his own apartment, where a slight breakfast was prepared.

Her spirits being revived by the speed of this departure, she would again have expressed her thanks, but he peremptorily interrupted her, and sorbade any further mention of gratitude.

On entering the court where the horses were in waiting, and perceiving Spalatro, Ellena shrunk and put her arm within Schedoni's for protection. "What recollections does the presence of that man revive!" said she, "I can scarcely venture to believe myself safe, even with you, when he is here."

Schedoni made no reply, till the remark was repeated, "You have nothing to fear from him," muttered the Confessor, while he hastened her forward, "and we have no time to lose in vague apprehension."

"How!" exclaimed Ellena, "is not he the assassin from whom you saved me! I cannot doubt, that you know him to be such, though you would spare me the pain of believing so."

"Well, well, be it so," replied the Confessor; "Spalatro, lead the horses this way."

The party were soon mounted, when, quitting this eventful mansion, and the shore of the Adriatic, as Ellena hoped for ever, they entered upon the gloomy wilderness of the Garganus. She often turned her eyes back upon the house with emotions of inexpressible awe, astonishment, and thankfulness, and gazed while a glimpse of it's turretted walls could be caught beyond the dark branches, which, closing over it, at length shut it from her view. The joy of this departure, however, was considerably abated by the presence of Spalatro, and her fearful countenance enquired of Schedoni the meaning of his being suffered to accompany them. The Confessor was reluctant to speak concerning a man, of whose very existence he would willingly have ceased to think. Ellena guided her horse still closer to Schedoni's, but, forbearing to urge the enquiry otherwise than by looks, she received no reply, and endeavoured to quiet her apprehensions, by considering that he would not have permitted this man to be their guide, unless he had believed he might be trusted. This consideration, though it relieved her fears, encreased her perplexity respecting the late designs of Spalatro, and her surprise that Schedoni, if he had really understood them to be evil, should endure his presence. Every time she stole a glance at the dark countenance of this man, rendered still darker by the shade of the trees, she thought "assassin" was written in each line of it, and could scarcely doubt that he, and not the people who had conducted her to the mansion, had dropped the dagger in her chamber. Whenever she looked round through the deep glades, and on the forest-mountains that on every side closed the scene, and seemed to exclude all cheerful haunt of man, and then regarded her companions, her heart sunk; notwithstanding the reasons she had for believing herself in the protection of a father. Nay, the very looks of Schedoni himself, more than once reminding her of his appearance on the sea-shore, renewed the impressions of alarm and even of dismay, which she had there experienced. At such moments it was scarcely possible for her to consider him as her parent, and, in spite of every late appearance, strange and unaccountable doubts began to gather on her mind.

Schedoni, meanwhile, lost in thought, broke not, by a single word, the deep silence of the solitudes through which they passed. Spalatro was equally mute, and equally engaged by his reflections on the sudden change in Schedoni's purpose, and by wonder as to the motive, which could have induced him to lead Ellena in safety, from the very spot whither she was brought by his express command to be destroyed. He, however, was not so wholly occupied, as to be unmindful of his situation, or unwatchful of an opportunity of serving his own interests, and retaliating upon Schedoni for the treatment he had received on the preceding night.

Among the various subjects that distracted the Confessor, the difficulty of disposing of Ellena, without betraying at Naples that she was his relative, was not the least distressing. Whatever might be the reason which could justify such feelings, his fears of a premature discovery of the circumstance to the society with whom he lived, were so strong, as often to produce the most violent effect upon his countenance, and it was, perhaps, when he was occupied by this subject, that it's terrific expression revived with Ellena the late scene upon the shore. His embarrassment was not less, as to the excuse to be offered the Marchesa, for having failed to fulfil his engagement, and respecting the means by which he might interest her in favour of Ellena, and even dispose her to approve the marriage, before she should be informed of the family of this unfortunate young woman. Perceiving all the necessity for ascertaining the probabilities of such consent, before he ventured to make an avowal of her origin, he determined not to reveal himself till he should be perfectly sure that the discovery would be acceptable to the Marchesa. In the mean time, as it would be necessary to say something of Ellena's birth, he meant to declare, that he had discovered it to be noble, and her family worthy, in every respect, of a connection with that of the Vivaldi.

An interview with the Marchesa, was almost equally wished for and dreaded by the Confessor. He shuddered at the expectation of meeting a woman, who had instigated him to the murder of his own child, which, though he had been happily prevented from committing it, was an act that would still be wished for by the Marchesa. How could he endure her reproaches, when she should discover that he had failed to accomplish her will! How conceal the indignation of a father, and dissimulate all a father's various feelings, when, in reply to such reproaches, he must form excuses, and act humility, from which his whole soul would revolt! Never could his arts of dissimilation have been so severely tried, not even in the late scenes with Ellena, never have returned upon himself in punishment so severe, as in that which awaited him with the Marchesa. And from it's approach, the cool and politic Schedoni often shrunk in such horror, that he almost determined to avoid it at any hazard, and secretly to unite Vivaldi and Ellena, without even soliciting the consent of the Marchesa.

A desire, however, of the immediate preferment, so necessary to his pride, constantly checked this scheme, and finally made him willing to subject every honest feeling, and submit to any meanness, however vicious, rather than forego the favourite object of his erroneous ambition. Never, perhaps, was the paradoxical union of pride and abjectness, more strongly exhibited than on this occasion.

While thus the travellers silently proceeded, Ellena's thoughts often turned to Vivaldi, and she considered, with trembling anxiety, the effect which the late discovery was likely to have upon their future lives. It appeared to her, that Schedoni must approve of a connection thus flattering to the pride of a father, though he would probably refuse his consent to a private marriage. And, when she further considered the revolution, which a knowledge of her family might occasion towards herself in the minds of the Vivaldi, her prospects seemed to brighten, and her cares began to dissipate. Judging that Schedoni must be acquainted with the present situation of Vivaldi, she was continually on the point of mentioning him, but was as constantly restrained by timidity, though, had she suspected him to be an inhabitant of the Inquisition, her scruples would have vanished before an irresistible interest. As it was, believing that he, like herself, had been imposed upon by the Marchesa's agents, in the disguise of officials, she concluded, as has before appeared, that he now suffered a temporary imprisonment by order of his mother, at one of the family villas. When, however, Schedoni, awaking from his reverie, abruptly mentioned Vivaldi, her spirits fluttered with impatience to learn his exact situation, and she enquired respecting it.

"I am no stranger to your attachment," said Schedoni, evading the question, "but I wish to be informed of some circumstances relative to it's commencement."

Ellena, confused, and not knowing what to reply, was for a moment silent, and then repeated her enquiry.

"Where did you first meet?" said the Confessor, still disregarding her question. Ellena related, that she had first seen Vivaldi, when attending her aunt from the church of San Lorenzo. For the present she was spared the embarrassment of further explanation by Spalatro, who, riding up to Schedoni, informed him they were approaching the twon of Zanti. On looking forward, Ellena perceived houses peeping from among the forest-trees, at a short distance, and presently heard the cheerful bark of a dog, that sure herald and faithful servant of man!

Soon after the travellers entered Zanti, a small town surrounded by the forest, where, however, the poverty of the inhabitants seemed to forbid a longer stay than was absolutely necessary for repose, and a slight refreshment. Spalatro led the way to a cabin, in which the few persons, that journied this road were usually entertained. The appearance of the people, who owned it, was as wild as their country, and the interior of the dwelling was so dirty and comfortless, that Schedoni, preferring to take his repast in the open air, a table was spread under the luxuriant shade of the forest-trees, at a little distance. Here, when the host had withdrawn, and Spalatro had been dispatched to examine the post-horses, and to procure a lay-habit for the Confessor, the latter, once more alone with Ellena, began to experience again somewhat of the embarassments of conscience; and Ellena, whenever her eyes glanced upon him, suffered a solemnity of fear that rose almost to terror. He, at length, terminated this emphatic silence, by renewing his mention of Vivaldi, and his command that Ellena should relate the history of their affection. Not daring to refuse, she obeyed, but with as much brevity as possible, and Schedoni did not interrupt her by a single observation. However eligible their nuptials now appeared to him, he forbore to give any hint of approbation, till he should have extricated the object of her regards from his perilous situation. But, with Ellena, this very silence implied the opinion it was meant to conceal, and, encouraged by the hope it imparted, she ventured once more to ask, by whose order Vivaldi had been arrested; whither he had been conveyed, and the circumstances of his present situation.

Too politic to intrust her with a knowledge of his actual condition, the Confessor spared her the anguish of learning that he was a prisoner in the Inquisition. He affected ignorance of the late transaction at Celano, but ventured to believe, that both Vivaldi and herself had been arrested by order of the Marchesa, who, he conjectured, had thrown him into temporary confinement, a measure which she, no doubt, had meant to enforce also towards Ellena.

"And you, my father," observed Ellena, "what brought you to my prison, — you who was not informed with the Marchesa's designs? What accident conducted you to that remote solitude, just at the moment when you could save your child!"

"Informed of the Marchesa's designs!" said Schedoni, with embarrassment and displeasure: "Have you ever imagined that I could be accessary — that I could consent to assist, I mean could consent to be a confidant of such atrocious" — Schedoni, bewildered, confounded, and half betrayed, checked himself.

"Yet you have said, the Marchesa meant only to confine me,!" observed Ellena; "was that design so atrocious? Alas, my father! I know too well that her plan was more atrocious, and since you had too much reason to know this, why do you say that imprisonment only was intended for me? But your solicitude for my tranquillity leads you to" —

"What means," interrupted the suspicious Schedoni, "can I particularly have of understanding the Marchesa's schemes? I repeat, that I am not her confidant; how then is it to be supposed I should know that they extended further than to imprisonment?"

"Did you not save me from the arm of the assassin!" said Ellena tenderly; "did not you wrench the very dagger from his grasp!"

"I had forgotten, I had forgotten," said the Confessor, yet more embarrassed.

"Yes, good minds are ever thus apt to forget the benefits they confer," replied Ellena. "But you shall find, my father, that a grateful heart is equally tenacious to remember them; it is the indelible register of every act that is dismissed from the memory of the benefactor."

"Mention no more of benefits," said Schedoni, impatiently; "let silence on this subject henceforth indicate your with to oblige me."

He rose, and joined the host, who was at the door of his cabin. Schedoni wished to dismiss Spalatro as soon as possible, and he enquired for a guide to conduct him through that part of the forest, which remained to be traversed. In this poor town, a person willing to undertake that office was easily to be found, but the host went in quest of a neighbour whom he had recommended.

Meanwhile Spalatro returned, without having succeeded in his commission. Not any lay-habit could be procured, upon so short a notice, that suited Schedoni. He was obliged, therefore, to continue his journey to the next town at least, in his own dress, but the necessity was not very serious to him, since it was improbable that he should be known in this obscure region.

Presently the host appeared with his neighbour, when Schedoni, having received satisfactory answers to his questions, engaged him for the remainder of the forest-road, and dismissed Spalatro. The ruffian departed with sullen reluctance and evident ill-will, circumstances which the Confessor scarcely noticed, while occupied by the satisfaction of escaping from the presence of the atrocious partner of his conscience. But Ellena, as he passed her, observed the malignant disappointment of his look, and it served only to heighten the thankfulness his departure occasioned her.

It was afternoon before the travellers proceeded. Schedoni had calculated that they could easily reach the town, at which they designed to pass the night, before the close of evening, and he had been in no haste to depart during the heat of the day. Their track now lay through a country less savage, though scarcely less wild than that they had passed in the morning. It emerged from the interior towards the border of the forest; they were no longer enclosed by impending mountains; the withdrawing shades were no longer impenetrable to the eye, but now and then opened to gleams of sunshine-land-scape, and blue distances; and in the immediate scene, many a green glade spread it's bosom to the sun. The grandeur of the trees, however, did not decline; the plane, the oak, and the chestnut still threw a pomp of foliage round these smiling spots, and seemed to consecrate the mountain streams, that descended beneath their solemn shade.

To the harassed spirits of Ellena the changing scenery was refreshing, and she frequently yielded her cares to the influence of majestic nature. Over the gloom of Schedoni, no scenery had, at any moment, power; the shape and paint of external imagery gave neither impression or colour to his fancy. He contemned the sweet illusions, to which other spirits are liable, and which often confer a delight more exquisite, and not less innocent, than any, which deliberative reason can bestow.

The same thoughtful silence, that had wrapt him at the beginning of the journey, he still preserved, except when occasionally he asked a question of the guide concerning the way, and received answers too loquacious for his humour. This loquacity, however, was not easily repressed, and the peasant had already begun to relate some terrible stories of murder, committed in these forests upon people, who had been hardy enough to venture into them without a guide, before the again abstracted Schedoni even noticed that he spoke. Though Ellena did not give much credit to these narratives, they had some effect upon her fears, when soon after she entered the deep shades of a part of the forest, that lay along a narrow desile, whence every glimpse of cheerful landscape was again excluded by precipices, which towered on either side. The stilness was not less effectual than the gloom, for no sounds were heard, except such as seemed to characterize solitude, and impress it's awful power more deeply on the heart, — the hollow dashing of torrents descending distantly, and the deep sighings of the wind, as it passed among trees, which threw their broad arms over the cliffs, and crowned the highest summits. Onward, through the narrowing windings of the defile, no living object appeared; but, as Ellena looked fearfully back, she thought she distinguished a human figure advancing beneath the dusky umbrage that closed the view. She communicated her suspicion to Schedoni, though not her fears, and they stopped for a moment, to observe further. The object advanced slowly, and they perceived the stature of a man, who, having continued to approach, suddenly paused, and then glided away behind the foliage that crossed the perspective, but not before Ellena fancied she discriminated the figure of Spalatro, None but a purpose the most desperate, she believed, could have urged him to follow into this pass, instead of returning, as he had pretended, to his home. Yet it appeared improbable, that he alone should be willing to attack two armed persons, for both Schedoni and the guide had weapons of defence. This consideration afforded her only a momentary respite from apprehension, since it was possible that he might not be alone, though only one person had yet been seen among the shrouding branches of the woods. “Did you not think he resembled Spalatro?” said Ellena to the Confessor, “was he not of the same stature and air? You are well armed, or I should fear for you, as well as for myself.”

“I did not observe a resemblance,” replied Schedoni, throwing a glance back, “but whoever he is, you have nothing to apprehend from him, for he has disappeared.”

“Yes, Signor, so much the worse,” observed the guide, “so much the worse, if he means us any harm, for he can steal along the rocks behind these thickets, and strike out upon us before we are aware of him. Or, if he knows the path that runs among those old oaks yonder, on the left, where the ground rises, he has us sure at the turning of the next cliff.”

“Speak lower,” said Schedoni, “unless you mean that he should benefit by your instructions.”

Though the Confessor said this without any suspicion of evil intention from the guide, the man immediately began to justify himself, and added, “I’ll give him a hint of what he may expect, however, if he attacks us.” As he spoke, he fired his trombone in the air, when every rock reverberated the sound, and the faint and fainter thunder retired in murmurs through all the windings of the desile. The eagerness, with which the guide had justified himself, produced an effect upon Schedoni contrary to what he designed; and the Confessor, as he watched him suspiciously, observed, that after he had fired, he did not load his piece again. “Since you have given the enemy sufficient intimation where to find us,” said Schedoni, “you will do well to prepare for his reception; load again, friend. I have arms too, and they are ready.”

While the man sullenly obeyed, Ellena, again alarmed, looked back in search of the stranger, but not any person appeared beneath the gloom, and no footstep broke upon the stilness. When, however, she suddenly heard a rustling noise, she looked to the bordering thickets, almost expecting to see Spalatro break from among them, before she perceived that it was only the sounding pinions of birds, which, startled by the report of the trombone from their high nests in the cliffs, winged their way from danger.

The suspicions of the Confessor had, probably, been flight, for they were transient; and when Ellena next addressed him, he had again retired within himself. He was ruminating upon an excuse to be offered the Marchesa, which might be sufficient both to assuage her disappointment and baffle her curiosity, and he could not, at present, fabricate one that might soothe her resentment, without risk of betraying his secret.

Twilight had added its gloom to that of the rocks, before the travellers distinguished the town, at which they meant to pass the night. It terminated the defile, and its grey houses could scarcely be discerned from the precipice upon which they hung, or from the trees that embosomed them. A rapid stream rolled below, and over it a bridge conducted the wanderers to the little inn, at which they were to take up their abode. Here, quietly lodged, Ellena dismissed all present apprehension of Spalatro, but she still believed she had seen him, and her suspicions, as to the motive of his extraordinary journey, were not appeased.

As this was a town of ampler accommodation than the one they had left, Schedoni easily procured a lay-habit, that would disguise him for the remainder of the journey; and Ellena was permitted to lay aside the nun’s veil, for one of a more general fashion; but, in dismissing it, she did not forget that it had been the veil of Olivia, and she preserved it as a sacred relique of her favourite recluse.

The distance between this town and Naples was still that of several days journey, according to the usual mode of travelling; but the most dangerous part of the way was now overcome, the road having emerged from the forests; and when Schedoni, on the following morning, was departing, he would have discharged the guide, had not the host assured him, he would find one still necessary in the open, but wild, country through which he must pass. Schedoni’s distrust of this guide had never been very serious, and, as the result of the preceding evening proved favourable, he had restored him so entirely to his confidence, as willingly to engage him for the present day. In this confidence, however, Ellena did not perfectly coincide; she had observed the man while he loaded the trombone, on Schedoni’s order, and his evident reluctance had almost persuaded her, that he was in league with some person who designed to attack them; a conjecture, perhaps, the more readily admitted while her mind was suffering from the impression of having seen Spalatro. She now ventured to hint her distrust to the Confessor, who paid little attention to it, and reminded her, that sufficient proof of the man’s honesty had appeared, in their having been permitted to pass in safety, a defile so convenient for the purpose of rapine as that of yesterday. To a reply apparently so reasonable. Ellena could oppose nothing, had she even dared to press the topic; and she re-commenced the journey with gayer hopes.

❦

Chapter 22

> Mark where yon ruin frowns upon the steep,
> The giant-spectre of departed power!
> Within those shadowy walls and silent chambers
> Have stalked the crimes of days long past!

On this day, Schedoni was more communicative than on the preceding one. While they rode apart from the guide, he conversed with Ellena on various topics relative to herself, but without once alluding to Vivaldi; and even condescended to mention his design of disposing of her in a convent at some distance from Naples, till it should be convenient for him to acknowledge her for his daughter. But the difficulty of finding a suitable situation embarrassed him, and he was disconcerted by the aukwardness of introducing her himself to strangers, whose curiosity would be heightened by a sense of their interest.

These circumstances induced him the more easily to attend to the distress of Ellena, on her learning that she was again to be placed at a distance from her home, and among strangers; and the more willingly to listen to the account she gave of the convent of Santa Maria della Pieta, and to her request of returning thither. But in whatever degree he might be inclined to approve, he listened without consenting, and Ellena had only the consolation of perceiving that he was not absolutely determined to adopt his first plan.

Her thoughts were too deeply engaged upon her future prospects to permit leisure for present fears, or probably she would have suffered some return of those of yesterday, in traversing the lonely plains and rude vallies, through which the road lay. Schedoni was thankful to the landlord, who had advised him to keep the guide, the road being frequently obscured amongst the wild heaths that stretched around, and the eye often sweeping over long tracts of country, without perceiving a village, or any human dwelling. During the whole morning, they had not met one traveller, and they continued to proceed beneath the heat of noon, because Schedoni had been unable to discover even a cottage, in which shelter and repose might be obtained.

It was late in the day when the guide pointed out the grey walls of an edifice, which crowned the acclivity they were approaching. But this was so shrouded among woods, that no feature of it could be distinctly seen, and it did but slightly awaken their hopes of approaching a convent, which might receive them with hospitality.

The high banks overshadowed with thickets, between which the road ascended, soon excluded even a glimpse of the walls; but, as the travellers turned the next projection, they perceived a person on the summit of the road, crossing as if towards some place of residence, and concluded that the edifice they had seen was behind the trees, among which he had disappeared.

A few moments brought them to the spot, where, retired at a short distance among the woods that browed the hill, they discovered the extensive remains of what seemed to have been a villa, and which, from the air of desolation it exhibited, Schedoni would have judged to be wholly deserted, had he not already seen a person enter. Wearied and exhausted, he determined to ascertain whether any refreshment could be procured from the inhabitants within, and the party alighted before the portal of a deep and broad avenue of arched stone, which seemed to have been the grand approach to the villa. Over this majestic portal rose the light holes and tall heads of aloes; while the Indian-fig threw its broad leaves in many a luxuriant cluster among the capitals and rich ornaments below. The entrance was obstructed by fallen fragments of columns, and by the underwood that had taken root amongst them. The travellers, however, easily overcame these interruptions: but as the avenue was of considerable extent, and as its only light proceeded from the portal, except what a few narrow loops in the walls admitted, they soon found themselves involved in an obscurity that rendered the way difficult, and Schedoni endeavoured to make himself heard by the person he had seen. The effort was unsuccessful, but, as they proceeded a bend in the passage shewed a distant glimmering of light, which served to guide them to the opposite entrance, where an arch opened immediately into a court of the villa. Schedoni paused here in disappointment, for every object seemed to bear evidence of abandonment and desolation; and he looked, almost hopelessly, round the light colonnade which ran along three sides of the court, and to the trees that waved over the fourth, in search of the person, who had been seen from the road. No human figure stole upon the vacancy; yet the apt fears of Ellena almost imagined the form of Spalatro gliding behind the columns, and she started as the air shook over the wild plants that wreathed them, before she discovered that it was not the sound of steps. At the extravagance of her suspicions, however, and the weakness of her terrors, she blushed, and endeavoured to resist that propensity to fear, which nerves long pressed upon had occasioned in her mind.

Schedoni, meanwhile, stood in the court, like the evil spirit of the place, examining its desolation, and endeavouring to ascertain whether any person lurked in the interior of the building. Several doorways in the colonnade appeared to lead to chambers of the villa, and, after a short hesitation, Schedoni, having determined to pursue his inquiry, entered one of them, and passed through a marble hall to a suite of rooms, whose condition told how long it was since they had been inhabited. The roofs had entirely vanished, and even portions of the walls had fallen, and lay in masses amongst the woods without.

Perceiving that it was as useless as difficult to proceed, the confessor returned to the court, where the shade of the palmetos, at least, offered an hospitable shelter to the wearied travellers. They reposed themselves beneath the branches, on some fragments of a marble fountain, whence the court opened to the extensive landscape, now mellowed by the evening beams, and partook of the remains of a repast, which had been deposited in the wallet of the guide.

"This place appears to have suffered from an earthquake, rather than from time," said Schedoni, "for the walls, though shattered, do not seem to have decayed; and much that has been strong lies in ruin, while what is comparatively slight remains uninjured; these are certainly symptoms of partial shocks of the earth. Do you know any thing of the history of this place, friend?"

"Yes, Signor," replied the guide.

"Relate it, then.

"I shall never forget the earthquake that destroyed it Signor; for it was felt all through the Garganus. I was then about sixteen, and I remember it was near an hour before midnight that the great shock was felt. The weather had been almost stifling for several days, scarcely a breath of air had stirred, and slight tremblings of the ground were noticed by many people. I had been out all day, cutting wood in the forest with my father, and tired enough we were, when — "

"This is the history of yourself," said Schedoni, interrupting him, "Who did this place belong to?"

"Did any person suffer here?" said Ellena.

"The Baróne di Cambrusca lived here," replied the guide.

"Hah! the Baróne!" repeated Schedoni, and sunk into one of his customary fits of abstraction.

"He was a Signor little loved in the country," continued the guide, "and some people said it was a judgment upon him for — "

"Was it not rather a judgment upon the country," interrupted the Confessor, lifting up his head, and then sinking again into silence.

"I know not for that, Signor, but he had committed crimes enough to make one's hair stand on end. It was here that he — "

"Fools are always wondering at the actions of those above them," said Schedoni, testily; "Where is the Baróne now?"

"I cannot tell, Signor, but most likely where he deserves to be, for he has never been heard of since the night of the earthquake, and it is believed he was buried under the ruins."

"Did any other person suffer?" repeated Ellena.

"You shall hear, Signora," replied the peasant, "I happen to know something about the matter, because a cousin of our's lived in the family at the time, and my father has often told me all about it, as well as of the late lord's goings-on. It was near midnight when the great shock came, and the family, thinking of nothing at all, had supped, and been asleep some time. Now it happened, that the Baróne's chamber was in a tower of the old building, at which people often wondered, because, said they, why should he chuse to sleep in the old part when there are so many fine rooms in the new villa? but so it was."

"Come, dispatch your meal," said Schedoni, awaking from his deep musing, "the sun is setting, and we have yet far to go."

"I will finish the meal and the story together, Signor, with your leave," replied the guide. Schedoni did not notice what he said, and, as the man was not forbidden, he proceeded with his relation.

"Now it happened, that the Baróne's chamber was in that old tower, — if you will look this way, Signora, you may see what is left of it."

Ellena turned her attention to where the guide pointed, and perceived the shattered remains of a tower rising beyond the arch, through which she had entered the court.

“You see that corner of a windowcase, left in the highest part of the wall, Signora,” continued the guide, “just by that tuft of ash, that grows out of the stone.”

“I observe,” said Ellena.

“Well, that was one of the windows of the very chamber, Signora, and you see scarcely any thing else is left of it. Yes, there is the door-case, too, but the door itself is gone; that little staircase, which you see beyond it, led up to another story, which nobody now would guess had ever been; for roof, and flooring, and all are fallen. I wonder how that little staircase in the corner happened to hold so-fast!”

“Have you almost done?” inquired Schedoni, who had not apparently attended to any thing the man said, and now alluded to the refreshment he was taking.

“Yes, Signor, I have not a great deal more to tell, or to eat either, for that matter,” replied the guide; “but you shall bear. Well, yonder was the very chamber, Signora; at that door-case, which is still in the wall, the Baróne came in; ah! he little thought, I warrant, that he should never more go out at it! How long he had been in the room I do not know, nor whether he was asleep, or awake, for there is nobody that can tell; but when the great shock came, it split the old tower at once, before any other part of the buildings. You see that heap of ruins, yonder, on the ground, Signora, there lie the remains of the chamber; the Baróne, they say, was buried under them!”

Ellena shuddered while she gazed upon this destructive mass. A groan from Schedoni startled her, and she turned towards him, but, as he appeared shrouded in meditation, she again directed her attention to this awful memorial. As her eye passed upon the neighbouring arch, she was struck with the grandeur of its proportions, and with its singular appearance, now that the evening rays glanced upon the overhanging shrubs, and darted a line of partial light athwart the avenue beyond. But what was her emotion, when she perceived a person gliding away in the perspective of the avenue, and, as he crosled where the gleam fell, distinguished the figure and countenance of Spalatro! She had scarcely power faintly to exclaim, “Steps go there!” before he had disappeared; and, when Schedoni looked round, the vacuity and silence of solitude every where prevailed.

Ellena now did not scruple positively to affirm that she had seen Spalatro, and Schedoni, fully sensible that, if her imagination had not deluded her, the purpose of his thus tracing their route must be desperate, immediately rose, and, followed by the peasant, passed into the avenue to ascertain the truth, leaving Ellena alone in the court. He had scarcely disappeared before the danger of his adventuring into that obscure passage, where an assassin might strike unseen, forcibly occurred to Ellena, and she loudly conjured him to return. She listened for his voice, but heard only his retreating steps; when, too anxious to remain where she was, she hastened to the entrance of the avenue. But all was now hushed; neither voice, nor steps were distinguished. Awed by the gloom of the place, she feared to venture further, yet almost equally dreaded to remain alone in any part of the ruin, while a man so desperate as Spalatro was hovering about it.

As she yet listened at the entrance of the avenue, a faint cry, which seemed to issue from the interior of the villa, reached her. The first dreadful surmise that struck Ellena was, that they were murdering her father, who had probably been decoyed, by another passage, back into some chamber of the ruin; when, instantly forgetting every fear for herself, she hastened towards the spot whence she judged the sound to have issued. She entered the hall, which Schedoni had noticed, and passed on through a suite of apartments beyond. Every thing here, however, was silent, and the place apparently deserted. The suite terminated in a passage, that seemed to lead to a distant part of the villa, and Ellena, after a momentary hesitation, determined to follow it.

She made her way with difficulty between the half-demolished walls, and was obliged to attend so much to her steps, that she scarcely noticed whither she was going, till, the deepening shade of the place recalling her attention, she perceived herself among the ruins of the tower, whose history had been related by the guide; and, on looking up, observed she was at the foot of the staircase, which still wound up the wall, that had led to the chamber of the Baróne.

At a moment less anxious, the circumstance would have affected her; but now, she could only repeat her calls upon the name of Schedoni, and listen for some signal that he was near. Still receiving no answer, nor hearing any further sound of distress, she began to hope that her fears had deceived her, and having ascertained that the passage terminated here, she quitted the spot.

On regaining the first chamber, Ellena rested for a moment to recover breath; and, while she leaned upon what had once been a window, opening to the court, she heard a distant report of fire-arms. The sound swelled, and seemed to revolve along the avenue through which Schedoni had disappeared. — Supposing that the combatants were engaged at the farthest entrance, Ellena was preparing to go thither, when a sudden step moved near her, and, on turning, she discovered, with a degree of horror that almost deprived her of recollection, Spalatro himself stealing along the very chamber in which she was.

That part of the room which she stood in, fell into a kind of recess; and whether it was this circumstance that prevented him from immediately perceiving her, or that, his chief purpose being directed against another object, he did not chuse to pause here, he passed on with skulking steps; and, before Ellena had determined whither to go, she observed him cross the court before her, and enter the avenue. As he had passed, he looked up at the window: and it was certain he then saw her, for he instantly faultered, but in the next moment proceeded swiftly, and disappeared in the gloom.

It seemed that he had not yet encountered Schedoni, but it also occurred to Ellena, that he was gone into the avenue for the purpose of waiting to assassinate him in the darkness. While she was meditating some means of giving the Confessor a timely alarm of his danger, she once more distinguished his voice. It approached from the avenue, and Ellena immediately calling aloud that Spalatro was there, entreated him to be on his guard. In the next instant a pistol was fired there.

Among the voices that succeeded the report, Ellena thought she distinguished groans. Schedoni's voice was in the next moment heard again, but it seemed faint and low. The courage which she had before exerted was now exhausted; she remained fixed to the spot, unable to encounter the dreadful spectacle that probably awaited her in the avenue, and almost sinking beneath the expectation of it.

All was now hushed; she listened for Schedoni's voice, and even for a foot-step — in vain. To endure this state of uncertainty much longer was scarcely possible, and Ellena was endeavouring to collect fortitude to meet a knowledge of the worst, when suddenly a feeble groaning was again heard. It seemed near, and to be approaching still nearer. At that moment, Ellena, on looking towards the avenue, perceived a figure covered with blood, pass into the court. A film, which drew over her eyes, prevented her noticing farther. She tottered a few paces back, and caught at the fragment of a pillar, by which she supported herself. The weakness was transient; immediate assistance appeared necessary to the wounded person, and pity soon predominating over horror, she recalled her spirits, and hastened to the court.

When, on reaching it, she looked round in search of Schedoni, he was no where to be seen; the court was again solitary and silent, till she awakened all its echoes with the name of father. While she repeated her calls, she hastily examined the colonnade, the separated chamber which opened immediately from it, and the shadowy ground beneath the palmetos, but without discovering any person.

As she turned towards the avenue, however, a track of blood on the ground told her too certainly where the wounded person had passed. It guided her to the entrance of a narrow passage, that seemingly led to the foot of the tower; but here she hesitated, fearing to trust the obscurity beyond. For the first time, Ellena conjectured, that not Schedoni, but Spalatro might be the person she had seen, and that, though he was wounded, vengeance might give him strength to strike his stiletto at the heart of whomsoever approached him, while the duskiness of the place would fathe deed.

She was yet at the entrance of the passage, fearful to enter, and reluctant to leave it, listening for a sound, and still hearing at intervals, swelling though feeble groans; when quick steps were suddenly heard advancing up the grand avenue, and presently her own name was repeated loudly in the voice of Schedoni. His manner was hurried as he advanced to meet her, and he threw an eager glance round the court. "We must be gone," said he, in a low tone, and taking her arm within his. "Have you seen any one pass?"

"I have seen a wounded man enter the court," replied Ellena, "and feared he was yourself."

"Where? — Which way did he go!" inquired Schedoni, eagerly, while his eyes glowed, and his countenance became fell.

Ellena, instantly comprehending his motive for the question, would not acknowledge that she knew whither Spalatro had withdrawn; and, reminding him of the danger of their situation, she entreated that they might quit the villa immediately.

"The sun is already set," she added.

"I tremble at what may be the perils of this place at such an obscure hour, and even at what may be those of our road at a later!"

"You are sure he was wounded?" said the Confessor.

"Too sure," replied Ellena, faintly.

"Too sure!" sternly exclaimed Schedoni.

"Let us depart, my father; O let us go this instant!" repeated Ellena.

"What is the meaning of all this!" asked Schedoni, with anger. "You cannot, surely, have the weakness to pity this fellow!"

"It is terrible to see any one suffer," said Ellena. "Do not, by remaining here, leave me a possibility of grieving for you. What anguish it would occasion you, to see me bleed; judge, then, what must be mine, if you are wounded by the dagger of an assassin!"

Schedoni stifled the groan which swelled from his heart, and abruptly turned away.

"You trifle with me," he said, in the next moment: "you do not know that the villain is wounded. I fired at him, it is true, at the instant I saw him enter the avenue, but he has escaped me. What reason have you for your supposition?"

Ellena was going to point to the track of blood on the ground, at a little distance, but checked herself; considering that this might guide him on to Spalatro, and again she entreated they might depart, adding, "O! spare yourself, and him!"

"What! spare an assassin!" said Schedoni, impatiently.

"An assassin! He has, then, attempted your life?" exclaimed Ellena.

"Why no, not absolutely that," said Schedoni, recollecting himself, "but — what does the fellow do here? Let me pass, I will find him."

Ellena still hung upon his garment, while, with persuasive tenderness, she endeavoured to awaken his humanity. "O! if you had ever known what it was to expect instant death," she continued, "you would pity this man now, as he, perhaps, has sometimes pitied others! I have known such suffering, my father, and can, therefore, feel even for him!"

"Do you know for whom you are pleading?" said the distracted Schedoni, while every word she had uttered seemed to have penetrated his heart. The surprize which this question awakened in Ellena's countenance, recalled him to a consciousness of his imprudence; he recollected that Ellena did not certainly know the office, with which Spalatro had been commissioned against her: and when he considered that this very Spalatro, whom Ellena had with such simplicity supposed to have, at some time, spared a life through pity, had in truth spared her own, and, yet more, had been eventually a means of preventing him from destroying his own child, the Confessor turned in horror from his design; all his passions changed, and he abruptly quitted the court, nor paused till he reached the farthest extremity of the avenue, where the guide was in waiting with the horses.

A recollection of the conduct of Spalatro respecting Ellena had thus induced Schedoni to spare him; but this was all; it did not prevail with him to inquire into the condition of this man, or to mitigate his punishment; and, without remorse, he now left him to his fate.

With Ellena it was otherwise; though she was ignorant of the obligation she owed him, she could not know that any human being was left under such circumstances of suffering and solitude, without experiencing very painful emotion; but, considering how expeditiously Spalatro had been able to remove himself, she endeavoured to hope that his wound was not mortal.

The travellers, mounting their horses in silence, left the ruin, and were for some time too much engaged by the impression of the late occurrences, to converse together. When, at length, Ellena inquired the particulars of what had passed in the avenue, she understood that Schedoni, on pursuing Spalatro, had seen him there only for a moment. Spalatro had escaped by some way unknown to the Confessor, and had regained the interior of the ruin, while his pursuers were yet following the avenue. The cry, which Ellena had imagined to proceed from the interior, was uttered, as it now appeared, by the guide, who, in his haste, had fallen over some fragments of the wall that lay scattered in the avenue: the first report of arms had been from the trombone, which Schedoni had discharged on reaching the portal; and the last, when he fired a pistol, on perceiving Spalatro passing from the court.

"We have had trouble enough in running after this fellow," said the guide, "and could not catch him at last. It is strange that, if he came to look for us, he should run away so when he had found us! I do not think he meant us any harm, after all, else he might have done it easily enough in that dark passage; instead whereof he only took to his heels!"

“Silence!” said Schedoni, “fewer words, friend.”

“Well, Signor, he’s peppered now, however; so we need not be afraid; his wings are clipped for one while, so he cannot overtake us. We need not be in such a hurry, Signor, we shall get to the inn in good time yet. It is upon a mountain yonder, whose top you may see upon that red streak in the west. He cannot come after us; I myself saw his arm was wounded.”

“Did you so?” said Schedoni, sharply: “and pray where was you when you saw so much? It was more than I saw.”

“I was close at your heels, Signor, when you fired the pistol.”

“I do not remember to have heard you there,” observed the Confessor: “and why did you not come forward, instead of retreating? And where, also, did you hide yourself while I was searching for the fellow, instead of assisting me in the pursuit?”

The guide gave no answer, and Ellena, who had been attentively observing him during the whole of this conversation, perceived that he was now considerably embarrassed; so that her former suspicions as to his integrity began to revive, notwithstanding the several circumstances, which had occurred to render them improbable. There was, however, at present no opportunity for farther observation, Schedoni having, contrary to the advice of the guide, immediately quickened his pace, and the horses continuing on the full gallop, till a steep ascent compelled them to relax their speed.

Contrary to his usual habit, Schedoni now, while they slowly ascended, appeared desirous of conversing with this man, and asked him several questions relative to the villa they had left; and, whether it was that he really felt an interest on the subject, or that he wished to discover if the man had deceived him in the circumstances he had already narrated, from which he might form a judgment as to his general character, he pressed his inquiries with a patient minuteness, that somewhat surprized Ellena. During this conversation, the deep twilight would no longer permit her to notice the countenances of either Schedoni, or the guide, but she gave much attention to the changing tones of their voices, as different circumstances and emotions seemed to affect them. It is to be observed, that during the whole of this discourse, the guide rode at the side of Schedoni.

While the Confessor appeared to be musing upon something, which the peasant had related respecting the Baróne di Cambrusca, Ellena inquired as to the fate of the other inhabitants of the villa.

“The falling of the old tower was enough for them,” replied the guide; “the crash waked them all directly, and they had time to get out of the new buildings, before the second and third shocks laid them also in ruins. They ran out into the woods for safety, and found it too, for they happened to take a different road from the earthquake. Not a soul suffered, except the Baróne, and he deserved it well enough. O! I could tell such things that I have heard of him! — ”

“What became of the rest of the family?” interrupted Schedoni.

“Why, Signor, they were scattered here and there, and every where; and they none of them ever returned to the old spot. No! no! they had suffered enough there already, and might have suffered to this day, if the earthquake had not happened.”

“If it had not happened?” repeated Ellena.

“Aye, Signora, for that put an end to the Baróne. If those walls could but speak, they could tell strange things, for they have looked upon sad doings: and that chamber, which I shewed you, Signora, nobody ever went into it but himself, except the servant, to keep it in order, and that he would scarcely suffer, and always staid in the room the while.”

“He had probably treasure secreted there,” said Ellena.

“No, Signora, no treasure! He had always a lamp burning there; and sometimes in the night he has been heard — Once, indeed, his valet happened to — ”

“Come on,” said Schedoni, interrupting him; “keep pace with me. What idle dream are you relating now?”

“It is about the Baróne di Cambrusca, Signor, him that you was asking me so much about just now. I was saying what strange ways he had, and how that, on one stormy night in December, as my cousin Francisco told my father, who told me, and he lived in the family at the time it happened — ”

“What happened?” said Schedoni, hastily.

“What I am going to tell, Signor. My cousin lived there at the time; so, however unbelievable it may seem, you may depend upon it, it is all true. My father knows I would not believe it myself till — ”

“Enough of this,” said Schedoni; no more. What family had this Baróne

— had he a wife at the time of this destructive shock?”

“Yes, truly, Signor, he had, as I was going to tell, if you would but condescend to have patience.”

“The Baróne had more need of that, friend; I have no wife.” — “The Baróne’s wife had most need of it, Signor, as you shall hear. A good soul, they say, was the Baronessa! but luckily she died many years before. He had a daughter, also, and, young as she was, she had lived too long, but for the earthquake which set her free.”

“How far is it to the inn?” said the Confessor, roughly.

“When we get to the top of this hill, Signor, you will see it on the next, if any light is stirring, for there will only be the hollow between us. But do not be alarmed, Signor, the fellow we left cannot overtake us. Do you know much about him, Signor?”

Schedoni inquired whether the trombone was charged; and, discovering that it was not, ordered the man to load immediately.

“Why, Signor, if you knew as much of him as I do, you could not be more afraid!” said the peasant, while he stopped to obey the order.

“I understood that he was a stranger to you!” observed the Confessor, with surprize.

“Why, Signor, he is, and he is not; I know more about him than he thinks for.”

“You seem to know a vast deal too much of other persons affairs,” said Schedoni, in a tone that was meant to silence him.

“Why, that is just what he would say, Signor; but bad deeds will out, whether people like them to be known or not. This man comes to our town sometimes to market, and nobody knew where he came from for a long while; so they set themselves to work and found it out at last.”

“We shall never reach the summit of this hill,” said Schedoni, testily.

“And they found out, too, a great many strange things about him,” continued the guide.

Ellena, who had attended to this discourse with a degree of curiosity that was painful, now listened impatiently for what might be farther mentioned concerning Spalatro, but without daring to invite, by a single question, any discovery on a subject which appeared to be so intimately connected with Schedoni.

“It was many years ago,” rejoined the guide, “that this man came to live in that strange house on the sea-shore. It had been shut up ever since — ”

“What are you talking of now?” interrupted the Confessor.

“Why, Signor, you never will let me tell you. You always snap me up so short at the beginning, and then ask — what am I talking about! I was going to begin the story, and it is a pretty long one. But first of all, Signor, who do you suppose this man belonged to! And what do you think the people determined to do, when the report was first set a-going? only they could not be sure it was true, and any body would be unwilling enough to believe such a shocking — ”

“I have no curiosity on the subject,” replied the Confessor, sternly interrupting him; “and desire to hear no more concerning it.”

“I meant no harm, Signor,” said the man; “I did not know it concerned you.”

“And who says that it does concern me!”

“Nobody, Signor, only you seemed to be in a bit of a passion, and so I thought — But I meant no harm, Signor, only as he happened to be your guide part of the way, I guessed you might like to know something of him.”

“All that I desire to know of my guide is, that he does his duty,” replied Schedoni, “that he conducts me safely, and understands when to be silent.”

To this the man replied nothing, but slackened his pace, and slunk behind his reprover.

The travellers reaching, soon after, the summit of this long hill, looked out for the inn of which they had been told; but darkness now confounded every object, and no domestic light twinkling, however distantly, through the gloom, gave signal of security and comfort. They descended dejectedly into the hollow of the mountains, and found themselves once more immerged in woods. Schedoni again called the peasant to his side, and bade him keep abreast of him, but he did not discourse; and Ellena was too thoughtful to attempt conversation. The hints, which the guide had thrown out respecting Spalatro, had increased her curiosity on that subject; but the conduct of Schedoni, his impatience, his embarrassment, and the decisive manner in which he had put an end to the talk of the guide, excited a degree of surprize, that bordered on astonishment. As she had, however, no clue to lead her conjectures to any point, she was utterly bewildered in surmise, understanding only that Schedoni had been much more deeply connected with Spalatro than she had hitherto believed.

The travellers having descended into the hollow, and commenced the ascent of the opposite height, without discovering any symptom of a neighbouring town, began again to fear that their conductor had deceived them. It was now so dark that the road, though the soil was a limestone, could scarcely be discerned, the woods on either side forming a "close dungeon of innumerous boughs," that totally excluded the twilight of the stars.

While the Confessor was questioning the man, with some severity, a faint shouting was heard from a distance, and he stopped the horses to listen from what quarter it came.

"That comes the way we are going, Signor," said the guide.

"Hark!" exclaimed Schedoni, "those are strains of revelry!"

A confused sound of voices, laughter, and musical instruments, was heard, and, as the air blew stronger, tamborines and flutes were distinguished.

"Oh! Oh! we are near the end of our journey!" said the peasant; "all this comes from the town we are going to. But what makes them all so merry, I wonder!"

Ellena, revived by this intelligence, followed with alacrity the sudden speed of the Confessor; and presently reaching a point of the mountain, where the woods opened, a cluster of lights on another summit, a little higher, more certainly announced the town.

They soon after arrived at the ruinous gates, which had formerly led to a place of some strength, and passed at once from darkness and desolated walls, into a market place, blazing with light and resounding with the multitude. Booths, fantastically hung with lamps, and filled with merchandize of every kind, disposed in the gayest order, were spread on all sides, and peasants in their holiday cloaths, and parties of masks crowded every avenue. Here was a band of musicians, and there a group of dancers; on one spot the outré humour of a zanni provoked the never-failing laugh of an Italian rabble, in another the improvisatore, by the pathos of his story, and the persuasive sensibility of his strains, was holding the attention of his auditors, as in the bands of magic. Farther on was a stage raised for a display of fireworks, and near this a theatre, where a mimic opera, the "shadow of a shade," was exhibiting, whence the roar of laughter, excited by the principal buffo within, mingled with the heterogeneous voices of the venders of ice, maccaroni, sherbet, and diavoloni, without.

The Confessor looked upon this scene with disappointment and ill-humour, and bade the guide go before him, and shew the way to the best inn; an office which the latter undertook with great glee, though he made his way with difficulty. "To think I should not know it was the time of the fair!" said he, "though, to say truth, I never was at it but once in my life, so it is not so surprizing, Signor."

"Make way through the crowd," said Schedoni.

"After jogging on so long in the dark, Signor, with nothing at all to be seen," continued the man, without attending to the direction, "then to come, all of a sudden, to such a place as this, why it is like coming out of purgatory into paradise! Well! Signor, you have forgot all your quandaries now; you think nothing now about that old ruinous place where we had such a race after the man, that would not murder us; but that shot I fired did his business."

"You fired!" said Schedoni, aroused by the assertion.

"Yes, Signor, as I was looking over your shoulder; I should have thought you must have heard it!"

"I should have thought so, too, friend."

"Aye, Signor, this fine place has put all that out of your head, I warrant, as well as what I said about that same fellow; but, indeed, Signor, I did not know he was related to you, when I talked so of him. But, perhaps, for all that, you may not know the piece of his story I was going to tell you, when you cut me off so short, though you are better acquainted with one another than I guessed for; so, when I come in from the fair, Signor, if you please, I will tell it you; and it is a pretty long history, for I happen to know the whole of it; though, where you cut me short, when you was in one of those quandaries, was only just at the beginning, but no matter for that, I can begin it again, for — "

"What is all this!" said Schedoni, again recalled from one of the thoughtful moods in which he had so habitually indulged, that even the bustle around him had failed to interrupt the course of his mind. He now bade the peasant be silent; but the man was too happy to be tractable, and proceeded to express all he felt, as they advanced slowly through the crowd. Every object here was to him new and delightful; and, nothing doubting that it must be equally so to every other person, he was continually pointing out to the proud and gloomy Confessor the trivial subjects of his own admiration. “See! Signor, there is Punchinello, see! how he eats the hot maccaroni! And look there, Signor! there is a juggler! O! good Signor, stop one minute, to look at his tricks. See! he has turned a monk into a devil already, in the twinkling of an eye!”

“Silence! and proceed,” said Schedoni.

“That is what I say, Signor:— silence! for the people make such a noise that I cannot hear a word you speak. — Silence, there!”

“Considering that you could not hear, you have answered wonderfully to the purpose,” said Ellena.

“Ah! Signora! is not this better than those dark woods and hills? But what have we here? Look, Signor, here is a fine sight!”

The crowd, which was assembled round a stage on which some persons grotesquely dressed, were performing, now interrupting all farther progress, the travellers were compelled to stop at the foot of the platform. The people above were acting what seemed to have been intended for a tragedy, but what their strange gestures, uncouth recitation, and incongruous countenances, had transformed into a comedy.

Schedoni, thus obliged to pause, withdrew his attention from the scene; Ellena consented to endure it, and the peasant, with gaping mouth and staring eyes, stood like a statue, yet not knowing whether he ought to laugh or cry, till suddenly turning round to the Confessor, whose horse was of necessity close to his, he seized his arm, and pointing to the stage, called out, “Look! Signor, see! Signor, what a scoundrel! what a villain! See! he has murdered his own daughter!”

At these terrible words, the indignation of Schedoni was done away by other emotions; he turned his eyes upon the stage, and perceived that the actors were performing the story of Virginia. It was at the moment when she was dying in the arms of her father, who was holding up the poniard, with which he had stabbed her. The feelings of Schedoni, at this instant, inflicted a punishment almost worthy of the crime he had meditated.

Ellena, struck with the action, and with the contrast which it seemed to offer to what she had believed to have been the late conduct of Schedoni towards herself, looked at him with most expressive tenderness, and as his glance met her’s, she perceived, with surprize, the changing emotions of his soul, and the inexplicable character of his countenance. Stung to the heart, the Confessor furiously spurred his horse, that he might escape from the scene, but the poor animal was too spiritless and jaded, to force its way through the crowd; and the peasant, vexed at being hurried from a place where, almost for the first time in his life, he was suffering under the strange delights of artificial grief, and half angry, to observe an animal, of which he had the care, ill treated, loudly remonstrated, and seized the bridle of Schedoni, who, still more incensed, was applying the whip to the shoulders of the guide, when the crowd suddenly fell back and opened a way, through which the travellers passed, and arrived, with little further interruption, at the door of the inn.

Schedoni was not in a humour which rendered him fit to encounter difficulties, and still less the vulgar squabbles of a place already crowded with guests; yet it was not without much opposition that he at length obtained a lodging for the night. The peasant was not less anxious for the accommodation of his horses; and, when Ellena heard him declare, that the animal, which the Confessor had so cruelly spurred, should have a double feed, and a bed of straw as high as his head, if he himself went without one, she gave him, unnoticed by Schedoni, the only ducat she had left.

❦

CHAPTER 23

“But, if you be afraid to hear the worst,
Then let the worst, unheard, fall on your head.”
Shakespeare.

Schedoni passed the night without sleep. The incident of the preceding evening had not only renewed the agonies of remorse, but excited those of pride and apprehension. There was something in the conduct of the peasant towards him, which he could not clearly understand, though his suspicions were sufficient to throw his mind into a state of the utmost perturbation. Under an air of extreme simplicity, this man had talked of Spalatro, had discovered that he was acquainted with much of his history, and had hinted that he knew by whom he had been employed; yet at the same time appeared unconscious, that Schedoni’s was the master-hand, which had directed the principal actions of the ruffian. At other times, his behaviour had seemed to contradict the supposition of his ignorance on this point; from some circumstances he had mentioned, it appeared impossible but that he must have known who Schedoni really was, and even his own conduct had occasionally seemed to acknowledge this, particularly when, being interrupted in his history of Spalatro, he attempted an apology, by saying, he did not know it concerned Schedoni: nor could the conscious Schedoni believe that the very pointed manner, in which the peasant had addressed him at the representation of Virginia, was merely accidental. He wished to dismiss the man immediately, but it was first necessary to ascertain what he knew concerning him, and then to decide on the measures to be taken. It was, however, a difficult matter to obtain this information, without manifesting an anxiety, which might betray him, if the guide had, at present, only a general suspicion of the truth; and no less difficult to determine how to proceed towards him, if it should be evident that his suspicions rested on Spalatro. To take him forward to Naples, was to bring an informer to his home; to suffer him to return with his discovery, now that he probably knew the place of Schedoni’s residence, was little less hazardous. His death only could secure the secret.

After a night passed in the tumult of such considerations, the Confessor summoned the peasant to his chamber, and, with some short preface, told him he had no further occasion for his services, adding, carelessly, that he advised him to be on his guard as he re-passed the villa, lest Spalatro, who might yet lurk there, should revenge upon him the injury he had received. “According to your account of him, he is a very dangerous fellow,” said Schedoni; “but your information is, perhaps, erroneous.”

The guide began, testily, to justify himself for his assertions, and the Confessor then endeavoured to draw from him what he knew on the subject. But, whether the man was piqued by the treatment he had lately received, or had other reasons for reserve, he did not, at first, appear so willing to communicate as formerly.

“What you hinted of this man,” said Schedoni, “has, in some degree, excited my curiosity: I have now a few moments of leisure, and you may relate, if you will, something of the wonderful history you talked of.”

“It is a long story, Signor, and you would be tired before I got to the end of it,” replied the peasant; “and, craving your pardon, Signor, I don’t much like to be snapped up so!”

“Where did this man live?” said the Confessor. “You mentioned something of a house at the sea side.”

“Aye, Signor, there is a strange history belonging to that house, too; but this man, as I was saying, came there all of a sudden, nobody knew how! and the place had been shut up ever since the Marchese — ”

“The Marchese!” said Schedoni, coldly, “what Marchese, friend?” — “Why, I mean the Baróne di Cambrusca, Signor, to be sure, as I was going to have told you, of my own accord, if you would only have let me. Shut up ever since the Baróne — I left off there, I think.”

“I understood that the Baróne was dead!” observed the Confessor.

“Yes, Signor,” replied the peasant, fixing his eyes on Schedoni; “but what has his death to do with what I was telling? This happened before he died.”

Schedoni, somewhat disconcerted by this unexpected remark, forgot to resent the familiarity of it. “This man, then, this Spalatro, was connected with the Baróne di Cambrusca?” said he.

“It was pretty well guessed so, Signor.”

“How! no more than guessed?”

“No, Signor, and that was more than enough for the Baróne’s liking, I warrant. He took too much care for any thing certain to appear against him, and he was wife so to do, for if it had — it would have been worse for him. But I was going to tell you the story, Signor.”

“What reasons were there for believing this was an agent of the Baróne di Cambrusca, friend?”

“I thought you wished to hear the story, Signor.”

“In good time; but first what were your reasons?”

“One of them is enough, Signor, and if you would only have let me gone straight on with the story, you would have found it out by this time, Signor.”

Schedoni frowned, but did not otherwise reprove the impertinence of the speech.

“It was reason enough, Signor, to my mind,” continued the peasant, “that it was such a crime as nobody but the Baróne di Cambrusca could have committed; there was nobody wicked enough, in our parts, to have done it but him. Why is not this reason enough, Signor? What makes you look at me so? why the Baróne himself could hardly have looked worse, if I had told him as much!”

“Be less prolix,” said the Confessor, in a restrained voice.

“Well then, Signor, to begin at the beginning. It is a good many years ago that Marco came first to our town. Now the story goes, that one stormy night — ”

“You may spare yourself the trouble of relating the story,” said Schedoni, abruptly, “Did you ever see the Baróne you was speaking of, friend?”

“Why did you bid me tell it, Signor, since you know it already! I have been here all this while, just a-going to begin it, and all for nothing!”

“It is very surprising,” resumed the artful Schedoni, without having noticed what had been said, “that if this Spalatro was known to be the villain you say he is, not any step should have been taken to bring him to justice! how happened that? But, perhaps, all this story was nothing more than a report.”

“Why, Signor, it was every body’s business, and nobody’s, as one may say; then, besides, nobody could prove what they had heard, and though every body believed the story just the same as if they had seen the whole, yet that, they said, would not do in law, but they should be made to prove it. Now, it is not one time in ten that any thing can be proved, Signor, as you well know, yet we none of us believe it the less for that!

“So, then, you would have had this man punished for a murder, which, probably, he never committed!” said the Confessor.

“A murder!” repeated the peasant. Schedoni was silent, but, in the next instant, said, “Did you not say it was a murder?”

“I have not told you so, Signor!

“What was the crime, then?” resumed Schedoni, after another momentary pause, you said it was atrocious, and what more so than — murder?” His lip quivered as he pronounced the last word.

The peasant made no reply, but remained with his eyes fixed upon the Confessor, and, at length, repeated, “Did I say it was murder, Signor?”

“If it was not that, say what it was,” demanded the Confessor, haughtily; “but let it be in two words.”

“As if a story could be told in two words, Signor!”

“Well, well, be brief.”

“How can I, Signor, when the story is so long!”

“I will waste no more time,” said Schedoni, going.

“Well, Signor, I will do my best to make it short. It was one stormy night in December, that Marco Torma had been out fishing. Marco, Signor, was an old man that lived in our town when I was a boy; I can but just remember him, but my father knew him well, and loved old Marco, and used often to say — ”

“To the story!” said Schedoni.

“Why I am telling it, Signor, as fast as I can. This old Marco did not live in our town at the time it happened, but in some place, I have forgot the name of it, near the sea shore. What can the name be! it is something like — ”

“Well, what happened to this old dotard?”

“You are out there, Signor, he was no old dotard; but you shall hear. At that time, Signor, Marco lived in this place that I have forgot the name of, and was a fisherman, but better times turned up afterwards, but that is neither here nor there. Old Marco had been out fishing; it was a stormy night, and he was glad enough to get on shore, I warrant. It was quite dark, as dark, Signor, I suppose, as it was last night, and he was making the best of his way, Signor, with some fish along the shore, but it being so dark, he lost it notwithstanding. The rain beat, and the wind blew, and he wandered about a long while, and could see no light, nor hear any thing, but the surge near him, which sometimes seemed as if it was coming to wash him away. He got as far off it as he could, but he knew there were high rocks over the beach, and he was afraid he should run his head against them, if he went too far, I suppose. However, at last, he went up close to them, and as he got a little shelter, he resolved to try no further for the present. I tell it you, Signor, just as my father told it me, and he had it from the old man himself,”

“You need not be so particular,” replied the Confessor; “speak to the point.”

“Well, Signor, as old Marco lay snug under the rocks, he thought he heard somebody coming, and he lifted up his head, I warrant, poor old soul! as if he could have seen who it was; however, he could hear, though it was so dark, and he heard the steps coming on; but he said nothing yet, meaning to let them come close up to him, before he discovered himself. Presently he sees a little moving light, and it comes nearer and nearer, till it was just opposite to him, and then he saw the shadow of a man on the ground, and then spied the man himself, with a dark lanthorn, passing along the beach.”

“Well, well, to the purpose,” said Schedoni.

“Old Marco, Signor, my father says, was never stout-hearted, and he took it into his head this might be a robber, because he had the lanthorn, though, for that matter, he would have been glad enough of a lanthorn himself, and so he lay quiet. But, presently, he was in a rare fright, for the man stopped to rest the load he had upon his back, on a piece of rock near him, and old Marco saw him throw off a heavy sack, and heard him breathe hard, as if he was hugely tired. I tell it, Signor, just as my father does.”

“What was in the sack?” said Schedoni, coolly.

“All in good time, Signor;” perhaps old Marco never found out; but you shall hear. He was afraid, when he saw the sack, to stir a limb, for he thought it held booty. But, presently, the man, without saying a word, heaved it on his shoulders again, and staggered away with it along the beach, and Marco saw no more of him.”

“Well! what has he to do with your story, then?” said the Confessor, “Was this Spalatro?”

“All in good time, Signor; you put me out. When the storm was down a little, Marco crept out, and, thinking there must be a village, or a hamlet, or a cottage, at no great distance, since this man had passed, he thought he would try a little further. He had better have staid where he was, for he wandered about a long while, and could see nothing, and what was worse, the storm came on louder than before, and he had no rocks to shelter him now. While he was in the quandary, he sees a light at a distance, and it came into his head this might be the lantern again, but he determined to go on notwithstanding, for if it was, he could stop short, and if it was not, he should get shelter, perhaps; so on he went, and I suppose I should have done the same, Signor.”

“Well! this history never will have an end!” said Schedoni.

“Well! Signor, he had not gone far when he found out that it was no lantern, but a light at a window. When he came up to the house he knocked softly at the door, but nobody came.”

“What house?” inquired the Confessor, sharply.

“The rain beat hard, Signor, and I warrant poor old Marco waited a long time before he knocked again, for he was main patient, Signor. O! how I have seen him-listen to a story, let it be ever so long!”

“I have need of his patience!” said Schedoni.

“When he knocked again, Signor, the door gave way a little, and he found it was open, and so, as nobody came, he thought fit to walk in of his own accord.”

“The dotard! what business had he to be so curious?” exclaimed Schedoni.

“Curious! Signor, he only sought shelter! He stumbled about in the dark, for a good while, and could find nobody, nor make nobody hear, but, at last, he came to a room where there was some fire not quite out, upon the hearth, and he went up to it, to warm himself, till somebody should come."

"What! was there nobody in the house?" said the Confessor.

"You shall hear, Signor. He had not been there, he said, no, he was sure, not above two minutes, when he heard a strange sort of a noise in the very room where he was, but the fire gave such a poor light, he could not see whether any body was there."

"What was the noise?"

"You put me out, Signor. He said he did not much like it, but what could he do! So he stirred up the fire, and tried to make it blaze a little, but it was as dusky as ever; he could see nothing. Presently, however, he heard somebody coming, and saw a light, and then a man coming towards the room where he was, so he went up to him to ask shelter."

"Who was this man?" said Schedoni.

"Ask shelter. He says the man, when he came to the door of the room, turned as white as a sheet, as well he might, to see a stranger, to find a stranger there, at that time of the night. I suppose I should have done the same myself. The man did not seem very willing to let him stay, but asked what he did there, and such like; but the storm was very loud, and so Marco did not let a little matter daunt him, and, when he shewed the man what fine fish he had in his basket, and said he was welcome to it, he seemed more willing."

"Incredible!" exclaimed Schedoni, "the blockhead!"

"He had wit enough for that matter, Signor; Marco says he appeared to be main hungry — "

"Is that any proof of his wit?" said the Confessor, peevishly.

"You never will let me finish, Signor; main hungry; for he put more wood on the fire directly, to dress some of the fish. While he was doing this, Marco says his heart, somehow, misgave him, that this was the man he saw on the beach, and he looked at him pretty hard, till the other asked him, crossly, what he stared at him so for; but Marco took care not to tell. While he was busy making ready the fish, however, Marco had an opportunity of eying him the more, and every time the man looked round the room, which happened to be pretty often, he had a notion it was the same."

"Well, and if it was the same," said Schedoni.

"But when Marco happened to spy the sack, lying in a corner, he had no doubt about the matter. He says his heart then misgave him sadly, and he wished himself safe out of the house, and determined, in his own mind, to get away as soon as he could, without letting the man suspect what he thought of him. He now guessed, too, what made the man look round the room so often, and, though Marco thought before it was to find out if he had brought any body with him, he now believed it was to see whether his treasure was safe."

"Aye, likely enough," observed Schedoni.

"Well, old Marco sat not much at his ease, while the fish was preparing, and thought it was 'out of the fryingpan into the fire' with him; but what could he do?"

"Why get up and walk away, to be sure," said the Confessor, "as I shall do, if your story lasts much longer."

"You shall hear, Signor; he would have done so, if he had thought this man would have let him, but — "

"Well, this man was Spalatro, I suppose," said Schedoni, impatiently, 'and this was the house on the shore you formerly mentioned."

"How well you have guessed it, Signor! though to say truth, I have been expecting you to find it out for this half hour."

Schedoni did not like the significant look, which the peasant assumed while he said this, but he bade him proceed.

"At first, Signor, Spalatro hardly spoke a word, but he came to by degrees, and by the time the fish was nearly ready, he was talkative enough."

Here the Confessor rose, with some emotion, and paced the room.

"Poor old Marco, Signor, began to think better of him, and when he heard the rain at the casements, he was loath to think of stirring. Presently Spalatro went out of the room for a plate to eat the fish on. — "

"Out of the room?" said Schedoni, and checked his steps.

"Yes, Signor, but he took care to carry the light with him. However, Marco, who had a deal of curiosity to — "

"Yes, he appears to have had a great deal, indeed!" said the Confessor, and turning away, renewed his pace.

"Nay, Signor, I am not come to that yet, he has shewn none yet; — a great deal of curiosity to know what was in the sack, before he consented to let himself stay much longer, thought this a good opportunity for looking, and as the fire was now pretty bright, he determined to see. He went up to the sack, therefore, Signor, and tried to lift it,, but it was too heavy for him though it did not seem full."

Schedoni again checked his steps, and stood fixed before the peasant.

"He raised it, however, a little, Signor, but it fell from his hands, and with such a heavy weight upon the floor, that he was sure it held no common booty. Just then, he says, he thought he heard Spalatro coming, and the sound of the sack was enough to have frightened him, and so Marco quitted it; but he was mistaken, and he went to it again. But you don't seem to hear me, Signor, for you look as you do when you are in those quandaries, so busy a-thinking, and I— "

"Proceed," said Schedoni, sternly, and renewed his steps, "I hear you."

"Went to it again," — resumed the peasant, cautiously taking up the story at the last words he had dropped. "He untied the string, Signor, that held the sack, and opened the cloth a little way, but think, Signor, what he must have thought, when he felt — cold flesh! O, Signor! and when he saw by the light of the fire, the face of a corpse within! O, Signor!" —

The peasant, in the eagerness with which he related this circumstance, had followed Schedoni to the other end of the chamber, and he now took hold of his garment, as if to secure his attention to the remainder of the story. The Confessor, however, continued his steps, and the peasant kept pace with him, still loosely holding his garment.

"Marco," he resumed, "was so terrified, as my father says, that he hardly knew where he was, and I warrant, if one could have seen him, he looked as white, Signor, as you do now."

The Confessor abruptly withdrew his garment from the peasant's grasp, and said, in an inward voice, "If I am shocked at the mere mention of such a spectacle, no wonder he was, who beheld it!" After the pause of a moment, he added, — "But what followed?"

"Marco says he had no power to tie up the cloth again, Signor, and when he came to his thoughts, his only fear was, lest Spalatro should return, though he had hardly been gone a minute, before he could get out of the house, for he cared nothing about the storm now. And sure enough he heard him coming, but he managed to get out of the room, into a passage another way from that Spalatro was in. And luckily, too, it was the same passage he had come in by, and it led him out of the house. He made no more ado, but ran straight off, without stopping to chuse which way, and many perils and dangers he got into among the woods, that night, and — "

"How happened it, that this Spalatro was not taken up, after this discovery?" said Schedoni. "What was the consequence of it?"

"Why, Signor, old Marco had like to have caught his death that night; what with the wet, and what with the fright, he was laid up with a fever, and was light-headed, and raved of such strange things, that people would not believe any thing he said when he came to his senses."

"Aye," said Schedoni, "the narrative resembles a delirious dream, more than a reality; I perfectly accord with them in their opinion of this feverish old man."

"But you shall hear, Signor; after a while they began to think better of it, and there was some stir made about it; but what could poor folks do, for nothing could be proved! The house was searched, but the man was gone, and nothing could be found! From that time the place was shut up; till many years after, this Spalatro appeared, and old Marco then said he was pretty sure he was the man, but he could not swear it, and so nothing could be done."

"Then it appears, after all, that you are not certain that this long history belongs to this Spalatro!" said the Confessor; "nay, not even that the history itself is any thing more than the vision of a distempered brain!"

"I do not know, Signor, what you may call certain; but I know what we all believe. But the strangest part of the story is to come yet, and that which nobody would believe, hardly, if — "

"I have heard enough," said Schedoni, "I will hear no more!"

"Well but, Signor, I have not told you half yet; and I am sure when I heard it myself, it so terrified me."

"I have listened too long to this idle history," said the Confessor, "there seems to be no rational foundation for it. Here is what I owe you; you may depart."

“Well, Signor, ’tis plain you know the rest already, or you never would go without it. But you don’t know, perhaps, Signor, what an unaccountable — I am sure it made my hair stand on end to hear of it, what an unaccountable — ”

“I will hear no more of this absurdity,” interrupted Schedoni, with sternness. “I reproach myself for having listened so long to such a gossip’s tale, and have no further curiosity concerning it. You may withdraw; and bid the host attend me.”

“Well, Signor, if you are so easily satisfied,” replied the peasant, with disappointment, “there is no more to be said, but — ”

“You may stay, however, while I caution you,” said Schedoni, “how you pass the villa, where this Spalatro may yet linger, for, though I can only smile at the story you have related — ”

“Related, Signor! why I have not told it half; and if you would only please to be patient — ”

“Though I can only smile at that simple narrative,” — repeated Schedoni in a louder tone.

“Nay, Signor, for that matter, you can frown at it too, as I can testify,” muttered the guide.

“Listen to me!” said the Confessor, in a yet more insisting voice. “I say, that though I give no credit to your curious history, I think this same Spalatro appears to be a desperate fellow, and, therefore, I would have you be on your guard. If you see him, you may depend upon it, that he will attempt your life in revenge of the injury I have done him. I give you, therefore, in addition to your trombone, this stiletto to defend you.”

Schedoni, while he spoke, took an instrument from his bosom, but it was not the one he usually wore, or, at least, that he was seen to wear. He delivered it to the peasant, who received it with a kind of stupid surprise, and then gave him some directions as to the way in which it should be managed.

“Why, Signor,” said the man, who had listened with much attention, “I am kindly obliged to you for thinking about me, but is there any thing in this stiletto different from others, that it is to be used so?”

Schedoni looked gravely at the peasant for an instant, and then replied, “Certainly not, friend, I would only instruct you to use it to the best advantage; — farewell!”

“Thank you kindly, Signor, but — but I think I have no need of it, my trombone is enough for me.”

“This will defend you more adroitly,” replied Schedoni, refusing to take back the stiletto, “and moreover, while you were loading the trombone, your adversary might use his poniard to advantage. Keep it, therefore, friend; it will protect you better than a dozen trombones. Put it up.”

Perhaps it was Schedoni’s particular look, more than his argument, that convinced the guide of the value of his gift; he received it submissively, though with a stare of stupid surprise; probably it had been better, if it had been suspicious surprise. He thanked Schedoni again, and was leaving the room, when the Confessor called out, “Send the landlord to me immediately, I shall set off for Rome without delay!”

“Yes, Signor,” replied the peasant, “you are at the right place, the road parts here; but I thought you was going for Naples!”

“For Rome,” said Schedoni.

“For Rome, Signor! Well, I hope you will get safe, Signor, with all my heart!” said the guide, and quitted the chamber.

While this dialogue had been passing between Schedoni and the peasant, Ellena, in solitude, was considering on the means of prevailing with the Confessor to allow her to return either to Altieri, or to the neighbouring cloister of “Our Lady of Pity,” instead of placing her at a distance from Naples, till he should think proper to acknowledge her. The plan, which he had mentioned, seemed to her long-harrassed mind to exile her forever from happiness, and all that was dear to her affections; it appeared like a second banishment to San Stesano, and every abbess, except that of the Santa della Pieta, came to her imagination in the portraiture of an inexorable jailor. While this subject engaged her, she was summoned to attend Schedoni, whom she found impatient to enter the carriage, which at this town they had been able to procure. Ellena, on looking out for the guide, was informed that he had already set off for his home, a circumstance, for the suddenness of which she knew not how to account.

The travellers immediately proceeded on their journey; Schedoni, reflecting on the late conversation, said little, and Ellena read not in his countenance any thing that might encourage her to introduce the subject of her own intended solicitation. Thus separately occupied, they advanced, during some hours, on the road to Naples, for thither Schedoni had designed to go, notwithstanding his late assertion to the guide, whom it appears, for whatever reason, he was anxious to deceive, as to the place of his actual residence.

They stopped to dine at a town of some consideration, and, when Ellena heard the Confessor inquire concerning the numerous convents it contained, she perceived that it was necessary for her no longer to defer her petition. She therefore represented immediately what must be the forlornness of her state, and the anxiety of her mind, if she were placed at a distance from the scenes and the people, which affection and early habit seemed to have consecrated; especially at this time, when her spirits had scarcely recovered from the severe pressure of long suffering, and when to soothe and renovate them, not only quiet, but the consciousness of security, were necessary; a consciousness which it was impossible, and especially so after her late experience, that she could acquire among strangers, till they should cease to be such.

To these pleadings Schedoni thoughtfully attended, but the darkness of his aspect did not indicate that his compassion was touched; and Ellena proceeded to represent, secondly, that which, had she been more artful, or less disdainful of cunning, she would have urged the first. As it was, she had begun with the mention of circumstances, which, though the least likely to prevail with Schedoni, she felt to be most important to herself; and she concluded with representing that, which was most interesting to him. Ellena suggested, that her residence in the neighbourhood of Altieri might be so managed, as that his secret would be as effectually preserved, as if she were at an hundred miles from Naples.

It may appear extraordinary, that a man of Schedoni's habitual coolness, and exact calculation, should have suffered fear, on this occasion, to obscure his perceptions; and this instance strongly proved the magnitude of the cause, which could produce so powerful an effect. While he now listened to Ellena, he began to perceive circumstances that had eluded his own observation; and he, at length, acknowledged, that it might be safer to permit her to return to the Villa Altieri, and that she should from thence go, as she had formerly intended, to the Santa della Pieta, than to place her in any convent, however remote, where it would be necessary for himself to introduce her. His only remaining objection to the neighbourhood of Naples, now rested on the chance it would offer the Marchesa di Vivaldi of discovering Ellena's abode, before he should judge it convenient to disclose to her his family; and his knowledge of the Marchesa justified his most horrible suspicion, as to the consequence of such a premature discovery.

Something, however, it appeared, must be risked in any situation he might chuse for Ellena; and her residence at the Santa della Pieta, a large convent, well secured, and where, as she had been known to them from her infancy, the abbess and the sisters might be supposed to be not indifferent concerning her welfare, seemed to promise security against any actual violence from the malice of the Marchesa; against her artful duplicity every place would be almost equally insufficient. Here, as Ellena would appear in the character she had always been known in, no curiosity could be excited, or suspicion awakened, as to her family; and here, therefore, Schedoni's secret would more probably be preserved, than elsewhere. As this was, after all, the predominant subject of his anxiety, to which, however unnatural it may seem, even the safety of Ellena was secondary, he finally determined, that she should return to the Santa della Pieta; and she thanked him almost with tears, for a consent which she received as a generous indulgence, but which was in reality little more than an effect of selfish apprehension.

The remainder of the journey, which was of some days, passed without any remarkable occurrence: Schedoni, with only short intervals, was still enveloped in gloom and silence; and Ellena, with thoughts engaged by the one subject of her interest, the present situation and circumstances of Vivaldi, willingly submitted to this prolonged stillness.

As, at length, she drew near Naples, her emotions became more various and powerful; and, when she distinguished the top of Vesuvius peering over every intervening summit, she wept as her imagination charactered all the well-known country it overlooked. But when, having reached an eminence, that scenery was exhibited to her senses, when the Bay of Naples, stretching into remotest distance, was spread out before her; when every mountain of that magnificent horizon, which enclosed her native landscape, that country which she believed Vivaldi to inhabit, stood unfolded, how affecting, how overwhelming were her sensations! Every object seemed to speak of her home, of Vivaldi, and of happiness that was passed! and so exquisitely did regret mingle with hope, the tender grief of remembrance with the interest of expectation, that it were difficult to say which prevailed.

Her expressive countenance disclosed to the Confessor the course of her thoughts and of her feelings, feelings which, while he contemned, he believed he perfectly comprehended, but of which, having never in any degree experienced them, he really understood nothing. The callous Schedoni, by a mistake not uncommon, especially to a mind of his character, substituted words for truths; not only confounding the limits of neighbouring qualities, but mistaking their very principles. Incapable of perceiving their nice distinctions, he called the persons who saw them, merely fanciful; thus making his very incapacity an argument for his superior wisdom. And, while he confounded delicacy of feeling with fatuity of mind, taste with caprice, and imagination with error, he yielded, when he most congratulated himself on his sagacity, to illusions not less egregious, because they were less brilliant, than those which are incident to sentiment and feeling.

The better to escape observation, Schedoni had contrived not to reach Naples till the close of evening, and it was entirely dark before the carriage stopped at the gate of the Villa Altieri. Ellena, with a mixture of melancholy and satisfaction, viewed, once more, her long-deserted home, and while she waited till a servant should open the gate, remembered how often she had thus waited when there was a beloved friend within, to welcome her with smiles, which were now gone for ever. Beatrice, the old housekeeper, at length, however, appeared, and received her with an affection as sincere, if not as strong, as that of the relative for whom she mourned.

Here Schedoni alighted, and, having dismissed the carriage, entered the house, for the purpose of relinquishing also his disguise, and resuming his monk’s habit. Before he departed, Ellena ventured to mention Vivaldi, and to express her wish to hear of his exact situation; but, though Schedoni was too well enabled to inform her of it, the policy which had hitherto kept him silent on this subject still influenced him; and he replied only, that if she should happen to learn the circumstances of his condition, she should not remain ignorant of them.

This assurance revived Ellena, for two reasons; it afforded her a hope of relief from her present uncertainty, and it also seemed to express an approbation of the object of her affection, such as the Confessor had never yet disclosed. Schedoni added, that he should see her no more, till he thought proper to acknowledge her for his daughter; but that, if circumstances made it necessary, he should, in the mean time, write to her; and he now gave her a direction by which to address him under a fictitious name, and at a place remote from his convent. Ellena, though assured of the necessity for this conduct, could not yield to such disguise, without an aversion that was strongly expressed in her manner, but of which Schedoni took no notice. He bade her, as she valued her existence, watchfully to preserve the secret of her birth; and to waste not a single day at Villa Altieri, but to retire to the Santa della Pieta; and these injunctions were delivered in a manner so solemn and energetic, as not only deeply to impress upon her mind the necessity of fulfilling them, but to excite some degree of amazement.

After a short and general direction respecting her further conduct, Schedoni bade her farewell, and, privately quitting the villa, in his ecclesiastical dress, repaired to the Dominican convent, which he entered as a brother returned from a distant pilgrimage. He was received as usual by the society, and found himself, once more, the austere father Schedoni of the Spirito Santo.

The cause of his first anxiety was the necessity for justifying himself to the Marchesa di Vivaldi, for ascertaining how much he might venture to reveal of the truth, and for estimating what would be her decision, were she informed of the whole. His second step would be to obtain the release of Vivaldi; and, as his conduct in this instance would be regulated, in a great degree, by the result of his conference with the Marchesa, it would be only the second. However painful it must be to Schedoni to meet her, now that he had discovered the depth of the guilt, in which she would have involved him, he determined to seek this eventful conference on the following morning: and he passed this night partly in uneasy expectation of the approaching day, but chiefly in inventing circumstances and arranging arguments, that might bear him triumphantly towards the accomplishment of his grand design.

❦

Chapter 24

> "Beneath the silent gloom of Solitude
> Tho' Peace can sit and smile, tho' meek Content
> Can keep the cheerful tenor of her soul,
> Ev'n in the loneliest shades, yet let not Wrath
> Approach, let black Revenge keep far aloof,
> Or soon they flame to madness.."
> Elfrida.

Schedoni, on his way to the Vivaldi palace, again reviewed and arranged every argument, or rather specious circumstances, which might induce the Marchesa's consent to the nuptials he so much desired. His family was noble, though no longer wealthy, and he believed that as the seeming want of descent had hitherto been the chief objection to Ellena, the Marchesa might be prevailed with to overlook the wreck of his fortune.

At the palace he was told, that the Marchesa was at one of her villas on the bay; and he was too anxious not to follow her thither immediately. This delightful residence was situated on an airy promontory, that overhung the water, and was nearly embosomed among the woods, that spread far along the heights, and descended, with great pomp of foliage and colouring, to the very margin of the waves. It seemed scarcely possible that misery could inhabit so enchanting an abode; yet the Marchesa was wretched amidst all these luxuries of nature and art, which would have perfected the happiness of an innocent mind. Her heart was possessed by evil passions, and all her perceptions were distorted and discoloured by them, which, like a dark magician, had power to change the fairest scenes into those of gloom and desolation.

The servants had orders to admit father Schedoni at all times, and he was shewn into a saloon, in which the Marchesa was alone. Every object in this apartment announced taste, and even magnificence. The hangings were of purple and gold; the vaulted cieling was designed by one of the first painters of the Venetian school; the marble statues that adorned the recesses were not less exquisite, and the whole symmetry and architecture, airy, yet rich; gay, yet chastened; resembled the palace of a fairy, and seemed to possess almost equal fascinations. The lattices were thrown open, to admit the prospect, as well as the air loaded with fragrance from an orangery, that spread before them. Losty palms and plantains threw their green and refreshing tint over the windows, and on the lawn that sloped to the edge of the precipice, a shadowy perspective, beyond which appeared the ample waters of the gulf, where the light fails of feluccas, and the spreading canvas of larger vessels, glided upon the scene and passed away, as in a camera obscura. Vesuvius and the city of Naples were seen on the coast beyond, with many a bay and lofty cape of that long tract of bold and gaily-coloured scenery, which extends toward Cape Campanella, crowned by fading ranges of mountains, lighted up with all the magic of Italian sunshine. The Marchesa reclined on a sofa before an open lattice; her eyes were fixed upon the prospect without, but her attention was wholly occupied by the visions that evil passions painted to her imagination. On her still beautiful features was the languor of discontent and indisposition; and, though her manners, like her dress, displayed the elegant negligence of the graces, they concealed the movements of a careful, and even a tortured heart. On perceiving Schedoni, a faint smile lightened upon her countenance, and she held forth her hand to him; at the touch of which he shuddered.

"My good father, I rejoice to see you," said the Marchesa; "I have felt the want of your conversation much, and at this moment of indisposition especially."

She waved the attendant to withdraw; while Schedoni, stalking to a window, could with difficulty conceal the perturbation with which he now, for the first time, consciously beheld the willing destroyer of his child. Some farther compliment from the Marchesa recalled him; he soon recovered all his address, and approaching her, said,

"Daughter! you always send me away a worse Dominican than I come; I approach you with humility, but depart elated with pride, and am obliged to suffer much from self-infliction before I can descend to my proper level."

After some other flatteries had been exchanged, a silence of several moments followed, during which neither of the parties seemed to have sufficient courage to introduce the subjects that engaged their thoughts, subjects upon which their interests were now so directly and unexpectedly opposite. Had Schedoni been less occupied by his own feelings, he might have perceived the extreme agitation of the Marchesa, the tremor of her nerves, the faint flush that crossed her cheek, the wanness that succeeded, the languid movement of her eyes, and the laborious sighs that interrupted her breathing, while she wished, yet dared not ask, whether Ellena was no more, and averted her regards from him, whom she almost believed to be a murderer.

Schedoni, not less affected, though apparently tranquil, as sedulously avoided the face of the Marchesa, whom he considered with a degree of contempt almost equal to his indignation: his feelings had reversed, for the present, all hi opinions on the subject of their former arguments, and had taught him, for once, to think justly. Every moment of silence now increased his embarrassment, and his reluctance even to name Ellena. He feared to tell that she lived, yet despised himself for suffering such fear, and shuddered at a recollection of the conduct, which had made any assurance concerning her life necessary. The insinuations, that he had discovered her family to be such as would not degrade that of the Marchesa, he knew not how to introduce with such delicacy of gradation as might win upon the jealousy of her pride, and soothe her disappointment; and he was still meditating how he might lead to this subject, when the Marchesa herself broke the silence.

“Father,” she said, with a sigh, “I always look to you for consolation, and am seldom disappointed. You are too well acquainted with the anxiety which has long oppressed me; may I understand that the cause of it is removed?” She paused; and then added, “May I hope that my son will no longer be led from the observance of his duty?”

Schedoni, with his eyes fixed on the ground, remained silent, but, at length, said, “The chief occasion of your anxiety is certainly removed;” — and he was again silent.

“How!” exclaimed the Marchesa, with the quick-sightedness of suspicion, while all her dissimulation yielded to the urgency of her fear, “Have you failed? Is she not dead?”

In the earnestness of the question, she fixed her eyes on Schedoni’s face, and, perceiving there symptoms of extraordinary emotion, added, “Relieve me from my apprehensions, good father, I entreat; tell me that you have succeeded, and that she has paid the debt of justice.”

Schedoni raised his eyes to the Marchesa, but instantly averted them; indignation had lifted them, and disgust and stifled horror turned them away. Though very little of these feelings appeared, the Marchesa perceived such expression as she had never been accustomed to observe in his countenance; and, her surprize and impatience increasing, she once more repeated the question, and with a yet more decisive air than before.

“I have not failed in the grand object,” replied Schedoni: “your son is no longer in danger of forming a disgraceful alliance.”

“In what, then, have you failed?” asked the Marchesa; “for I perceive that you have not been completely successful.”

“I ought not to say that I have failed in any respect,” replied Schedoni, with emotion, “since the honour of your house is preserved, and — a life is spared.”

His voice faultered as he pronounced the last words, and he seemed to experience again the horror of that moment, when, with an uplifted poniard in his grasp, he had discovered Ellena for his daughter.

“Spared!” repeated the Marchesa, doubtingly; “explain yourself, good father!”

“She lives,” replied Schedoni; “but you have nothing, therefore, to apprehend.”

The Marchesa, surprized no less by the tone in which he spoke, than shocked at the purport of his words, changed countenance, while she said, impatiently —

“You speak in enigmas, father.”

“Lady! I speak plain truth — she lives.”

“I understand that sufficiently,” said the Marchesa; “but when you tell me, I have nothing to apprehend — ”

“I tell you truth, also,” rejoined the Confessor; “and the benevolence of your nature may be permitted to rejoice, for justice no longer has forbade the exercise of mercy.”

“This is all very well in its place,” said the Marchesa, betrayed by the vexation she suffered; “such sentiments and such compliments are like gala suits, to be put on in fine weather. My day is cloudy; let me have a little plain strong sense: inform me of the circumstances which have occasioned this change in the course of your observations, and, good father! be brief.”

Schedoni then unfolded, with his usual art, such circumstances relative to the family of Ellena as he hoped would soften the aversion of the Marchesa to the connection, and incline her, in consideration of her son’s happiness, finally to approve it; with which disclosure he mingled a plausible relation of the way, in which the discovery had been made.

The Marchesa's patience would scarcely await the conclusion of his narrative or her disappointment submit to the curb of discretion. When, at length, he had finished his history, "Is it possible," said she, with fretful displeasure, "that you have suffered yourself to be deceived by the plausibility of a girl, who might have been expected to utter any falshood, which should appear likely to protect her! Has a man of your discernment given faith to the idle and improbable tale! Say, rather, father, that your resolution failed in the critical moment, and that you are now anxious to form excuses to yourself for a conduct so pusillanimous."

"I am not apt to give an easy faith to appearances," replied Schedoni, gravely, "and still less, to shrink from the performance of any act, which I judge to be necessary and just. To the last intimation, I make no reply; it does not become my character to vindicate myself from an implication of falshood."

The Marchesa, perceiving that her passion had betrayed her into imprudence, condescended to apologize for that which she termed an effect of her extreme anxiety, as to what might follow from an act of such indiscreet indulgence; and Schedoni as willingly accepted the apology, each believing the assistance of the other necessary to success.

Schedoni then informed her, that he had better authority for what he had advanced than the assertion of Ellena; and he mentioned some circumstances, which proved him to be more anxious for the reputation than for the truth of his word. Believing that his origin was entirely unknown to the Marchesa, he ventured to disclose some particulars of Ellena's family, without apprehending that it could lead to a suspicion of his own.

The Marchesa, though neither appeased or convinced, commanded her feelings so far as to appear tranquil, while the Confessor represented, with the most delicate address, the unhappiness of her son, and the satisfaction, which must finally result to herself from an acquiescence with his choice, since the object of it was known to be worthy of his alliance. He added, that, while he had believed the contrary, he had proved himself as strenuous to prevent, as he was now sincere in approving their marriage; and concluded with gently blaming her for suffering prejudice and some remains of resentment to obscure her excellent understanding. "Trusting to the natural clearness of your perceptions," he added, "I doubt not that when you have maturely considered the subject, every objection will yield to a consideration of your son's happiness."

The earnestness, with which Schedoni pleaded for Vivaldi, excited some surprize; but the Marchesa, without condescending to reply either to his argument or remonstrance, inquired whether Ellena had a suspicion of the design, with which she had been carried into the forests of the Garganus, or concerning the identity of her persecutor. Schedoni, immediately perceiving to what these questions tended, replied, with the facility with which he usually accommodated his conscience to his interest, that Ellena was totally ignorant as to who were her immediate persecutors, and equally unsuspicious of any other evil having been intended her, than that of a temporary confinement.

The last assertion was admitted by the Marchesa to be probable, till the boldness of the first made her doubt the truth of each; and occasioned her new surprize and conjecture as to the motive, which could induce Schedoni to venture these untruths. She then inquired where Ellena was now disposed of, but he had too much prudence to disclose the place of her retreat, however plausible might be the air with which the inquiry was urged; and he endeavoured to call off her attention to Vivaldi. The Confessor did not, however, venture, at present, to give a hint as to the pretended discovery of his situation in the inquisition, but reserved to a more favourable opportunity such mention, together with the zealous offer of his services to extricate the prisoner. The Marchesa, believing that her son was still engaged in pursuit of Ellena, made many inquiries concerning him, but without expressing any solicitude for his welfare; resentment appearing to be the only emotion she retained towards him. While Schedoni replied with circumspection to her questions, he urged inquiries of his own, as to the manner in which the Marchesa endured the long absence of Vivaldi; thus endeavouring to ascertain how far he might hereafter venture to appear in any efforts for liberating him, and how shape his conduct respecting Ellena. It seemed that the Marchese was not indifferent as to his son's absence; and, though he had at first believed the search for Ellena to have occasioned it, other apprehensions now disturbed him, and taught him the feelings of a father. His numerous avocations and interests, however, seemed to prevent such anxiety from preying upon his mind; and, having dismissed persons in search of Vivaldi, he passed his time in the usual routine of company and the court. Of the actual situation of his son it was evident that neither he, nor the Marchesa, had the least apprehension, and this was a circumstance, which the Confessor was very careful to ascertain.

Before he took leave, he ventured to renew the mention of Vivaldi's attachment, and gently to plead for him. The Marchesa, however, seemed inattentive to what he represented, till, at length, awaking from her reverie, she said — "Father, you have judged ill — " and, before she concluded the sentence, she relapsed again into thoughtful silence.

Believing that he anticipated her meaning, Schedoni began to repeat his own justification respecting his conduct towards Ellena.

“You have judged erroneously, father,” resumed the Marchesa, with the same considering air, “in placing the girl in such a situation; my son cannot fail to discover her there.”

“Or wherever she may be,” replied the Confessor, believing that he understood the Marchesa’s aim. “It may not be possible to conceal her long from his search.”

“The neighbourhood of Naples ought at least to have been avoided,” observed the Marchesa.

Schedoni was silent, and she added, “So near, also, to his own residence! How far is the Santa della Piéta from the Vivaldi palace?”

Though Schedoni had thought that the Marchesa, while displaying a pretended knowledge of Ellena’s retreat, was only endeavouring to obtain a real one, this mention of the place of her actual residence shocked him; but he replied almost immediately, “I am ignorant of the distance, for, till now, I was unacquainted that there is a convent of the name you mention. It appears, however, that this Santa della Piéta is the place, of all other, which ought to have been avoided. How could you suspect me, lady, of imprudence thus extravagant!”

While Schedoni spoke, the Marchesa regarded him attentively, and then replied, “I may be allowed, good father, to suspect your prudence in this instance, since you have just given me so unequivocal a proof of it in another.”

She would then have changed the subject, but Schedoni, believing this inclination to be the consequence of her having assured herself, that she had actually discovered Ellena’s asylum, and too reasonably suspecting the dreadful use she designed to make of the discovery, endeavoured to unsettle her opinion, and mislead her as to the place of Ellena’s abode. He not only contradicted the fact of her. present residence at the Santa della Piéta, but, without scruple, made a positive assertion, that she was at a distance from Naples, naming, at the same time, a fictitious place, whose obscurity, he added, would be the best protection from the pursuit of Vivaldi.

“Very true, father,” observed the Marchesa; “I believe that my son will not readily discover the girl in the place you have named,”

Whether the Marchesa believed Schedoni’s assertion or not, she expressed no farther curiosity on the subject, and appeared considerably more tranquil than before. She now chatted with ease on general topics, while the Confessor dared no more to urge the subject of his secret wishes; and, having supported, for some time, a conversation most uncongenial with his temper, he took his leave, and returned to Naples. On the way thither, he reviewed, with exactness, the late behaviour of the Marchesa, and the result of this examination was a resolution — never to renew the subject of their conversation, but to solemnize, without her consent, the nuptials of Vivaldi and Ellena.

The Marchesa, meanwhile, on the departure of Schedoni, remained in the attitude in which he had left her, and absorbed by the interest, which his visit excited. The sudden change in his conduct no less astonished and perplexed, than, disappointed her. She could not explain it by the supposition of any principle, or motive. Sometimes it occurred to her, that Vivaldi had bribed him with rich promises, to promote the marriage, which he contributed to thwart; but, when she considered the high expectations she had herself encouraged him to cherish, the improbability of the conjecture was apparent. That Schedoni, from whatever cause, was no longer to be trusted in this business, was sufficiently clear, but she endeavoured to console herself with a hope that a more confidential person might yet be discovered. A part of Schedoni’s resolution she also adopted, which was, never again to introduce the subject of their late conversation. But, while she should silently pursue her own, plans, she determined to conduct herself towards Schedoni in every other respect, as usual, not suffering him to suspect that she had withdrawn her confidence, but inducing him to believe that she had relinquished all farther design, against Ellena.

❦

CHAPTER 25

— “We
Would learn the private virtues; how to glide
Through shades and plains, along the smoothest stream
Of rural life; or, snatch’d away by hope,
Through the dim spaces of futurity,
With earnest eye anticipate those scenes
Of happiness and wonder, where the mind,
In endless growth and infinite ascent,
Rises from state to state, and world to world.”
Thomson.

Ellena, obedient to the command of Schedoni, withdrew from her home on the day that followed her arrival there, to the Santa della Piéta. The Superiour, who had known her from her infancy, and, from the acquaintance which such long observation afforded, had both esteemed and loved her, received Ellena with a degree of satisfaction proportionate to the concern she had suffered when informed of her disastrous removal from the Villa Altieri.

Among the quiet groves of this convent, however, Ellena vainly endeavoured to moderate her solicitude respecting the situation of Vivaldi; for, now that she had a respite from immediate calamity, she thought with more intense anxiety as to what might be his sufferings, and her fears and impatience increased, as each day disappointed her expectation of intelligencé from Schedoni.

If the soothings of sympathy and the delicate arts of benevolence could have restored the serenity of her mind, Ellena would now have been peaceful; for all these were offered her by the abbess and the sisters of the Santa della Piéta. They were not acquainted with the cause of her sorrow, but they perceived that she was unhappy, and wished her to be otherwise. The society of Our Lady of Pity, was such as a convent does not often shroud; to the wisdom and virtue of the Superiour, the sisterhood was principally indebted for the harmony and happiness which distinguished them. This lady was a shining example to governesses of religious houses, and a striking instance of the influence, which a virtuous mind may acquire over others, as well as of the extensive good that it may thus diffuse. She was dignified without haughtiness, religious without bigotry, and mild, though decisive and firm. She possessed penetration to discover what was just, resolution to adhere to it, and temper to practise it with gentleness and grace; so that even correction from her, assumed the winning air of courtesy: the person, whom she admonished, wept in sorrow for the offence, instead of being secretly irritated by the reproof, and loved her as a mother, rather than feared her as a judge. Whatever might be her failings, they were effectually concealed by the general benevolence of her heart, and the harmony of her mind; a harmony, not the effect of torpid feelings, but the accomplishment of correct and vigilant judgment. Her religion was neither gloomy, nor bigotted; it was the sentiment of a grateful heart offering itself up to a Deity, who delights in the happiness of his creatures; and she conformed to the customs of the Roman church, without supposing a faith in all of them to be necessary to salvation. This opinion, however, she was obliged to conceal, lest her very virtue should draw upon her the punishment of a crime, from some fierce ecclesiastics, who contradicted in their practice the very essential principles, which the christianity they professed would have taught them.

In her lectures to the nuns she seldom touched upon points of faith, but explained and enforced the moral duties, particularly such as were most practicable in the society to which she belonged; such as tended to soften and harmonize the affections, to impart that repose of mind, which persuades to the practice of sisterly kindness, universal charity, and the most pure and elevated devotion. When she spoke of religion, it appeared so interesting, so beautiful, that her attentive auditors revered and loved it as a friend, a refiner of the heart, a sublime consoler; and experienced somewhat of the meek and holy ardour, which may belong to angelic natures.

The society appeared like a large family, of which the lady abbess was the mother, rather than an assemblage of strangers; and particularly when gathered around her, they listened to the evening sermon, which she delivered with such affectionate interest, such persuasive eloquence, and sometimes with such pathetic energy, as few hearts could resist.

She encouraged in her convent every innocent and liberal pursuit, which might sweeten the austerities of confinement, and which were generally rendered instrumental to charity. The Daughters of Pity particularly excelled in music; not in those difficulties of the art, which display florid graces, and intricate execution, but in such eloquence of sound as steals upon the heart, and awakens its sweetest and best affections. It was probably the well-regulated sensibility of their own minds, that enabled these sisters to diffuse through their strains a character of such finely-tempered taste, as drew crowds of visitors, on every festival, to the church of the Santa della Piéta.

The local circumstances of this convent were scarcely less agreeable than the harmony of its society was interesting. These extensive domains included olive-grounds, vineyards, and some corn-land; a considerable tract was devoted to the pleasures of the garden, whose groves supplied walnuts, almonds, oranges, and citrons, in abundance, and almost every kind of fruit and flower, which this luxurious climate nurtured. These gardens hung upon the slope of a hill, about a mile within the shore, and afforded extensive views of the country round Naples, and of the gulf. But from the terraces, which extended along a semicircular range of rocks, that rose over the convent, and formed a part of the domain, the prospects were infinitely finer. They extended on the south to the isle of Capræa, where the gulf expands into the sea; in the west, appeared the island of Ischia, distinguished by the white pinnacles of the lofty mountain Epomeo; and near it Prosida, with its many-coloured cliffs, rose out of the waves. Overlooking many points towards Puzzuoli, the eye caught beyond other promontories, and others further still, to the north, a glimpse of the sea, that bathes the now desolate shores of Baia; with Capua, and all the towns and villas, that speckle the garden-plains between Caserta and Naples.

In the nearer scene were the rocky heights of Pausilippo, and Naples itself, with all its crowded suburbs ascending among the hills, and mingling with vineyards and overtopping cypress; the castle of San Elmo, conspicuous on its rock, overhanging the magnificent monastery of the Chartreux; while in the scene below appeared the Castel Nuovo, with its clustered towers, the long-extended Corso, the mole, with its tall pharos, and the harbour gay with painted shipping, and full to the brim with the blue waters of the bay. Beyond the hills of Naples, the whole horizon to the north and east was bounded by the mountains of the Appenine, an amphitheatre proportioned to the grandeur of the plain, which the gulf spread out below.

These terraces, shaded with acacias and plane-trees, were the favourite haunt of Ellena. Between the opening branches, she looked down upon Villa Altieri, which brought to her remembrance the affectionate Bianchi, with all the sportive years of her childhood; and where some of her happiest hours had been passed in the society of Vivaldi. Along the windings of the coast, too, she could distinguish many places rendered sacred by affection, to which she had made excursions with her lamented relative, and Vivaldi; and, though sadness mingled with the recollections a view of them restored, they were precious to her heart. Here, alone and unobserved, she frequently yielded to the melancholy which she endeavoured to suppress in society; and at other times tried to deceive, with books and the pencil, the lingering moments of uncertainty concerning the state of Vivaldi; for day after day still elapsed without bringing any intelligence from Schedoni. Whenever the late scenes connected with the discovery of her family recurred to Ellena, she was struck with almost as much amazement as if she was gazing upon a vision, instead of recalling realities. Contrasted with the sober truth of her present life, the past appeared like romance; and there were moments when she shrunk from the relationship of Schedoni with unconquerable affright. The first emotions his appearance had excited were so opposite to those of filial tenderness, that she perceived it was now nearly impossible to love and revere him as her father, and she endeavoured, by dwelling upon all the obligations, which she believed he had lately conferred upon her, to repay him in gratitude, what was withheld in affection.

In such melancholy considerations, she often lingered under the shade of the accacias, till the sun had sunk behind the far distant promontory of Miseno, and the last bell of vespers summoned her to the convent below.

Among the nuns, Ellena had many favourites, but not one that she admired and loved equally with Olivia of San Stefano, the remembrance of whom was always accompanied with a fear lest she should have suffered from her generous compassion, and a wish that she had taken up her abode with the happy society of the Daughters of Pity, instead of being subjected to the tyranny of the abbess of San Stefano. To Ellena, the magnificent scenes of the Santa della Piéta seemed to open a secure, and, perhaps, a last asylum; for, in her present circumstances, she could not avoid perceiving how menacing and various were the objections to her marriage with Vivaldi, even should Schedoni prove propitious to it. The character of the Marchesa di Vivaldi, such as it stood unfolded by the late occurrences, struck her with dismay, for her designs appeared sufficiently atrocious, whether they had extended to the utmost limit of Ellena's suspicions, or had stopped where the affected charity of Schedoni had pointed out. In either case, the pertinacity of her aversion, and the vindictive violence of her nature, were obvious.

In this view of her character, however, it was not the inconvenience threatened to those who might become connected with her, that principally affected Ellena, but the circumstance of such a woman being the mother of Vivaldi; and, to alleviate so afflicting a consideration, she endeavoured to believe all the palliating suggestions of Schedoni, respecting the Marchesa's late intentions. But if Ellena was grieved on discovering crime in the character of Vivaldi's parent, what would have been her suffering, had she suspected the nature of Schedoni? — what, if she had been told that he was the adviser of the Marchesa's plans? — if she had known that he had been the partner of her intentional guilt? From such suffering she was yet spared, as well as from that, which a knowledge of Vivaldi's present situation, and of the result of Schedoni's efforts to procure a release from the perils, among which he had precipitated him, would have inflicted. Had she known this, it is probable that in the first despondency of her mind, she would have relinquished what is called the world, and sought a lasting asylum with the society of the holy sisters. Even as it was, she sometimes endeavoured to look with resignation upon the events which might render such a step desirable; but it was an effort that seldom soothed her even with a temporary self-delusion. Should the veil, however, prove her final refuge, it would be by her own choice; for the lady abbess of the Santa della Piéta employed no art to win a recluse, nor suffered the nuns to seduce votaries to the order.

❦

Chapter 26

> "Sullen and sad to fancy's frighted eye
> Did shapes of dun and murky hue advance,
> In train tumultuous, all of gesture strange,
> And passing horrible."
> Caractacus.

While the late events had been passing in the Garganus, and at Naples, Vivaldi and his servant Paulo remained imprisoned in distinct chambers of the Inquisition. They were again separately interrogated. From the servant no information could be obtained; he asserted only his master's innocence, without once remembering to mention his own; clamoured, with more justness than prudence, against the persons who had occasioned his arrest; seriously endeavouring to convince the inquisitors, that he himself had no other motive in having demanded to be brought to these prisons than that he might comfort his master, he gravely remonstrated on the injustice of separating them, adding, that he was sure when they knew the rights of the matter, they would order him to be carried to the prison of Signor Vivaldi.

"I do assure your Serenissimo Illustrissimo," continued Paulo, addressing the chief inquisitor with profound gravity, "that this is the last place I should have thought of coming to, on any other account; and if you will only condescend to ask your officials, who took my master up, they will tell you as good. They knew well enough all along, what I came here for, and if they had known it would be all in vain, it would have been but civil of them to have told me as much, and not have brought me; for this is the last place in the world I would have come to, otherwise, of my own accord."

Paulo was permitted to harangue in his own way, because his examiners hoped that his prolixity would be a means of betraying circumstances connected with his master. By this view, however, they were misled, for Paulo, with all his simplicity of heart, was both vigilant and shrewd in Vivaldi's interest. But, when he perceived them really convinced, that his sole motive for visiting the Inquisition was that he might console his master, yet still persisting in the resolution of separately confining him, his indignation knew no bounds. He despised alike their reprehension, their thundering menaces, and their more artful exhibitions; told them of all they had to expect both here and hereafter, for their cruelty to his dear master, and said they might do what they would with him; he defied them to make him more miserable than he was.

It was not without difficulty that he was removed from the chamber; where he left his examiners in a state of astonishment at his rashness, and indignation of his honesty, such as they had, probably, never experienced before.

When Vivaldi was again called up to the table of the Holy Office, he underwent a longer examination than on a former occasion. Several inquisitors attended, and every art was employed to induce him to confess crimes, of which he was suspected, and to draw from him a discovery of others, which might have eluded even suspicion. Still the examiners cautiously avoided informing him of the subject of the accusation on which he had been arrested, and it was, therefore, only on the former assurances of the Benedictine, and the officials in the chapel of San Sebastian, that Vivaldi understood he was accused of having carried off a nun. His answers on the present occasion were concise and firm, and his whole deportment undaunted. He felt less apprehension for himself, than indignation of the general injustice and cruelty, which the tribunal was permitted to exercise upon others; and this virtuous indignation gave a loftiness, a calm heroic grandeur to his mind, which never, for a moment, forsook him, except when he conjectured what might be the sufferings of Ellena. Then, his fortitude and magnanimity failed, and his tortured spirit rose almost to frenzy.

On this, his second examination, he was urged by the same dark questions, and replied to them with the same open sincerity, as during the first. Yet the simplicity and energy of truth failed to impress conviction on minds, which, no longer possessing the virtue themselves, were not competent to understand the symptoms of it in others. Vivaldi was again threatened with the torture, and again dismissed to his prison.

On the way to this dreadful abode, a person passed him in one of the avenues, of whose air and figure he thought he had some recollection; and, as the stranger stalked away, he suddenly knew him to be the prophetic monk, who had haunted him among the ruins of Paluzzi. In the first moment of surprize, Vivaldi lost his presence of mind so far, that he made no attempt to interrupt him. In the next instant, however, he paused and looked back, with an intention of speaking; but this mysterious person was already at the extremity of the avenue. Vivaldi called, and besought him to stop. Without either speaking, or turning his head, however, he immediately disappeared beyond a door that opened at his approach.

Vivaldi, on attempting to take the way of the monk, was withheld by his guards, and, when he inquired who was the stranger he had seen, the officials asked, in their turn, what stranger he alluded to.

"He who has just passed us," replied Vivaldi.

The officials seemed surprized, "Your spirits are disordered, Signor," observed one of them, "I saw no person pass!"

"He passed so closely," said Vivaldi, "that it was hardly possible you could avoid seeing him!"

"I did not even hear a footstep!" added the man.

"I do not recollect that I did," answered Vivaldi, "but I saw his figure as plainly as I now see your's; his black garments almost touched me! Was he an inquisitor?"

The official appeared astonished; and, whether his surprize was real, or affected for the purpose of concealing his knowledge of the person alluded to, his embarrassment and awe seemed natural. Vivaldi observed, with almost equal curiosity and surprize, the fear which his face expressed; but perceived also, that it would avail nothing to repeat his questions.

As they proceeded along the avenue, a kind of half-stifled groan was sometimes audible from a distance. "Whence come those sounds?" said Vivaldi, "they strike to my heart!"

"They should do so," replied the guard.

"Whence come they?" repeated Vivaldi, more impatiently, and shuddering.

"From the place of torture," said the official.

"O God! O God!" exclaimed Vivaldi, with a deep groan.

He passed with hasty steps the door of that terrible chamber, and the guard did not attempt to stop him. The officials had brought him, in obedience to the customary orders they had received, within hearing of those doleful sounds, for the purpose of impressing upon his mind the horrors of the punishment, with which he was threatened, and of inducing him to confess without incurring them.

On this same evening, Vivaldi was visited, in his prison, by a man whom he had never consciously seen before. He appeared to be between forty and fifty; was of a grave and observant physiognomy, and of manners, which, though somewhat austere, were not alarming. The account he gave of himself, and of his motive for this visit, was curious. He said that he also was a prisoner in the inquisition, but, as the ground of accusation against him was light, he had been favoured so far as to be allowed some degree of liberty within certain bounds; that, having heard of Vivaldi's situation, he had asked and obtained leave to converse with him, which he had done in compassion; and with a desire of assuaging his sufferings, so far as an expression of sympathy and commiseration might relieve them.

While he spoke, Vivaldi regarded him with deep attention, and the improbability that these pretensions should be true, did not escape him; but the suspicion which they occasioned he prudently concealed. The stranger conversed on various subjects. Vivaldi's answers were cautious and concise; but not even long pauses of silence wearied the compassionate patience of his visitor. Among other topics he, at length, introduced that of religion.

"I have, myself, been accused of heresy," said he, "and know how to pity others in the same situation."

"It is of heresy, then, that I am accused!" interrupted Vivaldi, "of heresy!"

"It availed me nothing that I asserted my innocence," continued the stranger, without noticing Vivaldi's exclamation,

"I was condemned to the torture. My sufferings were too terrible to be endured! I confessed my offence — "

"Pardon me," interrupted Vivaldi, "but allow me to observe, that since your sufferings were so severe, your's, against whom the ground of accusation was light, what may be the punishment of those, whose offences are more serious?"

The stranger was somewhat embarrassed. "My offence was slight," he continued, without giving a full answer.

"Is it possible," said Vivaldi, again interrupting him, "that heresy can be considered as a slight offence before the tribunal of the Inquisition?"

"It was only of a slight degree of heresy," replied the visitor, reddening with displeasure, "that I was suspected, and — "

"Does then the Inquisition allow of degrees in heresy?" said Vivaldi.

"I confessed my offence," added the stranger with a louder emphasis, and the consequence of this confession was a remission of punishment. After a trifling penance I shall be dismissed, and probably, in a few days, leave the prison. Before

I left it, I was desirous of administering some degree of consolation to a fellow sufferer; if you have any friends whom you wish to inform of your situation, do not fear to confide their names and your message to me."

The latter part of the speech was delivered in a low voice, as if the stranger feared to be overheard. Vivaldi remained silent, while he examined, with closer attention, the countenance of his visitor. It was of the utmost importance to him, that his family should be made acquainted with his situation; yet he knew not exactly how to interpret, or/to confide in this offer. Vivaldi had heard that informers sometimes visited the prisoners, and, under the affectation of kindness and sympathy, drew from them a confession of opinions, which were afterwards urged against them; and obtained discoveries relative to their connections and friends, who were, by these insidious means, frequently involved in their destruction. Vivaldi, conscious of his own innocence, had, on his first examination, acquainted the inquisitor with the names and residence of his family; he had, therefore, nothing new to apprehend from revealing them to this stranger; but he perceived that if it should be known he had attempted to convey a message, however concise and harmless, the discovery would irritate the jealous inquisitors against him, and might be urged as a new presumption of his guilt. These considerations, together with the distrust which the inconsistency of his visitor's assertions, and the occasional embarrassment of his manner, had awakened, determined Vivaldi to resist the temptation now offered to him; and the stranger, having received his thanks, reluctantly withdrew, observing, however, that should any unforeseen circumstance detain him in the Inquisition longer than he had reason to expect, he should beg leave to pay him another visit. In reply to this, Vivaldi only bowed, but he remarked that the stranger's countenance changed, and that some dark brooding appeared to cloud his mind, as he quitted the chamber.

Several days elapsed, during which Vivaldi heard no more of his new acquaintance. He was then summoned to another examination, from which he was dismissed as before; and some weeks of solitude and of heavy uncertainty succeeded, after which he was a fourth time called up to the table of the Holy Office. It was then surrounded by inquisitors, and a more than usual solemnity appeared in the proceedings.

As proofs of Vivaldi's innocence had not been obtained, the suspicions of his examiners, of course, were not removed; and, as he persisted in denying the truth of the charge which he understood would be exhibited against him, and refused to make any confession of crimes, it was ordered that he should, within three hours, be put to the question. Till then, Vivaldi was once more dismissed to his prison chamber. His resolution remained unshaken, but he could not look, unmoved, upon the horrors which might be preparing for him. The interval of expectation between the sentence and the accomplishment of this preliminary punishment, was, indeed, dreadful. The seeming ignominy of his situation, and his ignorance as to the degree of torture to be applied, overcame the calmness he had before exhibited, and as he paced his cell, cold damps, which hung upon his forehead, betrayed the agony of his mind. It was not long, however, that he suffered from a sense of ignominy; his better judgment shewed him, that innocence cannot suffer disgrace from any situation or circumstance, and he once more resumed the courage and the firmness which belong to virtue.

It was about midnight, that Vivaldi heard steps approaching, and a murmur of voices at the door of his cell. He understood these to be the persons come to summon him to the torture. The door was unbarred, and two men, habited in black, appeared at it. Without speaking, they advanced, and throwing over him a singular kind of mantle, led him from the chamber.

Along the galleries, and other avenues through which they passed, not any person was seen, and, by the profound stillness that reigned, it seemed as if death had already anticipated his work in these regions of horror, and had condemned alike the tortured and the torturer.

They descended to the large hall, where Vivaldi had waited on the night of his entrance, and thence through an avenue, and down a long flight of steps, that led to subterranean chambers. His conductors did not utter a syllable during the whole progress; Vivaldi knew too well that questions would only subject him to greater severity, and he asked none.

The doors, through which they passed, regularly opened at the touch of an iron rod, carried by one of the officials, and without the appearance of any person. The other man bore a torch, and the passages were so dimly lighted, that the way could scarcely have been found without one. They crossed what seemed to be a burial vault, but the extent and obscurity of the place did not allow it to be ascertained; and, having reached an iron door, they stopped. One of the officials struck upon it three times with the rod, but it did not open as the others had done. While they waited, Vivaldi thought he heard, from within, low intermitting sounds, as of persons in their last extremity, but, though within, they appeared to come from a distance. His whole heart was chilled, not with fear, for at that moment he did not remember himself, but with horror.

Having waited a considerable time, during which the official did not repeat the signal, the door was partly opened by a person whom Vivaldi could not distinguish in the gloom beyond, and with whom one of his conductors communicated by signs; after which the door was closed.

Several minutes had elapsed, when tones of deep voices aroused the attention of Vivaldi. They were loud and hoarse, and spoke in a language unknown to him. At the sounds, the official immediately extinguished his torch. The voices drew nearer, and, the door again unfolding, two figures stood before Vivaldi, which, shewn by a glimmering light within, struck him with astonishment and dismay. They were cloathed, like his conductors, in black, but in a different fashion, for their habits were made close to the shape. Their faces were entirely concealed beneath a very peculiar kind of cowl, which descended from the head to the feet; and their eyes only were visible through small openings contrived for the sight. It occurred to Vivaldi that these men were torturers; their appearance was worthy of demons. Probably they were thus habited, that the persons whom they afflicted might not know them; or, perhaps, it was only for the purpose of striking terror upon the minds of the accused, and thus compelling them to confess without further difficulty. Whatever motive might have occasioned their horrific appearance, and whatever was their office, Vivaldi was delivered into their hands, and in the same moment heard the iron door shut, which enclosed him with them in a narrow passage, gloomily lighted by a lamp suspended from the arched roof. They walked in silence on each side of their prisoner, and came to a second door, which admitted them instantly into another passage. A third door, at a short distance, admitted them to a third avenue, at the end of which one of his mysterious guides struck upon a gate, and they stopped. The uncertain sounds that Vivaldi had fancied he heard, were now more audible, and he distinguished, with inexpressible horror, that they were uttered by persons suffering.

The gate was, at length, opened by a figure habited like his conductors, and two other doors of iron, placed very near each other, being also unlocked, Vivaldi found himself in a spacious chamber, the walls of which were hung with black, duskily lighted by lamps that gleamed in the lofty vault. Immediately on his entrance, a strange sound ran along the walls, and echoed among other vaults, that appeared, by the progress of the sound, to extend far beyond this.

It was not immediately that Vivaldi could sufficiently recollect himself to observe any object before him; and, even when he did so, the gloom of the place prevented his ascertaining many appearances. Shadowy countenances and uncertain forms seemed to flit through the dusk, and many instruments, the application of which he did not comprehend, struck him with horrible suspicions. Still he heard, at intervals, half-suppressed groans, and was looking round to discover the wretched people from whom they were extorted, when a voice from a remote part of the chamber, called on him to advance.

The distance, and the obscurity of the spot whence the voice issued, had prevented Vivaldi from noticing any person there, and he was now slowly obeying, when, on a second summons, his conductors seized his arms, and hurried him forward.

In a remote part of this extensive chamber, he perceived three persons seated under a black canopy, on chairs raised several steps from the floor, and who appeared to preside there in the office of either judges or examiners, or directors of the punishments. Below, at a table, sat a secretary, over whom was suspended the only lamp that could enable him to commit to paper what should occur during the examination. Vivaldi now understood that the three persons who composed the tribunal were the vicar general, or grand inquisitor, the advocate of the exchequer, and an ordinary inquisitor, who was seated between the other two, and who appeared more eagerly to engage in the duties of his cruel office. A portentous obscurity enveloped alike their persons and their proceedings.

At some distance from the tribunal stood a large iron frame, which Vivaldi conjectured to be the rack, and near it another, resembling, in shape, a coffin, but, happily, he could not distinguish through the remote obscurity, any person undergoing actual suffering. In the vaults beyond, however, the diabolical decrees of the inquisitors seemed to be fulfilling; for, whenever a distant door opened for a moment, sounds of lamentation issued forth, and men, whom he judged to be familiars, habited like those who stood beside him, were seen passing to and fro within.

Vivaldi almost believed himself in the infernal regions; the dismal aspect of this place, the horrible preparation for punishment, and, above all, the disposition and appearance of the persons that were ready to inflict it, confirmed the resemblance. That any human being should willingly afflict a fellow being who had never injured, or even offended him; that, unswayed by passion, he should deliberately become the means of torturing him, appeared to Vivaldi nearly incredible! But when he looked at the three persons who composed the tribunal, and considered that they had not only voluntarily undertaken the cruel office they fulfilled, but had probably long regarded it as the summit of their ambition, his astonishment and indignation were unbounded.

The grand inquisitor, having again called on Vivaldi by name, admonished him to confess the truth, and avoid the suffering that awaited him.

As Vivaldi had on former examinations spoken the truth, which was not believed, he had no chance of escaping present suffering, but by asserting falshood: in doing so, to avoid such monstrous injustice and cruelty, he might, perhaps, have been justified, had it been certain that such assertion could affect himself alone; but since he knew that the consequence must extend to others, and, above all, believed that Ellena di Rosalba must be involved in it, he did not hesitate for an instant to dare whatever torture his firmness might provoke. But even if morality could have forgiven falshood in such extraordinary circumstances as these, policy, after all, would have forbidden it, since a discovery of the artifice would probably have led to the final destruction of the accused person.

Of Ellena's situation he would now have asked, however desperate the question; would again have asserted her innocence, and supplicated for compassion, even to inquisitors, had he not perceived that, in doing so, he should only furnish them with a more exquisite means of torturing him than any other they could apply; for if, when all the terrors of his soul concerning her were understood, they should threaten to increase her sufferings, as the punishment of what was termed his obstinacy, they would, indeed, become the masters of his integrity, as well as of his person.

The tribunal again, and repeatedly, urged Vivaldi to confess himself guilty; and the inquisitor, at length, concluded with saying, that the judges were innocent of whatever consequence might ensue from his obstinacy; so that, if he expired beneath his sufferings, himself only, not they, would have occasioned his death.

"I am innocent of the charges which I understand are urged against me," said Vivaldi, with solemnity; "I repeat, that I am innocent! If, to escape the horrors of these moments, I could be weak enough to declare myself guilty, not all your racks could alter truth, and make me so, except in that assertion. The consequence of your tortures, therefore, be upon your own heads!"

While Vivaldi spoke, the vicar general listened with attention, and, when he had ceased to speak, appeared to meditate; but the inquisitor was irritated by the boldness of his speech, instead of being convinced by the justness of his representation; and made a signal for the officers to prepare for the question. While they were obeying, Vivaldi observed, notwithstanding the agitation he suffered, a person cross the chamber; whom he immediately knew to be the same that had passed him in an avenue of the inquisition on a former night, and whom he had then fancied to be the mysterious stranger of Paluzzi. Vivaldi now fixed his eyes upon him, but his own peculiar situation prevented his feeling the interest he had formerly suffered concerning him.

The figure, air, and stalk, of this person were so striking, and so strongly resembled those of the monk of Paluzzi, that Vivaldi had no longer a doubt as to their identity. He pointed him out to one of the officials, and inquired who he was. While he spoke, the stranger, was passing forward, and, before any reply was given, a door leading to the farther vaults shut him from view. Vivaldi, however, repeated the inquiry, which the official appeared unable to answer, and a reproof from the tribunal reminded him that he must not ask questions there. Vivaldi observed that it was the grand inquisitor who spoke, and that the manner of the official immediately changed.

The familiars, who were the same that had conducted Vivaldi into the chamber, having made ready the instrument of torture, approached him, and, after taking off his cloak and vest, bound him with strong cords. They threw over his head the customary black garment, which entirely enveloped his figure, and prevented his observing what was farther preparing. In this state of expectation, he was again interrogated by the inquisitor.

"Was you ever in the church of the Spirito Santo, at Naples?" said he.

"Yes," replied Vivaldi.

"Did you ever express there a contempt for the Catholic faith?"

"Never," said Vivaldi.

"Neither by word or action?" continued the inquisitor.

"Never, by either!"

"Recollect yourself," added the inquisitor. "Did you never insult there a minister of our most holy church?"

Vivaldi was silent: he began to perceive the real nature of the charge which was to be urged against him, and that it was too plausible to permit his escape from the punishment, which is adjudged for heresy. Questions so direct and minute had never been put to him here on his former examinations; they had been reserved for a moment when it was believed he could not evade them; and the real charge had been concealed from him, that he might not be prepared to elude it.

“Answer!” repeated the inquisitor. — “Did you ever insult a minister of the Catholic faith, in the church of the Spirito Santo, at Naples?”

“Did you not insult him while he was performing an act of holy penance?” said another voice.

Vivaldi started, for he instantly recollected the well-known tones of the monk of Paluzzi. “Who asks the question?” demanded Vivaldi.

“It is you who are to answer here,” resumed the inquisitor. “Answer to what I have required.”

“I have offended a minister of the church,” replied Vivaldi, “but never could intentionally insult our holy religion. You are not acquainted, fathers, with the injuries that provoked — ”

“Enough!” interrupted the inquisitor; “speak to the question. Did you not, by insult and menace, force a pious brother to leave unperformed the act of penance in which he had engaged himself? Did you not compel him to quit the church, and fly for refuge to his convent?”

“No,” replied Vivaldi. “’Tis true, he left the church, and that in consequence of my conduct there; but the consequence was not necessary; if he had only replied to my inquiry, or promised to restore her of whom he had treacherously robbed me, he might have remained quietly in the church till this moment, had that depended upon my forbearance.”

“What!” said the vicar-general, “would you have compelled him to speak, when he was engaged in silent penance? You confess, that you occasioned him to leave the church. That is enough.”

“Where did you first see Ellena di Rosalba?” said the voice, which had spoken once before.

“I demand again, who gives the question,” answered Vivaldi.

“Recollect yourself,” said the inquisitor, “a criminal cannot make a demand.”

“I do not perceive the connection between your admonition and your assertion,” observed Vivaldi.

“You appear to be rather too much at your ease,” said the inquisitor. “Answer to the question which was last put to you, or the familiars shall do their duty.”

“Let the same person ask it,” replied Vivaldi.

The question was repeated in the former voice.

“In the church of San Lorenzo, at Naples,” said Vivaldi, with a heavy sigh, “I first beheld Ellena di Rosalba.”

“Was she then professed?” asked the vicar general.

“She never accepted the veil,” replied Vivaldi, “nor ever intended to do so.”

“Where did she reside at that period?”

“She lived with a relative at Villa Altieri, and would yet reside there, had not the machinations of a monk occasioned her to be torn from her home, and confined in a convent, from which I had just assisted to release her, when she was again seized, and upon a charge most false and cruel. — O reverend fathers! I conjure, I supplicate — “ Vivaldi restrained himself, for he was going to have betrayed, to the mercy of inquisitors, all the feelings of his heart.

“The name of the monk?” said the stranger, earnestly.

“If I mistake not,” replied Vivaldi, “you are already acquainted with it. The monk is called father Schedoni. He is of the Dominican convent of the Spirito Santo, in Naples, and the same who accuses me of having insulted him in the church of that name.”

“How did you know him for your accuser?” asked the same voice.

“Because he is my only enemy,” replied Vivaldi.

“Your enemy!” observed the inquisitor; “a former deposition says, you were unconscious of having one! You are inconsistent in your replies.”

“You were warned not to visit Villa Altieri,” said the unknown person. “Why did you not profit by the warning?”

“I was warned by yourself,” answered Vivaldi. “Now I know you well.”

“By me!” said the stranger, in a solemn tone.

“By you!” repeated Vivaldi: “you who also foretold the death of Signora Bianchi; and you are that enemy — that father Schedoni, by whom I am accused.”

“Whence come these questions?” demanded the vicar general. “Who has been authorised thus to interrogate the prisoner?”

No reply was made. A busy hum of voices from the tribunal succeeded the silence. At length, the murmuring subsided, and the monk’s voice was heard again.

“I will declare thus much,” it said, addressing Vivaldi; “I am not father Schedoni.”

The peculiar tone and emphasis, with which this was delivered, more than the assertion itself, persuaded Vivaldi that the stranger spoke truth; and, though he still recognized the voice of the monk of Paluzzi, he did not know it to be that of Schedoni. Vivaldi was astonished! He would have torn the veil from his eyes, and once more viewed this mysterious stranger, had his hands been at liberty. As it was, he could only conjure him to reveal his name, and the motives for his former conduct.

“Who is come amongst us?” said the vicar general, in the voice of a person, who means to inspire in others the awe he himself suffers.

“Who is come amongst us?” he repeated, in a louder tone. Still no answer was returned; but again a confused murmur sounded from the tribunal, and a general consternation seemed to prevail. No person spoke with sufficient pre-eminence to be understood by Vivaldi; something extraordinary appeared to be passing, and he awaited the issue with all the patience he could command. Soon after he heard doors opened, and the noise of persons quitting the chamber. A deep silence followed; but he was certain that the familiars were still beside him, waiting to begin their work of torture.

After a considerable time had elapsed, Vivaldi heard footsteps advancing, and a person give orders for his release, that he might be carried back to his cell.

When the veil was removed from his eyes, he perceived that the tribunal was dissolved, and that the stranger was gone. The lamps were dying away, and the chamber appeared more gloomily terrific than before.

The familiars conducted him to the spot at which they had received him; whence the officers who had led him thither, guarded him to his prison. There, stretched upon his bed of straw, in solitude and in darkness, he had leisure enough to reflect upon what had passed, and to recollect with minute exactness every former circumstance connected with the stranger. By comparing those with the present, he endeavoured to draw a more certain conclusion as to the identity of this person, and his motives for the very extraordinary conduct he had pursued. The first appearance of this stranger, among the ruins of Paluzzi, when he had said that Vivaldi’s steps were watched, and had cautioned him against returning to Villa Altieri, was recalled to his mind. Vivaldi re-considered, also, his second appearance on the same spot, and his second warning; the circumstances, which had attended his own adventures within the fortress; — the monk’s prediction of Bianchi’s death, and his evil tidings respecting Ellena, at the very hour when she had been seized and carried from her home. The longer he considered these several instances, as they were now connected in his mind, with the certainty of Schedoni’s evil disposition towards him, the more he was inclined to believe, notwithstanding the voice of seeming truth which had just affirmed the contrary, that the unknown person was Schedoni himself, and that he had been employed by the Marchesa, to prevent Vivaldi’s visits to Villa Altieri. Being thus an agent in the events of which he had warned Vivaldi, he was too well enabled to predict them. Vivaldi paused upon the remembrance of Signor Bianchi’s death; he considered the extraordinary and dubious cirumstances that had attended it, and shuddered as a new conjecture crossed his mind. — The thought was too dreadful to be permitted, and he dismissed it instantly.

Of the conversation, however, which he had afterwards held with the Confessor in the Marchesa’s cabinet, he recollected many particulars that served to renew his doubts as to the identity of the stranger; the behaviour of Schedoni when he was obliquely challenged for the monk of Paluzzi, still appeared that of a man unconscious of disguise; and above all, Vivaldi was struck with the seeming candour of his having pointed out a circumstance, which removed the probability that the stranger was a brother of the Santa del Pianto.

Some particulars, also, of the stranger’s conduct did not agree with what might have been expected from Schedoni, even though the Confessor had really been Vivaldi’s enemy; a circumstance which the latter was no longer permitted to doubt. Nor did those particular circumstances accord, as he was inclined to believe, with the manner of a being of this world; and, when Vivaldi considered the suddenness and mystery, with which the stranger had always appeared and retired, he felt disposed to adopt again one of his earliest conjectures, which undoubtedly the horrors of his present abode disposed his imagination to admit, as those of his former situation in the vaults of Paluzzi, together with a youthful glow of curiosity concerning the marvellous, had before contributed to impress them upon his mind.

He concluded his present reflections as he had began them — in doubt and perplexity; but at length found a respite from thought and from suffering in sleep.

Midnight had been passed in the vaults of the Inquisition; but it was probably not yet two o'clock, when he was imperfectly awakened by a sound, which he fancied proceeded from within his chamber. He raised himself to discover what had occasioned the noise; it was, however, impossible to discern any object, for all was dark, but he listened for a return of the sound. The wind only, was heard moaning among the inner buildings of the prison, and Vivaldi concluded, that his dream had mocked him with a mimic voice.

Satisfied with this conclusion, he again laid his head on his pillow of straw, and soon sunk into a slumber. The subject of his waking thoughts still haunted his imagination, and the stranger, whose voice he had this night recognized as that of the monk of Paluzzi, appeared before him. Vivaldi, on perceiving the figure of this unknown, felt, perhaps, nearly the same degrees of awe, curiosity, and impatience that he would have suffered, had he beheld the substance of this shadow. The monk, whose face was still shrowded, he thought advanced, till, having come within a few paces of Vivaldi, he paused, and, lifting the awful cowl that had hitherto concealed him, disclosed — not the countenance of Schedoni, but one which Vivaldi did not recollect ever having seen before! It was not less interesting to curiosity, than striking to the feelings. Vivaldi at the first glance shrunk back; — something of that strange and indescribable air, which we attach to the idea of a supernatural being, prevailed over the features; and the intense and fiery eyes resembled those of an evil spirit, rather than of a human character. He drew a poniard from beneath a fold of his garment, and, as he displayed it, pointed with a stern frown to the spots which discoloured the blade; Vivaldi perceived they were of blood! He turned away his eyes in horror, and, when he again looked round in his dream, the figure was gone.

A groan awakened him, but what were his feelings, when, on looking up, he perceived the same sigure standing before him! It was not, however, immediately that he could convince himself the appearance was more than the phantom of his dream, strongly impressed upon an alarmed fancy. The voice of the monk, for his face was as usual concealed, recalled Vivaldi from his error; but his emotion cannot easily be conceived, when the stranger, slowly lifting that mysterious cowl, discovered to him the same awful countenance, which had characterized the vision in his slumber. Unable to inquire the occasion of this appearance, Vivaldi gazed in astonishment and terror, and did not immediately observe, that, instead of a dagger, the monk held a lamp, which gleamed over every deep furrow of his features, yet left their shadowdy markings to hint the passions and the history of an extraordinary life.

"You are spared for this night," said the stranger, "but for to-morrow" — he paused.

"In the name of all that is most sacred," said Vivaldi, endeavouring to recollect his thoughts, "who are you, and what is your errand?"

"Ask no questions," replied the monk, solemnly; — "but answer me."

Vivaldi was struck by the tone, with which he said this, and dared not to urge the inquiry at the present moment.

"How long have you known father Schedoni?" continued the stranger, "Where did you first meet?

"I have known him about a year, as my mother's Confessor," replied Vivaldi. "I first saw him in a corridor of the Vivaldi palace; it was evening, and he was returning from the Marchesa's closet."

"Are you certain as to this?" said the monk, with peculiar emphasis. "It is of consequence that you should be so."

"I am certain," repeated Vivaldi.

"It is strange," observed the monk, after a pause, "that a circumstance, which must have appeared trivial to you at the moment, should have left so strong a mark on your memory! In two years we have time to forget many things!" He sighed as he spoke.

"I remember the circumstance," said Vivaldi, "because I was struck with his appearance; the evening was far advanced — it was dusk, and he came upon me suddenly. His voice startled me; as he passed he said to himself — "It is for vespers." At the same time I heard the bell of the Spirito Santo."

"Do you know who he is?" said the stranger, solemnly.

"I know only what he appears to be," replied Vivaldi.

"Did you never hear any report of his past life?"

"Never," answered Vivaldi.

"Never any thing extraordinary concerning him," added the monk.

Vivaldi paused a moment; for he now recollected the obscure and imperfect story, which Paulo had related while they were confined in the dungeon of Paluzzi, respecting a confession made in the church of the Black Penitents; but he could not presume to affirm, that it concerned Schedoni. He remembered also the monk's garments, stained with blood, which he had discovered in the vaults of that fort. The conduct of the mysterious being, who now stood before him, with many other particulars of his own adventures there, passed like a vision over his memory. His mind resembled the glass of a magician, on which the apparitions of long-buried events arise, and as they fleet away, point portentously to shapes half-hid in the duskiness of futurity. An unusual dread seized upon him; and a superstition, such as he had never before admitted in an equal degree, usurped his judgment. He looked up to the shadowy countenance of the stranger; and almost believed he beheld an inhabitant of the world of spirits.

The monk spoke again, repeating in a feverer tone, "Did you never hear any thing extraordinary concerning father Schedoni?"

"Is it reasonable," said Vivaldi, recollecting his courage, "that I should answer the questions, the minute questions, of a person who refuses to tell me even his name?"

"My name is passed away — it is no more remembered," replied the stranger, turning from Vivaldi, — "I leave you to your fate."

"What fate?" asked Vivaldi, "and what is the purpose of this visit? I conjure you, in the tremendous name of the Inquisition, to say!"

"You will know full soon; have mercy on yourself!"

"What fate?" repeated Vivaldi.

"Urge me no further," said the stranger; "but answer to what I shall demand. Schedoni — "

"I have told all that I certainly know concerning him," interrupted Vivaldi, "the rest is only conjecture."

"What is that conjecture? Does it relate to a consession made in the church of the Black Penitents of the Santa Maria del Pianto?

"It does!" replied Vivaldi with surprise.

"What was that confession?"

"I know not," answered Vivaldi.

"Declare the truth," said the stranger, sternly.

"A confession," replied Vivaldi, "is sacred, and forever buried in the bosom of the priest to whom it is made. How, then, is it to be supposed, that I can be acquainted with the subject of this?"

"Did you never hear, that father Schedoni had been guilty of some great crimes, which he endeavours to erase from his conscience by the severity of penance?"

"Never!" said Vivaldi.

"Did you never hear that he had a wife — a brother?"

"Never!"

"Nor the means he used — no hint of — murder, of — "

The stranger paused, as if he wished Vivaldi to fill up his meaning, Vivaldi was silent and aghast.

"You know nothing then, of Schedoni," resumed the monk after a deep pause — "nothing of his past life?

"Nothing, except what I have mentioned," replied Vivaldi.

"Then listen to what I shall unfold!" continued the monk, with solemnity. "To-morrow night you will be again carried to the place of torture; you will be taken to a chamber beyond that in which you were this night. You will there witness many extraordinary things, of which you have not now any suspicion. Be not dismayed; I shall be there, though, perhaps, not visible."

“Not visible!” exclaimed Vivaldi.

“Interrupt me not, but listen. — When you are asked of father Schedoni, say — that he has lived for fifteen years in the disguise of a monk, a member of the Dominicans of the Spirito Santo, at Naples. When you are asked who he is, reply — Ferando Count di Bruno. You will be asked the motive, for such disguise. In reply to this, refer them to the Black Penitents of the Santa Maria del Pianto, near that city; bid the inquisitors summon before their tribunal one father Ansaldo di Rovalli, the grand penitentiary of the society, and command him to divulge the crimes confessed to him in the year 1752, on the evening of the twenty-fourth of April, which was then the vigil of Santo Marco, in a confessional of the Santa del Pianto.”

“It is probable he may have forgotten such confession, at this distance of time,” observed Vivaldi.

“Fear not but he will remember,” replied the stranger.

“But will his conscience suffer him to betray the secrets of a confession?” said Vivaldi.

“The tribunal command, and his conscience is absolved,” answered the monk, “He may not refuse to obey! You are further to direct your examiners to summon father Schedoni, to answer for the crimes which Ansaldo shall reveal.” The monk paused, and seemed waiting the reply of Vivaldi, who, after a momentary consideration, said,

“How can I do all this, and upon the instigation of a stranger! Neither conscience nor prudence will suffer me to assert what I cannot prove. It is true that I have reason to believe Schedoni is my bitter enemy, but I will not be unjust even to him. I have no proof that he is the Count di Bruno, nor that he is the perpetrator of the crimes you allude to, whatever those may be; and I will not be made an instrument to summon any man before a tribunal, where innocence is no protection from ignominy, and where suspicion alone may inflict death.”

“You doubt, then, the truth of what I assert?” said the monk, in a haughty tone.

“Can I believe that of which I have no proof?” replied Vivaldi.

“Yes, there are cases which do not admit of proof; under your peculiar circumstances, this is one of them; you can act only upon assertion. I attest,” continued the monk, raising his hollow voice to a tone of singular solemnity, “I attest the powers which are beyond this earth, to witness to the truth of what I have delivered!”

As the stranger uttered this adjuration, Vivaldi observed, with emotion, the extraordinary expression of his eyes; Vivaldi’s presence of mind, however, did not forsake him, and, in the next moment, he said, “But who is he that thus attests? It is upon the assertion of a stranger that I am to rely, in defect of proof! It is a stranger who calls upon me to bring solemn charges against a man, of whose guilt I know nothing!”

“You are not required to bring charges, you are only to summon him who will.”

“I should still assist in bringing forward accusations, which may be founded in error,” replied Vivaldi. “If you are convinced of their truth, why do not you summon Ansaldo yourself!”

“I shall do more,” said the monk.

“But why not summon also?” urged Vivaldi.

“I shall appear,” said the stranger, with emphasis.

Vivaldi, though somewhat awed by the manner, which accompanied these words, still urged his inquiries, “As a witness?” said he.

“Aye, as a dreadful witness!” replied the monk.

“But may not a witness summon others before the tribunal of the inquisition?” continued Vivaldi, faulteringly.

“He may,” said the stranger.

“Why then,” observed Vivaldi, “am I, a stranger to you, called upon to do that which you could perform yourself?”

“Ask no further,” said the monk, “but answer, whether you will deliver the summons?”

“The charges, which must follow,” replied Vivaldi, “appear to be of a nature too solemn to justify my promoting them. I resign the task to you.”

“When I summon,” said the stranger, “you shall obey!”

Vivaldi, again awed by his manner, again justified his refusal, and concluded with repeating his surprize, that he should be required to assist in this mysterious affair, “Since I neither know you, father,” he added, “nor the Penitentiary

Ansaldo, whom you bid me admonish to appear."

"You shall know me hereafter," said the stranger, frowningly; and he drew from beneath his garment a dagger!

Vivaldi remembered his dream.

"Mark those spots," said the monk.

Vivaldi looked, and beheld blood!

"This blood, added the stranger, pointing to the blade, "would have saved your's! Here is some print of truth! To-morrow night you will meet me in the chambers of death!"

As he spoke, he turned away; and, before Vivaldi had recovered from his consternation, the light disappeared. Vivaldi knew that the stranger had quitted the prison, only by the silence which prevailed there.

He remained sunk in thought, till, at the dawn of day, the man, on watch, unfastened the door of his cell, and brought, as usual, a jug of water, and some bread. Vivaldi inquired the name of the stranger who had visited him in the night. The centinel looked surpized, and Vivaldi repeated the question before he could obtain an answer.

"I have been on guard since the first hour," said the man, and no person, in that time, has passed through this door!"

Vivaldi regarded the centinel with attention, while he made this assertion, and did not perceive in his manner any consciousness of falshood; yet he knew not how to believe what he had affirmed. "Did you hear no noise, either?" said Vivaldi. "Has all been silent during the night?"

"I have heard only the bell of San Dominico strike upon the hour," replied the man, "and the watch word of the centinels."

"This is incomprehensible!" exclaimed Vivaldi, "What! no footsteps, no voice?"

The man smiled contemptuously. "None, but of the centinels," he replied.

"How can you be certain you heard only the centinel's, friend?" added Vivaldi.

"They speak only to pass the watch word, and the clash of their arms is heard at the same time."

"But their footsteps! — how are they distinguished from those of other persons?"

"By the heaviness of their tread; our sandals are braced with iron. But why these questions, Signor?"

"You have kept guard at the door of this chamber?" said Vivaldi.

"Yes, Signor."

"And you have not once heard, during the whole night, a voice from within it?"

"None, Signor."

"Fear nothing from discovery, friend; confess that you have slumbered."

"I had a comrade," replied the centinel, angrily, "has he, too, slumbered! and if he had, how could admittance be obtained without our keys?"

"And those might easily have been procured, friend, if you were overcome with sleep. You may rely upon my promise of secrecy."

"What!" said the man, "have I kept guard for three years in the Inquisition, to be suspected, by a heretic, of neglecting my duty?"

"If you were suspected by an heretic," replied Vivaldi, "you ought to console yourself by recollecting that his opinions are considered to be erroneous."

"We were watchful every minute of the night," said the centinel, going.

"This is incomprehensible!" said Vivaldi, "By what means could the stranger have entered my prison?"

"Signor, you still dream!" replied the centinel, pausing, "No person has been here."

"Still dream!" repeated Vivaldi, "how do you know that I have dreamt at all?" His mind deeply affected by the extraordinary circumstances of the dream, and the yet more extraordinary incident that had followed, Vivaldi gave a meaning to the words of the centinel, which did not belong to them.

"When people sleep, they are apt to dream," replied the man, dryly. "I supposed you had slept, Signor."

"A person, habited like a monk, came to me in the night, "resumed Vivaldi, and he described the appearance of the stranger. The centinel, while he listened, became grave and thoughtful.

“Do you know any person resembling the one I have mentioned,” said Vivaldi.

“No!” replied the guard.

“Though you have not seen him enter my prison,” continued Vivaldi, “you may, perhaps, recollect such a person, as an inhabitant of the Inquisition.”

“San Dominico forbid!”

Vivaldi, surprized at this exclamation, inquired the reason for it.

“I know him not,” replied the centinel, changing countenance, and he abruptly left the prison. Whatever consideration might occasion this sudden departure, his assertion that he had been for three years a guard of the Inquisition could scarcely be credited, since he had held so long a dialogue with a prisoner, and was, apparently, insensible of the danger he incurred by so doing.

❦

Chapter 27

— "Is it not dead midnight?
Cold fearful drops stand on my trembling flesh.
What do I fear?"
Shakespeare.

At about the same hour, as on the preceding night, Vivaldi heard persons approaching his prison, and, the door unfolding, his former conductors appeared. They threw over him the same mantle as before, and, in addition, a black veil, that completely muffled his eyes; after which, they led him from the chamber. Vivaldi heard the door shut, on his departure, and the centinels followed his steps, as if their duty was finished, and he was to return thither no more. At this moment, he remembered the words of the stranger when he had displayed the poniard, and Vivaldi apprehended the worst, from having thwarted the designs of a person apparently so malignant; but he exulted in the rectitude, which had preserved him from debasement, and, with the magnanimous enthusiasm of virtue, he almost welcomed sufferings, which would prove the firmness of his justice towards an enemy; for he determined to brave every thing, rather than impute to Schedoni circumstances, the truth of which he possessed no means of ascertaining.

While Vivaldi was conducted, as on the preceding night, through many passages, he endeavoured to discover, by their length, and the abruptness of their turnings, whether they were the same he had traversed before. Suddenly, one of his conductors cried "Steps!" It was the first word Vivaldi had ever heard him utter. He immediately perceived that the ground sunk, and he began to descend; as he did which, he tried to count the number of the steps, that he might form some judgment whether this was the flight he had passed before. When he had reached the bottom, he inclined to believe that it was not so; and the care which had been observed in blinding him, seemed to indicate that he was going to some new place.

He passed through several avenues, and then ascended; soon after which, he again descended a very long stair-case, such as he had not any remembrance of, and they passed over a considerable extent of level ground. By the hollow sounds which his steps returned, he judged that he was walking over vaults. The footsteps of the centinels who had followed from the cell were no longer heard, and he seemed to be left with his conductors only. A second flight appeared to lead him into subterraneous vaults, for he perceived the air change, and felt a damp vapour wrap round him. The menace of the monk, that he should meet him in the chambers of death, frequently occurred to Vivaldi.

His conductors stopped in this vault, and seemed to hold a consultation, but they spoke in such low accents, that their words were not distinguishable, except a few unconnected ones, that hinted of more than Vivaldi could comprehend. He was, at length, again led forward; and soon after, he heard the heavy grating of hinges, and perceived that he was passing through several doors, by the situation of which Vivaldi judged they were the same he had entered the night before, and concluded, that he was going to the hall of the tribunal.

His conductors stopped again, and Vivaldi heard the iron rod strike three times upon a door; immediately a strange voice spoke from within, and the door was unclosed. Vivaldi passed on, and imagined that he was admitted into a spacious vault; for the air was freer, and his steps sounded to a distance.

Presently, a voice, as on the preceding night, summoned him to come forward, and Vivaldi understood that he was again before the tribunal. It was the voice of the inquisitor who had been his chief examiner.

"You, Vincentio di Vivaldi," it said, "answer to your name, and to the questions which shall be put to you, without equivocation, on pain of the torture."

As the monk had predicted, Vivaldi was asked what he knew of father Schedoni, and, when he replied, as he had formerly done to his mysterious visitor, he was told that he knew more than he acknowledged.

"I know no more," replied Vivaldi.

"You equivocate," said the inquisitor. "Declare what you have heard, and remember that you formerly took an oath to that prupose."

Vivaldi was silent, till a tremendous voice from the tribunal commanded him to respect his oath.

"I do respect it," said Vivaldi; "and I conjure you to believe that I also respect truth, when I declare, that what I am going to relate, is a report to which I give no confidence, and concerning even the probability of which I cannot produce the smallest proof."

"Respect truth!" said another voice from the tribunal, and Vivaldi fancied he distinguished the tones of the monk. He paused a moment, and the exhortation was repeated. Vivaldi then related what the stranger had said concerning the family of Schedoni, and the disguise which the father had assumed in the convent of the Spirito Santo; but forbore even to name the penitentiary Ansaldo, and any circumstance connected with the extraordinary confession. Vivaldi concluded, with again declaring, that he had not sufficient authority to justify a belief in those reports.

"On what authority do you repeat them?" said the vicar-general.

Vivaldi was silent.

"On what authority?" inquired the inquisitor, sternly.

Vivaldi, after a momentary hesitation, said, "What I am about to declare, holy fathers, is so extraordinary — "

"Tremble!" said a voice close to his ear, which he instantly knew to be the monk's, and the suddenness of which electrified him. He was unable to conclude the sentence.

"What is your authority for the reports" demanded the inquisitor.

"It is unknown, even to myself!" answered Vivaldi.

"Do not equivocate!" said the vicar-general.

"I solemnly protest" rejoined Vivaldi, "that I know not either the name or the condition of my informer, and that I never even beheld his face, till the period when he spoke of father Schedoni."

"Tremble!" repeated the same low, but emphatic voice in his ear. Vivaldi started, and turned involuntarily towards the sound, though his eyes could not assist his curiosity.

"You did well to say, that you had something extraordinary to add," observed the inquisitor. "'Tis evident, also, that you expected something extraordinary from your judges, since you supposed they would credit these assertions."

Vivaldi was too proud to attempt the justifying himself against so gross an accusation, or to make any reply.

"Why do you not summon father Ansaldo?" said the voice. "Remember my words!"

Vivaldi, again awed by the voice, hesitated, for an instant, how to act, and in that instant his courage returned.

"My informer stands beside me!" said Vivaldi, boldy; "I know his voice! Detain him; it is of consequence."

"Whose voice?" demanded the inquisitor. "No person spoke but myself!"

"Whose voice?" said the vicar-general.

"The voice was close beside me," replied Vivaldi. "It spoke low, but I knew it well."

"This is either the cunning, or the frenzy of despair!" observed the vicar-general.

"Not any person is now beside you, except the familiars," said the inquisitor, "and they wait to do their office, if you shall refuse to answer the questions put to you."

"I persist in my assertion," replied Vivaldi; "and I supplicate that my eyes may be unbound, that I may know my enemy."

The tribunal, after a long private consultation, granted the request; the veil was withdrawn, and Vivaldi perceived beside him — only the familiars! Their faces, as is usual, were concealed. It appeared that one of these torturers must be the mysterious enemy, who pursued him, if, indeed, that enemy was an inhabitant of the earth! and Vivaldi requested that they might be ordered to uncover their features. He was sternly rebuked for so presumptuous a requisition, and reminded of the inviolable law and faith, which the tribunal had pledged, that persons appointed to their awful office should never be exposed to the revenge of the criminal, whom it might be their duty to punish.

"Their duty!" exclaimed Vivaldi, thrown from his guard by strong indignation. "And is faith held sacred with demons!"

Without awaiting the order of the tribunal, the familiars immediately covered Vivaldi's face with the veil, and he felt himself in their grasp. He endeavoured, however, to disentangle his hands, and, at length, shook these men from their hold, and again unveiled his eyes; but the familiars were instantly ordered to replace the veil.

The inquisitor bade Vivaldi to recollect in whose presence he then was, and to dread the punishment which his resistance had incurred, and which would be inflicted without delay, unless he could give some instance, that might tend to prove the truth of his late assertions.

“If you expect that I should say more,” replied Vivaldi, “I claim, at least, protection from the unbidden violence of the men who guard me. If they are suffered, at their pleasure, to sport with the misery of their prisoner, I will be inflexibly silent; and, since I must suffer, it shall be according to the laws of the tribunal.”

The vicar-general, or, as he is called, the grand inquisitor, promised Vivaldi the degree of protection he claimed, and demanded, at the same time, what were the words he had just heard.

Vivaldi considered, that, though justice bade him avoid accusing an enemy of suspicious circumstances, concerning which he had no proof, yet, that neither justice nor common sense required he should make a sacrifice of himself to the dilemma in which he was placed: he, therefore, without further scruple, acknowledged, that the voice had bidden him require of the tribunal to summon one father Ansaldo, the grand penitentiary of the Santa del Pianto, near Naples, and also father Schedoni, who was to answer to extraordinary charges, which would be brought against him by Ansaldo. Vivaldi anxiously and repeatedly declared, that he knew not the nature of the charges, nor that any just grounds for them existed.

These assertions seemed to throw the tribunal into new perplexity. Vivaldi heard their busy voices in low debate, which continued for a considerable time. In this interval, he had leisure to perceive the many improbabilities that either of the familiars should be the stranger who so mysteriously haunted him; and among these was the circumstance of his having resided so long at Naples.

The tribunal, after some time had elapsed in consultation, proceeded on the examination, and Vivaldi was asked what he knew of father Ansaldo. He immediately replied, that Ansaldo was an utter stranger to him, and that he was not even acquainted with a single person residing in the Santa del Pianto or who had any knowledge of the penitentiary.

“How!” said the grand inquisitor.

“You forget that the person, who bade you require of this tribunal to summon Ansaldo, has knowledge of him.”

“Pardon me, I do not forget,” replied Vivaldi; “and I request it may be remembered that I am not acquainted with that person. If, therefore, he had given me any account of Ansaldo, I could not have relied upon its authenticity.” Vivaldi again required of the tribunal to understand that he did not summon Ansaldo, or any other person, before them, but had merely obeyed their command, to repeat what the stranger had said.

The tribunal acknowledged the justness of this injunction, and exculpated him from any harm that should be the consequence of the summons. But this assurance of safety for himself was not sufficient to appease Vivaldi, who was alarmed left he should be the means of bringing an innocent person under suspicion. The grand inquisitor again addressed him, after a general silence had been commanded in the court.

“The account you have given of your informer,” said he, “is so extraordinary, that it would not deserve credit, but that you have discovered the utmost reluctance to reveal the charges he gave you, from which, it appears, that, on your part, at least, the summons is not malicious. But are you certain that you have not deluded yourself, and that the voice beside you was not an imaginary one, conjured up by your agitated spirits?”

“I am certain,” replied Vivaldi, with firmness.

“It is true,” resumed the grand inquisitor, “that several persons were near you, when you exclaimed, that you heard the voice of your informer; yet no person heard it besides yourself!”

“Where are those persons now?” demanded Vivaldi.

“They are dispersed: alarmed at your accusation.”

“If you will summon them,” said Vivaldi, “and order that my eyes may be uncovered, I will point out to you, without hesitation, the person of my informer, should he remain among them.”

The tribunal commanded that they should appear, but new difficulties arose. It was not remembered of whom the crowd consisted; a few individuals only were recollected, and these were summoned.

Vivaldi, in solemn expectation, heard steps and the hum of voices gathering round him, and impatiently awaited for the words that would restore him to sight, and, perhaps, release him from uncertainty. In a few moments, he heard the command given; the veil was once more removed from his eyes, and he was ordered to point out the accuser. Vivaldi threw an hasty glance upon the surrounding strangers.

“The lights burn dimly,” said he, “I cannot distinguish these faces.”

It was ordered that a lamp should be lowered from the roof, and that the strangers should arrange themselves on either side of Vivaldi. When this was done, and he glanced his eyes again upon the crowd, “He is not here!” said Vivaldi; “not one of these countenances resembles the monk of Paluzzi. Yet, stay; who is he that stands in the shade behind those persons on the left? Bid him lift his cowl!”

The crowd fell back, and the person, to whom Vivaldi had pointed, was left alone within the circle.

“He is an officer of the Inquisition,” said a man near Vivaldi, “and he may not be compelled to discover his face, unless by an express command from the tribunal.”

“I call upon the tribunal to command it!” said Vivaldi.

“Who calls!” exclaimed a voice, and Vivaldi recognized the tones of the monk, but he knew not exactly whence they came.

“I, Vincentio di Vivaldi,” replied the prisoner, “I claim the privilege that has been awarded me, and bid you unveil your countenance.”

There was a pause of silence in the court, except that a dull murmur ran through the tribunal. Meanwhile, the figure within the circle stood motionless, and remained veiled.

“Spare him,” said the man, who had before addressed Vivaldi; “he has reasons for wishing to remain unknown, which you cannot conjecture. He is an officer of the Inquisition, and not the person you apprehend.”

“Perhaps I can conjecture his reasons,” replied Vivaldi, who, raising his voice, added, “I appeal to this tribunal, and command you, who stand alone within the circle, you in black garments, to unveil your features!”

Immediately a loud voice issued from the tribunal, and said,

“We command you, in the name of the most holy Inquisition, to reveal yourself!”

The stranger trembled, but, without presuming to hesitate, uplifted his cowl. Vivaldi’s eyes were eagerly fixed upon him; but the action disclosed, not the countenance of the monk! but of an official whom he recollected to have seen once before, though exactly on what occasion he did not now remember.

“This is not my informer!” said Vivaldi, turning from him with deep disappointment, while the stranger dropped his cowl, and the crowd closed upon him. At the assertion of Vivaldi, the members of the tribunal looked upon each other doubtingly, and were silent, till the grand inquisitor, waving his hand, as if to command attention, addressed Vivaldi.

“It appears, then, that you have formerly seen the face of your informer!”

“I have already declared so,” replied Vivaldi.

The grand inquisitor demanded when, and where, he had seen it.

“Last night, and in my prison,” answered Vivaldi.

“In your prison!” said the ordinary inquisitor, contemptuously, who had before examined him, “and in your dreams, too, no doubt!”

“In your prison!” exclaimed several members of the lower tribunal.

“He dreams still!” observed an inquisitor. “Holy fathers! he abuses your patience, and the frenzy of terror has deluded his credulity. We neglect the moments.”

“We must inquire further into this,” said another inquisitor. “Here is some deception. If you, Vincentio di Vivaldi, have asserted a falshood — tremble!”

Whether Vivaldi’s memory still vibrated with the voice of the monk, or that the tone in which this same word was now pronounced did resemble it, he almost started, when the inquisitor had said tremble! and he demanded who spoke then.

“It is ourself,” answered the inquisitor.

After a short conversation among the members of the tribunal, the grand inquisitor gave orders that the centinels, who had watched on the preceding night at the prison door of Vivaldi, should be brought into the hall of justice. The persons, who had been lately summoned into the chamber, were now bidden to withdraw, and all further examination was suspended till the arrival of the centinels; Vivaldi heard only the low voices of the inquisitors, as they conversed privately together, and he remained silent, thoughtful, and amazed.

When the centinels appeared, and were asked who had entered the prison of Vivaldi during the last night, they declared, without hesitation, or confusion, that not any person had passed through the door after the hour when the prisoner had returned from examination, till the following morning, when the guard had carried in the usual allowance of bread and water. In this assertion, they persisted, without the least equivocation, notwithstanding which they were ordered into confinement, till the affair should be cleared up.

The doubts, however, which were admitted, as to the integrity of these men, did not contribute to dissipate those, which had prevailed over the opposite side of the question. On the contrary, the suspicions of the tribunal, augmenting with their perplexity, seemed to fluctuate equally over every point of the subject before them, till, instead of throwing any light upon the truth, they only served to involve the whole in deeper obscurity. More doubtful than before of the honesty of Vivaldi's extraordinary assertions, the grand inquisitor informed him, that if, after further inquiry into this affair, it should appear he had been trifling with the credulity of his judges, he would be severely punished for his audacity; but that, on the other hand, should there be reason to believe that the centinels had failed in their duty, and that some person had entered his prison during the night, the tribunal would proceed in a different manner.

Vivaldi, perceiving that, to be believed, it was necessary he should be more circumstantial, described, with exactness, the person and appearance of the monk, without, however, mentioning the poniard which had been exhibited. A profound silence reigned in the chamber, while he spoke; it seemed a silence not merely of attention, but of astonishment. Vivaldi himself was awed, and, when he had concluded, almost expected to hear the voice of the monk uttering defiance, or threatening vengeance; but all remained hushed, till the inquisitor, who had first examined him, said, in a solemn tone,

"We have listened with attention to what you have delivered, and will give the case a full inquiry. Some points, on which you have touched, excite our amazement, and call for particular regard. Retire whence you came — and sleep this night without fear; — you will soon know more."

Vivaldi was immediately led from the chamber, and, still blindfolded, re-conducted to the prison to which he had supposed it was designed he should return no more. When the veil was withdrawn, he perceived that his guard was changed.

Again left to the silence of his cell, he reviewed all that had passed in the chamber of justice; the questions which had been put to him; the different manners of the inquisitors; the occurrence of the monk's voice; and the similarity, which he had fancied he perceived between it and that of an inquisitor, when the latter pronounced the word tremble; but the consideration of all these circumstances did not in any degree relieve him from his perplexity. Sometimes he was inclined to think that the monk was an inquisitor, and the voice had more than once appeared to proceed from the tribunal; but he remembered, also, that, more than once, it had spoken close to his ear, and he knew that a member of this tribunal might not leave his station during the examination of a prisoner, and that, even if he had dared to do so, his singular dress would have pointed him out to notice, and consequently to suspicion, at the moment when Vivaldi had exclaimed, that he heard the voice of his informer.

Vivaldi, however, could not avoid meditating, with surprize, on the last words which the inquisitor, who had been his chief examiner, had addressed to him, when he was dismissed from before the tribunal. These were the more surprizing, because they were the first from him that had in any degree indicated a wish to console or quiet the alarm of the prisoner; and Vivaldi even fancied that they betrayed some fore-knowledge that he would not be disturbed this night by the presence of his awful visitor. He would entirely have ceased to apprehend, though not to expect, had he been allowed a light, and any weapon of defence, if, in truth, the stranger was of a nature to fear a weapon; but, to be thus exposed to the designs of a mysterious and powerful being, whom he was conscious of having offended, to sustain such a situation, without suffering anxiety, required somewhat more than courage, or less than reason.

❦

Chapter 28

> “ — It came o’er my soul as doth the thunder,
> While distant yet, with an unexpected burst,
> It threats the trembling ear. Now to the trial.”
> Caractacus.

In consequence of what had transpired at the last examination of Vivaldi, the grand penitentiary Ansaldo, together with the father Schedoni, were cited to appear before the table of the holy office.

Schedoni was arrested on his way to Rome, whither he was going privately to make further efforts for the liberation of Vivaldi, whose release he had found it more difficult to effect, than his imprisonment; the person upon whose assistance the Confessor relied in the first instance, having boasted of more influence than he possessed, or perhaps thought it prudent to exert. Schedoni had been the more anxious to procure an immediate release for Vivaldi, lest a report of his situation should reach his family, notwithstanding the precautions, which are usually employed to throw an impenetrable shrowd over the prisoners of this dreadful tribunal, and bury them for ever from the knowledge of their friends. Such premature discovery of Vivaldi’s circumstances, Schedoni apprehended might include also a discovery of the persecutor, and draw down upon himself the abhorrence and the vengeance of a family, whom it was now, more than ever, his wish and his interest to conciliate. It was still his intention, that the nuptials of Vivaldi and Ellena should be privately solemnized immediately on the release of the prisoner, who, even if he had reason to suspect Schedoni for his late persecutor, would then be interested in concealing his suspicions for ever, and from whom therefore, no evil was to be apprehended.

How little did Vivaldi foresee, that in repeating to the tribunal the stranger’s summons of father Schedoni, he was deferring, or, perhaps, wholly preventing his own marriage with Ellena di Rosalba! How little, also, did he apprehend what would be the further consequences of a disclosure, which the peculiar circumstances of his situation had hardly permitted him to withhold, though, could he have understood the probable event of it, he would have braved all the terrors of the tribunal, and death itself, rather than incur the remorse of having promoted it.

The motive for his arrestation was concealed from Schedoni, who had not the remotest suspicion of its nature, but attributed the arrest, to a discovery, which the tribunal had made of his being the accuser of Vivaldi. This disclosure he attributed to his own imprudence, in having stated, as an instance of Vivaldi’s contempt for the Catholic faith, that he had insulted a priest while doing penance in the church of the Spirito Santo. But by what art the tribunal had discovered that he was the priest alluded to, and the author of the accusation, Schedoni could by no means conjecture. He was willing to believe that this arrest was only for the purpose of obtaining proof of Vivaldi’s guilt; and the Confessor knew that he could so conduct himself in evidence, as in all probability to exculpate the prisoner, from whom, when he should explain himself, no resentment on account of his former conduct was to be apprehended. Yet Schedoni was not perfectly at ease; for it was possible that a knowledge of Vivaldi’s situation, and of the author of it, had reached his family, and had produced his own arrest. On this head, however, his fears were not powerful; since, the longer he dwelt upon the subject, the more improbable it appeared that such a disclosure, at least so far as it related to himself, could have been affected.

Vivaldi, from the night of his late examination, was not called upon, till Schedoni and father Ansaldo appeared together in the hall of the tribunal. The two latter had already been separately examined, and Ansaldo had privately stated the particulars of the confession he had received on the vigil of the Santo Marco, in the year 1752, for which disclosure he had received formal absolution. What had passed at that examination does not appear, but on this his second interrogation, he was required to repeat the subject and the circumstances of the confession. This was probably with a view of observing its effect upon Schedoni and on Vivaldi, which would direct the opinion of the tribunal as to the guilt of the Confessor, and the veracity of the young prisoner.

On this night a very exact inquiry was made, concerning every person, who had obtained admission into the hall of justice; such officials as were not immediately necessary to assist in the ceremonies of the tribunal were excluded, together with every other person belonging to the Inquisition not material to the evidence, or to the judges. When this scrutiny was over, the prisoners were brought in, and their conductors ordered to withdraw. A silence of some moments prevailed in the hall; and, however different might be the reflections of the several prisoners, the degree of anxious expectation was in each, probably, nearly the same, The grand-vicar having spoken a few words in private to a person on his left hand, an inquisitor rose.

“If any person in this court,” said he, “is known by the name of father Schedoni, belonging to the Dominican society of the Spirito Santo at Naples, let him appear!”

Schedoni answered to the summons. He came forward with a firm step, and, having crossed himself, and bowed to the tribunal, awaited in silence its commands.

The penitentiary Ansaldo was next called upon. Vivaldi observed that he faultered as he advanced; and that his obeisance to the tribunal was more profound than Schedoni’s had been. Vivaldi himself was then summoned; his air was calm and dignified, and his countenance expressed the solemn energy of his feelings, but nothing of dejection.

Schedoni and Ansaldo were now, for the first time, confronted. Whatever might be the feelings of Schedoni on beholding the penitentiary of the Santa del Pianto, he effectually concealed them.

The grand-vicar himself opened the examination, “You, father Schedoni, of the Spirito Santo,” he said, “answer and say, whether the person who now stands before you, bearing the title of grand penitentiary of the order of the Black Penitents, and presiding over the convent of the Santa Maria del Pianto at Naples, is known to you.

To this requisition Schedoni replied with firmness in the negative.

“You have never, to your knowledge, seen him before this hour?”

“Never!” said Schedoni.

“Let the oath be administered,” added the grand-vicar. Schedoni having accepted it; the same questions were put to Ansaldo concerning the Confessor, when, to the astonishment of Vivaldi and of the greater part of the court, the penitentiary denied all knowledge of Schedoni. His negative was given, however, in a less decisive manner than that of the Confessor, and when the usual oath was offered, Ansaldo declined to accept it.

Vivaldi was next called upon to identify Schedoni: he declared, that the person who was then pointed out to him, he had never known by any other denomination than that of father Schedoni; and that he had always understood him to be a monk of the Spirito Santo; but Vivaldi was at the same time careful to repeat, that he knew nothing further relative to his life.

Schedoni was somewhat surprized at this apparent candour of Vivaldi towards himself, but accustomed to impute an evil motive to all conduct, which he could not clearly comprehend, he did not scruple to believe, that some latent mischief was directed against him in this seemingly honest declaration.

After some further preliminary forms had passed, Ansaldo was ordered to relate the particulars of the confession, which had been made to him on the eve of the Santo Marco. It must be remembered, that this was still what is called in the Inquisition, a private examination.

After he had taken the customary oaths to relate neither more nor less than the truth of what had passed before him, Ansaldo’s depositions were written down nearly in the following words; to which Vivaldi listened with almost trembling attention, for, besides the curiosity which some previous circumstances had excited respecting them, he believed that his own fate in a great measure depended upon a discovery of the fact to which they led. What, if he had surmised how much! and that the person, whom he had been in some degree instrumental in citing before this tremendous tribunal, was the father of his Ellena di Rosalba!

Ansaldo, having again answered to his name and titles, gave his deposition as follows: “It was on the eve of the twenty-fifth of April, and in the year 1752, that as I sat, according to my custom, in the confessional of San Marco, I was alarmed by deep groans, which came from the box on my left hand.”

Vivaldi observed, that the date now mentioned agreed with that recorded by the stranger, and he was thus prepared to believe what might follow, and to give his confidence to this extraordinary and unseen personage.

Ansaldo continued, “I was the more alarmed by these sounds, because I had not been prepared for them; I knew not that any person was in the confessional, nor had even observed any one pass along the aisle — but the duskiness of the hour may account for my having failed to do so; it was after sun-set, and the tapers at the shrine of San Antonio as yet burned feebly in the twilight.”

“Be brief, holy father,” said the inquisitor who had formerly been most active in examining Vivaldi; “speak closely to the point.”

“The groans would sometimes cease,” resumed Ansaldo, “and long pauses of silence follow; they were those of a soul in agony, struggling with the consciousness of guilt, yet wanting resolution to confess it. I tried to encourage the penitent, and held forth every hope of mercy and forgiveness which my duty would allow, but for a considerable time without effect; — the enormity of the sin seemed too big for utterance, yet the penitent appeared equally unable to endure the concealment of it. His heart was bursting with the secret, and required the comfort of absolution, even at the price of the severest penance.”

“Facts!” said the inquisitor, “these are are only surmises.”

“Facts will come full soon!” replied Ansaldo, and bowed his head, “the mention of them will petrify you, holy fathers! as they did me, though not for the same reasons. While I endeavoured to encourage the penitent, and assured him, that absolution should follow the acknowledgment of his crimes, however heinous those crimes might be, if accompanied by sincere repentance, he more than once began his confession, and abruptly dropt it. Once, indeed, he quitted the confessional; his agitated spirit required liberty; and it was then, as he walked with perturbed steps along the aisle, that I first observed his figure. He was in the habit of a white friar, and, as nearly as I can recollect, was about the stature of him, the father Schedoni, who now stands before me.”

As Ansaldo delivered these words, the attention of the whole tribunal was turned upon Schedoni, who stood unmoved, and with his eyes bent towards the ground.

“His face,” continued the penitentiary, “I did not see; he was, with good reason, careful to conceal it; other resemblance, therefore, than the stature, I cannot point out between them. The voice, indeed, the voice of the penitent, I think I shall never forget; I should know it again at any distance of time.”

“Has it not struck your ear, since you came within these walls?” said a member of the tribunal.

“Of that hereafter,” observed the inquisitor, “you wander from the point, father.”

The vicar-general remarked, that the circumstances just related were important, and ought not to be passed over as irrelevant. The inquisitor submitted to this opinion, but objected that they were not pertinent to the moment; and Ansaldo was again bidden to repeat what he had heard at confession.

“When the stranger returned to the steps of the confessional, he had acquired sufficient resolution to go through with the task he had imposed upon himself, and a thrilling voice spoke through the grate the facts I am about to relate.”

Father Ansaldo paused, and was somewhat agitated; he seemed endeavouring to recollect courage to go through with what he had begun. During this pause, the silence of expectation rapt the court, and the eyes of the tribunal were directed alternately to Ansaldo and Schedoni, who certainly required something more than human firmness to support unmoved the severe scrutiny, and the yet severer suspicions, to which he stood exposed. Whether, however, it was the fortitude of conscious innocence, or the hardihood of atrocious vice, that protected the Confessor, he certainly did not betray any emotion. Vivaldi, who had unceasingly observed him from the commencement of the depositions, felt inclined to believe that he was not the penitent described. Ansaldo, having, at length, recollected himself, proceeded as follows:

“I have been through life,’ said the penitent, ‘the slave of my passions, and they have led me into horrible excesses. I had once a brother!’ — He stopped, and deep groans again told the agony of his soul; at length, he added — ‘That brother had a wife! — Now listen, father, and say, whether guilt like mine may hope for absolution! She was beautiful — I loved her; she was virtuous, and I despaired. You, father,’ he continued in a frightful tone, ‘never knew the fury of despair! It overcame or communicated its own force to every other passion of my soul, and I sought to release myself from its tortures by any means. My brother died! — ‘ The penitent paused again,” continued Ansaldo, “I trembled while I listened; my lips were sealed. At length, I bade him proceed, and he spoke as follows. — ‘My brother died at a distance from home.’ — Again the penitent paused, and the silence continued so long, that I thought it proper to inquire of what disorder the brother had expired. ‘Father, I was his murderer!’ said the penitent in a voice which I never can forget; it sunk into my heart.”

Ansaldo appeared affected by the remembrance, and was for a moment silent. At the last words Vivaldi had particularly noticed Schedoni, that he might judge by their effect upon him, whether he was guilty; but he remained in his former attitude, and his eyes were still fixed upon the ground.

“Proceed, father!” said the inquisitor, “what was your reply to this confession?”

“I was silent,” said Ansaldo; “but at length I bade the penitent go on. ‘I contrived said he, that my brother should die at a distance from home, and I so conducted the affair, that his widow never suspected the cause of his death. It was not till long after the usual time of mourning had expired, that I ventured to solicit her hand: but she had not yet forgotten my brother, and she rejected me. My passion would no longer be trifled with. I caused her to be carried from her house, and she was afterwards willing to retrieve her honour by the marriage vow. I had sacrificed my conscience, without having found happiness; — she did not even condescend to conceal her disdain. Mortified, exasperated by her conduct, I begun to suspect that some other emotion than resentment occasioned this disdain; and last of all jealousy — jealousy came to crown my misery — to light up all my passions into madness!'

"The penitent," added Ansaldo, "appeared by the manner in which he uttered this, to be nearly frantic at the moment, and convulsive sobs soon stifled his words. When he resumed his confession, he said, 'I soon found an object for my jealousy. Among the few persons, who visited us in the retirement of our country residence, was a gentleman, who, I fancied, loved my wife; I fancied too, that, whenever he appeared, an air of particular satisfaction was visible on her countenance. She seemed to have pleasure in conversing with, and shewing him distinction. I even sometimes thought, she had pride in displaying to me the preference she entertained for him, and that an air of triumph, and even of scorn, was addressed to me, whenever she mentioned his name. Perhaps, I mistook resentment for love, and she only wished to punish me, by exciting my jealousy. Fatal error! she punished herself also!"

"Be less circumstantial, father," said the inquisitor.

Ansaldo bowed his head, and continued. "One evening,' continued the penitent, 'that I returned home unexpectedly, I was told that a visitor was with my wife! As I approached the apartment where they sat, I heard the voice of Sacchi; it seemed mournful and supplicating. I stopped to listen, and distinguished enough to fire me with vengeance. I restrained myself, however, so far as to step softly to a lattice that opened from the passage, and overlooked the apartment. The traitor was on his knee before her. Whether she had heard my step, or observed my face, through the high lattice, or that she resented his conduct, I know not, but she rose immediately from her chair. I did not pause to question her motive; but, seizing my stiletto, I rushed into the room, wish intent to strike it to the villain's heart. The supposed assassin of my honour escaped into the garden, and was heard of no more.' — But your wife? said I. 'Her bosom received the poniard!' replied the penitent."

Ansaldo's voice faultered, as he repeated this part of the confession, and he was utterly unable to proceed. The tribunal, observing his condition, allowed him a chair, and, after a struggle of some moments, he added, "Think, holy fathers. O think! what must have been my feelings at that instant! I was myself the lover of the woman, whom he confessed himself to have murdered."

"Was she innocent?" said a voice; and Vivaldi, whose attention had latterly been fixed upon Ansaldo, now, on looking at Schedoni, perceived that it was he who had spoken. At the sound of his voice, the penitentiary turned instantly towards him. There was a pause of general silence, during which Ansaldo's eyes were earnestly fixed upon the accused. At length, he spoke, "She was innocent!" He replied, with solemn emphasis, "She was most virtuous!"

Schedoni had shrunk back within himself; he asked no further. A murmur ran through the tribunal, which rose by degrees, till it broke forth into audible conversation; at length, the secretary was directed to note the question of Schedoni.

"Was that the voice of the penitent, which you have just heard?" demanded the inquisitor of Ansaldo. "Remember, you have said that you should know it again!"

"I think it was," replied Ansaldo; "but I cannot swear to that."

"What infirmity of judgment is this!" said the same inquisitor, who himself was seldom troubled with the modesty of doubt, upon any subject. Ansaldo was bidden to resume the narrative.

"On this discovery of the murderer," said the penitentiary, "I quitted the confessional, and my senses forsook me before I could deliver orders for the detection of the assassin. When I recovered, it was too late; he had escaped! From that hour to the present, I have never seen him, nor dare I affirm that the person now before me is he."

The inquisitor was about to speak, but the grand-vicar waved his hand, as a signal for attention, and, addressing Ansaldo, said, "Although you may be unacquainted with Schedoni, the monk of the Spirito Santo, reverend father, can you not recollect the person of the Count di Bruno, your former friend?"

Ansaldo again looked at Schedoni, with a scrutinizing eye; he fixed it long; but the countenance of Schedoni suffered no change.

"No!" said the penitentiary, at length, "I dare not take upon me to assert, that this is the Count di Bruno. If it is he, years have wrought deeply on his features. That the penitent was the Count di Bruno I have proof; he mentioned my name as his visitor, and particular circumstances known only to the Count and myself; but that father Schedoni was the penitent, I repeat it, I dare not affirm.”

“But that dare I!” said another voice; and Vivaldi, turning towards it, beheld the mysterious stranger advancing, his cowl now thrown back, and an air of menace overspreading every terrific feature. Schedoni, in the instant that he perceived him, seemed agitated; his countenance, for the first time, suffered some change.

The tribunal was profoundly silent, but surprize, and a kind of restless expectation, marked every brow. Vivaldi was about to exclaim, “That is my informer!” when the voice of the stranger checked him.

“Dost thou know me?” said he, sternly, to Schedoni, and his attitude became fixed.

Schedoni gave no reply.

“Dost thou know me?” repeated his accuser, in a steady solemn voice.

“Know thee!” uttered Schedoni, faintly.

“Dost thou know this?” cried the stranger, raising his voice, as he drew from his garment what appeared to be a dagger. “Dost thou know these indelible stains?” said he, lifting the poniard, and, with an outstretched arm, pointing it towards Schedoni.

The Confessor turned away his face; it seemed as if his heart sickened.

“With this dagger was thy brother slain!” said the terrible stranger. “Shall I declare myself?”

Schedoni’s courage forsook him, and he sunk against a pillar of the hall for support.

The consternation was now general; the extraordinary appearance and conduct of the stranger seemed to strike the greater part of the tribunal, a tribunal of the inquisition itself! with dismay. Several of the members rose from their seats; others called aloud for the officials, who kept guard at the doors of the hall, and inquired who had admitted the stranger, while the vicar-general and a few inquisitors conversed privately together, during which they frequently looked at the stranger and at Schedoni, as if they were the subjects of the discourse. Meanwhile the monk remained with the dagger in his grasp, and his eyes fixed on the Confessor, whose face was still averted, and who yet supported himself against the pillar.

At length, the vicar-general called upon the members who had arisen to return to their seats, and ordered that the officials should withdraw to their posts.

“Holy brethren!” said the vicar, “we recommend to you, at this important hour, silence and deliberation. Let the examination of the accused proceed; and here-after let us inquire as to the admittance of the accuser. For the present, suffer him also to have hearing, and the father Schedoni to reply.

“We suffer him!” answered the tribunal, and bowed their heads.

Vivaldi, who, during the tumult, had ineffectually endeavoured to make himself heard, now profited by the pause which followed the assent of the inquisitors, to claim attention: but the instant he spoke several members impatiently bade that the examination should proceed, and the grand-vicar was again obliged to command silence, before the request of Vivaldi could be understood. Permission to speak being granted him, “That person,” said he, pointing to the stranger, “is the same who visited me in my prison; and the dagger the same he now displays! It was he, who commanded me to summon the penitentiary Ansaldo, and the father Schedoni. I have acquitted myself, and have nothing further to do in this struggle.”

The tribunal was again agitated, and the murmurs of private conversation again prevailed. Meanwhile Schedoni appeared to have recovered some degree of self-command; he raised himself, and, bowing to the tribunal, seemed preparing to speak; but waited till the confusion of sound that filled the hall should subside. At length he could be heard, and, addressing the tribunal, he said,

“Holy fathers! the stranger who is now before you is an impostor! I will prove that my accuser was once my friend; — you may perceive how much the discovery of his perfidy affects me. The charge he brings is most false and malicious!”

“Once the friend!” replied the stranger, with peculiar emphasis, “and what has made me the enemy! View these spots,” he continued, pointing to the blade of the poniard, “are they also false and malicious? are they not, on the contrary, reflected on the conscience?”

"I know them not," replied Schedoni, "my conscience is unstained."

"A brother's blood has stained it!" said the stranger, in a hollow voice.

Vivaldi, whose attention was now fixed upon Schedoni, observed a livid hue overspread his complexion, and that his eyes were averted from this extraordinary person with horror: the spectre of his deceased brother could scarcely have called forth a stronger expression. It was not immediately that he could command his voice; when he could, he again appealed to the tribunal.

"Holy fathers!" said he, "suffer me to defend myself."

"Holly fathers!" said the accuser, with solemnity, "hear! hear what I shall unfold!"

Schedoni, who seemed to speak by a strong effort only, again addressed the inquisitors; "I will prove," said he, "that this evidence is not of a nature to be trusted."

"I will bring such proof to the contrary!" said the monk. "And here," pointing to Ansaldo, "is sufficient testimony that the Count di Bruno did confess himself guilty of murder."

The court commanded silence, and upon the appeal of the stranger to Ansaldo, the penitentiary was asked whether he knew him. He replied, that he did not.

"Recollect yourself," said the grand inquisitor, "it is of the utmost consequence that you should be correct on this point."

The penitentiary observed the stranger with deep attention, and then repeated his assertion.

"Have you never seen him before?" said an inquisitor.

"Never, to my knowledge!" replied Ansaldo.

The inquisitors looked upon each other in silence.

"He speaks the truth," said the stranger.

This extraordinary fact did not fail to strike the tribunal, and to astonish Vivaldi. Since the accuser confirmed it, Vivaldi was at a loss to understand the means by which he could have become acquainted with the guilt of Schedoni, who, it was not to be supposed, would have acknowledged crimes of such magnitude as those contained in the accusation, to any person, except, indeed, to his Confessor, and this Confessor, it appeared, was so far from having betrayed his trust to the accuser, that he did not even know him. Vivaldi was no less perplexed as to what would be the nature of the testimony with which the accuser designed to support his charges: but the pause of general amazement, which had permitted Vivaldi these considerations, was now at an end; the tribunal resumed the examination, and the grand inquisitor called aloud,

"You, Vincentio di Vivaldi, answer with exactness to the questions that shall be put to you."

He was then asked some questions relative to the person, who had visited him in prison. In his answers, Vivaldi was clear and concise, constantly affirming, that the stranger was the same, who now accused Schedoni.

When the accuser was interrogated, he acknowledged, without hesitation, that Vivaldi had spoken the truth. He was then asked his motive for that extraordinary visit.

"It was," replied the monk, "that a murderer might be brought to justice."

"This," observed the grand inquisitor, "might have been accomplished by fair and open accusation. If you had known the charge to be just, it is probable that you would have appealed directly to this tribunal, instead of endeavouring infidiously to obtain an influence over the mind of a prisoner, and urging him to become the instrument of bringing the accused to punishment."

"Yet I have not shrunk from discovery," observed the stranger, calmly; "I have voluntarily appeared."

At these words, Schedoni seemed again much agitated, and even drew his hood over his eyes.

"That is just," said the grand inquisitor, addressing the stranger: "but you have neither declared your name, or whence you come!"

To this remark the monk made no reply; but Schedoni, with reviving spirit, urged the circumstance, in evidence of the malignity and falshood of the accuser.

"Wilt thou compel me to reveal my proof?" said the stranger: "Darest thou to do so?"

"Why should I fear thee?" answered Schedoni.

"Ask thy conscience!" said the stranger, with a terrible frown.

The tribunal again suspended the examination, and consulted in private together.

To the last exhortation of the monk, Schedoni was silent. Vivaldi observed, that during this short dialogue, the Confessor had never once turned his eyes towards the stranger, but apparently avoided him, as an object too affecting to be looked upon. He judged, from this circumstance, and from some other appearances in his conduct, that Schedoni was guilty; yet the consciousness of guilt alone did not perfectly account, he thought, for the strong emotion, with which he avoided the sight of his accuser — unless, indeed, he knew that accuser to have been, not only an accomplice in his crime, but the actual assassin. In this case, it appeared natural even for the stern and subtle Schedoni to betray his horror, on beholding the person of the murderer, with the very instrument of crime in his grasp. On the other hand, Vivaldi could not but perceive it to be highly improbable, that the very man who had really committed the deed should come voluntarily into a court of justice, for the purpose of accusing his employer; that he should dare publicly to accuse him, whose guilt, however enormous, was not more so than his own.

The extraordinary manner, also, in which the accuser had proceeded in the commencement of the affair, engaged Vivaldi's consideration; his apparent reluctance to be seen in this process, and the artful and mysterious plan by which he had caused Schedoni to be summoned before the tribunal, and had endeavoured that he should be there accused by Ansaldo, indicated, at least to Vivaldi's apprehension, the fearfulness of guilt, and, still more, that malice, and a thirst of vengeance, had instigated his conduct in the prosecution. If the stranger had been actuated only by a love of justice, it appeared that he would not have proceeded toward it in a way thus dark and circuitous, but have sought it by the usual process, and have produced the proofs, which he even now asserted he possessed, of Schedoni's crimes. In addition to the circumstances, which seemed to strengthen a supposition of the guiltlessness of Schedoni, was that of the accuser's avoiding to acknowledge who he was, and whence he came. But Vivaldi paused again upon this point; it appeared to be inexplicable, and he could not imagine why the accuser had adopted a style of secrecy, which, if he persisted in it, must probably defeat the very purpose of the accusation; for Vivaldi did not believe that the tribunal would condemn a prisoner upon the testimony of a person who, when called upon, should publicly refuse to reveal himself, even to them. Yet the accuser must certainly have considered this circumstance before he ventured into court; notwithstanding which, he had appeared!

These reflections led Vivaldi to various conjectures relative to the visit he had himself received from the monk, the dream that had preceded it, the extraordinary means by which he had obtained admittance to the prison, the declaration of the centinels, that not any person had passed the door, and many other unaccountable particulars; and, while Vivaldi now looked upon the wild physiognomy of the stranger, he almost fancied, as he had formerly done, that he beheld something not of this earth.

"I have heard of the spirit of the murdered," said he, to himself — "restless for justice, becoming visible in our world — " But Vivaldi checked the imperfect thought, and, though his imagination inclined him to the marvellous, and to admit ideas which, filling and expanding all the faculties of the soul, produce feelings that partake of the sublime, he now resisted the propensity, and dismissed, as absurd, a supposition, which had begun to thrill his every nerve with horror. He awaited, however, the result of the examination, and what might be the further conduct of the stranger, with intense expectation.

When the tribunal had, at length, finally determined on the method of their proceedings, Schedoni was first called upon, and examined as to his knowledge of the accuser. It was the same inquisitor who had formerly interrogated Vivaldi, that now spoke. "You, father Schedoni, a monk of the Spirito Santo convent, at Naples, otherwise Ferando Count di Bruno, answer to the questions which shall be put to you. Do you know the name of this man who now appears as your accuser?"

"I answer not to the title of Count di Bruno," replied the Confessor, "but I will declare that I know this man. His name is Nicola di Zampari."

"What is his condition?"

"He is a monk of the Dominican convent of the Spirito Santo," replied Schedoni. "Of his family I know little."

"Where have you seen him?"

"In the city of Naples, where he has resided, during some years, beneath the same roof with me, when I was of the convent of San Angiolo, and since that time, in the Spirito Santo."

"You have been a resident at the San Angiolo?" said the inquisitor.

“I have,” replied Schedoni; “and it was there that we first lived together in the confidence of friendship.”

“You now perceive how ill placed was that confidence,” said the inquisitor, “and repent, no doubt, of your imprudence?”

The wary Schedoni was not entrapped by this observation.

“I must lament a discovery of ingratitude,” he replied, calmly, “but the subjects of my confidence were too pure to give occasion for repentance.”

“This Nicola di Zampari was ungrateful, then? You had rendered him services?” said the inquisitor.

“The cause of his enmity I can well explain,” observed Schedoni, evading, for the present, the question.

“Explain,” said the stranger, solemnly.

Schedoni hesitated; some sudden consideration seemed to occasion him perplexity.

“I call upon you, in the name of your deceased brother,” said the accuser, “to reveal the cause of my enmity!”

Vivaldi, struck by the tone in which the stranger spoke this, turned his eyes upon him, but knew not how to interpret the emotion visible on his countenance.

The inquisitor commanded Schedoni to explain himself; the latter could not immediately reply, but, when he recovered a self-command, he added,

“I promised this accuser, this Nicola di Zampari, to assist his preferment with what little interest I possessed; it was but little. Some succeeding circumstances encouraged me to believe that I could more than fulfil my promise. His hopes were elevated, and, in the fulness of expectation — he was disappointed, for I was myself deceived, by the person in whom I had trusted. To the disappointment of a choleric man, I am to attribute this unjust accusation.” Schedoni paused, and an air of dissatisfaction and anxiety appeared upon his features. His accuser remained silent, but a malicious smile announced his triumph.

“You must declare, also, the services,” said the inquisitor, “which merited the reward you promised.”

“Those services were inestimable to me,” resumed Schedoni, after a momentary hesitation; “though they cost di Zampari little: they were the consolations of sympathy, the intelligence of friendship, which he administered, and which gratitude told me never could be repaid.”

“Of sympathy! of friendship!” said the grand-vicar. “Are we to believe that a man, who brings false accusation of so dreadful a nature as the one now before us, is capable of bestowing the consolations of sympathy, and of friendship? You must either acknowledge, that services of a less disinterested nature won your promises of reward; or we must conclude that your acenser’s charge is just. Your assertions are inconsistent, and your explanation too trivial, to deceive for a moment.”

“I have declared the truth,” said Schedoni, haughtily.

“In which instance?” asked the inquisitor; “for your assertions contradict each other!”

Schedoni was silent. Vivaldi could not judge whether the pride which occasioned his silence was that of innocence, or of remorse.

“It appears, from your own testimony,” said the inquisitor, “that the ingratitude was your’s, not your accuser’s, since he consoled you with kindness, which you have never returned him! — Have you any thing further to say?”

Schedoni was still silent.

“This, then, is your only explanation?” added the inquisitor.

Schedoni bowed his head, The inquisitor then, addressing the accuser, demanded what he had to reply.

“I have nothing to reply,” said the stranger, with malicious triumph; “the accused has replied for me!”

“We are to conclude, then, that he has spoken truth, when he asserted you to be a monk of the Spirito Santo, at Naples?” said the inquisitor.

“You, holy father,” said the stranger, gravely, appealing to the inquisitor, “can answer for me, whether I am.”

Vivaldi listened with emotion.

The inquisitor rose from his chair, and with solemnity replied, “I answer, then, that you are not a monk of Naples.”

“By that reply,” said the vicar-general, in a low voice, to the inquisitor, “I perceive you think father Schedoni is guilty.”

The rejoinder of the inquisitor was delivered in so low a tone, that Vivaldi could not understand it. He was perplexed to interpret the answer given to the appeal of the stranger. he thought that the inquisitor would not have ventured an assertion thus positive, if his opinion had been drawn from inference only; and that he should know the accuser, while he was conducting himself towards him as a stranger, amazed Vivaldi, no less than if he had understood the character of an inquisitor to be as artless as his own. On the other hand, he had so frequently seen the stranger at Paluzzi, and in the habit of a monk, that he could hardly question the assertion of Schedoni, as to his identity.

The inquisitor, addressing Schedoni, said, "Your evidence we know to be in part erroneous; your accuser is not a monk of Naples, but a servant of the most holy Inquisition. Judging, from this part of your evidence, we must suspect the whole."

"A servant of the Inquisition!" exclaimed Schedoni, with unaffected surprize. "Reverend father! your assertion astonishes me! You are deceived, however strange it may appear, trust me, you are deceived! You doubt the credit of my word; I, therefore, will assert no more. But inquire of Signor Vivaldi; ask him, whether he has not often, and lately, seen my accuser at Naples, and in the habit of a monk."

"I have seen him at the ruins of Paluzzi, near Naples, and in the ecclesiastical dress," replied Vivaldi, without waiting for the regular question, "and under circumstances no less extraordinary than those which have attended him here. But, in return for this frank acknowledgment, I require of you, father Schedoni, to answer some questions which I shall venture to suggest to the tribunal — By what means were you informed that I have often seen the stranger at Paluzzi — and was you interested or not in his mysterious conduct towards me there?"

To these questions, though formally delivered from the tribunal, Schedoni did not deign to reply.

"It appears, then," said the vicar-general, "that the accuser and the accused were once accomplices."

The inquisitor objected, that this did not certainly appear; and that, on the contrary, Schedoni seemed to have given his last questions in despair; an observation which Vivaldi thought extraordinary from an inquisitor.

"Be it accomplices, if it so please you," said Schedoni, bowing to the grand vicar, without noticing the inquisitor: "you may call us accomplices, but I say, that we were friends. Since it is necessary to my own peace, that I should more fully explain some circumstances attending our intimacy, I will own that my accuser was occasionally my agent, and assisted in preserving the dignity of an illustrious family at Naples, the family of the Vivaldi. And there, holy father," added Schedoni, pointing to Vincentio, "is the son of that ancient house, for whom I have attempted so much!"

Vivaldi was almost overwhelmed by this confession of Schedoni, though he had already suspected a part of the truth. In the stranger he believed he saw the slanderer of Ellena, the base instrument of the Marchesa's policy, and of Schedoni's ambition; and the whole of his conduct at Paluzzi, at least, seemed now intelligible. In Schedoni he beheld his secret accuser, and the inexorable enemy whom he believed to have occasioned the imprisonment of Ellena. At this latter consideration, all circumspection, all prudence forsook him: he declared, with energy, that, from what Schedoni had just acknowledged to be his conduct, he knew him for his secret accuser, and the accuser, also, of Ellena di Rosalba; and he called upon the tribunal to examine into the Confessor's motives for the accusation, and afterwards to give hearing to what he would himself unfold.

To this, the grand-vicar replied, that Vivaldi's appeal would be taken into consideration; and he then ordered that the present business should proceed.

The inquisitor, addressing Schedoni, said, "The disinterested nature of your friendship is now sufficiently explained, and the degree of credit, which is due to your late assertions understood. Of you we ask no more, but turn to father Nicola di Zampari, and demand what he has to say in support of his accusation. What are your proofs, Nicola di Zampari, that he who calls himself father Schedoni is Ferando Count di Bruno; and that he has been guilty of murder, the murder of his brother, and of his wife? Answer to our charge!"

"To your first question," said the monk, "I reply that he has himself acknowledged to me, on an occasion, which it is not necessary to mention, that he was the Count di Bruno; to the last, I produce the poniard which I received, with the dying confession of the assassin whom he employed."

"Still, there are not proofs, but assertion," observed the vicar-general, "and the first forbids our confidence in the second. — If, as you declare, Schedoni himself acknowledged to you that he was Count di Bruno, you must have been to him the intimate friend he has declared you were, or he would not have confided to you a secret so dangerous to himself. And, if you were that friend, what confidence ought we to give to your assertions respecting the dagger? since, whether your accusations be true or false, you prove yourself guilty of treachery in bringing them forward at all."

Vivaldi was surprized to hear such candour from an inquisitor.

"Here is my proof," said the stranger, who now produced a paper, containing what he asserted to be the dying confession of the assassin. It was signed by a priest of Rome, as well as by himself, and appeared from the date to have been given only a very few weeks before. The priest, he said, was living, and might be summoned. The tribunal issued an order for the apprehension of this priest, and that he should be brought to give evidence on the following evening; after which, the business of this night proceeded, without further interruption, towards its conclusion.

The vicar-general spoke again, "Nicola di Zampari, I call upon you to say, why, if your proof of Schedoni's guilt is so clear, as the confession of the assassin himself must make it, — why you thought it necessary to summon father Ansaldo to attest the criminality of the Count di Bruno? The dying confession of the assassin is certainly of more weight than any other evidence."

"I summoned the father Ansaldo," replied the stranger, "as a means of proving that Schedoni is the Count di Bruno. The confession of the assassin sufficiently proves the Count to have been the instigator of the murder, but not that Schedoni is the Count."

"But that is more than I will engage to prove," replied Ansaldo, "I know it was the Count di Bruno who confessed to me, but I do not know that the father Schedoni, who is now before me, was the person who so confessed."

"Conscientiously observed!" said the vicar-general, interrupting the stranger, who was about to reply, "but you, Nicola di Zampari, have not on this head been sufficiently explicit. — How do you know that Schedoni is the penitent who confessed to Ansaldo on the vigil of San Marco?"

"Reverend father, that is the point I was about to explain," replied the monk. "I myself accompanied Schedoni, on the eve of San Marco, to the church of the Santa Maria del Pianto, at the very hour when the confession is said to have been made. Schedoni told me he was going to confession; and, when I observed to him his unusual agitation, his behaviour implied a consciousness of extraordinary guilt; he even betrayed it by some words, which he dropt in the confusion of his mind. I parted with him at the gates of the church. He was then of an order of white friars, and habited as father Ansaldo has described. Within a few weeks after this confession, he left his convent, for what reason I never could learn, though I have often surmised it, and came to reside at the Spirito Santo, whither I also had removed,"

"Here is no proof," said the vicar-general, "other friars of that order might confess at the same hour, in the same church."

"But here is strong presumption for proof," observed the inquisitor. "Holy father, we must judge from probabilities, as well as from proof."

"But probabilities themselves," replied the vicar-general, "are strongly against the evidence of a man, who would betray another by means of words dropped in the unguarded moments of powerful emotion."

"Are these the sentiments of an inquisitor!" said Vivaldi to himself, "can such glorious candour appear amidst the tribunal of an Inquisition!" Tears sell fast on Vivaldi's cheek while he gazed upon this just judge, whose candour, had it been exerted in his cause, could not have excited more powerful sensations of esteem and admiration. "An inquisitor!" he repeated to himself, "an inquisitor!"

The inferior inquisitor, however, was so far from possessing any congeniality of character with his superior, that he was evidently disappointed by the appearance of liberality, which the vicar-general discovered, and immediately said, "Has the accuser any thing further to urge in evidence, that the father Schedoni is the penitent, who confessed to the penitentiary Ansaldo?"

"I have," replied the monk, with asperity. "When I had left Schedoni in the church, I lingered without the walls for his return, according to appointment. But the appeared considerably sooner than I expected, and in a state of disorder, such as I had never witnessed in him before. In an instant he passed me, nor could my voice arrest his progress. Confusion seemed to reign within the church and the convent, and, when I would have entered, for the purpose of inquiring the occasion of it, the gates were suddenly closed, and all entrance forbidden. It has since appeared, that the monks were then searching for the penitent. A rumour afterwards reached me, that a confession had caused this disturbance; that the father Confessor, who happened at that time to be the grand penitentiary Ansaldo, had left the chair in horror of what had been divulged from the grate, and had judged it necessary that a search should be made for the penitent, who was a white friar. This report, reverend fathers, excited general attention; with me it did more — for I thought I knew the penitent. When on the following day, I questioned Schedoni as to his sudden departure from the church of the Black Penitents, his answers were dark, but emphatic, and he extorted from me a promise, thoughtless that I was! never to disclose his visit of the preceding evening to the Santa del Pianto. I then certainly discovered who was the penitent"

"Did he, then, confess to you also?" said the Vicar-general.

"No father. I understood him to be the penitent to whom the report alluded, but I had no suspicion of the nature of his crimes, till the assassin began his confession, the conclusion of which clearly explained the subject of Schedoni's; it explained also his motive for endeavouring ever after to attach me to his interest."

"You have now," said the vicar-general, "you have now, confessed yourself a member of the convent of the Spirito Santo at Naples, and an intimate of the father Schedoni; one whom for many years he has endeavoured to attach to him. Not an hour has passed since you denied all this; the negative to the latter circumstance was given, it is true, by implication only; but to the first a direct and absolute denial was pronounced!"

"I denied that I am a monk of Naples," replied the accuser, "and I appealed to the Inquisitor for the truth of my denial. He has said, that I am now a servant of the most holy Inquisition."

The vicar-general, with some surprise, looked at the inquisitor for explanation; other members of the tribunal did the same; the rest appeared to understand more than they had thought it necessary to avow. The inquisitor, who had been called upon, rose, and replied, "Nicola di Zampari has spoken the truth. It is not many weeks since he entered the holy office. A certificate from his convent at Naples bears testimony to the truth of what I advance, and procured him admittance here."

"It is extraordinary that you should not have disclosed your knowledge of this person before!" said the vicar-general.

"Holy father, I had reasons," replied the inquisitor, "you will recollect that the accused was present, and you will understand them."

"I comprehend you," said the vicar-general, "but I do neither approve of, nor perceive any necessity for your countenancing the subterfuge of this Nicola di Zampari, relative to his identity. But more of this in private."

"I will explain all there," answered the inquisitor.

"It appears then," resumed the vicar-general, speaking aloud, "that this Nicola di Zampari was formerly the friend and confidant of father Schedoni, whom he now accuses. The accusation is evidently malicious; whether it be also false remains to be decided. A material question naturally arises out of the subject — Why was not the accusation brought forward before this period?"

The monk's visage brightened with the satisfaction of anticipated triumph, and he immediately replied, "Most holy father! as soon as I ascertained the crime, I prepared to prosecute the perpetrator of it. A short period only has elapsed since the assassin gave his confession. In this interval I discovored, in these prisons, Signor Vivaldi, and immediately comprehended by whose means he was confined. I knew enough both of the accuser and accused, to understand which of these was innocent, and had then a double motive for causing Schedoni to be summoned; — I wished equally to deliver the innocent and punish the criminal. The question as to the motive for my becoming the enemy of him, who was once my friend, is already answered; — it was a sense of justice, not a suggestion of malice."

The grand-vicar smiled, but asked no further; and this long examination concluded with committing Schedoni again into close custody, till cull evidence should be obtained of his guilt, or his innocence should appear. Respecting the manner of his wife's death, there was yet no other evidence than that which was asserted to be his own confession, which, though perhaps sufficient to condemn a criminal before the tribunal of the Inquisition, was not enough to satisfy the present vicar-general, who gave direction that means might be employed towards obtaining proof of each article of the accusation; in order that, should Schedoni be acquitted of the charge of having murdered his brother, documents might appear for prosecuting him respecting the death of his wife.

Schedoni, when he withdrew from the hall, bowed respectfully to the tribunal, and whether, not withstanding late appearances, he were innocent, or that subtlety enabled him to reassume his usual address, it is certain his manner no longer betrayed any symptom of conscious guilt. His countenance was firm and even tranquil, and his air dignified. Vivaldi, who, during the greater part of this examination, had been convinced of his criminality, now only doubted his innocence. Vivaldi was himself reconducted to his prison, and the sitting of the tribunal was dissolved.

Chapter 29

> “The time shall come when Glo’ster’s heart shall bleed
> In life’s last hours with horrors of the deed;
> When dreary visions shall at last present
> Thy vengeful image.” —
> Collins.

When the night of Schedoni’s trial arrived, Vivaldi was again summoned to the hall of the tribunal. Every circumstance was now arranged according to the full ceremonies of the place; the members of the tribunal were more numerous than foremerly at the examinations; the chief inquisitors wore habits of a fashion different from those, which before distinguished them, and their turbans, of a singular form and larger size, seemed to give an air of sterner ferocity to their features. The hall, as usual, was hung with black, and every person who appeared there, whether inquisitor, official, witness or prisoner, was habited in the same dismal hue, which, together with the kind of light diffused through the chamber from lamps hung high in the vaulted roof, and from torches held by parties of officials who kept watch at the several doors, and in different parts of this immense hall, gave a character of gloomy solemnity to the assembly, which was almost horrific.

Vivaldi was situated in a place, whence he beheld the whole of the tribunal, and could distinguish whatever was passing in the hall. The countenance of every member was now fully displayed to him by the torchmen, who, arranged at the steps of the platform on which the three chief inquisitors were elevated, extended in a semicircle on either hand of the place occupied by the inferior members. The red glare, which the torches threw upon the latter, certainly did not soften the expression of faces, for the most part sculptured by passions of dark malignity, or fiercer cruelty; and Vivaldi could not bear even to examine them long.

Before the bar of the tribunal, he distinguished Schedoni, and little did he suspect, that in him, a criminal brought thither to answer for the guilt of murder — the murder of a brother, and of a wife, he beheld the parent of Ellena di Rosalba!

Near Schedoni was seated the penitentiary Ansaldo, the Roman priest, who was to be a principal witness, and father Nicolah di Zampari, upon whom Vivaldi could not even now look without experiencing somewhat of the awe, which had prevailed over his mind when he was inclined to consider the stranger, rather as the vision of another world, than as a being of this. The same wild and indescribable character still distinguished his air, his every look and movement, and Vivaldi could not but believe that something in the highest degree extraordinary would yet be discovered concerning him.

The witnesses being called over, Vivaldi understood that he was placed among them, though he had only repeated the words which father Nicola had spoken, and which, since Nicola himself was present as a witness against Schedoni, he did not perceive could be in the least material on the trial.

When Vivaldi had, in his turn, answered to his name, a voice, bursting forth from a distant part of the hall, exclaimed, “It is my master! my dear master!” and on directing his eyes whence it came, he perceived the faithful Paulo struggling with his guard. Vivaldi called to him to be patient, and to forbear resistance, an exhortation, however, which served only to increase the efforts of the servant for liberty, and in the next instant he broke from the grasp of the officials, and, darting towards Vivaldi, fell at his feet, sobbing; and clasping his knees, and exclaiming, “O my master! my master! have I found you at last?”

Vivaldi, as much affected by this meeting as Paulo, could not immediately speak. He would, however, have raised and embraced his affectionate servant, but Paulo, still clinging to his knees and sobbing, was so much agitated that he scarcely understood any thing said to him, and to the kind assurances and gentle remonstrances of Vivaldi, constantly replied as if to the officers, whom he fancied to be forcing him away.

“Remember your situation, Paulo,” said Vivaldi, “consider mine also, and be governed by prudence.”

“You shall not force me hence!” cried Paulo, “you can take my life only once; if I must die, it shall be here.”

“Recollect yourself, Paulo, and be composed. Your life, I trust, is in no danger.”

Paulo looked up, and again bursting into a passion of tears, repeated, “O! my master! my master! where have you been all this while? are you indeed alive? I thought I never should see you again! I have dreamt an hundred times that you were dead and buried! and I wished to be dead and buried with you. I thought you was gone out of this world into the next. I feared you was gone to heaven, and so believed we should never meet again. But now, I see you once more, and know that you live! O! my master! my master!"

The officers who had followed Paulo, now endeavouring to withdraw him, he became more outrageous.

"Do your worst at once," said he; "but you shall find tough work of it, if you try to force me from hence, so you had better be contented with killing me here."

The incensed officials were laying violent hands upon him, when Vivaldi interposed. "I entreat, I supplicate you," said he, "that you will suffer him to remain near me."

"It is impossible," replied an officer, "we dare not."

"I will promise that he shall not even speak to me, if you will only allow him to be near," added Vivaldi.

"Not speak to you, master!" exclaimed Paulo, "but I will stay by you, and speak to you as long as I like, till my last gasp. Let them do their worst at once; I defy them all, and all the devils of inquisitors at their heels too, to force me away. I can die but once, and they ought to be satisfied with that, — so what is there to be afraid of? Not speak!"

"He knows not what he says," said Vivaldi to the officials, while he endeavoured to silence Paulo with his hand, "I am certain that he will submit to whatever I shall require of him, and will be entirely silent; or, if he does speak now and then, it shall be only in a whisper."

"A whisper!" said an officer sneeringly, "do you suppose Signor, that any person is suffered to speak in a whisper here?"

"A whisper!" shouted Paulo, "I scorn to speak in a whisper. I will speak so loud, that every word I say shall ring in the ears of all those old black devils on the benches yonder; aye, and those on that mountebank stage too, that sit there looking so grim and angry as if they longed to tear us in pieces. They" —

"Silence," said Vivaldi with emphasis, "Paulo, I command you to be silent."

"They shall know a bit of my mind," continued Paulo, without noticing Vivaldi, "I will tell them what they have to expect for all their cruel usage of my poor master. Where do they expect to go when they die, I wonder? Though for that matter, they cannot go to a worse place than they are in already, and I suppose it is, knowing that, which makes them not afraid of being ever so wicked. They shall hear a little plain truth, for once in their lives, however, they shall hear" — During the whole of this harangue, Vivaldi, alarmed for the consequence of such imprudent, though honest indignation, had been using all possible effort to silence him, and was the more alarmed, since the officials made no further attempt to interrupt Paulo, a forbearance, which Vivaldi attributed to malignity, and to a wish that Paulo might be entrapped by his own act. At length he made himself heard.

"I entreat," said Vivaldi.

Paulo stopped for a moment.

"Paulo!" rejoined Vivaldi earnestly, "do you love your master?"

"Love my master!" said Paulo resentfully, without allowing Vivaldi to finish his sentence, "Have I not gone through fire and water for him? or, what is as good, have I not put myself into the Inquisition, and all on his account? and now to be asked, 'Do I love my master!' If you believe, Signor, that any thing else made me come here, into these dismal holes, you are quite entirely out; and when they have made an end of me, as I suppose they will do, before all is over, you will, perhaps, think better of me than to suspect that I came here for my own pleasure."

"All that may be as you say, Paulo," replied Vivaldi coldly, while he with difficulty commanded his tears, "but your immediate submission is the only conduct that can convince me of the sincerity of your professions. I entreat you to be silent."

"Entreat me!" said Paulo, "O my master! what have I done that it should come to this? Entreat me!" he repeated, sobbing.

"You will then give me this proof of your attachment?" asked Vivaldi.

"Do not use such a heart breaking word again, master," replied Paulo, while he dashed the tears from his cheek, "such a heart breaking word, and I will do any thing."

"You submit to what I require then, Paulo?"

“Aye, Signor, if — if it is even to kneel at the feet of that devil of an inquisitor, yonder.”

“I shall only require you to be silent,” replied Vivaldi, “and you may then be permitted to remain near me.”

“Well, Signor, well; I will do as you bid me, then, and only just say” —

“Not a syllable! Paulo,” interrupted Vivaldi.

“Only just say, master” —

“Not a word I entreat you!” added Vivaldi, “or you will be removed immediately.”

“His removal does not depend on that,” said one of the officials, breaking from his watchful silence, “he must go, and that without more delay.”

“What! after I have promised not to open my lips!” said Paulo, “do you pretend to break your agreement?”

“There is no presence, and there was no agreement,” replied the man sharply, “so obey directly, or it will be the worse for you.”

The officials were provoked, and Paulo became still more enraged and clamorous, till at length the uproar reached the tribunal at the other end of the hall, and silence having been commanded, an inquiry was made into the cause of the confusion. The consequence of this was, an order that Paulo should withdraw from Vivaldi; but as at this moment he feared no greater evil, he gave his refusal to the tribunal with as little ceremony as he had done before to the officials.

At length, after much difficulty, a sort of compromise was made, and Paulo being soothed by his master into some degree of compliance, was suffered to remain within a short distance of him.

The business of the trial soon after commenced. Ansaldo the penitentiary, and father Nicola, appeared as witnesses, as did, also, the Roman priest, who had assisted in taking the depositions of the dying assassin. He had been privately interrogated, and had given clear and satisfactory evidence as to the truth of the paper produced by Nicola. Other witnesses, also, had been subpoenaed, whom Schedoni had no expectation of meeting.

The deportment of the Confessor, on first entering the hall, was collected and firm; it remained unchanged when the Roman priest was brought forward; but, on the appearance of another witness, his courage seemed to faulter. Before this evidence was, however, called for, the depositions of the assassin were publicly read. They stated, with the closest conciseness, the chief facts, of which the following is a somewhat more dilated narrative.

It appeared, that about the year 1742, the late Count di Bruno had passed over into Greece, a journey which his brother, the present Confessor, having long expected, had meditated to take advantage of. Though a lawless passion had first suggested to the dark mind of Schedoni the atrocious act, which should destroy a brother, many circumstances and considerations had conspired to urge him towards its accomplishment. Among these was the conduct of the late Count towards himself, which, however reasonable, as it had contradicted his own selfish gratifications, and added strong reproof to opposition, had excited his most inveterate hatred. Schedoni, who, as a younger brother of his family, bore, at that time, the title of Count di Marinella, had dissipated his small patrimony at a very early age; but, though suffering might then have taught him prudence, it had only encouraged him in duplicity, and rendered him more eager to seek a temporary refuge in the same habits of extravagance which had led to it. The Count di Bruno, though his fortune was very limited, had afforded frequent supplies to his brother; till, finding that he was incorrigible, and that the sums which he himself spared with difficulty from his family were lavished, without remorse, by Marinella, instead of being applied, with economy, to his support, he refused further aid than was sufficient for his absolute necessities.

It would be difficult for a candid mind to believe how a conduct so reasonable could possibly excite hatred in any breast, or that the power of selfishness could so far warp any understanding, as to induce Marinella, whom we will, in future, again call Schedoni, to look upon his brother with detestation, because he had refused to ruin himself that his kinsman might revel! Yet it is certain that Schedoni, terming the necessary prudence of di Bruno to be meanness and cold insensibility to the comfort of others, suffered full as much resentment towards him from system, as he did from passion, though the meanness and the insensibility he imagined in his brother’s character were not only real traits in his own, but were displaying themselves in the very arguments he urged against them.

The rancour thus excited was cherished by innumerable circumstances, and ripened by envy, that meanest and most malignant of the human passions; by envy of di Bruno’s blessings, of an unencumbered estate, and of a beautiful wife, he was tempted to perpetrate the deed, which might transfer those blessings to himself. Spalatro, whom he employed to this purpose, was well known to him, and he did not fear to confide the conduct of the crime to this man, who was to purchase a little habitation on the remote shore of the Adriatic, and, with a certain stipend, to reside there. The ruinous dwelling, to which Ellena had been carried, as its solitary situation suited Schedoni's views, was taken for him.

Schedoni, who had good intelligence of all di Bruno's movements, acquainted Spalatro, from time to time, with his exact situation; and it was after di Bruno, on his return, had crossed the Adriatic, from Ragusi to Manfredonia, and was entering upon the woods of the Garganus, that Spalatro, with his comrade, overtook him. They fired at the Count and his attendants, who were only a valet, and a guide of the country; and, concealed among the thickets, they securely repeated the attack. The shot did not immediately succeed, and the Count, looking round to discover his enemy, prepared to defend himself, but the firing was so rapidly sustained, that, at length, both di Bruno and his servant fell, covered with wounds. The guide fled.

The unfortunate travellers were buried by their assassins on the spot; but, whether the suspicion which attends upon the consciousness of guilt, prompted Spalatro to guard against every possibility of being betrayed by the accomplice of his crime, or whatever was the motive, he returned to the forest alone; and, shrouded by night, removed the bodies to a pit, which he had prepared under the flooring of the house where he lived; thus displacing all proof, should his accomplice hereafter point out to justice the spot in which he had assisted to deposit the mangled remains of di Bruno.

Schedoni contrived a plausible history of the shipwreck of his brother upon the Adriatic, and of the loss of the whole crew; and, as no persons but the assassins were acquainted with the real cause of his death, the guide, who had fled, and the people at the only town he had passed through, since he landed, being ignorant even of the name of di Bruno, there was not any circumstance to contradict the falshood. It was universally credited, and even the widow of the Count had, perhaps, never doubted its truth; or if, after her compelled marriage with Schedoni, his conduct did awaken a suspicion, it was too vague to produce any serious consequence.

During the reading of Spalatro's confession, and particularly at the conclusion of it, the surprize and dismay of Schedoni were too powerful for concealment; and it was not the least considerable part of his wonder, that Spalatro should have come to Rome for the purpose of making these depositions; but further consideration gave him a conjecture of the truth.

The account, which Spalatro had given of his motive for this journey to the priest, was, that, having lately understood Schedoni to be resident at Rome, he had followed him thither, with an intention of relieving his conscience by an acknowledgment of his own crimes, and a disclosure of Schedoni's. This, however, was not exactly the fact. The design of Spalatro was to extort money from the guilty Confessor; a design, from which the latter believed he had protected himself, as well as from every other evil consequence, when he misled his late accomplice, respecting his place of residence; little foreseeing that the very artifice, which should send this man in search of him to Rome, instead of Naples, would be the means of bringing his crimes before the public.

Spalatro had followed the steps of Schedoni as far as the town at which he slept, on the first night of his journey; and, having there passed him, had reached the villa di Cambrusca, when, perceiving the Confessor approaching, he had taken shelter from observation, within the ruin. The motive, which before made him shrink from notice, had contributed, and still did so, to a suspicion that he aimed at the life of Schedoni, who, in wounding him, believed he had saved himself from an assassin. The wounds, however, of Spalatro did not so much disable him, but that he proceeded towards Rome from the town whence the parting road had conducted his master towards Naples.

The fatigue of a long journey, performed chiefly on foot, in Spalatro's wounded condition, occasioned a fever, that terminated together his journey and his life; and in his last hours he had unburdened his conscience by a full confession of his guilt. The priest, who, on this occasion, had been sent for, alarmed by the importance of the confession, since it implicated a living person, called in a friend as witness to the depositions. This witness was father Nicola, the former intimate of Schedoni, and who was of a character to rejoice in any discovery, which might punish a man from whose repeated promises he had received only severe disappointments.

Schedoni now perceived that all his designs against Spalatro had failed, and he had meditated more than have yet been fully disclosed. It may be remembered, that on parting with the peasant, his conductor, the Confessor, gave him a stiletto to defend him, as he said, from the attack of Spalatro, in case of encountering him on the road. The point of this instrument was tipped with poison; so that a scratch from it was sufficient to inflict death. Schedoni had for many years secretly carried about him such an envenomed instrument, for reasons known only to himself. He had hoped, that, should the peasant meet Spalatro, and be provoked to defend himself, this stiletto would terminate the life of his accomplice, and relieve him from all probability of discovery, since the other assassin, whom he employed, had been dead several years. The expedient failed in every respect; the peasant did not even see Spalatro; and, before he reached his home, he luckily lost the fatal stiletto, which, as he had discovered himself to be acquainted with some circumstances connected with the crimes of Schedoni, the Confessor would have wished him to keep, from the chance, that he might some time injure himself in using it. The poniard, as he had no proper means of fastening it to his dress, had fallen, and was carried away by the torrent he was crossing at that moment.

But, if Schedoni had been shocked by the confession of the assassin, his dismay was considerably greater, when a new witness was brought forward, and he perceived an ancient domestic of his house. This man identified Schedoni for Ferando Count di Bruno, with whom he had lived as a servant after the death of the Count his brother. And not only did he bear testimony to the person of Schedoni, but to the death of the Countess, his wife. Giovanni declared himself to be one of the domestics who had assisted in conveying her to her apartment, after she had been struck by the poniard of Schedoni, and who had afterwards attended her funeral in the church of the Santa del Miracoli, a convent near the late residence of di Bruno. He further affirmed, that the physicians had reported her death to be in consequence of the wound she had received, and he bore witness to the flight of his master, previous to the death of the Countess, and immediately upon the assassination, and that he had never publicly appeared upon his estate since that period.

An inquisitor asked, whether any measures had been taken by the relations of the deceased lady, toward a prosecution of the Count.

The witness replied, that a long search had been made for the Count, for such a purpose, but that he had wholly eluded discovery, and that, of course, no further step had been taken in the affair. This reply appeared to occasion dissatisfaction: the tribunal was silent, and seemed to hesitate; the vicar-general then addressed the witness.

“How can you be certain that the person now before you, calling himself father Schedoni, is the Count di Bruno, your former master, if you have never seen him during the long interval of years you mention?”

Giovanni; without hesitation, answered, that, though years had worn the features of the Count, he recollected them the moment he beheld him; and not the Count only, but the person of the penitentiary Ansaldo, whom he had seen a frequent visitor at the house of di Bruno, though his appearance, also, was considerably changed by time, and by the ecclesiastical habit which he now wore.

The vicar-general seemed still to doubt the evidence of this man, till Ansaldo himself, on being called upon, remembered him to have been a servant of the Count, though he could not identify the Count himself.

The grand-inquisitor remarked, that it was extraordinary he should recollect the face of the servant, yet forget that of the master, with whom he had lived in habits of intimacy. To this Ansaldo replied, that the stronger passions of Schedoni, together with his particular habits of life, might reasonably be supposed to have wrought a greater change upon the features of the Count than the character and circumstances of Giovanni’s could have effected on his.

Schedoni, not without reason, was appalled, on the appearance of this servant, whose further testimony gave such clearness and force to some other parts of the evidence, that the tribunal pronounced sentence upon Schedoni, as the murderer of the Count his brother; and as this, the first charge, was sufficient for his condemnation to death, they did not proceed upon the second, that which related to his wife.

The emotion betrayed by Schedoni, on the appearance of the last witness, and during the delivery of the evidence, disappeared when his fate became certain; and when the dreadful sentence of the law was pronounced, it made no visible impression on his mind. From that moment, his firmness or his hardihood never forsook him.

Vivaldi, who witnessed this condemnation, appeared infinitely more affected by it than himself, and, though in revealing the circumstance of father Nicola’s summons, which had eventually led to the discovery of Schedoni’s crimes, he had not been left a choice in his conduct, he felt, at this moment, as miserable as if he had actually borne witness against the life of a fellow being: what, then, would have been his feelings, had he been told that this Schedoni, thus condemned, was the father of Ellena di Rosalba! But, whatever these might be, he was soon condemned to experience them. One of the most powerful of Schedoni’s passions appeared even in this last scene; and as, in quitting the tribunal, he passed near Vivaldi, he uttered these few words — “In me you have murdered the father of Ellena di Rosalba!”

Not with any hope that the intercession of Vivaldi, himself also a prisoner, could in the least mitigate a sentence pronounced by the Inquisition, did he say this, but for the purpose of revenging himself for the evil, which Vivaldi's evidence had contributed to produce, and inflicting the exquisite misery such information must give. The attempt succeeded too well.

At first, indeed, Vivaldi judged this to be only the desperate assertion of a man, who believed his last chance of escaping the rigour of the law to rest with him; and, at the mention of Ellena, forgetting every precaution, he loudly demanded to know her situation. Schedoni, throwing upon him an horrible smile of triumph and derision, was passing forward without replying, but Vivaldi, unable to support this state of uncertainty, asked permission of the tribunal to converse, for a few moments, with the prisoner; and request which was granted with extreme reluctance, and only on condition that the conversation should be public.

To Vivaldi's questions, as to the situation of Ellena, Schedoni only replied, that she was his daughter, and the solemnity, which accompanied these repeated assertions, though it failed to convince Vivaldi of this truth, occasioned him agonizing doubt and apprehension: but when the Confessor, perceiving the policy of disclosing her place of residence to Vivaldi, softened from his desire of vengeance to secure the interest of his family, and named the Santa della Piéta as her present asylum, the joy of such intelligence overcame, for a time, every other consideration.

To this dialogue, however, the officials put a speedy conclusion; Schedoni was led back to his cell, and Vivaldi was soon after ordered to his former close confinement.

But Paulo became again outrageous, when he was about to be separated from his master, till the latter, having petitioned the tribunal, that his servant might accompany him to his prison, and received an absolute refusal, endeavoured to calm the violence of his despair. He fell at his master's feet, and shed tears, but he uttered no further complaints. When he rose, he turned his eyes in silence upon Vivaldi, and they seemed to say, "Dear master! I shall never see you more!" and with this sad expression, he continued to gaze on him till he had left the hall.

Vivaldi, notwithstanding the various subjects of his distress, could not bear to meet the piteous looks of this poor man, and he withdrew his eyes; yet, at every other step he took, they constantly returned to his faithful servant, till the doors solded him from sight.

When he had quitted the hall, Vivaldi pleaded, however hopelessly, to the officials, in favour of Paulo, entreating that they would speak to the persons, who kept guard over him, and prevail with them to shew him every allowable indulgence.

"No indulgence can be allowed him," replied one of the men, "except bread and water, and the liberty of walking in his cell."

"No other!" said Vivaldi.

"None," repeated the official. "This prisoner has been near getting one of his guards into a scrape already, for, somehow or other, he so talked him over, and won upon him, (for he is but a young one here) that the man let him have a light, and a pen and ink; but, luckily, it was found out, before any harm was done."

"And what became of this honest fellow?" inquired Vivaldi.

"Honest! he was none so honest, either, Signor, if he could not mind his duty."

"Was he punished, then?"

"No, Signor," replied the man, pausing, and looking back upon the long avenue they were passing, to inquire whether he was observed to hold this conversation with a prisoner: "no, Signor, he was a younker, so they let him off for once, and sent him to guard a man, who was not so sull of his coaxing ways."

"Paulo made him merry, perhaps?" asked Vivaldi. "What were the coaxing ways you spoke of?"

"Merry, Signor! no! he made him cry, and that was as bad."

"Indeed!" said Vivaldi. "The man must have been here, then, a very short time."

"Not more than a month, or so, Signor."

"But the coaxing ways you talked of," repeated Vivaldi, "what were they? — a ducat, or so?"

"A ducat!" exclaimed the man, "no! not a paolo!"

"Are you sure of that?" cried Vivaldi, shrewdly.

"Aye, sure enough, Signor. This fellow is not worth a ducat in the world!"

"But his master is, friend," observed Vivaldi, in a very low voice, while he put some money into his hand.

The officer made no answer, but concealed the money, and nothing further was said.

Vivaldi had given this as a bribe, to procure some kindness for his servant, not from any consideration of himself, for his own critical situation had ceased at this time to be a subject of anxiety with him. His mind was at present strangely agitated between emotions the most opposite in their nature, the joy which a discovery of Ellena's safety inspired, and the horrible suspicion that Schedoni's assurances of relationship occasioned. That his Ellena was the daughter of a murderer, that the father of Ellena should be brought to ignominious death, and that he himself, however unintentionally, should have assisted to this event, were considerations almost too horrible to be sustained! Vivaldi sought refuge from them in various conjectures as to the motive, which might have induced Schedoni to assert a falshood in this instance; but that of revenge alone appeared plausible; and even this surmise was weakened, when he considered that the Confessor had assured him of Ellena's safety, an assurance which, as Vivaldi did not detect the selfish policy connected with it, he believed Schedoni would not have given, had his general intent towards him been malicious. But it was possible, that this very information, on which all his comfort reposed, might be false, and had been given only for the purpose of inflicting the anguish a discovery of the truth must lead to! With an anxiety so intense, as almost to overcome his faculty of judging, he examined every minute probability relative to this point, and concluded with believing that Schedoni had, in this last instance, at least, spoken honestly.

Whether he had done so in his first assertion was a question, which had raised in Vivaldi's mind a tempest of conjecture and of horror; for, while the subject of it was too astonishing to be fully believed, it was, also, too dreadful, not to be apprehended even as a possibility.

❦

Chapter 30

O holy nun! why bend the mournful head?
Why fall those tears from lids uplift in pray'r?
Why o'er thy pale cheek steals the feeble blush,
Then fades, and leaves it wan as the lily
On which a moon-beam falls?

While these events were passing in the prisons of the Inquisition at Rome, Ellena, in the sanctuary of Our Lady of Pity, remained ignorant of Schedoni's arrest, and of Vivaldi's situation. She understood that the Confessor was preparing to acknowledge her for his daughter, and believed that she comprehended also the motive for his absence; but, though he had forbidden her to expect a visit from him till his arrangement should be completed, he had promised to write in the mean time, and inform her of all the present circumstances of Vivaldi; his unexpected silence had excited, therefore, apprehensions as various, though not so terrible, as those which Vivaldi had suffered for her; nor did the silence of Vivaldi himself appear less extraordinary.

"His confinement must be severe indeed," said the afflicted Ellena, "since he cannot relieve my anxiety by a single line of intelligence. Or, perhaps, harassed by unceasing opposition, he has submitted to the command of his family, and has consented to forget me. Ah! why did I leave the opportunity for that command to his family; why did I not enforce it myself!"

Yet, while she uttered this self-reproach, the tears she shed contradicted the pride which had suggested it; and a conviction lurking in her heart that Vivaldi could not so resign her, soon dissipated those tears. But other conjectures recalled them; it was possible that he was ill — that he was dead!

In such vague and gloomy surmise her days passed away; employment could no longer withdraw her from herself, nor music, even for a moment, charm away the sense of sorrow; yet she regularly partook of the various occupations of the nuns; and was so far from permitting herself to indulge in any useless expression of anxiety, that she had never once disclosed the sacred subject of it; so that, though she could not assume an air of cheerfulness, she never appeared otherwise than tranquil. Her most soothing, yet perhaps most melancholy hour, was when about sun-set she could withdraw unnoticed, to the terrace among the rocks, that overlooked the convent, and formed a part of its domain. There, alone and relieved from all the ceremonial restraints of the society, her very thoughts seemed more at liberty. As, from beneath the light foliage of the accacias, or the more majestic shade of the plane-trees that waved their branches over the many-coloured cliffs of this terrace, Ellena looked down upon the magnificent scenery of the bay, it brought back to memory, in sad yet pleasing detail, the many happy days she had passed on those blue waters, or on the shores, in the society of Vivaldi and her departed relative Bianchi; and every point of the prospect marked by such remembrance, which the veiling distance stole, was rescued by imagination, and pictured by affection in tints more animated than those of brightest nature.

One evening Ellena had lingered on the terrace later than usual. She had watched the rays retiring from the highest points of the horizon, and the fading imagery of the lower scene, till, the sun having sunk into the waves, all colouring was withdrawn, except an empurpling and reposing hue, which overspread the waters and the heavens, and blended in soft confusion every feature of the landscape The roofs and slender spires of the Santa della Pieta, with a single tower of the church rising loftily over every other part of the buildings that composed the convent, were fading fast from the eye; but the solemn tint that invested them accorded so well with their style, that Ellena was unwilling to relinquish this interesting object. Suddenly she perceived through the dubious light an unusual number of moving figures in the court of the great cloister, and listening, she fancied she could distinguish the murmuring of many voices. The white drapery of the nuns rendered them conspicuous as they moved, but it was impossible to ascertain who were the individuals engaged in this bustle. Presently the assemblage dispersed; and Ellena, curious to understand the occasion of what she had observed, prepared to descend to the convent.

She had left the terrace, and was about to enter a long avenue of chesnuts that extended to a part of the convent, communicating immediately with the great court, when she heard approaching steps, and, on turning into the walk, perceived several persons advancing in the shady distance. Among the voices, as they drew nearer, she distinguished one whose interesting tone engaged all her attention, and began also to awaken memory. She listened, wondered, doubted, hoped, and feared! It spoke again! Ellena thought she could not be deceived in those tender accents, so full of intelligence, so expressive of sensibility and refinement. She proceeded with quicker steps, yet faltered as she drew near the group, and paused to discern whether among them was any figure that might accord with the voice and justify her hopes.

The voice spoke again; it pronounced her name; pronounced it with the tremblings of tenderness and impatience, and Ellena scarcely dared to trust her senses, when she beheld Olivia, the nun of San Stefano, in the cloisters of the Della Pieta!

Ellena could find no words to express her joy and surprise on beholding her preserver in safety, and in these quiet groves; but Olivia repaid all the affectionate caresses of her young friend, and, while she promised to explain the circumstance that had led to her present appearance here, she, in her turn, made numerous inquiries relative to Ellena's adventures after she had quitted San Stefano. They were now, however, surrounded by too many auditors to allow of unreserved conversation; Ellena, therefore, led the nun to her apartment, and Olivia then explained her reasons for having left the convent of San Stefano, which were indeed sufficient to justify, even with the most rigid devotee, her conduct as to the change. This unfortunate recluse, it appeared, persecuted by the suspicions of the abbess, who understood that she had assisted in the liberation of Ellena, had petitioned the bishop of her diocese for leave to remove to the Santa della Pieta. The abbess had not proof to proceed formally against her, as an accomplice in the escape of a novice, for though Jeronimo could have supplied the requisite evidence, he was too deeply implicated in this adventure to do so without betraying his own conduct. From his having withheld such proof, it appears, however, that accident rather than design had occasioned his failure on the evening of Ellena's departure from the monastery. But, though the abbess had not testimony enough for legal punishment, she was acquainted with circumstances sufficient to justify suspicion, and had both the inclination and the power to render Olivia very miserable.

In her choice of the Santa della Pieta, the nun was influenced by many considerations, some of which were the consequence of conversations she had held with Ellena respecting the state of that society. Her design she had been unable to disclose to her friend, lest, by a discovery of such correspondence, the abbess of San Stefano should obtain grounds on which to proceed against her. Even in her appeal to the bishop the utmost caution and secrecy had been necessary, till the order for her removal, procured not without considerable delay and difficulty, arrived, and when it came, the jealous anger of the superior rendered an immediate departure necessary.

Olivia, during many years, had been unhappy in her local circumstances, but it is probable she would have concluded her days within the walls of San Stefano, had not the aggravated oppression of the abbess aroused her courage and activity, and dissipated the despondency, with which severe misfortune had obscured her views.

Ellena was particular in her inquiries whether any person of the monastery had suffered for the assistance they had given her; but learned that not one, except Olivia, had been suspected of befriending her; and then understood, that the venerable friar, who had dared to unfasten the gate which restored her with Vivaldi to liberty, had not been involved by his kindness.

"It is an embarrassing and rather an unusual circumstance," concluded Olivia, "to change one's convent; but you perceive the strong reasons which determined me upon a removal. I was, however, perhaps, the more impatient of severe treatment, since you, my sister, had described to me the society of Our Lady of Pity, and since I believed it possible that you might form a part of it. When, on my arrival here, I learned that my wishes had not deceived me on this point, I was impatient to see you once more, and as soon as the ceremonies attending an introduction to the superior were over, I requested to be conducted to you, and was in search of you when we met in the avenue. It is unnecessary for me to insist upon the satisfaction, which this meeting gives me; but you may not, perhaps, understand how much the manners of our lady abbess, and of the sisterhood in general, as far as a first interview will allow me to judge of them, have re-animated me. The gloom, which has long hung over my prospects, seems now to open, and a distant gleam promises to light up the evening of my stormy day."

Olivia paused and appeared to recollect herself; this was the first time she had made so direct a reference to her own misfortunes; and, while Ellena silently remarked it, and observed the dejection, which was already stealing upon the expressive countenance of the nun, she wished, yet feared to lead her back towards the subject of them.

Endeavouring to dismiss some painful remembrance, and assuming a smile of languid gaiety, Olivia said, "Now that I have related the history of my removal; and sufficiently indulged my egotism, will you let me hear what adventures have be fallen you, my young friend, since the melancholy adieu you gave me in the gardens of San Stefano."

This was a task, to which Ellena's spirits, though revived by the presence of Olivia, were still unequal. Over the scenes of her past distress Time had not yet drawn his shadowing veil; the colours were all too fresh and garish for the meek dejection of her eye, and the subject was too intimately connected with that of her present anxiety, to be reviewed without very painful feelings. She therefore requested Olivia to spare her from a detail of particulars, which she could not recollect but with extreme reluctance; and, scrupulously observing the injunction of Schedoni, she merely mentioned her separation from Vivaldi upon the banks of the Celano, and that a variety of distressing circumstances had intervened before she could regain the sanctuary of the della Pieta.

Olivia understood too well the kind of feelings, from which Ellena was desirous of escaping, willingly to subject her to a renewal of them; and felt too much generous compassion for her sufferings not to endeavour to soothe the sense of them by an exertion of those delicate and nameless arts which, while they mock detection, fascinate the weary spirit as by a charm of magic!

The friends continued in conversation, till a chime from a chapel of the convent summoned them to the last vespers; and, when the service had concluded, they separated for the night.

With the society of the Santa della Pieta, Olivia had thus found an asylum such as till lately she had never dared to hope for; but, though she frequently expressed her sense of this blessing, it was seldom without tears; and Ellena observed, with some surprise and more disappointment, within a very few days after her arrival, a cloud of melancholy spreading again over her mind.

But a nearer interest soon withdrew Ellena's attention from Olivia to fix it upon Vivaldi; and, when she saw her infirm old servant, Beatrice, enter a chamber of the convent, she anticipated that the knowledge of some extraordinary, and probably unhappy, event had brought her. She knew too well the circumspection of Schedoni to believe that Beatrice came commissioned from him; and as the uncertain situation of Vivaldi was so constantly the subject of her anxiety, she immediately concluded that her servant came to announce some evil relative to him. — His indisposition, perhaps his actual confinement in the Inquisition, which lately she had sometimes been inclined to think might not have been a mere menace to Vivaldi, though it had proved to be no more to herself; — or possibly she came to tell of his death — his death in those prisons! This last was a possibility that almost incapacitated her for inquiring what was the errand of Beatrice.

The old servant, trembling and wan, either from the fatigue of her walk, or from a consciousness of disastrous intelligence, seated herself without speaking, and some moments elapsed before she could be prevailed with to answer the repeated inquiries of Ellena.

"O Signora!" said she, at length, "you do not know what it is to walk up hill such a long way, at my age! Well! heaven protect you, I hope you never will!"

"I perceive you bring ill news," said Ellena; "I am prepared for it, and you need not fear to tell me all you know."

"Holy San Marco!" exclaimed Beatrice, "if death be ill news, you have guessed right, Signora, for I do bring news of that, it is certain. How came you, Lady, to know my errand? They have been beforehand with me, I see, though I have not walked so fast up hill this many a day, as I have now, to tell you what has happened."

She stopped on observing the changing countenance of Ellena, who tremulously called upon her to explain what had happened — who was dead; and entreated her to relate the particulars as speedily as possible.

"You said you was prepared, Signora," said Beatrice, "but your looks tell another tale." —

"What is the event you would disclose?" said Ellena, almost breathless. "When did it happen? — be brief,"

"I cannot tell exactly when it happened, Signora, but it was an own servant of the Marchese's that I had it from."

"The Marchese's?" interrupted Ellena in a faltering voice.

"Aye, Lady; you will say that is pretty good authority.

"Death! and in the Marchese's family!" exclaimed Ellena.

"Yes, Signora, I had it from his own servant. He was passing by the garden-gate just as I happened to be speaking to the maccaroni-man. — But you are ill, Lady!" —

"I am very well, if you will but proceed," replied Ellena, faintly, while her eyes were fixed upon Beatrice, as if they only had power to enforce her meaning.

"'Well, dame,' he says to me, 'I have not seen you of a long time.' 'No,' says I, 'that is a great grievance truly! for old women now-a-days are not much thought of; out of sight out of mind with them, now-a-days!" —

"I beseech you to the purpose," interrupted Ellena. "Whose death did he announce?" She had not courage to pronounce Vivaldi's name.

"You shall hear, Signora. I saw he looked in a sort of a bustle, so I asked him how all did at the Palazzo: so he answers, 'Bad enough, Signora Beatrice, have not you heard?' 'Heard,' says I; 'what should I have heard?' 'Why,' says he, 'of what has just happened in our family."

"O heavens!" exclaimed Ellena, "he is dead! Vivaldi is dead!"

"You shall hear, Signora," continued Beatrice.

"Be brief!" said Ellena, "answer me simply yes or no."

"I cannot, till I come to the right place, Signora; if you will but have a little patience, you shall hear all. But if you fluster me so, you will put me quite out."

"Grant me patience!" said Ellena, endeavouring to calm her spirits.

"With that, Signora, I asked him to walk in and rest himself, and tell me all about it. He answered, he was in a great hurry, and could not stay a moment, and a great deal of that sort; but I, knowing that whatever happened in that family, Signora, was something to you, would not let him go off so easily; and so, when I asked him to refresh himself with a glass of lemon-ice, he forgot all his business in a minute, and we had a long chat."

And Beatrice might now have continued her circumlocution, perhaps as long as she had pleased, for Ellena had lost all power to urge inquiry, and was scarcely sensible of what was said. She neither spoke, nor shed a tear; the one image that possessed her fancy, the image of Vivaldi dead seemed to hold all her faculties, as by a spell.

"So when I asked him," added Beatrice, "again what had happened, he was ready enough to tell all about it. 'It is near a month ago,' said he, 'since she was first taken; the Marchesa had been" —

"The Marchesa!" repeated Ellena, with whom that one word had dissolved the spell of terror — "the Marchesa!"

"Yes Signora, to be sure. Who else did I say it was!"

"Go on, Beatrice; the Marchesa?" —

"What makes you look so glad all of a sudden, Signora? I thought just now you was very sorry about it. What! I warrant you was thinking about my young lord, Vivaldi."

"Proceed," said Ellena.

"Well!" added Beatrice, 'It was about a month ago that the Marchesa was first taken,' continued the varlet. 'She had seemed poorly a long time, but it was from a conversazione at the di Voglio palazzo, that she came home so ill. It is supposed she had been long in a bad state of health, but nobody thought her so near her end, till the doctors were called together; and then matters looked very bad indeed. They found out that she had been dying, or as good, for many years, though nobody else had suspected it, and the Marchesa's own physician was blamed for not finding it out before. But he,' added the rogue, 'had a regard for my lady. He was very obstinate, too, for he kept saying almost to the last, there was no danger, when every body else saw how it was going. The other doctors soon made their words good, and my lady died."

"And her son" — said Ellena, "was he with the Marchesa when she expired?"

"What, Signor Vivaldi, lady? No, the Signor was not there."

"That is very extraordinary!" observed Ellena with emotion. "Did the servant mention him?"

"Yes, Signora; he said what a sad thing it was that he should be out of the way at that time, and nobody know where!"

"Are his family then ignorant where he is?" asked Ellena, with increased emotion.

"To be sure they are, lady, and have been for these many weeks. They have heard nothing at all of the Signor, or one Paulo Mendrico, his servant, though the Marchesa's people have been riding post after them from one end of the kingdom to the other all the time!"

Shocked with the conviction of a circumstance, which, till lately she scarcely believed was possible, the imprisonment of Vivaldi in the Inquisition, Ellena lost for a while all power of further inquiry; but Beatrice proceeded.

"The Lady Marchesa seemed to lay something much to heart, as the man told me, and often inquired for Signor Vincentio."

"The Marchesa you are sure then was ignorant where he was?" said Ellena, with now astonishment and perplexity as to the person who, after betraying him into the Inquisition, could yet have suffered her, though arrested at the same time, to escape.

"Yes, Signora, for she wanted sadly to see him. And when she was dying, she sent for her Confessor, one father Schedoni, I think they call him, and" —

"What of him?" said Ellena incautiously.

"Nothing, Signora, for he could not be found."

"Not be found!" repeated Ellena.

"No, Signora, not just then; he was Confessor, I warrant, to other people beside the Marchesa, and I dare say they had sins enough to confess, so he could not get away in a hurry."

Ellena recollected herself sufficiently to ask no further of Schedoni; and, when she considered the probable cause of Vivaldi's arrest, she was again consoled by a belief that he had not fallen into the power of real officials, since the comrades of the men who had arrested him, had proved themselves otherwise; and she thought it highly probable, that, while undiscovered by his family, he had been, and was still engaged in searching for the place of her confinement.

"But I was saying," proceeded Beatrice, "what a bustle there was when my lady, the Marchesa was dying. As this father Schedoni was not to be found, another Confessor was sent for, and shut up with her for a long while indeed! And then my Lord Marchese was called in, and there seemed to be a deal going forward, for my Lord was heard every now and then by the attendants in the anti-chamber, talking loud, and sometimes my Lady Marchesa's voice was heard too, though she was so ill! At last all was silent, and after some time my Lord came out of the room, and he seemed very much flustered, they say, that is, very angry and yet very sorrowful. But the Confessor remained with my Lady for a long while after; and, when he departed, my Lady appeared more unhappy than ever. She lived all that night and part of the next day, and something seemed to lie very heavy at her heart, for she sometimes wept, but oftener groaned, and would look so, that it was piteous to see her. She frequently asked for the Marchese, and when he came, the attendants were sent away, and they held long conferences by themselves. The Confessor also was sent for again, just at the last, and they were all shut up together. After this, my Lady appeared more easy in her mind, and not long after she died."

Ellena, who had attended closely to this little narrative, was prevented for the present from asking the few questions which it had suggested, by the entrance of Olivia, who, on perceiving a stranger, was retiring, but Ellena, not considering these inquiries as important, prevailed with the nun to take a chair at the embroidery frame she had lately quitted.

After conversing for a few moments with Olivia, she returned to a consideration of her own interests. The absence of Schedoni still appeared to her as something more than accidental; and, though she could not urge any inquiry with Beatrice, concerning the monk of the Spirito Santo, she ventured to ask whether she had lately seen the stranger, who had restored her to Altieri, for Beatrice knew him only in the character of Ellena's deliverer.

"No, Signora," replied Beatrice rather sharply, "I have never seen his face since he attended you to the villa, though for that matter, I did not see much of it there; and then how he contrived to let himself out of the house that night without my seeing him, I cannot divine, though I have thought of it, often enough since. I am sure he need not to have been ashamed to have shewn his face to me, for I should only have blessed him for bringing you safe home again!"

Ellena was somewhat surprized to find that Beatrice had noticed a circumstance apparently so trivial, and replied, that she had herself opened the door for her protector.

While Beatrice spoke, Olivia raising her eyes from the embroidery, had fixed them upon the old servant, who respectfully withdrew her's; but, when the nun was again engaged on her work, she resumed her observation. Ellena fancied she perceived something extraordinary in this mutual examination, although the curiosity of strangers towards each other might have accounted for it.

Beatrice then received directions from Ellena as to some drawings, which she wished to have sent to the convent, and when the servant spoke in reply, Olivia again raised her eyes, and fixed them on her face with intense curiosity.

"I certainly ought to know that voice," said the nun with great emotion, "though I dare not judge from your features. Is it, — can it be possible! — is it Beatrice Olca, to whom I speak? So many years have passed" —

Beatrice with equal surprize answered, "It is, Signora; you are right in my name. But, lady, who are you that know me?"

While she earnestly regarded Olivia, there was an expression of dismay in her look, which increased Ellena's perplexity. The nun's complexion varied every instant, and her words failed when she attempted to speak. Beatrice meanwhile exclaimed, “My eyes deceive me! yet there is a strange likeness. Santa della Pieta! how it has fluttered me! my heart beats still — you are so like her, lady, yet you are very different too.”

Olivia, whose regards were now entirely fixed upon Ellena, said in a voice that was scarcely articulate, while her whole frame seemed sinking beneath some irresistible feeling, “Tell me, Beatrice, I conjure you, quickly say, who is this?” — She pointed to Ellena, and the sentence died on her lips.

Beatrice, wholly occupied by interests of her own, gave no reply, but exclaimed, “It is in truth the Lady Olivia! It is herself! In the name of all that is sacred, how came you here? O! how glad you must have been to find one another out!” She looked, still gasping with astonishment, at Olivia, while Ellena, unheard, repeatedly inquired the meaning of her words, and in the next moment found herself pressed to the bosom of the nun, who seemed better to have understood them, and who weeping, trembling, and almost fainting, held her there in silence.

Ellena, after some moments had thus passed, requested an explanation of what she witnessed, and Beatrice at the same time demanded the cause of all this emotion. “For can it be that you did not know one another?” she added.

“What new discovery is this?” said Ellena, fearfully to the nun. “It is but lately that I have found my father! O tell me by what tender name I am to call you?”

“Your father!” exclaimed Olivia.

“Your father, lady!” echoed Beatrice.

Ellena, betrayed by strong emotion into this premature mention of Schedoni, was embarrassed and remained silent.

“No, my child!” said Olivia, softening from amazement into tones of ineffable sorrow, while she again pressed Ellena to her heart — “No! — thy father is in the grave!”

Ellena no longer returned her caresses; surprize and doubt suspended every tender emotion; she gazed upon Olivia with an intenseness that partook of wildness. At length she said slowly — “It is my mother, then, whom I see! When will these discoveries end!”

“It is your mother!” replied Olivia solemnly, “a mother's blessing rests with you!”

The nun endeavoured to soothe the agitated spirits of Ellena, though she was herself nearly overwhelmed by the various and acute feelings this disclosure occasioned: For a considerable time they were unable to speak but in short sentences of affectionate exclamation, but joy was evidently a more predominant feeling with the parent than with the child. When, however, Ellena could weep, she became more tranquil, and by degrees was sensible of a degree of happiness, such as she had perhaps never experienced.

Meanwhile Beatrice seemed lost in amazement mingled with fear. She expressed no pleasure, notwithstanding the the joy she witnessed, but was uniformly grave and observant.

Olivia, when she recovered some degree of composure, inquired for her sister Bianchi. The silence and sudden dejection of Ellena indicated the truth. On this mention of her late mistress, Beatrice recovered the use of speech.

“Alas! lady,” said the old servant, “she is now where I believed you were! and I should as soon have expected to see my dear mistress here as yourself!”

Olivia, though affected by this intelligence, did not feel it with the acuteness she would have done probably at any other moment. After she had indulged her fears, she added, that from the unusual silence of Bianchi, she had suspected the truth, and particularly since not any answer had been returned to the letter she had sent to Altieri upon her arrival at the Santa della Pieta.

“Alas!” said Beatrice, “I wonder much my lady abbess failed to tell you the sad news, for she knew it too well! — My dear mistress is buried in the church here! as for the letter, I have brought it with me for Signora Ellena to open.”

“The lady abbess is not informed of our relationship,” replied Olivia, “and I have particular reasons for wishing that at present she should remain ignorant of it. Even you, my Ellena, must appear only as my friend, till some inquiries have been made, which are essential to my peace.”

Olivia required an explanation of Ellena's late extraordinary assertion respecting her father, but this was a request made with emotions very different from those which hope or joy inspire. Ellena, believing that the same circumstances which had deceived herself during so many years, as to his death, had also misled Olivia, was not surprized at the incredulity her mother had shewn, but she was considerably embarrassed how to answer her inquiries. It was now too late to observe the promise of secrecy extorted from her by Schedoni; the first moments of surprize had betrayed her; yet, while she trembled further to transgress his injunction, she perceived that a full explanation was now unavoidable. And, since Ellena considered, that as Schedoni could not have foreseen her present peculiar situation, his command had no reference to her mother, her scruples on this head disappeared. When, therefore, Beatrice had withdrawn, Ellena repeated her assertion, that her father still lived; which, though it increased the amazement of Olivia, did not vanquish her incredulity. Olivia's tears flowed fast, while in contradiction to this assurance, she mentioned the year in which the Count de Bruno died, with some circumstances relative to his death; which, however, as Ellena understood that her mother had not witnessed it, she still believed had not happened. To confirm her late assertion, Ellena then related a few particulars of her second interview with Schedoni, and as some confirmation that he lived, offered to produce the portrait, which he had claimed as his own. Olivia, in great agitation, requested to see the miniature, and Ellena left the apartment in search of it.

Every moment of her absence was to Olivia's expectation lengthened to an hour; she paced the room; listened for a footstep; endeavoured to tranquillize her spirits, and still Ellena did not return. Some strange mystery seemed to lurk in the narrative she had just heard, which she wished, yet dreaded to develope; and when, at length, Ellena appeared with the miniature, she took it in trembling eagerness, and having gazed upon it for an instant, her complexion faded and she fainted.

Ellena had now no doubt respecting the truth of Schedoni's declaration, and blamed herself for not having more gradually prepared her mother for the knowledge of a circumstance, which she believed had overwhelmed her with joy. The usual applications, however, soon restored Olivia, who, when she was again alone with her daughter, desired to behold once more the portrait. Ellena, attributing the strong emotion, with which she still regarded it, to surprize, and fear lest she was admitting a fallacious hope, endeavoured to comfort her by renewed assurances, that not only the Count di Bruno yet existed, but that he lived at this very time in Naples, and further, that he would probably be in her presence within the hour, "When I quitted the room for the miniature," added Ellena, "I dispatched a person with a note, requesting to see my father immediately, being impatient to realize the joy, which such a meeting between my long lost parents must occasion."

In this instance Ellena had certainly suffered her generous sympathy to overcome her discretion, for, though the contents of the note to Schedoni could not positively have betrayed him, had he even been in Naples at this time, her sending it to the Spirito Santo, instead of the place which he had appointed for his letters, might have led to a premature inquiry respecting herself.

While Ellena had acquainted Olivia that Schedoni would probably be with them soon, she watched eagerly for the joyful surprize she expected would appear on her countenance; how severe then was her disappointment when only terror and dismay were expressed there! and, when, in the next moment, her mother uttered exclamations of distress and even of despair!

"If he sees me," said Olivia, "I am irrecoverably lost! O! unhappy Ellena! your precipitancy has destroyed me. The original of this portrait is not the Count di Bruno, my dear lord, nor your parent, but his brother, the cruel husband" — Olivia left the sentence unfinished, as if she was betraying more than was at present discreet; but Ellena, whom astonishment had kept silent, now entreated that she would explain her words, and the cause of her distress.

"I know not," said Olivia, "by what means that portrait has been conveyed to you; but it is the resemblance of the Count Ferando di Bruno, the brother of my lord, and my" — second husband she should have said, but her lips refused to honour him with the title.

"She paused and was much affected, but presently added — "I cannot at present explain the subject more fully, for it is to me a very distressing one. Let me rather consider the means of avoiding an interview with di Bruno, and even of concealing, if possible, that I exist."

Olivia was, however, soothed when she understood that Ellena had not named her in the note, but had merely desired to see the Confessor upon a very particular occasion.

While they were consulting upon the excuse it would be necessary to form for this imprudent summons, the messenger returned with the note unopened, and with information, that father Schedoni was abroad on a pilgrimage, which was the explanation the brothers of the Spirito Santo chose to give of his absence; judging it prudent, for the honour of their convent, to conceal his real situation.

Olivia, thus released from her fears, consented to explain some points of the subject so interesting to Ellena; but it was not till several days after this discovery, that she could sufficiently command her spirits to relate the whole of her narrative. The first part of it agreed perfectly with the account delivered in the confession to the penitentiary Ansaldo; that which follows was known only to herself, her sister Bianchi, a physician, and one faithful servant, who had been considerably entrusted with the conduct of the plan.

It may be recollected that Schedoni left his house immediately after the act, which was designed to be fatal to the Countess his wife, and that she was carried senseless to her chamber. The wound, as appears, was not mortal. But the atrocity of the intent determined her to seize the opportunity thus offered by the absence of Schedoni, and her own peculiar circumstances, to release herself from his tyranny without having recourse to a court of justice, which would have covered with infamy the brother of her first husband. She withdrew, therefore, from his house for ever, and with the assistance of the three persons before-mentioned, retired to a remote part of Italy, and sought refuge in the convent of San Stefano, while at home the report of her death was confirmed by a public funeral Bianchi remained for some time after the departure of Olivia, in her own residence near the Villa di Bruno, having taken under her immediate care the daughter of the Countess and of the first Count di Bruno, as well as an infant daughter of the second.

After some time had elapsed, Bianchi withdrew with her young charge, but not to the neighbourhood of San Stefano. The indulgence of a mother's tenderness was denied to Olivia, for Bianchi could could not reside near the convent without subjecting her to the hazard of a discovery, since Schedoni, though he now believed the report of her death, might be led to doubt it, by the conduct of Bianchi, whose steps would probably be observed by him. She chose a residence, therefore, at a distance from Olivia, though not yet at Altieri. At this period, Ellena was not two years old; the daughter of Schedoni was scarcely as many months, and she died before the year concluded. It was this his child, for whom the Confessor, who had too well concealed himself to permit Bianchi to acquaint him with her death, had mistaken Ellena, and to which mistake his own portrait, affirmed by Ellena to be that of her father, had contributed. This miniature she had found in the cabinet of Bianchi after her aunt's decease, and, observing it inscribed with the title of Count di Bruno, she had worn it with a filial fondness ever since that period.

Bianchi, when she had acquainted Ellena with the secret of her birth, was withheld, both by prudence and humanity, from intrusting her with a knowledge that her mother lived; but this, no doubt, was the circumstance she appeared so anxious to disclose on her death-bed, when the suddenness of her disorder had deprived her of the power. The abruptness of that event had thus contributed to keep the mother and daughter unknown to each other, even when they afterwards accidentally met, to which concealment the name of Rosalba, given to Ellena from her infancy by Bianchi, for the purpose of protecting her from discovery by her uncle, had assisted. Beatrice, who was not the domestic intrusted with the escape of Olivia, had believed the report of her death, and thus, though she knew Ellena to be the daughter of the Countess di Bruno, she could never have been a means of discovering them to each other, had it not happened that Olivia recognized this ancient servant of Bianchi, while Ellena was present.

When Bianchi came to reside in the neighbourhood of Naples, she was unsuspicious that Schedoni, who had never been heard of since the night of the assassination, inhabited there; and she so seldom left her house, that it is not surprizing she should never happen to meet him, at least consciously; for her veil, and the monk's cowl, might easily have concealed them from each other if they had met.

It appears to have been the intention of Bianchi to disclose to Vivaldi the family of Ellena, before their nuptials were solemnized; since, on the evening of their last conversation, she had declared, when her spirits were exhausted by the exertion she had made, that much remained for her to say, which weakness obliged her to defer till another opportunity. Her unexpected death prevented any future meeting. That she had not sooner intended to make a communication, which might have removed, in a considerable degree, the objection of the Vivaldi to a connection with Ellena, appears extraordinary, till other circumstances of her family, than that of its nobility, are considered. Her present indigence, and yet more, the guilt attached to an individual of the di Bruno, it was reasonable to suppose would operate as a full antidote to the allurement of rank, however jealous of birth the Vivaldi had proved themselves.

Ferando di Bruno had contrived, even in the short interval between the death of his brother and the supposed decease of his wife, again to embarrass his affairs, and soon after his flight, the income arising from what remained of his landed property had been seized upon by his creditors, whether lawfully or not, he was then in a situation which did not permit him to contest, and Ellena was thus left wholly dependent upon her aunt. The small fortune of Bianchi had been diminished by the assistance she afforded Olivia, for whose admittance into the convent of San Stefano it had been necessary to advance a considerable sum; and her original income was afterwards reduced by the purchase of the villa Altieri. This expenditure, however, was not an imprudent one, since she preferred the comforts and independence of a pleasant home, with industry, to the indulgence of an indolence which must have confined her to an inferior residence; and was acquainted with the means of making this industry profitable without being dishonourable. She excelled in many elegant and ingenious arts, and the productions of her pencil and needle were privately disposed of to the nuns of the Santa della Pieta. When Ellena was of an age to assist her, she resigned much of the employment and the profit to her niece, whose genius having unfolded itself, the beauty of her designs and the elegance of her execution, both in drawings and embroidery, were so highly valued by the purchasers at the grate of the convent, that Bianchi committed to Ellena altogether the exercise of her art.

Olivia meanwhile had dedicated her life to devotion in the monastery of San Stefano, a choice which was willingly made while her mind was yet softened by grief for the death of her first lord, and wearied by the cruelty she had afterwards experienced. The first years of her retirement were passed in tranquillity, except when the remembrance of her child, whom she did not dare to see at the convent, awakened a parental pang. With Bianchi she, however, corresponded as regularly as opportunity would allow, and had at least the consolation of knowing, that the object most dear to her lived, till, within a short period of Ellena’s arrival at the very asylum chosen by her mother, her apprehensions were in some degree excited by the unusual silence of Bianchi.

When Olivia had first seen Ellena in the chapel of San Stefano, she was struck with a slight resemblance she bore to the late Count di Bruno, and had frequently afterwards examined her features with a most painful curiosity; but, circumstanced as she was, Olivia could not reasonably suspect the stranger to be her daughter. Once, however, a sense of this possibility so far overcame her judgment, as to prompt an inquiry for the sirname of Ellena; but the mention of Rosalba had checked all further conjecture. What would have been the feelings of the nun, had she been told when her generous compassion was assisting a stranger to escape from oppression that she was preserving her own child! It may be worthy of observation, that the virtues of Olivia, exerted in a general cause, had thus led her unconsciously to the happiness of saving her daughter; while the vices of Schedoni had as unconsciously urged him nearly to destroy his niece, and had always been preventing, by the means they prompted him to employ, the success of his constant aim.

❦

Chapter 31

> "Those hours, which lately smil'd, where are they now?
> Pallid to thought and ghastly!"
> Young.

The Marchesa di Vivaldi, of whose death Beatrice had given an imperfect account, struck with remorse of the crime she had meditated against Ellena, and with terror of the punishment due to it, had sent, when on her death-bed, for a Confessor, to whom she unburthened her conscience, and from whom she hoped to receive, in return; an alleviation of her despair. This Confessor was a man of good sense and humanity; and, when he fully understood the story of Vivaldi and Ellena di Rosalba, he declared, that her only hope of forgiveness, both for the crime she had meditated, and the undeserved sufferings she had occasioned, rested upon her willingness to make those now happy, whom she had formerly rendered miserable. Her conscience had already given her the same lesson; and, now that she was sinking to that grave which levels all distinctions, and had her just fear of retribution no longer opposed by her pride, she became as anxious to promote the marriage of Vivaldi with Ellena as she had ever been to prevent it. She sent, therefore, for the Marchese; and, having made an avowal of the arts she had practised against the peace and reputation of Ellena, without, however, confessing the full extent of her intended crimes, she made it her last request, that he would consent to the happiness of his son.

The Marchese, however, shocked as he was at this discovery of the duplicity and cruelty of his wife, had neither her terror of the future, or remorse for the past, to overcome his objection to the rank of Ellena; and he resisted all her importunity, till the anguish of her last hours overcame every consideration but that of affording her relief; he then gave a solemn promise, in the presence of the Confessor, that he would no longer oppose the marriage of Vivaldi and Ellena, should the former persist in his attachment to her. This promise was sufficient for the Marchesa, and she died with some degree of resignation. It did not, however, appear probable, that the Marchese would soon be called upon to fulfil the engagements, into which he had so unwillingly entered, every inquiry after Vivaldi having been hitherto ineffectual.

During the progress of this fruitless search for his son, and while the Marchese was almost lamenting him as dead, the inhabitants of the Vivaldi palace were, one night, aroused from sleep by a violent knocking at the great gate of the court. The noise was so loud and inceffant, that, before the porter could obey the summons, the Marchese, whose apartment looked upon the court, was alarmed, and sent an attendant from his anti-room, to inquire the occasion of it.

Presently a voice was heard from the first anti-chamber, exclaiming, "I must see my Lord Marchese directly; he will not be angry to be waked, when he knows all about it;" and, before the Marchese could order that no person, on whatever pretence, should be admitted, Paulo, haggard, ragged, and covered with dirt, was in the chamber. His wan and affrighted countenance, his disordered dress, and his very attitude, as on entering he half turned to look back upon the anti-rooms, like one, who, just escaped from bondage, listens to the fancied sounds of pursuit, were altogether so striking and terrific, that the Marchese, anticipating some dreadful news of Vivaldi, had scarcely power to inquire for him. Paulo, however, rendered questions unnecessary; for, without any circumlocution, or preface, he immediately informed the Marchese, that the Signor, his dear master, was in the prisons of the Inquisition, at Rome, if, indeed, they had not put an end to him before that time."

"Yes, my Lord," said Paulo, "I am just got out myself, for they would not let me be with the Signor, so it was of no use to stay there any longer. Yet it was a hard matter with me to go away, and leave my dear master within those dismal walls; and nothing should have persuaded me to do so, but that I hoped, when your Lordship knew where the Signor was, you might be able to get him out. But there is not a minute to be lost, my Lord, for when once a gentleman has got within the claws of those inquisitors, there is no knowing how soon they may take it in their heads to tear him in pieces. Shall I order horses for Rome, my Lord? I am ready to set off again directly."

The suddenness of such intelligence, concerning an only son, might have agitated stronger nerves than those of the Marchese, and so much was he shocked by it, that he could not immediately determine how to proceed, or give any answer to Paulo's repeated questions. When, however, he became sufficiently recollected to make further inquiry into the situation of Vivaldi, he perceived the necessity of an immediate journey; but first it would be prudent to consult with some friends, whose connections at Rome might be a means of greatly faoilitating the important purpose, which led him thither, and this could not be done till the following morning. Yet he gave orders, that preparation should be made for his fetting out at a moment’s notice; and, having listened to as full an account as Paulo could give of the past and present circumstances of Vivaldi, he dismissed him to repose for the remainder of the night.

Paulo, however, though much in want of rest, was in too great an agitation of spirits either to seek or to find it; and the fear he had indicated, on entering the Marchese’s apartment, proceede from the hurry of his mind, rather than from any positive apprehension of new evil. For his liberty he was indebied to the young centinel, who had on a former occasion been removed from the door of his prison, but who, by means of the guard, to whom Vivaldi had given money, as he returned one night from the tribunal, had since been able to communicate with him. This man, of a nature too humane for his situation, was become wretched in it, and he determined mined to escape from his office before the expiration of the time for which he had been engaged. He thought that to be a guard over prisoners was nearly as miserable as being a prisoner himself. “I see no difference between them,” said he, “except that the prisoner watches on one side of the door, and the centinel on the other.”

With the resolution to release himself; he conferred with Paulo, whose good nature and feeling heart, among so many people of a contrary character, had won his confidence and affection, and he laid his plan of escape so well, that it was on the point of succeeding, when Paulo’s obstinacy in attempting an impossibility had nearly counteracted the whole. It went to his heart, he said, to leave his master in prison, while he himself was to march off in safety, and he would run the risk of his neck, rather than have such a deed upon his head. He proposed, therefore, as Vivaldi’s guards were of too ferocious a nature to be tampered with, to scale a wall of the court into which a grate of Vivaldi’s dungeon looked. But had this lofty wall been practicable, the grate was not; and the attempt had nearly cost Paulo not only his liberty, but his life.

When, at length, he had made his way through the perilous avenues of the prison, and was fairly beyond the walls, he could hardly be prevailed upon by his companion to leave them. For near an hour, he wandered under their shade, weeping and exclaiming, and calling up on his dear master, at the evident hazard of being retaken; and probably would have remained there much longer, had not the dawn of morning rendered his companion desperate. Just, however, as the man was forcing him away, Paulo fancied he distinguished, by the strengthening light, the roos of that particular building, in whose dungeon his master was confined, and the appearance of Vivaldi, himself could scarcely have occasioned a more sudden burst of joy; succeeded by one of grief. “It is the roof, it is the very roof!” exclaimed Paulo, vaulting from the ground, and clapping his hands; “it is the roof, the roof! O, my master, my master! the roof, the roof!” He continued alternately to exclaim, “My master! the roof! my master! the roof!” till his companion began to fear he was frantic, while tears streamed down his cheeks, and every look and gesture expressed the most extravagant and whimsical union of joy and sorrow. At length, the absolute terror of discovery compelled his companion to force him from the spot; when, having lost sight of the building which inclosed Vivaldi, he set off for Naples with a speed that desied all interruption, and arrived there in the condition, which has been mentioned, having taken no sleep, and scarcely any sustenance, since he left the Inquisition. Yet though in this exhausted state, the spirit, of his affection remained unbroken, and when, on the following morning, the Marchese quited Naples, neither his weariness, nor the imminent danger, to which this journey must expose him, could prevent his attending him to Rome.

The rank of the Marchese, and the influence he was known to posses at the court of Naples, were circumstances that promised to have weight with the Holy Office, and to procure Vivaldi a speedy release; but yet more than these, were the high connections which the Count di Maro, the friend of the Marchese, had in the church of Rome.

The applications, however, which were made to the inquisitors, were not so soon replied to as the wishes of the Marchese had expected, and he had been above afortnight in that city, before he was even permitted to visit his son. In this interview, affection predominated on both sides over all remembrance of the past. The condition of Vivaldi, his saded appearance, to which the wounds he had received at Celano, and from which he was scarcely recovered, had contributed; and his situation in a melancholy and terrible prison, were circumstances that awakened all the tenderness of the father; his crrors were forgiven, and the Marchese felt disposed to consent to all that might restore him to happiness, could he but be restored to liberty. Vivaldi, when informed of his mother’s death, shed bitter tears of sorrow and remorse, for having occasioned her so much uneasiness. The unreasonableness of her claims was forgotten, and her faults were extenuated; happily, indeed, for his peace, the extent of her criminal designs he had never understood; and when he learned that her dying request had been intended to promote his happiness, the cruel consciousness of having interrupted her’s, occasioned him severe anguish, and he was obliged to recollect her former conduct towards Ellena at San Stefano, before he could become reconciled to himself.

Chapter 32

"Your's in the ranks of death."
Shakespeare.

Near three weeks had elapsed since the Marchese's arrival at Rome, and not any decisive answer was returned by the Inquisition to his application, when he and Vivaldi received at the same time a summons to attend father Schedoni in his dungeon. To meet the man who had occasioned so much suffering to his family, was extremely painful to the Marchese, but he was not allowed to refuse the interview; and at the hour appointed he called at the chamber of Vivaldi; and, followed by two officials, they passed on together to that of Schedoni.

While they waited at the door of the prison-room, till the numerous bars and locks were unsastened, the agitation, which Vivaldi had suffered, on receiving the summons, returned with redoubled force, now that he was about to behold, once more, that wretched man, who had announced himself to be the parent of Ellena di Rosalba. The Marchese suffered emotions of a different nature, and with his reluctance to see Schedoni, was mingled a degree of curiosity as to the event, which had occasioned this summons.

The door being thrown open, the officials entered first, and the Marchese and Vivaldi, on following, discovered the Confessor lying on a mattress. He did not rise to receive them, but, as he lifted his head, and bowed it in obeisance, his countenance, upon which the little light admitted through the triple grate of his dungeon gleamed, seemed more than usually ghastly; his eyes were hollow, and his shrunk features appeared as if death had already touched them. Vivaldi, on perceiving him, groaned, and averted his face; but, soon recovering a command of himself, he approached the mattress.

The Marchese, suppressing every expression of resentment towards an enemy, who was reduced to this deplorable condition, inquired what he had to communicate.

"Where is father Nicola?" said Schedoni to an official, without attending to the question: "I do not see him here. Is he gone so soon, and without having heard the purport of my summons? Let him be called."

The official spoke to a centinel, who immediately lest the chamber.

"Who are these that surround me?" said Schedoni. "Who is he that stands at the foot of the bed?" While he spoke, he bent his eyes on Vivaldi, who rested in deep dejection there, and was lost in thought, till, aroused by Schedoni's voice, he replied, "It is I, Vincentio dr Vivaldi I obey your requisition, and inquire the purpose of it?"

The Marchese repeated the demand. Schedoni appeared to meditate; sometimes he fixed his eyes upon Vivaldi, for an instant, and when he withdrew them, he seemed to sink into deeper thoughtfulness. As he raised them once again, they assumed a singular expression of wildness, and then settling, as if on vacancy, a sudden glare shot from them, while he said — "Who is he, that glides there in the dusk?"

His eyes were directed beyond Vivaldi, who, on turning, perceived the monk, father Nicola, passing behind him.

"I am here," said Nicola: "what do you require of me?"

"That you will bear testimony to the truth of what I shall declare," replied Schedoni.

Nicola, and an inquisitor who had accompanied him, immediately arranged themselves on one side of the bed, while the Marchese stationed himself on the other. Vivaldi remained at its foot.

Schedoni, after a pause, began: "That which I have to make known relates to the cabal formerly carried on by him, the father Nicola, and myself, against the peace of an innocent young woman, whom, at my instigation, he has basely traduced."

At these words, Nicola attempted to interrupt the Confessor, but Vivaldi restrained him.

"Ellena di Rosalba is known to you?" continued Schedoni, addressing the Marchese.

Vivaldi's countenance changed at this abrupt mention of Ellena, but he remained silent.

"I have heard of her," replied the Marchese, coldly.

"And you have heard falsely of her," rejoined Schedoni. "Lift your eyes, my lord Marchese, and say, do you not recollect that face?" pointing to Nicola.

The Marchese regarded the monk attentively, "It is a face not easily to be forgotten," he replied; "I remember to have seen it more than once.”

“Where have you seen him, my Lord?”

“In my own palace, at Naples; and you yourself introduced him to me there.”

“I did,” replied Schedoni.

“Why, then, do you now accuse him of falshood,” observed the Marchese, “since you acknowledge yourself to have been the instigator of his conduct?”

“O heavens!” said Vivaldi, “this monk, then, this father Nicola, is, as I suspected, the slanderet of Ellena di Rosalba!”

“Most true,” rejoined Schedoni; “and it is for the purpose of vindicating — “ “And you acknowledge yourself to be the author of those infamous slanders!” passionately interrupted Vivaldi; — “you, who but lately declared yourself to be her father!”

In the instant, that Vivaldi had uttered this, he became sensible of his indiscretion, for till now he had avoided informing the Marchese, that Ellena had been declared the daughter of Schedoni. This abrupt disclosure, and at such a moment, he immediately perceived might be satal to his hopes, and that the Marchese would not consider the promise he had given to his dying wife, however solemn, as binding, under circumstances so peculiar and unforeseen as the present. The astonishment of the Marchese, upon this discovery, cannot easily be imagined; he looked at his son for an explanation of what he had heard, and then with increased defestation at the Confessor; but Vivaldi was not in a state of mind to give any explanation at this moment, and he requested his father to suspend even his conjectures till he could converse with him alone.

The Marchese desisted for the present from further inquiry, but it was obvious that his opinion and his resolution, respecting the marriage of Vivaldi, was already formed.

“You, then, are the author of those slanders!” repeated Vivaldi.

“Hear me!” cried Schedoni, in a voice which the strength of his spirit contending with the seebleness of his condition, rendered hollow and terrible. — “Hear me”

He stopped, unable to recover immediately from the effect of the exertion he had made. At length, he resumed, “I have declared, and I continue to declare, that Ellena di Rosalba, as she has been named for the purpose, I conjecture, of concealing her from an unworthy father, is my daughter!”

Vivaldi groaned in the excess of his despair, but made no further attempt to interrupt Schedoni. The Marchese was not equally passive. “And was it to listen to a vindication of your daughter,” said he, “that I have been summoned hither? But let this Signora Rosalba, be who she may, of what importance can it be to me whether she is innocent or otherwise!”

Vivaldi, with the utmost difficulty, forbore to express the feelings, which this sentence excited. It appeared to recall all the spirit of Schedoni. “She is the daughter of a noble house,” said the Confessor, haughtily, while he half raised himself from his mattress. “In me you behold the last of the Counts di Bruno.”

The Marchese smiled contemptuously.

Schedoni proceeded “I call upon you, Nicola di Zampari, who have declared yourself, on a late occasion, so strenuous for justice, I call upon you now to do justice in this instance, and to acknowledge, before these witnesses, that Ellena Rosalba is innocent of every circumstance of misconduct, which you have formerly related to the Marchese di Vivaldi!”

“Villain! do you hesitate,” said Vivaldi to Nicola, “to retract the cruel slanders which you have thrown upon her name, and which have been the means of destroying her peace, perhaps for ever? Do you persist — “ The Marchese interrupted his son:— “Let me put an end to the difficulty, by concluding the interview; I perceive that my presence has been required for a purpose that does not concern me.”

Before the Confessor could reply, the Marchese had turned from him to quit the chamber; but the vchemence of Vivaldi’s distress prevailed with him to pause, and thus allowed him to understand from Schedoni, that the justification of the innocent Ellena, though it had been mentioned first, as being the object nearcst to his heart, was not the only one that had urged him to require this meeting.

“If you consent,” added Schedoni, “to listen to the vindication of my child, you shall afterwards perceive, Signor, that I, fallen though I am, have still been desirous of counteracting, as far as remains for me, the evil I have occasioned. You shall acknowledge, that what I then make known is of the utmost confequence to the repose of the Marchese di Vivaldi, high in influence, and haughty in prosperity as he now appears."

The latter part of this assurance threatened to overcome the effect of the first; the pride of the Marchese swelled high; he took some steps towards the door, but then stopped, and, conjecturing that the subject, to which Schedoni alluded, concerned the liberation of his son, he consented to attend to what Nicola should disclose.

This monk, meanwhile, had been balancing the necessity for acknowledging himself a slanderer, against the possibility of avoiding it; and it was the resolute manner of Vivaldi, who appeared to have no doubt as to his guilt in this instance, that made him apprehend the consequence of persisting in falshood, not either remorse of conscience, or the appeal of Schedoni. He acknowledged then, after considerable circumlocution, in which he contrived to defend himself, by throwing all the odium of the original design upon the Confessor, that he had been prevailed upon by his arts to impose on the credulity of the Marchese, respecting the conduct of Ellena di Rosalba. This avowal was made upon oath, and Schedoni, by the questions he put to him, was careful it should be so full and circumstantial that even the most prejudiced hearer must have been convinced of its truth; while the most unfeeling must have yielded for once to indignation against the asperser, and pity of the aspersed. Its effect upon the present auditors was various. The Marchese had listened to the whole explanation with an unmoved countenance, but with profound attention. Vivaldi had remained in a fixed attitude, with eyes bent on father Nicola, in such eager and stern regard, as seemed to search into his very soul; and, when the monk concluded, a smile of triumphant joy lighted up his features, as he looked upon the Marchese, and claimed an acknowledgment of his conviction, that Ellena had been calumniated. The cold glance, which the Marchese returned, struck the impassioned and generous Vivaldi to the heart, who perceived that he was not only totally indifferent as to the injustice, which an innocent and helpless young woman had suffered, but fancied that he was unwilling to admit the truth, which his judgment would no longer allow him to reject.

Schedoni, meanwhile, appeared almost to writhe under the agony, which his mind inflieted upon him, and it was only by strong effort, that he sustained his spirit so far as to go through with the interrogations he had judged it necessary to put to Nicola. When the subject was finished, he sunk back on his pillow, and, closing his eyes, a hue so pallid, succeeded by one so livid, overspread his features, that Vivaldi for an instant believed he was dying; and in this supposition he was not singular, for even an official was touched with the Confessor's condition, and had advanced to assist him, when he unclosed his eyes, and seemed to revive.

The Marohese, without making any comment upon the avowal of father Nicola, demanded, on its conclusion, the disclosure, which Schedoni had afforted to be intimately connected with his peace; and the latter now inquired of a person near him, whether a secretary of the Inquisition was in the chamber, who he had requested might attend, to take a formal deposition of what he should declare. He was answered, that such an one was already in waiting. He then asked, what other persons were in the room, adding, that he should require inquisitorial witnesses to his deposition; and was answered, that an inquisitor and two officials were present; and that their evidence was more than sufficient for his purpose.

A lamp was then called for by the secretary; but, as that could not immediately be procured, the torch of one of the centinels, who watched in the dark avenue without, was brought in its stead, and this discovered to Schedoni the various sigures assembled in his dusky chamber, and to them the emaciated form and ghastly visage of the Confessor. As Vivaldi now beheld him by the stronger light of the torch, he again fancied that death was in his aspect.

Every person was now ready for the declaration of Schedoni; but he himself seemed not fully prepared. He remained for some moments reclining on his pillow in silence, with his eyes shut, while the changes in his features indicated the strong emotion of his mind. Then, as if by a violent effort, he half raised himself, and made an ample confession of the arts he had practised against Vivaldi. He declared himself to be the anonymous accuser, who had caused him to be arrested by the Holy Office, and that the charge of heresy, which he had brought against him, was false and malicious.

At the moment when Vivaldi received this confirmation of his suspicions, as to the identity of his accuser, he discovered more fully that the charge was not what had been stated to him at the chapel of San Sebastian, in which Ellena was implicated; and he demanded an explanation of this circumstance. Schedoni acknowledged, that the persons, who had there arrested him, were not officers of the Inquisition, and that the instrument of arrest, containing the charge of elopement with a nun, was forged by himself, for the purpose of empowering the ruffians to carry off Ellena, without opposition from the inhabitants of the convent, in which she was then lodged.

To Vivaldi's inquiry, why it had been thought necessary to employ stratagem in the removal of Ellena, since, if

Schedoni had only claimed her for his daughter, he might have removed her without any, the Confessor replied, that he was then ignorant of the relationship which existed between them. But to the further inquiries, with what design, and whither Ellena had been removed, and the means by which he had discovered her to be his daughter, Schedoni was silent; and he sunk back, overwhelmed by the recollections they awakened.

The depositions of Schedoni having been taken down by the secretary, were formally signed by the inquisitor and the officials present; and Vivaldi thus saw his innocence vindicated by the very man who had thrown him among the perils of the Inquisition. But the near prospect of release now before him failed to affect him with joy, while he understood that Ellena was the daughter of Schedoni, the child of a murderer, whom he himself had been in some degree instrumental in bringing to a dreadful and ignominious death. Still, however, willing to hope, that Schedoni had not spoken the truth concerning his relationship to Ellena, he claimed, in consideration of the affection he had so long cherished for her, a full explanation of the circumstances connected with the discovery of her family.

At this public avowal of his attachment, a haughty impatience appeared on the countenance of the Marchese, who forbade him to make further inquiry on the subject, and was immediately retiring from the chamber.

“My presence is no longer necessary,” he added: “the prisoner has concluded the only detail which I could be interested to hear from him; and, in confideration of the confession he has made as to the innocence of my son, I pardon him the suffering, which his false charge has occasioned to me and my family. The paper containing his depositions is given to your responsibility, holy father,” addressing the inquisitor; “and you are required to lay it upon the table of the Holy Office, that the innocence of Vincentio di Vivaldi may appear, and that he may be released from these prisons without further delay. But first, I demand a copy of those deelarations, and that the copy also shall be signed by the present witnesses.”

The secretary was now bidden to copy them, and, while the Marchese waited to receive the paper, (for he would not leave the chamber till he had secured it) Vivaldi was urging his claim for an explantion respecting the family of Ellena, with unconquerable perseverance. Schedoni, no longer permitted to evade the inquiry, could not, however, give a circumstantial explanation, without partly diselosing, also, the satal designs which had been mediated by him and the late Marchesa di Vivaldi, of whose death he was ignorant; he related, therefore, little more respecting Ellena than that a portrait, which she wore as being her father’s, had first led to the discovery of her family.

While the Confessor had been giving this brief explanation, Nicola, who was somewhat withdrawn from the circle, stood gazing at him with the malignity of a demon. His glowing cyes just appeared under the edge of his cowl, while, rolled up in his dark drapery, the lower features of his face were muffled; but the intermediate part of his countenance, reciving the full glare of the torch, displayed all its speaking and terrific lines. Vivaldi, as his eye glanced upon him, saw again the very monk of Paluzzi, and he thought he beheld also a man capable of the very crimes of which he had accused Schedoni. At this instant, he remembered the dreadful garment that had been discovered in a dungeon of the fortress; and, yet more, he remembered the extraordinary circumstances attending the death of Bianchi, together with the immediate knowledge which the monk had displayed of that event. Vivaldi’s suspicions respecting the cause of her death being thus revived, he determined to obtain, if possible, either a relief from, or a confirmation of them; and he solemnly called upon Schedoni, who, ready condemned to die, had no longer any thing to fear from a disclosure of the truth, whatever it might be, to declare all that he knew on the subject. As he did so, he looked at Nicola, to observe the effect of this demand, whose countenance was, however, so much shrouded, that little of its expression could be seen; but Vivaldi remarked, that, while he had spoken, the monk drew his garment closer over the lower part of his face, and that he had immediately turned his eyes from him upon the Confessor.

With most solemn protestations, Schedoni declared himself to be both innocent and ignorant of the cause of Bianchi’s death.

Vivaldi then demanded by what means his agent, Nicola, had obtained such immediate information, as the warning he had delivered at Paluzzi proved him to have, of an event, in which it appeared that he could be so little interested; and why that warning had been given.

Nicola did not attempt to anticipate the reply of Schedoni, who, after a momentary silence, said, “That warming, young man, was given to deter you from visiting Altieri, as was every circumstance of advice or intelligence, which you received beneath the arch of Paluzzi.”

“Father,” replied Vivaldi, “you have never loved, or you would have spared yourself the practice of artifices so ineffectual to mislead or to conquer a lover. Did you believe that an anonymous adviser could have more influence with me than my affection, or that I could could be terrisied by such stratagems into a renunciation of its object?”

“I believed,” rejoined the Confessor, “that the disinterested advice of a stranger might have some weight with you; but I trusted more to the impression of awe, which the conduct and seeming fore-knowledge of that stranger were adapted to inspire in a mind like your’s; and I thus endeavoured to avarl myself of your prevailing weakness.”

“And what do you term my prevailing weakness,” said Vivaldi, blushing.

“A susceptibility which renders you especially liable to superstition,” replied Schedoni.

“What! does a monk call superstition a weakness!” rejoined Vivaldi. “But grant he does, on what occasion have I betrayed such weakness?”

“Have you forgotten a conversation which I once held with you on invisible spirits?” said Schedoni.

As he asked this, Vivaldi was struck with the tone of his voice; he thought it was different from what he had remembered ever to have heard from him; and he looked at Schedoni more intently, that he might be certain it was he who had spoken. The Confessor’s eyes were fixed upon him, and he repeated slowly in the same tone, “Have you forgotten?”

“I have not forgotten the conversation to which you allude,” replied Vivaldi, “and I do not recollect that I then disclosed any opinion that may justify your assertion.”

“The opinions you avowed were rational,” said Schedoni, “but the ardour of your imagination was apparent, and what ardent imagination ever was contented to trust to plain reasoning, or to the evidence of the senses? It may not willingly confine itself to the dull truths of this earth, but, eager to expand its faculties, to fill its capacity, and to experience its own peculiar delights, soars after new wonders into a world of its own!”

Vivaldi blushed at this reproof, now conscious of its justness; and was surprised that Schedoni should so well have understood the nature of his mind, while he himself, with whom conjecture had never assumed the stability of opinion, on the subject to which the Confessor alluded, had been ignorant even of its propensities.

“I acknowledge the truth of your remark,” said Vivaldi, “as far as it concerns myself. I have, however, inquiries to make on a point less abstracted, and towards explaining which the evidence of my senses themselves have done little. To whom belonged the bloody garments I found in the dungeon of Paluzzi, and what became of the person to whom they had pertained?”

Consternation appeared for an instant on the features of Schedoni. “What garments?” said he.

“They appeared to be those of a person who had died by violence,” replied Valdi, “and they were discovered in a place frequented by your avowed agent, Nicola, the monk.”

As he concluded the sentence, Vivaldi looked at Nicola, upon whom the attention of every person present was now directed.

“They were my own,” said this monk.

“Your own! and in that condition!” exclaimed Vivaldi. “They were covered with gore!”

“They were my own,” repeated Nicola. “For their condition, I have to thank you, — the wound your pistol gave me occasioned it.”

Vivaldi was astonished by this apparent subtersuge. “I had no pistol,” he rejoined, “my sword was my only weapon!”

“Pause a moment,” said the monk.

“I repeat that I had no fire-arms,” replied Vivaldi.

“I appeal to father Schedoni,” rejoined Nicola, “whether I was not wounded by a pistol shot.”

“To me you have no longer any right of appeal,” said Schedom. “Why should I save you from suspicions, that may bring you to a state like this, to which you have reduced me!”

“Your crimes have reduced you to it,” replied Nicola, “I have only done my duty, and that which another person could have effected without my aid — the priest to whom Spalatro made his last confession.”

“It is, however, a duty of such a kind,” observed Vivaldi, “as I would not willingly have upon my conscience. You have betrayed the life of your former friend, and have compelled me to assist in the destruction of a fellow being.”

"You, like me, have assisted to destroy a destroyer," replied the monk. "He has taken life, and deserves, therefore, to lose it. If, however, it will afford you consolation to know that you have not materially assisted in his destruction, I will hereafter give you proof for this assurance. There were other means of shewing that Schedoni was the Count di Bruno, than the testimony of Ansaldo, though I was ignorant of them when I bade you summon the penitentiary."

"If you had sooner avowed this," said Vivaldi, the assertion would have been more plausible. Now, I can only understand that it is designed to win my silence, and prevent my retorting upon you your own maxim — that he who has taken the life of another, deserves to lose his own. — To whom did those bloody garments belong?"

"To myself, I repeat," replied Nicola, "Shedoni can bear testimony that I received at Paluzzi a pistol wound."

"Impossible," said Vivaldi, "I was armed only with my sword!"

"You had a companion," observed the monk, "had not he fire-arms?"

Vivaldi, after a momentary consideration, recollected that Paulo had pistols, and that he had fired one beneath the arch of Paluzzi, on the first alarm occasioned by the stranger's voice. He immediately acknowledged the recollection. "But I heard, no groan, no symptom of distress!" he added. "Besides, the garments were at a considerable distance from the spot where the pistol was fired! How could a person, so severely wounded as those garments indicated, have silently withdrawn to a remote dungeon, or, having done so, is it probable he would have thrown aside his dress!"

"All that is nevertheless true," replied Nicola. "My resolution enabled me to stifle the expression of my anguish; I withdrew to the interior of the ruin, to escape from you, but you pursued me even to the dungeon, where I threw off my discoloured vestments, in which I dared not return to my convent, and departed by a way which all your ingenuity failed to discover. The people who were already in the fort, for the purpose of assisting to confine you and your servant during the night on which Signora Rosalba was taken from Altieri, procured me another habit, and relief for my wound. But, though I was unseen by you during the night, I was not entirely unheard, for my groans reached you more than once from an adjoining chamber, and my companions were entertained with the alarn which your servant testified. — Are you now convinced?"

The groans were clearly remembered by Vivaldi, and many other circumstances of Nicola's narration accorded so well with others, which he recollected to have occurred on the night alluded to, that he had no longer a doubt of its veracity. The suddenness of Bianchi's death, however, still occasioned him suspicions as to its cause; yet Schedoni had declared not only that he was innocent, but ignorant of this cause, which it appeared from his unwillingness to give testimony in favour of his agent, he would not have affirmed, had he been conscious that the monk was in any degree guilty in this instance. That Nicola could have no inducement for attempting the life of Bianchi other than a reward offered him by Schedoni, was clear; and Vivaldi, after more fully considering these circumstances, became convinced that her death was in consequence of some incident of natural decay.

While this conversation was passing, the Marchese, impatient to put a conclusion to it, and to leave the chamber, repeatedly urged the secretary to dispatch; and, while he now earnestly renewed his request, another voice answered for the secretary, that he had nearly concluded. Vivaldi thought that he had heard the voice on some former occasion, and on turning his eyes upon the person who had spoken, discovered the stranger to be the same who had first visited him in prison. Perceiving by his dress, that he was an officer of the Inquisition, Vivaldi now understood too well the purport of his former visit, and that he had come with a design to betray him by affected sympathy into a confession of some heretical opinions. Similar instances of treachery Vivaldi had heard were frequently practised upon accused persons, but he had never fully believed such cruelty possible till now, that it had been attempted towards himself.

The visit of this person bringing to his recollection the subsequent one he had received from Nicola, Vivaldi inquired whether the centinels had really admitted him to his cell, or he had entered it by other means; a question to which the monk was silent, but the smile on his features, if so strange an expression deserved to be called a smile, seemed to reply, "Do you believe that I, a servant of the Inquisition, will betray its secrets?"

Vivaldi, however, urged the inquiry, for he wished to know whether the guard, who appeared to be faithful to their office, had escaped the punishment that was threatened.

"They were honest," replied Nicola, "seek no further."

"Are the tribunal convinced of their integrity?"

Nicola smiled again in derision, and replied, "They never doubted it."

"How!" said Vivaldi. "Why were these men put under arrest, if their faithfulness was not even suspected?"

"Be satisfied with the knowledge, which experience has given you of the secrets of the Inquisition," replied Nicola solemnly, "seek to know no more!"

"It has terrible secrets!" said Schedoni, who had been long silent. "Know, young man, that almost every cell of every prisoner has a concealed entrance, by which the ministers of death may pass unnoticed to their victims. This Nicola is now one of those dreadful summoners, and is acquainted with all the secret avenues, that lead to murder."

Vivaldi shrunk from Nicola in horror, and Schedoni paused; but while he had spoken, Vivaldi had again noticed the extraordinary change in his voice, and shuddered at its sound no less than at the information it had given. Nicola was silent; but his terrible eyes were fixed in vengeance on Schedoni.

"His office has been short," resumed the Confessor, turning his heavy eyes upon Nicola, "and his task is almost done!" As he pronounced the last words his voice saltered, but they were heard by the monk, who drawing nearer to the bed, demanded an explanation of them. A ghastly smile triumphed in the features of Schedoni; "Fear not but that an explanation will come full soon," said he.

Nicola fixed himself before the Confessor, and bent his brows upon him as if he would have searched into his very soul. When Vivaldi again looked at Schedoni, he was shocked on observing the sudden alteration in his countenance, yet still a faint smile of triumph lingered there. But, while Vivaldi gazed, the features suddenly became agitated; in the next instant his whole frame was convulsed, and heavy groans laboured from his breast. Schedoni was now evidently dying.

The horror of Vivaldi, and of the Marchese, who endeavoured to leave the chamber, was equalled only by the general confusion that reigned there; every person present seemed to feel at least a momentary compassion, except Nicola, who stood unmoved beside Schedoni, and looked stedsastly upon his pangs, while a smile of derision marked his countenance. As Vivaldi observed, with detestation, this expression, a slight spasm darted over Nicola's face, and his muscles also seemed to labour with sudden contraction; but the affection was transient, and vanished as abruptly as it had appeared. The monk, however, turned from the miserable spectacle before him, and as he turned he caught involuntarily at the arm of a person near him, and leaned on his shoulder for support. His manner appeared to betray that he had not been permitted to triumph in the sufferings of his enemy, without participating at least in their horror.

Schedoni's struggles now began to abate, and in a short time he lay motionless. When he unclosed his eyes, death was in them. He was yet nearly insensible; but presently a saint gleam of recollection shot from them, and gradually lighting them up, the character of his soul appeared there; the expression was indeed seeble, but it was true. He moved his lips as if he would have spoken, and looked languidly round the chamber, seemingly in search of some person. At length, he uttered a sound, but he had not yet sufficient command of his muscles, to modulate that sound into a word, till by repeated efforts the name of Nicola became intelligible. At the call, the monk raised his head from the shoulder of the person on whom he had reclined, and turning round, Schedoni, as was evident from the sudden change of expression in his countenance, discovered him; his eyes, as they settled on Nicola seemed to recollect all their wonted fire, and the malignant triumph, lately so prevalent in his physiognomy, again appeared as in the next moment, he pointed to him. His glance seemed suddenly impowered with the destructive fascination attributed to that of the basilisk, for while it now met Nicola's, that monk seemed as if transfixed to the spot, and unable to withdraw his eyes from the glare of Schedoni's; in their expression he read the dreadful sentence of his fate, the triumph of revenge and cunning. Struck with this terrible conviction a pallid hue overspread his face; at the same time an involuntary motion convulsed his features, cold trembling seized upon his frame, and, uttering a deep groan, he fell back, and was caught in the arms of the people near him. At the instant of his fall, Schedoni uttered a sound so strange and horrible, so convulsed, yet so loud, so exulting, yet so unlike any human voice, that every person in the chamber, except those who were assisting Nicola, struck with irresistible terror, endeavoured to make their way out of it. This, however, was impracticable, for the door was sastened, until a physician, who had been sent for, should arrive, and some investigation could be made into this mysterious affair. The consternation of the Marchese and of Vivaldi, compelled to witness this scene of horror, cannot easily be imagined.

Schedoni, having uttered that demoniacal found of exultation, was not permitted to repeat it, for the pangs he had lately suffered returned upon him, and he was again in strong convulsions, when the physician entered the chamber. The moment he beheld Schedoni, he declared him to be poisoned; and he pronounced a similar opinion on father Nicola; affirming, also, that the drug, as appeared from the violence of the effect, was of too subtle and inveterate a nature to allow of antidote. He was, however, willing to administer the medicine usual in such cases.

While he was giving orders to an attendant, with respect to this, the violence of Schedoni’s convulsions once more relaxed; but Nicola appeared in the last extremity. His sufferings were incessant, his senses never for a moment returned, and he expired, before the medicine, which had been sent for, could be brought. When it came, however, it was administered with some success to Schedoni, who recovered not only his recollection, but his voice; and the first word he uttered was, as formerly, the name of Nicola.

“Does he live?” added the Confessor with the utmost difficulty, and after a long pause. The persons around him were silent, but the truth, which this silence indicated, seemed to revive him.

The inquisitor, who had attended, perceiving that Schedoni had recovered the use of his intellects, now judged it prudent to ask some questions relative to his present condition, and to the cause of Nicola’s death.

“Poison,” replied Schedoni readily.

“By whom administered?” said the inquisitor, “consider that, while you answer, you are on your death-bed.”

“I have no wish to conceal the truth,” rejoined Schedoni, “nor the satisfaction” — he was obliged to pause, but presently added, “I have destroyed him, who would have destroyed me, and — and I have escaped an ignominious death.”

He paused again; it was with difficulty that he had said thus much, and he was now overcome by the exertion he had made. The secretary, who had not been permitted to leave the chamber, was ordered to note Schedoni’s words.

“You avow then,” continued the inquisitor, “that the poison was administered, both in the case of father Nicola and in your own, by yourself?”

Schedoni could not immediately reply; but when he did, he said, “I avow it.”

He was asked by what means he had contrived to procure the poison, and was bidden to name his accomplice.

“I had no accomplice,” replied Schedoni. “How did you procure the poison, then?”

Schedoni, slowly and with difficulty, replied, “It was concealed in my vest.”

“Consider that you are dying,” said the inquisitor, “and confess the truth. We cannot believe what you have last asserted. It is improbable that you should have had an opportunity of providing yourself with poison after your arrest, and equally improbable that you should have thought such provision necessary before that period. Confess who is your accomplice.”

This accusation of falshood recalled the spirit of Schedoni, which, contending with, and conquering, for a moment, corporeal suffering, he said in a firmer tone, “It was the poison, in which I dip my poniard, the better to defend me.”

The inquisitor smiled in contempt of this explanation, and Schedoni, observing him, desired a particular part of his vest might be examined, where would be found some remains of the drug concealed as he had affirmed. He was indulged in his request, and the poison was discovered within a broad hem of his garment.

Still it was inconceivable how he had contrived to administer it to Nicola, who, though he had been for some time alone with him on this day, would scarcely have so far confided in an enemy, as to have accepted any seeming sustenance that might have been offered by him. The inquisitor, still anxious to discover an accomplice, asked Schedoni who had assisted to administer the drug to Nicola, but the Confessor was no longer in a condition to reply. Life was now sinking apace; the gleam of spirit and of character that had returned to his eyes, was departed, and left them haggard and fixed; and presently a livid corse was all that remained of the once terrible Schedoni!

While this awful event had been accomplishing, the Marchese, suffering under the utmost perturbation, had withdrawn to the distant grate of the dungeon, where he conversed with an official as to what might be the probable consequence of his present situation to himself; but Vivaldi, in an agony of horror, had been calling incessantly for the medicine, which might possibly afford some relief to the anguish he witnessed; and when it was brought, he had assisted to support the sufferers. At length, now that the worst was over, and when the several witnesses had signed to the last avowal of Schedoni, every person in the chamber was suffered to depart; and Vivaldi was re-conducted to his prison, accompanied by the Marchese, where he was to remain till the decision of the holy office respecting his innocence, as asserted by the deposition of Schedoni, should be known. He was too much affected by the late scene to give the Marchese any explanation at present, respecting the family of Ellena di Rosalba, and the Marchese, having remained for some time with his son, withdrew to the residence of his friend.

CHAPTER 33

> "Master, go on, and I will follow thee
> To the last gasp, with truth and loyalty."
> Shakespeare.

In consequence of the dying confession of Schedoni, an order was sent from the holy office for the release of Vivaldi, within a few days after the death of the Confessor; and the Marchese conducted his son from the prisons of the Inquisition to the mansion of his friend the Count di Maro, with whom he had resided since his arrival at Rome.

While they were receiving the ceremonious congratulations of the Count, and of some nobles assembled to welcome the emancipated prisoner a loud voice was heard from the anti-chamber exclaiming, "Let me pass! It is my master, let me pass! May all those who attempt to stop me, be sent to the Inquisition themselves!"

In the next instant Paulo burst into the saloon, followed by a group of lacqueys, who, however, paused at the door, fearful of the displeasure of their lord, yet scarcely able to stifle a laugh; while Paulo, springing forward, had nearly overset some of the company, who happened at that moment to be bowing with profound joy to Vivaldi.

"It is my master! it is my dear master!" cried Paulo, and, sending off a nobleman with each elbow, as he made his way between them, he hugged Vivaldi in his arms, repeating, "O, my master! my master!" till a passion of joy and affection overcame his voice, and he fell at his master's feet and wept.

This was a moment of finer joy to Vivaldi, than he had known since his meeting with his father, and he was too much interested by his faithful servant, to have leisure to apologize to the astonished company for his rudeness. While the lacqueys were repairing the mischief Paulo had occasioned, were picking up the rolling snuff-boxes he had jerked away in his passage, and wiping the snuff from the soiled clothes, Vivaldi was participating in all the delight, and returning all the affection of his servant, and was so wholly occupied by these pleasurable feelings as scarcely to be sensible that any persons besides themselves were in the room. The Marchese, meanwhile was making a thousand apologies for the disasters Paulo had occasioned; was alternately calling upon him to recollect in whose presence he was, and to quit the apartment immediately; explaining to the company that he had not seen Vivaldi since they were together in the Inquisition, and remarking profoundly, that he was much attached to his master. But Paulo, insensible to the repeated commands of the Marchese, and to the endeavours of Vivaldi to raise him, was still pouring forth his whole heart at his master's feet. "Ah! my Signor," said he, "if you could but know how miserable I was when I got out of the Inquisition!" — "He raves!" observed the Count to the Marchese, "you perceive that joy has rendered him delirious!"

"How I wandered about the walls half the night, and what it cost me to leave them! But when I lost sight of them, Signor, O! San Dominico! I thought my heart would have broke. I had a great mind to have gone back again and given myself up; and, perhaps, I should too, if it had not been for my friend, the centinel, who escaped with me, and I would not do him an injury, poor fellow! for he meant nothing but kindness when he let me out. And sure enough, as it has proved, it was all for the best, for now I am here, too, Signor, as well as you; and can tell you all I felt when I believed I should never see you again."

The contrast of his present joy to his remembered grief again brought tears into Paulo's eyes; he smiled and wept, and sobbed and laughed with such rapid transition, that Vivaldi began to be alarmed for him; when, suddenly becoming calm, he looked up in his master's face and said gravely, but with eagerness, "Pray Signor, was not the roof of your little prison peaked, and was there not a little turret stuck up at one corner of it? and was there not a battlement round the turret? and was there not" — Vivaldi, after regarding him for a moment, replied smilingly, "Why truly, my good Paulo, my dungeon was so far from the roof, that I never had an opportunity of observing it."

"That is very true, Signor," replied Paulo, "very true indeed; but I did not happen to think of that. I am certain, though, it was as I say, and I was sure of it at the time. O Signor! I thought that roof would have broke my heart, O how I did look at it! and now to think that I am here, with my dear master once again!"

As Paulo concluded, his tears and sobs returned with more violence than before; and Vivaldi, who could not perceive any necessary connection between this mention of the roof of his late prison, and the joy his servant expressed on seeing him again, began to fear that his senses were bewildered, and desired an explanation of his words. Paulo's account, rude and simple as it was, soon discovered to him the relation of these apparently heterogeneous circumstances to each other;

when Vivaldi, overcome by this new instance of the power of Paulo's affection, embraced him with his whole heart, and, compelling him to rise, presented him to the assembly as his faithful friend, and chief deliverer.

The Marchese, affected by the scene he had witnessed, and with the truth of Vivaldi's words, condescended to give Paulo a hearty shake by the hand, and to thank him warmly for the bravery and fidelity he had displayed in his master's interest. "I never can fully reward your attachment, added the Marchese, "but what remains for me to do, shall be done. From this moment I make you independent, and promise, in the presence of this noble company, to give you a thousand sequins, as some acknowledgement of your services."

Paulo did not express all the gratitude for this gift which the Marchese expected. He stammered, and bowed and blushed, and at length burst into tears; and when Vivaldi inquired what distressed him, he replied, "Why, Signor, of what use are the thousand sequins to me, if I am to be independent! what use if I am not to stay with you?"

Vivaldi cordially assured Paulo, that he should always remain with him, and that he should consider it as his duty to render his future life happy. "You shall henceforth," added Vivaldi, "be placed at the head of my houshold; the management of my servants, and the whole conduct of my domestic concerns shall be committed to you, as a proof of my entire confidence in your integrity and attachment; and because this is a situation which will allow you to be always near me."

"Thank you, my Signor," replied Paulo, in a voice rendered almost inarticulate by his gratitude, "Thank you with my whole heart! if I stay with you, that is enough for me, I ask no more. But I hope my Lord Marchese will not think me ungrateful for refusing to accept of the thousand sequins he was so kind as to offer me, if I would but be independent, for I thank him as much as if I had received them, and a great deal more too."

The Marchese, smiling at Paulo's mistake, rejoined, "As I do not perceive, my good friend, how your remaining with your master can be a circumstance to disqualify you from accepting a thousand sequins, I command you, on pain of my displeasure, to receive them; and whenever you marry, I shall expect that you will shew your obedience to me again, by accepting another thousand from me with your wife, as her dower."

"This is too much, Signor," said Paulo sobbing — "too much to be borne!" and ran out of the saloon. But amidst the murmur of applause which his conduct drew from the noble spectators, for Paulo's warm heart had subdued even the coldness of their pride, a convulsive sound from the anti-chamber betrayed the excess of emotion, which he had thus abruptly withdrawn himself to conceal.

In a few hours, the Marchese and Vivaldi took leave of their friends, and set out for Naples, where they arrived, without any interruption, on the fourth day. But it was a melancholy journey to Vivaldi, notwithstanding the joy of his late escape; for the Marchese, having introduced the mention of his attachment to Ellena di Rosalba, informed him, that, under the present unforeseen circumstances, he could not consider his late engagement to the Marchesa on that subject as binding, and that Vivaldi must relinquish Ellena, if it should appear that she really was the daughter of the late Schedoni.

Immediately on his arrival at Naples, however, Vivaldi, with a degree of impatience, to which his utmost speed was inadequate, and with a revived joy so powerful as to overcome every fear, and every melancholy consideration, which the late conversation with his father had occasioned, hastened to the Santa della Piéta.

Ellena heard his voice from the grate, inquiring for her of a nun, who was in the parlour, and in the next instant they beheld each other yet once again.

In such a meeting, after the long uncertainty and terror, which each had suffered for the fate of the other, and the dangers and hardships they had really incurred, joy was exalted almost to agony. Ellena wept, and some minutes passed before she could answer to Vivaldi's few words of tender exclamation: it was long ere she was tranquil enough to observe the alteration, which severe confinement had given to his appearance. The animated expression of his countenance was unchanged; yet, when the first glow of joy had faded from it, and Ellena had leisure to observe its wanness, she understood, too certainly, that he had been a prisoner in the Inquisition.

During this interview, he related, at Ellena's request, the particulars of his adventures, since he had been separated from her in the chapel of San Sebastian; but, when he came to that part of the narration where it was necessary to mention Schedoni, he paused in unconquerable embarrassment and a distress not unmingled with horror. Vivaldi could scarcely endure even to hint to Ellena any part of the unjust conduct, which the Confessor had practised towards him, yet it was impossible to conclude his account, without expressing much more than hints; nor could he bear to afflict her with a knowledge of the death of him who he believed to be her parent, however the dreadful circumstances of that event might be concealed. His embarrassment became obvious, and was still increased by Ellena's inquiries.

At length, as an introduction to the information it was necessary to give, and to the fuller explanation he wished to receive upon a subject, which, though it was the one that pressed most anxiously upon his mind, he had not yet dared to mention, Vivaldi ventured to declare his knowledge of her having discovered her parent to be living. The satisfaction immediately apparent upon Ellena's countenance heightened his distress, and his reluctance to proceed; believing, as he did, that the event he had to communicate must change her gladness to grief."

Ellena, however, upon this mention of a topic so interesting to them both, proceeded to express the happiness she had received from the discovery of a parent, whose virtues had even won her affection long before she understood her own interest in them. It was with some difficulty, that Vivaldi could conceal his surprize at such an avowal of prepossession; the manners of Schedoni, of whom he believed her to speak, having certainly never been adapted to inspire tenderness. But his surprize soon changed its object, when Olivia, who had heard that a stranger was at the grate, entered the parlour, and was announced as the mother of Ellena di Rosalba.

Before Vivaldi left the convent, a full explanation, as to family, was given on both sides, when he had the infinite joy of learning, that Ellena was not the daughter of Schedoni; and Olivia had the satisfaction to know that she had no future evil to apprehend from him who had hitherto been her worst enemy. The manner of his death, however, with all the circumstances of his character, as unfolded by his late trial, Vivaldi was careful to conceal.

When Ellena had withdrawn from the room, Vivaldi made a full acknowledgment to Olivia of his long attachment to her daughter, and supplicated for her consent to their marriage. To this application, however, Olivia replied, that, though she had long been no stranger to their mutual affection, or to the several circumstances which had both proved its durability, and tried their fortitude, she never could consent that her daughter should become a member of any family, whose principal was either insensible of her value, or unwilling to acknowledge it; and that in this instance it would be necessary to Vivaldi's success, not only that he, but that his father should be a suitor; on which condition only, she allowed him to hope for her acquiescence.

Such a stipulation scarcely chilled the hopes of Vivaldi, now that Ellena was proved to be the daughter not of the murderer Schedoni, but of a Count di Bruno, who had been no less respectable in character than in rank; and he had little doubt that his father would consent to fulfil the promise he had given to the dying Marchesa.

In this belief he was not mistaken. The Marchese, having attended to Vivaldi's account of Ellena's family, promised, that if it should appear there was no second mistake on the subject, he would not longer oppose the wishes of his son.

The Marchese immediately caused a private inquiry to be made as to the identity of Olivia, the present Countess di Bruno; and, though this was not pursued without difficulty, the physician, who had assisted in the plan of her escape from the cruelty of Ferando di Bruno, and who was living, as well as Beatrice, who clearly remembered the sister of her late mistress, at length rendered Olivia's identity unquestionable. Now, therefore, that the Marchese's every doubt was removed, he paid a visit to the Santa della Piéta, and solicited, in due form, Olivia's consent to the nuptials of Vivaldi with Ellena; which she granted him with an entire satisfaction. In this interview, the Marchese was so much fascinated by the manners of the Countess, and pleased with the delicacy and sweetness, which appeared in those of Ellena, that his consent was no longer a constrained one, and he willingly relinquished the views of superior rank and fortune, which he had formerly looked to for his son, for those of virtue and permanent happiness that were now unfolded to him.

On the twentieth of May, the day on which Ellena completed her eighteenth year, her nuptials with Vivaldi were solemnized in the church of the Santa Maria della Piéta, in the presence of the Marchese and of the Countess di Bruno. As Ellena advanced through the church, she recollected, when on a former occasion she had met Vivaldi at the altar, and, the scenes of San Sebastian rising to her memory, the happy character of those, which her present situation opposed to them, drew tears of tender joy and gratitude to her eyes. Then, irresolute, desolate, surrounded by strangers, and ensnared by enemies, she had believed she saw Vivaldi for the last time; now, supported by the presence of a beloved parent, and by the willing approbation of the person, who had hitherto so strenuously opposed her, they were met to part no more; and, as a recollection of the moment when she had been carried from the chapel glanced upon her mind, that moment when she had called upon him for succour, supplicated even to hear his voice once more, and when a blank silence, which, as she believed, was that of death, had succeeded; as the anguish of that moment was now remembered, Ellena became more than ever sensible of the happiness of the present.

Olivia, in thus relinquishing her daughter so soon after she had found her, suffered some pain, but she was consoled by the fair prospect of happiness, that opened to Ellena, and cheered, by considering, that, though she relinquished, she should not lose her, since the vicinity of Vivaldi's residence to La Piéta, would permit a frequent intercourse with the convent.

As a testimony of singular esteem, Paulo was permitted to be present at the marriage of his master, when, as perched in a high gallery of the church, he looked down upon the ceremony, and witnessed the delight in Vivaldi's countenance, the satisfaction in that of my "old Lord Marchese," the pensive happiness in the Countess di Bruno's, and the tender complacency of Ellena's, which her veil, partly undrawn, allowed him to observe, he could scarcely refrain from expressing the joy he felt, and shouting aloud, "O! giorno felíce! O! giorno felíce!" [Note: O happy day! O happy day!]

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Chapter 34

> "Ah! where shall I so sweet a dwelling find!
> For all around, without, and all within,
> Nothing save what delightful was and kind,
> Of goodness favouring and a tender mind,
> E'er rose to view."
> Thomson.

The fête which, some time after the nuptials, was given by the Marchese, in celebration of them, was held at a delightful villa, belonging to Vivaldi, a few miles distant from Naples, upon the border of the gulf, and on the opposite shore to that which had been the frequent abode of the Marchesa. The beauty of its situation and its interior elegance induced Vivaldi and Ellena to select it as their chief residence. It was, in truth, a scene of fairy-land. The pleasure-grounds extended over a valley, which opened to the bay, and the house stood at the entrance of this valley, upon a gentle slope that margined the water, and commanded the whole extent of its luxuriant shores, from the lofty cape of Miseno to the bold mountains of the south, which, stretching across the distance, appeared to rise out of the sea, and divided the gulf of Naples from that of Salerno.

The marble porticoes and arcades of the villa were shadowed by groves of the beautiful magnolia flowering ash, cedrati, camellias, and majestic palms; and the cool and airy halls, opening on two opposite sides to a colonade, admitted beyond the rich soliage all the seas and shores of Naples, from the west; and to the east, views of the valley of the domain, withdrawing among winding hills wooded to their summits, except where cliffs of various-coloured granites, yellow, green, and purple, lifted their tall heads, and threw gay gleams of light amidst the umbrageous landscape.

The style of the gardens, where lawns and groves, and woods varied the undulating surface, was that of England, and of the present day, rather than of Italy; except "Where a long alley peeping on the main," exhibited such gigantic loftiness of shade, and grandeur of perspective, as characterize the Italian taste.

On this jubilee, every avenue and grove, and pavilion was richly illuminated. The villa itself, where each airy hall and arcade was resplendent with lights, and lavishly decorated with flowers and the most beautiful shrubs, whose buds seemed to pour all Arabia's perfumes upon the air, this villa resembled a fabric called up by enchantment, rather than a structure of human art.

The dresses of the higher rank of visitors were as splendid as the scenery, of which Ellena was, in every respect, the queen. But this entertainment was not given to persons of distinction only, for both Vivaldi and Ellena had wished that all the tenants of the domain should partake of it, and share the abundant happiness which themselves possessed; so that the grounds, which were extensive enough to accommodate each rank, were relinquished to a general gaiety. Paulo was, on this occasion, a sort of master of the revels; and, surrounded by a party of his own particular associates, danced once more, as he had so often wished, upon the moon-light shore of Naples.

As Vivaldi and Ellena were passing the spot, which Paulo had chosen for the scene of his festivity, they paused to observe his strange capers and extravagant gesticulation, as he mingled in the dance, while every now-and-then he shouted forth, though half breathless with the heartiness of the exercise, "O! giorno felíce! O! giorno felíce!"

On perceiving Vivaldi, and the smiles with which he and Ellena regarded him, he quitted his sports, and advancing, "Ah! my dear master," said he, "do you remember the night, when we were travelling on the banks of the Celano, before that diabolical accident happened in the chapel of San Sebastian; don't you remember how those people, who were tripping it away so joyously, by moonlight, reminded me of Naples and the many merry dances I had footed on the beach here?"

"I remember it well," replied Vivaldi.

"Ah! Signor mio, you said at the time, that you hoped we should soon be here, and that then I should frisk it away with as glad a heart as the best of them. The first part of your hope, my dear master, you was out in, for, as it happened, we had to go through purgatory before we could reach paradise; but the second part is come at last; — for here I am, sure enough! dancing by moonlight, in my own dear bay of Naples, with my own dear master and mistress, in safety, and as happy almost as myself; and with that old mountain yonder, Vesuvius, which I, forsooth! thought I was never to see again, spouting up fire, just as it used to do before we got ourselves put into the Inquisition! O! who could have foreseen all this!

O! giorno felíce! O! giorno felíce!”

“I rejoice in your happiness, my good Paulo,” said Vivaldi, “almost as much as in my own; though I do not entirely agree with you as to the comparative proportion of each.”

“Paulo!” said Ellena, “I am indebted to you beyond any ability to repay; for to your intrepid affection your master owes his present safety. I will not attempt to thank you for your attachment to him; my care of your welfare shall prove how well I know it; but I wish to give to all your friends this acknowledgment of your worth, and of my sense of it.”

Paulo bowed, and stammered, and writhed and blushed, and was unable to reply; till, at length, giving a sudden and lofty spring from the ground, the emotion which had nearly stifled him burst forth in words, and “O! giorno felíce! O! giorno felíce!” flew from his lips with the force of an electric shock. They communicated his enthusiasm to the whole company, the words passed like lightning from one individual to another, till Vivaldi and Ellena withdrew amidst a choral shout, and all the woods and strands of Naples re-echoed with — “O! giorno felíce! O! giorno felíce!”

“You see,” said Paulo, when they had departed, and he came to himself again, “you see how people get through their misfortunes, if they have but a heart to bear up against them, and do nothing that can lie on their conscience afterwards; and how suddenly one comes to be happy, just when one is beginning to think one never is to be happy again! Who would have guessed that my dear master and I, when we were clapped up in that diabolical place, the Inquisition, should ever come out again into this world! Who would have guessed when we were taken before those old devils of Inquisitors, sitting there all of a row in a place under ground, hung with black, and nothing but torches all around, and faces grinning at us, that looked as black as the gentry aforesaid; and when I was not so much as suffered to open my mouth, no! they would not let me open my mouth to my master! — who, I say, would have guessed we should ever be let loose again! who would have thought we should ever know what it is to be happy! Yet here we are all abroad once more! All at liberty! And may run, if we will, straight forward, from one end of the earth to the other, and back again without being stopped! May fly in the sea, or swim in the sky, or tumble over head and heels into the moon! For remember, my good friends, we have no lead in our consciences to keep us down!”

“You mean swim in the sea, and fly in the sky, I suppose,” observed a grave personage near him, “but as for tumbling over head and heels into the moon! I don’t know what you mean by that!”

“Pshaw!” replied Paulo, “who can stop, at such a time as this, to think about what he means! I wish that all those, who on this night are not merry enough to speak before they think, may ever after be grave enough to think before they speak! But you, none of you, no! not one of you! I warrant, ever saw the roof of a prison, when your master happened to be below in the dungeon, nor know what it is to be forced to run away, and leave him behind to die by himself. Poor souls! But no matter for that, you can be tolerably happy, perhaps, notwithstanding; but as for guessing how happy I am, or knowing any thing about the matter. — O! it’s quite beyond what you can understand. O! giorno felice! O! giorno felice!” repeated Paulo, as he bounded forward to mingle in the dance, and “O! giorno felice!” was again shouted in chorus by his joyful companions.

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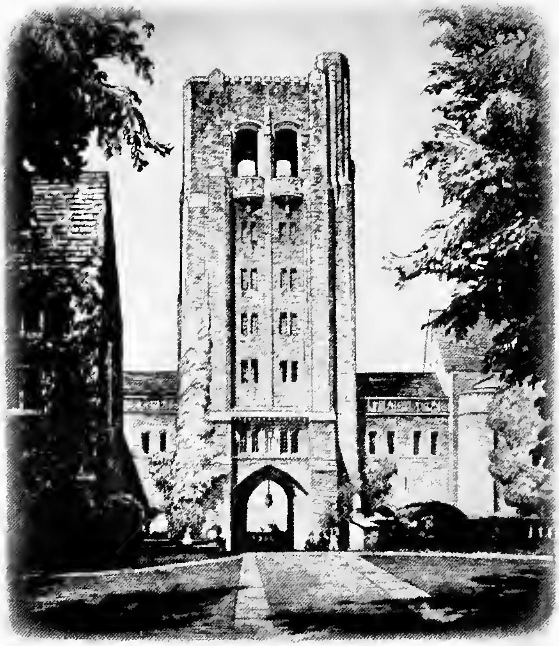

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Complete Works

OF

OSCAR WILDE

EDITED BY

ROBERT ROSS

THE PICTURE OF DORIAN GRAY

A HOUSE OF POMEGRANATES

AUTHORIZED EDITION

THE WYMAN-FOGG COMPANY
BOSTON :: MASSACHUSETTS

THE PICTURE OF DORIAN GRAY

I

THE studio was filled with the rich odor of roses, and when the light summer wind stirred amid the trees of the garden there came through the open door the heavy scent of the lilac, or the more delicate perfume of the pink-flowering thorn.

From the corner of the divan of Persian saddle-bags on which he was lying, smoking, as was his custom, innumerable cigarettes, Lord Henry Wotton could just catch the gleam of the honey-sweet and honey-colored blossoms of a laburnum, whose tremulous branches seemed hardly able to bear the burden of a beauty so flame-like as theirs; and now and then the fantastic shadows of birds in flight flitted across the long tussore-silk curtains that were stretched in front of the huge window, producing a kind of momentary Japanese effect, and making him think of those pallid jade-faced painters of Tokio who, through the medium of an art that is necessarily immobile, seek to convey the sense of swiftness and motion. The sullen murmur of the bees shouldering their way through the long unmown grass, or circling with monotonous insistence round the dusty gilt horns of the straggling woodbine, seemed to make the stillness more oppressive. The dim roar of London was like the bourdon note of a distant organ.

In the center of the room, clamped to an upright easel, stood the full-length portrait of a young man of extraordinary personal beauty, and in front of it, some little distance away, was sitting the artist himself, Basil Hallward, whose sudden disappearance some years ago caused, at the time, such public excitement, and gave rise to so many strange conjectures.

As the painter looked at the gracious and comely form he had so skilfully mirrored in his art, a smile of pleasure passed across his face, and seemed about to linger there. But he suddenly started up, and, closing his eyes, placed his fingers upon the lids, as though he sought to imprison within his brain some curious dream from which he feared he might awake.

"It is your best work, Basil, the best thing you have ever done," said Lord Henry, languidly. "You must certainly send it next year to the Grosvenor. The Academy is too large and too vulgar. Whenever I have gone there, there have been either so many people that I have not been able to see the pictures, which were dreadful, or so many pictures that I have not been able to see the people, which was worse. The Grosvenor is really the only place."

"I don't think I shall send it anywhere," he answered, tossing his head back in that odd way that used to make his friends laugh at him at Oxford. "No, I won't send it anywhere."

Lord Henry elevated his eyebrows, and looked at him in amazement through the thin blue wreaths of smoke that curled up in such fanciful whorls from his heavy opium-tainted cigarette. "Not send it anywhere! My dear fellow, why? Have you any reason? What odd chaps you painters are! You do anything in the world to gain a reputation. As soon as you have one, you seem to want to throw it away. It is silly of you, for there is only one thing in the world worse than being talked about, and that is not being talked about. A portrait like this would set you far above all the young men in England, and make the old men quite jealous, if old men are ever capable of any emotion."

"I know you will laugh at me," he replied, "but I really can't exhibit it. I have put too much of myself into it."

Lord Henry stretched himself out on the divan and laughed.

"Yes, I knew you would; but it is quite true, all the same."

"Too much of yourself in it! Upon my word, Basil, I didn't know you were so vain; and I really can't see any resemblance between you, with your rugged, strong face and your coal-black hair, and this young Adonis, who looks as if he was made of ivory and rose-leaves. Why, my dear Basil, he is a Narcissus, and you—well, of course, you have an intellectual expression, and all that. But beauty, real beauty, ends where an intellectual expression begins. Intellect is in itself a mode of exaggeration, and destroys the harmony of any face. The moment one sits down to think, one becomes all nose, or all forehead, or something horrid. Look at the successful men in any of the learned professions. How perfectly hideous they are! Except, of course, in the Church. But then in the Church they don't think. A bishop keeps on saying at the age of eighty what he was told to say when he was a boy of eighteen, and as a natural consequence he always looks absolutely delightful. Your mysterious young friend, whose name you have never told me, but whose picture really fascinates me, never thinks. I feel quite sure of that. He is some brainless, beautiful creature, who should be always here in winter when we have no flowers to look at, and always here in summer when we want something to chill our intelligence. Don't flatter yourself, Basil: you are not in the least like him."

"You don't understand me, Harry," answered the artist. "Of course I am not like him. I know that perfectly well. Indeed, I should be sorry to look like him. You shrug your shoulders? I am telling you the truth. There is a fatality about all physical and intellectual distinction, the sort of fatality that seems to dog through history the faltering steps of kings. It is better not to be different from one's fellows. The ugly and the stupid have the best of it in this world. They can sit at their ease and gape at the play. If they know nothing of victory, they are at least spared the knowledge of defeat. They live as we all should live, undisturbed, indifferent, and without disquiet. They neither bring ruin upon others, nor ever receive it from alien hands. Your rank and wealth, Harry; my brains, such as they are—my art, whatever it may be worth; Dorian Gray's good looks—we shall all suffer for what the gods have given us, suffer terribly."

"Dorian Gray? Is that his name?" asked Lord Henry, walking across the studio toward Basil Hallward.

"Yes, that is his name. I didn't intend to tell it to you."

"But why not?"

"Oh, I can't explain. When I like people immensely I never tell their names to any one. It is like surrendering a part of them. I have grown to love secrecy. It seems to be the one thing that can make modern life mysterious or marvelous to us. The commonest thing is delightful if one only hides it. When I leave town now I never tell my people where I am going. If I did, I would lose all my pleasure. It is a silly habit, I dare say, but somehow it seems to bring a great deal of romance into one's life. I suppose you think me awfully foolish about it?"

"Not at all," answered Lord Henry, "not at all, my dear Basil. You seem to forget that I am married, and the one charm of marriage is that it makes a life of deception absolutely necessary for both parties. I never know where my wife is, and my wife never knows what I am doing. When we meet—we do meet occasionally, when we dine out together, or go down to the Duke's—we tell each other the most absurd stories with the most serious faces. My wife is very good at it—much better, in fact, than I am. She never gets confused over her dates, and I always do. But when she does find me out, she makes no row at all. I sometimes wish she would; but she merely laughs at me."

"I hate the way you talk about your married life, Harry," said Basil Hallward, strolling toward the door that led into the garden. "I believe that you are really a very good husband, but that you are thoroughly ashamed of your own virtues. You are an extraordinary fellow. You never say a moral thing, and you never do a wrong thing. Your cynicism is simply a pose."

"Being natural is simply a pose, and the most irritating pose I know," cried Lord Henry, laughing; and the two young men went out into the garden together, and ensconced themselves on a long bamboo seat that stood in the shade of a tall laurel bush. The sunlight slipped over the polished leaves. In the grass, white daisies were tremulous.

After a pause, Lord Henry pulled out his watch. "I am afraid I must be going, Basil," he murmured, "and before I go, I insist on your answering a question I put to you some time ago."

"What is that?" said the painter, keeping his eyes fixed on the ground.

"You know quite well."

"I do not, Harry."

"Well, I will tell you what it is. I want you to explain to me why you won't exhibit Dorian Gray's picture. I want the real reason."

"I told you the real reason."

"No, you did not. You said it was because there was too much of yourself in it. Now, that is childish."

"Harry," said Basil Hallward, looking him straight in the face, "every portrait that is painted with feeling is a portrait of the artist, not of the sitter. The sitter is merely the accident, the occasion. It is not he who is revealed by the painter; it is rather the painter who, on the colored canvas, reveals himself. The reason I will not exhibit this picture is that I am afraid that I have shown in it the secret of my own soul."

Lord Henry laughed. "And what is that?" he asked.

"I will tell you," said Hallward; but an expression of perplexity came over his face.

"I am all expectation, Basil," continued his companion, glancing at him.

"Oh, there is really very little to tell, Harry," answered the painter; "and I am afraid you will hardly understand it. Perhaps you will hardly believe it."

Lord Henry smiled, and, leaning down, plucked a pink-petaled daisy from the grass, and examined it. "I am quite sure I shall understand it," he replied, gazing intently at the little golden white-feathered disk, "and as for believing things, I can believe anything, provided that it is incredible."

The wind shook some blossoms from the trees, and the heavy lilac-blooms, with their clustering stars, moved to and fro in the languid air. A grasshopper began to chirrup by the wall, and like a blue thread a long thin dragon-fly floated past on its brown gauze wings. Lord Henry felt as if he could hear Basil Hallward's heart beating, and wondered what was coming.

"The story is simply this," said the painter after some time. "Two months ago I went to a crush at Lady Brandon's. You know we poor artists have to show ourselves in society from time to time, just to remind the public that we are not savages. With an evening coat and a white tie, as you told me once, anybody, even a stock-broker, can gain a reputation for being civilized. Well, after I had been in the room about ten minutes, talking to huge overdressed dowagers and tedious Academicians, I suddenly became conscious that some one was looking at me. I turned half-way round, and saw Dorian Gray for the first time. When our eyes met, I felt that I was growing pale. A curious sensation of terror came over me. I knew that I had come face to face with some one whose mere personality was so fascinating that, if I allowed it to do so, it would absorb my whole nature, my whole soul, my very art itself. I did not want any external influence in my life. You know yourself, Harry, how independent I am by nature. I have always been my own master; had at least always been so, till I met Dorian Gray. Then—But I don't know how to explain it to you. Something seemed to tell me that I was on the verge of a terrible crisis in my life. I had a strange feeling that Fate had in store for me exquisite joys and exquisite sorrows. I grew afraid, and turned to quit the room. It was not conscience that made me do so: it was a sort of cowardice. I take no credit to myself for trying to escape."

"Conscience and cowardice are really the same things, Basil. Conscience is the trade-name of the firm. That is all."

"I don't believe that, Harry, and I don't believe you do either. However, whatever was my motive—and it may have been pride, for I used to be very proud—I certainly struggled to the door. There, of course, I stumbled against Lady Brandon. 'You are not going to run away so soon, Mr. Hallward?' she screamed out. You know her curiously shrill voice?"

"Yes; she is a peacock in everything but beauty," said Lord Henry, pulling the daisy to bits with his long, nervous fingers.

"I could not get rid of her. She brought me up to Royalties, and people with Stars and Garters, and elderly ladies with gigantic tiaras and parrot noses. She spoke of me as her dearest friend. I had only met her once before, but she took it into her head to lionize me. I believe some picture of mine had made a great success at the time—at least, had been chattered about in the penny newspapers, which is the nineteenth-century standard of immortality. Suddenly I found myself face to face with the young man whose personality had so strangely stirred me. We were quite close, almost touching. Our eyes met again. It was reckless of me, but I asked Lady Brandon to introduce me to him. Perhaps it was not so reckless, after all. It was simply inevitable. We would have spoken to each other without any introduction. I am sure of that. Dorian told me so afterward. He, too, felt that we were destined to know each other."

"And how did Lady Brandon describe this wonderful young man?" asked his companion. "I know she goes in for giving a rapid *précis* of all her guests. I remember her bringing me up to a truculent and red-faced old gentleman covered all over with orders and ribbons, and hissing into my ear, in a tragic whisper which must have been perfectly audible to everybody in the room, the most astounding details. I simply fled. I like to find out people for myself. But poor Lady Brandon treats her guests exactly as an auctioneer treats his goods. She either explains them entirely away, or tells one everything about them except what one wants to know."

"Poor Lady Brandon! You are hard on her, Harry!" said Hallward, listlessly.

"My dear fellow, she tried to found a *salon,* and only succeeded in opening a restaurant. How could I admire her? But tell me, what did she say about Mr. Dorian Gray?"

"Oh, something like, 'Charming boy—poor dear mother and I absolutely inseparable. Quite forget what he does—afraid he—doesn't do anything—oh, yes, plays the piano—or is it the violin, dear Mr. Gray?' Neither of us could help laughing, and we became friends at once."

"Laughter is not at all a bad beginning for a friendship, and it is far the best ending for one," said the young lord, plucking another daisy.

Hallward shook his head. "You don't understand what friendship is, Harry," he murmured—"or what enmity is, for that matter. You like every one; that is to say, you are indifferent to every one."

"How horribly unjust of you!" cried Lord Henry, tilting his hat back, and looking up at the little clouds that, like raveled skeins of glossy white silk, were drifting across the hollow turquois of the summer sky. "Yes, horribly unjust of you. I make a great difference between people. I choose my friends for their good looks, my acquaintances for their good characters, and my enemies for their good intellects. A man cannot be too careful in the choice of his enemies. I have not got one who is a fool. They are all men of some intellectual power, and consequently they all appreciate me. Is that very vain of me? I think it is rather vain."

"I should think it was, Harry. But according to your category I must be merely an acquaintance."

"My dear old Basil, you are much more than an acquaintance."

"And much less than a friend. A sort of brother, I suppose?"

"Oh, brothers! I don't care for brothers. My elder brother won't die, and my younger brothers seem never to do anything else."

"Harry!" exclaimed Hallward, frowning.

"My dear fellow, I am not quite serious. But I can't help detesting my relations. I suppose it comes from the fact that none of us can stand other people having the same faults as ourselves. I quite sympathize with the rage of the English democracy against what they call the vices of the upper orders. The masses feel that drunkenness, stupidity, and immorality should be their own special property, and that if any one of us makes an ass of himself he is poaching on their preserves. When poor Southward got into the Divorce Court, their indignation was quite magnificent. And yet I don't suppose that ten per cent. of the proletariat live correctly."

"I don't agree with a single word that you have said, and, what is more, Harry, I feel sure you don't either."

Lord Henry stroked his pointed brown beard, and tapped the toe of his patent-leather boot with a tasseled ebony cane. "How English you are, Basil! That is the second time you have made that observation. If one puts forward an idea to a true Englishman—always a rash thing to do—he never dreams of considering whether the idea is right or wrong. The only thing he considers of any importance is whether one believes it one's self. Now, the value of an idea has nothing whatsoever to do with the sincerity of the man who expresses it. Indeed, the probabilities are that the more insincere the man is, the more purely intellectual will the idea be, as in that case it will not be colored by either his wants, his desires, or his prejudices. However, I don't propose to discuss politics, sociology, or metaphysics with you. I like persons better than principles, and I like persons with no principles better than anything else in the world. Tell me more about Mr. Dorian Gray. How often do you see him?"

"Every day. I couldn't be happy if I didn't see him every day. He is absolutely necessary to me."

"How extraordinary! I thought you would never care for anything but your art."

"He is all my art to me now," said the painter, gravely. "I sometimes think, Harry, that there are only two eras of any importance in the world's history. The first is the appearance of a new medium for art, and the second is the appearance of a new personality for art also. What the invention of oil-painting was to Venetians, the face of Antinoüs was to late Greek sculpture, and the face of Dorian Gray will some day be to me. It is not merely that I paint from him, draw from him, sketch from him. Of course I have done all that. But he is much more to me than a model or a sitter. I won't tell you that I am dissatisfied with what I have done of him, or that his beauty is such that Art cannot express it. There is nothing that Art cannot express, and I know that the work I have done, since I met Dorian Gray, is good work, is the best work of my life. But in some curious way—I wonder will you understand me?—his personality has suggested to me an entirely new manner in art, an entirely new mode of style. I see things differently, I think of them differently. I can now re-create life in a way that was hidden from me before. 'A dream of form in days of thought:'—who is it who says that? I forget; but it is what Dorian Gray has been to me. The merely visible presence of this lad—for he seems to me little more than a lad, though he is really over twenty—his merely visible presence—ah! I wonder can you realize all that that means? Unconsciously he defines for me the lines of a fresh school, a school that is to have in it all the passion of the romantic spirit, all the perfection of the spirit that is Greek. The harmony of soul and body—how much that is! We in our madness have separated the two, and have invented a realism that is vulgar, an ideality that is void. Harry! if you only knew what Dorian Gray is to me! You remember that landscape of mine for which Agnew offered me such a huge price, but which I would not part with? It is one of the best things I have ever done. And why is it so? Because, while

I was painting it, Dorian Gray sat beside me. Some subtle influence passed from him to me, and for the first time in my life I saw in the plain woodland the wonder I had always looked for, and always missed."

"Basil, this is extraordinary! I must see Dorian Gray."

Hallward got up from the seat, and walked up and down the garden. After some time he came back. "Harry," he said, "Dorian Gray is to me simply a motive in art. You might see nothing in him. I see everything in him. He is never more present in my work than when no image of him is there. He is a suggestion, as I have said, of a new manner. I find him in the curves of certain lines, in the loveliness and subtleties of certain colors. That is all."

"Then why won't you exhibit his portrait?" asked Lord Henry.

"Because, without intending it, I have put into it some expression of all this curious artistic idolatry, of which, of course, I have never cared to speak to him. He knows nothing about it. He shall never know anything about it. But the world might guess it; and I will not bare my soul to their shallow, prying eyes. My heart shall never be put under their microscope. There is too much of myself in the thing, Harry—too much of myself!"

"Poets are not so scrupulous as you are. They know how useful passion is for publication. Nowadays a broken heart will run to many editions."

"I hate them for it," cried Hallward. "An artist should create beautiful things, but should put nothing of his own life into them. We live in an age when men treat art as if it were meant to be a form of autobiography. We have lost the abstract sense of beauty. Some day I will show the world what it is; and for that reason the world shall never see my portrait of Dorian Gray."

"I think you are wrong, Basil, but I won't argue with you. It is only the intellectually lost who ever argue. Tell me, is Dorian Gray very fond of you?"

The painter considered for a few moments. "He likes me," he answered, after a pause; "I know he likes me. Of course I flatter him dreadfully. I find a strange pleasure in saying things to him that I know I shall be sorry for having said. As a rule, he is charming to me, and we sit in the studio and talk of a thousand things. Now and then, however, he is horribly thoughtless, and seems to take a real delight in giving me pain. Then I feel, Harry, that I have given away my whole soul to some one who treats it as if it were a flower to put in his coat, a bit of decoration to charm his vanity, an ornament for a summer's day."

"Days in summer, Basil, are apt to linger," murmured Lord Henry. "Perhaps you will tire sooner than he will. It is a sad thing to think of, but there is no doubt that Genius lasts longer than Beauty. That accounts for the fact that we all take such pains to over-educate ourselves. In the wild struggle for existence, we want to have something that endures, and so we fill our minds with rubbish and facts, in the silly hope of keeping our place. The thoroughly well-informed man—that is the modern ideal. And the mind of the thoroughly well-informed man is a dreadful thing. It is like a bric-à-brac shop, all monsters and dust, with everything priced above its proper value. I think you will tire first, all the same. Some day you will look at your friend, and he will seem to you to be a little out of drawing, or you won't like his tone of color, or something. You will bitterly reproach him in your own heart, and seriously think that he has behaved very badly to you. The next time he calls, you will be perfectly cold and indifferent. It will be a great pity, for it will alter you. What you have told me is quite a romance, a romance of art one might call it, and the worst of having a romance of any kind is that it leaves one so unromantic."

"Harry, don't talk like that. As long as I live, the personality of Dorian Gray will dominate me. You can't feel what I feel. You change too often."

"Ah, my dear Basil, that is exactly why I can feel it. Those who are faithful know only the trivial side of love: it is the faithless who know love's tragedies." And Lord Henry struck a light on a dainty silver case, and began to smoke a cigarette with a self-conscious and satisfied air, as if he had summed up the world in a phrase. There was a rustle of chirruping sparrows in the green lacquer leaves of the ivy, and the blue cloud-shadows chased themselves across the grass like swallows. How pleasant it was in the garden! And how delightful other people's emotions were!—much more delightful than their ideas, it seemed to him. One's own soul, and the passions of one's friends—those were the fascinating things in life. He pictured to himself with silent amusement the tedious luncheon that he had missed by staying so long with Basil Hallward. Had he gone to his aunt's, he would have been sure to have met Lord Goodbody there, and the whole conversation would have been about the feeding of the poor, and the necessity for model lodging-houses. Each class would have preached the importance of those virtues, for whose exercise there was no necessity in their own lives. The rich would have spoken on the value of thrift, and the idle grown eloquent over the dignity of labor. It was charming to have escaped all that! As he thought of his aunt, an idea seemed to strike him. He turned to Hallward, and said, "My dear fellow, I have just remembered."

"Remembered what, Harry?"

"Where I heard the name of Dorian Gray."

"Where was it?" asked Hallward, with a slight frown.

"Don't look so angry, Basil. It was at my aunt Lady Agatha's. She told me she had discovered a wonderful young man, who was going to help her in the East End, and that his name was Dorian Gray. I am bound to state that she never told me he was good-looking. Women have no appreciation of good looks —at least, good women have not. She said that he was very earnest, and had a beautiful nature. I at once pictured to myself a creature with spectacles and lank hair, horribly freckled, and tramping about on huge feet. I wish I had known it was your friend."

"I am very glad you didn't, Harry."

"Why?"

"I don't want you to meet him."

"You don't want me to meet him?"

"No."

"Mr. Dorian Gray is in the studio, sir," said the butler, coming into the garden.

"You must introduce me now!" cried Lord Henry, laughing.

The painter turned to his servant, who stood blinking in the sunlight. "Ask Mr. Gray to wait, Parker; I shall be in in a few moments." The man bowed, and went up the walk.

Then he looked at Lord Henry. "Dorian Gray is my dearest friend," he said. "He has a simple and a beautiful nature. Your aunt was quite right in what she said of him. Don't spoil him. Don't try to influence him. Your influence would be bad. The world is wide, and has many marvelous people in it. Don't take away from me the one person who gives to my art whatever charm it possesses: my life as an artist depends on him. Mind, Harry, I trust you." He spoke very slowly, and the words seemed wrung out of him almost against his will.

"What nonsense you talk!" said Lord Henry, smiling, and, taking Hallward by the arm, he almost led him into the house.

II

As they entered they saw Dorian Gray. He was seated at the piano, with his back to them, turning over the pages of a volume of Schumann's "Forest Scenes." "You must lend me these, Basil!" he cried. "I want to learn them. They are perfectly charming."

"That entirely depends on how you sit to-day, Dorian."

"Oh, I am tired of sitting, and I don't want a life-sized portrait of myself," answered the lad, swinging round on the music-stool, in a wilful, petulant manner. When he caught sight of Lord Henry, a faint blush colored his cheeks for a moment, and he started up. "I beg your pardon, Basil, but I didn't know you had any one with you."

"This is Lord Henry Wotton, Dorian, an old Oxford friend of mine. I have just been telling him what a capital sitter you were, and now you have spoiled everything."

"You have not spoiled my pleasure in meeting you, Mr. Gray," said Lord Henry, stepping forward and extending his hand. "My aunt has often spoken to me about you. You are one of her favorites, and, I am afraid, one of her victims also."

"I am in Lady Agatha's black books at present," answered Dorian, with a funny look of penitence. "I promised to go to a club in Whitechapel with her last Tuesday, and I really forgot all about it. We were to have played a duet together—three duets, I believe.

I don't know what she will say to me. I am far too frightened to call."

"Oh, I will make your peace with my aunt. She is quite devoted to you. And I don't think it really matters about your not being there. The audience probably thought it was a duet. When Aunt Agatha sits down to the piano she makes quite enough noise for two people."

"That is very horrid to her, and not very nice to me," answered Dorian, laughing.

Lord Henry looked at him. Yes, he was certainly wonderfully handsome, with his finely curved scarlet lips, his frank blue eyes, his crisp gold hair. There was something in his face that made one trust him at once. All the candor of youth was there, as well as all youth's passionate purity. One felt that he had kept himself unspotted from the world. No wonder Basil Hallward worshiped him.

"You are too charming to go in for philanthropy, Mr. Gray—far too charming." And Lord Henry flung himself down on the divan, and opened his cigarette-case.

The painter had been busy mixing his colors and getting his brushes ready. He was looking worried, and when he heard Lord Henry's last remark he glanced at him, hesitated for a moment, and then said: "Harry, I want to finish this picture to-day. Would you think it awfully rude of me if I asked you to go away?"

Lord Henry smiled, and looked at Dorian Gray. "Am I to go, Mr. Gray?" he asked.

"Oh, please don't, Lord Henry. I see that Basil is in one of his sulky moods; and I can't bear him when he sulks. Besides, I want you to tell me why I should not go in for philanthropy."

"I don't know that I shall tell you that, Mr. Gray. It is so tedious a subject that one would have to talk seriously about it. But I certainly shall not run away, now that you have asked me to stop. You don't really mind, Basil, do you? You have often told me that you liked your sitters to have some one to chat to."

Hallward bit his lip. "If Dorian wishes it, of course you must stay. Dorian's whims are laws to everybody, except himself."

Lord Henry took up his hat and gloves. "You are very pressing, Basil, but I am afraid I must go. I have promised to meet a man at the Orleans. Good-bye, Mr. Gray. Come and see me some afternoon in Curzon Street. I am nearly always at home at five o'clock. Write to me when you are coming. I should be sorry to miss you."

"Basil," cried Dorian Gray, "if Lord Henry Wotton goes I shall go too. You never open your lips while you are painting, and it is horribly dull standing on a platform and trying to look pleasant. Ask him to stay. I insist upon it."

"Stay, Harry, to oblige Dorian, and to oblige me," said Hallward, gazing intently at his picture. "It is quite true, I never talk when I am working, and never listen either, and it must be dreadfully tedious for my unfortunate sitters. I beg you to stay."

"But what about my man at the Orleans?"

The painter laughed. "I don't think there will be any difficulty about that. Sit down again, Harry. And now Dorian, get up on the platform, and don't move about too much, or pay any attention to what Lord Henry says. He has a very bad influence over all his friends, with the single exception of myself."

Dorian Gray stepped up on the dias, with the air of a young Greek martyr, and made a little *moue* of discontent to Lord Henry, to whom he had rather taken a fancy. He was so unlike Basil. They made a delightful contrast. And he had such a beautiful voice. After a few moments he said to him: "Have you really a very bad influence, Lord Henry? As bad as Basil says?"

"There is no such thing as a good influence, Mr. Gray. All influence is immoral—immoral from the scientific point of view."

"Why?"

"Because to influence a person is to give him one's own soul. He does not think his natural thoughts, or burn with his natural passions. His virtues are not real to him. His sins, if there are such things as sins, are borrowed. He becomes an echo of some one else's music, an actor of a part that has not been written for him. The aim of life is self-development. To realize one's nature perfectly—that is what each of us is here for. People are afraid of themselves nowadays. They have forgotten the highest of all duties, the duty that one owes to one's self. Of course they are charitable. They feed the hungry and clothe the beggar. But their own souls starve, and are naked. Courage has gone out of our race. Perhaps we never really had it. The terror of society, which is the basis of morals; the terror of God, which is the secret of religion—these are the two things that govern us. And yet—"

"Just turn your head a little more to the right, Dorian, like a good boy," said the painter, deep in his work, and conscious only that a look had come into the lad's face that he had never seen there before.

"And yet," continued Lord Henry, in his low, musical voice, and with that graceful wave of the hand that was always so characteristic of him, and that he had even in his Eton days, "I believe that if one man were to live out his life fully and completely, were to give form to every feeling, expression to every thought, reality to every dream—I believe that the world would gain such a fresh impulse of joy that we would forget all the maladies of mediævalism, and return to the Hellenic ideal—to something finer, richer, than the Hellenic ideal, it may be. But the bravest man among us is afraid of himself. The mutilation of the savage has its tragic survival in the self-denial that mars our lives. We are punished for our refusals. Every impulse that we strive to strangle broods in the mind and poisons us. The body sins once, and has done with its sin, for action is a mode of purification. Nothing remains then but the recollection of a pleasure, or the luxury of a regret. The only way to get rid of a temptation is to yield to it. Resist it, and your soul grows sick with longing for the things it has forbidden to itself, with desire for what its monstrous laws have made monstrous and unlawful. It has been said that the great events of the world take place in the brain. It is in the brain and the brain only, that the great sins of the world take place also. You, Mr. Gray, you yourself, with your rose-red youth and your rose-white boyhood, you have had passions that have made you afraid, thoughts that have filled you with terror, day-dreams and sleeping dreams whose mere memory might stain your cheek with shame—"

"Stop!" faltered Dorian Gray, "stop! you bewilder me. I don't know what to say. There is some answer to you, but I cannot find it. Don't speak. Let me think, or rather, let me try not to think."

For nearly ten minutes he stood there, motionless, with parted lips, and eyes strangely bright. He was dimly conscious that entirely fresh influences were at work within him. Yet they seemed to him to have come really from himself. The few words that Basil's friend had said to him—words spoken by chance, no doubt, and with wilful paradox in them—had touched some secret chord that had never been touched before, but that he felt was now vibrating and throbbing to curious pulses.

Music had stirred him like that. Music had troubled him many times. But music was not articulate. It was not a new world, but rather another chaos, that it created in us. Words! Mere words! How terrible they were! How clear, and vivid, and cruel! One could not escape from them. And yet what a subtle magic there was in them! They seemed to be able to give a plastic form to formless things, and to have a music of their own as sweet as that of viol or of lute. Mere words! Was there anything so real as words?

Yes; there had been things in his boyhood that he had not understood. He understood them now. Life suddenly became fiery-colored to him. It seemed to him that he had been walking in fire. Why had he not known it?

With his subtle smile, Lord Henry watched him. He knew the precise psychological moment when to say nothing. He felt intensely interested. He was amazed at the sudden impression that his words had produced, and, remembering a book that he had read when he was sixteen, a book which had revealed to him much that he had not known before, he wondered whether Dorian Gray was passing through a similar experience. He had merely shot an arrow into the air. Had it hit the mark? How fascinating the lad was!

Hallward painted away with that marvelous, bold touch of his that had the true refinement and perfect delicacy that in art, at any rate, comes only from strength. He was unconscious of the silence.

"Basil, I am tired of standing!" cried Dorian Gray, suddenly. "I must go out and sit in the garden. The air is stifling here."

"My dear fellow, I am so sorry. When I am painting, I can't think of anything else. But you never sat better. You were perfectly still. And I have caught the effect I wanted—the half-parted lips, and the bright look in the eyes. I don't know what Harry has been saying to you, but he has certainly made you have the most wonderful expression. I suppose he has been paying you compliments. You mustn't believe a word that he says."

"He has certainly not been paying me compliments. Perhaps that is the reason that I don't believe anything he has told me."

"You know you believe it all," said Lord Henry, looking at him with his dreamy, languorous eyes. "I will go out to the garden with you. It is horribly hot in the studio. Basil, let us have something iced to drink, something with strawberries in it."

"Certainly, Harry. Just touch the bell, and when Parker comes I will tell him what you want. I have got to work up this background, so I will join you later on. Don't keep Dorian too long. I have never been in better form for painting than I am to-day. This is going to be my masterpiece. It is my masterpiece as it stands."

Lord Henry went out to the garden, and found Dorian Gray burying his face in the great cool lilac blossoms, feverishly drinking in their perfume as if it had been wine. He came close to him, and put his hand upon his shoulder. "You are quite right to do that," he murmured. "Nothing can cure the soul but the senses, just as nothing can cure the senses but the soul."

The lad started and drew back. He was bareheaded, and the leaves had tossed his rebellious curls and tangled all their gilded threads. There was a look of fear in his eyes, such as people have when they are suddenly awakened. His finely chiseled nostrils quivered, and some hidden nerve shook the scarlet of his lips and left them trembling.

"Yes," continued Lord Henry, "that is one of the great secrets of life—to cure the soul by means of the senses, and the senses by means of the soul. You are a wonderful creation. You know more than you think you know, just as you know less than you want to know."

Dorian Gray frowned and turned his head away. He could not help liking the tall, graceful young man who was standing by him. His romantic olive-colored face and worn expression interested him. There was something in his low, languid voice that was absolutely fascinating. His cool, white, flower-like hands, even, had a curious charm. They moved, as he spoke, like music, and seemed to have a language of their own. But he felt afraid of him, and ashamed of being afraid. Why had it been left for a stranger to reveal him to himself? He had known Basil Hallward for months, but the friendship between them had never altered him. Suddenly there had come some one across his life who seemed to have disclosed to him life's mystery. And, yet, what was there to be afraid of? He was not a schoolboy or a girl. It was absurd to be frightened.

"Let us go and sit in the shade," said Lord Henry. "Parker has brought out the drinks, and if you stay any longer in this glare you will be quite spoiled, and

Basil will never paint you again. You really must not allow yourself to become sunburnt. It would be unbecoming."

"What can it matter?" cried Dorian Gray, laughing, as he sat down on the seat at the end of the garden.

"It should matter everything to you, Mr. Gray."

"Why?"

"Because you have the most marvelous youth, and youth is the one thing worth having."

"I don't feel that, Lord Henry."

"No, you don't feel it now. Some day, when you are old and wrinkled and ugly, when thought has seared your forehead with its lines, and passion branded your lips with its hideous fires, you will feel it, you will feel it terribly. Now, wherever you go, you charm the world. Will it always be so? . . . You have a wonderfully beautiful face, Mr. Gray. Don't frown. You have. And Beauty is a form of Genius—is higher, indeed, than Genius, as it needs no explanation. It is of the great facts of the world, like sunlight, or springtime, or the reflection in dark waters of that silver shell we call the moon. It cannot be questioned. It has its divine right of sovereignty. It makes princes of those who have it. You smile? Ah! when you have lost it you won't smile. . . . People say sometimes that Beauty is only superficial. That may be so. But at least it is not so superficial as Thought is. To me, Beauty is the wonder of wonders. It is only shallow people who do not judge by appearances. The true mystery of the world is the visible, not the invisible. . . . Yes, Mr. Gray the gods have been good to you. But what the gods give they quickly take away. You have only a few years in which to live really, perfectly, and fully. When your youth goes, your beauty will go with it, and then you will suddenly discover that there are no triumphs left for you, or have to content yourself with those mean triumphs that the memory of your past will make more bitter than defeats. Every month as it wanes brings you nearer to something dreadful. Time is jealous of you, and wars against your lilies and your roses. You will become sallow, and hollow-cheeked, and dull-eyed. You will suffer horribly. . . . Ah! realize your youth while you have it. Don't squander the gold of your days listening to the tedious, trying to improve the hopeless failure, or giving away your life to the ignorant, the common, and the vulgar. These are the sickly aims, the false ideals, of our age. Live! Live the wonderful life that is in you! Let nothing be lost upon you. Be always searching for new sensations. Be afraid of nothing. . . . A new Hedonism—that is what our century wants. You might be its visible symbol. With your personality there is nothing you could not do. The world belongs to you for a season. . . . The moment I met you I saw that you were quite unconscious of what you really are, of what you really might be. There was so much in you that charmed me that I felt that I must tell you something about yourself. I thought how tragic it would be if you were wasted. For there is such a little time that your youth will last—such a little time. The common hill-flowers wither, but they blossom again. The laburnum will be as yellow next June as it is now. In a month there will be purple stars on the clematis, and year after year the green night of its leaves will hold its purple stars. But we never get back our youth. The pulse of joy that beats in us at twenty becomes sluggish. Our limbs fail, our senses rot. We degenerate into hideous puppets, haunted by the memory of the passions of which we were too much afraid, and the exquisite temptations that we had not the courage to yield to. Youth! Youth! There is absolutely nothing in the world but youth!"

Dorian Gray listened, open-eyed and wondering. The spray of lilac fell from his hand upon the gravel. A furry bee came and buzzed round it for a moment. Then it began to scramble all over the oval stellated globe of the tiny blossoms. He watched it with that strange interest in trivial things that we try to develop when things of high import make us afraid, or when we are stirred by some new emotion for which we cannot find expression, or when some thought that terrifies us lays sudden siege to the brain and calls on us to yield. After a time the bee flew away. He saw it creeping into the stained trumpet of a Tyrian convolvulus. The flower seemed to quiver, and then swayed gently to and fro.

Suddenly the painter appeared at the door of the studio, and made staccato signs for them to come in. They turned to each other and smiled.

"I am waiting!" he cried. "Do come in. The light is quite perfect, and you can bring your drinks."

They rose up, and sauntered down the walk together. Two green-and-white butterflies fluttered past them, and in the pear-tree at the corner of the garden a thrush began to sing.

"You are glad you have met me, Mr. Gray," said Lord Henry, looking at him.

"Yes, I am glad now. I wonder shall I always be glad?"

"Always! That is a dreadful word. It makes me shudder when I hear it. Women are so fond of using it. They spoil every romance by trying to make it last forever. It is a meaningless word too. The only difference between a caprice and a life-long passion is that the caprice lasts a little longer."

As they entered the studio, Dorian Gray put his hand upon Lord Henry's arm. "In that case, let our friendship be a caprice," he murmured, flushing at his own boldness, then stepped up on the platform and resumed his pose.

Lord Henry flung himself into a large wicker armchair, and watched him. The sweep and dash of the brush on the canvas made the only sound that broke the stillness, except when, now and then, Hallward stepped back to look at his work from a distance. In the slanting beams that streamed through the open doorway the dust danced and was golden. The heavy scent of the roses seemed to brood over everything.

After about a quarter of an hour Hallward stopped painting, looked for a long time at Dorian Gray, and then for a long time at the picture, biting the end of one of his huge brushes, and frowning. "It is quite finished!" he cried, at last, and stooping down he wrote his name in long vermillion letters on the left-hand corner of the canvas.

Lord Henry came over and examined the picture. It was certainly a wonderful work of art, and a wonderful likeness as well.

"My dear fellow, I congratulate you most warmly," he said. "It is the finest portrait of modern times. Mr. Gray come over and look at yourself."

The lad started, as if awakened from some dream. "Is it really finished?" he murmured, stepping down from the platform.

"Quite finished," said the painter. "And you have sat splendidly to-day. I am awfully obliged to you."

"That is entirely due to me," broke in Lord Henry. "Isn't it, Mr. Gray?"

Dorian made no answer, but passed listlessly in front of his picture and turned toward it. When he saw it he drew back, and his cheeks flushed for a moment with pleasure. A look of joy came into his eyes, as if he had recognized himself for the first time. He stood there motionless and in wonder, dimly conscious that Hallward was speaking to him, but not catching the meaning of his words. The sense of his own beauty came on him like a revelation. He had never felt it before. . Basil Hallward's compliments had seemed to him to be merely the charming exaggerations of friendship. He had listened to them, laughed at them, forgotten them. They had not influenced his nature. Then had come Lord Henry Wotton with his strange panegyric on youth, his terrible warning of its brevity. That had stirred him at the time, and now, as he stood gazing at the shadow of his own loveliness, the full reality of the description flashed across him. Yes there would be a day when his face would be wrinkled and wizen, his eyes dim and colorless, the grace of his figure broken and deformed. The scarlet would pass away from his lips, and the gold steal from his hair. The life that was to make his soul would mar his body. He would become dreadful, hideous, and uncouth.

As he thought of it a sharp pang of pain struck through him like a knife, and made each delicate fiber of his nature quiver. His eyes deepened into amethyst, and across them came a mist of tears. He felt as if a hand of ice had been laid upon his heart.

"Don't you like it?" cried Hallward at last, stung a little by the lad's silence, not understanding what it meant.

"Of course he likes it," said Lord Henry. "Who wouldn't like it? It is one of the greatest things in modern art. I will give you anything you like to ask for it. I must have it."

"It is not my property, Harry."

"Whose property is it?"

"Dorian's, of course," answered the painter.

"He is a very lucky fellow."

"How sad it is!" murmured Dorian Gray, with his eyes still fixed upon his own portrait. "How sad it is! I shall grow old, and horrible, and dreadful. But this picture will remain always young. It will never be older than this particular day of June. . . . If it were only the other way! If it were I who was to be always young, and the picture that was to grow old! For that—for that—I would give everything! Yes, there is nothing in the whole world I would not give! I would give my soul for that!"

"You would hardly care for such an arrangement, Basil," cried Lord Henry, laughing. "It would be rather hard lines on your work."

"I should object very strongly, Harry," said Hallward.

Dorian Gray turned and looked at him. "I believe you would, Basil. You like your art better than your friends. I am no more to you than a green bronze figure. Hardly as much, I dare say."

The painter stared in amazement. It was so unlike Dorian to speak like that. What had happened? He seemed quite angry. His face was flushed and his cheeks burning.

"Yes," he continued, "I am less to you than your ivory Hermes or your silver Faun. You will like them always. How long will you like me? Till I have my first wrinkle, I suppose. I know, now, that when one loses one's good looks, whatever they may be, one loses everything. Your picture has taught me that. Lord Henry Wotton is perfectly right. Youth is the only thing worth having. When I find that I am growing old I shall kill myself."

Hallward turned pale, and caught his hand. "Dorian! Dorian!" he cried, "don't talk like that! I have never had such a friend as you, and I shall never have such another. You are not jealous of material things, are you?—you who are finer than any of them!"

"I am jealous of everything whose beauty does not die. I am jealous of the portrait you have painted of me. Why should it keep what I must lose? Every moment that passes takes something from me, and gives something to it. Oh, if it were only the other way! If the picture could change, and I could be always what I am now! Why did you paint it? It will mock me some day—mock me horribly!" The hot tears welled into his eyes; he tore his hand away, and flinging himself on the divan, he buried his face in the cushions, as though he was praying.

"This is your doing, Harry," said the painter, bitterly.

Lord Henry shrugged his shoulders. "It is the real Dorian Gray—that is all."

"It is not."

"If it is not, what have I to do with it?"

"You should have gone away when I asked you," he muttered.

"I stayed when you asked me," was Lord Henry's answer.

"Harry, I can't quarrel with my two best friends at once, but between you both you have made me hate the finest piece of work I have ever done, and I will destroy it. What is it but canvas and color? I will not let it come across our three lives and mar them."

Dorian Gray lifted his golden head from the pillow, and with pallid face and tear-stained eyes looked at him, as he walked over to the deal painting-table that was set beneath the high curtained window. What was he doing there? His fingers were straying about among the litter of tin tubes and dry brushes, seeking for something. Yes, it was for the long palette-knife, with its thin blade of lithe steel. He had found it at last. He was going to rip up the canvas.

With a stifled sob the lad leaped from the couch, and rushing over to Hallward, tore the knife out of his hand, and flung it to the end of the studio. "Don't Basil, don't!" he cried. "It would be murder!"

"I am glad you appreciate my work at last, Dorian," said the painter, coldly, when he had recovered from his surprise. "I never thought you would."

"Appreciate it? I am in love with it, Basil. It is part of myself. I feel that."

"Well, as soon as you are dry, you shall be varnished, and framed, and sent home. Then you can do what you like with yourself." And he walked across the room and rang the bell for tea. "You will have tea, of course, Dorian? And so will you, Harry? Or do you object to such simple pleasure?"

"I adore simple pleasures," said Lord Henry. "They are the last refuge of the complex. But I don't like scenes, except on the stage. What absurd fellows you are, both of you! I wonder who it was defined man as a rational animal. It was the most premature definition ever given. Man is many things, but he is not rational. I am glad he is not, after all; though I wish you chaps would not squabble over the picture. You had much better let me have it, Basil. This silly boy doesn't really want it, and I really do."

"If you let any one have it but me, Basil, I shall never forgive you!" cried Dorian Gray; "and I don't allow people to call me a silly boy."

"You know the picture is yours, Dorian. I gave it to you before it existed."

"And you know you have been a little silly, Mr. Gray, and that you don't really object to being reminded that you are extremely young."

"I should have objected very strongly this morning, Lord Henry."

"Ah! this morning! You have lived since then."

There came a knock at the door, and the butler entered with a laden tea-tray and set it down upon a small Japanese table. There was a rattle of cups and saucers and the hissing of a fluted Georgian urn. Two globe-shaped china dishes were brought in by a page. Dorian Gray went over and poured out the tea. The two men sauntered languidly to the table, and examined what was under the covers.

"Let us go to the theater to-night," said Lord Henry. "There is sure to be something on, somewhere. I have promised to dine at White's, but it is only with an old friend, so I can send him a wire to say that I am ill, or that I am prevented from coming in consequence of a subsequent engagement. I think that would be a rather nice excuse: it would have all the surprise of candor."

"It is such a bore putting on one's dress-clothes," muttered Hallward. "And, when one has them on, they are so horrid."

"Yes," answered Lord Henry, dreamily, "the costume of the nineteenth century is detestable. It is so somber, so depressing. Sin is the only real color-element left in modern life."

"You really must not say things like that before Dorian, Harry."

"Before which Dorian? The one who is pouring out tea for us, or the one in the picture?"

"Before either."

"I should like to come to the theater with you, Lord Henry," said the lad.

"Then you shall come; and you will come too, Basil, won't you?"

"I can't, really. I would sooner not. I have a lot of work to do."

"Well, then, you and I will go alone, Mr. Gray."

"I should like that awfully."

The painter bit his lip and walked over, cup in hand, to the picture. "I shall stay with the real Dorian," he said, sadly.

"Is it the real Dorian?" cried the original of the portrait, strolling across to him. "Am I really like that?"

"Yes, you are just like that."

"How wonderful, Basil!"

"At least you are like it in appearance. But it will never alter," sighed Hallward. "That is something."

"What a fuss people make about fidelity!" exclaimed Lord Henry. "Why, even in love it is purely a question for physiology. It has nothing to do with our own will. Young men want to be faithful, and are not; old men want to be faithless, and cannot: that is all one can say."

"Don't go to the theater to-night, Dorian," said Hallward. "Stop and dine with me."

"I can't, Basil."

"Why?"

"Because I have promised Lord Henry Wotton to go with him."

"He won't like you the better for keeping your promises. He always breaks his own. I beg you not to go."

Dorian Gray laughed and shook his head.

"I entreat you."

The lad hesitated, and looked over at Lord Henry, who was watching them from the tea-table with an amused smile.

"I must go, Basil," he answered.

"Very well," said Hallward; and he went over and laid down his cup on the tray. "It is rather late, and, as you have to dress, you had better lose no time. Good-bye, Harry; good-bye Dorian. Come and see me soon. Come to-morrow."

"Certainly."

"You won't forget?"

"No, of course not," cried Dorian.

"And . . . Harry!"

"Yes, Basil?"

"Remember what I asked you when we were in the garden this morning."

"I have forgotten it."

"I trust you."

"I wish I could trust myself," said Lord Henry, laughing. "Come, Mr. Gray, my hansom is outside, and I can drop you at your own place. Good-bye, Basil. It has been a most interesting afternoon."

As the door closed behind them, the painter flung himself down on a sofa, and a look of pain came into his face.

III

AT half-past twelve next day Lord Henry Wotton strolled from Curzon Street over to the Albany to call on his uncle, Lord Fermor, a genial if somewhat rough-mannered old bachelor, whom the outside world called selfish because it derived no particular benefit from him, but who was considered generous by Society, as he fed the people who amused him. His father had been our ambassador at Madrid when Isabella was young, and Prim unthought of, but had retired from the Diplomatic Service in a capricious moment of annoyance on not being offered the embassy at Paris, a post to which he considered that he was fully entitled by reason of his birth, his indolence, the good English of his despatches, and his inordinate passion for pleasure. The son, who had been his father's secretary, had resigned along with his chief, somewhat foolishly, as was thought at the time, and on succeeding some months later to the title, had set himself to the serious study of the great aristocratic art of doing absolutely nothing. He had two large town houses, but preferred to live in chambers as it was less trouble, and took most of his meals at his club. He paid some attention to the management of his collieries in the Midland counties, excusing himself for this taint of industry on the ground that the one advantage of having coal was that it enabled a gentleman to afford the decency of burning wood on his own hearth. In politics he was a Tory, except when the Tories were in office, during which period he roundly abused them for being a pack of Radicals. He was a hero to his valet, who bullied him, and a terror to most of his relations, whom he bullied in turn. Only England could have produced him, and he always said that the country was going to the dogs. His principles were out of date, but there was a good deal to be said for his prejudices.

When Lord Henry entered the room he found his uncle sitting in a rough shooting-coat, smoking a cheroot and grumbling over *The Times*. "Well, Harry," said the old gentleman, "what brings you out so early? I thought you dandies never got up till two, and were not visible till five."

"Pure family affection, I assure you, Uncle George. I want to get something out of you."

"Money, I suppose," said Lord Fermor, making a wry face. "Well, sit down and tell me all about it. Young people, nowadays, imagine that money is everything."

"Yes," murmured Lord Henry, settling his buttonhole in his coat; "and when they grow older they know it. But I don't want money. It is only people who pay their bills who want that, Uncle George, and I never pay mine. Credit is the capital of a younger son, and one lives charmingly upon it. Besides, I always deal with Dartmoor's tradesmen, and consequently they never bother me. What I want is information: not useful information, of course; useless information."

"Well, I can tell you anything that is in an English Blue-book, Harry, although those fellows nowadays write a lot of nonsense. When I was in the Diplomatic, things were much better. But I hear they let them in now by examination. What can you expect? Examinations, sir, are pure humbug from beginning to end. If a man is a gentleman, he knows quite enough, and if he is not a gentleman, whatever he knows is bad for him."

"Mr. Dorian Gray does not belong to Blue-books, Uncle George," said Lord Henry, languidly.

"Mr. Dorian Gray? Who is he?" asked Lord Fermor, knitting his bushy white eyebrows.

"That is what I have come to learn, Uncle George. Or, rather, I know who he is. He is the last Lord Kelso's grandson. His mother was a Devereux, Lady Margaret Devereux. I want you to tell me about this mother. What was she like? Whom did she marry? You have known nearly everybody in your time, so you might have known her. I am very much interested in Mr. Gray at present. I have only just met him."

"Kelso's grandson!" echoed the old gentleman—"Kelso's grandson! . . . Of course. . . . I knew his mother intimately. I believe I was at her christening. She was an extraordinarily beautiful girl, Margaret Devereux, and made all the men frantic by running away with a penniless young fellow, a mere nobody, a subaltern in a foot regiment, or something of that kind. Certainly. I remember the whole thing as if it happened yesterday. The poor chap was killed in a duel at Spa a few months after the marriage. There was an ugly story about it. They said Kelso got some rascally adventurer, some Belgian brute, to insult his son-in-law in public, paid him, sir, to do it, paid him, and that the fellow spitted the man as if he had been a pigeon. The thing was hushed up, but, egad, Kelso ate his chop alone at the club for some time afterward. He brought his daughter back with him, I was told, and she never spoke to him again. Oh, yes; it was a bad business. The girl died too, died within a year. So she left a son, did she? I had forgotten that. What sort of a boy is he? If he is like his mother he must be a good-looking chap."

"He is very good-looking," assented Lord Henry.

"I hope he will fall into proper hands," continued the old man. "He should have a pot of money waiting for him if Kelso did the right thing by him. His mother had money too. All the Selby property came to her, through her grandfather. Her grandfather hated Kelso, thought him a mean dog. He was, too. Came to Madrid once when I was there. Egad, I was ashamed of him. The Queen used to ask me about the English noble who was always quarreling with the cabmen about their fares. They made quite a story of it. I didn't dare show my face at court for a month. I hope he treated his grandson better than he did the jarvies."

"I don't know," answered Lord Henry. "I fancy that the boy will be well off. He is not of age yet. He has Selby, I know. He told me so. And . . . his mother was very beautiful?"

"Margaret Devereux was one of the loveliest creatures I ever saw, Harry. What on earth induced her to behave as she did, I never could understand. She could have married anybody she chose. Carlington was mad after her. She was romantic, though. All the women of that family were. The men were a poor lot, but, egad! the women were wonderful. Carlington went on his knees to her. Told me so himself. She laughed at him, and there wasn't a girl in London at the time who wasn't after him. And by the way, Harry, talking about silly marriages, what is this humbug your father tells me about Dartmoor wanting to marry an American? Ain't English girls good enough for him?"

"It is rather fashionable to marry Americans just now, Uncle George."

"I'll back English women against the world, Harry," said Lord Fermor, striking the table with his fist.

"The betting is on the Americans."

"They don't last, I am told," muttered his uncle.

"A long engagement exhausts them, but they are capital at a steeplechase. They take things flying. I don't think Dartmoor has a chance."

"Who are her people?" grumbled the old gentleman. "Has she got any?"

Lord Henry shook his head. "American girls are as clever at concealing their parents as English women are at concealing their past," he said, rising to go.

"They are pork-packers, I suppose."

"I hope so, Uncle George, for Dartmoor's sake. I am told pork-packing is the most lucrative profession in America, after politics."

"Is she pretty?"

"She behaves as if she was beautiful. Most American women do. It is the secret of their charm."

"Why can't these American women stay in their own country? They are always telling us that it is the Paradise for women."

"It is. That is the reason why, like Eve, they are so excessively anxious to get out of it," said Lord Henry. "Good-bye, Uncle George. I shall be late for lunch if I stop any longer. Thanks for giving me the information I wanted. I always like to know everything about my new friends, and nothing about my old ones."

"Where are you lunching, Harry?"

"At Aunt Agatha's. I have asked myself and Mr. Gray. He is her latest *protégé.*"

"Humph! tell your Aunt Agatha, Harry, not to bother me any more with charity appeals. I am sick of them. Why, the good woman thinks that I have nothing to do but to write cheques for her silly fads."

"All right, Uncle George, I'll tell her, but it won't have any effect. Philanthropic people lose all sense of humanity. It is their distinguishing characteristic."

The old gentleman growled approvingly, and rang the bell for his servant. Lord Henry passed up the low arcade into Burlington Street, and turned his steps in the direction of Berkeley Square.

So that was the story of Dorian Gray's parentage. Crudely as it had been told to him, it had yet stirred him by its suggestion of a strange, almost modern romance. A beautiful woman risking everything for a mad passion. A few wild weeks of happiness cut short by a hideous, treacherous crime. Months of voiceless agony, and then a child born in pain. The mother snatched away by death, the boy left to solitude and the tyranny of an old and loveless man. Yes, it was an interesting background. It posed the lad, made him more perfect as it were. Behind every exquisite thing that existed, there was something tragic. Worlds had to be in travail, that the meanest flower might blow. . . . And how charming he had been at dinner the night before, as with startled eyes and lips parted in frightened pleasure he had sat opposite to him at the club, the red candleshades staining to a richer rose the wakening wonder of his face. Talking to him was like playing upon an exquisite violin. He answered to every touch and thrill of the bow. . . . There was something terribly enthralling in the exercise of influence. No other activity was like it. To project one's soul into some gracious form, and let it tarry there for a moment; to hear one's own intellectual views echoed back to one with all the added music of passion and youth; to convey one's temperament into another, as though it were a subtle fluid or a strange perfume: there was a real joy in that—perhaps the most satisfying joy left to us in an age so limited and vulgar as our own, an age grossly carnal in its pleasures, and grossly common in its aims. . . . He was a marvelous type, too, this lad, whom by so curious a chance he had met in Basil's studio, or could be fashioned into a marvelous type, at any rate. Grace was his, and the white purity of boyhood, and beauty such as old Greek marbles kept for us. There was nothing that one could not do with him. He could be made a Titan or a toy. What a pity it was that such beauty was destined to fade! . . . And Basil? From a psychological point of view, how interesting he was! The new manner in art, the fresh mode of looking at life, suggested so strangely by the merely visible presence of one who was unconscious of it all; the silent spirit that dwelt in dim woodland, and walked unseen in open field, suddenly showing herself, Dryad-like and not afraid, because in his soul who sought for her there had been awakened that wonderful vision to which alone are wonderful things revealed; the mere shapes and pattern of things becoming, as it were, refined, and gaining a kind of symbolical value, as though they were themselves patterns of some other and more perfect form whose shadow they made real: how strange it all was! He remembered something like it in history. Was it not

Plato, that artist in thought, who had first analyzed it? Was it not Buonarotti who had carved it in the colored marbles of a sonnet-sequence? But in our own century it was strange. . . . Yes, he would try to be to Dorian Gray what, without knowing it, the lad was to the painter who had fashioned the wonderful portrait. He would seek to dominate him—had already, indeed, half done so. He would make that wonderful spirit his own. There was something fascinating in this son of Love and Death.

Suddenly he stopped, and glanced up at the houses. He found that he had passed his aunt's some distance, and, smiling to himself, turned back. When he entered the somewhat somber hall, the butler told him that they had gone in to lunch. He gave one of the footmen his hat and stick, and passed into the dining-room.

"Late, as usual, Harry," cried his aunt, shaking her head at him.

He invented a facile excuse, and having taken the vacant seat next to her, looked round to see who was there. Dorian bowed to him shyly from the end of the table, a flush of pleasure stealing into his cheek. Opposite was the Duchess of Horley, a lady of admirable good nature and good temper, much liked by every one who knew her, and of those ample architectural proportions that in women who are not Duchesses are described by contemporary historians as stoutness. Next to her sat, on her right, Sir Thomas Burdon, a Radical member of Parliament, who followed his leader in public life, and in private life followed the best cooks, dining with the Tories and thinking with the Liberals, in accordance with a wise and well-known rule. The post on her left was occupied by Mr. Erskine of Treadley, an old gentleman of considerable charm and culture, who had fallen, however, into bad habits of silence, having, as he explained once to Lady Agatha, said everything that he had to say before he was thirty. His own neighbor was Mrs. Vandeleur, one of his aunt's oldest friends, a perfect saint among women, but so dreadfully dowdy that she reminded one of a badly bound hymn-book. Fortunately for him she had on the other side Lord Faudel, a most intelligent middle-aged mediocrity, as bald as a ministerial statement in the House of Commons, with whom she was conversing in that intensely earnest manner which is the one unpardonable error, as he remarked once himself, that all really good people fall into, and from which none of them ever quite escape.

"We are talking about poor Dartmoor, Lord Henry," cried the Duchess, nodding pleasantly to him across the table. "Do you think he will really marry this fascinating young person?"

"I believe she has made up her mind to propose to him, Duchess."

"How dreadful!" exclaimed Lady Agatha. "Really, some one should interfere."

"I am told, on excellent authority, that her father keeps an American dry-goods store," said Sir Thomas Burdon, looking supercilious.

"My uncle has already suggested pork-packing, Sir Thomas."

"Dry-goods! What are American dry-goods?" asked the Duchess, raising her large hands in wonder, and accentuating the verb.

"American novels," answered Lord Henry, helping himself to some quail.

The Duchess looked puzzled.

"Don't mind him, my dear," whispered Lady

Agatha. "He never means anything that he says."

"When America was discovered," said the Radical member, and he began to give some wearisome facts. Like all people who try to exhaust a subject, he exhausted his listeners. The Duchess sighed, and exercised her privilege of interruption. "I wish to goodness it never had been discovered at all!" she exclaimed. "Really, our girls have no chance nowadays. It is most unfair."

"Perhaps, after all, America never has been discovered," said Mr. Erskine; "I myself would really say that it had merely been detected."

"Oh! but I have seen specimens of the inhabitants," answered the Duchess, vaguely. "I must confess that most of them are extremely pretty. And they dress well, too. They get all their dresses in Paris. I wish I could afford to do the same."

"They say that when good Americans die they go to Paris," chuckled Sir Thomas, who had a large wardrobe of Humor's cast-off clothes.

"Really! And where do bad Americans go to when they die?" inquired the Duchess.

"They go to America," murmured Lord Henry.

Sir Thomas frowned. "I am afraid that your nephew is prejudiced against that great country," he said to Lady Agatha. "I have traveled all over it, in cars provided by the directors, who, in such matters are extremely civil. I assure you that it is an education to visit it."

"But must we really see Chicago in order to be educated?" asked Mr. Erskine, plaintively. "I don't feel up to the journey."

Sir Thomas waved his hand. "Mr. Erskine of Treadley has the world on his shelves. We practical men like to see things, not to read about them. The

Americans are an extremely interesting people. They are absolutely reasonable. I think that is their distinguishing characteristic. Yes, Mr. Erskine, an absolutely reasonable people. I assure you there is no nonsense about the Americans."

"How dreadful!" cried Lord Henry. "I can stand brute force, but brute reason is quite unbearable. There is something unfair about its use. It is hitting below the intellect."

"I do not understand you," said Sir Thomas, growing rather red.

"I do, Lord Henry," murmured Mr. Erskine, with a smile.

"Paradoxes are all very well in their way, . . ." rejoined the Baronet.

"Was that a paradox!" asked Mr. Erskine. "I did not think so. Perhaps it was. Well, the way of paradoxes is the way of truth. To test Reality we must see it on the tight-rope. When the Verities become acrobats we can judge them."

"Dear me!" said Lady Agatha, "how you men argue! I am sure I never can make out what you are talking about. Oh! Harry, I am quite vexed with you. Why do you try to persuade our nice Mr. Dorian Gray to give up the East End? I assure you he would be quite invaluable. They would love his playing."

"I want him to play to me," cried Lord Henry, smiling, and he looked down the table and caught a bright answering glance.

"But they are so unhappy in Whitechapel," continued Lady Agatha.

"I can sympathize with everything, except suffering," said Lord Henry, shrugging his shoulders. "I cannot sympathize with that. It is too ugly, too horrible, too distressing. There is something terribly morbid in the modern sympathy with pain. One should sympathize with the color, the beauty, the joy of life. The less said about life's sores the better."

"Still, the East End is a very important problem," remarked Sir Thomas, with a grave shake of the head.

"Quite so," answered the young lord. "It is the problem of slavery, and we try to solve it by amusing the slaves."

The politician looked at him keenly. "What change do you propose, then?" he asked.

Lord Henry laughed. "I don't desire to change anything in England except the weather," he answered. "I am quite content with philosophic contemplation. But, as the nineteenth century has gone bankrupt through an over-expenditure of sympathy, I would suggest that we should appeal to Science to put us straight. The advantage of the emotions is that they lead us astray, and the advantage of Science is that it is not emotional."

"But we have such grave responsibilities," ventured Mrs. Vandeleur, timidly.

"Terribly grave," echoed Lady Agatha.

Lord Henry looked over at Mr. Erskine. "Humanity takes itself too seriously. It is the world's original sin. If the caveman had known how to laugh, History would have been different."

"You are really very comforting," warbled the Duchess. "I have always felt rather guilty when I came to see your dear aunt, for I take no interest at all in the East End. For the future I shall be able to look her in the face without a blush."

"A blush is very becoming, Duchess," remarked Lord Henry.

"Only when one is young," she answered. "When an old woman like myself blushes, it is a very bad sign. Ah! Lord Henry, I wish you would tell me how to become young again."

He thought for a moment. "Can you remember any great error that you committed in your early days, Duchess?" he asked, looking at her across the table.

"A great many, I fear," she cried.

"Then commit them over again," he said, gravely. "To get back one's youth one has merely to repeat one's follies."

"A delightful theory!" she exclaimed. "I must put it into practise."

"A dangerous theory!" came from Sir Thomas's tight lips. Lady Agatha shook her head, but could not help being amused. Mr. Erskine listened.

"Yes," he continued, "that is one of the great secrets of life. Nowadays most people die of a sort of creeping common sense, and discover when it is too late that the only things one never regrets are one's mistakes."

A laugh ran round the table.

He played with the idea, and grew wilful; tossed it into the air and transformed it; let it escape and recaptured it; made it iridescent with fancy, and winged it with paradox. The praise of folly, as he went on, soared into a philosophy, and Philosophy herself became young, and catching the mad music of Pleasure, wearing, one might fancy, her wine-stained robe and wreath of ivy, danced like a Bacchante over the hills of life, and mocked the slow Silenus for being sober. Facts fled before her like frightened forest things. Her white feet trod the huge press at which wise Omar sits, till the seething grape-juice rose round her bare limbs in waves of purple bubbles, or crawled in red foam over the vat's black, dripping, sloping sides.

It was an extraordinary improvisation. He felt that the eyes of Dorian Gray were fixed on him, and the consciousness that among his audience there was one whose temperament he wished to fascinate, seemed to give his wit keenness, and to lend color to his imagination. He was brilliant, fantastic, irresponsible. He charmed his listeners out of themselves, and they followed his pipe laughing. Dorian Gray never took his gaze off him, but sat like one under a spell, smiles chasing each other over his lips, and wonder growing grave in his darkening eyes.

At last liveried in the costume of the age, Reality entered the room in the shape of a servant to tell the Duchess that her carriage was waiting. She wrung her hands in mock despair. "How annoying!" she cried. "I must go. I have to call for my husband at the club, to take him to some absurd meeting at Willis's Rooms, where he is going to be in the chair. If I am late he is sure to be furious, and I couldn't have a scene in this bonnet. It is far too fragile. A harsh word would ruin it. No, I must go, dear Agatha. Good-bye, Lord Henry, you are quite delightful, and dreadfully demoralizing. I am sure I don't know what to say about your views. You must come and dine with us some night. Tuesday? Are you disengaged Tuesday!"

"For you I would throw over anybody, Duchess," said Lord Henry, with a bow.

"Ah! that is very nice, and very wrong of you," she cried; "so mind you come;" and she swept out of the room, followed by Lady Agatha and the other ladies.

When Lord Henry had sat down again, Mr. Erskine moved round, and taking a chair close to him, placed his hand upon his arm.

"You talk books away," he said; "why don't you write one?"

"I am too fond of reading books to care to write them, Mr. Erskine. I should like to write a novel certainly, a novel that would be as lovely as a Persian carpet and as unreal. But there is no literary public in England for anything except newspapers, primers, and encyclopædias. Of all the people in the world the English have the least sense of the beauty of literature."

"I fear you are right," answered Mr. Erskine. "I myself used to have literary ambitions, but I gave them up long ago. And now, my dear young friend, if you will allow me to call you so, may I ask if you really meant all that you said to us at lunch?"

"I quite forget what I said," smiled Lord Henry. "Was it all very bad?"

"Very bad indeed. In fact, I consider you extremely dangerous, and if anything happens to our good Duchess we shall all look on you as being primarily responsible. But I should like to talk to you about life. The generation into which I was born was tedious. Some day, when you are tired of London, come down to Treadley, and expound to me your philosophy of pleasure over some admirable Burgundy I am fortunate enough to possess."

"I shall be charmed. A visit to Treadley would be a great privilege. It has a perfect host, and a perfect library."

"You will complete it," answered the old gentleman, with a courteous bow. "And now I must bid good-bye to your excellent aunt. I am due at the Athenæum. It is the hour when we sleep there."

"All of you, Mr. Erskine?"

"Forty of us, in forty arm-chairs. We are practising for an English Academy of Letters."

Lord Henry laughed, and rose. "I am going to the Park," he cried.

As he was passing out of the door, Dorian Gray touched him on the arm. "Let me come with you," he murmured.

"But I thought you had promised Basil Hallward to go and see him," answered Lord Henry.

"I would sooner come with you; yes, I feel I must come with you. Do let me. And you will promise to talk to me all the time? No one talks so wonderfully as you do."

"Ah! I have talked quite enough for to-day," said Lord Henry, smiling. "All I want now is to look at life. You may come and look at it with me if you care to."

IV

ONE afternoon, a month later, Dorian Gray was reclining in a luxurious arm-chair, in the little library of Lord Henry's house in Mayfair. It was, in its way, a very charming room, with its high paneled wainscoting of olive-stained oak, its cream-colored frieze and ceiling of raised plaster-work, and its brickdust felt carpet strewn with silk long-fringed Persian rugs. On a tiny satinwood table stood a statuette by Clodion, and beside it lay a copy of "Les Cent Nouvelles," bound for Margaret of Valois by Clovis Eve, and powdered with the gilt daisies that queen had selected for her device. Some large blue china jars and parrot-tulips were arranged on the mantel-shelf, and through the small leaded panes of the window streamed the apricot-colored light of a summer day in London.

Lord Henry had not yet come in. He was always late on principle, his principle being that punctuality is the thief of time. So the lad was looking rather sulky, as with listless fingers he turned over the pages of an elaborately illustrated edition of "Manon Lescaut" that he had found in one of the bookcases. The formal mononotous ticking of the Louis Quatorze clock annoyed him. Once or twice he thought of going away.

At last he heard a step outside, and the door opened. "How late you are, Harry!" he murmured.

"I am afraid it is not Harry, Mr. Gray," answered a shrill voice.

He glanced quickly round, and rose to his feet. "I beg your pardon. I thought—"

"You thought it was my husband. It is only his wife. You must let me introduce myself. I know you quite well by your photographs. I think my husband has got seventeen of them."

"Not seventeen, Lady Henry?"

"Well, eighteen, then. And I saw you with him the other night at the opera." She laughed nervously as she spoke, and watched him with her vague forget-me-not eyes. She was a curious woman, whose dresses always looked as if they had been designed in a rage and put on in a tempest. She was usually in love with somebody, and as her passion was never returned, she had kept all her illusions. She tried to look picturesque, but only succeeded in being untidy. Her name was Victoria, and she had a perfect mania for going to church.

"That was at 'Lohengrin,' Lady Henry, I think."

"Yes, it was at dear 'Lohengrin.' I like Wagner's music better than anybody's. It is so loud that one can talk the whole time without other people hearing what one says. That is a great advantage; don't you think so, Mr. Gray?"

The same nervous staccato laugh broke from her thin lips, and her fingers began to play with a long tortoise-shell paper-knife.

Dorian smiled, and shook his head. "I am afraid I don't think so, Lady Henry. I never talk during music—at least, during good music. If one hears bad music, it is one's duty to drown it in conversation."

"Ah! that is one of Harry's views, isn't it, Mr. Gray? I always hear Harry's views from his friends. It is the only way I get to know of them. But you must not think I don't like good music. I adore it, but I am afraid of it. It makes me too romantic. I have simply worshiped pianists—two at a time, sometimes Harry tells me. I don't know what it is about them. Perhaps it is that they are foreigners. They all are, ain't they? Even those that are born in England become foreigners after a time, don't they? It is so clever of them, and such a compliment to art. Makes it quite cosmopolitan, doesn't it? You have never been to any of my parties, have you, Mr. Gray? You must come. I can't afford orchids, but I spare no expense in foreigners. They make one's rooms look so picturesque. But here is Harry!—Harry, I came in to look for you, to ask you something—I forget what it was—and I found Mr. Gray here. We have had such a pleasant chat about music. We have quite the same ideas. No; I think our ideas are quite different. But he has been most pleasant. I am so glad I've seen him."

"I am charmed, my love, quite charmed," said Lord Henry, elevating his dark crescent-shaped eyebrows and looking at them both with an amused smile. "So sorry I am late, Dorian. I went to look after a piece of old brocade in Wardour Street, and had to bargain for hours for it. Nowadays people know the price of everything and the value of nothing."

"I am afraid I must be going," exclaimed Lady Henry, breaking an awkward silence with her silly sudden laugh. "I have promised to drive with the Duchess. Good-bye, Mr. Gray. Good-bye, Harry. You are dining out, I suppose? So am I. Perhaps I shall see you at Lady Thornbury's?"

"I dare say, my dear," said Lord Henry, shutting the door behind her, as, looking like a bird-of-paradise that had been out all night in the rain, she flitted out of the room, leaving a faint odor of frangipanni.

Then he lit a cigarette, and flung himself down on the sofa.

"Never marry a woman with straw-colored hair, Dorian," he said, after a few puffs.

"Why, Harry."

"Because they are so sentimental."

"But I like sentimental people."

"Never marry at all, Dorian. Men marry because they are tired; women because they are curious; both are disappointed."

"I don't think I am likely to marry, Harry. I am too much in love. That is one of your aphorisms. I am putting it into practise, as I do everything you say."

"Who are you in love with?" asked Lord Henry, after a pause.

"With an actress," said Dorian Gray, blushing.

Lord Henry shrugged his shoulders. "That is a rather commonplace *début.*"

"You would not say so if you saw her, Harry."

"Who is she?"

"Her name is Sibyl Vane."

"Never heard of her."

"No one has. People will some day, however. She is a genius."

"My dear boy, no woman is a genius. Women are a decorative sex. They never have anything to say, but they say it charmingly. Women represent the triumph of matter over mind, just as men represent the triumph of mind over morals."

"Harry, how can you?"

"My dear Dorian, it is quite true. I am analyzing women at present, so I ought to know. The subject is not so abtruse as I thought it was. I find that, ultimately, there are only two kinds of women, the plain and the colored. The plain women are very useful. If you want to gain a reputation for respectability, you have merely to take them down to supper. The other women are very charming. They commit one mistake, however. They paint in order to try and look young. Our grandmothers painted in order to try and talk brilliantly. *Rouge* and *esprit* used to go together. That is all over now. As long as a woman can look ten years younger than her own daughter, she is perfectly satisfied. As for conversation, there are only five women in London worth talking to, and two of these can't be admitted into decent society. However, tell me about your genius. How long have you known her?"

"Ah! Harry, your views terrify me."

"Never mind that. How long have you known her?"

"About three weeks."

"And where did you come across her?"

"I will tell you Harry; but you musn't be unsympathetic about it. After all, it never would have happened if I had not met you. You filled me with a wild desire to know everything about life. For days after I met you, something seemed to throb in my veins. As I lounged in the Park, or strolled down Piccadilly, I used to look at every one who passed me, and wonder, with a mad curiosity, what sort of lives they led. Some of them fascinated me. Others filled me with terror. There was an exquisite poison in the air. I had a passion for sensations. . . . Well, one evening about seven o'clock I determined to go out in search of some adventure. I felt that this grey, monstrous London of ours, with its myriads of people, its sordid sinners, and its splendid sins, as you once phrased, must have something in store for me. I fancied a thousand things. The mere danger gave me a sense of delight. I remembered what you had said to me on that wonderful evening when we first dined together, about the search for beauty being the real secret of life. I don't know what I expected, but I went out and wandered eastward, soon losing my way in a labyrinth of grimy streets and black, grassless squares. About half-past eight I passed by an absurd little theater, with great flaring gas-jets and gaudy play-bills. A hideous Jew, in the most amazing waistcoat I ever beheld in my life, was standing at the entrance, smoking a vile cigar. He had greasy ringlets, and an enormous diamond blazed in the center of a soiled shirt. ''Ave a box, my lord?' he said, when he saw me, and he took off his hat with an act of gorgeous servility. There was something about him, Harry, that amused me. He was such a monster. You will laugh at me, I know, but I really went in and paid a whole guinea for the stage-box. To the present day I can't make out why I did so; and yet if I hadn't—my dear Harry, if I hadn't, I would have missed the greatest romance of my life. I see you are laughing. It is horrid of you!"

"I am not laughing, Dorian—at least, I am not laughing at you. But you should not say the greatest romance of your life. You should say the first romance of your life. You will always be loved, and you will always be in love with love. A *grande passion* is the privilege of people who have nothing to do. That is the one use of the idle classes of a country. Don't be afraid. There are exquisite things in store for you. This is merely the beginning."

"Do you think my nature so shallow?" cried Dorian Gray, angrily.

"No; I think your nature so deep."

"How do you mean?"

"My dear boy, the people who love only once in their lives are really the shallow people. What they call their loyalty, and their fidelity, I call either the lethargy of custom or their lack of imagination. Faithfulness is to the emotional life what consistency is to the life of the intellect—simply a confession of failure. Faithfulness! I must analyze it some day. The passion for property is in it. There are many things that we would throw away if we were not afraid that others might pick them up. But I don't want to interrupt you. Go on with your story."

"Well, I found myself seated in a horrid little private box, with a vulgar drop-scene staring me in the face. I looked out from behind the curtain, and surveyed the house. It was a tawdry affair, all cupids and cornucopias, like a third-rate wedding-cake. The gallery and pit were fairly full, but the two rows of dingy stalls were quite empty, and there was hardly a person in what I suppose they called the dress-circle. Women went about with oranges and ginger beer, and there was a terrible consumption of nuts going on."

"It must have been just like the palmy days of the British Drama."

"Just like, I should fancy, and very depressing. I began to wonder what on earth I should do, when I caught sight of the play-bill. What do you think the play was, Harry?"

"I should think 'The Idiot Boy; or, Dumb but Innocent.' Our fathers used to like that sort of piece, I believe. The longer I live, Dorian, the more keenly I feel that whatever was good enough for our fathers is not good enough for us. In art, as in politics, *les grandpères ont toujours tort.*"

"This play was good enough for us, Harry. It was 'Romeo and Juliet.' I must admit that I was rather annoyed at the idea of seeing Shakespeare done in such a wretched hole of a place. Still, I felt interested, in a sort of way. At any rate, I determined to wait for the first act. There was a dreadful orchestra, presided over by a young Hebrew who sat at a cracked piano, that nearly drove me away, but at last the drop-scene was drawn up, and the play began. Romeo was a stout elderly gentleman, with corked eyebrows, a husky tragedy voice, and a figure like a beer-barrel. Mercutio was almost as bad. He was played by the low comedian, who had introduced gags of his own and was on most friendly terms with the pit. They were both as grotesque as the scenery, and that looked as if it had come out of a country booth. But Juliet! Harry, imagine a girl, hardly seventeen years of age, with a little flower-like face, a small Greek head with plaited coils of dark-brown hair, eyes that were violet wells of passion, lips that were like the petals of the rose. She was the loveliest thing I had ever seen in my life. You said to me once that pathos left you unmoved, but that beauty, mere beauty, could fill your eyes with tears. I tell you, Harry, I could hardly see this girl for the mist of tears that came across me. And her voice—I never heard such a voice. It was very low at first, with deep mellow notes, that seemed to fall singly upon one's ear. Then it became a little louder, and sounded like a flute or a distant hautboy. In the garden scene it had all the tremulous ecstacy that one hears just before dawn when nightingales are singing. There were moments, later on, when it had the wild passion of violins. You know how a voice can stir one. Your voice and the voice of Sibyl Vane are two things that I shall never forget. When I close my eyes, I hear them, and each of them says something different. I don't know which to follow. Why should I not love her? Harry, I do love her. She is everything to me in life. Night after night I go to see her play. One evening she is Rosalind, and the next evening she is Imogen. I have seen her die in the gloom of an Italian tomb, sucking the poison from her lover's lips. I have watched her wandering through the forest of Arden, disguised as a pretty boy in hose and doublet and dainty cap. She has been mad, and has come into the presence of a guilty king, and given him rue to wear, and bitter herbs to taste of. She has been innocent, and the black hands of jealousy have crushed her reed-like throat. I have seen her in every age and in every costume. Ordinary women never appeal to one's imagination. They are limited to their century. No glamour ever transfigures them. One knows their minds as easily as one knows their bonnets. One can always find them. There is no mystery in any of them. They ride in the Park in the morning, and chatter at tea-parties in the afternoon. They have their stereotyped smile and their fashionable manner. They are quite obvious. But an actress! How different an actress is! Harry! why didn't you tell me that the only thing worth loving is an actress?"

"Because I have loved so many of them, Dorian."

"Oh, yes; horrid people with dyed hair and painted faces."

"Don't run down dyed hair and painted faces. There is an extraordinary charm in them, sometimes," said Lord Henry.

"I wish now I had not told you about Sibyl Vane."

"You could not have helped telling me, Dorian. All through your life you will tell me everything you do."

"Yes, Harry, I believe that is true. I cannot help telling you things. You have a curious influence over me. If I ever did a crime, I would come and confess it to you. You would understand me."

"People like you—the wilful sunbeams of life—don't commit crimes, Dorian. But I am much obliged for the compliment, all the same. And now tell me—reach me the matches, like a good boy: thanks—what are your actual relations with Sibyl Vane?"

Dorian Gray leaped to his feet, with flushed cheeks and burning eyes. "Harry, Sibyl Vane is sacred!"

"It is only the sacred things that are worth touching, Dorian," said Lord Henry, with a strange touch of pathos in his voice. "But why should you be annoyed? I suppose she will belong to you some day. When one is in love, one always begins by deceiving one's self, and one always ends by deceiving others. That is what the world calls a romance. You know her, at any rate, I suppose?"

"Of course I know her. On the first night I was at the theater, the horrid old Jew came round to the box after the performance was over, and offered to take me behind the scenes and introduce me to her. I was furious with him, and told him that Juliet had been dead for hundreds of years, and that her body was lying in a marble tomb in Verona. I think, from his blank look of amazement, that he was under the impression that I had taken too much champagne, or something."

"I am not surprised."

"Then he asked me if I wrote for any of the newspapers. I told him I never even read them. He seemed terribly disappointed at that, and confided to me that all the dramatic critics were in a conspiracy against him, and that they were every one of them to be bought."

"I should not wonder if he was quite right there. But, on the other hand, judging from their appearance, most of them cannot be at all expensive."

"Well, he seemed to think they were beyond his means," laughed Dorian. "By this time, however, the lights were being put out in the theater, and I had to go. He wanted me to try some cigars that he strongly recommended. I declined. The next night, of course, I arrived at the place again. When he saw me he made me a low bow, and assured me that I was a munificent patron of art. He was a most offensive brute, though he had an extraordinary passion for Shakespeare. He told me once, with an air of pride, that his five bankruptcies were entirely due to 'The Bard,' as he insisted on calling him. He seemed to think it a distinction."

"It was a distinction, my dear Dorian—a great distinction. Most people become bankrupt through having invested too heavily in the prose of life. To have ruined one's self over poetry is an honor. But when did you first speak to Miss Sibyl Vane?"

"The third night. She had been playing Rosalind. I could not help going round. I had thrown her some flowers, and she had looked at me—at least, I fancied that she had. The old Jew was persistent. He seemed determined to take me behind, so I consented. It was curious my not wanting to know her, wasn't it?"

"No, I don't think so."

"My dear Harry, why?"

"I will tell you some other time. Now I want to know about the girl."

"Sibyl? Oh, she was so shy, and so gentle. There is something of a child about her. Her eyes opened wide in exquisite wonder when I told her what I thought of her performance, and she seemed quite unconscious of her power. I think we were both rather nervous. The old Jew stood grinning at the doorway of the dusty greenroom, making elaborate speeches about us both, while we stood looking at each other like children. He would insist on calling me 'My Lord,' so I had to assure Sibyl that I was not anything of the kind. She said, quite simply to me, 'You look more like a prince. I must call you Prince Charming.' "

"Upon my word, Dorian, Miss Sibyl knows how to pay compliments."

"You don't understand her, Harry. She regarded me merely as a person in a play. She knows nothing of life. She lives with her mother, a faded, tired woman who played Lady Capulet in a sort of magenta dressing-wrapper on the first night, and looks as if she had seen better days."

"I know that look. It depresses me," murmured Lord Henry, examining his rings.

"The Jew wanted to tell me her history, but I said it did not interest me."

"You were quite right. There is always something infinitely mean about other people's tragedies."

"Sibyl is the only thing I care about. What is it to me where she came from? From her little head to her little feet, she is absolutely and entirely divine. Every night of my life I go to see her act, and every night she is more marvelous."

"That is the reason, I suppose, that you never dine with me now. I thought you must have some curious romance on hand. You have; but it is not quite what I expected."

"My dear Harry, we either lunch or sup together every day, and I have been to the Opera with you several times," said Dorian, opening his blue eyes in wonder.

"You always come dreadfuly late."

"Well, I can't help going to see Sibyl play," he cried, "even if it is only a single act. I get hungry for her presence; and when I think of the wonderful soul that is hidden away in that little ivory body, I am filled with awe."

"You can dine with me to-night, Dorian, can't you?"

He shook his head. "To-night she is Imogen," he answered, "and to-morrow night she will be Juliet."

"When is she Sibyl Vane?"

"Never."

"I congratulate you."

"How horrid you are! She is all the great heroines of the world in one. She is more than an individual. You laugh, but I tell you she has genius. I love her, and I must make her love me. You, who know all the secrets of life, tell me how to charm Sibyl Vane to love me! I want to make Romeo jealous. I want the dead lovers of the world to hear our laughter, and grow sad. I want a breath of our passion to stir their dust into consciousness, to wake their ashes into pain. My God, Harry, how I worship her!" He was walking up and down the room as he spoke. Hectic spots of red burned on his cheeks. He was terribly excited.

Lord Henry watched him with a subtle sense of pleasure. How different he was now from the shy, frightened boy he had met in Basil Hallward's studio! His nature had developed like a flower, had borne blossoms of scarlet flame. Out of its secret hiding-place had crept his Soul, and Desire had come to meet it on the way.

"And what do you propose to do?" said Lord Henry, at last.

"I want you and Basil to come with me some night and see her act. I have not the slightest fear of the result. You are certain to acknowledge her genius. Then we must get her out of the Jew's hands. She is bound to him for three years—at least, for two years and eight months from the present time. I shall have to pay him something, of course. When all that is settled, I shall take a West End theater and bring her out properly. She will make the world as mad as she has made me."

"That would be impossible, my dear boy!"

"Yes, she will. She has not merely art, consummate art-instinct, in her, but she has personality also; and you have often told me that it is personalities, not principles, that move the age."

"Well, what night shall we go?"

"Let me see. To-day is Tuesday. Let us fix to-morrow. She plays Juliet to-morrow."

"All right. The Bristol at eight o'clock; and I will get Basil."

"Not eight, Harry, please. Half-past six. We must be there before the curtain rises. You must see her in the first act, where she meets Romeo."

"Half-past six! What an hour! It will be like having a meat-tea or reading an English novel. It must be seven. No gentleman dines before seven. Shall you see Basil between this and then? Or shall I write to him?"

"Dear Basil! I have not laid eyes on him for a week. It is rather horrid of me, as he has sent me my portrait in the most wonderful frame, especially designed by himself, and, though I am a little jealous of the picture for being a whole month younger than I am, I must admit that I delight in it. Perhaps you had better write to him. I don't want to see him alone. He says things that annoy me. He gives me good advice."

Lord Henry smiled. "People are very fond of giving away what they need most themselves. It is what I call the depth of generosity."

"Oh, Basil is the best of fellows, but he seems to me to be just a bit of a Philistine. Since I have known you, Harry, I have discovered that."

"Basil, my dear boy, puts everything that is charming in him into his work. The consequence is that he has nothing left for life but his prejudices, his principles, and his common sense. The only artists I have ever known who are personally delightful are bad artists. Good artists exist simply in what they make, and consequently are perfectly uninteresting in what they are. A great poet, a really great poet, is the most unpoetical of all creatures. But inferior poets are absolutely fascinating. The worse their rhymes are, the more picturesque they look. The mere fact of having published a book of second-rate sonnets makes a man quite irresistible. He lives the poetry that he cannot write. The others write the poetry that they dare not realize."

"I wonder is that really so, Harry?" said Dorian Gray, putting some perfume on his handkerchief out of a large gold-topped bottle that stood on the table. "It must be, if you say it. And now I am off.

Imogen is waiting for me. Don't forget about to-morrow. Good-bye."

As he left the room, Lord Henry's heavy eyelids drooped, and he began to think. Certainly few people had ever interested him so much as Dorian Gray, and yet the lad's mad adoration of some one else caused him not the slightest pang of annoyance or jealousy. He was pleased by it. It made him a more interesting study. He had been always enthralled by the methods of natural science, but the ordinary subject-matter of that science had seemed to him trivial and of no import. And so he had begun by vivisecting himself, as he had ended by vivisecting others. Human life—that appeared to him the one thing worth investigating. Compared to it there was nothing else of any value. It was true that as one watched life in its curious crucible of pain and pleasure, one could not wear over one's face a mask of glass, nor keep the sulphurous fumes from troubling the brain and making the imagination turbid with monstrous fancies and misshapen dreams. There were poisons so subtle that to know their properties one had to sicken of them. There were maladies so strange that one had to pass through them if one sought to understand their nature. And yet what a great reward one received! How wonderful the whole world became to one! To note the curious hard logic of passion, and the emotional colored life of the intellect—to observe where they met, and where they separated, at what point they were in unison, and at what point they were at discord—there was a delight in that! What matter what the cost was? One could never pay too high a price for any sensation.

He was conscious—and the thought brought a gleam of pleasure into his brown agate eyes—that it was through certain words of his, musical words said with musical utterance, that Dorian Gray's soul had turned to this white girl and bowed in worship before her. To a large extent, the lad was his own creation. He had made him premature. That was something. Ordinary people waited till life disclosed to them its secrets, but to the few, to the elect, the mysteries of life were revealed before the veil was drawn away. Sometimes this was the effect of art, and chiefly of the art of literature, which dealt immediately with the passions and the intellect. But now and then a complex personality took the place and assumed the office of art, was indeed, in its way, a real work of art, Life having its elaborate masterpieces, just as poetry has, or sculpture, or painting.

Yes, the lad was premature. He was gathering his harvest while it was yet spring. The pulse and passion of youth were in him, but he was becoming self-conscious. It was delightful to watch him. With his beautiful face and his beautiful soul, he was a thing to wonder at. It was no matter how it all ended, or was destined to end. He was like one of those gracious figures in a pageant or a play, whose joys seem to be remote from one, but whose sorrows stir one's sense of beauty, whose wounds are like red roses.

Soul and body, body and soul—how mysterious they were! There was animalism in the soul, and the body had its moments of spirituality. The senses could refine, and the intellect could degrade. Who could say where the fleshly impulse ceased, or the psychical impulse began? How shallow were the arbitrary definitions of ordinary psychologists! And yet how difficult to decide between the claims of the various schools! Was the soul a shadow seated in the house of sin? Or was the body really in the soul, as

Giordano Bruno thought? The separation of spirit from matter was a mystery, and the union of spirit with matter was a mystery also.

He began to wonder whether he could ever make psychology so absolute a science that each little spring of life would be revealed to us. As it was, we always misunderstood ourselves, and rarely understood others. Experience was of no ethical value. It was merely the name men gave to their mistakes. Moralists had, as a rule, regarded it as a mode of warning, had claimed for it a certain ethical efficacy in the formation of character, had praised it as something that taught us what to follow and showed us what to avoid. But there was no motive power in experience. It was as little of an active cause as conscience itself. All that it really demonstrated was that our future would be the same as our past, and that the sin we had done once, and with loathing, we would do many times, and with joy.

It was clear to him that the experimental method was the only method by which one could arrive at any scientific analysis of the passions; and certainly Dorian Gray was a subject made to his hand, and seemed to promise rich and fruitful results. His sudden mad love for Sibyl Vane was a psychological phenomenon of no small interest. There was no doubt that curiosity had much to do with it—curiosity and the desire for new experiences; yet it was not a simple but rather a very complex passion. What there was in it of the purely sensuous instinct of boyhood had been transformed by the workings of the imagination, changed into something that seemed to the lad himself to be remote from sense, and was for that very reason all the more dangerous. It was the passions about whose origin we deceived ourselves that tyrannized most strongly over us. Our weakest motives were those of whose nature we were conscious. It often happened that when we thought we were experimenting on others we were really experimenting on ourselves.

While Lord Henry sat dreaming on these things, a knock came at the door, and his valet entered, and reminded him it was time to dress for dinner. He got up and looked out into the street. The sunset had smitten into scarlet gold the upper windows of the houses opposite. The panes glowed like plates of heated metal. The sky above was like a faded rose. He thought of his friend's young fiery-colored life, and wondered how it was all going to end.

When he arrived home, about half-past twelve o'clock, he saw a telegram lying on the hall table. He opened it and found it was from Dorian Gray. It was to tell him that he was engaged to be married to Sibyl Vane.

V

"MOTHER, mother, I am so happy!" whispered the girl burying her face in the lap of the faded, tired-looking woman who, with back turned to the shrill intrusive light, was sitting in the one arm-chair that their dingy sitting-room contained. "I am so happy!" she repeated, "and you must be happy too!"

Mrs. Vane winced, and put her thin bismuth-whitened hands on her daughter's head. "Happy!" she echoed, "I am only happy, Sibyl, when I see you act. You must not think of anything but your acting. Mr. Isaacs has been very good to us, and we owe him money."

The girl looked up and pouted. "Money, mother!" she cried. "What does money matter? Love is more than money."

"Mr. Isaacs has advanced us fifty pounds to pay off our debts, and to get a proper outfit for James. You must not forget that, Sibyl. Fifty pounds is a very large sum. Mr. Isaacs has been most considerate."

"He is not a gentleman, mother, and I hate the way he talks to me," said the girl, rising to her feet, and going over to the window.

"I don't know how we could manage without him," answered the elder woman, querulously.

Sibyl Vane tossed her head and laughed. "We don't want him any more, mother. Prince Charming rules life for us now." Then she paused. A rose shook in her blood, and shadowed her cheeks. Quick breath parted the petals of her lips. They trembled. Some southern wind of passion swept over her, and stirred the dainty folds of her dress. "I love him," she said simply.

"Foolish child! foolish child!" was the parrot-phrase flung in answer. The waving of crooked, false-jeweled fingers gave an added grotesqueness to the words.

The girl laughed again. The joy of a caged bird was in her voice. Her eyes caught the melody, and echoed it in radiance: then closed for a moment, as though to hide their secret. When they opened, the mist of a dream had passed across them.

Thin-lipped Wisdom spoke at her from the worn chair, hinted at prudence, quoted from that book of cowardice whose author apes the name of common sense. She did not listen. She was free in her prison of passion. Her prince, Prince Charming, was with her. She had called on memory to remake him. She had sent her soul to search for him, and it had brought him back. His kiss burned again upon her mouth. Her eyelids were warm with his breath.

Then Wisdom altered its method and spoke of espial and discovery. This young man might be rich. If so, marriage should be thought of. Against the shell of her ear broke the waves of worldly cunning. The arrows of craft shot by her. She saw the thin lips moving, and smiled.

Suddenly she felt the need to speak. The wordy silence troubled her. "Mother! mother!" she cried, "why does he love me so much? I know why I love him. I love him because he is like what Love himself should be. But what does he see in me? I am not worthy of him. And yet—why, I cannot tell—

though I feel so much beneath him, I don't feel humble. I feel proud, terribly proud. Mother, did you love my father as I love Prince Charming?"

The elder woman grew pale beneath the coarse powder that daubed her cheeks, and her dry lips twitched with a spasm of pain. Sibyl rushed to her, flung her arms around her neck, and kissed her. "Forgive me, mother. I know it pains you to talk about our father. But it only pains you because you loved him so much. Don't look so sad. I am as happy to-day as you were twenty years ago. Ah! let me be happy forever!"

"My child, you are far too young to think of falling in love. Besides, what do you know of this young man? You don't even know his name. The whole thing is most inconvenient, and really, when James is going away to Australia, and I have so much to think of, I must say that you should have shown more consideration. However, as I said before, if he is rich . . ."

"Ah! mother, mother, let me be happy!"

Mrs. Vane glanced at her, and with one of those false theatrical gestures that so often become a mode of second nature to a stage-player, clasped her in her arms. At this moment the door opened, and a young lad with rough brown hair came into the room. He was thick-set of figure, and his hands and feet were large, and somewhat clumsy in movement. He was not so finely bred as his sister. One would hardly have guessed the close relationship that existed between them. Mrs. Vane fixed her eyes on him, and intensified her smile. She mentally elevated her son to the dignity of an audience. She felt sure that the *tableau* was interesting.

"You might keep some of your kisses for me, Sibyl, I think," said the lad, with a good-natured grumble.

"Ah! but you don't like being kissed, Jim," she cried. "You are a dreadful old bear." And she ran across the room and hugged him.

James Vane looked into his sister's face with tenderness. "I want you to come out with me for a walk, Sibyl. I don't suppose I shall ever see this horrid London again. I am sure I don't want to."

"My son, don't say such dreadful things," murmured Mrs. Vane, taking up a tawdry theatrical dress, with a sigh, and beginning to patch it. She felt a little disappointed that he had not joined the group. It would have increased the theatrical picturesqueness of the situation.

"Why not, mother? I mean it."

"You pain me, my son. I trust you will return from Australia in a position of affluence. I believe there is no society of any kind in the Colonies, nothing that I would call society; so when you have made your fortune you must come back and assert yourself in London."

"Society!" muttered the lad. "I don't want to know anything about that. I should like to make some money to take you and Sibyl off the stage. I hate it!"

"Oh, Jim!" said Sibyl, laughing, "how unkind of you! But are you really going for a walk with me? That will be nice! I was afraid you were going to say good-bye to some of your friends—to Tom Hardy, who gave you that hideous pipe, or Ned Langton, who makes fun of you for smoking it. It is very sweet of you to let me have your last afternoon. Where shall we go? Let us go to the Park."

"I am too shabby," he answered, frowning. "Only swell people go to the Park."

"Nonsense, Jim," she whispered, stroking the sleeve of his coat.

He hesitated for a moment. "Very well," he said at last, "but don't be too long dressing." She danced out of the door. One could hear her singing as she ran up-stairs. Her little feet pattered overhead.

He walked up and down the room two or three times. Then he turned to the still figure in the chair. "Mother, are my things ready?" he asked.

"Quite ready, James," she answered, keeping her eyes on her work. For some months past she had felt ill at ease when she was alone with this rough, stern son of hers. Her shallow, secret nature was troubled when their eyes met. She used to wonder if he suspected anything. The silence, for he made no other observation, became intolerable to her. She began to complain. Women defend themselves by attacking, just as they attack by sudden and strange surrenders. "I hope you will be contented, James, with your seafaring life," she said. "You must remember that it is your own choice. You might have entered a solicitor's office. Solicitors are a very respectable class, and in the country often dine with the best families."

"I hate offices, and I hate clerks," he replied. "But you are quite right. I have chosen my own life. All I say is, watch over Sibyl. Don't let her come to any harm. Mother, you must watch over her."

"James, you really talk very strangely. Of course I watch over Sibyl."

"I hear a gentleman comes every night to the theater, and goes behind to talk to her. Is that right? What about that?"

"You are speaking about things you don't understand, James. In the profession we are accustomed to receive a great deal of most gratifying attention. I myself used to receive many bouquets at one time. That was when acting was really understood. As for Sibyl, I do not know at present whether her attachment is serious or not. But there is no doubt that the young man in question is a perfect gentleman. He is always most polite to me. Besides, he has the appearance of being rich, and the flowers he sends are lovely."

"You don't know his name, though," said the lad, harshly.

"No," answered his mother, with a placid expression on her face. "He has not yet revealed his real name. I think it is quite romantic of him. He is probably a member of the aristocracy."

James Vane bit his lip. "Watch over Sibyl, mother!" he cried, "watch over her!"

"My son, you distress me very much. Sibyl is always under my special care. Of course, if this gentleman is wealthy, there is no reason why she should not contract an alliance with him. I trust he is one of the aristocracy. He has all the appearance of it, I must say. It might be a most brilliant marriage for Sibyl. They would make a charming couple. His good looks are really quite remarkable; everybody notices them."

The lad muttered something to himself, and drummed on the window-pane with his coarse fingers. He had just turned round to say something, when the door opened, and Sibyl ran in.

"How serious you both are!" she cried. "What is the matter?"

"Nothing," he answered. "I suppose one must be serious sometimes. Good-bye, mother; I will have my dinner at five o'clock. Everything is packed, except my shirts, so you need not trouble."

"Good-bye, my son," she answered, with a bow of strained stateliness.

She was extremely annoyed at the tone he had adopted with her, and there was something in his look that had made her feel afraid.

"Kiss me, mother," said the girl. Her flower-like lips touched the withered cheek, and warmed its frost.

"My child! my child!" cried Mrs. Vane, looking up to the ceiling in search of an imaginary gallery.

"Come, Sibyl," said her brother, impatiently. He hated his mother's affectations.

They went out into the flickering wind-blown sunlight, and strolled down the dreary Euston Road. The passers-by glanced in wonder at the sullen, heavy youth, who, in coarse, ill-fitting clothes, was in the company of such a graceful, refined-looking girl. He was like a common gardener walking with a rose.

Jim frowned from time to time when he caught the inquisitive glance of some stranger. He had that dislike of being stared at which comes on geniuses late in life, and never leaves the commonplace. Sibyl, however, was quite unconscious of the effect she was producing. Her love was trembling in laughter on her lips. She was thinking of Prince Charming, and, that she might think of him all the more, she did not talk of him, but prattled on about the ship in which Jim was going to sail, about the gold he was certain to find, about the wonderful heiress whose life he was to save from the wicked, red-shirted bushrangers. For he was not to remain a sailor, or a supercargo, or whatever he was going to be. Oh, no! A sailor's existence was dreadful. Fancy being cooped up in a horrid ship, with the hoarse, humpbacked waves trying to get in, and a black wind blowing the masts down, and tearing the sails into long, screaming ribands! He was to leave the vessel at Melbourne, bid a polite good-bye to the captain, and go off at once to the gold-fields. Before the week was over he was to come across a large nugget of pure gold, the largest nugget that had ever been discovered, and bring it down to the coast in a wagon guarded by six mounted policemen. The bushrangers were to attack them three times, and be defeated with immense slaughter. Or, no. He was not to go to the gold-fields at all. They were horrid places, where men got intoxicated, and shot each other in barrooms, and used bad language. He was to be a nice sheep-farmer, and one evening, as he was riding home, he was to see the beautiful heiress being carried off by a robber on a black horse, and give chase, and rescue her. Of course she would fall in love with him, and he with her, and they would get married and come home, and live in an immense house in London. Yes, there were delightful things in store for him. But he must be very good and not lose his temper, or spend his money foolishly. She was only a year older than he was, but she knew so much more of life. He must be sure, also, to write to her by every mail, and to say his prayers each night before he went to sleep. God was very good, and would watch over him. She would pray for him, too, and in a few years he would come back quite rich and happy.

The lad listened sulkily to her, and made no answer. He was heart-sick at leaving home.

Yet it was not this alone that made him gloomy and morose. Inexperienced though he was, he had still a strong sense of the danger of Sibyl's position. This young dandy who was making love to her could mean her no good. He was a gentleman, and he hated him for that, hated him through some curious race-instinct for which he could not account, and which for that reason was all the more dominant in him. He was conscious also of the shallowness and vanity of his mother's nature, and in that saw infinite peril for Sibyl and Sibyl's happiness. Children begin by loving their parents; as they grow older they judge them; sometimes they forgive them.

His mother! He had something on his mind to ask of her, something that he had brooded on for many months of silence. A chance phrase that he had heard at the theater, a whispered sneer that had reached his ears one night as he waited at the stage door had set loose a train of horrible thoughts. He remembered it as if it had been the lash of a hunting-crop across his face. His brows knit together into a wedge-like furrow, and with a twitch of pain he bit his under lip.

"You are not listening to a word I am saying, Jim," cried Sibyl, "and I am making the most delightful plans for your future. Do say something."

"What do you want me to say?"

"Oh, that you will be a good boy, and not forget us," she answered, smiling at him.

He shrugged his shoulders. "You are more likely to forget me than I am to forget you, Sibyl."

She flushed. "What do you mean, Jim?" she asked.

"You have a new friend, I hear. Who is he? Why have you not told me about him? He means you no good."

"Stop, Jim!" she exclaimed. "You must not say anything about him. I love him."

"Why, you don't even know his name," answered the lad. "Who is he? I have a right to know."

"He is called Prince Charming. Don't you like the name? Oh! you silly boy! you should never forget it. If you only saw him, you would think him the most wonderful person in the world. Some day you will meet him: when you come back from Australia. You will like him so much. Everybody likes him, and I . . . love him. I wish you could come to the theater to-night. He is going to be there, and I am to play Juliet. Oh! how I shall play it! Fancy, Jim, to be in love and play Juliet! To have him sitting there! To play for his delight! I am afraid I may frighten the company—frighten or enthrall them. To be in love is to surpass one's self. Poor dreadful Mr. Isaacs will be shouting 'Genius!' to his loafers at the bar. He has preached me as a dogma; to-night he will announce me as a revelation. I feel it. And it is all his, his only, Prince Charming, my wonderful lover, my god of graces. But I am poor beside him. Poor? What does that matter? When poverty creeps in at the door, love flies in through the window. Our proverbs want rewriting. They were made in winter, and it is summer now; springtime for me, I think—a very dance of blossoms in blue skies."

"He is a gentleman," said the lad, suddenly.

"A Prince!" she cried, musically. "What more do you want?"

"He wants to enslave you."

"I shudder at the thought of being free."

"I want you to beware of him."

"To see him is to worship him, to know him is to trust him."

"Sibyl, you are mad about him."

She laughed, and took his arm. "You dear old Jim, you talk as if you were a hundred. Some day you will be in love yourself. Then you will know what it is. Don't look so sulky. Surely you should be glad to think that, though you are going away, you leave me happier than I have ever been before. Life has been hard for us both—terribly hard and difficult. But it will be different now. You are going to a new world, and I have found one. Here are two chairs; let us sit down and see the smart people go by."

They took their seats amid a crowd of watchers. The tulip-bed across the road flamed like throbbing rings of fire. A white dust, tremulous cloud of orris-root it seemed, hung in the panting air. The brightly colored parasols danced and dipped like monstrous butterflies.

She made her brother talk of himself, his hopes, his prospects. He spoke slowly and with effort. They passed words to each other as players at a game pass counters. Sibyl felt oppressed. She could not communicate her joy. A faint smile curving that sullen mouth was all the echo she could win. After some time she became silent. Suddenly she caught a glimpse of golden hair and laughing lips, and in an open carriage with two ladies Dorian Gray drove past.

She started to her feet. "There he is!" she cried.

"Who?" said Jim Vane.

"Prince Charming," she answered, looking after the victoria.

He jumped up, and siezed her roughly by the arm. "Show him to me. Which is he? Point him out. I must see him!" he exclaimed. But at that moment the Duke of Berwick's four-in-hand came between, and when it had left the space clear, the carriage had swept out of the park.

"He is gone," murmured Sibyl, sadly. "I wish you had seen him."

"I wish I had, for as sure as there is a God in heaven, if he ever does you any wrong, I shall kill him."

She looked at him in horror. He repeated his words. They cut the air like a dagger. The people round began to gape. A lady standing close to her tittered.

"Come away, Jim; come away," she whispered. He followed her doggedly as she passed through the crowd. He felt glad at what he had said.

When they reached the Achilles Statue she turned round. There was pity in her eyes that became laughter on her lips. She shook her head at him. "You are foolish, Jim, utterly foolish; a bad-tempered boy, that is all. How can you say such horrible things? You don't know what you are talking about. You are simply jealous and unkind. Ah! I wish you would fall in love. Love makes people good, and what you said was wicked."

"I am sixteen," he answered, "and I know what I am about. Mother is no help to you. She doesn't understand how to look after you. I wish now that I was not going to Australia at all. I have a great mind to chuck the whole thing up. I would, if my articles hadn't been signed."

"Oh, don't be so serious, Jim. You are like one of the heroes of those silly melodramas mother used to be so fond of acting in. I am not going to quarrel with you. I have seen him, and oh! to see him is perfect happiness. We won't quarrel. I know you would never harm any one I love, would you?"

"Not as long as you love him, I suppose," was the sullen answer.

"I shall love him forever!" she cried.

"And he?"

"Forever, too!"

"He had better."

She shrank from him. Then she laughed and put her hand on his arm. He was merely a boy.

At the Marble Arch they hailed an omnibus, which left them close to their shabby home in the Euston Road. It was after five o'clock, and Sibyl had to lie down for a couple of hours before acting. Jim insisted that she should do so. He said that he would sooner part with her when their mother was not present. She would be sure to make a scene, and he detested scenes of every kind.

In Sibyl's own room they parted. There was jealousy in the lad's heart, and a fierce, murderous hatred of the stranger who, as it seemed to him, had come between them. Yet, when her arms were flung round his neck, and her fingers strayed through his hair, he softened, and kissed her with real affection. There were tears in his eyes as he went down-stairs.

His mother was waiting for him below. She grumbled at his unpunctuality as he entered. He made no answer, but sat down to his meager meal. The flies buzzed round the table, and crawled over the stained cloth. Through the rumble of omnibuses, and the clatter of street-cabs, he could hear the droning voice devouring each minute that was left to him.

After some time he thrust away his plate, and put his head in his hands. He felt that he had a right to know. It should have been told to him before, if it was as he suspected. Leaden with fear, his mother watched him. Words dropped mechanically from her lips. A tattered lace handkerchief twitched in her fingers. When the clock struck six, he got up, and went to the door. Then he turned back, and looked at her. Their eyes met. In hers he saw a wild appeal for mercy. It enraged him.

"Mother, I have something to ask you," he said. Her eyes wandered vaguely about the room. She made no answer. "Tell me the truth. I have a right to know. Were you married to my father?"

She heaved a deep sigh. It was a sigh of relief. The terrible moment, the moment that night and day, for weeks and months, she had dreaded, had come at last, and yet she felt no terror. Indeed, in some measure it was a disappointment to her. The vulgar directness of the question called for a direct answer. The situation had not been gradually led up to. It was crude. It reminded her of a bad rehearsal.

"No," she answered, wondering at the harsh simplicity of life.

"My father was a scoundrel, then!" cried the lad, clenching his fists.

She shook her head. "I knew he was not free. We loved each other very much. If he had lived, he would have made provision for us. Don't speak against him, my son. He was your father, and a gentleman. Indeed, he was highly connected."

An oath broke from his lips. "I don't care for myself!" he exclaimed, "but don't let Sibyl . . . It is a gentleman, isn't it, who is in love with her, or says he is? Highly connected too, I suppose?"

For a moment a hideous sense of humiliation came over the woman. Her head drooped. She wiped her eyes with her shaking hands. "Sibyl has a mother," she murmured; "I had none."

The lad was touched. He went toward her, and stooping down he kissed her. "I am sorry if I have pained you by asking about my father," he said, "but

I could not help it. I must go now. Good-bye. Don't forget that you will have only one child now to look after, and believe me that if this man wrongs my sister, I will find out who he is, track him down, and kill him like a dog. I swear it."

The exaggerated folly of the threat, the passionate gesture that accompanied it, the mad melodramatic words, made life seem more vivid to her. She was familiar with the atmosphere. She breathed more freely, and for the first time for many months she really admired her son. She would have liked to have continued the scene on the same emotional scale, but he cut her short. Trunks had to be carried down, and mufflers looked for. The lodging-house drudge bustled in and out. There was the bargaining with the cabman. The moment was lost in vulgar details. It was with a renewed feeling of disappointment that she waved the tattered lace handkerchief from the window as her son drove away. She was conscious that a great opportunity had been wasted. She consoled herself by telling Sibyl how desolate she felt her life would be, now that she had only one child to look after. She remembered the phrase. It had pleased her. Of the threat she said nothing. It was vividly and dramatically expressed. She felt that they would all laugh at it some day.

VI

"I SUPPOSE you have heard the news, Basil?" said Lord Henry that evening, as Hallward was shown into a little private room at the Bristol, where dinner had been laid for three.

"No, Harry," answered the artist, giving his hat and coat to the bowing waiter. "What is it? Nothing about politics, I hope? They don't interest me. There is hardly a single person in the House of Commons worth painting, though many of them would be the better for a little whitewashing."

"Dorian Gray is engaged to be married," said Lord Henry, watching him as he spoke.

Hallward started, and then frowned. "Dorian engaged to be married!" he cried. "Impossible!"

"It is perfectly true."

"To whom?"

"To some little actress or other."

"I can't believe it. Dorian is far too sensible."

"Dorian is far too wise not to do foolish things now and then, my dear Basil."

"Marriage is hardly a thing that one can do now and then, Harry."

"Except in America," rejoined Lord Henry, languidly. "But I didn't say that he was married. I said he was engaged to be married. There is a great difference. I have a distinct remembrance of being married, but I have no recollection at all of being engaged. I am inclined to think that I never was engaged."

"But think of Dorian's birth, and position, and wealth. It would be absurd for him to marry so much beneath him."

"If you want him to marry this girl, tell him that, Basil. He is sure to do it, then. Whenever a man does a thoroughly stupid thing, it is always from the noblest motives."

"I hope the girl is good, Harry. I don't want to see Dorian tied to some vile creature who might degrade his nature and ruin his intellect."

"Oh, she is better than good—she is beautiful," murmured Lord Henry, sipping a glass of vermouth and orange bitters. "Dorian says she is beautiful, and he is not often wrong about things of that kind. Your portrait of him has quickened his appreciation of the personal appearance of other people. It has had that excellent effect, among others. We are to see her to-night, if that boy doesn't forget his appointment."

"Are you serious?"

"Quite serious, Basil. I should be miserable if I thought I should ever be more serious than I am at the present moment."

"But do you approve of it, Harry?" asked the painter, walking up and down the room, and biting his lip. "You can't approve of it, possibly. It is some silly infatuation."

"I never approve, or disapprove, of anything now. It is an absurd attitude to take toward life. We are not sent into the world to air our moral prejudices. I never take any notice of what common people say, and I never interfere with what charming people do. If a personality fascinates me, whatever mode of expression that personality selects is absolutely delightful to me. Dorian Gray falls in love with a beautiful girl who acts Juliet, and proposes to marry her. Why not? If he wedded Messalina he would be none the less interesting. You know I am not a champion of marriage. The real drawback to marriage is that it makes one unselfish. And unselfish people are colorless. They lack individuality. Still, there are certain temperaments that marriage makes more complex. They retain their egotism, and add to it many other egos. They are forced to have more than one life. They become more highly organized, and to be highly organized is, I should fancy, the object of man's existence. Besides, every experience is of value, and, whatever one may say against marriage, it is certainly an experience. I hope that Dorian Gray will make this girl his wife, passionately adore her for six months, and then suddenly become fascinated by some one else. He would be a wonderful study."

"You don't mean a single word of all that, Harry, you know you don't. If Dorian Gray's life were spoiled, no one would be sorrier than yourself. You are much better than you pretend to be."

Lord Henry laughed. "The reason we all like to think so well of others is that we are all afraid for ourselves. The basis of optimism is sheer terror. We think that we are generous because we credit our neighbor with the possession of those virtues that are likely to be a benefit to us. We praise the banker that we may overdraw our account, and find good qualities in the highwayman in the hope that he may spare our pockets. I mean everything that I have said. I have the greatest contempt for optimism. As for a spoiled life, no life is spoiled but one whose growth is arrested. If you want to mar a nature, you have merely to reform it. As for marriage, of course that would be silly, but there are other and more interesting bonds between men and women. I will certainly encourage them. They have the charm of being fashionable. But here is Dorian himself. He will tell you more than I can."

"My dear Harry, my dear Basil, you must both congratulate me!" said the lad, throwing off his evening cape with its satin-lined wings, and shaking each of his friends by the hand in turn. "I have never been so happy. Of course it is sudden: all really delightful things are. And yet it seems to me to be the one thing I have been looking for all my life." He was flushed with excitement and pleasure, and looked extraordinarily handsome.

"I hope you will always be very happy, Dorian," said Hallward, "but I don't quite forgive you for not having let me know of your engagement. You let Harry know."

"And I don't forgive you for being late for dinner," broke in Lord Henry, putting his hand on the lad's shoulder, and smiling as he spoke. "Come, let us sit down and try what the new *chef* here is like, and then you will tell us how it all came about."

"There is really not much to tell," cried Dorian, as they took their seats at the small round table. "What happened was simply this. After I left you yesterday evening, Harry, I dressed, had some dinner at that little Italian restaurant in Rupert Street you introduced me to, and went down at eight o'clock to the theater. Sibyl was playing Rosalind. Of course the scenery was dreadful, and the Orlando absurd. But Sibyl! You should have seen her! When she came on in her boy's clothes she was perfectly wonderful. She wore a moss-colored velvet jerkin with cinnamon sleeves, slim brown cross-gartered hose, a dainty little green cap with a hawk's feather caught in a jewel, and a hooded cloak lined with dull red. She had never seemed to me more exquisite. She had all the delicate grace of that Tanagra figurine that you have in your studio, Basil. Her hair clustered round her face like dark leaves round a pale rose. As for her acting—well, you shall see her to-night. She is simply a born artist. I sat in the dingy box absolutely enthralled. I forgot that I was in London and in the nineteenth century. I was away with my love in a forest that no man had ever seen. After the performance was over I went behind and spoke to her. As we were sitting together, suddenly there came into her eyes a look that I had never seen there before. My lips moved toward hers. We kissed each other. I can't describe to you what I felt at that moment. It seemed to me that all my life had been narrowed to one perfect point of rose-colored joy. She trembled all over, and shook like a white narcissus. Then she flung herself on her knees and kissed my hands. I feel that I should not tell you all this, but I can't help it. Of course our engagement is a dead secret. She has not even told her own mother. I don't know what my guardians will say. Lord Radley is sure to be furious. I don't care. I shall be of age in less than a year, and then I can do what I like. I have been right, Basil, haven't I, to take my love out of poetry, and to find my wife in Shakespeare's plays? Lips that Shakespeare taught to speak have whispered their secret in my ear. I have had the arms of Rosalind around me, and kissed Juliet on the mouth."

"Yes, Dorian, I suppose you are right," said Hallward, slowly.

"Have you seen her to-day?" asked Lord Henry.

Dorian Gray shook his head. "I left her in the forest of Arden, I shall find her in an orchard in Verona."

Lord Henry sipped his champagne in a meditative manner. "At what particular point did you mention the word marriage, Dorian? and what did she say in answer? Perhaps you forgot all about it."

"My dear Harry, I did not treat it as a business transaction, and I did not make any formal proposal. I told her that I loved her, and she said she was not worthy to be my wife. Not worthy! Why, the whole world is nothing to me compared with her."

"Women are wonderfully practical," murmured Lord Henry—"much more practical than we are. In situations of that kind we often forget to say anything about marriage, and they always remind us."

Hallward laid his hand upon his arm. "Don't, Harry. You have annoyed Dorian. He is not like other men. He would never bring misery upon any one. His nature is too fine for that."

Lord Henry looked across the table. "Dorian is never annoyed with me," he answered. "I asked the question for the best reason possible, for the only reason, indeed, that excuses one for asking any question—simple curiosity. I have a theory that it is always the women who propose to us, and not we who propose to the women—except, of course, in middle-class life. But then the middle classes are not modern."

Dorian Gray laughed, and tossed his head. "You are quite incorrigible, Harry; but I don't mind. It is impossible to be angry with you. When you see Sibyl Vane you will feel that the man who could wrong her would be a beast—a beast without a heart. I cannot understand how any one can wish to shame the thing he loves. I love Sibyl Vane. I want to place her on a pedestal of gold, and to see the world worship the woman who is mine. What is marriage? An irrevocable vow. You mock at it for that. Ah! don't mock. It is an irrevocable vow that I want to take. Her trust makes me faithful, her belief makes me good. When I am with her, I regret all that you have taught me. I become different from what you have known me to be. I am changed, and the mere touch of Sibyl Vane's hand makes me forget you and all your wrong, fascinating, poisonous, delightful theories."

"And those are . . . ?" asked Lord Henry, helping himself to some salad.

"Oh, your theories about life, your theories about love, your theories about pleasure. All your theories, in fact, Harry."

"Pleasure is the only thing worth having a theory about," he answered, in his slow, melodious voice. "But I am afraid I cannot claim my theory as my own. It belongs to Nature, not to me. Pleasure is Nature's test, her sign of approval. When we are happy we are always good, but when we are good we are not always happy."

"Ah! but what do you mean by good?" cried Basil Hallward.

"Yes," echoed Dorian, leaning back in his chair, and looking at Lord Henry over the heavy clusters of purple-lipped irises that stood in the center of the table, "what do you mean by good, Harry?"

"To be good is to be in harmony with one's self," he replied, touching the thin stem of his glass with his pale, fine pointed fingers. "Discord is to be forced to be in harmony with others. One's own life—that is the important thing. As for the lives of one's neighbors, if one wishes to be a prig or a Puritan, one can flaunt one's moral views about them, but they are not one's concern. Besides, Individualism has really the higher aim. Modern morality consists in accepting the standard of one's age. I consider that for any man of culture to accept the standard of his age is a form of the grossest immorality."

"But, surely, if one lives merely for one's self, Harry, one pays a terrible price for doing so?" suggested the painter.

"Yes, we are overcharged for everything nowadays. I should fancy that the real tragedy of the poor is that they can afford nothing but self-denial. Beautiful sins, like beautiful things, are the privilege of the rich."

"One has to pay in other ways but money."

"What sort of ways, Basil?"

"Oh! I should fancy in remorse, in suffering, in . . . well, in the consciousness of degradation."

Lord Henry shrugged his shoulders. "My dear fellow, mediæval art is charming, but mediæval emotions are out of date. One can use them in fiction, of course. But then the only things that one can use in fiction are the things that one has ceased to use in fact. Believe me, no civilized man ever regrets a pleasure, and no uncivilized man ever knows what a pleasure is."

"I know what pleasure is!" cried Dorian Gray. "It is to adore some one."

"That is certainly better than being adored," he answered, toying with some fruits. "Being adored is a nuisance. Women treat us just as humanity treats its gods. They worship us, and are always bothering us to do something for them."

"I should have said that whatever they ask for they had first given to us," murmured the lad, gravely. "They create Love in our natures. They have a right to demand it back."

"That is quite true, Dorian," cried Hallward.

"Nothing is ever quite true," said Lord Henry.

"This is," interrupted Dorian. "You must admit, Harry, that women give to men the very gold of their lives."

"Possibly," he sighed, "but they invariably want it back in such very small change. That is the worry. Women, as some witty Frenchman once put it, inspire us with the desire to do masterpieces, and always prevent us from carrying them out."

"Harry, you are dreadful! I don't know why I like you so much."

"You will always like me, Dorian," he replied. "Will you have some coffee, you fellows?—Waiter, bring coffee, and *fine-champagne,* and some cigarettes. No, don't mind the cigarettes; I have some.—Basil, I can't allow you to smoke cigars. You must have a cigarette. A cigarette is the perfect type of a perfect pleasure. It is exquisite, and it leaves one unsatisfied. What more can one want? Yes, Dorian, you will always be fond of me. I represent to you all the sins you have never had the courage to commit."

"What nonsense you talk, Harry!" cried the lad, taking a light from a fire-breathing silver dragon that the waiter had placed on the table. "Let us go down to the theater. When Sibyl comes on the stage you will have a new ideal of life. She will represent something to you that you have never known."

"I have known everything," said Lord Henry, with a tired look in his eyes, "but I am always ready for a new emotion. I am afraid, however, that, for me at any rate, there is no such thing. Still, your wonderful girl may thrill me. I love acting. It is so much more real than life. Let us go. Dorian, you will come with me. I am so sorry, Basil, but there is only room for two in the brougham. You must follow us in a hansom."

They got up and put on their coats, sipping their coffee standing. The painter was silent and preoccupied. There was a gloom over him. He could not bear this marriage, and yet it seemed to him to be better than many other things that might have happened. After a few minutes, they all passed downstairs. He drove off by himself, as had been arranged, and watched the flashing lights of the little brougham in front of him. A strange sense of loss came over him. He felt that Dorian Gray would never again be to him all that he had been in the past. Life had come between them. . . . His eyes darkened, and the crowded, flaring streets became blurred to his eyes. When the cab drew up at the theater it seemed to him that he had grown years older.

VII

FOR some reason or other the house was crowded that night, and the fat Jew manager who met them at the door was beaming from ear to ear with an oily, tremulous smile. He escorted them to their box with a sort of pompous humility, waving his fat jeweled hands, and talking at the top of his voice. Dorian Gray loathed him more than ever. He felt as if he had come to look for Miranda and had been met by Caliban. Lord Henry, upon the other hand, rather liked him (at least, he declared he did), and insisted on shaking him by the hand, and assuring him that he was proud to meet a man who had discovered a real genius and gone bankrupt over a poet. Hallward amused himself with watching the faces in the pit. The heat was terribly oppressive, and the huge sunlight flamed like a monstrous dahlia with petals of yellow fire. The youths in the gallery had taken off their coats and waistcoats and hung them over the side. They talked to each other across the theater, and shared their oranges with the tawdry girls who sat beside them. Some women were laughing in the pit; their voices were horribly shrill and discordant. The sound of the popping of corks came from the bar.

"What a place to find one's divinity in!" said Lord Henry.

"Yes," answered Dorian Gray. "It was here I found her, and she is divine beyond all living things. When she acts you will forget everything. These common rough people, with their coarse faces and brutal gestures, become quite different when she is on the stage. They sit silently and watch her. They weep and laugh as she wills them to do. She makes them as responsive as a violin. She spiritualizes them, and one feels that they are of the same flesh and blood as one's self."

"The same flesh and blood as one's self! Oh, I hope not!" exclaimed Lord Henry, who was scanning the occupants of the gallery through his opera-glass.

"Don't pay any attention to him, Dorian," said the painter. "I understand what you mean, and I believe in this girl. Any one you love must be marvelous, and any girl that has the effect you describe must be fine and noble. To spiritualize one's age—that is something worth doing. If this girl can give a soul to those who have lived without one, if she can create the sense of beauty in people whose lives have been sordid and ugly, if she can strip them of their selfishness and lend them tears for sorrows that are not their own, she is worthy of all your adoration, worthy of the adoration of the world. This marriage is quite right. I did not think so at first, but I admit it now. The gods made Sibyl Vane for you. Without her you would have been incomplete."

"Thanks, Basil," answered Dorian Gray, pressing his hand. "I knew that you would understand me. Harry is so cynical, he terrifies me. But here is the orchestra. It is quite dreadful, but it only lasts for about five minutes. Then the curtain rises, and you will see the girl to whom I am going to give all my life, to whom I have given everything that is good in me."

A quarter of an hour afterward, amid an extraordinary turmoil of applause, Sibyl Vane stepped on to the stage. Yes, she was certainly lovely to look at—one of the loveliest creatures, Lord Henry thought, that he had ever seen. There was something of the fawn in her shy grace and startled eyes. A faint blush, like the shadow of a rose in a mirror of silver, came to her cheeks as she glanced at the crowded, enthusiastic house. She stepped back a few paces, and her lips seemed to tremble. Basil Hallward leaped to his feet and began to applaud. Motionless, and as one in a dream, sat Dorian Gray, gazing at her. Lord Henry peered through his glasses, murmuring, "Charming! charming!"

The scene was the hall of Capulet's house, and Romeo in his pilgrim's dress had entered with Mercutio and his other friends. The band, such as it was, struck up a few bars of music, and the dance began. Through the crowd of ungainly, shabbily dressed actors, Sibyl Vane moved like a creature from a finer world. Her body swayed, while she danced, as a plant swayed in the water. The curves of her throat were the curves of a white lily. Her hands seemed to be made of cool ivory.

Yet she was curiously listless. She showed no sign of joy when her eyes rested on Romeo. The few words she had to speak—

Good pilgrim, you do wrong your hand too much,
Which mannerly devotion shows in this;
For saints have hands that pilgrims' hands do touch,
And palm to palm is holy palmer's kiss—

with the brief dialogue that follows, were spoken in a thoroughly artificial manner. The voice was exquisite, but from that point of view of tone it was absolutely false. It was wrong in color. It took away all the life from the verse. It made the passion unreal.

Dorian Gray grew pale as he watched her. He was puzzled and anxious. Neither of his friends dared to say anything to him. She seemed to them to be absolutely incompetent. They were horribly disappointed.

Yet they felt that the true test of any Juliet is in the balcony scene of the second act. They waited for that. If she failed there, there was nothing in her.

She looked charming as she came out in the moonlight. That could not be denied. But the staginess of her acting was unbearable, and grew worse as she went on. Her gestures became absurdly artificial. She overemphasized everything that she had to say. The beautiful passage—

Thou knowest the mask of night is on my face,
Else would a maiden blush repaint my cheek
For that which thou hast heard me speak tonight—

was declaimed with the painful precision of a schoolgirl who has been taught to recite by some second-rate professor of elocution. When she leaned over the balcony and came to those wonderful lines—

Although I joy in thee,
I have no joy of this contract to-night:
It is too rash, too unadvised, too sudden;
Too like the lightning, which doth cease to be
Ere one can say, "It lightens." Sweet, good-night!
This bud of love by summer's ripening breath
May prove a beauteous flower when next we meet—

she spoke the words as though they conveyed no meaning to her. It was not nervousness. Indeed, so

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far from being nervous, she was absolutely self-contained. It was simply bad art. She was a complete failure.

Even the common, uneducated audience of the pit and gallery lost their interest in the play. They got restless, and began to talk loudly and to whistle. The Jew manager, who was standing at the back of the dress-circle, stamped and swore with rage. The only person unmoved was the girl herself.

When the second act was over there came a storm of hisses, and Lord Henry got up from his chair and put on his coat. "She is quite beautiful, Dorian," he said, "but she can't act. Let us go."

"I am going to see the play through," answered the lad, in a hard, bitter voice. "I am awfully sorry that I have made you waste an evening, Harry. I apologize to you both."

"My dear Dorian, I should think Miss Vane was ill," interrupted Hallward. "We will come some other night."

"I wish she was ill," he rejoined. "But she seems to me to be simply callous and cold. She has entirely altered. Last night she was a great artist. This evening she is merely a commonplace, mediocre actress."

"Don't talk like that about any one you love, Dorian. Love is a more wonderful thing than Art."

"They are both simply forms of imitation," remarked Lord Henry. "But do let us go. Dorian, you must not stay here any longer. It is not good for one's morals to see bad acting. Besides, I don't suppose you will want your wife to act. So what does it matter if she plays Juliet like a wooden doll? She is very lovely, and if she knows as little about life as she does about acting, she will be a delightful experience.

There are only two kinds of people who are really fascinating—people who know absolutely everything, and people who know absolutely nothing. Good heavens, my dear boy, don't look so tragic! The secret of remaining young is never to have an emotion that is unbecoming. Come to the club with Basil and myself. We will smoke cigarettes and drink to the beauty of Sibyl Vane. She is beautiful. What more can you want?"

"Go away, Harry," cried the lad, "I want to be alone! Basil, you must go. Ah! can't you see that my heart is breaking?" The hot tears came to his eyes. His lips trembled, and, rushing to the back of the box, he leaned up against the wall, hiding his face in his hands.

"Let us go, Basil," said Lord Henry, with a strange tenderness in his voice, and the two young men passed out together.

A few moments afterward the footlights flared up, and the curtain rose on the third act. Dorian Gray went back to his seat. He looked pale, and proud, and indifferent. The play dragged on, and seemed interminable. Half of the audience went out, tramping in heavy boots, and laughing. The whole thing was a *fiasco*. The last act was played to almost empty benches. The curtain went down on a titter, and some groans.

As soon as it was over, Dorian Gray rushed behind the scenes into the greenroom. The girl was standing there alone, with a look of triumph on her face. Her eyes were lit with an exquisite fire. There was a radiance about her. Her parted lips were smiling over some secret of their own.

When he entered she looked at him, and an expression of infinite joy came over her. "How badly I acted to-night, Dorian!" she cried.

"Horribly!" he answered, gazing at her in amazement—"horribly! It was dreadful. Are you ill? You have no idea what it was. You have no idea what I suffered."

The girl smiled. "Dorian," she answered, lingering over his name with long-drawn music in her voice, as though it were sweeter than honey to the red petals of her mouth—"Dorian, you should have understood. But you understand now, don't you?"

"Understand what?" he asked, angrily.

"Why I was so bad to-night. Why I shall always be bad. Why I shall never act well again."

He shrugged his shoulders. "You are ill, I suppose. When you are ill you shouldn't act. You make yourself ridiculous. My friends were bored. I was bored."

She seemed not to listen to him. She was transfigured with joy. An ecstasy of happiness dominated her.

"Dorian, Dorian," she cried, "before I knew you, acting was the one reality of my life. It was only in the theater that I lived. I thought that it was all true. I was Rosalind one night, and Portia the other. The joy of Beatrice was my joy, and the sorrows of Cordelia were mine also. I believed in everything. The common people who acted with me seemed to me to be godlike. The painted scenes were my world. I knew nothing but shadows, and I thought them real. You came—oh, my beautiful love!—and you freed my soul from prison. You taught me what reality really is. To-night, for the first time in my life, I saw through the hollowness, the sham, the silliness of the empty pageant in which I had always played. To-night for the first time, I became conscious that the Romeo was hideous, and old, and painted, that the moonlight in the orchard was false, that the scenery was vulgar, and that the words I had to speak were unreal, were not my words, were not what I wanted to say. You had brought me something higher, something of which all art is but a reflection. You had made me understand what love really is. My love! my love! Prince Charming! Prince of life! I have grown sick of shadows. You are more to me than all art can ever be. What have I to do with the puppets of a play? When I came on to-night I could not understand how it was that everything had gone from me. I thought that I was going to be wonderful. I found that I could do nothing. Suddenly it dawned on my soul what it all meant. The knowledge was exquisite to me. I heard them hissing, and I smiled. What could they know of love such as ours? Take me away, Dorian—take me away with you, where we can be quite alone. I hate the stage. I might mimic a passion that I do not feel, but I cannot mimic one that burns me like fire. Oh, Dorian, Dorian, you understand now what it signifies? Even if I could do it, it would be profanation for me to play at being in love. You have made me see that."

He flung himself down on the sofa, and turned away his face. "You have killed my love," he muttered.

She looked at him in wonder, and laughed. He made no answer. She came across to him, and with her little fingers stroked his hair. She knelt down and pressed his hands to her lips. He drew them away, and a shudder ran through him.

Then he leaped up, and went to the door. "Yes," he cried, "you have killed my love! You used to stir my imagination. Now you don't even stir my curiosity. You simply produce no effect. I loved you because you were marvelous, because you had genius and intellect, because you realized the dreams of great poets and gave shape and substance to the shadows of art. You have thrown it all away. You are shallow and stupid. My God! how mad I was to love you! What a fool I have been! You are nothing to me now. I will never see you again. I will never think of you. I will never mention your name. You don't know what you were to me, once. Why, once . . . Oh, I can't bear to think of it! I wish I had never laid eyes upon you! You have spoiled the romance of my life. How little you can know of love if you say it mars your art! Without your art you are nothing. I would have made you famous, splendid, magnificent. The world would have worshiped you, and you would have borne my name. What are you now? A third-rate actress with a pretty face."

The girl grew white, and trembled. She clenched her hands together, and her voice seemed to catch in her throat. "You are not serious, Dorian?" she murmured. "You are acting."

"Acting! I leave that to you. You do it so well," he answered, bitterly.

She rose from her knees, and, with a piteous expression of pain in her face, came across the room to him. She put her hand upon his arm, and looked into his eyes. He thrust her back. "Don't touch me!" he cried.

A low moan broke from her, and she flung herself at his feet, and lay there like a trampled flower. "Dorian, Dorian, don't leave me!" she whispered. "I am so sorry I didn't act well. I was thinking of you all the time. But I will try—indeed, I will try. It came so suddenly across me, my love for you. I think I should never have known it if you had not kissed me—if we had not kissed each other. Kiss me again, my love. Don't go away from me. I couldn't bear it. Oh! don't go away from me. My brother . . . No; never mind. He didn't mean it. He was in jest. . . . But you, oh! can't you forgive me for to-night? I will work so hard, and try to improve. Don't be cruel to me, because I love you better than anything in the world. After all, it is only once that I have not pleased you. But you are quite right, Dorian. I should have shown myself more of an artist. It was foolish of me; and yet I couldn't help it. Oh, don't leave me, don't leave me!" A fit of passionate sobbing choked her. She crouched on the floor like a wounded thing, and Dorian Gray, with his beautiful eyes, looked down at her, and his chiseled lips curled in exquisite disdain. There is always something ridiculous about the emotion of people whom one has ceased to love. Sibyl Vane seemed to him to be absurdly melodramatic. Her tears and sobs annoyed him.

"I am going," he said at last, in his calm, clear voice. "I don't wish to be unkind, but I can't see you again. You have disappointed me."

She wept silently, and made no answer, but crept nearer. Her little hands stretched blindly out, and appeared to be seeking for him. He turned on his heel, and left the room. In a few moments he was out of the theater.

Where he went to he hardly knew. He remembered wandering through dimly lit streets, past gaunt, black-shadowed archways and evil-looking houses. Women with hoarse voices and harsh laughter had called after him. Drunkards had reeled by cursing, and chattering to themselves like monstrous apes. He had seen grotesque children huddled upon doorsteps, and heard shrieks and oaths from gloomy courts.

As the dawn was just breaking he found himself close to Covent Garden. The darkness lifted, and, flushed with faint fires, the sky hollowed itself into a perfect pearl. Huge carts filled with nodding lilies rumbled slowly down the polished empty street. The air was heavy with the perfume of the flowers, and their beauty seemed to bring him an anodyne for his pain. He followed into the market, and watched the men unloading their wagons. A white-smocked carter offered him some cherries. He thanked him, wondered why he refused to accept any money for them, and began to eat them listlessly. They had been plucked at midnight, and the coldness of the moon had entered into them. A long line of boys carrying crates of striped tulips, and of yellow and red roses, defiled in front of him, threading their way through the huge jade-green piles of vegetables. Under the portico, with its gray sun-bleached pillars, loitered a troop of draggled bareheaded girls, waiting for the auction to be over. Others crowded round the swinging doors of the coffee-house in the Piazza. The heavy cart-horses slipped and stamped upon the rough stones, shaking their bells and trappings. Some of the drivers were lying asleep on a pile of sacks. Iris-necked, and pink-footed, the pigeons ran about picking up seeds.

After a little while he hailed a hansom, and drove home. For a few moments he loitered upon the doorstep, looking round at the silent Square, with its blank, close-shuttered windows and its staring blinds. The sky was pure opal now, and the roofs of the houses glistened like silver against it. From some chimney opposite a thin wreath of smoke was rising. It curled, a violent riband, through the nacre-colored air.

In the huge gilt Venetian lantern, spoil of some Doge's barge, that hung from the ceiling of the great oak-paneled hall of entrance, lights were still burning from three flickering jets; thin blue petals of flame they seemed, rimmed with white fire. He turned them out, and, having thrown his hat and cape on the table, passed through the library toward the door of his bedroom, a large octagonal chamber on the ground floor that, in his new-born feeling for luxury, he had just had decorated for himself, and hung with some curious Renaissance tapestries that had been discovered stored in a disused attic at Selby Royal. As he was turning the handle of the door his eyes fell upon the portrait Basil Hallward had painted of him. He started back as if in surprise. Then he went on into his own room, looking somewhat puzzled. After he had taken the button-hole out of his coat, he seemed to hesitate. Finally he came back, went over to the picture and examined it. In the dim arrested light that struggled through the cream-colored silk blinds, the face appeared to him to be a little changed. The expression looked different. One would have said that there was a touch of cruelty in the mouth. It was certainly strange.

He turned round, and, walking to the window, drew up the blinds. The bright dawn flooded the room, and swept the fantastic shadows into dusty corners, where they lay shuddering. But the strange expression that he had noticed in the face of the portrait seemed to linger there, to be more intensified even. The quivering, ardent sunlight showed him the lines of cruelty round the mouth as clearly as if he had been looking into a mirror after he had done some dreadful thing.

He winced and taking up from the table an oval glass framed in ivory Cupids, one of Lord Henry's many presents to him, glanced hurriedly into its polished depths. No line like that warped his red lips. What did it mean?

He rubbed his eyes, and came close to the picture, and examined it again. There were no signs of any change when he looked into the actual painting, and yet there was no doubt that the whole expression had altered. It was not a mere fancy of his own. The thing was horribly apparent.

He threw himself into a chair, and began to think. Suddenly there flashed across his mind what he had said in Basil Hallward's studio the day the picture had been finished. Yes, he remembered it perfectly. He had uttered a mad wish that he himself might remain young and the portrait grow old; that his own beauty might be untarnished, and the face on the canvas bear the burden of his passions and his sins; that the painted image might be seared with the lines of suffering and thought, and that he might keep all the delicate bloom and loveliness of his then just conscious boyhood. Surely his wish had not been fulfilled? Such things were impossible. It seemed monstrous even to think of them. And yet there was the picture before him, with the touch of cruelty in the mouth.

Cruelty! Had he been cruel? It was the girl's fault, not his. He had dreamed of her as a great artist, had given his love to her because he had thought her great. Then she had disappointed him. She had been shallow and unworthy. And yet a feeling of infinite regret came over him as he thought of her lying at his feet sobbing like a little child. He remembered with what callousness he had watched her. Why had he been made like that? Why had such a soul been given to him? But he had suffered also. During the three terrible hours that the play had lasted he had lived centuries of pain, eon upon eon of torture. His life was well worth hers. She had marred him for a moment, if he had wounded her for an age. Besides, women were better suited to bear sorrow than men. They lived on their emotions. They only thought of their emotions. When they took lovers, it was merely to have some one with whom they could have scenes. Lord Henry had told him that, and Lord Henry knew what women were. Why should he trouble about Sibyl Vane? She was nothing to him now.

But the picture? What was he to say of that? It held the secret of his life, and told his story. It had taught him to love his own beauty. Would it teach him to loathe his own soul? Would he ever look at it again?

No; it was merely an illusion wrought on the troubled senses. The horrible night that he had passed had left phantoms behind it. Suddenly there had fallen upon his brain that tiny scarlet speck that makes men mad. The picture had not changed. It was folly to think so.

Yet it was watching him, with its beautiful marred face and its cruel smile. Its bright hair gleamed in the early sunlight. Its blue eyes met his own. A sense of infinite pity, not for himself, but for the painted image of himself, came over him. It had altered already, and would alter more. Its gold would wither into gray. Its red and white roses would die. For every sin that he committed, a stain would fleck and wreck its fairness. But he would not sin. The picture, changed or unchanged, would be to him the visible emblem of conscience. He would resist temptation. He would not see Lord Henry any more—would not, at any rate, listen to those subtle, poisonous theories that in Basil Hallward's garden had first stirred within him the passion for impossible things. He would go back to Sibyl Vane, make her amends, marry her, try to love her again. Yes, it was his duty to do so. She must have suffered more than he had. Poor child! He had been selfish and cruel to her. The fascination that she had exercised over him would return. They would be happy together. His life with her would be beautiful and pure.

He got up from his chair, and drew a large screen right in front of the portrait, shuddering as he glanced at it. "How horrible!" he muttered to himself, and he walked across to the window and opened it. When he stepped out onto the grass, he drew a deep breath. The fresh morning air seemed to drive away all his sombre passions. He thought only of Sibyl. A faint echo of his love came back to him. He repeated her name over and over again. The birds that were singing in the dew-drenched garden seemed to be telling the flowers about her.

VIII

IT was long past noon when he awoke. His valet had crept several times on tiptoe into the room to see if he was stirring, and had wondered what made his young master sleep so late. Finally his bell sounded, and Victor came in softly with a cup of tea and a pile of letters on a small tray of old Sévres china, and drew back the olive-satin curtains, with their shimmering blue lining, that hung in front of the three tall windows.

"Monsieur has well slept this morning," he said, smiling.

"What o'clock is it, Victor?" asked Dorian Gray, drowsily.

"One hour and a quarter, monsieur."

How late it was! He sat up, and, having sipped some tea, turned over his letters. One of them was from Lord Henry, and had been brought by hand that morning. He hesitated for a moment, and then put it aside. The others he opened listlessly. They contained the usual collection of cards, invitations to dinner, tickets for private views, programs of charity concerts, and the like, that are showered on fashionable young men every morning during the season. There was a rather heavy bill for a chased silver Louis Quinze toilet-set that he had not yet had the courage to send on to his guardians, who were extremely old-fashioned people and did not realize that we live in an age when unnecessary things are our only necessities; and there were several very courteously worded communications from Jermyn Street money-lenders, offering to advance any sum of money at a moment's notice and at the most reasonable rates of interest.

After about ten minutes he got up, and, throwing on an elaborate dressing-gown of silk-embroidered cashmere wool, passed into the onyx-paved bathroom. The cool water refreshed him after his long sleep. He seemed to have forgotten all that he had gone through. A dim sense of having taken part in some strange tragedy came to him once or twice, but there was the unreality of a dream about it.

As soon as he was dressed, he went into the library and sat down to a light French breakfast that had been laid out for him on a small round table close to the open window. It was an exquisite day. The warm air seemed laden with spices. A bee flew in, and buzzed around the blue-dragon bowl that, filled with sulphur-yellow roses, stood before him. He felt perfectly happy.

Suddenly his eye fell on the screen that he had placed in front of the portrait, and he started.

"Too cold for monsieur?" asked his valet, putting an omelet on the table. "I shut the window."

Dorian shook his head. "I am not cold," he murmured.

Was it all true? Had the portrait really changed? Or had it been simply his own imagination that had made him see a look of evil where there had been a look of joy? Surely a painted canvas could not alter? The thing was absurd. It would serve as a tale to tell Basil some day. It would make him smile.

And yet how vivid was his recollection of the whole thing! First in the dim twilight, and then in the bright dawn, he had seen the touch of cruelty round the warped lips. He almost dreaded his valet leaving the room. He knew that when he was alone he would have to examine the portrait. He was afraid of certainty. When the coffee and cigarettes had been brought and the man turned to go, he felt a wild desire to tell him to remain. As the door was closing behind him he called him back. The man stood waiting for his orders. Dorian looked at him for a moment. "I am not at home to any one, Victor," he said, with a sigh. The man bowed and retired.

Then he rose from the table, lit a cigarette, and flung himself down on a luxuriously cushioned couch that stood facing the screen. The screen was an old one of gilt Spanish leather, stamped and wrought with a rather florid Louis Quatorze pattern. He scanned it curiously, wondering if ever before it had concealed the secret of a man's life.

Should he move it aside, after all? Why not let it stay there? What was the use of knowing? If the thing was true, it was terrible. If it was not true, why trouble about it? But what if, by some fate or deadlier chance, eyes other than his spied behind, and saw the horrible change? What should he do if Basil Hallward came and asked to look at his own picture? Basil would be sure to do that. No; the thing had to be examined, and at once. Anything would be better than this dreadful state of doubt.

He got up and locked both doors; at least he would be alone when he looked upon the mask of his shame. Then he drew the screen aside, and saw himself face to face. It was perfectly true. The portrait had altered.

As he often remembered afterward, and always with no small wonder, he found himself at first gazing at the portrait with a feeling of almost scientific interest. That such a change should have taken place was incredible to him. And yet it was a fact. Was there some subtle affinity between the chemical atoms, that shaped themselves into form and color on the canvas, and the soul that was within him? Could it be that what that soul thought, they realized?—that what it dreamed, they made true? Or was there some other, more terrible reason? He shuddered and felt afraid, and, going back to the couch, lay there, gazing at the picture in sickened horror.

One thing, however, he felt that it had done for him: it had made him conscious how unjust, how cruel, he had been to Sibyl Vane. It was not too late to make reparation for that. She could still be his wife. His unreal and selfish love would yield to some higher influence, would be transformed into some nobler passion, and the portrait that Basil Hallward had painted of him would be a guide to him through life, would be to him what holiness is to some, and conscience to others, and the fear of God to us all. There were opiates for remorse, drugs that could lull the moral sense to sleep. But here was a visible symbol of the degradation of sin. Here was an ever-present sign of the ruin men brought upon their souls.

Three o'clock struck, and four, and the half-hour rang its double chime, but Dorian Gray did not stir. He was trying to gather up the scarlet threads of life, and to weave them into a pattern; to find his way through the sanguine labyrinth of passion through which he was wandering. He did not know what to do or what to think. Finally, he went over to the table and wrote a passionate letter to the girl he loved, imploring her forgiveness, and accusing himself of madness. He covered page after page with wild words of sorrow, and wilder words of pain. There is a luxury in self-reproach. When we blame ourselves we feel that no one else has a right to blame us. It is the confession, not the priest, that gives us absolution. When Dorian Gray had finished the letter, he felt that he had been forgiven.

Suddenly there came a knock at the door, and he heard Lord Henry's voice outside. "My dear boy, I must see you. Let me in at once. I can't bear your shutting yourself up like this."

He made no answer at first, but remained quite still. The knocking still continued, and grew louder. Yes, it was better to let Lord Henry in, and to explain to him the new life he was going to lead, to quarrel with him if it became necessary to quarrel, to part, if parting was inevitable. He jumped up, drew the screen hastily across the picture, and unlocked the door.

"I am sorry for it all, Dorian," said Lord Henry, as he entered. "But you must not think too much about it."

"Do you mean about Sibyl Vane?" asked the lad.

"Yes, of course," answered Lord Henry, sinking into a chair, and slowly pulling off his yellow gloves. "It is dreadful, from one point of view, but it was not your fault. Tell me, did you go behind and see her after the play was over?"

"Yes."

"I felt sure you had. Did you make a scene with her?"

"I was brutal, Harry—perfectly brutal. But it is all right now. I am not sorry for anything that has happened. It has taught me to know myself better."

"Ah, Dorian, I am so glad you take it in that way! I was afraid I would find you plunged in remorse, and tearing that nice curly hair of yours."

"I have got through all that," said Dorian, shaking his head, and smiling. "I am perfectly happy now. I know what conscience is, to begin with. It is not what you told me it was. It is the divinest thing in us. Don't sneer at it, Harry, any more—at least, not before me. I want to be good. I can't bear the idea of my soul being hideous."

"A very charming artistic basis for ethics, Dorian! I congratulate you on it. But how are you going to begin?"

"By marrying Sibyl Vane."

"Marrying Sibyl Vane!" cried Lord Henry, standing up, and looking at him in perplexed amazement. "But, my dear Dorian—"

"Yes, Harry, I know what you are going to say. Something dreadful about marriage. Don't say it. Don't ever say things of that kind to me again. Two days ago I asked Sibyl to marry me. I am not going to break my word to her. She is to be my wife."

"Your wife! Dorian! . . . Didn't you get my letter? I wrote to you this morning, and sent the note down by my own man."

"Your letter? Oh, yes, I remember. I have not read it yet, Harry. I was afraid there might be something in it that I wouldn't like. You cut life to pieces with your epigrams."

"You know nothing, then?"

"What do you mean?"

Lord Henry walked across the room, and, sitting down by Dorian Gray, took both his hands in his own, and held them tightly. "Dorian," he said, "my letter—don't be frightened—was to tell you that Sibyl Vane is dead."

A cry of pain broke from the lad's lips, and he leaped to his feet, tearing his hands away from Lord

Henry's grasp. "Dead! Sibyl dead! It is not true! It is a horrible lie! How dare you say it?"

"It is quite true, Dorian," said Lord Henry, gravely. "It is in all the morning papers. I wrote down to you to ask you not to see any one till I came. There will have to be an inquest, of course, and you must not be mixed up in it. Things like that make a man fashionable in Paris. But in London people are so prejudiced. Here, one should never make one's *début* with a scandal. One should reserve that to give an interest to one's old age. I suppose they don't know your name at the theater. If they don't, it is all right. Did any one see you going round to her room? That is an important point."

Dorian did not answer for a few moments. He was dazed with horror. Finally he stammered, in a stifled voice: "Harry, did you say an inquest? What did you mean by that? Did Sibyl— Oh, Harry I can't bear it! But be quick. Tell me everything at once."

"I have no doubt it was not an accident, Dorian, though it must be put in that way to the public. It seems that as she was leaving the theater with her mother, about half-past twelve or so, she said she had forgotten something up-stairs. They waited some time for her, but she did not come down again. They ultimately found her lying dead on the floor of her dressing-room. She had swallowed something by mistake, some dreadful thing they use at theaters. I don't know what it was, but it had either prussic acid or white lead in it. I should fancy it was prussic acid, and she seems to have died instantaneously."

"Harry, Harry, it is terrible!" cried the lad.

"Yes, it is very tragic, of course, but you must not get yourself mixed up in it. I see by *The Standard* that she was seventeen. I should have thought she was almost younger than that. She looked such a child, and seemed to know so little about acting. Dorian, you mustn't let this thing get on your nerves. You must come and dine with me, and afterward we will look in at the Opera. It is a Patti night, and everybody will be there. You can come to my sister's box. She has got some smart women with her."

"So I have murdered Sibyl Vane," said Dorian Gray, half to himself—"murdered her as surely as if I had cut her little throat with a knife. Yet the roses are not less lovely for all that. The birds sing just as happily in my garden. And to-night I am to dine with you, and then go on to the Opera, and sup somewhere, I suppose, afterward. How extraordinarily dramatic life is! If I had read all this in a book, Harry, I think I would have wept over it. Somehow, now that it has happened actually, and to me, it seems far too wonderful for tears. Here is the first passionate love-letter I have ever written in my life. Strange, that my first passionate love-letter should have been addressed to a dead girl. Can they feel, I wonder, those white silent people we call the dead? Sibyl! Can she feel, or know, or listen? Oh, Harry, how I loved her once! It seems years ago to me now. She was everything to me. Then came that dreadful night—was it really only last night?—when she played so badly, and my heart almost broke. She explained it all to me. It was terribly pathetic. But I was not moved a bit. I thought her shallow. Suddenly something happened that made me afraid. I can't tell you what it was, but it was terrible. I said I would go back to her. I felt I had done wrong. And now she is dead. My God! my God! Harry, what shall I do? You don't know the danger I am in, and there is nothing to keep me straight. She would have done that for me. She had no right to kill herself. It was selfish of her."

"My dear Dorian," answered Lord Henry, taking a cigarette from his case, and producing a gold-latten match-box, "the only way a woman can ever reform a man is by boring him so completely that he loses all possible interest in life. If you had married this girl you would have been wretched. Of course, you would have treated her kindly. One can always be kind to people about whom one cares nothing. But she would have soon found out that you were absolutely indifferent to her. And when a woman finds that out about her husband, she either becomes dreadfully dowdy, or wears very smart bonnets that some other woman's husband has to pay for. I say nothing about the social mistake, which would have been abject, which, of course, I would not have allowed, but I assure you that in any case the whole thing would have been an absolute failure."

"I suppose it would," muttered the lad, walking up and down the room, and looking horribly pale. "But I thought it was my duty. It is not my fault that this terrible tragedy has prevented my doing what was right. I remember your saying once that there is a fatality about good resolutions—that they are always made too late. Mine certainly were."

"Good resolutions are useless attempts to interfere with scientific laws. Their origin is pure vanity. Their result is absolutely *nil*. They give us, now and then, some of those luxurious sterile emotions that have a certain charm for the weak. That is all that can be said for them. They are simply cheques that men draw on a bank where they have no account."

"Harry," cried Dorian Gray, coming over and sitting down beside him, "why is it that I cannot feel this tragedy as much as I want to? I don't think I am heartless. Do you?"

"You have done too many foolish things during the last fortnight to be entitled to give yourself that name, Dorian," answered Lord Henry, with his sweet, melancholy smile.

The lad frowned. "I don't like that explanation, Harry," he rejoined, "but I am glad you don't think I am heartless. I am nothing of the kind. I know I am not. And yet I must admit that this thing that has happened does not affect me as it should. It seems to me to be simply like a wonderful ending to a wonderful play. It has all the terrible beauty of a Greek tragedy, a tragedy in which I took a great part, but by which I have not been wounded."

"It is an interesting question," said Lord Henry, who found an exquisite pleasure in playing on the lad's unconscious egotism—"an extremely interesting question. I fancy that the true explanation is this. It often happens that the real tragedies of life occur in such an inartistic manner that they hurt us by their crude violence, their absolute incoherence, their absurd want of meaning, their entire lack of style. They affect us just as vulgarity affects us. They give us an impression of sheer brute force, and we revolt against that. Sometimes, however, a tragedy that possesses artistic elements of beauty crosses our lives. If these elements of beauty are real, the whole thing simply appeals to our sense of dramatic effect. Suddenly we find that we are no longer the actors, but the spectators of the play; or, rather, we are both. We watch ourselves, and the mere wonder of the spectacle enthralls us. In the present case, what is it that has really happened? Some one has killed herself for love of you. I wish that I had ever had such an experience. It would have made me in love with love for the rest of my life. The people who have adored me—there have not been very many, but there have been some—have always insisted on living on, long after I had ceased to care for them, or they to care for me. They have become stout and tedious, and when I meet them they go in at once for reminiscences. That awful memory of woman! What a fearful thing it is! And what an utter intellectual stagnation it reveals! One should absorb the color of life, but one should never remember its details. Details are always vulgar."

"I must sow poppies in my garden," sighed Dorian.

"There is no necessity," rejoined his companion. "Life has always poppies in her hands. Of course, now and then things linger. I once wore nothing but violets all through one season, as a form of artistic mourning for a romance that would not die. Ultimately, however, it did die. I forget what killed it. I think it was her proposing to sacrifice the whole world for me. That is always a dreadful moment. It fills one with the terror of eternity. Well—would you believe it?—a week ago, at Lady Hampshire's I found myself seated at dinner next the lady in question, and she insisted on going over the whole thing again, and digging up the past, and raking up the future. I had buried my romance in a bed of asphodel. She dragged it out again, and assured me that I had spoiled her life. I am bound to state that she ate an enormous dinner, so I did not feel any anxiety. But what a lack of taste she showed! The one charm of the past is that it is the past. But women never know when the curtain has fallen. They always want a sixth act, and as soon as the interest of the play is entirely over they propose to continue it. If they were allowed their own way, every comedy would have a tragic ending, and every tragedy would culminate in a farce. They are charmingly artificial, but they have no sense of art. You are more fortunate than I am. I assure you, Dorian, that not one of the women I have known would have done for me what Sibyl Vane did for you. Ordinary women always console themselves. Some of them do it by going in for sentimental colors. Never trust a woman who wears mauve, whatever her age may be, or a woman over thirty-five who is fond of pink ribbons. It always means that they have a history. Others find a great consolation in suddenly discovering the good qualities of their husbands. They flaunt their conjugal felicity in one's face, as if it were the most fascinating of sins. Religion consoles some. Its mysteries have all the charm of a flirtation, a woman once told me; and I can quite understand it. Besides, nothing makes one so vain as being told that one is a sinner. Conscience makes egotists of us all. Yes, there is really no end to the consolations that women find in modern life. Indeed, I have not mentioned the most important one."

"What is that, Harry?" said the lad, listlessly.

"Oh, the obvious consolation. Taking some one else's admirer when one loses one's own. In good society that always whitewashes a woman. But really, Dorian, how different Sibyl Vane must have been from all the women one meets! There is something to me quite beautiful about her death. I am glad I am living in a century when such wonders happen. They make one believe in the reality of the things we all play with, such as romance, passion, and love."

"I was terribly cruel to her. You forget that."

"I am afraid that women appreciate cruelty, downright cruelty, more than anything else. They have wonderfully primitive instincts. We have emancipated them, but they remain slaves looking for their masters, all the same. They love being dominated. I am sure you were splendid. I have never seen you really and absolutely angry, but I can fancy how delightful you looked. And, after all, you said something to me the day before yesterday that seemed to me at the time to be merely fanciful, but that I see now was absolutely true, and it holds the key to everything."

"What was that, Harry?"

"You said to me that Sibyl Vane represented to you all the heroines of romance—that she was Desdemona one night, and Orphelia the other; that if she died as Juliet, she came to life as Imogen."

"She will never come to life again now," muttered the lad, burying his face in his hands.

"No, she will never come to life. She has played her last part. But you must think of that lonely death in the tawdry dressing-room simply as a strange lurid fragment from some Jacobean tragedy, as a wonderful scene from Webster, or Ford, or Cyril Tourneur. The girl never really lived, and so she has never really died. To you at least she was always a dream, a phantom that flitted through Shakespeare's plays and left them lovelier for its presence, a reed through which Shakespeare's music sounded richer and more full of joy. The moment she touched actual life, she marred it, and it marred her, and so she passed away. Mourn for Orphelia, if you like. Put ashes on your head because Cordelia was strangled. Cry out against Heaven because the daughter of Brabantio died. But don't waste your tears over Sibyl Vane. She was less real than they are."

There was a silence. The evening darkened in the room. Noiselessly, and with silver feet, the shadows crept in from the garden. The colors faded wearily out of things.

After some time Dorian Gray looked up. "You have explained me to myself, Harry," he murmured, with something of a sigh of relief. "I felt all that you have said, but somehow I was afraid of it, and I could not express it to myself. How well you know me! But we will not talk again of what has happened. It has been a marvelous experience. That is all. I wonder if life has still in store for me anything as marvelous."

"Life has everything in store for you, Dorian. There is nothing that you, with your extraordinary good looks, will not be able to do."

"But suppose, Harry, I became haggard, and old, and wrinkled? What then?"

"Ah, then," said Lord Henry, rising to go—"then, my dear Dorian, you would have to fight for your victories. As it is, they are brought to you. No, you must keep your good looks. We live in an age that reads too much to be wise, and that thinks too much to be beautiful. We can not spare you. And now you had better dress, and drive down to the club. We are rather late, as it is."

"I think I shall join you at the Opera, Harry. I feel too tired to eat anything. What is the number of your sister's box?"

"Twenty-seven, I believe. It is on the grand tier. You will see her name on the door. But I am sorry you won't come and dine."

"I don't feel up to it," said Dorian, listlessly. "But I am awfully obliged to you for all that you have said to me. You are certainly my best friend. No one has ever understood me as you have."

"We are only at the beginning of our friendship, Dorian," answered Lord Henry, shaking him by the hand. "Good-bye. I shall see you before nine-thirty, I hope. Remember, Patti is singing."

As he closed the door behind him, Dorian Gray touched the bell, and in a few minutes Victor appeared with the lamps and drew the blinds down. He waited impatiently for him to go. The man seemed to take an interminable time over everything.

As soon as he had left, he rushed to the screen, and drew it back. No; there was no further change in the picture. It had received the news of Sibyl Vane's death before he had known of it himself. It was conscious of the events of life as they occurred. The vicious cruelty that marred the fine lines of the mouth had, no doubt, appeared at the very moment that the girl had drunk the poison, whatever it was. Or was it indifferent to results? Did it merely take cognizance of what passed within the soul? He wondered, and hoped that some day he would see the change taking place before his very eyes, shuddering as he hoped it.

Poor Sibyl! what a romance it had all been! She had often mimicked death on the stage. Then Death himself had touched her, and taken her with him. How had she played that dreadful last scene? Had she cursed him as she died? No; she had died for love of him, and love would always be a sacrament to him now. She had atoned for everything by the sacrifice she had made of her life. He would not think any more of what she had made him go through on that horrible night at the theater. When he thought of her, it would be as a wonderful tragic figure sent on to the world's stage to show the supreme reality of Love. A wonderful tragic figure? Tears came to his eyes as he remembered her childlike look and winsome fanciful ways and shy tremulous grace. He brushed them away hastily, and looked again at the picture.

He felt that the time had really come for making his choice. Or had his choice already been made? Yes, life had decided that for him—life, and his own infinite curiosity about life. Eternal youth, infinite passion, pleasures subtle and secret, wild joys and wilder sins—he was to have all these things. The portrait was to bear the burden of his shame; that was all.

A feeling of pain crept over him as he thought of the desecration that was in store for the fair face on the canvas. Once, in boyish mockery of Narcissus, he had kissed, or feigned to kiss, those painted lips that now smiled so cruelly at him. Morning after morning he had sat before the portrait wondering at its beauty, almost enamored of it, as it seemed to him at times. Was it to alter now with every mood to which he yielded? Was it to become a monstrous and loathsome thing, to be hidden away in a locked room, to be shut out from the sunlight that had so often touched to brighter gold the waving wonder of its hair? The pity of it! the pity of it!

For a moment he thought of praying that the horrible sympathy that existed between him and the picture might cease. It had changed in answer to a prayer; perhaps in answer to a prayer it might remain unchanged. And yet who that knew anything about Life would surrender the chance of remaining always young, however fantastic that chance might be, or with what fateful consequences it might be fraught? Besides, was it really under his control? Had it indeed been prayer that had produced the substitution? Might there not be some curious scientific reason for it all? If thought could exercise its influence upon a living organism, might not thought exercise an influence upon dead and inorganic things? Nay, without thought or conscious desire, might not things external to ourselves vibrate in unison with our moods and passions, atom calling to atom, in secret love or strange affinity? But the reason was of no importance. He would never again attempt by prayer any terrible power. If the picture was to alter, it was to alter. That was all. Why inquire too closely into it?

For there would be a real pleasure in watching it, He would be able to follow his mind into its secret places. This portrait would be to him the most magical of mirrors. As it had revealed to him his own body, so it would reveal to him his own soul. And when winter came upon it, he would still be standing where spring trembles on the verge of summer. When the blood crept from its face, and left behind a pallid mask of chalk with leaden eyes, he would keep the glamour of boyhood. Not one blossom of his loveliness would ever fade, not one pulse of his life would ever weaken. Like the gods of the Greeks, he would be strong, and fleet, and joyous. What did it matter what happened to the colored image on the canvas? He would be safe. That was everything.

He drew the screen back into its former place in front of the picture, smiling as he did so, and passed into his bedroom, where his valet was already waiting for him. An hour later he was at the Opera, and Lord Henry was leaning over his chair.

IX

AS he was sitting at breakfast next morning, Basil Hallward was shown into the room.

"I am so glad I have found you, Dorian," he said, gravely. "I called last night, and they told me you were at the Opera. Of course, I knew that was impossible. But I wish you had left word where you had really gone to. I passed a dreadful evening, half afraid that one tragedy might be followed by another. I think you might have telegraphed for me when you heard of it first. I read of it quite by chance in a late edition of the *Globe* that I picked up at the club. I came here at once, and was miserable at not finding you. I can't tell you how heart-broken I am about the whole thing. I know what you must suffer. But where were you? Did you go down and see the girl's mother? For a moment I thought of following you there. They gave the address in the paper. Somewhere in the Euston Road, isn't it? But I was afraid of intruding upon a sorrow that I could not lighten. Poor woman! What a state she must be in! And her only child, too! What did she say about it all?"

"My dear Basil, how do I know?" murmured Dorian Gray, sipping some pale-yellow wine from a delicate gold-beaded bubble of Venetian glass, and looking dreadfully bored. "I was at the Opera. You should have come on there. I met Lady Gwendolen, Harry's sister, for the first time. We were in her box. She is perfectly charming; and Patti sung divinely. Don't talk about horrid subjects. If one doesn't talk about a thing, it has never happened. • It is simply expression, as Harry says, that gives reality to things. I may mention that she was not the woman's only child. There is a son, a charming fellow, I believe. But he is not on the stage. He is a sailor, or something. And now, tell me about yourself and what you are painting."

"You went to the Opera?" said Hallward, speaking very slowly, and with a strained touch of pain in his voice. "You went to the Opera while Sibyl Vane was lying dead in some sordid lodging? You can talk to me of other women being charming, and of Patti singing divinely, before the girl you loved has even the quiet of a grave to sleep in? Why, man, there are horrors in store for that little white body of hers!"

"Stop Basil! I won't hear it!" cried Dorian, leaping to his feet. "You must not tell me about things. What is done is done. What is past is past."

"You call yesterday the past?"

"What has the actual lapse of time got to do with it? It is only shallow people who require years to get rid of an emotion. A man who is master of himself can end a sorrow as easily as he can invent a pleasure. I don't want to be at the mercy of my emotions. I want to use them, to enjoy them, and to dominate them."

"Dorian, this is horrible! Something has changed you completely. You look exactly the same wonderful boy who, day after day, used to come down to my studio to sit for his picture. But you were simple, natural, and affectionate then. You were the most unspoiled creature in the whole world. Now, I don't know what has come over you. You talk as if you had no heart, no pity in you. It is all Harry's influence. I see that."

The lad flushed up, and going to the window looked for a few moments on the green, flickering, sun-lashed garden. "I owe a great deal to Harry, Basil," he said at last—"more than I owe to you. You only taught me to be vain."

"Well, I am punished for that, Dorian—or shall be some day."

"I don't know what you mean, Basil," he exclaimed, turning round. "I don't know what you want. What do you want?"

"I want the Dorian Gray I used to paint," said the artist, sadly.

"Basil," said the lad, going over to him, and putting his hand on his shoulder, "you have come too late. Yesterday, when I heard that Sibyl Vane had killed herself—"

"Killed herself! Good heavens! is there no doubt about that?" cried Hallward, looking up at him with an expression of horror.

"My dear Basil! Surely you don't think it was a vulgar accident? Of course she killed herself."

The elder man buried his face in his hands. "How fearful!" he muttered, and a shudder ran through him.

"No," said Dorian Gray, "there is nothing fearful about it. It is one of the great romantic tragedies of the age. As a rule, people who act lead the most commonplace lives. They are good husbands, or faithful wives, or something tedious. You know what I mean—middle-class virtue, and all that kind of thing. How different Sibyl was! She lived her finest tragedy. She was always a heroine. The last night she played—the night you saw her—she acted badly because she had known the reality of love. When she knew its unreality, she died, as Juliet might have died. She passed again into the sphere of art. There is something of the martyr about her. Her death has all the pathetic uselessness of martyrdom, all its wasted beauty. But, as I was saying, you must not think I have not suffered. If you had come in yesterday at a particular moment—about half-past five, perhaps, or a quarter to six—you would have found me in tears. Even Harry, who was here—who brought me the news, in fact—had no idea of what I was going through. I suffered immensely. Then it passed away. I cannot repeat an emotion. No one can, except sentimentalists. And you are awfully unjust, Basil. You come down here to console me. That is charming of you. You find me consoled, and you are furious. How like a sympathetic person! You remind me of a story Harry told me about a certain philanthropist who spent twenty years of his life in trying to get some grievance redressed, or some unjust law altered—I forget exactly what it was. Finally he succeeded, and nothing could exceed his disappointment. He had absolutely nothing to do, almost died of *ennui,* and became a confirmed misanthrope. And, besides, my dear old Basil, if you really want to console me, teach me rather to forget what has happened, or to see it from a proper artistic point of view. Was it not Gautier who used to write about *la consolation des art?* I remember picking up a little vellum-covered book in your studio one day and chancing on that delightful phrase. Well, I am not like that young man you told me of when we were down at Marlowe together, the young man who used to say that yellow satin could console one for all the miseries of life. I love beautiful things that one can touch and handle. Old brocades, green bronzes, lacquer-work, carved ivories, exquisite surroundings, luxury, pomp—there is much to be got from all these. But the artistic temperament that they create, or at any rate reveal, is still more to me. To become the spectator of one's own life, as Harry says, is to escape the suffering of life. I know you are surprised at my talking to you like this. You have not realized how I have developed. I was a schoolboy when you knew me. I am a man now. I have new passions, new thoughts, new ideas. I am different, but you must not like me less. I am changed, but you must always be my friend. Of course, I am very fond of Harry. But I know you are better than he is. You are not stronger—you are too much afraid of life—but you are better. And how happy we used to be together! Don't leave me, Basil, and don't quarrel with me. I am what I am. There is nothing more to be said."

The painter felt strangely moved. The lad was infinitely dear to him, and his personality had been the great turning-point in his art. He could not bear the idea of reproaching him any more. After all, his indifference was probably merely a mood that would pass away. There was so much in him that was good, so much in him that was noble.

"Well, Dorian," he said, at length, with a sad smile, "I won't speak to you again about this horrible thing after to-day. I only trust your name won't be mentioned in connection with it. The inquest is to take place this afternoon. Have they summoned you?"

Dorian shook his head, and a look of annoyance passed over his face at the mention of the word "inquest." There was something so crude and vulgar about everything of the kind. "They don't know my name," he answered.

"But surely she did?"

"Only my Christian name, and that, I am quite sure, she never mentioned to any one. She told me once that they were all rather curious to learn who I was, and that she invariably told them my name was Prince Charming. It was pretty of her. You must do me a drawing of Sibyl, Basil. I should like to have something more of her than the memory of a few kisses and some broken, pathetic words."

"I will try and do something, Dorian, if it would please you. But you must come and sit to me yourself again. I can't get on without you."

"I can never sit to you again, Basil. It is impossible!" he exclaimed, starting back.

The painter stared at him. "My dear boy, what nonsense!" he cried. "Do you mean to say you don't like what I did of you? Where is it? Why have you pulled the screen in front of it? Let me look at it. It is the best thing I have ever done. Do take the screen away, Dorian; it is simply disgraceful of your servant hiding my work like that. I felt the room looked different as I came in."

"My servant has nothing to do with it, Basil. You don't imagine I let him arrange my room for me? He settles my flowers for me sometimes—that is all. No; I did it myself. The light was too strong on the portrait."

"Too strong! Impossible, my dear fellow! It is an admirable place for it. Let me see it." And Hallward walked toward the corner of the room.

A cry of terror broke from Dorian Gray's lips and he rushed between the painter and the screen.

"Basil," he said, looking very pale, "you must not look at it. I don't wish you to."

"Not look at my own work! You are not serious. Why shouldn't I look at it?" exclaimed Hallward, laughing.

"If you try to look at it, Basil, on my word of honor I will never speak to you again as long as I live. I am quite serious. I don't offer any explanation, and you are not to ask for any. But, remember, if you touch this screen, everything is over between us."

Hallward was thunderstruck. He looked at Dorian Gray in absolute amazement. He had never seen him like this before. The lad was actually pallid with rage. His hands were clenched, and the pupils of his eyes were like disks of blue fire. He was trembling all over.

"Dorian!"

"Don't speak!"

"But what is the matter? Of course, I won't look at it if you don't want me to," he said, rather coldly, turning on his heel, and going over toward the window. "But, really, it seems rather absurd that I shouldn't see my own work, especially as I am going to exhibit it in Paris in the autumn. I shall probably have to give it another coat of varnish before that, so I must see it some day, and why not to-day?"

"To exhibit it! You want to exhibit it?" exclaimed Dorian Gray, a strange sense of terror creeping over him. Was the world going to be shown his secret? Were people to gape at the mystery of his life? That was impossible. Something—he did not know what—had to be done at once.

"Yes; I don't suppose you will object to that.

Georges Petit is going to collect all my best pictures for a special exhibition in the Rue de Sèze,which will open the first week in October. The portrait will only be away a month. I should think you could easily spare it for that time. In fact, you are sure to be out of town. And if you keep it always behind a screen, you can't care much about it."

Dorian Gray passed his hand over his forehead. There were beads of perspiration there. He felt that he was on the brink of a horrible danger. "You told me a month ago that you would never exhibit it," he cried. "Why have you changed your mind? You people who go in for being consistent have just as many moods as others have. The only difference is that your moods are rather meaningless. You can't have forgotten that you assured me most solemnly that nothing in the world would induce you to send it to any exhibition. You told Harry exactly the same thing." He stopped suddenly, and a gleam of light came into his eyes. He remembered that Lord Henry had said to him once, half seriously and half in jest: "If you want to have a strange quarter of an hour, get Basil to tell you why he won't exhibit your picture. He told me why he wouldn't, and it was a revelation to me." Yes, perhaps Basil, too, had his secret. He would ask him and try.

"Basil," he said, coming over quite close and looking him straight in the face, "we have each of us a secret. Let me know yours, and I shall tell you mine. What was your reason for refusing to exhibit my picture?"

The painter shuddered in spite of himself. "Dorian, if I told you, you might like me less than you do, and you would certainly laugh at me. I could not bear your doing either of those two things. If you wish me never to look at your picture again, I am content. I have always you to look at. If you wish the best work I have ever done to be hidden from the world, I am satisfied. Your friendship is dearer to me than any fame or reputation."

"No, Basil, you must tell me," insisted Dorian Gray. "I think I have a right to know." His feeling of terror had passed away, and curiosity had taken its place. He was determined to find out Basil Hallward's mystery.

"Let us sit down, Dorian," said the painter, looking troubled. "Let us sit down. And just answer me one question. Have you noticed in the picture something curious?—something that probably at first did not strike you, but that revealed itself to you suddenly?"

"Basil!" cried the lad, clutching the arms of his chair with trembling hands, and gazing at him with wild, startled eyes.

"I see you did. Don't speak. Wait till you hear what I have to say. Dorian, from the moment I met you, your personality had the most extraordinary influence over me. I was dominated, soul, brain, and power, by you. You became to me the visible incarnation of that unseen ideal whose memory haunts us artists like an exquisite dream. I worshiped you. I grew jealous of every one to whom you spoke. I wanted to have you all to myself. I was only happy when I was with you. When you were away from me you were still present in my art. . . . Of course, I never let you know anything about this. It would have been impossible. You would not have understood it; I hardly understood it myself. I only knew that I had seen perfection face to face, and that the world had become wonderful to my eyes—too wonderful, perhaps; for in such mad worships there is peril, the peril of losing them, no less than the peril of keeping them. . . . Weeks and weeks went on, and I grew more and more absorbed in you. Then came a new development. I had drawn you as Paris in dainty armor, and as Adonis with huntsman's cloak and polished boar-spear. Crowned with heavy lotus-blossoms, you had sat on the prow of Adrian's barge, gazing across the green turbid Nile. You had leaned over the still pool of some Greek woodland, and seen in the water's silent silver the marvel of your own face; and it had all been what art should be—unconscious, ideal, and remote. One day—a fatal day, I sometimes think—I determined to paint a wonderful portrait of you as you actually are, not in the costume of dead ages, but in your own dress and in your own time. Whether it was the Realism of the method, or the mere wonder of your own personality, thus directly presented to me without mist or veil, I can not tell. But I know that as I worked at it every flake and film of color seemed to me to reveal my secret. I grew afraid that others would know of my idolatry. I felt, Dorian, that I had told too much, that I had put too much of myself into it. Then it was that I resolved never to allow the picture to be exhibited. You were a little annoyed, but then you did not realize all that it meant to me. Harry, to whom I talked about it, laughed at me. But I did not mind that. When the picture was finished, and I sat alone with it, I felt that I was right. . . . Well, after a few days the thing left my studio, and as soon as I had got rid of the intolerable fascination of its presence it seemed to me that I had been foolish in imagining that I had seen anything in it, more than that you were extremely good-looking and that I could paint. Even now I can not help feeling that it is a mistake to think that the passion one feels in creation is ever really shown in the work one creates. Art is always more abstract than we fancy. Form and color tell us of form and color—that is all. It often seems to me that art conceals the artist far more completely than it ever reveals him. And so when I got this offer from Paris I determined to make your portrait the principal thing in my exhibition. It never occurred to me that you would refuse. I see now that you were right. The picture cannot be shown. You must not be angry with me, Dorian, for what I have told you. As I said to Harry once, you are made to be worshiped."

Dorian Gray drew a long breath. The color came back to his cheeks, and a smile played about his lips. The peril was over. He was safe for the time. Yet he could not help feeling infinite pity for the painter who had just made this strange confession to him, and wondered if he himself would ever be so dominated by the personality of a friend. Lord Henry had the charm of being very dangerous. But that was all. He was too clever and too cynical to be really fond of. Would there ever be some one who would fill him with a strange idolatry? Was that one of the things that life had in store?

"It is extraordinary to me, Dorian," said Hallward, "that you should have seen this in the portrait. Did you really see it?"

"I saw something in it," he answered—"something that seemed to be very curious."

"Well, you don't mind my looking at the thing now?"

Dorian shook his head. "You must not ask me that, Basil. I could not possibly let you stand in front of that picture."

"You will some day, surely?"

"Never."

"Well, perhaps you are right. And now good-bye, Dorian. You have been the one person in my life who has really influenced my art. Whatever I have done that is good, I owe to you. Ah! you don't know what it cost me to tell you all that I have told you."

"My dear Basil," said Dorian, "what have you told me? Simply that you felt that you admired me too much. That is not even a compliment."

"It was not intended as a compliment. It was a confession. Now that I have made it, something seems to have gone out of me. Perhaps one should never put one's worship into words."

"It was a very disappointing confession."

"Why, what did you expect, Dorian? You didn't see anything else in the picture, did you? There was nothing else to see?"

"No, there was nothing else to see. Why do you ask? But you mustn't talk about worship. It is foolish. You and I are friends, Basil, and we must alway remain so."

"You have got Harry," said the painter, sadly.

"Oh, Harry!" cried the lad, with a ripple of laughter. "Harry spends his days in saying what is incredible, and his evenings in doing what is improbable. Just the sort of life I would like to lead. But still I don't think I would go to Harry if I were in trouble. I would sooner go to you, Basil."

"You will sit to me again?"

"Impossible!"

"You spoil my life as an artist by refusing, Dorian. No man came across two ideal things. Few come across one."

"I can't explain it to you, Basil, but I must never sit to you again. There is something fatal about a portrait. It has a life of its own. I will come and have tea with you. That will be just as pleasant."

"Pleasanter for you, I'm afraid," murmured Hallward, regretfully. "And now good-bye. I am sorry you won't let me look at the picture once again. But that can't be helped. I quite understand what you feel about it."

As he left the room, Dorian Gray smiled to himself. Poor Basil! how little he knew of the true reason. And how strange it was that, instead of having been forced to reveal his own secret, he had succeeded almost by chance, in wresting a secret from his friend! How much that strange confession explained to him! The painter's absurd fits of jealousy, his wild devotion, his extravagant panegyrics, his curious reticences—he understood them all now, and he felt sorry. There seemed to him to be something tragic in a friendship so colored by romance.

He sighed, and touched the bell. The portrait must be hidden away at all costs. He could not run such a risk of discovery again. It had been mad of him to have allowed the thing to remain, even for an hour, in a room to which any of his friends had access.

X

WHEN his servant entered, he looked at him steadfastly, and wondered if he had thought of peering behind the screen. The man was quite impassive, and waited for his orders. Dorian lit a cigarette, and walked over to the glass and glanced into it. He could see the reflection of Victor's face perfectly. It was like a placid mask of servility. There was nothing to be afraid of there. Yet he thought it best to be on his guard.

Speaking very slowly, he told him to tell the housekeeper that he wanted to see her, and then to go to the frame-maker and ask him to send two of his men round at once. It seemed to him that as the man left the room his eyes wandered in the direction of the screen. Or was that merely his own fancy?

After a few moments, in her black silk dress, with old-fashioned thread mittens on her wrinkled hands, Mrs. Leaf bustled into the library. He asked her for the key of the schoolroom.

"The old schoolroom, Mr. Dorian!" she exclaimed. "Why, it is full of dust. I must get it arranged and put straight before you go into it. It is not fit for you to see, sir. It is not, indeed."

"I don't want it put straight, Leaf. I only want the key."

"Well, sir, you'll be covered with cobwebs if you go into it. Why, it hasn't been opened for nearly five years—not since his lordship died."

He winced at the mention of his grandfather. He had hateful memories of him. "That does not matter," he answered. "I simply want to see the place—that is all. Give me the key."

"And here is the key, sir," said the old lady, going over the contents of her bunch with tremulously uncertain hands. "Here is the key. I'll have it off the bunch in a moment. But you don't think of living up there, sir, and you so comfortable here?"

"No, no!" he cried, petulantly. "Thank you, Leaf. That will do."

She lingered for a few moments, and was garrulous over some detail of the household. He sighed, and told her to manage things as she thought best. She left the room, wreathed in smiles.

As the door closed, Dorian put the key in his pocket and looked around the room. His eye fell on a large purple satin coverlet heavily embroidered with gold, a splendid piece of late seventeenth-century Venetian work that his grandfather had found in a convent near Bologna. Yes, that would serve to wrap the dreadful thing in. It had, perhaps, served often as a pall for the dead. Now it was to hide something that had a corruption of its own, worse than the corruption of death itself—something that would breed horrors and yet would never die. What the worm was to the corpse, his sins would be to the painted image on the canvas. They would mar its beauty, and eat away its grace. They would defile it, and make it shameful. And yet the thing would still live on. It would be always alive.

He shuddered, and for a moment, he regretted that he had not told Basil the true reason why he had wished to hide the picture away. Basil would have helped him to resist Lord Henry's influence, and the still more poisonous influences that came from his own temperament. The love that he bore him—for it was really love—had nothing in it that was not noble and intellectual. It was not that mere physical admiration of beauty that is born of the senses, and that dies when the senses tire. It was such love as Michael Angelo had known, and Montaigne, and Winckelmann, and Shakespeare himself. Yes, Basil could have saved him. But it was too late now. The past could always be annihilated; regret, denial, or forgetfulness could do that. But the future was inevitable. There were passions in him that would find their terrible outlet, dreams that would make the shadow of their evil real.

He took up from the couch the great purple-and-gold texture that covered it, and, holding it in his hands, passed behind the screen. Was the face on the canvas viler than before? It seemed to him that it was unchanged; and yet his loathing of it was intensified. Gold hair, blue eyes, and rose-red lips—they all were there. It was simply the expression that had altered. That was horrible in its cruelty. Compared to what he saw in it of censure or rebuke, how shallow Basil's reproaches about Sibyl Vane had been!—how shallow, and of what little account? His own soul was looking out at him from the canvas and calling him to judgment. A look of pain came across him, and he flung the rich pall over the picture. As he did so, a knock came to the door. He passed out as his servant entered.

"The persons are here, monsieur."

He felt that the man must be got rid of at once. He must not be allowed to know where the picture was being taken to. There was something sly about him, and he had thoughtful, treacherous eyes. Sitting down at the writing-table he scribbled a note to

Lord Henry, asking him to send him round something to read, and reminding him that they were to meet at eight-fifteen that evening.

"Wait for an answer," he said, handing it to him, "and show the men in here."

In two or three minutes there was another knock, and Mr. Hubbard himself, the celebrated frame-maker of South Audley Street, came in with a somewhat rough-looking young assistant. Mr. Hubbard was a florid, red-whiskered little man, whose admiration for art was considerably tempered by the inveterate impecuniosity of most of the artists who dwelt with him. As a rule, he never left his shop. He waited for people to come to him. But he always made an exception in favor of Dorian Gray. There was something about Dorian that charmed everybody. It was a pleasure even to see him.

"What can I do for you, Mr. Gray?" he said, rubbing his fat, freckled hands. "I thought I would do myself the honor of coming round in person. I have just got a beauty of a frame sir. Picked it up at a sale. Old Florentine. Came from Fonthill, I believe. Admirably suited for a religious subject, Mr. Gray."

"I am so sorry you have given yourself the trouble of coming around, Mr. Hubbard. I shall certainly drop in and look at the frame—though I don't go in much at present for religious art—but to-day I only want a picture carried to the top of the house for me. It is rather heavy, so I thought I would ask you to lend me a couple of your men."

"No trouble at all, Mr. Gray. I am delighted to be of any service to you. Which is the work of art, sir?"

"This," replied Dorian, moving the screen back. "Can you move it, covering and all, just as it is? I don't want it to get scratched going up-stairs."

"There will be no difficulty, sir," said the genial frame-maker, beginning, with the aid of his assistant, to unhook the picture from the long brass chains by which it was suspended. "And now where shall we carry it to, Mr. Gray?"

"I will show you the way, Mr. Hubbard, if you will kindly follow me; or perhaps you had better go in front. I am afraid it is right at the top of the house. We will go up by the front staircase, as it is wider."

He held the door open for them, and they passed out into the hall and began the ascent. The elaborate character of the frame had made the picture extremely bulky, and now and then, in spite of the obsequious protests of Mr. Hubbard, who had a true tradesman's spirited dislike of seeing a gentleman doing anything useful, Dorian put his hand to it so as to help them.

"Something of a load to carry, sir" gasped the little man, when they reached the top landing. And he wiped his shiny forehead.

"I am afraid it is rather heavy," murmured Dorian, as he unlocked the door that opened into the room that was to keep for him the curious secret of his life and hide his soul from the eyes of men.

He had not entered the place for more than four years—not, indeed, since he had used it first as a playroom when he was a child, and then as a study when he grew somewhat older. It was a large, well-proportioned room, which had been specially built by the last Lord Kelso for the use of the little grandson whom, for his strange likeness to his mother, and also for other reasons, he had always hated and desired to keep at a distance. It appeared to Dorian to have but little changed. There was a huge Italian *cassone,* with its fantastically painted panels and its tarnished gilt moldings, in which he had so often hidden himself as a boy. There the satinwood bookcase filled with his dog-eared schoolbooks. On the wall behind it was hanging the same ragged Flemish tapestry where a faded king and queen were playing chess in a garden, while a company of hawkers rode by, carrying hooded birds on their gauntleted wrists. How well he remembered it all! Every moment of his lonely childhood came back to him as he looked round. He recalled the stainless purity of his boyish life, and it seemed horrible to him that it was here the fatal portrait was to be hidden away. How little he had thought, in those dead days, of all that was in store for him!

But there was no other place in the house so secure from prying eyes as this. He had the key, and no one else could enter it. Beneath its purple pall the face painted on the canvas could grow bestial, sodden, and unclean. What did it matter? No one could see it. He himself would not see it. Why should he watch the hideous corruption of his soul? He kept his youth—that was enough. And, besides, might not his nature grow finer, after all? There was no reason that the future should be so full of shame. Some love might come across his life, and purify him, and shield him from those sins that seemed to be already stirring in spirit and in flesh—those curious, unpictured sins whose very mystery lent them their subtlety and their charm. Perhaps some day the cruel look would have passed away from the scarlet sensitive mouth, and he might show to the world Basil Hallward's masterpiece.

No; that was impossible. Hour by hour and week by week the thing upon the canvas was growing old. It might escape the hideousness of sin, but the hideousness of age was in store for it. The cheeks would become hollow or flaccid. Yellow crow's-feet would creep round the fading eyes and make them horrible. The hair would lose its brightness, the mouth would gape or droop, would be foolish or gross, as the mouths of old men are. There would be the wrinkled throat, the cold, blue-veined hands, the twisted body, that he remembered in the grandfather who had been so stern to him in his boyhood. The picture had to be concealed. There was no help for it.

"Bring it in, Mr. Hubbard, please," he said, wearily, turning round. "I am sorry I kept you so long. I was thinking of something else."

"Always glad to have a rest, Mr. Gray," answered the frame-maker, who was still gasping for breath. "Where shall we put it, sir?"

"Oh, anywhere. Here, this will do. I don't want to have it hung up. Just lean it against the wall. Thanks."

"Might one look at the work of art, sir?"

Dorian started. "It would not interest you, Mr. Hubbard," he said, keeping his eye on the man. He felt ready to leap upon him and fling him to the ground if he dared lift the gorgeous hanging that concealed the secret of his life. "I sha'n't trouble you any more now. I am much obliged for your kindness in coming round."

"Not at all, not at all, Mr. Gray. Ever ready to do anything for you, sir." And Mr. Hubbard tramped down-stairs, followed by the assistant, who glanced back at Dorian with a look of shy wonder in his rough, uncomely face. He had never seen any one so marvelous.

When the sound of their footsteps had died away, Dorian locked the door and put the key in his pocket. He felt safe now. No one would ever look upon the horrible thing. No eye but his would ever see his shame.

On reaching the library he found that it was just after five o'clock, and that the tea had been already brought up. On a little table of dark, perfumed wood, thickly incrusted with nacre, a present from Lady Radley, his guardian's wife, a pretty professional invalid, who had spent the preceding winter in Cairo, was lying a note from Lord Henry, and beside it was a book bound in yellow paper, the cover slightly torn and the edges soiled. A copy of the third edition of *The St. James's Gazette* had been placed on the tea-tray. It was evident that Victor had returned. He wondered if he had met the men in the hall as they were leaving the house, and had wormed out of them what they had been doing. He would be sure to miss the picture—had no doubt missed it already, while he had been laying the tea-things. The screen had not been set back, and the blank space was visible on the wall. Perhaps some night he might find him creeping up-stairs and trying to force the door of the room. It was a terrible thing to have a spy in one's house. He had heard of rich men who had been blackmailed all their lives by some servant who had read a letter, or overheard a conversation, or picked up a card with an address, or found beneath a pillow a withered flower or a shred of crumpled lace.

He sighed, and, having poured himself out some tea, opened Lord Henry's note. It was simply to say that he sent him round the evening paper and a book that might interest him, and that he would be at the club at eight-fifteen. He opened *The St. James's* languidly, and looked through it. A red pencil-mark on the fifth page caught his eye. It drew attention to the following paragraph:

INQUEST ON AN ACTRESS.—An inquest was held this morning at the Bell Tavern, Hoxton Road, by Mr. Danby, the District Coroner, on the body of Sibyl Vane, a young actress recently engaged at the Royal Theater, Holborn. A verdict of death by misadventure was returned. Considerable sympathy was expressed for the mother of the deceased, who was greatly affected during the giving of her own evidence and that of Dr. Birrell, who had made the post-mortem examination of the deceased.

He frowned, and, tearing the paper in two, went across the room and flung the pieces away. How ugly it all was! And how horribly real ugliness made things! He felt a little annoyed with Lord Henry for having sent him the report. And it was certainly stupid of him to have marked it with red pencil. Victor might have read it. The man knew more than enough English for that.

Perhaps he had read it, and had begun to suspect something. And yet, what did it matter? What had Dorian Gray to do with Sibyl Vane's death? There was nothing to fear. Dorian Gray had not killed her.

His eye fell on the yellow book that Lord Henry had sent him. What was it? he wondered. He went toward the little pearl-colored octagonal stand, that had always looked to him like the work of some strange Egyptian bees that wrought in silver, and taking up the volume, flung himself into an arm-chair, and began to turn over the leaves. After a few minutes he became absorbed. It was the strangest book that he had ever read. It seemed to him that in exquisite raiment, and to the delicate sound of flutes, the sins of the world were passing in dumb show before him. Things that he had dimly dreamed of were suddenly made real to him. Things of which he had never dreamed were gradually revealed.

It was a novel without a plot, and with only one character, being, indeed, simply a psychological study of a certain young Parisian, who spent his life trying to realize in the nineteenth century all the passions and modes of thought that belonged to every century except his own, and to sum up, as it were, in himself the various moods through which the world-spirit had ever passed, loving for their mere artificiality those renunciations that men have unwisely called virtue as much as those natural rebellions that wise men still call sin. The style in which it was written was that curious jeweled style, vivid and obscure at once, full of *argot* and of archaisms, of technical expressions and of elaborate paraphrases, that characterizes the work of some of the finest artists of the French school of *Symbolistes.* There were in it metaphors as monstrous as orchids, and as subtle in color. The life of the senses was described in the terms of mystical philosophy. One hardly knew at times whether one was reading the spiritual ecstasies of some mediæval saint or the morbid confessions of a modern sinner. It was a poisonous book. The heavy odor of incense seemed to cling about its pages and to trouble the brain. The mere cadence of the sentences, the subtle monotony of their music, so full as it was of complex refrains and movements elaborately repeated, produced in the mind of the lad, as he passed from chapter to chapter, a form of reverie, a malady of dreaming, that made him unconscious of the falling day and the creeping shadows.

Cloudless, and pierced by one solitary star, a copper-green sky gleamed through the windows. He read on by its wan light till he could read no more. Then, after his valet had reminded him several times of the lateness of the hour, he got up, and, going into the next room, placed the book on the little Florentine table that always stood at his bedside, and began to dress for dinner.

It was almost nine o'clock before he reached the club, where he found Lord Henry sitting alone, in the morning-room, looking very much bored.

"I am so sorry, Harry," he cried, "but really it is entirely your fault. That book you sent me so fascinated me that I forgot how the time was going."

"Yes? I thought you would like it," replied his host, rising from his chair.

"I didn't say I liked it, Harry. I said it fascinated me. There is a great difference."

"Ah, you have discovered that?" murmured Lord Henry. And they passed into the dining-room.

XI

FOR years Dorian Gray could not free himself from the influence of this book; or perhaps it would be more accurate to say that he never sought to free himself from it. He procured from Paris no less than nine large-paper copies of the first edition, and had them bound in different colors, so that they might suit his various moods and the changing fancies of a nature over which he seemed, at times, to have almost entirely lost control. The hero, the wonderful young Parisian, in whom the romantic and the scientific temperament were so strangely blended, became to him a kind of prefiguring type of himself. And, indeed, the whole book seemed to him to contain the story of his own life, written before he had lived it.

In one point he was more fortunate than the novel's fantastic hero. He never knew—never, indeed, had any cause to know—that somewhat grotesque dread of mirrors, and polished metal surfaces, and still water, which came upon the young Parisian so early in his life, and was occasioned by the sudden decay of a beauty that had once, apparently, been so remarkable. It was with an almost cruel joy—and perhaps in nearly every joy, as certainly in every pleasure, cruelty has its place—that he used to read the latter part of the book, with its really tragic, if somewhat over-emphasized, account of the sorrow and despair of one who had himself lost what in others, and in the world, he had most dearly valued.

For the wonderful beauty that had so fascinated Basil Hallward, and many others besides him, seemed never to leave him. Even those who had heard the most evil things against him (and from time to time strange rumors about his mode of life crept through London and became the chatter of the clubs) could not believe anything to his dishonor when they saw him. He had always the look of one who had kept himself unspotted from the world. Men who talked grossly became silent when Dorian Gray entered the room. There was something in the purity of his face that rebuked them. His mere presence seemed to recall to them the memory of the innocence that they had tarnished. They wondered how one so charming and graceful as he was could have escaped the stain of an age that was at once sordid and sensual.

Often, on returning home from one of those mysterious and prolonged absences that gave rise to such strange conjecture among those who were his friends, or thought that they were so, he himself would creep up-stairs to the locked room, open the door with the key that never left him now, and stand, with a mirror, in front of the portrait that Basil Hallward had painted of him, looking now at the evil and aging face on the canvas, and now at the fair young face that laughed back at him from the polished glass. The very sharpness of the contrast used to quicken his sense of pleasure. He grew more and more enamored of his own beauty, more and more interested in the corruption of his own soul. He would examine with minute care, and sometimes with a monstrous and terrible delight, the hideous lines that seared the wrinkling forehead or crawled around the heavy, sensual mouth, wondering sometimes which were the more horrible the signs of sin or the signs of age.

He would place his white hands beside the coarse, bloated hands of the picture, and smile. He mocked the misshapen body and the failing limbs.

There were moments, indeed, at night, when, lying sleepless in his own delicately scented chamber, or in the sordid room of the little ill-famed tavern near the Docks, which, under an assumed name, and in disguise, it was his habit to frequent, he would think of the ruin he had brought upon his soul, with a pity that was all the more poignant because it was purely selfish. But moments such as these were rare. That curiosity about life which Lord Henry had first stirred in him, as they sat together in the garden of their friend, seemed to increase with gratification. The more he knew, the more he desired to know. He had mad hungers that grew more ravenous as he fed them.

Yet he was not really reckless, at any rate, in his relation to society. Once or twice every month during the winter, and on each Wednesday evening while the season lasted, he would throw open to the world his beautiful house, and have the most celebrated musicians of the day to charm his guests with the wonders of their art. His little dinners, in the settling of which Lord Henry always assisted him, were noted as much for the careful selection and placing of those invited as for the exquisite taste shown in the decoration of the table, with its subtle symphonic arrangements of exotic flowers, and embroidered cloths, and antique plate of gold and silver. Indeed, there were many, especially among the very young men, who saw, or fancied that they saw, in Dorian Gray the true realization of a type of which they had often dreamed in Eton or Oxford days—a type that was to combine something of the real culture of the scholar with all the grace and distinction and perfect manner of a citizen of the world. To them he seemed to be of the company whom Dante describes as having sought to "make themselves perfect by the worship of beauty." Like Gautier, he was one for whom "the visible world existed."

And, certainly, to him Life itself was the first, the greatest, of the arts, and for it all the other arts seemed to be but a preparation. Fashion, by which what is really fantastic becomes for a moment universal, and Dandyism, which, in its own way, is an attempt to assert the absolute modernity of beauty, had, of course, their fascination for him. His mode of dressing, and the particular styles that from time to time he affected, had their marked influence on the young exquisites of the Mayfair balls and Pall Mall club windows, who copied him in everything that he did, and tried to reproduce the accidental charm of his graceful, though to him only half-serious fopperies.

For while he was but too ready to accept the position that was almost immediately offered to him on his coming of age, and found, indeed, a subtle pleasure in the thought that he might really become to the London of his own day what to imperial Neronian Rome the author of the "Satyricon" once had been, yet in his inmost heart he desired to be something more than a mere *arbiter elegantiarum,* to be consulted on the wearing of a jewel, or the knotting of a necktie, or the conduct of a cane. He sought to elaborate some new scheme of life that would have its reasoned philosophy and its ordered principles, and find in the spiritualizing of the senses its highest realization.

The worship of the senses has often, and with much justice, been decried, men feeling a natural instinct of terror about passions and sensations that seem stronger than themselves, and that they are conscious of sharing with the less highly organized forms of existence. But it appeared to Dorian Gray that the true nature of the senses had never been understood, and that they had remained savage and animal merely because the world had sought to starve them into submission or to kill them by pain, instead of aiming at making them elements of a new spirituality, of which a fine instinct for beauty was to be the dominant characteristic. As he looked back upon man moving through History, he was haunted by a feeling of loss. So much had been surrendered! and to such little purpose! There had been mad, wilful rejections, monstrous forms of self-torture and self-denial, whose origin was fear, and whose result was a degradation infinitely more terrible than that fancied degradation from which, in their ignorance, they had sought to escape, Nature, in her wonderful irony, driving out the anchorite to feed with the wild animals of the desert and giving to the hermit the beasts of the field as his companions.

Yes, there was to be, as Lord Henry had prophesied, a new Hedonism that was to re-create life, and to save it from that harsh, uncomely Puritanism that is having, in our own day, its curious revival. It was to have its service of the intellect, certainly; yet it was never to accept any theory or system that would involve the sacrifice of any mode of passionate experience. Its aim, indeed, was to be experience itself, and not the fruits of experience, sweet or bitter as they might be. Of the asceticism that deadens the senses, as of the vulgar profligacy that dulls them, it was to know nothing. But it was to teach man to concentrate himself upon the moments of a life that is itself but a moment.

There are few of us who have not sometimes wakened before dawn, either after one of those dream-less nights that make us almost enamored of death, or one of those nights of horror and misshapen joy, when through the chambers of the brain sweep phantoms more terrible than reality itself, and instinct with that vivid life that lurks in all grotesques, and that lends to Gothic art its enduring vitality, this art being, one might fancy, especially the art of those whose minds have been troubled with the malady of reverie. Gradually white fingers creep through the curtains, and they appear to tremble. In black, fantastic shapes, dumb shadows crawl into the corners of the room, and crouch there. Outside, there is the stirring of birds among the leaves, or the sound of men going forth to their work, or the sigh and sob of the wind coming down from the hills and wandering round the silent house, as though it feared to wake the sleepers, and yet must needs call forth Sleep from her purple cave. Veil after veil of thin, dusky gauze is lifted, and by degrees the forms and colors of things are restored to them, and we watch the dawn remaking the world in its antique pattern. The wan mirrors get back their mimic life. The flameless tapers stand where we had left them, and beside them lies the half-cut book that we had been studying, or the wired flower that we had worn at the ball, or the letter we had been afraid to read, or that we had read too often. Nothing seems to us changed. Out of the unreal shadows of the night comes back the real life that we had known. We have to resume it where we had left off, and there steals over us a terrible sense of the necessity for the continuance of energy in the same wearisome round of stereotyped habits, or a wild longing, it may be, that our eyelids might open some morning upon a world that had been refashioned anew in the darkness for our pleasure, a world in which things would have fresh shapes and colors, and be changed, or have other secrets, a world in which the past would have little or no place, or survive, at any rate, in no conscious form of obligation or regret, the remembrance even of joy having its bitterness, and the memories of pleasure their pain.

It was the creation of such worlds as these that seemed to Dorian Gray to be the true object, or among the true objects, of life; and in his search for sensations that would be at once new and delightful, and possess that element of strangeness that is so essential to romance, he would often adopt certain modes of thought that he knew to be really alien to his nature, abandon himself to their subtle influences, and then, having, as it were, caught their color and satisfied his intellectual curiosity, leave them with that curious indifference that is not incompatible with a real ardor of temperament, and that, indeed, according to certain modern psychologists, is often a condition of it.

It was rumored of him once that he was about to join the Roman Catholic communion; and certainly the Roman ritual had always a great attraction for him. The daily sacrifice, more awful really than all the sacrifices of the antique world, stirred him as much by its superb rejection of the evidence of the senses as by the primitive simplicity of its elements and the eternal pathos of the human tragedy that it sought to symbolize. He loved to kneel down on the cold marble pavement, and watch the priest, in his stiff, flowered dalmatic, slowly and with white hands moving aside the veil of the tabernacle, or raising aloft the jeweled lantern-shaped monstrance with that pallid wafer that at times, one would fain think, is indeed the *"panis cœlestis,"* the bread of angels, or robed in the garments of the Passion of Christ, breaking the

Host into the chalice, and smiting his breast for his sins. The fuming censers, that the grave boys, in their lace and scarlet, tossed into the air like great gilt flowers, had their subtle fascination for him. As he passed out, he used to look with wonder at the black confessionals, and long to sit in the dim shadow of one of them and listen to men and women whispering through the worn grating the true story of their lives.

But he never fell into the error of arresting his intellectual development by any formal acceptance of creed or system, or of mistaking, for a house in which to live, an inn that is but suitable for the sojourn of a night, or for a few hours of a night in which there are no stars and the moon is in travail. Mysticism, with its marvelous power of making common things strange to us, and the subtle antinomianism that always seems to accompany it, moved him for a season; and for a season he inclined to the materialistic doctrines of the "Darwinismus" movement in Germany, and found a curious pleasure in tracing the thoughts and passions of men to some pearly cell in the brain, or some white nerve in the body, delighting in the conception of the absolute dependence of the spirit on certain physical conditions, morbid or healthy, normal or diseased. Yet, as has been said of him before, no theory of life seemed to him to be of any importance compared with life itself. He felt keenly conscious of how barren all intellectual speculation is when separated from action and experiment. He knew that the senses, no less than the soul, have their spiritual mysteries to reveal.

And so he would now study perfumes, and the secrets of their manufacture, distilling heavily scented oils, and burning odorous gums from the East. He saw that there was no mood of the mind that had not its counterpart in the sensuous life, and set himself to discover their true relations, wondering what there was in frankincense that made one mystical, and in ambergris that stirred one's passions, and in violets that woke the memory of dead romances, and in musk that troubled the brain, and in champak that stained the imagination; and seeking often to elaborate a real psychology of perfumes, and to estimate the several influences of sweet-smelling roots, and scented pollen-laden flowers, of aromatic balms, and of dark and fragrant woods, of spikenard that sickens, of hovenia that makes men mad, and of aloes that are said to be able to expel melancholy from the soul.

At another time he devoted himself entirely to music, and in a long, latticed room, with a vermillion-and-gold ceiling and walls of olive-green lacquer, he used to give curious concerts in which mad gypsies tore wild music from little zithers, or grave yellow-shawled Tunisians plucked at the strained strings of monstrous lutes, while grinning negroes beat monotonously upon copper drums, and, crouching upon scarlet mats, slim turbaned Indians blew through long pipes of reed or brass, and charmed, or feigned to charm, great hooded snakes and horrible horned adders. The harsh intervals and shrill discords of barbaric music stirred him at times when Schubert's grace and Chopin's beautiful sorrows and the mighty harmonies of Beethoven himself fell unheeded on his ear. He collected together from all parts of the world the strangest instruments that could be found, either in the tombs of dead nations or among the few savage tribes that have survived contact with Western civilizations, and loved to touch and try them. He had the mysterious *juruparis* of the Rio Negro Indians, that women are not allowed to look at, and that even youths may not see till they have been subjected to fasting and scourging, and the earthen jars of the Peruvians that have the shrill cries of birds, and flutes of human bones such as Alfonso de Ovalle heard in Chili, and the sonorous green jaspers that are found near Cuzco and give forth a note of singular sweetness. He had painted gourds filled with pebbles that rattled when they were shaken; the long *clarin* of the Mexicans, into which the performer does not blow, but through which he inhales the air; the harsh *ture* of the Amazon tribes, that is sounded by the sentinels who sit all day long in high trees, and can be heard, it is said, at a distance of three leagues; the *teponaztli,* that has two vibrating tongues of wood, and is beaten with sticks that are smeared with an elastic gum obtained from the milky juice of plants; the *yotl*-bells of the Aztecs, that are hung in clusters like grapes; and a huge cylindrical drum, covered with the skins of great serpents, like the one that Bernal Diaz saw when he went with Cortes into the Mexican temple, and of whose doleful sound he has left us so vivid a description. The fantastic character of these instruments fascinated him, and he felt a curious delight in the thought that Art, like Nature, has her monsters—things of bestial shape and with hideous voices. Yet, after some time, he wearied of them, and would sit in his box at the Opera, either alone or with Lord Henry, listening in rapt pleasure to "Tannhäuser," and seeing in the prelude to that great work of art a presentation of the tragedy of his own soul.

On one occasion he took up the study of jewels, and appeared at a costume ball as Anne de Joyeuse, Admiral of France, in a dress covered with five hundred and sixty pearls. This taste enthralled him for years, and, indeed, may be said never to have left him. He would often spend a whole day settling and resettling in their cases the various stones that he had collected, such as the olive-green chrysoberyl that turns red by lamplight, the cymophane with its wire-like line of silver, the pistachio-colored peridot, rose-pink and wine-yellow topazes, carbuncles of fiery scarlet with tremulous four-rayed stars, flame-red cinnamon-stones, orange and violet spinels, and amethysts with their alternate layers of ruby and sapphire. He loved the red gold of the sunstone, and the moonstone's pearly whiteness, and the broken rainbow of the milky opal. He procured from Amsterdam three emeralds of extraordinary size and richness of color, and had a turquois *de la vieille roche* that was the envy of all the connoisseurs.

He discovered wonderful stories, also, about jewels. In Alphonso's "Clericalis Disciplina" a serpent was mentioned with eyes of real jacinth, and in the romantic history of Alexander, the conqueror of Emathia was said to have found in the vale of Jordon snakes "with collars of real emeralds growing on their backs." There was a gem in the brain of the dragon, Philostratus told us, and "by the exhibition of golden letters and a scarlet robe" the monster could be thrown into a magical sleep, and slain. According to the great alchemist, Pierre de Boniface, the diamond rendered a man invisible, and the agate of India made him eloquent. The cornelian appeased anger, and the hyacinth provoked sleep, and the amethyst drove away the fumes of wine. The garnet cast out demons, and the hydropicus deprived the Moon of her color. The selenite waxed and waned with the moon, and the meloceus, that discovers thieves, could be affected only by the blood of kids. Leonardus Camillus had seen a white stone taken from the brain of a newly killed toad that was a certain antidote against poison. The bezoar, that was found in the heart of the Arabian deer, was a charm that could cure the plague. In the nests of Arabian birds was the aspilates, that, according to Democritus, kept the wearer from any danger by fire.

The King of Ceilan rode through his city with a large ruby in his hand, as the ceremony of his coronation. The gates of the palace of John the Priest were "made of sardius, with the horn of the horned snake inwrought, so that no man might bring poison within." Over the gable were "two golden apples, in which were two carbuncles," so that the gold might shine by day and the carbuncles by night. In Lodge's strange romance, "A Margarite of America," it was stated that in the chamber of the queen one could behold "all the chaste ladies of the world, inchased out of silver, looking through fair mirrors of chrysolites, carbuncles, sapphires, and greene emeraults." Marco Polo had seen the inhabitants of Zipangu place rose-colored pearls in the mouths of the dead. A sea monster had been enamored of the pearl that the diver brought to King Perozes, and had slain the thief, and mourned for seven moons over its loss. When the Huns lured the king into the great pit, he flung it away—Procopius tells the story—nor was it ever found again, though the Emperor Anastasius offered five hundred-weight of gold pieces for it. The King of Malabar had shown to a certain Venetian a rosary of three hundred and four pearls, one for every god that he worshiped.

When the Duke de Valentinois, son of Alexander VI., visited Louis XII. of France, his horse was loaded with gold leaves, according to Brantôme, and his cap had double rows of rubies that threw out a great light. Charles of England had ridden in stirrups hung with four hundred and twenty-one diamonds. Richard II. had a coat, valued at thirty thousand marks, which was covered with balas-rubies. Hall described Henry VIII., on his way to the Tower previous to his coronation, as wearing "a jacket of raised gold, the placard embroidered with diamonds and other rich stones, and a great bauderike about his neck of large balasses." The favorites of James I. wore earrings of emeralds set in gold filigrane. Edward II. gave to Piers Gaveston a suit of red-gold armor studded with jacinths, a collar of gold roses set with turquois stones, and a skull-cap *parsemé* with pearls. Henry II. wore jeweled gloves reaching to the elbow and had a hawk-glove sewn with twelve rubies and fifty-two great orients. The ducal hat of Charles the Rash, the last Duke of Burgundy of his race, was hung with pear-shaped pearls, and studded with sapphires.

How exquisite life had once been! How gorgeous in its pomp and decoration! Even to read of the luxury of the dead was wonderful.

Then he turned his attention to embroideries, and to the tapestries that performed the office of frescos in the chill rooms of the northern nations of Europe. As he investigated the subject—and he always had an extraordinary faculty of becoming absolutely absorbed for the moment in whatever he took up—he was almost saddened by the reflection of the ruin that Time brought on beautiful and wonderful things. He, at any rate, had escaped that. Summer followed summer, and the yellow jonquils bloomed and died many times, and nights of horror repeated the story of their shame, but he was unchanged. No winter marred his face or stained his flower-like bloom. How different it was with material things! Where had they passed to? Where was the great crocus-colored robe, on which the gods fought against the giants, that had been worked by brown girls for the pleasure of Athena? Where, the huge velarium that Nero had stretched across the Colosseum at Rome, that Titan sail of purple on which was represented the starry sky and Apollo driving a chariot drawn by white gilt-reigned steeds? He longed to see the curious table-napkins wrought for the Priest of the Sun, on which were displayed all the dainties and viands that could be wanted for a feast; the mortuary cloth of King Chilperic, with its three hundred golden bees; the fantastic robes that excited the indignation of the Bishop of Pontus, and were figured with "lions, panthers, bears, dogs, forests, rocks, hunters—all, in fact, that a painter can copy from nature"; and the coat that Charles of Orleans once wore, on the sleeves of which were embroidered the verses of a song beginning "*Madame, je suis tout joyeux,*" the musical accompaniment of the words being wrought in gold thread, and each note, of square shape in those days, formed with four pearls. He read of the room that was prepared at the palace at Rheims for the use of Queen Joan of Burgundy, and was decorated with "thirteen hundred and twenty-one parrots, made in broidery, and blazoned with the king's arms, and five hundred and sixty-one butterflies, whose wings were similarly ornamented with the arms of the queen, the whole worked in gold." Catherine de Médicis had a mourning-bed made for her of black velvet powdered with crescents and suns. Its curtains were of damask, with leafy wreaths and garlands, figured upon a gold and silver ground, and fringed along the edges with broideries of pearls, and it stood in a room hung with rows of the queen's devices in cut black velvet upon cloth and silver. Louis XIV. had gold embroidered caryatides fifteen feet high in his apartment. The state bed of Sobieski, King of Poland, was made of Smyrna gold brocade embroidered in turquoises with verses from the Koran. Its supports were of silver gilt, beautifully chased, and profusely set with enameled and jeweled medallions. It had been taken from the Turkish camp before Vienna, and the standard of Mohammed had stood beneath the tremulous gilt of its canopy.

And so, for a whole year, he sought to accumulate the most exquisite specimens that he could find of textile and embroidered work, getting the dainty Delhi muslins, finely wrought, with gold-thread palmates, and stitched over with iridescent beetles' wings; the Dacca gauzes, that from their transparency are known in the East as "woven air," and "running water," and "evening dew"; strange figured cloths from Java; elaborate yellow Chinese hangings; books bound in tawny satins or fair blue silks, and wrought with *fleurs-de-lys,* birds, and images; veils of *lacis* worked in Hungary point; Sicilian brocades, and stiff Spanish velvets; Georgian work with its gilt coins, and Japanese *Foukousas* with their green-toned golds and their marvelously plumaged birds.

He had a special passion, also, for ecclesiastical vestments, as indeed he had for everything connected with the service of the Church. In the long cedar chests that lined the west gallery of his house he had stored away many rare and beautiful specimens of what is really the raiment of the Bride of Christ, who must wear purple and jewels and fine linen that she may hide the pallid macerated body that is worn by the suffering that she seeks for, and wounded by self-inflicted pain. He possessed a gorgeous cope of crimson silk and gold-thread damask, figured with a repeating pattern of golden pomegranates set in six-petaled formal blossoms, beyond which, on either side, was the pineapple device wrought in seed-pearls. The orphreys were divided into panels representing scenes from the life of the Virgin, and the coronation of the Virgin was figured in colored silks upon the hood. This was Italian work of the fifteenth century. Another cope was of green velvet, embroidered with heart-shaped groups of acanthus leaves, from which spread long-stemmed white blossoms, the details of which were picked out with silver thread and colored crystals. The morse bore a seraph's head in gold-thread raised work. The orphreys were woven in a diaper of red and gold silk, and were starred with medallions of many saints and martyrs, among whom was St. Sebastian. He had chasubles, also, of amber-colored silk, and blue silk and gold brocade, and yellow silk damask and cloth of gold, figured with representations of the passion and Crucifixion of Christ, and embroidered with lions and peacocks and other emblems; dalmatics of white satin and pink silk damask, decorated with tulips and dolphins and *fleurs-de-lys;* altar frontals of crimson velvet and blue linen; and many corporals, chalice veils, and sudaria. In the mystic offices to which such things were put there was something that quickened his imagination.

For these treasures, and everything that he collected in his lovely house, were to be to him means of forgetfulness, modes by which he could escape, for a season, from the fear that seemed to him at times to be almost too great to be borne. Upon the walls of the lonely locked room where he had spent so much of his boyhood he had hung with his own hands the terrible portrait whose changing features showed him the real degradation of his life, and in front of it had draped the purple-and-gold pall as a curtain. For weeks he would not go there, would forget the hideous painted thing, and get back his light heart, his wonderful joyousness, his passionate absorption in mere existence. Then, suddenly, some night he would creep out of the house, go down to dreadful places near Blue Gate Fields, and stay there, day after day, until he was driven away. On his return he would sit in front of the picture, sometimes loathing it and himself, but filled, at other times, with that pride of individualism that is half the fascination of sin, and smiling, with secret pleasure, at the misshapen shadow that had to bear the burden that should have been his own.

After a few years he could not endure to be long out of England, and gave up the villa that he had shared at Trouville with Lord Henry, as well as the little white walled-in house at Algiers where they had more than once spent the winter. He hated to be separated from the picture that was such a part of his life, and was also afraid that during his absence some one might gain access to the room, in spite of the elaborate bars that he had caused to be placed upon the door.

He was quite conscious that this would tell them nothing. It was true that the portrait still preserved, under all the foulness and ugliness of the face, its marked likeness to himself; but what could they learn from that? He would laugh at any one who tried to taunt him. He had not painted it. What was it to him how vile and full of shame it looked? Even if he told them, would they believe it?

Yet he was afraid. Sometimes when he was down at his great house in Nottinghamshire, entertaining the fashionable young men of his own rank who were his chief companions, and astounding the county by the wanton luxury and gorgeous splendor of his mode of life, he would suddenly leave his guests and rush back to town to see that the door had not been tampered with and that the picture was still there. What if it should be stolen? The mere thought made him cold with horror. Surely the world would know his secret then. Perhaps the world already suspected it.

For, while he fascinated many, there were not a few who distrusted him. He was very nearly blackballed at a West End club of which his birth and social position fully entitled him to become a member, and it was said that on one occasion, when he was brought by a friend into the smoking-room of the Churchill, the Duke of Berwick and another gentleman got up in a marked manner and went out. Curious stories became current about him after he had passed his twenty-fifth year. It was rumored that he had been seen brawling with foreign sailors in a low den in the distant parts of Whitechapel, and that he consorted with thieves and coiners and knew the mysteries of their trade. His extraordinary absences became notorious, and, when he used to reappear again in society, men would whisper to each other in corners, or pass him with a sneer, or look at him with cold, searching eyes, as though they were determined to discover his secret.

Of such insolences and attempted slights he, of course, took no notice, and in the opinion of most people his frank, debonnair manner, his charming, boyish smile, and the infinite grace of that wonderful youth that seemed never to leave him, were in themselves a sufficient answer to the calumnies (for so they termed them) that were circulated about him. It was remarked, however, that some of those who had been most intimate with him appeared, after a time, to shun him. Women who had wildly adored him, and for his sake had braved all social censure and set convention at defiance, were seen to grow pallid with shame or horror if Dorian Gray entered the room.

Yet these whispered scandals only increased in the eyes of many his strange and dangerous charm. His great wealth was a certain element of security. Society, civilized society at least, is never very ready to believe anything to the detriment of those who are both rich and fascinating. It feels instinctively that manners are of more importance than morals, and, in its opinion, the highest respectability is of much less value than the possession of a good *chef*. And, after all, it is a very poor consolation to be told that the man who has given one a bad dinner, or poor wine, is irreproachable in his private life. Even the cardinal virtues can not atone for half-cold *entrées*, as Lord Henry remarked once, in a discussion on the subject; and there is possibly a good deal to be said for his views. For the canons of good society are, or should be, the same as the canons of art. Form is absolutely essential to it. It should have the dignity of a ceremony, as well as its unreality, and should combine the insincere character of a romantic play with the wit and beauty that makes such plays delightful to us. Is insincerity such a terrible thing? I think not. It is merely a method by which we can multiply our personalities.

Such, at any rate, was Dorian Gray's opinion. He used to wonder at the shallow psychology of those who conceive the Ego in man as a thing simple, permanent, reliable, and of one essence. To him, man was a being with myriad lives and myriad sensations, a complex multiform creature that bore within itself strange legacies of thought and passion, and whose very flesh was tainted with the monstrous maladies of the dead. He loved to stroll through the gaunt, cold picture-gallery of his country-house and look at the various portraits of those whose blood flowed in his veins. Here was Philip Herbert, described by Francis Osborne, in his "Memoirs on the Reigns of Queen Elizabeth and King James," as one who was "caressed by the court for his handsome face, which kept him not long company." Was it young Herbert's life that he sometimes led? Had some strange poisonous germ crept from body to body till it had reached his own? Was it some dim sense of that ruined grace that had made him so suddenly, and almost without cause, give utterance, in Basil Hallward's studio, to the mad prayer that had so changed his life? Here, in gold-embroidered red doublet, jeweled surcoat, and gilt-edged ruff and wristbands, stood Sir Anthony Sherard, with his silver-and-black armor piled at his feet. What had this man's legacy been? Had the lover of Giovanna of Naples bequeathed him some inheritance of sin and shame? Were his own actions merely the dreams that the dead man had not dared to realize? Here, from the fading canvas, smiled Lady Elizabeth Devereux, in her gauze hood, pearl stomacher, and pink slashed sleeves. A flower was in her right hand, and her left clasped an enameled collar of white and damask roses. On a table by her side lay a mandolin and an apple. There were large green rosettes upon her little pointed shoes. He knew her life, and the strange stories that were told about her lovers. Had he something of her temperament in him? These oval, heavy-lidded eyes seemed to look curiously at him. What of George Willoughby, with his powdered hair and fantastic patches? How evil he looked! The face was saturnine and swarthy, and the sensual lips seemed to be twisted with disdain. Delicate lace ruffles fell over the lean yellow hands that were so over-laden with rings. He had been a macaroni of the eighteenth century, and the friend, in his youth, of Lord Ferrars. What of the second Lord Beckenham, the companion of the Prince Regent in his wildest days, and one of the witnesses at the secret marriage with Mrs. Fitzherbert? How proud and handsome he was, with his chestnut curls and insolent pose! What passions had he bequeathed? The world had looked upon him as infamous. He had led the orgies at Carlton House. The star of the Garter glittered upon his breast. Beside him hung the portrait of his wife, a pallid, thin-lipped woman in black. Her blood, also, stirred within him. How curious it all seemed! And his mother, with her Lady Hamilton face and her moist, wine-dashed lips—he knew what he had got from her. He had got from her his beauty and his passion for the beauty of others. She laughed at him in her loose Bacchante dress. There were vine leaves in her hair. The purple spilled from the cup she was holding. The carnations of the painting had withered, but the eyes were still wonderful in their depth and brilliancy of color. They seemed to follow him wherever he went.

Yet one had ancestors in literature, as well as in one's own race, nearer perhaps in type and temperament, many of them, and certainly with an influence of which one was more absolutely conscious. There were times when it appeared to Dorian Gray that the whole of history was merely the record of his own life, not as he has lived it in act and circumstance, but as his imagination had created it for him, as it had been in his brain and in his passions. He felt that he had known them all, those strange, terrible figures that had passed across the stage of the world and made sin so marvelous and evil so full of subtlety. It seemed to him that in some mysterious way their lives had been his own.

The hero of the wonderful novel that had so influenced his life had himself known this curious fancy. In the seventh chapter he tells how, crowned with laurel, lest lightning might strike him, he had sat, as Tiberius, in a garden at Capri, reading the shameful books of Elephantis, while dwarfs and peacocks strutted round him and the flute-player mocked the swinger of the censor; and, as Caligula, had caroused with the green-shirted jockeys in their stables, and supped in an ivory manger with a jewel-frontleted horse; and, as Domitian, had wandered through a corridor lined with marble mirrors, looking round with haggard eyes for the reflection of the dagger that was to end his days, and sick with that ennui, that terrible *tædium vitæ,* that comes on those to whom life denies nothing; and had peered through a clear emerald at the red shambles of the Circus, and then, in a litter of pearl and purple drawn by silver-shod mules, been carried through the Street of Pomegranates to a House of Gold, and heard men cry on Nero Cæsar as he passed by; and, as Elagabalus, had painted his face with colors, and plied the distaff among the women, and brought the Moon from Carthage, and given her in mystic marriage to the Sun.

Over and over again Dorian used to read this fantastic chapter, and the two chapters immediately following, in which, as in some curious tapestries or cunningly wrought enamels, were pictured the awful and beautiful forms of those whom Vice and Blood and Weariness had made monstrous or mad: Filippo, Duke of Milan, who slew his wife, and painted her lips with a scarlet poison that her lover might suck death from the dead thing he fondled; Pietro Barbi, the Venetian, known as Paul the Second, who sought in his vanity to assume the title of Formosus, and whose tiara, valued at two hundred thousand florins, was bought at the price of a terrible sin; Gian Maria Visconti, who used hounds to chase living men, and whose murdered body was covered with roses by a harlot who had loved him; the Borgia on his white horse, with Fratricide riding beside him, and his mantle stained with the blood of Perotto; Pietro Riario, the young Cardinal Archbishop of Florence, child and minion of Sixtus IV., whose beauty was equaled only by his debauchery, and who received Leonora of Aragon in a pavilion of white and crimson silk, filled with nymphs and centaurs, and gilded a boy that he might serve at the feast as Ganymede or Hylas; Ezzelin, whose melancholy could be cured only by the spectacle of death, and who had a passion for red blood, as other men have for red wine—the son of the Fiend, as was reported, and one who had cheated his father at dice when gambling with him for his own soul; Giambattista Cibo, who in mockery took the name of Innocent, and into whose torpid veins the blood of three lads was infused by a Jewish doctor; Sigismondo Malatesta, the lover of Isotta, and the lord of Rimini, whose effigy was burned at Rome as the enemy of God and man, who strangled Polyssena with a napkin, and gave poison to Ginevra d'Este in a cup of emerald, and in honor of a shameful passion built a pagan church for Christian worship; Charles VI., who had so wildly adored his brother's wife that a leper had warned him of the insanity that was coming on him, and who, when his brain had thickened and grown strange, could only be soothed by Saracen cards painted with images of Love and Death and Madness; and, in his trimmed jerkin and jeweled cap and acanthus-like curls, Grifonetto Baglioni, who slew Astorre with his bride, and Simonetto with his page, and whose comeliness was such that, as he lay dying in the yellow piazza of Perugia, those who had hated him could not choose but weep, and Atalanta, who had cursed him, blessed him.

There was a horrible fascination in them all. He saw them at night, and they troubled his imagination in the day. The Renaissance knew of strange manners of poisoning—poisoning by a helmet and a lighted torch, by an embroidered glove and a jeweled fan, by a gilded pomander and by an amber chain. Dorian Gray had been poisoned by a book. There were moments when he looked on evil simply as a mode through which he could realize his conception of the beautiful.

XII

IT was on the 9th day of November, the eve of his own thirty-eighth birthday, as he often remembered afterward.

He was walking home about eleven o'clock from Lord Henry's, where he had been dining, and was wrapped in heavy furs, as the night was cold and foggy. At the corner of Grosvenor Square and South Audley Street a man passed him in the mist, walking very fast, and with the collar of his grey ulster turned up. He had a bag in his hand. Dorian recognized him. It was Basil Hallward. A strange sense of fear, for which he could not account, came over him. He made no sign of recognition, and went on quickly in the direction of his own house.

But Hallward had seen him. Dorian heard him first stopping on the pavement, and then hurrying after him. In a few moments his hand was upon his arm.

"Dorian! What an extraordinary piece of luck! I have been waiting for you in your library ever since nine o'clock. Finally I took pity on your tired servant, and told him to go to bed, as he let me out. I am off to Paris by the midnight train, and I particularly wanted to see you before I left. I thought it was you, or, rather, your fur coat, as you passed me. But I wasn't quite sure. Didn't you recognize me?"

"In this fog, my dear Basil? Why, I can't even recognize Grosvenor Square. I believe my house is somewhere about here, but I don't feel at all certain about it. I am sorry you are going away, as I have not seen you for ages. But I suppose you will be back soon?"

"No, I am going to be out of England for six months. I intend to take a studio in Paris, and shut myself up till I have finished a great picture I have in my head. However, it wasn't about myself I wanted to talk. Here we are at your door. Let me come in for a moment. I have something to say to you."

"I shall be charmed. But won't you miss your train?" said Dorian Gray, languidly, as he passed up the steps and opened the door with his latch-key.

The lamplight struggled out through the fog, and Hallward looked at his watch. "I have heaps of time," he answered. "The train doesn't go till twelve-fifteen, and it is only just eleven. In fact, I was on my way to the club to look for you when I met you. You see, I shan't have any delay about luggage, as I have sent on my heavy things. All I have with me is in this bag, and I can easily get to Victoria in twenty minutes."

Dorian looked at him and smiled. "What a way for a fashionable painter to travel! A Gladstone bag and an ulster! Come in, or the fog will get into the house. And mind you don't talk about anything serious. Nothing is serious nowadays—at least, nothing should be."

Hallward shook his head as he entered, and followed Dorian into the library. There was a bright wood fire blazing in the large open hearth. The lamps were lit, and an open Dutch silver spirit-case stood, with some siphons of soda-water and large cut-glass tumblers, on a little marqueterie table.

"You see your servant made me quite at home, Dorian. He gave me everything I wanted, including your best gold-tipped cigarettes. He is a most hospitable creature. I like him much better than the Frenchman you used to have. What has become of the Frenchman, by the bye?"

Dorian shrugged his shoulders. "I believe he married Lady Radley's maid, and has established her in Paris as an English dressmaker. *Anglomanie* is very fashionable over there now, I hear. It seems silly of the French, doesn't it? But—do you know?—he was not at all a bad servant. I never liked him, but I had nothing to complain about. One often imagines things that are quite absurd. He was really very devoted to me, and seemed quite sorry when he went away. Have another brandy-and-soda? Or would you like hock-and-seltzer? I always take hock-and-seltzer myself. There is sure to be some in the next room."

"Thanks, I won't have anything more," said the painter, taking his cap and coat off, and throwing them on the bag that he had placed in the corner. "And now, my dear fellow, I want to speak to you seriously. Don't frown like that. You make it so much more difficult for me."

"What is it all about?" cried Dorian, in his petulant way, flinging himself down on the sofa. "I hope it is not about myself. I am tired of myself to-night. I should like to be somebody else."

"It is about yourself," answered Hallward, in his grave, deep voice, "and I must say it to you. I shall only keep you half an hour."

Dorian sighed, and lit a cigarette. "Half an hour!" he murmured.

"It is not much to ask of you, Dorian, and it is entirely for your own sake that I am speaking. I think it right that you should know that the most dreadful things are being said against you in London."

"I don't wish to know anything about them. I love scandals about other people, but scandals about myself don't interest me. They have not got the charm of novelty."

"They must interest you, Dorian. Every gentleman is interested in his good name. You don't want people to talk of you as something vile and degraded. Of course you have your position, and your wealth, and all that kind of thing. But position and wealth are not everything. Mind you, I don't believe these rumors at all—at least, I can't believe them when I see you. Sin is a thing that writes itself across a man's face. It cannot be concealed. People talk sometimes of secret vices. There are no such things. If a wretched man has a vice, it shows itself in the lines of his mouth, the droop of his eyelids, the molding of his hands even. Somebody—I won't mention his name, but you know him—came to me last year to have his portrait done. I had never seen him before, and had never heard anything about him at the time, though I have heard a good deal since. He offered an extravagant price. I refused him. There was something in the shape of his fingers that I hated. I know now that I was quite right in what I fancied about him. His life is dreadful. But you, Dorian, with your pure, bright, innocent face, and your marvelous, untroubled youth—I can't believe anything against you. And yet I see you very seldom, and you never come down to the studio now, and when I am away from you, and I hear all these hideous things that people are whispering about you, I don't know what to say. Why is it, Dorian, that a man like the Duke of Berwick leaves the room of a club when you enter it? Why is it that so many gentlemen in London will neither go to your house nor invite you to theirs? You used to be a friend of Lord Staveley. I met him at dinner last week. Your name happened to come up in conversation, in connection with the miniatures you have lent to the exhibition at the Dudley. Staveley curled his lip, and said that you might have the most artistic tastes, but that you were a man whom no pure-minded girl should be allowed to know, and whom no chaste woman should sit in the same room with. I reminded him that I was a friend of yours, and asked him what he meant. He told me. He told me right out before everybody. It was horrible! Why is your friendship so fatal to young men? There was that wretched boy in the Guards who committed suicide. You were his great friend. There was Sir Henry Ashton, who had to leave England, with a tarnished name. You and he were inseparable. What about Adrian Singleton and his dreadful end? What about Lord Kent's only son, and his career? I met his father yesterday in St. James's Street. He seemed broken with shame and sorrow. What about the young Duke of Perth? What sort of life has he got now? What gentleman would associate with him?"

"Stop, Basil! You are talking about things of which you know nothing," said Dorian Gray, biting his lips, and with a note of infinite contempt in his voice. "You ask me why Berwick leaves a room when I enter it. It is because I know everything about his life, not because he knows anything about mine. With such blood as he has in his veins, how could his record be clean? You ask me about Henry Ashton and young Perth. Did I teach the one his vices and the other his debauchery? If Kent's silly son takes his wife from the streets, what is that to me? If Adrian Singleton writes his friend's name across a bill, am I his keeper? I know how people chatter in England. The middle classes air their moral prejudices over their gross dinner-tables, and whisper about what they call the profligacies of their betters in order to try and pretend that they are in smart society, and on intimate terms with the people they slander. In this country it is enough for a man to have distinction and brains for every common tongue to wag against him. And what sort of lives do these people, who pose as being moral, lead themselves? My dear fellow, you forget that we are in the native land of the hypocrite."

"Dorian," cried Hallward, "that is not the question! England is bad enough, I know, and English society is all wrong. That is the reason why I want you to be fine. You have not been fine. One has a right to judge of a man by the effect he has over his friends. Yours seem to lose all sense of honor, of goodness, of purity. You have filled them with a madness for pleasure. They have gone down into the depths. You led them there. Yes, you led them there; and yet you can smile as you are smiling now. And there is worse behind. I know you and Harry are inseparable. Surely for that reason, if for none other, you should not have made his sister's name a byword."

"Take care, Basil. You go too far."

"I must speak, and you must listen. You shall listen. When you met Lady Gwendolen, not a breath of scandal had ever touched her. Is there a single decent woman in London now who would drive with her in the Park? Why, even her children are not allowed to live with her. Then there are other stories—stories that you have been seen creeping at dawn out of dreadful houses and slinking in disguise into the foulest dens in London. Are they true? Can they be true? When I first heard them I laughed. I hear them now, and they make me shudder. What about your country-house, and the life that is led there? Dorian, you don't know what is said about you. I won't tell you that I don't want to preach to you. I remember Harry saying once that every man who turned himself into an amateur curate for the moment always began by saying that, and then proceeded to break his word. I do want to preach to you. I want you to lead such a life as will make the world respect you. I want you to have a clean name and a fair record. I want you to get rid of the dreadful people you associate with. Don't shrug your shoulders like that. Don't be so indifferent. You have a wonderful influence. Let it be for good, not for evil. They say that you corrupt every one with whom you become intimate, and that it is quite sufficient for you to enter a house for shame of some kind to follow after. I don't know whether it is so or not. How should I know? But it is said of you. I am told things that it seems impossible to doubt. Lord Gloucester was one of my greatest friends at Oxford. He showed me a letter that his wife had written to him when she was dying alone in her villa at Mentone. Your name was implicated in the most terrible confession I ever read. I told him that it was absurd—that I knew you thoroughly, and that you were incapable of anything of the kind. Know you? I wonder do I know you? Before I could answer that I should have to see your soul."

"To see my soul!" muttered Dorian Gray, starting up from the sofa and turning almost white with fear.

"Yes," answered Hallward, gravely, and with deep-toned sorrow in his voice—"to see your soul. But only God can do that."

A bitter laugh of mockery broke from the lips of the younger man. "You shall see it yourself to-night!" he cried, seizing a lamp from the table. "Come, it is your own handiwork. Why shouldn't you look at it? You can tell the world all about it afterward if you choose. Nobody would believe you. If they did believe you, they would like me all the better for it. I know the age better than you do, though you will prate about it so tediously. Come, I tell you. You have chattered enough about corruption. Now you shall look on it face to face."

There was the madness of pride in every word he uttered. He stamped his foot upon the ground in his boyish, insolent manner. He felt a terrible joy at the thought that some one else was to share his secret, and that the man who had painted the portrait that was the origin of all his shame was to be burdened for the rest of his life with the hideous memory of what he had done.

"Yes," he continued, coming closer to him, and looking steadfastly into his stern eyes, "I shall show you my soul. You shall see the thing that you fancy only God can see."

Hallward started back. "This is blasphemy, Dorian!" he cried. "You must not say things like that. They are horrible, and they don't mean anything."

"You think so?" He laughed again.

"I know so. As for what I said to you to-night, I said it for your good. You know I have been always a stanch friend to you."

"Don't touch me. Finish what you have to say."

A twisted flash of pain shot across the painter's face. He paused for a moment, and a wild feeling of pity came over him. After all, what right had he to pry into the life of Dorian Gray? If he had done a tithe of what was rumored about him, how much he must have suffered! Then he straightened himself up, and walked over to the fireplace, and stood there, looking at the burning logs with their frostlike ashes and their throbbing cores of flame.

"I am waiting, Basil," said the young man, in a hard, clear voice.

He turned round. "What I have to say is this," he cried. "You must give me some answer to these horrible charges that are made against you. If you tell me that they are absolutely untrue from beginning to end, I shall believe you. Deny them, Dorian, deny them! Can't you see what I am going through? My God! don't tell me that you are bad and corrupt and shameful!"

Dorian Gray smiled. There was a curl of contempt in his lips. "Come up-stairs, Basil," he said, quietly. "I keep a diary of my life from day to day, and it never leaves the room in which it is written. I shall show it to you if you come with me."

"I shall come with you, Dorian, if you wish it. I see I have missed my train. That makes no matter. I can go to-morrow. But don't ask me to read anything to-night. All I want is a plain answer to my question."

"That shall be given to you up-stairs. I could not give it here. You will not have to read long."

XIII

HE passed out of the room, and began the ascent, Basil Hallward following close behind. They walked softly, as men do instinctively at night. The lamp cast fantastic shadows on the wall and staircase. A rising wind made some of the windows rattle.

When they reached the top landing, Dorian set the lamp down on the floor, and taking out the key turned it in the lock. "You insist on knowing, Basil?" he asked, in a low voice.

"Yes."

"I am delighted," he answered, smiling. Then he added, somewhat harshly: "You are the one man in the world who is entitled to know everything about me. You have had more to do with my life than you think." And, taking up the lamp, he opened the door and went in. A cold current of air passed them, and the light shot up for a moment in a flame of murky orange. He shuddered. "Shut the door behind you," he whispered, as he placed the lamp on the table.

Hallward glanced round him with a puzzled expression. The room looked as if it had not been lived in for years. A faded Flemish tapestry, a curtained picture, an old Italian *cassone*, and an almost empty bookcase—that was all that it seemed to contain besides a chair and a table. As Dorian Gray was lighting a half-burned candle that was standing on the mantelshelf, he saw that the whole was covered with dust, and that the carpet was in holes. A mouse ran shuffling behind the wainscoting. There was a damp odor of mildew.

"So you think that it is only God who sees the soul, Basil? Draw that curtain back, and you will see mine."

The voice that spoke was cold and cruel. "You are mad, Dorian, or playing a part," muttered Hallward, frowning.

"You won't? Then I must do it myself," said the young man; and he tore the curtain from its rod, and flung it on the ground.

An exclamation of horror broke from the painter's lips as he saw in the dim light the hideous face on the canvas grinning at him. There was something in its expression that filled him with disgust and loathing. Good heavens! it was Dorian Gray's own face that he was looking at! The horror, whatever it was, had not yet entirely spoiled that marvelous beauty. There was still some gold in the thinning hair and some scarlet on the sensual mouth. The sodden eyes had kept something of the loveliness of their blue, the noble curves had not yet completely passed away from chiseled nostrils and from plastic throat. Yes, it was Dorian himself. But who had done it? He seemed to recognize his own brush-work, and the frame was his own design. The idea was monstrous, yet he felt afraid. He seized the lighted candle, and held it to the picture. In the left-hand corner was his own name, traced in long letters of bright vermillion.

It was some foul parody, some infamous, ignoble satire. He had never done that. Still, it was his own picture. He knew it, and he felt as if his blood had changed in a moment from fire to sluggish ice. His own picture! What did it mean? Why had it altered? He turned, and looked at Dorian Gray with the eyes of a sick man. His mouth twitched, and his parched tongue seemed unable to articulate. He passed his hand across his forehead. It was dank with clammy sweat.

The young man was leaning against the mantelshelf, watching him with that strange expression that one sees on the faces of those who are absorbed in a play when some great artist is acting. There was neither real sorrow in it nor real joy. There was simply the passion of the spectator, with perhaps a flicker of triumph in his eyes. He had taken the flower out of his coat, and was smelling it, or pretending to do so.

"What does this mean?" cried Hallward, at last. His own voice sounded shrill and curious in his ears.

"Years ago, when I was a boy," said Dorian Gray, crushing the flower in his hand, "you met me, flattered me, and taught me to be vain of my good looks. One day you introduced me to a friend of yours, who explained to me the wonder of youth, and you finished a portrait of me that revealed to me the wonder of beauty. In a mad moment, that, even now, I don't know whether I regret or not, I made a wish—perhaps you would call it a prayer . . ."

"I remember it!—oh, how well I remember it! No; the thing is impossible. The room is damp. Mildew has got into the canvas. The paints I used had some wretched mineral poison in them. I tell you the thing is impossible."

"Ah, what is impossible?" murmured the young man, going over to the window, and leaning his forehead against the cold, mist-stained glass.

"You told me you had destroyed it."

"I was wrong. It has destroyed me."

"I don't believe it is my picture."

"Can't you see your ideal in it?" said Dorian bitterly.

"My ideal as you call it . . ."

"As you called it."

"There was nothing evil in it, nothing shameful. You were to me such an ideal as I shall never meet again. This is the face of a satyr."

"It is the face of my soul."

"Christ! what a thing I must have worshiped! It has the eyes of a devil."

"Each of us has Heaven and Hell in him, Basil!" cried Dorian, with a wild gesture of despair.

Hallward turned again to the portrait, and gazed at it. "My God! if it is true," he exclaimed, "and this is what you have done with your life, why, you must be worse, even, than those who talk against you fancy you to be!" He held the light up again to the canvas, and examined it. The surface seemed to be quite undisturbed and as he had left it. It was from within, apparently, that the foulness and horror had come. Through some strange quickening of inner life the leprosies of sin were slowly eating the thing away. The rotting of a corpse in a watery grave was not so fearful.

His hand shook, and the candle fell from its socket on the floor, and lay there sputtering. He placed his foot on it and put it out. Then he flung himself into the rickety chair that was standing by the table and buried his face in his hands.

"Good God, Dorian, what a lesson! what an awful lesson!" There was no answer, but he could hear the young man sobbing at the window. "Pray, Dorian, pray," he murmured. "What is it that one was taught to say in one's boyhood? 'Lead us not into temptation. Forgive us our sins. Wash away our iniquities.' Let us say that together. The prayer of your pride has been answered. The prayer of your repentance will be answered also. I worshiped you too much. I am punished for it. You worshiped yourself too much. We are both punished."

Dorian Gray turned slowly around, and looked at him with tear-dimmed eyes. "It is too late, Basil," he faltered.

"It is never too late, Dorian. Let us kneel down and try if we can not remember a prayer. Isn't there a verse somewhere, 'Though your sins be as scarlet, yet I will make them as white as snow'?"

"Those words mean nothing to me now."

"Hush! don't say that. You have done enough evil in your life. My God! don't you see that accursed thing leering at us?"

Dorian Gray glanced at the picture, and suddenly an uncontrollable feeling of hatred for Basil Hallward came over him, as though it had been suggested to him by the image on the canvas, whispered into his ear by those grinning lips. The mad passions of a hunted animal stirred within him, and he loathed the man who was seated at the table more than in his whole life he had ever loathed anything. He glanced wildly around. Something glimmered on the top of the painted chest that faced him. His eye fell on it. He knew what it was. It was a knife that he had brought up, some days before, to cut a piece of cord, and had forgotten to take away with him. He moved slowly toward it, passing Hallward as he did so. As soon as he got behind him, he seized it, and turned round. Hallward stirred in his chair as if he was going to rise. He rushed at him, and dug the knife into the great vein that is behind the ear, crushing the man's head down on the table, and stabbing again and again.

There was a stifled groan and the horrible sound of some one choking with blood. Three times the outstretched arms shot up convulsively, waving grotesque, stiff-fingered hands in the air. He stabbed him twice more, but the man did not move. Something began to trickle on the floor. He waited for a moment, still pressing the head down. Then he threw the knife on the table and listened.

He could hear nothing but the drip, drip on the threadbare carpet. He opened the door and went out on the landing. The house was absolutely quiet. No one was about. For a few seconds he stood bending over the balustrade, and peering down into the black, seething well of darkness. Then he took out the key and returned to the room, locking himself in as he did so.

The thing was still seated in the chair, straining over the table with bowed head, and humped back, and long, fantastic arms. Had it not been for the red, jagged tear in the neck, and the clotted black pool that was slowly widening on the table, one would have said that the man was simply asleep.

How quickly it had all been done! He felt strangely calm, and, walking over to the window, opened it, and stepped out on the balcony. The wind had blown the fog away, and the sky was like a monstrous peacock's tail, starred with myriads of golden eyes. He looked down, and saw the policeman going his rounds and flashing the long beam of his lantern on the doors of the silent houses. The crimson spot of a prowling hansom gleamed at the corner and then vanished. A woman in a fluttering shawl was creeping slowly by the railings, staggering as she went.

Now and then she stopped and peered back. Once she began to sing in a hoarse voice. The policeman strolled over and said something to her. She stumbled away, laughing. A bitter blast swept across the Square. The gas-lamps flickered and became blue, and the leafless trees shook their black iron branches to and fro. He shivered and went back, closing the window behind him.

Having reached the door, he turned the key, and opened it. He did not even glance at the murdered man. He felt that the secret of the whole thing was not to realize the situation. The friend who had painted the fatal portrait to which all his misery had been due had gone out of his life. That was enough.

Then he remembered the lamp. It was a rather curious one of a Moorish workmanship, made of dull silver, inlaid with arabesques of burnished steel and studded with coarse turquoises. Perhaps it might be missed by his servant, and questions would be asked. He hesitated for a moment, then he turned back and took it from the table. He could not help seeing the dead thing. How still it was! How horribly white the long hands looked! It was like a dreadful wax image.

Having locked the door behind him, he crept quietly down-stairs. The woodwork creaked, and seemed to cry out as if in pain. He stopped several times, and waited. No; everything was still. It was merely the sound of his own footsteps.

When he reached the library he saw the bag and coat in the corner. They must be hidden away somewhere. He unlocked a secret press that was in the wainscoting, a press in which he kept his own curious disguises, and put them into it. He could easily burn them afterward. Then he pulled out his watch. It was twenty minutes to two.

He sat down and began to think. Every year—every month, almost—men were strangled in England for what he had done. There had been a madness of murder in the air. Some red star had come too close to the earth. . . . And yet what evidence was there against him? Basil Hallward had left the house at eleven. No one had seen him come in again. Most of the servants were at Selby Royal. His valet had gone to bed. . . . Paris! Yes. It was to Paris that Basil had gone, and by the midnight train, as he had intended. With his curious, reserved habits, it would be months before any suspicions would be aroused. Months! Everything could be destroyed long before then.

A sudden thought struck him. He put on his fur coat and hat, and went out into the hall. There he paused, hearing the slow, heavy tread of the policeman on the pavement outside, and seeing the flash of the bull's eye reflected in the window. He waited, and held his breath.

After a few moments he drew back the latch and slipped out, shutting the door very gently behind him. Then he began ringing the bell. In about five minutes his valet appeared, half dressed, and looking very drowsy.

"I am sorry to have had to wake you up, Francis," he said, stepping in; "but I had forgotten my latch-key. What time is it?"

"Ten minutes past two, sir," answered the man, looking at the clock and blinking.

"Ten minutes past two? How horribly late! You must wake me at nine to-morrow. I have some work to do."

"All right, sir."

"Did any one call this evening?"

"Mr. Hallward, sir. He stayed here till eleven, and then he went away to catch his train."

"Oh! I am sorry I didn't see him. Did he leave any message?"

"No, sir, except that he would write to you from Paris, if he did not find you at the club."

"That will do, Francis. Don't forget to call me at nine to-morrow."

"No, sir."

The man shambled down the passage in his slippers.

Dorian Gray threw his hat and coat upon the table, and passed into the library. For a quarter of an hour he walked up and down the room biting his lip and thinking. Then he took down the Blue Book from one of the shelves, and began to turn over the leaves. "Alan Campbell, 152, Hertford Street, Mayfair." Yes; that was the man he wanted.

XIV

AT nine o'clock the next morning his servant came in with a cup of chocolate on a tray, and opened the shutters. Dorian was sleeping quite peacefully, lying on his right side, with one hand underneath his cheek. He looked like a boy who had been tired out with play or study.

The man had to touch him twice on the shoulder before he woke, and as he opened his eyes a faint smile passed across his lips, as though he had been lost in some delightful dream. Yet he had not dreamed at all. His night had been untroubled by any images of pleasure or of pain. But youth smiles without any reason. It is one of its chiefest charms.

He turned round, and, leaning upon his elbow, began to sip his chocolate. The mellow November sun came streaming into the room. The sky was bright, and there was a genial warmth in the air. It was almost like a morning in May.

Gradually the events of the preceding night crept with silent blood-stained feet into his brain, and reconstructed themselves there with terrible distinctness. He winced at the memory of all that he had suffered, and for a moment the same curious feeling of loathing for Basil Hallward that had made him kill him as he sat in the chair came back to him, and he grew cold with passion. The dead man was still sitting there, too, and in the sunlight now. How horrible that was! Such hideous things were for the darkness, not for the day.

He felt that if he brooded on what he had gone through he would sicken or grow mad. There were sins whose fascination was more in the memory than in the doing of them, strange triumphs that gratified the pride more than the passions, and gave to the intellect a quickened sense of joy, greater than any joy they brought, or could ever bring, to the senses. But this was not one of them. It was a thing to be driven out of the mind, to be drugged with poppies, to be strangled lest it might strangle one itself.

When the half-hour struck he passed his hand across his forehead, and then got up hastily, and dressed himself with even more than his usual care, giving a good deal of attention to the choice of his necktie and scarf-pin, and changing his rings more than once. He spent a long time also over breakfast, tasting the various dishes, talking to his valet about some new liveries that he was thinking of getting made for the servants at Selby, and going through his correspondence. At some of the letters he smiled. Three of them bored him. One he read several times over, and then tore up with a slight look of annoyance in his face. "That awful thing, a woman's memory!" as Lord Henry had once said.

After he had drunk his cup of black coffee, he wiped his lips slowly with a napkin, motioned to his servant to wait, and, going over to the table, sat down and wrote two letters. One he put in his pocket, the other he handed to the valet.

"Take this round to 152, Hertford Street, Francis, and if Mr. Campbell is out of town, get his address."

As soon as he was alone he lit a cigarette, and began sketching upon a piece of paper, drawing first flowers and bits of architecture, and then human faces. Suddenly he remarked that every face that he drew seemed to have a fantastic likeness to Basil Hallward. He frowned, and, getting up, went over to the bookcase and took out a volume at hazard. He was determined that he would not think about what had happened until it became absolutely necessary that he should do so.

When he had stretched himself on the sofa he looked at the title-page of the book. It was Gautier's "Émaux et Camées," Charpentier's Japanese paper edition, with the Jacquemart etching. The binding was of citron-green leather, with a design of gilt trelliswork and dotted pomegranates. It had been given to him by Adrian Singleton. As he turned over the pages his eye fell upon the poem about the hand of Lacenaire, the cold, yellow hand *"du supplice encore mal lavée,"* with its downy red hairs and its *"doigts de faune."* He glanced at his own white taper fingers, shuddering slightly in spite of himself, and passed on till he came to those lovely stanzas upon Venice:

Sur une gamme chromatique,
Le sein de perles ruisselant,
La Vénus de l'Adriatique
Sort de l'eau son corps rose et blanc.

Les dômes, sur l'azur des ondes
Suivant la phrase au pur contour,
S'enflent comme des gorges rondes
Que soulève un soupir d'amour.

L'esquif aborde et me dépose,
Jetant son amarre au pilier,
Devant une façade rose,
Sur le marbre d'un escalier.

How exquisite they were! As one read them, one seemed to be floating down the green waterways of the pink and pearl city, seated in a black gondola with silver prow and trailing curtains. The mere lines looked to him like those straight lines of turquoise-blue that follow one as one pushes out to the Lido. The sudden flashes of color reminded him of the gleam of the opal-and-iris-throated birds that flutter round the tall honey-combed Campanile, or stalk, with such stately grace, through the dim, dust-stained arcades. Leaning back with half-closed eyes, he kept saying over and over to himself:

Devant une façade rose,
Sur le marbre d'un escalier.

The whole of Venice was in those two lines. He remembered the autumn that he had passed there, and a wonderful love that had stirred him to mad, delightful follies. There was romance in every place. But Venice, like Oxford, had kept the background for romance, and, to the true romantic, background was everything, or almost everything. Basil had been with him part of the time, and had gone wild over Tintoret. Poor Basil! what a horrible way for a man to die!

He sighed, and took up the volume again, and tried to forget. He read of the swallows that fly in and out of the little *café* at Smyrna, where the Hadjis sit counting their amber beads, and the turbaned merchants smoke their long tasseled pipes and talk gravely to each other; he read of the Obelisk in the Place de la Concorde that weeps tears of granite in its lonely sunless exile, and longs to be back by the hot lotus-covered Nile, where there are Sphinxes, and rose-red ibises, and white vultures with gilded claws, and crocodiles, with small beryl eyes, that crawl over the green steaming mud; he began to brood over those verses which, drawing music from kiss-stained marble, tell of that curious statue that Gautier compares to a contralto voice, the *"monstre charmant"* that couches in the porphyry-room of the Louvre. But after a time the book fell from his hand. He grew nervous, and a horrible fit of terror came over him. What if Alan Campbell should be out of England? Days would elapse before he could come back. Perhaps he might refuse to come. What could he do then? Every moment was of vital importance.

They had been great friends once, five years before —almost inseparable, indeed. Then the intimacy had come suddenly to an end. When they met in society now, it was only Dorian Gray who smiled: Alan Campbell never did.

He was an extremely clever young man, though he had no real appreciation of the visible arts, and whatever little sense of the beauty of poetry he possessed he had gained entirely from Dorian. His dominant intellectual passion was for science. At Cambridge he had spent a great deal of his time working in the Laboratory, and had taken a good class in the Natural Science Tripos of his year. Indeed, he was still devoted to the study of chemistry, and had a laboratory of his own, in which he used to shut himself up all day long, greatly to the annoyance of his mother, who had set her heart on his standing for Parliament, and had a vague idea that a chemist was a person who made up prescriptions. He was an excellent musician, however, as well, and played both the violin and the piano better than most amateurs; in fact, it was music that had first brought him and Dorian Gray together—

music and that indefinable attraction that Dorian seemed to be able to exercise whenever he wished, and indeed exercised often without being conscious of it. They had met at Lady Berkshire's the night that Rubinstein played there, and after that used to be always seen together at the Opera, and wherever good music was going on. For eighteen months their intimacy lasted. Campbell was always either at Selby Royal or in Grosvenor Square. To him, as to many others, Dorian Gray was the type of everything that is wonderful and fascinating in life. Whether or not a quarrel had taken place between them no one ever knew. But suddenly people remarked that they scarcely spoke when they met, and that Campbell seemed always to go away early from any party at which Dorian Gray was present. He had changed, too—was strangely melancholy at times, appeared almost to dislike hearing music, and would never himself play, giving as his excuse, when he was called upon, that he was so absorbed in science that he had no time left in which to practise. And this was certainly true. Every day he seemed to become more interested in biology, and his name appeared once or twice in some of the scientific reviews in connection with certain curious experiments.

This was the man Dorian Gray was waiting for. Every second he kept glancing at the clock. As the minutes went by he became horribly agitated. At last he got up, and began to pace up and down the room, looking like a beautiful caged thing. He took long, stealthy strides. His hands were curiously cold.

The suspense became unbearable. Time seemed to him to be crawling with feet of lead, while he by monstrous winds was being swept toward the jagged edge of some black cleft or precipice. He knew what was waiting for him there—saw it, indeed; and, shuddering, crushed with dank hands his burning lids, as though he would have robbed the very brain of sight and driven the eyeballs back into their cave. It was useless. The brain had its own food on which it battened, and the imagination, made grotesque by terror, twisted and distorted as a living thing by pain, danced like some foul puppet on a stand, and grinned through moving masks. Then, suddenly, Time stopped for him. Yes, that blind, slow-breathing thing crawled no more, and horrible thoughts, Time being dead, raced nimbly on in front, and dragged a hideous future from its grave, and showed it to him. He stared at it. Its very horror made him stone.

At last the door opened, and his servant entered. He turned glazed eyes upon him.

"Mr. Campbell, sir," said the man.

A sigh of relief broke from his parched lips, and the color came back to his cheeks.

"Ask him to come in at once, Francis." He felt that he was himself again. His mood of cowardice had passed away.

The man bowed, and retired. In a few moments Alan Campbell walked in, looking very stern and rather pale, his pallor being intensified by his coal-black hair and dark eyebrows.

"Alan! this is kind of you. I thank you for coming."

"I had intended never to enter your house again, Gray. But you said it was a matter of life and death." His voice was hard and cold. He spoke with slow deliberation. There was a look of contempt in the steady, searching gaze that he turned on Dorian.

He kept his hands in the pockets of his Astrakhan coat, and seemed not to have noticed the gesture with which he had been greeted.

"Yes, it is a matter of life and death, Alan, and to more than one person. Sit down."

Campbell took a chair by the table, and Dorian sat opposite to him. The two men's eyes met. In Dorian's there was infinite pity. He knew that what he was going to do was dreadful.

After a strained moment of silence, he leaned across and said, very quietly, but watching the effect of each word upon the face of him he had sent for: "Alan, in a locked room at the top of this house, a room to which nobody but myself has access, a dead man is seated at a table. He has been dead ten hours now. Don't stir, and don't look at me like that. Who the man is, why he died, how he died, are matters that do not concern you. What you have to do is this—"

"Stop, Gray. I don't want to know anything further. Whether what you have told me is true or not true doesn't concern me. I entirely decline to be mixed up in your life. Keep your horrible secrets to yourself. They don't interest me any more."

"Alan, they will have to interest you. This one will have to interest you. I am awfully sorry for you, Alan. But I can't help myself. You are the one man who is able to save me. I am forced to bring you into the matter. I have no option. Alan, you are scientific. You know about chemistry, and things of that kind. You have made experiments. What you have got to do is to destroy the thing that is up-stairs —to destroy it so that not a vestige of it will be left. Nobody saw this person come into the house. Indeed, at the present moment he is supposed to be in Paris. He will not be missed for months. When he is missed, there must be no trace of him found here. You, Alan, you must change him, and everything that belongs to him, into a handful of ashes that I may scatter in the air."

"You are mad, Dorian."

"Ah! I was waiting for you to call me Dorian."

"You are mad, I tell you—mad to imagine that I would raise a finger to help you, mad to make this monstrous confession. I will have nothing to do with this matter, whatever it is. Do you think I am going to peril my reputation for you? What is it to me what devil's work you are up to?"

"It was a suicide, Alan."

"I am glad of that. But who drove him to it? You, I should fancy."

"Do you still refuse to do this for me?"

"Of course I refuse. I will have absolutely nothing to do with it. I don't care what shame comes on you. You deserve it all. I should not be sorry to see you disgraced, publicly disgraced. How dare you ask me, of all men in the world, to mix myself up in this horror? I should have thought you knew more about people's characters. Your friend Lord Henry Wotton can't have taught you much about psychology, whatever else he has taught you. Nothing will induce me to stir a step to help you. You have come to the wrong man. Go to some of your friends. Don't come to me."

"Alan, it was murder. I killed him. You don't know what he had made me suffer. Whatever my life is, he had more to do with the making or the marring of it than poor Harry has had. He may not have intended it, the result was the same."

"Murder! Good God, Dorian, is that what you have come to? I shall not inform upon you. It is not my business. Besides, without my stirring in the matter, you are certain to be arrested. Nobody ever commits a crime without doing something stupid. But I will have nothing to do with it."

"You must have something to do with it. Wait, wait a moment; listen to me. Only listen, Alan. All I ask of you is to perform a certain scientific experiment. You go to hospitals and dead-houses, and the horrors that you do there don't affect you. If in some hideous dissecting-room or fetid laboratory you found this man lying on a leaden table with red gutters scooped out in it for the blood to flow through, you would simply look upon him as an admirable subject. You would not turn a hair. You would not believe that you were doing anything wrong. On the contrary, you would probably feel that you were benefiting the human race, or increasing the sum of knowledge in the world, or gratifying intellectual curiosity, or something of that kind. What I want you to do is merely what you have often done before. Indeed, to destroy a body must be far less horrible than what you are accustomed to work at. And, remember, it is the only piece of evidence against me. If it is discovered, I am lost; and it is sure to be discovered unless you help me."

"I have no desire to help you. You forget that. I am simply indifferent to the whole thing. It has nothing to do with me."

"Alan, I entreat you. Think of the position I am in. Just before you came I almost fainted with terror. You may know terror yourself some day. No! Don't think of that. Look at the matter purely from the scientific point of view. You don't inquire where the dead things on which you experiment come from. Don't inquire now. I have told you too much as it is. But I beg of you to do this. We were friends once, Alan."

"Don't speak about those days, Dorian; they are dead."

"The dead linger sometimes. The man up-stairs will not go away. He is sitting at the table with bowed head and outstretched arms. Alan! Alan! if you don't come to my assistance I am ruined. Why, they will hang me, Alan! Don't you understand? They will hang me for what I have done."

"There is no good in prolonging this scene. I absolutely refuse to do anything in the matter. It is insane of you to ask me."

"You refuse?"

"Yes."

"I entreat you, Alan."

"It is useless."

The same look of pity came into Dorian Gray's eyes. Then he stretched out his hand, took a piece of paper, and wrote something on it. He read it over twice, folded it carefully, and pushed it across the table. Having done this, he got up, and went over to the window.

Campbell looked at him in surprise, and then took up the paper and opened it. As he read it his face became ghastly pale, and he fell back in his chair. A horrible sense of sickness came over him. He felt as if his heart was beating itself to death in some empty hollow.

After two or three minutes of terrible silence Dorian turned round, and came and stood behind him, putting his hand upon his shoulder.

"I am so sorry for you, Alan," he murmured, "but you leave me no alternative. I have a letter written already. Here it is. You see the address.

If you don't help me, I must send it. If you don't help me, I will send it. You know what the result will be. But you are going to help me. It is impossible for you to refuse now. I tried to spare you. You will do me the justice to admit that. You were stern, harsh, offensive. You treated me as no man has ever dared to treat me—no living man, at any rate. I bore it all. Now it is for me to dictate terms."

Campbell buried his face in his hands, and a shudder passed through him.

"Yes, it is my turn to dictate terms, Alan. You know what they are. The thing is quite simple. Come, don't work yourself into this fever. The thing has to be done. Face it and do it."

A groan broke from Campbell's lips and he shivered all over. The ticking of the clock on the mantelpiece seemed to him to be dividing Time into separate atoms of agony, each of which was too terrible to be borne. He felt as if an iron ring was being slowly tightened round his forehead, as if the disgrace with which he was threatened had already come upon him. The hand upon his shoulder weighed like a hand of lead. It was intolerable. It seemed to crush him.

"Come, Alan, you must decide at once."

"I cannot do it," he said, mechanically, as though words could alter things.

"You must. You have no choice. Don't delay."

He hesitated a moment. "Is there a fire in the room up-stairs?"

"Yes, there is a gas-fire with asbestos."

"I shall have to go home and get some things from the laboratory."

"No, Alan, you must not leave the house. Write out on a sheet of note-paper what you want, and my servant will take a cab and bring the things back to you."

Campbell scrawled a few lines, blotted them, and addressed an envelope to his assistant. Dorian took the note up and read it carefully. Then he rang the bell, and gave it to his valet, with orders to return as soon as possible, and to bring the things with him.

As the hall door shut, Campbell started nervously, and, having got up from the chair, went over to the chimneypiece. He was shivering with a kind of ague. For nearly twenty minutes neither of the men spoke. A fly buzzed noisily about the room, and the ticking of the clock was like the beat of a hammer.

As the chime struck one, Campbell turned round, and, looking at Dorian Gray, saw that his eyes were filled with tears. There was something in the purity and refinement of that sad face that seemed to enrage him. "You are infamous, absolutely infamous!" he muttered.

"Hush, Alan, you have saved my life," said Dorian.

"Your life? Good heavens! what a life that is! You have gone from corruption to corruption, and now you have culminated in crime. In doing what I am going to do, what you force me to do, it is not of your life that I am thinking."

"Ah, Alan," murmured Dorian, with a sigh, "I wish you had a thousandth part of the pity for me that I have for you." He turned away as he spoke, and stood looking out at the garden. Campbell made no answer.

After about ten minutes a knock came to the door, and the servant entered, carrying a large mahogany chest of chemicals, with a long coil of steel and platinum wire, and two rather curiously shaped iron clamps.

"Shall I leave the things here, sir?" he asked Campbell.

"Yes," said Dorian. "And I am afraid, Francis, that I have another errand for you. What is the name of the man at Richmond who supplies Selby with orchids?"

"Harden, sir."

"Yes—Harden. You must go down to Richmond at once, see Harden personally, and tell him to send twice as many orchids as I ordered, and to have as few white ones as possible—in fact, I don't want any white ones. It is a lovely day, Francis, and Richmond is a very pretty place, otherwise I wouldn't bother you about it."

"No trouble sir. At what time shall I be back?"

Dorian looked at Campbell. "How long will your experiment take, Alan?" he said, in a calm, indifferent voice. The presence of a third person in the room seemed to give him extraordinary courage.

Campbell frowned, and bit his lip. "It will take about five hours," he answered.

"It will be time enough, then, if you are back at half-past seven, Francis—or, stay; just leave my things out for dressing. You can have the evening to yourself. I am not dining at home, so I shall not want you."

"Thank you, sir," said the man, leaving the room.

"Now, Alan, there is not a moment to be lost. How heavy this chest is! I'll take it for you. You bring the other things." He spoke rapidly, and in an authoritative manner. Campbell felt dominated by him. They left the room together.

When they reached the top landing, Dorian took out the key and turned it in the lock. Then he stopped, and a troubled look came into his eyes. He shuddered. "I don't think I can go in Alan," he murmured.

"It is nothing to me. I don't require you," said Campbell, coldly.

Dorian half opened the door. As he did so he saw the face of his portrait learing in the sunlight. On the floor in front of it the torn curtain was lying. He remembered that the night before he had forgotten, for the first time in his life, to hide the fatal canvas, and was about to rush forward, when he drew back with a shudder.

What was that loathsome red dew that gleamed, wet and glistening, on one of the hands, as though the canvas had sweated blood? How horrible it was!—more horrible, it seemed to him for the moment, than the silent thing that he knew was stretched across the table, the thing whose grotesque, misshapen shadow on the spotted carpet showed him that it had not stirred, but was still there, as he had left it.

He heaved a deep breath, opened the door a little wider, and, with half-closed eyes and averted head, walked quickly in, determined that he would not look even once upon the dead man. Then, stooping down, and taking up the gold-and-purple hanging, he flung it right over the picture.

There he stopped, feeling afraid to turn round, and his eyes fixed themselves on the intricacies of the pattern before him. He heard Campbell bringing in the heavy chest, and the irons, and the other things that he required for his dreadful work. He began to wonder if he and Basil Hallward had ever met, and, if so what they had thought of each other.

"Leave me now," said a stern voice behind him.

He turned and hurried out, just conscious that the dead man had been thrust back into the chair, and that Campbell was gazing into a glistening, yellow face. As he was going down-stairs he heard the key being turned in the lock.

It was long after seven when Campbell came back into the library. He was pale, but absolutely calm. "I have done what you asked me to do," he muttered. "And now, good-bye. Let us never see each other again."

"You have saved me from ruin, Alan. I cannot forget that," said Dorian, simply.

As soon as Campbell had left he went up-stairs. There was a horrible smell of nitric acid in the room. But the thing that had been sitting at the table was gone.

XV

THAT evening, at eight-thirty, exquisitely dressed, and wearing a large buttonhole of Parma violets, Dorian Gray was ushered into Lady Narborough's drawing-room by bowing servants. His forehead was throbbing with maddened nerves, and he felt wildly excited, but his manner as he bent over his hostess's hand was as easy and graceful as ever. Perhaps one never seems so much at one's ease as when one has to play a part. Certainly no one looking at Dorian Gray that night could have believed that he had passed through a tragedy as horrible as any tragedy of our age. Those finely shaped fingers could never have clutched a knife for sin, nor those smiling lips have cried out on God and goodness. He himself could not help wondering at the calm of his demeanor, and for a moment felt keenly the terrible pleasure of a double life.

It was a small party, got up rather in a hurry by Lady Narborough, who was a very clever woman, with what Lord Henry used to describe as the remains of really remarkable ugliness. She had proved an excellent wife to one of our most tedious ambassadors, and having buried her husband properly in a marble mausoleum, which she had herself designed, and married off her daughters to some rich, rather elderly men, she devoted herself now to the pleasures of French fiction, French cookery, and French *esprit*—when she could get it.

Dorian was one of her especial favorites, and she always told him she was extremely glad she had not met him in early life. "I know, my dear, I should have fallen madly in love with you," she used to say, "and thrown my bonnet right over the mills for your sake. It is most fortunate that you were not thought of at the time. As it was, our bonnets were so unbecoming, and the mills were so occupied in trying to raise the wind, that I never had even a flirtation with anybody. However, that was all Narborough's fault. He was dreadfully short-sighted, and there is no pleasure in taking in a husband who never sees anything."

Her guests this evening were rather tedious. The fact was, as she explained to Dorian, behind a very shabby fan, one of her married daughters had come up quite suddenly to stay with her, and, to make matters worse, had actually brought her husband with her. "I think it is most unkind of her, my dear," she whispered. "Of course, I go and stay with them every summer after I come from Homburg, but then an old woman like me must have fresh air sometimes, and, besides, I really wake them up. You don't know what an existence they lead down there. It is pure, unadulterated country life. They get up early, because they have so much to do, and go to bed early because they have so little to think about. There has not been a scandal in the neighborhood since the time of Queen Elizabeth, and consequently they all fall asleep after dinner. You sha'n't sit next either of them. You shall sit by me, and amuse me."

Dorian murmured a graceful compliment, and looked round the room. Yes, it was certainly a tedious party. Two of the people he had never seen before, and the others consisted of Ernest Harrowden, one of those middle-aged mediocrities so common in London clubs who have no enemies, but are thoroughly disliked by their friends; Lady Roxton, an overdressed woman of forty-seven, with a hooked nose, who was always trying to get herself compromised, but was so peculiarly plain that to her great disappointment no one would ever believe anything against her; Mrs. Erlynne, a pushing nobody, with a delightful lisp, and Venetian-red hair; Lady Alice Chapman, his hostess's daughter, a dowdy dull girl, with one of those characteristic British faces that, once seen, are never remembered; and her husband, a red-cheeked, white-whiskered creature who, like so many of his class, was under the impression that inordinate joviality can atone for an entire lack of ideas.

He was rather sorry he had come, till Lady Narborough, looking at the great ormulo gilt clock that sprawled in gaudy curves on the mauve-draped mantel-shelf, exclaimed: "How horrid of Henry Wotton to be so late! I sent round to him this morning on chance, and he promised faithfully not to disappoint me."

It was some consolation that Harry was to be there, and when the door opened, and he heard his slow musical voice lending charm to some insincere apology, he ceased to feel bored.

But at dinner he could not eat anything. Plate after plate went away untasted. Lady Narborough kept scolding him for what she called "an insult to poor Adolphe, who invented the *menu* specially for you," and now and then Lord Henry looked across at him, wondering at his silence and abstracted manner. From time to time the butler filled his glass with champagne. He drank eagerly, and his thirst seemed to increase.

"Dorian," said Lord Henry, at last, as the *chaud-*

froid was being handed round, "what is the matter with you to-night? You are quite out of sorts."

"I believe he is in love," cried Lady Narborough, "and that he is afraid to tell me for fear I should be jealous. He is quite right. I certainly should."

"Dear Lady Narborough," murmured Dorian, smiling, "I have not been in love for a whole week—not, in fact, since Madame de Ferrol left town."

"How you men can fall in love with that woman!" exclaimed the old lady. "I really cannot understand it."

"It is simply because she remembered you when you were a little girl, Lady Narborough," said Lord Henry. "She is the one link between us and your short frocks."

"She does not remember my short frocks at all, Lord Henry. But I remember her very well at Vienna thirty years ago, and how *décolletée* she was then."

She is still *décolletée*," he answered, taking an olive in his long fingers; "and when she is in a very smart gown she looks like an *édition de luxe* of a bad French novel. She is really wonderful, and full of surprises. Her capacity for family affection is extraordinary. When her third husband died, her hair turned quite gold from grief."

"How can you, Harry!" cried Dorian.

"It is a most romantic explanation," laughed the hostess. "But her third husband, Lord Henry! You don't mean to say that Ferrol is the fourth?"

"Certainly, Lady Narborough."

"I don't believe a word of it."

"Well, ask Mr. Gray. He is one of her most intimate friends."

"Is it true, Mr. Gray?"

"She assures me so, Lady Narborough," said Dorian. "I asked her whether, like Marguerite de Navarre, she had their hearts embalmed and hung at her girdle. She told me she didn't, because none of them had had any hearts at all."

"Four husbands! Upon my word, that is *trop de zéle.*"

"*Trop d' audace,* I tell her," said Dorian.

"Oh! she is audacious enough for anything, my dear. And what is Ferrol like? I don't know him."

"The husbands of very beautiful women belong to the criminal classes," said Lord Henry, sipping his wine.

Lady Narborough hit him with her fan. "Lord Henry, I am not at all surprised that the world says that you are extremely wicked."

"But what world says that?" asked Lord Henry, elevating his eyebrows. "It can only be the next world. This world and I are on excellent terms."

"Everybody I know says you are very wicked!" cried the old lady, shaking her head.

Lord Henry looked serious for some moments. "It is perfectly monstrous," he said, at last, "the way people go about nowadays saying things against one behind one's back that are absolutely and entirely true."

"Isn't he incorrigible?" cried Dorian, leaning forward in his chair.

"I hope so," said his hostess, laughing. "But, really, if you all worship Madame de Terrol in this ridiculous way, I shall have to marry again so as to be in the fashion."

"You will never marry again, Lady Narborough," broke in Lord Henry. "You were far too happy. When a woman marries again, it is because she detested her first husband. When a man marries again, it is because he adored his first wife. Women try their luck; men risk theirs."

"Narborough wasn't perfect," cried the old lady.

"If he had been, you would not have loved him, my dear lady," was the rejoinder. "Women love us for our defects. If we have enough of them, they will forgive us everything, even our intellects. You will never ask me to dinner again, after saying this, I am afraid, Lady Narborough; but it is quite true."

"Of course it is true, Lord Henry. If we women did not love you for your defects, where would you all be? Not one of you would ever be married. You would be a set of unfortunate bachelors. Not, however, that that would alter you much. Nowadays all the married men live like bachelors, and all the bachelors like married men."

"*Fin de siècle,*" murmured Lord Henry.

"*Fin du globe,*" answered his hostess.

"I wish it were *fin du globe,*" said Dorian, with a sigh. "Life is a great disappointment."

"Ah, my dear," cried Lady Narborough, putting on her gloves, "don't tell me that you have exhausted Life. When a man says that, one knows that life has exhausted him. Lord Henry is very wicked, and I sometimes wish that I had been; but you are made to be good—you look so good. I must find you a nice wife. Lord Henry, don't you think that Mr. Gray should get married?"

"I am always telling him so, Lady Narborough," said Lord Henry, with a bow.

"Well, we must look out for a suitable match for him. I shall go through Debrett carefully to-night, and draw out a list of all the eligible young ladies."

"With their ages, Lady Narborough?" asked Dorian.

"Of course, with their ages, slightly edited. But nothing must be done in a hurry. I want it to be what *The Morning Post* calls a suitable alliance, and I want you both to be happy."

"What nonsense people talk about happy marriages!" exclaimed Lord Henry. "A man can be happy with any woman, as long as he does not love her."

"Ah! what a cynic you are!" cried the old lady, pushing back her chair, and nodding to Lady Ruxton. "You must come and dine with me soon again. You are really an admirable tonic, much better than what Sir Andrew prescribes for me. You must tell me what people you would like to meet though. I want it to be a delightful gathering."

"I like men who have a future and women who have a past," he answered. "Or do you think that would make it a petticoat party?"

"I fear so," she said, laughing, as she stood up. "A thousand pardons, my dear Lady Ruxton," she added, "I didn't see you hadn't finished your cigarette."

"Never mind, Lady Narborough. I smoke a great deal too much. I am going to limit myself for the future."

"Pray don't, Lady Ruxton," said Lord Henry. "Moderation is a fatal thing. Enough is as bad as a meal. More than enough is as good as a feast."

Lady Ruxton glanced at him curiously. "You must come and explain that to me some afternoon, Lord Henry. It sounds a fascinating theory," she murmured, as she swept out of the room.

"Now, mind you don't stay too long over your politics and scandal," cried Lady Narborough from the door. "If you do, we are sure to squabble upstairs."

The men laughed, and Mr. Chapman got up solemnly from the foot of the table and came up to the top. Dorian Gray changed his seat, and went and sat by Lord Henry. Mr. Chapman began to talk in a loud voice about the situation in the House of Commons. He guffawed at his adversaries. The word *doctrinaire*—word full of terror to the British mind—reappeared from time to time between his explosions. An alliterative prefix served as an ornament of oratory. He hoisted the Union Jack on the pinnacles of Thought. The inherited stupidity of the race—sound English common sense, he jovially termed it—was shown to be the proper bulwark of Society.

A smile curved Lord Henry's lips, and he turned round and looked at Dorian.

"Are you better, my dear fellow?" he asked. "You seemed rather out of sorts at dinner."

"I am quite well, Harry. I am tired. That is all."

"You were charming last night. The little Duchess is quite devoted to you. She tells me she is going down to Selby."

"She has promised to come on the twentieth."

"Is Monmouth to be there too?"

"Oh, yes, Harry."

"He bores me dreadfully, almost as much as he bores her. She is very clever, too clever for a woman. She lacks the indefinable charm of weakness. It is the feet of clay that make the gold of image precious. Her feet are very pretty, but they are not feet of clay

—white porcelain feet, if you like. They have been through the fire, and what fire does not destroy it hardens. She has had experiences."

"How long has she been married?" asked Dorian.

"An eternity, she tells me. I believe, according to the peerage, it is ten years, but ten years with Monmouth must have been like eternity, with time thrown in. Who else is coming?"

"Oh, the Willoughby's, Lord Rugby and his wife, our hostess, Geoffrey Clouston—the usual set. I have asked Lord Grotian."

"I like him," said Lord Henry. "A great many people don't, but I find him charming. He atones for being occasionally somewhat overdressed by being always absolutely overeducated. He is a very modern type."

"I don't know if he will be able to come, Harry. He may have to go to Monte Carlo with his father."

"Ah, what a nuisance people's people are! Try and make him come. By the way, Dorian, you ran off very early last night. You left before eleven. What did you do afterward? Did you go straight home?"

Dorian glanced at him hurriedly, and frowned. "No, Harry," he said at last, "I did not get home till nearly three."

"Did you go to the club?"

"Yes," he answered. Then he bit his lip. "No, I don't mean that. I didn't go to the club. I walked about. I forget what I did. . . . How inquisitive you are, Harry! You always want to know what one has been doing. I always want to forget what I have been doing. I came in at half-past two, if you wish to know the exact time. I had left my latch-key at home, and my servant had to let me in. If you want any corroborative evidence on the subject you can ask him."

Lord Henry shrugged his shoulders. "My dear fellow, as if I cared! Let us go up to the drawing-room.—No cherry, thank you, Mr. Chapman.—Something has happened to you, Dorian. Tell me what it is. You are not yourself to-night."

"Don't mind me, Harry. I am irritable and out of temper. I shall come round and see you to-morrow or next day. Make my excuses to Lady Narborough. I shan't go up-stairs. I shall go home. I must go home."

"All right, Dorian. I dare say I shall see you to-morrow at tea-time. The Duchess is coming."

"I will try to be there, Harry," he said, leaving the room.

As Dorian Gray drove back to his own house, he was conscious that the sense of terror he thought he had strangled had come back to him. Lord Henry's casual questioning had made him lose his nerve for the moment, and he wanted his nerve still. Things that were dangerous had to be destroyed. He winced. He hated the idea of even touching them. Yet it had to be done. He realized that, and when he had locked the door of his library, he opened the secret press into which he had thrust Basil Hallward's coat and bag. A huge fire was blazing. He piled another log on it. The smell of the singeing clothes and burning leather was horrible. It took him three-quarters of an hour to consume everything. At the end he felt faint and sick, and having lit some Algerian pastilles in a pierced copper brazier, he bathed his hands and forehead with a cool musk-scented vinegar.

Suddenly he started. His eyes grew strangely bright, and he gnawed nervously at his under-lip. Between two of the windows stood a large Florentine cabinet, made out of ebony, and inlaid with ivory and blue lapis. He watched it as though it were a thing that could fascinate and make afraid, as though it held something that he longed for and yet almost loathed. His breath quickened. A mad craving came over him. He lit a cigarette, and then threw it away. His eyelids drooped till the long, fringed lashes almost touched his cheek. But he still watched the cabinet. At last he got up from the sofa on which he had been lying, went over to it, and, having unlocked it, touched some hidden spring. A triangular drawer passed slowly out. His fingers moved instinctively toward it, dipped in, and closed on something. It was a small Chinese box of black and gold-dust lacquer, elaborately wrought, the sides patterned with curved waves, and the silken cords hung with round crystals and tasseled with plaited metal threads. He opened it. Inside was a green paste, waxy in luster, the odor curiously heavy and persistent.

He hesitated for some moments, with a strangely immobile smile upon his face. Then shivering, though the atmosphere of the room was terribly hot, he drew himself up, and glanced at the clock. It was twenty minutes to twelve. He put the box back, shutting the cabinet doors as he did so, and went into his bedroom.

As midnight was striking bronze blows upon the dusky air, Dorian Gray, dressed commonly, and with a muffler wrapped around his throat, crept quietly out of his house. In Bond Street he found a hansom with a good horse. He hailed it, and in a low voice gave the driver an address.

The man shook his head. "It is too far for me," he muttered.

"Here is a sovereign for you," said Dorian. "You will have another if you drive fast."

"All right, sir," answered the man, "you will be there in an hour." And after his fare got in he turned his horse round, and drove rapidly toward the river.

XVI

A COLD rain began to fall, and the blurred street-lamps looked ghastly in the dripping mist. The public-houses were just closing, and dim men and women were clustering in broken groups round their doors. From some of the bars came the sound of horrible laughter. In others, drunkards brawled and screamed.

Lying back in the hansom, with his hat pulled over his forehead, Dorian Gray watched with listless eyes the sordid shame of the great city, and now and then he repeated to himself the words that Lord Henry had said to him on the first day they had met: "To cure the soul by means of the senses, and the senses by means of the soul." Yes, that was the secret. He had often tried it, and would try it again now. There were opium-dens, where one could buy oblivion—dens of horror, where the memory of old sins could be destroyed by the madness of sins that were new.

The moon hung low in the sky, like a yellow skull. From time to time a huge misshapen cloud stretched a long arm across and hid it. The gas-lamps grew fewer, and the streets more narrow and gloomy. Once the man lost his way, and had to drive back half a mile. A steam rose from the horse as it splashed up the puddles. The side-windows of the hansom were clogged with a grey flannel mist.

"To cure the soul by means of the senses, and the senses by means of the soul!" How the words rang in his ears! His soul, certainly, was sick to death.

Was it true that the senses could cure it? Innocent blood had been spilt. What could atone for that? Ah! for that there was no atonement; but though forgiveness was impossible, forgetfulness was possible still, and he was determined to forget, to stamp the thing out, to crush it as one would crush the adder that had stung one. Indeed, what right had Basil to have spoken to him as he had done? Who had made him a judge over others? He had said things that were dreadful, horrible, not to be endured.

On and on plodded the hansom, going slower, it seemed to him, at each step. He thrust up the trap, and called to the man to drive faster. The hideous hunger for opium began to gnaw at him. His throat burned, and his delicate hands twitched nervously together. He struck at the horse madly with his stick. The driver laughed, and whipped up. He laughed in answer, and the man was silent.

The way seemed interminable, and the streets like the black web of some sprawling spider. The monotony became unbearable, and, as the mist thickened, he felt afraid.

Then they passed by lonely brick-fields. The fog was lighter here, and he could see the strange, bottle-shaped kilns, with their orange fan-like tongues of fire. A dog barked as they went by, and far away in the darkness some wandering sea-gull screamed. The horse stumbled in a rut, then swerved aside, and broke into a gallop.

After some time they left the clay road, and rattled again over rough-paven streets. Most of the windows were dark, but now and then fantastic shadows were silhouetted against some lamp-lit blind. He watched them curiously. They moved like monstrous marionettes, and made gestures like live things. He hated them. A dull rage was in his heart. As they turned a corner a woman yelled something at them from an open door, and two men ran after the hansom for about a hundred yards. The driver beat at them with his whip.

It is said that passion makes one think in a circle. Certainly with hideous iteration the bitten lips of Dorian Gray shaped and reshaped those subtle words that dealt with soul and sense, till he had found in them the full expression, as it were, of his mood, and justified, by intellectual approval, passions that without such justification would still have dominated his temper. From cell to cell of his brain crept the one thought; and the wild desire to live, most terrible of all man's appetites, quickened into force each trembling nerve and fiber. Ugliness that had once been hateful to him because it made things real, became dear to him now for that very reason. Ugliness was the one reality. The coarse brawl, the loathsome den, the crude violence of disordered life, the very vileness of thief and outcast, were more vivid, in their intense actuality of impression, than all the gracious shapes of Art, the dreamy shadows of Song. They were what he needed for forgetfulness. In three days he would be free.

Suddenly the man drew up with a jerk at the top of a dark lane. Over the low roofs and jagged chimney-stacks of the houses rose the black masts of ships. Wreaths of white mist clung like ghostly sails to the yards.

"Somewhere about here, sir, ain't it?" he asked, huskily, through the trap.

Dorian started, and peered round. "This will do," he answered, and, having got out hastily, and given the driver the extra fare he had promised him, he walked quickly in the direction of the quay. Here and there a lantern gleamed at the stern of some huge merchantman. The light shook and splintered in the puddles. A red glare came from an outward-bound steamer that was coaling. The slimy pavement looked like a wet mackintosh.

He hurried on toward the left, glancing back now and then to see if he was being followed. In about seven or eight minutes he reached a small, shabby house, that was wedged in between two gaunt factories. In one of the top windows stood a lamp. He stopped, and gave a peculiar knock.

After a little time he heard steps in the passage and the chain being unhooked. The door opened quietly, and he went in without saying a word to the squat, misshapen figure that flattened itself into the shadow as he passed. At the end of the hall hung a tattered green curtain that swayed and shook in the gusty wind which had followed him in from the street. He dragged it aside, and entered a long, low room, which looked as if it had once been a third-rate dancing saloon. Shrill flaring gas-jets, dulled and distorted in the fly-blown mirrors that faced them, were ranged round the walls. Greasy reflectors of ribbed tin backed them, making quivering discs of light. The floor was covered with ocher-colored sawdust, trampled here and there into mud, and stained with dark rings of spilt liquor. Some Malays were crouching by a little charcoal stove playing with bone counters, and showing their white teeth as they chattered. In one corner, with his head buried in his arms, a sailor sprawled over a table, and by the tawdrily painted bar, that ran across one complete side, stood two haggard women mocking an old man who was brushing the sleeves of his coat with an expression of disgust.

"He thinks he's got red ants on him," laughed one of them as Dorian passed by. The man looked at her in terror and began to whimper.

At the end of the room there was a little staircase, leading to a darkened chamber. As Dorian hurried up its three rickety steps, the heavy odor of opium met him. He heaved a deep breath, and his nostrils quivered with pleasure. When he entered, a young man with smooth yellow hair, who was bending over a lamp lighting a long, thin pipe, looked up at him, and nodded in a hesitating manner.

"You here, Adrian?" muttered Dorian.

"Where else should I be?" he answered listlessly. "None of the chaps will speak to me now."

"I thought you had left England."

"Darlington is not going to do anything. My brother paid the bill at last. George doesn't speak to me, either. . . . I don't care," he added, with a sigh. "As long as one has this stuff, one doesn't want friends. I think I have had too many friends."

Dorian winced, and looked round at the grotesque things that lay in such fantastic postures on the ragged mattresses. The twisted limbs, the gaping mouths, the staring, lusterless eyes, fascinated him. He knew in what strange heavens they were suffering, and what dull hells were teaching them the secret of some new joy. They were better off than he was. He was prisoned in thought. Memory, like a horrible malady, was eating his soul away. From time to time he seemed to see the eyes of Basil Hallward looking at him. Yet he felt he could not stay. The presence of Adrian Singleton troubled him. He wanted to be where no one would know who he was. He wanted to escape from himself.

"I am going on to the other place," he said, after a pause.

"On the wharf?"

"Yes."

"That mad-cat is sure to be there. They won't have her in this place now."

Dorian shrugged his shoulders. "I am sick of women who love one. Women who hate one are much more interesting. Besides, the stuff is better."

"Much the same."

"I like it better. Come and have something to drink. I must have something."

"I don't want anything," murmured the young man.

"Never mind."

Adrian Singleton rose up wearily, and followed Dorian to the bar. A half-caste, in a ragged turban and a shabby ulster, grinned a hideous greeting as he thrust a bottle of brandy and two tumblers in front of them. The women sidled up, and began to chatter. Dorian turned his back on them, and said something in a low voice to Adrian Singleton.

A crooked smile, like a Malay crease, writhed across the face of one of the women. "We are very proud to-night," she sneered.

"For God's sake don't talk to me!" cried Dorian, stamping his foot on the ground. "What do you want? Money? Here it is. Don't ever talk to me again."

Two red sparks flashed for a moment in the woman's sodden eyes, then flickered out, and left them dull and glazed. She tossed her head, and raked the coins off the counter with greedy fingers. Her companion watched her enviously.

"It's no use," sighed Adrian Singleton. "I don't care to go back. What does it matter? I am quite happy here."

"You will write to me if you want anything, won't you?" said Dorian, after a pause.

"Perhaps."

"Good-night, then."

"Good-night," answered the young man, passing up the steps, and wiping his parched mouth with a handkerchief.

Dorian walked to the door with a look of pain in his face. As he drew the curtain aside a hideous laugh broke from the painted lips of the woman who had taken his money. "There goes the devil's bargain," she hiccoughed, in a hoarse voice.

"Curse you," he answered, "don't call me that."

She snapped her fingers. "Prince Charming is what you like to be called, ain't it?" she yelled after him.

The drowsy sailor leaped to his feet as she spoke, and looked wildly round. The sound of the shutting of the hall door fell on his ear. He rushed out as if in pursuit.

Dorian Gray hurried along the quay through the drizzling rain. His meeting with Adrian Singleton had strangely moved him, and he wondered if the ruin of the young life was really to be laid at his door, as Basil Hallward had said to him with such infamy of insult. He bit his lip, and for a few seconds his eyes grew sad. Yet, after all, what did it matter to him? One's days were too brief to take the burden of another's errors on one's shoulders. Each man lived his own life, and paid his own price for living it. The only pity was one had to pay so often for a single fault. One had to pay over and over again, indeed. In her dealings with man, Destiny never closed her accounts.

There are moments, psychologists tell us, when the passion for sin, or for what the world calls sin, so dominates a nature that every fiber of the body, as every cell of the brain, seems to be instinct with fearful impulses. Men and women at such moments lose the freedom of their will. They move to their terrible end as automatons move. Choice is taken from them, and conscience is either killed, or, if it lives at all, lives but to give rebellion its fascination and disobedience its charm. For all sins, as theologians weary not of reminding us, are sins of disobedience. When that high spirit, that morning star of evil, fell from heaven, it was as a rebel that he fell.

Callous, concentrated on evil, with stained mind, and soul hungry for rebellion, Dorian Gray hastened on, quickening his steps as he went. But as he darted aside into a dim archway that had served him often as a short cut to the ill-famed place where he was going, he felt himself suddenly seized from behind, and before he had time to defend himself he was thrust back against the wall, with a brutal hand round his throat.

He struggled madly for life, and by a terrible effort wrenched the tightening fingers away. In a second he heard the click of a revolver, and saw the gleam of a polished barrel pointing straight at his head, and the dusky form of a short, thick-set man facing him.

"What do you want?" he gasped.

"Keep quiet," said the man. "If you stir, I shoot you."

"You are mad. What have I done to you?"

"You wrecked the life of Sibyl Vane," was the answer, "and Sibyl Vane was my sister. She killed herself. I know it. Her death is at your door. I swore I would kill you in return. For years I have sought you. I had no clue, no trace. The two people who could have described you were dead. I knew nothing of you but the pet name she used to call you. I heard it to-night by chance. Make your peace with God, for to-night you are going to die."

Dorian Gray grew sick with fear. "I never knew her," he stammered. "I never heard of her. You are mad."

"You had better confess your sin, for as sure as I am James Vane you are going to die." There was a horrible moment. Dorian did not know what to say or do. "Down on your knees!" growled the man. "I give you one minute to make your peace—no more. I go on board to-night for India, and I must do my job first. One minute. That's all."

Dorian's arms fell to his side. Paralyzed with terror, he did not know what to do. Suddenly a wild hope flashed across his brain. "Stop!" he cried. "How long ago is it since your sister died. Quick, tell me!"

"Eighteen years," said the man. "Why do you ask me? What do years matter?"

"Eighteen years," laughed Dorian Gray, with a touch of triumph in his voice. "Eighteen years! Set me under the lamp and look at my face!"

James Vane hesitated for a moment, not understanding what was meant. Then he seized Dorian Gray and dragged him from the archway.

Dim and wavering as was the wind-blown light, yet it served to show him the hideous error, as it seemed, into which he had fallen, for the face of the man he had sought to kill had all the bloom of boyhood, all the unstained purity of youth. He seemed little more than a lad of twenty summers, hardly older, if older indeed at all, than his sister had been when they had parted so many years ago. It was obvious that this was not the man who had destroyed her life.

He loosened his hold and reeled back. "My God! my God!" he cried, "and I would have murdered you!"

Dorian Gray drew a long breath. "You have been on the brink of committing a terrible crime, my man," he said, looking at him sternly. "Let this be a warning to you not to take vengeance into your own hands."

"Forgive me, sir," muttered James Vane, "I was deceived. A chance word I had heard in that damned den set me on the wrong track."

"You had better go home and put that pistol away, or you may get into trouble," said Dorian, turning on his heel and going slowly down the street.

James Vane stood on the pavement in horror. He was trembling from head to foot. After a little while a black shadow that had been creeping along the dripping wall moved out into the light, and came close to him with stealthy footsteps. He felt a hand laid on his arm, and looked round with a start. It was one of the women who had been drinking at the bar.

"Why didn't you kill him?" she hissed out, putting her haggard face quite close to his. "I knew you were following him when you rushed out from Daly's. You fool! You should have killed him. He has lots of money, and he's as bad as bad."

"He is not the man I'm looking for," he exclaimed, "and I want no man's money. I want a man's life. The man whose life I want must be nearly forty now. This one is little more than a boy. Thank God, I have not got his blood upon my hands."

The woman gave a bitter laugh. "Little more than a boy!" she sneered. "Why, man, it's nigh on eighteen years since Prince Charming made me what I am."

"You lie!" cried James Vane.

She raised her hand up to heaven. "Before God I am telling the truth!" she cried.

"Before God?"

"Strike me dumb if it ain't so. He is the worst one that comes here. They say he has sold himself to the devil for a pretty face. It's nigh on eighteen years since I met him. He hasn't changed much since then. I have, though," she added, with a sickly leer.

"You swear this?"

"I swear it," came in a hoarse echo from her flat mouth. "But don't give me away to him," she whined; "I am afraid of him. Let me have some money for my night's lodging."

He broke from her with an oath, and rushed to the corner of the street; but Dorian Gray had disappeared. When he looked back the woman had vanished also.

XVII

A WEEK later Dorian Gray was sitting in the conservatory at Selby Royal talking to the pretty Duchess of Monmouth, who with her husband, a jaded-looking man of sixty, was among his guests. It was tea-time, and the mellow light of the huge lace-covered lamp that stood on the table lit up the delicate china and hammered silver of the service at which the Duchess was presiding. Her white hands were moving daintily among the cups, and her full red lips were smiling at something that Dorian had whispered to her. Lord Henry was lying back in a silk-draped wicker chair looking at them. On a peach-colored divan sat Lady Narborough, pretending to listen to the Duke's description of the last Brazilian beetle that he had added to his collection. Three young men in elaborate smoking-suits were handling tea-cakes to some of the women. The house-party consisted of twelve people, and there were more expected to arrive on the next day.

"What are you two talking about?" said Lord Henry, strolling over to the table, and putting his cup down. "I hope Dorian has told you about my plan for rechristening everything, Gladys. It is a delightful idea."

"But I don't want to be rechristened, Harry," rejoined the Duchess, looking up at him with her wonderful eyes. "I am quite satisfied with my own name, and I am sure Mr. Gray should be satisfied with his."

"My dear Gladys, I would not alter either name for the world. They are both perfect. I was thinking chiefly of flowers. Yesterday I cut an orchid for my buttonhole. It was a marvelous spotted thing, as effective as the seven deadly sins. In a thoughtless moment I asked one of my gardeners what it was called. He told me it was a fine specimen of *Robinsoniana,* or something dreadful of that kind. It is a sad truth, but we have lost the faculty of giving lovely names to things. Names are everything. I never quarrel with actions. My one quarrel is with words. That is the reason I hate vulgar realism in literature. The man who could call a spade a spade should be compelled to use one. It is the only thing he is fit for."

"Then what should we call you, Harry?" she asked.

"His name is Prince Paradox," said Dorian.

"I recognize him in a flash!" exclaimed the Duchess.

"I won't hear of it," laughed Lord Henry, sinking into a chair. "From a label there is no escape. I refuse the title."

"Royalties may not abdicate," fell as a warning from pretty lips.

"You wish me to defend my throne, then?"

"Yes."

"I give the truths of to-morrow."

"I prefer the mistakes of to-day," she answered.

"You disarm me, Gladys!" he cried, catching the wilfulness of her mood.

"Of your shield, Harry; not of your spear."

"I never tilt against Beauty," he said with a wave of his hand.

"That is your error, Harry, believe me. You value beauty far too much."

"How can you say that? I admit that I think that it is better to be beautiful than to be good. But, on the other hand, no one is more ready than I am to acknowledge that it is better to be good than to be ugly."

"Ugliness is one of the seven deadly sins, then?" cried the Duchess. "What becomes of your simile about the orchid?"

"Ugliness is one of the seven deadly virtues, Gladys. You, as a good Tory, must not underrate them. Beer, the Bible, and the seven deadly virtues have made our England what she is."

"You don't like your country, then?" she asked.

"I live in it."

"That you may censure it the better."

"Would you have me take the verdict of Europe on it?" he inquired.

"What do they say of us?"

"That Tartuffe has emigrated to England and opened a shop."

"Is that yours, Harry?"

"I give it to you."

"I could not use it. It is too true."

"You need not be afraid. Our countrymen never recognize a description."

"They are practical."

"They are more cunning than practical. When they make up their ledger, they balance stupidity by wealth, and vice by hypocrisy."

"Still we have done great things."

"Great things have been thrust on us, Gladys."

"We have carried their burden."

"Only as far as the Stock Exchange."

She shook her head. "I believe in the race," she cried.

"It represents the survival of the pushing."

"It has development."

"Decay fascinates me more."

"What of Art?" she asked.

"It is a malady."

"Love?"

"An illusion."

"Religion?"

"The fashionable substitute for Belief."

"You are a sceptic."

"Never! Scepticism is the beginning of Faith."

"What are you?"

"To define is to limit."

"Give me a clue."

"Threads snap. You would lose your way in the labyrinth."

"You bewilder me. Let us talk of some one else."

"Our host is a delightful topic. Years ago he was christened Prince Charming."

"Ah! don't remind me of that!" cried Dorian Gray.

"Our host is rather horrid this evening," answered the Duchess, coloring. "I believe he thinks that Monmouth married me on purely scientific principles as the best specimen he could find of a modern butterfly."

"Well, I hope he won't stick pins into you, Duchess," laughed Dorian.

"Oh! my maid does that already, Mr. Gray, when she is annoyed with me."

"And what does she get annoyed with you about, Duchess?"

"For the most trivial things, Mr. Gray, I assure you. Usually because I come in at ten minutes to nine and tell her that I must be dressed by half-past eight."

"How unreasonable of her! You should give her warning."

"I daren't, Mr. Gray. Why, she invents hats for me. You remember the one I wore at Lady Hilstone's garden-party? You don't, but it is nice of you to pretend that you do. Well, she made it out of nothing. All good hats are made out of nothing."

"Like all good reputations, Gladys," interrupted Lord Henry. "Every effect that one produces gives one an enemy. To be popular one must be a mediocrity."

"Not with women," said the Duchess, shaking her head; "and women rule the world. I assure you we can't bear mediocrities. We women, as some one says, love with our ears, just as you men love with your eyes, if you ever love at all."

"It seems to me that we never do anything else," murmured Dorian.

"Ah! then you never really love, Mr. Gray," answered the Duchess, with mock sadness.

"My dear Gladys!" cried Lord Henry. "How can you say that? Romance lives by repetition, and repetition converts an appetite into an art. Besides, each time that one loves is the only time one has ever loved. Difference of object does not alter singleness of passion. It merely intensifies it. We can have in life but one great experience at best, and the secret of life is to reproduce that experience as often as possible."

"Even when one has been wounded by it, Harry?" asked the Duchess, after a pause.

"Especially when one has been wounded by it," answered Lord Henry.

The Duchess turned and looked at Dorian Gray with a curious expression in her eyes. "What do you say to that, Mr. Gray?" she inquired.

Dorian hesitated for a moment. Then he threw his head back and laughed. "I always agree with Harry, Duchess."

"Even when he is wrong?"

"Harry is never wrong, Duchess."

"And does his philosophy make you happy?"

"I have never searched for happiness. Who wants happiness? I have searched for pleasure."

"And found it, Mr. Gray?"

"Often. Too often."

The Duchess sighed. "I am searching for peace," she said, "and if I don't go and dress, I shall have none this evening."

"Let me get you some orchids, Duchess," cried Dorian, starting to his feet, and walking down the conservatory.

"You are flirting disgracefully with him," said Lord Henry to his cousin. "You had better take care. He is very fascinating."

"If he were not there would be no battle."

"Greek meets Greek, then?"

"I am on the side of the Trojans. They fought for a woman."

"They were defeated."

"There are worse things than capture," she answered.

"You gallop with a loose rein."

"Pace gives life," was the *riposte*.

"I shall write it in my diary to-night."

"What?"

"That a burnt child loves the fire."

"I am not even singed. My wings are untouched."

"You use them for everything, except flight."

"Courage has passed from men to women. It is a new experience for us."

"You have a rival."

"Who?"

He laughed. "Lady Narborough," he whispered. "She perfectly adores him."

"You fill me with apprehension. The appeal to Antiquity is fatal to us who are romanticists."

"Romanticists! You have all the methods of science."

"Men have educated us."

"But not explained you."

"Describe us as a sex," was her challenge.

"Sphynxes without secrets."

She looked at him, smiling. "How long Mr. Gray is!" she said. "Let us go and help him. I have not yet told him the color of my frock."

"Ah! you must suit your frock to his flowers, Gladys."

"That would be a premature surrender."

"Romantic Art begins with its climax."

"I must keep an opportunity for retreat."

"In the Parthian manner?"

"They found safety in the desert. I could not do that."

"Women are not always allowed a choice," he answered; but hardly had he finished the sentence before from the far end of the conservatory came a stifled groan, followed by the dull sound of a heavy fall. Everybody started up. The Duchess stood motionless in horror. And with fear in his eyes Lord Henry rushed through the flapping palms, to find Dorian Gray lying face downward on the tiled floor in a deathlike swoon.

He was carried at once into the blue drawing-room, and laid upon one of the sofas. After a short time he came to himself, and looked round with a dazed expression.

"What has happened?" he asked. "Oh! I remember. Am I safe here, Harry?" He began to tremble.

"My dear Dorian," answered Lord Henry, "you merely fainted. That was all. You must have overtired yourself. You had better not come down to dinner. I will take your place."

"No, I will come down," he said, struggling to his feet. "I would rather come down. I must not be alone."

He went to his room and dressed. There was a wild recklessness of gaiety in his manner as he sat at table, but now and then a thrill of terror ran through him when he remembered that, pressed against the window of the conservatory, like a white handkerchief, he had seen the face of James Vane watching him.

XVIII

THE next day he did not leave the house, and, indeed, spent most of the time in his own room, sick with a wild terror of dying, and yet indifferent to life itself. The consciousness of being hunted, snared, tracked down, had begun to dominate him. If the tapestry did but tremble in the wind, he shook. The dead leaves that were blown against the leaded panes seemed to him like his own wasted resolutions and wild regrets. When he closed his eyes he saw again the sailor's face peering through the mist-stained glass, and horror seemed once more to lay its hand upon his heart.

But perhaps it had been only his fancy that had called vengeance out of the night, and set the hideous shapes of punishment before him. Actual life was chaos, but there was something terribly logical in the imagination. It was the imagination that set remorse to dog the feet of sin. It was the imagination that made each crime bear its misshapen brood. In the common world of fact the wicked were not punished, nor the good rewarded. Success was given to the strong, failure thrust upon the weak. That was all. Besides, had any stranger been prowling round the house he would have been seen by the servants or the keepers. Had any footmarks been found on the flowerbeds, the gardeners would have reported it. Yes, it had been merely fancy. Sibyl Vane's brother had not come back to kill him. He had sailed away in his ship to founder in some winter sea. From him, at any rate, he was safe. Why, the man did not know who he was, could not know who he was. The mask of youth had saved him.

And yet if it had been merely an illusion, how terrible it was to think that conscience could raise such fearful phantoms, and give them visible form, and make them move before one! What sort of life would his be if, day and night, shadows of his crime were to peer at him from silent corners, to mock him from secret places, to whisper in his ear as he sat at the feast, to wake him with icy fingers as he lay asleep! As the thought crept through his brain, he grew pale with terror, and the air seemed to him to have become suddenly colder. Oh! in what a wild hour of madness he had killed his friend! How ghastly the mere memory of the scene! He saw it all again. Each hideous detail came back to him with added horror. Out of the black cave of Time, terrible and swathed in scarlet, rose the image of his sin. When Lord Henry came in at six o'clock he found him crying as one whose heart would break.

It was not till the third day that he ventured to go out. There was something in the clear, pine-scented air of that winter morning that seemed to bring him back his joyousness and his ardor for life. But it was not merely the physical conditions of environment that had caused the change. His own nature had revolted against the excess of anguish that had sought to maim and mar the perfection of its calm. With subtle and finely wrought temperaments it is always so. Their strong passions must either bruise or bend. They either slay the man or themselves die. Shallow sorrows and shallow loves live on. The loves and sorrows that are great are destroyed by their own plenitude. Besides, he had convinced himself that he had been the victim of a terror-stricken imagination, and looked back now on his fears with something of pity and not a little of contempt.

After breakfast he walked with the Duchess for an hour in the garden, and then drove across the park to join the shooting-party. The crisp frost lay like salt upon the grass. The sky was an inverted cup of blue metal. A thin film of ice bordered the flat, reed-grown lake.

At the corner of the pine wood he caught sight of Sir Geoffrey Clouston, the Duchess's brother, jerking two spent cartridges out of his gun. He jumped from the cart, and, having told the groom to take the mare home, made his way toward his guest through the withered bracken and rough undergrowth.

"Have you had good sport, Geoffrey?" he asked.

"Not very good, Dorian. I think most of the birds have gone to the open. I dare say it will be better after lunch, when we get to new ground."

Dorian strolled along by his side. The keen, aromatic air, the brown and red lights that glimmered in the wood, the hoarse cries of the beaters ringing out from time to time, and the sharp snaps of the guns that followed, fascinated him with a sense of delightful freedom. He was dominated by the carelessness of happiness, by the high indifference of joy.

Suddenly from a lumpy tussock of old grass, some twenty yards in front of them, with black-tipped ears erect, and long hinder limbs throwing it forward, started a hare. It bolted for a thicket of alders. Sir Geoffrey put his gun to his shoulder, but there was something in the animal's graceful movement that strangely charmed Dorian Gray, and he cried out at once: "Don't shoot it, Geoffrey! Let it live!"

"What nonsense, Dorian!" laughed his companion, and as the hare bounded into the thicket, he fired. There were two cries heard, the one cry of a hare in pain, which is dreadful, the cry of a man in agony, which is worse.

"Good heavens! I have hit a beater!" exclaimed Sir Geoffrey. "What an ass the man was to get in front of the guns! Stop shooting there!" he called out at the top of his voice. "A man is hurt!"

The head keeper came running up with a stick in his hand.

"Where, sir? Where is he?" he shouted. At the same time the firing ceased along the line.

"Here," answered Sir Geoffrey, angrily, hurrying toward the thicket. "Why on earth don't you keep your men back? Spoiled my shooting for the day."

Dorian watched them as they plunged into the alder-clump, brushing the lithe, swinging branches aside. In a few moments they emerged, dragging a body after them into the sunlight. He turned away in horror. It seemed to him that misfortune followed wherever he went. He heard Sir Geoffrey ask whether the man was really dead, and the affirmative answer of the keeper. The wood seemed to him to have become suddenly alive with faces. There was the trampling of myriad feet, and the low buzz of voices. A great copper-breasted pheasant came beating through the boughs overhead.

After a few moments, that were to him, in his perturbed state, like endless hours of pain, he felt a hand laid on his shoulder. He started, and looked round.

"Dorian," said Lord Henry, "I had better tell them that the shooting is stopped for to-day. It would not look well to go on."

"I wish it were stopped forever, Harry," he answered, bitterly. "The whole thing is hideous and cruel. Is the man . . . ?"

He could not finish the sentence.

"I am afraid so," rejoined Lord Henry. "He got the whole charge of shot in his chest. He must have died almost instantaneously. Come; let us go home."

They walked side by side in the direction of the avenue for nearly fifty yards without speaking. Then Dorian looked at Lord Henry, and said, with a heavy sigh, "It is a bad omen, Harry—a very bad omen."

"What is?" asked Lord Henry. "Oh! this accident, I suppose. My dear fellow, it can't be helped. It was the man's own fault. Why did he get in front of the guns? Besides, it is nothing to us. It is rather awkward for Geoffrey, of course. It does not do to pepper beaters. It makes people think that one is a wild shot. And Geoffrey is not; he shoots very straight. But there is no use talking about the matter."

Dorian shook his head. "It is a bad omen, Harry. I feel as if something horrible were going to happen to some of us. To myself, perhaps," he added, passing his hand over his eyes, with a gesture of pain.

The elder man laughed. "The only horrible thing in the world is *ennui,* Dorian. That is the one sin for which there is no forgiveness. But we are not likely to suffer from it, unless these fellows keep chattering about this thing at dinner. I must tell them that the subject is to be tabooed. As for omens, there is no such thing as an omen. Destiny does not send us heralds. She is too wise or too cruel for that. Besides, what on earth could happen to you, Dorian? You have everything in the world that a man can want. There is no one who would not be delighted to change places with you."

"There is no one with whom I would not change places, Harry. Don't laugh like that. I am telling you the truth. The wretched peasant who has just died is better off than I am. I have no terror of Death. It is the coming of Death that terrifies me. Its monstrous wings seem to wheel in the leaden air around me. Good heavens! don't you see a man moving behind the trees there, watching me, waiting for me?"

Lord Henry looked in the direction in which the trembling gloved hand was pointing. "Yes," he said, smiling, "I see the gardener waiting for you. I suppose he wants to ask you what flowers you wish to have on the table to-night. How absurdly nervous you are, my dear fellow! You must come and see my doctor when we get back to town."

Dorian heaved a sigh of relief as he saw the gardener approaching. The man touched his hat, glanced for a moment at Lord Henry in a hesitating manner, and then produced a letter, which he handed to his master. "Her Grace told me to wait for an answer," he murmured.

Dorian put the letter into his pocket. "Tell her Grace that I am coming in," he said coldly. The man turned round and went rapidly in the direction of the house.

"How fond women are of doing dangerous things!" laughed Lord Henry. "It is one of the qualities in them that I admire most. A woman will flirt with anybody in the world as long as other people are looking on."

"How fond you are of saying dangerous things, Harry! In the present instance you are quite astray. I like the Duchess very much, but I don't love her."

"And the Duchess loves you very much, but she likes you less, so you are excellently matched."

"You are talking scandal, Harry, and there is never any basis for scandal."

"The basis of every scandal is an immoral certainty," said Lord Henry, lighting a cigarette.

"You would sacrifice anybody, Harry, for the sake of an epigram."

"The world goes to the altar of its own accord," was the answer.

"I wish I could love!" cried Dorian Gray, with a deep note of pathos in his voice. "But I seem to have lost the passion and forgotten the desire. I am too much concentrated on myself. My own personality has become a burden to me. I want to escape, to go away, to forget. It was silly of me to come down here at all. I think I shall send a wire to Harvey to have the yacht got ready. On a yacht one is safe."

"Safe from what, Dorian? You are in some trouble. Why not tell me what it is? You know I would help you."

"I can't tell you, Harry," he answered, sadly. "And I dare say it is only a fancy of mine. This unfortunate accident has upset me. I have a horrible presentiment that something of the kind may happen to me."

"What nonsense!"

"I hope it is, but I can't help feeling it. Ah! here is the Duchess, looking like Artemis in a tailor-made gown—You see we have come back, Duchess."

"I have heard all about it, Mr. Gray," she answered. "Poor Geoffrey is terribly upset. And it seems that you asked him not to shoot the hare. How curious!"

"Yes, it was very curious. I don't know what made me say it. Some whim, I suppose. It looked the loveliest of little live things. But I am sorry they told you about the man. It is a hideous subject."

"It is an annoying subject," broke in Lord Henry. "It has no psychological value at all. Now, if Geoffrey had done the thing on purpose, how interesting he would be! I should like to know some one who had committed a real murder."

"How horrid of you, Harry!" cried the Duchess. "Isn't it, Mr. Gray? Harry, Mr. Gray is ill again. He is going to faint."

Dorian drew himself up with an effort, and smiled. "It is nothing, Duchess," he murmured; "my nerves are dreadfully out of order. That is all. I am afraid I walked too far this morning. I didn't hear what Harry said. Was it very bad? You must tell me some other time. I think I must go and lie down. You will excuse me, won't you?"

They had reached the great flight of steps that led from the conservatory on to the terrace. As the glass door closed behind Dorian, Lord Henry turned and looked at the Duchess with his slumberous eyes. "Are you very much in love with him?" he asked.

She did not answer for some time, but stood gazing at the landscape. "I wish I knew," she said at last.

He shook his head. "Knowledge would be fatal. It is the uncertainty that charms one. A mist makes things wonderful."

"One may lose one's way."

"All ways end at the same point, my dear Gladys."

"What is that?"

"Disillusion."

"It was my *début* in life," she sighed.

"It came to you crowned."

"I am tired of strawberry leaves."

"They become you."

"Only in public."

"You would miss them," said Lord Henry.

"I will not part with a petal."

"Monmouth has ears."

"Old age is dull of hearing."

"Has he never been jealous?"

"I wish he had been."

He glanced about as if in search of something. "What are you looking for?" she inquired.

"The button from your foil," he answered. "You have dropped it."

She laughed. "I have still the mask."

"It makes your eyes lovelier," was his reply.

She laughed again. Her teeth showed like white seeds in a scarlet fruit.

Up-stairs, in his own room, Dorian Gray was lying on a sofa, with terror in every tingling fiber of his body. Life had suddenly become too hideous a burden for him to bear. The dreadful death of the unlucky beater, shot in the thicket like a wild animal, had seemed to him to prefigure death for himself also. He had nearly swooned at what Lord Henry had said in a chance mood of cynical jesting.

At five o'clock he rang his bell for his servant, and gave him orders to pack his things for the night express to town, and to have the brougham at the door by eight-thirty. He was determined not to sleep another night at Selby Royal. It was an ill-omened place. Death walked there in the sunlight. The grass of the forest had been spotted with blood.

Then he wrote a note to Lord Henry, telling him that he was going up to town to consult his doctor, and asking him to entertain his guests in his absence.

As he was putting it into the envelope, a knock came to the door, and his valet informed him that the head keeper wished to see him. He frowned, and bit his lip. "Send him in," he muttered, after some moments' hesitation.

As soon as the man entered, Dorian pulled his cheque-book out of a drawer, and spread it out before him.

"I suppose you have come about the unfortunate accident this morning, Thornton?" he said, taking up a pen.

"Yes, sir," answered the gamekeeper.

"Was the poor fellow married? Had he any people dependent on him?" asked Dorian, looking bored. "If so, I should not like them to be left in want, and will send them any sum of money you may think necessary."

"We don't know who he is, sir. That is what I took the liberty of coming to you about."

"Don't know who he is?" said Dorian, listlessly. "What do you mean? Wasn't he one of your men?"

"No, sir. Never saw him before. Seems like a sailor, sir."

The pen dropped from Dorian Gray's hand, and he felt as if his heart had suddenly stopped beating. "A sailor!" he cried out. "Did you say a sailor?"

"Yes sir. He looks as if he had been a sort of sailor; tattooed on both arms, and that kind of thing."

"Was there anything found on him?" said Dorian, leaning forward and looking at the man with startled eyes. "Anything that would tell his name?"

"Some money, sir—not much, and a six-shooter. There was no name of any kind. A decent-looking man sir, but roughlike. A sort of sailor, we think."

Dorian started to his feet. A terrible hope fluttered past him. He clutched at it madly. "Where is the body?" he exclaimed. "Quick, I must see it at once."

"It is in an empty stable in the Home Farm, sir. The folk don't like to have that sort of thing in their houses. They say a corpse brings bad luck."

"The Home Farm! Go there at once and meet me. Tell one of the grooms to bring my horse round. No. Never mind. I'll go to the stables myself. It will save time."

In less than a quarter of an hour Dorian Gray was galloping down the long avenue as hard as he could go. The trees seemed to sweep past him in spectral procession, and wild shadows to fling themselves across his path. Once the mare swerved at a white gate-post and nearly threw him. He lashed her across the neck with his crop. She cleft the dusky air like an arrow. The stones flew from her hoofs.

At last he reached the Home Farm. Two men were loitering in the yard. He leaped from the saddle and threw the reins to one of them. In the farthest stable a light was glimmering. Something seemed to tell him that the body was there, and he hurried to the door, and put his hand upon the latch.

There he paused for a moment, feeling that he was on the brink of a discovery that would either make or mar his life. Then he thrust the door open, and entered.

On a heap of sacking in the far corner was lying the dead body of a man dressed in a coarse shirt and a pair of blue trousers. A spotted handkerchief had been placed over the face. A coarse candle, stuck in a bottle, sputtered beside it.

Dorian Gray shuddered. He felt that his could not be the hand to take the handkerchief away, and called out to one of the farm-servants to come to him.

"Take that thing off the face. I wish to see it," he said, clutching at the door-post for support.

When the farm-servant had done so, he stepped forward. A cry of joy broke from his lips. The man who had been shot in the thicket was James Vane.

He stood there for some minutes, looking at the dead body. As he rode home his eyes were full of tears, for he knew he was safe.

XIX

"THERE is no use your telling me that you are going to be good!" cried Lord Henry, dipping his white fingers into a red copper bowl filled with rose-water. "You are quite perfect. Pray, don't change."

Dorian Gray shook his head. "No, Harry, I have done too many dreadful things in my life. I am not going to do any more. I began my good actions yesterday."

"Where were you yesterday?"

"In the country, Harry. I was staying at a little inn by myself."

"My dear boy," said Lord Henry, smiling, "anybody can be good in the country. There are no temptations there. That is the reason why people who live out of town are so absolutely uncivilized. Civilization is not, by any means, an easy thing to attain to. There are only two ways by which men can reach it. One is by being cultured, the other by being corrupt. Country people have no opportunity of being either, so they stagnate."

"Culture and corruption," echoed Dorian. "I have known something of both. It seems terrible to me now that they should ever be found together. For I have a new ideal, Harry. I am going to alter. I think I have altered."

"You have not yet told me what your good action was. Or did you say you had done more than one?" asked his companion, as he spilt into his plate a little crimson pyramid of seeded strawberries, and through a perforated, shell-shaped spoon snowed white sugar upon them.

"I can tell you, Harry. It is not a story I could tell to any one else. I spared somebody. It sounds vain, but you understand what I mean. She was quite beautiful, and wonderfully like Sibyl Vane. I think it was that which first attracted me to her. You remember Sibyl, don't you? How long ago that seems? Well, Hetty was not one of our own class, of course. She was simply a girl in a village. But I really loved her. I am quite sure that I loved her. All during this wonderful May that we have been having I used to run down and see her two or three times a week. Yesterday she met me in a little orchard. The apple blossoms kept tumbling down on her hair, and she was laughing. We were to have gone away together this morning at dawn. Suddenly I determined to leave her as flowerlike as I had found her."

"I should think the novelty of the emotion must have given you a thrill of real pleasure, Dorian," interrupted Lord Henry. "But I can finish your idyl for you. You gave her good advice and broke her heart. That was the beginning of your reformation."

"Harry, you are horrible! You mustn't say these dreadful things. Hetty's heart is not broken. Of course, she cried, and all that. But there is no disgrace upon her. She can live, like Perdita, in her garden of mint and marigold."

"And weep over a faithless Florizel," said Lord Henry, laughing, as he leaned back in his chair. "My dear Dorian, you have the most curiously boyish moods. Do you think this girl will ever be really contented now with any one of her own rank? I suppose she will be married some day to a rough carter or a grinning plowman. Well the fact of having met you, and loved you, will teach her to despise her husband, and she will be wretched. From a moral point of view, I cannot say that I think much of your great renunciation. Even as a beginning, it is poor. Besides, how do you know that Hetty isn't floating at the present moment in some star-lit mill-pond, with lovely waterlilies round her, like Ophelia?"

"I can't bear this, Harry! You mock at everything, and then suggest the most serious tragedies. I am sorry I told you now. I don't care what you say to me. I know I was right in acting as I did. Poor Hetty! As I rode past the farm this morning I saw her white face at the window, like a spray of jasmine. Don't let me talk about it any more, and don't try to persuade me that the first good action I have done for years, the first little bit of self-sacrifice I have ever known, is really a sort of sin. I want to be better. I am going to be better. Tell me something about yourself. What is going on in town? I have not been to the club for days."

"The people are still discussing poor Basil's disappearance."

"I should have thought they had got tired of that by this time," said Dorian, pouring himself out some wine, and frowning slightly.

"My dear boy, they have only been talking about it for six weeks, and the British public are really not equal to the mental strain of having more than one topic every three months. They have been very fortunate lately, however. They have had my own divorce case and Alan Campbell's suicide. Now they have got the mysterious disappearance of an artist. Scotland Yard still insists that the man in the grey ulster who left for Paris by the midnight train on the 9th of November was poor Basil, and the French police declare that Basil never arrived in Paris at all. I suppose in about a fortnight we shall be told that he has been seen in San Francisco. It is an odd thing, but every one who disappears is said to be seen at San Francisco. It must be a delightful city, and possess all the attraction of the next world."

"What do you think has happened to Basil?" asked Dorian, holding up his Burgundy against the light, and wondering how it was that he could discuss the matter so calmly.

"I have not the slightest idea. If Basil chooses to hide himself, it is no business of mine. If he is dead, I don't want to think about him. Death is the only thing that ever terrifies me. I hate it."

"Why?" said the younger man, wearily.

"Because," said Lord Henry, passing beneath his nostrils the gilt trellis of an open vinaigrette box, "one can survive everything nowadays except that. Death and vulgarity are the only two facts in the nineteenth century that one cannot explain away. Let us have our coffee in the music-room, Dorian. You must play Chopin to me. The man with whom my wife ran away played Chopin exquisitely. Poor Victoria! I was very fond of her. The house is rather lonely without her. Of course, married life is merely a habit—a bad habit. But then one regrets the loss even of one's worst habits. Perhaps one regrets them the most. They are such an essential part of one's personality."

Dorian said nothing, but rose from the table, and, passing into the next room, sat down to the piano and let his fingers stray across the white and black ivory of the keys. After the coffee had been brought in, he stopped, and, looking over at Lord Henry, said: "Harry, did it ever occur to you that Basil was murdered?"

Lord Henry yawned. "Basil was very popular, and always wore a Waterbury watch. Why should he have been murdered? He was not clever enough to have enemies. Of course, he had a wonderful genius for painting. But a man can paint like Velasquez, and yet be as dull as possible. Basil was really rather dull. He only interested me once, and that was when he told me, years ago, that he had a wild adoration for you, and that you were the dominant motive of his art."

"I was very fond of Basil," said Dorian, with a note of sadness in his voice. "But don't people say that he was murdered?"

"Oh, some of the papers do. It does not seem to me to be at all probable. I know there are dreadful places in Paris, but Basil was not the sort of man to have gone to them. He had no curiosity. It was his chief defect."

"What would you say, Harry, if I told you that I had murdered Basil?" said the younger man. He watched him intently after he had spoken.

"I would say, my dear fellow, that you were posing for a character that doesn't suit you. All crime is vulgar, just as all vulgarity is crime. It is not in you, Dorian, to commit a murder. I am sorry if I hurt your vanity by saying so, but I assure you it is true. Crime belongs exclusively to the lower orders. I don't blame them in the smallest degree. I should fancy that crime was to them what art is to us, simply a method of procuring extraordinary sensations."

"A method of procuring sensations? Do you think, then, that a man who has once committed a murder could possibly do the same crime again? Don't tell me that."

"Oh! anything becomes a pleasure if one does it too often," cried Lord Henry, laughing. "That is one of the most important secrets of life. I should fancy, however, that murder is always a mistake. One should never do anything that one cannot talk about after dinner. But let us pass from poor Basil. I wish I could believe that he had come to such a really romantic end as you suggest; but I can't. I dare say he fell into the Seine off an omnibus, and that the conductor hushed up the scandal. Yes, I should fancy that was his end. I see him lying now on his back under those dull-green waters with the heavy barges floating over him, and long weeds catching in his hair. Do you know, I don't think he would have done much more good work. During the last ten years his painting had gone off very much."

Dorian heaved a sigh, and Lord Henry strolled across the room and began to stroke the head of a curious Java parrot, a large grey-plumaged bird, with pink crest and tail, that was balancing itself upon a bamboo perch. As his pointed fingers touched it, it dropped the white scurf of crinkled lids over black glass-like eyes, and began to sway backward and forward.

"Yes," he continued, turning round, and taking his handkerchief out of his pocket, "his painting had quite gone off. It seemed to me to have lost something. It had lost an ideal. When you and he ceased to be great friends, he ceased to be a great artist. What was it separated you? I suppose he bored you. If so, he never forgave you. It's a habit bores have. By the way, what has become of that wonderful portrait he did of you? I don't think I have ever seen it since he finished it. Oh! I remember your telling me years ago that you had sent it down to Selby, and that it got mislaid or stolen on the way. You never got it back? What a pity! It was really a masterpiece. I remember I wanted to buy it. I wish I had now. It belonged to Basil's best period. Since then his work was that curious mixture of bad painting and good intentions that always entitles a man to be called a representative British artist. Did you advertise for it? You should."

"I forget," said Dorian. "I suppose I did. But I never really liked it. I am sorry I sat for it. The memory of the thing is hateful to me. Why do you talk about it? It used to remind me of those curious lines in some play—'Hamlet,' I think—how do they run?—

" 'Like the painting of a sorrow,
'A face without a heart.'

Yes, that is what it was like."

Lord Henry laughed. "If a man treats life artistically, his brain is his heart," he answered, sinking into an arm-chair.

Dorian Gray shook his head, and struck some soft chords on the piano. " 'Like the painting of a sorrow,' " he repeated, " 'a face without a heart.' "

The elder man lay back and looked at him with half-closed eyes. "By the way, Dorian," he said, after a pause, " 'what does it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose'—how does the quotation run?—'his own soul'?"

The music jarred, and Dorian Gray started and stared at his friend. "Why do you ask me that, Harry?"

"My dear fellow," said Lord Henry, elevating his eyebrows in surprise, "I asked you because I thought you might be able to give me an answer. That is all. I was going through the Park last Sunday, and close by the Marble Arch there stood a little crowd of shabby-looking people listening to some vulgar street-preacher. As I passed by I heard the man yelling out that question to his audience. It struck me as being rather dramatic. London is very rich in curious effects of that kind. A wet Sunday, an uncouth Christian in a mackintosh, a ring of sickly white faces under a broken roof of dripping umbrellas, and a wonderful phrase flung into the air by shrill, hysterical lips—it was really very good in its way, quite a suggestion. I thought of telling the prophet that Art had a soul, but that man had not. I am afraid, however, he would not have understood me."

"Don't, Harry. The soul is a terrible reality. It can be bought, and sold, and bartered away. It can be poisoned, or made perfect. There is a soul in each one of us. I know it."

"Do you feel quite sure of that, Dorian?"

"Quite sure."

"Ah! then it must be an illusion. The things one feels absolutely certain about are never true. That is the fatality of Faith, and the lesson of Romance. How grave you are! Don't be so serious. What have you or I to do with the superstitions of our age? No; we have given up our belief in the soul. Play me something. Play me a nocturne, Dorian, and, as you play, tell me, in a low voice, how you have kept your youth. You must have some secret. I am only ten years older than you are, and I am wrinkled, and worn, and yellow. You are really wonderful, Dorian. You have never looked more charming than you do to-night. You remind me of the day I saw you first. You were rather cheeky, very shy, and absolutely extraordinary. You have changed, of course, but not in appearance. I wish you would tell me your secret. To get back my youth I would do anything in the world, except take exercise, get up early, or be respectable. Youth! There is nothing like it. It's absurd to talk of the ignorance of youth. The only people to whose opinions I listen now with any respect are people much younger than myself. They seem in front of me. Life has revealed to them her latest wonder. As for the aged, I always contradict the aged. I do it on principle. If you ask them their opinion on something that happened yesterday, they solemnly give the opinions current in 1820, when people wore high stocks, believed in everything, and knew absolutely nothing. How lovely that thing you you are playing is! I wonder did Chopin write it at Majorca, with the sea weeping round the villa and the salt spray dashing against the panes? It is marvelously romantic. What a blessing it is that there is one art left to us that is not imitative! Don't stop. I want music to-night. It seems to me that you are the young Apollo, and that I am Marsyas listening to you. I have sorrows, Dorian, of my own, that even you know nothing of. The tragedy of old age is not that one is old, but that one is young. I am amazed sometimes at my own sincerity. Ah, Dorian, how happy you are! What an exquisite life you have had! You have drunk deeply of everything. You have crushed the grapes against your palate. Nothing has been hidden from you. And it has all been to you no more than the sound of music. It has not marred you. You are still the same."

"I am not the same, Harry."

"Yes, you are the same. I wonder what the rest of your life will be. Don't spoil it by renunciations. At present you are a perfect type. Don't make yourself incomplete. You are quite flawless now. You need not shake your head; you know you are. Besides, Dorian, don't deceive yourself. Life is not governed by will or intention. Life is a question of nerves, and fibers, and slowly built-up cells in which thought hides itself and passion has its dreams. You may fancy yourself safe, and think yourself strong. But a chance tone of color in a room or a morning sky, a particular perfume that you had once loved and that brings subtle memories with it, a line from a forgotten poem that you had come across again, a cadence from a piece of music that you had ceased to play—I tell you, Dorian, that it is on things like these that our lives depend. Browning writes about that somewhere; but our own senses will imagine them for us. There are moments when the odor of *lilas blanc* passes suddenly across me, and I have to live the strangest month of my life over again. I wish I could change places with you, Dorian. The world has cried out against us both, but it has always worshiped you. It always will worship you. You are the type of what the age is searching for, and what it is afraid it has found. I am so glad that you have never done anything—never carved a statue, or painted a picture, or produced anything outside of yourself! Life has been your art. You have set yourself to music. Your days are your sonnets."

Dorian rose up from the piano, and passed his hand through his hair. "Yes, life has been exquisite," he murmured, "but I am not going to have the same life, Harry. And you must not say these extravagant things to me. You don't know everything about me. I think that if you did, even you would turn from me. You laugh. Don't laugh."

"Why have you stopped playing, Dorian? Go back and give me the nocturne over again. Look at that great honey-colored moon that hangs in the dusky air. She is waiting for you to charm her, and if you play she will come closer to the earth. You won't. Let us go to the club, then. It has been a charming evening, and we must end it charmingly. There is some one at White's who wants immensely to know you—young Lord Poole, Bournemouth's eldest son. He has already copied your neckties, and has begged me to introduce him to you. He is quite delightful, and rather reminds me of you."

"I hope not," said Dorian, with a sad look in his eyes. "But I am tired to-night, Harry. I sha'n't go to the club. It is nearly eleven, and I want to go to bed early."

"Do stay. You have never played so well as to-night. There was something in your touch that was wonderful. It had more expression than I had ever heard from it before."

"It is because I am going to be good," he answered, smiling. "I am a little changed already."

"You cannot change to me, Dorian," said Lord Henry. "You and I will always be friends."

"Yet you poisoned me with a book once. I should not forgive that. Harry, promise me that you will never lend that book to any one. It does harm."

"My dear boy, you are really beginning to moralize. You will soon be going about like the converted and the revivalist, warning people against all the sins of which you have grown tired. You are much too delightful to do that. Besides, it is no use. You and I are what we are, and will be what we will be. As for being poisoned by a book, there is no such thing as that. Art has no influence upon action. It annihilates the desire to act. It is superbly sterile. The books that the world calls immoral are books that show the world its own shame. That is all. But we won't discuss literature. Come round to-morrow. I am going to ride at eleven. We might go together, and I will take you to lunch afterward with Lady Branksome. She is a charming woman, and wants to consult you about some tapestries she is thinking of buying. Mind you come. Or shall we lunch with our little Duchess? She says she never sees you now. Perhaps you are tired of Gladys? I thought you would be. Her clever tongue gets on one's nerves. Well, in any case be here at eleven.

"Must I really come, Harry?"

"Certainly. The Park is quite lovely now. I don't think there have been such lilacs since the year I met you."

"Very well. I will be here at eleven," said Dorian. "Good-night, Harry." As he reached the door he hesitated for a moment, as if he had something more to say. Then he sighed and went out.

XX

IT was a lovely night, so warm that he threw his coat over his arm, and did not even put his silk scarf round his throat. As he strolled home, smoking his cigarette, two young men in evening dress passed him. He heard one of them whisper to the other, "That is Dorian Gray." He remembered how pleased he used to be when he was pointed out, or stared at, or talked about. He was tired of hearing his own name now. Half the charm of the little village where he had been so often lately was that no one knew who he was. He had often told the girl whom he had lured to love him that he was poor, and she had believed him. He had told her once that he was wicked, and she had laughed at him, and answered that wicked people were always very old and very ugly. What a laugh she had!—just like a thrush singing. And how pretty she had been in her cotton dresses and her large hats! She knew nothing, but she had everything that he had lost.

When he reached home he found his servant waiting up for him. He sent him to bed, and threw himself down on the sofa in the library, and began to think over some of the things that Lord Henry had said to him.

Was it really true that one could never change? He felt a wild longing for the unstained purity of his boyhood—his rose-white boyhood, as Lord Henry had once called it. He knew that he had tarnished himself, filled his mind with corruption, and given horror to his fancy; that he had been an evil influence to others, and had experienced a terrible joy in being so; and that of the lives that had crossed his own it had been the fairest and the most full of promise that he had brought to shame. But was it all irretrievable? Was there no hope for him?

Ah! in what a monstrous moment of pride and passion he had prayed that the portrait should bear the burden of his days, and he keep the unsullied splendor of eternal youth! All his failure had been due to that. Better for him that each sin of his life had brought its sure, swift penalty along with it. There was purification in punishment. Not "Forgive us our sins" but "Smite us for our iniquities" should be the prayer of man to a most just God.

The curiously carved mirror that Lord Henry had given to him, so many years ago now, was standing on the table, and the white-limbed Cupids laughed round it as of old. He took it up as he had done on that night of horror, when he had first noted the change in the fatal picture, and with wild, tear-dimmed eyes looked into its polished shield. Once, some one who had terribly loved him, had written to him a mad letter, ending with these idolatrous words: "The world is changed because you are made of ivory and gold. The curves of your lips rewrite history." The phrases came back to his memory, and he repeated them over and over to himself. Then he loathed his own beauty, and flinging the mirror on the floor crushed it into silver splinters beneath his heel. It was his beauty that had ruined him, his beauty and the youth that he had prayed for. But for those two things his life might have been free from stain. His beauty had been to him but a mask, his youth but a mockery. What was youth at best? A green, an unripe time—a time of shallow moods and sickly thoughts. Why had he worn its livery? Youth had spoiled him.

It was better not to think of the past. Nothing could alter that. It was of himself and of his own future that he had to think. James Vane was hidden in a nameless grave in Selby churchyard. Alan Campbell had shot himself one night in his laboratory, but had not revealed the secret that he had been forced to know. The excitement, such as it was, over Basil Hallward's disappearance would soon pass away. It was already waning. He was perfectly safe there. Nor, indeed, was it the death of Basil Hallward that weighed most upon his mind. It was the living death of his own soul that troubled him. Basil had painted the portrait that had marred his life. He could not forgive him that. It was the portrait that had done everything. Basil had said things to him that were unbearable, and that he had yet borne with patience. The murder had been simply the madness of a moment. As for Alan Campbell, his suicide had been his own act. He had chosen to do it. It was nothing to him.

A new life! That was what he wanted. That was what he was waiting for. Surely he had begun it already. He had spared one innocent thing, at any rate. He would never again tempt innocence. He would be good.

As he thought of Hettie Merton he began to wonder if the portrait in the locked room had changed. Surely it was not still so horrible as it had been? Perhaps if his life became pure he would be able to expel every sign of evil passion from the face. Perhaps the signs of evil had already gone away. He would go and look.

He took the lamp from the table and crept upstairs. As he unbarred the door a smile of joy flitted across his strangely young-looking face and lingered for a moment about his lips. Yes, he would be good, and the hideous thing that he had hidden away would no longer be a terror to him. He felt as if the load had been lifted from him already.

He went in quietly, locking the door behind him, as was his custom, and dragged the purple hanging from the portrait. A cry of pain and indignation broke from him. He could see no change, save that in the eyes there was a look of cunning, and in the mouth the curved wrinkle of the hypocrite. The thing was still loathsome—more loathsome, if possible, than before—and the scarlet dew that spotted the hand seemed brighter, and more like blood newly spilled. Then he trembled. Had it been merely vanity that had made him do his one good deed? Or the desire of a new sensation, as Lord Henry had hinted, with his mocking laugh? Or that passion to act a part that sometimes makes us do things finer than we are ourselves? Or, perhaps all these? And why was the red stain larger than it had been? It seemed to have crept like a horrible disease over the wrinkled fingers. There was blood on the painted feet, as though the blood had dripped—blood even on the hand that had not held the knife. Confess? Did it mean that he was to confess? To give himself up, and be put to death? He laughed. He felt that the idea was monstrous. Besides, even if he did confess, who would believe him? There was no trace of the murdered man anywhere. Everything belonging to him had been destroyed. He himself had burned what had been below-stairs. The world would simply say that he was mad. They would shut him up if he persisted in his story. . . . Yet it was his duty to confess, to suffer public shame, and to make public atonement. There was a God who called upon men to tell their sins to earth as well as to heaven. Nothing that he could do would cleanse him till he had told his own sin. His sin? He shrugged his shoulders. The death of Basil Hallward seemed very little to him. He was thinking of Hetty Merton. For it was an unjust mirror, this mirror of his soul that he was looking at. Vanity? Curiosity? Hypocrisy? Had there been nothing more in his renunciation than that? There had been something more. At least, he thought so. But who could tell? . . . No. There had been nothing more. Through vanity he had spared her. In hypocrisy he had worn the mask of goodness. For curiosity's sake he had tried the denial of himself. He recognized that now.

But this murder—was it to dog him all his life? Was he always to be burdened by his past? Was he really to confess? Never. There was only one bit of evidence left against him. The picture itself—that was evidence. He would destroy it. Why had he kept it so long? Once it had given him pleasure to watch it changing and growing old. Of late he had felt no such pleasure. It had kept him awake at night. When he had been away he had been filled with terror lest other eyes should look upon it. It had brought melancholy across his passions. Its mere memory had marred many moments of joy. It had been like conscience to him. Yes, it had been conscience. He would destroy it.

He looked round, and saw the knife that had stabbed Basil Hallward. He had cleaned it many times, till there was no stain left upon it. It was bright, and glistened. As it had killed the painter, so it would kill the painter's work, and all that that meant. It would kill the past, and when that was dead he would be free. It would kill this monstrous soul-life, and without its hideous warnings he would be at peace. He seized the thing, and stabbed the picture with it.

There was a cry heard, and a crash. The cry was so horrible in its agony that the frightened servants woke, and crept out of their rooms. Two gentlemen, who were passing in the Square below, stopped, and looked up at the great house. They walked on till they met a policeman, and brought him back. The man rang the bell several times, but there was no answer. Except for a light in one of the top windows, the house was all dark. After a time he went away, and stood in an adjoining portico and watched.

"Whose house is that, constable?" asked the elder of the two gentlemen.

"Mr. Dorian Gray's, sir," answered the policeman.

They looked at each other as they walked away, and sneered. One of them was Sir Henry Ashton's uncle.

Inside, in the servant's part of the house, the half-clad domestics were talking in low whispers to each other. Old Mrs. Leaf was crying, and wringing her hands. Francis was as pale as death.

After about a quarter of an hour he got the coachman and one of the footmen, and crept up-stairs. They knocked, but there was no reply. They called out. Everything was still. Finally, after vainly trying to force the door, they got on the roof, and dropped down onto the balcony. The windows yielded easily; their bolts were old.

When they entered they found hanging upon the wall a splendid portrait of their master as they had last seen him, in all the wonder of his exquisite youth and beauty. Lying on the floor was a dead man, in evening dress, with a knife in his heart. He was withered, wrinkled, and loathsome of visage. It was not till they had examined the rings that they recognized who it was.

THE HOUSE OF POMEGRANATES

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THE YOUNG KING

THE YOUNG KING

IT was the night before the day fixed for his coronation, and the young King was sitting alone in his beautiful chamber. His courtiers had all taken their leave of him, bowing their heads to the ground, according to the ceremonious usage of the day, and had retired to the Great Hall of the Palace, to receive a few last lessons from the Professor of Etiquette; there being some of them who had still quite natural manners, which in a courtier is, I need hardly say, a very grave offence.

The lad—for he was only a lad, being but sixteen years of age—was not sorry at their departure, and had flung himself back with a deep sigh of relief on the soft cushions of his embroidered couch, lying there, wild-eyed and open-mouthed, like a brown woodland Faun, or some young animal of the forest newly snared by the hunters.

And, indeed, it was the hunters who had

found him, coming upon him almost by chance as, bare-limbed and pipe in hand, he was following the flock of the poor goatherd who had brought him up, and whose son he had always fancied himself to be. The child of the old King's only daughter by a secret marriage with one much beneath her in station—a stranger, some said, who, by the wonderful magic of his lute-playing, had made the young Princess love him; while others spoke of an artist from Rimini, to whom the Princess had shown much, perhaps too much honour, and who had suddenly disappeared from the city, leaving his work in the Cathedral unfinished—he had been, when but a week old, stolen away from his mother's side, as she slept, and given into the charge of a common peasant and his wife, who were without children of their own, and lived in a remote part of the forest, more than a day's ride from the town. Grief, or the plague, as the court physician stated, or, as some suggested, a swift Italian poison administered in a cup of spiced wine, slew, within an hour of her wakening, the white girl who had given him birth, and as the trusty messenger who bare the child across his saddle-bow stooped from his weary horse and knocked at the rude door of the goatherd's hut, the body of the Princess was being lowered into an open grave that had been dug in a deserted churchyard, beyond the city gates, a grave where it was said that another body was also lying, that of a young man of marvellous and foreign beauty, whose hands were tied behind him with a knotted cord, and whose breast was stabbed with many red wounds.

Such, at least, was the story that men whispered to each other. Certain it was that the old King, when on his deathbed, whether moved by remorse for his great sin, or merely desiring that the kingdom should not pass away from his line, had had the lad sent for, and, in the presence of the Council, had acknowledged him as his heir.

And it seems that from the very first moment of his recognition he had shown signs of that strange passion for beauty that was destined to have so great an influence over his life. Those who accompanied him to the suite of rooms set apart for his service, often spoke of the cry of pleasure that broke from his lips when he saw the delicate raiment and rich jewels that had been prepared for him, and of the almost fierce joy with which he flung aside his rough leathern tunic and coarse sheepskin cloak. He missed, indeed, at times the fine freedom of his forest life, and was always apt to chafe at the tedious Court ceremonies that occupied so much of each day, but the wonderful palace—*Joyeuse*, as they called it—of which he now found himself lord, seemed to him to be a new world fresh-fashioned for his delight; and as soon as he could escape from the council-board or audience-chamber, he would run down the great staircase, with its lions of gilt bronze and its steps of bright porphyry, and wander from room to room, and from corridor to corridor, like one who was seeking to find in beauty an anodyne from pain, a sort of restoration from sickness.

Upon these journeys of discovery, as he would call them—and, indeed, they were to him real voyages through a marvellous land, he would sometimes be accompanied by the slim, fair-haired Court pages, with their floating mantles, and gay fluttering ribands; but more often he would be alone, feeling through a certain quick instinct, which was almost a divination, that the secrets of art are best learned in secret, and that Beauty, like Wisdom, loves the lonely worshipper.

Many curious stories were related about him at this period. It was said that a stout Burgomaster, who had come to deliver a florid oratorical address on behalf of the citizens of the town, had caught sight of him kneeling in real adoration before a great picture that had just been brought from Venice, and that seemed to herald the worship of some new gods. On another occasion he had been missed for several hours, and after a lengthened search had been discovered in a little chamber in one of the northern turrets of the palace gazing, as one in a trance, at a Greek gem carved with the figure of Adonis. He had been seen, so the tale ran, pressing his warm lips to the marble brow of an antique statue that had been discovered in the bed of the river on the occasion of the building of the stone bridge, and was inscribed with the name of the Bithynian slave of Hadrian. He had passed a whole night in noting the effect of the moonlight on a silver image of Endymion.

All rare and costly materials had certainly a great fascination for him, and in his eagerness to procure them he had sent away many merchants, some to traffic for amber with the rough fisher-folk of the north seas, some to Egypt to look for that curious green turquoise which is found only in the tombs of kings, and is said to possess magical properties, some to Persia for silken carpets and painted pottery, and others to India to buy gauze and stained ivory, moonstones and bracelets of jade, sandalwood and blue enamel and shawls of fine wool.

But what had occupied him most was the robe he was to wear at his coronation, the robe of tissued gold, and the ruby-studded crown, and the sceptre with its rows and rings of pearls. Indeed, it was of this that he was thinking to-night, as he lay back on his luxurious couch, watching the great pinewood log that was burning itself out on the open hearth. The designs, which were from the hands of the most famous artists of the time, had been submitted to him many months before, and he had given orders that the artificers were to toil night and day to carry them out, and that the whole world was to be searched for jewels that would be worthy of their work. He saw himself in fancy standing at the high altar of the cathedral in the fair raiment of a King, and a smile played and lingered about his boyish lips, and lit up with a bright lustre his dark woodland eyes.

After some time he rose from his seat, and leaning against the carved penthouse of the chimney, looked round at the dimly-lit room. The walls were hung with rich tapestries representing the Triumph of Beauty. A large press, inlaid with agate and lapis-lazuli, filled one corner, and facing the window stood a curiously wrought cabinet with lacquer panels of powdered and mosaiced gold, on which were placed some delicate goblets of Venetian glass, and a cup of dark-veined onyx. Pale poppies were broidered on the silk coverlet of the bed, as though they had fallen from the tired hands of sleep, and tall reeds of fluted ivory bare up the velvet canopy, from which great tufts of ostrich plumes sprang, like white foam, to the pallid silver of the fretted ceiling. A laughing Narcissus in green bronze held a polished mirror above its head. On the table stood a flat bowl of amethyst.

Outside he could see the huge dome of the cathedral, looming like a bubble over the shadowy houses, and the weary sentinels pacing up and down on the misty terrace by the river. Far away, in an orchard, a nightingale was singing. A faint perfume of jasmine came through the open window. He brushed his brown curls back from his forehead, and taking up a lute, let his fingers stray across the cords.

His heavy eyelids drooped, and a strange languor came over him. Never before had he felt so keenly, or with such exquisite joy, the magic and the mystery of beautiful things.

When midnight sounded from the clock-tower he touched a bell, and his pages entered and disrobed him with much ceremony, pouring rose-water over his hands, and strewing flowers on his pillow. A few moments after that they had left the room, he fell asleep.

And as he slept he dreamed a dream, and this was his dream.

He thought that he was standing in a long, low attic, amidst the whir and clatter of many looms. The meagre daylight peered in through the grated windows, and showed him the gaunt figures of the weavers bending over their cases. Pale, sickly-looking children were crouched on the huge crossbeams. As the shuttles dashed through the warp they lifted up the heavy battens, and when the shuttles stopped they let the battens fall and pressed the threads together. Their faces were pinched with famine, and their thin hands shook and trembled. Some haggard women were seated at a table sewing. A horrible odour filled the place. The air was foul and heavy, and the walls dripped and streamed with damp.

The young King went over to one of the weavers, and stood by him and watched him.

And the weaver looked at him angrily, and said, 'Why art thou watching me? Art thou a spy set on us by our master?'

'Who is thy master?' asked the young King.

'Our master!' cried the weaver, bitterly. 'He is a man like myself. Indeed, there is but this difference between us—that he wears fine clothes while I go in rags, and that while I am weak from hunger he suffers not a little from overfeeding.'

'The land is free,' said the young King, 'and thou art no man's slave.'

'In war,' answered the weaver, 'the strong make slaves of the weak, and in peace the rich make slaves of the poor. We must work to live, and they give us such mean wages that we die. We toil for them all day long, and they heap up gold in their coffers, and our children fade away before their time, and the faces of those we love become hard and evil. We tread out the grapes, and another drinks the wine. We sow the corn, and our own board is empty. We have chains, though no eye beholds them; and are slaves, though men call us free.'

'Is it so with all?' he asked.

'It is so with all,' answered the weaver, 'with the young as well as with the old, with the women as well as with the men, with the little children as well as with those who are stricken in years. The merchants grind us down, and we must needs do their bidding. The priest rides by and tells his beads, and no man has care of us. Through our sunless lanes creeps Poverty with her hungry eyes, and Sin with his sodden face follows close behind her. Misery wakes us in the morning, and Shame sits with us at night. But what are these things to thee? Thou art not one of us. Thy face is too happy.' And he turned away scowling, and threw the shuttle across the loom, and the young King saw that it was threaded with a thread of gold.

And a great terror seized upon him, and he said to the weaver, 'What robe is this that thou art weaving?'

'It is the robe for the coronation of the young King,' he answered; 'what is that to thee?'

And the young King gave a loud cry and woke, and lo! he was in his own chamber, and through the window he saw the great honey-coloured moon hanging in the dusky air.

And he fell asleep again and dreamed, and this was his dream.

He thought that he was lying on the deck of a huge galley that was being rowed by a hundred slaves. On a carpet by his side the master of the galley was seated. He was black as ebony, and his turban was of crimson silk. Great ear-rings of silver dragged down the thick lobes of his ears, and in his hands he had a pair of ivory scales.

The slaves were naked, but for a ragged loin-cloth, and each man was chained to his neighbour. The hot sun beat brightly upon them, and the negroes ran up and down the gangway and lashed them with whips of hide. They stretched out their lean arms and pulled the heavy oars through the water. The salt spray flew from the blades.

At last they reached a little bay, and began to take soundings. A light wind blew from the shore, and covered the deck and the great lateen sail with a fine red dust. Three Arabs mounted on wild asses rode out and threw spears at them. The master of the galley took a painted bow in his hand and shot one of them in the throat. He fell heavily into the surf, and his companions galloped away. A woman wrapped in a yellow veil followed slowly on a camel, looking back now and then at the dead body.

As soon as they had cast anchor and hauled down the sail, the negroes went into the hold and brought up a long rope-ladder, heavily weighted with lead. The master of the galley threw it over the side, making the ends fast to two iron stanchions. Then the negroes seized the youngest of the slaves and knocked his gyves off, and filled his nostrils and his ears with wax, and tied a big stone round his waist. He crept wearily down the ladder, and disappeared into the sea. A few bubbles rose where he sank. Some of the other slaves peered curiously over the side. At the prow of the galley sat a shark-charmer, beating monotonously upon a drum.

After some time the diver rose up out of the water, and clung panting to the ladder with a pearl in his right hand. The negroes seized it from him, and thrust him back. The slaves fell asleep over their oars.

Again and again he came up, and each time that he did so he brought with him a beautiful pearl. The master of the galley weighed them, and put them into a little bag of green leather.

The young King tried to speak, but his tongue seemed to cleave to the roof of his mouth, and his lips refused to move. The negroes chattered to each other, and began to quarrel over a string of bright beads. Two cranes flew round and round the vessel.

Then the diver came up for the last time, and the pearl that he brought with him was fairer than all the pearls of Ormuz, for it was shaped like the full moon, and whiter than the morning star. But his face was strangely pale, and as he fell upon the deck the blood gushed from his ears and nostrils. He quivered for a little, and then he was still. The negroes shrugged their shoulders, and threw the body overboard.

And the master of the galley laughed, and, reaching out, he took the pearl, and when he saw it he pressed it to his forehead and bowed. ‘It shall be,’ he said, ‘for the sceptre of the young King,’ and he made a sign to the negroes to draw up the anchor.

And when the young King heard this he gave a great cry, and woke, and through the window he saw the long grey fingers of the dawn clutching at the fading stars.

And he fell asleep again, and dreamed, and this was his dream.

He thought that he was wandering through a dim wood, hung with strange fruits and with beautiful poisonous flowers. The adders hissed at him as he went by, and the bright parrots flew screaming from branch to branch. Huge tortoises lay asleep upon the hot mud. The trees were full of apes and peacocks.

On and on he went, till he reached the outskirts of the wood, and there he saw an immense multitude of men toiling in the bed of a dried-up river. They swarmed up the crag like ants. They dug deep pits in the ground and went down into them. Some of them cleft the rocks with great axes; others grabbled in the sand. They tore up the cactus by its roots, and trampled on the scarlet blossoms. They hurried about, calling to each other, and no man was idle.

From the darkness of a cavern Death and Avarice watched them, and Death said, 'I am weary; give me a third of them and let me go.'

But Avarice shook her head. 'They are my servants,' she answered.

And Death said to her, 'What hast thou in thy hand?'

'I have three grains of corn,' she answered; 'what is that to thee?'

'Give me one of them,' cried Death, 'to plant in my garden; only one of them, and I will go away.'

'I will not give thee anything,' said Avarice, and she hid her hand in the fold of her raiment.

And Death laughed, and took a cup, and dipped it into a pool of water, and out of the cup rose Ague. She passed through the great multitude, and a third of them lay dead. A cold mist followed her, and the water-snakes ran by her side.

And when Avarice saw that a third of the multitude was dead she beat her breast and wept. She beat her barren bosom, and cried aloud. 'Thou hast slain a third of my servants,' she cried, 'get thee gone. There is war in the mountains of Tartary, and the kings of each side are calling to thee. The Afghans have slain the black ox, and are marching to battle. They have beaten upon their shields with their spears, and have put on their helmets of iron. What is my valley to thee, that thou shouldst tarry in it? Get thee gone, and come here no more.'

'Nay,' answered Death, 'but till thou hast given me a grain of corn I will not go.'

But Avarice shut her hand, and clenched her teeth. 'I will not give thee anything,' she muttered.

And Death laughed, and took up a black stone, and threw it into the forest, and out of a thicket of wild hemlock came Fever in a robe of flame. She passed through the multitude, and touched them, and each man that she touched died. The grass withered beneath her feet as she walked.

And Avarice shuddered, and put ashes on her head. 'Thou art cruel,' she cried; 'thou art cruel. There is famine in the walled cities of India, and the cisterns of Samarcand have run dry. There is famine in the walled cities of Egypt, and the locusts have come up from the desert. The Nile has not overflowed its banks, and the priests have cursed Isis and Osiris. Get thee gone to those who need thee, and leave me my servants.'

'Nay,' answered Death, 'but till thou hast given me a grain of corn I will not go.'

'I will not give thee anything,' said Avarice.

And Death laughed again, and he whistled through his fingers, and a woman came flying through the air. Plague was written upon her forehead, and a crowd of lean vultures wheeled round her. She covered the valley with her wings, and no man was left alive.

And Avarice fled shrieking through the forest, and Death leaped upon his red horse and galloped away, and his galloping was faster than the wind.

And out of the slime at the bottom of the valley crept dragons and horrible things with scales, and the jackals came trotting along the sand, sniffing up the air with their nostrils.

And the young King wept, and said: ‘Who were these men, and for what were they seeking?’

‘For rubies for a king’s crown,’ answered one who stood behind him.

And the young King started, and, turning round, he saw a man habited as a pilgrim and holding in his hand a mirror of silver.

And he grew pale, and said: ‘For what king?’

And the pilgrim answered: ‘Look in this mirror, and thou shalt see him.’

And he looked in the mirror, and, seeing his own face, he gave a great cry and woke, and the bright sunlight was streaming into the room, and from the trees of the garden and pleasaunce the birds were singing.

And the Chamberlain and the high officers of State came in and made obeisance to him, and the pages brought him the robe of tissued gold, and set the crown and the sceptre before him.

And the young King looked at them, and they were beautiful. More beautiful were they than aught that he had ever seen. But he remembered his dreams, and he said to his lords: 'Take these things away, for I will not wear them.'

And the courtiers were amazed, and some of them laughed, for they thought that he was jesting.

But he spake sternly to them again, and said: 'Take these things away, and hide them from me. Though it be the day of my coronation, I will not wear them. For on the loom of Sorrow, and by the white hands of Pain, has this my robe been woven. There is Blood in the heart of the ruby, and Death in the heart of the pearl.' And he told them his three dreams.

And when the courtiers heard them they looked at each other and whispered, saying: 'Surely he is mad; for what is a dream but a dream, and a vision but a vision? They are not real things that one should heed them. And what have we to do with the lives of those who toil for us? Shall a man not eat bread till he has seen the sower, nor drink wine till he has talked with the vinedresser?'

And the Chamberlain spake to the young King, and said, 'My lord, I pray thee set aside these black thoughts of thine, and put on this fair robe, and set this crown upon thy head. For how shall the people know that thou art a king, if thou hast not a king's raiment?'

And the young King looked at him. 'Is it so, indeed?' he questioned. 'Will they not know me for a king if I have not a king's raiment?'

'They will not know thee, my lord,' cried the Chamberlain.

'I had thought that there had been men who were kinglike,' he answered, 'but it may be as thou sayest. And yet I will not wear this robe, nor will I be crowned with this crown, but even as I came to the palace so will I go forth from it.'

And he bade them all leave him, save one page whom he kept as his companion, a lad a year younger than himself. Him he kept for his service, and when he had bathed himself in clear water, he opened a great painted chest, and from it he took the leathern tunic and rough sheepskin cloak that he had worn when he had watched on the hillside the shaggy goats of the goatherd. These he put on, and in his hand he took his rude shepherd's staff.

And the little page opened his big blue eyes in wonder, and said smiling to him, 'My lord, I see thy robe and thy sceptre, but where is thy crown?'

And the young King plucked a spray of wild briar that was climbing over the balcony, and bent it, and made a circlet of it, and set it on his own head.

'This shall be my crown,' he answered.

And thus attired he passed out of his chamber into the Great Hall, where the nobles were waiting for him.

And the nobles made merry, and some of them cried out to him, 'My lord, the people wait for their king, and thou showest them a beggar,' and others were wroth and said, 'He brings shame upon our state, and is unworthy to be our master.' But he answered them not a word, but passed on, and went down the bright porphyry staircase, and out through the gates of bronze, and mounted upon his horse, and rode towards the cathedral, the little page running beside him.

And the people laughed and said, 'It is the King's fool who is riding by,' and they mocked him.

And he drew rein and said, 'Nay, but I am the King.' And he told them his three dreams.

And a man came out of the crowd and spake bitterly to him and said, 'Sir, knowest thou not that out of the luxury of the rich cometh the life of the poor? By your pomp we are nurtured, and your vices give us bread. To toil for a hard master is bitter, but to have no master to toil for is more bitter still. Thinkest thou that the ravens will feed us? And what cure hast thou for these things? Wilt thou say to the buyer, "Thou shalt buy for so much," and to the seller, "Thou shalt sell at this price"? I trow not. Therefore go back to thy Palace and put on thy purple and fine linen. What hast thou to do with us, and what we suffer?'

'Are not the rich and the poor brothers?' asked the young King.

'Ay,' answered the man, 'and the name of the rich brother is Cain.'

And the young King's eyes filled with tears, and he rode on through the murmurs of the people, and the little page grew afraid and left him.

And when he reached the great portal of the cathedral, the soldiers thrust their halberts out and said, 'What dost thou seek here? None enters by this door but the King.'

And his face flushed with anger, and he said to them, 'I am the King,' and waved their halberts aside and passed in.

And when the old Bishop saw him coming in his goatherd's dress, he rose up in wonder from his throne, and went to meet him, and said to him, 'My son, is this a king's apparel? And with what crown shall I crown thee, and what sceptre shall I place in thy hand? Surely this should be to thee a day of joy, and not a day of abasement.'

'Shall Joy wear what Grief has fashioned?' said the young King. And he told him his three dreams.

And when the Bishop had heard them he knit his brows, and said, 'My son, I am an old man, and in the winter of my days, and I know that many evil things are done in the wide world. The fierce robbers come down from the mountains, and carry off the little children, and sell them to the Moors. The lions lie in wait for the caravans, and leap upon the camels. The wild boar roots up the corn in the valley, and the foxes gnaw the vines upon the hill. The pirates lay waste the sea-coast and burn the ships of the fishermen, and take their nets from them. In the salt-marshes live the lepers; they have houses of wattled reeds, and none may come nigh them. The beggars wander through the cities, and eat their food with the dogs. Canst thou make these things not to be? Wilt thou take the leper for thy bedfellow, and set the beggar at thy board? Shall the lion do thy bidding, and the wild boar obey thee? Is not He who made misery wiser than thou art? Wherefore I praise thee not for this that thou hast done, but I bid thee ride back to the Palace and make thy face glad, and put on the raiment that beseemeth a king, and with the crown of gold I will crown thee, and the sceptre of pearl will I place in thy hand. And as for thy dreams, think no more of them. The burden of this world is too great for one man to bear, and the world's sorrow too heavy for one heart to suffer.'

'Sayest thou that in this house?' said the young King, and he strode past the Bishop, and climbed up the steps of the altar, and stood before the image of Christ.

He stood before the image of Christ, and on his right hand and on his left were the marvellous vessels of gold, the chalice with the yellow wine, and the vial with the holy oil. He knelt before the image of Christ, and the great candles burned brightly by the jewelled shrine, and the smoke of the incense curled in thin blue wreaths through the dome. He bowed his head in prayer, and the priests in their stiff copes crept away from the altar.

And suddenly a wild tumult came from the street outside, and in entered the nobles with drawn swords and nodding plumes, and shields of polished steel. 'Where is this dreamer of dreams?' they cried. 'Where is this King, who is apparelled like a beggar—this boy who brings shame upon our state? Surely we will slay him, for he is unworthy to rule over us.'

And the young King bowed his head again, and prayed, and when he had finished his prayer he rose up, and turning round he looked at them sadly.

And lo! through the painted windows came the sunlight streaming upon him, and the sunbeams wove round him a tissued robe that was fairer than the robe that had been fashioned for his pleasure. The dead staff blossomed, and bare lilies that were whiter than pearls. The dry thorn blossomed, and bare roses that were redder than rubies. Whiter than fine pearls were the lilies, and their stems were of bright silver. Redder than male rubies were the roses, and their leaves were of beaten gold.

He stood there in the raiment of a king, and the gates of the jewelled shrine flew open, and from the crystal of the many-rayed monstrance shone a marvellous and mystical light. He stood there in a king's raiment, and the Glory of God filled the place, and the saints in their carven niches seemed to move. In the fair raiment of a king he stood before them, and the organ pealed out its music, and the trumpeters blew upon their trumpets, and the singing boys sang.

And the people fell upon their knees in awe, and the nobles sheathed their swords and did homage, and the Bishop's face grew pale, and his hands trembled. 'A greater than I hath crowned thee,' he cried, and he knelt before him.

And the young King came down from the high altar, and passed home through the midst of the people. But no man dared look upon his face, for it was like the face of an angel.

THE BIRTHDAY OF THE INFANTA

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IT was the birthday of the Infanta. She was just twelve years of age, and the sun was shining brightly in the gardens of the palace.

Although she was a real Princess and the Infanta of Spain, she had only one birthday every year, just like the children of quite poor people, so it was naturally a matter of great importance to the whole country that she should have a really fine day for the occasion. And a really fine day it certainly was. The tall striped tulips stood straight up upon their stalks, like long rows of soldiers, and looked defiantly across the grass at the roses, and said: 'We are quite as splendid as you are now.' The purple butterflies fluttered about with gold dust on their wings, visiting each flower in turn; the little lizards crept out of the crevices of the wall, and lay basking in the white glare; and the pomegranates split and cracked with the heat, and showed their bleeding red hearts. Even the pale yellow lemons, that hung in such profusion from the mouldering trellis and along the dim arcades, seemed to have caught a richer colour from the wonderful sunlight, and the magnolia trees opened their great globe-like blossoms of folded ivory, and filled the air with a sweet heavy perfume.

The little Princess herself walked up and down the terrace with her companions, and played at hide and seek round the stone vases and the old moss-grown statues. On ordinary days she was only allowed to play with children of her own rank, so she had always to play alone, but her birthday was an exception, and the King had given orders that she was to invite any of her young friends whom she liked to come and amuse themselves with her. There was a stately grace about these slim Spanish children as they glided about, the boys with their large-plumed hats and short fluttering cloaks, the girls holding up the trains of their long brocaded gowns, and shielding the sun from their eyes with huge fans of black and silver. But the Infanta was the most graceful of all, and the most tastefully attired, after the somewhat cumbrous fashion of the day. Her robe was of grey satin, the skirt and the wide puffed sleeves heavily embroidered with silver, and the stiff corset studded with rows of fine pearls. Two tiny slippers with big pink rosettes peeped out beneath her dress as she walked. Pink and pearl was her great gauze fan, and in her hair, which like an aureole of faded gold stood out stiffly round her pale little face, she had a beautiful white rose.

From a window in the palace the sad melancholy King watched them. Behind him stood his brother, Don Pedro of Aragon, whom he hated, and his confessor, the Grand Inquisitor of Granada, sat by his side. Sadder even than usual was the King, for as he looked at the Infanta bowing with childish gravity to the assembling courtiers, or laughing behind her fan at the grim Duchess of Albuquerque who always accompanied her, he thought of the young Queen, her mother, who but a short time before —so it seemed to him—had come from the gay country of France, and had withered away in the sombre splendour of the Spanish court, dying just six months after the birth of her child, and before she had seen the almonds blossom twice in the orchard, or plucked the second year's fruit from the old gnarled fig-tree that stood in the centre of the now grass-grown courtyard. So great had been his love for her that he had not suffered even the grave to hide her from him. She had been embalmed by a Moorish physician, who in return for this service had been granted his life, which for heresy and suspicion of magical practices had been already forfeited, men said, to the Holy Office, and her body was still lying on its tapestried bier in the black marble chapel of the Palace, just as the monks had borne her in on that windy March day nearly twelve years before. Once every month the King, wrapped in a dark cloak and with a muffled lantern in his hand, went in and knelt by her side, calling out, '*Mi reina! Mi reina!*' and sometimes breaking through the formal etiquette that in Spain governs every separate action of life, and sets limits even to the sorrow of a King, he would clutch at the pale jewelled hands in a wild agony of grief, and try to wake by his mad kisses the cold painted face.

To-day he seemed to see her again, as he had seen her first at the Castle of Fontainebleau, when he was but fifteen years of age, and she still younger. They had been formally betrothed on that occasion by the Papal Nuncio in the presence of the French King and all the Court, and he had returned to the Escurial bearing with him a little ringlet of yellow hair, and the memory of two childish lips bending down to kiss his hand as he stepped into his carriage. Later on had followed the marriage, hastily performed at Burgos, a small town on the frontier between the two countries, and the grand public entry into Madrid with the customary celebration of high mass at the Church of La Atocha, and a more than usually solemn *auto-da-fé*, in which nearly three hundred heretics, amongst whom were many Englishmen, had been delivered over to the secular arm to be burned.

Certainly he had loved her madly, and to the ruin, many thought, of his country, then at war with England for the possession of the empire of the New World. He had hardly ever permitted her to be out of his sight; for her, he had forgotten, or seemed to have forgotten, all grave affairs of State; and, with that terrible blindness that passion brings upon its servants, he had failed to notice that the elaborate ceremonies by which he sought to please her did but aggravate the strange malady from which she suffered. When she died he was, for a time, like one bereft of reason. Indeed, there is no doubt but that he would have formally abdicated and retired to the great Trappist monastery at Granada, of which he was already titular Prior, had he not been afraid to leave the little Infanta at the mercy of his brother, whose cruelty, even in Spain, was notorious, and who was suspected by many of having caused the Queen's death by means of a pair of poisoned gloves that he had presented to her on the occasion of her visiting his castle in Aragon. Even after the expiration of the three years of public mourning that he had ordained throughout his whole dominions by royal edict, he would never suffer his ministers to speak about any new alliance, and when the Emperor himself sent to him, and offered him the hand of the lovely Archduchess of Bohemia, his niece, in marriage, he bade the ambassadors tell their master that the King of Spain was already wedded to Sorrow, and that though she was but a barren bride he loved her better than Beauty; an answer that cost his crown the rich provinces of the Netherlands, which soon after, at the Emperor's instigation, revolted against him under the leadership of some fanatics of the Reformed Church.

His whole married life, with its fierce, fiery-coloured joys and the terrible agony of its sudden ending, seemed to come back to him to-day as he watched the Infanta playing on the terrace. She had all the Queen's pretty petulance of manner, the same wilful way of tossing her head, the same proud curved beautiful mouth, the same wonderful smile—*vrai sourire de France* indeed—as she glanced up now and then at the window, or stretched out her little hand for the stately Spanish gentlemen to kiss. But the shrill laughter of the children grated on his ears, and the bright pitiless sunlight mocked his sorrow, and a dull odour of strange spices, spices such as embalmers use, seemed to taint—or was it fancy?—the clear morning air. He buried his face in his hands, and when the Infanta looked up again the curtains had been drawn, and the King had retired.

She made a little *moue* of disappointment, and shrugged her shoulders. Surely he might have stayed with her on her birthday. What did the stupid State-affairs matter? Or had he gone to that gloomy chapel, where the candles were always burning, and where she was never allowed to enter? How silly of him, when the sun was shining so brightly, and everybody was so happy! Besides, he would miss the sham bull-fight for which the trumpet was already sounding, to say nothing of the puppet-show and the other wonderful things. Her uncle and the Grand Inquisitor were much more sensible. They had come out on the terrace, and paid her nice compliments. So she tossed her pretty head, and taking Don Pedro by the hand, she walked slowly down the steps towards a long pavilion of purple silk that had been erected at the end of the garden, the other children following in strict order of precedence, those who had the longest names going first.

A procession of noble boys, fantastically dressed as *toreadors*, came out to meet her, and the young Count of Tierra-Nueva, a wonderfully handsome lad of about fourteen years of age, uncovering his head with all the grace of a born hidalgo and grandee of Spain, led her solemnly in to a little gilt and ivory chair that was placed on a raised dais above the arena. The children grouped themselves all round, fluttering their big fans and whispering to each other, and Don Pedro and the Grand Inquisitor stood laughing at the entrance. Even the Duchess—the Camerera-Mayor as she was called—a thin, hard-featured woman with a yellow ruff, did not look quite so bad-tempered as usual, and something like a chill smile flitted across her wrinkled face and twitched her thin bloodless lips.

It certainly was a marvellous bull-fight, and much nicer, the Infanta thought, than the real bull-fight that she had been brought to see at Seville, on the occasion of the visit of the Duke of Parma to her father. Some of the boys pranced about on richly-caparisoned hobby-horses brandishing long javelins with gay streamers of bright ribands attached to them; others went on foot waving their scarlet cloaks before the bull, and vaulting lightly over the barrier when he charged them; and as for the bull himself, he was just like a live bull, though he was only made of wicker-work and stretched hide, and sometimes insisted on running round the arena on his hind legs, which no live bull ever dreams of doing. He made a splendid fight of it too, and the children got so excited that they stood up upon the benches, and waved their lace handkerchiefs and cried out: *Bravo toro! Bravo toro!* just as sensibly as if they had been grown-up people. At last, however, after a prolonged combat, during which several of the hobby-horses were gored through and through, and their riders dismounted, the young Count of Tierra-Nueva brought the bull to his knees, and having obtained permission from the Infanta to give the *coup de grâce,* he plunged his wooden sword into the neck of the animal with such violence that the head came right off, and disclosed the laughing face of little Monsieur de Lorraine, the son of the French Ambassador at Madrid.

The arena was then cleared amidst much applause, and the dead hobby-horses dragged solemnly away by two Moorish pages in yellow and black liveries, and after a short interlude, during which a French posture-master performed upon the tight-rope, some Italian puppets appeared in the semi-classical tragedy of *Sophonisba* on the stage of a small theatre that had been built up for the purpose. They acted so well, and their gestures were so extremely natural, that at the close of the play the eyes of the Infanta were quite dim with tears. Indeed some of the children really cried, and had to be comforted with sweetmeats, and the Grand Inquisitor himself was so affected that he could not help saying to Don Pedro that it seemed to him intolerable that things made simply out of wood and coloured wax, and worked mechanically by wires, should be so unhappy and meet with such terrible misfortunes.

An African juggler followed, who brought in a large flat basket covered with a red cloth, and having placed it in the centre of the arena, he took from his turban a curious reed pipe, and blew through it. In a few moments the cloth began to move, and as the pipe grew shriller and shriller two green and gold snakes put out their strange wedge-shaped heads and rose slowly up, swaying to and fro with the music as a plant sways in the water. The children, however, were rather frightened at their spotted hoods and quick darting tongues, and were much more pleased when the juggler made a tiny orange-tree grow out of the sand and bear pretty white blossoms and clusters of real fruit; and when he took the fan of the little daughter of the Marquess de Las-Torres, and changed it into a blue bird that flew all round the pavilion and sang, their delight and amazement knew no bounds. The solemn minuet, too, performed by the dancing boys from the church of Nuestra Senora Del Pilar, was charming. The Infanta had never before seen this wonderful ceremony which takes place every year at Maytime in front of the high altar of the Virgin, and in her honour; and indeed none of the royal family of Spain had entered the great cathedral of Saragossa since a mad priest, supposed by many to have been in the pay of Elizabeth of England, had tried to administer a poisoned wafer to the Prince of the Asturias. So she had known only by hearsay of 'Our Lady's Dance,' as it was called, and it certainly was a beautiful sight. The boys wore old-fashioned court dresses of white velvet, and their curious three-cornered hats were fringed with silver and surmounted with huge plumes of ostrich feathers, the dazzling whiteness of their costumes, as they moved about in the sunlight, being still more accentuated by their swarthy faces and long black hair. Everybody was fascinated by the grave dignity with which they moved through the intricate figures of the dance, and by the elaborate grace of their slow gestures, and stately bows, and when they had finished their performance and doffed their great plumed hats to the Infanta, she acknowledged their reverence with much courtesy, and made a vow that she would send a large wax candle to the shrine of Our Lady of Pilar in return for the pleasure that she had given her.

A troop of handsome Egyptians — as the gipsies were termed in those days—then advanced into the arena, and sitting down cross-legs, in a circle, began to play softly upon their zithers, moving their bodies to the tune, and humming, almost below their breath, a low dreamy air. When they caught sight of Don Pedro they scowled at him, and some of them looked terrified, for only a few weeks before he had had two of their tribe hanged for sorcery in the market-place at Seville, but the pretty Infanta charmed them as she leaned back peeping over her fan with her great blue eyes, and they felt sure that one so lovely as she was could never be cruel to anybody. So they played on very gently and just touching the cords of the zithers with their long pointed nails, and their heads began to nod as though they were falling asleep. Suddenly, with a cry so shrill that all the children were startled and Don Pedro's hand clutched at the agate pommel of his dagger, they leapt to their feet and whirled madly round the enclosure beating their tambourines, and chaunting some wild love-song in their strange guttural language. Then at another signal they all flung themselves again to the ground and lay there quite still, the dull strumming of the zithers being the only sound that broke the silence. After that they had done this several times, they disappeared for a moment and came back leading a brown shaggy bear by a chain, and carrying on their shoulders some little Barbary apes. The bear stood upon his head with the utmost gravity, and the wizened apes played all kinds of amusing tricks with two gipsy boys who seemed to be their masters, and fought with tiny swords, and fired off guns, and went through a regular soldier's drill just like the King's own bodyguard. In fact the gipsies were a great success.

But the funniest part of the whole morning's entertainment, was undoubtedly the dancing of the little Dwarf. When he stumbled into the arena, waddling on his crooked legs and wagging his huge misshapen head from side to side, the children went off into a loud shout of delight, and the Infanta herself laughed so much that the Camerera was obliged to remind her that although there were many precedents in Spain for a King's daughter weeping before her equals, there were none for a Princess of the blood royal making so merry before those who were her inferiors in birth. The Dwarf, however, was really quite irresistible, and even at the Spanish Court, always noted for its cultivated passion for the horrible, so fantastic a little monster had never been seen. It was his first appearance, too. He had been discovered only the day before, running wild through the forest, by two of the nobles who happened to have been hunting in a remote part of the great cork-wood that surrounded the town, and had been carried off by them to the Palace as a surprise for the Infanta; his father, who was a poor charcoal-burner, being but too well pleased to get rid of so ugly and useless a child. Perhaps the most amusing thing about him was his complete unconsciousness of his own grotesque appearance. Indeed he seemed quite happy and full of the highest spirits. When the children laughed, he laughed as freely and as joyously as any of them, and at the close of each dance he made them each the funniest of bows, smiling and nodding at them just as if he was really one of themselves, and not a little misshapen thing that Nature, in some humourous mood, had fashioned for others to mock at. As for the Infanta, she absolutely fascinated him. He could not keep his eyes off her, and seemed to dance for her alone, and when at the close of the performance, remembering how she had seen the great ladies of the Court throw bouquets to Caffarelli, the famous Italian treble, whom the Pope had sent from his own chapel to Madrid that he might cure the King's melancholy by the sweetness of his voice, she took out of her hair the beautiful white rose, and partly for a jest and partly to tease the Camerera, threw it to him across the arena with her sweetest smile, he took the whole matter quite seriously, and pressing the flower to his rough coarse lips he put his hand upon his heart, and sank on one knee before her, grinning from ear to ear, and with his little bright eyes sparkling with pleasure.

This so upset the gravity of the Infanta that she kept on laughing long after the little Dwarf had run out of the arena, and expressed a desire to her uncle that the dance should be immediately repeated. The Camerera, however, on the plea that the sun was too hot, decided that it would be better that her Highness should return without delay to the Palace, where a wonderful feast had been already prepared for her, including a real birthday cake with her own initials worked all over it in painted sugar and a lovely silver flag waving from the top. The Infanta accordingly rose up with much dignity, and having given orders that the little dwarf was to dance again for her after the hour of siesta, and conveyed her thanks to the young Count of Tierra-Nueva for his charming reception, she went back to her apartments, the children following in the same order in which they had entered.

Now when the little Dwarf heard that he was to dance a second time before the Infanta, and by her own express command, he was so proud that he ran out into the garden, kissing the white rose in an absurd ecstasy of pleasure, and making the most uncouth and clumsy gestures of delight.

The Flowers were quite indignant at his daring to intrude into their beautiful home, and when they saw him capering up and down the walks, and waving his arms above his head in such a ridiculous manner, they could not restrain their feelings any longer.

'He is really far too ugly to be allowed to play in any place where we are,' cried the Tulips.

'He should drink poppy-juice, and go to sleep for a thousand years,' said the great scarlet Lilies, and they grew quite hot and angry.

'He is a perfect horror!' screamed the Cactus. 'Why, he is twisted and stumpy, and his head is completely out of proportion with his legs. Really he makes me feel prickly all over, and if he comes near me I will sting him with my thorns.'

'And he has actually got one of my best blooms,' exclaimed the White Rose-Tree. 'I gave it to the Infanta this morning myself, as a birthday present, and he has stolen it from her.' And she called out: 'Thief, thief, thief!' at the top of her voice.

Even the red Geraniums, who did not usually give themselves airs, and were known to have a great many poor relations themselves, curled up in disgust when they saw him, and when the Violets meekly remarked that though he was certainly extremely plain, still he could not help it, they retorted with a good deal of justice that that was his chief defect, and that there was no reason why one should admire a person because he was incurable; and, indeed, some of the Violets themselves felt that the ugliness of the little Dwarf was almost ostentatious, and that he would have shown much better taste if he had looked sad, or at least pensive, instead of jumping about merrily, and throwing himself into such grotesque and silly attitudes.

As for the old Sundial, who was an extremely remarkable individual, and had once told the time of day to no less a person than the Emperor Charles v. himself, he was so taken aback by the little Dwarf's appearance, that he almost forgot to mark two whole minutes with his long shadowy finger, and could not help saying to the great milk-white Peacock, who was sunning herself on the balustrade, that every one knew that the children of Kings were Kings, and that the children of charcoal-burners were charcoal-burners, and that it was absurd to pretend that it wasn't so; a statement with which the Peacock entirely agreed, and indeed screamed out, 'Certainly, certainly,' in such a loud, harsh voice, that the gold-fish who lived in the basin of the cool splashing fountain put their heads out of the water, and asked the huge stone Tritons what on earth was the matter.

But somehow the Birds liked him. They had seen him often in the forest, dancing about like an elf after the eddying leaves, or crouched up in the hollow of some old oak-tree, sharing his nuts with the squirrels. They did not mind his being ugly, a bit. Why, even the nightingale herself, who sang so sweetly in the orange groves at night that sometimes the Moon leaned down to listen, was not much to look at after all; and, besides, he had been kind to them, and during that terribly bitter winter, when there were no berries on the trees, and the ground was as hard as iron, and the wolves had come down to the very gates of the city to look for food, he had never once forgotten them, but had always given them crumbs out of his little hunch of black bread, and divided with them whatever poor breakfast he had.

So they flew round and round him, just touching his cheek with their wings as they passed, and chattered to each other, and the little Dwarf was so pleased that he could not help showing them the beautiful white rose, and telling them that the Infanta herself had given it to him because she loved him.

They did not understand a single word of what he was saying, but that made no matter, for they put their heads on one side, and looked wise, which is quite as good as understanding a thing, and very much easier.

The Lizards also took an immense fancy to him, and when he grew tired of running about and flung himself down on the grass to rest, they played and romped all over him, and tried to amuse him in the best way they could. 'Every one cannot be as beautiful as a lizard,' they cried; 'that would be too much to expect. And, though it sounds absurd to say so, he is really not so ugly after all, provided, of course, that one shuts one's eyes, and does not look at him.' The Lizards were extremely philosophical by nature, and often sat thinking for hours and hours together, when there was nothing else to do, or when the weather was too rainy for them to go out.

The Flowers, however, were excessively annoyed at their behaviour, and at the behaviour of the birds. 'It only shows,' they said, 'what a vulgarising effect this incessant rushing and flying about has. Well-bred people always stay exactly in the same place, as we do. No one ever saw us hopping up and down the walks, or galloping madly through the grass after dragon-flies. When we do want change of air, we send for the gardener, and he carries us to another bed. This is dignified, and as it should be. But birds and lizards have no sense of repose, and indeed birds have not even a permanent address. They are mere vagrants like the gipsies, and should be treated in exactly the same manner.' So they put their noses in the air, and looked very haughty, and were quite delighted when after some time they saw the little Dwarf scramble up from the grass, and make his way across the terrace to the palace.

'He should certainly be kept indoors for the rest of his natural life,' they said. 'Look at his hunched back, and his crooked legs,' and they began to titter.

But the little Dwarf knew nothing of all this. He liked the birds and the lizards immensely, and thought that the flowers were the most marvellous things in the whole world, except of course the Infanta, but then she had given him the beautiful white rose, and she loved him, and that made a great difference. How he wished that he had gone back with her! She would have put him on her right hand, and smiled at him, and he would have never left her side, but would have made her his playmate, and taught her all kinds of delightful tricks. For though he had never been in a palace before, he knew a great many wonderful things. He could make little cages out of rushes for the grasshoppers to sing in, and fashion the long-jointed bamboo into the pipe that Pan loves to hear. He knew the cry of every bird, and could call the starlings from the tree-top, or the heron from the mere. He knew the trail of every animal, and could track the hare by its delicate footprints, and the boar by the trampled leaves. All the wild-dances he knew, the mad dance in red raiment with the autumn, the light dance in blue sandals over the corn, the dance with white snow-wreaths in winter, and the blossom-dance through the orchards in spring. He knew where the wood-pigeons built their nests, and once when a fowler had snared the parent birds, he had brought up the young ones himself, and had built a little dovecot for them in the cleft of a pollard elm. They were quite tame, and used to feed out of his hands every morning. She would like them, and the rabbits that scurried about in the long fern, and the jays with their steely feathers and black bills, and the hedgehogs that could curl themselves up into prickly balls, and the great wise tortoises that crawled slowly about, shaking their heads and nibbling at the young leaves. Yes, she must certainly come to the forest and play with him. He would give her his own little bed, and would watch outside the window till dawn, to see that the wild horned cattle did not harm her, nor the gaunt wolves creep too near the hut. And at dawn he would tap at the shutters and wake her, and they would go out and dance together all the day long. It was really not a bit lonely in the forest. Sometimes a Bishop rode through on his white mule, reading out of a painted book. Sometimes in their green velvet caps, and their jerkins of tanned deerskin, the falconers passed by, with hooded hawks on their wrists. At vintage-time came the grape-treaders, with purple hands and feet, wreathed with glossy ivy and carrying dripping skins of wine; and the charcoal-burners sat round their huge braziers at night, watching the dry logs charring slowly in the fire, and roasting chestnuts in the ashes, and the robbers came out of their caves and made merry with them. Once, too, he had seen a beautiful procession winding up the long dusty road to Toledo. The monks went in front singing sweetly, and carrying bright banners and crosses of gold, and then, in silver armour, with matchlocks and pikes, came the soldiers, and in their midst walked three barefooted men, in strange yellow dresses painted all over with wonderful figures, and carrying lighted candles in their hands. Certainly there was a great deal to look at in the forest, and when she was tired he would find a soft bank of moss for her, or carry her in his arms, for he was very strong, though he knew that he was not tall. He would make her a necklace of red bryony berries, that would be quite as pretty as the white berries that she wore on her dress, and when she was tired of them, she could throw them away, and he would find her others. He would bring her acorn-cups and dew-drenched anemones, and tiny glow-worms to be stars in the pale gold of her hair.

But where was she? He asked the white rose, and it made him no answer. The whole palace seemed asleep, and even where the shutters had not been closed, heavy curtains had been drawn across the windows to keep out the glare. He wandered all round looking for some place through which he might gain an entrance, and at last he caught sight of a little private door that was lying open. He slipped through, and found himself in a splendid hall, far more splendid, he feared, than the forest, there was so much more gilding everywhere, and even the floor was made of great coloured stones, fitted together into a sort of geometrical pattern. But the little Infanta was not there, only some wonderful white statues that looked down on him from their jasper pedestals, with sad blank eyes and strangely smiling lips.

At the end of the hall hung a richly embroidered curtain of black velvet, powdered with suns and stars, the King's favourite devices, and broidered on the colour he loved best. Perhaps she was hiding behind that? He would try at any rate.

So he stole quietly across, and drew it aside. No; there was only another room, though a prettier room, he thought, than the one he had just left. The walls were hung with a many-figured green arras of needle-wrought tapestry representing a hunt, the work of some Flemish artists who had spent more than seven years in its composition. It had once been the chamber of *Jean le Fou*, as he was called, that mad King who was so enamoured of the chase, that he had often tried in his delirium to mount the huge rearing horses, and to drag down the stag on which the great hounds were leaping, sounding his hunting horn, and stabbing with his dagger at the pale flying deer. It was now used as the council-room, and on the centre table were lying the red portfolios of the ministers, stamped with the gold tulips of Spain, and with the arms and emblems of the house of Hapsburg.

The little Dwarf looked in wonder all round him, and was half-afraid to go on. The strange silent horsemen that galloped so swiftly through the long glades without making any noise, seemed to him like those terrible phantoms of whom he had heard the charcoal-burners speaking—the Comprachos, who hunt only at night, and if they meet a man, turn him into a hind, and chase him. But he thought of the pretty Infanta, and took courage. He wanted to find her alone, and to tell her that he too loved her. Perhaps she was in the room beyond.

He ran across the soft Moorish carpets, and opened the door. No! She was not here either. The room was quite empty.

It was a throne-room, used for the reception of foreign ambassadors, when the King, which of late had not been often, consented to give them a personal audience; the same room in which, many years before, envoys had appeared from England to make arrangements for the marriage of their Queen, then one of the Catholic sovereigns of Europe, with the Emperor's eldest son. The hangings were of gilt Cordovan leather, and a heavy gilt chandelier with branches for three hundred wax lights hung down from the black and white ceiling. Underneath a great canopy of gold cloth, on which the lions and towers of Castile were broidered in seed pearls, stood the throne itself, covered with a rich pall of black velvet studded with silver tulips and elaborately fringed with silver and pearls. On the second step of the throne was placed the kneeling-stool of the Infanta, with its cushion of cloth of silver tissue, and below that again, and beyond the limit of the canopy, stood the chair for the Papal Nuncio, who alone had the right to be seated in the King's presence on the occasion of any public ceremonial, and whose Cardinal's hat, with its tangled scarlet tassels, lay on a purple *tabouret* in front. On the wall, facing the throne, hung a life-sized portrait of Charles v. in hunting dress, with a great mastiff by his side, and a picture of Philip II. receiving the homage of the Netherlands occupied the centre of the other wall. Between the windows stood a black ebony cabinet, inlaid with plates of ivory, on which the figures from Holbein's Dance of Death had been graved — by the hand, some said, of that famous master himself.

But the little Dwarf cared nothing for all this magnificence. He would not have given his rose for all the pearls on the canopy, nor one white petal of his rose for the throne itself. What he wanted was to see the Infanta before she went down to the pavilion, and to ask her to come away with him when he had finished his dance. Here, in the Palace, the air was close and heavy, but in the forest the wind blew free, and the sunlight with wandering hands of gold moved the tremulous leaves aside. There were flowers, too, in the forest, not so splendid, perhaps, as the flowers in the garden, but more sweetly scented for all that; hyacinths in early spring that flooded with waving purple the cool glens, and grassy knolls; yellow primroses that nestled in little clumps round the gnarled roots of the oak-trees; bright celandine, and blue speedwell, and irises lilac and gold. There were grey catkins on the hazels, and the fox-gloves drooped with the weight of their dappled bee-haunted cells. The chestnut had its spires of white stars, and the hawthorn its pallid moons of beauty. Yes: surely she would come if he could only find her! She would come with him to the fair forest, and all day long he would dance for her delight. A smile lit up his eyes at the thought, and he passed into the next room.

Of all the rooms this was the brightest and the most beautiful. The walls were covered with a pink-flowered Lucca damask, patterned with birds and dotted with dainty blossoms of silver; the furniture was of massive silver, festooned with florid wreaths, and swinging Cupids; in front of the two large fire-places stood great screens broidered with parrots and peacocks, and the floor, which was of sea-green onyx, seemed to stretch far away into the distance. Nor was he alone. Standing under the shadow of the doorway, at the extreme end of the room, he saw a little figure watching him. His heart trembled, a cry of joy broke from his lips, and he moved out into the sunlight. As he did so, the figure moved out also, and he saw it plainly.

The Infanta! It was a monster, the most grotesque monster he had ever beheld. Not properly shaped, as all other people were, but hunchbacked, and crooked-limbed, with huge lolling head and mane of black hair. The little Dwarf frowned, and the monster frowned also. He laughed, and it laughed with him, and held its hands to its sides, just as he himself was doing. He made it a mocking bow, and it returned him a low reverence. He went towards it, and it came to meet him, copying each step that he made, and stopping when he stopped himself. He shouted with amusement, and ran forward, and reached out his hand, and the hand of the monster touched his, and it was as cold as ice. He grew afraid, and moved his hand across, and the monster's hand followed it quickly. He tried to press on, but something smooth and hard stopped him. The face of the monster was now close to his own, and seemed full of terror. He brushed his hair off his eyes. It imitated him. He struck at it, and it returned blow for blow. He loathed it, and it made hideous faces at him. He drew back, and it retreated.

What is it? He thought for a moment, and looked round at the rest of the room. It was strange, but everything seemed to have its double in this invisible wall of clear water. Yes, picture for picture was repeated, and couch for couch. The sleeping Faun that lay in the alcove by the doorway had its twin brother that slumbered, and the silver Venus that stood in the sunlight held out her arms to a Venus as lovely as herself.

Was it Echo? He had called to her once in the valley, and she had answered him word for word. Could she mock the eye, as she mocked the voice? Could she make a mimic world just like the real world? Could the shadows of things have colour and life and movement? Could it be that——?

He started, and taking from his breast the beautiful white rose, he turned round, and kissed it. The monster had a rose of its own, petal for petal the same! It kissed it with like kisses, and pressed it to its heart with horrible gestures.

When the truth dawned upon him, he gave a wild cry of despair, and fell sobbing to the ground. So it was he who was misshapen and hunchbacked, foul to look at and grotesque. He himself was the monster, and it was at him that all the children had been laughing, and the little Princess who he had thought loved him—she too had been merely mocking at his ugliness, and making merry over his twisted limbs. Why had they not left him in the forest, where there was no mirror to tell him how loathsome he was? Why had his father not killed him, rather than sell him to his shame? The hot tears poured down his cheeks, and he tore the white rose to pieces. The sprawling monster did the same, and scattered the faint petals in the air. It grovelled on the ground, and, when he looked at it, it watched him with a face drawn with pain. He crept away, lest he should see it, and covered his eyes with his hands. He crawled, like some wounded thing, into the shadow, and lay there moaning.

And at that moment the Infanta herself came in with her companions through the open window, and when they saw the ugly little dwarf lying on the ground and beating the floor with his clenched hands, in the most fantastic and exaggerated manner, they went off into shouts of happy laughter, and stood all round him and watched him.

'His dancing was funny,' said the Infanta; 'but his acting is funnier still. Indeed he is almost as good as the puppets, only of course not quite so natural.' And she fluttered her big fan, and applauded.

But the little Dwarf never looked up, and his sobs grew fainter and fainter, and suddenly he gave a curious gasp, and clutched his side. And then he fell back again, and lay quite still.

'That is capital,' said the Infanta, after a pause; 'but now you must dance for me.'

'Yes,' cried all the children, 'you must get up and dance, for you are as clever as the Barbary apes, and much more ridiculous.'

But the little Dwarf made no answer.

And the Infanta stamped her foot, and called out to her uncle, who was walking on the terrace with the Chamberlain, reading some despatches that had just arrived from Mexico, where the Holy Office had recently been established. 'My funny little dwarf is sulking,' she cried, 'you must wake him up, and tell him to dance for me.'

They smiled at each other, and sauntered in, and Don Pedro stooped down, and slapped the Dwarf on the cheek with his embroidered glove. 'You must dance,' he said, '*petit monstre.* You must dance. The Infanta of Spain and the Indies wishes to be amused.'

But the little Dwarf never moved.

'A whipping master should be sent for,' said Don Pedro wearily, and he went back to the terrace. But the Chamberlain looked grave, and he knelt beside the little dwarf, and put his hand upon his heart. And after a few moments he shrugged his shoulders, and rose up, and having made a low bow to the Infanta, he said—

'*Mi bella Princesa,* your funny little dwarf will never dance again. It is a pity, for he is so ugly that he might have made the King smile.'

'But why will he not dance again?' asked the Infanta, laughing.

'Because his heart is broken,' answered the Chamberlain.

And the Infanta frowned, and her dainty rose-leaf lips curled in pretty disdain. 'For the future let those who come to play with me have no hearts,' she cried, and she ran out into the garden.

THE FISHERMAN AND HIS SOUL

THE FISHERMAN AND HIS SOUL

EVERY evening the young Fisherman went out upon the sea, and threw his nets into the water.

When the wind blew from the land he caught nothing, or but little at best, for it was a bitter and black-winged wind, and rough waves rose up to meet it. But when the wind blew to the shore, the fish came in from the deep, and swam into the meshes of his nets, and he took them to the market-place and sold them.

Every evening he went out upon the sea, and one evening the net was so heavy that hardly could he draw it into the boat. And he laughed, and said to himself, ‘Surely I have caught all the fish that swim, or snared some dull monster that will be a marvel to men, or some thing of horror that the great Queen will desire,’ and putting forth all his strength, he tugged at the coarse ropes till, like lines of blue enamel round a vase of bronze, the long veins rose up on his arms. He tugged at the thin ropes, and nearer and nearer came the circle of flat corks, and the net rose at last to the top of the water.

But no fish at all was in it, nor any monster or thing of horror, but only a little Mermaid lying fast asleep.

Her hair was as a wet fleece of gold, and each separate hair as a thread of fine gold in a cup of glass. Her body was as white ivory, and her tail was of silver and pearl. Silver and pearl was her tail, and the green weeds of the sea coiled round it; and like sea-shells were her ears, and her lips were like sea-coral. The cold waves dashed over her cold breasts, and the salt glistened upon her eyelids.

So beautiful was she that when the young Fisherman saw her he was filled with wonder, and he put out his hand and drew the net close to him, and leaning over the side he clasped her in his arms. And when he touched her, she gave a cry like a startled sea-gull, and woke, and looked at him in terror with her mauve-amethyst eyes, and struggled that she might escape. But he held her tightly to him, and would not suffer her to depart.

And when she saw that she could in no way escape from him, she began to weep, and said, 'I pray thee let me go, for I am the only daughter of a King, and my father is aged and alone.'

But the young Fisherman answered, 'I will not let thee go save thou makest me a promise that whenever I call thee, thou wilt come and sing to me, for the fish delight to listen to the song of the Sea-folk, and so shall my nets be full.'

'Wilt thou in very truth let me go, if I promise thee this?' cried the Mermaid.

'In very truth I will let thee go,' said the young Fisherman.

So she made him the promise he desired, and sware it by the oath of the Sea-folk. And he loosened his arms from about her, and she sank down into the water, trembling with a strange fear.

Every evening the young Fisherman went out upon the sea, and called to the Mermaid, and she rose out of the water and sang to him. Round and round her swam the dolphins, and the wild gulls wheeled above her head.

And she sang a marvellous song. For she sang of the Sea-folk who drive their flocks from cave to cave, and carry the little calves on their shoulders; of the Tritons who have long green beards, and hairy breasts, and blow through twisted conchs when the King passes by; of the palace of the King which is all of amber, with a roof of clear emerald, and a pavement of bright pearl; and of the gardens of the sea where the great filigrane fans of coral wave all day long, and the fish dart about like silver birds, and the anemones cling to the rocks, and the pinks bourgeon in the ribbed yellow sand. She sang of the big whales that come down from the north seas and have sharp icicles hanging to their fins; of the Sirens who tell of such wonderful things that the merchants have to stop their ears with wax lest they should hear them, and leap into the water and be drowned; of the sunken galleys with their tall masts, and the frozen sailors clinging to the rigging, and the mackerel swimming in and out of the open portholes; of the little barnacles who are great travellers, and cling to the keels of the ships and go round and round the world; and of the cuttlefish who live in the sides of the cliffs and stretch out their long black arms, and can make night come when they will it. She sang of the nautilus who has a boat of her own that is carved out of an opal and steered with a silken sail; of the happy Mermen who play upon harps and can charm the great Kraken to sleep; of the little children who catch hold of the slippery porpoises and ride laughing upon their backs; of the Mermaids who lie in the white foam and hold out their arms to the mariners; and of the sea-lions with their curved tusks, and the sea-horses with their floating manes.

And as she sang, all the tunny-fish came in from the deep to listen to her, and the young Fisherman threw his nets round them and caught them, and others he took with a spear. And when his boat was well-laden, the Mermaid would sink down into the sea, smiling at him.

Yet would she never come near him that he might touch her. Oftentimes he called to her and prayed of her, but she would not; and when he sought to seize her she dived into the water as a seal might dive, nor did he see her again that day. And each day the sound of her voice became sweeter to his ears. So sweet was her voice that he forgot his nets and his cunning, and had no care of his craft. Vermilion-finned and with eyes of bossy gold, the tunnies went by in shoals, but he heeded them not. His spear lay by his side unused, and his baskets of plaited osier were empty. With lips parted, and eyes dim with wonder, he sat idle in his boat and listened, listening till the sea-mists crept round him, and the wandering moon stained his brown limbs with silver.

And one evening he called to her, and said: ‘Little Mermaid, little Mermaid, I love thee. Take me for thy bridegroom, for I love thee.’

But the Mermaid shook her head. ‘Thou hast a human soul,’ she answered. ‘If only thou wouldst send away thy soul, then could I love thee.’

And the young Fisherman said to himself, ‘Of what use is my soul to me? I cannot see it. I may not touch it. I do not know it. Surely I will send it away from me, and much gladness shall be mine.’ And a cry of joy broke from his lips, and standing up in the painted boat, he held out his arms to the Mermaid. ‘I will send my soul away,’ he cried, ‘and you shall be my bride, and I will be thy bridegroom, and in the depth of the sea we will dwell together, and all that thou hast sung of thou shalt show me, and all that thou desirest I will do, nor shall our lives be divided.’

And the little Mermaid laughed for pleasure, and hid her face in her hands.

'But how shall I send my soul from me?' cried the young Fisherman. 'Tell me how I may do it, and lo! it shall be done.'

'Alas! I know not,' said the little Mermaid: 'the Sea-folk have no souls.' And she sank down into the deep, looking wistfully at him.

Now early on the next morning, before the sun was the span of a man's hand above the hill, the young Fisherman went to the house of the Priest and knocked three times at the door.

The novice looked out through the wicket, and when he saw who it was, he drew back the latch and said to him, 'Enter.'

And the young Fisherman passed in, and knelt down on the sweet-smelling rushes of the floor, and cried to the Priest who was reading out of the Holy Book and said to him, 'Father, I am in love with one of the Sea-folk, and my soul hindereth me from having my desire. Tell me how I can send my soul away from me, for in truth I have no need of it. Of what value is my soul to me? I cannot see it. I may not touch it. I do not know it.'

And the Priest beat his breast, and answered, 'Alack, alack, thou art mad, or hast eaten of some poisonous herb, for the soul is the noblest part of man, and was given to us by God that we should nobly use it. There is no thing more precious than a human soul, nor any earthly thing that can be weighed with it. It is worth all the gold that is in the world, and is more precious than the rubies of the kings. Therefore, my son, think not any more of this matter, for it is a sin that may not be forgiven. And as for the Sea-folk, they are lost, and they who would traffic with them are lost also. They are as the beasts of the field that know not good from evil, and for them the Lord has not died.'

The young Fisherman's eyes filled with tears when he heard the bitter words of the Priest, and he rose up from his knees and said to him, 'Father, the Fauns live in the forest and are glad, and on the rocks sit the Mermen with their harps of red gold. Let me be as they are, I beseech thee, for their days are as the days of flowers. And as for my soul, what doth my soul profit me, if it stand between me and the thing that I love?'

'The love of the body is vile,' cried the Priest, knitting his brows, 'and vile and evil are the pagan things God suffers to wander through His world. Accursed be the Fauns of the woodland, and accursed be the singers of the sea! I have heard them at night-time, and they have sought to lure me from my beads. They tap at the window, and laugh. They whisper into my ears the tale of their perilous joys. They tempt me with temptations, and when I would pray they make mouths at me. They are lost, I tell thee, they are lost. For them there is no heaven nor hell, and in neither shall they praise God's name.'

'Father,' cried the young Fisherman, 'thou knowest not what thou sayest. Once in my net I snared the daughter of a King. She is fairer than the morning star, and whiter than the moon. For her body I would give my soul, and for her love I would surrender heaven. Tell me what I ask of thee, and let me go in peace.'

'Away! Away!' cried the Priest: 'thy leman is lost, and thou shalt be lost with her.' And he gave him no blessing, but drove him from his door.

And the young Fisherman went down into the market-place, and he walked slowly, and with bowed head, as one who is in sorrow.

And when the merchants saw him coming, they began to whisper to each other, and one of them came forth to meet him, and called him by name, and said to him, 'What hast thou to sell?'

'I will sell thee my soul,' he answered: 'I pray thee buy it of me, for I am weary of it. Of what use is my soul to me? I cannot see it. I may not touch it. I do not know it.'

But the merchants mocked at him, and said, 'Of what use is a man's soul to us? It is not worth a clipped piece of silver. Sell us thy body for a slave, and we will clothe thee in sea-purple, and put a ring upon thy finger, and make thee the minion of the great Queen. But talk not of the soul, for to us it is nought, nor has it any value for our service.'

And the young Fisherman said to himself: 'How strange a thing this is! The Priest telleth me that the soul is worth all the gold in the world, and the merchants say that it is not worth a clipped piece of silver.' And he passed out of the market-place, and went down to the shore of the sea, and began to ponder on what he should do.

And at noon he remembered how one of his companions, who was a gatherer of samphire, had told him of a certain young Witch who dwelt in a cave at the head of the bay and was very cunning in her witcheries. And he set to and ran, so eager was he to get rid of his soul, and a cloud of dust followed him as he sped round the sand of the shore. By the itching of her palm the young Witch knew his coming, and she laughed and let down her red hair. With her red hair falling around her, she stood at the opening of the cave, and in her hand she had a spray of wild hemlock that was blossoming.

'What d'ye lack? What d'ye lack?' she cried, as he came panting up the steep, and bent down before her. 'Fish for thy net, when the wind is foul? I have a little reed-pipe, and when I blow on it the mullet come sailing into the bay. But it has a price, pretty boy, it has a price. What d'ye lack? What d'ye lack? A storm to wreck the ships, and wash the chests of rich treasure ashore? I have more storms than the wind has, for I serve one who is stronger than the wind, and with a sieve and a pail of water I can send the great galleys to the bottom of the sea. But I have a price, pretty boy, I have a price. What d'ye lack? What d'ye lack? I know a flower that grows in the valley, none knows it but I. It has purple leaves, and a star in its heart, and its juice is as white as milk. Shouldst thou touch with this flower the hard lips of the Queen, she would follow thee all over the world. Out of the bed of the King she would rise, and over the whole world she would follow thee. And it has a price, pretty boy, it has a price. What d'ye lack? What d'ye lack? I can pound a toad in a mortar, and make broth of it, and stir the broth with a dead man's hand. Sprinkle it on thine enemy while he sleeps, and he will turn into a black viper, and his own mother will slay him. With a wheel I can draw the Moon from heaven, and in a crystal I can show thee Death. What d'ye lack? What d'ye lack? Tell me thy desire, and I will give it thee, and thou shalt pay me a price, pretty boy, thou shalt pay me a price.'

'My desire is but for a little thing,' said the young Fisherman, 'yet hath the Priest been wroth with me, and driven me forth. It is but for a little thing, and the merchants have mocked at me, and denied me. Therefore am I come to thee, though men call thee evil, and whatever be thy price I shall pay it.'

'What wouldst thou?' asked the Witch, coming near to him.

'I would send my soul away from me,' answered the young Fisherman.

The Witch grew pale, and shuddered, and hid her face in her blue mantle. 'Pretty boy, pretty boy,' she muttered, 'that is a terrible thing to do.'

He tossed his brown curls and laughed. 'My soul is nought to me,' he answered. 'I cannot see it. I may not touch it. I do not know it.'

'What wilt thou give me if I tell thee?' asked the Witch, looking down at him with her beautiful eyes.

'Five pieces of gold,' he said, 'and my nets, and the wattled house where I live, and the painted boat in which I sail. Only tell me how to get rid of my soul, and I will give thee all that I possess.'

She laughed mockingly at him, and struck him with the spray of hemlock. 'I can turn the autumn leaves into gold,' she answered, 'and I can weave the pale moonbeams into silver if I will it. He whom I serve is richer than all the kings of this world, and has their dominions.'

'What then shall I give thee,' he cried, 'if thy price be neither gold nor silver?'

The Witch stroked his hair with her thin white hand. 'Thou must dance with me, pretty boy,' she murmured, and she smiled at him as she spoke.

'Nought but that?' cried the young Fisherman in wonder, and he rose to his feet.

'Nought but that,' she answered, and she smiled at him again.

'Then at sunset in some secret place we shall dance together,' he said, 'and after that we have danced thou shalt tell me the thing which I desire to know.'

She shook her head. 'When the moon is full, when the moon is full,' she muttered. Then she peered all round, and listened. A blue bird rose screaming from its nest and circled over the dunes, and three spotted birds rustled through the coarse grey grass and whistled to each other. There was no other sound save the sound of a wave fretting the smooth pebbles below. So she reached out her hand, and drew him near to her and put her dry lips close to his ear.

'To-night thou must come to the top of the mountain,' she whispered. 'It is a Sabbath, and He will be there.'

The young Fisherman started and looked at her, and she showed her white teeth and laughed. 'Who is He of whom thou speakest?' he asked.

'It matters not,' she answered. 'Go thou to-night, and stand under the branches of the hornbeam, and wait for my coming. If a black dog run towards thee, strike it with a rod of willow, and it will go away. If an owl speak to thee, make it no answer. When the moon is full I shall be with thee, and we will dance together on the grass.'

'But wilt thou swear to me to tell me how I may send my soul from me?' he made question.

She moved out into the sunlight, and through her red hair rippled the wind. 'By the hoofs of the goat I swear it,' she made answer.

'Thou art the best of the witches,' cried the young Fisherman, 'and I will surely dance with thee to-night on the top of the mountain. I would indeed that thou hadst asked of me either gold or silver. But such as thy price is thou shalt have it, for it is but a little thing.' And he doffed his cap to her, and bent his head low, and ran back to the town filled with a great joy.

And the Witch watched him as he went, and when he had passed from her sight she entered her cave, and having taken a mirror from a box of carved cedarwood, she set it up on a frame, and burned vervain on lighted charcoal before it, and peered through the coils of the smoke.

And after a time she clenched her hands in anger. 'He should have been mine,' she muttered, 'I am as fair as she is.'

And that evening, when the moon had risen, the young Fisherman climbed up to the top of the mountain, and stood under the branches of the hornbeam. Like a targe of polished metal the round sea lay at his feet, and the shadows of the fishing boats moved in the little bay. A great owl, with yellow sulphurous eyes, called to him by his name, but he made it no answer. A black dog ran towards him and snarled. He struck it with a rod of willow, and it went away whining.

At midnight the witches came flying through the air like bats. 'Phew!' they cried, as they lit upon the ground, 'there is some one here we know not!' and they sniffed about, and chattered to each other, and made signs. Last of all came the young Witch, with her red hair streaming in the wind. She wore a dress of gold tissue embroidered with peacocks' eyes, and a little cap of green velvet was on her head.

'Where is he, where is he?' shrieked the witches when they saw her, but she only laughed, and ran to the hornbeam, and taking the Fisherman by the hand she led him out into the moonlight and began to dance.

Round and round they whirled, and the young Witch jumped so high that he could see the scarlet heels of her shoes. Then right across the dancers came the sound of the galloping of a horse, but no horse was to be seen, and he felt afraid.

'Faster,' cried the Witch, and she threw her arms about his neck, and her breath was hot upon his face. 'Faster, faster!' she cried, and the earth seemed to spin beneath his feet, and his brain grew troubled, and a great terror fell on him, as of some evil thing that was watching him, and at last he became aware that under the shadow of a rock there was a figure that had not been there before.

It was a man dressed in a suit of black velvet, cut in the Spanish fashion. His face was strangely pale, but his lips were like a proud red flower. He seemed weary, and was leaning back toying in a listless manner with the pommel of his dagger. On the grass beside him lay a plumed hat, and a pair of riding-gloves gauntleted with gilt lace, and sewn with seed-pearls wrought into a curious device. A short cloak lined with sables hung from his shoulder, and his delicate white hands were gemmed with rings. Heavy eyelids drooped over his eyes.

The young Fisherman watched him, as one snared in a spell. At last their eyes met, and wherever he danced it seemed to him that the eyes of the man were upon him. He heard the Witch laugh, and caught her by the waist, and whirled her madly round and round.

Suddenly a dog bayed in the wood, and the dancers stopped, and going up two by two, knelt down, and kissed the man's hands. As they did so, a little smile touched his proud lips, as a bird's wing touches the water and makes it laugh. But there was disdain in it. He kept looking at the young fisherman.

'Come! let us worship,' whispered the Witch, and she led him up, and a great desire to do as she besought him seized on him, and he followed her. But when he came close, and without knowing why he did it, he made on his breast the sign of the Cross, and called upon the holy name.

No sooner had he done so than the witches screamed like hawks and flew away, and the pallid face that had been watching him twitched with a spasm of pain. The man went over to a little wood, and whistled. A jennet with silver trappings came running to meet him. As he leapt upon the saddle he turned round, and looked at the young Fisherman sadly.

And the Witch with the red hair tried to fly away also, but the Fisherman caught her by her wrists, and held her fast.

'Loose me,' she cried, 'and let me go. For thou hast named what should not be named, and shown the sign that may not be looked at.'

'Nay,' he answered, 'but I will not let thee go till thou hast told me the secret.'

'What secret?' said the Witch, wrestling with him like a wild cat, and biting her foam-flecked lips.

'Thou knowest,' he made answer.

Her grass-green eyes grew dim with tears, and she said to the Fisherman, 'Ask me anything but that!'

He laughed, and held her all the more tightly.

And when she saw that she could not free herself, she whispered to him, 'Surely I am as fair as the daughters of the sea, and as comely as those that dwell in the blue waters,' and she fawned on him and put her face close to his.

But he thrust her back frowning, and said to her, 'If thou keepest not the promise that thou madest to me I will slay thee for a false witch.'

She grew grey as a blossom of the Judas tree, and shuddered. ‘Be it so,’ she muttered. ‘It is thy soul and not mine. Do with it as thou wilt.’ And she took from her girdle a little knife that had a handle of green viper’s skin, and gave it to him.

‘What shall this serve me?’ he asked of her, wondering.

She was silent for a few moments, and a look of terror came over her face. Then she brushed her hair back from her forehead, and smiling strangely she said to him, ‘What men call the shadow of the body is not the shadow of the body, but is the body of the soul. Stand on the sea-shore with thy back to the moon, and cut away from around thy feet thy shadow, which is thy soul’s body, and bid thy soul leave thee, and it will do so.’

The young Fisherman trembled. ‘Is this true?’ he murmured.

‘It is true, and I would that I had not told thee of it,’ she cried, and she clung to his knees weeping.

He put her from him and left her in the rank grass, and going to the edge of the mountain he placed the knife in his belt and began to climb down.

And his Soul that was within him called out to him and said, 'Lo! I have dwelt with thee for all these years, and have been thy servant. Send me not away from thee now, for what evil have I done thee?'

And the young Fisherman laughed. 'Thou hast done me no evil, but I have no need of thee,' he answered. 'The world is wide, and there is Heaven also, and Hell, and that dim twilight house that lies between. Go wherever thou wilt, but trouble me not, for my love is calling to me.'

And his Soul besought him piteously, but he heeded it not, but leapt from crag to crag, being sure-footed as a wild goat, and at last he reached the level ground and the yellow shore of the sea.

Bronze-limbed and well-knit, like a statue wrought by a Grecian, he stood on the sand with his back to the moon, and out of the foam came white arms that beckoned to him, and out of the waves rose dim forms that did him homage. Before him lay his shadow, which was the body of his soul, and behind him hung the moon in the honey-coloured air.

And his Soul said to him, 'If indeed thou must drive me from thee, send me not forth without a heart. The world is cruel, give me thy heart to take with me.'

He tossed his head and smiled. 'With what should I love my love if I gave thee my heart?' he cried.

'Nay, but be merciful,' said his Soul: 'give me thy heart, for the world is very cruel, and I am afraid.'

'My heart is my love's,' he answered, 'therefore tarry not, but get thee gone.'

'Should I not love also?' asked his Soul.

'Get thee gone, for I have no need of thee,' cried the young Fisherman, and he took the little knife with its handle of green viper's skin, and cut away his shadow from around his feet, and it rose up and stood before him, and looked at him, and it was even as himself.

He crept back, and thrust the knife into his belt, and a feeling of awe came over him. 'Get thee gone,' he murmured, 'and let me see thy face no more.'

'Nay, but we must meet again,' said the Soul. Its voice was low and flute-like, and its lips hardly moved while it spake.

'How shall we meet?' cried the young Fisherman. 'Thou wilt not follow me into the depths of the sea?'

'Once every year I will come to this place, and call to thee,' said the Soul. 'It may be that thou wilt have need of me.'

'What need should I have of thee?' cried the young Fisherman, 'but be it as thou wilt,' and he plunged into the water, and the Tritons blew their horns, and the little Mermaid rose up to meet him, and put her arms around his neck and kissed him on the mouth.

And the Soul stood on the lonely beach and watched them. And when they had sunk down into the sea, it went weeping away over the marshes.

And after a year was over the Soul came down to the shore of the sea and called to the young Fisherman, and he rose out of the deep, and said, 'Why dost thou call to me?'

And the Soul answered, 'Come nearer, that I may speak with thee, for I have seen marvellous things.'

So he came nearer, and couched in the shallow water, and leaned his head upon his hand and listened.

And the Soul said to him, 'When I left thee I turned my face to the East and journeyed.

From the East cometh everything that is wise. Six days I journeyed, and on the morning of the seventh day I came to a hill that is in the country of the Tartars. I sat down under the shade of a tamarisk tree to shelter myself from the sun. The land was dry, and burnt up with the heat. The people went to and fro over the plain like flies crawling upon a disk of polished copper.

'When it was noon a cloud of red dust rose up from the flat rim of the land. When the Tartars saw it, they strung their painted bows, and having leapt upon their little horses they galloped to meet it. The women fled screaming to the waggons, and hid themselves behind the felt curtains.

'At twilight the Tartars returned, but five of them were missing, and of those that came back not a few had been wounded. They harnessed their horses to the waggons and drove hastily away. Three jackals came out of a cave and peered after them. Then they sniffed up the air with their nostrils, and trotted off in the opposite direction.

'When the moon rose I saw a camp-fire burning on the plain, and went towards it. A company of merchants were seated round it on carpets. Their camels were picketed behind them, and the negroes who were their servants were pitching tents of tanned skin upon the sand, and making a high wall of the prickly pear.

'As I came near them, the chief of the merchants rose up and drew his sword, and asked me my business.

'I answered that I was a Prince in my own land, and that I had escaped from the Tartars, who had sought to make me their slave. The chief smiled, and showed me five heads fixed upon long reeds of bamboo.

'Then he asked me who was the prophet of God, and I answered him Mohammed.

'When he heard the name of the false prophet, he bowed and took me by the hand, and placed me by his side. A negro brought me some mare's milk in a wooden dish, and a piece of lamb's flesh roasted.

'At daybreak we started on our journey. I rode on a red-haired camel by the side of the chief, and a runner ran before us carrying a spear. The men of war were on either hand, and the mules followed with the merchandise. There were forty camels in the caravan, and the mules were twice forty in number.

'We went from the country of the Tartars into the country of those who curse the Moon.

We saw the Gryphons guarding their gold on the white rocks, and the scaled Dragons sleeping in their caves. As we passed over the mountains we held our breath lest the snows might fall on us, and each man tied a veil of gauze before his eyes. As we passed through the valleys the Pygmies shot arrows at us from the hollows of the trees, and at night time we heard the wild men beating on their drums. When we came to the Tower of Apes we set fruits before them, and they did not harm us. When we came to the Tower of Serpents we gave them warm milk in bowls of brass, and they let us go by. Three times in our journey we came to the banks of the Oxus. We crossed it on rafts of wood with great bladders of blown hide. The river-horses raged against us and sought to slay us. When the camels saw them they trembled.

'The kings of each city levied tolls on us, but would not suffer us to enter their gates. They threw us bread over the walls, little maize-cakes baked in honey and cakes of fine flour filled with dates. For every hundred baskets we gave them a bead of amber.

'When the dwellers in the villages saw us coming, they poisoned the wells and fled to the hill-summits. We fought with the Magadae who are born old, and grow younger and younger every year, and die when they are little children; and with the Laktroi who say that they are the sons of tigers, and paint themselves yellow and black; and with the Aurantes who bury their dead on the tops of trees, and themselves live in dark caverns lest the Sun, who is their god, should slay them; and with the Krimnians who worship a crocodile, and give it earrings of green glass, and feed it with butter and fresh fowls; and with the Agazonbae, who are dog-faced; and with the Sibans, who have horses' feet, and run more swiftly than horses. A third of our company died in battle, and a third died of want. The rest murmured against me, and said that I had brought them an evil fortune. I took a horned adder from beneath a stone and let it sting me. When they saw that I did not sicken they grew afraid.

'In the fourth month we reached the city of Illel. It was night time when we came to the grove that is outside the walls, and the air was sultry, for the Moon was travelling in Scorpion. We took the ripe pomegranates from the trees, and brake them, and drank their sweet juices. Then we lay down on our carpets and waited for the dawn.

'And at dawn we rose and knocked at the gate of the city. It was wrought out of red bronze, and carved with sea-dragons and dragons that have wings. The guards looked down from the battlements and asked us our business. The interpreter of the caravan answered that we had come from the island of Syria with much merchandise. They took hostages, and told us that they would open the gate to us at noon, and bade us tarry till then.

'When it was noon they opened the gate, and as we entered in the people came crowding out of the houses to look at us, and a crier went round the city crying through a shell. We stood in the market-place, and the negroes uncorded the bales of figured cloths and opened the carved chests of sycamore. And when they had ended their task, the merchants set forth their strange wares, the waxed linen from Egypt and the painted linen from the country of the Ethiops, the purple sponges from Tyre and the blue hangings from Sidon, the cups of cold amber and the fine vessels of glass and the curious vessels of burnt clay. From the roof of a house a company of women watched us. One of them wore a mask of gilded leather.

'And on the first day the priests came and bartered with us, and on the second day came the nobles, and on the third day came the craftsmen and the slaves. And this is their custom with all merchants as long as they tarry in the city.

'And we tarried for a moon, and when the moon was waning, I wearied and wandered away through the streets of the city and came to the garden of its god. The priests in their yellow robes moved silently through the green trees, and on a pavement of black marble stood the rose-red house in which the god had his dwelling. Its doors were of powdered lacquer, and bulls and peacocks were wrought on them in raised and polished gold. The tiled roof was of sea-green porcelain, and the jutting eaves were festooned with little bells. When the white doves flew past, they struck the bells with their wings and made them tinkle.

'In front of the temple was a pool of clear water paved with veined onyx. I lay down beside it, and with my pale fingers I touched the broad leaves. One of the priests came towards me and stood behind me. He had sandals on his feet, one of soft serpent-skin and the other of birds' plumage. On his head was a mitre of black felt decorated with silver crescents. Seven yellows were woven into his robe, and his frizzed hair was stained with antimony.

‘After a little while he spake to me, and asked me my desire.

‘I told him that my desire was to see the god.

‘“The god is hunting,” said the priest, looking strangely at me with his small slanting eyes.

‘“Tell me in what forest, and I will ride with him,” I answered.

‘He combed out the soft fringes of his tunic with his long pointed nails. “The god is asleep,” he murmured.

‘“Tell me on what couch, and I will watch by him,” I answered.

‘“The god is at the feast,” he cried.

‘“If the wine be sweet I will drink it with him, and if it be bitter I will drink it with him also,” was my answer.

‘He bowed his head in wonder, and, taking me by the hand, he raised me up, and led me into the temple.

‘And in the first chamber I saw an idol seated on a throne of jasper bordered with great orient pearls. It was carved out of ebony, and in stature was of the stature of a man. On its forehead was a ruby, and thick oil dripped from its hair on to its thighs. Its feet were red with the blood of a newly-slain kid, and its loins girt with a copper belt that was studded with seven beryls.

'And I said to the priest, "Is this the god?" And he answered me, "This is the god."

'"Show me the god," I cried, "or I will surely slay thee." And I touched his hand, and it became withered.

'And the priest besought me, saying, "Let my lord heal his servant, and I will show him the god."

'So I breathed with my breath upon his hand, and it became whole again, and he trembled and led me into the second chamber, and I saw an idol standing on a lotus of jade hung with great emeralds. It was carved out of ivory, and in stature was twice the stature of a man. On its forehead was a chrysolite, and its breasts were smeared with myrrh and cinnamon. In one hand it held a crooked sceptre of jade, and in the other a round crystal. It ware buskins of brass, and its thick neck was circled with a circle of selenites.

'And I said to the priest, "Is this the god?" And he answered me, "This is the god."

'"Show me the god," I cried, "or I will surely slay thee." And I touched his eyes, and they became blind.

'And the priest besought me, saying, "Let my lord heal his servant, and I will show him the god."

'So I breathed with my breath upon his eyes, and the sight came back to them, and he trembled again, and led me into the third chamber, and lo! there was no idol in it, nor image of any kind, but only a mirror of round metal set on an altar of stone.

'And I said to the priest, "Where is the god?"

'And he answered me: "There is no god but this mirror that thou seest, for this is the Mirror of Wisdom. And it reflecteth all things that are in heaven and on earth, save only the face of him who looketh into it. This it reflecteth not, so that he who looketh into it may be wise. Many other mirrors are there, but they are mirrors of Opinion. This only is the Mirror of Wisdom. And they who possess this mirror know everything, nor is there anything hidden from them. And they who possess it not have not Wisdom. Therefore is it the god, and we worship it." And I looked into the mirror, and it was even as he had said to me.

'And I did a strange thing, but what I did matters not, for in a valley that is but a day's journey from this place have I hidden the Mirror of Wisdom. Do but suffer me to enter into thee again and be thy servant, and thou shalt be wiser than all the wise men, and Wisdom shall be thine. Suffer me to enter into thee, and none will be as wise as thou.'

But the young Fisherman laughed. 'Love is better than Wisdom,' he cried, 'and the little Mermaid loves me.'

'Nay, but there is nothing better than Wisdom,' said the Soul.

'Love is better,' answered the young Fisherman, and he plunged into the deep, and the Soul went weeping away over the marshes.

And after the second year was over, the Soul came down to the shore of the sea, and called to the young Fisherman, and he rose out of the deep and said, 'Why dost thou call to me?'

And the Soul answered, 'Come nearer, that I may speak with thee, for I have seen marvellous things.'

So he came nearer, and couched in the shallow water, and leaned his head upon his hand and listened.

And the Soul said to him, ‘When I left thee, I turned my face to the South and journeyed. From the South cometh everything that is precious. Six days I journeyed along the highways that lead to the city of Ashter, along the dusty red-dyed highways by which the pilgrims are wont to go did I journey, and on the morning of the seventh day I lifted up my eyes, and lo! the city lay at my feet, for it is in a valley.

‘There are nine gates to this city, and in front of each gate stands a bronze horse that neighs when the Bedouins come down from the mountains. The walls are cased with copper, and the watch-towers on the walls are roofed with brass. In every tower stands an archer with a bow in his hand. At sunrise he strikes with an arrow on a gong, and at sunset he blows through a horn of horn.

‘When I sought to enter, the guards stopped me and asked of me who I was. I made answer that I was a Dervish and on my way to the city of Mecca, where there was a green veil on which the Koran was embroidered in silver letters by the hands of the angels. They were filled with wonder, and entreated me to pass in.

‘Inside it is even as a bazaar. Surely thou shouldst have been with me. Across the narrow streets the gay lanterns of paper flutter like large butterflies. When the wind blows over the roofs they rise and fall as painted bubbles do. In front of their booths sit the merchants on silken carpets. They have straight black beards, and their turbans are covered with golden sequins, and long strings of amber and carved peach-stones glide through their cool fingers. Some of them sell gelbanum and nard, and curious perfumes from the islands of the Indian Sea, and the thick oil of red roses, and myrrh and little nail-shaped cloves. When one stops to speak to them, they throw pinches of frankincense upon a charcoal brazier and make the air sweet. I saw a Syrian who held in his hands a thin rod like a reed. Grey threads of smoke came from it, and its odour as it burned was as the odour of the pink almond in spring. Others sell silver bracelets embossed all over with creamy blue turquoise stones, and anklets of brass wire fringed with little pearls, and tigers' claws set in gold, and the claws of that gilt cat, the leopard, set in gold also, and earrings of pierced emerald, and finger-rings of hollowed jade. From the tea-houses comes the sound of the guitar, and the opium-smokers with their white smiling faces look out at the passers-by.

'Of a truth thou shouldst have been with me. The wine-sellers elbow their way through the crowd with great black skins on their shoulders. Most of them sell the wine of Schiraz, which is as sweet as honey. They serve it in little metal cups and strew rose leaves upon it. In the market-place stand the fruitsellers, who sell all kinds of fruit: ripe figs, with their bruised purple flesh, melons, smelling of musk and yellow as topazes, citrons and rose-apples and clusters of white grapes, round red-gold oranges, and oval lemons of green gold. Once I saw an elephant go by. Its trunk was painted with vermilion and turmeric, and over its ears it had a net of crimson silk cord. It stopped opposite one of the booths and began eating the oranges, and the man only laughed. Thou canst not think how strange a people they are. When they are glad they go to the bird-sellers and buy of them a caged bird, and set it free that their joy may be greater, and when they are sad they scourge themselves with thorns that their sorrow may not grow less.

'One evening I met some negroes carrying a heavy palanquin through the bazaar. It was made of gilded bamboo, and the poles were of vermilion lacquer studded with brass peacocks.

Across the windows hung thin curtains of muslin embroidered with beetles' wings and with tiny seed-pearls, and as it passed by a pale-faced Circassian looked out and smiled at me. I followed behind, and the negroes hurried their steps and scowled. But I did not care. I felt a great curiosity come over me.

'At last they stopped at a square white house. There were no windows to it, only a little door like the door of a tomb. They set down the palanquin and knocked three times with a copper hammer. An Armenian in a caftan of green leather peered through the wicket, and when he saw them he opened, and spread a carpet on the ground, and the woman stepped out. As she went in, she turned round and smiled at me again. I had never seen any one so pale.

'When the moon rose I returned to the same place and sought for the house, but it was no longer there. When I saw that, I knew who the woman was, and wherefore she had smiled at me.

'Certainly thou shouldst have been with me. On the feast of the New Moon the young Emperor came forth from his palace and went into the mosque to pray. His hair and beard were dyed with rose-leaves, and his cheeks were powdered with a fine gold dust. The palms of his feet and hands were yellow with saffron.

'At sunrise he went forth from his palace in a robe of silver, and at sunset he returned to it again in a robe of gold. The people flung themselves on the ground and hid their faces, but I would not do so. I stood by the stall of a seller of dates and waited. When the Emperor saw me, he raised his painted eyebrows and stopped. I stood quite still, and made him no obeisance. The people marvelled at my boldness, and counselled me to flee from the city. I paid no heed to them, but went and sat with the sellers of strange gods, who by reason of their craft are abominated. When I told them what I had done, each of them gave me a god and prayed me to leave them.

'That night, as I lay on a cushion in the teahouse that is in the Street of Pomegranates, the guards of the Emperor entered and led me to the palace. As I went in they closed each door behind me, and put a chain across it. Inside was a great court with an arcade running all round. The walls were of white alabaster, set here and there with blue and green tiles. The pillars were of green marble, and the pavement of a kind of peach-blossom marble. I had never seen anything like it before.

'As I passed across the court two veiled women looked down from a balcony and cursed me. The guards hastened on, and the butts of the lances rang upon the polished floor. They opened a gate of wrought ivory, and I found myself in a watered garden of seven terraces. It was planted with tulip-cups and moonflowers, and silver-studded aloes. Like a slim reed of crystal a fountain hung in the dusky air. The cypress-trees were like burnt-out torches. From one of them a nightingale was singing.

'At the end of the garden stood a little pavilion. As we approached it two eunuchs came out to meet us. Their fat bodies swayed as they walked, and they glanced curiously at me with their yellow-lidded eyes. One of them drew aside the captain of the guard, and in a low voice whispered to him. The other kept munching scented pastilles, which he took with an affected gesture out of an oval box of lilac enamel.

'After a few moments the captain of the guard dismissed the soldiers. They went back to the palace, the eunuchs following slowly behind and plucking the sweet mulberries from the trees as they passed. Once the elder of the two turned round, and smiled at me with an evil smile.

'Then the captain of the guard motioned me towards the entrance of the pavilion. I walked on without trembling, and drawing the heavy curtain aside I entered in.

'The young Emperor was stretched on a couch of dyed lion skins, and a ger-falcon perched upon his wrist. Behind him stood a brass-turbaned Nubian, naked down to the waist, and with heavy earrings in his split ears. On a table by the side of the couch lay a mighty scimitar of steel.

'When the Emperor saw me he frowned, and said to me, "What is thy name? Knowest thou not that I am Emperor of this city?" But I made him no answer.

'He pointed with his finger at the scimitar, and the Nubian seized it, and rushing forward struck at me with great violence. The blade whizzed through me, and did me no hurt. The man fell sprawling on the floor, and when he rose up his teeth chattered with terror and he hid himself behind the couch.

'The Emperor leapt to his feet, and taking a lance from a stand of arms, he threw it at me.

I caught it in its flight, and brake the shaft into two pieces. He shot at me with an arrow, but I held up my hands and it stopped in mid-air. Then he drew a dagger from a belt of white leather, and stabbed the Nubian in the throat lest the slave should tell of his dishonour. The man writhed like a trampled snake, and a red foam bubbled from his lips.

'As soon as he was dead the Emperor turned to me, and when he had wiped away the bright sweat from his brow with a little napkin of purfled and purple silk, he said to me, "Art thou a prophet, that I may not harm thee, or the son of a prophet, that I can do thee no hurt? I pray thee leave my city to-night, for while thou art in it I am no longer its lord."

'And I answered him, "I will go for half of thy treasure. Give me half of thy treasure, and I will go away."

'He took me by the hand, and led me out into the garden. When the captain of the guard saw me, he wondered. When the eunuchs saw me, their knees shook and they fell upon the ground in fear.

'There is a chamber in the palace that has eight walls of red porphyry, and a brass-scaled ceiling hung with lamps. The Emperor touched one of the walls and it opened, and we passed down a corridor that was lit with many torches. In niches upon each side stood great wine-jars filled to the brim with silver pieces. When we reached the centre of the corridor the Emperor spake the word that may not be spoken, and a granite door swung back on a secret spring, and he put his hands before his face lest his eyes should be dazzled.

'Thou couldst not believe how marvellous a place it was. There were huge tortoise-shells full of pearls, and hollowed moonstones of great size piled up with red rubies. The gold was stored in coffers of elephant-hide, and the gold-dust in leather bottles. There were opals and sapphires, the former in cups of crystal, and the latter in cups of jade. Round green emeralds were ranged in order upon thin plates of ivory, and in one corner were silk bags filled, some with turquoise-stones, and others with beryls. The ivory horns were heaped with purple amethysts, and the horns of brass with chalcedonies and sards. The pillars, which were of cedar, were hung with strings of yellow lynx-stones. In the flat oval shields there were carbuncles, both wine-coloured and coloured like grass. And yet I have told thee but a tithe of what was there.

'And when the Emperor had taken away his hands from before his face he said to me: "This is my house of treasure, and half that is in it is thine, even as I promised to thee. And I will give thee camels and camel drivers, and they shall do thy bidding and take thy share of the treasure to whatever part of the world thou desirest to go. And the thing shall be done to-night, for I would not that the Sun, who is my father, should see that there is in my city a man whom I cannot slay."

'But I answered him, "The gold that is here is thine, and the silver also is thine, and thine are the precious jewels and the things of price. As for me, I have no need of these. Nor shall I take aught from thee but that little ring that thou wearest on the finger of thy hand."

'And the Emperor frowned. "It is but a ring of lead," he cried, "nor has it any value. Therefore take thy half of the treasure and go from my city."

'"Nay," I answered, "but I will take nought but that leaden ring, for I know what is written within it, and for what purpose."

'And the Emperor trembled, and besought me and said, "Take all the treasure and go from my city. The half that is mine shall be thine also."

'And I did a strange thing, but what I did matters not, for in a cave that is but a day's journey from this place have I hidden the Ring of Riches. It is but a day's journey from this place, and it waits for thy coming. He who has this Ring is richer than all the kings of the world. Come therefore and take it, and the world's riches shall be thine.'

But the young Fisherman laughed. 'Love is better than Riches,' he cried, 'and the little Mermaid loves me.'

'Nay, but there is nothing better than Riches,' said the Soul.

'Love is better,' answered the young Fisherman, and he plunged into the deep, and the Soul went weeping away over the marshes.

And after the third year was over, the Soul came down to the shore of the sea, and called to the young Fisherman, and he rose out of the deep and said, 'Why dost thou call to me?'

And the Soul answered, 'Come nearer, that I may speak with thee, for I have seen marvellous things.'

So he came nearer, and couched in the shallow water, and leaned his head upon his hand and listened.

And the Soul said to him, 'In a city that I know of there is an inn that standeth by a river. I sat there with sailors who drank of two different-coloured wines, and ate bread made of barley, and little salt fish served in bay leaves with vinegar. And as we sat and made merry, there entered to us an old man bearing a leathern carpet and a lute that had two horns of amber. And when he had laid out the carpet on the floor, he struck with a quill on the wire strings of his lute, and a girl whose face was veiled ran in and began to dance before us. Her face was veiled with a veil of gauze, but her feet were naked. Naked were her feet, and they moved over the carpet like little white pigeons. Never have I seen anything so marvellous, and the city in which she dances is but a day's journey from this place.'

Now when the young Fisherman heard the words of his Soul, he remembered that the little Mermaid had no feet and could not dance. And a great desire came over him, and he said to himself, 'It is but a day's journey, and I can return to my love,' and he laughed, and stood up in the shallow water, and strode towards the shore.

And when he had reached the dry shore he laughed again, and held out his arms to his Soul. And his Soul gave a great cry of joy and ran to meet him, and entered into him, and the young Fisherman saw stretched before him upon the sand that shadow of the body that is the body of the Soul.

And his Soul said to him, 'Let us not tarry, but get hence at once, for the Sea-gods are jealous, and have monsters that do their bidding.'

So they made haste, and all that night they journeyed beneath the moon, and all the next day they journeyed beneath the sun, and on the evening of the day they came to a city.

And the young Fisherman said to his Soul, 'Is this the city in which she dances of whom thou didst speak to me?'

And his Soul answered him, 'It is not this city, but another. Nevertheless let us enter in.'

So they entered in and passed through the streets, and as they passed through the Street of the Jewellers the young Fisherman saw a fair silver cup set forth in a booth. And his Soul said to him, 'Take that silver cup and hide it.'

So he took the cup and hid it in the fold of his tunic, and they went hurriedly out of the city.

And after that they had gone a league from the city, the young Fisherman frowned, and flung the cup away, and said to his Soul, 'Why didst thou tell me to take this cup and hide it, for it was an evil thing to do?'

But his Soul answered him, 'Be at peace, be at peace.'

And on the evening of the second day they came to a city, and the young Fisherman said to his Soul, 'Is this the city in which she dances of whom thou didst speak to me?'

And his Soul answered him, 'It is not this city, but another. Nevertheless let us enter in.'

So they entered in and passed through the streets, and as they passed through the Street of the Sellers of Sandals, the young Fisherman saw a child standing by a jar of water. And his Soul said to him, 'Smite that child.' So he smote the child till it wept, and when he had done this they went hurriedly out of the city.

And after that they had gone a league from the city the young Fisherman grew wroth, and said to his Soul, 'Why didst thou tell me to smite the child, for it was an evil thing to do?'

But his Soul answered him, 'Be at peace, be at peace.'

And on the evening of the third day they came to a city, and the young Fisherman said to his Soul, 'Is this the city in which she dances of whom thou didst speak to me?'

And his Soul answered him, 'It may be that it is in this city, therefore let us enter in.'

So they entered in and passed through the streets, but nowhere could the young Fisherman find the river or the inn that stood by its side. And the people of the city looked curiously at him, and he grew afraid and said to his Soul, 'Let us go hence, for she who dances with white feet is not here.'

But his Soul answered, 'Nay, but let us tarry, for the night is dark and there will be robbers on the way.'

So he sat him down in the market-place and rested, and after a time there went by a hooded merchant who had a cloak of cloth of Tartary, and bare a lantern of pierced horn at the end of a jointed reed. And the merchant said to him, 'Why dost thou sit in the market-place, seeing that the booths are closed and the bales corded?'

And the young Fisherman answered him, 'I can find no inn in this city, nor have I any kinsman who might give me shelter.'

'Are we not all kinsmen?' said the merchant.

'And did not one God make us? Therefore come with me, for I have a guest-chamber.'

So the young Fisherman rose up and followed the merchant to his house. And when he had passed through a garden of pomegranates and entered into the house, the merchant brought him rose-water in a copper dish that he might wash his hands, and ripe melons that he might quench his thirst, and set a bowl of rice and a piece of roasted kid before him.

And after that he had finished, the merchant led him to the guest-chamber, and bade him sleep and be at rest. And the young Fisherman gave him thanks, and kissed the ring that was on his hand, and flung himself down on the carpets of dyed goat's-hair. And when he had covered himself with a covering of black lamb's-wool he fell asleep.

And three hours before dawn, and while it was still night, his Soul waked him and said to him, 'Rise up and go to the room of the merchant, even to the room in which he sleepeth, and slay him, and take from him his gold, for we have need of it.'

And the young Fisherman rose up and crept towards the room of the merchant, and over the feet of the merchant there was lying a curved sword, and the tray by the side of the merchant held nine purses of gold. And he reached out his hand and touched the sword, and when he touched it the merchant started and awoke, and leaping up seized himself the sword and cried to the young Fisherman, 'Dost thou return evil for good, and pay with the shedding of blood for the kindness that I have shown thee?'

And his Soul said to the young Fisherman, 'Strike him,' and he struck him so that he swooned, and he seized then the nine purses of gold, and fled hastily through the garden of pomegranates, and set his face to the star that is the star of morning.

And when they had gone a league from the city, the young Fisherman beat his breast, and said to his Soul, 'Why didst thou bid me slay the merchant and take his gold? Surely thou art evil.'

But his Soul answered him, 'Be at peace, be at peace.'

'Nay,' cried the young Fisherman, 'I may not be at peace, for all that thou hast made me to do I hate. Thee also I hate, and I bid thee tell me wherefore thou hast wrought with me in this wise.'

And his Soul answered him, 'When thou didst send me forth into the world thou gavest me no heart, so I learned to do all these things and love them.'

'What sayest thou?' murmured the young Fisherman.

'Thou knowest,' answered his Soul, 'thou knowest it well. Hast thou forgotten that thou gavest me no heart? I trow not. And so trouble not thyself nor me, but be at peace, for there is no pain that thou shalt not give away, nor any pleasure that thou shalt not receive.'

And when the young Fisherman heard these words he trembled and said to his Soul, 'Nay, but thou art evil, and hast made me forget my love, and hast tempted me with temptations, and hast set my feet in the ways of sin.'

And his Soul answered him, 'Thou hast not forgotten that when thou didst send me forth into the world thou gavest me no heart. Come, let us go to another city, and make merry, for we have nine purses of gold.'

But the young Fisherman took the nine purses of gold, and flung them down, and trampled on them.

'Nay,' he cried, 'but I will have nought to do with thee, nor will I journey with thee anywhere, but even as I sent thee away before, so will I send thee away now, for thou hast wrought me no good. And he turned his back to the moon, and with the little knife that had the handle of green viper's skin he strove to cut from his feet that shadow of the body which is the body of the Soul.

Yet his Soul stirred not from him, nor paid heed to his command, but said to him, 'The spell that the Witch told thee avails thee no more, for I may not leave thee, nor mayest thou drive me forth. Once in his life may a man send his Soul away, but he who receiveth back his Soul must keep it with him for ever, and this is his punishment and his reward.'

And the young Fisherman grew pale and clenched his hands and cried, 'She was a false Witch in that she told me not that.'

'Nay,' answered his Soul, 'but she was true to Him she worships, and whose servant she will be ever.'

And when the young Fisherman knew that he could no longer get rid of his Soul, and that it was an evil Soul and would abide with him always, he fell upon the ground weeping bitterly.

And when it was day the young Fisherman

rose up and said to his Soul, 'I will bind my hands that I may not do thy bidding, and close my lips that I may not speak thy words, and I will return to the place where she whom I love has her dwelling. Even to the sea will I return, and to the little bay where she is wont to sing, and I will call to her and tell her the evil I have done and the evil thou hast wrought on me.'

And his Soul tempted him and said, 'Who is thy love, that thou shouldst return to her? The world has many fairer than she is. There are the dancing-girls of Samaris who dance in the manner of all kinds of birds and beasts. Their feet are painted with henna, and in their hands they have little copper bells. They laugh while they dance, and their laughter is as clear as the laughter of water. Come with me and I will show them to thee. For what is this trouble of thine about the things of sin? Is that which is pleasant to eat not made for the eater? Is there poison in that which is sweet to drink? Trouble not thyself, but come with me to another city. There is a little city hard by in which there is a garden of tulip-trees. And there dwell in this comely garden white peacocks and peacocks that have blue breasts.

Their tails when they spread them to the sun are like disks of ivory and like gilt disks. And she who feeds them dances for their pleasure, and sometimes she dances on her hands and at other times she dances with her feet. Her eyes are coloured with stibium, and her nostrils are shaped like the wings of a swallow. From a hook in one of her nostrils hangs a flower that is carved out of a pearl. She laughs while she dances, and the silver rings that are about her ankles tinkle like bells of silver. And so trouble not thyself any more, but come with me to this city.'

But the young Fisherman answered not his Soul, but closed his lips with the seal of silence and with a tight cord bound his hands, and journeyed back to the place from which he had come, even to the little bay where his love had been wont to sing. And ever did his Soul tempt him by the way, but he made it no answer, nor would he do any of the wickedness that it sought to make him to do, so great was the power of the love that was within him.

And when he had reached the shore of the sea, he loosed the cord from his hands, and took the seal of silence from his lips, and called to the little Mermaid. But she came not to his call, though he called to her all day long and besought her.

And his Soul mocked him and said, 'Surely thou hast but little joy out of thy love. Thou art as one who in time of dearth pours water into a broken vessel. Thou givest away what thou hast, and nought is given to thee in return. It were better for thee to come with me, for I know where the Valley of Pleasure lies, and what things are wrought there.'

But the young Fisherman answered not his Soul, but in a cleft of the rock he built himself a house of wattles, and abode there for the space of a year. And every morning he called to the Mermaid, and every noon he called to her again, and at night-time he spake her name. Yet never did she rise out of the sea to meet him, nor in any place of the sea could he find her, though he sought for her in the caves and in the green water, in the pools of the tide and in the wells that are at the bottom of the deep.

And ever did his Soul tempt him with evil, and whisper of terrible things. Yet did it not prevail against him, so great was the power of his love.

And after the year was over, the Soul thought within himself, 'I have tempted my master with evil, and his love is stronger than I am. I will tempt him now with good, and it may be that he will come with me.'

So he spake to the young Fisherman and said, 'I have told thee of the joy of the world, and thou hast turned a deaf ear to me. Suffer me now to tell thee of the world's pain, and it may be that thou wilt hearken. For of a truth pain is the Lord of this world, nor is there any one who escapes from its net. There be some who lack raiment, and others who lack bread. There be widows who sit in purple, and widows who sit in rags. To and fro over the fens go the lepers, and they are cruel to each other. The beggars go up and down on the highways, and their wallets are empty. Through the streets of the cities walks Famine, and the Plague sits at their gates. Come, let us go forth and mend these things, and make them not to be. Wherefore shouldst thou tarry here calling to thy love, seeing she comes not to thy call? And what is love, that thou shouldst set this high store upon it?'

But the young Fisherman answered it nought, so great was the power of his love. And every morning he called to the Mermaid, and every noon he called to her again, and at night-time he spake her name. Yet never did she rise out of the sea to meet him, nor in any place of the sea could he find her, though he sought for her in the rivers of the sea, and in the valleys that are under the waves, in the sea that the night makes purple, and in the sea that the dawn leaves grey.

And after the second year was over, the Soul said to the young Fisherman at night-time, and as he sat in the wattled house alone, 'Lo! now I have tempted thee with evil, and I have tempted thee with good, and thy love is stronger than I am. Wherefore will I tempt thee no longer, but I pray thee to suffer me to enter thy heart, that I may be one with thee even as before.'

'Surely thou mayest enter,' said the young Fisherman, 'for in the days when with no heart thou didst go through the world thou must have much suffered.'

'Alas!' cried his Soul, 'I can find no place of entrance, so compassed about with love is this heart of thine.'

'Yet I would that I could help thee,' said the young Fisherman.

And as he spake there came a great cry of mourning from the sea, even the cry that men hear when one of the Sea-folk is dead. And the young Fisherman leapt up, and left his wattled house, and ran down to the shore. And the black waves came hurrying to the shore, bearing with them a burden that was whiter than silver. White as the surf it was, and like a flower it tossed on the waves. And the surf took it from the waves, and the foam took it from the surf, and the shore received it, and lying at his feet the young Fisherman saw the body of the little Mermaid. Dead at his feet it was lying.

Weeping as one smitten with pain he flung himself down beside it, and he kissed the cold red of the mouth, and toyed with the wet amber of the hair. He flung himself down beside it on the sand, weeping as one trembling with joy, and in his brown arms he held it to his breast. Cold were the lips, yet he kissed them. Salt was the honey of the hair, yet he tasted it with a bitter joy. He kissed the closed eyelids, and the wild spray that lay upon their cups was less salt than his tears.

And to the dead thing he made confession. Into the shells of its ears he poured the harsh wine of his tale. He put the little hands round his neck, and with his fingers he touched the thin reed of the throat. Bitter, bitter was his joy, and full of strange gladness was his pain.

The black sea came nearer, and the white foam moaned like a leper. With white claws of foam the sea grabbled at the shore. From the palace of the Sea-King came the cry of mourning again, and far out upon the sea the great Tritons blew hoarsely upon their horns.

'Flee away,' said his Soul, 'for ever doth the sea come nigher, and if thou tarriest it will slay thee. Flee away, for I am afraid, seeing that thy heart is closed against me by reason of the greatness of thy love. Flee away to a place of safety. Surely thou wilt not send me without a heart into another world?'

But the young Fisherman listened not to his Soul, but called on the little Mermaid and said, 'Love is better than wisdom, and more precious than riches, and fairer than the feet of the daughters of men. The fires cannot destroy it, nor can the waters quench it. I called on thee at dawn, and thou didst not come to my call. The moon heard thy name, yet hadst thou no heed of me. For evilly had I left thee, and to my own hurt had I wandered away. Yet ever did thy love abide with me, and ever was it strong, nor did aught prevail against it, though

I have looked upon evil and looked upon good. And now that thou art dead, surely I will die with thee also.'

And his Soul besought him to depart, but he would not, so great was his love. And the sea came nearer, and sought to cover him with its waves, and when he knew that the end was at hand he kissed with mad lips the cold lips of the Mermaid, and the heart that was within him brake. And as through the fulness of his love his heart did break, the Soul found an entrance and entered in, and was one with him even as before. And the sea covered the young Fisherman with its waves.

And in the morning the Priest went forth to bless the sea, for it had been troubled. And with him went the monks and the musicians, and the candle-bearers, and the swingers of censers, and a great company.

And when the Priest reached the shore he saw the young Fisherman lying drowned in the surf, and clasped in his arms was the body of the little Mermaid. And he drew back frowning, and having made the sign of the cross, he cried aloud and said, 'I will not bless the sea nor anything that is in it. Accursed be the Sea-folk, and accursed be all they who traffic with them. And as for him who for love's sake forsook God, and so lieth here with his leman slain by God's judgment, take up his body and the body of his leman, and bury them in the corner of the Field of the Fullers, and set no mark above them, nor sign of any kind, that none may know the place of their resting. For accursed were they in their lives, and accursed shall they be in their deaths also.'

And the people did as he commanded them, and in the corner of the Field of the Fullers, where no sweet herbs grew, they dug a deep pit, and laid the dead things within it.

And when the third year was over, and on a day that was a holy day, the Priest went up to the chapel, that he might show to the people the wounds of the Lord, and speak to them about the wrath of God.

And when he had robed himself with his robes, and entered in and bowed himself before the altar, he saw that the altar was covered with strange flowers that never had been seen before. Strange were they to look at, and of curious beauty, and their beauty troubled him, and their odour was sweet in his nostrils. And he felt glad, and understood not why he was glad.

And after that he had opened the tabernacle, and incensed the monstrance that was in it, and shown the fair wafer to the people, and hid it again behind the veil of veils, he began to speak to the people, desiring to speak to them of the wrath of God. But the beauty of the white flowers troubled him, and their odour was sweet in his nostrils, and there came another word into his lips, and he spake not of the wrath of God, but of the God whose name is Love. And why he so spake, he knew not.

And when he had finished his word the people wept, and the Priest went back to the sacristy, and his eyes were full of tears. And the deacons came in and began to unrobe him, and took from him the alb and the girdle, the maniple and the stole. And he stood as one in a dream.

And after that they had unrobed him, he looked at them and said, 'What are the flowers that stand on the altar, and whence do they come?'

And they answered him, 'What flowers they are we cannot tell, but they come from the corner of the Fullers' Field. And the Priest trembled, and returned to his own house and prayed.

And in the morning, while it was still dawn, he went forth with the monks and the musicians, and the candle-bearers and the swingers of censers, and a great company, and came to the shore of the sea, and blessed the sea, and all the wild things that are in it. The Fauns also he blessed, and the little things that dance in the woodland, and the bright-eyed things that peer through the leaves. All the things in God's world he blessed, and the people were filled with joy and wonder. Yet never again in the corner of the Fullers' Field grew flowers of any kind, but the field remained barren even as before. Nor came the Sea-folk into the bay as they had been wont to do, for they went to another part of the sea.

THE STAR-CHILD

THE STAR-CHILD

ONCE upon a time two poor Woodcutters were making their way home through a great pine-forest. It was winter, and a night of bitter cold. The snow lay thick upon the ground, and upon the branches of the trees: the frost kept snapping the little twigs on either side of them, as they passed: and when they came to the Mountain-Torrent she was hanging motionless in air, for the Ice-King had kissed her.

So cold was it that even the animals and the birds did not know what to make of it.

'Ugh!' snarled the Wolf, as he limped through the brushwood with his tail between his legs, 'this is perfectly monstrous weather. Why doesn't the Government look to it?'

'Weet! weet! weet!' twittered the green Linnets, 'the old Earth is dead, and they have laid her out in her white shroud.'

'The Earth is going to be married, and this is her bridal dress,' whispered the Turtle-doves to each other. Their little pink feet were quite frost-bitten, but they felt that it was their duty to take a romantic view of the situation.

'Nonsense!' growled the Wolf. 'I tell you that it is all the fault of the Government, and if you don't believe me I shall eat you.' The Wolf had a thoroughly practical mind, and was never at a loss for a good argument.

'Well, for my own part,' said the Woodpecker, who was a born philosopher, 'I don't care an atomic theory for explanations. If a thing is so, it is so, and at present it is terribly cold.'

Terribly cold it certainly was. The little Squirrels, who lived inside the tall fir-tree, kept rubbing each other's noses to keep themselves warm, and the Rabbits curled themselves up in their holes, and did not venture even to look out of doors. The only people who seemed to enjoy it were the great horned Owls. Their feathers were quite stiff with rime, but they did not mind, and they rolled their large yellow eyes, and called out to each other across the forest, 'Tu-whit! Tu-whoo! Tu-whit! Tu-whoo! what delightful weather we are having!'

On and on went the two Woodcutters, blowing lustily upon their fingers, and stamping with their huge iron-shod boots upon the caked snow. Once they sank into a deep drift, and came out as white as millers are, when the stones are grinding; and once they slipped on the hard smooth ice where the marsh-water was frozen, and their faggots fell out of their bundles, and they had to pick them up and bind them together again; and once they thought that they had lost their way, and a great terror seized on them, for they knew that the Snow is cruel to those who sleep in her arms. But they put their trust in the good Saint Martin, who watches over all travellers, and retraced their steps, and went warily, and at last they reached the outskirts of the forest, and saw, far down in the valley beneath them, the lights of the village in which they dwelt.

So overjoyed were they at their deliverance that they laughed aloud, and the Earth seemed to them like a flower of silver, and the Moon like a flower of gold.

Yet, after that they had laughed they became sad, for they remembered their poverty, and one of them said to the other, ‘Why did we make merry, seeing that life is for the rich, and not for such as we are? Better that we had died of cold in the forest, or that some wild beast had fallen upon us and slain us.'

'Truly,' answered his companion, 'much is given to some, and little is given to others Injustice has parcelled out the world, nor is there equal division of aught save of sorrow.'

But as they were bewailing their misery to each other this strange thing happened. There fell from heaven a very bright and beautiful star. It slipped down the side of the sky, passing by the other stars in its course, and, as they watched it wondering, it seemed to them to sink behind a clump of willow-trees that stood hard by a little sheepfold no more than a stone's-throw away.

'Why! there is a crock of gold for whoever finds it,' they cried, and they set to and ran, so eager were they for the gold.

And one of them ran faster than his mate, and outstripped him, and forced his way through the willows, and came out on the other side, and lo! there was indeed a thing of gold lying on the white snow. So he hastened towards it, and stooping down placed his hands upon it, and it was a cloak of golden tissue, curiously wrought with stars, and wrapped in many folds. And he cried out to his comrade that he had found the treasure that had fallen from the sky, and when his comrade had come up, they sat them down in the snow, and loosened the folds of the cloak that they might divide the pieces of gold. But, alas! no gold was in it, nor silver, nor, indeed, treasure of any kind, but only a little child who was asleep.

And one of them said to the other: 'This is a bitter ending to our hope, nor have we any good fortune, for what doth a child profit to a man? Let us leave it here, and go our way, seeing that we are poor men, and have children of our own whose bread we may not give to another.'

But his companion answered him: 'Nay, but it were an evil thing to leave the child to perish here in the snow, and though I am as poor as thou art, and have many mouths to feed, and but little in the pot, yet will I bring it home with me, and my wife shall have care of it.'

So very tenderly he took up the child, and wrapped the cloak around it to shield it from the harsh cold, and made his way down the hill to the village, his comrade marvelling much at his foolishness and softness of heart.

And when they came to the village, his comrade said to him, 'Thou hast the child, therefore give me the cloak, for it is meet that we should share.'

But he answered him: 'Nay, for the cloak is neither mine nor thine, but the child's only,' and he bade him Godspeed, and went to his own house and knocked.

And when his wife opened the door and saw that her husband had returned safe to her, she put her arms round his neck and kissed him, and took from his back the bundle of faggots, and brushed the snow off his boots, and bade him come in.

But he said to her, 'I have found something in the forest, and I have brought it to thee to have care of it,' and he stirred not from the threshold.

'What is it?' she cried. 'Show it to me, for the house is bare, and we have need of many things.' And he drew the cloak back, and showed her the sleeping child.

'Alack, goodman!' she murmured, 'have we not children of our own, that thou must needs bring a changeling to sit by the hearth? And who knows if it will not bring us bad fortune? And how shall we tend it?' And she was wroth against him.

'Nay, but it is a Star-Child,' he answered;

and he told her the strange manner of the finding of it.

But she would not be appeased, but mocked at him, and spoke angrily, and cried: 'Our children lack bread, and shall we feed the child of another? Who is there who careth for us? And who giveth us food?'

'Nay, but God careth for the sparrows even, and feedeth them,' he answered.

'Do not the sparrows die of hunger in the winter?' she asked. 'And is it not winter now?' And the man answered nothing, but stirred not from the threshold.

And a bitter wind from the forest came in through the open door, and made her tremble, and she shivered, and said to him: 'Wilt thou not close the door? There cometh a bitter wind into the house, and I am cold.'

'Into a house where a heart is hard cometh there not always a bitter wind?' he asked. And the woman answered him nothing, but crept closer to the fire.

And after a time she turned round and looked at him, and her eyes were full of tears. And he came in swiftly, and placed the child in her arms, and she kissed it, and laid it in a little bed where the youngest of their own children was lying. And on the morrow the Woodcutter took the curious cloak of gold and placed it in a great chest, and a chain of amber that was round the child's neck his wife took and set it in the chest also.

So the Star-Child was brought up with the children of the Woodcutter, and sat at the same board with them, and was their playmate. And every year he became more beautiful to look at, so that all those who dwelt in the village were filled with wonder, for, while they were swarthy and black-haired, he was white and delicate as sawn ivory, and his curls were like the rings of the daffodil. His lips, also, were like the petals of a red flower, and his eyes were like violets by a river of pure water, and his body like the narcissus of a field where the mower comes not.

Yet did his beauty work him evil. For he grew proud, and cruel, and selfish. The children of the Woodcutter, and the other children of the village, he despised, saying that they were of mean parentage, while he was noble, being sprung from a Star, and he made himself master over them, and called them his servants. No pity had he for the poor, or for those who were blind or maimed or in any way afflicted, but would cast stones at them and drive them forth on to the highway, and bid them beg their bread elsewhere, so that none save the outlaws came twice to that village to ask for alms. Indeed, he was as one enamoured of beauty, and would mock at the weakly and ill-favoured, and make jest of them; and himself he loved, and in summer, when the winds were still, he would lie by the well in the priest's orchard and look down at the marvel of his own face, and laugh for the pleasure he had in his fairness.

Often did the Woodcutter and his wife chide him, and say: 'We did not deal with thee as thou dealest with those who are left desolate, and have none to succour them. Wherefore art thou so cruel to all who need pity?'

Often did the old priest send for him, and seek to teach him the love of living things, saying to him: 'The fly is thy brother. Do it no harm. The wild birds that roam through the forest have their freedom. Snare them not for thy pleasure. God made the blind-worm and the mole, and each has its place. Who art thou to bring pain into God's world? Even the cattle of the field praise Him.'

But the Star-Child heeded not their words, but would frown and flout, and go back to his companions, and lead them. And his companions followed him, for he was fair, and fleet of foot, and could dance, and pipe, and make music. And wherever the Star-Child led them they followed, and whatever the Star-Child bade them do, that did they. And when he pierced with a sharp reed the dim eyes of the mole, they laughed, and when he cast stones at the leper they laughed also. And in all things he ruled them, and they became hard of heart, even as he was.

Now there passed one day through the village a poor beggar-woman. Her garments were torn and ragged, and her feet were bleeding from the rough road on which she had travelled, and she was in very evil plight. And being weary she sat her down under a chestnut-tree to rest.

But when the Star-Child saw her, he said to his companions, 'See! There sitteth a foul beggar-woman under that fair and green-leaved tree. Come, let us drive her hence, for she is ugly and ill-favoured.'

So he came near and threw stones at her, and mocked her, and she looked at him with terror in her eyes, nor did she move her gaze from him. And when the Woodcutter, who was cleaving logs in a haggard hard by, saw what the Star-Child was doing, he ran up and rebuked him, and said to him: ‘Surely thou art hard of heart and knowest not mercy, for what evil has this poor woman done to thee that thou shouldst treat her in this wise?’

And the Star-Child grew red with anger, and stamped his foot upon the ground, and said, ‘Who art thou to question me what I do? I am no son of thine to do thy bidding.’

‘Thou speakest truly,’ answered the Woodcutter, ‘yet did I show thee pity when I found thee in the forest.’

And when the woman heard these words she gave a loud cry, and fell into a swoon. And the Woodcutter carried her to his own house, and his wife had care of her, and when she rose up from the swoon into which she had fallen, they set meat and drink before her, and bade her have comfort.

But she would neither eat nor drink, but said to the Woodcutter, ‘Didst thou not say that the child was found in the forest? And was it not ten years from this day?’

And the Woodcutter answered, ‘Yea, it was in the forest that I found him, and it is ten years from this day.’

'And what signs didst thou find with him?' she cried. 'Bare he not upon his neck a chain of amber? Was not round him a cloak of gold tissue broidered with stars?'

'Truly,' answered the Woodcutter, 'it was even as thou sayest.' And he took the cloak and the amber chain from the chest where they lay, and showed them to her.

And when she saw them she wept for joy, and said, 'He is my little son whom I lost in the forest. I pray thee send for him quickly, for in search of him have I wandered over the whole world.'

So the Woodcutter and his wife went out and called to the Star-Child, and said to him, 'Go into the house, and there shalt thou find thy mother, who is waiting for thee.'

So he ran in, filled with wonder and great gladness. But when he saw her who was waiting there, he laughed scornfully and said, 'Why, where is my mother? For I see none here but this vile beggar-woman.'

And the woman answered him, 'I am thy mother.'

'Thou art mad to say so,' cried the Star-Child angrily. 'I am no son of thine, for thou art a beggar, and ugly, and in rags. Therefore get thee hence, and let me see thy foul face no more.'

'Nay, but thou art indeed my little son, whom I bare in the forest,' she cried, and she fell on her knees, and held out her arms to him. 'The robbers stole thee from me, and left thee to die,' she murmured, 'but I recognised thee when I saw thee, and the signs also have I recognised, the cloak of golden tissue and the amber-chain. Therefore I pray thee come with me, for over the whole world have I wandered in search of thee. Come with me, my son, for I have need of thy love.'

But the Star-Child stirred not from his place, but shut the doors of his heart against her, nor was there any sound heard save the sound of the woman weeping for pain.

And at last he spoke to her, and his voice was hard and bitter. 'If in very truth thou art my mother,' he said, 'it had been better hadst thou stayed away, and not come here to bring me to shame, seeing that I thought I was the child of some Star, and not a beggar's child, as thou tellest me that I am. Therefore get thee hence, and let me see thee no more.'

'Alas! my son,' she cried, 'wilt thou not kiss me before I go? For I have suffered much to find thee.'

'Nay,' said the Star-Child, 'but thou art too foul to look at, and rather would I kiss the adder or the toad than thee.'

So the woman rose up, and went away into the forest weeping bitterly, and when the Star-Child saw that she had gone, he was glad, and ran back to his playmates that he might play with them.

But when they beheld him coming, they mocked him and said, 'Why, thou art as foul as the toad, and as loathsome as the adder. Get thee hence, for we will not suffer thee to play with us,' and they drave him out of the garden.

And the Star-Child frowned and said to himself, 'What is this that they say to me? I will go to the well of water and look into it, and it shall tell me of my beauty.'

So he went to the well of water and looked into it, and lo! his face was as the face of a toad, and his body was scaled like an adder. And he flung himself down on the grass and wept, and said to himself, 'Surely this has come upon me by reason of my sin. For I have denied my mother, and driven her away, and been proud and cruel to her. Wherefore I will go and seek her through the whole world, nor will I rest till I have found her.'

And there came to him the little daughter of the Woodcutter, and she put her hand upon his shoulder and said, 'What doth it matter if thou hast lost thy comeliness? Stay with us, and I will not mock at thee.'

And he said to her, 'Nay, but I have been cruel to my mother, and as a punishment has this evil been sent to me. Wherefore I must go hence, and wander through the world till I find her, and she give me her forgiveness.'

So he ran away into the forest and called out to his mother to come to him, but there was no answer. All day long he called to her, and when the sun set he lay down to sleep on a bed of leaves, and the birds and the animals fled from him, for they remembered his cruelty, and he was alone save for the toad that watched him, and the slow adder that crawled past.

And in the morning he rose up, and plucked some bitter berries from the trees and ate them, and took his way through the great wood, weeping sorely. And of everything that he met he made inquiry if perchance they had seen his mother.

He said to the Mole, 'Thou canst go beneath the earth. Tell me, is my mother there?'

And the Mole answered, 'Thou hast blinded mine eyes. How should I know?'

He said to the Linnet, 'Thou canst fly over the tops of the tall trees, and canst see the whole world. Tell me, canst thou see my mother?'

And the Linnet answered, 'Thou hast clipt my wings for thy pleasure. How should I fly?'

And to the little Squirrel who lived in the fir-tree, and was lonely, he said, 'Where is my mother?'

And the Squirrel answered, 'Thou hast slain mine. Dost thou seek to slay thine also?'

And the Star-Child wept and bowed his head, and prayed forgiveness of God's things, and went on through the forest, seeking for the beggar-woman. And on the third day he came to the other side of the forest and went down into the plain.

And when he passed through the villages the children mocked him, and threw stones at him, and the carlots would not suffer him even to sleep in the byres lest he might bring mildew on the stored corn, so foul was he to look at, and their hired men drave him away, and there was none who had pity on him. Nor could he hear anywhere of the beggar-woman who was his mother, though for the space of three years he wandered over the world, and often seemed to see her on the road in front of him, and would call to her, and run after her till the sharp flints made his feet to bleed. But overtake her he could not, and those who dwelt by the way did ever deny that they had seen her, or any like to her, and they made sport of his sorrow.

For the space of three years he wandered over the world, and in the world there was neither love nor loving-kindness nor charity for him, but it was even such a world as he had made for himself in the days of his great pride.

And one evening he came to the gate of a strong-walled city that stood by a river, and, weary and footsore though he was, he made to enter in. But the soldiers who stood on guard dropped their halberts across the entrance, and said roughly to him, 'What is thy business in the city?'

'I am seeking for my mother,' he answered, 'and I pray ye to suffer me to pass, for it may be that she is in this city.'

But they mocked at him, and one of them wagged a black beard, and set down his shield and cried, 'Of a truth, thy mother will not be merry when she sees thee, for thou art more ill-favoured than the toad of the marsh, or the adder that crawls in the fen. Get thee gone. Get thee gone. Thy mother dwells not in this city.'

And another, who held a yellow banner in his hand, said to him, 'Who is thy mother, and wherefore art thou seeking for her?'

And he answered, 'My mother is a beggar even as I am, and I have treated her evilly, and I pray ye to suffer me to pass that she may give me her forgiveness, if it be that she tarrieth in this city.' But they would not, and pricked him with their spears.

And, as he turned away weeping, one whose armour was inlaid with gilt flowers, and on whose helmet couched a lion that had wings, came up and made inquiry of the soldiers who it was who had sought entrance. And they said to him, 'It is a beggar and the child of a beggar, and we have driven him away.'

'Nay,' he cried, laughing, 'but we will sell the foul thing for a slave, and his price shall be the price of a bowl of sweet wine.'

And an old and evil-visaged man who was passing by called out, and said, 'I will buy him for that price,' and, when he had paid the price, he took the Star-Child by the hand and led him into the city.

And after that they had gone through many streets they came to a little door that was set in a wall that was covered with a pomegranate tree. And the old man touched the door with a ring of graved jasper and it opened, and they went down five steps of brass into a garden filled with black poppies and green jars of burnt clay. And the old man took then from his turban a scarf of figured silk, and bound with it the eyes of the Star-Child, and drave him in front of him. And when the scarf was taken off his eyes, the Star-Child found himself in a dungeon, that was lit by a lantern of horn.

And the old man set before him some mouldy bread on a trencher and said, 'Eat,' and some brackish water in a cup and said, 'Drink,' and when he had eaten and drunk, the old man went out, locking the door behind him and fastening it with an iron chain.

And on the morrow the old man, who was indeed the subtlest of the magicians of Libya and had learned his art from one who dwelt in the tombs of the Nile, came in to him and frowned at him, and said, ‘In a wood that is nigh to the gate of this city of Giaours there are three pieces of gold. One is of white gold, and another is of yellow gold, and the gold of the third one is red. To-day thou shalt bring me the piece of white gold, and if thou bringest it not back, I will beat thee with a hundred stripes. Get thee away quickly, and at sunset I will be waiting for thee at the door of the garden. See that thou bringest the white gold, or it shall go ill with thee, for thou art my slave, and I have bought thee for the price of a bowl of sweet wine.’ And he bound the eyes of the Star-Child with the scarf of figured silk, and led him through the house, and through the garden of poppies, and up the five steps of brass. And having opened the little door with his ring he set him in the street.

And the Star-Child went out of the gate of the city, and came to the wood of which the Magician had spoken to him.

Now this wood was very fair to look at from without, and seemed full of singing birds and of sweet-scented flowers, and the Star-Child entered it gladly. Yet did its beauty profit him little, for wherever he went harsh briars and thorns shot up from the ground and encompassed him, and evil nettles stung him, and the thistle pierced him with her daggers, so that he was in sore distress. Nor could he anywhere find the piece of white gold of which the Magician had spoken, though he sought for it from morn to noon, and from noon to sunset. And at sunset he set his face towards home, weeping bitterly, for he knew what fate was in store for him.

But when he had reached the outskirts of the wood, he heard from a thicket a cry as of some one in pain. And forgetting his own sorrow he ran back to the place, and saw there a little Hare caught in a trap that some hunter had set for it.

And the Star-Child had pity on it, and released it, and said to it, 'I am myself but a slave, yet may I give thee thy freedom.'

And the Hare answered him, and said: 'Surely thou hast given me freedom, and what shall I give thee in return?'

And the Star-Child said to it, 'I am seeking for a piece of white gold, nor can I anywhere find it, and if I bring it not to my master he will beat me.'

'Come thou with me,' said the Hare, 'and I will lead thee to it, for I know where it is hidden, and for what purpose.'

So the Star-Child went with the Hare, and lo! in the cleft of a great oak-tree he saw the piece of white gold that he was seeking. And he was filled with joy, and seized it, and said to the Hare, 'The service that I did to thee thou hast rendered back again many times over, and the kindness that I showed thee thou hast repaid a hundred-fold.'

'Nay,' answered the Hare, 'but as thou dealt with me, so I did deal with thee,' and it ran away swiftly, and the Star-Child went towards the city.

Now at the gate of the city there was seated one who was a leper. Over his face hung a cowl of grey linen, and through the eyelets his eyes gleamed like red coals. And when he saw the Star-Child coming, he struck upon a wooden bowl, and clattered his bell, and called out to him, and said, 'Give me a piece of money, or I must die of hunger. For they have thrust me out of the city, and there is no one who has pity on me.'

'Alas!' cried the Star-Child, 'I have but one piece of money in my wallet, and if I bring it not to my master he will beat me, for I am his slave.'

But the leper entreated him, and prayed of him, till the Star-Child had pity, and gave him the piece of white gold.

And when he came to the Magician's house, the Magician opened to him, and brought him in, and said to him, 'Hast thou the piece of white gold?' And the Star-Child answered, 'I have it not.' So the Magician fell upon him, and beat him, and set before him an empty trencher, and said, 'Eat,' and an empty cup, and said, 'Drink,' and flung him again into the dungeon.

And on the morrow the Magician came to him, and said, 'If to-day thou bringest me not the piece of yellow gold, I will surely keep thee as my slave, and give thee three hundred stripes.'

So the Star-Child went to the wood, and all day long he searched for the piece of yellow gold, but nowhere could he find it. And at sunset he sat him down and began to weep, and as he was weeping there came to him the little Hare that he had rescued from the trap.

And the Hare said to him, 'Why art thou weeping? And what dost thou seek in the wood?'

And the Star-Child answered, 'I am seeking for a piece of yellow gold that is hidden here, and if I find it not my master will beat me, and keep me as a slave.'

'Follow me,' cried the Hare, and it ran through the wood till it came to a pool of water. And at the bottom of the pool the piece of yellow gold was lying.

'How shall I thank thee?' said the Star-Child, 'for lo! this is the second time that you have succoured me.'

'Nay, but thou hadst pity on me first,' said the Hare, and it ran away swiftly.

And the Star-Child took the piece of yellow gold, and put it in his wallet, and hurried to the city. But the leper saw him coming, and ran to meet him, and knelt down and cried, 'Give me a piece of money or I shall die of hunger.'

And the Star-Child said to him, 'I have in my wallet but one piece of yellow gold, and if I bring it not to my master he will beat me and keep me as his slave.'

But the leper entreated him sore, so that the Star-Child had pity on him, and gave him the piece of yellow gold.

And when he came to the Magician's house, the Magician opened to him, and brought him in, and said to him, 'Hast thou the piece of yellow gold?' And the Star-Child said to him, 'I have it not.' So the Magician fell upon him, and beat him, and loaded him with chains, and cast him again into the dungeon.

And on the morrow the Magician came to him, and said, 'If to-day thou bringest me the piece of red gold I will set thee free, but if thou bringest it not I will surely slay thee.'

So the Star-Child went to the wood, and all day long he searched for the piece of red gold, but nowhere could he find it. And at evening he sat him down, and wept, and as he was weeping there came to him the little Hare.

And the Hare said to him, 'The piece of red gold that thou seekest is in the cavern that is behind thee. Therefore weep no more but be glad.'

'How shall I reward thee,' cried the Star-Child, 'for lo! this is the third time thou hast succoured me.'

'Nay, but thou hadst pity on me first,' said the Hare, and it ran away swiftly.

And the Star-Child entered the cavern, and in its farthest corner he found the piece of red gold. So he put it in his wallet, and hurried to the city. And the leper seeing him coming, stood in the centre of the road, and cried out, and said to him, 'Give me the piece of red money, or I must die,' and the Star-Child had pity on him again, and gave him the piece of red gold, saying, 'Thy need is greater than mine.' Yet was his heart heavy, for he knew what evil fate awaited him.

But lo! as he passed through the gate of the city, the guards bowed down and made obeisance to him, saying, 'How beautiful is our lord!' and a crowd of citizens followed him, and cried out, 'Surely there is none so beautiful in the whole world!' so that the Star-Child wept, and said to himself, 'They are mocking me, and making light of my misery.' And so large was the concourse of the people, that he lost the threads of his way, and found himself at last in a great square, in which there was a palace of a King.

And the gate of the palace opened, and the priests and the high officers of the city ran forth to meet him, and they abased themselves before him, and said, 'Thou art our lord for whom we have been waiting, and the son of our King.'

And the Star-Child answered them and said, 'I am no king's son, but the child of a poor beggar-woman. And how say ye that I am beautiful, for I know that I am evil to look at?'

Then he, whose armour was inlaid with gilt flowers, and on whose helmet couched a lion that had wings, held up a shield, and cried, 'How saith my lord that he is not beautiful?'

And the Star-Child looked, and lo! his face was even as it had been, and his comeliness had come back to him, and he saw that in his eyes which he had not seen there before.

And the priests and the high officers knelt down and said to him, 'It was prophesied of old that on this day should come he who was to rule over us. Therefore, let our lord take this crown and this sceptre, and be in his justice and mercy our King over us.'

But he said to them, 'I am not worthy, for I have denied the mother who bare me, nor may I rest till I have found her, and known her forgiveness. Therefore, let me go, for I must wander again over the world, and may not tarry here, though ye bring me the crown and the sceptre.' And as he spake he turned his face from them towards the street that led to the gate of the city, and lo! amongst the crowd that pressed round the soldiers, he saw the beggar-woman who was his mother, and at her side stood the leper, who had sat by the road.

And a cry of joy broke from his lips, and he ran over, and kneeling down he kissed the wounds on his mother's feet, and wet them with his tears. He bowed his head in the dust, and sobbing, as one whose heart might break, he said to her: 'Mother, I denied thee in the hour of my pride. Accept me in the hour of my humility. Mother, I gave thee hatred. Do thou give me love. Mother, I rejected thee. Receive thy child now.' But the beggar-woman answered him not a word.

And he reached out his hands, and clasped the white feet of the leper, and said to him: 'Thrice did I give thee of my mercy. Bid my mother speak to me once.' But the leper answered him not a word.

And he sobbed again, and said: 'Mother, my suffering is greater than I can bear. Give me thy forgiveness, and let me go back to the forest.' And the beggar-woman put her hand on his head, and said to him, 'Rise,' and the leper put his hand on his head, and said to him 'Rise,' also.

And he rose up from his feet, and looked at them, and lo! they were a King and a Queen.

And the Queen said to him, 'This is thy father whom thou hast succoured.'

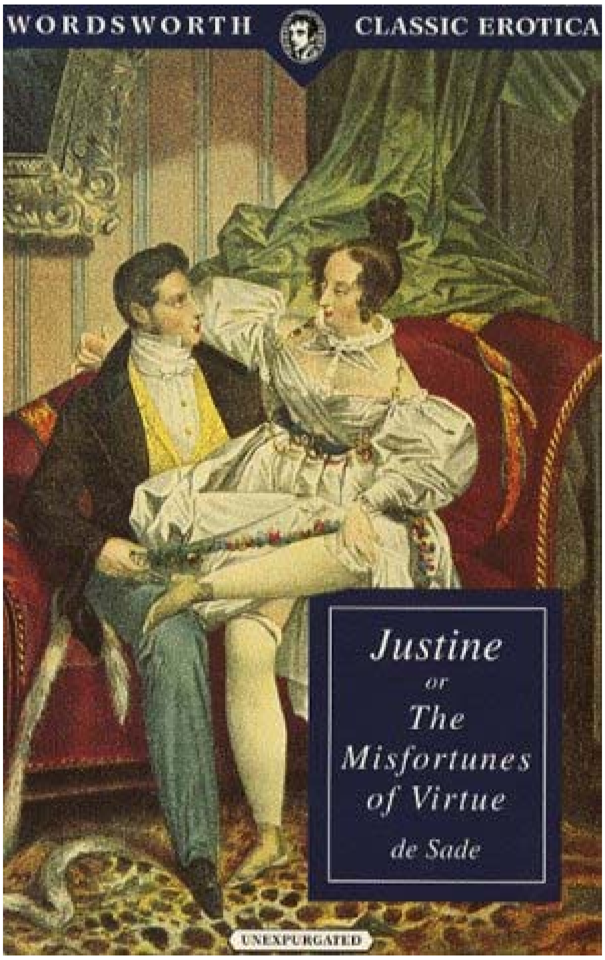
And the King said, 'This is thy mother whose feet thou hast washed with thy tears.'

And they fell on his neck and kissed him, and brought him into the palace, and clothed him in fair raiment, and set the crown upon his head, and the sceptre in his hand, and over the city that stood by the river he ruled, and was its lord. Much justice and mercy did he show to all, and the evil Magician he banished, and to the Woodcutter and his wife he sent many rich gifts, and to their children he gave high honour. Nor would he suffer any to be cruel to bird or beast, but taught love and loving-kindness and charity, and to the poor he gave bread, and to the naked he gave raiment, and there was peace and plenty in the land.

Yet ruled he not long, so great had been his suffering, and so bitter the fire of his testing, for after the space of three years he died. And he who came after him ruled evilly.

Marquis De Sade

Justine or The Misfortunes Of Virtue


WORDSWORTH
CLASSIC EROTICA
Justine
or
The Misfortunes of Virtue
de Sade
UNEXPURGATED

Justine Or The Misfortunes of Virtue

By the Marquis de Sade

The ultimate triumph of philosophy would be to cast light upon the mysterious ways in which Providence moves to achieve the designs it has for man, and then to deduce therefrom some plan of conduct which would enable that two-legged wretch, forever buffeted by the whims of the Supreme Being who is said to direct his steps no less despotically, to know how to interpret what Providence decrees for him and to select a path to follow which would forestall the bizarre caprices of the Fate to which a score of different names are given but whose nature is still uncertain.

For if, taking social conventions as our starting-point and remaining faithful to the respect for them which education has bred in us, it should by mischance occur that through the perversity of others we encounter only thorns while evil persons gather nothing but roses, then will not a man, possessed of a stock of virtue insufficient to allow him to rise above the thoughts inspired by these unhappy circumstances, calculate that he would do as well to swim with the torrent as against it? And will he not say that when virtue, however fine a thing it be, unhappily proves too weak to resist evil, then virtue becomes the worst path he can follow, and will he not conclude that in an age that is utterly corrupt, the best policy is to do as others do? Or if you prefer, let the man have a degree of learning and allow him to abuse the knowledge he has acquired: will he not then say, like the angel Jesrad in Voltaire's *Zadig,* that there is no evil from which some good does not flow? And will he not add of his own accord that, since in the imperfect fabric of this corrupt world of ours there is a sum of evil equal to the sum of good, the continuing equilibrium of the world requires that there be as many good people as wicked people, and that it follows that in the general scheme of things it matters not if such and such a man be good or wicked; that since misfortune persecutes virtue, and prosperity is the almost invariable accompaniment of vice (a matter of complete indifference to Nature), then is it not infinitely better to side with the wicked who prosper than with the good who perish? It is therefore important to guard against the dangerous sophisms of philosophy, and essential to show that when examples of suffering virtue are thrust before a corrupt soul in which principles of goodness are not entirely extinct, then even that straying soul may be returned to goodness as surely as if the road to virtue were littered with the most glittering prizes and the most flattering rewards. It is of course a cruel thing to have to depict the heap of misfortunes which overwhelms the sweet, feeling woman whose respect for virtue is unmatched, and on the other hand to portray the sparkling good fortune of her sister who scorned virtue all her life. And yet if some good should come from our sketching of these two pictures, shall we take ourselves to task for laying them before the public? Shall we feel remorse for establishing an exact account which will enable the wise man, who reads with profit and draws the ineffable lesson of submission to the will of Providence, to answer part of his secret stock of unanswered questions and heed the fatal warning that it is often to redirect our steps to the path of duty that Heaven strikes those next to us who best appear to have discharged theirs?

Such are the sentiments which led us to take up our pen, and it is in deference to their unimpeachable sincerity that we ask of our readers a modicum of attention and sympathy for the misfortunes of unhappy, wretched Justine.

* * *

The Comtesse de Lorsange was one of those votaries of Venus who owe their fortune to a bewitching face and a generous measure of loose conduct and underhand dealing, and whose letters patent of nobility, however imposing, being concocted out of the impertinence of those who seek them and the stupid credulity of those who issue them, exist only in the archives of Cythera.[1] She had dark hair, a vivacious manner, a fine figure, marvellously expressive black eyes, much wit, and above all that fashionable lack of religious belief which, lending extra savour to passion, makes the woman suspected of harbouring it a special object of attraction. She had nevertheless been given the finest of educations. Daughter of a merchant in a large way of business in the rue Saint-Honoré, she was brought up with her sister three years her junior in one of the best convents in Paris where, until the age of 15, she was never denied good counsel or teachers nor good books or talents. At an age which can prove fatal to the virtue of any young woman, she lost everything in a single day. Cruel bankruptcy brought her father to so ruinous a pass that his only means of escaping the most dreadful fate was to flee in haste to England, leaving his daughters in the care of his wife who died of grief within the space of one week after his departure. The one or two relatives who remained deiiberated on what was to be done with the girls. Their inheritance amounting to about a hundred écus apiece, it was decided that the convent doors be thrown open to them, that they be given their due and allowed to make their own way. Mine de Lorsange, then known as Juliette, was already to all intents and purposes as mature in character and mind as she was to be at 30, which was her age at the time we tell this story. She seemed alive only to the sensation of being free and did not pause for a moment to reflect upon the cruel reverses which had snapped the chains which had bound her. But her sister Justine, who had just turned 12, gloomy and melancholic by disposition yet blessed with surprising gentleness and sensitivity, having none of her sister's artfulness and guile but the ingenuousness, candour, and honesty which were to make her stumble into many traps, Justine felt the full horror of her situation. Her face was quite unlike Juliette's. Where the features of the one were all artifice, cunning, and coquetry, the other's were remarkable for their modesty, refinement, and shyness. A virginal air, large, engaging blue eyes, dazzling skin, a slender, well-shaped figure, a voice to move the heart, teeth of ivory, and beautiful fair hair—so much, in outline sketch, for the younger sister whose simple grace and delightful expression were of too fine, too delicate a stamp not to elude the brush which would capture them entire.

Both were given twenty-four hours to quit the convent and complete freedom to fend for themselves with their hundred écus. Overjoyed to be her own mistress, Juliette attempted briefly to dry Justine's tears, but seeing that she would not succeed, left off comforting her and fell to scolding. She told her she was a foolish girl and said that given their ages and pretty faces, it was unheard of for girls to starve to death. She quoted the instance of one of their neighbour's daughters who had escaped from her father's house and was now sumptuously kept by a tax~farmer[2] and lived in great style in Paris. Justine was horrified by this pernicious example. She said she would die rather than follow her lead and categorically refused to share a lodging with her sister Juliette once she saw that she had set her mind on the kind of abominable life she had commended so warmly.

And so the moment it was clear that their intentions were so different, the sisters went their separate ways, making no promises to meet again. Would Juliette, who, she claimed, would become a great lady, ever agree to have anything more to do with the foolish girl whose *virtuous*, squeamish inclinations would dishonour her? And for her part would Justine put her moral purity at risk by associating with a perverse creature who would surely be a victim of lewdness and public debauchery? And so each made provision for their money to be paid and left the convent the next day as arranged.

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[1] One of seven Ionian islands which, in Greek mythology, was sacred to Aphrodite, goddess of love and beauty. In the imagery of 18th-century French gallantry, Cythera stood for sexual licence.

[2] Was a private citizen who brought from the King a licence to raise taxes in a given area to an agreed amount.

As a little girl, Justine had been coddled by her mother's seamstress and, thinking that this woman would be moved by her plight, sought her out, told her of her distressed circumstances, asked for work, and was sent away with harsh words .

'Great Heaven!' said the poor creature, 'must the first steps I take in the world come so soon and so surely to grief? This woman loved me once. Why then does she turn me away now? Because, alas, I am an orphan and penniless, because I no longer have means to call on and because people are valued only in terms of the help or profit that may be got out of them.'

When she realized this, Justine called on her parish priest and asked him for advice. But the charitable churchman answered ambiguously, saying that the parish was overburdened and that it was not possible for her to receive a portion of the poor-box, but that if she were prepared to work for him he would gladly give her lodging in his house. But as, in so saying, the holy man had placed his hand beneath her chin and gave her far too worldly a kiss for a man of the cloth, Justine, understanding his meaning only too well, pulled back sharply and said:

'Sir, I do not ask for charity or a position as servant. Too little time has gone by since my station in life was far above the lowly circumstances in which such favours have to be begged for, for me to be reduced to soliciting them now! I asked you for the guidance I need in my youth and misfortune, and you would have me purchase it with a crime.'

Angered by this word, the priest showed her the door and callously turned her out. Justine, twice spurned on the very day she was sentenced to a life of isolation, entered a house with a notice in the window, took a small furnished room which she paid for in advance, and was now at least table to surrender undisturbed to the mortification engendered by her circumstances and the cruelty of the few people to whom her unlucky star had led her.

The reader will allow us to leave her in her dark coop for a while and return to Juliette so that we may tell as briefly as possible how, from her unremarkable beginnings on leaving the convent, she became within the space of fifteen years a lady possessing a title, an income of 30,000 livres, gorgeous jewels, two or three houses in Paris and in the country, plus, for the time being, the heart, purse, and confidence of Monsieur de Corville, a Councillor of State, a man enjoying the highest credit and poised to become a Minister of the Crown. Her path had been thorny. Of this there can be no doubt: it is only by serving the most shameful, bitter apprenticeship that girls of her sort make their way. The woman who today occupies the bed of a prince may well still bear upon her person the humiliating marks of the brutality of the depraved libertines into whose hands she was thrown by her tentative first steps, her youth, and her inexperience.

On leaving the convent, Juliette had promptly gone off in search of a woman she had heard mentioned by her friend, the former neighbour who had taken to debauchery. She had kept the address and appeared shamelessly on the doorstep with her bundle under her arm, her plain dress in disarray and with the prettiest face that ever was and the air of one who was only too willing to learn. She told her story to the woman and pleaded with her to grant her the same protection that she had bestowed on her friend a few years earlier.

'How old are you, child?' asked Madame Du Buisson.

'I shall be 15 in a few days.'

‘And has any man or woman . . . ?’

‘O no, Madame, I swear.’

‘But sometimes, you know, in convents—an almoner? a nun? a friend? I shall need proof.’

‘Pray proceed as you think fit, Madame, and you will have all the proof you want.’

Madame Du Buisson perched a pair of spectacles on her nose and, after satisfying herself of the exact state of things, said to Juliette:

‘Well, child, you may stay here. Follow my advice strictly, be accommodating in observing my rules, be clean and thrifty, behave candidly with me, courteously with your companions and deceitfully with men, and under my direction you shall be in a position a few years hence to withdraw from this place to a room of your own with a chest for your clothes, a pier-glass, and a maid, and the art which you acquire in my house will provide you with the means of procuring the rest.’

Madame Du Buisson took charge of Juliette’s little bundle and asked if she had any money about her. Juliette having volunteered too promptly that she had a hundred écus, her dear Mama pocketed that too, telling her young pupil that she would invest it for her, for young ladies should not be allowed to have money, since money provided the means for wrong-doing and, in so corrupt a century, a girl of good character and family should take care to avoid anything that might cause her to stumble and topple into a snare. Once this sermon was done, the newcomer was presented to her companions, she was shown to her chamber in the house and the very next day her virginity was put up for sale. Within a space of four months, the same merchandise was sold in turn to eighty persons who each paid as though for unused goods, and it was only at the expiry of her thorny novitiate that Juliette was granted entry to the sisterhood. From that moment on, she was truly acknowledged as a full daughter of the nunnery and bore her share of its lewd and exhausting labours—in effect a further novitiate. If during the first, Juliette, apart from a few lapses, had served nature, she now neglected nature ‘s laws during the second and submitted to criminal refinements, loathsome pleasures, secret, filthy debauches, shocking, bizarre tastes, humiliating fancies, all of which were born, first, of the search for pleasures free of all risk to health and, second, of pernicious Surfeit which blunts the imagination and leaves it no scope or room except through excess and no means of satisfaction save in depravity. Juliette’s morals were totally corrupted in her new school and her soul was thoroughly depraved by the victories she observed borne off by vice. She felt that since she was made for crime, then at the very least she should set her sights on the highest peak and refuse to languish in her present lowly condition which required her to commit the same foul acts and be no less degraded, but brought her nothing like the same profit. She took the fancy of an old, thoroughly depraved nobleman who at first had singled her out for a mere quarter of an hour’s amusement. She managed to beguile him into keeping her in the most opulent manner and at last she began to be seen in theatres and in the fashionable walks on an equal footing with the luminaries of the Order of Cythera. She was looked at, her words were repeated, she was an object of envy, and the jade went about her business so well that in four years she ruined three men, the poorest of whom had an income of 100,000 écus. It was enough to make her reputation. Such is the blindness of people nowadays that the more impure one of these unfortunates shows herself to be, the keener they are to be on her list. It is as though the depth of her depravity and corruption is the only yardstick by which the feelings which they lavish so shamelessly on her in public are to be measured.

Juliette had just turned 20 when a certain Count de Lorsange, a nobleman from the province of Anjou aged about 40, became so smitten with her that he resolved upon making her his wife since he had not fortune enough to keep her as his mistress. He made over an income of 12,000 livres to her, and arranged that the remainder of his fortune, a further 8,ooo, would be hers should he die before she did; he gave her a house, servants, and a retinue and conferred on her a degree of respectability in society which ensured that within two or three years her beginnings were forgotten. It was then that the wretched Juliette, oblivious to all the decent promptings of her birth and sound education, corrupted by evil books and evil counsel, impatient to enjoy her advantages alone, to have a name and to be rid of all chains, dared yield to the culpable notion of abridging her husband's life . . . She conceived her plan and, regrettably, executed it with such stealth that she was able both to elude the arm of the law and to bury all traces of her abominable crime along with her hindrance of a husband.

Once more in possession of her freedom and now a Countess, Madame de Lorsange took up her old habits, but thinking that she cut some figure in the world, she put a measure of decency into her proceedings. She was no longer a kept woman but a rich widow who gave gay supper-parties to which the ornaments of town and court were only too happy to be admitted—yet she could be bedded for 200 louis and bought for 500 a month. Until she was 26, she continued to make brilliant conquests, ruined three ambassadors, four tax-farmers, two bishops, and three Knights of Royal Orders and, since it is rare to stop at one crime especially when it has turned out successfully, Juliette, the wretched, culpable Juliette sank ever deeper into the mire with two more crimes of the same kind as the first; one, that she might rob one of her lovers of a sum of money put into her keeping by him without his family's knowing which she sequestered to her own profit by means of her odious crime, the other, that she might the sooner receive a bequest of 100,000 livres which one of her admirers had written into his will in the name of a third party who was appointed to hand the money over to her against a small consideration. To these horrors, Madame de Lorsange added two or three infanticides: considerations of all kinds—fear of spoiling her pretty figure or a need to safeguard twin amours running in tandem—led her to resort on several occasions to abortion. These crimes, like the others, went undetected and did nothing to prevent this scheming and ambitious woman from finding new dupes daily and swelling her fortune at every turn as her crimes accumulated. It is regrettably only too true that prosperity may accompany crime and that even in the most freely embraced state of depravity and corruption the thread of life may be gilded by what men call happiness. But let not this cruel and unavoidable reality be a cause for dismay. Let not the truth (of which we shall presently furnish an example) that it is on the contrary vice which everywhere pursues and attacks virtue, trouble the hearts of honest, decent persons. The prosperity of crime is more apparent than real. Independently of Providence which of necessity punishes his ostensible success, a guilty man harbours in the recesses of his heart a worm which gnaws at him unceasingly, makes it impossible for him to bask in the felicity which bathes his existence, and leaves him instead with only the grievous memory of the crimes by which he came by it. And against the misfortunes which snap at virtue's heels, the unhappy man who is persecuted by Fate has the consolation of a clear conscience and the inner joy which comes from the purity of his soul: together these are a prompt compensation for the injustice of men.

The affairs of Madame de Lorsange had reached this pitch when Monsieur de Corville who, at 50, enjoyed the credit which we have already mentioned, resolved to devote himself entirely to her and to keep her for himself alone. What with thoughtfulness or attentions on his part and discretion on hers, he had succeeded and had been living with her for four years together on exactly the same footing as if she were his legally married wife, when a superb estate which he had just bought for her near Montargis prompted in both the desire to spend a few months of the summer there. One June evening, the fine weather tempted them to push on by foot as far as the town and, feeling too weary to return in the manner in which they had come, they entered the inn which serves as a staging-post for the Lyons coach, thinking to send a rider thence to fetch them a carriage from their chateau. They were resting in a cool, low-ceilinged room which looked out on to the courtyard when the coach we have mentioned drove in. Observing travellers is a natural pastime; anyone with an idle moment to spare will gladly occupy it in this way when the occasion arises. Madame de Lorsange stood up, her lover did likewise, and both watched as the passengers entered the inn. It appeared that no one was left on board when a constable, leaping down from the jump-seat, helped to hand down from one of his colleagues who had been riding next to him a young woman of about 26 or 27 with a cheap calico shawl about her person and her hands tied together like a criminal's. At a cry of horror and astonishment which escaped from Madame de Lorsange, the young woman turned, revealing features so sweet and delicate and so fine and shapely a figure that Monsieur de Corville and his mistress could not restrain a desire to intervene on behalf of so wretched a creature. Monsieur de Corville approached and asked one of the constables what the unhappy creature had done.

'Well sir,' replied the gendarme, 'she is accused of committing three or four major crimes, to wit, theft, murder, and arson, but I don't mind admitting that neither my colleague here nor myself ever had less stomach for an escort detail. She is the sweetest creature and I'd say the straightest too.

'Is that so?' said Monsieur de Corville. 'Perhaps she has been the victim of some mistake. Mistakes are not unknown in magistrates' courts. Where were the crimes committed?'

'At an inn three leagues outside Lyons. She was tried at Lyons and is on her way to Paris for confirmation of sentence. Then she'll travel back to Lyons and be executed there.'

Madame de Lorsange had drawn near, overheard what was said, and now whispered to Monsieur de Corville that she would very much like to hear the story of the young woman's misfortunes from her own lips. Monsieur de Corville, sharing her wish, spoke of it to her escort and made himself known. They raised no objection. Madame de Lorsange and Monsieur de Corville now resolved to spend the night at Montargis and asked to be given a suitable apartment with an adjacent room for the constables. Monsieur de Corville took full responsibility for the prisoner. Her hands were untied and she was shown into the room of Madame de Lorsange and Monsieur de Corville. Her guards dined and went to bed in the adjoining chamber. When the poor unfortunate had been persuaded to take a little sustenance, Madame de Lorsange, who could not prevent herself from feeling the keenest interest in her and doubtless was telling herself: 'This wretched and perhaps innocent creature is treated like a criminal while everything I touch turns to gold—and I am assuredly far guiltier than she.'—Madame de Lorsange, I say, the moment she saw that the young woman was a little recovered and in some measure consoled by the attentions shown to her and the concern displayed on her behalf, persuaded her to relate the circumstances which had, notwithstanding her air of honesty and goodness, brought her to so terrible a pass.

* * *

The story of my life, Madame (said the beautiful, unhappy creature to the Countess), would furnish you with the most striking example of the misfortunes of innocence. To tell it would be to accuse Providence and complain of its workings. It would be a sin of a kind and I cannot bring myself to ...

Tears then streamed from the eyes of the unfortunate young woman, but after letting them flow freely for a moment, she began her story in these terms.

With your leave, I shall withhold my name. I come of a family which, though undistinguished, Madame, was respectable, and I was not born to the mortifications which have been the source of the larger part of my misfortunes. I lost both my parents when very young. With the modest means they left at my disposal, I had thought to obtain an honest situation, but constantly rejecting offers which were far from honest, I exhausted my small inheritance more quickly than I realized. The poorer I grew, the more reviled I was. The more I stood in need of help, the smaller grew my hopes of finding it or the more frequently was it held out to me in unworthy and shameful forms. Of all the hardships which I endured in my distressed condition, of all the horrid propositions that were made to me, I shall mention only what befell me in the house of Monsieur Dubourg, one of the richest merchants in the capital. I had been directed to him as the kind of man whose wealth and credit were most suited and best able to alleviate my fate. But those who had advised me thus either sought to deceive me or else were unaware of the hardness of the man's heart or the depravity of his morals. After waiting two hours in his antechamber, I was shown into his presence. Monsieur Dubourg, who was about 45 years of age, had just risen from his bed and was wearing a loose-fitting robe which barely covered his state of undress. Being about to have his peruke arranged upon his head, he dismissed his valet and asked me what I wanted.

'Alas, Monsieur,' I answered, 'I am a poor orphan who, though not yet 14, nevertheless am acquainted with all the degrees of misfortune.' I then told him of my setbacks, my difficulties in finding a situation, the unhappy circumstance of my having spent the little money I had in seeking a place, the rejections I had met with, even the difficulties I had encountered in finding needlework to do either in a dressmaker's shop or in my own room, and I spoke of the hopes I had conceived of his helping me to find a means of earning a living.

After listening to me most attentively, Monsieur Dubourg asked me if I had always been a good girl.

'I should neither be so poor nor have fallen so low, Monsieur,' I said, 'had I ever wanted to be otherwise.'

At this, he said: 'My child, on what grounds do you believe that Wealth should extend a helping hand seeing that you serve its purposes in no way whatsoever?'

'Serve, Monsieur? But I ask only to be of service.'

'The services which a child like you can contribute to the running of a house are of no great weight, though I was not thinking of those services. You are neither old enough nor sufficiently presentable for me to find you a position as you ask. But if you were to adopt a less ludicrously strict attitude, you might aspire to a modest future in any libertine circle. And it is in that direction that you had now best move. The virtue of which you make so much serves no useful purpose in the real world. You can tout it around as much as you like, but you will find that it won't even buy you a glass of water. Those of us who actually dole out charity, which is something we do as little as possible and then only with the greatest reluctance, want to be compensated for the money which is taken out of our pockets. Now, what can a little girl like you do to repay the help she receives, if not to agree to whatever is asked of her?'

'O sir, so there are neither philanthropy nor decent feelings in men's hearts?'

'No, not a great deal, my child. The mania for obliging others without asking anything in return is now a thing of the past. It flattered one's pride momentarily, of course. But since there is nothing so illusory and so quickly dispelled as pleasure, people have begun demanding more palpable gratifications. They felt that in the case of a girl like yourself, for example, it was far more worth while to take a return on the moneys advanced in the form of the pleasures afforded by libertinage than to take pride in having acted charitably. The reputation of a liberal, charitable, generous man is, to my way of thinking, as nothing compared to the smallest hint of the pleasure you could give me. In consideration of which—and here my views are those of almost everyone of my tastes and age—you will understand, child, that any help I give you will be proportionate to your agreeing to do whatever it pleases me to ask of you.'

'What hardness of heart, sir! Do you imagine that Heaven will not punish you for your callousness?'

'You are young and know nothing, but hear this: Heaven is the last thing in the world which interests us. Whether what we do on earth pleases Heaven or not is the last thing which gives us pause. Being only too aware of how little power Heaven has over men, we defy it daily without a qualm. Indeed, our passions acquire true enchantment only when they transgress Heaven's designs most outrageously, or at least what simpletons assure us are its designs, though in reality they form the illusory chain by which hypocrites and impostors have always set out to deceive and subjugate the strong.

'But sir, do not such principles mean that the unfortunate man is doomed to perish?'

'What does that signify? France has more subjects than it needs. The Government sees everything in broad terms and is not overly concerned with individuals provided that the machinery runs smoothly overall.'

'But do you think that children respect their fathers when they are badly treated?'

'What does the love of children who serve no useful purpose matter to a father who already has far too many?'

'So it would have been better if we had been strangled at birth?'

'Probably. But enough of politics which you cannot possibly understand. Why do you complain of your fate when you could so easily change it?'

'But Heavens, at what cost!'

'The cost merely of an idle fancy, of a thing which has no value beyond the price which your pride sets upon it. But let us leave aside this question too and simply keep to what concerns us both at this juncture. You lay great store by this idle fancy, don't you, while I attach very little importance to it and so shall not fight you for it. The duties which I should expect of you, and for which you will be reasonably, but not excessively paid, will be of a quite different order. I shall give you into my housekeeper's charge. You will answer to her and each morning, in my presence, either this woman or my valet will subject you to . . .'

O Madame, how shall I convey this execrable proposition to you? I was too humiliated to take it in as it was being made, and my head spun, so to speak, as the words were said . . . Being too ashamed to repeat them now, I beg you to be good enough to imagine the rest. . . The cruel man spoke the names of high-ranking churchmen and I was to be their victim.

'That is as much as I can do for you, my child,' the wicked man went on as he stood up with no thought for decency, 'and even so all I can promise you for the duration of these proceedings, which will be always protracted and painful, is to support you for two years. You are now 14. At 16 you will be free to seek your fortune elsewhere. Until then, you will be clothed and fed and will receive one louis each month. It is a very fair offer: I have not been giving as much to the girl you will replace. Of course, she did not possess intact the virtue by which you set such great store and which I reckon to be worth, as you see, about 50 écus a year, a rather larger sum than was given to your predecessor. Think it over carefully, pay special attention to the poverty from which I should save you, and reflect that in this unjust society of which you are part, those who do not have enough to live on must suffer if they are to earn enough to get by. Like them you will suffer too, I grant, but you will earn far more than the vast majority of them.'

The monster's appalling words had inflamed his passions. He seized me by the collar of my dress and told me that on this first occasion he himself would show me what was involved . . . But my plight gave me courage and strength, I managed to struggle free and, as I rushed to the door:

'Loathsome man!' I cried as I fled, 'may Heaven which you offend so cruelly punish you one day as you deserve for your odious barbarity. You are not worthy of the wealth which you abuse so vilely, nor even of the air you breathe in a world made foul by your brutal ways.

I was returning dejectedly to my lodging plunged into the black, depressing thoughts to which the cruelty and corruption of men inevitably give rise, when my eye seemed for a moment to catch a glimpse of fair weather. The woman with whom I lodged was acquainted with my distress. She now came up to me and said that she had at last discovered a house where I would be gladly received, provided my behaviour was beyond reproach.

'O Heavens, Madame,' I said, embracing her ecstatically, 'that is a condition I should myself insist upon! I accept most gladly!'

The man I was to serve was an elderly money-lender who, it was said, had grown rich not only by lending against pledges but by robbing all and sundry with impunity each time he saw it was safe for him to do so. He lived in a first-floor apartment in the rue Quincampoix with an aged mistress he called his wife who was as least as spiteful as he.

'Sophie,' the miser said to me, 'Sophie' (this was the name I had taken to conceal my own), 'the foremost virtue which I require in my house is honesty. If ever even the tenth part of a denier should find its way into your pocket, I shall have you hanged, do you hear Sophie? hanged beyond reviving. If my wife and I enjoy a few comforts in our old age, they are the fruit of our unending labours and extreme abstemiousness. Do you eat a great deal, my child?'

'A few ounces of bread a day, sir,' I replied, 'some water and a little soup when I am fortunate enough to have it.'

'Soup! Good God! Soup! Look at her, my dear,' the old miser said to his wife, 'and see to what a pass the taste for luxury has brought us! Here's a slavey who has been looking for a place for a year, starving for a twelve-month, and she asks for soup! Soup is something we hardly ever make, just once, on Sundays, and we have been working like Turks these forty years. You will make do with three ounces of bread a day, my girl, half a bottle of river water, one of my wife's cast-off dresses every eighteen months for you to turn into petticoats, and three écus for your pay at the end of the year if we are happy with the work you do, if you are as economical as we are and, finally, if, by your orderliness and good husbandry, you help the business to prosper. We do not require much in the way of attendance and there is no servant but you. All you have to do is to polish and clean the six rooms in the apartment three times a week, make my wife's bed and mine, answer the door, powder my wig, dress my wife's hair, look after the dog, the cat, and the parrot, attend to the kitchen, shine the pans whether they have been used or not, help my wife when she makes us a bite to eat, and spend the rest of the day washing, darning stockings, trimming hats, and making other household oddments. As you see, there's not much to it, Sophie. You'll have plenty of time to yourself and we shall not stand in your way if you wish to use it for your private purposes and also to do your personal washing and make whatever clothes you may need.'

You will have no difficulty in imagining, Madame, that only one in circumstances as reduced as those in which I now found myself would ever accept such a place. Not only was there infinitely more work than my age and strength allowed me to undertake, but would I be able to live on what I had been offered? I took care, however, to avoid making difficulties and moved in that same evening.

If in the parlous circumstances I now find myself at this moment, Madame, I had half a mind to afford you a moment's amusement, though by rights I should have no thought but to interest your heart in my favour, I think I can say I should entertain you royally with some account of the miserly habits I was witness to in that house. But a calamity so terrible in its consequences for me stood waiting at the finish of my second year there that it is with no little difficulty, when I think back, that I now bring myself to relate a few humorous details before telling you of the setback I mentioned. So let me say, Madame, that no lights were ever lit in that house. Fortunately, the apartment of my master and mistress looked on to the street lamp outside and this freed them of the need to have any other glim: no lamp of any other kind served to light them to bed. They made no use of linen. My master's coat, like my mistress's dress, was furnished with a pair of cuffs stitched to the cloth at the sleeve-ends and these I washed each Saturday evening so that they were presentable of a Sunday; there were no sheets or table napkins, to save on laundry-work, always a costly item in any household according to Monsieur Du Harpin, my respected master. No wine was served, water being, as Madame Du Harpin held, the natural drink of the first men on earth and the only drink prescribed by Nature. Whenever bread was cut, a basket was placed beneath to catch the crumbs that fell, and to them anything left over from meals was carefully added, the whole being fried together on Sundays with a little rancid butter, this constituting festive fare for the day of rest. Clothes and upholstery were not to be beaten, for fear of wearing them out, but were to be lightly switched with a feather duster. The shoes worn by my master and mistress were bottomed with iron, and both husband and wife still clung reverently to the footwear which had served them on their wedding-day. But there was one practice, odder still by far, which I was required to follow regularly once a week. The apartment boasted one room of fair size whose walls were unpapered; with a knife, I was required to scrape a quantity of plaster from them which I then passed through a fine sieve, what remained from this operation being employed as the powder with which I dressed my master's wig and my mistress's hair each morning. But would to God that these shameful practices were the only ones to which these dreadful people subscribed. Nothing is more natural than the wish to preserve what one has, but what is rather less so is the desire to double one's property by adding to it property belonging to other people, and it was not long before I perceived that it was in this manner, and this manner alone, that Monsieur Du Harpin had grown so rich. Living on the floor above was a gentleman with a decent competency, being possessed of rather fine jewels. Now perhaps because he lived so near or perhaps because his effects had already passed through his hands, the extent of his wealth was well known to my master. I often heard him and his wife say how much they regretted a particular gold casket worth 30 or 40 louis which would certainly have remained in his possession had the attorney he employed known his business better; to make up the loss of the returned casket, the honest Monsieur Du Harpin now proposed to steal it and I was charged with the business.

After reading me a long lesson on the trivial nature of stealing and on the useful role it plays in society where theft redresses a balance destroyed by inequalities in the distribution of wealth, Monsieur Du Harpin gave me a counterfeit key and assured me that it fitted the door to his neighbour's apartment; that I should find the casket in a cabinet which was never locked; that I could purloin it without running any kind of risk; and that for rendering such an important service, I should have an extra écu on my wages for the next two years.

‘O sir!’ I cried, ‘is it possible that a master should seek to corrupt his servant so? What is there to prevent me from turning against you the same weapons which you place in my hand, for what reasonable objection could you make were I to rob you according to your own principles?’

Monsieur Du Harpin, much taken aback by my answer, did not dare insist further but, nursing a secret rancour against me, said that what he had done was intended to test me, that it was fortunate indeed that I had not agreed to his insidious scheme, for had I succumbed then I would have been as good as hanged. I settled for this reply but from that time forward I was aware both of the misfortunes which hung over my head as a result of such a proposition and of my error in answering him so categorically. But there was no middle path: I had either to commit the crime he spoke of or to reject what he proposed out of hand. Had I then had a little more experience of the world, I should have quitted the house at once. But it was already written in the book of my destiny that each honest prompting of my nature would be repaid by misfortune. I was therefore forced to submit to fate, it being impossible that I should ever escape it.

Monsieur Du Harpin allowed close upon a month to pass, that is until about the time of my completing a second year in his household, without mentioning or giving the slightest sign of ill will towards me for having refused his bidding, when one evening, withdrawing to my chamber after my work was done, there to enjoy a few hours of calm, I suddenly heard my door broken down and not without fright observed Monsieur Du Harpin leading a police officer and four men of the watch to my bedside.

‘Do your duty, constable,’ said he to the officer of the law, ‘the hussy has robbed me of a diamond worth a thousand écus. You will find it in her room or about her person. It’s here all right.’

‘I, sir, steal from you!’ said I dismayed, throwing myself to the foot of my bed. ‘Ah, who better than you knows how offensive I find the very thought of such things and how impossible it would be for me to have stooped so low!’

But Monsieur Du Harpin, who made a great deal of noise so that my words should go unheard, continued to oversee the search and the wretched ring was found in one of my mattresses. Against evidence so incontrovertible there was no reply. I was immediately seized, bound, and led to the Palace prison, during which time I could not gain the smallest hearing for anything I might have said in my defence.

The trial of any hapless person who lacks credit or protection is a quickly expedited business in France where virtue is thought incompatible with poverty and the ill fortune of the accused is proof sufficient of guilt in the eyes of magistrates. An unjust assumption persuades courts that whoever was most likely to have perpetrated the crime is in fact the person who committed it; sentiments are gauged by the state in which the accused appears and the moment he is seen to have neither title nor wealth to prove that he is honest, it becomes self-evident that he is not.

In vain did I try to defend myself and provide the court advocate I was briefly allowed to have with the best arguments: my master accused me, the diamond had been found in my chamber, and it was obvious that I had stolen it. When I attempted to raise the matter of Monsieur Du Harpin’s dishonest scheme and prove that the misfortune which had befallen me was no more than an effect of his revenge and his wish to be rid of a creature who, knowing his secret, had power to ruin his reputation, my counter-complaints were dismissed as mere recriminations. I was told that for forty years Monsieur Du Harpin had been known for an honest man and was quite incapable of such villainy, and I believed that I was about to pay with my life for my refusal to take part in a crime, when an unexpected turn of events intervened and I was freed only to be thrust once more into the new calamities which still awaited me in this vale of tears.

A woman of 40 years called Dubois, notorious for abominable actions of every kind, was also on the point of having sentence of death carried out on her, her sentence at least being better deserved than mine since the case against her was fully attested, whereas it was impossible to find any crime that could be laid at my door. I had aroused the interest of this woman. One evening, only a few days before we were both to forfeit our lives, she told me that I should not go to bed but, doing nothing to attract attention, should stay by her side and keep as close to the gates of the prison as could be managed.

‘Between midnight and one o’clock,’ said the enterprising jade, ‘the building will catch fire. It will be my handiwork. It is possible that someone may well be burned to death, but no matter, for what is uppermost is that you and I shall escape. Three men, who are my accomplices and friends, will meet us and I shall answer for your freedom.’

The hand of Heaven which a short space before had punished innocence in my person now served crime in that of my protectress. The flames caught, the conflagration was horrible to see, ten people were burned to death, but we made off safely. That same day we reached a cottage in the forest of Bondy belonging to a poacher, a different kind of criminal from the others but a close associate of our gang.

‘Now you are free, my dear Sophie,’ Dubois said to me, ‘you are at liberty to choose whatever kind of life you please. But a word of counsel: give up your virtuous ways which as you can see have never helped you prosper. Misplaced delicacy brought you to the foot of the gallows while a gruesome crime enabled me to escape the rope: ask yourself what purpose goodness serves in the world and consider whether there is any profit to be gained by sacrificing yourself for it. You are young and pretty. I shall answer for making your fortune in Brussels, if you wish. I am bound there now, for I was born in that city. Within two years, I shall raise you to untold heights, but I warn you now that it is not along the narrow paths of virtue that I shall lead you to fortune. Anyone of your age who wants to get on quickly in life must be prepared to undertake more than one trade and be adept at managing more than one intrigue at a time. Do you hear me, Sophie, do you catch my drift? Make up your mind quickly. We must leave this place, for we shall be safe here for a few hours only.’

‘O Madame,’ said I to my benefactress, ‘I am deeply in your debt, for you saved my life. But I am also appalled that I should owe my life to a crime and you may be assured that if I had been given any choice in the matter, I would sooner have perished than set my hand to it. I am only too sensible of the dangers I have run by committing myself to those feelings of decency which will ever grow in my heart. But whatever the thorns of virtue, I shall always prefer them to the false beams that shine on prosperity, for these are dangerous marks of favour and the fleeting accompaniment of crime. I carry within me notions of religion which, thanks be to God, will never desert me. If Providence makes my course in life arduous, it is only so that I shall be the more amply rewarded in a better world. This hope is my consolation: it is balm to my sorrows and quiets my murmuring soul, it gives me strength in adversity and helps me to face whatever ills it is pleased to set in my path. It is a joy which would be soon extinguished in my heart were I to desecrate it with criminal actions and, being then filled with the fear of tribulations yet to come in this world, more terrible by far, I should also have in view the dreadful prospect of the punishments which heavenly justice reserves in the next for those who offend against it.

‘Your principles are absurd and they will lead you straight to prison, my girl, take it from me,’ said Dubois with a frown. ‘Forget heavenly justice, your punishments and your rewards to come. Such talk is fit only for leaving in the schoolroom or, once you have left it and entered the world, for enabling you to starve to death, should you be foolish enough to believe it. The callousness of the rich justifies the knavery of the poor, my child. If their purses would open to satisfy our needs and if humanity reigned in their hearts, then virtue would take root in ours. But as long as our distress, the patience with which we bear it, our honesty and our subjection serve merely to add weight to our chains, our misdemeanours are their handiwork and we should be dupes indeed to reject crime as a means of lightening a yoke which they fasten around our necks. We were all born equal in the eyes of Nature, Sophie. If fate chooses to disturb the original disposition of Nature's general laws, it is for us to correct departures therefrom and by our artfulness repair the depradations of the strong. How I love hearing rich people, the judges, and the magistrates, oh, how I love seeing them preaching virtue at us! Oh, how difficult it must be for them to refrain from theft when they have three times as much as they need to live on, how difficult never to think of murder when they are surrounded only by admirers and submissive slaves, how exceedingly painful indeed to be temperate and sober when they are intoxicated by sensuality and the most succulent dishes are set before them—and they must find it trying indeed to be frank and honest when the need to lie scarcely ever arises. But the likes of us, Sophie, have been condemned to crawl on the earth, like the serpent upon its belly, by that same barbaric Providence which in your folly you have made your idol. We are looked on with scorn because we are poor, humiliated because we are weak, and in every part of the globe find nothing but gall and thorns—and yet you believe that we should deny ourselves the uses of Crime, though Crime alone opens the door to life which it sustains, preserves, and prevents from losing altogether. You would have us be eternally subject and humiliated while the class which dominates us has on its side the advantage of fortune's endless favours! You would wish upon us only toil, despair and suffering, poverty and tears, odium and the gallows! No, Sophie, no! Either the Providence which you revere was made only to deserve our contempt, or else its intentions were quite different. Learn to know Providence better, Sophie, acquaint yourself with its ways and be persuaded that if Providence places us in situations where acting wickedly becomes necessary and at the same time allows us to choose to be wicked, then its laws are served no less well by evil than by good and Providence thus gains as much by the one as by the other. The state into which we were born at her behest is a state of equality. Whoever disturbs that state is no more guilty than anyone who seeks to restore it, for both parties act upon impulses implanted in them, and have no choice but to act upon them, clap a blindfold to their eyes, and enjoy the result.'

I confess that if ever I wavered it was as I listened to the tempting arguments put by this artful woman. But in my heart a stronger voice than hers fought against her sophisms. I heard her out and then declared for the last time that I was resolved never to allow myself to succumb to corruption.

'In that case,' Dubois told me, 'do as you please. I leave you to your wretched fate. But if they ever hang you, as will surely happen given the fatality which saves crime and inevitably punishes virtue, at least remember to say nothing of us.'

While we had been discoursing thus, Dubois's three companions had been drinking with the poacher, and since wine commonly has the effect of making the criminal forget his old crimes and of prompting him to commit new ones while still teetering on the brink of the precipice from which he has just escaped, the villains were not content to observe my resolve to flee their clutches without wishing some entertainment at my expense. Their principles and customs, the gloomy place where we had halted, the degree of safety they believed they enjoyed, their drunkenness, my youth, innocence, and appearance—all served to encourage them. They left the table where they had been sitting, talked among themselves, and consulted Dubois. The mystery of these proceedings made me tremble with horror. The final upshot was that before I departed I should have to make up my mind to pass through the hands of all four, either with good grace or by force; that if I accepted with good grace they would each give me one écu to see me to whichever destination I chose, since I refused to go with them; that if force was needed to make my mind up for me, the result would be the same; but that in order that their secret be not betrayed, the last of the four who had his way with me would plunge a dagger into my heart and then bury me at the foot of a tree. I leave you to imagine, Madame, the effect this execrable proposition made upon me. I flung myself at Dubois's feet and begged her to protect me a second time. But the jade merely laughed at a predicament which to me was appalling but which to her seemed a matter of small consequence.

'Mercy,' said she, 'what a pretty pickle! Here you are, required to oblige four lusty lads like these! There are ten thousand women in Paris, my girl, who would pay out good money to be in your shoes just now. Listen,' she said, however, after a moment's thought, 'I have enough influence over these clods to get you out of this—if you are prepared to earn it.'

'Alas, Madame! What must I do?' I cried through my tears. 'Say the word and I shall be ready!'

'You must come with us, become one of us, do exactly as we do and do it willingly. If you are prepared to pay this price, I guarantee the rest.'

I did not believe I had any choice. By accepting, I should be courting new perils, I own, but they were less pressing than those I faced at that moment. I might be able to avoid those which still lay in the future but there was nothing to preserve me from the danger now threatening me.

'I shall go anywhere, Madame,' I told Dubois, 'anywhere, I promise. Save me from these brutal men and I shall never leave you.'

'Lads,' said Dubois to the four bandits, 'the girl is now one of our gang. I have just admitted her as a full member. I order you not to do her any violence: she must not be sickened of the business on her very first day. You can see for yourselves how useful her youth and that pretty face are going to be to us. We must use her to further our interests and not sacrifice her to our pleasures. But the passions can have such power over man that no words can tame them. The men I now faced were in no mood to listen to reason. All four advanced towards me together in a state which was hardly calculated to allow me flattering hopes of being preserved, and with one voice declared to Dubois that even if there had been a gallows on the spot, I should still be their prey.

'She's mine first,' said one of them, seizing me by the waist.

'Who says you can start?' said another, as he drove his comrade off and snatched me roughly from his grasp.

'By God, your turn's after mine,' said a third.

And the quarrel growing warm, all four champions grabbed each other by the hair and let fly with their fists, brawling amongst themselves and knocking each other to the ground. Meanwhile, only too happy with this turn of events which gave me time to make good my escape, and with Dubois being occupied in trying to separate them, I made a run for it, reached the forest, and the hut was soon lost from view.

'O Supreme Being!' said I, throwing myself on to my knees the instant I felt I was safe, 'Supreme Being who art my true protector and guide, take pity on my plight. Thou seest my weakness and my innocence, and knowest the trust with which I place all my hopes in Thee. Preserve me from the dangers which beset me, or by a death less ignominious than that which I have escaped, grant at least that I be recalled promptly to Thy eternal bosom.'

Prayer is the sweetest consolation of the unfortunate. He is stronger who has prayed. I stood up fortified by courage and, since it was now beginning to grow dark, I crept into a thicket where I could spend the night with the smallest risk of discovery. The sense of security I felt, my exhausted state, and the small measure of relief which I had lately tasted, all contributed to my passing a good night. The sun was already high when my eyes opened once more upon a new day. The moment of waking is the most critical time for the unfortunate: their senses are in repose, their minds are at peace, their misfortunes are temporarily forgotten— and all this reminds them of their misery with interest and makes the weight of their wretchedness even harder to bear.

‘Ah, it is true then,’ said I to myself, ‘there are indeed human beings who are intended by Nature to share the state of wild animals! I crouch in their lair and hide myself from men just as they do. What difference is there now between them and me? What was the point of being born to suffer so pitiable a fate?’ And my tears flowed liberally as I formulated these bleak reflections. I was scarcely done when I heard a sound nearby. For a moment I thought it was some beast of the forest but gradually I made out the voices of two men.

‘Come on, over here,’ said one, ‘it’s the ideal place for us. Here at least the spoiling presence of my interfering mother will not cheat me of a brief moment’s enjoyment of those pleasures which are sweetest of all to me.’

They drew near and halted so exactly opposite me that nothing of what they said, nothing of what they did escaped me and I saw .

‘Great Heavens, Madame,’ said Sophie, breaking off her tale, ‘can it be possible that fate has always placed me in such uniformly parlous situations for it to be as testing to ordinary decency to hear of them as it is for me to describe them? The horrible offence which outrages both Nature and established law, the heinous crime upon which the heavy hand of God has so often descended, I mean that infamy which was so new to me that I could scarcely conceive of it, was there, before my very eyes, consummated with all the impure refinements and dreadful proceedings which the most considered depravity could inject into it.’

One of the men, the dominant partner, was aged 24, wore a green coat and was sufficiently well turned out to suggest that he came of good family. The other appeared to be a young domestic in his service. He was 17 or 18 years old and very pretty. The spectacle was as lengthy as it was scandalous, and to me the time seemed to hang all the more cruelly since I dared not move for fear of giving myself away.

Finally, the felonious players who had enacted these criminal scenes, doubtless being sated, stood up and were about to rejoin the path which led them home when the master drew near to the bush which hid me to satisfy a need. My tall bonnet gave me away. He saw it.

‘Jasmine, dear boy,’ he called to his young Adonis, ‘we are betrayed. Our mysteries have been observed by the uninitiate, to wit, a girl. Come here and we shall winkle the hussy out and discover what the devil she is doing here.’

I did not put them to the trouble of helping me to leave my shelter. Dragging myself out, I collapsed at their feet.

‘O sirs!’ I cried, holding my arms out to them, ‘have mercy on an unfortunate creature whose fate is more to be pitied than you can think. Few have suffered calamities equal to mine. I beg you, do not allow the predicament in which you discovered me to start suspicions of me in your mind, for my situation is the result of misfortune and not of any wrongs that I have done. Do not increase the sum of the ills which lie heavy upon me, but on the contrary, I beseech you, kindly furnish me with some means of escaping the rigours by which I am pursued.’

Monsieur de Bressac (such was the name of the young man into whose clutches I had fallen) had a mind well stocked with licentiousness but a heart which was not over-generously endowed with compassion. It is regrettably only too commonly observed that sensual excess drives out pity in man. Its ordinary effect is to harden the heart. Whether this is because most carnal excesses require a kind of apathy of soul or whether the violent effect they produce on the nervous system weakens the sensitivity by which it operates, it nevertheless remains a fact that a professional libertine is rarely a compassionate man. But to the natural cruelty entrenches in the minds of the type of person whose character I have here described, there was further in Monsieur de Bressac's case an aversion so marked for our sex, a hatred so inveterate for everything which characterizes the human female, that I saw I should have the greatest difficulty in firing his soul with the sentiments through which I hoped to gain his sympathy.

'What are you doing here, my turtle-dove?' was the only answer, pretty harshly spoken, which I was given by this man whose heart I wished to soften. 'The truth now: you saw everything which passed between this young man and myself, did you not?'

'O no, sir!' I said quickly, believing that I should do no harm in disguising the truth on this particular score. 'I assure you, what I saw was quite unremarkable. I observed you both, this other gentleman and you, sitting on the grass, and I believe I noticed that you stayed there a while talking. That is all, I do assure you.'

'I'll take your word for it—for your sake,' answered Monsieur de Bressac. 'For if I thought for a moment that you had seen anything else you would not leave this thicket alive. Come, Jasmine. It is still early. We have time enough to listen to the tale of this whore's adventures. She can start telling us all about them now, and when she's finished we shall tie her to that grist oak there and try out our hunting-knives on her.'

The two young men sat down, ordered me to sit next to them and there, without art, I gave them a plain account of everything that had happened to me since the time of my birth.

'Come, Jasmine,' said Monsieur de Bressac getting up the instant I had done, 'for once in our lives, let us be just. All-seeing Themis has pronounced the slut guilty. We cannot stand by and see the goddess's designs frustrated, so we two shall proceed to carry out on a proven criminal the punishment which she was about to undergo. What we are about to do is no crime, my friend, but virtue. It will be a restoration of the moral order of things, and since there are times when we ourselves unfortunately upset that balance, we should have the courage to redress it whenever the occasion arises.'

And the two cruel men having pulled me to my feet began dragging me towards the appointed tree, as insensible to my moans as they were to my tears.

'Tie her to it this way on,' said Bressac to his valet as he pushed me face-forward against the tree.

They used their braces, handkerchiefs, anything that came to hand, and in a trice I was bound so cruelly tight that I found it impossible to move hand or foot. When this operation was completed, the blackguards removed my skirts, raised my petticoats above my head and took out their hunting-knives. I fully believed that they were about to hack and slash my hindquarters which in their ferocity they had bared completely.

'That will do,' said Bressac before I had felt a single thrust of his knife. 'That should be enough for her to know what we are like, to understand what we can do to her, and to ensure that she remains subservient to our will. Sophie,' he went on, releasing my bonds, 'get dressed, keep your counsel, and come with us. Serve me well and you will not have cause to regret it, my child. My mother needs a second waiting-maid. I shall present you to her. On the strength of what you have told us of your adventures, I shall make myself answerable for your behaviour. But should you take advantage of my kindness or betray my trust ... Look closely at the oak which was to have been your hanging-tree. Never forget that it is not a league from the château where I shall now take you and that at the first offence, however trivial, you will be brought back here.'

Fully dressed once more and scarce able to find words to thank my benefactor, I threw myself at his feet. I kissed his knees and swore in every way I could think of that my conduct would be beyond reproach. But as untouched by my happiness as he had been by my distress, Monsieur de Bressac said:

'Let us be gone. Your conduct will speak for you and your conduct alone will decide your fate.'

We set off, Jasmine and his master conversing together and I meekly following in silence. Less than an hour's walk brought us to the chateau of the Countess de Bressac. Its magnificent appointments informed me that whatever position I was to have in this household, it would surely be better remunerated than that of head-housekeeper to Monsieur and Madame Du Harpin. I was shown into a servants' hall where Jasmine served me a very decent dinner. Meanwhile, Monsieur de Bressac went upstairs to see his mother, explained about me, and a half-hour later came to fetch me and presented me to her.

Madame de Bressac was a woman of 45, very beautiful still, who seemed to me highly respectable and, even more to the point, exceedingly considerate, though her words and principles were not unmixed with a certain asperity. She was two years the widow of a man of the highest rank who had brought her in marriage no fortune other than the noble name which he had conferred upon her. The expectations of the young Marquis de Bressac thus centred on his mother, for what his father had left him was barely adequate for his ordinary needs. Madame de Bressac swelled the sum by making him a generous allowance, but even so it was far from enough to meet her son's expenditure which was as large as it was irregular. The estate was worth at least 60,000 livres a year and Monsieur de Bressac had neither brothers nor sisters. He could never be prevailed upon to enter the army, for anything which took him away from his choicest pleasures was so unbearable to him that he refused categorically to submit to constraints of any sort. The Countess and her son spent three months of the year on their estate and the rest of the time in Paris, and those three months which she insisted that her son spend with her were torture to a man who could never absent himself from the centre of his pleasures without lapsing into despair.

The Marquis de Bressac commanded me to relate to his mother the same tale which I had already told him. When I had finished my story, Madame de Bressac said:

'Your candour and sincerity seem to me to put your innocence beyond doubt. I shall institute no enquiries about you beyond satisfying myself that you are, as you say, the daughter of the man you mentioned. If indeed you are, then I knew your father, a circumstance which will be an added reason for my interesting myself in your welfare. As for your difficulties with Du Harpin, I shall make it my business to settle matters with a couple of visits to the Chancellor who has been a friend of mine for many years. He is the most upright man in France. All that is required to overturn the charges against you so that you may return to Paris without fear is to prove your innocence to him. But you must bear in mind, Sophie, that what I promise you now is conditional upon irreproachable conduct on your part. In this way you can see that the pledges which I ask from you will not fail to turn to your advantage.'

I threw myself at Madame de Bressac's feet, assured her that she would never have reason but to be satisfied with me, and was immediately installed in the house as second chambermaid.

Within three days, the information requested from Paris by Madame de Bressac arrived and proved to be all I could have wished for. All my thoughts of misfortune faded at last from my mind, their place being taken by hopes of the sweetest consolations to which I now felt justified in looking forward. But it was not written by Heaven that poor Sophie would ever be happy, for should a few instants of peace chance to settle upon her, they would only serve to make her feel more bitterly still the moments of horror which would surely follow.

We were hardly arrived in Paris when Madame de Bressac began to busy herself on my behalf. The First President of the Court asked to see me. He listened with interest to my tale of woe, and Du Harpin's villainy, being investigated, was acknowledged. It was recognized that if I had taken advantage of the fire in the Palace prison, I had taken no part in causing it and I was assured that all proceedings against me were quashed by the magistrates appointed to examine the matter without their having need to resort to further formalities.

It may easily be imagined how closely such good offices bound me to Madame de Bressac: even had she not further shown me kindnesses of every description, how could the steps she had taken on my behalf have failed to endear me eternally to such a precious protectress? However, it did not enter into the intentions of the young Marquis de Bressac to have me draw so close to his mother. Independently of the appalling lewdness of the kind I have described to you into which the young man threw himself blindly and even more wildly in Paris than in the country, it was not long before I perceived that he hated the Countess with all his being. In truth, she did all she could to put an end to his debauches or at least to curb them, but she perhaps being over-harsh in her manner of proceeding, the Marquis, further inflamed by the effects of her strictness, plunged with renewed vigour into his excesses, and all the profit the poor Countess derived from her persecution of him was to be heartily detested.

'Do not imagine,' the Marquis would often tell me, 'that my mother acts unprompted in what she does for you. Believe me, Sophie, if I did not badger her at every turn she would probably forget what promises she gave to take care of you. She makes much of all the steps she takes, but they have all been my handiwork. I think I can fairly say therefore that if you feel grateful to anyone, it should be to me, and the return I ask of you will seem all the more disinterested in your eyes since you know enough of me to be quite certain that, however pretty your face, it is not your favours that I seek. No, Sophie, the services I expect from you are of a different order, and when you are quite convinced by all I have done for you, I trust you will find it in your heart to give me everything I am entitled to expect in return.'

Such words seemed so cloudy to me that I never knew what to answer. But answer I did, saying whatever came into my head and without giving sufficient thought to my replies.

The moment has come, Madame, when I must tell you of the only real wrong I ever did in my life for which I reproach myself. Wrong is perhaps not the word, more an unparalleled extravagance, but certainly not a crime. It was simply an error which rebounded against myself alone and which I do not believe was an instrument wielded by the equitable hand of Heaven to plunge me into the abyss which was secretly opening beneath my feet. I had been unable to see the Marquis de Bressac without feeling drawn to him by sentiments of tenderness which, try as I might, I could not overcome. Whatever thoughts I had about his aversion to women, the depravity of his tastes, and the moral distance which separated us, there was nothing on earth I could do to drench the flames of my dawning passion, and if the Marquis had asked me to lay down my life, I should gladly have sacrificed it for his sake and thought I had done little enough to oblige him. He had no inkling of my feelings which I kept very carefully locked in my heart, no inkling, the ungrateful wretch, of the cause of the tears shed daily by the unhappy Sophie for the shameful excesses which were like to be his undoing. Yet he could not but be sensible of my eagerness to anticipate and undertake anything which might please him, nor was it possible that he could remain ignorant of my attentions which, in my blindness, extended to seconding his waywardness at least in so far as decency permitted, and to hiding them from his mother. My manner of proceeding had to some extent earned me his trust and, anything coming from him being precious to me, I so chose not to see how little his heart offered me that at times I was vain enough to believe that he was not indifferent towards me. But how promptly was I disabused by the extravagance of his carnal lusts! They were pitched at such a level that not only was the inside of the house staffed by servants, maintained on this execrable footing, whom I could not avoid, but also he kept a host of ne’er-do-wells outside too, he going sometimes to them and they calling on him every day. Since his tastes, odious though they are, rank with the most expensive, the Marquis made prodigious inroads into his fortune. Occasionally, I took the liberty to point out the disadvantages of his conduct. He would hear me out willingly enough and then say that no one had the power to correct the kind of vice which drove him; that it took countless different forms and had for each age of a man’s life divers branches which, spawning ever new sensations with each decade that passed, were enough to see those unfortunate to worship at that particular shrine clear through to the grave. But if I tried to speak to him of his mother and the grief he caused her, all I obtained in return was resentment, ill temper, anger, impatience at seeing a fortune which should already be his remaining so long in her hands, the most inveterate hatred for a respectable mother, and the most brazen rebellion against the sentiments of Nature. Can it then truly follow in the case of a man who, indulging his tastes, has so categorically infringed the sacred laws of Nature that the necessary consequence of his first transgression is the appalling ease with which he goes on to commit all other crimes with impunity?

Sometimes I resorted to persuasion through religion in which I have almost invariably found consolation. I endeavoured to open the heart of this perverse man to its balm, being almost certain that I should hold him in a net of faith if I could succeed in communicating its charms to him. But the Marquis gave me little time to employ these means of persuading him. As a declared enemy of our sacred mysteries, a stubborn kicker against the purity of our doctrine, and a furious opponent of the existence of a Supreme Being, the Marquis, instead of allowing me to convert him, sought rather to corrupt me.

‘All religions start from a false premiss, Sophie,’ he would say. ‘Each one assumes the need for belief in a Creator. Now if this everlasting world of ours, like all the others which hang in the infinite plains of space, had no beginning and can never have an end; if all the products of nature are the consequential effects of laws by which Nature herself is bound; if her perpetual actions and reactions presuppose the movement which is an integral part of her essence, then what role is left for the prime mover which you gratuitously impute to it? Believe me, Sophie, the God you admit to is nothing but the fruit on the one hand of ignorance and on the other of tyranny. When the strong first set out to enslave the weak, they convinced their victims that God sanctified the chains that bound them, and the weak, their wits crushed by poverty, believed what they were told. All religions are the destructive consequences of this first fiction and merit the same contempt as its source deserves. There is not one of these fairy-tales which does not march under the banner of imposture and stupidity. In all these mysteries which stagger human reason, I see only dogmas which outrage Nature and grotesque ceremonials which warrant nothing but derision. From the moment my eyes were opened, Sophie, I loathed all these disgusting shams. I vowed I should trample them beneath my feet and never return to the fold as long as I lived. If you wish to be a rational being, follow my lead.’

‘O sir,’ I answered the Marquis, ‘you will rob an unfortunate creature of her sweetest hope if you deprive her of the religion which consoles her. Firmly attached to what it teaches, fervently believing that all the kicks that come my way are no more than the effects of libertinism and the passions, shall I sacrifice the sweetest thoughts I know in life to sophisms which make me tremble?’

To this, I added countless other arguments dictated by my head and watered by my heart, but all the Marquis did was laugh, and his captious principles, enhanced by a more virile eloquence and backed by reference to books that I am glad to say I had never read, always got the better of mine. Madame de Bressac, a woman of virtue and piety, was not unaware that her son justified his wayward conduct by using all the paradoxes of the unbeliever. Oftentimes she communicated her grief to me and, being of a mind to think me possessed of a little more good sense than the other women who attended her, she took a fancy to confiding her sorrows to me.

However, she was increasingly exposed to her son’s evil ways. He reached the stage where he no longer hid them from her. Not only did he surround his mother with the dangerous rabble who served his pleasures but he went so far in his insolence as to tell her, within my hearing, that if she tried to interfere with his tastes once more, then he would convince her of their power to charm by demonstrations thereof in her presence. Such talk and his behaviour cut me to the quick, and I did all in my power to summon from deep within me reasons for stifling the wretched passion which consumed me. But is love a sickness which can be cured? Every argument I put up against it served only to stoke it higher, and the perfidious Bressac never seemed to me more alluring than when I had assembled in my mind all the reasons that should have led me to hate him.

I had been in that house for four years, still persecuted by the same sorrows, still solaced by the same sweet consolations, when the ghastly reason for the Marquis’s exploiting his seductive power over me was made plain in all its horror. At the time, we were in the country and I was the Countess’s sole attendant, her first chambermaid having obtained leave to remain in Paris on account of some business of her husband’s. One evening, shortly after quitting my mistress, I was taking the air on the balcony of my chamber, unable to make up my mind to go to bed, it being excessively warm, when the Marquis knocked unexpectedly on my door and begged me to give him leave to talk with me for part of the night. Alas, every moment granted me by the cruel architect of my unhappiness seemed so precious that I dared not pass up the chance of a single instant with him. He entered, closed the door carefully and, flinging himself on to a chair next to me, said in a slightly embarrassed way:

‘Listen, Sophie, I have something of the greatest consequence to tell you. Swear now that you will never reveal anything of what I am about to say.’

‘O sir, how can you think me capable of betraying your confidence?’

‘You have no idea what you would be risking if you ever showed me that I was mistaken in placing my trust in you.

‘The greatest of my regrets would be to forfeit it. That is threat enough for me.’

‘Well then, Sophie, I am hatching a plot against my mother’s life and it is your hand that I have chosen to serve me.’

‘I, sir?’ I cried, recoiling in horror, ‘how could you ever have imagined two such horrible ideas? Take my life, sir, it is yours, I owe it to you. But you must never think that you will prevail upon me to be a party to a crime the very idea of which my heart could never countenance.’

‘Listen, Sophie,’ said Monsieur de Bressac, calmly quieting my agitation, ‘I suspected you might be reluctant, but since you are a quick-witted girl, I flattered myself I could overcome your resistance by proving to your satisfaction that the crime which you think so monstrous is really a quite simple thing. To your unphilosophical eye, two crimes are involved: the destruction of a fellow human being and the circumstance that the deed is compounded by the fact that the death concerned is that of one's own mother. As far as the destruction of a fellow being is concerned, Sophie, you can be clear in your own mind that it is an illusion. The power to destroy life is not given to man who at most has the power to change its forms, but not the ability to obliterate it. Now, all forms are equal in the eyes of Nature. Nothing is lost in the immense melting-pot where endless variations are produced. Each quantity of matter thrown into it is continually renewed and given a new shape. Whatever part we play in the process cannot offend directly against the whole. Nothing we can do outrages Nature directly. Our acts of destruction give her new vigour and feed her energy, but none of our wreckings can weaken her power. So of what concern is it to Nature, endlessly creating, if a mound of flesh which today has the shape of a woman, should reproduce itself tomorrow as countless insects of different types? Have you courage enough to assert that it requires more effort on her part to construct an individual such as we are than to make a worm and that therefore Nature should logically take a greater interest in us? Or if her degree of concern, or rather unconcern, is the same in both cases, what can it matter to Nature if, through what we call the crime of one individual, another is changed into a fly or a lettuce? Even if it were proved to me that the human species is Nature's most sublime handiwork, and were I to be shown beyond doubt that humankind is so important to her that her laws are necessarily thrown into confusion by its being prematurely destroyed, then I might think that such destruction was a crime. But if the most careful study of Nature should prove to my satisfaction that everything which flourishes on this earth, even the least perfect of her works, is of equal importance in her eyes, I should never imagine that the transformation of one of these beings into a thousand others could ever infringe her laws. I should say to myself: all men, all plants, and all animals which grow, flourish and destroy each other in similar ways, never truly dying but simply reappearing as variants through the process which modifies them—all forms of life, I should further say, growing, destroying, reproducing themselves mechanically, taking now one form and now another, have the ability, if it pleases the Being who alone has the will and the power to actuate them, to change many, many times within the space of a single day without affecting a single law of Nature.

'But the being I propose to strike is my mother, she who bore me in her womb. But why should this footling consideration give me pause? On what grounds should it stay my hand? Was she thinking of me when lubricity drove her to conceive the foetus from which I grew? Should I be grateful to her for thinking of her pleasure? In any case, it is not the blood of the mother which shapes the child, but the blood of the father only. The female womb fructifies, preserves, and amplifies, but does not of itself contribute any vivifying ingredient. Since this is so, I could never have raised my hand against my father, whereas I view the idea of abbreviating my mother's life as a quite straightforward matter. If it is nevertheless possible for a child's heart to be justifiably moved by feelings of gratitude towards its mother, it can only be by reason of the manner in which she treated us from the time we were old enough to appreciate it. If she dealt with us kindly, we can love her, indeed perhaps we should. But if she showed us acts of unkindness linked to no law of Nature, then not only do we owe her nothing, but everything tells us we should be rid of her: it is a consequence of the egoism which naturally and irresistibly leads man to rid himself of everything which gives him pain.'

'O sir,' I replied in alarm to the Marquis, 'the indifference you impute to Nature is yet another effect of your passions. Just for an instant, I beg you, heed your heart and ignore their clamour, and you will see that it reproves the arrogant reasoning prompted by your libertinism! Is not your heart, that judge before whom I ask you to stand, the temple where Nature, which you outrage, demands to be heard and obeyed? If Nature there inscribes the greatest horror for the crime you are planning, will you not concede that it is indeed reprehensible? If you answer that the heat of passion will destroy the horror of it in a twinkling, you will scarcely have time to take satisfaction from its being extinguished before it catches fire again, prompted by the imperious voice of Remorse. The more sensitive you are, the more agonizing its call will be. Each day, every moment, you will see before your eyes the tender mother whom your brutal hand dispatched to her grave. You will hear her plaintive voice still speaking the sweet name which was the delight of your childish years. She will appear in your waking nights, she will rack your dreams, she will reach out with bloody hands to reopen the wounds with which you savaged her. From that moment on, you would not know a single glimmer of happiness on earth, all your pleasures would be poisoned and all your ideas overcast. A heavenly hand whose power you underestimate will avenge the life you destroyed by turning yours to ashes and, without ever enjoying the fruits of your crimes, you will perish a victim of the mortal regret that you ever dared commit them!'

My tears flowed freely as I pronounced these last words. I threw myself at the feet of the Marquis, implored him by whatever he held most dear to put out of his mind all thought of an infamous deed which I swore I would keep secret all my days. But I did not know the heart of the man I tried to disarm: it might beat strongly still, but crime had snapped its springs and the passions in all their fiery heat had melted all save evil-doing. The Marquis stood up coldly.

'I see clearly that I was mistaken, Sophie,' said he. 'I am perhaps as sorry for it for your sake as for mine. But no matter, I shall find other ways and you will have lost much in my eyes while your mistress will have gained nothing.'

This threat changed all my ideas. By not agreeing to the crime as put to me, I should place myself at considerable risk and my mistress would surely die; by consenting to be an accessory, I should be safe from my young master's anger and would necessarily save his mother. This thought, which with me was the work of a moment, prompted me to change sides at once. But since so sudden a shift might seem suspect, I made my defeat a lengthy business, forced the Marquis to repeat his sophisms many times, and gave the impression of not quite knowing how to answer them. The Marquis believed I was beaten, I justified my weakness by acknowledging his persuasive powers, made out at the last that I had capitulated, and the Marquis threw his arms about me. How happy his doing so would have made me had not his barbarous plans cast out all the feelings which my vulnerable heart had conceived for him. Had it been possible for me to love him still.

'You are the first woman I ever kissed,' the Marquis said to me, 'and in truth I do so now with all my heart. You are delicious, child. A ray of philosophy has lit up your mind. How is it possible that such a pretty face could have dwelt so long in darkness?'

And thereupon we agreed our plans. To ensure that the Marquis was firmly snared in the trap, I kept up a certain show of reluctance each time he outlined more of his scheme or explained by what means he intended to carry it off, and it was by this deception, which my unhappy plight fully justified, that I succeeded in fooling him completely. We arranged that some two or three days hence, depending on the opportunities which came my way, I should, without attracting attention, empty the small sachet of poison the Marquis gave me into the cup of chocolate which the Countess was in the habit of taking each morning. The Marquis answered for what would happen next and promised me 2,000 écus annually for the rest of my life which would be mine to spend either in his entourage or in some other place which I should be free to choose. He signed this contract but without specifying in it what I was to do to earn his bounty and then we parted.

In the mean time, there occurred something too singular and too revealing of the character of the man with whom I had to deal for me not to pause at this point in my account, which you are doubtless anticipating, of the manner in which the cruel adventure I was embarked upon was concluded. Two days after our interview, the Marquis received news that an uncle, of whom he had entertained no expectations whatsoever, had died leaving him 80,000 livres a year. ‘Sweet Heaven,’ I asked myself when I was told the news, ‘is it thus that celestial justice punishes those who plot treasons? I believed that by refusing to commit an infinitely smaller crime, I should forfeit my life. And now this man, for devising a scheme of appalling proportions, is set high upon a pinnacle!’ But instantly repenting of this blasphemy against Providence, I fell to my knees, asked pardon of God, and took heart from the thought that this unexpected legacy would at least lead to a change in the Marquis’s plans. Great God, how mistaken I was!

‘O my dear Sophie,’ Monsieur de Bressac said to me as he burst into my chamber that same evening, ‘prosperity positively showers me with favours! How often have I told you that there is nothing better guaranteed to bring happiness than conceiving a crime—indeed, the road to happiness seems to be made easiest for the wrong-doer. Eighty plus sixty, child, makes 140,000 livres to spend annually on my pleasures.’

‘But sir,’ I replied, with a surprise modified by the circumstances by which I was bound fast, ‘given this unexpected piece of good fortune, will you not now wait patiently for the death which you are intent on hastening?’

‘Wait? I do not intend waiting two minutes, child. I am 28 now and waiting is hard at my age. I beg you, do not allow what has happened to alter our plans. Let us take satisfaction in finishing our business before the time comes for us to return to Paris. Try and see to it that the deed is done tomorrow or the next day at the latest. I am already looking forward to paying your first quarter’s allowance and then of making over the full sum to you.’

I did my best to disguise the fear which such fervent pursuit of crime inspired in me. I resumed the role I had been playing, but all my feeling for him now being finally quenched, I believed that so hardened and villainous a man was deserving only of my horror.

But my position was extremely delicate. If I did not do what he wanted, the Marquis would soon realize that I had tricked him. If I warned Madame de Bressac, then whatever action she took as a result of my telling her, the young man would still know that he had been deceived and would perhaps resort to surer methods which would not only bring about the death of the mother but also leave me exposed to the vengeance of the son. There remained the law, but I was absolutely determined not to go down that road. I resolved therefore, come what may, to warn the Countess. Of all the avenues open to me, this seemed the best and I now stepped out boldly upon it.

‘Madame,’ I said to her the day after my latest interview with the Marquis, ‘I have something of the greatest consequence to reveal to you. But though it affects you closely, I am determined to say nothing unless you first give me your word of honour that you will not give your son the smallest mark of your displeasure at what he has been rash enough to plan. You will act, Madame, you will do what you think best, but say nothing. You must grant what I ask or I shall remain silent.’

Madame de Bressac, thinking that the matter consisted of no more than new instances of her son’s ordinary excesses, readily agreed to the promise I asked of her and I told her everything.

When that unhappy mother learned of such infamy, she burst into tears.

‘The wretch!’ she cried, ‘What did I ever do that was not for his good? If I tried to curb his vices or correct them, what motives could ever make me act with such severity but his happiness and tranquillity? To whom does he owe the fortune he has lately inherited if not to me and my efforts on his behalf? If I did not mention them to him, it was to spare his feelings. The monster! 0 Sophie, show me how black the scheme he has formed, paint every corner of the picture so that I have no room left to doubt, for I need to hear anything that will finally silence the voice of Nature in my heart.’

I then showed the Countess the sachet of poison which had been given into my keeping. We gave a little of it to a dog which we then shut up. It died two hours later in the throes of the most agonized convulsions. The Countess, doubting no longer and quickly determining upon the course she would follow, bade me hand over the rest of the poison and immediately dispatched a courier with a letter to her relative, the Duke de Sonzeval, asking him to call secretly on the Minister; to let him have the fullest account of the black-hearted villainy of which she was soon to be the victim; to obtain a *lettre de cachet* against her son; to proceed with all convenient speed to her estate with the letter and an officer of the law; and to deliver her without delay from the monster who plotted against her life. But it was written in Heaven that the abominable crime would be committed and that virtue brought low would succumb to the stratagems of the wicked.

The wretched dog upon which we had performed our experiment revealed all to the Marquis. He heard it howling and knowing his mother to be passing fond of it, anxiously asked what was the matter with the dog and where it was. Since those of whom he enquired knew nothing of the matter, they could not answer. It was doubtless at this point that he began to suspect. He said nothing, but I could see that he was worried, uneasy, and watchful all day long. I mentioned this to the Countess, but there was no choice: all we could do was to impress the courier with the need for haste while concealing the object of his mission. The Countess told her son that she was sending the man to Paris to request the Duke de Sonzeval to take personal charge of the affairs of the lately testate uncle, for unless an authorized signature appeared on the papers, there was every risk of lawsuits ensuing. She added that she had invited the Duke to come in person to lay the whole matter before her so that she could know whether or not, if the business required it, to go up to town taking her son with her. The Marquis, too skilled in physiognomy not to read the embarrassment on his mother’s face nor to mistake the hints of confusion in mine, took all this in but was now even more on his guard than before. Using the pretext of a walk with his *mignons*, he left the château and waited for the courier at a spot where he must surely pass. This messenger, who answered more willingly to him than to his mother, made no difficulties in handing over his dispatches and the Marquis, convinced of what he no doubt called my ‘treachery’, gave the man 100 louis, told him never to show his face at the house again, and returned with rage in his heart. But controlling himself as best he could, he met up with me, teased me in his usual manner, asked me if the deed was fixed for the morrow, added that it was vital it should be done before the Duke arrived, and went off to bed calmly enough and without a sign that anything was amiss. If the dreadful crime was committed—and the Marquis informed me soon afterwards that it was—it could only have happened in the manner which I shall now set down . . .

The next morning Madame took her chocolate according to her custom and, since no one had touched it but me, I am certain that nothing had been put into it. But at about ten o’clock the Marquis, entering the kitchen and finding there only the cook, commanded the man to go into the garden at once and pick peaches for him. The man protested, saying that he could not leave his viands, but the Marquis insisted on his pressing fancy to eat peaches, saying he would stay and watch over the stove. The cook went, the Marquis inspected the viands destined for dinner and in all likelihood dropped the fatal drug which was to snap her life's thread into the chards of which Madame was passionately fond. Dinner was served, the Countess probably ate from the lethal dish, and the crime was perpetrated. What I have told you is conjecture only: during the unhappy aftermath of the event, Monsieur de Bressac told me that the deed was done, and my best guesses have yielded this as the only explanation of the manner in which he managed it. But let us leave these horrid speculations and turn now to the cruel way in which I was punished for having refused to have any hand in so dreadful a business and for having divulged it.

As soon as dinner was over, the Marquis came up to me:

'Listen, Sophie,' he said, with the outward coolness of a tranquil mind, 'I have hit upon a safer way of achieving my ends than the one I put to you, but it requires detailed work. I dare not appear in your chamber as frequently as I have of late, for I fear everyone's prying eyes. Be at the corner of the park at five o'clock. I shall collect you there and during a long walk I shall explain it all to you.'

Whether it was by the express leave of Providence or the fault of too much innocence or blindness on my part, I own there was nothing to forewarn me of the misfortune which lay in wait. I so believed the secret was safe and was so confident of the Countess's arrangements that I never imagined that the Marquis might have found them out. However, I confess to feeling a certain little awkwardness in my heart. One of our tragic poets has remarked that:

> He perjures not but virtue furthers
> Who betrays a trust to punish murthers.

And yet perjury must always be repellent to persons of a nice and feeling disposition who find that they are driven to stoop to it. My role went somewhat against the grain though my doubts did not last long. The Marquis's odious proceedings were to give me fresh cause for distress and my initial scruples were soon silenced.

He came up to me as gaily and as openly as could be and together we walked into the forest without his doing anything more than laughing and bantering as was his habit when he was with me. When I attempted to direct the conversation towards the matter about which he wished to speak to me, he told me to wait a little longer, saying that he feared that we were observed and that we were not yet in a safe place. Imperceptibly, we drew near to the thicket and the oak where he had first encountered me. I could not suppress a shudder on seeing the place, and at that moment the full extent of my imprudence and the true horror of my fate seemed to loom up before my eyes. You may judge if my fears multiplied when I saw, seated at the foot of the fatal tree where I had undergone so ghastly a trial, two of the Marquis's young *mignons* who were thought to be those he liked best. They stood up when we approached and into the grass let fall ropes, bludgeons, and other instruments which made me quake. Then the Marquis, addressing me now only with the crudest and foulest epithets, turned to me:

'You b—ch,' he said, while we were still out of earshot of his young men, 'do you recognize this thicket from which I dragged you like a beast of the forest and saved your life which you had richly deserved to lose? Do you recognize this tree to which I threatened to return you if you ever gave me cause to regret my generosity? Why did you agree to perform the actions against my mother I asked you to undertake if you were bent on betraying me? And what made you think you could serve virtue by putting at risk the life of a man to whom you owed your own? Placed of necessity between two crimes, why did you choose the more abominable? You should have simply refused what I asked, not agreed to it the better to betray me.

Then the Marquis told me of the manner of his intercepting the courier’s dispatches and of the suspicions which had led him to take such a step.

‘What have you achieved by your duplicity, you lying b—ch?’ he went on. ‘You risked your life without saving my mother’s, for that deed is done, and when I return to the house I expect to see my labours amply rewarded. But I must punish you, I must teach you to see that the path of virtue is not always the best and that there are times when to connive at a crime is preferable to exposing it. Knowing me as you must, how did you ever dare think you could play games with me? Did you imagine that the feeling of pity which my heart has never admitted except in so far as it furthers my pleasures, or perhaps one or two principles of religion which I have always trampled underfoot, would be enough to stay my hand? Or perhaps you were relying upon your beauty?’ he added, in the most cruelly bantering tone. ‘Ha! I shall now prove to you that your beauty, even when stripped of the last concealing veil, can never be more than the brand which kindles my vengeance!’

And without giving me time to reply, and showing not the slightest emotion on seeing the torrent of tears which flowed from me, he grasped my arm as in a vice and dragged me across to his henchmen.

‘Here she is,’ said he. ‘This is the jade who set out to poison my mother and, in spite of my best efforts to stop her, has perhaps already succeeded in committing her foul crime. It might have been better if I had handed her over to the law, but then she would simply have forfeited her life whereas I prefer to let her live so that she may have more time to feel her sufferings. Strip her quickly and tie her with her face to that tree so that I may chastise her as she deserves.’

The order was no sooner given than executed. A handkerchief was thrust into my mouth, I was made to clasp the tree in a tight embrace and was bound at the shoulders and legs, which left the rest of my body free of ropes so that I should have no protection against the beating which I was about to receive. The Marquis, marvellously excited, seized a thong. Before striking me, he was cruel enough to wish to observe my face, and it was as though he was feasting his eyes not only on my tears but also on the expressions of pain and fear with which my countenance was suffused. He then placed himself behind me at a distance of about three feet and I immediately felt, from the middle of my back to the top of my legs, the stroke of the lash which he applied with all the strength he could muster. My tormentor paused for a moment and ran his hands roughly over the areas which he had just beaten black and blue. I did not catch what he said to one of his satellites but a handkerchief was immediately thrown over my head so that I was deprived of the power to see anything of their movements. However, I heard them moving about behind me before the resumption of the bloody scenes in which I was destined to play a further part. ‘Oh yes, that’s good,’ the Marquis said before striking me anew. But hardly were these words, of which I understood nothing, out of his mouth when the beating began again with increased violence. There was another interval, hands again explored my lacerated flesh and there was more muttering. One of the young men said, ‘Am I better this way?’ and these new words, which made as little sense to me but to which the Marquis replied, ‘Closer, closer’, were followed by a third assault which was even more vigorously delivered than the others. While it lasted, Bressac said the following words two or three times in rapid succession, seasoning them with appalling curses: ‘Go to it, both of you. Don’t you understand? I intend her to die by my hand here and now?’ These words, spoken in a graded crescendo of pitch and volume, brought the murderous onslaught to a close. For a few moments more, I caught the sound of whispering, heard them moving around, and felt the ropes being untied. It was then that I saw my blood on the grass and realized the state I must be in. The Marquis was alone. His aides had disappeared.

‘Well now, whore,’ he said, looking at me with the distaste which comes when passion is spent, ‘don’t you think virtue is a rather expensive calling? Were not 2,000 écus a year a better bargain than a hundred strokes of the lash?’

I collapsed at the foot of the tree, almost fainting away. The unfeeling blackguard, still not sated by the horrors by which he had been transported and cruelly excited by the spectacle of my suffering, trampled me beneath his feet, pressing me into the earth as though he would choke me.

‘I am more than generous, for I have spared your life,’ he repeated twice or thrice. ‘You would be well advised to think seriously of the use to which you intend to put this new instance of my charity.’

Then he ordered me to my feet and told me to dress. Since there was blood everywhere, I dazedly gathered handfuls of grass and cleaned myself so that my clothes, which were the only ones I had, would not be stained with it. Meanwhile, he paced up and down, paying me no attention, concerned more with his thoughts than with me. My swollen flesh, the still flowing blood, the pain I was suffering—all made the business of dressing virtually impossible. But not once did the brutal man with whom I had to deal, the monster who had reduced me to this pitiful state and for whom, only days before, I should gladly have given my life, not once was he moved by the slightest feeling of commiseration to extend a helping hand. When I was ready, he came up to me.

‘Go where you will,’ said he. ‘You must have money left in your purse. I shall not take it from you. But have a care never to come anywhere near me again, either in Paris or here in the country. I warn you, word will go out that you murdered my mother. If she is not dead yet, I shall tell her it was you who did for her so that she may carry the thought with her to the grave. The entire household will be told. I shall inform the authorities to that effect. As a result, you will find Paris even more uninhabitable than before, for you should bear in mind that the previous case against you was never officially closed but, take note, simply adjourned. You were told that the matter had been dropped, but you were misled. Your sentence has neither been served nor cancelled and it was decided to let you carry on in this footing to see how you would behave. So now you face not one charge but two, and have as your adversary not a common money-lender but a rich and powerful man determined to follow you to hell if, by making slanderous complaints, you should abuse the life which I have been generous enough to let you keep.’

‘O sir,’ I answered, ‘though you have used me cruelly, you need fear nothing from me. I believed I had no choice but to act as I did when your mother’s life was at stake. But I shall never lift a finger against you if Sophie’s interests alone are uppermost. Goodbye, sir. May your crimes make you as happy as your cruelties have caused me pain. Whatever fate Heaven has in store for you, then as long as that same Heaven chooses to prolong my deplorable life, so long shall I use it solely to pray for you.’

The Marquis looked up and could not help but stare as I said these words. Seeing me bathed in tears and scarce able to stand, the heartless man, fearing no doubt to give way to his feelings, walked away and did not look back once in my direction. As soon as he had gone, I sank to the ground and there, surrendering to my distress, rent the air with my groans and watered the earth with my tears:

‘O God!’ I exclaimed, ‘Thou hast worked Thy purpose out. It was by Thy will that innocence has fallen prey to the guilty once more. Do with me, 0 Lord, as it pleaseth Thee, for the pain I have suffered is as nothing beside the pain Thou once didst bear for us! May the suffering which

I endure as I praise Thee render me worthy one day of the rewards which Thou hast promised the weak who keep Thee as a beacon in their time of trouble and glorify Thee in the midst of their travails!'

Night was falling. I was in no fit state to venture any further, indeed I was barely able to stand. I recollected the thicket where I had spent that night four years before, my situation being rather less wretched then than now, and dragged myself into it as best I could. Lodged in that same place, enduring agonies from my wounds which still bled, stricken by the grief of my thoughts and the sorrows of my heart, I spent the cruellest night that can be imagined. The resilience of my youth and my constitution both gave me a little strength as the new day dawned and, filled with dread by the proximity of that cruel chateau, I made off promptly, left the forest and, resolving to strike out at random for the first dwellings which I should meet with, entered the little town of Claye, some six leagues distant from Paris. I asked to be directed to the surgeon's house and I was shown the way. I begged him to bind my wounds, saying that fleeing my mother's house in Paris as the result of some affair of the heart, I had unfortunately fetched up in the forest of Bondy where wicked men had reduced me to the state he saw me in. He tended me, on the condition that I should swear out an affidavit to the Clerk of Justice in the village. I agreed. It seems that the matter was looked into though I never heard what came of it. The surgeon, agreeing to keep me in his house until such time as I should be well again, set about his business with such skill that within a month I was completely recovered.

As soon as my condition allowed me to take the air, my first thought was to find some village girl sufficiently shrewd and intelligent to be sent to the Chateau de Bressac to discover what had transpired since my departure. Curiosity was not my only motive in taking this step. Indeed, curiosity might have been dangerous and was certainly out of place. But I had left in my chamber there the little money I had earned while in the service of the Countess and I had barely 6 louis to hand, whereas I had 30 in the château. I did not imagine that the Marquis would be so cruel as to refuse me what was mine by right and was convinced that once his first anger had passed, he would not inflict a second injustice upon me. I wrote the most affecting letter I could. Alas, it was perhaps too affecting, for in it, despite my better judgement, my sorrowing heart spoke out in favour of that false-hearted man. I carefully hid the place of my confinement from him and entreated him to send me my effects and the small sum of my money which was in my chamber. A peasant girl aged between 20 and 25, brisk-mannered and with all her wits about her, promised to carry my letter and to make such discreet enquiries as would satisfy me on her return as to the various matters on which I informed her she would be questioned. I enjoined her expressly to withhold the name of the place whence she came, on no account to speak of me, but to say that she had got the letter from a man who had brought it from another town more than fifteen leagues distant. Jeannette set off (such was the name of my messenger) and four and twenty hours later brought me my answer. It is indispensable, Madame, for me to relate to you now what had happened in the residence of the Marquis de Bressac before I allow you to see the letter which I received from him.

The Countess de Bressac, falling gravely ill on the day I left the château, had died suddenly during that night. No one had arrived at the chateau from Paris and the Marquis, plunged into the deepest affliction (the hypocrite!), claimed that his mother had been poisoned by a chambermaid who had run off that same day and whose name was Sophie. A search was instituted for this maid, the intention being that if found she should be sent to the gallows. Besides this, the Marquis, now succeeding to his estate, had found himself far richer than he had thought, for Madame de Bressac's strong-boxes and gems, of which little had been known, made him master, independently of his own fortune, of 600,000 francs in property and ready cash. It was said that, sorely afflicted though he was, he had great difficulty in hiding his jubilation. The relatives who had been summoned for the post-mortem examination he had insisted on had duly lamented the fate of the unhappy Countess and sworn to avenge her if the maid who had committed so heinous a crime should ever fall into their hands. Then they left the young man in complete, undisturbed possession of the fruit of his villainy. Monsieur de Bressac himself had spoken to Jeannette and had asked her divers questions which the girl had answered with such firmness and candour that he had resolved to write a reply for her without pressing her further.

‘This is the fatal letter,’ said Sophie, taking it from her pocket. ‘I have it here, Madame. There are times when my heart has need of it and I shall keep it until my dying breath. Read it, if you can do so without revulsion.’

Taking the note from the hand of our fair adventurer, Madame de Lorsange read the following words:

‘A slut capable of poisoning my mother is bold indeed who dares write to me after committing so foul a mischief. She does well to conceal her whereabouts, for she may rest assured that if discovered she will be seriously incommoded. But what does she ask? Why does she speak of money and effects? Is not what she left behind the equivalent of what she stole during both her sojourn and her committing of her late crime? She is well advised never to send here again as she now does, for she should know that her messenger would be detained until the secret of her hiding-place was known to the authorities.’

‘Pray continue, my child,’ said Madame de Lorsange, returning the letter to Sophie. ‘These proceedings fill me with the deepest horror. To be rolling in wealth and to withhold from an unfortunate girl who refused to abet a crime the little money which she honestly came by, is an act of unprecedented infamy!’

‘Alas, Madame,’ continued Sophie, taking up the thread of her tale, ‘I was two days weeping over his cruel letter, bitterly lamenting the base dealing it revealed far more than the refusal which it contained. I am guilty, then, I cried, I am denounced to the law of men for having too earnestly respected Justice. So be it! But I do not repent of my conduct. Whatever befalls me, I shall always remain beyond the reach of spiritual torment and remorse as long as my heart remains pure and my wrongs run to nothing more than my having too well heeded those sentiments of even-handedness and virtue which will never desert me.’

Yet I could not believe that the searches the Marquis had spoken of had any substance to them. They seemed most unlikely for there would have been such danger to him of his bringing me before the Justices that I reasoned that he must secretly have been more frightened at the prospect of coming face to face with me, if he were ever to discover my hiding-place, than I was of his threats. This reflection determined my resolve to stay in the place where I then was and, if possible, to find employment there until my funds swelled sufficiently to enable me to leave. Monsieur Rodin (this was the name of the surgeon with whom I was lodged) himself suggested that I should enter his service. He was a man of 35 years of age, of a callous, abrupt, and brutal character, but nevertheless enjoying an excellent reputation throughout the whole of the surrounding country. He was totally wedded to his doctoring and as he employed no woman in his service, was only too pleased, on his returning home each day, to find one there to attend to the needs of his house and his person. He offered me 200 francs annually and a small share of the revenue from his practice, and I accepted what he proposed. Monsieur Rodin had too exact a knowledge of my person to be ignorant of the fact that I had never known a man. He was also aware of my extreme desire to keep myself always pure and promised he would never trouble me on that score. As a result, our mutually agreeable arrangement was quickly settled. But I did not tell my new master everything and he never knew who I was.

I had been two years in his house, and though I did not fail to have a great deal of hard labour to do in it, yet the kind of peace of mind I enjoyed there had almost driven my sorrows from my mind, when Heaven, resolved never to allow one single virtue to go forth from my heart without immediately burdening me with misfortune, intervened once more to wrench me from the cheerless felicity I fleetingly tasted and plunge me into new calamities.

One day, finding myself alone in the house and passing through various parts of it as and where my duties beckoned, I thought I heard groans coming from the depths of a cellar. I approached, the sounds grew clearer, and I made out the cries of a girl. But a securely locked door separated her from me and I was quite unable to open up the place where she was held. Countless thoughts crowded into my mind. What was the poor creature doing there? Monsieur Rodin was childless and to my knowledge had neither sisters nor nieces in whom he might profess an interest. The perfect regularity of the life I had observed him lead ruled out the possibility that the young woman was intended for his debauches. For what reason, then, had he locked her away? Exceeding curious to resolve these difficulties, I dared question the child, asking her what she did there and who she was.

‘Alas, Mademoiselle,’ the hapless creature replied through her tears, ‘I am the daughter of a woodcutter who lives in the forest. I am but 12. The gentleman who lives here, aided by a friend, carried me off yesterday at a moment when my father was absent. Together they bound me, threw me into a bag of sawdust which prevented my crying out, put me over the back of a horse, and smuggled me into this house late last night, bringing me directly to this cellar. I do not know what they want of me but on reaching this place they stripped me naked, inspected my person, asked my age, and then the gentleman who seemed to be master of the house told the other that the operation would have to be postponed until the evening of the day after next on account of my being afraid; that the experiment would pass off all the better for my being a little calmer; and that otherwise I answered fully to the conditions required in a *subject.’*

After pronouncing these words, the girl fell silent and began weeping again more bitterly than before. I persuaded her to calm herself and promised to help. I found it exceeding difficult to understand what Monsieur Rodin and his friend, also a surgeon, were intending to do with this hapless girl. However, the word *subject*, which I had heard them use on other occasions, immediately prompted the suspicion that it was more than likely that they were planning to perform some ghastly anatomical dissection on the wretched child. But before fixing myself in this cruel opinion, I resolved to make further enquiries. Rodin returned with his friend and they supped together and dismissed me. With a show of obedience, I hid myself, and their conversation convinced me only too well that they were indeed hatching a horrible plan.

‘It is a part of the anatomy,’ said one, ‘which will never be properly understood until it has been examined with the greatest exactness in a subject aged 12 or 13 who is cut open at the precise moment pain makes contact with the nerves. It is odious that considerations of a piddling sort should impede the progress of science the way they do. She would be one subject sacrificed to save millions: can we afford to wonder whether we should pay such a price? Is the murder which is sanctioned by law of a different nature to the kind which we are about to commit in our operation? Is not the whole point of the wise laws which permit capital punishment that one life should be sacrificed to save a thousand others? So let no such reservations stand in our way.

‘As far as I am concerned,’ the other went on, ‘I am clear in my own mind. I should have done it long ago if I had dared to do it alone.’

I shall not report to you the rest of this conversation. It ran solely upon medical matters and I took in little of it. But from that moment I set the whole of my mind, whatever the cost might be, to the task of rescuing this wretched victim from an art which, though precious no doubt from every point of view, bought its progress at too high a price when that price was the immolation of innocence. The two friends parted and Rodin went to bed without speaking a word to me. The following day, which was the day appointed for the sacrifice, he left the house in the usual way, saying that he would not return till supper which he would, as on the previous evening, take with his friend. He was hardly out of the house when I began busying myself with my own scheme. Heaven gave its blessing, but whether this was to succour innocence sacrificed or with a view to punish wretched Sophie for her act of compassion, I dare not say. I shall relate the matter as it happened, and you will be the judge, Madame, for I am brought so low by the hand of impenetrable Providence that I cannot ever fathom what it has in store for me. Endeavouring always to promote its designs, I have been barbarously punished for doing so and can say no more than that.

I went down to the cellar and again questioned the girl who repeated the same talk and the same fears. I asked her if she knew where her captors left the key when they closed her prison door on her. ‘I don’t know,’ she answered, ‘but I believe they take it with them.’ Determined to leave no avenue unexplored, I was casting around me when I felt something in the dirt at my feet. I bent down. It was the key! I opened the door. The poor little creature threw herself at my feet and watered my hands with the tears of her gratitude. Without pausing to wonder what risk I ran, without reflecting on the fate which must await me, I thought of nothing but of ways of helping the child to escape. I succeeded in getting her out of the village without our meeting anyone and set her down on the forest path, kissed her, and rejoiced as much as she both in her present happiness and in the good cheer she would bring to her father when she reappeared before him. Then I promptly returned to the house.

Our two surgeons returned at the hour appointed in eager anticipation of executing their odious plans. They supped with as much good humour as haste and went down into the cellar the moment they had finished. The only precaution I had taken to conceal what I had done was to break the lock and return the key to the place where I had found it, so as to suggest that the girl had escaped unaided. But the men I hoped thus to deceive were not the kind to let themselves be so easily duped. Rodin came back up fuming, leaped upon me and, in a welter of blows, demanded to know what I had done with the girl he had locked up. I began by denying all knowledge of it, but my wretched honesty led me in the end to admit everything. There is nothing that can match the callous, wild rantings which these two blackguards then uttered. One proposed that I should take the place of the child I had saved, the other that I should be subjected to tortures even more appalling. All these proposals and ravings were interspersed with blows which sent me reeling from the one to the other and soon I was so dazed that I fell to the ground unconscious. Their fury was then quieted. Rodin brought me round and as soon as I had recovered my wits, they ordered me to strip. I obeyed tremblingly. When I was as they wanted, one of them held me while the other operated: they cut a toe from each of my feet then, sitting me down, they pulled out one of my back teeth apiece.

‘But that’s not the finish of it,’ said Rodin, putting an iron into the fire. ‘She came to me with the stripes of the whip on her. I intend to send her away otherwise marked.’

And so saying, the unspeakable wretch applied to the back of my shoulder the red-hot iron with which thieves are branded while his colleague held me fast.

‘Now let the whore try and make trouble, just let her try,’ said Rodin furiously and, pointing to the shameful brand, added: ‘I shall have no trouble now explaining my reasons for dismissing her from my service with such secrecy and such dispatch.’

This said, the two friends laid hold of me. It was night. They took me to the edge of the forest and callously left me there, but not without a reminder of how dangerous it would be for me in my present disreputable state to lodge any kind of complaint against them.

Anyone else but I would have paid little heed to this threat: the moment it was shown that the treatment I had received was not the work of any established court of law, what had I to fear? But my weakness, my ingrained lack of guile, the alarms which arose out of my unfortunate adventures in Paris and at the Chateau de Bressac, all these things numbed my wits and made me fearful and I had now only one thought, which was to flee from that dreadful place as soon as my sufferings had eased a little. Since they had carefully bound the hurts they had inflicted on me, the pain had subsided by the next morning and, after spending one of the most dreadful nights of my life under a tree, I set off at first light. The injuries to my feet prevented my walking very quickly but, anxious to be well clear of the forest which was so full of danger for me, I nevertheless made four leagues that first day and as many again the next and the day following. But having no directions and not daring to enquire my way, I simply went in circles around Paris, and by the evening of the fourth day of my perambulation, I found I had got no further than Lieusaint. Knowing that this road would carry me to the cities of southern France, I resolved to follow it and make my way as best I could to those distant places, believing that the peace and safe haven which were so cruelly denied me in my native land stood waiting for me perhaps at the other end of the globe.

O fatal error! O, how numerous the trials I had yet to endure! My funds, swelling more modestly in my service with Rodin than during the time I had spent with the Marquis de Bressac, were not so large that I had needed to set a proportion aside for safe-keeping, and fortunately I had the entire sum with me, which is to say about 10 louis, this sum being made up of what I had salvaged from my Bressac service and what I had earned in the house of the surgeon. Although excessively weighed down by my sorrows, I could yet rejoice that this money had not been taken from me and I flattered myself that it would at least last me until I was able to find a situation. As the infamies which had been inflicted upon me did not show outside my clothes, I fancied I should always be able to hide them and their stigma would not be a bar to my earning a living. I was 22 and enjoyed rude good health in spite of my being slight in build and slenderly made; I was possessed of a face which, to my cost, others praised too well, and a handful of virtues which, though they had never borne me but misfortune, nevertheless afforded me inward consolations and allowed me to hope that in the end Providence would grant them if not some measure of reward then at least some suspension of the ills which they had brought upon my head. Taking heart and full of hope, I continued on my way as far as Sens. But my badly healed feet caused me considerable pain and I resolved to rest up there for a few days. Not daring to expose the cause of my sufferings to any person and recalling the drugs which I had seen Rodin employ in similar cases, I bought quantities of the same and treated myself. A week’s rest set me completely to tights. I might perhaps have found myself employment at Sens, but only too sensible of the need to get away I did not even think to ask. I went on my way with an idea that I might seek my fortune in the Dauphiné region. I had heard a great deal about this part of France during my childhood and fancied happiness was to be had there. We shall see if I succeeded in finding it.

Whatever the circumstances of my life, the feeling for religion had never deserted me. Scorning the sophisms of clever men which I believed to stem much more from libertinism than from true conviction, I always countered them with my heart and my conscience, finding in both sufficient weapons to combat them. Forced on occasions by my misfortunes to neglect the duties of religion, I made good my deficiencies whenever I could. I had just left Auxerre on *7* June—I shall never forget that time—and had proceeded for about two leagues. The heat was beginning to tell on me and I resolved to climb a low hill topped by a spinney to my left which was somewhat out of my way, with a notion of finding a little coolness and of sleeping a couple of hours there, which I could do at a cheaper cost than at an inn and in greater safety than on the high road. I made my way up and settled at the foot of an oak where, after partaking of a frugal meal of a crust of bread and water, I surrendered to the charms of Morpheus. I slumbered peacefully for above two hours. On waking, I feasted my eyes on the landscape spread out before me, still to the left of the road. In the middle of a forest which stretched away endlessly, I could make out, more than three leagues off, a small steeple rising modestly into the air.

‘Sweet solitude!’ said I, ‘how dearly I long to dwell in thy midst! Here must be the retreat of solitary nuns or saintly men, with thoughts only for their duties, wholly devoted to religion, far removed from pernicious society where crime, ceaselessly doing battle with innocence, invariably gains the upper hand. I feel sure that all the virtues reside behind those walls.’

I was musing thus when a young woman of my age, shepherding a few sheep on this higher ground, suddenly came into view. I enquired of her what the buildings were and she said that what I could see was a house of Recollet Friars which was occupied by four solitary Brethren whose religion, abstinence, and sobriety were without equal.

‘It is,’ said she, ‘a place of pilgrimage where once a year people go to see a miraculous Virgin who grants the truly pious whatever they ask.’

Filled with an immediate desire to go and solicit help at the feet of the Holy Mother of God, I asked the girl if she would come with me. She said that she could not, that her mother was waiting even then for her at home, but that the way was easy. She pointed it out to me, adding that the Father Superior, who was the most respectable and holy of men, would not only receive me warmly but extend a helping hand should I be in need of one.

‘He is called the Reverend Father Raphael,’ the girl went on. ‘He is Italian but has lived all his life in France. He is happy in this solitary place and has several times refused excellent offers of advancement from the Pope to whom he is related. He is a man of high family, mild-mannered, obliging, full of zeal and piety, aged about *50,* and considered by everyone hereabouts to be a saint.’

The words of the shepherdess inflaming me further, I found it quite impossible now to ignore the desire I had formed to undertake a pilgrimage to the monastery and, by as many pious acts as I was capable of, to make amends for all the neglected observance of which I was guilty. Although I myself stood in need of alms, I gave the girl of my charity and without more ado was embarked upon the road to Sainte-Marie-des-Bois (this was the name of the monastery towards which I was headed). Down on the plain once more, I lost sight of the steeple and my only guide was now the forest itself. I had not asked my informant how many leagues it was from the place where I had encountered her to the monastery, and soon I discovered that the distance was in fact much greater than the idea I had formed of it. But I was in no whit discouraged. I reached the edge of the forest and, observing that there was ample daylight left, I decided to press on into it, being virtually assured of getting to the monastery before nightfall. However, my eyes met with no sign of human activity, not a house even, and the only way forward was a little-used path which I followed as best I could. I had come at least five leagues from the hill where I had thought that three at most would see me to my destination, and could still make out nothing of it.

The sun was about to desert me when at last I heard the sound of a bell less than a league from where I was. I turned towards the sound, I quickened my steps, the path widened a little, and after an hour's walking from the time I heard the bell, I finally made out some hedges and shortly after that the monastery itself. Nothing could be more rural than this deserted spot. There were no other buildings close by, the nearest being more than six leagues off, and in every direction the forest extended for at least three leagues. The monastery being in a hollow, I had been obliged to make a considerable descent to get to it: this explained why I had lost sight of the steeple the moment I was down on the plain. The hut occupied by one of the Brothers who tended the garden was built against the wall of the inner refuge, and it was here that the traveller applied before gaining entry. I asked the saintly hermit if it was allowed to speak to the Father Superior. He asked me what I wanted of him. I gave him to understand that a matter of religious observance, a vow, had drawn me to this pious retreat and that I should be thoroughly consoled for all the trouble I had taken to reach the place if I could, just for a moment, prostrate myself before the Virgin and kneel at the feet of the holy director of the house where her miraculous statue resided. After showing me where I could rest, the Brother disappeared into the monastery and, since it was already night and the friars were, said he, at supper, it was some time before he returned. Finally, he reappeared accompanied by a friar:

'This is Father Clement, Mademoiselle,' said the Brother. 'He is the steward of our House and he has come to determine whether what you desire is sufficiently grave to warrant disturbing the Superior.'

Father Clement was a man of 45, enormously stout and colossally tall. His eyes were wild and dark, his voice rough and hard, and his manner made me tremble far more than it consoled. An involuntary shudder seized me and, powerless to prevent it, the recollection of all my past misfortunes swam up into my memory.

'What do you want?' the friar said very sternly. 'What time is this to be coming to church? You have the look of an adventuress about you.'

'Holy Man,' said I, flinging myself to the ground, 'I thought there was never a wrong time to appear in the house of God, and to enter it I have travelled far, full of fervour and devotion. I ask to be confessed if that is possible, and when the secrets of my heart are known to you, you will see whether or not I am worthy to prostrate myself at the feet of the miraculous Virgin which you care for in your saintly house.'

'But it is not the hour for confession,' said the friar in a kindlier tone. 'Where will you spend the night? We have nowhere to accommodate you. Morning was the time to come.'

Against this I set out for him all the reasons which had prevented my doing so and, without giving me any further answer, he went off to report to the Superior. A few moments later, I heard the church doors opening and then saw the Father Superior himself, striding towards the gardener's hut where I was. He invited me to go with him into the temple. Father Raphael, of whom I should give you some idea before proceeding further, was as old as I had been given to believe but looked a man of not above 40 years. He was slim, quite tall, and his face was intelligent and kindly. He spoke French extremely well though with a slight Italian accent, and was as outwardly genteel and considerate as he was inwardly saturnine and fierce, of which I shall presently have only too much occasion to persuade you.

'My child,' this man of God said graciously, 'for all that the hour is quite unseemly and although it is not our custom to welcome callers so late, I shall nevertheless hear your confession. We shall then consider what arrangements can be made for you to spend the night with respect to the decencies until tomorrow when you will bow down to the holy statue which we have in our care.’

So saying, he lit a number of Lamps around the confessional, bade me go inside and, sending the Brother away and shutting all the doors, urged me to confide fully and freely in him. In the presence of so kindly-seeming a man, I felt perfectly recovered from the fears which Father Clement had started in me. After humbling myself at my confessor’s feet, I opened my heart fully to him and, with my habitual candour and trust, left him in ignorance of nothing which concerned me. I confessed all my faults and confided all my misfortunes ever to him: nothing was omitted, not even the shameful mark with which the execrable Rodin had branded me.

Father Raphael listened with the closest attention, and even asked me to repeat a number of details which he heard with an air of compassion and concern. His chief questions at various times concerned the following points:

1. Was it quite true that I was an orphan and hailed from Paris?
2. Was it really the case that I had no family or friends or protectors or anyone with whom I corresponded?
3. Had I told anyone other than the shepherdess of my design to come to the monastery, and had I arranged to meet her on my return?
4. Was it a fact that I was a virgin and that I was but 22 years of age?
5. Was it absolutely certain that I had not been followed and that no one had observed my entering the monastery?

When I had given him full satisfaction on these matters and answered each question in the most candid fashion, the Superior rose to his feet and, taking me by the hand, said:

‘Come, my child. The hour is too late for you to kneel to the Virgin this evening. But I shall see to it that tomorrow you will have the sweet comfort of hearing mass at the foot of her statue. But first let us think of how we shall arrange for you to sup and sleep tonight.’

And so saying, he led me towards the sacristy.

‘But Father,’ said I with a hint of unease which I felt was beyond my control, ‘am I then to be lodged inside your house?’

‘But where else, fair pilgrim?’ he replied, opening the doors of the cloister which, giving on to the sacristy, gave me entry to the main body of the building. ‘Come now! Are you afraid to spend the night with four men of God? Oh, you will discover, my angel, that we are not really as sanctimonious as we appear and that we know how to take our pleasure with a pretty girl.’

These words made me quake. ‘O, just Heaven!’ said I to myself. ‘Am I once more to be the victim of my righteous sentiments? Will the desire which I felt to draw near to what is most respectable in religion meet with the same punishment as a crime?’ Meanwhile we continued to advance through the darkness until at last, at the end of one of the sides of the cloister, there appeared a stairway. The Superior indicated that I should precede him and, observing that I was somewhat reluctant to do so, turned to me:

‘Twice a whore!’ he said angrily and, immediately exchanging his smooth tone for the most sneering of manners, went on: ‘Don’t think you can turn back now! God’s blood, you will soon learn that you had done better to tumble into a robbers’ lair than fall into a company of four Recollets!’

Causes for my fears increased and multiplied so rapidly before my very eyes that I had no time to be alarmed by these words which had no sooner registered when new subjects of alarm assailed my senses. The door opened and seated at a table I saw three friars and three girls, all six in the most indecent state imaginable. Two of the girls were completely naked and the third was in the process of being undressed. The friars were more or less in the same condition.

‘My friends,’ said Raphael as he entered the room, ‘we were one short: now we have her! Allow me to present to you a genuine phenomenon. Here is a Lucretia who bears on her shoulder the mark of the whore and here,’ he went on with a gesture as clear as it was indecent, ‘here, proof certain of an authentic virginity.’

Great hoots of laughter from every corner of the room greeted this singular welcoming address and Clement, the friar I had met first, already half drunk, immediately shouted for the facts to be checked at once. Given the obligation on me to paint a picture for you of the people in whose midst I now found myself, I shall interrupt my tale here—but shall leave you in suspense with regard to my situation for the shortest time possible.

You are already sufficiently acquainted with Raphael and Clement for me to come directly to the others. Antonin, the third of the friars in the monastery, was a small man of 40, spare, slight, with a temperament of fire and the face of a satyr, hairy as a bear, a man of unbridled lechery, mettlesome and nasty beyond example. Father Jerome, the senior man, was an old libertine of 60, as hard and as brutal as Clement but the greater drunkard of the two. Being indifferent to ordinary pleasures, he was obliged, if he was to feel any glimmer of sensuality, to have recourse to tastes as depraved as they were revolting.

Florette was the youngest of the women. She was a native of Dijon, aged about 14, the daughter of a prosperous merchant of that town. She had been abducted by agents of Raphael who, wealthy and enjoying great credit in his Order, was prepared to spare no pains in the pursuit of his pleasures. She was dark, had very pretty eyes and an exceedingly alluring and provocative face. Corné1ie was about 16, blonde and comely in appearance. She had beautiful hair, dazzling skin, and the finest of figures; she was from Auxerre, the daughter of a wine-merchant, and had been seduced by Raphael himself who had covertly lured her into his snares. Omphale was a woman of 30, very tall, with a very sweet and pleasing face, an extremely full figure, superb hair, the most handsome bosom conceivable, and the tenderest eyes you could ever hope to see. She was the daughter of a well-to-do vine-grower from Joigny and had been on the point of marrying a man who would have made her fortune when Jerome detached her from her family at the age of 16 by decoying her with the most extraordinary enticements. Such was the company in which I was to live, such the sink of foulness and filth, whereas I had fancied I would find virtues there frilly consonant with all that may be assumed of a respectable place of retreat.

The moment I joined this fearsome group, I was given to understand that I should be well advised to imitate the submissiveness of my companions.

‘You can easily imagine,’ said Raphael, ‘how futile it would be to put up any resistance in this inaccessible fastness to which your unlucky star has brought you. You say you have endured many misfortunes and, judging by your tale, that is quite true. Yet you will note that the greatest mishap of all for a virtuous maid is still missing from the catalogue of your misfortunes. Is it natural for a girl to be a virgin at your age? And is not being so a kind of miracle which could not be prolonged indefinitely? Like you, your companions were extremely put out when they realized they had no choice but to serve our desires and, as you will wisely do, they submitted at the last when they saw that failure to do so would lead only to harsh treatment. In your present circumstances, Sophie, how can you possibly hope to defend yourself? Give a thought to how alone you are in the world. On your own admission you have neither relatives nor friends remaining. Think of your situation here in this sequestered place far from help, forgotten by the outside world, in the clutches of four libertines who certainly have no wish to spare you. To whom will you turn ? Will it be to the God whose help you implored with such fervour only moments since, who takes advantage of your zeal to push you a little more firmly into the trap? You must see that there is no power human or divine capable of plucking you from our grasp, nothing in the realm of physical possibilities or in the class of miracles, nothing in short which can succeed in further preserving the virtue of which you are so proud, nothing which will prevent your becoming in every sense and in all conceivable ways the prey of the foul excesses which all four of us are about to indulge in at your expense. So remove your clothes, Sophie, and may your most total resignation earn our leniency which, however, if you do not submit, will be instantly replaced by the harshest treatment which will, in turn, serve only to inflame us further without shielding you from our intemperance and brutal appetites.'

I was only too aware that this terrible haranguing left me without expedient. But would I not have been indeed guilty not to resort to the shift which my heart now prompted me to take and which Nature still left open to me? I threw myself at Raphael's feet and, deploying all the forces of my moral being, implored him not to take advantage of my predicament. The bitterest of salty drops bedewed his knees and everything my heart could furnish by way of pathos I dared try upon him as I wept—but having yet to learn that tears are but an added attraction in the eyes of crime and debauchery, I did not know that everything I did in my efforts to move the hearts of these monsters would simply have the effect of inflaming them further. Raphael got to his feet in a fury:

'Take the slut, Antonin,' he said, frowning ominously, 'and as you strip her and we look on, teach her that compassion has no claim upon men like us.'

Antonin seized me in his spare, wiry arms and, spicing word and action with appalling oaths, took less than two minutes to throw off my clothes and expose my nakedness to the gaze of the assembled company.

'Such a beautiful creature!' said Jerome. 'May the monastery walls fall on me if I ever saw such loveliness these thirty years past!'

'One moment,' said the Superior, 'let us put a little order into our dealings. You are all aware, my friends, of our customary procedures with new acquisitions. She must undergo them all, without exception, and meanwhile let these three other women remain at hand to attend to or stimulate our needs.'

Immediately, a circle was formed and I was placed in the centre. There, for above two hours, I was inspected, scrutinized, probed by all four libertines, the object in turn of their praise and censure. You will permit me, Madame (said the beautiful prisoner blushing furiously at this juncture), to draw a veil over a part of the obscene details which were observed at this first ceremony. Let your imagination picture every outrage to which the spirit of debauchery is like to incite lecherous men to perform in such circumstances. Let it observe them as they pass in turn from my companions to me, comparing, contrasting, juxtaposing, discoursing—and you will have only the palest notion of what was perpetrated during the course of those first orgies which, however, were tepid affairs compared with the horrors of which I was shortly to be the victim.

'Come,' said Raphael whose desires had reached a prodigious pitch of excitement which he seemed incapable of containing any longer, 'the time has come to sacrifice the victim. Let each of us prepare to make her undergo our chosen pleasures.'

And the wicked man, placing me on a couch in an attitude propitious to his execrable pleasures and ordering Antonin and Clement to hold me fast, this Raphael, who was Italian, a friar and thoroughly depraved, satisfied his impure desires but left me still a maid. Was there ever such frenzy? It was as though each of these crapubus men gloried in denying Nature in the choice of their ignoble pleasures. Clement stepped forward, excited by the sight of the infamies committed by Raphael, and made more furious still by what he had been engaged in as he watched. He declared that he would be no more dangerous to me than his Superior and that the altar on which he paid his homage would similarly leave my virtue unthreatened. He ordered me to kneel and, clasping me close as I crouched, assuaged his perfidious passions in such a way that during the sacrifice I was denied the power of protesting at the irregularity of his procedure. Jerome followed, choosing the temple favoured by Raphael, but without attempting to reach the sanctuary; content to observe the portals from without and excited by preliminary, quite indescribable obscenities, he achieved the full satisfaction of his desires only by employing the same barbarous means of which Dubourg almost made me the victim and which I suffered entire at the hands of Bressac.

‘The preparations have begun well,’ said Antonin as he seized me. ‘Come, my sweet, come that I may make up for the irregularity of my brothers and pick the flower which their intemperance has left for me . . .’

The details . . . O God! . . . I cannot find words to paint them. It was as if the villain, the most libertine of the four, though seemingly the least removed from the views of Nature, was prepared to tread her path and put a smaller degree of nonconformity into his order of worship, only by compensating for a semblance of lesser depravity by inflicting the highest degree of outrage upon my person . . . Alas, if in imagination I had on occasion strayed to thoughts of such pleasures, I always believed them to be as chaste as the God who inspired them: they were given to humankind by Nature as a consolation and were born of love and decency. Foreign to me was the notion that man, like the beasts of the field, could pleasure himself only by making his partners suffer. But this I now discovered, and with such a degree of violence that the natural pain of the loss of my virginity was the least of the agonies which I was required to bear during his terrifying onslaught. But Antonin marked the moment of paroxysm with such furious whoopings and bellowings, with such murderous assaults on every part of my body, and not least with bites which were like the tiger’s bloody caress, that for a moment I believed I had fallen prey to some wild animal which would not be sated until it had devoured me whole. When these horrors ended, I collapsed upon the altar where I had been sacrificed, motionless and almost unconscious.

Raphael ordered the women to care for me and give me food, but a fit of rage and sorrow mixed assailed my soul at this cruel moment. I could not bear the horrible idea that I had now at last lost the treasure of my maidenhood for which I would have sacrificed my life a hundred times over, nor the thought that I had been defiled by the very men from whom I had every reason on the contrary to expect to receive most help and the highest spiritual consolation. My tears flowed freely, my screams reverberated around the room, I rolled upon the ground, tore my hair and begged my tormentors to make an end of me. But though the blackguards, far too hardened to such displays, busied themselves more with tasting new pleasures with my companions than with easing my sufferings or comforting my hurts, yet nevertheless being inconvenienced by my wailing, they resolved to send me away to rest in a place where I could not be heard. Omphale was about to lead me off when the perfidious Raphael, casting another lubricious glance upon me notwithstanding the cruel state to which I had been reduced, declared that he would not allow me to be dismissed without making me his victim one more time. No sooner was the scheme conceived than it was carried out. But since his desires now required an extra degree of stimulation, it was not until he had fully employed the cruel expedients favoured by Jerome that he succeeded in finding the powers necessary for the execution of his latest crime. What new heights of debauchery were there scaled! Great God, how was it that these lechers could be so savage as to choose an instant of agonizing spiritual crisis such as the one through which I was then passing to inflict upon me its barbarous physical counterpart?

‘By God!’ said Antonin as he too resumed with me, ‘there is nothing finer than to follow the example set by a Superior, and nothing spicier than to repeat a crime. They say that pain is conducive to pleasure, and I am persuaded that this delicious child will make me the happiest of mortals.’

And notwithstanding my struggles, my screams, and my supplications, I became once more the hapless butt of the wretch’s outrageous urges . . . Finally, I was allowed to quit the room.

‘If,’ said Clement, ‘I had not been quite so premature when our beautiful princess first arrived, she would not leave the room without serving my passions a second time. But she will lose nothing by waiting.’

‘I can promise her as much,’ said Jerome, and as I passed by him he let me feel the weight of his arm. ‘But for tonight, let us retire to our beds.’

Raphael being of the same mind, the orgies ceased. He kept Florette by him—and doubtless she remained there the whole night—while the rest of the company went their several ways. I was given into the keeping of Omphale, a sort of Sultaness who, being older than the others, appeared to me to have charge of the sisters. She led me into our common apartment in a kind of square tower with a bed in each corner for each of the four of us. By custom, one of the friars always followed their women as they retired, securing the door with two or three bolts. It was Clement who carried out this duty. Once inside, it was impossible to get out again, there being no other exit apart from a small adjoining closet designed for our ease and our toilets, which had a window as closely barred as the one in the chamber where we slept. The place was, furthermore, sparsely furnished: a chair and bedside table curtained off by a piece of cheap calico, one or two wooden chests in the closet, close-stools, bidets, and a dressing-table for our common use. It was not until the next morning that I observed these things, for during that initial instant I had no thought but for my sufferings. ‘O just Heaven!’ said I to myself, ‘so it is indeed written that no act of virtue shall go forth from my heart but that it is immediately followed by its punishment! What wrong did I commit, my God, by wishing to call on this house and follow some slight religious observance? Did I offend against Heaven by wishing so to do and was this my reward for making the attempt? O incomprehensible decrees of Providence, grant me, I beg, a moment’s clear view of your laws if it is not your design to drive me to revolt against them!’ Bitter tears followed these reflections and I was still wet with them when Omphale drew near to my bed as day was about to break.

‘Dear sister,’ said she, ‘I come to urge you to take heart. During my first days here, I wept as you do, but now habit prevails and you will get used to things as I have. The first times are horrible. It is not simply that we are endlessly forced to satisfy the unbridled lust of debauched men which makes our life such torture: it is the loss of liberty and the brutal way we are treated in this infamous place. Those who are wretched are consoled when they see those around them suffer; however much my wounds smarted, I soothed them by asking one of my companions to acquaint me with the further ills which lay in wait for me. ‘Listen,’ said Omphale, sitting at the head of my bed, ‘I am going to speak to you in all honesty, but remember: you must never abuse my trust. The most cruel of our sufferings, my dear, is not knowing what our fate will be: we have no way of knowing what will happen to us when we leave here. We have as much evidence as our solitude allows us to acquire that girls dismissed from this place are never seen again in the world outside. The friars themselves give us notice of this, for they do not hide from us that this retreat is also our grave. Even so, hardly a year goes by but that two or three girls leave. What happens to them? Do the friars make an end of them? At times they claim that they do and at other times they say that they don't, but none of those who have gone away, however sincerely they swore to lodge a formal complaint against the monastery and to work for our release, not one I say has ever kept her word. Do the friars see to it that the complaints are hushed up or do they ensure that the girls are in no state to make them? When we ask new arrivals for news of those who have left, they invariably know nothing about them. So what happens to the poor creatures? That is what makes us sick with worry, Sophie, that is the fatal uncertainty which makes our lives so anguished and wretched. I have been in this house for fourteen years and I have seen above fifty girls go hence. Where are they now? Why, since all gave their oath to help us, why has none ever been true to her word? Our number is fixed at four, at least as regards this chamber, for we are all convinced that there is another tower corresponding to ours where they keep a similar contingent. All manner of things the friars do and say have persuaded us that this is so. But if these fellow-sufferers do indeed exist, we have never seen them. One of the strongest pieces of evidence we have for their presence is that we are never on duty on succeeding days. We were required yesterday; so today we rest. For it is quite clear that our lechers never allow themselves a single day's abstinence. In practice, no known principles determine the moment of our superannuation, not age, nor fading charms, nor on their part lassitude or revulsion, nothing save their whim decides when they give us the fatal quietus and we have no means of telling if our dismissal is to benefit us or not. I have known here an inmate aged 70; she left just last summer, having been in this place for sixty years. Whereas they kept her on, I saw a good dozen sent away, none being aged above 16. Some I have seen leave three days after their arrival, some within a month, and others besides at the end of several years: in this matter there is no rule beyond their will, or rather their caprice. Nor does our conduct enter into it: I have known some girls prepared to go more than half-way to anticipate their desires who were dismissed after six weeks while others who were surly and temperamental were kept on for many years. It is therefore but a waste of breath to prescribe to a new arrival the kind of conduct she should observe, for our masters' fantastical whims overturn all laws and there is no logic in them. The friars do not vary a great deal. Raphael arrived fifteen years ago, Clement has lived in this place for sixteen years, Jerome has been here for thirty and Antonin for ten: he has been the only one to come in my time. He took the place of a friar aged 6o who died in the course of one particularly frenzied orgy. Raphael, a Florentine by birth, is a close relative of the Pope with whom he is on the best of terms. It is only since his coming that the miraculous Virgin has brought the house a measure of reputation which prevents prying eyes from taking too close an interest in what goes on here, but the monastery was as you see it now when he first arrived. It has been, so it is said, on the same footing for almost eighty years and all the Superiors appointed have continued to run its affairs in a way entirely favourable to their pleasures. Raphael, one of the most depraved churchmen of the century, arranged to be sent here only because he already knew what it was like and his intention is to preserve its secret privileges for as long as he can. We are part of the diocese of Auxerre but whether the bishop has knowledge of what transpires here or not, we never see him within these walls. Indeed, few visitors ever appear here. Except during the time of the matronal festival at the end of August, scarcely ten persons come throughout the whole of the year. But when outsiders do appear, the Superior is most careful to receive them well and to impress them with an infinite show of austerity and piety; they go away content and speak warmly of the monastery, and in this way the impunity enjoyed by these scoundrels has become rooted in the good faith of the people and the credulity of the faithful. Yet there are no stricter rules than those which govern our conduct and nothing more dangerous to us than to breach them in the smallest particular. It is vital that I should go into this matter with you in some detail,' continued my instructress, 'for it is no excuse here to say: "Do not punish me for breaking such and such a law for I did not know it existed." It is for each newcomer to seek instruction from her companions or else to work it out for herself: no one is informed about anything but every infringement is punished. The only form of correction allowed is the Lash, for it was logical that a rite which forms part of the pleasures of these wicked men should become their favoured form of punishment. You felt its bite yesterday having done no wrong; you will feel it again soon enough for committing some fault. All four are obsessed by this barbarous flagellating mania and each takes turns to act as chastiser. Each day there is one who is named Regent-in-Charge. He receives the reports submitted by the Doyenne of the inmates, has the running of the seraglio, makes all the arrangements for the suppers to which we are admitted, and frames accusations of misconduct which he himself then punishes. But let us look more closely at each of these heads. We are all required to be up and dressed by nine in the morning. At ten we are brought bread and water for luncheon. At two, dinner is served: it generally consists of a quite acceptable potage, a piece of boiled meat, a dish of vegetables, sometimes a little fruit, and a bottle of wine which we share. Punctually each day, winter and summer, the Regent calls on us at five o'clock. It is then that he hears the Doyenne who informs on her companions. The only complaints she is authorized to make concern the behaviour of the girls in her chamber: whether any words of ill humour or sedition have been spoken; whether all rose at the appointed time; whether face and hair were carefully groomed and hygiene thoroughly attended to; whether all have eaten properly; and whether any have talked of escape. The Doyenne is required to render an exact account of all these matters, for we ourselves run the risk of punishment if we are remiss. Next, the Regent goes into our closet where he inspects divers objects. When he has done, it is rare that he leaves without taking his pleasure with one of us, and frequent that he does so with all four. Once he has gone, unless it be our Supper Day, we are free to read or chat, amuse ourselves as we choose and retire to bed when we will. But if we are to sup that evening with the friars, a bell is rung which tells us that it is time to prepare. The Regent himself comes to fetch us, we go down to the room where you first saw us, and the first thing to be done is the reading out of the catalogue of faults committed by us since our last appearance. First come infractions committed during the previous supper: examples of remissness, instances of cool responses to the friars at those moments when we serve their desires, plus any failure of attentiveness, submission, or cleanliness. To this is added the list of offences committed in our chamber in the space of the intervening two days as recorded by the Doyenne. The delinquents advance in turn to the middle of the room. The Regent states the charge and confronts the accused with their crime. They are then stripped naked by the Doyenne (or the vice-Doyenne in cases where the Doyenne is at fault), and the Regent administers the prescribed punishment in a manner so energetic that they find it difficult to forget. So skilled at the business are these awful men that it is virtually impossible for there to be a single day when one or two chastisements are not administered. Once these matters are over, the orgies begin. It would be quite impossible for me to list all the variants in detail: could such bizarre whims ever be catalogued? Our prime objective is never to refuse them anything. . . and always to anticipate. But even when we observe this rule, however sound it may be, we are still sometimes none too safely off. Half-way through the orgies, supper is served. We are permitted to share the meal which is always finer and more sumptuous than those which we are served. The bacchanalia resumes when the friars are half-drunk. At midnight, they disperse, but each has the right to keep one of us by him through the night, the chosen favourite sleeping in the cell of the friar who selected her, being restored to us on the morrow. The rest retire and on returning find the chamber cleaned, the beds made, and our clothes-boxes tidied. Sometimes of a morning, as soon as we are up and about, before luncheon, it may occur that a friar will send for one of us to go to his cell. The Brother who sees to our menial needs then comes to fetch us and escorts us to the friar who desires us; the friar either brings us back himself or has it done by the same Brother the moment he tires of us. The Cerberus who cleans our apartments and occasionally escorts us is an aged monk whom you will see presently. He is 70 years old, has one eye, limps, and is dumb. Responsible for the running of the entire establishment, he is aided by three other monks: one to prepare the food, one to clean the cells of the friars, sweep all through the buildings and help in the kitchen, and lastly the porter whom you encountered when you arrived. Of these, we see only the Brother who serves us; the briefest word to him would count as one of our most serious offences. The Superior occasionally comes to call on us. At these times, there are a number of ceremonial customs which you will learn by practice: failure to observe them is a crime, for the desire the friars have to seek out infractions so that they might have the pleasure of punishing them leads them to find more and more faults daily. It is rarely without some scheme in mind that Raphael pays us a visit and his schemes are unfailingly cruel or lewd as you have had ample opportunity to learn for yourself. For the rest, being securely shut up always, there is no occasion during the year when we are allowed to take the air; though there is a very large garden, yet there are no gates to it for they fear an escape which would be highly dangerous since by information laid before the Justices and Mother Church regarding all the crimes which are committed in this place, matters here would soon be set to rights. We never practise the least religious observance; we are as forbidden to think of it as to speak thereof: any such talk is one of the wrongs which most surely receives punishment. And that is the sum of what I can tell you, my dear,’ added our Doyenne. ‘Experience will teach you the rest. Take heart if you can, but give up all thought of escape, for there has never been a girl yet who left this prison and saw the outside world again.’

This last comment making me horribly uneasy, I asked Omphale what she really thought had become of the girls who had been sent away.

‘What sort of answer do you expect me to give you?’ said she, ‘for hope springs up eternally to contradict my dismal opinion. Everything tells me beyond doubting that a grave is their final refuge—yet every instant brings a crowd of thoughts born of hope to overturn my all too fatal conviction. We are not informed,’ Omphale went on, ‘until the morning of the day they intend to be rid of us. The Regent comes before our luncheon is served, saying, as I imagine: “Omphale, pack your bag, the monastery is sending you away. I shall come for you when it gets dark”, and then he goes out. The girl who has been dismissed embraces her companions and promises over and over to help them, to lodge complaints, to raise a clamour about what goes on here. The hour tolls, the friar comes, the girl goes . . . and is never heard of again. Yet if it is a Supper Day, then everything carries on as usual. All we have noted on those days is that the friars exert themselves much less, drink a great deal more, send us away much earlier, and take no one into their beds.’

‘Dear Omphale,’ said I to the Doyenne as I thanked her for instructing me, ‘perhaps you never had to deal before except with children who had not strength enough to keep their word. Are you willing to make that same mutual promise with me? I shall begin by swearing in advance upon everything I hold most sacred that I shall make an end of these infamies or die in the attempt. Do you promise me as much on your side?’

‘With all my heart,’ said Omphale, ‘but you must appreciate that such promises are quite futile. Girls older than you, and more outraged too if that is possible, who belonged to the best families in the province and were therefore far better armed, the kind of girls who would have given their life's blood for me, have broken the self-same oaths before. Please understand therefore if my cruel experience leads me to consider the pledge we have just sworn to be meaningless and to say that I do not place more hope in it than in the others.'

We then talked of the characters of the friars and of our companions.

'There are no men in Europe', said Omphale, 'more dangerous than Raphael and Antonin. Their natural qualities are duplicity, villainy, spite, nastiness, cruelty, and irreligion. Joy never sparkles in their eyes except when they are most fully launched upon their vices. Clement who appears to be the gruffest of the four is in fact the best of them, for he is to be feared only when in his cups; but when he is, you must take great care not to cross him, for doing so can often be a highly risky affair. As to Jerome, he is naturally brutal, and cuffs, kicks, and punches are common coin with him, though when his passions are spent he becomes as gentle as a lamb, which is an important difference between him and the first two who revive their flagging desires only by committing the most perfidious and appalling actions. Turning to the girls, the Doyenne went on, 'there is really very little to say. Florette is a child who is none too intelligent and can be twisted around anyone's little finger. Cornélie has a good heart and a fund of fine feelings: she is utterly inconsolable and cannot be reconciled to her fate.'

When I had noted all this information, I asked my companion if it were indeed quite impossible to discover whether there was or not a second tower containing other unfortunates besides ourselves.

'If they exist, and I am virtually certain they do,' said Omphale, 'we shall never know unless it be through some indiscretion on the part of the friars or the mute Brother who serves us and doubtless attends to their needs also. But such knowledge would be a source of great danger. For what purpose would be served by knowing whether we are alone here or not, since we have no means of helping each other? If you ask what grounds I have for saying that their existence is more than likely, then I shall tell you: a number of remarks the friars have let slip without thinking are more than enough to persuade us that such is the case. Moreover, I was once leaving Raphael's cell in the morning after a night spent there, and was stepping through his door and he was about to follow me and bring me back here himself, when I saw without his noticing the mute Brother going into Antonin's with a very pretty girl aged about 17 or 18 who was certainly not one of us. Seeing that he was observed, the Brother pushed her hurriedly into Antonin's cell—but not before I got a clear view of her. He did not report me and the matter was left there. Had it been made public, I might perhaps have bought my knowledge dear. So it is quite certain that there are women here other than ourselves, and since we sup with the friars every two days, they must sup with them on the intervening days, and most likely are as many as we are.'

Omphale had scarcely finished speaking when Florette returned from Raphael's cell where she had spent the night. It was expressly forbidden for girls to tell each other what had happened when they had been chosen and, seeing that we were awake, she simply murmured a 'good-morning' and threw herself exhausted on to her bed where she remained until nine o'clock, which was our time for getting up. The tender Cornélie came up to me and, weeping as she looked at me, said:

'Oh, my dear mademoiselle! What wretched creatures we are!'

Luncheon was brought, my companions forced me to take a little nourishment and I ate something for their sakes. The day passed quietly enough. At five, as Omphale had said, the Regent for that day entered: it was Antonin. With a laugh he asked me how I was after my adventure and, since the only answer I could give him was to lower my tear-filled eyes, he said sneeringly:

‘She’ll learn. There is not a convent in the whole of France where girls get a better education than they are given here.’

He completed his inspection and took the list of offences from the Doyenne who, being too good-hearted to overfill it, very often said that there was nothing to report. Before leaving us, Antonin came up to me. I shuddered, for I believed I was about to become the monster’s victim once more—though since I might be at any time, what did it matter if the thing happened then or the next day? However, I was let off with some rough fondling and he leaped instead upon Cornélie and, busying himself with her, ordered all of us present to help stimulate his passions. Already replete with sensuality, the beast, grudging himself no form of voluptuousness, ended his business with the hapless creature exactly as he had with me the evening before, which is to say with the most considered excesses of brutality and lewdness. Group enactments of this kind were a pretty regular occurrence. It was more or less customary that when a friar took his pleasure with one of us sisters, the other three should gather round and stimulate his senses in every manner conceivable so that he should be aware of his sensuality through each and every one of his organs. I set down these loathsome details here so that I shall not have to return to them again, it not being my purpose to dwell further on the obscenity of these occasions. To describe one is to describe them all and, of my long sojourn in that place, my design is to speak to you only of happenings of any significance and not to appal you further with the details. As it was not a Supper Day for us, we were left quite to ourselves. My companions consoled me as best they could, but nothing could assuage sorrows as deep as mine. They strove in vain, for the more they spoke of my misfortunes, the more desperate those misfortunes seemed.

The following morning at nine o’clock, the Superior came to see me, though it was not his day to do so, and asked Omphale if I was beginning to set my mind to make the best of my plight. Without waiting for a reply, he opened one of the chests in our closet and took several women’s garments from it:

‘Since you brought no raiment with you,’ said he, ‘we must give some thought to what you shall wear, a little more perhaps for our sake than for yours. There is no need therefore to be grateful. I am not myself in favour of all this pointless dressing up. If we were to allow the girls who serve our needs to go about as naked as the beasts of the field, it strikes me that the drawbacks of such a proceeding would be of little consequence. But the friars are men of the world and demand luxury and finery, and they must be satisfied.’

On to the bed he tossed a number of dishabilles together with a half-dozen shifts, several bonnets, stockings, and shoes, and bade me try them all. He watched as I put them on and did not miss a single opportunity for indecent fondlings which the situation gave rise to. There were two or three loose gowns of taffeta and one of India cotton which all fitted me tolerably well. These he allowed me to keep and told me to suit myself as to the remainder, reminding me however that they were all House Property and saying that they were to be returned if I should chance to leave before wearing any of them out. These various proceedings affording a number of spectacles which raised him to boiling pitch, he ordered me to adopt the attitude which I knew suited him best. I was minded to entreat for mercy but seeing the rage and anger already ashine in his eyes, I judged that the speediest issue was through obedience and I took up my position . . . The libertine, abetted by the three other women, took his pleasure as was his wont at the cost of morality, religion, and Nature. I had roused him to a fever. At supper, he made much of me and I was designated to spend the night with him. My companions withdrew and I passed into his apartment. I shall say no more of my loathing or my sufferings, Madame, for you can doubtless picture both to be extreme, and my monotonous retailing of them would perhaps blunt the edge of what I have yet to tell. Raphael occupied a very pretty cell which had been furnished voluptuously and in the finest taste: nothing was lacking which could render this private place as pleasant as it was purpose-made for pleasure. When we were inside, Raphael, stripping naked and bidding me to do likewise, took a good long time to be brought to a peak of excitement by the self-same methods with which, as the active agent in the business, he next inflamed his own passions. I can state here that during that night I followed as complete a course of lewd conduct as any supplied to the best taught harlot who has been schooled in these foul exercises. From being the mistress, I soon passed to the status of pupil once more, but durst not treat as I was treated, and though I was never asked to stay my hand I was quickly reduced to pleading, weeping hot tears, that he stayed his. But my entreaties were met with scoffing, my attempts at evading him were nullified by the most barbarous counters and, once he observed that I was mastered, I was subjected to unparalleled brutality for two hours and more. He did not limit himself to the bodily parts reserved for such matters but wandered everywhere without distinction: the most contrary places, the most delicate globes, nothing escaped the fury of my tormentor whose *frissons* of sensuality received their impetus from the symptoms of pain upon which his hungry eyes feasted.

‘And now to bed,’ said he at the last. ‘Perhaps you have had enough, but I certainly have not. I never weary of this most holy order of worship, and all we have done thus far is no more than a faint image of pleasure as it might really be.’

We got into the bed. There, Raphael, his lasciviousness as unabated as his depravity, held me all night, the slave of his criminal desires. Thinking him momentarily assuaged, I took advantage of a brief interval of calm in these debauches to beseech him to tell me if I could ever hope to quit the house one day.

‘Most certainly,’ Raphael answered, ‘you were allowed entry only on that basis. When all four of us are agreed that you should be permitted to leave, then leave you most certainly shall.’

‘But,’ said I, thinking to extract something more definite from him, ‘do you not fear that girls who are younger and far less discreet than I swear to be all my life, might not on occasion make disclosures about what is done here?’

‘That would be impossible,’ said the Superior.

‘Impossible?’

‘Absolutely.’

‘Perhaps you would explain . . .’

‘No. It’s our secret. All I can tell you is that, discreet or not discreet, once you are outside it will be quite impossible for you ever to reveal anything of what goes on within these walls.’

And so saying, he ordered me roughly to speak of other things and I dared not enquire further. At seven in the morning, he ordered the Brother to escort me back and, putting what he had said to me together with what I had learned from Omphale, I convinced myself, over-pessimistically perhaps, that it was only too plain that the most violent measures were taken against girls who left the house, and that if they never raised a hue and cry, it was because they were prevented from doing so by being shut up in a coffin. I remained all atremble at this terrible thought for some time until, managing at the last to overcome it by the force of hope, I fell into the same dull state as my companions.

Within the space of a week, I had done the rounds of the four friars and during this time had ample opportunity to observe the various aberrant and infamous practices perpetrated in turn by each of them. But with them as with Raphael, the torch of libertinage was lit only by excesses of brutality. It was as though this vice of their corrupt hearts was the organ which stimulated all the rest, and it seemed that only by giving vent to it could their efforts be crowned with pleasure.

Antonin was the friar at whose hands I suffered most. It is impossible to imagine how far the wretch carried cruelty in the course of his ecstatic frenzies. He was unfailingly guided by his sombre urges: they were the true masters of his pleasure, they continued to fuel his desire even at the peak of his enjoyment, and they alone revived it when his passion was near to being spent. Given all this, I was amazed that the methods he used, for all the severity of their application, never ended with the impregnation of any of his victims. I asked our Doyenne by what means he managed to avoid such an eventuality.

‘By immediately destroying,’ Omphale told me, ‘any consequence of his ardour. As soon as he has an indication of its early progress, he forces us on three days running to swallow six large glasses of a certain tea or infusion which, by the fourth day, leaves no trace of his intemperance. Cornélie has just had it happen to her. It has happened to me on three occasions. There is no adverse effect on our health. Indeed, it appears that we all feel much the better for it. But as you will have observed, he is the only one of the four with whom we need anticipate this danger. The irregular desires of each of the others leave us nothing to fear from them on that score.’

Then Omphale asked me if it were not true that of all the friars Clement was the one of whom I had least to complain.

‘Alas,’ said I, ‘surrounded as I am by horrors and obscenities which both sicken and revolt me, I should have the greatest difficulty in saying which one wearies me least. They all exhaust me and I wish I were already free of this place, whatever fate awaits me.’

‘But it is possible that you will have your wish soon,’ Omphale went on. ‘You came here quite by chance, and they had not counted on your coming. A week before you arrived, a girl had just been sent away, and they never send anyone away unless they are quite sure of having a replacement. They are not always the ones who select new recruits. They have well-paid agents who serve them zealously. I am pretty certain that a new girl will be coming at any moment and your wish might well be granted. Moreover, the matronal festival is almost upon us. It is rare that the event passes without bringing them some advantage: either they use the confessional to seduce a few young girls or else they shut one of them up here, but it is most unusual that the occasion passes without some tasty morsel being snapped up.’

The great day finally arrived. Would you believe, Madame, to what depths of monstrous impiety the friars sank during the festival? They fancied that a visible miracle would considerably enhance their good name and consequently dressed Florette, who was the youngest and smallest of us, in all the Virgin’s finery, secured her fast around the waist by ropes which could not be seen, and ordered her to raise her arms solemnly heavenwards when the host was lifted up. Since the unhappy creature was threatened with the most cruel treatment if she uttered a single word or failed to carry out her role, she performed to the best of her ability and the fraud was every whit as successful as could have been wished for. The congregation acclaimed a miracle, gave rich offerings to the Virgin, and went away more convinced than ever of the mercy of the Heavenly Mother.

To crown their impiety, the libertines required Florette to appear at supper dressed in the costume which had brought her such homage, and each inflamed his odious desires by subjecting her, she still wearing the same vestments, to his lewd whims. Excited by this initial crime, the monsters did not stop there. They then made her lie face down, unclothed, upon a large table, lit candles, placed a figure of Our Lord next her head, and dared celebrate the most awful of our mysteries upon her bare back. I fainted at the horrible sight of it, being unable to bear the spectacle. Seeing this, Raphael declared that, to break me to their ways, I should serve as altar in my turn. I was seized and placed where Florette had been and the foul Italian, enacting much crueller and infinitely more sacrilegious rites, consummated over me the same horror which he had the moment before performed over my companion. I was dragged from there unconscious and had to be carried back to the chamber where for three days I wept the bitterest tears over the hideous crime in which I had, though against my will, participated. The memory of it still racks my heart, Madame, and I cannot think of it without weeping. In me, religion is a function of my sensibility and anything which offends or outrages my faith makes the blood drain from my heart.

Meanwhile, it did not seem to us that the new companion we were expecting had been taken from among the vast concourse of people who had been drawn by the festival. A new recruit might have been made to the other seraglio, but no one came to ours. And so everything continued in the same manner for two weeks more. I had been in that hateful place for six weeks when Raphael came to our tower one morning at about nine o’clock. He appeared to be very restive and a kind of madness gleamed in his eyes. He examined each of us, made us adopt his favoured position one after the other, and came to a noticeable halt at Omphale. He stood there for several minutes gazing at her in that posture, exciting himself quietly, trying out one of his choicest fantasies, but without consummation. Then, ordering her to her feet, he stared at her very sternly for a while and, with ferocity painted upon every feature of his face, said:

‘You have served us long enough. Our fraternity hereby dismisses you and I have come to give you notice of it. Make ready. I shall come for you myself as darkness falls.’

So saying, he examined her once more with the same severe look in his eye and left the chamber abruptly.

The instant he had gone, Omphale threw herself into my arms.

‘Oh, the moment has come,’ said she through her tears, ‘which I have been both dreading and longing for. O God! What will become of me?’

I did all I could to calm her, but without success. She swore by the most expressive oaths that she would stint no effort to see that we were delivered and to lay information against our perfidious captors, if she were given the opportunity to do so, and her manner of giving me these pledges left me not an instant’s doubt that either she would do it or else the thing could not be done at all. The day passed like any other and at about six o’clock, Raphael himself returned.

‘Come,’ he said sharply to Omphale, ‘are you ready?’

‘Yes, Father.’

‘Let us go then, and go quickly.’

‘Will you allow me to embrace my companions?’

‘That is quite unnecessary,’ said the friar, pulling her away by the arm. ‘You are stayed for. Follow me.’

Then she asked whether she was to bring her bundle with her.

‘Bring nothing, nothing at all,’ said Raphael. ‘Is not everything here House Property? You will have no further need of these things.’

Then correcting himself like someone who has said too much, he added:

‘These clothes will be of no further use to you. You will have others made to measure which will suit you better.’

I asked the friar if he would permit me to accompany Omphale as far as the monastery gate, but he answered with so savage, so wild a look that I recoiled in fear and dared not repeat my request. Our hapless companion left us, casting me a glance as she went which brimmed with disquiet and tears, and the moment she was gone all three of us gave way to the sorrow of the parting. A half-hour later, Antonin came to fetch us to supper. Raphael did not appear until about an hour after we had gone down. He looked extremely agitated, whispered much to the others, and yet everything passed off much as usual. However, I noticed, as Omphale had led me to expect, that we were sent to our chambers much earlier and that the monks, who drank vaster quantities than was their wont, made do with stimulating their desires without ever permitting their consummation. What could be deduced from these observations? I remarked all these things because everything is noticed in such circumstances, but as to telling what followed from them, I had not wit enough to see and perhaps I should not bother to tell you now of these circumstances had they not made such a singular impact upon me.

We spent four days waiting for news of Omphale, one moment not doubting but that she would without fail honour the pledge she had given, and the next quite convinced that the cruel measures taken against her would make it impossible for her to serve us in any way. We despaired then and our anxieties reached a new pitch. The fourth day after Omphale’s departure, we were escorted down to supper in accordance with the normal state of affairs, but what was our surprise when all three of us beheld a new companion enter from an outside door at the very moment when we appeared through ours!

‘Mesdemoiselles, this is the recruit our fraternity has chosen to replace the girl who has lately left us,’ declared Raphael. ‘Pray have a thought to live with her as with a sister and to ease her passage in those matters which are yours to decide. Sophie,’ said the Superior, turning to me, ‘you are the oldest in the class and I hereby raise you to the position of Doyenne. You are acquainted with the duties of the post. Take care to carry them out punctually.’

I sorely wanted to refuse, but it was impossible for me to do so, for I was eternally obliged to sacrifice my own wishes and desires to those of my evil captors. I bowed my head and promised to see to everything in a way which would content him.

Then, from the head and shoulders of our new companion were removed the mantles and veils which hid her face and figure, and we beheld a girl of 15 years endowed with the most expressive and delicate physiognomy. Her eyes, though wet with tears, seemed to us quite magnificent: she raised them with such grace to each one of us that I can state now that never did I see a look more touching in all my life. She had long fair hair which cascaded over her shoulders in natural curls, and a fresh, rosy mouth. She carried her head nobly and there was something so attractive in her general bearing that it was impossible to see her without feeling drawn towards her. We learned soon enough from her own lips (and I include it here so that I may make one piece of all that concerns her) that her name was Octavie, that she was the daughter of a prosperous merchant at Lyons, that she had just finished her education in Paris, that she had been returning thence to her parents’ house in the company of a governess when, being attacked at night on the road between Auxerre and Vermenton, she had been abducted against her will and brought to the monastery, and that she had been unable to discover news of the coach in which she had ridden or of the woman who had accompanied her. She had been kept locked up by herself in a confined cell for above an hour where she had surrendered to her despair, and then had been fetched away to join our company without any of the friars having yet spoken one word to her.

The four libertines, momentarily struck with ecstasy at the spectacle of so many charms, had strength only to admire. The power of beauty imposes respect, and the most corrupt of scoundrels cannot help but pay a kind of worshipful tribute which cannot be transgressed without feelings of remorse. But monsters such as those with whom we had to deal do not allow such a brake to check their course for long.

'Come, Mademoiselle,' said the Superior, 'pray show us if the remainder of your charms answer those which Nature has so liberally scattered upon your face.'

And as the beautiful creature grew uneasy and blushed, not understanding what was meant, the brutal Antonin seized her by the arm and shouted curses and reprimands at her far too indecent for me to repeat:

'Don't you understand, little Miss Prig, that what you are being told to do is to strip naked as quick as you like!'

There followed more tears and further efforts at resistance. But Clement immediately took hold of her and within one minute had sent flying off everything which had veiled the alluring creature's maidenly modesty. The charms which decency normally required Octavie to keep hidden could not have been a better riposte to the delights which usage allowed her to display. It is unlikely that a whiter skin or more pleasing forms were ever seen, and yet so much freshness and innocence and delicacy were about to fall to these barbarous men. It was only to be defiled by them, it seemed, that Nature had showered her with so many advantages. The circle formed around her and, exactly as had happened with me, she was passed round in all directions. Antonin, in a fury, had not strength enough to resist: a cruel onslaught upon Octavie's budding charms decided the homage to be paid and incense smoked at the feet of the god. Raphael, of a mind to think of more serious matters, but in no state to be patient, seized the victim and positioned her according to his desires. Since she did nothing to accommodate him, he beseeched Clement to hold her for him. Octavie wept but her wailings went unheard. Fire blazed in the eyes of the execrable Italian. Master of the fortress which he was about to take by storm, it was as if he paused to examine his ways forward the better to overcome all resistance: he neither employed ruse nor lingered over preparations. However great the disproportion between attacker and defender, the former did not hesitate to launch his onslaught. A heart-rending scream from the victim announced her final capitulation. But nothing could move the heart of her proud conqueror. The more she seemed to beg for mercy, the more ferociously he pressed her and, following my example, the hapless girl was ignominiously defiled while never ceasing to be a maid.

'Never was a prize more difficult to win,' said Raphael, regaining his composure. 'For the first time in my life, I thought I would fail in my attempt.'

'Let me take it from here,' said Antonin, preventing her from rising, 'there is more than one breach in the rampart and you have taken only one of them.'

So saying, he advanced proudly to do battle and a moment later was master of the field. More groans were heard...

'God be praised!' said the horrid ghoul, 'I should have been uncertain of the completeness of the defeat but for the squawking of the vanquished. I value my triumphs only when it has cost tears.'

'In truth,' said Jerome, advancing with a bundle of wands in his hand, 'I shall not disturb her pleasant pose either, for it could not be better suited to what I have in mind.'

He gazed, touched, and felt, and then all at once the air was filled with a hideous swishing sound. The beautiful flesh changed colour, brightest crimson mingling with the whiteness of the lily. But what might on another occasion have afforded Love a moment of innocent diversion had moderation directed this maniacal practice, now turned instantly into a criminal act. No consideration stayed the hand of the heartless friar: the more the pupil moaned, the more strictly the master applied himself. Every part received equal treatment and none obtained grace in his sight. Soon there was not a single part of that beautiful body but bore the mark of his barbarity and it was over the bloody remnants of his odious pleasures that the perfidious friar finally quenched his burning fires.

‘I shall be gentler by far than all that has gone before,’ said Clement, taking the girl in his arms and planting an impure kiss upon her coral lips. ‘Here is the altar on which I shall make my sacrifice.’

A few kisses more on those adorable lips, made by Venus herself, served to stoke him to new heights. He forced upon the unhappy girl the infamies which were his delectation and the sweetest refuge of love was befouled by horror.

The rest of the evening proved to be much like what you know of those occasions, with this difference, viz., that the beauty and touching youth of the girl inflamed the barbarians more effectively, so that their savagery was increased several fold and it was satiety rather than compassion which, having first sent her off to our chamber, restored to her, at least for a few hours, the calm of which she stood in such need. I should have liked to have been able to comfort her, at least on that first night, but, being required to spend it with Antonin, it was on the contrary I who might well have been reduced to needing succour. I had had the misfortune not to please, the word is quite unsuitable, but to excite more ardently than any of my companions the lecher’s foul desires, and for a long time past very few weeks had gone by when I did not spend five or six nights in his room. When I got back the next morning, I found the new inmate in tears. I told her what I had formerly been told to calm me, but I had no more success with her than had been obtained with me. It is no easy thing to find solace for such an abrupt change in one’s circumstances. Moreover, the girl had a great fund of piety, virtue, honour, and fine feeling, and in consequence her present state seemed all the more cruel to her. Raphael, who had taken a great fancy to her, kept her by him several nights running, and little by little she did as the rest did: she found consolation for her misfortunes in the hope of seeing them ended one day. Omphale had been right to say that seniority had no effect upon our being sent away, for the matter being dictated solely by the friars’ whims or perhaps by subsequent girl-hunts outside, it could as well come after a week as after twenty years. Octavie had been with us for less than six weeks when Raphael came one day and told her she was to leave. She made us the same promises as Omphale had given and disappeared just as she had without our ever hearing what became of her.

We remained for about a month without seeing a new face arrive to take her place. It was during this interval that I, like Omphale, had occasion to be convinced that we were not the only women to live in the monastery and that there was another building which doubtless contained the same complement as ours. But Omphale had been able to do no more than surmise; my adventure, being much more conclusive, confirmed my own suspicions fully. This is how it came about. I had just spent the night with Raphael and was leaving his cell according to the customary practice at about seven in the morning when a Brother, as old and repulsive as ours, whom I had never seen before, suddenly debouched into the corridor with a tall girl of 18 or 20 who struck me as being beautiful enough to have sat for a painter. Raphael, who was to escort me back to our chamber, kept me waiting. He emerged as I came positively face to face with the girl; the Brother did not know what to do with her to get her out of my sight.

‘Where are you taking that creature?’ shouted the Superior in a fury.

‘I’m bringing her to you, Reverend Father,’ said the ghoulish go-between. ‘Your Grace has perhaps forgotten that you gave me the order last night.’

‘I said nine o’clock.’

‘Seven, Monsignor. You told me you wanted to see her before you said mass.’

All this time, I stood gazing at this companion who stared back with the same astonishment.

‘Come, the matter is of no importance,’ said Raphael, ushering me back into his cell and bringing the other girl in too. ‘Look here, Sophie,’ said he, shutting the door, ‘this girl holds the same position in another tower as you hold in yours: she too is a Doyenne. No harm will be done by allowing both our Doyennes to meet and, that you may know her thoroughly, Sophie, I shall now show you Marianne undressed.’

This Marianne, who appeared to me to be a very forward sort of girl, disrobed in a twinkling and Raphael, bidding me stimulate his desires, subjected her to his choicest pleasures as I looked on.

‘That is what I wanted with her,’ the blackguard declared when he was satisfied. ‘Spending the night with one woman always makes me want another in the morning. Nothing is quite as insatiable as our urges; the greater the offerings we make to them, the hotter they burn. Of course, the outcome is always pretty much the same, yet we always imagine that there is better just around the corner. The instant our thirst for one woman is slaked is also the moment when the same drives kindle our desire for another. You both hold positions of trust and you must remain silent. Go now, Sophie, go, the Brother will take you back. I have a new mystery to celebrate with your companion here.’

I promised to say nothing as I was bid and went, absolutely certain now that we were not alone in serving the monstrous pleasures of these unbridled libertines.

But Octavie was replaced immediately. A young peasant girl of 12, fresh-faced and pretty but very inferior in beauty to her predecessor, was chosen to fill her shoes. Within two years, I had become the longest server. Florette and Cornélie duly left, both swearing like Omphale that I should hear news of them and neither succeeding any better than she. Both had just been replaced, Florette by a 15-year-old from Dijon, a plump, fat-cheeked creature who had in her favour only the bloom of youth, Cornélie by a girl from Autun, a real beauty, who came of a very upright family. Fortunately the latter, who was 16, had ousted me from my place in Antonin’s affections. But then I realized that if I had been expunged from the lecher’s good graces, I was also in immediate danger of losing my credit with all the others. The fickleness of all four made me tremble for my fate, for I was aware that it signalled my dismissal, and I was only too clear in my mind that my cruel superannuation was tantamount to a sentence of death, not to feel a moment of great alarm. A moment, did I say? Unhappy that I was, could I then still cling on to life? Should not my greatest happiness then be to have had that life ended? These reflections comforted me and helped me await my fate with such resignation that I made no effort to restore my credit. I felt the weight of the friars’ spiteful dealings; hardly a moment went by when they did not find me at fault, scarcely a day when I was not punished. I prayed to Heaven and awaited the sentence. I was perhaps about to be given it when the hand of Providence, wearying of torturing me in the same continuing way, plucked me from my present abyss only to hurl me headlong into another. But let us not anticipate events. Allow me to begin by recounting the circumstances which finally delivered us from the clutches of these arrant libertines.

Of course, the same principle of vice rewarded was to dictate the course of events just as, to my eye, it always had at each crisis of my life. It was written that those who had tortured, humiliated, and chained me would receive, promptly and plain for me to see, high wages for their crimes, as though Providence was bent upon showing me the futility of virtue—a hard lesson which did not alter my ways and which, if I escape the sword which even at this instant hangs over me, shall never prevent my being the eternal slave of the deity which rules my heart.

Quite unexpectedly one morning, Antonin appeared in our chamber and announced that the Reverend Father Raphael, a relative and protege of the Pope, had just been named Vicar-General of the Order of St Francis by His Holiness.

‘And I, my children,’ he said, ‘am to be Superior of the community of Lyons. Two new friars will soon be here to replace us. Indeed they may come before the day is over. We do not know them and it is as likely that they will send you all to your homes as it is that they will keep you here. But whatever your fate, I advise you for your own sakes and for the honour of the two brother friars we leave behind us to conceal all details of our proceedings and to admit only those things which cannot be gainsaid.’

News so flattering to our hopes prevented our denying the friar anything he appeared to desire, and we promised everything he asked yet still the wretch insisted on taking his leave of all four of us together. The end of our misfortunes now half-glimpsed, we had strength enough to bear this final onslaught without complaint. We refused him nothing and he left, never to set eyes on us again. We were served our dinner in the usual way. About two hours after this, Clement came to our chamber with two monks both venerable in age and features.

‘You must confess, Father,’ one of them said to Clement, ‘you must confess that all your debauches have been quite disgraceful and that it is curious indeed that Heaven should have suffered them to continue for so long.’

Clement meekly agreed upon every head, apologizing for the failure of himself and his brother friars to introduce changes and saying that all four of them had found everything in exactly the same state as they now left it, that in truth inmates had come and gone but that, likewise finding the system of rotation in place, they had therefore done no more than follow custom as laid down by their predecessors.

‘Very well,’ resumed the same friar whom I took to be the new Superior, which indeed he was, ‘but let us make an end at once to this execrable debauchery, Father. It would be sickening in men of the world, so I leave you to think how it would be viewed in men of the cloth.’

He next asked us what we wanted to become of us. Each of us answered that she would like to go back whence she had come or to be returned to her family.

‘And so it shall be, my daughters,’ said the friar, ‘and I shall give each of you what money you require to go hence. But it is indispensable that you leave one after the other, at intervals of two days, that you go alone and on foot, and that you say nothing of what has happened in this place.’ We pledged ourselves to abide by these conditions. But the Superior was not satisfied by our word and urged us to partake of the Sacrament. None of us refused and there, kneeling at the altar, he made us swear that we should keep forever secret the things which had happened in the monastery. I did as the others and if, in your hearing, Madame, I now break that promise, it is because I respect the spirit rather than the letter of what the good priest then asked of me. His intention was that no official complaint should ever be made and I am quite certain that my relating of my adventures to you could never possibly result in any unpleasantness for the Order to which the friars belonged. My companions left first and since we were absolutely forbidden to arrange to meet anywhere and had been separated at the time of the arrival of the new Superior, we never saw each other again. I had asked to go to Grenoble and I was given 2 louis to see me there. Donning the clothes I had been wearing on the day I arrived at the monastery, I found the 8 louis which I had with me at that time and, buoyed up with relief that I was forever fleeing that terrifying refuge of vice and that I was leaving it in so easy and so unexpected a manner, I struck out into the forest from which I emerged on the Auxerre road at the same spot where I had left it to walk of my own free will into the trap. It was just three years after I had committed my folly, that is, I was now 25 years old, or a few weeks off it. My first thought was to throw myself on to my knees and ask God to grant me new pardons for the involuntary offences which I had committed. I did so with even greater compunction than when prostrate before the fouled altars of the ignoble monastery which I had left with such joy in my heart. Tears of regret flowed from my eyes. ‘Alas,’ said I, ‘I was pure when long ago I turned off this very road, being guided by a principle of faith which was so cruelly abused. But in what sorry state do I now find myself!’ These bitter reflections being modified somewhat by my pleasure on finding myself free, I went on my way. To avoid boring you further, Madame, with details which I fear would try your patience, I shall henceforward dwell, if you approve, only on those incidents which either taught me important lessons or which further changed the course of my life. After resting for a few days at Lyons, I chanced one day to glance at a foreign gazette belonging to the woman in whose house I lodged. Imagine my surprise on finding therein crime once more rewarded and one of the principal authors of my misfortunes raised to a pinnacle! Rodin, the ignoble doctor who had so cruelly punished me for preventing his committing a murder and had been forced to flee from France no doubt for committing others, had just, according to my news-sheet, been appointed Surgeon-in-Chief to the King of Sweden, a post carrying rich emoluments. ‘Let the scoundrel prosper,’ said I, ‘let him enjoy the fruits, if Providence so wishes, while you, wretch that you are, must go on suffering alone and without complaint since it is written that gall and tribulation are the grim wages of virtue!’

I left Lyons after sojourning three days there and set out on the Dauphiné road, full of wild hope that some small measure of prosperity lay waiting for me in that province. I had scarcely gone two leagues from Lyons, still journeying by foot as was my custom, having a couple of shifts and handkerchiefs in my pouches, when I met an old woman who seemed to be distressed. She came up to me and begged me to give her alms. Being naturally compassionate and knowing no charm on earth comparable to that of helping a fellow human being, I instantly got out my purse intending to take a few coins from it to give to the woman. But the unworthy creature, who was nimbler than I was, though I had at first taken her to be old and broken-winded, adroitly snatched my purse and sent me sprawling with a hefty punch to my stomach. When I next saw her, which was not until I was on my feet again, she was standing a hundred paces off in the company of four rough men who made threatening gestures in my direction each time I tried to approach them. ‘O just Heaven!’ I cried bitterly, ‘so it really is impossible for a virtuous impulse to start within me without its being instantly punished by the cruellest misfortunes I have to fear in the whole universe!’ In that dreadful moment, all my courage was on the point of deserting me. Today I entreat Heaven to forgive me, but at that moment rebellion was not far from my heart. Two appalling courses of action now presented themselves to me: I was of a mind either to join up with these footpads who had cruelly wronged me the moment before, or else to go back to Lyons and take to a life of vice. God granted that I did not succumb to either and although the light of hope which He lit once more in my heart was to prove no more than the dawn of more terrible adversities yet to come, I nevertheless give Him thanks for being my prop and my sustainer. The chain of misfortunes which has led me to the scaffold, though I am innocent, will bring me no end but death. Other expedients I might have tried would have brought me shame, remorse, and infamy, and death is less cruel in my eyes than all of these.

I continued on my way, resolving to sell the few effects I had with me when I reached Vienne and thence to strike out for Grenoble. I was walking along dejectedly and was within a quarter of a league from the town when, on a piece of level ground away to the right of the road, I saw two mounted men trampling a third beneath the hooves of their horses. Leaving him for dead, they galloped off at high speed. This savage spectacle moved me to tears. ‘Alas!’ said I, ‘here is someone even more unfortunate than I. I at least still have my health and my strength, I am able to earn my living and if he is not rich and in the same pass as myself, then he will be a cripple for the rest of his life. And what will become of him then?’ However much I ought to have been on my guard against such feelings of compassion, and though the punishment to which they had recently led me was cruel indeed, I could not refrain from heeding them once more. I went up to the dying man. I had with me a little smelling-water which I made him inhale. He opened his eyes to the light, and his first reactions being of gratitude I was prompted to persist in caring for him. I tore one of my shifts for a bandage; it was one of my few remaining effects and I had counted on it to prolong my life, yet I rent it into strips for this man, staunched the blood which flowed from numerous wounds, made him drink a little of the small quantity of wine which I carried in a bottle to revive my faltering steps at weary moments, and used the rest to bathe his bruises. In the end, the unfortunate man suddenly regained both strength and heart. Although he was not mounted and was somewhat casually dressed, he did not appear to be without means, having a few costly items on him, viz., rings, a watch, and other pieces of finery, though his mishap had left them in a sorry state. When at last he was able to speak, he asked me who was the angel of mercy who had helped him and enquired what he could do to show his gratitude. Being guileless enough to believe that a heart bound by gratitude must be mine forever, I believed I could quite safely enjoy the sweet pleasure of sharing my own tears with a man who had the moment before himself been weeping in my arms. I related all my adventures to him. He listened with interest and when I ended with an account of the latest catastrophe to befall me, the telling of which opened his eyes to the cruel state of destitution I was then in, he declared:

‘How happy I am at least to be able to say how grateful I feel for everything you have done for me! My name is Dalville,’ my adventurer went on, ‘and I own a château, a rather fine one, in the mountains fifteen leagues from here. I should very much like to invite you to stay with me there if you would care to come—and lest the invitation should alarm your modesty, allow me to explain at once exactly how you could be useful to me. I am married and my wife needs at her side a woman she can depend upon. We lately dismissed a woman who turned out to be a bad lot. I should like you to take her place.’

I thanked my protector humbly and asked how it chanced that a man such as I took him to be had ventured forth unaccompanied on his travels, thus leaving himself vulnerable to attacks by footpads in the manner he had just experienced.

‘Being strong, young, and active,’ said Dalville, ‘I have long been in the habit of travelling in this fashion from my home to Vienne: both my health and my purse are the better for it. Not that my circumstances are such that I need to worry about expense, for I am rich, thank God, and you should see how rich for yourself by being good enough to accept my offer to come home with me. The two men you saw me fall foul of are a couple of down-at-heel gentlemen who live in the district. They have nothing but a name and a sword, one being a soldier of the Guards and the other a Musketeer, which is to say they are a pair of rogues and cheats. Last week I won a hundred louis from them in a gaming-house at Vienne. Since they were nowhere near having even a fraction of the money between them, I agreed to take their note for the sum. I met up with them today and asked them for what they owe me. You saw for yourself the manner in which they paid me.’

I was commiserating with my honest gentleman over the double misfortune which had befallen him when he proposed that we should make a start.

‘Thanks to your attentions, I feel somewhat recovered,’ said Dalville. ‘It will soon be dark. Let us make for a hostelry I know of about two leagues distant. From there, with horses we can get in the morning, perhaps we might be able to reach home by evening.’

Fully determined to take advantage of the helping hand which Heaven seemed to have extended to me, I helped Dalville to get to his feet and start walking. I gave him my support along the way and, carefully avoiding all known roads, we proceeded as the crow flies towards the Alps along small side-tracks. We found the hostelry of which Dalville had spoken about two leagues further on and ate a decent dinner there in good spirits. When the meal was over, he commended me to the mistress of the hostelry who let me sleep in her bed and in the morning, mounted on two hired mules and accompanied on foot by one of the inn’s stable-lads, we reached the border of Dauphiné, still set on our course for the mountains. Dalville, having received a thorough drubbing, was incapable of completing the journey without interruption and I was not sorry for this on my own account for, little used to this mode of travel, I was no less discomfited than he. We halted at Virieu where I was shown the same honest attentions by my protector, and the next morning we went on our way again, still heading in the same direction. At about four o’clock in the afternoon, we reached the foot of the mountains. Our way now becoming virtually impassable, Dalville ordered the stable-boy to stay close by me for fear of accidents and we picked our way through the gorges. Constantly turning and climbing, we made no more than four leagues, by which time we had left all human habitation and frequented roads so far behind us that I believed I had got to the end of the world. Despite myself, I was gripped by a slight feeling of unease. As I strayed further into this inaccessible rocky fastness, I was reminded of the twisting paths of the forest surrounding the monastery of Sainte-Marie-des-Bois, and the dislike I had conceived of all solitary places made me shudder at my present environs. At last, we saw a château teetering on the very edge of an awesome precipice. It seemed to hang suspended atop a sheer rock face and looked more like the lair of ghostly spirits than a dwelling-place intended for humankind. We could see the chateau but no visible path that led up to it. The track we were following, used only by goats and littered with stones, took us there, however, though in an endless upward spiral. ‘That is where I live,’ said Dalville when he judged I had seen the château, and on my expressing my surprise at his living in such an out of the way place, he replied with extreme tartness that one lived where one could. I was as much shocked as frightened by his tone. Nothing escapes our attention when misfortune threatens, and the slightest inflexion of the voice of those on whose mercies we depend will strangle or revive our hopes. But since it was now too late to go back, I gave no outward sign of any misgivings. At length, after we had ridden round and round the ancient pile, it suddenly loomed up before us. Dalville got down from his mule and bidding me do likewise returned them both to the stable-lad, paid him, and ordered him to return whence he came—another piece of business which I found exceeding distasteful. Dalville noticed my unease.

‘What is it, Sophie?’ said he, as we walked towards his house. ‘You have not left France. My château is on the borders of Dauphiné, but is still on French territory.’

‘That may be so, sir,’ I replied, ‘but whatever made you decide to settle in such a bandits’ lair?’

‘It’s no bandits’ lair,’ said Dalville, glancing slyly at me as we proceeded. ‘It is not quite the lair of bandits, my dear, but neither is it a place where very honest folk live.’

‘O sir,’ I replied, ‘you are frightening me. Where are you taking me?’

‘I am taking you, whore, where you will be set to work for coiners,[3] said Dalville and, seizing me by the arm, he dragged me by force across a drawbridge which, being let down at our approach, was now immediately raised once we were inside. ‘Here you are,’ he added when we reached the courtyard. ‘Do you see this well?’ he went on, pointing to a wide-mouthed, deep pit close by the gate where two naked women in chains were turning the wheel which raised the water which flowed into a storage cistern. ‘These are your companions and this your task. You will toil twelve hours each day keeping the wheel turning and, like your companions, you will be duly and roundly beaten each time you slacken your efforts. In return, you will be allowed six ounces of black bread and a dish of beans each day. As to freedom, give up all thought of it, for you will never see the sky above your head again. You will die in harness and be thrown down that shaft which you see next to the well, to join the thirty or forty who are there already, and then you will be replaced by another like you.’

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[3] Counterfeiting the coin of the realm was a capital offence.

‘Just Heaven, sir,’ I cried, throwing myself at Dalville’s feet. ‘Be so good as to recall that I saved your life, that being momentarily moved by gratitude you appeared bent on making me happy, and that my rightful expectation was not to be reduced to this.’

‘What do you mean, pray, by this sense of “gratitude” with which you imagine you hold me fast?’ said Dalville. ‘Come, you must think straighter, you witless creature. What exactly did you do when you came to my aid? You had the choice of continuing on your way or of helping me, and you chose the latter because your heart prompted you to do so. Which means that you did what gave you pleasure. Now how the devil can you say I should be under any obligation to reward you for giving yourself pleasure? How can it enter your head to imagine that a man such as myself, rolling in gold and wealth, with an income of a million a year and ready to travel as far as Venice to enjoy what it can buy him, should ever allow himself to be indebted to a nobody such as you? Had you raised me from the dead, I should still owe you nothing since what you did was for your own benefit. To work, slave, to work! Know this: though civilization has upset the established order of Nature, it has nevertheless not deprived Nature of her rights. In the beginning, she created strong and weak, her intention being that the latter be eternally subordinate to the former as the lamb still is to the lion or the insect to the elephant. The adroitness and wit of humankind determined the relative positions of individuals, for soon it was not physical strength which decided rank but the strength a man acquired through wealth. The richest man was the strongest man, the poorest was the weakest. But in spite of this change in the manner by which an individual came by his power, the superiority of the strong over the weak remained fundamental to the laws of Nature, according to which it mattered not if the rope which secured the weak was held by a man who was rich or a man who was strong, or whether its coils weighed heaviest on the weakest or the poorest. Now this sense of gratitude on which you stake your claims on me, Sophie, is not recognized by Nature. It was never a part of her laws that the pleasure one person took in obliging another should be a reason for the recipient to abandon his rights over his benefactor. Are these sentiments in which you take such pride to be found among animals which are examples to us all? If I dominate you by my wealth or strength, is it natural that I should have to give up my rights because in helping me you either self-servingly got the satisfaction you wanted or else consciously set out to help yourself? But even if the helping hand were extended by one equal to another, the self-respect of a lofty soul would never permit itself to be debased by gratitude. The man who receives is always a man humiliated, and is not the humiliation he feels a sufficient return for the person who obliged him? Is it not balm to our pride to rise above our neighbour? Does the obliger need anything more? And if the obligation which humbles the pride of the obliged is burdensome to him, by what right shall he be bound to tolerate it? Why should I consent to be humiliated each time my benefactor looks at me? Ingratitude, far from being a vice, is therefore the virtue of proud souls as surely as charity is the virtue merely of faint hearts. The slave talks of gratitude to his master because he stands in need of it, but the master, guided by his passions and by Nature, must yield only to what promotes his interest or flatters him. Oblige whomever you like if you find pleasure in it, but do not expect rewards for enjoying the experience.'

At these words, which Dalville gave me no time to answer, two underlings, acting upon his orders, seized me, stripped off my clothes, chained me to my companions, and put me to work alongside them that same evening, no opportunity being given me to rest after the wearisome journey I had made. I had been toiling at the loathsome wheel for less than a quarter of an hour when the full company of coiners, having ended their labours for the day, crowded round, with their leader at their head, and proceeded to inspect me. They all heaped sarcastic, rude remarks upon me on account of the mark of shame which, though innocent, I bore upon my hapless body. They drew close, feeling me roughly all over and casting aspersions spiced with pungent pleasantries upon everything which, despite myself, I exposed to their view. This painful scene being over, they retreated a few paces. Thereupon Dalville, picking up a horsewhip which was always conveniently kept nearby, struck me with it all over five or six times with all his strength.

'That, you slut, is what you will get,' said he as he applied the lash, 'each time you are unfortunate enough to fail in your duty. This time it was not for shirking, but just to give you an idea of how I deal with anyone who does shirk.'

Each stroke broke the skin and, never having felt such intense pain at the hands of either Bressac or the brutal friars, I shrieked and struggled against my chains. My contortions and my screams were a matter of great mirth for the monsters who looked on and I was given the cruel satisfaction of learning that if there are men who, whether moved by vengeance or by ignoble sensuality, can take pleasure from the pain of others, then there are others barbaric enough to enjoy the same delights for no other motive than to feel their power or indulge the most ghoulish curiosity. Man is thus naturally evil. He is only a whit less evil when driven by his passions as when he is not, and in both cases the ills which befall his fellows are like to make execrable sport for him.

Three dank pens, each separate from the other and all barred and bolted like prison cells, stood around the well. One of the men who had chained me showed me which was mine and I withdrew into it after first receiving from him the ration of water, beans, and bread which was intended for me. It was there that I was at last able to contemplate undisturbed the full horror of my plight. 'Is it possible,' thought I, 'that there are men barbaric enough to smother their feelings of gratitude and the virtue to which I for my part will gladly yield whenever the plight of some honest person furnishes me with an opportunity to feel it warm within me? Can virtue then be so little esteemed by men? And can the man who smothers it with so much inhumanity be anything other than a monster?' My mind was occupied with these reflections which I watered with my tears, when suddenly the door of my cell was flung open: it was Dalville. Without a word, without uttering a sound, he set down the candle which had lit his way, leaped upon me like a savage beast, forced me to submit to his desires, using his fists to repulse the resistance I tried to put up against him and scornfully brushing aside the protests which sprang from my wits, took his brutal pleasure, picked up his glim, went out and bolted the door. '0 mercy!' thought I, 'is it possible that indecency could ever be carried further than this? What difference can there be between a man such as this and the least savage creature of the forest?'

The sun came up before I had enjoyed a single instant's repose. Our cells were opened, we were chained once more, and we resumed our grim task. My companions were both aged between 25 and 30 years. Although they had been drained by wretchedness and crippled by physical overwork, they still exhibited a few remnants of their beauty; their figures were handsome and their waists small and one of the two still had magnificent hair. A dismal conversation with them informed me that both, at different times, were former mistresses of Dalville, one in Lyons and the other in Grenoble; that he had brought them to this hideous place where they had lived on the same footing with him for a few years; and that to reward them for pleasures they had afforded him, he had sentenced both to this humiliating drudgery. From them, I further learned that he currently had a charming mistress but that she, more fortunate than they, would in all likelihood follow him to Venice, where he was then about to go, if the considerable coinage which he had lately shipped to Spain resulted in his getting the letters of change he was waiting for before embarking on his Italian venture, since he did not wish to travel with his counterfeit gold to Venice. He never sent any there; it was always to his agents in countries other than the one he was shortly to visit that he expedited his false coin. As he never as a consequence had any money in the place where he wished to stay except for paper wealth drawn upon a different nation, his operations could never be found out and his fortune remained upon solid ground. But the structure might come crashing about his ears at any moment and the decampment he was planning was entirely dependent upon the success of this latest negotiation in which the larger part of his funds was engaged. If Cadiz accepted his piastres and louis d’or and in return sent him unimpeachable bills drawn on Venice, he would be set up for the rest of his life. But if his knavery were discovered, then he stood in danger of being denounced and hanged as he deserved. ‘Alas!’ said I on learning these particulars, ‘Providence must for once be just. It will not permit a monster like this to succeed and we shall all three of us be revenged.’ At noon, we were given two hours rest which we used, each going her separate way, to catch our breath and eat in our cells. At two, we were chained again and forced to turn the wheel until nightfall. We were never permitted to go inside the chateau. The reason for our being kept naked for five months of the year was the unbearable heat and the excessive work which we did, but also (as my companions assured me) so that we were more vulnerable to the beatings which our fierce master administered from time to time. In winter, we were given trousers and a waistcoat which fitted like a second skin, a type of garment which, enclosing us pretty tightly, similarly made our bodies easy of access to the beatings of our tormentor. Dalville did not make an appearance on that first day, but about midnight he repeated what he had done the night preceding. I tried to use the occasion to entreat him to mitigate my fate.

‘And by what right do you ask this?’ said the barbarian. ‘Because I care to indulge a whim with you? Am I then to kneel down and beg your favour which, when granted, would entitle you to ask for something in return? I ask nothing of you: I take. I do not see that because I exercise a right over you once it must necessarily follow that I should therefore abstain from doing so twice. There is no love in what I do. Love is a sentiment which was ever a stranger to my heart. I make use of a woman out of necessity, just as a man might use a pisspot for another kind of need. But I never bestow upon her, subject as she is to my money and my authority, either esteem or affection and, owing what I take solely to my own efforts and requiring nothing from her but submission, I fail to see why, given all this, I should have to show her any gratitude. Such would be tantamount to saying that the thief who robs a man of his purse in a wood because he is the stronger, should show his gratitude for the wrong he has done him. The same holds true for a violence performed upon a woman: it may entitle a man to repeat the violation but can never be an adequate reason why he should grant her any form of compensation.’

So saying, Dalville, having taken his pleasure, quitted me abruptly and left me deep in further thoughts which, as you might imagine, were not to his credit. In the evening, he came to watch us at work and finding that we had not supplied the regular daily quantity of water, he took down his cruel horsewhip and beat all three of us bloody. This did not prevent his coming to me that night (though I had been as little spared as the others) and behaving towards me as he had on the previous night. I showed him the weals he had raised on me and was bold enough again to remind him of the time I tore my shift to bind his wounds. But, preoccupied with his pleasure, the only answer Dalville gave my recriminations was a dozen cuffs interspersed with divers curses, and the moment he was satisfied he simply got up and went out as was his wont. This state of affairs lasted a month, after which time I at least obtained from my tormentor the relief of not being exposed at night to the dreadful anguish of seeing him take what he was so unworthy to have. Yet my life did not change one whit. I received neither more nor less kindness nor was I treated more or less harshly than before.

A year went by and still I was in this cruel pass when news finally spread throughout the house that not only was Dalville's fortune made and not only was he now in receipt of the vast sums in paper bills for Venice which he had wanted, but he had been asked to supply several further millions in false coin, payment for which would be made in the form of whatever bills drawn on Venice he cared to ask for. The villain could not possibly have made a larger and more unexpected fortune: when he left, he would have an annual revenue of more than a million, and that was to reckon without his further expectations. Such was the latest example which Providence thrust before me, such her freshest manner of seeking to persuade me that prosperity was the wages of crime and misfortune the reward of virtue.

Dalville made ready to leave but on the eve came to me at midnight, though he had not done so in a very long time. It was he himself who told me about his fortune and announced his imminent departure. I threw myself at his feet and beseeched him in the most earnest terms to restore me to liberty and to furnish me with as little money as he thought fit to see me to Grenoble.

'When you got to Grenoble, you would denounce me.'

'O sir,' I said, leaving his knees moist with my tears, 'Then I give you my oath that I shall never set foot there. But to make you quite easy on this score, there is something you could do: take me with you to Venice. Perhaps there I should find hearts less hard than they are in my own country, and if you were to carry me hence, I swear on everything I hold most sacred that I should never bother you again.'

'You will get no help and no money from me,' the arch-blackguard replied harshly. 'Anything which sayours of alms or charity is so repugnant to my character that had I three times the gold I presently have, I still should not give a farthing to a beggar-man. I have considered principles on this question and I shall never stray from them. The poor man is part of the natural order. By creating men unequal in strength, Nature has clearly shown us her wish that inequality be preserved, even though civilization should alter natural laws. The poor have replaced the weak, as I have already explained. To ease their plight would mean overturning the established order, opposing the natural order, and destroying the balance which underpins Nature's sublime arrangement of things. It would mean striving for equality which would be fatal to society and encouraging idleness and sloth. It would teach the poor to pick the pocket of any rich man who chose not to give them charity, a lesson the more easily learnt from the habit they would acquire of expecting to have money without working for it.'

'0 sir! How harsh your principles are! Would you say the same things if you had not always been rich?'

'I was not always rich, far from it. But I got the better of fate. I stamped on the mirage of virtue which invariably leads a man to gaol or the hangman’s noose. I realized very early on that religion, philanthropy, and charity were sure stumbling-blocks placed in the path of anyone who aspired to wealth and success and I have built my fortune on the ruins of human misconceptions. It was by mocking the laws of God and man, running roughshod over the weak who barred my way, abusing the good faith and gullibility of other people, and ruining the poor and robbing the rich that I have made my steep way up to the temple of the god to whom I kneeled. Why did you not do likewise? Your fortune was in your own hands to make. Has the imaginary virtue which you chose instead consoled you for the sacrifices which you have made in its name? But it is too late, you miserable creature, too late. Shed tears for your mistakes, suffer and, if you can, try and find in your cherished illusions those things which your gullibility has prevented you from enjoying.’

With these last cruel words, Dalville leaped upon me. But he was now so odious to me and his atrocious ideas inspired such hatred in my heart that I fought him off roughly. He attempted to use force but did not succeed. He made good his defeat with cruelties: I was beaten almost senseless but still victory was denied him. His fires, having burned to no purpose, died down and the tears shed by the rabid wretch, which were quite wasted on me, were my revenge at last for the outrages he had committed against me.

Before setting out the next day, the blackguard subjected us to a fresh scene of cruelty and barbarity of which there is no equal in the annals of the Andronici or the reigns of Nero, Tiberius, and Wenceslas. It was generally believed that his mistress was to go with him and he had bade her deck herself out accordingly. But when he was about to mount his horse, he brought her to where we were.

‘Here is your billet, you vile minx,’ he barked at her, and thereupon ordered her to strip to the skin. ‘I should like my comrades to have something to remember me by, and so, as a token of my esteem, I shall leave them the woman they believe I am most fond of. But since only three are needed here and since I am about to set out on a dangerous road where my weapons will prove their worth, I shall try out my pistols on one of you.’

So saying, he cocked one, aimed it at the breast of each of us as we turned the wheel and finally, turning to one of his former mistresses:

‘Go,’ said he, blowing her brains out, ‘go and tell news of me in the other world! Go tell the Devil that it is Dalville, the richest rogue on earth, who thus defies both his hand and the hand of Heaven with such insolence!’

His hapless victim had not been killed outright and struggled for some time in her chains. It was a horrid sight and the vile monster feasted his eyes on it with intense delight. In the end, he ordered the chains to be taken off her and put on to his mistress. He insisted on watching her push the wheel around three or four times and on personally administering a dozen lashes with the horsewhip. Then, when these barbaric acts were over, the fiend got on his horse and, accompanied by two men, rode out of our sight for ever.

The day after Dalville went away, everything became different. His successor, a mild, right-thinking man, ordered our immediate release.

‘This is no fit employment for the gentle, weaker sex,’ he told us kindly, ‘but the work of animals to serve the wheel. The business on which we are engaged is already crime enough. We should not outrage the Supreme Being further with gratuitous acts of cruelty.’

He installed us in the château, disinterestedly reinstated Dalville’s mistress to all the domestic functions of which she previously had charge, and employed my companion and myself in the workshop where we stamped out the coins—a much less tiring occupation certainly and one for which we were recompensed with very good rooms to sleep in and excellent eating. After a space of two months, Dalville's successor, who was named Roland, informed us of the safe arrival of his colleague at Venice. He had settled there, had turned his bills into money, and was enjoying his prosperity exactly as he had flattered himself he would.

The fate of his successor was very different. The luckless Roland was an honest man: it took no more than this for him to be promptly crushed. One day, when all was quiet in the château and, ruled by the laws of this good master, we were busying ourselves with our work which, though criminal, was easy and agreeable, the walls suddenly came under siege. Denied entry by the drawbridge, the attackers clambered across the moat and, before those inside had time even to think of defending themselves, the place was overrun by more than a hundred mounted officers of the constabulary. There was no course but surrender. We were chained together like animals, shackled and set upon the backs of horses, and carried off to Grenoble. 'O Heaven!' said I, as we arrived, 'here at last is the town where I was foolish enough to think that happiness would begin for me!' The trial of the coiners soon came to a judgement: all were sentenced to hang. The mark I bore being observed, my judges scarcely troubled to question me, and I was about to be sentenced along with the others when I spoke up in the hope of at last attracting a measure of compassion from the celebrated magistrate who was a credit to the bench: an upright judge, respected citizen, and enlightened philosopher, his celebrated and glorious name will be carved in the temple of Memory by his charity and humanity. He heard me out, but more, being won over to my good faith and to the truth of my tale of misfortune, he condescended to give me the comfort of his tears. O worthy man! I owe you a homage of respect: grant my heart leave to give you this mark of my esteem. You will not find the gratitude of an unfortunate woman heavy to bear and the tribute she offers in honour of your great and noble heart will ever give hers its sweetest felicity. Monsieur S. became my personal advocate, my griefs were heard, my groans found homes in kindly souls, and my tears flowed over hearts which, not being made of flint towards me, were further softened by his generous pleading. The general statements sworn by the criminals who were to be executed, being favourable to my cause, buttressed the zeal of this man who had taken it up. I was held to have been abducted and was declared innocent. My name was cleared, the charges against me were dropped, and I was unconditionally discharged, free once more to decide my own fate. To these services, my protector added the raising of a subscription for me which brought near to a hundred pistoles to my profit. It was at last a glimpse of happiness, my best hopes seemed about to be realized, and I believed I had reached the end of my misfortunes, when it pleased Providence to teach me that I still had a long road to travel.

On leaving prison, I had taken a room at an inn opposite the bridge over the river Isère where I had been assured that I should be respectably lodged. Following the advice given to me by Monsieur S., my intention was to remain there a while and make shift to find myself a position in the town or, if I did not succeed in this, to go back to Lyons armed with letters of recommendation with which he would be kind enough to furnish me. I was eating what is called the set dinner at the inn when, on the second day, I perceived that I was being closely watched by a stout, very well dressed woman who went about under the title of Baroness. Examining her in my turn, I fancied I recognized her. Each of us stepping forward to greet the other, we embraced like two people who have met but cannot remember where. Then, taking me to one side, the ample Baroness said: 'Sophie! Surely I am not mistaken! Are you not the Sophie I rescued ten years ago from the Palace prison. Do you not know your Dubois?'

Scarcely comforted by this discovery, I nevertheless gave her a civil answer. But I was dealing with the cleverest, most cunning woman in France and I could not escape her. Dubois said the kindest, most courteous things and told me that like the rest of the town she had followed my case with interest, though she had not known that I had been the object of it. With my customary weakness, I allowed myself to be led to her chamber and there recounted my misfortunes to her.

‘O my dear,’ she said, embracing me again, ‘if I wanted to have a quiet word with you in private, it was to tell you that I have made my fortune and that everything I possess is now yours to dispose of. Look here,’ she said, and she opened caskets filled with gold and diamonds. ‘This is the fruit of my industry. But had I, like you, worshipped virtue, I should have been hanged long ago or left to rot in gaol.’

‘O Madame,’ said I, ‘if you owe these riches to crime alone, then Providence, which never fails to be just at the last, will not allow you to enjoy them for long.’

‘You are mistaken,’ Dubois said. ‘Do not think that Providence always favours the virtuous. Take care lest a passing moment of prosperity should fill up your head with such misleading notions. It is a matter of indifference to the continued working of the laws of Providence if one man leads a life of vice while another treads the path of virtue. Providence requires equal quantities of vice and virtue, and the individual who practises either the one or the other is the smallest item in its calculations. Listen to me, Sophie, and listen well. You have wit and sense and I should like to see you come round finally to this view. It is not the choice which a man makes between vice or virtue, my dear, which enables him to be happy, since vice, like virtue, is simply a manner of behaving towards others. It is therefore not a matter of following one rather than the other but simply of how one makes one’s way along the common path. He who strays from that path is always in the wrong. In a wholly virtuous world, I should advise you to follow virtue since, all rewards being related to its practice, your happiness would be inextricably dependent upon it. And in a wholly corrupt world, I should never advise anything except the pursuit of vice. Whoever does not tread the path taken by others will surely perish, for every obstacle which bars his way will stub his foot and, since he is always the weaker of the two forces, it follows necessarily that he will come off the worse in the encounter. In vain do civil laws seek to restore order and return mankind to virtue: being too corrupt to undertake the task and too weak to bring it off, they may make men momentarily turn their backs on the common highway but will never make them wander off it for good. When the general interest of people prompts them to do evil, it follows that he who will not be corrupted along with the rest must perforce rise up against the general interest. Now what happiness can a man expect if he is perpetually at odds with the interest of others? You will say that it is vice which is hostile to the interest of men and this I should concede in a world where the vicious are equal in number to the virtuous, since in such a world the interest of the one clashes noisily with the interest of the other. But such is far from true in a society which is utterly corrupt, for there my vices, harming only the man who is vicious (there being only such), would turn his mind to other vices which would compensate him for his losses, and he and I would both be happy. There would result a general effervescence, a multiplicity of conflicts and mutually inflicted wounds, in which each person, now making good what he lost the moment before, constantly finds that he has regained the winning hand. If vice is a danger only to virtue, it is because virtue is too weak-kneed and timid to take the initiative. But if virtue be banished from the face of the earth, then vice, harming only those who are vicious, will cease to be bothersome: it will hatch further vices but will not taint virtue. “Ah,” you say, “but what of the beneficial effects of virtue?” This too is a sophism: in reality, these “beneficial effects” benefit only the weak and do not profit the man whose energies make him self-sufficient, whose resourcefulness is all he requires to correct the vagaries of fate. What can you have expected all your life other than to fail, my dear, since you always chose to go in the opposite direction to everybody else? If you had decided to swim with the current, you would have reached a safe haven as I have. Does the man who journeys up a river arrive at his destination as quickly as the man who travels down it? The first goes against Nature and the second drifts with it. You speak much to me of Providence, but what proof do you have that Providence loves order and therefore virtue? Has it not given you enough examples of its inherent unfairness and arbitrariness? Is it by visiting upon mankind war, pestilence, and famine, is it by creating a universe which is vicious in every respect, that Providence, in your eyes, makes manifest its extreme love of virtue? And why should you think that vicious persons should incur its displeasure since Providence itself operates strictly through vice, both its will and its works being nothing but wickedness and corruption, crime and chaos? In any case, whence comes the impulse which leads us to do evil? Is it not implanted in us by the hand of Providence? Is there a single wish or sensation which does not come to us from the same source? Is it therefore reasonable to argue that Providence would allow us keep, or give us a taste for anything which would not further its designs? If therefore vices serve the purposes of Providence, why should we want to combat them, by what right should we strive for their destruction, and why should we turn a deaf ear to them? If the world were a little more philosophical, everything would soon be in its rightful place again, and legislators and governors would see that the vices which they denounce and punish so sternly can sometimes be much more useful than the virtues which they preach but never reward.'

'But even were I weak enough, Madame, to adopt your wicked doctrine,' I answered my corruptress, 'how would you silence the remorse which it would constantly breed in my heart?'

'Remorse is an illusion, Sophie,' Dubois went on. 'It is nothing but the witless grumbling of minds too weak to dare to stop its voice.'

'But can its voice be stopped?'

'There is nothing easier, for we repent only those things which we are not in the habit of doing. If you repeat over and over the actions which make you feel remorseful, you would quickly put out their fire. Raise the torch of passion against them, vent on them the irresistible laws of self-interest, and you will discover that they evaporate like the morning mist. Remorse is not the infallible test of crime: it is no more than the badge of a mind which is easily enslaved. If some nonsensical order were to be given which forbade you to leave this room, then however convinced you were that you would be doing no wrong by doing so, you would not go through the door without a feeling of guilt. So it is quite untrue that only criminal actions give rise to remorse. If you could bring yourself to see how meaningless crime is, or how necessary crimes are to Nature's overall scheme of things, it would be as easy for you to overcome remorse as it would be to commit criminal acts—just as easy, in fact, as it would be for you to silence the remorse which would follow your quitting this room in contravention of the illegal order you had received to stay in it. We must begin by analysing exactly what men call "crime", starting from the conviction that what they describe as such is nothing more than a want of respect for the laws and manners of their nation; that what is called crime in France ceases to be criminal a hundred leagues beyond its borders; that in practice there is no action which is universally considered to be a crime; that in consequence there is in rational terms nothing which truly warrants the name of crime; and that the whole question is no more than a matter of opinion and geography. Given this, you will see how absurd it is to submit to practising virtues which pass for vices elsewhere, and to avoid committing crimes which under other skies are thought to be good actions. I ask you: is it possible that these conclusions, reached after mature reflection, would still breed remorse in the heart of a man who on French soil, whether for his pleasure or out of self-interest, commits an act of Chinese or Japanese virtue which would, however, incur the law’s displeasure in his native land? Would he be stopped in his course by this fanciful hair-splitting? And would it have sufficient sway over him to make him feel remorse if he had something of a philosophical cast of mind? Now remorse is merely a function of a prohibition. It arises as an effect of the violation of a prohibition and not as an effect of an action: is it a wise feeling which we should allow to persist in us, or should we not do better to strangle it at birth? Let us rather acquire the habit of thinking of actions which make us remorseful as being neutral; let us judge them in the light of a serious study of the manners and customs of all the nations of the world; and then, having looked at them in this way, let us commit those actions again, whatever they may be, as often as we can. Then should we see the torch of reason put an end to remorse and dispel the gloomy mind-workings which are but the product of ignorance, cowardice, and education. For thirty years, Sophie, an unending train of vices and crimes has been leading me step by step along the road to this brink of fortune where I now stand: two or three more successful tilts and I shall have risen out of the condition of poverty and beggardom in which I was born to an estate worth 50,000 livres a year. Do you imagine that throughout my brilliant career I ever once felt the prick of remorse? You must not think so, for I never did. Even if at this stage in the game some dreadful calamity were to cast me from my pinnacle into the abyss, I still should not give remorse houseroom. I should blame other people or my own want of skill, but I should remain at peace with my conscience.

‘That may be,’ said I, ‘but pray allow me to dwell a moment on the philosophical principles you have invoked. By what right do you insist that my conscience should be as firm as yours, for mine has not been accustomed from childhood to overcome the same scruples as you have? On what grounds do you say that my mind, which does not work like yours, can adapt to your way of thinking? You admit that there is a finite quantity of good and evil in Nature and that it follows therefore that there must be a certain number of people who do good and another category of persons who do evil. The policy which I have chosen is, by your own principles, natural. You cannot therefore ask me to depart from the laws which Nature prescribes for me. Furthermore, since you say you have found happiness in the career which you have followed, I should in my turn find it equally impossible to meet with felicity by departing from the course on which I am embarked. Nor should you think that the vigilance of the law will allow law-breakers to go on their way untroubled for long. Have you not just seen an example of its working for yourself? Out of fifteen wicked men whose company I was unfortunate enough to keep, fourteen have died shameful deaths.’

‘Is that what you call misfortune? Tell me: how much does shame matter to a man who has abandoned all principles? When the final ditch has been crossed, when honour is no more than a quaint fancy; reputation a will-o’-the-wisp and the future a bubble, does it matter whether a man dies on the scaffold or in his bed? There are two kinds of wicked men in the world: those whom great wealth and prodigious influence put beyond the reach of so tragic an end, and those who, if apprehended, will not avoid it. The latter kind, born with nothing, if they have any wit at all, can have only two prospects in view: either Wealth or the Wheel. If they succeed in acquiring the first, they have achieved their object; if they meet only with the second, what regrets can they have since they had nothing to lose? The law thus has no power over any wicked man. It cannot touch the scoundrel who has become powerful, for the successful rogue can always avoid its grasp, while the unsuccessful villain, who can expect nothing else from the sword of justice, can have no cause to fear it.’

‘Ah! But do you not then believe that in the next world heavenly justice lies in wait for the man who has not feared to lead a life of crime in this?’

‘I think that if there were a God, there would be less evil on this earth. I believe that if evil exists here below, then either it was willed by God or it was beyond His powers to prevent it. Now I cannot bring myself to fear a God who is either spiteful or weak. I defy Him without fear and care not a fig for His thunderbolts.’

‘You perturb me greatly, Madame,’ said I, getting to my feet. ‘You will forgive me if I listen no more to your execrable sophisms and odious blasphemies.’

‘Hold hard, Sophie. If I cannot convince your reason, then let me at least try to win over your heart. I need your help: do not refuse me. See, I have a hundred louis here. I put them to one side, so, as you may observe: they will be yours once the business has been successfully concluded.’

Giving expression now only to my natural inclination to do good, I immediately asked Dubois what business she meant, so that I might do all in my power to prevent the crime which she was preparing to commit.

‘This is the way of it,’ said she. ‘Have you remarked the young merchant from Lyons who has been dining with us downstairs for the last three days?’

‘You mean Dubreuil?’

‘The very same.’

‘Well?’

‘He is in love with you. He told me so. He has 600,000 francs in gold and paper which he keeps in a little casket next to his bed. Let me give him the idea that you would be agreeable to hearing his suit. Whether this is the case or not cannot matter to you. I shall suggest that he invites you to drive out into the country with him. I shall let him think that he will advance his cause during the drive. You will keep him amused and ensure that he stays out for as long as possible. Meanwhile, I shall be robbing him. I shall not run away, however: I shall still be here in Grenoble when his goods will be safely in Turin. We shall use all our ingenuity to prevent his suspecting us. We shall give every appearance of helping him with his enquiries. Then I shall announce my departure which will not arouse his suspicions, you will follow, and the hundred louis will be made over to you when we both arrive safely in Piedmont.’

‘Very well, Madame,’ I told Dubois, quite resolved to warn the hapless Dubreuil of the callous trick which was to be played on him. And the better to deceive the jade, I added: ‘But pray reflect, Madame, that if Dubreuil is in love with me, I could, by warning him or by selling him my favours, earn much more than the paltry sum which you are offering me to betray him.’

‘True, true,’ said Dubois. ‘Indeed, I begin to think that Heaven has given greater talents for crime to you than to me. If that is the way of it,’ she went on, writing a paper, ‘here is my note for a thousand louis. See if you dare refuse me now!’

‘I should never dream of any such thing, Madame,’ said I, taking the note from her. ‘But at least seek no explanation for my weakness and my wrong in accommodating your request, other than in my unhappy circumstances.’

‘I thought I could give you credit for showing some wit,’ said Dubois, ‘but you would rather have me put the blame on your poverty. As you wish. But serve me always and you will be content.’

The plot was arranged. That same evening, I began to be a little less unyielding with regard to Dubreuil and noticed that he did indeed feel something for me.

My position was exceeding delicate. Of course, I should have been utterly opposed to being a party in the proposed crime even had there been three times the money to be got from it. But I had no stomach whatsoever for consigning to the gallows a woman to whom, ten years before, I had owed my freedom. I wished to prevent the crime without exposing it, and with anyone but a consummate scoundrel like Dubois, I should assuredly have succeeded. Such is what I resolved to do, quite unaware that the veiled manipulations of this abominable creature would not only undermine the entire structure of my honourable scheme but would bring a punishment on my head for having conceived it.

On the day appointed for the planned excursion, Dubois invited both of us to dine in her chamber. We accepted and, when the meal was over, Dubreuil and I went down to urge haste to be made with the carriage which was being got ready for us. Dubois did not go down with us and I found myself for a moment alone with Dubreuil before we climbed on board.

‘Sir,’ said I quickly. ‘Listen to me carefully. Show no reaction and above all carry out exactly what I tell you. Do you have a friend staying at this inn on whom you can count absolutely?’

‘Yes, a junior partner of mine. I trust him as I should trust myself.’

‘Well, sir, you must go to him promptly and instruct him not to leave your chamber for a single instant for the whole of the time we shall be out driving.’

‘But I have the key to my chamber here in my pocket. What is the meaning of this extreme precaution?’

‘It is more important than you think, sir. Pray see to it, else I shall not drive out with you. The woman we have just left is a thief. She has only arranged the excursion we are about to embark upon together so that she may rob you undisturbed while we are out. Please hurry, sir, for she is watching us. She is very dangerous. It must not appear that I am giving you a warning. Give your key to your friend, urge him to keep to your chamber in the company of a few others if he can arrange it, and order the garrison not to stir out until we return. I shall explain the rest when we are in the carriage.’

Dubreuil heard me out, took my hand to thank me, and rushed away to give orders according to my recommendations. He returned, we set off and, as we drove, I revealed the whole plot to him. The young man expressed, in the most fulsome terms, his gratitude for the service which I had rendered him and then, begging me to tell him the full truth of my current situation, he declared that nothing in my account of my adventures revolted him sufficiently to prevent his making me the offer of his hand and his fortune.

‘We both come of the same class,’ Dubreuil said. ‘My father was a merchant like yours, my affairs have prospered while yours have not. I am only too happy to be able to right the wrongs which Fortune has done you. Think, Sophie, I am my own master, I answer to no one, I am on my way to Geneva to make an excellent investment of the money which your kind intervention has prevented me losing. You will follow me there. When you arrive I shall become your husband and you will not reappear in Lyons except as my wife.’

This turn of events was altogether too flattering to my hopes for me to dare refuse. Nevertheless I felt that I could not accept without making Dubreuil understand quite clearly all the circumstances which might lead him to regret his having asked. He was grateful for my niceness of sentiment but only pressed me the harder . . . O hapless creature that I was, was it ever to be that happiness was held out to me only to make me feel more keenly the bitter pain of never being able to grasp it? Was it an inescapable arrangement of the decrees of Providence that no virtue should ever burgeon in my heart but that it should tip me over into misfortune? Our conversation had already taken us two leagues from the town and we were about to step out of the carriage to enjoy the cool of the riverside walks which border the Isère where it was our intention to stroll, when all at once Dubreuil said that he felt terribly ill. He got down from the coach and was instantly attacked by the most dreadful retching. I ordered him to be put back in the carriage and we flew back in haste to Grenoble. Dubreuil was so ill that he had to be carried to his room. His condition amazed his friends who, following his orders, had not stirred from his apartment. I did not leave his side. A leech arrived and, just Heaven, the unfortunate young man's state was diagnosed: he had been poisoned! The moment I heard this ghastly news, I ran to Dubois's apartment. The wicked woman was gone! I hurried to my chamber where I found my clothes box broken into, the little money and all the clothes I owned all spirited off and Dubois, I was told, departed post-haste three hours since in the direction of Turin . . . There was no doubt that she was the author of all these crimes. Presenting herself at Dubreuil's door and vexed to find people in it, she had taken her revenge upon me. She had poisoned Dubreuil during dinner so that, on his returning to find she had succeeded in robbing him, the luckless young man, more concerned to save his life than to pursue her, would leave her to flee in safety, but also to ensure that the accident of his death occurring so to speak in my arms, I should be more like to be suspected than she. I ran back to Dubreuil's chamber but was not allowed to go near him: surrounded by his friends, he was expiring, but also exonerating me, assuring them I was innocent and forbidding them to bring charges. He had scarcely closed his eyes when his partner ran out to bring me the news and declared that I was to set my mind at rest. Alas, how could I? Was I not to weep bitter tears for the only man who, from the time when I first knew misfortune, had so generously proposed to rescue me from it? Was I not to lament a theft which returned me to the cruel pit of destitution out of which I seemed so incapable of climbing? I told Dubreuil's partner everything, not only what had been plotted against his friend but also what had happened to me. He pitied me, grieved bitterly for his partner, and reproved me for the excessive delicacy which had prevented my reporting the facts the moment I had learned of Dubois's scheme. We calculated that the abominable woman, who needed only four hours to see her safely to another country, would be there long before we could take steps to have her pursued; that it would be an expensive business; and that the innkeeper, closely implicated by the information I should lay before the justices, would defend himself vigorously and in the process might perhaps be the ruin of a person, namely myself, who, so it seemed, was still alive in Grenoble only because she had already survived one criminal trial, and was apparently able to subsist only on the strength of public charity. This reasoning seemed quite conclusive to me and, more, it filled me with such fear that I resolved to quit the town without taking formal leave of my protector. Monsieur S. Dubreuil's friend applauded my decision. He did not disguise from me that if the incident were to attract attention, then whatever precautions he took, I should be compromised by the depositions which he would be obliged to make, partly because of my connection with Dubois and partly because I had been with his friend on that last drive. Bearing all this in mind, he repeated his urgent advice that I should leave Grenoble at once without seeing anyone, and assured me that in the mean time I could count absolutely on his never acting in any way whatsoever which was contrary to my interests. Left alone to meditate on the whole affair, I saw that the young man's advice was all the sounder when I reflected that it was as clear that I appeared to be guilty as it was certain that I was not, and that the only aspect of the business which spoke spiritedly on my behalf—viz., my warning to Dubreuil, which he had perhaps explained none too clearly on his death-bed—would not be such convincing evidence that I should count absolutely on it. In the light of all this, I made up my mind quickly. I informed Dubreuil's partner what I had resolved.

'Would that my friend had charged me,' said he, 'with making some advantageous provision for you, for I should have attended to the business with the best of wills. And I wish heartily,' he added, ‘that he had told me that it was to you that he owed the warning to mount a guard on his apartment while he went driving out with you. But he did none of these things. He merely said several times over that you were not guilty and that no charges should be brought against you. I am forced therefore to limit my role to the execution of his wishes. The losses which you say you have incurred through acting on his behalf are such that I should be tempted to do a little something extra for you myself, Mademoiselle, if I could. But I am just starting out in business, I am young and my resources are pretty slender. There is not a penny-piece of mine amongst Dubreuil’s monies, and I must now return the entire sum to his family. Pray therefore, Sophie, understand if I restrict my services to the small gesture I shall now make. Here are *5* louis and here,’ he added, ushering into his room a female I had glimpsed at the inn earlier, ‘here is an honest woman of business from Châlon-surSaône which is my home town. She will return there after stopping for four and twenty hours in Lyons where she has affairs to settle.’

‘Madame Bertrand,’ said the young man as he introduced me to the woman, ‘I earnestly recommend this young person to you. She would be happy to find a position in the provinces and I beg you, as punctually as though you did it for me, to use every possible effort to find her a place in our town consonant with her birth and education. She is to pay out no money until it is done. I shall settle with you when I see you next. Goodbye, Sophie. Madame Bertrand leaves tonight. Go with her and may a larger measure of happiness accompany you to a town where I may soon have the satisfaction of seeing you again and be better able to express the deep gratitude I shall feel all my life for your honest manner of proceeding towards Dubreuil.’

The good-heartedness of this young man, who at bottom owed me nothing, made me shed a few tears despite myself. I accepted his gifts and swore that I should work solely to achieve a station in which I should be able one day to repay him. ‘Alas,’ said I, on leaving him, ‘though the practice of virtue has plunged me into misfortune once again, then at least, for the first time in my life, a glimmer of comfort has appeared in the ghastly pit of woe into which virtue continues still to propel me.’ I never saw my young benefactor again and, in accordance with what had been resolved between us, set off with Madame Bertrand the night following the terrible fate which had overtaken Dubreuil.

Madame Bertrand travelled in a small covered carriage drawn by a single horse which we took turns to drive from inside. In the carriage she carried all her effects and a good round sum in cash, together with her little daughter of 18 months who was still suckling and of whom I was soon, to my cost, to be altogether as fond as the mother who had borne her.

Madame Bertrand was a kind of fish-wife, having neither education nor wit, suspicious, garrulous, gossipy, tiresome, narrow-minded and, as such, more or less indistinguishable from any woman of the common people. Each evening, we regularly carried her goods into inns and we slept in the same chamber. We reached Lyons without any new incident arising, but during the two days which the woman needed to attend to her business, I had a singular encounter in the town. I was strolling on the bank of the Rhône with one of the servants from the inn whom I had asked to go with me, when suddenly I saw walking towards me the Reverend Father Antonin, now Superior of the Recollets of that place, the despoiler of my virginity whom I had known, as you will recall, Madame, at the little monastery of Sainte-Marie-des-Bois where my evil star had led me.

Antonin came up to me in the most casual manner and, though the serving-girl was there, asked me if I would care to call on him in his new abode where we might resume the pleasures we had known before.

‘But here is a buxom wench,’ said he, alluding to the girl who was with me, ‘who would be very welcome too. In our abbey, there are a number of stout fellows more than capable of holding their own against a brace of pretty women.’

I blushed prodigiously at his words and for a moment attempted to make him believe that he was mistaken in thinking he knew me. But not succeeding, I tried by signs to persuade him at least to restrain himself in the presence of my guide. But nothing could check his impudent flow and his solicitations simply became all the more pressing. In the end, upon our refusing repeatedly to go off with him, he insisted upon knowing our addresses. To rid myself of his importunities, I immediately thought to give him a false one. He wrote it down in his notebook and left us, promising that he would surely see us again soon. We returned to the inn. On the way, I imparted as well as I could to the serving-girl who was with me the history of my unfortunate acquaintance with the man. But either she was not satisfied by my account or else, being as indiscreet as her female sort always are by nature, I judged by what Madame Bertrand later said after the sorry adventure which befell me in her company, that the chit had fully apprised her of my knowing the abominable friar. However, he did not come and we went our way. We left Lyons rather late and on that first day got no further than Villefranche. It was there, Madame, that I suffered the dreadful calamity which has led me to appear before you as a criminal—without my being any guiltier in this latest pass in my life than in any of the others in which you have observed me so unjustly smitten by the cruel blows of fate, and without there having been any reason for my being plunged into the pit of woes other than the charitable impulses which I was utterly unable to eradicate from my heart.

On arriving in Villefranche at about six o’clock on a February evening, my companion and I had made haste to sup and go up early to bed so that we should make a longer day of it on the morrow. We had been sleeping for under two hours when a frightful quantity of smoke filled our chamber and made us both wake with a start. We could not but doubt that there was fire raging close at hand. Just Heaven! The speed with which the flames were spreading was already only too alarming. Half-dressed, we opened our door, but all we heard around us was the roar of walls collapsing, the ghastly noise of roof-timbers giving way, and the hideous screams of poor wretches as they fell into the fire below. A tongue of devouring flame reached up towards us, leaving us hardly time enough to hurry out of our room. However, we managed to scramble through the door and found ourselves commingled with the crowd of sorry folk who, half-naked as we were and some half-scorched too, were seeking safety in flight. At that instant, I recalled that Madame Bertrand, more concerned for herself than for her daughter, had given no thought to preserving her from certain death. Without a word to her, I ran back into our chamber through flames which blinded my eyes and burned me on several parts of my body, seized the poor little thing, and sprang up intending to return her to her mother. Trusting to a beam which was already partly burned through, I lost my footing and my first instinct was to put my arms out in front of me. Thus prompted by Nature, I was obliged to let go the precious burden I carried and the hapless infant fell into the flames as her mother looked on. This abominable woman, not pausing to think either of the object of the action I had tried to take, which was to save her child, or of the state to which the child’s falling while she watched had reduced me, and hysterical with grief, now accused me of killing her daughter, leaped wildly upon me, and attacked me with her fists. Meanwhile the fire abated and the multitude of helpers managed to save half the inn. Madame Bertrand’s first thought was to return to her chamber, which was one of the least damaged of all. There she repeated her charges, saying that I ought to have let her daughter be, that no harm would have come to her. But she became quite beside herself when, searching about for her goods, she discovered that she had been comprehensively robbed! Then, heeding only her despair and her anger, she screamed at me, accusing me of being the cause of the fire which I had started so that I could rob her more easily. She said she would report me, and straightway matching the threat to the deed, demanded to speak to the Justice of the place. In vain did I plead my innocence: she would not listen. The magistrate she had asked to see was not far away, having himself supervised the rescue work, and he appeared in answer to the summons of the loathsome woman. She stated her charge against me, shoring it up with anything that came into her head to give it greater force and legitimacy, and painted me in the colours of a common streetwalker who had escaped a hanging in Grenoble, as a baggage whom a young man, doubtless her lover, had given into her keeping against her better judgement, and she spoke too of the Recollet in Lyons. In short, nothing was omitted from the most emphatic performance which slander envenomed by grief and revenge could inspire. The judge received her statement and then the building was examined. It transpired that the fire had begun in a loft full of hay where several persons swore they had seen me go the previous evening, which was quite true. While looking for a water-closet to which I had been misdirected by the tavern servants whom I had asked, I had gone into this hay-loft and had remained there long enough to start a suspicion that I had done what I was accused of. And so my arraignment got under way, all the rules of procedure being strictly observed: the witnesses were all in agreement, nothing I alleged in my defence was even listened to, it was demonstrated that I was the arsonist, it was proved that I had accomplices who, while I busied myself here, were busying themselves committing thefts there, and, next morning at first light, without any further enquiry being made, I was taken back to Lyons, to the prison there, and was committed for arson, child-murder, and robbery.

Long grown accustomed to slander, injustice, and misfortune, and used since childhood to the idea that I never could yield to any virtuous impulse without being certain to find thorns somewhere in it, my affliction made me feel more bewildered than anguished, and I wept more than I bewailed my fate. However, it being natural for any suffering creature to grasp at every possible means by which he might climb out of the abyss into which misfortune has cast him, I thought of Father Antonin. However small the help I could hope for from that quarter, I did not reject out of hand my wish to see him and requested that he be fetched. Not knowing who could be asking for him, he came, but then affected not to recognize me. I told the gaoler that it was possible he could not place me because he had been my director of conscience only when I was very young, but on these grounds I requested a private interview with him. This was agreed by both parties. When I was alone with the friar, I threw myself at his feet and beseeched him to save me from the cruel pass I had come to. I proved my innocence to him and did nothing to disguise the fact that the crude suggestions he had made to me two days before had antagonized the person to whom I had been recommended, she now being my chief accuser. The friar listened to me very attentively and hardly had I finished my tale when he said:

‘Listen, Sophie, and do not fly into a passion as you usually do when anyone contradicts your cursed principles. You see where your notions have brought you, for now you have adequate leisure to convince yourself that they have served no purpose but to tip you into one abyss after another. So if you wish your neck to be saved, abandon them for once in your life. I can see only one way of managing it. One of the holy Brothers here in Lyons is a close relative of both the Governor and the King’s Intendant; I shall inform him of your plight. Say you are his niece and as such he will call for your release. By promising to pack you off to a convent for the rest of your life, I am certain that he will prevent matters being taken any further. In the event, you will disappear; he will hand you into my keeping and I will undertake to hide you until such time as a change of circumstances enables me to restore your freedom. But during your detention, you will belong to me. I make no bones of it: you will be a slave and subject to my whims which you will satisfy without demur. You understand me, Sophie, for you know me well enough. Come, choose now between this course and the scaffold—and do not make me wait for an answer.’

‘O Reverend Father!’ I replied in horror, ‘But you are a monster to take such cruel advantage of my situation to force me thus to choose between death and dishonour! Leave this place! I shall die innocent, but I shall at least die without remorse!’

My resistance excited the villain who thereupon was bold enough to show me just how inflamed his passions were. The vile man had the gall to think of the rites of love in that place of dread and chains beneath the sword of justice which was waiting to strike me down. I tried to escape his embrace, but he came after me and knocked me down on to the miserable straw pallet which did service as a bed, and if he did not quite consummate his crime, then at least he left me bearing marks so unambiguous that I could have no possible doubts as to the abhorrent nature of his intentions.

‘Listen,’ he said, brushing himself down, ‘you clearly do not want my help. Very well, I shall leave you to it. I shall neither help nor hinder, but if you take it into your pretty head to breathe a single word against me, then I shall charge you with crimes so heinous that I shall ensure that you will be left with no means of ever defending yourself again. Think hard before you answer and try to grasp the meaning of what I shall tell the gaoler. Or else I shall put the final touches to your downfall.’

He knocked on the cell door and the gaoler appeared:

‘Sir,’ the villain said, ‘this good woman was mistaken. She wished to speak to a Father Antonin who is now at Bordeaux. I neither know her nor have I ever known her. She asked me to hear her confession and this I have done. You are acquainted with the law which respects the confessional and I have therefore nothing to say of what passed in confidence between us. I give you both good-day. I shall always be ready to present myself here should my holy ministrations be judged necessary.

So saying, Antonin went out, leaving me as disconcerted by his double-dealing as I was dumbfounded by his sheer impudence and licentiousness.

The lower courts have no equal in the speedy dispatch of their work. As they are almost invariably composed of fools, cloddish martinets, or brutal fanatics, whose inane judgements will almost certainly later be reviewed and corrected by more intelligent eyes, there is nothing to restrain them whenever they have an opportunity to show their stupidity. I was thus unanimously sentenced to death by the eight or ten shop-keepers who sat on the worthy bench in this town of bankrupts, and was immediately transported to Paris for my conviction to be confirmed. The bitterest and most anguished thoughts rose up in me to finish off my much battered heart.

‘Under what fatal star was I then born,’ I asked myself, ‘for it now to be impossible for me even to think of following the smallest inclination to virtue without its being immediately washed away by a tide of woe! And how can it be that enlightened Providence, whose justice I willingly adore, punishing me for my virtues, simultaneously offers me the spectacle of those whose vices brought me low being raised on high to pinnacles? When I was very young, a money-lender attempted to persuade me to commit a theft: I refused, he grew rich, and I came close to hanging. Convicted robbers tried to ravish me in a forest because I would not join them: they prospered while I fell into the clutches of a lewd Marquis who gave me a hundred lashes because I would not poison his mother. Next, I went to the house of a surgeon: I saved him from committing an execrable crime which the brute repaid by butchering, branding, and ejecting me; he doubtless went on to complete further crimes and made his fortune while I was forced to beg for bread. I was then of a mind to partake of the sacrament and to offer fervent prayers to the Supreme Being who had visited as much misfortune upon me as these men had done. The august tribunal which I hoped would purify me through the workings of one of its holiest mysteries, viz., confession, became instead the ghastly scene of my undoing and my dishonour: the monster who defiled and befouled me was thereupon raised to the highest honours while I fell back into the dismal pit of my wretchedness. I gave money to alleviate the sufferings of a poor woman who promptly robbed me. I went to the aid of an unconscious man, and the scoundrel set me turning a wheel like some beast of burden and beat me mercilessly when my strength gave out: yet all of fortune's favours were showered on him while I came near to forfeiting my life for having been forced to work in his service. An abominable woman sought to involve me in another crime: but, for a second time, I lost everything I possessed because I tried to protect her victim's money and keep him safe from harm; the luckless man offered to reward me with marriage but died in my arms before we could be betrothed. I risked my life in a fire to save a child who was not mine: for doing as much I found myself a third time with head bowed before the sword of Themis. I begged protection of a cur who had dishonoured me, hoping to find him sympathetic to the extent of my misfortunes; yet it was at the cost of my being further dishonoured that the ogre offered to help me. O Providence! am I finally to doubt of your justice? Or what even greater horrors would have scourged me had I always, like those who have persecuted me, paid homage to vice?'

Such, Madame, were the imprecations which, against my better self—their being torn from deep inside me by dread of my impending fate—I had the temerity to utter. And then you had the kindness to turn a glance of pity and compassion upon me. Pray forgive me, Madame, for having presumed so long on your patience. I have reopened my wounds and I have troubled your peace of mind, and these are the only fruits which we both have picked out of the sorry tale of my adventures. The sun is rising, my guards will come for me, let me go now to meet my death. I no longer fear it, for it will abridge my sufferings, nay will end them. Death is to be feared only by those fortunate enough to lead pure, cloudless lives. But the wretched creature who has trodden on serpents, whose bleeding feet have stepped only on thorns, who has become acquainted with human nature only to learn how to hate humankind, who has seen the sun rise only to loathe its rising, whose cruel reverses have separated her from parents, fortune, help, protection, and friends, who in the great wide world has only tears for drink and tribulations for meat, a wretched creature such as this, I say, sees death draw near without fear, welcomes it as a safe haven where she will once more know peace in the bosom of a God too just to allow innocence, blighted and persecuted on this earth, to be denied some day the reward of its tears in heaven.

* * *

The honest Monsieur de Corville had not sat through this tale without being prodigiously moved by it. As for Madame de Lorsange, whose sensibility, as we have said, had not been blunted by the monstrous errors of her youth, she was almost reduced to a swooning state.

'Mademoiselle,' she said to Sophie, 'it is difficult to hear you and not be moved to feel the keenest interest in your case. But I must confess, a sentiment which I cannot explain, keener still than that interest I defined a moment since, draws me irresistibly to you and makes your misfortunes mine. You have kept your name from me, Sophie, you have concealed the truth of your birth. Tell me the secret, I beg you. Do not think it is idle curiosity which prompts me to ask this of you. If what I suspect should be true .. . O Justine! If only you were my sister!'

‘Justine! Madame, what name . . .?’

‘She would be your age now.’

‘O Juliette, is that you whose voice I hear?’ said the ill-starred prisoner throwing herself into the arms of Madame de Lorsange. ‘You! My sister! Great God! But what blasphemy have I committed in doubting Providence! Ah! I shall die less wretched now that I have been allowed to embrace you once more!’

And the two sisters, their arms tightly encircling each other, spoke only through sobs and heard each other only in their tears. Monsieur de Corville, incapable of stopping up his eyes and perceiving that he could not but take the most pressing interest in these events, immediately left the chamber and entered an adjacent room. There he wrote to the Lord Chancellor, painting the wretched Justine’s ghastly fate in strokes of blood and offering to stand as guarantor for her innocence. He petitioned that until a full investigation into her trial was complete, the alleged criminal be detained in his chateau and nowhere else, and signed an undertaking to give her up immediately on receipt of his Lordship’s order requiring him to do so. Having written his letter, he gave it into the keeping of the two escorts, made himself known to them, ordered them to deliver it immediately to its destination and to return. Then, if the Chief Magistrate gave his authorization, they were to carry the prisoner to his residence. The two men, seeing that they were dealing with a person of consequence, did not fear that they would be compromised by obeying his instructions. In the mean time, a carriage drew up at the ready.

‘So beautiful and so ill-used!’ said Monsieur de Corville to Justine who was still locked in her sister’s arms. ‘Come. The past quarter of an hour has wrought a transformation in your affairs. It must not be said that your virtues will never find their reward on this earth, nor that you met only with hearts of flint. Come, follow me. You are my prisoner. Henceforth I alone shall answer for you.’

Then Monsieur de Corville spoke briefly of what he had just arranged.

‘Dear, worthy man!’ said Madame de Lorsange, throwing herself to the ground at her lover’s feet, ‘this is the finest thing you ever did in your life! He alone can avenge the innocent oppressed and succour the unfortunate undone by fate who truly understands both the hearts of men and the spirit of the law. See now your prisoner stand before you! Come, Justine, come! Make haste to kiss the feet of this even—handed protector who, unlike the others you have known, will never desert you! O sir! If the chains of my love were dear to me before, how much more precious will they be henceforth now that they are bedecked by Nature’s garlands and drawn tighter by my affection and esteem!’

And both women vied with each other to kiss the feet of so generous a benefactor and moistened them with their tears. Then they made their departure. Monsieur de Corville and Madame de Lorsange took the greatest pleasure in guiding Justine’s passage from the depths of misfortune to the heights of ease and prosperity. They took delight in feeding her the most succulent dishes, they gave her the softest beds to sleep in, they urged her to use what was theirs as though it were her own: in short, they used her with as much niceness of feeling as could possibly be expected of any two sensitive spirits. During those first days, she was given the attentions of a physician. She was bathed, given fine clothes to wear, and made to appear to advantage. She was worshipped by the two lovers who competed in the race to make her forget her trials. A skilled practitioner undertook to remove all trace of the ignominious brand, cruel legacy of Rodin’s villainy. Everything proceeded as Madame de Lorsange and her delicate lover wished. Already the furrows etched by misfortune were fading from gentle Justine’s exquisite brow whose smoothness was being repaired by the graces; the ghastly white of her alabaster cheeks was ousted by the roses of spring; the smile long since wiped from her lips now returned on the wings of pleasure. The news from Paris could not have been better, for Monsieur de Corville had roused the whole of France and fanned the zeal of Monsieur S. who now worked with him to make Justine's misfortunes known and restore to her the tranquillity which was also her due. Finally, there came letters from the King which overturned all the verdicts unjustly made against her since childhood, restored her to full citizenship, silenced in perpetuity all the courts of his Kingdom which had plotted against an unfortunate, and granted her a pension of 1,200 livres to be paid for out of the monies seized in the coiners' eyrie in the Dauphiné. She almost died of joy on learning of such flattering developments. For several days together she wept the sweetest tears in the home of her protectors and then, so unaccountably that the cause of it was not to be discovered, her mood changed. She became sad, troubled, dreamy. Sometimes she wept in her friends' company, and could not herself have said what was the reason for her tears.

'I was not born to be so deliriously happy,' she would sometimes say to Madame de Lorsange. 'O dear sister! Such felicity is not made to last!'

Vainly was it put to her that, her tribulations now being over, she now had no further cause for anxiety of any sort. In drawing up the statements made on her behalf, the care which had been taken to avoid mention of any of the persons with whom she had been implicated, whose influence was still to be feared, was another reason for her being easy in her mind. Yet she was not to be persuaded. It was as though the poor girl, destined to know nothing but unhappiness and eternally sensing the hand of misfortune poised above her ready to strike, had some intimation of the final blow by which she was to be cut down.

Madame de Lorsange was still in residence in the country. It was the end of summer. A stroll was mooted which was made doubtful by the gathering of a violent storm. The heat being extreme, every window in the drawing room was open. The lightning flashed, hail fell, the wind howled and shrieked, and the thunder roared alarmingly. Madame de Lorsange quaked. Always terrified by thunder, Madame de Lorsange beseeched her sister to close up all the windows as quickly as she could. Monsieur de Corville came into the room just at this moment. Bent on allaying her sister's fears without delay, Justine flew to a window where she struggled for a whole minute against the wind which resisted her efforts. Suddenly, a bolt of lightning struck her and hurled her clear to the middle of the room where she lay lifeless on the floor.

Madame de Lorsange uttered a piteous cry, then fainted. Monsieur de Corville summoned help which was divided between the two casualties. Madame de Lorsange was revived but the hapless Justine had been so comprehensively struck down that there was not even the smallest hope remaining for her. The bolt had entered by her right breast, had blasted her thorax and come out again through her mouth, so disfiguring her face that she was hideous to look at. Monsieur de Corville thought it best that she be carried off without delay, but Madame de Lorsange, with an air of the greatest calm, rose to her feet and countermanded the order.

'No,' said she to her lover. 'No, leave her a moment where I may see her. I need her there to gaze upon so that I may be confirmed in the resolve which I have this moment made. Pray hear me out, sir, and do not obstruct the course I propose to follow, for nothing now shall deter me from it. The unprecedented misfortunes experienced by this benighted creature, though she ever respected virtue, are far too removed from the ordinary run not to open my eyes upon my own case. Do not think, sir, that I am blinded by the glimpses of that sham of happiness which, throughout all her adventures, we have observed to be the lot of the wicked men who plagued her. They are whims of fate, puzzles invented by Providence which it is not for us to try to penetrate nor should they ever tempt us. The prosperity enjoyed by wicked men is a test which Providence sets us. It is as the lightning whose beguiling flashes lend momentary beauty to the air before hurling headlong into death's chasm the unhappy man who is dazzled by its brilliance. We have before us an example of it. The chain of calamities, the dreadful, uninterrupted misfortunes of this poor girl are a warning which Almighty God has given me to repent of my ways, to heed the voice of remorse and fly at last to His bosom. How much must I fear at His hands, I whose crimes would appal you if you ever came to know them, I, whose lewdness, irreligion, and rejection of all decent principles have marked each step I have taken in life. What should I expect, then, if one such as this, who never once in her life knowingly committed a blameworthy act, has been so categorically treated? Let us part, sir; the time is ripe. There being no tie that binds us, forget me and allow me to go to a place where, repenting eternally at the feet of God Almighty, I may abjure the wicked actions by which I have debased myself. This catastrophe, though so dreadful for me, was nevertheless necessary for my redemption in this life and for the happiness for which I hope in the life that is to come. Farewell, sir, you will never see me more. The last gesture of friendship I ask of you is to promise you will never undertake any kind of investigation with the object of discovering what has become of me. I shall await you in a better world, for your virtues will assuredly bring you to it. May the mortifications in which I shall spend such wretched years as are left me in expiation of my crimes allow me indeed to see you there some day.

Madame de Lorsange left the house at once, ordered a carriage to be made ready, took some small provision of her money with her, leaving the rest for Monsieur de Corville to whom she gave directions concerning pious bequests to be made, and drove in haste to Paris where she entered the Carmelite Convent there. Within the space of a few years, she had become its model and example, known not only for her deep piety but also for the serenity of her spirit and the unimpeachable propriety of her morals.

Monsieur de Corville, a man deserving of the highest offices in his native land, was honoured to obtain them and accepted with the sole object of working for the happiness of the people, the glory of his sovereign, and the fortune of his friends.

And now, reader, having read this tale, may you extract the same profit from it as this reformed woman of the world. May you, like her, be persuaded that true happiness lies in virtue alone and that, though God allows goodness to be persecuted on earth, it is with no other end in view than to prepare for us a better reward in heaven.

Written in the space of two weeks,
this eighth day of July 1787.

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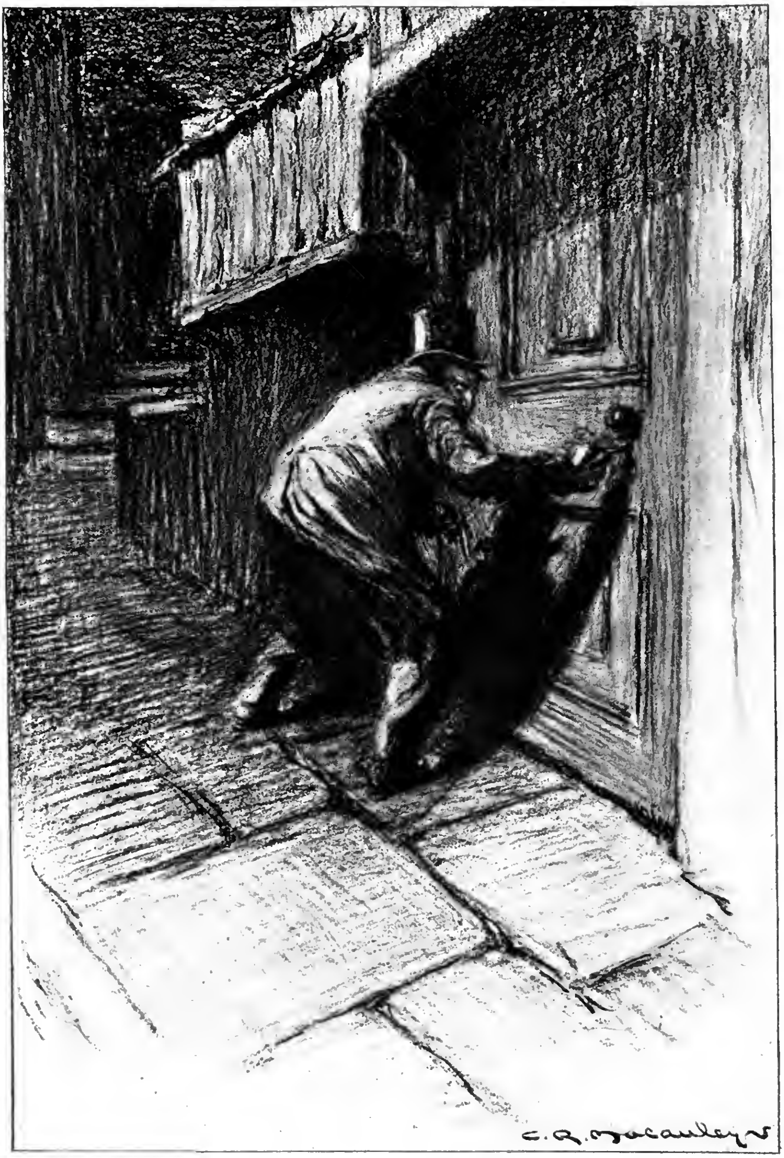
I

THE STRANGE CASE OF DR. JEKYLL AND MR. HYDE


C. R. Macauley

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THE STRANGE CASE OF DR. JEKYLL AND MR. HYDE

By Robert Louis Stevenson

Illustrated by
CHARLES RAYMOND MACAULEY

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New York
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542 Fifth Avenue
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Dedication

To

KATHARINE DE MATTOS

It's ill to loose the bands that God decreed to bind;
Still will we be the children of the heather and the wind.
Far away from home, O it's still for you and me
That the broom is blowing bonnie in the north countrie.

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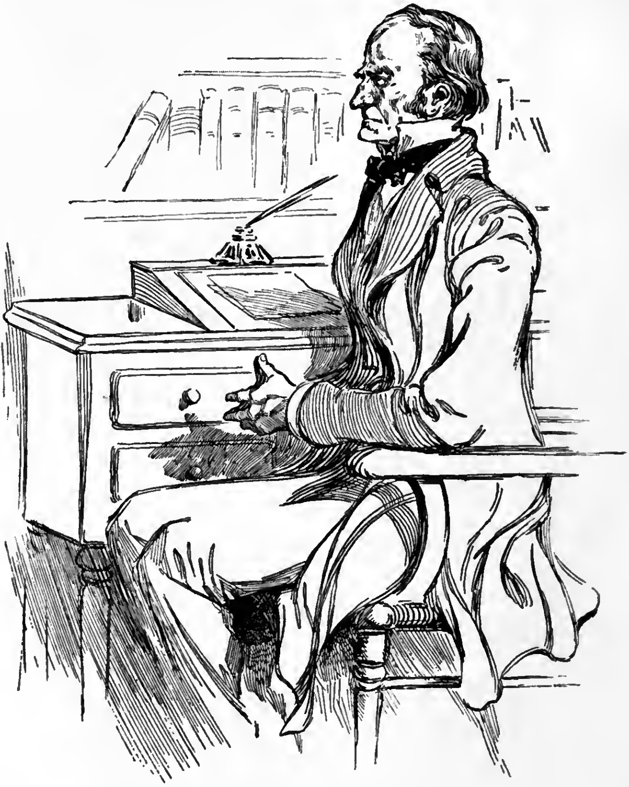
Story of the Door

Story of the Door

MR. UTTERSON the lawyer was a man of a rugged countenance, that was never lighted by a smile; cold, scanty, and embarrassed in discourse; backward in sentiment; lean, long, dusty, dreary, and yet somehow lovable. At friendly meetings, and when the wine was to his taste, something eminently human beaconed from his eye; something indeed which never found its way into his talk, but which spoke not only in these silent symbols of the after-dinner face, but more often and loudly in the acts of his life. He was austere with himself; drank gin when he was alone, to mortify a taste for vintages; and though he enjoyed the theatre, had not crossed the doors of one for twenty years. But he had an approved tolerance for others; sometimes wondering, almost with envy, at the high pressure of spirits involved in their misdeeds; and in



any extremity inclined to help rather than to reprove. "I incline to Cain's heresy," he used to say, quaintly; "I let my brother go to the devil in his own way." In this character, it was frequently his fortune to be the last reputable acquaintance and the last good influence in the lives of down-going men. And to such as these, so long as they came about his chambers, he never marked a shade of change in his demeanor.

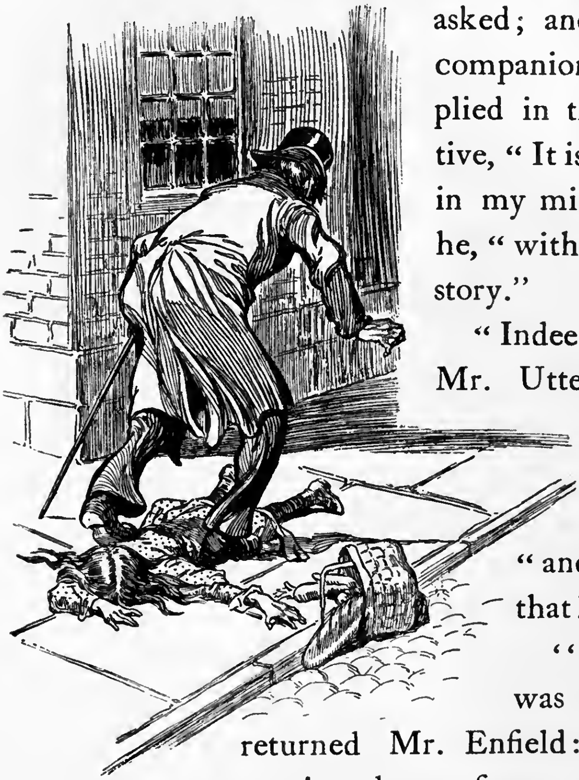
No doubt the feat was easy to Mr. Utterson; for he was undemonstrative at the best, and even his friendships seemed to be founded in a similar catholicity of good-nature. It is the mark of a modest man to accept his friendly circle ready-made from the hands of opportunity; and that was the lawyer's way. His friends were those of his own blood, or those whom he had known the longest; his affections, like ivy, were the growth of time,—they implied no aptness in the object. Hence, no doubt, the bond that united him to Mr. Richard Enfield, his distant kinsman, the well-known man about town. It was a nut to crack for many, what these two could see in each other, or what subject they could find in common. It was reported by those who encountered them in their Sunday walks that they said nothing, looked singularly dull, and would hail with obvious relief the appearance of a friend. For all that, the two put the greatest store by these excursions, counted them the chief jewel of each week, and not only set aside occasions of pleasure, but even resisted the calls of business, that they might enjoy them uninterrupted.

It chanced on one of these rambles that their way led them down a by-street in a busy quarter of London. The street was small and what is called quiet, but it drove a thriving trade on the week-days. The inhabitants were all doing well, it seemed, and all emulously hoping to do better still, and laying out the surplus of their gains in coquetry; so that the shop fronts stood along that thoroughfare with an air of invitation, like rows of smiling saleswomen. Even on Sunday, when it veiled its more florid charms and lay comparatively empty of passage, the street shone out in contrast to its dingy neighborhood, like a fire in a forest; and with its freshly painted shutters, well-polished brasses, and general cleanliness and gayety of note, instantly caught and pleased the eye of the passenger.

Two doors from one corner, on the left hand going east, the line was broken by the entry of a court; and just at that point, a certain sinister block of building thrust forward its gable on the street. It was two stories high, showed no window, nothing but a door on the lower story and a blind forehead of discolored wall on the upper, and bore in every feature the marks of prolonged and sordid negligence. The door, which was equipped with neither bell nor knocker, was blistered and distained. Tramps slouched into the recess and struck matches on the panels; the children kept shop upon the steps; the schoolboy had tried his knife on the moldings; and for close on a generation no one had appeared to drive away these random visitors or to repair their ravages.

Mr. Enfield and the lawyer were on the other side of the by-street; but when they came abreast of the entry, the former lifted up his cane and pointed.

"Did you ever remark that door?" he asked; and when his companion had replied in the affirmative, "It is connected in my mind," added he, "with a very odd story."



"Indeed?" said Mr. Utterson, with a slight change of voice, "and what was that?"

"Well, it was this way," returned Mr. Enfield: "I was coming home from some place at the end of the world, about three o'clock of a black winter morning, and my way lay through a part of town where there was literally nothing to be seen but lamps. Street after street, and all the folks asleep—street after street, all lighted up as if for a procession and all as empty as a church—till at last I got into that state of mind when a man listens and listens and begins to long for the sight of a policeman. All at once, I saw two figures: one a little man who was stumping along eastward at a good walk, and the other a girl of maybe eight or ten who was running as hard as she was able down a cross street. Well, sir, the two ran into each other naturally enough at the corner; and then came the horrible part of the thing; for the man trampled calmly over the child's body and left her screaming on the ground. It sounds nothing to hear, but it was hellish to see. It wasn't like a man; it was like some damned Juggernaut. I gave a view halloo, took to my heels, collared my gentleman, and brought him back to where there was already quite a group about the screaming child. He was perfectly cool and made no resistance, but gave me one look, so ugly that it brought out the sweat on me like running. The people who had turned out were the girl's own family; and pretty soon the doctor, for whom she had been sent, put in his appearance. Well, the child was not much the worse—more frightened, according to the sawbones; and there you might have supposed would be an end to it. But there was one curious circumstance. I had taken a loathing to my gentleman at first sight. So had the child's family, which was only natural. But the doctor's case was what struck me. He was the usual cut-and-dried apothecary, of no particular age and color, with a strong Edinburgh accent, and about as emotional as a bagpipe. Well, sir, he was like the rest of us; every time he looked at my prisoner, I saw that sawbones turned sick and white with the desire to kill him. I knew what was in his mind, just as he knew what was in mine; and killing being out of the question, we did the next best. We told the man we could and would make such a scandal out of this as should make his name stink from one end of London to the other. If he had any friends or any credit, we undertook that he should lose them. And all the time, as we were pitching it in red hot, we were keeping the women off him as best we could, for they were as wild as harpies. I never saw a circle of such hateful faces; and there was the man in the middle, with a kind of black, sneering coolness—frightened, too, I could see that—but carrying it off, sir, really like Satan. 'If you choose to make capital out of this accident,' said he, 'I am naturally helpless. No gentleman but wishes to avoid a scene,' says he. 'Name your figure.' Well, we screwed him up to a hundred pounds for the child's family; he would have clearly liked to stick out; but there was something about the lot of us that meant mischief, and at last he struck. The next thing was to get the money; and where do you think he carried us but to that place with the door?—whipped out a key, went in, and presently came back with the matter of ten pounds in gold and a check for the balance on Coutts's, drawn payable to bearer, and signed with a name that I can't mention, though it's one of the points of my story, but it was a name at least very well known and often printed. The figure was stiff; but the signature was good for more than that, if it was only genuine. I took the liberty of pointing out to my gentleman that the whole business looked apocryphal, and that a man does not, in real life, walk into a cellar door at four in the morning and come out of it with another man's check for close upon a hundred pounds. But he was quite easy and sneering. 'Set your mind at rest,' says he; 'I will stay with you till the banks open, and cash the check myself.' So we all set off—the doctor, and the child's father, and our friend and myself—and passed the rest of the night in my chambers; and next day, when we had breakfasted, went in a body to the bank. I gave in the check myself, and said I had every reason to believe it was a forgery. Not a bit of it. The check was genuine."

"Tut—tut!" said Mr. Utterson.

"I see you feel as I do," said Mr. Enfield. "Yes, it's a bad story. For my man was a fellow that nobody could have to do with, a really damnable man; and the person that drew the check is the very pink of proprieties, celebrated, too, and—what makes it worse—one of your fellows who do what they call good. Blackmail, I suppose; an honest man paying through the nose for some of the capers of his youth. Black Mail House is what I call that place with the door, in consequence. Though even that, you know, is far from explaining all," he added, and with the words fell into a vein of musing.

From this he was recalled by Mr. Utterson asking rather suddenly: "And you don't know if the drawer of the check lives there?"

"A likely place, isn't it?" returned Mr.

Enfield. "But I happen to have noticed his address; he lives in some square or other."

"And you never asked about the—place with the door?" said Mr. Utterson.

"No, sir; I had a delicacy," was the reply. "I feel very strongly about putting questions; it partakes too much of the style of the day of judgment. You start a question, and it's like starting a stone. You sit quietly on the top of a hill, and away the stone goes, starting others, and presently some bland old bird—the last you would have thought of—is knocked on the head in his own back garden and the family have to change their name. No, sir, I make it a rule of mine: the more it looks like Queer Street, the less I ask."

"A very good rule, too," said the lawyer.

"But I have studied the place for myself," continued Mr. Enfield. "It seems scarcely a house. There is no other door, and nobody goes in or out of that one but, once in a great while, the gentleman of my adventure. There are three windows looking on the court on the first floor; none below; the windows are always shut, but they're clean. And then there is a chimney which is generally smoking; so somebody must live there. And yet it's not so sure; for the buildings are so packed together about that court, that it's hard to say where one ends and another begins."

The pair walked on again for a while in silence; and then, "Enfield," said Mr. Utterson, "that's a good rule of yours."

"Yes, I think it is," returned Enfield.

"But for all that," continued the lawyer, "there's one point I want to ask. I want to ask the name of that man who walked over the child."

"Well," said Mr. Enfield, "I can't see what harm it would do. It was a man of the name of Hyde."

"H'm," said Mr. Utterson. "What sort of a man is he to see?"

"He is not easy to describe. There is something wrong with his appearance;

something displeasing, something downright detestable. I never saw a man I so disliked, and yet I scarcely know why. He must be deformed somewhere; he gives a strong feeling of deformity, although I couldn't specify the point. He's an extraordinary-looking man, and yet I really can name nothing out of the way. No, sir; I can make no hand of it; I can't describe him. And it's not want of memory; for I declare I can see him this moment."

Mr. Utterson again walked some way in silence and obviously under a weight of consideration. "You are sure he used a key?" he inquired at last.

"My dear sir"— began Enfield, surprised out of himself.

"Yes, I know," said Utterson; "I know it must seem strange. The fact is, if I do not ask you the name of the other party, it is because I know it already. You see, Richard, your tale has gone home. If you have been inexact in any point, you had better correct it."

"I think you might have warned me," returned the other with a touch of sullenness. "But I have been pedantically exact, as you call it. The fellow had a key; and what's more, he has it still. I saw him use it, not a week ago."

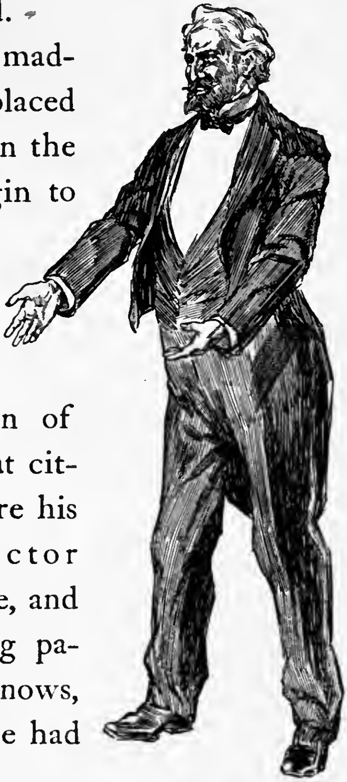
Mr. Utterson sighed deeply, but said never a word, and the young man presently resumed. "Here is another lesson to say nothing," said he. "I am ashamed of my long tongue. Let us make a bargain never to refer to this again."

"With all my heart," said the lawyer. "I shake hands on that, Richard."

Search for Mr. Hyde

Search for Mr. Hyde

THAT evening Mr. Utterson came home to his bachelor house in somber spirits and sat down to dinner without relish. It was his custom of a Sunday, when this meal was over, to sit close by the fire, a volume of some dry divinity on his reading-desk, until the clock of the neighboring church rang out the hour of twelve, when he would go soberly and gratefully to bed. On this night, however, as soon as the cloth was taken away, he took up a candle and went into his business-room. There he opened his safe, took from the most private part of it a document indorsed on the envelope as Dr. Jekyll's will, and sat down with a clouded brow to study its contents. The will was holograph, for Mr. Utterson, though he took charge of it now that it was made, had refused to lend the least assistance in the making of it; it provided not only that, in case of the decease of Henry Jekyll, M.D., D.C.L., LL.D., F.R.S., etc., all his possessions were to pass into the hands of his "friend and benefactor, Edward Hyde," but that in case of Doctor Jekyll's "disappearance or unexplained absence for any period exceeding three calendar months," the said Edward Hyde should step into the said Henry Jekyll's shoes without further delay and free from any burthen or obligation, beyond the payment of a few small sums to the members of the doctor's household. This document had long been the lawyer's eye-sore. It offended him both as a lawyer and as a lover of the sane and customary sides of life, to whom the fanciful was the immodest. And hitherto it was his ignorance of Mr. Hyde that had swelled his indignation; now, by a sudden turn, it was his knowledge. It was already bad enough when the name was but a name of which he could learn no more. It was worse when it began to be clothed upon with detestable attributes; and out of the shifting, insubstantial mists that had so long baffled his eye, there leaped up the sudden, definite presentment of a fiend.



"I thought it was madness," he said, as he replaced the obnoxious paper in the safe, "and now I begin to fear it is disgrace."

With that he blew out his candle, put on a great-coat, and set forth in the direction of Cavendish Square, that citadel of medicine, where his friend, the great Doctor Lanyon, had his house, and received his crowding patients. "If any one knows, it will be Lanyon," he had thought.

The solemn butler knew and welcomed him; he was subjected to no stage of delay, but ushered direct from the door to the dining-room where Doctor Lanyon sat alone over his wine. This was a hearty, healthy, dapper, red-faced gentleman, with a shock of hair prematurely white, and a boisterous and decided manner. At sight of Mr. Utterson, he sprang up from his chair and welcomed him with both hands. The geniality, as was the way of the man, was somewhat theatrical to the eye; but it reposed on genuine feeling. For these two were old friends, old mates both at school and college, both thorough respecters of themselves and of each other, and, what does not always follow, men who thoroughly enjoyed each other's company.

After a little rambling talk the lawyer led up to the subject which so disagreeably preoccupied his mind.

"I suppose, Lanyon," said he, "you and I must be the two oldest friends that Henry Jekyll has?"

"I wish the friends were younger," chuckled Doctor Lanyon. "But I suppose we are. And what of that? I see little of him now."

"Indeed?" said Utterson. "I thought you had a bond of common interest."

"We had," was the reply. "But it is more than ten years since Henry Jekyll became too fanciful for me. He began to go wrong, wrong in mind; and though of course I continue to take an interest in him for old sake's sake, as they say, I see and I have seen devilish little of the man. Such unscientific balderdash," added the doctor, flushing suddenly purple, "would have estranged Damon and Pythias."

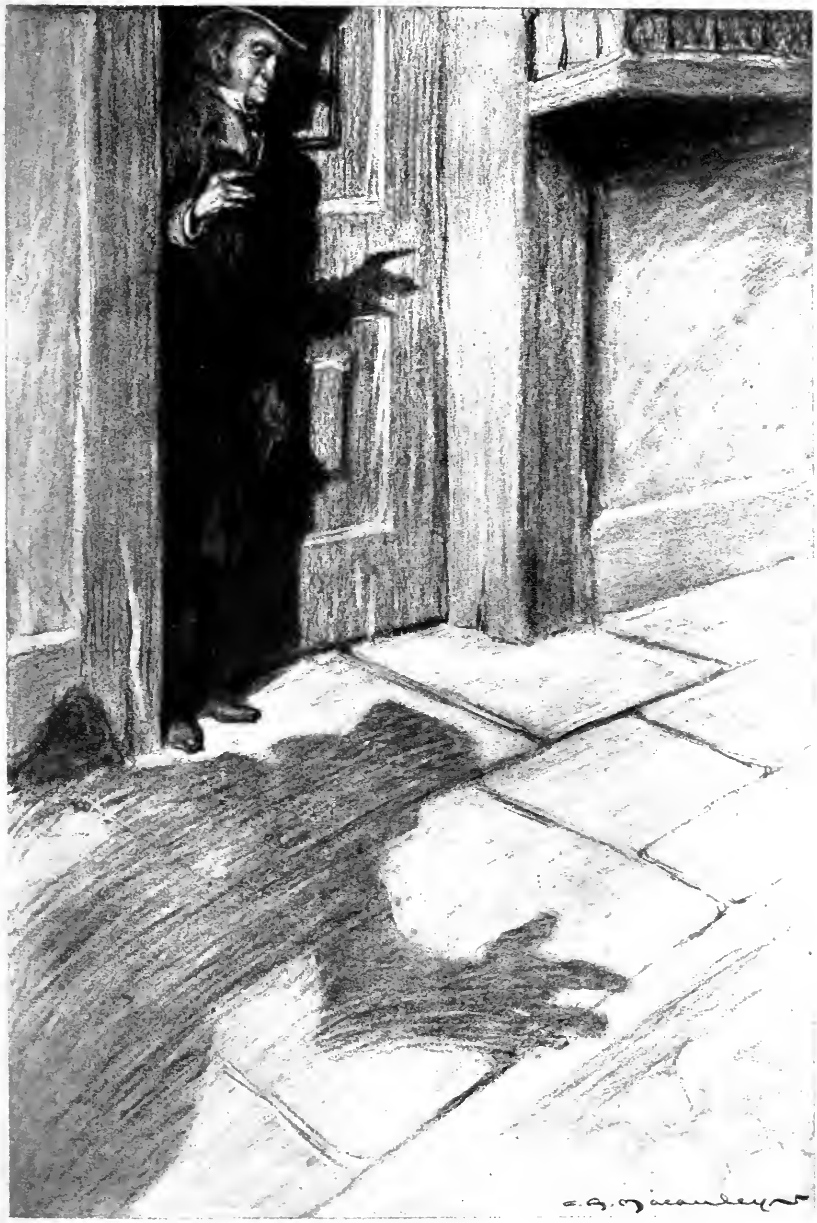
This little spirit of temper was somewhat of a relief to Mr. Utterson. "They have only differed on some point of science," he thought; and being a man of no scientific passions—except in the matter of conveyancing—he even added, "It is nothing worse than that!" He gave his friend a few seconds to recover his composure, and then approached the question he had come to put. "Did you ever come across a *protégé* of his—one Hyde?" he asked.

"Hyde?" repeated Lanyon. "No. Never heard of him since my time."

That was the amount of information that the lawyer carried back with him to the great, dark bed on which he tossed to and fro until the small hours of the morning began to grow large. It was a night of little ease to his toiling mind, toiling in mere darkness, and besieged by questions.

Six o'clock struck on the bells of the church that was so conveniently near to Mr. Utterson's dwelling, and still he was digging at the problem. Hitherto it had touched him on the intellectual side alone; but now his imagination also was engaged, or, rather, enslaved; and as he lay and tossed in the gross darkness of the night and the curtained room, Mr. Enfield's tale went by before his mind in a scroll of lighted pictures. He would be aware of the great field of lamps of a nocturnal city; then of the figure of a man walking swiftly; then of a child running from the doctor's; and then these met, and that human Juggernaut trod the child down and passed on regardless of her screams. Or else he would see a room in a rich house, where his friend lay asleep, dreaming and smiling at his dreams, and then the door of that room would be opened, the curtains of the bed plucked apart, the sleeper recalled, and lo! there would stand by his side a figure to whom power was given, and, even at that dead hour, he must rise and do its bidding. The figure in these two phases haunted the lawyer all night; and if at any time he dozed over, it was but to see it glide more stealthily through sleeping houses, or move the more swiftly and still the more swiftly, even to dizziness, through wider labyrinths of lamplit city, and at every street corner crush a child and leave her screaming. And still the figure had no face by which he might know it; even in his dreams it had no face, or one that baffled him and melted before his eyes; and thus it was that there sprang up and grew apace in the lawyer's mind a singularly strong, almost an inordinate, curiosity to behold the features of the real Mr. Hyde. If he could but once set eyes on him, he thought the mystery would lighten and perhaps roll altogether away, as was the habit of mysterious things when well examined. He might see a reason for his friend's strange preference or bondage—call it which you please—and even for the startling clauses of the will. At least it would be a face worth seeing; the face of a man who was without bowels of mercy; a face which had but to show itself to raise up in the mind of the unimpressionable Enfield a spirit of enduring hatred.

From that time forward Mr. Utterson began to haunt the door in the by-street of shops. In the morning before office hours, at noon, when business was plenty and time scarce, at night under the face of the fogged city moon, by all lights and at all hours of solitude or concourse, the lawyer was to be found on his chosen post.


C. A. Macauley

"If he be Mr. Hyde," he had thought, "I shall be Mr. Seek."

And at last his patience was rewarded. It was a fine, dry night; frost in the air; the streets as clean as a ballroom floor; the lamps, unshaken by any wind, drawing a regular pattern of light and shadow. By ten o'clock, when the shops were closed, the by-street was very solitary and, in spite of the low growl of London from all round, very silent. Small sounds carried far; domestic sounds out of the houses were clearly audible on either side of the roadway, and the rumor of the approach of any passenger preceded him by a long time. Mr. Utterson had been some minutes at his post, when he was aware of an odd, light footstep drawing near. In the course of his nightly patrols he had long grown accustomed to the quaint effect with which the footfalls of a single person, while he is still a great way off, suddenly spring out distinct from the vast hum and clatter of the city. Yet his attention had never before been so sharply and decisively arrested, and it was with a strong, superstitious prevision of success that he withdrew into the entry of the court.

The steps drew swiftly nearer, and swelled out suddenly louder as they turned the end of the street. The lawyer, looking forth from the entry, could soon see what manner of man he had to deal with. He was small and very plainly dressed, and the look of him, even at that distance, went somehow strongly against the watcher's inclination. But he made straight for the door, crossing the roadway to save time; and as he came, he drew a key from his pocket, like one approaching home.

Mr. Utterson stepped out and touched him on the shoulder as he passed. "Mr. Hyde, I think?"

Mr. Hyde shrank back with a hissing intake of the breath. But his fear was only momentary; and, though he did not look the lawyer in the face, he answered, coolly enough:

"That is my name. What do you want?"

"I see you are going in," returned the lawyer. "I am an old friend of Dr. Jekyll's—Mr. Utterson, of Gaunt Street—you must have heard my name; and meeting you so conveniently, I thought you might admit me."

"You will not find Dr. Jekyll; he is from home," replied Mr. Hyde, blowing in the key. And then suddenly, but still without looking up: "How did you know me?" he asked.

"On your side," said Mr. Utterson, "will you do me a favor?"

"With pleasure," replied the other. "What shall it be?"

"Will you let me see your face?" asked the lawyer.

Mr. Hyde appeared to hesitate, and then, as if upon some sudden reflection, fronted about with an air of defiance, and the pair stared at each other pretty fixedly for a few seconds. "Now I shall know you again," said Mr. Utterson. "It may be useful."

"Yes," returned Mr. Hyde; "it is as well we have met; and *a propos*, you should have my address." And he gave a number of a street in Soho.

"Good God!" thought Mr. Utterson, "can he, too, have been thinking of the will?" But he kept his feelings to himself, and only grunted in acknowledgment of the address.

"And now," said the other, "how did you know me?"

"By description," was the reply.

"Whose description?"

"We have common friends," said Mr. Utterson.

"Common friends?" echoed Mr. Hyde, a little hoarsely. "Who are they?"

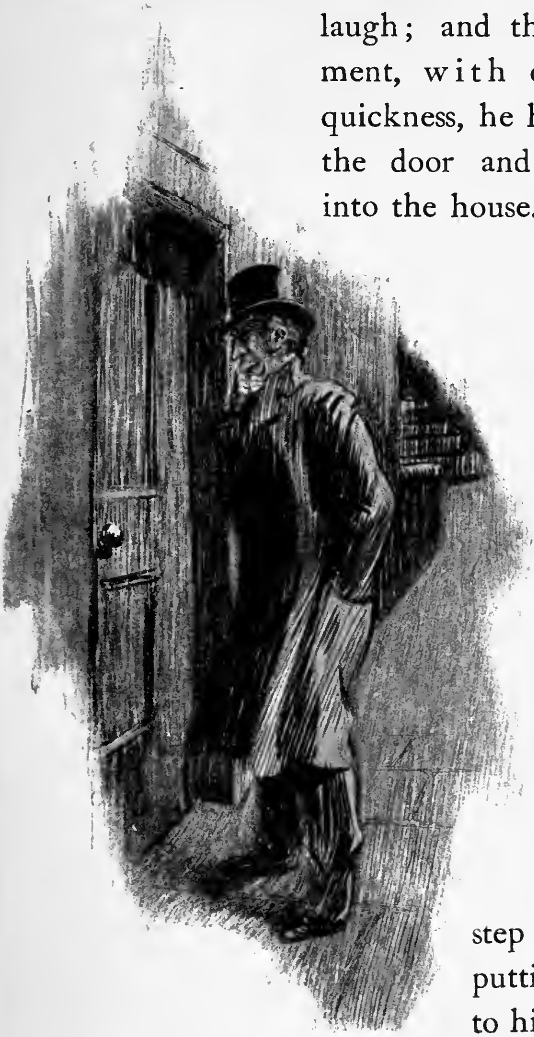
"Jekyll, for instance," said the lawyer.

"He never told you," cried Mr. Hyde, with a flush of anger. "I did not think you would have lied."

"Come," said Mr. Utterson, "that is not fitting language."

The other snarled aloud into a savage

laugh; and the next moment, with extraordinary quickness, he had unlocked the door and disappeared into the house.



The lawyer stood a while when Mr. Hyde had left him, the picture of disquietude. Then he began to slowly mount the street, pausing every step or two and putting his hand to his brow, like a man in mental perplexity. The problem he was thus debating as he walked was one of a class that is rarely solved. Mr. Hyde was pale and dwarfish; he gave an impression of deformity without any namable malformation; he had a displeasing smile; he had borne himself to the lawyer with a sort of murderous mixture of timidity and boldness, and he spoke with a husky, whispering, and somewhat broken voice: all these were points against him, but not all of these together could explain the hitherto unknown disgust, loathing, and fear with which Mr. Utterson regarded him. "There must be something else," said the perplexed gentleman. "There *is* something more, if I could find a name for it. God bless me, the man seems hardly human! Something troglodytic, shall we say? or can it be the old story of Dr. Fell? or is it the mere radiance of a foul soul that thus transpires through, and transfigures, its clay continent? The last, I think: for oh, my poor old Harry Jekyll, if ever I read Satan's signature upon a face, it is on that of your new friend."

Round the corner from the by-street there was a square of ancient, handsome houses, now for the most part decayed from their high estate and let in flats and chambers to all sorts and conditions of men: map-engravers, architects, shady lawyers, and the agents of obscure enterprises. One house, however, second from the corner, was still occupied entire; and at the door of this, which wore a great air of wealth and comfort, though it was now plunged in darkness except for the fan-light, Mr. Utterson stopped and knocked. A well-dressed, elderly servant opened the door.

"Is Doctor Jekyll at home, Poole?" asked the lawyer.

"I will see, Mr. Utterson," said Poole, admitting the visitor, as he spoke, into a large, low-roofed, comfortable hall, paved with flags, warmed—after the fashion of a country-house—by a bright, open fire, and furnished with costly cabinets of oak. "Will you wait here by the fire, sir? or shall I give you a light in the dining-room?"

"Here, thank you," said the lawyer, and he drew near and leaned on the tall fender. This hall, in which he was now left alone, was a pet fancy of his friend the doctor's; and Utterson himself was wont to speak of it as the pleasantest room in London. But to-night there was a shudder in his blood; the face of Hyde sat heavy on his memory; he felt—what is rare with him—a nausea and distaste of life; and in the gloom of his spirits he seemed to read a menace in the flickering of the firelight on the polished cabinets and the uneasy starting of the shadow on the roof. He was ashamed of his relief when Poole presently returned to announce that Doctor Jekyll was gone out.

"I saw Mr. Hyde go in by the old dissecting-room door, Poole," he said. "Is that right, when Dr. Jekyll is from home?"

"Quite right, Mr. Utterson, sir," replied the servant. "Mr. Hyde has a key."

"Your master seems to repose a great deal of trust in that young man, Poole," resumed the other, musingly.

"Yes, sir, he do, indeed," said Poole. "We all have orders to obey him."

"I do not think I ever met Mr. Hyde?" asked Utterson.

"Oh, dear, no, sir. He never *dines* here," replied the butler. "Indeed, we see very little of him on this side of the house; he mostly comes and goes by the laboratory."

"Well, good-night, Poole."

"Good-night, Mr. Utterson."

And the lawyer set out homeward with a very heavy heart. "Poor Harry Jekyll," he thought, "my mind misgives me he is in deep waters! He was wild when he was young—a long while ago, to be sure; but in the law of God there is no statute of limitations. Ay, it must be that; the ghost of some old sin, the cancer of some concealed disgrace; punishment coming, *pede claudo*, years after memory has forgotten, and self-love condoned the fault." And the lawyer, scared by the thought, brooded awhile on his own past, groping in all the corners of memory, lest, by chance, some Jack-in-the-box of an old iniquity should leap to light there. His past was fairly blameless; few men could read the rolls of their life with less apprehension; yet he was humbled to the dust by the many ill things he had done, and raised up again into a sober and fearful gratitude by the many that he had come so near to doing, yet avoided. And then, by a return on his former subject, he conceived a spark of hope. "This Master Hyde, if he were studied," thought he, "must have secrets of his own—black secrets, by the look of him; secrets compared to which poor Jekyll's worst would be like sunshine. Things cannot continue as they are. It turns me cold to think of this creature stealing like a thief to Harry's bedside; poor Harry, what a wakening! And the danger of it; for if this Hyde suspects the existence of the will, he may grow impatient to inherit. Ay, I must put my shoulder to the wheel, if Jekyll will but let me;" he added, "if Jekyll will only let me." For once more he saw before his mind's eye, as clear as a transparency, the strange clauses of the will.

Dr. Jekyll Was Quite at Ease

Dr. Jekyll Was Quite at Ease

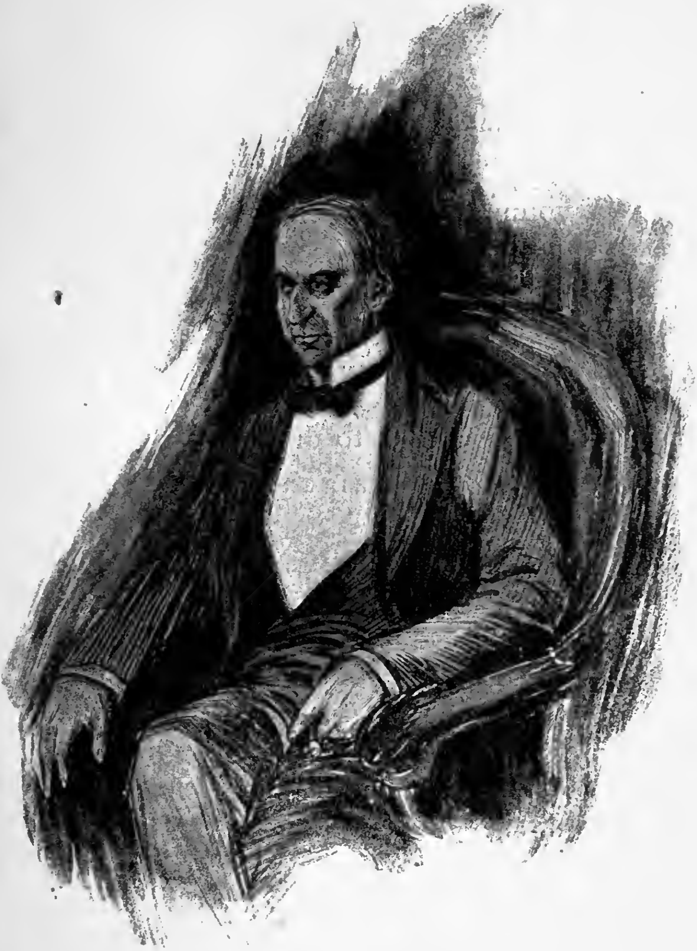
A FORTNIGHT later, by excellent good fortune, the doctor gave one of his pleasant dinners to some five or six old cronies—all intelligent, reputable men, and all judges of good wine—and Mr. Utterson so contrived that he remained behind after the others had departed. This was no new arrangement, but a thing that had befallen many scores of times. Where Utterson was liked, he was liked well. Hosts loved to detain the dry lawyer, when the light-hearted and the loose-tongued had already their foot on the threshold; they liked to sit a while in his unobtrusive company, practising for solitude, sobering their minds in the man's rich silence after the expense and strain of gayety. To this rule Doctor Jekyll was no exception; and as he now sat on the opposite side of the fire—a large, well-made, smooth-faced man of fifty, with something of a slyish cast, perhaps, but every mark of capacity and kindness—you could see by his looks that he cherished for Mr. Utterson a sincere and warm affection.

"I have been wanting to speak to you, Jekyll," began the latter. "You know that will of yours?"

A close observer might have gathered that the topic was distasteful; but the doctor carried it off gayly. "My poor Utterson," said he, "you are unfortunate in such a client. I never saw a man so distressed as you were by my will; unless it were that hide-bound pedant, Lanyon, at what he called my scientific heresies. Oh, I know he's a good fellow—you needn't frown—an excellent fellow, and I always mean to see more of him; but a hide-bound pedant for all that; an ignorant, blatant pedant. I was never more disappointed in any man than Lanyon."

"You know I never approved of it," pursued Utterson, ruthlessly disregarding the fresh topic.

"My will? Yes, certainly, I know that,"



said the doctor, a trifle sharply. "You have told me so."

"Well, I tell you so again," continued the lawyer. "I have been learning something of young Hyde."

The large, handsome face of Doctor Jekyll grew pale to the very lips, and there came a blackness about his eyes. "I do not care to hear more," said he. "This is a matter I thought we had agreed to drop."

"What I heard was abominable," said Utterson.

"It can make no change. You do not understand my position," returned the doctor, with a certain incoherency of manner. "I am painfully situated, Utterson; my position is a very strange—a very strange one. It is one of those affairs that can not be mended by talking."

"Jekyll," said Utterson, "you know me; I am a man to be trusted. Make a clean breast of this in confidence, and I make no doubt I can get you out of it."

"My good Utterson," said the doctor, "this is very good of you; this is downright good of you, and I can not find words to thank you in. I believe you fully; I would trust you before any man alive, ay, before myself, if I could make the choice; but, indeed, it isn't what you fancy; it is not so bad as that; and just to put your good heart at rest, I will tell you one thing: the moment I choose, I can be rid of Mr. Hyde. I give you my hand upon that; and I thank you again and again; and I will just add one little word, Utterson, that I'm sure you'll take in good part: this is a private matter, and I beg of you to let it sleep."

Utterson reflected a little, looking in the fire.

"I have no doubt you are perfectly right," he said at last, getting to his feet.

"Well, but since we have touched upon this business, and for the last time, I hope," continued the doctor, "there is one point I should like you to understand. I have really a very great interest in poor Hyde. I know you have seen him; he told me so; and I fear he was rude. But I do sincerely take a great, a very great interest in that young man; and if I am taken away, Utterson, I wish you to promise me that you will bear with him and get his rights for him. I think you would, if you knew all, and it would be a weight off my mind if you would promise."

"I can't pretend that I shall ever like him," said the lawyer.

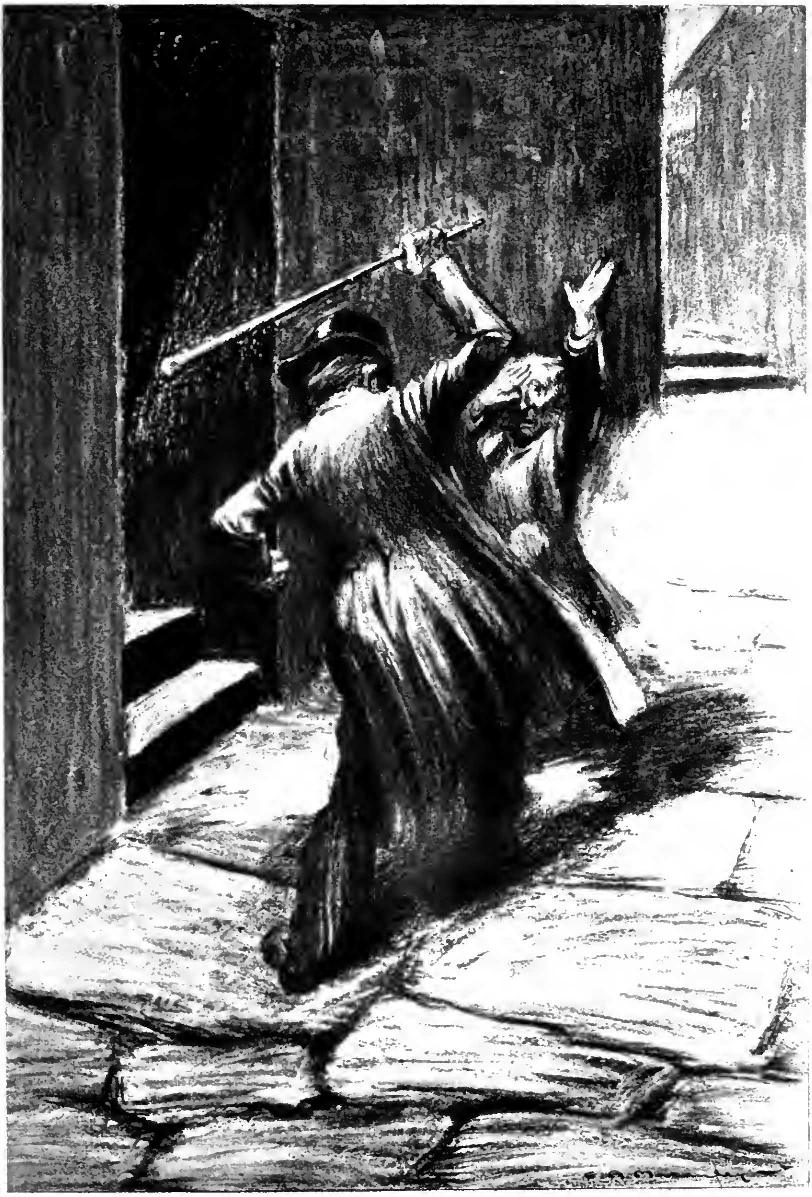
"I don't ask that," pleaded Jekyll, laying his hand upon the other's arm; "I only ask for justice; I only ask you to help him for my sake, when I am no longer here."

Utterson heaved an irrepressible sigh. "Well," said he, "I promise."

The Carew Murder Case

The Carew Murder Case

NEARLY a year later, in the month of October, 18—, London was startled by a crime of singular ferocity, rendered all the more notable by the high position of the victim. The details were few and startling. A maid-servant, living alone in a house not far from the river, had gone up stairs to bed about eleven. Although a fog rolled over the city in the small hours, the early part of the night was cloudless, and the lane, which the maid's window overlooked, was brilliantly lighted by the full moon. It seems she was romantically given, for she sat down upon her box, which stood immediately under the window, and fell into a dream of musing. Never—she used to say, with streaming tears, when she narrated that experience—never had she felt more at peace with all men or thought more kindly of the world. And as she so sat she became aware of an aged and beautiful gentleman, with white hair, drawing near along the lane, and, advancing to meet him, another and very small gentleman, to whom at first she paid less attention. When they had come within speech—which was just under the maid's eyes—the older man bowed and accosted the other with a very pretty manner of politeness. It did not seem as if the subject of his address were of great importance; indeed, from his pointing, it sometimes appeared as if he were only inquiring his way; but the moon shone on his face as he spoke, and the girl was pleased to watch it, it seemed to breathe such an innocent and old-world kindness of disposition, yet with something high, too, as of a well-founded self-content. Presently her eye wandered to the other, and she was surprised to recognize in him a certain Mr. Hyde, who had once visited her master, and for whom she had conceived a dislike. He had in his hand a heavy cane, with which he was trifling; but he answered never a word, and



seemed to listen with an ill-contained impatience. And then all of a sudden he broke out in a great flame of anger, stamping with his foot, brandishing the cane, and carrying on—as the maid described it—like a madman. The old gentleman took a step back, with the air of one very much surprised and a trifle hurt, and at that Mr. Hyde broke out of all bounds and clubbed him to the earth. And next moment, with ape-like fury, he was trampling his victim under foot and hailing down a storm of blows, under which the bones were audibly shattered and the body jumped upon in the roadway. At the horror of these sights and sounds the maid fainted.

It was two o'clock when she came to herself and called for the police. The murderer was gone long ago; but there lay his victim in the middle of the lane, incredibly mangled. The stick with which the deed had been done, although it was of some rare and very tough and heavy wood, had broken in the middle under the stress of this insensate cruelty; and one splintered half had rolled in the neighboring gutter—the other, without doubt, had been carried away by the murderer. A purse and a gold watch were found upon the victim; but no cards or papers, except a sealed and stamped envelope, which he had been probably carrying to the post, and which bore the name and address of Mr. Utterson.

This was brought to the lawyer the next morning, before he was out of bed; and he had no sooner seen it, and been told the circumstances, than he shot out a solemn lip. "I shall say nothing till I have seen the body," said he; "this may be very serious. Have the kindness to wait while I dress." And with the same grave countenance he hurried through his breakfast and drove to the police-station, whither the body had been carried. As soon as he came into the cell, he nodded.

"Yes," said he, "I recognize him. I am sorry to say that this is Sir Danvers Carew."

"Good God, sir!" exclaimed the officer, "is it possible?" and the next moment his eye lighted up with professional ambition. "This will make a deal of noise," he said. "And perhaps you can help us to the man." And he briefly narrated what the maid had seen, and showed the broken stick.

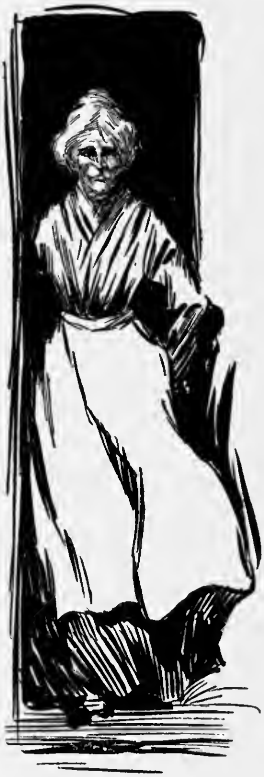
Mr. Utterson had already quailed at the name of Hyde, but when the stick was laid before him he could doubt no longer; broken and battered as it was, he recognized it for one that he had himself presented many years before to Henry Jekyll.

"Is this Mr. Hyde a person of small stature?" he inquired.

"Particularly small and particularly wicked-looking is what the maid calls him," said the officer.

Mr. Utterson reflected; and then, raising his head, "If you will come with me in my cab," he said, "I think I can take you to his house."

It was by this time about nine in the morning, and the first fog of the season. A great chocolate-colored pall lowered over heaven, but the wind was continually charging and routing these embattled vapors; so that as the cab crawled from street to street, Mr. Utterson beheld a marvelous number of degrees and hues of twilight; for here it would be dark like the back end of evening; and there, would be a glow of a rich, lurid brown, like the light of some strange conflagration; and here, for a moment, the fog would be quite broken up, and a haggard shaft of daylight would glance in between the swirling wreaths. The dismal quarter of Soho, seen under these changing glimpses, with its muddy ways and slatternly passengers, and its lamps, which had never been extinguished or had been kindled afresh to combat this mournful reinvasion of darkness, seemed, in the lawyer's eyes, like a district of some city in a nightmare. The thoughts of his mind, besides, were of the gloomiest dye; and when he glanced at the companion of his drive, he was conscious of some touch of that terror of the law and the law's officers which may at times assail the most honest.



As the cab drew up before the address indicated, the fog lifted a little and showed him a dingy street, a gin-palace, a low French eating-house, a shop for the retail of penny numbers and twopenny salads, many ragged children huddled in the doorways, and many women of many different nationalities passing out, key in hand, to have a morning glass; and the next moment the fog settled down again upon that part, as brown as umber, and cut him off from his blackguardly surroundings. This was the home of Henry Jekyll's favorite; of a man who was heir to quarter of a million sterling.

An ivory-faced and silvery-haired old

woman opened the door. She had an evil face, smoothed by hypocrisy, but her manners were excellent. Yes, she said, this was Mr. Hyde's, but he was not at home; he had been in that night very late, but had gone away again in less than an hour; there was nothing strange in that; his habits were very irregular, and he was often absent; for instance, it was nearly two months since she had seen him till yesterday.

"Very well, then, we wish to see his rooms," said the lawyer; and when the woman began to declare it was impossible, "I had better tell you who this person is," he added. "This is Inspector Newcomen of Scotland Yard."

A flash of odious joy appeared upon the woman's face. "Ah!" said she, "he is in trouble! What has he done?"

Mr. Utterson and the inspector exchanged glances. "He don't seem a very popular character," observed the latter. "And now, my good woman, just let me and this gentleman have a look about us."

In the whole extent of the house, which but for the old woman remained otherwise empty, Mr. Hyde had only used a couple of rooms; but these were furnished with luxury and good taste. A closet was filled with wine; the plate was of silver, the napery elegant; a good picture hung upon the walls—a gift, as Utterson supposed, from Henry Jekyll, who was much of a connoisseur; and the carpets were of many plies, and agreeable in color. At this moment, however, the rooms bore every mark of having been recently and hurriedly ransacked; clothes lay about the floor, with their pockets inside out; lock-fast drawers stood open; and on the hearth there lay a pile of gray ashes, as though many papers had been burned. From these embers the inspector disinterred the butt-end of a green check-book, which had resisted the action of the fire; the other half of the stick was found behind the door; and as this clinched his suspicions, the officer declared himself delighted. A visit to the bank, where several thousand pounds were found to be lying to the murderer's credit, completed his gratification.

"You may depend upon it, sir," he told Mr. Utterson, "I have him in my hand. He must have lost his head or he never would have left the stick, or, above all, burned the check-book. Why, money's life to the man. We have nothing to do but wait for him at the bank, and get out the handbills."

This last, however, was not so easy of accomplishment; for Mr. Hyde had numbered few familiars—even the master of the servant-maid had only seen him twice; his family could nowhere be traced; he had never been photographed; and the few who could describe him differed widely, as common observers will. Only on one point were they agreed, and that was the haunting sense of unexpressed deformity with which the fugitive impressed his beholders.

Incident of the Letter

Incident of the Letter

IT was late in the afternoon when Mr. Utterson found his way to Doctor Jekyll's door, where he was at once admitted by Poole, and carried down by the kitchen offices and across a yard, which had once been a garden, to the building which was indifferently known as the laboratory or the dissecting-rooms. The doctor had bought the house from the heirs of a celebrated surgeon; and his own tastes being rather chemical than anatomical, had changed the destination of the block at the bottom of the garden. It was the first time that the lawyer had been received in that part of his friend's quarters; and he eyed the dingy, windowless structure with curiosity, and gazed round with a distasteful sense of strangeness as he crossed the theatre, once crowded with eager students and now lying gaunt and silent, the tables laden with chemical apparatus, the floor etting

strewn with crates and littered with packing-straw, and the light falling dimly through the foggy cupola. At the farther end, a flight of stairs mounted to a door covered with red baize; and through this Mr. Utterson was at last received into the doctor's cabinet. It was a large room, fitted round with glass presses, furnished, among other things, with a cheval-glass and a business-table, and looking out upon the court by three dusty windows barred with iron. The fire burned in the grate; a lamp was set, lighted, on the chimney-shelf—for even in the houses the fog began to lie thickly; and there, close up to the warmth, sat Dr. Jekyll, looking deadly sick. He did not rise to meet his visitor, but held out a cold hand and bade him welcome in a changed voice.

"And now," said Mr. Utterson, as soon as Poole had left them, "you have heard the news?"

The doctor shuddered. "They were crying it in the square," he said. "I heard them in my dining-room."

"One word," said the lawyer. "Carew was my client, but so are you, and I want to know what I am doing. You have not been mad enough to hide this fellow?"

"Utterson, I swear to God," cried the doctor, "I swear to God I will never set eyes on him again. I bind my honor to you that I am done with him in this world. It is all at an end. And, indeed, he does not want my help; you do not know him as I do; he is safe, he is quite safe; mark my words, he will never more be heard of."

The lawyer listened gloomily; he did not like his friend's feverish manner. "You seem pretty sure of him," said he; "and for your sake, I hope you may be right. If it came to a trial, your name might appear."

"I am quite sure of him," replied Jekyll; "I have grounds for certainty that I can not share with any one. But there is one thing on which you may advise me. I have—I have received a letter, and I am at a loss whether I should show it to the police. I should like to leave it in your hands, Utterson; you would judge wisely, I am sure; I have so great a trust in you."

"You fear, I suppose, that it might lead to his detection?" asked the lawyer.

"No," said the other. "I can not say / that I care what becomes of Hyde; I am quite done with him. I was thinking of my own character, which this hateful business has rather exposed."

Utterson ruminated a while; he was surprised at his friend's selfishness, and yet relieved by it. "Well," said he, at last, "let me see the letter."

The letter was written in an odd, upright hand, and signed "Edward Hyde"; and it signified, briefly enough, that the writer's benefactor, Doctor Jekyll, whom he had long so unworthily repaid for a thousand generosities, need labor under no alarm for his safety, as he had means of escape on which he placed a sure dependence. The lawyer liked this letter well enough; it put a better color on the intimacy than he had looked for, and he blamed himself for some of his past suspicions.

"Have you the envelope?" he asked.

"I burned it," replied Jekyll, "before I thought what I was about. But it bore no postmark. The note was handed in."

"Shall I keep this and sleep upon it?" asked Utterson.

"I wish you to judge for me entirely," was the reply; "I have lost confidence in myself."

"Well, I shall consider," returned the lawyer. "And now, one word more: it was Hyde who dictated the terms in your will about that disappearance?"

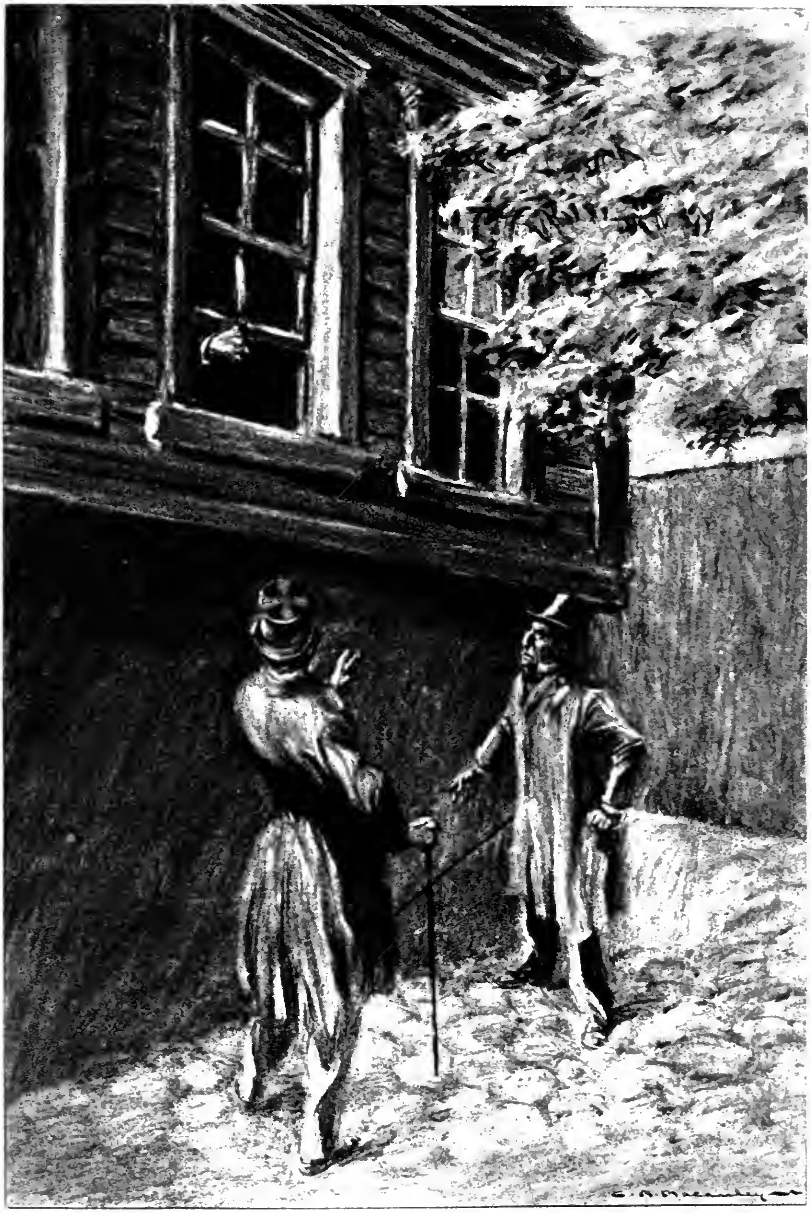
The doctor seemed seized with a qualm of faintness; he shut his mouth tight and nodded.

"I knew it," said Utterson. "He meant to murder you. You have had a fine escape."

"I have had what is far more to the purpose," returned the doctor, solemnly: "I have had a lesson—oh, God, Utterson, what a lesson I have had!" And he covered his face for a moment with his hands.

On his way out, the lawyer stopped and had a word or two with Poole. "By the bye," said he, "there was a letter handed in to-day; what was the messenger like?" But Poole was positive nothing had come except by post; "and only circulars by that," he added.

This news sent off the visitor with his fears renewed. Plainly, the letter had come by the laboratory door; possibly, indeed, it had been written in the cabinet; and if that were so, it must be differently judged, and handled with the more caution. The newsboys, as he went, were crying themselves hoarse along the footways: "Special edition. Shocking murder of an M. P." That was the funeral oration of one friend and client; and he could not help a certain apprehension lest the good name of another should be sucked down in the eddy of the scandal. It was, at least, a ticklish decision that he had to make; and self-reliant as he was by habit, he began to cherish a longing for advice. It was not to



be had directly; but perhaps, he thought, it might be fished for.

Presently after, he sat on one side of his own hearth, with Mr. Guest, his head clerk, upon the other, and midway between, at a nicely calculated distance from the fire, a bottle of a particular old wine that had long dwelt unsunned in the foundations of his house. The fog still slept on the wing above the drowned city, where the lamps glimmered like carbuncles; and through the muffle and smother of these fallen clouds, the procession of the town's life was still rolling in through the great arteries with a sound as of a mighty wind. But the room was gay with firelight. In the bottle the acids were long ago resolved; the imperial dye had softened with time, as the color grows richer in stained windows, and the glow of hot autumn afternoons on hillside vineyards was ready to be set free and to disperse the fogs of London. Insensibly the lawyer melted. There was no man from whom he kept fewer secrets than Mr.

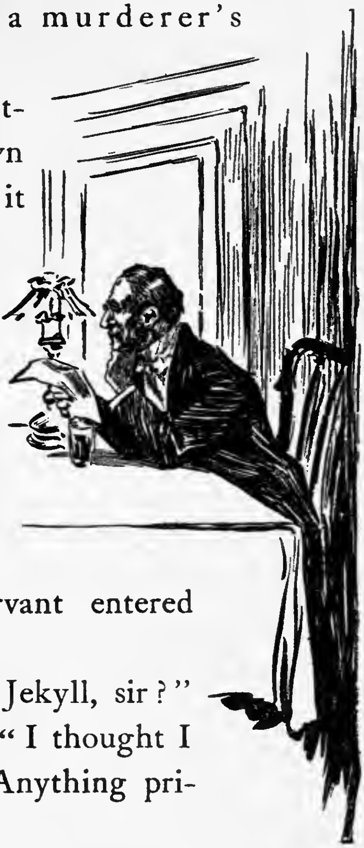
Setting

Guest; and he was not always sure that he kept as many as he meant. Guest had often been on business to the doctor's; he knew Poole; he could scarce have failed to hear of Mr. Hyde's familiarity about the house; he might draw conclusions. Was it not as well, then, that he should see a letter which put that mystery to rights? and, above all, since Guest, being a great student and critic of handwriting, would consider the step natural and obliging? The clerk, besides, was a man of counsel; he would scarce read so strange a document without dropping a remark, and by that remark Mr. Utterson might shape his future course.

"This is a sad business about Sir Danvers," he said.

"Yes, sir, indeed. It has elicited a great deal of public feeling," returned Guest. "The man, of course, was mad."

"I should like to hear your views on that," replied Utterson. "I have a document here in his handwriting; it is between ourselves, for I scarce know what to do about it; it is an ugly business at the best. But there it is; quite in your way: a murderer's autograph."



Guest's eyes brightened, and he sat down at once and studied it with passion. "No, sir," he said, "not mad; but it is an odd hand."

"And by all accounts a very odd writer," added the lawyer.

Just then the servant entered with a note.

"Is that from Dr. Jekyll, sir?" inquired the clerk. "I thought I knew the writing. Anything private, Mr. Utterson?"

"Only an invitation to dinner. Why? Do you want to see it?"

"One moment. I thank you, sir;" and the clerk laid the two sheets of paper alongside and sedulously compared their contents. "Thank you, sir," he said at last, returning both; "it's a very interesting autograph."

There was a pause, during which Mr. Utterson struggled with himself. "Why did you compare them, Guest?" he inquired, suddenly.

"Well, sir," returned the clerk, "there's a rather singular resemblance: the hands are in many points identical, only differently sloped."

"Rather quaint," said Utterson.

"It is, as you say, rather quaint," returned Guest.

"I wouldn't speak of this note, you know," said the master.

"No, sir," said the clerk. "I understand."

But no sooner was Mr. Utterson alone that night than he locked the note into his safe, where it reposed from that time forward. "What!" he thought, "Henry Jekyll forge for a murderer!" And his blood ran cold in his veins.

Remarkable Incident of Dr. Lanyon

Remarkable Incident of Dr. Lanyon

TIME ran on; thousands of pounds were offered in reward, for the death of Sir Danvers was resented as a public injury; but Mr. Hyde had disappeared out of the ken of the police as though he had never existed. Much of his past was unearthed, indeed, and all disreputable; tales came out of the man's cruelty, at once so callous and violent, of his vile life, of his strange associates, of the hatred that seemed to have surrounded his career; but of his present whereabouts, not a whisper. From the time he had left the house in Soho on the morning of the murder, he was simply blotted out, and gradually, as time drew on, Mr. Utterson began to recover from the hotness of his alarm, and to grow more at quiet with himself. The death of Sir Danvers was, to his way of thinking, more than paid for by the disappearance of Mr. Hyde. Now that that evil influence had been withdrawn, a new life began for Doctor Jekyll. He came out of his seclusion, renewed relations with his friends, became once more their familiar guest and entertainer; and whilst he had always been known for charities, he was now no less distinguished for religion. He was busy, he was much in the open air, he did good; his face seemed to open and brighten, as if with an inward consciousness of service; and for more than two months the doctor was at peace.

On the 8th of January Utterson had dined at the doctor's with a small party. Lanyon had been there; and the face of the host had looked from one to the other as in the old days when the trio were inseparable friends. On the 12th, and again on the 14th, the door was shut against the lawyer. "The doctor was confined to the house," Poole said, "and saw no one." On the 15th he tried again, and was again refused; and having now been used for the last two months to seeing his friend almost daily, he found this return of solitude to weigh upon his spirits. The fifth night, he had in Guest to dine with him, and the sixth he betook himself to Doctor Lanyon's.

There at least he was not denied admittance; but when he came in, he was shocked at the change which had taken place in the doctor's appearance. He had his death-warrant written legibly upon his face. The rosy man had grown pale; his flesh had fallen away; he was visibly balder and older; and yet it was not so much these tokens of a swift physical decay that arrested the lawyer's notice, as a look in the eye and quality of manner that seemed to testify to some deep-seated terror of the mind. It was unlikely that the doctor should fear death; and yet that was what Utterson was tempted to suspect. "Yes," he thought, "he is a doctor; he must know his own state and that his days are counted, and the knowledge is more than he can bear." And yet when Utterson remarked on his ill-looks, it was with an air of great firmness that Lanyon declared himself a doomed man.

"I have had a shock," he said, "and I shall never recover. It is a question of weeks. Well, life has been pleasant; I liked it; yes, sir, I used to like it. I sometimes think, if we knew all, we should be more glad to get away."

"Jekyll is ill, too," observed Utterson. "Have you seen him?"

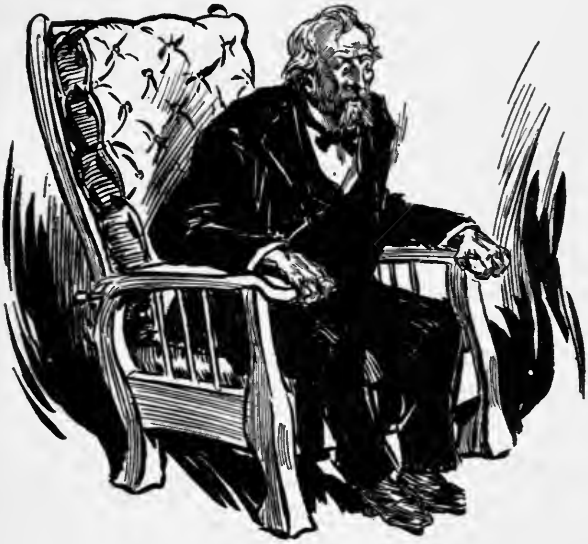
But Lanyon's face changed, and he held up a trembling hand. "I wish to see or hear no more of Doctor Jekyll," he said, in a loud, unsteady voice. "I am quite done with that person; and I beg that you will spare me any allusion to one whom I regard as dead."

"Tut! tut!" said Mr. Utterson; and then after a considerable pause, "Can't I do anything?" he inquired. "We are three very old friends, Lanyon; we shall not live to make others."

"Nothing can be done," returned Lanyon; "ask himself."

"He will not see me," said the lawyer.

"I am not surprised at that," was the reply. "Some day, Utterson, after I am dead, you may perhaps come to learn the right and wrong of this. I cannot tell you. And in the meantime, if you can sit and talk with me of other things, for God's sake, stay and do so; but if you cannot keep clear of this



accursed topic, then, in God's name, go, for I cannot bear it."

As soon as he got home, Utterson sat down and wrote to Jekyll, complaining of his exclusion from the house, and asking the cause of this unhappy break with Lanyon; and the next day brought him a long answer, often very pathetically worded, and sometimes darkly mysterious in drift. The quarrel with Lanyon was incurable. "I do not blame our old friend," Jekyll wrote, "but I share his view that we must never meet. I mean from henceforth to lead a life of extreme seclusion; you must not be surprised, nor must you doubt my friendship, if my door is often shut even to you. You must suffer me to go my own dark way. I have brought on myself a punishment and a danger that I cannot name. If I am the chief of sinners, I am the chief of sufferers also. I could not think that this earth contained a place for sufferings and terrors so unmanning; and you can do but one thing, Utterson, to lighten this destiny, and that is to respect my silence." Utterson was amazed; the dark influence of Hyde had been withdrawn, the doctor had returned to his old tasks and amities; a week ago the prospect had smiled with every promise of a cheerful and an honored age, and now, in a moment, friendship, and peace of mind, and the whole tenor of his life were wrecked. So great and unprepared a change pointed to madness; but in view of Lanyon's manner and words, there must lie for it some deeper ground.

A week afterward Doctor Lanyon took to his bed, and in something less than a fortnight he was dead. The night after the funeral, at which he had been sadly affected, Utterson locked the door of his business room, and sitting there by the light of a melancholy candle, drew out and set before him an envelope addressed by the hand and sealed with the seal of his dead friend. "PRIVATE; for the hands of G. J. UTTERSON ALONE, and in case of his pre-decease *to be destroyed unread,*" so it was emphatically superscribed; and the lawyer dreaded to behold the contents. "I have buried one friend to-day," he thought; "what if this should cost me another?" And then he condemned the fear as a disloyalty, and broke the seal. Within there was another inclosure, likewise sealed, and marked upon the cover as "not to be opened till the death or disappearance of Doctor Henry Jekyll." Utterson could not trust his eyes. Yes, it was disappearance; here again, as in the mad will which he had long ago restored to its author, here again were the idea of a disappearance and the name of Henry Jekyll bracketed. But in the will that idea had sprung from the sinister suggestion of the man Hyde; it was set there with a purpose all too plain and horrible. Written by the hand of Lanyon, what should it mean? A great curiosity came on the trustee to disregard the prohibition and dive at once to the bottom of these mysteries; but professional honor and faith to his dead friend were stringent obligations; and the packet slept in the inmost corner of his private safe.

Structure

It is one thing to mortify curiosity, another to conquer it; and it may be doubted if, from that day forth, Utterson desired the society of his surviving friend with the same eagerness. He thought of him kindly; but his thoughts were disquieted and fearful. He went to call, indeed, but he was perhaps relieved to be denied admittance; perhaps, in his heart, he desired to speak with Poole upon the doorstep and surrounded by the air and sounds of the open city, rather than to be admitted into that house of voluntary bondage, and to sit and speak with its inscrutable recluse. Poole had, indeed, no very pleasant news to communicate. The doctor, it appeared, now more than ever confined himself to the cabinet over the laboratory, where he would sometimes even sleep; he was out of spirits, he had grown very silent, he did not read; it seemed as if he had something on his mind. Utterson became so used to the unvarying character of these reports, that he fell off little by little in the frequency of his visits.

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Incident at the Window

Incident at the Window

IT chanced on Sunday, when Mr. Utterson was on his usual walk with Mr. Enfield, that their way lay once again through the by-street, and that when they came in front of the door, both stopped to gaze on it.

"Well," said Enfield, "that story's at an end at least. We shall never see more of Mr. Hyde."

"I hope not," said Utterson. "Did I ever tell you that I once saw him, and shared your feeling of repulsion?"

"It was impossible to do the one without the other," returned Enfield. "And, by the way, what an ass you must have thought me, not to know that this was a back way to Doctor Jekyll's! It was partly your own fault that I found it out even when I did."

"So you found it out, did you?" said Utterson. "But if that be so, we may step into the court and take a look at the windows.

To tell you the truth, I am uneasy about poor Jekyll; and even outside, I feel as if the presence of a friend might do him good."

The court was very cool and a little damp, and full of premature twilight, although the sky, high up overhead, was still bright with sunset. The middle one of the three windows was half-way open, and sitting close beside it, taking the air with an infinite sadness of mien, like some disconsolate prisoner, Utterson saw Doctor Jekyll.

"What! Jekyll!" he cried. "I trust you are better."

"I am very low, Utterson," replied the doctor, drearily, "very low. It will not last long, thank God."

"You stay too much indoors," said the lawyer. "You should be out, whipping up the circulation like Mr. Enfield and me. (This is my cousin—Mr. Enfield—Doctor Jekyll.) Come, now; get your hat and take a quick turn with us."

"You are very good," sighed the other.

"I should like to very much; but no, no, no, it is quite impossible; I dare not. But indeed, Utterson, I am very glad to see you; this is really a great pleasure; I would ask you and Mr. Enfield up, but the place is really not fit."

"Why, then," said the lawyer, good-naturedly, "the best thing we can do is to stay down here and speak with you from where we are."

"That is just what I was about to venture to propose," returned the doctor with a smile. But the words were hardly uttered before the smile was struck out of his face and succeeded by an expression of such abject terror and despair as froze the very blood of the two gentlemen below. They saw it but for a glimpse, for the window was instantly thrust down; but that glimpse had been sufficient, and they turned and left the court without a word. In silence, too, they traversed the by-street; and it was not until they had come into a neighboring thoroughfare, where even upon a Sunday there were still some stirrings of life, that Mr. Utterson at last turned and looked at his companion. They were both pale, and there was an answering horror in their eyes.

"God forgive us! God forgive us!" said Mr. Utterson.

But Mr. Enfield only nodded his head very seriously, and walked on once more in silence.

The Last Night

The Last Night

MR. UTTERSON was sitting by his fireside one evening after dinner, when he was surprised to receive a visit from Poole.

"Bless me, Poole, what brings you here?" he cried; and then taking a second look at him, "What ails you?" he added; "is the doctor ill?"

"Mr. Utterson," said the man, "there is something wrong."

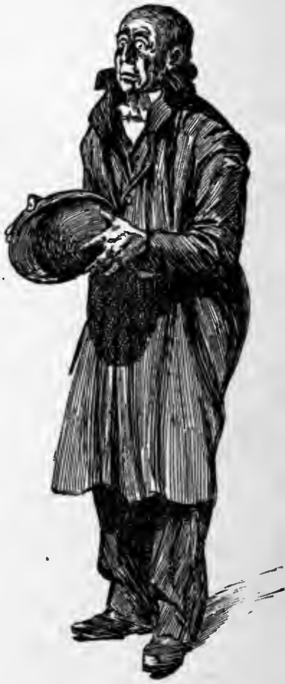
"Take a seat, and here is a glass of wine for you," said the lawyer. "Now, take your time, and tell me plainly what you want."

"You know the doctor's ways, sir," replied Poole, "and how he shuts himself up. Well, he's shut up again in the cabinet; and I don't like it, sir—I wish I may die if I like it. Mr. Utterson, sir, I'm afraid."

"Now, my good man," said the lawyer, "be explicit. What are you afraid of?"

"I've been afraid for about a week," returned Poole, doggedly disregarding the question, "and I can bear it no more."

The man's appearance amply bore out his words; his manner was altered for the worse; and except for the moment when he had first announced his terror, he had not once looked the lawyer in the face. Even now, he sat with the glass of wine untasted on his knee, and his eyes directed to a corner of the floor. "I can bear it no more," he repeated.



"Come," said the lawyer; "I see you have some good reason, Poole; I see there is something seriously amiss. Try to tell me what it is."

"I think there has been foul play," said Poole, hoarsely.

"Foul play!" cried the lawyer, a good

deal frightened and rather inclined to be irritated in consequence. "What foul play? What does the man mean?"

"I daren't say, sir," was the answer; "but will you come along with me and see for yourself?"

Mr. Utterson's only answer was to rise and get his hat and great-coat; but he observed with wonder the greatness of the relief that appeared upon the butler's face, and perhaps with no less, that the wine was still untasted when he set it down to follow.

It was a wild, cold, seasonable night of March, with a pale moon, lying on her back as though the wind had tilted her, and a flying wrack of the most diaphanous and lawny texture. The wind made talking difficult, and flecked the blood into the face. It seemed to have swept the streets unusually bare of passengers, besides; for Mr. Utterson thought he had never seen that part of London so deserted. He could have wished it otherwise; never in his life had he been conscious of so sharp a wish to see and touch his fellow creatures; for struggle as he might, there was borne in upon his mind a crushing anticipation of calamity. The square, when they got there, was all full of wind and dust, and the thin trees in the garden were lashing themselves along the railing. Poole, who had kept all the way a pace or two ahead, now pulled up in the middle of the pavement, and in spite of the biting weather, took off his hat and mopped his brow with a red pocket-handkerchief. But for all the hurry of his coming, these were not the dews of exertion that he wiped away, but the moisture of some strangling anguish; for his face was white, and his voice, when he spoke, harsh and broken.

"Well, sir," he said, "here we are, and God grant there be nothing wrong!"

"Amen, Poole," said the lawyer.

Thereupon the servant knocked in a very guarded manner, the door was opened on the chain, and a voice asked from within, "Is that you, Poole?"

"It's all right," said Poole. "Open the door."

The hall, when they entered it, was brightly lighted up, the fire was built high, and about the hearth the whole of the servants, men and women, stood huddled together like a flock of sheep. At the sight of Mr. Utterson, the housemaid broke into hysterical whimpering; and the cook, crying out, "Bless God! it's Mr. Utterson!" ran forward as if to take him in her arms.

"What—what? Are you all here?" said the lawyer, peevishly. "Very irregular, very unseemly; your master would be far from pleased."

"They're all afraid," said Poole.

Blank silence followed, no one protesting; only the maid lifted up her voice and now wept loudly.

"Hold your tongue!" Poole said to her, with a ferocity of accent that testified to his own jangled nerves; and indeed when the girl had so suddenly raised the note of her lamentation, they had all started and turned toward the inner door with faces of dreadful expectation. "And now," continued the butler, addressing the knife-boy, "reach me a candle, and we'll get this through our hands at once." And then he begged Mr. Utterson to follow him, and led the way to the back garden.

"Now, sir," said he, "you come as gently as you can. I want you to hear, and I don't want you to be heard. And see here, sir, if by any chance he was to ask you in, don't go."

Mr. Utterson's nerves, at this unlooked-for termination, gave a jerk that nearly threw him from his balance; but he re-collected his courage, and followed the butler into the laboratory building and through the surgical theater, with its lumber of crates and bottles, to the foot of the stair. Here Poole motioned him to stand on one side and listen; while he himself, setting down the candle and making a great and obvious call on his resolution, mounted the steps and knocked with a somewhat uncertain hand on the red baize of the cabinet door.

"Mr. Utterson, sir, asking to see you," he called; and even as he did so, once more violently signed to the lawyer to give ear.

A voice answered from within: "Tell him I cannot see any one," it said, complainingly.

"Thank you, sir," said Poole, with a note of something like triumph in his voice; and, taking up his candle, he led Mr. Utterson back across the yard and into the great kitchen, where the fire was out and the beetles were leaping on the floor.

"Sir," he said, looking Mr. Utterson in the eyes, "was that my master's voice?"

"It seems much changed," replied the lawyer, very pale, but giving look for look.

"Changed? Well, yes, I think so," said the butler. "Have I been twenty years in this man's house, to be deceived about his voice? No, sir; master's made away with; he was made away with eight days ago, when we heard him cry out upon the name of God;

and *who's* in there instead of him, and *why* it stays there, is a thing that cries to Heaven, Mr. Utterson!"

"This is a very strange tale, Poole; this is rather a wild tale, my man," said Mr. Utterson, biting his finger. "Suppose it were as you suspect; supposing Doctor Jekyll to have been—well, murdered, what could induce the murderer to stay? That won't hold water; it doesn't commend itself to reason."

"Well, Mr. Utterson, you are a hard man to satisfy, but I'll do it yet," said Poole. "All this last week—you must know—him, or it, or whatever it is that lives in that cabinet, has been crying, night and day, for some sort of medicine, and cannot get it to his mind. It was sometimes his way—the master's, that is—to write his orders on a sheet of paper, and throw it on the stair. We've had nothing else this week back; nothing but papers, and a closed door, and the very meals left there to be smuggled in when nobody was looking. Well, sir, every day, ay, and twice and thrice in the same day, there have been orders and complaints, and I have been sent flying to all the wholesale chemists in town. Every time I brought the stuff back, there would be another paper telling me to return it, because it was not pure, and another order to a different firm. This drug is wanted bitter bad, sir, whatever for."

"Have you any of these papers?" asked Mr. Utterson.

Poole felt in his pocket, and handed out a crumpled note, which the lawyer, bending nearer to the candle, carefully examined. Its contents ran thus: "Doctor Jekyll presents his compliments to Messrs. Maw. He assures them that their last sample is impure and quite useless for his present purpose. In the year 18— Doctor J. purchased a somewhat large quantity from Messrs. M. He now begs them to search with the most sedulous care, and should any of the same quality be left, to forward it to him at once. Expense is no consideration. The importance of this to Doctor J. can hardly be exaggerated." So far the letter had run composedly enough, but here, with a sudden splutter of the pen, the writer's emotion had broken loose. "For God's sake," he had added, "find me some of the old!"

"This is a strange note," said Mr. Utterson; and then, sharply, "How do you come to have it open?"

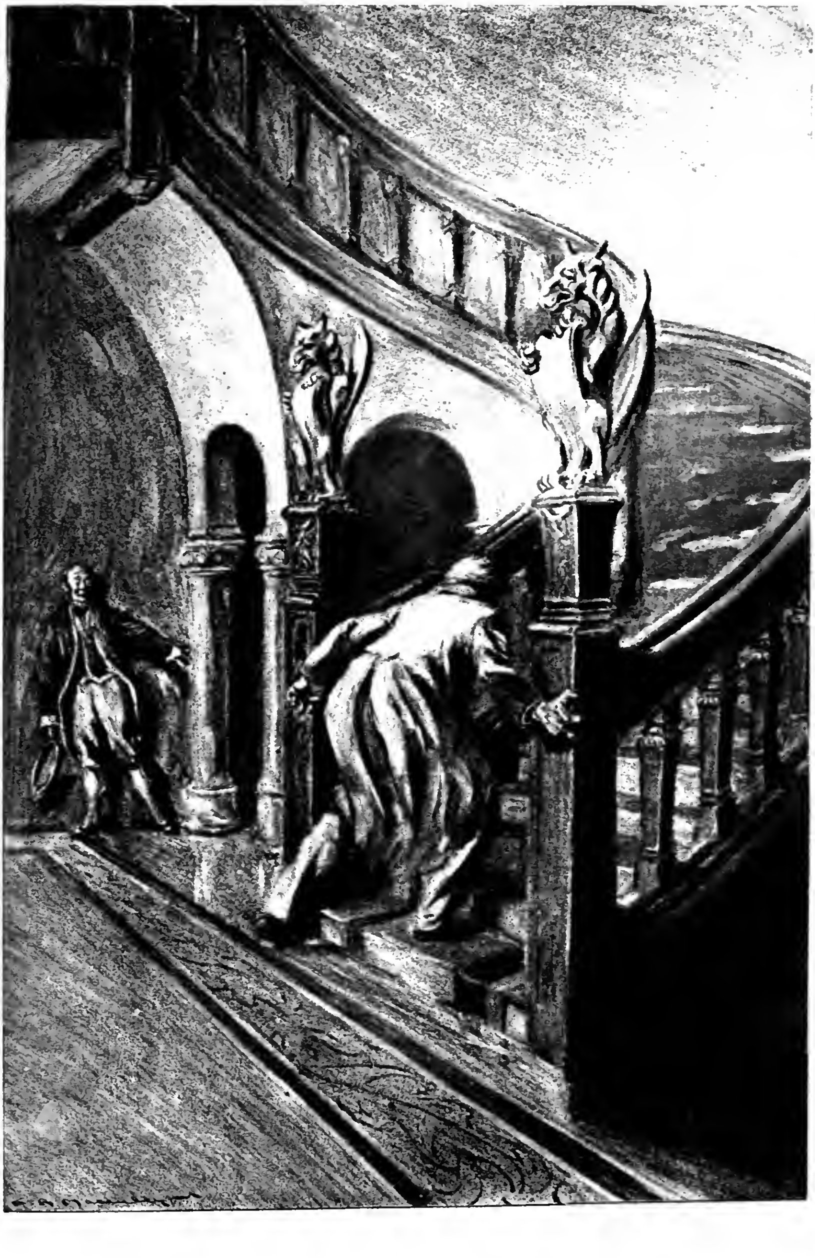
"The man at Maw's was main angry, sir, and he threw it back to me like so much dirt," returned Poole.

"This is unquestionably the doctor's hand, do you know?" resumed the lawyer.

"I thought it looked like it," said the servant, rather sulkily; and then, with another voice, "But what matters hand of write," he said. "I've seen him!"

"Seen him?" repeated Mr. Utterson. "Well?"

"That's it!" said Poole. "It was this way: I came suddenly into the theatre from the garden. It seems he had slipped out to



look for this drug or whatever it is; for the cabinet door was open, and there he was at the far end of the room digging among the crates. He looked up when I came in, gave a kind of cry, and whipped up stairs into the cabinet. It was but for one minute that I saw him, but the hair stood upon my head like quills. Sir, if that was my master, why had he a mask upon his face? If it was my master, why did he cry out like a rat, and run from me? I have served him long enough. And then"— The man paused and passed his hand over his face.

"These are all very strange circumstances," said Mr. Utterson, "but I think I begin to see daylight. Your master, Poole, is plainly seized with one of those maladies that both torture and deform the sufferer; hence, for aught I know, the alteration of his voice; hence the mask and his avoidance of his friends; hence his eagerness to find this drug, by means of which the poor soul retains some hope of ultimate recovery—God grant that he be not deceived! There is my explanation; it is sad enough, Poole, ay, and appalling to consider; but it is plain and natural, hangs well together, and delivers us from all exorbitant alarms."

"Sir," said the butler, turning to a sort of mottled pallor, "that thing was not my master, and there's the truth. My master"—here he looked round him and began to whisper—"is a tall, fine build of a man, and this was more of a dwarf." Utterson attempted to protest. "Oh, sir," cried Poole, "do you think I do not know my master after twenty years? do you think I do not know where his head comes to in the cabinet door, where I saw him every morning of my life? No, sir, that thing in the mask was never Doctor Jekyll—God knows what it was, but it was never Doctor Jekyll; and it is the belief of my heart that there was murder done."

"Poole," replied the lawyer, "if you say that it will become my duty to make certain. Much as I desire to spare your master's feelings, much as I am puzzled by this note, which seems to prove him to be still alive, I shall consider it my duty to break in that door."

"Ah, Mr. Utterson, that's talking!" cried the butler.

"And now comes the second question," resumed Utterson: "Who is going to do it?"

"Why, you and me," was the undaunted reply.

"That's very well said," returned the lawyer; "and whatever comes of it, I shall make it my business to see you are no loser."

"There is an axe in the theatre," continued Poole; "and you might take the kitchen poker for yourself."

The lawyer took that rude but weighty instrument into his hand, and balanced it. "Do you know, Poole," he said, looking up, "that you and I are about to place ourselves in a position of some peril?"

"You may say so, sir, indeed," returned the butler.

"It is well, then, that we should be frank," said the other. "We both think more than we have said; let us make a clean breast. This masked figure that you saw, did you recognize it?"

"Well, sir, it went so quick, and the creature was so doubled up, that I could hardly swear to that," was the answer. "But if you mean, was it Mr. Hyde?—why, yes, I think it was. You see, it was much of the same bigness; and it had the same quick light way with it; and then who else could have got in by the laboratory door? You have not forgot, sir, that at the time of the murder he had still the key with him? But that's not all. I don't know, Mr. Uttersou, if ever you met this Mr. Hyde."

"Yes," said the lawyer, "I once spoke with him."

"Then you must know as well as the rest of us that there was something queer about that gentleman—something that gave a man a turn—I don't know rightly how to say it, sir, beyond this: that you felt it in your marrow kind of cold and thin."

"I own I felt something of what you describe," said Mr. Utterson.

"Quite so, sir," returned Poole. "Well, when that masked thing like a monkey jumped from among the chemicals and whipped into the cabinet, it went down my spine like ice. Oh, I know it's not evidence, Mr. Utterson; I'm book-learned enough for that; but a man has his feelings, and I give you my Bible word it was Mr. Hyde!"

"Ay, ay," said the lawyer. "My fears incline to the same point. Evil, I fear, founded—evil was sure to come—of that connection. Ay, truly, I believe you; I believe poor Harry is killed, and I believe his murderer—for what purpose, God alone can tell—is still lurking in his victim's room. Well, let our name be Vengeance. Call Bradshaw."

The footman came at the summons, very white and nervous.

"Pull yourself together, Bradshaw," said the lawyer. "This suspense, I know, is telling upon all of you; but it is now our intention to make an end of it. Poole, here, and I are going to force our way into the cabinet. If all is well, my shoulders are broad enough to bear the blame. Meanwhile, lest anything should really be amiss, or any malefactor seek to escape by the back, you and the boy must go round the corner with a pair of good sticks, and take your post at the laboratory door. We give you ten minutes to get to your stations."

As Bradshaw left, the lawyer looked at his watch. "And now, Poole, let us get to ours," he said; and taking the poker under his arm, he led the way into the yard. The scud had banked over the moon, and it was now quite dark. The wind, which only broke in puffs and draughts into that deep well of building, tossed the light of the candle to and fro about their steps, until they came into the shelter of the theatre, where

they sat down silently to wait. London hummed solemnly all round; but nearer at hand, the stillness was only broken by the sounds of a footfall moving to and fro along the cabinet floor.

"So it will walk all day, sir," whispered Poole; "ay, and the better part of the night. Only when a new sample comes from the chemist, there's a bit of a break. Ah, it's an ill conscience that's such an enemy to rest! Ah, sir, there's blood foully shed in every step of it! But hark again, a little closer—put your heart in your ears, Mr. Utterson, and tell me, is that the doctor's foot?"

The steps fell lightly and oddly, with a certain swing, for all they went so slowly; it was different indeed from the heavy creaking tread of Henry Jekyll. Utterson sighed. "Is there never anything else?" he asked.

Poole nodded. "Once," he said. "Once I heard it weeping."

"Weeping? How that?" said the lawyer, conscious of a sudden chill of horror.

"Weeping like a woman or a lost soul," said the butler. "I came away with that upon my heart, that I could have wept, too."

But now the ten minutes drew to an end. Poole disinterred the axe from under a stack of packing-straw; the candle was set upon the nearest table to light them to the attack, and they drew near with bated breath to where that patient foot was still going up and down, up and down, in the quiet of the night.

"Jekyll," cried Utterson, with a loud voice, "I demand to see you." He paused a moment, but there came no reply. "I give you fair warning, our suspicions are aroused, and I must and shall see you," he resumed; "if not by fair means, then by foul—if not of your consent, then by brute force!"

"Utterson," said the voice, "for God's sake, have mercy!"

"Ah! that's not Jekyll's voice—it's Hyde's!" cried Utterson. "Down with the door, Poole!"

Poole swung the axe over his shoulder; the blow shook the building, and the red baize door leaped against the lock and hinges. A dismal screech, as of mere animal terror, rang from the cabinet. Up went the axe again, and again the panels crashed and the frame bounded; four times the blow fell; but the wood was tough and the fittings were of excellent workmanship; and it was not until the fifth that the lock burst in sunder and the wreck of the door fell inwards on the carpet.

The besiegers, appalled by their own riot and the stillness that had succeeded, stood back a little and peered in. There lay the cabinet before their eyes in the quiet lamplight, a good fire glowing and chattering on the hearth, the kettle singing its thin strain, a drawer or two open, papers neatly set forth on the business table, and nearer the fire, the things laid out for tea; the quietest room, you would have said, and, but for the glazed presses full of chemicals, the most commonplace that night in London.

Right in the midst there lay the body of a man sorely contorted and still twitching. They drew near on tiptoe, turned it on its back, and beheld the face of Edward Hyde. He was dressed in clothes far too large for him, clothes of the doctor's bigness; the cords of his face still moved with a semblance of life, but life was quite gone; and, by the crushed phial in the hand and the strong smell of kernels that hung upon the air, Utterson knew he was looking on the body of a self-destroyer.

"We have come too late," he said, sternly, "whether to save or punish. Hyde is gone to his account, and it only remains for us to find the body of your master."

The far greater proportion of the building was occupied by the theatre, which filled almost the whole ground-story and was lighted from above, and by the cabinet, which formed an upper story at one end and looked upon the court. A corridor joined the theatre to the door on the by-street, and with this the cabinet communicated separately by a second flight of stairs. There were, besides, a few dark closets and a spacious cellar. All these they now thoroughly examined. Each closet needed but a glance, for all were empty, and all, by the dust that fell from their doors, had stood long unopened. The cellar, indeed, was filled with crazy lumber, mostly dating from the times of the surgeon who was Jekyll's predecessor; but, even as they opened the door, they were advised of the uselessness of further search, by the fall of a perfect mat of cobweb which had for years sealed up the entrance. Nowhere was there any trace of Henry Jekyll, dead or alive.

Poole stamped on the flags of the corridor. "He must be buried here," he said, hearkening to the sound.

"Or he may have fled," said Utterson, and he turned to examine the door in the by-street. It was locked; and, lying near by on the flags, they found the key, already stained with rust.

"This does not look like use," observed the lawyer.

"Use!" echoed Poole. "Do you not see, sir, it is broken? much as if a man had stamped on it."

"Ay," continued Utterson, "and the fractures, too, are rusty." The two men looked at each other with a scare. "This is beyond me, Poole," said the lawyer. "Let us go back to the cabinet."

They mounted the stair in silence, and, still with an occasional awe-struck glance at the dead body, proceeded more thoroughly to examine the contents of the cabinet. At one table there were traces of chemical work, various measured heaps of some white salt being laid on glass saucers, as though for an experiment in which the unhappy man had been prevented.

"That is the same drug that I was always bringing him," said Poole; and even as he spoke, the kettle with a startling noise boiled over.

This brought them to the fireside, where the easy-chair was drawn cosily up, and the tea-things stood ready to the sitter's elbow, the very sugar in the cup. There were several books on a shelf; one lay beside the tea-things open, and Utterson was amazed to find it a copy of a pious work, for which Jekyll had several times expressed a great esteem, annotated, in his own hand, with startling blasphemies.

Next, in the course of their review of the chamber, the searchers came to the cheval-glass, into whose depths they looked with an involuntary horror. But it was so turned as to show them nothing but the rosy glow playing on the roof, the fire sparkling in a hundred repetitions along the glazed front of the presses, and their own pale and fearful countenances stooping to look in.

"This glass has seen some strange things, sir," whispered Poole.

"And surely none stranger than itself," echoed the lawyer in the same tones. "For what did Jekyll"—he caught himself up at the words with a start, and then conquering the weakness—"what could Jekyll want with it?" he said.

"You may say that!" said Poole.

Next they turned to the business table. On the desk, among the neat array of papers, a large envelope was uppermost, and bore, in the doctor's hand, the name of Mr. Utterson. The lawyer unsealed it, and several enclosures fell to the floor. The first was a will, drawn in the same eccentric terms as the one which he had returned six months before to serve as a testament in case of death and as a deed of gift in case of disappearance; but in place of the name of Edward Hyde, the lawyer, with indescribable amazement, read the name of Gabriel John Utterson. He looked at Poole, and then back at the paper, and last of all at the dead malefactor stretched upon the carpet.

"My head goes round," he said. "He has been all these days in possession; he had no cause to like me; he must have raged to see himself displaced; and he has not destroyed this document."

He caught up the next paper; it was a brief note in the doctor's hand and dated at the top. "Oh, Poole!" the lawyer cried, "he was alive and here this day. He can not have been disposed of in so short a space; he must be still alive; he must have fled! And then, why fled? and how? and in that case, can we venture to declare this suicide? Oh, we must be careful. I foresee that we may yet involve your master in some dire catastrophe."

"Why don't you read it, sir?" asked Poole.

"Because I fear," replied the lawyer, solemnly. "God grant I have no cause for it!" And with that he brought the paper to his eyes, and read as follows:

"MY DEAR UTTERSON—When this shall fall into your hands, I shall have disappeared, under what circumstances I have not the penetration to foresee, but my instinct and all the circumstances of my nameless situation tell me that the end is sure and must be early. Go then, and first read the narrative which

Lanyon warned me he was to place in your hands, and if you care to hear more, turn to the confession of

"Your unworthy and unhappy friend,

"HENRY JEKYLL."

"There was a third inclosure?" asked Utterson.

"Here, sir," said Poole, and gave into his hands a considerable packet sealed in several places.

The lawyer put it in his pocket. "I would say nothing of this paper. If your master has fled or is dead, we may at least save his credit. It is now ten; I must go home and read these documents in quiet; but I shall be back before midnight, when we shall send for the police."

They went out, locking the door of the theatre behind them; and Utterson, once more leaving the servants gathered about the fire in the hall, trudged back to his office to read the two narratives in which this mystery was now to be explained.

Dr. Lanyon's Narrative

Doctor Lanyon's Narrative

ON the ninth of January, now four days ago, I received by the evening delivery a registered envelope, addressed in the hand of my colleague and old school-companion, Henry Jekyll. I was a good deal surprised by this, for we were by no means in the habit of correspondence; I had seen the man—dined with him, indeed, the night before; and I could imagine nothing in our intercourse that should justify the formality of registration. The contents increased my wonder; for this is how the letter ran:

"10th December, 18—.

"DEAR LANYON,—You are one of my oldest friends; and although we may have differed at times on scientific questions, I cannot remember, at least on my side, any break in our affection. There was never a day when, if you had said to me, 'Jekyll, my life, my honor, my reason, depend upon you,' I would not have sacrificed my fortune or my left hand to help you. Lanyon, my life, my honor, my reason, are all at your mercy; if you fail me to-night, I am lost. You might suppose, after this preface, that I am going to ask you for something dishonorable to grant. Judge for yourself.

"I want you to postpone all other engagements for to-night—ay, even if you were summoned to the bedside of an emperor; to take a cab, unless your carriage should be actually at the door, and, with this letter in your hand for consultation, to drive straight to my house. Poole, my butler, has his orders; you will find him waiting your arrival with a locksmith. The door of my cabinet is then to be forced, and you are to go in alone; to open the glazed press—letter E—on the left hand, breaking the lock if it be shut, and to draw out, *with all its contents as they stand*, the fourth drawer from the top or—which is the same thing—the third from the bottom. In my extreme distress of mind, I have a morbid fear of misdirecting you; but even if I am in error, you may know the right drawer by its contents: some powders, a phial, and a paper book. This drawer I beg of you to carry back with you to Cavendish Square exactly as it stands.

"That is the first part of the service; now for the second. You should be back, if you set out at once on the receipt of this, long before midnight; but I will leave you that amount of margin, not only in the fear of one of those obstacles that can neither be prevented nor foreseen, but because an hour when your servants are in bed is to be preferred for what will then remain to do. At midnight, then, I have to ask you to be alone in your consulting room, to admit with your own hand into the house a man who will present himself in my name, and to place in his hands the drawer that you will have brought with you from my cabinet. Then you will have played your part and earned my gratitude completely. Five minutes afterward, if you insist upon an explanation, you will have understood that these arrangements are of capital importance, and that by the neglect of one of them, fantastic as they must appear, you might have charged your conscience with my death or the shipwreck of my reason.

"Confident as I am that you will not trifle with this appeal, my heart sinks and my hand trembles at the bare thought of such a possibility? Think of me at this hour, in a strange place, laboring under a blackness of distress that no fancy can exaggerate, and yet well aware that, if you will but punctually serve me, my troubles will roll away like a story that is told. Serve me, my dear Lanyon, and save

"Your friend,

"H. J.

"P. S.—I had already sealed this up when a fresh terror struck upon my soul. It is possible that the postoffice may fail me, and this letter not come into your hands until to-morrow morning. In that case, dear Lanyon, do my errand when it shall be most convenient for you in the course of the day; and once more expect my messenger at midnight. It may then already be too late; and if that night passes without event, you will know that you have seen the last of Henry Jekyll."

Upon the reading of this letter I made sure my colleague was insane; but till that was proved beyond the possibility of doubt, I felt bound to do as he requested. The less I understood of this farrago, the less I was in a position to judge of its importance; and an appeal so worded could not be set aside without a grave responsibility. I rose accordingly from the table, got into a hansom, and drove straight to Jekyll's house. The butler was awaiting my arrival; he had received by the same post as mine a registered letter of instruction, and had sent at once for a locksmith and a carpenter. The tradesmen came while we were yet speaking, and we moved in a body to old Doctor Denman's surgical theatre

—from which, as you are doubtless aware, Jekyll's private cabinet is most conveniently entered. The door was very strong, the lock excellent; the carpenter avowed he would have great trouble, and have to do much damage, if force were to be used, and the locksmith was near despair. But this last was a handy fellow, and after two hours' work the door stood open. The press marked E was unlocked; and I took out the drawer, had it filled up with straw and tied in a sheet, and returned with it to Cavendish Square.

Here I proceeded to examine its contents. The powders were neatly enough made up, but not with the nicety of the dispensing chemist; so that it was plain they were of Jekyll's private manufacture; and when I opened one of the wrappers, I found what seemed to me a simple crystalline salt of a white color. The phial, to which I next turned my attention, might have been about half full of a blood-red liquor, which was highly pungent to the sense of smell, and seemed to me to contain phosphorus and some volatile ether. At the other ingredients I could make no guess. The book was an ordinary version book, and contained little but a series of dates. These covered a period of many years, but I observed that the entries ceased nearly a year ago and quite abruptly. Here and there a brief remark was appended to a date, usually no more than a single word, "double" occurring perhaps six times in a total of several hundred entries; and once, very early in the list, and followed by several marks of exclamation, "total failure!!!" All this, though it whetted my curiosity, told me little that was definite. Here were a phial of some tincture, a paper of some salt, and the record of a series of experiments that had led—like too many of Jekyll's investigations—to no end of practical usefulness. How could the presence of these articles in my house affect either the honor, the sanity, or the life of my flighty colleague? If his messenger could go to one place, why could he not go to another? and even granting some impediment, why was this gentleman to be received by me in secret? The more I reflected, the more convinced I grew that I was dealing with a case of cerebral disease; and though I dismissed my servants to bed, I loaded an old revolver that I might be found in some posture of self-defense.

Twelve o'clock had scarce rung out over London, ere the knocker sounded very gently on the door. I went myself at the summons, and found a small man crouching against the pillars of the portico.

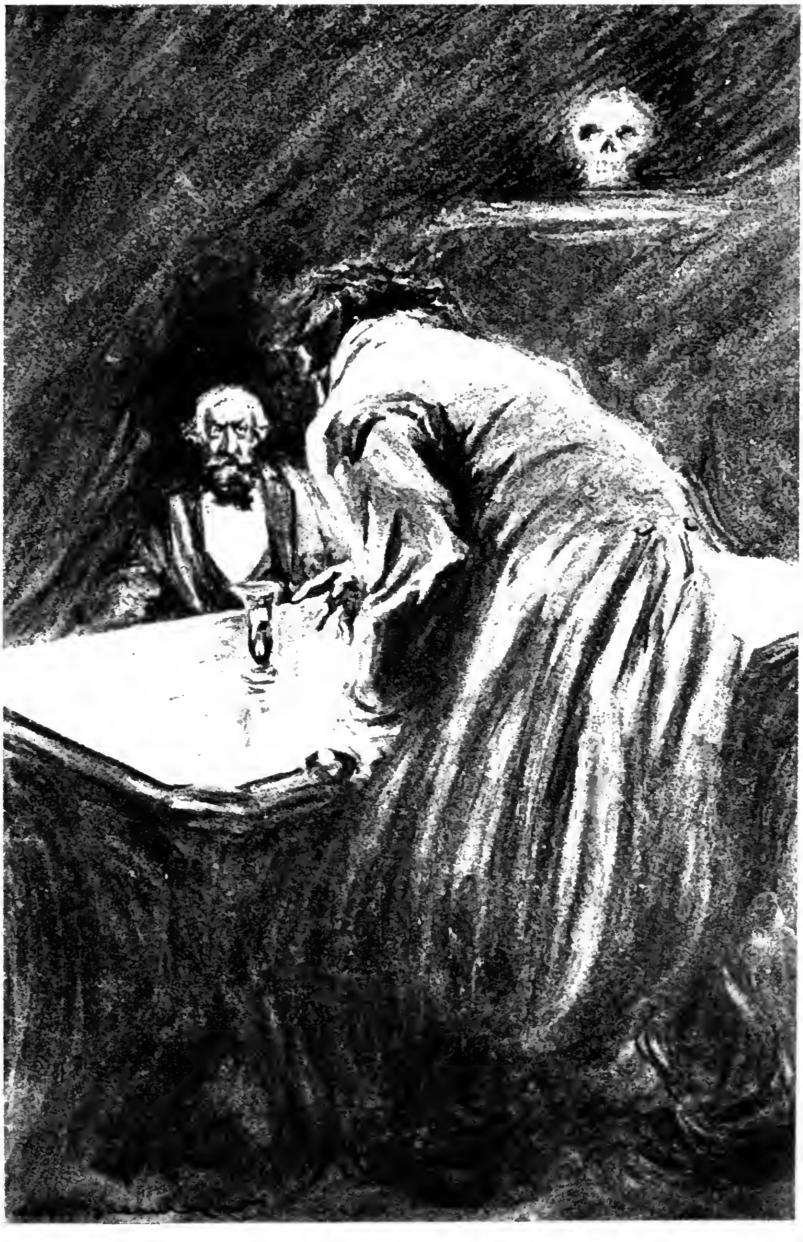
"Are you come from Doctor Jekyll?" I asked.

He told me "Yes" by a constrained gesture; and when I had bidden him enter, he did not obey me without a searching backward glance into the darkness of the square. There was a policeman not far off, advancing with his bull's-eye open; and at the sight, I thought my visitor started and made greater haste.

These particulars struck me, I confess, disagreeably; and as I followed him into the bright light of the consulting-room, I kept my hand ready on my weapon. Here, at last, I had a chance of clearly seeing him. I had never set eyes on him before; so much was certain. He was small, as I have said; I was struck besides with the shocking expression of his face, with his remarkable combination of great muscular activity and great apparent debility of constitution, and—last, but not least—with the odd, subjective disturbance caused by his neighborhood. This bore some resemblance to incipient rigor and was accompanied by a marked sinking of the pulse. At the time, I set it down to some idiosyncratic, personal distaste, and merely wondered at the acuteness of the symptoms; but I have since had reason to believe the cause to lie much deeper in the nature of man, and to turn on some nobler hinge than the principle of hatred.

This person—who had thus, from the first moment of his entrance, struck in me what I can only describe as a disgustful curiosity—was dressed in a fashion that would have made an ordinary person laughable: his clothes, that is to say, although they were of rich and sober fabric, were enormously too large for him in every measurement—the trousers hanging on his legs and rolled up to keep them from the ground, the waist of the coat below his haunches, and the collar sprawling wide upon his shoulders. Strange to relate, this ludicrous accoutrement was far from moving me to laughter. Rather, as there was something abnormal and misbegotten in the very essence of the creature that now faced me—something seizing, surprising, and revolting—this fresh disparity seemed but to fit in with and to re-enforce it; so that to my interest in the man's nature and character, there was added a curiosity as to his origin, his life, his fortune, and status in the world.

These observations, though they have taken so great a space to be set down in, were yet



the work of a few seconds. My visitor was, indeed, on fire with sombre excitement.

"Have you got it?" he cried. "Have you got it?" And so lively was his impatience that he even laid his hand upon my arm and sought to shake me.

I put him back, conscious at his touch of a certain icy pang along my blood. "Come, sir," said I. "You forget that I have not yet the pleasure of your acquaintance. Be seated, if you please." And I showed him an example, and sat down myself in my customary seat and with as fair an imitation of my ordinary manner to a patient as the lateness of the hour, the nature of my preoccupations, and the horror I had of my visitor would suffer me to muster.

"I beg your pardon, Doctor Lanyon," he replied, civilly enough. "What you say is very well founded; and my impatience has shown its heels to my politeness. I come here at the instance of your colleague, Doctor Henry Jekyll, on a piece of business of some moment; and I understood"—he paused and put his hand to his throat, and I could see, in spite of his collected manner, that he was wrestling against the approaches of the hysteria—"I understood, a drawer"—

But here I took pity on my visitor's suspense, and some perhaps on my own growing curiosity.

"There it is, sir," said I, pointing to the drawer, where it lay on the floor behind a table and still covered with the sheet.

He sprang to it, and then paused, and laid his hand upon his heart. I could hear his teeth grate with the convulsive action of his jaws; and his face was so ghastly to see that I grew alarmed both for his life and reason.

"Compose yourself," said I.

He turned a dreadful smile to me, and, as if with the decision of despair, plucked away the sheet. At sight of the contents, he uttered one loud sob of such immense relief that I sat petrified. And the next moment, in a voice that was already fairly well under control, "Have you a graduated glass?" he asked.

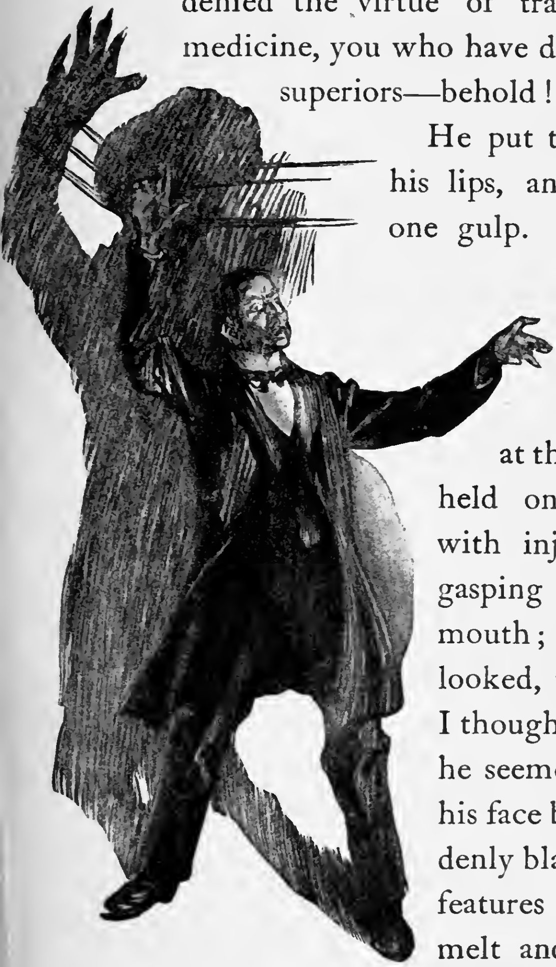
I rose from my place with something of an effort and gave him what he asked.

He thanked me with a smiling nod, measured out a few minims of the red tincture and added one of the powders. The mixture, which was at first of a reddish hue, began, in proportion as the crystals melted, to brighten in color, to effervesce audibly, and to throw off small fumes of vapor. Suddenly, and at the same moment, the ebullition ceased and the compound changed to a dark purple, which faded again more slowly to a watery green. My visitor, who had watched these metamorphoses with a keen eye, smiled, set down the glass upon the table, and then turned and looked upon me with an air of scrutiny.

"And now," said he, "to settle what remains. Will you be wise? will you be guided? will you suffer me to take this glass in my hand and to go forth from your house without further parley? or has the greed of curiosity too much command of you? Think before you answer, for it shall be done as you decide. As you decide, you shall be left as you were before, and neither richer nor wiser, unless the sense of service rendered to a man in mortal distress may be counted as a kind of riches of the soul. Or, if you shall so prefer to choose, a new province of knowledge and new avenues to fame and power shall be laid open to you, here in this room, upon the instant, and your sight shall be blasted by a prodigy to stagger the unbelief of Satan."

"Sir," said I, affecting a coolness that I was far from truly possessing, "you speak enigmas, and you will, perhaps, not wonder that I hear you with no very strong impression of belief. But I have gone too far in the way of inexplicable services to pause before I see the end."

"It is well," replied my visitor. "Lanyon, you remember your vows; what follows is under the seal of our profession. And now, you who have so long been bound to the most narrow and material views, you who have denied the virtue of transcendental medicine, you who have derided your superiors—behold!"



He put the glass to his lips, and drank at one gulp. A cry followed; he reeled, staggered, clutched at the table, and held on, staring with injected eyes, gasping with open mouth; and as I looked, there came, I thought, a change; he seemed to swell; his face became suddenly black, and the features seemed to melt and alter, and the next moment I had sprung to my feet and leaped back against the wall, my arm raised to shield me from that prodigy, my mind submerged in terror.

"Oh, God!" I screamed, and "Oh, God!" again and again; for there before my eyes—pale and shaken, and half fainting, and groping before him with his hands, like a man restored from death — there stood Henry Jekyll!

What he told me in the next hour I cannot bring my mind to set on paper. I saw what I saw, I heard what I heard, and my soul sickened at it; and yet now, when that sight has faded from my eyes, I ask myself if I believe it, and I cannot answer. My life is shaken to its roots; sleep has left me; the deadliest terror sits by me at all hours of the day and night; I feel that my days are numbered, and that I must die; and yet I shall die incredulous. As for the moral turpitude that man unveiled to me, even with tears of penitence, I can not, even in memory, dwell on it without a start of horror. I will say but one thing, Utterson, and that—if you can bring your mind to credit it—will be more than enough. The creature who crept into my house that night was, on Jekyll's own confession, known by the name of Hyde, and hunted for in every corner of the land as the murderer of Carew.

HASTIE LANYON.

Henry Jekyll's Full Statement of the Case

Henry Jekyll's Full Statement of the Case

I WAS born in the year 18— to a large fortune, endowed besides with excellent parts, inclined by nature to industry, fond of the respect of the wise and good among my fellow-men, and thus, as might have been supposed, with every guarantee of an honorable and distinguished future. And indeed the worst of my faults was a certain impatient gayety of disposition, such as has made the happiness of many, but such as I found it hard to reconcile with my imperious desire to carry my head high, and wear a more than commonly grave countenance before the public. Hence it came about that I concealed my pleasures; and that when I reached years of reflection, and began to look round me and take stock of my progress and position in the world, I stood already committed to a profound duplicity of life. Many a man would have even blazoned such irregularities as I was guilty of; but from the high views that I had set before me, I regarded and hid them with an almost morbid sense of shame. It was thus rather the exacting nature of my aspirations than any particular degradation in my faults that made me what I was, and, with even a deeper trench than in the majority of men, severed in me those provinces of good and ill which divide and compound man's dual nature. In this case, I was driven to reflect deeply and inveterately on that hard law of life which lies at the root of religion and is one of the most plentiful springs of distress. Though so profound a double-dealer, I was in no sense a hypocrite; both sides of me were in dead earnest; I was no more myself when I laid aside restraint and plunged in shame than when I labored, in the eye of day, at the furtherance of knowledge or the relief of sorrow and suffering. And it chanced that the direction of my scientific studies, which led wholly toward the mystic and the transcendental, reacted and shed a strong light on this consciousness of the perennial war among my members. With every day, and from both sides of my intelligence, the moral and the intellectual, I thus drew steadily nearer to that truth by whose partial discovery I had been doomed to such a dreadful shipwreck: that man is not truly one, but truly two. I say two, because the state of my own knowledge does not pass beyond that point. Others will follow, others will outstrip me on the same lines; and I hazard the guess that man will be ultimately known for a mere polity of multifarious, incongruous, and independent denizens. I, for my part, from the nature of my life, advanced infallibly in one direction, and in one direction only. It was on the moral side, and in my own person, that I learned to recognize the thorough and primitive duality of man; I saw that, of the two natures that contended in the field of my consciousness, even if I could rightly be said to be either, it was only because I was radically both; and from an early date, even before the course of my scientific discoveries had begun to suggest the most naked possibility of such a miracle, I had learned to dwell with pleasure, as a beloved day-dream, on the thought of the separation of these elements. If each, I told myself, could but be housed in separate identities, life would be relieved of all that was unbearable; the unjust might go his way, delivered from the aspirations and remorse of his more upright twin; and the just could walk steadfastly and securely on his upward path, doing the good things in which he found his pleasure, and no longer exposed to disgrace and penitence by the hands of this extraneous evil. It was the curse of mankind that these incongruous fagots were thus bound together—that in the agonized womb of consciousness these polar twins should be continuously struggling. How, then, were they dissociated?

Evil.
Twin

I was so far in my reflection when, as I have said, a side-light began to shine upon the subject from the laboratory table. I began to perceive more deeply than it has ever yet been stated, the trembling immateriality, the mist-like transience, of this seemingly so solid body in which we walk attired. Certain agents I found to have the power to shake and to pluck back that fleshly vestment, even as a wind might toss the curtains of a pavilion. For two good reasons, I will not enter deeply into this scientific branch of my confession. First, because I have been made to learn that the doom and burden of our life are bound forever on man's shoulders, and when the attempt is made to cast it off, it but returns upon us with more unfamiliar and more awful pressure. Second, because, as my narrative will make, alas! too evident, my discoveries were incomplete. Enough, then, that I not only recognized my natural body for the mere aura and effulgence of certain of the powers that made up my spirit, but managed to compound a drug by which these powers should be dethroned from their supremacy, and a second form and countenance substituted, none the less natural to me because they were the expression, and bore the stamp, of the lower elements in my soul.

I hesitated long before I put this theory to the test of practice. I knew well that I risked death; for any drug that so potently controlled and shook the very fortress of identity might by the least scruple of an overdose or at the least inopportunity in the moment of exhibition, utterly blot out that immaterial tabernacle which I looked to it to change. But the temptation of a discovery so singular and profound at last overcame the suggestions of alarm. I had long since prepared my tincture; I purchased at once, from a firm of wholesale chemists, a large quantity of a particular salt which I knew, from my experiments, to be the last ingredient required; and late one accursed night, I compounded the elements, watched them boil and smoke

Cocaine.

together in the glass, and, when the ebullition had subsided, with a strong glow of courage, drank off the potion.

The most racking pangs succeeded; a grinding in the bones, deadly nausea, and a horror of the spirit that can not be exceeded at the hour of birth or death. Then these agonies began swiftly to subside, and I came to myself as if out of a great sickness. There was something strange in my sensations, something indescribably new, and, from its very novelty, incredibly sweet. I felt younger, lighter, happier in body; within I was conscious of a heady recklessness, a current of disordered sensual images running like a mill-race in my fancy, a solution of the bonds of obligation, an unknown but not an innocent freedom of the soul. I knew myself, at the first breath of this new life, to be more wicked, tenfold more wicked, sold a slave to my original evil; and the thought, in that moment, braced and delighted me like wine. I stretched out my hands, exulting in the freshness of these sensations; and, in the act, I was suddenly aware that I had lost in stature.

There was no mirror, at that date, in my room; that which stands beside me as I write was brought there later on, and for the very purpose of these transformations. The night, however, was far gone into the morning—the morning, black as it was, was nearly ripe for the conception of the day—the inmates of my house were locked in the most rigorous hours of slumber, and I determined, flushed as I was with hope and triumph, to venture in my new shape as far as to my bedroom. I crossed the yard, wherein the constellations looked down upon me, I could have thought, with wonder, the first creature of that sort that their unsleeping vigilance had yet disclosed to them; I stole through the corridors, a stranger in my own house; and, coming to my room, I saw for the first time the appearance of Edward Hyde

Adam

I must here speak by theory alone, saying not that which I know, but that which I suppose to be most probable. The evil side of my nature, to which I had now transferred the stamping efficacy, was less robust and less developed than the good which I had just deposed. Again, in the course of my life, which had been, after all, nine-tenths a life of effort, virtue, and control, it had been much less exercised and much less exhausted. And hence, as I think, it came about that Edward Hyde was so much smaller, slighter and younger than Henry Jekyll. Even as good shone upon the countenance of the one, evil was written broadly and plainly on the face of the other. Evil besides—which I must still believe to be the lethal side of man—had left on that body an imprint of deformity and decay. And yet when I looked upon that ugly idol in the glass, I was conscious of no repugnance, rather of a leap of welcome. This, too, was myself. It seemed natural and human. In my eyes it bore a livelier image of the spirit, it seemed more express and single, than the imperfect and divided countenance I had been hitherto accustomed to call mine. And in so far I was doubtless right. I have observed that when I wore the semblance of Edward Hyde none could come near to me at first without a visible misgiving of the flesh. This, as I take it, was because all human beings, as we meet them, are commingled out of good and evil; and Edward Hyde, alone in the ranks of mankind, was pure evil.

I lingered but a moment at the mirror; the second and conclusive experiment had yet to be attempted; it yet remained to be seen if I had lost my identity beyond redemption and must flee before daylight from a house that was no longer mine; and hurrying back to my cabinet, I once more prepared and drank the cup, once more suffered the pangs of dissolution, and came to myself once more with the character, the stature, and the face of Henry Jekyll.

That night I had come to the fatal crossroads. Had I approached my discovery in a more noble spirit, had I risked the experiment while under the empire of generous or pious aspirations, all must have been otherwise, and from these agonies of death and birth I had come forth an angel instead of a fiend. The drug had no discriminating action; it was neither diabolical nor divine; it but shook the doors of the prison-house of my disposition; and like the captives of Philippi, that which stood within ran forth. At that time my virtue slumbered; my evil, kept awake by ambition, was alert and swift to seize the occasion, and the thing that was projected was Edward Hyde. Hence, although I had now two characters as well as two appearances, one was wholly evil and the other was still the old Henry Jekyll, that incongruous compound of whose reformation and improvement I had already learned to despair. The movement was thus wholly toward the worse.

drug
fiend

Even at that time, I had not yet conquered my aversion to the dryness of a life of study. I would still be merrily disposed at times;

and as my pleasures were—to say the least—undignified, and I was not only well known and highly considered, but growing towards the elderly man, this incoherency of my life was daily growing more unwelcome. It was on this side that my new power tempted me until I fell in slavery. I had but to drink the cup, to doff at once the body of the noted professor, and to assume, like a thick cloak, that of Edward Hyde. I smiled at the notion; it seemed to me at the time to be humorous, and I made my preparations with the most studious care. I took and furnished that house in Soho, to which Hyde was tracked by the police, and engaged as a housekeeper a creature whom I well knew to be silent and unscrupulous. On the other side, I announced to my servants that a Mr. Hyde—whom I described—was to have full liberty and power about my house in the square; and to parry mishaps, I even called and made myself a familiar object in my second character. I next drew up that will to which you so much objected; so that if anything befell me in the person of Doctor Jekyll I could enter on that of Edward Hyde without pecuniary loss. And thus fortified, as I supposed, on every side, I began to profit by the strange immunities of my position.

Men have before hired bravos to transact their crimes, while their own person and reputation sat under shelter. I was the first that ever did so for his pleasures. I was the first that could thus plod in the public eye with a load of genial respectability, and in a moment, like a schoolboy, strip off these lendings and spring headlong into the sea of liberty. But for me, in my impenetrable mantle, the safety was complete. Think of it—I did not even exist! Let me but escape into my laboratory door, give me but a second or two to mix and swallow the draught that I had always standing ready, and whatever he had done, Edward Hyde would pass away like the stain of breath upon a mirror, and there in his stead, quietly at home, trimming the midnight lamp in his study, a man who could afford to laugh at suspicion, would be Henry Jekyll.

The pleasures which I made haste to seek in my disguise were, as I have said, undignified; I would scarce use a harder term. But in the hands of Edward Hyde, they soon began to turn towards the monstrous. When I would come back from these excursions, I was often plunged into a kind of wonder at my vicarious depravity. This familiar that I called out of my own soul, and sent forth alone to do his good pleasure, was a being inherently malign and villainous; his every act and thought centered on self; drinking pleasure with bestial avidity from any degree of torture to another; relentless, like a man of stone. Henry Jekyll stood at times aghast before the acts of Edward Hyde; but the situation was apart from ordinary laws, and insidiously relaxed the grasp of conscience. It was Hyde, after all, and Hyde alone, that was guilty. Jekyll was no worse; he woke again to his good qualities seemingly unimpaired; he would even make haste, where it was possible, to undo the evil done by Hyde. And thus his conscience slumbered.

Into the details of the infamy at which I thus connived—for even now I can scarce grant that I committed it—I have no design of entering; I mean but to point out the warnings and the successive steps with which my chastisement approached. I met with one accident which, as it brought on no consequence, I shall no more than mention. An act of cruelty to a child aroused against me the anger of a passer-by, whom I recognized the other day in the person of your kinsman; the doctor and the child's family joined him; there were moments when I feared for my life; and at last, in order to pacify their too just resentment, Edward Hyde had to bring them to the door, and pay them in a check drawn in the name of Henry Jekyll. But this danger was easily eliminated from the future by opening an account at another bank in the name of Edward Hyde himself; and when, by sloping my own hand backward, I had supplied my double with a signature, I thought I sat beyond the reach of fate.

Some two months before the murder of Sir Danvers, I had been out for one of my adventures, had returned at a late hour, and woke the next day in bed with somewhat odd sensations. It was in vain I looked about me; in vain I saw the decent furniture and tall proportions of my room in the square; in vain that I recognized the pattern of the bed curtains and the design of the mahogany frame; something still kept insisting that I was not where I was, that I had not wakened where I seemed to be, but in the little room in Soho where I was accustomed to sleep in the body of Edward Hyde. I smiled to myself, and, in my psychological way, began lazily to inquire into the elements of this illusion, occasionally, even as I did so, dropping back into a comfortable morning doze. I was still so engaged when, in one of my more wakeful moments, my eye fell upon my hand. Now the hand of Henry Jekyll—as you have often remarked—was professional in shape and size: it was large, firm, white, and comely. But the hand which I now saw, clearly enough, in the yellow light of a mid-London morning, lying half-shut on the bed-clothes, was lean, corded, knuckly, of a dusky pallor, and thickly shaded with a swart growth of hair. It was the hand of Edward Hyde!

I must have stared upon it for near half a minute, sunk as I was in the mere stupidity of wonder, before terror woke up in my breast as sudden and startling as the crash of cymbals, and, bounding from my bed, I rushed to the mirror. At the sight that met my eyes, my blood was changed into something exquisitely thin and icy. Yes, I had gone to bed Henry Jekyll, I had awakened Edward Hyde. How was this to be explained? I asked myself; and then, with another bound of terror—how was it to be remedied? It was well on in the morning; the servants were up; all my drugs were in the cabinet—

a long journey down two pairs of stairs, through the back passage, across the open court and through the anatomical theatre, from where I was then standing horror-struck. It might indeed be possible to cover my face; but of what use was that, when I was unable to conceal the alteration in my stature? And then with an overpowering sweetness of relief, it came back upon my mind that the servants were already used to the coming and going of my second self. I had soon dressed, as well as I was able, in clothes of my own size; had soon passed through the house, where Bradshaw stared and drew back at seeing Mr. Hyde at such an hour and in such a strange array; and ten minutes later Doctor Jekyll had returned to his own shape and was sitting down, with a darkened brow, to make a feint of breakfasting.

Small indeed was my appetite. This inexplicable incident, this reversal of my previous experience, seemed, like the Babylonian finger on the wall, to be spelling out the letters of my judgment; and I began to reflect more seriously than ever before on the issues and possibilities of my double existence. That part of me which I had the power of projecting had lately been much exercised and nourished; it had seemed to me of late as though the body of Edward Hyde had grown in stature, as though—when I wore that form—I were conscious of a more generous tide of blood; and I began to spy a danger that, if this were much prolonged, the balance of my nature might be permanently overthrown, the power of voluntary change be forfeited, and the character of Edward Hyde become irrevocably mine. The power of the drug had not been always equally displayed. Once, very early in my career, it had totally failed me; since then I had been obliged on more than one occasion to double, and once, with infinite risk of death, to treble the amount; and these rare uncertainties had cast hitherto the sole shadow on my contentment. Now, however, and in the light of that morning's accident, I was led to remark that whereas, in the beginning, the difficulty had been to throw off the body of Jekyll, it had of late, gradually but decidedly, transferred itself to the other side. All things, therefore, seemed to point to this: that I was slowly losing hold of my original and better self, and becoming slowly incorporated with my second and worse.

Between these two, I now felt I had to choose. My two natures had memory in common, but all other faculties were most unequally shared between them. Jekyll—who was composite—now with the most sensitive apprehensions, now with a greedy gusto, projected and shared in the pleasures and adventures of Hyde; but Hyde was indifferent to Jekyll, or but remembered him as the mountain bandit remembers the cavern in which he conceals himself from pursuit. Jekyll had more than a father's interest; Hyde had more than a son's indifference. To cast in my lot with Jekyll, was to die to those appetites which I had long secretly indulged and had of late begun to pamper. To cast it in with Hyde was to die to a thousand interests and aspirations, and to become, at a blow and forever, despised and friendless. The bargain might appear unequal; but there was still another consideration in the scales; for while Jekyll would suffer smartingly in the fires of abstinence, Hyde would not be even conscious of all that he had lost. Strange as my circumstances were, the terms of this debate are as old and commonplace as man; much the same inducements and alarms cast the die for any tempted and trembling sinner; and it fell out with me, as it falls with so vast a majority of my fellows, that I chose the better part and was found wanting in the strength to keep to it.

Yes, I preferred the elderly and discontented doctor, surrounded by friends and cherishing honest hopes; and bade a resolute farewell to the liberty, the comparative youth, the light step, leaping impulses, and secret pleasures that I had enjoyed in the disguise of Hyde. I made this choice perhaps with some unconscious reservation, for I neither gave up the house in Soho, nor destroyed the clothes of Edward Hyde, which still lay ready in my cabinet. For two months, however, I was true to my determination; for two months I led a life of such severity as I had never before attained to, and enjoyed the compensations of an approving conscience. But time began at last to obliterate the freshness of my alarm; the praises of conscience began to grow into a thing of course; I began to be tortured with throes and longings, as of Hyde struggling after freedom; and at last, in an hour of moral weakness, I once again compounded and swallowed the transforming draught.

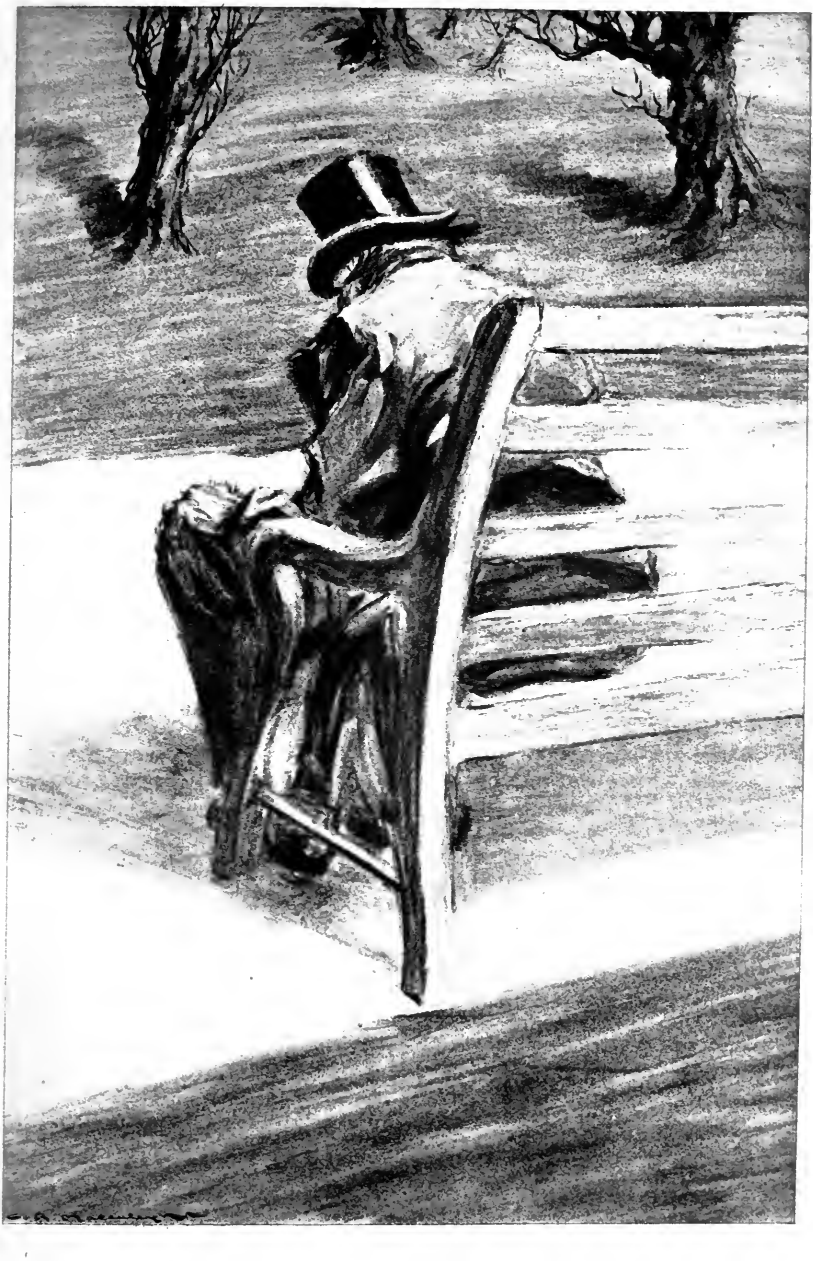
I do not suppose that, when a drunkard reasons with himself upon his vice, he is once out of five hundred times affected by the dangers that he runs through his brutish, physical insensibility; neither had I, long as I had considered my position, made enough allowance for the complete moral insensibility and insensate readiness to evil which were the leading characteristics of Edward Hyde. Yet it was by these that I was punished. My devil had been long caged; he came out roaring. I was conscious, even when I took the draught, of a more unbridled, a more furious, propensity to ill. It must have been this, I suppose, that stirred in my soul that tempest of impatience with which I listened to the civilities of my unhappy victim; I declare, at least, before God, no man morally sane could have been guilty of that crime upon so pitiful a provocation, and that I struck in no more reasonable spirit than that in which a sick child may break a plaything. But I had voluntarily stripped myself of all those balancing instincts by which even the worst of us continues to walk with some degree of steadiness among temptations; and in my case, to be tempted, however slightly, was to fall.

Instantly the spirit of hell awoke in me and raged. With a transport of glee, I mauled the unresisting body, tasting delight from every blow; and it was not till weariness had begun to succeed, that I was suddenly, in the top fit of my delirium, struck through the heart by a cold thrill of terror. A mist dispersed; I saw my life to be forfeit, and fled from the scene of these excesses, at once glorying and trembling, my lust of evil gratified and stimulated, my love of life screwed to the topmost peg. I ran to the house in Soho and—to make assurance doubly sure—destroyed my papers; thence I set out through the lamp-lit streets, in the same divided ecstasy of mind, gloating on my crime, light-headedly devising others in the future, and yet still hastening and still hearkening in my wake for the steps of the avenger. Hyde had a song upon his lips as he compounded the draught, and, as he drank it, pledged the dead man. The pangs of transformation had not done tearing him before Henry Jekyll, with streaming tears of gratitude and remorse, had fallen upon his knees and lifted his clasped hands to God. The veil of self-indulgence was rent from head to foot; I saw my life as a whole; I followed it up from the days of childhood, when I had walked with my father's hand, and through the self-denying toils of my professional life, to arrive again and again, with the same sense of unreality, at the damned horrors of the evening. I could have screamed aloud; I sought with tears and prayers to smother down the crowd of hideous images and sounds with which my memory swarmed against me; and still, between the petitions, the ugly face of my iniquity stared into my soul. As the acuteness of this remorse began to die away, it was succeeded by a sense of joy. The problem of my conduct was solved. Hyde was thenceforth impossible; whether I would or not, I was now confined to the better part of my existence; and oh, how I rejoiced to think it! with what willing humility I embraced anew the restrictions of natural life! with what sincere renunciation I locked the door by which I had so often gone and come, and ground the key under my heel!

The next day came the news that the murder had been overlooked, that the guilt of Hyde was patent to the world, and that the victim was a man high in public estimation. It was not only a crime; it had been a tragic folly. I think I was glad to know it; I think I was glad to have my better impulses thus buttressed and guarded by the terrors of the scaffold. Jekyll was now my city of refuge; let but Hyde peep out an instant, and the hands of all men would be raised to take and slay him.

I resolved in my future conduct to redeem the past; and I can say with honesty that my resolve was fruitful of some good. You know yourself how earnestly in the last months of last year I labored to relieve suffering; you know that much was done for others, and that the days passed quietly, almost happily, for myself. Nor can I truly say that I wearied of this beneficent and innocent life; I think instead that I daily enjoyed it more completely; but I was still cursed with my duality of purpose; and as the first edge of my penitence wore off, the lower side of me, so long indulged, so recently chained down, began to growl for license. Not that I dreamed of resuscitating Hyde; the bare idea of that would startle me to frenzy; no, it was in my own person that I was once more tempted to trifle with my conscience; and it was as an ordinary secret sinner that I at last fell before the assaults of temptation.

There comes an end to all things; the most capacious measure is filled at last; and this brief condescension to my evil finally destroyed the balance of my soul. And yet I was not alarmed; the fall seemed natural, like a return to the old days before I had made my discovery. It was a fine, clear January day, wet under foot where the frost had melted, but cloudless overhead, and the Regent's Park was full of winter chirrupings and sweet with spring odors. I sat in the sun on a bench, the animal within me licking the chaps of memory, the spiritual side a little drowsed, promising subsequent penitence but not yet moved to begin. After all, I reflected, I was like my neighbors; and then I smiled, comparing myself with other men, comparing my active good-will with the lazy cruelty of their neglect. And at the very moment of that vainglorious thought, a qualm came over me, a horrid nausea and a most deadly shuddering. These passed away, and left me faint; and then, as in its turn the faintness subsided, I began to be aware of a change in the temper of my thoughts, a greater boldness, a contempt of danger, a solution of the bonds of obligation. I looked down; my clothes hung formlessly on my shrunken limbs; the hand that lay on my knee was corded and hairy. I was once more Edward Hyde. A moment before I had been safe of all men's respect, wealthy, beloved—the cloth laying for me in the dining-room at home; and now I was the common quarry of mankind, hunted, house-

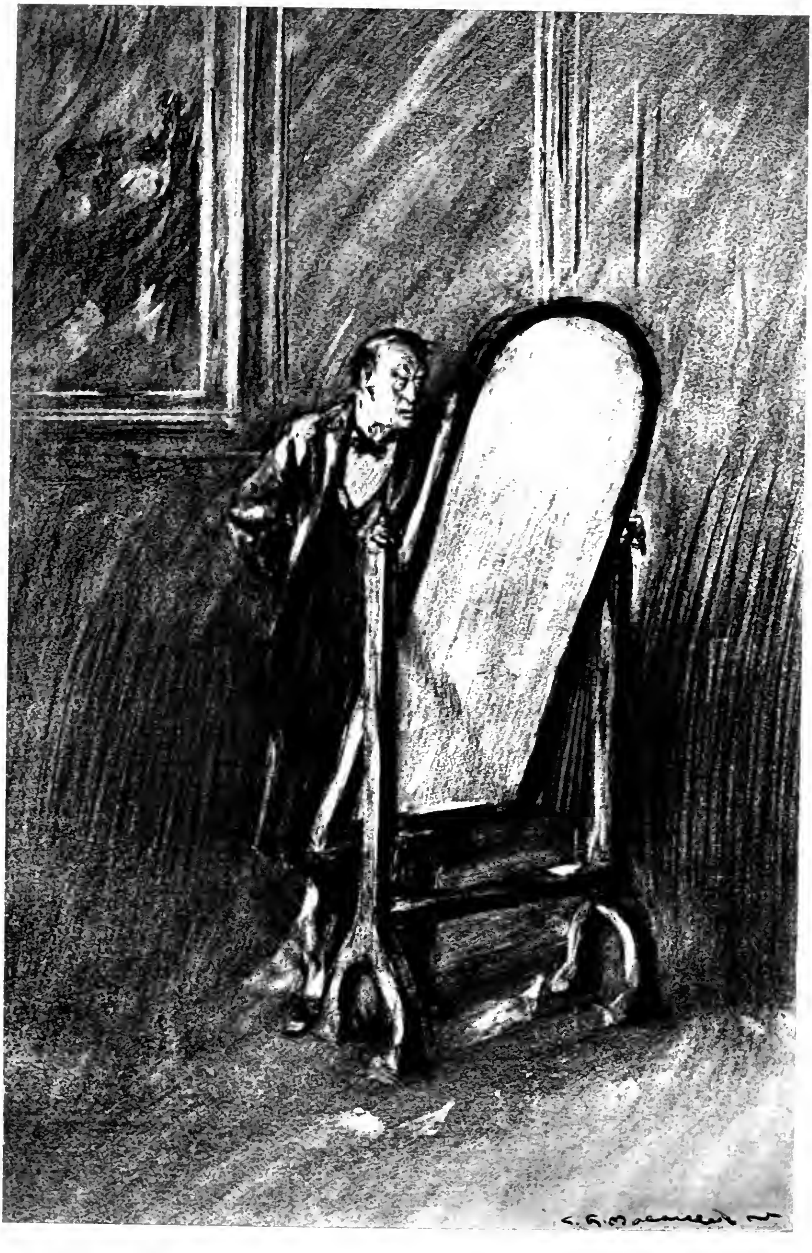


less, a known murderer, thrall to the gallows. My reason wavered, but it did not fail me utterly. I have more than once observed that, in my second character, my faculties seemed sharpened to a point and my spirits more tensely elastic; thus it came about that, where Jekyll perhaps might have succumbed, Hyde rose to the importance of the moment. My drugs were in one of the presses of my cabinet. How was I to reach them? That was the problem that—crushing my temples in my hands—I set myself to solve. The laboratory door I had closed. If I sought to enter by the house, my own servants would consign me to the gallows. I saw I must employ another hand, and thought of Lanyon. How was he to be reached? how persuaded? Supposing that I escaped capture in the streets, how was I to make my way into his presence? and how should I, an unknown and displeasing visitor, prevail on the famous physician to rifle the study of his colleague, Doctor Jekyll? Then I remembered that of my original character one part remained to me: I could write my own hand; and once I had conceived that kindling spark, the way that I must follow became lighted up from end to end.

Thereupon, I arranged my clothes as best I could, and, summoning a passing hansom, drove to a hotel in Portland Street, the name of which I chanced to remember. At my appearance — which was indeed comical enough, however tragic a fate these garments covered—the driver could not conceal his mirth. I gnashed my teeth upon him with a gust of devilish fury; and the smile withered from his face—happily for him—yet more happily for myself, for in another instant I had certainly dragged him from his perch. At the inn, as I entered, I looked about me with so black a countenance as made the attendants tremble; not a look did they exchange in my presence; but obsequiously took my orders, led me to a private room, and brought me wherewithal to write. Hyde in danger of his life was a creature new to me; shaken with inordinate anger, strung to the pitch of murder, lusting to inflict pain. Yet the creature was astute; mastered his fury with a great effort of the will; composed his two important letters, one to Lanyon and one to Poole; and, that he might receive actual evidence of their being posted, sent them out with directions that they should be registered.

Thenceforward, he sat all day over the fire in the private room, gnawing his nails; there he dined, sitting alone with his fears, the waiter visibly quailing before his eye; and thence, when the night was fully come, he set forth in the corner of a closed cab, and was driven to and fro about the streets of the city. He, I say—I can not say I. That child of hell had nothing human; nothing lived in him but fear and hatred. And when at last, thinking the driver had begun to grow suspicious, he discharged the cab and ventured on foot, attired in his misfitting clothes, an object marked out for observation, into the midst of the nocturnal passengers, these two base passions raged within him like a tempest. He walked fast, hunted by his fears, chattering to himself, skulking through the less frequented thoroughfares, counting the minutes that still divided him from midnight. Once a woman spoke to him, offering, I think, a box of lights. He smote her in the face, and she fled.

When I came to myself at Lanyon's, the horror of my old friend perhaps affected me somewhat; I do not know; it was at least but a drop in the sea to the abhorrence with which I looked back upon these hours. A change had come over me. It was no longer the fear of the gallows, it was the horror of being Hyde that racked me. I received Lanyon's condemnation partly in a dream; it was partly in a dream that I came home to my own house and got into bed. I slept after the prostration of the day, with a stringent and profound slumber which not even the nightmares that wrung me could avail to



break. I awoke in the morning shaken, weakened, but refreshed. I still hated and feared the thought of the brute that slept within me, and I had not of course forgotten the appalling dangers of the day before; but I was once more at home, in my own house and close to my drugs; and gratitude for my escape shone so strong in my soul that it almost rivalled the brightness of hope.

I was stepping leisurely across the court after breakfast, drinking the chill of the air with pleasure, when I was seized again with those indescribable sensations that heralded the change; and I had but the time to gain the shelter of my cabinet before I was once again raging and freezing with the passions of Hyde. It took on this occasion a double dose to recall me to myself; and alas! six hours after, as I sat looking sadly in the fire, the pangs returned, and the drug had to be readministered. In short, from that day forth it seemed only by a great effort, as of gymnastics, and only under the immediate stimulation of the drug, that I was able to wear the countenance of Jekyll. At all hours of the day and night, I would be taken with the premonitory shudder; above all, if I slept, or even dozed for a moment in my chair, it was always as Hyde that I awakened. Under the strain of this continually impending doom, and by the sleeplessness to which I now condemned myself, ay, even beyond what I had thought possible to man, I became, in my own person, a creature eaten up and emptied by fever, languidly weak both in body and mind, and solely occupied by one thought—the horror of my other self. But when I slept, or when the virtue of the medicine wore off, I would leap almost without transition—for the pangs of transformation grew daily less marked—into the possession of a fancy brimming with images of terror, a soul boiling with causeless hatreds, and a body that seemed not strong enough to contain the raging energies of life. The powers of Hyde seemed to have grown with the sickliness of

Jekyll. And certainly the hate that now divided them was equal on each side. With Jekyll, it was a thing of vital instinct. He had now seen the full deformity of that creature that shared with him some of the phenomena of consciousness, and was co-heir with him to death; and beyond these links of community, which in themselves made the most poignant part of his distress, he thought of Hyde, for all his energy of life, as of something not only hellish but inorganic. This was the shocking thing; that the slime of the pit seemed to utter cries and voices; that the amorphous dust gesticulated and sinned; that what was dead, and had no shape, should usurp the offices of life. And this again, that that insurgent horror was knit to him closer than a wife, closer than an eye lay caged in his flesh, where he heard it mutter and felt it struggle to be born; and at every hour of weakness, and in the confidence of slumber, prevailed against him, and deposed him out of life. The hatred of Hyde for Jekyll was of a different order. His terror of the gallows drove him continually to commit temporary suicide, and return to his subordinate station of a part instead of a person; but he loathed the necessity, he loathed the despondency into which Jekyll was now fallen, and he resented the dislike with which he was himself regarded. Hence the ape-like tricks that he would play me, scrawling in my own hand blasphemies on the pages of my books, burning the letters and destroying the portrait of my father; and indeed, had it not been for his fear of death, he would long ago have ruined himself in order to involve me in the ruin. But his love of life is wonderful; I go further; I, who sicken and freeze at the mere thought of him, when I recall the abjection and passion of this attachment, and when I know how he fears my power to cut him off by suicide, I find it in my heart to pity him.

It is useless, and the time awfully fails me, to prolong this description; no one has ever suffered such torments, let that suffice; and yet even to these, habit brought—no, not alleviation—but a certain callousness of soul, a certain acquiescence of despair; and my punishment might have gone on for years, but for the last calamity which has now fallen, and which has finally severed me from my own face and nature. My provision of the salt, which had never been renewed since the date of the first experiment, began to run low. I sent out for a fresh supply, and mixed the draught; the ebullition followed, and the first change of color, not the second; I drank it and it was without efficiency. You will learn from Poole how I have had London ransacked; it was in vain; and I am now persuaded that my first supply was impure, and that it was that unknown impurity which lent efficacy to the draught.

A week has passed, and I am now finishing this statement under the influence of the last of the old powders. This, then, is the last time, short of a miracle, that Henry Jekyll can think his own thoughts or see his own face—now how sadly altered!—in the glass. Nor must I delay too long to bring my writing to an end; for if my narrative has hitherto escaped destruction, it has been by a combination of great prudence and great good luck. Should the throes of change take me in the act of writing it, Hyde will tear it in pieces; but if some time shall have elapsed after I have laid it by, his wonderful selfishness and circumscription to the moment will probably save it once again from the action of his ape-like spite. And indeed the doom that is closing on us both has already changed and crushed him. Half an hour from now, when I shall again and forever reindue that hated personality, I know how I shall sit shuddering and weeping in my chair, or continue, with the most strained and fearstruck ecstasy of listening, to pace up and down this room—my last earthly refuge—and give ear to every sound of menace. Will Hyde die upon the scaffold? or will he find courage to release himself at the last moment? God knows; I am careless; this is my true hour of death, and what is to follow concerns another than myself. Here then, as I lay down the pen and proceed to seal up my confession, I bring the life of that unhappy Henry Jekyll to an end.

THE END

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INTRODUCTION.

Horace Walpole was the youngest son of Sir Robert Walpole, the great statesman, who died Earl of Orford. He was born in 1717, the year in which his father resigned office, remaining in opposition for about three years before his return to a long tenure of power. Horace Walpole was educated at Eton, where he formed a school friendship with Thomas Gray, who was but a few months older. In 1739 Gray was travelling-companion 22 with Walpole in France and Italy until they differed and parted; but the friendship was afterwards renewed, and remained firm to the end. Horace Walpole went from Eton to King's College, Cambridge, and entered Parliament in 1741, the year before his father's final resignation 24 and acceptance of an earldom. His way of life was made easy to him. As Usher of the Exchequer, Comptroller of the Pipe, and Clerk of the Estreats in the Exchequer, he received nearly two thousand a year for doing nothing, lived with his father, and amused himself.

Horace Walpole idled, and amused himself with the small life of the fashionable world to which he was proud of belonging, though he had a quick eye for its vanities. He had social wit, and liked to put it to small uses. But he was not an empty idler, and there were seasons when he could become a sharp judge of himself. "I am sensible," he wrote to his most intimate friend, "I am sensible of having more follies and weaknesses and fewer real good qualities than most men. I sometimes reflect on this, though, I own, too seldom. I always want to begin acting like a man, and a sensible one, which I think I might be if I would." He had deep home affections, and, under many polite affectations, plenty of good sense.

Horace Walpole's father died in 1745. The eldest son, who succeeded to the earldom, died in 1751, and left a son, George, who was for a time insane, and lived until 1791. As George left no child, the title and estates passed to Horace Walpole, then seventy-four years old, and the only uncle who survived. Horace Walpole thus became Earl of Orford during the last six years of his life. As to the title, he said that he felt himself being called names in his old age. He died unmarried, in the year 1797, at the age of eighty.

He had turned his house at Strawberry Hill, by the Thames, near Twickenham, into a Gothic villa —eighteenth-century Gothic—and amused himself by spending freely upon its adornment with such things as were then fashionable as objects of taste. But he delighted also in his flowers and his trellises of roses, and the quiet Thames. When confined by gout to his London house in Arlington Street, flowers from Strawberry Hill and a bird were necessary consolations. He set up also at Strawberry Hill a private printing press, at which he printed his friend Gray's poems, also in 1758 his own "Catalogue of the Royal and Noble Authors of England," and five volumes of "Anecdotes of Painting in England," between 1762 and 1771.

Horace Walpole produced *The Castle of Otranto* in 1765, at the mature age of forty-eight. It was suggested by a dream from which he said he waked one morning, and of which "all I could recover was, that I had thought myself in an ancient castle (a very natural dream for a head like mine, filled with Gothic story), and that on the uppermost banister of a great staircase I saw a gigantic hand in armour. In the evening I sat down and began to write, without knowing in the least what I intended to say or relate." So began the tale which professed to be translated by "William Marshal, gentleman, from the Italian of Onuphro Muralto, canon of the Church of St. Nicholas, at Otranto." It was written in two months. Walpole's friend Gray reported to him that at Cambridge the book made "some of them cry a little, and all in general afraid to go to bed o' nights." *The Castle of Otranto* was, in its own way, an early sign of the reaction towards romance in the latter part of the last century. This gives it interest. But it has had many followers, and the hardy modern reader, when he reads Gray's note from Cambridge, needs to be reminded of its date. H. M.

PREFACE

TO THE FIRST EDITION.

THE following work was found in the library of an ancient Catholic family in the north of England. It was printed at Naples, in the black letter, in the year 1529. How much sooner it was written does not appear. The principal incidents are such as were believed in the darkest ages of Christianity; but the language and conduct have nothing that savours of barbarism. The style is the purest Italian.

If the story was written near the time when it is supposed to have happened, it must have been between 1095, the era of the first Crusade, and 1243, the date of the last, or not long afterwards. There is no other circumstance in the work that can lead us to guess at the period in which the scene is laid: the names of the actors are evidently fictitious, and probably disguised on purpose: yet the Spanish names of the domestics seem to indicate that this work was not composed until the establishment of the Arragonian Kings in Naples had made Spanish appellations familiar in that country. The beauty of the diction, and the zeal of the author (moderated, however, by singular judgment) concur to make me think that the date of the composition was little antecedent to that of the impression. Letters were then in their most flourishing state in Italy, and contributed to dispel the empire of superstition, at that time so forcibly attacked by the reformers. It is not unlikely that an artful priest might endeavour to turn their own arms on the innovators, and might avail himself of his abilities as an author to confirm the populace in their ancient errors and superstitions. If this was his view, he has certainly acted with signal address. Such a work as the following would enslave a hundred vulgar minds beyond half the books of controversy that have been written from the days of Luther to the present hour.

This solution of the author's motives is, however, offered as a mere conjecture. Whatever his views were, or whatever effects the execution of them might have, his work can only be laid before the public at present as a matter of entertainment. Even as such, some apology for it is necessary. Miracles, visions, necromancy, dreams, and other preternatural events, are exploded now even from romances. That was not the case when our author wrote; much less when the story itself is supposed to have happened. Belief in every kind of prodigy was so established in those dark ages, that an author would not be faithful to the manners of the times, who should omit all mention of them. He is not bound to believe them himself, but he must represent his actors as believing them.

If this air of the miraculous is excused, the reader will find nothing else unworthy of his perusal. Allow the possibility of the facts, and all the actors comport themselves as persons would do in their situation. There is no bombast, no similes, flowers, digressions, or unnecessary descriptions. Everything tends directly to the catastrophe. Never is the reader's attention relaxed. The rules of the drama are almost observed throughout the conduct of the piece. The characters are well drawn, and still better maintained. Terror, the author's principal engine, prevents the story from ever languishing; and it is so often contrasted by pity, that the mind is kept up in a constant vicissitude of interesting passions.

Some persons may perhaps think the characters of the domestics too little serious for the general cast of the story; but besides their opposition to the principal personages, the art of the author is very observable in his conduct of the subalterns. They discover many passages essential to the story, which could not be well brought to light but by their *naïveté* and simplicity. In particular, the womanish terror and foibles of Bianca, in the last chapter, conduce essentially towards advancing the catastrophe.

It is natural for a translator to be prejudiced in favour of his adopted work. More impartial readers may not be so much struck with the beauties of this piece as I was. Yet I am not blind to my author's defects. I could wish he had grounded his plan on a more useful moral than this: that "the sins of fathers are visited on their children to the third and fourth generation." I doubt whether, in his time, any more than at present, ambition curbed its appetite of dominion from the dread of so remote a punishment. And yet this moral is weakened by that less direct insinuation, that even such anathema may be diverted by devotion to St. Nicholas. Here the interest of the Monk plainly gets the better of the judgment of the author. However, with all its faults, I have no doubt but the English reader will be pleased with a sight of this performance. The piety that reigns throughout, the lessons of virtue that are inculcated, and the rigid purity of the sentiments, exempt this work from the censure to which romances are but too liable. Should it meet with the success I hope for, I may be encouragėd to reprint the original Italian, though it will tend to depreciate my own labour. Our language falls far short of the charms of the Italian, both for variety and harmony. The latter is peculiarly excellent for simple narrative. It is difficult in English to relate without falling too low or rising too high; a fault obviously occasioned by the little care taken to speak pure language in common conversation. Every Italian or Frenchman of any rank piques himself on speaking his own tongue correctly and with choice. I cannot flatter myself with having done justice to my author in this respect: his style is as elegant as his conduct of the passions is masterly. It is a pity that he did not apply his talents to what they were evidently proper for—the theatre.

I will detain the reader no longer, but to make one short remark. Though the machinery is invention, and the names of the actors imaginary, I cannot but believe that the groundwork of the story is founded on truth. The scene is undoubtedly laid in some real castle. The author seems frequently, without design, to describe particular parts. "The chamber," says he, "on the right hand;" "the door on the left hand;" "the distance from the chapel to Conrad's apartment:" these and other passages are strong presumptions that the author had some certain building in his eye. Curious persons, who have leisure to employ in such researches, may possibly discover in the Italian writers the foundation on which our author has built. If a catastrophe, at all resembling that which he describes, is believed to have given rise to this work, it will contribute to interest the reader, and will make the "Castle of Otranto" a still more moving story.

SONNET

TO

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE LADY MARY COKE.

THE gentle maid, whose hapless tale
These melancholy pages speak ;
Say, gracious lady, shall she fail
To draw the tear adown thy cheek ?

No ; never was thy pitying breast
Insensible to human woes ;
Tender, tho' firm, it melts distrest
For weaknesses it never knows.

Oh ! guard the marvels I relate
Of fell ambition scourg'd by fate,
From reason's peevish blame.
Blest with thy smile, my dauntless sail
I dare expand to Fancy's gale,
For sure thy smiles are Fame.

H. W.

even the bleeding mangled remains of the young Prince divert the eyes of Manfred from the portent before him.

All who had known his partial fondness for young Conrad, were as much surprised at their Prince's insensibility, as thunderstruck themselves at the miracle of the helmet. They conveyed the disfigured corpse into the hall, without receiving the least direction from Manfred. As little was he attentive to the ladies who remained in the chapel. On the contrary, without mentioning the unhappy princesses, his wife and daughter, the first sounds that dropped from Manfred's lips were, "Take care of the Lady Isabella."

The domestics, without observing the singularity of this direction, were guided by their affection to their mistress, to consider it as peculiarly addressed to her situation, and flew to her assistance. They conveyed her to her chamber more dead than alive, and indifferent to all the strange circumstances she heard, except the death of her son.

Matilda, who doted on her mother, smothered her own grief and amazement, and thought of nothing but assisting and comforting her afflicted parent. Isabella, who had been treated by Hippolita like a daughter, and who returned that tenderness with equal duty and affection, was scarce less assiduous about the Princess; at the same time endeavouring to partake and lessen the weight of sorrow which she saw Matilda strove to suppress, for whom she had conceived the warmest sympathy of friendship. Yet her own situation could not help finding its place in her thoughts. She felt no concern for the death of young Conrad, except commiseration; and she was not sorry to be delivered from a marriage which had promised her little felicity, either from her destined bridegroom, or from the severe temper of Manfred, who, though he had distinguished her by great indulgence, had imprinted her mind with terror, from his causeless rigour to such amiable princesses as Hippolita and Matilda.

While the ladies were conveying the wretched mother to her bed, Manfred remained in the court, gazing on the ominous casque, and regardless of the crowd which the strangeness of the event had now assembled around him. The few words he articulated, tended solely to inquiries, whether any man knew from whence it could have come? Nobody could give him the least information.

However, as it seemed to be the sole object of his curiosity, it soon became so to the rest of the spectators, whose conjectures were as absurd and improbable, as the catastrophe itself was unprecedented. In the midst of their senseless guesses, a young peasant, whom rumour had drawn thither from a neighbouring village, observed that the miraculous helmet was exactly like that on the figure in black marble of Alfonso the Good, one of their former princes, in the church of St. Nicholas.

"Villain! What sayest thou?" cried Manfred, starting from his trance in a tempest of rage, and seizing the young man by the collar; "how darest thou utter such treason? Thy life shall pay for it."

The spectators, who as little comprehended the cause of the Prince's fury as all the rest they had seen, were at a loss to unravel this new circumstance. The young peasant himself was still more astonished, not conceiving how he had offended the Prince. Yet recollecting himself, with a mixture of grace and humility, he disengaged himself from Manfred's gripe, and then with an obeisance, which discovered more jealousy of innocence than dismay, he asked, with respect, of what he was guilty? Manfred, more enraged at the vigour, however decently exerted, with which the young man had shaken off his hold, than appeased by his submission, ordered his attendants to seize him, and, if he had not been withheld by his friends whom he had invited to the nuptials, would have poignarded the peasant in their arms.

During this altercation, some of the vulgar spectators had run to the great church, which stood near the castle, and came back open-mouthed, declaring that the helmet was missing from Alfonso's statue. Manfred, at this news, grew perfectly frantic; and, as if he sought a subject on which to vent the tempest within him, he rushed again on the young peasant, crying—

"Villain! Monster! Sorcerer! 'tis thou hast done this! 'tis thou hast slain my son!"

The mob, who wanted some object within the scope of their capacities, on whom they might discharge their bewildered reasonings, caught the words from the mouth of their lord, and re-echoed—

"Ay, ay; 'tis he, 'tis he: he has stolen the helmet from good Alfonso's tomb, and dashed out the brains of our young Prince with it," never reflecting how enormous the disproportion was between the marble helmet that had been in the church, and that of steel before their eyes; nor how impossible it was for a youth seemingly not twenty, to wield a piece of armour of so prodigious a weight.

The folly of these ejaculations brought Manfred to himself: yet whether provoked at the peasant having observed the resemblance between the two helmets, and thereby led to the farther discovery of the absence of that in the church, or wishing to bury any such rumour under so impertinent a supposition, he gravely pronounced that the young man was certainly a necromancer, and that till the Church could take cognisance of the affair, he would have the Magician, whom they had thus detected, kept prisoner under the helmet itself, which he ordered his attendants to raise, and place the young man under it; declaring he should be kept there without food, with which his own infernal art might furnish him.

It was in vain for the youth to represent against this preposterous sentence: in vain did Manfred's friends endeavour to divert him from this savage and ill-grounded resolution. The generality were charmed with their lord's decision, which, to their apprehensions, carried great appearance of justice, as the Magician was to be punished by the very instrument with which he had offended: nor were they struck with the least compunction at the probability of the youth being starved, for they firmly believed that, by his diabolic skill, he could easily supply himself with nutriment.

Manfred thus saw his commands even cheerfully obeyed; and appointing a guard with strict orders to prevent any food being conveyed to the prisoner, he dismissed his friends and attendants, and retired to his own chamber, after locking the gates of the castle, in which he suffered none but his domestics to remain.

In the meantime, the care and zeal of the young Ladies had brought the Princess Hippolita to herself, who amidst the transports of her own sorrow frequently demanded news of her lord, would have dismissed her attendants to watch over him, and at last enjoined Matilda to leave her, and visit and comfort her father. Matilda, who wanted no affectionate duty to Manfred, though she trembled at his austerity, obeyed the orders of Hippolita, whom she tenderly recommended to Isabella; and inquiring of the domestics for her father, was informed that he was retired to his chamber, and had commanded that nobody should have admittance to him. Concluding that he was immersed in sorrow for the death of her brother, and fearing to renew his tears by the sight of his sole remaining child, she hesitated whether she should break in upon his affliction ; yet solicitude for him, backed by the commands of her mother, encouraged her to venture disobeying the orders he had given ; a fault she had never been guilty of before.

The gentle timidity of her nature made her pause for some minutes at his door. She heard him traverse his chamber backwards and forwards with disordered steps ; a mood which increased her apprehensions. She was, however, just going to beg admittance, when Manfred suddenly opened the door ; and as it was now twilight, concurring with the disorder of his mind, he did not distinguish the person, but asked angrily, who it was ? Matilda replied, trembling—

"My dearest father, it is I, your daughter."

Manfred, stepping back hastily, cried, "Begone ! I do not want a daughter ;" and flinging back abruptly, clapped the door against the terrified Matilda.

She was too well acquainted with her father's impetuosity to venture a second intrusion. When she had a little recovered the shock of so bitter a reception, she wiped away her tears to prevent the additional stab that the knowledge of it would give to Hippolita, who questioned her in the most anxious terms on the health of Manfred, and how he bore his loss. Matilda assured her he was well, and supported his misfortune with manly fortitude.

"But will he not let me see him?" said Hippolita mournfully; "will he not permit me to blend my tears with his, and shed a mother's sorrows in the bosom of her Lord? Or do you deceive me, Matilda? I know how Manfred doted on his son: is not the stroke too heavy for him? has he not sunk under it? You do not answer me—alas! I dread the worst!—Raise me, my maidens; I will, I will see my Lord. Bear me to him instantly: he is dearer to me even than my children."

Matilda made signs to Isabella to prevent Hippolita's rising; and both those lovely young women were using their gentle violence to stop and calm the Princess, when a servant, on the part of Manfred, arrived and told Isabella that his Lord demanded to speak with her.

"With me!" cried Isabella.

"Go," said Hippolita, relieved by a message from her Lord: "Manfred cannot support the sight of his own family. He thinks you less disordered than we are, and dreads the shock of my grief. Console him, dear Isabella, and tell him I will smother my own anguish rather than add to his."

As it was now evening, the servant who conducted Isabella bore a torch before her. When they came to Manfred, who was walking impatiently about the gallery, he started, and said hastily—

"Take away that light, and begone."

Then shutting the door impetuously, he flung himself upon a bench against the wall, and bade Isabella sit by him. She obeyed trembling.

"I sent for you, Lady," said he—and then stopped under great appearance of confusion.

"My Lord!"

"Yes, I sent for you on a matter of great moment," resumed he. "Dry your tears, young Lady—you have lost your bridegroom. Yes, cruel fate! and I have lost the hopes of my race! But Conrad was not worthy of your beauty."

"How, my Lord!" said Isabella; "sure you do not suspect me of not feeling the concern I ought: my duty and affection would have always——"

"Think no more of him," interrupted Manfred; "he was a sickly, puny child, and Heaven has perhaps taken him away, that I might not trust the honours of my house on so frail a foundation. The line of Manfred calls for numerous supports. My foolish fondness for that boy blinded the eyes of my prudence—but it is better as it is. I hope, in a few years, to have reason to rejoice at the death of Conrad."

Words cannot paint the astonishment of Isabella. At first she apprehended that grief had disordered Manfred's understanding. Her next thought suggested that this strange discourse was designed to ensnare her: she feared that Manfred had perceived her indifference for his son: and in consequence of that idea she replied—

"Good my Lord, do not doubt my tenderness: my heart would have accompanied my hand. Conrad would have engrossed all my care; and wherever fate shall dispose of me, I shall always cherish his memory, and regard your Highness and the virtuous Hippolita as my parents."

"Curse on Hippolita!" cried Manfred. "Forget her from this moment, as I do. In short, Lady, you have missed a husband undeserving of your charms: they shall now be better disposed of. Instead of a sickly boy, you shall have a husband in the prime of his age, who will know how to value your beauties, and who may expect a numerous offspring."

"Alas, my Lord!" said Isabella, "my mind is too sadly engrossed by the recent catastrophe in your family to think of another marriage. If ever my father returns, and it shall be his pleasure, I shall obey, as I did when I consented to give my hand to your son: but until his return, permit me to remain under your hospitable roof, and employ the melancholy hours in assuaging yours, Hippolita's, and the fair Matilda's affliction."

"I desired you once before," said Manfred angrily, "not to name that woman: from this hour she must be a stranger to you, as she must be to me. In short, Isabella, since I cannot give you my son, I offer you myself."

"Heavens!" cried Isabella, waking from her delusion, "what do I hear? You! my Lord! You! My father-in-law! the father of Conrad! the husband of the virtuous and tender Hippolita!"

"I tell you," said Manfred imperiously, "Hippolita is no longer my wife; I divorce her from this hour. Too long has she cursed me by her unfruitfulness. My fate depends on having sons, and this night I trust will give a new date to my hopes."

At those words he seized the cold hand of Isabella, who was half dead with fright and horror. She shrieked, and started from him.

Manfred rose to pursue her, when the moon, which was now up, and gleamed in at the opposite casement, presented to his sight the plumes of the fatal helmet, which rose to the height of the windows, waving backwards and forwards in a tempestuous manner, and accompanied with a hollow and rustling sound. Isabella, who gathered courage from her situation, and who dreaded nothing so much as Manfred's pursuit of his declaration, cried—

"Look, my Lord! see, Heaven itself declares against your impious intentions!"

"Heaven nor Hell shall impede my designs," said Manfred, advancing again to seize the Princess.

At that instant the portrait of his grandfather, which hung over the bench where they had been sitting, uttered a deep sigh, and heaved its breast.

Isabella, whose back was turned to the picture, saw not the motion, nor knew whence the sound came, but started, and said—

"Hark, my Lord! What sound was that?" and at the same time made towards the door.

Manfred, distracted between the flight of Isabella, who had now reached the stairs, and yet unable to keep his eyes from the picture, which began to move, had, however, advanced some steps after her, still looking backwards on the portrait, when he saw it quit its panel, and descend on the floor with a grave and melancholy air.

"Do I dream?" cried Manfred, returning; "or are the devils themselves in league against me? Speak, infernal spectre! Or, if thou art my grandsire, why dost thou too conspire against thy wretched descendant, who too dearly pays for——" Ere he could finish the sentence, the vision sighed again, and made a sign to Manfred to follow him.

"Lead on!" cried Manfred; "I will follow thee to the gulf of perdition."

The spectre marched sedately, but dejected, to the end of the gallery, and turned into a chamber on the right hand. Manfred accompanied him at a little distance, full of anxiety and horror, but resolved. As he would have entered the chamber, the door was clapped to with violence by an invisible hand. The Prince, collecting courage from this delay, would have forcibly burst open the door with his foot, but found that it resisted his utmost efforts.

"Since Hell will not satisfy my curiosity," said Manfred, "I will use the human means in my power for preserving my race; Isabella shall not escape me."

The lady, whose resolution had given way to terror the moment she had quitted Manfred, continued her flight to the bottom of the principal staircase. There she stopped, not knowing whither to direct her steps, nor how to escape from the impetuosity of the Prince. The gates of the castle, she knew, were locked, and guards placed in the court. Should she, as her heart prompted her, go and prepare Hippolita for the cruel destiny that awaited her, she did not doubt but Manfred would seek her there, and that his violence would incite him to double the injury he meditated, without leaving room for them to avoid the impetuosity of his passions. Delay might give him time to reflect on the horrid measures he had conceived, or produce some circumstance in her favour, if she could—for that night, at least—avoid his odious purpose. Yet where conceal herself? How avoid the pursuit he would infallibly make throughout the castle?

As these thoughts passed rapidly through her mind, she recollected a subterraneous passage which led from the vaults of the castle to the church of St. Nicholas. Could she reach the altar before she was overtaken, she knew even Manfred's violence would not dare to profane the sacredness of the place; and she determined, if no other means of deliverance offered, to shut herself up for ever among the holy virgins whose convent was contiguous to the cathedral. In this resolution, she seized a lamp that burned at the foot of the staircase, and hurried towards the secret passage.

The lower part of the castle was hollowed into several intricate cloisters; and it was not easy for one under so much anxiety to find the door that opened into the cavern. An awful silence reigned throughout those subterraneous regions, except now and then some blasts of wind that shook the doors she had passed, and which, grating on the rusty hinges, were re-echoed through that long labyrinth of darkness. Every murmur struck her with new terror; yet more she dreaded to hear the wrathful voice of Manfred urging his domestics to pursue her.

She trod as softly as impatience would give her leave, yet frequently stopped and listened to hear if she was followed. In one of those moments she thought she heard a sigh. She shuddered, and recoiled a few paces. In a moment she thought she heard the step of some person. Her blood curdled; she concluded it was Manfred. Every suggestion that horror could inspire rushed into her mind. She condemned her rash flight, which had thus exposed her to his rage in a place where her cries were not likely to draw anybody to her assistance. Yet the sound seemed not to come from behind. If Manfred knew where she was, he must have followed her. She was still in one of the cloisters, and the steps she had heard were too distinct to proceed from the way she had come. Cheered with this reflection, and hoping to find a friend in whoever was not the Prince, she was going to advance, when a door that stood ajar, at some distance to the left, was opened gently: but ere her lamp, which she held up, could discover who opened it, the person retreated precipitately on seeing the light.

Isabella, whom every incident was sufficient to dismay, hesitated whether she should proceed. Her dread of Manfred soon outweighed every other terror. The very circumstance of the person avoiding her gave her a sort of courage. It could only be, she thought, some domestic belonging to the castle. Her gentleness had never raised her an enemy, and conscious innocence made her hope that, unless sent by the Prince's order to seek her, his servants would rather assist than prevent her flight. Fortifying herself with these reflections, and believing by what she could observe that she was near the mouth of the subterraneous cavern, she approached the door that had been opened; but a sudden gust of wind that met her at the door extinguished her lamp, and left her in total darkness.

Words cannot paint the horror of the Princess's situation. Alone in so dismal a place, her mind imprinted with all the terrible events of the day, hopeless of escaping, expecting every moment the arrival of Manfred, and far from tranquil on knowing she was within reach of somebody, she knew not whom, who for some cause seemed concealed thereabouts; all these thoughts crowded on her distracted mind, and she was ready to sink under her apprehensions. She addressed herself to every saint in heaven, and inwardly implored their assistance. For a considerable time she remained in an agony of despair.

At last, as softly as was possible, she felt for the door, and having found it, entered trembling into the vault from whence she had heard the sigh and steps. It gave her a kind of momentary joy to perceive an imperfect ray of clouded moonshine gleam from the roof of the vault, which seemed to be fallen in, and from whence hung a fragment of earth or building, she could not distinguish which, that appeared to have been crushed inwards. She advanced eagerly towards this chasm, when she discerned a human form standing close against the wall.

She shrieked, believing it the ghost of her betrothed Conrad. The figure, advancing, said, in a submissive voice—

"Be not alarmed, Lady; I will not injure you."

Isabella, a little encouraged by the words and tone of voice of the stranger, and recollecting that this must be the person who had opened the door, recovered her spirits enough to reply—

"Sir, whoever you are, take pity on a wretched Princess, standing on the brink of destruction. Assist me to escape from this fatal castle, or in a few moments I may be made miserable for ever."

"Alas!" said the stranger, "what can I do to assist you? I will die in your defence; but I am unacquainted with the castle, and want——"

"Oh!" said Isabella, hastily interrupting him; "help me but to find a trap-door that must be hereabout, and it is the greatest service you can do me, for I have not a minute to lose."

Saying these words, she felt about on the pavement, and directed the stranger to search likewise, for a smooth piece of brass enclosed in one of the stones.

"That," said she, "is the lock, which opens with a spring, of which I know the secret. If we can find that, I may escape—if not, alas! courteous stranger, I fear I shall have involved you in my misfortunes: Manfred will suspect you for the accomplice of my flight, and you will fall a victim to his resentment."

"I value not my life," said the stranger, "and it will be some comfort to lose it in trying to deliver you from his tyranny."

"Generous youth," said Isabella, "how shall I ever requite——"

As she uttered those words, a ray of moonshine, streaming through a cranny of the ruin above, shone directly on the lock they sought.

"Oh! transport!" said Isabella; "here is the trap-door!" and, taking out the key, she touched the spring, which, starting aside, discovered an iron ring. "Lift up the door," said the Princess.

The stranger obeyed, and beneath appeared some stone steps descending into a vault totally dark.

"We must go down here," said Isabella. "Follow me; dark and dismal as it is, we cannot miss our way; it leads directly to the church of St. Nicholas. But, perhaps," added the Princess modestly, "you have no reason to leave the castle, nor have I farther occasion for your service; in a few minutes I shall be safe from Manfred's rage—only let me know to whom I am so much obliged."

"I will never quit you," said the stranger eagerly, "until I have placed you in safety—nor think me, Princess, more generous than I am; though you are my principal care——"

The stranger was interrupted by a sudden noise of voices that seemed approaching, and they soon distinguished these words—

"Talk not to me of necromancers; I tell you she must be in the castle; I will find her in spite of enchantment."

"Oh, heavens!" cried Isabella; "it is the voice of Manfred! Make haste, or we are ruined! and shut the trap-door after you."

Saying this, she descended the steps precipitately; and as the stranger hastened to follow her, he let the door slip out of his hands: it fell, and the spring closed over it. He tried in vain to open it, not having observed Isabella's method of touching the spring; nor had he many moments to make an essay. The noise of the falling door had been heard by Manfred, who, directed by the sound, hastened thither, attended by his servants with torches.

"It must be Isabella," cried Manfred, before he entered the vault. "She is escaping by the subterraneous passage, but she cannot have got far."

What was the astonishment of the Prince when, instead of Isabella, the light of the torches discovered to him the young peasant whom he thought confined under the fatal helmet!

"Traitor!" said Manfred; "how camest thou here? I thought thee in durance above in the court."

"I am no traitor," replied the young man boldly, "nor am I answerable for your thoughts."

"Presumptuous villain!" cried Manfred; "dost thou provoke my wrath? Tell me, how hast thou escaped from above? Thou hast corrupted thy guards, and their lives shall answer it."

"My poverty," said the peasant calmly, "will disculpate them: though the ministers of a tyrant's wrath, to thee they are faithful, and but too willing to execute the orders which you unjustly imposed upon them."

"Art thou so hardy as to dare my vengeance?" said the Prince; "but tortures shall force the truth from thee. Tell me; I will know thy accomplices."

"There was my accomplice!" said the youth, smiling, and pointing to the roof.

Manfred ordered the torches to be held up, and perceived that one of the cheeks of the enchanted casque had forced its way through the pavement of the court, as his servants had let it fall over the peasant, and had broken through into the vault, leaving a gap, through which the peasant had pressed himself some minutes before he was found by Isabella.

"Was that the way by which thou didst descend?" said Manfred.

"It was," said the youth.

"But what noise was that," said Manfred, "which I heard as I entered the cloister?"

"A door clapped," said the peasant; "I heard it as well as you."

"What door?" said Manfred hastily.

"I am not acquainted with your castle," said the peasant; "this is the first time I ever entered it, and this vault the only part of it within which I ever was."

"But I tell thee," said Manfred (wishing to find out if the youth had discovered the trap-door), "it was this way I heard the noise. My servants heard it too."

"My Lord," interrupted one of them officiously, "to be sure it was the trap-door, and he was going to make his escape."

"Peace, blockhead!" said the Prince angrily; "if he was going to escape, how should he come on this side? I will know from his own mouth what noise it was I heard. Tell me truly; thy life depends on thy veracity."

"My veracity is dearer to me than my life," said the peasant; "nor would I purchase the one by forfeiting the other."

"Indeed, young philosopher!" said Manfred contemptuously; "tell me, then, what was the noise I heard?"

"Ask me what I can answer," said he, "and put me to death instantly if I tell you a lie."

Manfred, growing impatient at the steady valour and indifference of the youth, cried—

"Well, then, thou man of truth, answer! Was it the fall of the trap-door that I heard?"

"It was," said the youth.

"It was!" said the Prince; "and how didst thou come to know there was a trap-door here?"

"I saw the plate of brass by a gleam of moonshine," replied he.

"But what told thee it was a lock?" said Manfred. "How didst thou discover the secret of opening it?"

"Providence, that delivered me from the helmet, was able to direct me to the spring of a lock," said he.

"Providence should have gone a little farther, and have placed thee out of the reach of my resentment," said Manfred. "When Providence had taught thee to open the lock, it abandoned thee for a fool, who did not know how to make use of its favours. Why didst thou not pursue the path pointed out for thy escape? Why didst thou shut the trap-door before thou hadst descended the steps?"

"I might ask you, my Lord," said the peasant, "how I, totally unacquainted with your castle, was to know that those steps led to any outlet? but I scorn to evade your questions. Wherever those steps lead to, perhaps I should have explored the way—I could not be in a worse situation than I was. But the truth is, I let the trap-door fall: your immediate arrival followed. I had given the alarm—what imported it to me whether I was seized a minute sooner or a minute later?"

"Thou art a resolute villain for thy years," said Manfred; "yet on reflection I suspect thou dost but trifle with me. Thou hast not yet told me how thou didst open the lock."

"That I will show you, my Lord," said the peasant; and, taking up a fragment of stone that had fallen from above, he laid himself on the trapdoor, and began to beat on the piece of brass that covered it, meaning to gain time for the escape of the Princess. This presence of mind, joined to the frankness of the youth, staggered Manfred. He even felt a disposition towards pardoning one who had been guilty of no crime. Manfred was not one of those savage tyrants who wanton in cruelty unprovoked. The circumstances of his fortune had given an asperity to his temper, which was naturally humane; and his virtues were always ready to operate, when his passions did not obscure his reason.

While the Prince was in this suspense, a confused noise of voices echoed through the distant vaults. As the sound approached, he distinguished the clamours of some of his domestics, whom he had dispersed through the castle in search of Isabella, calling out—

"Where is my Lord? where is the Prince?"

"Here I am," said Manfred, as they came nearer; "have you found the Princess?"

The first that arrived, replied, "Oh, my Lord! I am glad we have found you."

"Found me!" said Manfred; "have you found the Princess?"

"We thought we had, my Lord," said the fellow, looking terrified, "but——"

"But, what?" cried the Prince; "has she escaped?"

"Jaquez and I, my Lord——"

"Yes, I and Diego," interrupted the second, who came up in still greater consternation.

"Speak one of you at a time," said Manfred; "I ask you, where is the Princess?"

"We do not know," said they both together; "but we are frightened out of our wits."

"So I think, blockheads," said Manfred; "what is it has scared you thus?"

"Oh! my Lord," said Jaquez, "Diego has seen such a sight! your Highness would not believe our eyes."

"What new absurdity is this?" cried Manfred; "give me a direct answer, or, by Heaven——"

"Why, my Lord, if it please your Highness to hear me," said the poor fellow, "Diego and I——"

"Yes, I and Jaquez——" cried his comrade.

"Did not I forbid you to speak both at a time?" said the Prince: "you, Jaquez, answer; for the other fool seems more distracted than thou art; what is the matter?"

"My gracious Lord," said Jaquez, "if it please your Highness to hear me; Diego and I, according to your Highness's orders, went to search for the young Lady; but being comprehensive that we might meet the ghost of my young Lord, your Highness's son, God rest his soul, as he has not received Christian burial——"

"Sot!" cried Manfred in a rage; "is it only a ghost, then, that thou hast seen?"

"Oh! worse! worse! my Lord," cried Diego: "I had rather have seen ten whole ghosts."

"Grant me patience!" said Manfred; "these blockheads distract me. Out of my sight, Diego! and thou, Jaquez, tell me in one word, art thou sober? art thou raving? thou wast wont to have some sense: has the other sot frightened himself and thee too? Speak; what is it he fancies he has seen?"

"Why, my Lord," replied Jaquez, trembling, "I was going to tell your Highness, that since the calamitous misfortune of my young Lord, God rest his precious soul! not one of us your Highness's faithful servants—indeed we are, my Lord, though poor men—I say, not one of us has dared to set a foot about the castle, but two together: so Diego and I, thinking that my young Lady might be in the great gallery, went up there to look for her, and tell her your Highness wanted something to impart to her."

"O blundering fools!" cried Manfred; "and in the meantime she has made her escape, because you were afraid of goblins!—Why, thou knave! she left me in the gallery; I came from thence myself."

"For all that, she may be there still for aught I know," said Jaquez; "but the devil shall have me before I seek her there again—poor Diego! I do not believe he will ever recover it."

"Recover what?" said Manfred; "am I never to learn what it is has terrified these rascals?—but I lose my time; follow me, slave; I will see if she is in the gallery."

"For Heaven's sake, my dear, good Lord," cried Jaquez, "do not go to the gallery! Satan himself I believe is in the chamber next to the gallery."

Manfred, who hitherto had treated the terror of his servants as an idle panic, was struck at this new circumstance. He recollected the apparition of the portrait, and the sudden closing of the door at the end of the gallery. His voice faltered, and he asked with disorder—

"What is in the great chamber?"

"My Lord," said Jaquez, "when Diego and I came into the gallery, he went first, for he said he had more courage than I. So when we came into the gallery we found nobody. We looked under every bench and stool; and still we found nobody."

"Were all the pictures in their places?" said Manfred.

"Yes, my Lord," answered Jaquez; "but we did not think of looking behind them."

"Well, well!" said Manfred; "proceed."

"When we came to the door of the great chamber," continued Jaquez, "we found it shut."

"And could not you open it?" said Manfred.

"Oh! yes, my Lord; would to Heaven we had not!" replied he—"nay, it was not I neither; it was Diego: he was grown foolhardy, and would go on, though I advised him not—if ever I open a door that is shut again——"

"Trifle not," said Manfred, shuddering, "but tell me what you saw in the great chamber on opening the door."

"I! my Lord!" said Jaquez; "I saw nothing; I was behind Diego; but I heard the noise."

"Jaquez," said Manfred, in a solemn tone of voice; "tell me, I adjure thee by the souls of my ancestors, what was it thou sawest? what was it thou heardest?"

"It was Diego saw it, my Lord, it was not I," replied Jaquez; "I only heard the noise. Diego had no sooner opened the door, than he cried out, and ran back. I ran back too, and said, 'Is it the ghost?' 'The ghost! no, no,' said Diego, and his hair stood on end—'it is a giant, I believe; he is all clad in armour, for I saw his foot and part of his leg, and they are as large as the helmet below in the court.' As he said these words, my Lord, we heard a violent motion and the rattling of armour, as if the giant was rising, for Diego has told me since that he believes the giant was lying down, for the foot and leg were stretched at length on the floor. Before we could get to the end of the gallery, we heard the door of the great chamber clap behind us, but we did not dare turn back to see if the giant was following us—yet, now I think on it, we must have heard him if he had pursued us—but for Heaven's sake, good my Lord, send for the chaplain, and have the castle exorcised, for, for certain, it is enchanted."

"Ay, pray do, my Lord," cried all the servants at once, "or we must leave your Highness's service."

"Peace, dotards!" said Manfred, "and follow me; I will know what all this means."

"We! my Lord!" cried they with one voice; "we would not go up to the gallery for your Highness's revenue." The young peasant, who had stood silent, now spoke.

"Will your Highness," said he, "permit me to try this adventure? My life is of consequence to nobody; I fear no bad angel, and have offended no good one."

"Your behaviour is above your seeming," said Manfred, viewing him with surprise and admiration—"hereafter I will reward your bravery—but now," continued he with a sigh, "I am so circumstanced, that I dare trust no eyes but my own. However, I give you leave to accompany me."

Manfred, when he first followed Isabella from the gallery, had gone directly to the apartment of his wife, concluding the Princess had retired thither. Hippolita, who knew his step, rose with anxious fondness to meet her Lord, whom she had not seen since the death of their son. She would have flown in a transport mixed of joy and grief to his bosom, but he pushed her rudely off, and said—

"Where is Isabella?"

"Isabella! my Lord!" said the astonished Hippolita.

"Yes, Isabella," cried Manfred imperiously; "I want Isabella."

"My Lord," replied Matilda, who perceived how much his behaviour had shocked her mother, "she has not been with us since your Highness summoned her to your apartment."

"Tell me where she is," said the Prince; "I do not want to know where she has been."

"My good Lord," says Hippolita, "your daughter tells you the truth: Isabella left us by your command, and has not returned since;—but, my good Lord, compose yourself: retire to your rest: this dismal day has disordered you. Isabella shall wait your orders in the morning."

"What, then, you know where she is!" cried

Manfred. "Tell me directly, for I will not lose an instant—and you, woman," speaking to his wife, "order your chaplain to attend me forthwith."

"Isabella," said Hippolita calmly, "is retired, I suppose, to her chamber: she is not accustomed to watch at this late hour. Gracious my Lord," continued she, "let me know what has disturbed you. Has Isabella offended you?"

"Trouble me not with questions," said Manfred, "but tell me where she is."

"Matilda shall call her," said the Princess. "Sit down, my Lord, and resume your wonted fortitude."

"What, art thou jealous of Isabella?" replied he, "that you wish to be present at our interview!"

"Good heavens! my Lord," said Hippolita, "what is it your Highness means?"

"Thou wilt know ere many minutes are passed," said the cruel Prince. "Send your chaplain to me, and wait my pleasure here."

At these words he flung out of the room in search of Isabella, leaving the amazed ladies thunderstruck with his words and frantic deportment, and lost in vain conjectures on what he was meditating.

Manfred was now returning from the vault, attended by the peasant and a few of his servants whom he had obliged to accompany him. He ascended the staircase without stopping till he arrived at the gallery, at the door of which he met Hippolita and her chaplain. When Diego had been dismissed by Manfred, he had gone directly to the Princess's apartment with the alarm of what he had seen. That excellent Lady, who no more than Manfred doubted of the reality of the vision, yet affected to treat it as a delirium of the servant. Willing, however, to save her Lord from any additional shock, and prepared by a series of griefs not to tremble at any accession to it, she determined to make herself the first sacrifice, if fate had marked the present hour for their destruction. Dismissing the reluctant Matilda to her rest, who in vain sued for leave to accompany her mother, and attended only by her chaplain, Hippolita had visited the gallery and great chamber; and now with more serenity of soul than she had felt for many hours, she met her Lord, and assured him that the vision of the gigantic leg and foot was all a fable; and no doubt an impression made by fear, and the dark and dismal hour of the night, on the minds of his servants. She and the chaplain had examined the chamber, and found everything in the usual order.

Manfred, though persuaded, like his wife, that the vision had been no work of fancy, recovered a little from the tempest of mind into which so many strange events had thrown him. Ashamed, too, of his inhuman treatment of a Princess who returned every injury with new marks of tenderness and duty, he felt returning love forcing itself into his eyes; but not less ashamed of feeling remorse towards one against whom he was inwardly meditating a yet more bitter outrage, he curbed the yearnings of his heart, and did not dare to lean even towards pity. The next transition of his soul was to exquisite villainy.

Presuming on the unshaken submission of Hippolita, he flattered himself that she would not only acquiesce with patience to a divorce, but would obey, if it was his pleasure, in endeavouring to persuade Isabella to give him her hand—but ere he could indulge his horrid hope, he reflected that Isabella was not to be found. Coming to himself, he gave orders that every avenue to the castle should be strictly guarded, and charged his domestics on pain of their lives to suffer nobody to pass out. The young peasant, to whom he spoke favourably, he ordered to remain in a small chamber on the stairs, in which there was a pallet-bed, and the key of which he took away himself, telling the youth he would talk with him in the morning. Then dismissing his attendants, and bestowing a sullen kind of half-nod on Hippolita, he retired to his own chamber.

CHAPTER II.

Matilda, who by Hippolita's order had retired to her apartment, was ill-disposed to take any rest. The shocking fate of her brother had deeply affected her. She was surprised at not seeing Isabella; but the strange words which had fallen from her father, and his obscure menace to the Princess his wife, accompanied by the most furious behaviour, had filled her gentle mind with terror and alarm. She waited anxiously for the return of Bianca, a young damsel that attended her, whom she had sent to learn what was become of Isabella. Bianca soon appeared, and informed her mistress of what she had gathered from the servants, that Isabella was nowhere to be found. She related the adventure of the young peasant who had been discovered in the vault, though with many simple additions from the incoherent accounts of the domestics; and she dwelt principally on the gigantic leg and foot which had been seen in the gallery-chamber. This last circumstance had terrified Bianca so much, that she was rejoiced when Matilda told her that she would not go to rest, but would watch till the Princess should rise.

The young Princess wearied herself in conjectures on the flight of Isabella, and on the threats of Manfred to her mother. "But what business could he have so urgent with the chaplain?" said Matilda. "Does he intend to have my brother's body interred privately in the chapel?"

"Oh, Madam!" said Bianca, "now I guess. As you are become his heiress, he is impatient to have you married: he has always been raving for more sons; I warrant he is now impatient for grandsons. As sure as I live, Madam, I shall see you a bride at last.—Good madam, you won't cast off your faithful Bianca: you won't put Donna Rosara over me, now you are a great Princess."

"My poor Bianca," said Matilda, "how fast your thoughts amble! I a great Princess! What hast thou seen in Manfred's behaviour since my brother's death that bespeaks any increase of tenderness to me? No, Bianca; his heart was ever a stranger to me—but he is my father, and I must not complain. Nay, if Heaven shuts my father's heart against me, it overpays my little merit in the tenderness of my mother—O that dear mother! yes, Bianca, 'tis there I feel the rugged temper of Manfred. I can support his harshness to me with patience; but it wounds my soul when I am witness to his causeless severity towards her."

"Oh! Madam," said Bianca, "all men use their wives so, when they are weary of them."

"And yet you congratulated me but now," said Matilda, "when you fancied my father intended to dispose of me!"

"I would have you a great Lady," replied Bianca, "come what will. I do not wish to see you moped in a convent, as you would be if you had your will, and if my Lady, your mother, who knows that a bad husband is better than no husband at all, did not hinder you.—Bless me! what noise is that! St. Nicholas forgive me! I was but in jest."

"It is the wind," said Matilda, "whistling through the battlements in the tower above: you have heard it a thousand times."

"Nay," said Bianca, "there was no harm neither in what I said: it is no sin to talk of matrimony—and so, Madam, as I was saying, if my Lord Manfred should offer you a handsome young Prince for a bridegroom, you would drop him a curtsey, and tell him you would rather take the veil?"

"Thank Heaven! I am in no such danger,"

said Matilda: "you know how many proposals for me he has rejected——"

"And you thank him, like a dutiful daughter, do you, Madam? But come, Madam; suppose, to-morrow morning, he was to send for you to the great council chamber, and there you should find at his elbow a lovely young Prince, with large black eyes, a smooth white forehead, and manly curling locks like jet; in short, Madam, a young hero resembling the picture of the good Alfonso in the gallery, which you sit and gaze at for hours together——"

"Do not speak lightly of that picture," interrupted Matilda sighing; "I know the adoration with which I look at that picture is uncommon—but I am not in love with a coloured panel. The character of that virtuous Prince, the veneration with which my mother has inspired me for his memory, the orisons which, I know not why, she has enjoined me to pour forth at his tomb, all have concurred to persuade me that somehow or other my destiny is linked with something relating to him."

"Lord, Madam! how should that be?" said Bianca; "I have always heard that your family was in no way related to his: and I am sure I cannot conceive why my Lady, the Princess, sends you in a cold morning or a damp evening to pray at his tomb: he is no saint by the almanack. If you must pray, why does she not bid you address yourself to our great St. Nicholas? I am sure he is the saint I pray to for a husband."

"Perhaps my mind would be less affected," said Matilda, "if my mother would explain her reasons to me: but it is the mystery she observes, that inspires me with this—I know not what to call it. As she never acts from caprice, I am sure there is some fatal secret at bottom—nay, I know there is: in her agony of grief for my brother's death she dropped some words that intimated as much."

"Oh! dear Madam," cried Bianca, "what were they?"

"No," said Matilda, "if a parent lets fall a word, and wishes it recalled, it is not for a child to utter it."

"What! was she sorry for what she had said?" asked Bianca; "I am sure, Madam, you may trust me——"

"With my own little secrets when I have any, I may," said Matilda; "but never with my mother's: a child ought to have no ears or eyes, but as a parent directs."

"Well! to be sure, Madam, you were born to be a saint," said Bianca, "and there is no resisting one's vocation: you will end in a convent at last. But there is my Lady Isabella would not be so reserved to me: she will let me talk to her of young men: and when a handsome cavalier has come to the castle, she has owned to me that she wished your brother Conrad resembled him."

"Bianca," said the Princess, "I do not allow you to mention my friend disrespectfully. Isabella is of a cheerful disposition, but her soul is pure as virtue itself. She knows your idle babbling humour, and perhaps has now and then encouraged it, to divert melancholy, and enliven the solitude in which my father keeps us——"

"Blessed Mary!" said Bianca, starting, "there it is again! Dear Madam, do you hear nothing? this castle is certainly haunted!"

"Peace!" said Matilda, "and listen! I did think I heard a voice—but it must be fancy: your terrors, I suppose, have infected me."

"Indeed! indeed! Madam," said Bianca, half-weeping with agony, "I am sure I heard a voice."

"Does anybody lie in the chamber beneath?" said the Princess.

"Nobody has dared to lie there," answered Bianca, "since the great astrologer, that was your brother's tutor, drowned himself. For certain, Madam, his ghost and the young Prince's are now met in the chamber below—for Heaven's sake let us fly to your mother's apartment!"

"I charge you not to stir," said Matilda. "If they are spirits in pain, we may ease their sufferings by questioning them. They can mean no hurt to us, for we have not injured them—and if they should, shall we be more safe in one chamber than in another? Reach me my beads; we will say a prayer, and then speak to them."

"Oh! dear Lady, I would not speak to a ghost for the world!" cried Bianca. As she said those words they heard the casement of the little chamber below Matilda's open. They listened attentively, and in a few minutes thought they heard a person sing, but could not distinguish the words.

"This can be no evil spirit," said the Princess, in a low voice; "it is undoubtedly one of the family—open the window, and we shall know the voice."

"I dare not, indeed, Madam," said Bianca.

"Thou art a very fool," said Matilda, opening the window gently herself. The noise the Princess made was, however, heard by the person beneath, who stopped; and they concluded had heard the casement open.

"Is anybody below?" said the Princess; "if there is, speak."

"Yes," said an unknown voice.

"Who is it?" said Matilda.

"A stranger," replied the voice.

"What stranger?" said she; "and how didst thou come there at this unusual hour, when all the gates of the castle are locked?"

"I am not here willingly," answered the voice. "But pardon me, Lady, if I have disturbed your rest; I knew not that I was overheard. Sleep had forsaken me; I left a restless couch, and came to waste the irksome hours with gazing on the fair approach of morning, impatient to be dismissed from this castle."

"Thy words and accents," said Matilda, "are of melancholy cast; if thou art unhappy, I pity thee. If poverty afflicts thee, let me know it; I will mention thee to the Princess, whose beneficent soul ever melts for the distressed, and she will relieve thee."

"I am indeed unhappy," said the stranger; and I know not what wealth is. But I do not complain of the lot which Heaven has cast for me; I am young and healthy, and am not ashamed of owing my support to myself—yet think me not proud, or that I disdain your generous offers. I will remember you in my orisons, and will pray for blessings on your gracious self and your noble mistress—if I sigh, Lady, it is for others, not for myself."

"Now I have it, Madam," said Bianca, whispering the Princess; "this is certainly the young peasant; and, by my conscience, he is in love—Well! this is a charming adventure!—do, Madam, let us sift him. He does not know you, but takes you for one of my Lady Hippolita's women."

"Art thou not ashamed, Bianca!" said the Princess. "What right have we to pry into the secrets of this young man's heart? He seems virtuous and frank, and tells us he is unhappy. Are those circumstances that authorise us to make a property of him? How are we entitled to his confidence?"

"Lord, Madam! how little you know of love!" replied Bianca; "why, lovers have no pleasure equal to talking of their mistress."

"And would you have *me* become a peasant's confidante?" said the Princess.

"Well, then, let me talk to him," said Bianca; "though I have the honour of being your Highness's maid of honour, I was not always so great. Besides, if love levels ranks, it raises them too; I have a respect for any young man in love."

"Peace, simpleton!" said the Princess. "Though he said he was unhappy, it does not follow that he must be in love. Think of all that has happened to-day, and tell me if there are no misfortunes but what love causes.—Stranger," resumed the Princess, "if thy misfortunes have not been occasioned by thy own fault, and are within the compass of the Princess Hippolita's power to redress, I will take upon me to answer that she will be thy protectress. When thou art dismissed from this castle, repair to holy father Jerome, at the convent adjoining to the church of St. Nicholas, and make thy story known to him, as far as thou thinkest meet. He will not fail to inform the Princess, who is the mother of all that want her assistance. Farewell; it is not seemly for me to hold farther converse with a man at this unwonted hour."

'May the saints guard thee, gracious Lady!" replied the peasant; "but oh! if a poor and worthless stranger might presume to beg a minute's audience farther; am I so happy? the casement is not shut; might I venture to ask——"

"Speak quickly," said Matilda; "the morning dawns apace: should the labourers come into the fields and perceive us—What wouldst thou ask?"

"I know not how, I know not if I dare," said the young stranger, faltering; "yet the humanity with which you have spoken to me emboldens—Lady! dare I trust you?"

"Heavens!" said Matilda, "what dost thou mean? With what wouldst thou trust me? Speak boldly, if thy secret is fit to be entrusted to a virtuous breast."

"I would ask," said the peasant, recollecting himself, "whether what I have heard from the domestics is true, that the Princess is missing from the castle?"

"What imports it to thee to know?" replied Matilda. "Thy first words bespoke a prudent and becoming gravity. Dost thou come hither to pry into the secrets of Manfred? Adieu. I have been mistaken in thee." Saying these words she shut the casement hastily, without giving the young man time to reply.

"I had acted more wisely," said the Princess to Bianca, with some sharpness, "if I had let thee converse with this peasant; his inquisitiveness seems of a piece with thy own."

"It is not fit for me to argue with your Highness," replied Bianca; "but perhaps the questions I should have put to him would have been more to the purpose than those you have been pleased to ask him."

"Oh! no doubt," said Matilda; "you are a very discreet personage! May I know what *you* would have asked him?"

"A bystander often sees more of the game than those that play," answered Bianca. "Does your Highness think, Madam, that this question about my Lady Isabella was the result of mere curiosity? No, no, Madam, there is more in it than you great folks are aware of. Lopez told me that all the servants believe this young fellow contrived my Lady Isabella's escape; now, pray, Madam, observe—you and I both know that my Lady Isabella never much fancied the Prince your brother. Well! he is killed just in a critical minute—I accuse nobody. A helmet falls from the moon—so, my Lord, your father says; but Lopez and all the servants say that this young spark is a magician, and stole it from Alfonso's tomb——"

"Have done with this rhapsody of impertinence," said Matilda.

"Nay, Madam, as you please," cried Bianca; "yet it is very particular though, that my Lady Isabella should be missing the very same day, and that this young sorcerer should be found at the mouth of the trap-door. I accuse nobody; but if my young Lord came honestly by his death——"

"Dare not on thy duty," said Matilda, "to breathe a suspicion on the purity of my dear Isabella's fame."

"Purity, or not purity," said Bianca, "gone she is—a stranger is found that nobody knows; you question him yourself; he tells you he is in love, or unhappy, it is the same thing—nay, he owned he was unhappy about others; and is anybody unhappy about another, unless they are in love with them? and at the very next word, he asks innocently, pour soul! if my Lady Isabella is missing."

"To be sure," said Matilda, "thy observations are not totally without foundation—Isabella's flight amazes me. The curiosity of the stranger is very particular; yet Isabella never concealed a thought from me."

"So she told you," said Bianca, "to fish out your secrets; but who knows, Madam, but this stranger may be some Prince in disguise? Do, Madam, let me open the window, and ask him a few questions."

"No," replied Matilda, "I will ask him myself, if he knows aught of Isabella; he is not worthy I should converse farther with him." She was going to open the casement, when they heard the bell ring at the postern-gate of the castle, which is on the right hand of the tower, where Matilda lay. This prevented the Princess from renewing the conversation with the stranger.

After continuing silent for some time, "I am persuaded," said she to Bianca, "that whatever be the cause of Isabella's flight it had no unworthy motive. If this stranger was accessory to it, she must be satisfied with his fidelity and worth. I observed, did not you, Bianca? that his words were tinctured with an uncommon infusion of piety. It was no ruffian's speech; his phrases were becoming a man of gentle birth."

"I told you, Madam," said Bianca, "that I was sure he was some Prince in disguise."

"Yet," said Matilda, "if he was privy to her escape, how will you account for his not accompanying her in her flight? why expose himself unnecessarily and rashly to my father's resentment?"

"As for that, Madam," replied she, "if he could get from under the helmet, he will find ways of eluding your father's anger. I do not doubt but he has some talisman or other about him."

"You resolve everything into magic," said Matilda; "but a man who has any intercourse with infernal spirits, does not dare to make use of those tremendous and holy words which he uttered. Didst thou not observe with what fervour he vowed to remember *me* to heaven in his prayers? Yes; Isabella was undoubtedly convinced of his piety."

"Commend me to the piety of a young fellow and a damsel that consult to elope!" said Bianca. "No, no, Madam, my Lady Isabella is of another guess mould than you take her for. She used indeed to sigh and lift up her eyes in your company, because she knows you are a saint; but when your back was turned—— "

"You wrong her," said Matilda; "Isabella is no hypocrite; she has a due sense of devotion, but never affected a call she has not. On the contrary, she always combated my inclination for the cloister; and though I own the mystery she has made to me of her flight confounds me; though it seems inconsistent with the friendship between us; I cannot forget the disinterested warmth with which she always opposed my taking the veil. She wished to see me married, though my dower would have been a loss to her and my brother's children. For her sake I will believe well of this young peasant."

"Then you do think there is some liking between them," said Bianca. While she was speaking, a servant came hastily into the chamber and told the Princess that the Lady Isabella was found.

"Where?" said Matilda.

"She has taken sanctuary in St. Nicholas's church," replied the servant; "Father Jerome has brought the news himself; he is below with his Highness."

"Where is my mother?" said Matilda.

"She is in her own chamber, Madam, and has asked for you."

Manfred had risen at the first dawn of light, and gone to Hippolita's apartment, to inquire if she knew aught of Isabella. While he was questioning her, word was brought that Jerome demanded to speak with him. Manfred, little suspecting the cause of the Friar's arrival, and knowing he was employed by Hippolita in her charities, ordered him to be admitted, intending to leave them together, while he pursued his search after Isabella.

"Is your business with me or the Princess?" said Manfred.

"With both," replied the holy man. "The Lady Isabella—— "

"What of her?" interrupted Manfred, eagerly.

"Is at St. Nicholas's altar," replied Jerome.

"That is no business of Hippolita," said Manfred with confusion; "let us retire to my chamber, Father, and inform me how she came thither."

"No, my Lord," replied the good man, with an air of firmness and authority, that daunted even the resolute Manfred, who could not help revering the saint-like virtues of Jerome; "my commission is to both, and with your Highness's good-liking, in the presence of both I shall deliver it; but first, my Lord, I must interrogate the Princess, whether she is acquainted with the cause of the Lady Isabella's retirement from your castle."

"No, on my soul," said Hippolita; "does Isabella charge me with being privy to it?"

"Father," interrupted Manfred, "I pay due reverence to your holy profession; but I am sovereign here, and will allow no meddling priest to interfere in the affairs of my domestic. If you have aught to say attend me to my chamber; I do not use to let my wife be acquainted with the secret affairs of my state; they are not within a woman's province."

"My Lord," said the holy man, "I am no intruder into the secrets of families. My office is to promote peace, to heal divisions, to preach repentance, and teach mankind to curb their headstrong passions. I forgive your Highness's uncharitable apostrophe; I know my duty, and am the minister of a mightier prince than Manfred. Hearken to him who speaks through my organs."

Manfred trembled with rage and shame. Hippolita's countenance declared her astonishment and impatience to know where this would end. Her silence more strongly spoke her observance of Manfred.

"The Lady Isabella," resumed Jerome, "commends herself to both your Highnesses; she thanks both for the kindness with which she has been treated in your castle: she deplores the loss of your son, and her own misfortune in not becoming the daughter of such wise and noble

Princes, whom she shall always respect as Parents; she prays for uninterrupted union and felicity between you" [Manfred's colour changed]: "but as it is no longer possible for her to be allied to you, she entreats your consent to remain in sanctuary, till she can learn news of her father, or, by the certainty of his death, be at liberty, with the approbation of her guardians, to dispose of herself in suitable marriage."

"I shall give no such consent," said the Prince, "but insist on her return to the castle without delay: I am answerable for her person to her guardians, and will not brook her being in any hands but my own."

"Your Highness will recollect whether that can any longer be proper," replied the Friar.

"I want no monitor," said Manfred, colouring; "Isabella's conduct leaves room for strange suspicions—and that young villain, who was at least the accomplice of her flight, if not the cause of it——"

"The cause!" interrupted Jerome; "was a *young* man the cause?"

"This is not to be borne!" cried Manfred. "Am I to be bearded in my own palace by an insolent Monk? Thou art privy, I guess, to their amours."

"I would pray to heaven to clear up your uncharitable surmises," said Jerome, "if your Highness were not satisfied in your conscience how unjustly you accuse me. I do pray to heaven to pardon that uncharitableness: and I implore your Highness to leave the Princess at peace in that holy place, where she is not liable to be disturbed by such vain and worldly fantasies as discourses of love from any man."

"Cant not to me," said Manfred, "but return and bring the Princess to her duty."

"It is my duty to prevent her return hither," said Jerome. "She is where orphans and virgins are safest from the snares and wiles of this world; and nothing but a parent's authority shall take her thence."

"I am her parent," cried Manfred, "and demand her."

"She wished to have you for her parent," said the Friar; "but Heaven that forbad that connection has for ever dissolved all ties betwixt you: and I announce to your Highness——"

"Stop! audacious man," said Manfred, "and dread my displeasure."

"Holy father," said Hippolita, "it is your office to be no respecter of persons: you must speak as your duty prescribes: but it is my duty to hear nothing that it pleases not my Lord I should hear. Attend the Prince to his chamber. I will retire to my oratory, and pray to the blessed Virgin to inspire you with her holy counsels, and to restore the heart of my gracious Lord to its wonted peace and gentleness."

"Excellent woman!" said the Friar. "My Lord, I attend your pleasure."

Manfred, accompanied by the Friar, passed to his own apartment, where shutting the door, "I perceive, Father," said he, "that Isabella has acquainted you with my purpose. Now hear my resolve, and obey. Reasons of state, most urgent reasons, my own and the safety of my people, demand that I should have a son. It is in vain to expect an heir from Hippolita. I have made choice of Isabella. You must bring her back; and you must do more. I know the influence you have with Hippolita: her conscience is in your hands. She is, I allow, a faultless woman: her soul is set on heaven, and scorns the little grandeur of this world: you can withdraw her from it entirely. Persuade her to consent to the dissolution of our marriage, and to retire into a monastery—she shall endow one if she will; and she shall have the means of being as liberal to your order as she or you can wish. Thus you will divert the calamities that are hanging over our heads, and have the merit of saving the principality of Otranto from destruction. You are a prudent man, and though the warmth of my temper betrayed me into some unbecoming expressions, I honour your virtue, and wish to be indebted to you for the repose of my life and the preservation of my family."

"The will of heaven be done!" said the Friar. "I am but its worthless instrument. It makes use of my tongue to tell thee, Prince, of thy unwarrantable designs. The injuries of the virtuous Hippolita have mounted to the throne of pity. By me thou art reprimanded for thy adulterous intention of repudiating her: by me thou art warned not to pursue the incestuous design on thy contracted daughter. Heaven that delivered her from thy fury, when the judgments so recently fallen on thy house ought to have inspired thee with other thoughts, will continue to watch over her. Even I, a poor and despised Friar, am able to protect her from thy violence—I, sinner as I am, and uncharitably reviled by your Highness as an accomplice of I know not what amours, scorn the allurements with which it has pleased thee to tempt mine honesty. I love my order; I honour devout souls; I respect the piety of thy Princess—but I will not betray the confidence she reposes in me, nor serve even the cause of religion by foul and sinful compliances—but forsooth! the welfare of the state depends on your Highness having a son! Heaven mocks the short-sighted views of man. But yester-morn, whose house was so great, so flourishing as Manfred's?—where is young Conrad now?—My Lord, I respect your tears—but I mean not to check them—let them flow, Prince! They will weigh more with heaven toward the welfare of thy subjects, than a marriage, which, founded on lust or policy, could never prosper. The sceptre, which passed from the race of Alfonso to thine, cannot be preserved by a match which the church will never allow. If it is the will of the Most High that Manfred's name must perish, resign yourself, my Lord, to its decrees; and thus deserve a crown that can never pass away. Come, my Lord; I like this sorrow—let us return to the Princess: she is not apprised of your cruel intentions; nor did I mean more than to alarm you. You saw with what gentle patience, with what efforts of love, she heard, she rejected hearing, the extent of your guilt. I know she longs to fold you in her arms, and assure you of her unalterable affection."

"Father," said the Prince, "you mistake my compunction: true, I honour Hippolita's virtues; I think her a Saint; and wish it were for my soul's health to tie faster the knot that has united us—but alas! Father, you know not the bitterest of my pangs! it is some time that I have had scruples on the legality of our union: Hippolita is related to me in the fourth degree—it is true, we had a dispensation: but I have been informed that she had also been contracted to another. This it is that sits heavy at my heart: to this state of unlawful wedlock I impute the visitation that has fallen on me in the death of Conrad!—ease my conscience of this burden: dissolve our marriage, and accomplish the work of godliness which your divine exhortations have commenced in my soul."

How cutting was the anguish which the good man felt, when he perceived this turn in the wily Prince! He trembled for Hippolita, whose ruin he saw was determined; and he feared if Manfred had no hope of recovering Isabella, that his impatience for a son would direct him to some other object, who might not be equally proof against the temptation of Manfred's rank. For some time the holy man remained absorbed in thought. At length, conceiving some hopes from delay, he thought the wisest conduct would be to prevent the Prince from despairing of recovering Isabella. Her the Friar knew he could dispose, from her affection to Hippolita, and from the aversion she had expressed to him for Manfred's addresses, to second his views, till the censures of the church could be fulminated against a divorce. With this intention, as if struck with the Prince's scruples, he at length said:

"My Lord, I have been pondering on what your Highness has said; and if in truth it is delicacy of conscience that is the real motive of your repugnance to your virtuous Lady, far be it from me to endeavour to harden your heart. The church is an indulgent mother: unfold your griefs to her: she alone can administer comfort to your soul, either by satisfying your conscience, or upon examination of your scruples, by setting you at liberty, and indulging you in the lawful means of continuing your lineage. In the latter case, if the Lady Isabella can be brought to consent——"

Manfred, who concluded that he had either over-reached the good man, or that his first warmth had been but a tribute paid to appearance, was overjoyed at this sudden turn, and repeated the most magnificent promises, if he should succeed by the Friar's mediation. The well-meaning priest suffered him to deceive himself, fully determined to traverse his views, instead of seconding them.

"Since we now understand one another," resumed the Prince, "I expect, Father, that you satisfy me in one point. Who is the youth that I found in the vault? He must have been privy to Isabella's flight: tell me truly, is he her lover? or is he an agent for another's passion? I have often suspected Isabella's indifference to my son: a thousand circumstances crowd on my mind that confirm that suspicion. She herself was so conscious of it, that while I discoursed her in the gallery, she outran my suspicions, and endeavoured to justify herself from coolness to Conrad."

The Friar, who knew nothing of the youth, but what he had learnt occasionally from the Princess, ignorant what was become of him, and not sufficiently reflecting on the impetuosity of Manfred's temper, conceived that it might not be amiss to sow the seeds of jealousy in his mind: they might be turned to some use hereafter, either by prejudicing the Prince against Isabella, if he persisted in that union; or by diverting his attention to a wrong scent, and employing his thoughts on a visionary intrigue, prevent his engaging in any new pursuit. With this unhappy policy, he answered in a manner to confirm Manfred in the belief of some connection between Isabella and the youth. The Prince, whose passions wanted little fuel to throw them into a blaze, fell into a rage at the idea of what the Friar suggested.

"I will fathom to the bottom of this intrigue," cried he; and quitting Jerome abruptly, with a command to remain there till his return, he hastened to the great hall of the castle, and ordered the peasant to be brought before him.

"Thou hardened young impostor!" said the Prince, as soon as he saw the youth; "what becomes of thy boasted veracity now? it was Providence, was it, and the light of the moon, that discovered the lock of the trap-door to thee? Tell me, audacious boy, who thou art, and how long thou hast been acquainted with the Princess—and take care to answer with less equivocation than thou didst last night, or tortures shall wring the truth from thee."

The young man, perceiving that his share in the flight of the Princess was discovered, and concluding that anything he should say could no longer be of any service or detriment to her, replied—

"I am no impostor, my Lord, nor have I deserved opprobrious language. I answered to every question your Highness put to me last night with the same veracity that I shall speak now: and that will not be from fear of your tortures, but because my soul abhors a falsehood. Please to repeat your questions, my Lord; I am ready to give you all the satisfaction in my power."

"You know my questions," replied the Prince, "and only want time to prepare an evasion. Speak directly; who art thou? and how long hast thou been known to the Princess?"

"I am a labourer at the next village," said the peasant; "my name is Theodore. The Princess found me in the vault last night: before that hour I never was in her presence."

"I may believe as much or as little as I please of this," said Manfred; "but I will hear thy own story before I examine into the truth of it. Tell me, what reason did the Princess give thee for making her escape? thy life depends on thy answer."

"She told me," replied Theodore, "that she was on the brink of destruction, and that if she could not escape from the castle, she was in danger in a few moments of being made miserable for ever."

"And on this slight foundation, on a silly girl's report," said Manfred, "thou didst hazard my displeasure?"

"I fear no man's displeasure," said Theodore, "when a woman in distress puts herself under my protection."

During this examination, Matilda was going to the apartment of Hippolita. At the upper end of the hall, where Manfred sat, was a boarded gallery with latticed windows, through which Matilda and Bianca were to pass. Hearing her father's voice, and seeing the servants assembled round him, she stopped to learn the occasion. The prisoner soon drew her attention: the steady and composed manner in which he answered, and the gallantry of his last reply, which were the first words she heard distinctly, interested her in his favour. His person was noble, handsome, and commanding, even in that situation: but his countenance soon engrossed her whole care.

"Heavens! Bianca," said the Princess, softly, "do I dream? or is not that youth the exact resemblance of Alfonso's picture in the gallery?"

She could say no more, for her father's voice grew louder at every word.

"This bravado," said he, "surpasses all thy former insolence. Thou shalt experience the wrath with which thou darest to trifle. Seize him," continued Manfred, "and bind him—the first news the Princess hears of her champion shall be, that he has lost his head for her sake."

"The injustice of which thou art guilty towards me," said Theodore, "convinces me that I have done a good deed in delivering the Princess from thy tyranny. May she be happy, whatever becomes of me!"

"This is a lover!" cried Manfred in a rage: "a peasant within sight of death is not animated by such sentiments. Tell me, tell me, rash boy, who thou art, or the rack shall force thy secret from thee."

"Thou hast threatened me with death already," said the youth, "for the truth I have told thee: if that is all the encouragement I am to expect for sincerity, I am not tempted to indulge thy vain curiosity farther."

"Then thou wilt not speak?" said Manfred.

"I will not," replied he.

"Bear him away into the courtyard," said Manfred; "I will see his head this instant severed from his body."

Matilda fainted at hearing those words. Bianca shrieked, and cried—

"Help! help! the Princess is dead!" Manfred started at this ejaculation, and demanded what was the matter! The young peasant, who heard it too, was struck with horror, and asked eagerly the same question; but Manfred ordered him to be hurried into the court, and kept there for execution, till he had informed himself of the cause of Bianca's shrieks. When he learned the meaning, he treated it as a womanish panic, and ordering Matilda to be carried to her apartment, he rushed into the court, and calling for one of his guards, bad Theodore kneel down, and prepare to receive the fatal blow.

The undaunted youth received the bitter sentence with a resignation that touched every heart but Manfred's. He wished earnestly to know the meaning of the words he had heard relating to the Princess; but fearing to exasperate the tyrant more against her, he desisted. The only boon he deigned to ask was, that he might be permitted to have a confessor, and make his peace with heaven. Manfred, who hoped by the confessor's means to come at the youth's history, readily granted his request; and being convinced that Father Jerome was now in his interest, he ordered him to be called and shrive the prisoner. The holy man, who had little foreseen the catastrophe that his imprudence occasioned, fell on his knees to the Prince, and adjured him in the most solemn manner not to shed innocent blood. He accused himself in the bitterest terms for his indiscretion, endeavoured to disculpate the youth, and left no method untried to soften the tyrant's rage. Manfred, more incensed than appeased by Jerome's intercession, whose retraction now made him suspect he had been imposed upon by both, commanded the Friar to do his duty, telling him he would not allow the prisoner many minutes for confession.

"Nor do I ask many, my Lord," said the unhappy young man. "My sins, thank heaven, have not been numerous; nor exceed what might be expected at my years. Dry your tears, good Father, and let us despatch. This is a bad world; nor have I had cause to leave it with regret."

"Oh! wretched youth!" said Jerome; "how canst thou bear the sight of me with patience? I am thy murderer! it is I have brought this dismal hour upon thee!"

"I forgive thee from my soul," said the youth, "as I hope heaven will pardon me. Hear my confession, Father; and give me thy blessing."

"How can I prepare thee for thy passage as I ought?" said Jerome. "Thou canst not be saved without pardoning thy foes—and canst thou forgive that impious man there?"

"I can," said Theodore; "I do."

"And does not this touch thee, cruel Prince?" said the Friar.

"I sent for thee to confess him," said Manfred, sternly; "not to plead for him. Thou didst first incense me against him—his blood be upon thy head!"

"It will! it will!" said the good man, in an agony of sorrow. "Thou and I must never hope to go where this blessed youth is going!"

"Despatch!" said Manfred; "I am no more to be moved by the whining of priests than by the shrieks of women."

"What!" said the youth; "is it possible that my fate could have occasioned what I heard! Is the Princess then again in thy power?"

"Thou dost but remember me of my wrath," said Manfred. "Prepare thee, for this moment is thy last."

The youth, who felt his indignation rise, and who was touched with the sorrow which he saw he had infused into all the spectators, as well as into the Friar, suppressed his emotions, and putting off his doublet, and unbuttoning his collar, knelt down to his prayers. As he stooped, his shirt slipped down below his shoulder, and discovered the mark of a bloody arrow.

"Gracious heaven!" cried the holy man, starting; "what do I see? It is my child! my Theodore!"

The passions that ensued must be conceived; they cannot be painted. The tears of the assistants were suspended by wonder, rather than stopped by joy. They seemed to inquire in the eyes of their Lord what they ought to feel. Surprise, doubt, tenderness, respect, succeeded each other in the countenance of the youth. He received with modest submission the effusion of the old man's tears and embraces. Yet afraid of giving a loose to hope, and suspecting from what had passed the inflexibility of Manfred's temper, he cast a glance towards the Prince, as if to say, canst thou be unmoved at such a scene as this?

Manfred's heart was capable of being touched. He forgot his anger in his astonishment; yet his pride forbad his owning himself affected. He even doubted whether this discovery was not a contrivance of the Friar to save the youth.

"What may this mean?" said he. "How can he be thy son? Is it consistent with thy profession or reputed sanctity to avow a peasant's offspring for the fruit of thy irregular amours!"

"Oh, God!" said the holy man, "dost thou question his being mine? Could I feel the anguish I do if I were not his father? Spare him! good Prince! spare him! and revile me as thou pleasest."

"Spare him! spare him!" cried the attendants, "for this good man's sake!"

"Peace!" said Manfred, sternly. "I must know more ere I am disposed to pardon. A Saint's bastard may be no saint himself."

"Injurious Lord!" said Theodore, "add not insult to cruelty. If I am this venerable man's son, though no Prince, as thou art, know the blood that flows in my veins——"

"Yes," said the Friar, interrupting him, "his blood is noble; nor is he that abject thing, my Lord, you speak him. He is my lawful son, and Sicily can boast of few houses more ancient than that of Falconara. But alas! my Lord, what is blood! what is nobility! We are all reptiles, miserable, sinful creatures. It is piety alone that can distinguish us from the dust whence we sprung, and whither we must return."

"Truce to your sermon," said Manfred: "you forget you are no longer Friar Jerome, but the Count of Falconara. Let me know your history; you will have time to moralise hereafter, if you should not happen to obtain the grace of that sturdy criminal there."

"Mother of God!" said the Friar, "is it possible my Lord can refuse a father the life of his only, his long-lost, child! Trample me, my Lord, scorn, afflict me, accept my life for his, but spare my son!"

"Thou canst feel, then," said Manfred, "what it is to lose an only son! A little hour ago thou didst preach up resignation to me: *my* house, if fate so pleased, must perish—but the Count of Falconara——"

"Alas! my Lord," said Jerome, "I confess I have offended; but aggravate not an old man's sufferings! I boast not of my family, nor think of such vanities—it is nature that pleads for this boy; it is the memory of the dear woman that bore him. Is she, Theodore, is she dead?"

"Her soul has long been with the blessed," said Theodore.

"Oh! how?" cried Jerome, "tell me—no—she is happy! Thou art all my care now!—Most dread Lord! will you—will you grant me my poor boy's life?"

"Return to thy convent," answered Manfred; "conduct the Princess hither; obey me in what else thou knowest; and I promise thee the life of thy son."

"Oh! my Lord," said Jerome, "is my honesty the price I must pay for this dear youth's safety?"

"For me!" cried Theodore. "Let me die a thousand deaths, rather than stain thy conscience. What is it the tyrant would exact of thee? Is the Princess still safe from his power? Protect her, thou venerable old man; and let all the weight of his wrath fall on me."

Jerome endeavoured to check the impetuosity of the youth; and ere Manfred could reply, the trampling of horses was heard, and a brazen trumpet, which hung without the gate of the castle, was suddenly sounded. At the same instant the sable plumes on the enchanted helmet, which still remained at the other end of the court, were tempestuously agitated, and nodded thrice, as if bowed by some invisible wearer.

CHAPTER III.

MANFRED'S heart misgave him when he beheld the plumage on the miraculous casque shaken in concert with the sounding of the brazen trumpet.

"Father!" said he to Jerome, whom he now ceased to treat as Count of Falconara, "what mean these portents? If I have offended——" the plumes were shaken with greater violence than before.

"Unhappy Prince that I am," cried Manfred. "Holy Father! will you not assist me with your prayers?"

"My Lord," replied Jerome, "heaven is no doubt displeased with your mockery of its servants. Submit yourself to the church; and cease to persecute her ministers. Dismiss this innocent youth; and learn to respect the holy character I wear. Heaven will not be trifled with: you see——" the trumpet sounded again.

"I acknowledge I have been too hasty," said Manfred. "Father, do you go to the wicket, and demand who is at the gate."

"Do you grant me the life of Theodore?" replied the Friar.

"I do," said Manfred; "but inquire who is without!"

Jerome, falling on the neck of his son, discharged a flood of tears, that spoke the fulness of his soul.

"You promised to go to the gate," said Manfred.

"I thought," replied the Friar, "your Highness would excuse my thanking you first in this tribute of my heart."

"Go, dearest Sir," said Theodore; "obey the Prince. I do not deserve that you should delay his satisfaction for me."

Jerome, inquiring who was without, was answered, "A Herald."

"From whom?" said he.

"From the Knight of the Gigantic Sabre," said the Herald; "and I must speak with the usurper of Otranto."

Jerome returned to the Prince, and did not fail to repeat the message in the very words it had been uttered. The first sounds struck Manfred with terror; but when he heard himself styled usurper, his rage rekindled, and all his courage revived.

"Usurper!—insolent villain!" cried he; "who dares to question my title? Retire, Father; this is no business for Monks: I will meet this presumptuous man myself. Go to your convent and prepare the Princess's return. Your son shall be a hostage for your fidelity: his life depends on your obedience."

"Good heaven! my Lord," cried Jerome, "your Highness did but this instant freely pardon my child—have you so soon forgot the interposition of heaven?"

"Heaven," replied Manfred, "does not send Heralds to question the title of a lawful Prince. I doubt whether it even notifies its will through Friars—but that is your affair, not mine. At present you know my pleasure; and it is not a saucy Herald that shall save your son, if you do not return with the Princess."

It was in vain for the holy man to reply. Manfred commanded him to be conducted to the postern-gate, and shut out from the castle. And he ordered some of his attendants to carry Theodore to the top of the black tower, and guard him strictly; scarce permitting the father and son to exchange a hasty embrace at parting. He then withdrew to the hall, and seating himself in princely state, ordered the Herald to be admitted to his presence.

"Well! thou insolent!" said the Prince, "what wouldst thou with me?"

"I come," replied he, "to thee, Manfred, usurper of the principality of Otranto, from the renowned and invincible Knight, the Knight of the Gigantic Sabre: in the name of his Lord, Frederic, Marquis of Vicenza, he demands the Lady Isabella, daughter of that Prince, whom thou hast basely and traitorously got into thy power, by bribing her false guardians during his absence; and he requires thee to resign the principality of Otranto, which thou hast usurped from the said Lord Frederic, the nearest of blood to the last rightful Lord, Alfonso the Good. If thou dost not instantly comply with these just demands, he defies thee to single combat to the last extremity." And so saying, the Herald cast down his warder.

"And where is this braggart who sends thee?" said Manfred.

"At the distance of a league," said the Herald: "he comes to make good his Lord's claim against thee, as he is a true knight, and thou an usurper and ravisher."

Injurious as this challenge was, Manfred reflected that it was not his interest to provoke the Marquis. He knew how well founded the claim of Frederic was; nor was this the first time he had heard of it. Frederic's ancestors had assumed the style of Princes of Otranto, from the death of Alfonso the Good without issue; but Manfred, his father, and grandfather, had been too powerful for the house of Vicenza to dispossess them. Frederic, a martial and amorous young Prince, had married a beautiful young lady, of whom he was enamoured, and who had died in childbed of Isabella. Her death affected him so much that he had taken the cross and gone to the Holy Land, where he was wounded in an engagement against the infidels, made prisoner, and reported to be dead. When the news reached Manfred's ears, he bribed the guardians of the Lady Isabella to deliver her up to him as a bride for his son Conrad, by which alliance he had proposed to unite the claims of the two houses. This motive, on Conrad's death, had co-operated to make him so suddenly resolve on espousing her himself; and the same reflection determined him now to endeavour at obtaining the consent of Frederic to this marriage. A like policy inspired him with the thought of inviting Frederic's champion into the castle, lest he should be informed of Isabella's flight, which he strictly enjoined his domestics not to disclose to any of the Knight's retinue.

"Herald," said Manfred, as soon as he had digested these reflections, "return to thy master, and tell him, ere we liquidate our differences by the sword, Manfred would hold some converse with him. Bid him welcome to my castle, where by my faith, as I am a true Knight, he shall have courteous reception, and full security for himself and followers. If we cannot adjust our quarrel by amicable means, I swear he shall depart in safety, and shall have full satisfaction according to the laws of arms: So help me God and His holy Trinity!"

The Herald made three obeisances and retired.

During this interview Jerome's mind was agitated by a thousand contrary passions. He trembled for the life of his son, and his first thought was to persuade Isabella to return to the castle. Yet he was scarce less alarmed at the thought of her union with Manfred. He dreaded Hippolita's unbounded submission to the will of her Lord; and though he did not doubt but he could alarm her piety not to consent to a divorce, if he could get access to her; yet should Manfred discover that the obstruction came from him, it might be equally fatal to Theodore. He was impatient to know whence came the Herald, who with so little management had questioned the title of Manfred: yet he did not dare absent himself from the convent, lest Isabella should leave it, and her flight be imputed to him. He returned disconsolately to the monastery, uncertain on what conduct to resolve. A Monk, who met him in the porch and observed his melancholy air, said—

"Alas! brother, is it then true that we have lost our excellent Princess Hippolita?"

The holy man started, and cried, "What meanest thou, brother? I come this instant from the castle, and left her in perfect health."

"Martelli," replied the other Friar, "passed by the convent but a quarter of an hour ago on his way from the castle, and reported that her Highness was dead. All our brethren are gone to the chapel to pray for her happy transit to a better life, and willed me to wait thy arrival. They know thy holy attachment to that good Lady, and are anxious for the affliction it will cause in thee—indeed we have all reason to weep; she was a mother to our house. But this life is but a pilgrimage; we must not murmur — we shall all follow her! May our end be like hers!"

"Good brother, thou dreamest," said Jerome. "I tell thee I come from the castle, and left the Princess well. Where is the Lady Isabella?"

"Poor Gentlewoman!" replied the Friar; "I told her the sad news, and offered her spiritual comfort. I reminded her of the transitory condition of mortality, and advised her to take the veil: I quoted the example of the holy Princess Sanchia of Arragon."

"Thy zeal was laudable," said Jerome, impatiently; "but at present it was unnecessary: Hippolita is well—at least I trust in the Lord she is; I heard nothing to the contrary—yet, methinks, the Prince's earnestness——Well, brother, but where is the Lady Isabella?"

"I know not," said the Friar; "she wept much, and said she would retire to her chamber."

Jerome left his comrade abruptly, and hastened to the Princess, but she was not in her chamber. He inquired of the domestics of the convent, but could learn no news of her. He searched in vain throughout the monastery and the church, and despatched messengers round the neighbourhood, to get intelligence if she had been seen; but to no purpose. Nothing could equal the good man's perplexity. He judged that Isabella, suspecting

Manfred of having precipitated his wife's death, had taken the alarm, and withdrawn herself to some more secret place of concealment. This new flight would probably carry the Prince's fury to the height. The report of Hippolita's death, though it seemed almost incredible, increased his consternation; and though Isabella's escape bespoke her aversion of Manfred for a husband, Jerome could feel no comfort from it, while it endangered the life of his son. He determined to return to the castle, and made several of his brethren accompany him to attest his innocence to Manfred, and, if necessary, join their intercession with his for Theodore.

The Prince, in the meantime, had passed into the court, and ordered the gates of the castle to be flung open for the reception of the stranger Knight and his train. In a few minutes the cavalcade arrived. First came two harbingers with wands. Next a herald, followed by two pages and two trumpets. Then a hundred foot-guards. These were attended by as many horse. After them fifty footmen, clothed in scarlet and black, the colours of the Knight. Then a led horse. Two heralds on each side of a gentleman on horseback bearing a banner with the arms of Vicenza and

Otranto quarterly—a circumstance that much offended Manfred—but he stifled his resentment. Two more pages. The Knight's confessor telling his beads. Fifty more footmen clad as before. Two Knights habited in complete armour, their beavers down, comrades to the principal Knight. The squires of the two Knights, carrying their shields and devices. The Knight's own squire. A hundred gentlemen bearing an enormous sword, and seeming to faint under the weight of it. The Knight himself on a chestnut steed, in complete armour, his lance in the rest, his face entirely concealed by his vizor, which was surmounted by a large plume of scarlet and black feathers. Fifty foot-guards with drums and trumpets closed the procession, which wheeled off to the right and left to make room for the principal Knight.

As soon as he approached the gate he stopped; and the herald advancing, read again the words of the challenge. Manfred's eyes were fixed on the gigantic sword, and he scarce seemed to attend to the cartel: but his attention was soon diverted by a tempest of wind that rose behind him. He turned and beheld the plumes of the enchanted helmet agitated in the same extraordinary manner as before. It required intrepidity like Manfred's not to sink under a concurrence of circumstances that seemed to announce his fate. Yet scorning in the presence of strangers to betray the courage he had always manifested, he said boldly—

"Sir Knight, whoever thou art, I bid thee welcome. If thou art of mortal mould, thy valour shall meet its equal: and if thou art a true Knight, thou wilt scorn to employ sorcery to carry thy point. Be these omens from heaven or hell, Manfred trusts to the righteousness of his cause and to the aid of St. Nicholas, who has ever protected his house. Alight, Sir Knight, and repose thyself. To-morrow thou shalt have a fair field, and heaven befriend the juster side!"

The Knight made no reply, but dismounting, was conducted by Manfred to the great hall of the castle. As they traversed the court, the Knight stopped to gaze on the miraculous casque; and kneeling down, seemed to pray inwardly for some minutes. Rising, he made a sign to the Prince to lead on. As soon as they entered the hall, Manfred proposed to the stranger to disarm, but the Knight shook his head in token of refusal.

"Sir Knight," said Manfred, "this is not courteous, but by my good faith I will not cross thee, nor shalt thou have cause to complain of the Prince of Otranto. No treachery is designed on my part; I hope none is intended on thine; here take my gage" (giving him his ring): "your friends and you shall enjoy the laws of hospitality. Rest here until refreshments are brought. I will but give orders for the accommodation of your train, and return to you." The three Knights bowed as accepting his courtesy. Manfred directed the stranger's retinue to be conducted to an adjacent hospital, founded by the Princess Hippolita for the reception of pilgrims. As they made the circuit of the court to return towards the gate, the gigantic sword burst from the supporters, and falling to the ground opposite to the helmet, remained immovable. Manfred, almost hardened to preternatural appearances, surmounted the shock of this new prodigy; and returning to the hall, where by this time the feast was ready, he invited his silent guests to take their places. Manfred, however ill his heart was at ease, endeavoured to inspire the company with mirth. He put several questions to them, but was answered only by signs. They raised their vizors but sufficiently to feed themselves, and that sparingly.

"Sirs" said the Prince, "ye are the first guests

I ever treated within these walls who scorned to hold any intercourse with me: nor has it oft been customary, I ween, for princes to hazard their state and dignity against strangers and mutes. You say you come in the name of Frederic of Vicenza; I have ever heard that he was a gallant and courteous Knight; nor would he, I am bold to say, think it beneath him to mix in social converse with a Prince that is his equal, and not unknown by deeds in arms. Still ye are silent—well! be it as it may—by the laws of hospitality and chivalry ye are masters under this roof: ye shall do your pleasure. But come, give me a goblet of wine; ye will not refuse to pledge me to the healths of your fair mistresses."

The principal Knight sighed and crossed himself, and was rising from the board.

"Sir Knight," said Manfred, "what I said was but in sport. I shall constrain you in nothing: use your good liking. Since mirth is not your mood, let us be sad. Business may hit your fancies better. Let us withdraw, and hear if what I have to unfold may be better relished than the vain efforts I have made for your pastime."

Manfred then conducting the three Knights into an inner chamber, shut the door, and inviting them to be seated, began thus, addressing himself to the chief personage :—

"You come, Sir Knight, as I understand, in the name of the Marquis of Vicenza, to re-demand the Lady Isabella, his daughter, who has been contracted in the face of Holy Church to my son, by the consent of her legal guardians; and to require me to resign my dominions to your Lord, who gives himself for the nearest of blood to Prince Alfonso, whose soul God rest! I shall speak to the latter article of your demands first. . You must know, your Lord knows, that I enjoy the principality of Otranto from my father, Don Manuel, as he received it from his father, Don Ricardo. Alfonso, their predecessor, dying childless in the Holy Land, bequeathed his estates to my grandfather, Don Ricardo, in consideration of his faithful services." The stranger shook his head.

"Sir Knight," said Manfred, warmly, "Ricardo was a valiant and upright man; he was a pious man; witness his munificent foundation of the adjoining church and two convents. He was peculiarly patronised by St. Nicholas—my grandfather was incapable—I say, Sir, Don Ricardo was incapable—excuse me, your interruption has disordered me. I venerate the memory of my grandfather. Well, Sirs, he held this estate; he held it by his good sword and by the favour of St. Nicholas—so did my father; and so, Sirs, will I, come what come will. But Frederic, your Lord, is nearest in blood. I have consented to put my title to the issue of the sword. Does that imply a vicious title? I might have asked, where is Frederic your Lord? Report speaks him dead in captivity. You say, your actions say, he lives—I question it not—I might, Sirs, I might—but I do not. Other Princes would bid Frederic take his inheritance by force, if he can: they would not stake their dignity on a single combat: they would not submit it to the decision of unknown mutes!—pardon me, gentlemen, I am too warm: but suppose yourselves in my situation: as ye are stout Knights, would it not move your choler to have your own and the honour of your ancestors called in question?

"But to the point. Ye require me to deliver up the Lady Isabella. Sirs, I must ask if ye are authorised to receive her?"

The Knight nodded.

"Receive her," contined Manfred; "well, you are authorised to receive her, but, gentle Knight, may I ask if you have full powers?"

The Knight nodded.

"'Tis well," said Manfred; "then hear what I have to offer. Ye see, gentlemen, before you, the most unhappy of men!" (he began to weep); "afford me your compassion; I am entitled to it, indeed I am. Know, I have lost my only hope, my joy, the support of my house—Conrad died yester morning."

The Knights discovered signs of surprise.

"Yes, Sirs, fate has disposed of my son. Isabella is at liberty."

"Do you then restore her?" cried the chief Knight, breaking silence.

"Afford me your patience," said Manfred. "I rejoice to find, by this testimony of your goodwill, that this matter may be adjusted without blood. It is no interest of mine dictates what little I have farther to say. Ye behold in me a man disgusted with the world: the loss of my son has weaned me from earthly cares. Power and greatness have no longer any charms in my eyes. I wished to transmit the sceptre I had received from my ancestors with honour to my son—but that is over! Life itself is so indifferent to me, that I accepted your defiance with joy. A good Knight cannot go to the grave with more satisfaction than when falling in his vocation: whatever is the will of heaven, I submit; for alas! Sirs, I am a man of many sorrows. Manfred is no object of envy, but no doubt you are acquainted with my story."

The Knight made signs of ignorance, and seemed curious to have Manfred proceed.

"Is it possible, Sirs," continued the Prince, "that my story should be a secret to you? Have you heard nothing relating to me and the Princess Hippolita?"

They shook their heads.

"No! Thus, then, Sirs, it is. You think me ambitious: ambition, alas! is composed of more rugged materials. If I were ambitious, I should not for so many years have been a prey to all the hell of conscientious scruples. But I weary your patience: I will be brief. Know, then, that I have long been troubled in mind on my union with the Princess Hippolita. Oh! Sirs, if ye were acquainted with that excellent woman! if ye knew that I adore her like a mistress, and cherish her as a friend—but man was not born for perfect happiness! She shares my scruples, and with her consent I have brought this matter before the church, for we are related within the forbidden degrees. I expect every hour the definitive sentence that must separate us for ever—I am sure you feel for me—I see you do—pardon these tears!"

The Knights gazed on each other, wondering where this would end.

Manfred continued—

"The death of my son betiding while my soul was under this anxiety, I thought of nothing but resigning my dominions, and retiring for ever from the sight of mankind. My only difficulty was to fix on a successor, who would be tender of my people, and to dispose of the Lady Isabella, who is dear to me as my own blood. I was willing to restore the line of Alfonso, even in his most distant kindred. And though, pardon me, I am satisfied it was his will that Ricardo's lineage should take place of his own relations; yet where was I to search for those relations? I knew of none but Frederic, your Lord; he was a captive to the infidels, or dead; and were he living, and at home, would he quit the flourishing State of Vicenza for the inconsiderable principality of Otranto? If he would not, could I bear the thought of seeing a hard, unfeeling Viceroy set over my poor faithful people? for, Sirs, I love my people, and thank heaven am beloved by them. But ye will ask whither tends this long discourse? Briefly, then, thus, Sirs. Heaven in your arrival seems to point out a remedy for these difficulties and my misfortunes. The Lady Isabella is at liberty; I shall soon be so. I would submit to anything for the good of my people. Were it not the best, the only way to extinguish the feuds between our families, if I was to take the Lady Isabella to wife? You start. But though Hippolita's virtues will ever be dear to me, a Prince must not consider himself; he is born for his people." A servant at that instant entering the chamber apprised Manfred that Jerome and several of his brethren demanded immediate access to him.

The Prince, provoked at this interruption, and fearing that the Friar would discover to the strangers that Isabella had taken sanctuary, was going to forbid Jerome's entrance. But recollecting that he was certainly arrived to notify the Princess's return, Manfred began to excuse himself to the Knights for leaving them for a few moments, but was prevented by the arrival of the Friars. Manfred angrily reprimanded them for their intrusion, and would have forced them back from the chamber; but Jerome was too much agitated to be repulsed. He declared aloud the flight of Isabella, with protestations of his own innocence.

Manfred, distracted at the news, and not less at its coming to the knowledge of the strangers, uttered nothing but incoherent sentences, now upbraiding the Friar, now apologising to the Knights, earnest to know what was become of Isabella, yet equally afraid of their knowing; impatient to pursue her, yet dreading to have them join in the pursuit. He offered to despatch messengers in quest of her, but the chief Knight, no longer keeping silence, reproached Manfred in bitter terms for his dark and ambiguous dealing, and demanded the cause of Isabella's first absence from the castle. Manfred, casting a stern look at Jerome, implying a command of silence, pretended that on Conrad's death he had placed her in sanctuary until he could determine how to dispose of her. Jerome, who trembled for his son's life, did not dare contradict this falsehood, but one of his brethren, not under the same anxiety, declared frankly that she had fled to their church in the preceding night. The Prince in vain endeavoured to stop this discovery, which overwhelmed him with shame and confusion. The principal stranger, amazed at the contradictions he heard, and more than half persuaded that Manfred had secreted the Princess, notwithstanding the concern he expressed at her flight, rushing to the door, said—

"Thou traitor Prince! Isabella shall be found."

Manfred endeavoured to hold him, but the other Knights assisting their comrade, he broke from the Prince, and hastened into the court, demanding his attendants. Manfred, finding it vain to divert him from the pursuit, offered to accompany him; and summoning his attendants, and taking Jerome and some of the Friars to guide them, they issued from the castle; Manfred privately giving orders to have the Knight's company secured, while to the Knight he affected to despatch a messenger to require their assistance.

The company had no sooner quitted the castle than Matilda, who felt herself deeply interested for the young peasant, since she had seen him condemned to death in the hall, and whose thoughts had been taken up with concerting measures to save him, was informed by some of the female attendants that Manfred had despatched all his men various ways in pursuit of Isabella. He had in his hurry given this order in general terms, not meaning to extend it to the guard he had set upon Theodore, but forgetting it. The domestics, officious to obey so peremptory a Prince, and urged by their own curiosity and love of novelty to join in any precipitate chase, had to a man left the castle. Matilda disengaged herself from her women, stole up to the black tower, and unbolting the door, presented herself to the astonished Theodore.

"Young man," said she, "though filial duty and womanly modesty condemn the step I am taking, yet holy charity, surmounting all other ties, justifies this act. Fly; the doors of thy prison are open: my father and his domestics are absent; but they may soon return. Be gone in safety; and may the angels of heaven direct thy course!"

"Thou art surely one of those angels!" said the enraptured Theodore: "none but a blessed saint could speak, could act—could look like thee. May I not know the name of my divine protectress? Methought thou namedst thy father. Is it possible? Can Manfred's blood feel holy pity? Lovely Lady, thou answerest not. But how art thou here thyself? Why dost thou neglect thy own safety, and waste a thought on a wretch like Theodore? Let us fly together: the life thou bestowest shall be dedicated to thy defence."

"Alas! thou mistakest," said Matilda, sighing: "I am Manfred's daughter, but no dangers await me."

"Amazement!" said Theodore: "but last night I blessed myself for yielding thee the service thy gracious compassion so charitably returns me now."

"Still thou art in an error," said the Princess; "but this is no time for explanation. Fly, virtuous youth, while it is in my power to save thee: should my father return, thou and I both should indeed have cause to tremble."

"How!" said Theodore; "thinkest thou, charming maid, that I will accept of life at the hazard of aught calamitous to thee? Better I endured a thousand deaths."

"I run no risk," said Matilda, "but by thy delay. Depart; it cannot be known that I have assisted thy flight."

"Swear by the saints above," said Theodore, "that thou canst not be suspected; else here I vow to await whatever can befall me."

"Oh! thou art too generous," said Matilda; "but rest assured that no suspicion can alight on me."

"Give me thy beauteous hand in token that thou dost not deceive me," said Theodore; "and let me bathe it with the warm tears of gratitude."

"Forbear!" said the Princess; "this must not be."

"Alas!" said Theodore, "I have never known but calamity until this hour—perhaps shall never know other fortune again: suffer the chaste raptures of holy gratitude: 'tis my soul would print its effusions on thy hand."

"Forbear, and be gone," said Matilda. "How would Isabella approve of seeing thee at my feet?"

"Who is Isabella?" said the young man with surprise.

"Ah, me! I fear," said the Princess, "I am serving a deceitful one. Hast thou forgot thy curiosity this morning?"

"Thy looks, thy actions, all thy beauteous self seem an emanation of divinity," said Theodore; "but thy words are dark and mysterious. Speak, Lady; speak to thy servant's comprehension."

"Thou understandest but too well!" said Matilda; "but once more I command thee to be gone: thy blood, which I may preserve, will be on my head, if I waste the time in vain discourse."

"I go, Lady," said Theodore, "because it is thy will, and because I would not bring the grey hairs of my father with sorrow to the grave. Say but, adored Lady, that I have thy gentle pity."

"Stay," said Matilda; "I will conduct thee to the subterraneous vault by which Isabella escaped; it will lead thee to the church of St. Nicholas, where thou mayst take sanctuary."

"What!" said Theodore, "was it another, and not thy lovely self that I assisted to find the subterraneous passage?"

"It was," said Matilda; "but ask no more; "I tremble to see thee still abide here; fly to the sanctuary."

"To sanctuary," said Theodore; "no, Princess; sanctuaries are for helpless damsels, or for criminals. Theodore's soul is free from guilt, nor will wear the appearance of it. Give me a sword, Lady, and thy father shall learn that Theodore scorns an ignominious flight."

"Rash youth!" said Matilda; "thou wouldst not dare to lift thy presumptuous arm against the Prince of Otranto?"

"Not against thy father; indeed, I dare not," said Theodore. "Excuse me, Lady; I had forgotten. But could I gaze on thee, and remember thou art sprung from the tyrant Manfred? But he is thy father, and from this moment my injuries are buried in oblivion."

A deep and hollow groan, which seemed to come from above, startled the Princess and Theodore.

"Good heaven! we are overheard!" said the Princess. They listened; but perceiving no further noise, they both concluded it the effect of pent-up vapours. And the Princess, preceding Theodore softly, carried him to her father's armoury, where, equipping him with a complete suit, he was conducted by Matilda to the postern-gate.

"Avoid the town," said the Princess, "and all the western side of the castle. 'Tis there the search must be making by Manfred and the strangers; but hie thee to the opposite quarter. Yonder behind that forest to the east is a chain of rocks, hollowed into a labyrinth of caverns that reach to the sea coast. There thou mayst lie concealed, till thou canst make signs to some vessel to put on shore, and take thee off. Go! heaven be thy guide!—and sometimes in thy prayers remember—Matilda!"

Theodore flung himself at her feet, and seizing her lily hand, which with struggles she suffered him to kiss, he vowed on the earliest opportunity to get himself knighted, and fervently entreated her permission to swear himself eternally her knight.

Ere the Princess could reply, a clap of thunder was suddenly heard that shook the battlements. Theodore, regardless of the tempest, would have urged his suit: but the Princess, dismayed, retreated hastily into the castle, and commanded the youth to be gone with an air that would not be disobeyed. He sighed, and retired, but with eyes fixed on the gate, until Matilda, closing it, put an end to an interview, in which the hearts of both had drunk so deeply of a passion, which both now tasted for the first time.

Theodore went pensively to the convent, to acquaint his father with his deliverance. There he learned the absence of Jerome, and the pursuit that was making after the Lady Isabella, with some particulars of whose story he now first became acquainted. The generous gallantry of his nature prompted him to wish to assist her; but the Monks could lend him no lights to guess at the route she had taken. He was not tempted to wander far in search of her, for the idea of Matilda had imprinted itself so strongly on his heart, that he could not bear to absent himself at much distance from her abode. The tenderness Jerome had expressed for him concurred to confirm this reluctance; and he even persuaded himself that filial affection was the chief cause of his hovering between the castle and monastery.

Until Jerome should return at night, Theodore at length determined to repair to the forest that Matilda had pointed out to him. Arriving there, he sought the gloomiest shades, as best suited to the pleasing melancholy that reigned in his mind. In this mood he roved insensibly to the caves which had formerly served as a retreat to hermits, and were now reported round the country to be haunted by evil spirits. He recollected to have heard this tradition; and being of a brave and adventurous disposition, he willingly indulged his curiosity in exploring the secret recesses of this labyrinth. He had not penetrated far before he thought he heard the steps of some person who seemed to retreat before him.

Theodore, though firmly grounded in all our holy faith enjoins to be believed, had no apprehension that good men were abandoned without cause to the malice of the powers of darkness. He thought the place more likely to be infested by robbers than by those infernal agents who are reported to molest and bewilder travellers. He had long burned with impatience to approve his valour. Drawing his sabre, he marched sedately onwards, still directing his steps as the imperfect rustling sound before him led the way. The armour he wore was a like indication to the person who avoided him. Theodore, now convinced that he was not mistaken, redoubled his pace, and evidently gained on the person that fled, whose haste increasing, Theodore came up just as a woman fell breathless before him. He hasted to raise her, but her terror was so great that he apprehended she would faint in his arms. He used every gentle word to dispel her alarms, and assured her that far from injuring, he would defend her at the peril of his life. The Lady recovering her spirits from his courteous demeanour, and gazing on her protector, said—

"Sure, I have heard that voice before!"

"Not to my knowledge," replied Theodore; "unless, as I conjecture, thou art the Lady Isabella."

"Merciful heaven!" cried she. "Thou art not sent in quest of me, art thou?" And saying those words, she threw herself at his feet, and besought him not to deliver her up to Manfred.

"To Manfred!" cried Theodore—"no, Lady; I have once already delivered thee from his tyranny, and it shall fare hard with me now, but I will place thee out of the reach of his daring."

"Is it possible," said she, "that thou shouldst be the generous unknown whom I met last night in the vault of the castle? Sure thou art not a mortal, but my guardian angel. On my knees, let me thank——"

"Hold! gentle Princess," said Theodore, "nor demean thyself before a poor and friendless young man. If heaven has selected me for thy deliverer, it will accomplish its work, and strengthen my arm in thy cause. But come, Lady, we are too near the mouth of the cavern; let us seek its inmost recesses. I can have no tranquillity till I have placed thee beyond the reach of danger."

"Alas! what mean you, sir?" said she. "Though all your actions are noble, though your sentiments speak the purity of your soul, is it fitting that I should accompany you alone into these perplexed retreats? Should we be found together, what would a censorious world think of my conduct?"

"I respect your virtuous delicacy," said Theodore; "nor do you harbour a suspicion that wounds my honour. I meant to conduct you into the most private cavity of these rocks, and then at the hazard of my life to guard their entrance against every living thing. Besides, Lady," continued he, drawing a deep sigh, "beauteous and all perfect as your form is, and though my wishes are not guiltless of aspiring, know, my soul is dedicated to another; and although——" A sudden noise prevented Theodore from proceeding. They soon distinguished these sounds—

"Isabella! what, ho! Isabella!" The trembling Princess relapsed into her former agony of fear. Theodore endeavoured to encourage her, but in vain. He assured her he would die rather than suffer her to return under Manfred's power; and begging her to remain concealed, he went forth to prevent the person in search of her from approaching.

At the mouth of the cavern he found an armed Knight, discoursing with a peasant, who assured him he had seen a lady enter the passes of the rock. The Knight was preparing to seek her, when Theodore, placing himself in his way, with his sword drawn, sternly forbad him at his peril to advance.

"And who art thou, who darest to cross my way?" said the Knight, haughtily.

"One who does not dare more than he will perform," said Theodore.

"I seek the Lady Isabella," said the Knight, and understand she has taken refuge among these rocks. Impede me not, or thou wilt repent having provoked my resentment.

"Thy purpose is as odious as thy resentment is contemptible," said Theodore. "Return whence thou camest, or we shall soon know whose resentment is most terrible."

The stranger, who was the principal Knight that had arrived from the Marquis of Vicenza, had galloped from Manfred as he was busied in getting information of the Princess, and giving various orders to prevent her falling into the power of the three Knights. Their chief had suspected Manfred of being privy to the Princess's absconding, and this insult from a man, who he concluded was stationed by that Prince to secrete her, confirming his suspicions, he made no reply, but discharging a blow with his sabre at Theodore, would soon have removed all obstruction, if Theodore, who took him for one of Manfred's captains, and who had no sooner given the provocation than prepared to support it, had not received the stroke on his shield. The valour that had so long been smothered in his breast broke forth at once; he rushed impetuously on the Knight, whose pride and wrath were not less powerful incentives to hardy deeds.

The combat was furious, but not long. Theodore wounded the Knight in three several places, and at last disarmed him as he fainted by the loss of blood.

The peasant, who had fled on the first onset, had given the alarm to some of Manfred's domestics, who, by his orders, were dispersed through the forest in pursuit of Isabella. They came up as the Knight fell, whom they soon discovered to be the noble stranger. Theodore, notwithstanding his hatred to Manfred, could not behold the victory he had gained without emotions of pity and generosity. But he was more touched when he learned the quality of his adversary, and was informed that he was no retainer, but an enemy, of Manfred. He assisted the servants of the latter in disarming the Knight, and in endeavouring to stanch the blood that flowed from his wounds. The Knight recovering his speech, said, in a faint and faltering voice—

"Generous foe, we have both been in an error. I took thee for an instrument of the tyrant; I perceive thou hast made the like mistake. It is too late for excuses. I faint. If Isabella is at hand—call her—I have important secrets to——"

"He is dying!" said cne of the attendants;

"has nobody a crucifix about them? Andrea, do thou pray over him."

"Fetch some water," said Theodore, "and pour it down his throat, while I hasten to the Princess."

Saying this, he flew to Isabella, and in few words told her modestly that he had been so unfortunate by mistake as to wound a gentleman from her father's court, who wished, ere he died, to impart something of consequence to her.

The Princess, who had been transported at hearing the voice of Theodore, as he called to her to come forth, was astonished at what she heard. Suffering herself to be conducted by Theodore, the new proof of whose valour recalled her dispersed spirits, she came where the bleeding Knight lay speechless on the ground. But her fears returned when she beheld the domestics of Manfred. She would again have fled if Theodore had not made her observe that they were unarmed, and had not threatened them with instant death if they should dare to seize the Princess.

The stranger, opening his eyes, and beholding a woman, said, "Art thou—pray tell me truly—art thou Isabella of Vicenza?"

"I am," said she: "good heaven restore thee!"

"Then thou—then thou"—said the Knight, struggling for utterance—"seest—thy father. Give me one——"

"Oh! amazement! horror! what do I hear! what do I see!" cried Isabella. "My father! You my father! How came you here, Sir? For heaven's sake, speak! Oh! run for help, or he will expire!"

"'Tis most true," said the wounded Knight, exerting all his force; "I am Frederic thy father. Yes, I came to deliver thee. It will not be. Give me a parting kiss, and take——"

"Sir," said Theodore, "do not exhaust yourself; suffer us to convey you to the castle."

"To the castle!" said Isabella. "Is there no help nearer than the castle? Would you expose my father to the tyrant? If he goes thither, I dare not accompany him; and yet, can I leave him!"

"My child," said Frederic, "it matters not for me whither I am carried. A few minutes will place me beyond danger; but while I have eyes to dote on thee, forsake me not, dear Isabella! This brave Knight—I know not who he is—will protect thy innocence. Sir, you will not abandon my child, will you?"

Theodore, shedding tears over his victim, and vowing to guard the Princess at the expense of his life, persuaded Frederic to suffer himself to be conducted to the castle. They placed him on a horse belonging to one of the domestics, after binding up his wounds as well as they were able. Theodore marched by his side; and the afflicted Isabella, who could not bear to quit him, followed mournfully behind.

CHAPTER IV.

The sorrowful troop no sooner arrived at the castle, than they were met by Hippolita and Matilda, whom Isabella had sent one of the domestics before to advertise of their approach. The ladies causing Frederic to be conveyed into the nearest chamber, retired, while the surgeons examined his wounds. Matilda blushed at seeing Theodore and Isabella together; but endeavoured to conceal it by embracing the latter, and condoling with her on her father's mischance. The surgeons soon came to acquaint Hippolita that none of the Marquis's wounds were dangerous; and that he was desirous of seeing his daughter and the Princesses.

Theodore, under pretence of expressing his joy at being freed from his apprehensions of the combat being fatal to Frederic, could not resist the impulse of following Matilda. Her eyes were so often cast down on meeting his, that Isabella, who regarded Theodore as attentively as he gazed on Matilda, soon divined who the object was that he had told her in the cave engaged his affections. While this mute scene passed, Hippolita demanded of Frederic the cause of his having taken that mysterious course for reclaiming his daughter; and threw in various apologies to excuse her Lord for the match contracted between their children.

Frederic, however incensed against Manfred, was not insensible to the courtesy and benevolence of Hippolita: but he was still more struck with the lovely form of Matilda. Wishing to detain them by his bedside, he informed Hippolita of his story. He told her that, while prisoner to the infidels, he had dreamed that his daughter, of whom he had learned no news since his captivity, was detained in a castle, where she was in danger of the most dreadful misfortunes: and that if he obtained his liberty, and repaired to a wood near Joppa, he would learn more. Alarmed at this dream, and incapable of obeying the direction given by it, his chains became more grievous than ever. But while his thoughts were occupied on the means of obtaining his liberty, he received the agreeable news that the confederate Princes who were warring in Palestine had paid his ransom. He instantly set out for the wood that had been marked in his dream.

For three days he and his attendants had wandered in the forest without seeing a human form: but on the evening of the third they came to a cell, in which they found a venerable hermit in the agonies of death. Applying rich cordials, they brought the fainting man to his speech.

"My sons," said he, "I am bounden to your charity—but it is in vain—I am going to my eternal rest—yet I die with the satisfaction of performing the will of heaven. When first I repaired to this solitude, after seeing my country become a prey to unbelievers—it is alas! above fifty years since I was witness to that dreadful scene! St. Nicholas appeared to me, and revealed a secret, which he bade me never disclose to mortal man, but on my death-bed. This is that tremendous hour, and ye are no doubt the chosen warriors to whom I was ordered to reveal my trust. As soon as ye have done the last offices to this wretched corse, dig under the seventh tree on the left hand of this poor cave, and your pains will——Oh! good heaven receive my soul!" With those words the devout man breathed his last.

"By break of day," continued Frederic, "when we had committed the holy relics to earth, we dug according to direction. But what was our astonishment, when about the depth of six feet we discovered an enormous sabre—the very weapon yonder in the court. On the blade, which was then partly out of the scabbard, though since closed by our efforts in removing it, were written the following lines—— no; excuse me, Madam," added the Marquis, turning to Hippolita, "if I forbear to repeat them: I respect your sex and rank, and would not be guilty of offending your ear with sounds injurious to aught that is dear to you."

He paused. Hippolita trembled. She did not doubt but Frederic was destined by heaven to accomplish the fate that seemed to threaten her house. Looking with anxious fondness at Matilda, a silent tear stole down her cheek: but recollecting herself, she said—

"Proceed, my Lord; heaven does nothing in vain; mortals must receive its divine behests with lowliness and submission. It is our part to deprecate its wrath, or bow to its decrees. Repeat the sentence, my Lord; we listen resigned."

Frederic was grieved that he had proceeded so far. The dignity and patient firmness of Hippolita penetrated him with respect, and the tender silent affection with which the Princess and her daughter regarded each other, melted him almost to tears. Yet apprehensive that his forbearance to obey would be more alarming, he repeated in a faltering and low voice the following lines:

> "Where'er a casque that suits this sword is found,
> With perils is thy daughter compass'd round;
> *Alfonso's* blood alone can save the maid,
> And quiet a long restless Prince's shade."

"What is there in these lines," said Theodore impatiently, "that affects these Princesses? Why were they to be shocked by a mysterious delicacy, that has so little foundation?"

"Your words are rude, young man," said the Marquis; "and though fortune has favoured you once ——"

"My honoured Lord," said Isabella, who resented Theodore's warmth, which she perceived was dictated by his sentiments for Matilda, "discompose not yourself for the glosing of a peasant's son: he forgets the reverence he owes you; but he is not accustomed——"

Hippolita, concerned at the heat that had arisen, checked Theodore for his boldness, but with an air acknowledging his zeal; and changing the conversation, demanded of Frederic where he had left her Lord? As the Marquis was going to reply, they heard a noise without, and rising to inquire the cause, Manfred, Jerome, and part of the troop, who had met an imperfect rumour of what had happened, entered the chamber. Manfred advanced hastily towards Frederic's bed to condole with him on his misfortune, and to learn the circumstances of the combat, when starting in an agony of terror and amazement, he cried—

"Ha! what art thou? thou dreadful spectre! is my hour come?"

"My dearest, gracious Lord," cried Hippolita, clasping him in her arms, "what is it you see? Why do you fix your eye-balls thus?"

"What!" cried Manfred breathless; "dost thou see nothing, Hippolita? Is this ghastly phantom sent to me alone—to me, who did not ——"

"For mercy's sweetest self, my Lord," said Hippolita, "resume your soul, command your reason. There is none here, but us, your friends."

"What, is not that Alfonso?" cried Manfred. "Dost thou not see him? can it be my brain's delirium?"

"This! my Lord," said Hippolita; "this is Theodore, the youth who has been so unfortunate."

"Theodore!" said Manfred mournfully, and striking his forehead; "Theodore or a phantom, he has unhinged the soul of Manfred. But how comes he here? and how comes he in armour?"

"I believe he went in search of Isabella," said Hippolita.

"Of Isabella!" said Manfred, relapsing into rage; "yes, yes, that is not doubtful——. But how did he escape from durance in which I left him? Was it Isabella, or this hypocritical old Friar, that procured his enlargement?"

"And would a parent be criminal, my Lord," said Theodore, "if he meditated the deliverance of his child?"

Jerome, amazed to hear himself in a manner accused by his son, and without foundation, knew not what to think. He could not comprehend how Theodore had escaped, how he came to be armed, and to encounter Frederic. Still he would not venture to ask any questions that might tend to inflame Manfred's wrath against his son. Jerome's silence convinced Manfred that he had contrived Theodore's release.

"And is it thus, thou ungrateful old man," said the Prince, addressing himself to the Friar, "that thou repayest mine and Hippolita's bounties? And not content with traversing my heart's nearest wishes, thou armest thy bastard, and bringest him into my own castle to insult me!"

"My Lord," said Theodore, "you wrong my

father: neither he nor I are capable of harbouring a thought against your peace. Is it insolence thus to surrender myself to your Highness's pleasure?" added he, laying his sword respectfully at Manfred's feet. "Behold my bosom; strike, my Lord, if you suspect that a disloyal thought is lodged there. There is not a sentiment engraven on my heart that does not venerate you and yours."

The grace and fervour with which Theodore uttered these words interested every person present in his favour. Even Manfred was touched——yet still possessed with his resemblance to Alfonso, his admiration was dashed with secret horror.

"Rise," said he; "thy life is not my present purpose. But tell me thy history, and how thou camest connected with this old traitor here."

"My Lord," said Jerome eagerly.

"Peace! impostor!" said Manfred; "I will not have him prompted."

"My Lord," said Theodore, "I want no assistance; my story is very brief. I was carried at five years of age to Algiers with my mother, who had been taken by corsairs from the coast of Sicily. She died of grief in less than a twelvemonth;" the tears gushed from Jerome's eyes, on whose countenance a thousand anxious passions stood expressed.

"Before she died," continued Theodore, "she bound a writing about my arm under my garments, which told me I was the son of the Count Falconara."

"It is most true," said Jerome; "I am that wretched father."

"Again I enjoin thee silence," said Manfred: "proceed."

"I remained in slavery," said Theodore, "until within these two years, when attending on my master in his cruises, I was delivered by a Christian vessel, which overpowered the pirate; and discovering myself to the captain, he generously put me on shore in Sicily; but alas! instead of finding a father, I learned that his estate, which was situated on the coast, had, during his absence, been laid waste by the Rover who had carried my mother and me into captivity: that his castle had been burnt to the ground, and that my father on his return had sold what remained, and was retired into religion in the kingdom of Naples, but where no man could inform me. Destitute and friendless, hopeless almost of attaining the transport of a parent's embrace, I took the first opportunity of setting sail for Naples, from whence, within these six days, I wandered into this province, still supporting myself by the labour of my hands; nor until yester-morn did I believe that heaven had reserved any lot for me but peace of mind and contented poverty. This, my Lord, is Theodore's story. I am blessed beyond my hope in finding a father; I am unfortunate beyond my desert in having incurred your Highness's displeasure."

He ceased. A murmur of approbation gently arose from the audience.

"This is not all," said Frederic; "I am bound in honour to add what he suppresses. Though he is modest, I must be generous; he is one of the bravest youths on Christian ground. He is warm too; and from the short knowledge I have of him, I will pledge myself for his veracity: if what he reports of himself were not true, he would not utter it—and for me, youth, I honour a frankness which becomes thy birth; but now, and thou didst offend me: yet the noble blood which flows in thy veins, may well be allowed to boil out, when it has so recently traced itself to its source. Come, my Lord (turning to Manfred), if I can pardon him, surely you may; it is not the youth's fault, if you took him for a spectre."

This bitter taunt galled the soul of Manfred.

"If beings from another world," replied he haughtily, "have power to impress my mind with awe, it is more than living man can do; nor could a stripling's arm."

"My Lord," interrupted Hippolita, "your guest has occasion for repose: shall we not leave him to his rest?" Saying this, and taking Manfred by the hand, she took leave of Frederic, and led the company forth.

The Prince, not sorry to quit a conversation which recalled to mind the discovery he had made of his most secret sensations, suffered himself to be conducted to his own apartment, after permitting Theodore, though under engagement to return to the castle on the morrow (a condition the young man gladly accepted), to retire with his father to the convent. Matilda and Isabella were too much occupied with their own reflections, and too little content with each other, to wish for farther converse that night. They separated each to her chamber, with more expressions of ceremony and fewer of affection than had passed between them since their childhood.

If they parted with small cordiality, they did but meet with greater impatience, as soon as the sun was risen. Their minds were in a situation that excluded sleep, and each recollected a thousand questions which she wished she had put to the other overnight. Matilda reflected that Isabella had been twice delivered by Theodore in very critical situations, which she could not believe accidental. His eyes, it was true, had been fixed on her in Frederic's chamber; but that might have been to disguise his passion for Isabella from the fathers of both. It were better to clear this up. She wished to know the truth, lest she should wrong her friend by entertaining a passion for Isabella's lover. Thus jealousy prompted, and at the same time borrowed an excuse from friendship to justify its curiosity.

Isabella, not less restless, had better foundation for her suspicions. Both Theodore's tongue and eyes had told her his heart was engaged; it was true—yet, perhaps, Matilda might not correspond to his passion; she had ever appeared insensible to love: all her thoughts were set on heaven.

"Why did I dissuade her?" said Isabella to herself; "I am punished for my generosity; but when did they meet? where? It cannot be; I have deceived myself; perhaps last night was the first time they ever beheld each other; it must be some other object that has prepossessed his affections—if it is, I am not so unhappy as I thought; if it is not my friend Matilda—how! Can I stoop to wish for the affection of a man, who rudely and unnecessarily acquainted me with his indifference? and that at the very moment in which common courtesy demanded at least expressions of civility. I will go to my dear Matilda, who will confirm me in this becoming pride. Man is false—I will advise with her on taking the veil: she will rejoice to find me in this disposition; and I will acquaint her that I no longer oppose her inclination for the cloister."

In this frame of mind, and determined to open her heart entirely to Matilda, she went to that Princess's chamber, whom she found already dressed, and leaning pensively on her arm. This attitude, so correspondent to what she felt herself, revived Isabella's suspicions, and destroyed the confidence she had purposed to place in her friend. They blushed at meeting, and were too much novices to disguise their sensations with address After some unmeaning questions and replies, Matilda demanded of Isabella the cause of her flight? The latter, who had almost forgotten Manfred's passion, so entirely was she occupied by her own, concluding that Matilda referred to her last escape from the convent, which had occasioned the events of the preceding evening, replied—

"Martelli brought word to the convent that your mother was dead."

"Oh!" said Matilda, interrupting her, "Bianca has explained that mistake to me: on seeing me faint, she cried out, 'The Princess is dead!' and Martelli, who had come for the usual dole to the castle——"

"And what made you faint?" said Isabella, indifferent to the rest. Matilda blushed and stammered—

"My father—he was sitting in judgment on a criminal——"

"What criminal?" said Isabella eagerly.

"A young man," said Matilda; "I believe—I think it was that young man that——

"What, Theodore?" said Isabella.

"Yes," answered she; "I never saw him before; I do not know how he had offended my father, but as he has been of service to you, I am glad my Lord has pardoned him."

"Served me!" replied Isabella; "do you term it serving me, to wound my father, and almost occasion his death? Though it is but since yesterday that I am blessed with knowing a parent, I hope Matilda does not think I am such a stranger to filial tenderness as not to resent the boldness of that audacious youth, and that it is impossible for me ever to feel any affection for one who dared to lift his arm against the author of my being. No, Matilda, my heart abhors him; and if you still retain the friendship for me that you have vowed from your infancy, you will detest a man who has been on the point of making me miserable for ever."

Matilda held down her head and replied: "I hope my dearest Isabella does not doubt her Matilda's friendship: I never beheld that youth until yesterday; he is almost a stranger to me: but as the surgeons have pronounced your father out of danger, you ought not to harbour uncharitable resentment against one, who I am persuaded did not know the Marquis was related to you."

"You plead his cause very pathetically," said Isabella, "considering he is so much a stranger to you! I am mistaken, or he returns your charity."

"What mean you?" said Matilda.

"Nothing," said Isabella, repenting that she had given Matilda a hint of Theodore's inclination for her. Then changing the discourse, she asked Matilda what occasioned Manfred to take Theodore for a spectre?

"Bless me," said Matilda, "did not you observe his extreme resemblance to the portrait of Alfonso in the gallery? I took notice of it to Bianca even before I saw him in armour; but with the helmet on, he is the very image of that picture."

"I do not much observe pictures," said Isabella: "much less have I examined this young man so attentively as you seem to have done. Ah! Matilda, your heart is in danger, but let me warn you as a friend, he has owned to me that he is in love; it cannot be with you, for yesterday was the first time you ever met—was it not?"

"Certainly," replied Matilda; "but why does my dearest Isabella conclude from anything I have said, that"—she paused—then continuing: "he saw you first, and I am far from having the vanity to think that my little portion of charms could engage a heart devoted to you; may you be happy, Isabella, whatever is the fate of Matilda!"

"My lovely friend," said Isabella, whose heart was too honest to resist a kind expression, "it is you that Theodore admires; I saw it; I am persuaded of it; nor shall a thought of my own happiness suffer me to interfere with yours."

This frankness drew tears from the gentle Matilda; and jealousy that for a moment had raised a coolness between these amiable maidens soon gave way to the natural sincerity and candour of their souls. Each confessed to the other the impression that Theodore had made on her; and this confidence was followed by a struggle of generosity, each insisting on yielding her claim to her friend. At length the dignity of Isabella's virtue reminding her of the preference which Theodore had almost declared for her rival, made her determine to conquer her passion, and cede the beloved object to her friend.

During this contest of amity, Hippolita entered her daughter's chamber.

"Madam," said she to Isabella, "you have so much tenderness for Matilda, and interest yourself so kindly in whatever affects our wretched house, that I can have no secrets with my child which are not proper for you to hear."

The princesses were all attention and anxiety.

"Know then, Madam," continued Hippolita, "and you my dearest Matilda, that being convinced by all the events of these two last ominous days, that heaven purposes the sceptre of Otranto should pass from Manfred's hands into those of the Marquis Frederic, I have been perhaps inspired with the thought of averting our total destruction by the union of our rival houses. With this view I have been proposing to Manfred, my lord, to tender this dear, dear child to Frederic, your father."

"Me to Lord Frederic!" cried Matilda; "good heavens! my gracious mother—and have you named it to my father?"

"I have," said Hippolita; "he listened benignly to my proposal, and is gone to break it to the Marquis."

"Ah! wretched Princess!" cried Isabella; "what hast thou done! what ruin has thy inadvertent goodness been preparing for thyself, for me, and for Matilda!"

"Ruin from me to you and to my child!" said Hippolita; "what can this mean?"

"Alas!" said Isabella, "the purity of your own heart prevents your seeing the depravity of others. Manfred, your lord, that impious man——"

"Hold," said Hippolita; "you must not in my presence, young lady, mention Manfred with disrespect: he is my lord and husband, and——"

"Will not long be so," said Isabella, "if his wicked purposes can be carried into execution."

"This language amazes me," said Hippolita. "Your feeling, Isabella, is warm; but until this hour I never knew it betray you into intemperance. What deed of Manfred authorises you to treat him as a murderer, an assassin?"

"Thou virtuous, and too credulous Princess!" replied Isabella; "it is not thy life he aims at—it is to separate himself from thee! to divorce thee! to——"

"To divorce me!" "To divorce my mother!" cried Hippolita and Matilda at once.

"Yes," said Isabella; "and to complete his crime, he meditates—I cannot speak it!"

"What can surpass what thou hast already uttered?" said Matilda.

Hippolita was silent. Grief choked her speech; and the recollection of Manfred's late ambiguous discourses confirmed what she heard.

"Excellent, dear lady! madam! mother!" cried Isabella, flinging herself at Hippolita's feet in a transport of passion; "trust me, believe me, I will die a thousand deaths sooner than consent to injure you, than yield to so odious—oh!——"

"This is too much!" cried Hippolita: "What crimes does one crime suggest! Rise, dear Isabella; I do not doubt your virtue. Oh! Matilda, this stroke is too heavy for thee! weep not, my child;

and not a murmur, I charge thee. Remember, he is thy father still!"

"But you are my mother too," said Matilda fervently; "and you are virtuous, you are guiltless!—Oh! must not I, must not I complain?"

"You must not," said Hippolita—"come, all will yet be well. Manfred, in the agony for the loss of thy brother, knew not what he said; perhaps Isabella misunderstood him; his heart is good—and, my child, thou knowest not all! There is a destiny hangs over us; the hand of Providence is stretched out; oh! could I but save thee from the wreck! Yes," continued she in a firmer tone, "perhaps the sacrifice of myself may atone for all; I will go and offer myself to this divorce—it boots not what becomes of me. I will withdraw into the neighbouring monastery, and waste the remainder of life in prayers and tears for my child and—the Prince!"

"Thou art as much too good for this world," said Isabella, "as Manfred is execrable; but think not, lady, that thy weakness shall determine for me. I swear, hear me all ye angels—— "

"Stop, I adjure thee," cried Hippolita: "remember thou dost not depend on thyself; thou hast a father."

"My father is too pious, too noble," interrupted Isabella, "to command an impious deed. But should he command it; can a father enjoin a cursed act? I was contracted to the son, can I wed the father? No, madam, no; force should not drag me to Manfred's hated bed. I loathe him, I abhor him: divine and human laws forbid—and my friend, my dearest Matilda! would I wound her tender soul by injuring her adored mother? my own mother—I never have known another"——

"Oh! she is the mother of both!" cried Matilda: "can we, can we, Isabella, adore her too much?"

"My lovely children," said the touched Hippolita, "your tenderness overpowers me—but I must not give way to it. It is not ours to make election for ourselves: heaven, our fathers, and our husbands must decide for us. Have patience until you hear what Manfred and Frederic have determined. If the Marquis accepts Matilda's hand, I know she will readily obey. Heaven may interpose and prevent the rest. What means my child?" continued she, "seeing Matilda fall at her feet with a flood of speechless tears——But no; answer me not, my daughter: I must not hear a word against the pleasure of thy father."

"Oh! doubt not my obedience, my dreadful obedience to him and to you!" said Matilda. "But can I, most respected of women, can I experience all this tenderness, this world of goodness, and conceal a thought from the best of mothers?"

"What art thou going to utter?" said Isabella trembling. "Recollect thyself, Matilda."

"No, Isabella," said the Princess, "I should not deserve this incomparable parent, if the inmost recesses of my soul harboured a thought without her permission—nay, I have offended her; I have suffered a passion to enter my heart without her avowal—but here I disclaim it; here I vow to heaven and her——"

"My child! my child;" said Hippolita, "what words are these! what new calamities has fate in store for us! Thou, a passion? Thou, in this hour of destruction——"

"Oh! I see all my guilt!" said Matilda. "I abhor myself, if I cost my mother a pang. She is the dearest thing I have on earth—oh! I will never, never behold him more!"

"Isabella," said Hippolita, "thou art conscious to this unhappy secret, whatever it is. Speak!"

"What!" cried Matilda, "have I so forfeited my mother's love, that she will not permit me even to speak my own guilt? oh! wretched, wretched Matilda!"

"Thou art too cruel," said Isabella to Hippolita: "canst thou behold this anguish of a virtuous mind, and not commiserate it?"

"Not pity my child!" said Hippolita, catching Matilda in her arms—"Oh! I know she is good, she is all virtue, all tenderness, and duty. I do forgive thee, my excellent, my only hope!"

The princesses then revealed to Hippolita their mutual inclination for Theodore, and the purpose of Isabella to resign him to Matilda. Hippolita blamed their imprudence, and showed them the improbability that either father would consent to bestow his heiress on so poor a man, though nobly born. Some comfort it gave her to find their passion of so recent a date, and that Theodore had had but little cause to suspect it in either. She strictly enjoined them to avoid all correspondence with him. This Matilda fervently promised: but Isabella, who flattered herself that she meant no more than to promote his union with her friend, could not determine to avoid him; and made no reply.

"I will go to the convent," said Hippolita, "and order new masses to be said for a deliverance from these calamities."

"Oh! my mother," said Matilda, "you mean to quit us: you mean to take sanctuary, and to give my father an opportunity of pursuing his fatal intention. Alas! on my knees I supplicate you to forbear; will you leave me a prey to Frederic? I will follow you to the convent."

"Be at peace, my child," said Hippolita: "I will return instantly. I will never abandon thee, until I know it is the will of heaven, and for thy benefit."

"Do not deceive me," said Matilda. "I will not marry Frederic until thou commandest it. Alas! what will become of me?"

"Why that exclamation?" said Hippolita. "I have promised thee to return——"

"Ah! my mother," replied Matilda, "stay and save me from myself. A frown from thee can do more than all my father's severity. I have given away my heart, and you alone can make me recall it."

"No more," said Hippolita; "thou must not relapse, Matilda."

"I can quit Theodore," said she, "but must I wed another? let me attend thee to the altar, and shut myself from the world for ever."

"Thy fate depends on thy father," said Hippolita; "I have ill-bestowed my tenderness, if it has taught thee to revere aught beyond him. Adieu! my child: I go to pray for thee."

Hippolita's real purpose was to demand of Jerome, whether in conscience she might not consent to the divorce. She had oft urged Manfred to resign the principality, which the delicacy of her conscience rendered an hourly burthen to her. These scruples concurred to make the separation from her husband appear less dreadful to her than it would have seemed in any other situation.

Jerome, at quitting the castle overnight, had questioned Theodore severely why he had accused him to Manfred of being privy to his escape. Theodore owned it had been with design to prevent Manfred's suspicion from alighting on Matilda; and added, the holiness of Jerome's life and character secured him from the tyrant's wrath. Jerome was heartily grieved to discover his son's inclination for that princess; and leaving him to his rest, promised in the morning to acquaint him with important reasons for conquering his passion.

Theodore, like Isabella, was too recently acquainted with parental authority to submit to its decisions against the impulse of his heart. He had little curiosity to learn the Friar's reasons, and less disposition to obey them. The lovely Matilda had made stronger impressions on him than filial affection. All night he pleased himself with visions of love; and it was not till late after the morning-office, that he recollected the Friar's commands to attend him at Alfonso's tomb.

"Young man," said Jerome, when he saw him, "this tardiness does not please me. Have a father's commands already so little weight?"

Theodore made awkward excuses, and attributed his delay to having overslept himself.

"And on whom were thy dreams employed?" said the Friar sternly. His son blushed. "Come, come," resumed the Friar, "inconsiderate youth, this must not be; eradicate this guilty passion from thy breast——"

"Guilty passion!" cried Theodore: "Can guilt dwell with innocent beauty and virtuous modesty?"

"It is sinful," replied the Friar, "to cherish those whom heaven has doomed to destruction. A tyrant's race must be swept from the earth to the third and fourth generation."

"Will heaven visit the innocent for the crimes of the guilty?" said Theodore. "The fair Matilda has virtues enough——"

"To undo thee:" interrupted Jerome. "Hast thou so soon forgotten that twice the savage Manfred has pronounced thy sentence?"

"Nor have I forgotten, sir," said Theodore, "that the charity of his daughter delivered me from his power. I can forget injuries, but never benefits."

"The injuries thou hast received from Manfred's race," said the Friar, "are beyond what thou canst conceive. Reply not, but view this holy image! Beneath this marble monument rest the ashes of the good Alfonso; a prince adorned with every virtue: the father of his people! the delight of mankind! Kneel, headstrong boy, and list, while a father unfolds a tale of horror that will expel every sentiment from thy soul, but sensations of sacred vengeance—Alfonso! much injured prince! let thy unsatisfied shade sit awful on the troubled air, while these trembling lips—Ha! who comes there?——"

"The most wretched of women!" said Hippolita, entering the choir. "Good Father, art thou at leisure?—but why this kneeling youth? what means the horror imprinted on each countenance?

why at this venerable tomb—alas! hast thou seen aught?"

"We were pouring forth our orisons to heaven," replied the Friar, with some confusion, "to put an end to the woes of this deplorable province. Join with us, Lady! thy spotless soul may obtain an exemption from the judgments which the portents of these days but too speakingly denounce against thy house."

"I pray fervently to heaven to divert them," said the pious Princess. "Thou knowest it has been the occupation of my life to wrest a blessing for my Lord and my harmless children.—One alas! is taken from me! would heaven but hear me for my poor Matilda! Father! intercede for her!"

"Every heart will bless her," cried Theodore with rapture.

"Be dumb, rash youth!" said Jerome. "And thou, fond Princess, contend not with the Powers above! the Lord giveth, and the Lord taketh away: bless His holy name, and submit to his decrees."

"I do most devoutly," said Hippolita; "but will He not spare my only comfort? must Matilda perish too?—ah! Father, I came—but dismiss thy son. No ear but thine must hear what I have to utter."

"May heaven grant thy every wish, most excellent Princess!" said Theodore retiring. Jerome frowned.

Hippolita then acquainted the Friar with the proposal she had suggested to Manfred, his approbation of it, and the tender of Matilda that he was gone to make to Frederic. Jerome could not conceal his dislike of the notion, which he covered under pretence of the improbability that Frederic, the nearest of blood to Alfonso, and who was come to claim his succession, would yield to an alliance with the usurper of his right. But nothing could equal the perplexity of the Friar, when Hippolita confessed her readiness not to oppose the separation, and demanded his opinion on the legality of her acquiescence. The Friar caught eagerly at her request of his advice, and without explaining his aversion to the proposed marriage of Manfred and Isabella, he painted to Hippolita in the most alarming colours the sinfulness of her consent, denounced judgments against her if she complied, and enjoined her in the severest terms to treat any such proposition with every mark of indignation and refusal.

Manfred, in the meantime, had broken his purpose to Frederic, and proposed the double marriage. That weak Prince, who had been struck with the charms of Matilda, listened but too eagerly to the offer. He forgot his enmity to Manfred, whom he saw but little hope of dispossessing by force; and flattering himself that no issue might succeed from the union of his daughter with the tyrant, he looked upon his own succession to the principality as facilitated by wedding Matilda. He made faint opposition to the proposal; affecting, for form only, not to acquiesce unless Hippolita should consent to the divorce. Manfred took that upon himself.

Transported with his success, and impatient to see himself in a situation to expect sons, he hastened to his wife's apartment, determined to extort her compliance. He learned with indignation that she was absent at the convent. His guilt suggested to him that she had probably been informed by Isabella of his purpose. He doubted whether her retirement to the convent did not import an intention of remaining there, until she could raise obstacles to their divorce; and the suspicions he had already entertained of Jerome, made him apprehend that the Friar would not only traverse his views, but might have inspired Hippolita with the resolution of taking sanctuary.

Impatient to unravel this clue, and to defeat its success, Manfred hastened to the convent, and arrived there as the Friar was earnestly exhorting the Princess never to yield to the divorce.

"Madam," said Manfred, "what business drew you hither? why did you not await my return from the Marquis?"

"I came to implore a blessing on your councils," replied Hippolita.

"My councils do not need a Friar's intervention," said Manfred; "and of all men living is that hoary traitor the only one whom you delight to confer with?"

"Profane Prince!" said Jerome; "is it at the altar that thou choosest to insult the servants of the altar?—but, Manfred, thy impious schemes are known. Heaven and this virtuous lady know them—nay, frown not, Prince. The Church despises thy menaces. Her thunders will be heard above thy wrath. Dare to proceed in thy cursed purpose of a divorce, until her sentence be known, and here I lance her anathema at thy head."

"Audacious rebel!" said Manfred, endeavouring to conceal the awe with which the Friar's words inspired him. "Dost thou presume to threaten thy lawful Prince?"

"Thou art no lawful Prince," said Jerome; "thou art no Prince—go, discuss thy claim with Frederic; and when that is done——"

"It is done," replied Manfred; "Frederic accepts Matilda's hand, and is content to waive his claim, unless I have no male issue"—as he spoke those words three drops of blood fell from the nose of Alfonso's statue. Manfred turned pale, and the Princess sank on her knees.

"Behold!" said the Friar; "mark this miraculous indication that the blood of Alfonso will never mix with that of Manfred!"

"My gracious Lord," said Hippolita, "let us submit ourselves to heaven. Think not thy ever obedient wife rebels against thy authority. I have no will but that of my Lord and the Church. To that revered tribunal let us appeal. It does not depend on us to burst the bonds that unite us. If the Church shall approve the dissolution of our marriage, be it so—I have but few years, and those of sorrow, to pass. Where can they be worn away so well as at the foot of this altar, in prayers for thine and Matilda's safety?"

"But thou shalt not remain here until then," said Manfred. "Repair with me to the castle, and there I will advise on the proper measures for a divorce;—but this meddling Friar comes not thither; my hospitable roof shall never more harbour a traitor—and for thy Reverence's offspring," continued he, "I banish him from my dominions. He, I ween, is no sacred personage, nor under the protection of the Church. Whoever weds Isabella, it shall not be Father Falconara's started-up son."

"They start up," said the Friar, "who are suddenly beheld in the seat of lawful Princes; but they wither away like the grass, and their place knows them no more."

Manfred, casting a look of scorn at the Friar, led Hippolita forth; but at the door of the church whispered one of his attendants to remain concealed about the convent, and bring him instant notice, if any one from the castle should repair thither.

CHAPTER V.

Every reflection which Manfred made on the Friar's behaviour, conspired to persuade him that Jerome was privy to an amour between Isabella and Theodore. But Jerome's new presumption, so dissonant from his former meekness, suggested still deeper apprehensions. The Prince even suspected that the Friar depended on some secret support from Frederic, whose arrival, coinciding with the novel appearance of Theodore, seemed to bespeak a correspondence. Still more was he troubled with the resemblance of Theodore to Alfonso's portrait. The latter he knew had unquestionably died without issue. Frederic had consented to bestow Isabella on him. These contradictions agitated his mind with numberless pangs.

He saw but two methods of extricating himself from his difficulties. The one was to resign his dominions to the Marquis—pride, ambition, and his reliance on ancient prophecies, which had pointed out a possibility of his preserving them to his posterity, combated that thought. The other was to press his marriage with Isabella. After long ruminating on these anxious thoughts, as he marched silently with Hippolita to the castle, he at last discoursed with that Princess on the subject of his disquiet, and used every insinuating and plausible argument to extract her consent to, even her promise of promoting the divorce. Hippolita needed little persuasions to bend her to his pleasure. She endeavoured to win him over to the measure of resigning his dominions; but finding her exhortations fruitless, she assured him, that as far as her conscience would allow, she would raise no opposition to a separation, though without better founded scruples than what he yet alleged, she would not engage to be active in demanding it.

This compliance, though inadequate, was sufficient to raise Manfred's hopes. He trusted that his power and wealth would easily advance his suit at the court of Rome, whither he resolved to engage Frederic to take a journey on purpose. That Prince had discovered so much passion for Matilda, that Manfred hoped to obtain all he wished by holding out or withdrawing his daughter's charms, according as the Marquis should appear more or less disposed to co-operate in his views. Even the absence of Frederic would be a material point gained, until he could take further measures for his security.

Dismissing Hippolita to her apartment, he repaired to that of the Marquis; but crossing the great hall through which he was to pass, he met Bianca. The damsel he knew was in the confidence of both the young ladies. It immediately occurred to him to sift her on the subject of Isabella and Theodore. Calling her aside into the recess of the oriel window of the hall, and soothing her with many fair words and promises, he demanded of her whether she knew aught of the state of Isabella's affections.

"I! my Lord! no my Lord—yes my Lord—poor Lady! she is wonderfully alarmed about her father's wounds; but I tell her he will do well; don't your Highness think so?"

"I do not ask you," replied Manfred, "what she thinks about her father; but you are in her secrets. Come, be a good girl and tell me; is there any young man—ha!—you understand me."

"Lord bless me! understand your Highness? no, not I. I told her a few vulnerary herbs and repose——"

"I am not talking," replied the Prince, impatiently, "about her father; I know he will do well."

"Bless me, I rejoice to hear your Highness say so; for though I thought it not right to let my young Lady despond, methought his greatness had a wan look, and a something—I remember when young Ferdinand was wounded by the Venetian— "

"Thou answerest from the point," interrupted Manfred; "but here, take this jewel, perhaps that may fix thy attention—nay, no reverences; my favour shall not stop here—come, tell me truly; how stands Isabella's heart?"

"Well! your Highness has such a way!" said Bianca, "to be sure—but can your Highness keep a secret? if it should ever come out of your lips——"

"It shall not, it shall not," cried Manfred.

"Nay, but swear, your Highness."

"By my halidame, if it should ever be known that I said it——"

"Why, truth is truth, I do not think my Lady Isabella ever much affectioned my young Lord your son; yet he was a sweet youth as one should see; I am sure, if I had been a Princess—but bless me! I must attend my Lady Matilda; she will marvel what is become of me."

"Stay," cried Manfred; "thou hast not satisfied my question. Hast thou ever carried any message, any letter?"

"I! good gracious!" cried Bianca; "I carry a letter? I would not to be a Queen. I hope your Highness thinks, though I am poor, I am honest. Did your Highness never hear what Count Marsigli offered me, when he came a wooing to my Lady Matilda?"

"I have not leisure," said Manfred, "to listen to thy tale. I do not question thy honesty. But it is thy duty to conceal nothing from me. How long has Isabella been acquainted with Theodore?"

"Nay, there is nothing can escape your Highness!" said Bianca; "not that I know any thing of the matter. Theodore, to be sure, is a proper young man, and, as my Lady Matilda says, the very image of good Alfonso. Has not your Highness remarked it?"

"Yes, yes,—No—thou torturest me," said Manfred. "Where did they meet? when?"

"Who! my Lady Matilda?" said Bianca.

"No, no, not Matilda: Isabella; when did Isabella first become acquainted with this Theodore?"

"Virgin Mary!" said Bianca, "how should I know?"

"Thou dost know," said Manfred; "and I must know; I will—— "

"Lord! your Highness is not jealous of young Theodore!" said Bianca.

"Jealous! no, no. Why should I be jealous? perhaps I mean to unite them—If I were sure Isabella would have no repugnance."

"Repugnance! no, I'll warrant her," said Bianca; "he is as comely a youth as ever trod on Christian ground. We are all in love with him; there is not a soul in the castle but would be rejoiced to have him for our Prince—I mean, when it shall please heaven to call your Highness to itself."

"Indeed!" said Manfred, "has it gone so far! oh! this cursed Friar!—but I must not lose time—go, Bianca, attend Isabella; but I charge thee, not a word of what has passed. Find out how she is affected towards Theodore; bring me good news, and that ring has a companion. Wait at the foot of the winding staircase: I am going to visit the Marquis, and will talk further with thee at my return."

Manfred, after some general conversation, desired Frederic to dismiss the two Knights, his companions, having to talk with him on urgent affairs. As soon as they were alone, he began in artful guise to sound the Marquis on the subject of

Matilda; and finding him disposed to his wish, he let drop hints on the difficulties that would attend the celebration of their marriage, unless——At that instant Bianca burst into the room with a wildness in her look and gestures that spoke the utmost terror.

"Oh! my Lord, my Lord!" cried she; "we are all undone! it is come again! it is come again!"

"What is come again?" cried Manfred amazed.

"Oh! the hand! the Giant! the hand!—support me! I am terrified out of my senses," cried Bianca. "I will not sleep in the castle to-night. Where shall I go? my things may come after me to-morrow—would I had been content to wed Francesco! this comes of ambition!"

"What has terrified thee thus, young woman?" said the Marquis. "Thou art safe here; be not alarmed."

"Oh! your Greatness is wonderfully good," said Bianca, "but I dare not—no, pray let me go—I had rather leave everything behind me, than stay another hour under this roof."

"Go to, thou hast lost thy senses," said Manfred. "Interrupt us not; we were communing on important matters—My Lord, this wench is subject to fits—Come with me, Bianca."

"Oh! the Saints! No," said Bianca," "for certain it comes to warn your Highness; why should it appear to me else? I say my prayers morning and evening—oh! if your Highness had believed Diego! 'Tis the same hand that he saw the foot to in the gallery-chamber—Father Jerome has often told us the prophecy would be out one of these days—'Bianca,' said he, 'mark my words—'"

"Thou ravest," said Manfred, in a rage; "be gone, and keep these fooleries to frighten thy companions."

"What! my Lord," cried Bianca, "do you think I have seen nothing? go to the foot of the great stairs yourself—as I live I saw it."

"Saw what? tell us, fair maid, what thou hast seen," said Frederic.

"Can your Highness listen," said Manfred, "to the delirium of a silly wench, who has heard stories of apparitions until she believes them?"

"This is more than fancy," said the Marquis; "her terror is too natural and too strongly impressed to be the work of imagination. Tell us, fair maiden, what it is has moved thee thus?"

"Yes, my Lord, thank your Greatness," said Bianca; "I believe I look very pale; I shall be better when I have recovered myself—I was going to my Lady Isabella's chamber, by his Highness's order——"

"We do not want the circumstances," interrupted Manfred. "Since his Highness will have it so, proceed; but be brief."

"Lord! your Highness thwarts one so!" replied Bianca; "I fear my hair—I am sure I never in my life—well! as I was telling your Greatness, I was going by his Highness's order to my Lady Isabella's chamber; she lies in the watchet-coloured chamber, on the right hand, one pair of stairs: so when I came to the great stairs—I was looking on his Highness's present here——"

"Grant me patience!" said Manfred, "will this wench never come to the point? what imports it to the Marquis, that I gave thee a bauble for thy faithful attendance on my daughter? we want to know what thou sawest."

"I was going to tell your Highness," said Bianca, "if you would permit me. So as I was rubbing the ring—I am sure I had not gone up three steps, but I heard the rattling of armour; for all the world such a clatter as Diego says he heard when the Giant turned him about in the gallery-chamber."

"What Giant is this, my Lord?" said the

Marquis; "is your castle haunted by giants and goblins?"

"Lord! what, has not your Greatness heard the story of the Giant in the gallery-chamber?" cried Bianca. "I marvel his Highness has not told you; mayhap you do not know there is a prophecy——"

"This trifling is intolerable," interrupted Manfred. "Let us dismiss this silly wench, my Lord! we have more important affairs to discuss."

"By your favour," said Frederic, "these are no trifles. The enormous sabre I was directed to in the wood, yon casque, its fellow—are these visions of this poor maiden's brain?"

"So Jaquez thinks, may it please your Greatness," said Bianca. "He says this moon will not be out without our seeing some strange revolution. For my part, I should not be surprised if it was to happen to-morrow; for, as I was saying, when I heard the clattering of armour, I was all in a cold sweat. I looked up, and, if your Greatness will believe me, I saw upon the uppermost banister of the great stairs a hand in armour ~~as big as big~~. I thought I should have swooned. I never stopped until I came hither—would I were well out of this castle. My Lady Matilda told me but yester-morning that her Highness Hippolita knows something."

"Thou art an insolent!" cried Manfred. "Lord Marquis, it much misgives me that this scene is concerted to affront me. Are my own domestics suborned to spread tales injurious to my honour? Pursue your claim by manly daring; or let us bury our feuds, as was proposed, by the intermarriage of our children. But trust me, it ill becomes a Prince of your bearing to practise on mercenary wenches."

"I scorn your imputation," said Frederic. "Until this hour I never set eyes on this damsel: I have given her no jewel. My Lord, my Lord, your conscience, your guilt accuses you, and would throw the suspicion on me; but keep your daughter, and think no more of Isabella. The judgments already fallen on your house forbid me matching into it."

Manfred, alarmed at the resolute tone in which Frederic delivered these words, endeavoured to pacify him. Dismissing Bianca, he made such submissions to the Marquis, and threw in such artful encomiums on Matilda, that Frederic was once more staggered. However, as his passion was of so recent a date, it could not at once surmount the scruples he had conceived. He had gathered enough from Bianca's discourse to persuade him that heaven declared itself against Manfred. The proposed marriages too removed his claim to a distance; and the principality of Otranto was a stronger temptation than the contingent reversion of it with Matilda. Still he would not absolutely recede from his engagements; but purposing to gain time, he demanded of Manfred if it was true in fact that Hippolita consented to the divorce. The Prince, transported to find no other obstacle, and depending on his influence over his wife, assured the Marquis it was so, and that he might satisfy himself of the truth from her own mouth.

As they were thus discoursing, word was brought that the banquet was prepared. Manfred conducted Frederic to the great hall, where they were received by Hippolita and the young Princesses. Manfred placed the Marquis next to Matilda, and seated himself between his wife and Isabella. Hippolita comported herself with an easy gravity; but the young ladies were silent and melancholy. Manfred, who was determined to pursue his point with the Marquis in the remainder of the evening, pushed on the feast until it waxed late; affecting unrestrained gaiety, and plying Frederic with repeated goblets of wine. The latter, more upon his guard than Manfred wished, declined his frequent challenges, on pretence of his late loss of blood; while the Prince, to raise his own disordered spirits, and to counterfeit unconcern, indulged himself in plentiful draughts, though not to the intoxication of his senses.

The evening being far advanced, the banquet concluded. Manfred would have withdrawn with Frederic; but the latter pleading weakness and want of repose, retired to his chamber, gallantly telling the Prince that his daughter should amuse his Highness until himself could attend him. Manfred accepted the party, and to the no small grief of Isabella, accompanied her to her apartment. Matilda waited on her mother to enjoy the freshness of the evening on the ramparts of the castle.

Soon as the company were dispersed their several ways, Frederic, quitting his chamber, inquired if Hippolita was alone, and was told by one of her attendants, who had not noticed her going forth, that at that hour she generally withdrew to her oratory, where he probably would find her. The Marquis, during the repast, had beheld

Matilda with increase of passion. He now wished to find Hippolita in the disposition her Lord had promised. The portents that had alarmed him were forgotten in his desires. Stealing softly and unobserved to the apartment of Hippolita, he entered it with a resolution to encourage her acquiescence to the divorce, having perceived that Manfred was resolved to make the possession of Isabella an unalterable condition, before he would grant Matilda to his wishes.

The Marquis was not surprised at the silence that reigned in the Princess's apartment. Concluding her, as he had been advertised, in her oratory, he passed on. The door was ajar; the evening gloomy and overcast. Pushing open the door gently, he saw a person kneeling before the altar. As he approached nearer, it seemed not a woman, but one in a long woollen weed, whose back was towards him. The person seemed absorbed in prayer. The Marquis was about to return, when the figure, rising, stood some moments fixed in meditation, without regarding him. The Marquis, expecting the holy person to come forth, and meaning to excuse his uncivil interruption, said,

"Reverend Father, I sought the Lady Hippolita."

"Hippolita!" replied a hollow voice; "camest thou to this castle to seek Hippolita?" and then the figure, turning slowly round, discovered to Frederic the fleshless jaws and empty sockets of a skeleton, wrapt in a hermit's cowl.

"Angels of grace protect me!" cried Frederic, recoiling.

"Deserve their protection!" said the Spectre. Frederic, falling on his knees, adjured the phantom to take pity on him.

"Dost thou not remember me?" said the apparition. "Remember the wood of Joppa!"

"Art thou that holy hermit?" cried Frederic, trembling. "Can I do aught for thy eternal peace?"

"Wast thou delivered from bondage," said the spectre, "to pursue carnal delights? Hast thou forgotten the buried sabre, and the behest of Heaven engraven on it?"

"I have not, I have not," said Frederic; "but say, blest spirit, what is thy errand to me? What remains to be done?"

"To forget Matilda!" said the apparition; and vanished.

Frederic's blood froze in his veins. For some minutes he remained motionless. Then falling prostrate on his face before the altar, he besought the intercession of every saint for pardon. A flood of tears succeeded to this transport; and the image of the beauteous Matilda rushing in spite of him on his thoughts, he lay on the ground in a conflict of penitence and passion. Ere he could recover from this agony of his spirits, the Princess Hippolita with a taper in her hand entered the oratory alone. Seeing a man without motion on the floor, she gave a shriek, concluding him dead. Her fright brought Frederic to himself. Rising suddenly, his face bedewed with tears, he would have rushed from her presence; but Hippolita stopping him, conjured him in the most plaintive accents to explain the cause of his disorder, and by what strange chance she had found him there in that posture.

"Ah, virtuous Princess!" said the Marquis, penetrated with grief, and stopped.

"For the love of Heaven, my Lord," said Hippolita, "disclose the cause of this transport! What mean these doleful sounds, this alarming exclamation on my name? What woes has heaven still in store for the wretched Hippolita? Yet silent! By every pitying angel, I adjure thee, noble Prince," continued she, falling at his feet, "to disclose the purport of what lies at thy heart. I see thou feelest for me; thou feelest the sharp pangs that thou inflictest—speak, for pity! Does aught thou knowest concern my child?"

"I cannot speak," cried Frederic, bursting from her. "Oh, Matilda!"

Quitting the Princess thus abruptly, he hastened to his own apartment. At the door of it he was accosted by Manfred, who flushed by wine and love had come to seek him, and to propose to waste some hours of the night in music and revelling. Frederic, offended at an invitation so dissonant from the mood of his soul, pushed him rudely aside, and entering his chamber, flung the door intemperately against Manfred, and bolted it inwards. The haughty Prince, enraged at this unaccountable behaviour, withdrew in a frame of mind capable of the most fatal excesses. As he crossed the court, he was met by the domestic whom he had planted at the convent as a spy on Jerome and Theodore. This man, almost breathless with the haste he had made, informed his Lord that Theodore and some lady from the castle were, at that instant, in private conference at the tomb of Alfonso in St. Nicholas's church. He had dogged Theodore thither, but the gloominess of the night had prevented his discovering who the woman was.

Manfred, whose spirits were inflamed, and whom Isabella had driven from her on his urging his passion with too little reserve, did not doubt but the inquietude she had expressed had been occasioned by her impatience to meet Theodore. Provoked by this conjecture, and enraged at her father, he hastened secretly to the great church. Gliding softly between the aisles, and guided by an imperfect gleam of moonshine that shone faintly through the illuminated windows, he stole towards the tomb of Alfonso, to which he was directed by indistinct whispers of the persons he sought. The first sounds he could distinguish were—

"Does it, alas! depend on me? Manfred will never permit our union."

"No, this shall prevent it!" cried the tyrant, drawing his dagger, and plunging it over her shoulder into the bosom of the person that spoke.

"Ah, me, I am slain!" cried Matilda, sinking. "Good heaven, receive my soul!"

"Savage, inhuman monster, what hast thou done!" cried Theodore, rushing on him, and wrenching his dagger from him.

"Stop, stop thy impious hand!" cried Matilda; "it is my father!"

Manfred, waking as from a trance, beat his breast, twisted his hands in his locks, and endeavoured to recover his dagger from Theodore to despatch himself. Theodore, scarce less distracted, and only mastering the transports of his grief to assist Matilda, had now by his cries drawn some of the monks to his aid. While part of them endeavoured, in concert with the afflicted Theodore, to stop the blood of the dying Princess, the rest prevented Manfred from laying violent hands on himself.

Matilda, resigning herself patiently to her fate, acknowledged with looks of grateful love the zeal of Theodore. Yet oft as her faintness would permit her speech its way, she begged the assistants to comfort her father. Jerome, by this time, had learnt the fatal news, and reached the church. His looks seemed to reproach Theodore, but turning to Manfred, he said,

"Now, tyrant! behold the completion of woe fulfilled on thy impious and devoted head! The blood of Alfonso cried to heaven for vengeance; and heaven has permitted its altar to be polluted by assassination, that thou mightest shed thy own blood at the foot of that Prince's sepulchre!"

"Cruel man!" cried Matilda, "to aggravate the woes of a parent; may heaven bless my father, and forgive him as I do! My Lord, my gracious Sire, dost thou forgive thy child? Indeed, I came not hither to meet Theodore. I found him praying at this tomb, whither my mother sent me to intercede for thee, for her—dearest father, bless your child, and say you forgive her."

"Forgive thee! Murderous monster!" cried Manfred, "can assassins forgive? I took thee for Isabella; but heaven directed my bloody hand to the heart of my child. Oh, Matilda!—I cannot utter it—canst thou forgive the blindness of my rage?"

"I can, I do; and may heaven confirm it!" said Matilda; "but while I have life to ask it—oh! my mother! what will she feel? Will you comfort her, my Lord? Will you not put her away? Indeed she loves you! Oh, I am faint! bear me to the castle. Can I live to have her close my eyes?"

Theodore and the monks besought her earnestly to suffer herself to be borne into the convent; but her instances were so pressing to be carried to the castle, that placing her on a litter, they conveyed her thither as she requested. Theodore, supporting her head with his arm, and hanging over her in an agony of despairing love, still endeavoured to inspire her with hopes of life. Jerome, on the other side, comforted her with discourses of heaven, and holding a crucifix before her, which she bathed with innocent tears, prepared her for her passage to immortality. Manfred, plunged in the deepest affliction, followed the litter in despair.

Ere they reached the castle, Hippolita, informed of the dreadful catastrophe, had flown to meet her murdered child; but when she saw the afflicted procession, the mightiness of her grief deprived her of her senses, and she fell lifeless to the earth in a swoon. Isabella and Frederic, who attended her, were overwhelmed in almost equal sorrow. Matilda alone seemed insensible to her own situation: every thought was lost in tenderness for her mother.

Ordering the litter to stop, as soon as Hippolita was brought to herself, she asked for her father. He approached, unable to speak. Matilda, seizing his hand and her mother's, locked them in her own, and then clasped them to her heart. Manfred could not support this act of pathetic piety. He dashed himself on the ground, and cursed the day he was born. Isabella, apprehensive that these struggles of passion were more than Matilda could support, took upon herself to order Manfred to be borne to his apartment, while she caused Matilda to be conveyed to the nearest chamber. Hippolita, scarce more alive than her daughter, was regardless of everything but her; but when the tender Isabella's care would have likewise removed her, while the surgeons examined Matilda's wound, she cried,

"Remove me! never, never! I lived but in her, and will expire with her."

Matilda raised her eyes at her mother's voice, but closed them again without speaking. Her sinking pulse and the damp coldness of her hand soon dispelled all hopes of recovery. Theodore followed the surgeons into the outer chamber, and heard them pronounce the fatal sentence with a transport equal to frenzy.

"Since she cannot live mine," cried he, "at least she shall be mine in death! Father! Jerome! will you not join our hands?" cried he to the Friar, who, with the Marquis, had accompanied the surgeons.

"What means thy distracted rashness?" said Jerome. "Is this an hour for marriage?"

"It is, it is," cried Theodore. "Alas! there is no other!"

"Young man, thou art too unadvised," said Frederic. "Dost thou think we are to listen to thy fond transports in this hour of fate? What pretensions hast thou to the Princess?"

"Those of a Prince," said Theodore; "of the sovereign of Otranto. This reverend man, my father, has informed me who I am."

"Thou ravest," said the Marquis. "There is no Prince of Otranto but myself, now Manfred, by murder, by sacrilegious murder, has forfeited all pretensions."

"My Lord," said Jerome, assuming an air of command, "he tells you true. It was not my purpose the secret should have been divulged so soon, but fate presses onward to its work. What his hot-headed passion has revealed, my tongue confirms. Know, Prince, that when Alfonso set sail for the Holy Land——"

"Is this a season for explanations?" cried Theodore. "Father, come and unite me to the Princess; she shall be mine! In every other thing I will dutifully obey you. My life! my adored Matilda!" continued Theodore, rushing back into the inner chamber, "will you not be mine? Will you not bless your——"

Isabella made signs to him to be silent, apprehending the Princess was near her end.

"What, is she dead?" cried Theodore; "is it possible!"

The violence of his exclamations brought Matilda to herself. Lifting up her eyes, she looked round for her mother.

"Life of my soul, I am here!" cried Hippolita; "think not I will quit thee!"

"Oh! you are too good," said Matilda. "But weep not for me, my mother! I am going where sorrow never dwells—Isabella, thou hast loved me; wouldst thou not supply my fondness to this dear, dear woman? Indeed I am faint!"

"Oh! my child! my child!" said Hippolita in a flood of tears, "can I not withhold thee a moment?"

"It will not be," said Matilda; "commend me to heaven — Where is my father? forgive him, dearest mother—forgive him my death; it was an error. Oh! I had forgotten—dearest mother, I vowed never to see Theodore more—perhaps that has drawn down this calamity—but it was not intentional—can you pardon me?"

"Oh! wound not my agonising soul!" said Hippolita; "thou never couldst offend me—Alas! she faints! help! help!"

"I would say something more," said Matilda, struggling, "but it cannot be—Isabella—Theodore—for my sake—Oh!——" she expired.

Isabella and her women tore Hippolita from the corse; but Theodore threatened destruction to all who attempted to remove him from it. He printed a thousand kisses on her clay-cold hands, and uttered every expression that despairing love could dictate.

Isabella, in the meantime, was accompanying the afflicted Hippolita to her apartment; but, in the middle of the court, they were met by Manfred, who, distracted with his own thoughts, and anxious once more to behold his daughter, was advancing to the chamber where she lay. As the moon was now at its height, he read in the countenances of this unhappy company the event he dreaded.

"What! is she dead?" cried he in wild confusion. A clap of thunder at that instant shook the castle to its foundations; the earth rocked, and the clank of more than mortal armour was heard behind. Frederic and Jerome thought the last day was at hand. The latter, forcing Theodore along with them, rushed into the court. The moment Theodore appeared, the walls of the castle behind Manfred were thrown down with a mighty force, and the form of Alfonso, dilated to an immense magnitude, appeared in the centre of the ruins.

"Behold in Theodore the true heir of Alfonso!" said the vision: And having pronounced those words, accompanied by a clap of thunder, it ascended solemnly towards heaven, where the clouds parting asunder, the form of St. Nicholas was seen, and receiving Alfonso's shade, they were soon wrapt from mortal eyes in a blaze of glory.

The beholders fell prostrate on their faces, acknowledging the divine will. The first that broke silence was Hippolita.

"My Lord," said she to the desponding Manfred, "behold the vanity of human greatness! Conrad is gone! Matilda is no more! In Theodore we view the true Prince of Otranto. By what miracle he is so I know not—suffice it to us, our doom is pronounced! shall we not, can we but dedicate the few deplorable hours we have to live, in deprecating the further wrath of heaven? heaven ejects us—whither can we fly, but to yon holy cells that yet offer us a retreat."

"Thou guiltless but unhappy woman! unhappy by my crimes!" replied Manfred, "my heart at last is open to thy devout admonitions. Oh! could—but it cannot be—ye are lost in wonder—let me at last do justice on myself! To heap shame on my own head is all the satisfaction I have left to offer to offended heaven. My story has drawn down these judgments: Let my confession atone—but, ah! what can atone for usurpation and a murdered child? a child murdered in a consecrated place? List, sirs, and may this bloody record be a warning to future tyrants!

"Alfonso, ye all know, died in the Holy Land——ye would interrupt me; ye would say he came not fairly to his end—it is most true—why else this bitter cup which Manfred must drink to the dregs. Ricardo, my grandfather, was his chamberlain—I would draw a veil over my ancestor's crimes—but it is in vain! Alfonso died by poison. A fictitious will declared Ricardo his heir. His crimes pursued him—yet he lost no Conrad, no Matilda! I pay the price of usurpation for all! A storm overtook him. Haunted by his guilt he vowed to St. Nicholas to found a church and two convents, if he lived to reach Otranto. The sacrifice was accepted: the saint appeared to him in a dream, and promised that Ricardo's posterity should reign in Otranto until the rightful owner should be grown too large to inhabit the castle, and as long as issue male from Ricardo's loins should remain to enjoy it—alas! alas! nor male nor female, except myself, remains of all his wretched race! I have done—the woes of these three days speak the rest. How this young man can be Alfonso's heir I know not—yet I do not doubt it. His are these dominions; I resign them—yet I knew not Alfonso had an heir—I question not the will of heaven—poverty and prayer must fill up the woeful space, until Manfred shall be summoned to Ricardo."

"What remains is my part to declare," said Jerome. "When Alfonso set sail for the Holy Land he was driven by a storm to the coast of Sicily. The other vessel, which bore Ricardo and his train, as your Lordship must have heard, was separated from him."

"It is most true," said Manfred; "and the title you give me is more than an outcast can claim—well! be it so—proceed."

Jerome blushed, and continued. "For three months Lord Alfonso was wind-bound in Sicily. There he became enamoured of a fair virgin named Victoria. He was too pious to tempt her to forbidden pleasures. They were married. Yet deeming this amour incongruous with the holy vow of arms by which he was bound, he determined to conceal their nuptials until his return from the Crusade, when he purposed to seek and acknowledge her for his lawful wife. He left her pregnant. During his absence she was delivered of a daughter. But scarce had she felt a mother's pangs ere she heard the fatal rumour of her Lord's death, and the succession of Ricardo. What could a friendless, helpless woman do? Would her testimony avail?—yet, my lord, I have an authentic writing——"

"It needs not," said Manfred; "the horrors of these days, the vision we have but now seen, all corroborate thy evidence beyond a thousand parchments. Matilda's death and my expulsion——"

"Be composed, my Lord," said Hippolita; "this holy man did not mean to recall your griefs." Jerome proceeded.

"I shall not dwell on what is needless. The daughter of which Victoria was delivered, was at her maturity bestowed in marriage on me. Victoria died; and the secret remained locked in my breast. Theodore's narrative has told the rest."

The Friar ceased. The disconsolate company retired to the remaining part of the castle. In the morning Manfred signed his abdication of the principality, with the approbation of Hippolita, and each took on them the habit of religion in the neighbouring convents. Frederic offered his daughter to the new Prince, which Hippolita's tenderness for Isabella concurred to promote. But Theodore's grief was too fresh to admit the thought of another love; and it was not until after frequent discourses with Isabella of his dear Matilda, that he was persuaded he could know no happiness but in the society of one with whom he could for ever indulge the melancholy that had taken possession of his soul.

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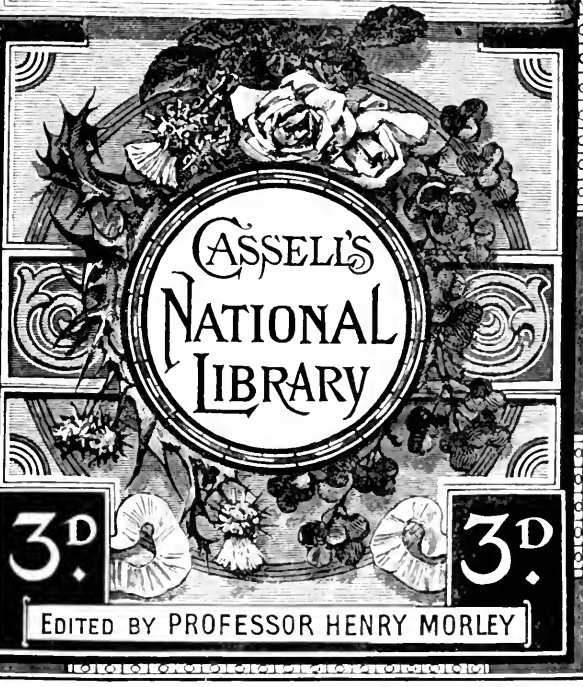

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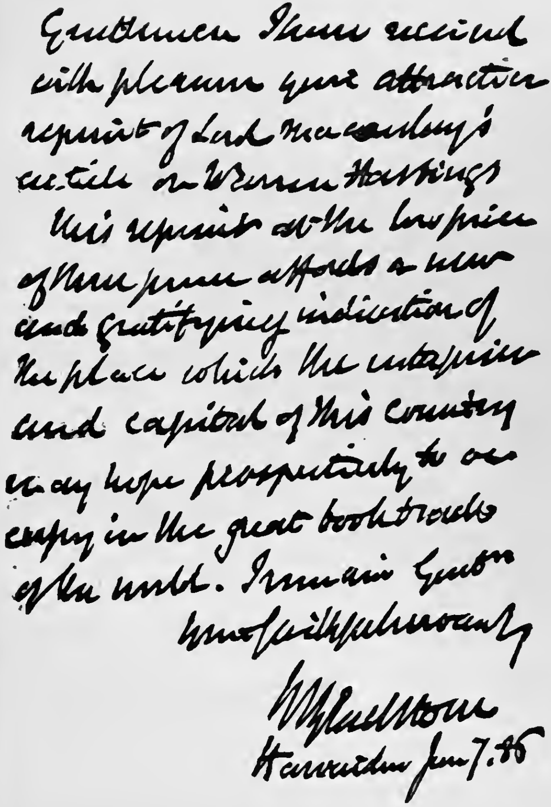

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PORTRAIT OF CHARLOTTE BRONTË . . . *Frontispiece*

From the drawing by G. Richmond in the possession of the Rev. A. B. Nichols, B.A.

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ROCHESTER AND JANE EYRE . . . *To face p.* 168

From a water-colour drawing by Frederick Walker, A.R.A.

Views of places described in the work, reproduced from photographs taken by Mr. W. R. Bland of Duffield, Derby, in conjunction with Mr. C. Barrow Keene of Derby:

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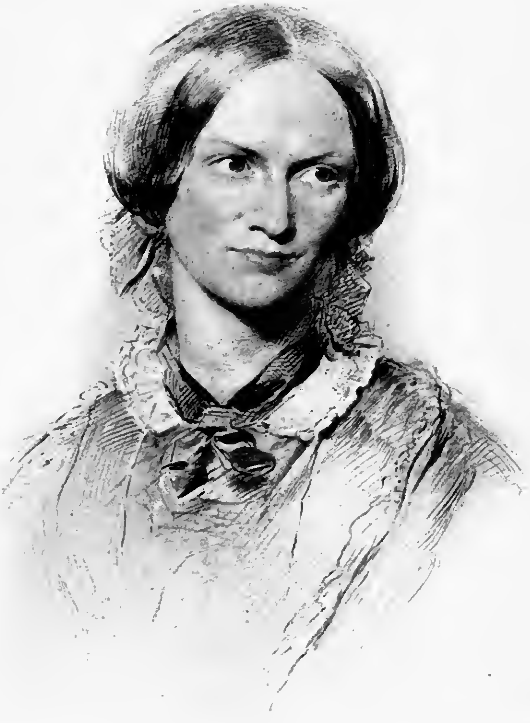


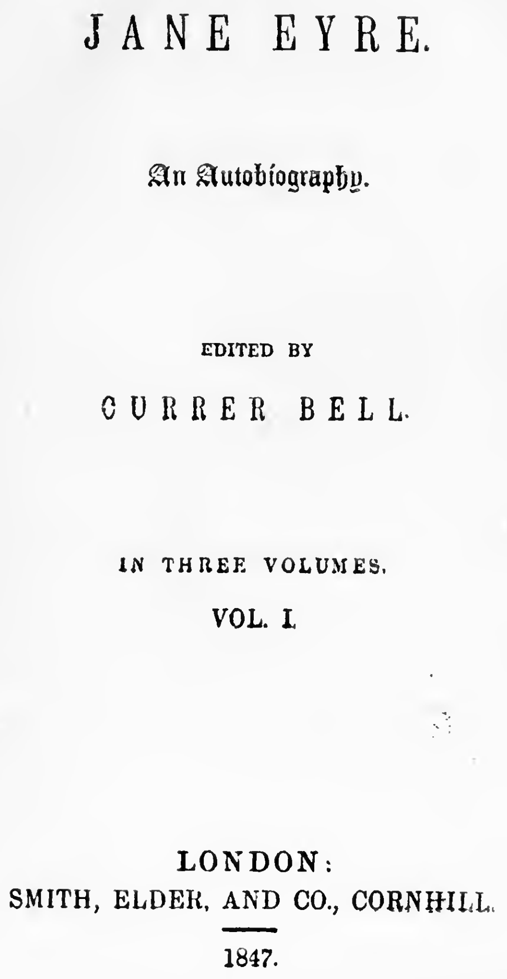
G. Richmond del.

Walker & B

Sincerely yours

C Brontë

Facsimile of the Title-page of the First Edition



JANE EYRE.

An Autobiography.

EDITED BY

CURRER BELL.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:
SMITH, ELDER, AND CO., CORNHILL.

1847.

INTRODUCTION

TO

JANE EYRE

'JANE EYRE' was first published in October 1847. Half a century—since this tale of the North by an unknown writer stole upon London, and, in the very midst of the serial publication of 'Vanity Fair,' took the town by storm, obtaining for its author in the course of a few weeks a success which, as the creator of Becky Sharp afterwards said to her, a little sadly and sharply, 'it took me the work of ten years to achieve.'

Half a century, in the view of the Roman Church, is often hardly sufficient to decide even the first step in the process of canonisation; it is generally amply sufficient to decide all matters of literary rank and permanence. How has the verdict gone in the case of Currer Bell? Have these fifty years 'cut all meaning from the name,' or have they but filled it with a fuller content, wreathed it with memories and associations that will for ever keep it luminous and delightful amid the dim tracts of the past?

Judging by the books that have been written and read in recent years, by the common verdict as to the Brontë sisters, their story, and their work, which prevails, almost without exception, in the literary criticism of the present day; by the tone of personal tenderness, even of passionate homage, in which many writers speak of Charlotte and of Emily; and by the increasing recognition which their books have obtained abroad, one may say with some confidence that the name and memory of the Brontës were never more alive than now, that 'Honour and Fame have got about their graves' for good and all, and that Charlotte and Emily Brontë are no less secure, at any rate, than Jane Austen or George Eliot or Mrs. Browning of literary recollection in the time to come.

But if the Brontës live, their books live also. There are some names of the past — Byron — Voltaire — that are far greater now, more full of magic and of spell, than the books associated with them — that are, in fact, separable from the books, and could almost live on without them. But Charlotte Brontë *is* Jane Eyre and Lucy Snowe. You cannot think of her apart from what she has written, and everything that she wrote has the challenging quality of personal emotion or of passion, moving in a narrow range among very concrete things, and intimately fused throughout with the incidents and feelings of one small, intense experience: so that, if one finds, as one does find abundantly, that the Brontës are remembered, it must be that their books are read, that people still sit up into the night with 'Jane Eyre,' and are still as angry as they were at the first, that they can get no one to assure them of Paul Emmanuel's safe return.

So it must be; and so, indeed, the personal experience of most of us can vouch that it is. Nevertheless, here and there one may hear a protesting voice. Here and there a reader—and generally a reader of more subtlety and range than his fellows—struck with the union of certain extravagances and certain dogmatisms in Charlotte Brontë's work, with the weakness of Anne's and the crudity of Emily's, will dare to say, 'Not at all! The vitality of the Brontë fame does not mean primarily the vitality of the Brontë books. It is a vitality which springs from the English love of the pathetic and the picturesque, and the English tendency to subordinate matters of art to matters of sentiment. Mrs. Gaskell, herself an accomplished novelist, wrote an account of these lonely girls on a Yorkshire moor, struggling with poverty and consumption, developing genius in the very wrestle with death, taking the heaven of fame by violence, and perishing in the effort. She showed them to us oppressed by poverty and by daily contact with a vicious brother, and yet, through it all, remaining dutiful, loving, and virtuous, as the good English public likes them to be: she describes the deaths—the piteous deaths—of two of the sisters in the very moment, or on the very threshold, of success, and, finally, her narrative brought us to the death of Charlotte herself—Charlotte snatched from happiness and from motherhood, after one brief year of married life: and so skilful is the telling, so touching the story, that the great English heart goes out to it, and forthwith the Brontë books must be books of genius, because the Brontës are so interesting and their story so tragic.'

Perhaps this explanation is put forward to account rather for the continuance of the Brontës' fame than for their original success. Such a critic would admit that 'Jane Eyre' is at least a vivid and exciting story; that 'Villette' has at least passages of extraordinary brilliance: but he will obstinately maintain, none the less, that other books, now forgotten, have had as much, and that the Brontë 'legend' has unfairly strengthened the claim of the Brontë stories upon posterity.

Let us see how such a contention stands in the case of 'Jane Eyre.' 'Jane Eyre'—to run through a summary of the plot—is the story of an orphan girl, reared at a Charity School amid many hardships, going out into the world as a governess, and falling in love with her employer, Mr. Rochester. She yields herself to her own passion and to his masterful love-making with an eager, an over-eager abandonment. The wedding-day is fixed; the small marriage party assembles. But in the very church, and at the moment of the ceremony, it is revealed to Jane Eyre that Mr. Rochester has a wife living, a frenzied lunatic who has been confined for months in a corner of the same house where she and Rochester have had their daily dwelling; that Rochester has deliberately entrapped her, and that she stands on the edge of an abyss. The marriage party breaks up in confusion; and Rochester's next endeavour is to persuade the stunned and miserable Jane to scout law and convention, and fly with him to love and foreign parts. He shows her the lunatic, in all the odious horror of her state, and Jane forgives him on the spot, having never indeed, so far as appears, felt any deep resentment of his conduct. Nevertheless, she summons up courage to leave him. She steals away by night, and, after days of wandering and starvation, she finds a home with the Rivers family, who ultimately turn out to be her cousins. St. John Rivers, the brother of the family, an Evangelical clergyman possessed with a fanatical enthusiasm for missionary life, observes the girl's strong and energetic nature, and makes up his mind to marry her, not in the least because he loves her, but because he thinks her fitted to be a missionary's wife. Her will is on the point of yielding to his, when she hears a mysterious midnight call from Rochester; she hurries back to her master, to find him blinded and maimed by the fire which has destroyed his house and his mad wife together; and of course the end is happiness.

Now certainly there never was a plot, which pretended to be a plot, of looser texture than that of 'Jane Eyre.' It abounds with absurdities and inconsistencies. The critics of Charlotte Brontë's time had no difficulty in pointing them out; they lie, indeed, on the surface for all to see. That such incidents should have happened to Jane Eyre in Mr. Rochester's house as did happen, without awakening her suspicions; that the existence of a lunatic should have been commonly known to all the servants of the house, yet wholly concealed from the governess; that Mr. Rochester should have been a man of honour and generosity, a man with whom not only Jane Eyre, but clearly the writer herself, is in love, and yet capable of deliberately betraying and deceiving a girl of twenty placed in a singularly helpless position;—these are the fundamental puzzles of the story. Mrs. Fairfax is a mystery throughout. How, knowing what she did, did she not inevitably know more?—what was her real relation to Rochester?—to Jane Eyre? These are questions that no one can answer—out of the four corners of the book. The country-house party is a tissue of extravagance throughout;

the sarcasms and brutalities of the beautiful Miss Ingram are no more credible than the manners assumed by the aristocratic Rochester from the beginning towards his ward's governess, or the amazing freedom with which he pours into the ears of the same governess—a virtuous girl of twenty, who has been no more than a few weeks under his roof—the story of his relations with Adèle's mother.

Turn to the early scenes, for instance, between Jane and Rochester. They have been 'several days' under the same roof; it is Jane's second interview with her employer. Mr. Rochester, in Sultan fashion, sends for her and her pupil after dinner. He sits silent, while Jane's quick eye takes note of him. Suddenly he turns upon her.

> 'You examine me, Miss Eyre,' said he; 'do you think me handsome?'

Jane, taken by surprise, delivers a stout negative, whereupon her employer, in caprice or pique, pursues the subject further:

> '——Criticise me: does my forehead not please you?'
>
> He lifted up the sable waves of hair which lay horizontally over his brow, and showed a solid enough mass of intellectual organs, but an abrupt deficiency where the suave sign of benevolence should have risen.
>
> 'Now, ma'am, am I a fool?'

Poor Jane gets out of the dilemma as best she can, and gradually this astonishing gentleman thaws, becomes conversational and kind. And this is how he puts the little governess at her ease:—

> 'You look very much puzzled, Miss Eyre; and though you are not pretty, any more than I am handsome, yet a puzzled air becomes you; besides, it is convenient, for it keeps those searching eyes of yours away from my physiognomy, and busies them with the worsted flowers of the rug; so puzzle on. Young lady, I am disposed to be gregarious and communicative to-night.'

'*Young lady, I am disposed to be gregarious and communicative to-night!*' Not even 'Mr. Rawchester' could exceed this. Parody has nothing to add.

The country-house party is equally far from anything known, either to realistic or romantic truth, even to the truth as it existed in the days of 'Jane Eyre's' Quarterly Reviewer and the Cowan Bridge School. Listen to the badinage of the beautiful and accomplished Miss Ingram. She is making brutal fun of governesses, in order to be overheard by the shy and shrinking Jane behind the window-curtain. Miss Ingram, it should be remarked, has never seen Jane before, has no grievance against her, and can only be supposed to be displaying the aristocratic temper as such. It pleases her to describe a love affair that her childhood had discovered between her own governess and her brother's tutor. She tells how she and her precious brothers and sisters employed it—the love affair—'as a sort of lever to hoist our dead-weights from the house.'

'. . . Dear mamma, there, as soon as she got an inkling of the business, found out that it was of an immoral tendency. Did you not, my lady-mother?'

'Certainly, my best. And I was quite right, depend on that; there are a thousand reasons why liaisons between governesses and tutors should never be tolerated a moment in any well-regulated house; firstly——'

'Oh, gracious, mamma! spare us the enumeration! *Au reste*, we all know them: danger of bad example to the innocence of childhood—distractions and consequent neglect of duty—on the part of the attached—mutual alliance and reliance; confidence thence resulting—insolence accompanying—mutiny and general blow-up. Am I right, Baroness Ingram, of Ingram Park?'

Baroness Ingram, of Ingram Park!

But Miss Ingram can also show herself as the gay and sprightly trifler with Rochester's well-bred homage.

'Whenever I marry,' she continued, after a pause which none interrupted, 'I am resolved that my husband shall not be a rival, but a foil. Mr. Rochester, now sing, and I will play for you.'

'I am all obedience,' was the response.

'Here, then, is a Corsair-song. Know that I doat on Corsairs; and for that reason sing it "con spirito."'

'Commands from Miss Ingram's lips would put spirit into a mug of milk and water.'

And so on. The whole scene from beginning to end is a piece of heavy grotesque, without either the truth or the fun of good satire. It was these pages, of course, and certain others like them in the book, that set George Henry Lewes preaching the 'mild eyes,' the 'truth,' and 'finish' of Miss Austen to the new and stormy genius which had produced 'Jane Eyre.' And one may see, perhaps, in Charlotte's soreness, in the very vehemence that she shows under this particular criticism, that, secretly, the shaft has gone home. She is, after all, infinitely shrewd, sensitive, and, in the end, just. She wrote a petulant letter to Mr. Lewes; but she sent for 'Pride and Prejudice,' which she had never read, and the probability is that, in spite of a natural antipathy, her quick eye took note at once of the fineness of stroke that goes to caricature itself in that immortal book; that she pondered Mr. Collins and Lady Catharine de Burgh; and that in the comparative ease and urbanity which marked the painting of manners in 'Shirley,' the influence of her tilt with Lewes counts for something.

As to the other weaknesses of plot and conception, they are very obvious and very simple. The 'arrangements' by which Jane Eyre is led to find a home in the Rivers household, and becomes at once her uncle's heiress, and the good angel of her newly discovered cousins; the device of the phantom voice that recalls her to Rochester's side; the fire that destroys the mad wife, and delivers into Jane's hands a subdued and helpless Rochester;—all these belong to that more mechanical and external sort of plot-making, which the modern novelist of feeling and passion—as distinguished from the novelist of adventure—prides himself on renouncing. To him the painting of a situation like that, say, in Benjamin Constant's 'Adolphe'—infinitely true, and wholly insoluble—where the writer scorns to apply any coercive framework, any rough-and-ready 'plot' to his material, is the admirable and important thing. The true subject of 'Jane Eyre' is the courage with which a friendless and loving girl confronts her own passion, and, in the interest of some strange social instinct which she knows as 'duty,' which she cannot explain and can only obey, tramples her love underfoot, and goes out miserable into the world. Beside this wrestle of the human will, everything else is trivial or vulgar. The various expedients — legacies, uncles, fires, and coincidences — by which Jane Eyre is ultimately brought to happiness, cheapen and degrade the book without convincing the reader. In fact—to return to our *advocatus diaboli*—'"Jane Eyre" is on the one side a rather poor novel of incident, planned on the conventional pattern, and full of clumsy execution; on another side it is a picture of passion and of ideas, for which in truth the writer had no sufficient equipment; she moves imprisoned, to quote Mr. Leslie Stephen, in "a narrow circle of thoughts;" if you press it, the psychology of the book is really childish; Rochester is absurd, Jane Eyre, in spite of the stir that she makes, only half-realised and half-conscious. Still, as a study of feeling, adapted to some extent to modern realist demands, the novel came at a happy moment. It is one of the signs, no doubt, that mark the transition from the old novel to the new, from the old novel of plot and coincidence to the new novel of psychology and character. But, given the defects of the book, how is it possible to assign it a high place in the history of that great modern art which has commanded the knowledge of a Tolstoy, and the mind of a Turguénieff, which is the subtle interpreter and not the vulgar stage-manager of nature, which shrinks from the merely obvious and vigorous, and is ever pressing forward toward that more delicate, more complex, more elusive expression, satisfying in proportion to its incompleteness, which is the highest response of human genius to this unintelligible world?'

II

So far the objector; yet, in spite of it all, 'Jane Eyre' persists, and Charlotte Brontë is with the immortals. What is it that a critic of this type forgets—what item does he drop out of the reckoning which yet, in the addition, decides the sum?

Simply, one might say, Charlotte Brontë herself. Literature, says Joubert, has been called the expression of society; and so no doubt it is, looked at as a whole. In the single writer, however, it appears rather as the expression of studies, or temper, or personality. 'And this last is the best. There are books so fine that literature in them is but the expression of those that write them.' In other words, there are books where the writer seems to be everything, the material employed, the environment, almost nothing. The main secret of the charm that clings to Charlotte Brontë's books is, and will always be, the contact which they give us with her own fresh, indomitable, surprising personality—surprising, above all. In spite of its conventionalities of scheme, 'Jane Eyre' has, in detail, in conversation, in the painting of character, that perpetual magic of the unexpected which overrides a thousand faults, and keeps the mood of the reader happy and alert. The expedients of the plot may irritate or chill the artistic sense; the voice of the story-teller, in its inflections of passion, or feeling or reverie, charms and holds the ear, almost from first to last. The general plan may be commonplace, the ideas even of no great profundity; but the book is original. How often in the early scenes of childhood or school-life does one instinctively expect the conventional solution, the conventional softening, the conventional prettiness or quaintness, that so many other story-tellers, of undoubted talent, could not have resisted! And it never comes. Hammer-like, the blows of a passionate realism descend. Jane Eyre, the little helpless child, is never comforted; Mrs. Reid, the cruel aunt, is never sorry for her cruelties; Bessie, the kind nurse, is not *very* kind, she does not break the impression, she satisfies no instinct of poetic compensation, she only just makes the story credible, the reader's assent possible. So, at Lowood, Helen Burns is not a suffering angel; there is nothing consciously pretty or touching in the wonderful picture of her; reality, with its discords, its infinite novelties, lends word and magic to the passion of Charlotte's memory of her dead sister; all is varied, living, poignant, full of the inexhaustible savour of truth, and warm with the fire of the heart. So that at last, when pure pathos comes, when Helen sleeps herself to death in Jane's arms, when the struggle is over, and room is made for softness, for pity, the mind of the reader yields itself wholly, without reserve, to the working of an artist so masterful, so self-contained, so rightly frugal as to the great words and great emotions of her art. We are in the presence of the same kind of power as that which drew the death of Bazarov in 'Fathers and Sons'—a power which, in the regions covered by the experience of the mind behind it, 'nothing common does nor mean,' which shrinks from the borrowed and the imitated and the insincere, as the patriot shrinks from treason.

Personality then—strong, free, passionate personality—is the sole but the sufficient spell of these books. Can we analyse some of its elements?—so far, at least, as their literary expression is concerned?

In the first place, has it ever been sufficiently recognised that Charlotte Brontë is first and foremost *an Irishwoman*, that her genius is at bottom a Celtic genius? When she first appeared at the Roehead school in 1831, as a child of fourteen, it was noticed by the schoolfellow to whom we owe so many early remembrances of her, that she 'spoke with a strong Irish accent.' Her father came from an Irish cabin in County Down; her mother was of a Cornish family. The main characteristics indeed of the Celt are all hers—disinterestedness, melancholy, wildness, a wayward force and passion, for ever wooed by sounds and sights to which other natures are insensible—by murmurs from the earth, by colours in the sky, by tones and accents of the soul, that speak to the Celtic sense as to no other. 'We shall never build the Parthenon,' said Renan of his own Breton race; 'marble is not for us; but we know how to grip the heart and the soul; we have an art of piercing that belongs to us alone; we plunge our hands into the entrails of man, and, like the witches of "Macbeth," we draw them back full of the secrets of the infinite. The great marvel of our art is to know how to make a charm out of the very disease that plagues us. A spring of eternal madness rises in the heart of our race. The "realm of faery," the most beautiful on earth, is our domain.'—Idealism, understood as a life-long discontent; passion, conceived as an inner thirst and longing that wears and kills more often than it makes happy; a love of home and kindred entwined with the very roots of life, so that home-sickness may easily exhaust and threaten life; an art directed rather to expression than to form—ragged often and broken, but always poignant, always suggestive, touched with reverie and emotion; who does not recognize in these qualities, these essentially Celtic qualities, the qualities of the Brontës?

Take this passage from Charlotte's letter to Miss Nussey, announcing Emily's death:

> The anguish of seeing her suffer is over; the spectacle of the pains of death is gone by; the funeral day is past. We feel she is at peace. No need now to tremble for the hard frost and the keen wind. Emily does not feel them. She died in a time of promise. We saw her taken from life in its prime.

Or, again:

> I cannot forget Emily's death-day.—It was very terrible. She was torn, conscious, panting, reluctant, though resolute, out of a happy life.

Or, take the well-known outburst in 'Shirley,' where Charlotte, writing in the desolate Haworth home after her sisters' deaths, turns from the description of Jessy Yorke, to think of Martha Taylor, Jessy Yorke's original, and of Martha's burial-day in Brussels:—

> But, Jessy, I will write about you no more. This is an autumn evening, wet and wild. There is only one cloud in the sky; but it curtains it from pole to pole. The wind cannot rest; it hurries, sobbing, over hills of sullen outline, colourless with twilight and mist. Rain has beat all day on that church tower—

[—one thinks of her, lifting her eyes from her small writing, as she looks down the bare strip of garden to Haworth Church—];

—it rises dark from the stony enclosure of its graveyard; the nettles, the long grass, and the tombs all drip with wet. This evening reminds me too forcibly of another evening some years ago: a howling, rainy, autumn evening, too,—when certain who had that day performed a pilgrimage to a grave new-made in a heretic cemetery, sat near a wood fire on the hearth of a foreign dwelling. They were merry and social, but they each knew that a gap, never to be filled, had been made in their circle. They knew they had lost something whose absence could never be quite atoned for, so long as they lived; and they knew that heavy falling rain was soaking into the wet earth which covered their lost darling; and that the sad, sighing gale was mourning above her buried head. The fire warmed them; Life and Friendship yet blessed them: but Jessy lay cold, coffined, solitary—only the sod screening her from the storm.

These passages surely have the Celtic quality, if ever writing had. Rapid, yearning, broken speech!—there is no note more penetrating in our literature.

Then, as to the Celtic pride, the Celtic shyness, the Celtic endurance,—Charlotte Brontë was rich in them all. Her nature loves to give—recoils from gifts. She will owe nothing to anyone; she half enjoys, half dislikes, the kindnesses even of her friendly and considerate publisher; and in society she will neither be exhibited nor patronised. Nor will she submit her judgment or taste; she will swear to no man's words. Nothing is more curious than to mark the resolute, and even haughty, independence with which the little countrywoman approached for the first time the literary world and the celebrities of London. She breaks her shy silence at a dinner-table crowded with Macready worshippers to denounce Macready's acting; when Thackeray comes to see her for the first time, she herself says, 'The giant sate before me; I was moved to speak to him of some of his shortcomings (literary, of course); one by one the faults came into my head, and one by one I brought them out and sought some explanation or defence;'—so that Mr. Smith, sitting by, may well describe it as 'a queer scene.' She will have nothing to say to Miss Barrett's poetry; and when she returns to Haworth, she says, with a touch of quiet and confident scorn, that London people talk a great deal of writers and books who mean nothing in the country, nothing to England at large. As to the shyness, it was the torment of both her physical and mental life. The Celtic craving for solitude, the Celtic shrinking from all active competitive existence—they were part of Charlotte's inmost nature, although perpetually crossed and checked, no doubt, by other influences driving her to utterance, to production, to sustained effort. And for endurance—did not her short life, divided between labour, fame, and calamity, make, first and chief upon all who knew it, the impression of an unshaken and indomitable spirit? The 'chainless soul' was hers no less than Emily's, though she was far saner and sweeter than Emily.

And all three qualities—pride, shrinking, endurance—are writ large in her books. With passion added, they *are* Jane Eyre and Lucy Snowe. They supply the atmosphere, the peculiar note, of all the stories. A contempt for mean and easy living, for common gains, and common luxuries, breathes in them, and makes them harsh and bracing as the air of her own moors.

And one other Celtic quality there is in Charlotte Brontë and her books, which is responsible perhaps for half their defects. It is a quality of exuberance, of extravagance, of what her contemporaries called 'bad taste.' Charles Kingsley threw 'Shirley' aside because the opening seemed to him vulgar. Miss Martineau expressed much the same judgment on 'Villette.' And there can be no doubt that there was in Miss Brontë a curious vein of recklessness, roughness, one might also say—*hoydenism*—that exists side by side with an exquisite delicacy and a true dignity, and is none the less Irish and Celtic for that. It disappears, so far as one can see, with the publication of 'Shirley;' but, up till then, it has to be reckoned with. It is conspicuous in the whole episode of 'the curates,' both in real life and in the pages of 'Shirley;' it is visible especially in certain recently published letters to Miss Nussey, which one could wish had been left unprinted; and it makes the one shadow of excuse for the inexcusable 'Quarterly' article. There is one sentence in the first chapter of 'Shirley,' which may serve both as an illustration of this defect, and as a landmark pointing to certain radical differences of feeling that separate 1900 from 1850. It occurs in the course of an address to the reader, warning him to expect neither sentiment, poetry, nor passion from the book before him. 'Calm your expectations; reduce them to a lowly standard. . . . It is not positively affirmed that you shall not have a taste of the exciting, perhaps towards the middle and close of the meal, but it is resolved that the first dish set upon the table shall be one that a Catholic—*aye, even an Anglo-Catholic—might eat on Good Friday on Passion Week: it shall be cold lentils and vinegar without oil; it shall be unleavened bread with bitter herbs, and no roast lamb.*'

These lines that I have thrown into italics were written in 1850, five years after Newman's secession, in the midst no doubt of a swelling tide of Liberal reaction, destined, however, as we all know now, to interfere very little with the spread and power of those deep undercurrents setting from the Oxford Movement. The hasty arrogance, the failure in feeling and right instinct, which the passage shows, mark the chief limitation and weakness in the artist who wrote it. It is a weakness of taste, a limitation, as Mr. Leslie Stephen would perhaps insist, of thought and idea. Taken together with the country-house scenes in 'Jane Eyre,' with some of the curate scenes in 'Shirley,' with various passages of raw didactic and rather shrill preaching, this utterance, and some others like it, suggest a lack of social intelligence, of a wide outlook, of that sense, above all, for measure and urbanity which belongs to other and more perfect art—like George Sand's—or to a more exquisitely tempered instinct—like that of Burns. One returns to Renan's explanation: 'We Celts shall never build a Parthenon; marble is not for us.' Our art is uncertain and wavering; liable to many lapses and false notes. But!—'we lay our grip on heart and soul, we bring up from the depths of the human spirit the secrets of the infinite.'

III

The Irish and Celtic element in Charlotte Brontë, however, is not all. Far from it. Crossing, controlling the wild impetuous temper of the Irishwoman is an influence from another world, an influence of habit and long association, breathed from Yorkshire, and the hard, frugal, persistent North. One has but to climb her Haworth hills to feel it flowing around one. Let it be in the winter, on some frosty white-rimed day, when the tops of the moors are lost in the cold mist, while a dim sun steals along their sides showing the great mills in the hollows, the ice-fringed streams, the bare half-poisoned woods, the rows of stone cottages, while the horse's hoofs ring sharp on the paving-stones of this Haworth Street that mounts stern and steep, without a relenting slope or zig-zag, heedless of the strained muscles of man or beast, from the busy factories below to the towered church and the little parsonage on the hill-top. The small stone houses mount with you on either hand, low, ugly, solid, without a trace of colour or ornament, the decent yet unlovely homes of a sturdy industrious race. The chimneys pour out their smoke, the valley hums with life and toil. You stand at the top of the hill and look around you. Manchester and the teeming Lancashire world are behind you. Bradford and Leeds in front of you. You can see nothing through the sun-lit fog, save the rolling forms of the moors bearing their dim ever-growing burden of houses; but you know that you stand in the heart of working England, the England that goes through its labour and its play, its trade-unionism and its football, its weaving or its coal-mining, with equal vigour and tenacity, with all the English love of gain and the English thirst for success—watchful, jealous, thrifty, absorbed in this very tangible earth, and the struggle to subdue it, stained with many coarse and brutal things, scornful of the dreamer and the talker, and yet, by virtue of its very strength of striving life, its very excesses of rough force and will, holding in its deep breast powers of passion and of drama unsuspected even by itself.

Amid this rude full-blooded keen-brained world grew up the four wonderful children who had survived their fragile mother and their two elder sisters. From the beginning they showed the Celtic qualities—the Celtic vision that remakes the world, throws it into groups and pictures, seen with a magical edge and sharpness. Are they gathered on a winter's night round the kitchen fire with Tabby for a companion? Charlotte—a mere child—*sees* the little scene as a whole, as a poet or a painter would see it, notes the winter storm and wind outside, the glow within, the quick-witted children, the old servant, throws it all into a fragment of vivid dialogue and writes it down—realised, on record, for ever. Or a tramp, talking the language of religious mania, comes to the door. Again Charlotte marks him, stamps him into words, makes a permanent representative figure out of him, a figure of the imagination. Yet all the time there are secret bonds between these four small creatures—the children of an Irish father and a Cornish mother—and the stern practical Yorkshire world about them. For they come not from the typical and Catholic Ireland, but from the Ireland of the North, on which commerce and Protestantism have set their grasp, the Ireland which has half yielded itself to England. In the girls, at any rate, the Bible and Puritanism have mingled with their Celtic blood. Economy, self-discipline, constancy, self-repression, order,—these things come easily to them, so far as the outer conduct of life is concerned. They take their revenge in dreams,—in the whims and passions of the imagination. But they cook and clean and sew, they learn all the household arts that their aunt and Tabby can teach them. They are docile, hard-working, hard-living. They are poor, saving, industrious, keenly alive to the value of money and of work, like the world about them.

And it is this mixture of Celtic dreaming with English realism and self-control which gives value and originality to all they do—to Emily's 'Wuthering Heights,' to Charlotte's four stories. Lady Caroline Lamb, an Irishwoman like

Charlotte, could tear you a passion to tatters, in 'Glenarvon,' with a certain wild power. Take a passage at random:—

> 'Many can deceive,' said Glenarvon, mournfully gazing on Calantha whilst she wept; 'but is your lover like the common herd? Oh! we have loved, my gentle mistress, better than they know how; we have dared the utmost: your mind and mine must not even be compared with theirs. Let the vulgar dissemble and fear—let them talk idly in the unmeaning jargon they admire; they never felt what we have felt; they never dared what we have done: to win, and to betray, is with them an air—a fancy; and fit is the delight for the beings who can enjoy it.—But if once I show myself again, the rabble must shrink at last; they dare not stand before Glenarvon. Heaven or hell, I care not which, have cast a ray so bright around my brow that not all the perfidy of a heart as lost as mine, of a heart loaded, as you know too well, with crimes man shudders even to imagine—not all the envy and malice of those whom my contempt has stung can lower me to their level. And you, Calantha, do you think you will ever learn to hate me, even were I to leave and to betray you?—Poor blighted flower—to thy last wretched hour thou wouldst pine in unavailing recollection and regret; as Clytie, though bound and fettered to the earth, still fixes her uplifted eyes upon her own sun, who passes over regardless in his course, nor deigns to cast a look below!'

This was passion, masterful passion, as a woman, Byron's pupil, conceived it, in 1816, the year of Charlotte Brontë's birth. It is instructive sometimes to look back at landmarks of this lesser kind. There is vigour in these sentences, but compare their vague and mouthing falsity with any conversation in 'Jane Eyre'—above all, with the touches in the last scene between Jane and Rochester. Dwell on the moment when Jane, carrying the tray, enters the blind man's presence; notice how clear and true—with the clearness and truth of poetry—are all the stages of recognition and of rapture—till Rochester says:

> 'Hitherto I have hated to be helped—to be led; henceforth, I feel I shall hate it no more. I did not like to put my hand into a hireling's; but it is pleasant to feel it circled by Jane's

> little fingers. I preferred utter loneliness to the constant attendance of servants; but Jane's soft ministry will be a perpetual joy. Jane suits me; do I suit her?'
>
> 'To the finest fibre of my nature, sir.' . . . Reverently lifting his hat from his brow, and bending his sightless eyes to the earth, he stood in mute devotion. Only the last words of the worship were audible.
>
> 'I thank my Maker that in the midst of judgment He has remembered mercy. I humbly entreat my Redeemer to give me strength to lead henceforth a purer life than I have done hitherto.'
>
> Then he stretched out his hand to be led. I took that dear hand, held it a moment to my lips, then let it pass round my shoulder; being so much lower of stature than he, I served both for his prop and guide. We entered the wood and wended homeward.

What feeling, and what truth!—a truth all Charlotte's own, not Jane Austen's nor another's—in which we may, if we will, detect the fusion of two races, the mingling of two worlds.

IV

As to the outer and material history of 'Jane Eyre,' it is written to some extent in Mrs. Gaskell's 'Life,' and has employed the pens of many a critic and local antiquary since. We all know that Lowood is Cowan Bridge, that Helen Burns stands for Maria Brontë, that 'Miss Temple' and 'Miss Scatcherd' were drawn from real people; we are told that Thornfield Hall was suggested by one old Yorkshire house, and Ferndean Manor by another; that St. John Rivers had an original: we may take for granted that Charlotte's own experiences as a governess have passed into the bitterness with which the rich and 'society' are described; and Mrs. Gaskell has recorded that, according to Charlotte's own testimony, the incident of the midnight voice heard by Rochester and Jane was 'true' and 'really happened.'

Such identifications and researches will always have their interest, though the artist never sees as the critic sees, and is often filled with a secret amazement when he or she is led back to the scene or the person which is supposed to have furnished — which did indeed furnish — the germ, and the clay. The student will collect these details; the reader will do well not to pay too much attention to them. The literary affiliations and connections of the book would be far more important and significant if one could trace them. But they are not easy to trace.

If one gathers together the information to be gleaned from Mrs. Gaskell's 'Life' and elsewhere, as to Charlotte's book education—that voracious and continuous reading to which we have many references, one may arrive at a general outline, something of this kind.—There were no children's books in Haworth Parsonage. The children there were nourished upon the food of their elders: the Bible, Shakspeare, Addison, Johnson, Sheridan, Cowper, for the past; Scott, Byron, Southey, Wordsworth, Coleridge, 'Blackwood's Magazine,' 'Fraser's Magazine,' and Leigh Hunt for the moderns; on a constant supply of newspapers, Whig and Tory—Charlotte once said to a friend that she had taken an interest in politics since she was five years old—on current biographies, such as Lockhart's Life of Burns, Moore's Lives of Byron and Sheridan, Southey's 'Nelson,' Wolfe's 'Remains;' and on miscellaneous readings of old Methodist magazines containing visions and miraculous conversions, Mrs. Rowe's 'Letters from the Dead to the Living,' the 'British Essayists,' collected from the 'Rambler,' the 'Mirror,' and elsewhere, and stories from the 'Lady's Magazine.' They breathed, therefore, as far as books were concerned a bracing and stimulating air from the beginning. Nothing was softened or adapted for them. Before little Maria, the eldest girl, died, at the age of eleven, her father could discuss with her any current topic in which he himself was interested, as though she were grown-up and his equal.

The Duke of Wellington was their nursery-hero, and Charlotte, a child of twelve, recorded at the time the emotions with which the news of Catholic Emancipation was received at Haworth Parsonage, and spent her leisure time at school, when she was fifteen, in fighting a Radical schoolfellow on behalf of the Duke and against Reform.

Thus strongly were the foundations laid, deep in the rich main soil of English life and letters. The force and freedom with which these lonely girls wrote and thought from the beginning they owed largely to this first training. Later on, both in Charlotte and in Emily, certain foreign influences come in. Just as Emily certainly owed something to Hofmann's Tales, so Charlotte probably owed much—more, I am inclined to believe, than has yet been recognised—to the books of French Romanticism, that great movement starting from Chateaubriand at the beginning of the century, and already at its height before 'Jane Eyre' was written. There are one or two pieces of evidence that bear on this point. In 1840, before the visit to Brussels, Charlotte writes that she has received 'another bale of French books from G——'—apparently from the Taylors—'containing upwards of forty volumes. They are like the rest, clever, wicked, sophistical and immoral. The best of it is, that they give one a thorough idea of France and Paris.' If these were contemporary books, as, from the last sentence, one might suppose they were, it is worth while to inquire what writers were probably among them. By 1840 Victor Hugo had written 'Marion Delorme,' 'Hernani,' 'Le Roi s'amuse,' 'Ruy Blas,' six volumes of poems, 'Notre Dame de Paris,' and much else. Alfred de Musset, who was thirty in 1840, had done all his work of importance, and sunk into premature exhaustion; 'Premières Poésies,' 'Rolla,' 'Confession d'un Enfant du Siècle,' 'Espoir en Dieu'—were they in the packet that reached Charlotte in 1840? George Sand, making her first great success with 'Indiana' in 1832, had produced 'Valentine,' 'Lélia,' 'Jacques,' 'Léone Leoni,' 'André,' 'Mauprat,' and some others. Balzac, herald of another age and another world, had been ten years at work on the 'Comédie Humaine.' We know, however, from a letter of Charlotte's in 1848, that she never read a novel of Balzac's till after the publication of 'Jane Eyre.'

But she did read George Sand, as the same letter informs us, and the influence of that great romantic artist in whom restless imagination went hand in hand with a fine and chosen realism, was probably of some true importance in the development of Charlotte Brontë's genius. During her two years in Brussels, under the teaching of M. Héger—who gave her passages from Victor Hugo to study as models of style, and was himself a keen reader, critic, and lecturer—there can be little question that she made wide acquaintance with the French books of the day, and it was the day of Victor Hugo, Alfred de Musset and George Sand. It has not yet, I think, been pointed out that there is in 'Jacques'—a novel written in 1834—a very curious anticipation of the cry of Rochester to Jane. The passage occurs in a letter from Sylvia, the sisterly friend, to Jacques, about to become the husband of Fernande:—

> Mon âme est habituée à vivre seule, Dieu le veut ainsi; que vient faire la tienne dans ma solitude? Viens-tu m'avertir de quelque danger, ou m'annoncer quelque malheur plus épouvantable que tous ceux auxquels a suffi mon courage? L'autre soir j'étais assise au pied de la montagne; le ciel était voilé, et le vent gémissait dans les arbres; j'ai entendu distinctement, au milieu de ces sons d'une triste harmonie, le son de ta voix. Elle a jeté trois ou quatre notes dans l'espace, faibles, mais si pures et si saisissables que j'ai été voir les buissons d'où elle était partie pour m'assurer que tu n'y étais pas. Ces choses-là m'ont rarement trompée; Jacques, il faut qu'il y ait un orage sur nos têtes.

The suggestion, the romantic suggestion of these sentences may very possibly have come in Charlotte Brontë's way, may have mingled with, perhaps given birth to, some later fancy or experience, of which she spoke to Mrs. Gaskell, and so found shape ultimately in the thrilling scene of 'Jane Eyre.' Of direct imitation of George Sand there is nowhere any trace; but in certain parts of 'Shirley,' in the 'Marriage of Genius and Humanity,' for instance, the stimulating influence of certain famous passages in 'Lélia' suggests itself readily; and throughout 'Villette' there is constantly something in her mode of approaching her subject, even in the turn of the sentences, especially in the use of participles, which is French rather than English. All the books testify to her pride in her French culture. She had won it at great cost; it had opened fresh worlds to her, and she makes free use of it in numerous scenes of 'Shirley' and 'Villette,' and in the whole portraiture of the Moores.

The differences, of course, between her and the author of 'Jacques' are great and fundamental. Charlotte Brontë's main *stuff* is English, Protestant, law-respecting, conventional even. No judgment was ever more foolish than that which detected a social rebel in the writer of 'Jane Eyre.' She thought the French books, as we have seen, 'clever, wicked, sophistical, and immoral.' But she read them; and for all her revolt from them, they quickened and fertilised her genius. More than this. The influence which she absorbed from them has given her a special place in our literature of imagination. She stands between Jane Austen, the gentle and witty successor of Miss Burney and Richardson, and George Eliot, upon whom played influences of quite another kind—German, critical, scientific—representing the world which succeeded the world of 'Hernani.' Midway appears the work of Charlotte Brontë, linked in various significant ways with the French romantic movement, which began with 'Atala' in 1801, and had run its course abroad before 1847, the year of 'Jane Eyre.' One may almost say of it, indeed, that it belongs more to the European than to the special English tradition. For all its strongly marked national and provincial elements, it was very early understood and praised in France; and it was of a French critic, and a French critic only, that Charlotte Brontë said with gratitude, in the case of Shirley, 'he follows Currer Bell through every winding, discerns every point, discriminates every shade, proves himself master of the subject, and lord of the aim.'

MARY A. WARD.

TO

W. M. THACKERAY, Esq.

THIS WORK

Is Respectfully Inscribed

BY THE AUTHOR

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

A PREFACE to the first edition of 'Jane Eyre' being unnecessary, I gave none: this second edition demands a few words both of acknowledgment and miscellaneous remark.

My thanks are due in three quarters.

To the Public, for the indulgent ear it has inclined to a plain tale with few pretensions.

To the Press, for the fair field its honest suffrage has opened to an obscure aspirant.

To my Publishers, for the aid their tact, their energy, their practical sense, and frank liberality have afforded an unknown and unrecommended Author.

The Press and the Public are but vague personifications for me, and I must thank them in vague terms; but my Publishers are definite: so are certain generous critics who have encouraged me as only large-hearted and high-minded men know how to encourage a struggling stranger; to them, *i. e.*, to my Publishers and the select Reviewers, I say cordially, Gentlemen, I thank you from my heart.

Having thus acknowledged what I owe those who have aided and approved me, I turn to another class; a small one, so far as I know, but not, therefore, to be overlooked. I mean the timorous or carping few who doubt the tendency of such books as 'Jane Eyre': in whose eyes whatever is unusual is wrong; whose ears detect in each protest against bigotry — that parent of crime — an insult to piety, that regent of God on earth. I would suggest to such doubters certain obvious distinctions; I would remind them of certain simple truths.

Conventionality is not morality. Self-righteousness is not religion. To attack the first is not to assail the last. To pluck the mask from the face of the Pharisee, is not to lift an impious hand to the Crown of Thorns.

These things and deeds are diametrically opposed: they are as distinct as is vice from virtue. Men too often confound them: they should not be confounded: appearance should not be mistaken for truth; narrow human doctrines, that only tend to elate and magnify a few, should not be substituted for the world-redeeming creed of Christ. There is—I repeat it—a difference; and it is a good, and not a bad action to mark broadly and clearly the line of separation between them.

The world may not like to see these ideas dissevered, for it has been accustomed to blend them; finding it convenient to make external show pass for sterling worth—to let white-washed walls vouch for clean shrines. It may hate him who dares to scrutinise and expose—to rase the gilding, and show base metal under it—to penetrate the sepulchre, and reveal charnel relics: but hate as it will, it is indebted to him.

Ahab did not like Micaiah, because he never prophesied good concerning him, but evil: probably he liked the sycophant son of Chenaanah better; yet might Ahab have escaped a bloody death, had he but stopped his ears to flattery and opened them to faithful counsel.

There is a man in our own days whose words are not framed to tickle delicate ears: who, to my thinking, comes before the great ones of society, much as the son of Imlah came before the throned Kings of Judah and Israel; and who speaks truth as deep, with a power as prophet-like and as vital—a mien as dauntless and as daring. Is the satirist of 'Vanity Fair' admired in high places? I cannot tell; but I think if some of those amongst whom he hurls the Greek fire of his sarcasm, and over whom he flashes the levin-brand of his denunciation, were to take his warnings in time—they or their seed might yet escape a fatal Ramoth-Gilead.

Why have I alluded to this man? I have alluded to him, Reader, because I think I see in him an intellect profounder and more unique than his contemporaries have yet recognised; because I regard him as the first social regenerator of the day—as the very master of that working corps who would restore to rectitude the warped system of things; because I think no commentator on his writings has yet found the comparison that suits him, the terms which rightly characterise his talent. They say he is like Fielding; they talk of his wit, humour, comic powers. He resembles Fielding as an eagle does a vulture: Fielding could stoop on carrion, but Thackeray never does. His wit is bright, his humour attractive, but both bear the same relation to his serious genius, that the mere lambent sheet-lightning, playing under the edge of the summer cloud, does to the electric death-spark hid in its womb. Finally; I have alluded to Mr. Thackeray, because to him—if he will accept the tribute of a total stranger—I have dedicated this second edition of 'JANE EYRE.'

CURRER BELL.

December 21, 1847.

JANE EYRE

CHAPTER I

THERE was no possibility of taking a walk that day. We had been wandering, indeed, in the leafless shrubbery an hour in the morning; but since dinner (Mrs. Reed, when there was no company, dined early) the cold winter wind had brought with it clouds so sombre, and a rain so penetrating, that further outdoor exercise was now out of the question.

I was glad of it: I never liked long walks, especially on chilly afternoons: dreadful to me was the coming home in the raw twilight, with nipped fingers and toes, and a heart saddened by the chidings of Bessie, the nurse, and humbled by the consciousness of my physical inferiority to Eliza, John, and Georgiana Reed.

The said Eliza, John, and Georgiana were now clustered round their mamma in the drawing-room: she lay reclined on the sofa by the fireside, and with her darlings about her (for the time neither quarrelling nor crying) looked perfectly happy. Me, she had dispensed from joining the group; saying, 'She regretted to be under the necessity of keeping me at a distance; but that until she heard from Bessie and could discover by her own observation that I was endeavouring in good earnest to acquire a more sociable and childlike disposition, a more attractive and sprightly manner—something lighter, franker, more natural, as it were—she really must exclude me from privileges intended only for contented, happy, little children.'

'What does Bessie say I have done?' I asked.

'Jane, I don't like cavillers or questioners: besides, there is something truly forbidding in a child taking up her elders in that manner. Be seated somewhere; and until you can speak pleasantly, remain silent.'

A small breakfast-room adjoined the drawing-room. I slipped in there. It contained a bookcase: I soon possessed myself of a volume, taking care that it should be one stored with pictures. I mounted into the window-seat: gathering up my feet, I sat cross-legged like a Turk; and, having drawn the red moreen curtain nearly close, I was shrined in double retirement.

Folds of scarlet drapery shut in my view to the right hand; to the left were the clear panes of glass, protecting, but not separating me from the drear November day. At intervals, while turning over the leaves of my book, I studied the aspect of that winter afternoon. Afar, it offered a pale blank of mist and cloud; near, a scene of wet lawn and storm-beat shrub, with ceaseless rain sweeping away wildly before a long and lamentable blast.

I returned to my book—Bewick's 'History of British Birds': the letterpress thereof I cared little for, generally speaking; and yet there were certain introductory pages that, child as I was, I could not pass quite as a blank. They were those which treat of the haunts of sea-fowl; of 'the solitary rocks and promontories' by them only inhabited; of the coast of Norway, studded with isles from its southern extremity, the Lindeness, or Naze, to the North Cape—

Where the Northern Ocean, in vast whirls,
Boils round the naked, melancholy isles
Of farthest Thule; and the Atlantic surge
Pours in among the stormy Hebrides.

Nor could I pass unnoticed the suggestion of the bleak shores of Lapland, Siberia, Spitzbergen, Nova Zembla, Iceland, Greenland, with 'the vast sweep of the Arctic Zone, and those forlorn regions of dreary space—that reservoir of frost and snow, where firm fields of ice, the accumulation of centuries of winters, glazed in Alpine heights above heights, surround the pole, and concentre the multiplied rigors of extreme cold.' Of these death-white realms I formed an idea of my own: shadowy, like all the half-comprehended notions that float dim through children's brains, but strangely impressive. The words in these introductory pages connected themselves with the succeeding vignettes, and gave significance to the rock standing up alone in a sea of billow and spray; to the broken boat stranded on a desolate coast; to the cold and ghastly moon glancing through bars of cloud at a wreck just sinking.

I cannot tell what sentiment haunted the quite solitary churchyard, with its inscribed headstone; its gate, its two trees, its low horizon, girdled by a broken wall, and its newly-risen crescent, attesting the hour of eventide.

The two ships becalmed on a torpid sea I believed to be marine phantoms.

The fiend pinning down the thief's pack behind him I passed over quickly: it was an object of terror.

So was the black, horned thing seated aloof on a rock, surveying a distant crowd surrounding a gallows.

Each picture told a story; mysterious often to my undeveloped understanding and imperfect feelings, yet ever profoundly interesting: as interesting as the tales Bessie sometimes narrated on winter evenings, when she chanced to be in good humour; and when, having brought her ironing-table to the nursery-hearth, she allowed us to sit about it, and while she got up Mrs. Reed's lace frills, and crimped her night-cap borders, fed our eager attention with passages of love and adventure taken from old fairy tales and older ballads; or (as at a later period I discovered) from the pages of 'Pamela,' and 'Henry, Earl of Moreland.'

With Bewick on my knee, I was then happy: happy at least in my way. I feared nothing but interruption, and that came too soon. The breakfast-room door opened.

'Boh! Madame Mope!' cried the voice of John Reed; then he paused: he found the room apparently empty.

'Where the dickens is she?' he continued. 'Lizzy! Georgy! (calling to his sisters) Joan is not here: tell mamma she is run out into the rain—bad animal!'

'It is well I drew the curtain,' thought I; and I wished fervently he might not discover my hiding-place: nor would John Reed have found it out himself; he was not quick either of vision or conception; but Eliza just put her head in at the door, and said at once:—'She is in the window-seat, to be sure, Jack.'

And I came out immediately, for I trembled at the idea of being dragged forth by the said Jack.

'What do you want?' I asked, with awkward diffidence.

'Say, "what do you want, Master Reed?"' was the answer. 'I want you to come here;' and sitting himself in an arm-chair, he intimated by a gesture that I was to approach and stand before him.

John Reed was a schoolboy of fourteen years old; four years older than I, for I was but ten; large and stout for his age, with a dingy and unwholesome skin; thick lineaments in a spacious visage, heavy limbs and large extremities. He gorged himself habitually at table, which made him bilious, and gave him a dim and bleared eye and flabby cheeks. He ought now to have been at school; but his mamma had taken him home for a month or two, 'on account of his delicate health.' Mr. Miles, the master, affirmed that he would do very well if he had fewer cakes and sweetmeats sent him from home; but the mother's heart turned from an opinion so harsh, and inclined rather to the more refined idea that John's sallowness was owing to over-application and, perhaps, to pining after home.

John had not much affection for his mother and sisters, and an antipathy to me. He bullied and punished me; not two or three times in the week, nor once or twice in the day, but continually: every nerve I had feared him, and every morsel of flesh on my bones shrank when he came near. There were moments when I was bewildered by the terror he inspired, because I had no appeal whatever against either his menaces or his inflictions; the servants did not like to offend their young master by taking my part against him, and Mrs. Reed was blind and deaf on the subject: she never saw him strike or heard him abuse me, though he did both now and then in her very presence; more frequently, however, behind her back.

Habitually obedient to John, I came up to his chair: he spent some three minutes in thrusting out his tongue at me as far as he could without damaging the roots: I knew he would soon strike, and while dreading the blow, I mused on the disgusting and ugly appearance of him who would presently deal it. I wonder if he read that notion in my face; for, all at once, without speaking, he struck suddenly and strongly. I tottered, and on regaining my equilibrium retired back a step or two from his chair.

'That is for your impudence in answering mamma a while since,' said he, 'and for your sneaking way of getting behind curtains, and for the look you had in your eyes two minutes since, you rat!'

Accustomed to John Reed's abuse, I never had an idea of replying to it; my care was how to endure the blow which would certainly follow the insult.

'What were you doing behind the curtain?' he asked.

'I was reading.'

'Show the book.'

I returned to the window and fetched it thence.

'You have no business to take our books; you are a dependent, mamma says; you have no money; your father left you none; you ought to beg, and not to live here with gentlemen's children like us, and eat the same meals we do, and wear clothes at our mamma's expense. Now, I'll teach you to rummage my book-shelves: for they *are* mine; all the house belongs to me, or will do in a few years.

Go and stand by the door, out of the way of the mirror and the windows.'

I did so, not at first aware what was his intention; but when I saw him lift and poise the book and stand in act to hurl it, I instinctively started aside with a cry of alarm: not soon enough, however; the volume was flung, it hit me, and I fell, striking my head against the door and cutting it. The cut bled, the pain was sharp: my terror had passed its climax; other feelings succeeded.

'Wicked and cruel boy!' I said. 'You are like a murderer—you are like a slave-driver—you are like the Roman emperors!'

I had read Goldsmith's 'History of Rome,' and had formed my opinion of Nero, Caligula, &c. Also I had drawn parallels in silence, which I never thought thus to have declared aloud.

'What! what!' he cried. 'Did she say that to me? Did you hear her, Eliza and Georgiana? Won't I tell mamma? but first——'

He ran headlong at me: I felt him grasp my hair and my shoulder: he had closed with a desperate thing. I really saw in him a tyrant: a murderer. I felt a drop or two of blood from my head trickle down my neck, and was sensible of somewhat pungent suffering: these sensations for the time predominated over fear, and I received him in frantic sort. I don't very well know what I did with my hands, but he called me 'Rat! rat!' and bellowed out aloud. Aid was near him: Eliza and Georgiana had run for Mrs. Reed, who was gone upstairs; she now came upon the scene, followed by Bessie and her maid Abbot. We were parted: I heard the words:—'Dear! dear! What a fury to fly at Master John!'

'Did ever anybody see such a picture of passion!'

Then Mrs. Reed subjoined:—'Take her away to the red-room, and lock her in there.' Four hands were immediately laid upon me, and I was borne upstairs.

CHAPTER II

I RESISTED all the way: a new thing for me, and a circumstance which greatly strengthened the bad opinion Bessie and Miss Abbot were disposed to entertain of me. The fact is, I was a trifle beside myself; or rather *out* of myself, as the French would say: I was conscious that a moment's mutiny had already rendered me liable to strange penalties, and, like any other rebel slave, I felt resolved, in my desperation, to go all lengths.

'Hold her arms, Miss Abbot: she's like a mad cat.'

'For shame! for shame!' cried the lady's-maid. 'What shocking conduct, Miss Eyre, to strike a young gentleman, your benefactress's son! Your young master.'

'Master! How is he my master? Am I a servant?'

'No; you are less than a servant, for you do nothing for your keep. There, sit down, and think over your wickedness.'

They had got me by this time into the apartment indicated by Mrs. Reed, and had thrust me upon a stool: my impulse was to rise from it like a spring; their two pairs of hands arrested me instantly.

'If you don't sit still, you must be tied down,' said Bessie. 'Miss Abbot, lend me your garters; she would break mine directly.'

Miss Abbot turned to divest a stout leg of the necessary ligature. This preparation for bonds, and the additional ignominy it inferred, took a little of the excitement out of me.

'Don't take them off,' I cried; 'I will not stir.'

In guarantee whereof I attached myself to my seat by my hands.

'Mind you don't,' said Bessie; and when she had ascertained that I was really subsiding, she loosened her hold of me; then she and Miss Abbot stood with folded arms, looking darkly and doubtfully on my face, as incredulous of my sanity.

'She never did so before,' at last said Bessie, turning to the Abigail.

'But it was always in her,' was the reply. 'I've told Missis often my opinion about the child, and Missis agreed with me. She's an underhand little thing: I never saw a girl of her age with so much cover.'

Bessie answered not; but ere long, addressing me, she said:

'You ought to be aware, Miss, that you are under obligations to Mrs. Reed: she keeps you: if she were to turn you off, you would have to go to the poor-house.'

I had nothing to say to these words: they were not new to me: my very first recollections of existence included hints of the same kind. This reproach of my dependence had become a vague sing-song in my ear; very painful and crushing, but only half intelligible. Miss Abbot joined in:—

'And you ought not to think yourself on an equality with the Misses Reed and Master Reed, because Missis kindly allows you to be brought up with them. They will have a great deal of money, and you will have none: it is your place to be humble, and to try to make yourself agreeable to them.'

'What we tell you is for your good,' added Bessie, in no harsh voice: 'you should try to be useful and pleasant, then, perhaps, you would have a home here; but if you become passionate and rude, Missis will send you away, I am sure.'

'Besides,' said Miss Abbot, 'God will punish her: He might strike her dead in the midst of her tantrums, and then where would she go? Come, Bessie, we will leave her: I wouldn't have her heart for anything. Say your prayers, Miss Eyre, when you are by yourself; for if you don't repent, something bad might be permitted to come down the chimney, and fetch you away.'

They went, shutting the door, and locking it behind them.

The red-room was a spare chamber, very seldom slept in; I might say never, indeed, unless when a chance influx of visitors at Gateshead Hall rendered it necessary to turn to account all the accommodation it contained: yet it was one of the largest and stateliest chambers in the mansion. A bed supported on massive pillars of mahogany, hung with curtains of deep red damask, stood out like a tabernacle in the centre; the two large windows, with their blinds always drawn down, were half shrouded in festoons and falls of similar drapery; the carpet was red; the table at the foot of the bed was covered with a crimson cloth; the walls were a soft fawn colour, with a blush of pink in it; the wardrobe, the toilet-table, the chairs were of darkly-polished old mahogany. Out of these deep surrounding shades rose high, and glared white, the piled-up mattresses and pillows of the bed, spread with a snowy Marseilles counterpane. Scarcely less prominent was an ample, cushioned easy-chair near the head of the bed, also white, with a footstool before it; and looking, as I thought, like a pale throne.

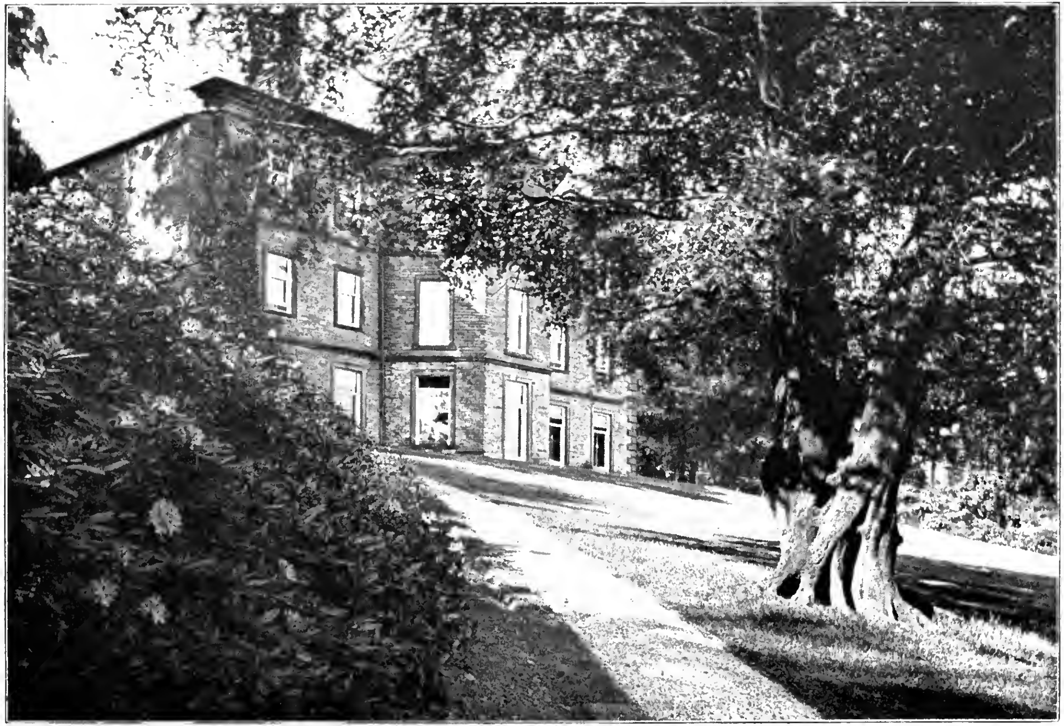
This room was chill, because it seldom had a fire; it was silent, because remote from the nursery and kitchens; solemn, because it was known to be so seldom entered. The housemaid alone came here on Saturdays, to wipe from the mirrors and the furniture a week's quiet dust: and Mrs. Reed herself, at far intervals, visited it to review the contents of a certain secret drawer in the wardrobe, where were stored divers parchments, her jewel-casket, and a miniature of her deceased husband; and in those last words lies the secret of the red-room—the spell which kept it so lonely in spite of its grandeur.

Mr. Reed had been dead nine years: it was in this chamber he breathed his last; here he lay in state; hence his coffin was borne by the undertaker's men; and, since that day, a sense of dreary consecration had guarded it from frequent intrusion.

My seat, to which Bessie and the bitter Miss Abbot had left me riveted, was a low ottoman near the marble chimney-piece; the bed rose before me; to my right hand there was the high, dark wardrobe, with subdued, broken reflections varying the gloss of its panels; to my left were the muffled windows; a great looking-glass between them repeated the vacant majesty of the bed and room. I was not quite sure whether they had locked the door; and, when I dared move, I got up, and went to see. Alas! yes: no jail was ever more secure. Returning, I had to cross before the looking-glass; my fascinated glance involuntarily explored the depth it revealed. All looked colder and darker in that visionary hollow than in reality: and the strange little figure there gazing at me, with a white face and arms specking the gloom, and glittering eyes of fear moving where all else was still, had the effect of a real spirit: I thought it like one of the tiny phantoms, half fairy, half imp, Bessie's evening stories represented as coming out of lone, ferny dells in moors, and appearing before the eyes of belated travellers. I returned to my stool.

Superstition was with me at that moment; but it was not yet her hour for complete victory: my blood was still warm; the mood of the revolted slave was still bracing me with its bitter vigour; I had to stem a rapid rush of retrospective thought before I quailed to the dismal present.

All John Reed's violent tyrannies, all his sisters' proud indifference, all his mother's aversion, all the servants' partiality, turned up in my disturbed mind like a dark deposit in a turbid well. Why was I always suffering, always browbeaten, always accused, for ever condemned? Why could I never please? Why was it useless to try to win any one's favour? Eliza, who was headstrong and selfish, was respected. Georgiana, who had a spoiled temper, a very acrid spite, a captious and insolent carriage, was universally indulged. Her beauty, her pink cheeks and golden curls,



STONE GAPPE (GATESHEAD HALL).

seemed to give delight to all who looked at her, and to purchase indemnity for every fault. John, no one thwarted, much less punished; though he twisted the necks of the pigeons, killed the little pea-chicks, set the dogs at the sheep, stripped the hothouse vines of their fruit, and broke the buds off the choicest plants in the conservatory: he called his mother 'old girl,' too; sometimes reviled her for her dark skin, similar to his own; bluntly disregarded her wishes; not unfrequently tore and spoiled her silk attire; and he was still 'her own darling.' I dared commit no fault; I strove to fulfil every duty; and I was termed naughty and tiresome, sullen and sneaking, from morning to noon, and from noon to night.

My head still ached and bled with the blow and fall I had received: no one had reproved John for wantonly striking me; and because I had turned against him to avert farther irrational violence, I was loaded with general opprobrium.

'Unjust!—unjust!' said my reason, forced by the agonising stimulus into precocious though transitory power; and Resolve, equally wrought up, instigated some strange expedient to achieve escape from insupportable oppression—as running away, or, if that could not be effected, never eating or drinking more, and letting myself die.

What a consternation of soul was mine that dreary afternoon! How all my brain was in tumult, and all my heart in insurrection! Yet in what darkness, what dense ignorance, was the mental battle fought! I could not answer the ceaseless inward question—*why* I thus suffered; now, at the distance of—I will not say how many years, I see it clearly.

I was a discord in Gateshead Hall; I was like nobody there; I had nothing in harmony with Mrs. Reed or her children, or her chosen vassalage. If they did not love me, in fact, as little did I love them. They were not bound to regard with affection a thing that could not sympathise with one amongst them; a heterogeneous thing, opposed to them in temperament, in capacity, in propensities; a useless thing, incapable of serving their interest, or adding to their pleasure; a noxious thing, cherishing the germs of indignation at their treatment, of contempt of their judgment. I know that had I been a sanguine, brilliant, careless, exacting, handsome, romping child—though equally dependent and friendless—Mrs. Reed would have endured my presence more complacently; her children would have entertained for me more of the cordiality of fellow-feeling; the servants would have been less prone to make me the scapegoat of the nursery.

Daylight began to forsake the red-room; it was past four o'clock, and the beclouded afternoon was tending to drear twilight. I heard the rain still beating continuously on the staircase window, and the wind howling in the grove behind the hall; I grew by degrees cold as a stone, and then my courage sank. My habitual mood of humiliation, self-doubt, forlorn depression, fell damp on the embers of my decaying ire. All said I was wicked, and perhaps I might be so: what thought had I been but just conceiving of starving myself to death? That certainly was a crime: and was I fit to die? Or was the vault under the chancel of Gateshead Church an inviting bourne? In such vault I had been told did Mr. Reed lie buried; and led by this thought to recall his idea, I dwelt on it with gathering dread. I could not remember him; but I knew that he was my own uncle—my mother's brother—that he had taken me when a parentless infant to his house; and that in his last moments he had required a promise of Mrs. Reed that she would rear and maintain me as one of her own children. Mrs. Reed probably considered she had kept this promise; and so she had, I dare say, as well as her nature would permit her; but how could she really like an interloper not of her race, and unconnected with her, after her husband's death, by any tie? It must have been most irksome to find herself bound by a hard-wrung pledge to stand in the stead of a parent to a strange child she could not love, and to see an uncongenial alien permanently intruded on her own family group.

A singular notion dawned upon me. I doubted not—never doubted—that if Mr. Reed had been alive he would have treated me kindly; and now, as I sat looking at the white bed and overshadowed walls—occasionally also turning a fascinated eye towards the dimly gleaming mirror—I began to recall what I had heard of dead men, troubled in their graves by the violation of their last wishes, revisiting the earth to punish the perjured and avenge the oppressed; and I thought Mr. Reed's spirit, harassed by the wrongs of his sister's child, might quit its abode—whether in the church vault, or in the unknown world of the departed—and rise before me in this chamber. I wiped my tears and hushed my sobs, fearful lest any sign of violent grief might waken a preternatural voice to comfort me, or elicit from the gloom some haloed face, bending over me with strange pity. This idea, consolatory in theory, I felt would be terrible if realised: with all my might I endeavoured to stifle it—I endeavoured to be firm. Shaking my hair from my eyes, I lifted my head and tried to look boldly round the dark room. At this moment a light gleamed on the wall. Was it, I asked myself, a ray from the moon penetrating some aperture in the blind? No; moonlight was still, and this stirred; while I gazed, it glided up to the ceiling and quivered over my head. I can now conjecture readily that this streak of light was, in all likelihood, a gleam from a lantern, carried by some one across the lawn: but then, prepared as my mind was for horror, shaken as my nerves were by agitation, I thought the swift-darting beam was a herald of some coming vision from another world. My heart beat thick, my head grew hot; a sound filled my ears, which I deemed the rushing of wings: something seemed near me; I was oppressed, suffocated: endurance broke down; I rushed to the door and shook the lock in desperate effort. Steps came running along the outer passage; the key turned, Bessie and Abbot entered.

'Miss Eyre, are you ill?' said Bessie.

'What a dreadful noise! it went quite through me!' exclaimed Abbot.

'Take me out! let me go into the nursery!' was my cry.

'What for? Are you hurt? Have you seen something?' again demanded Bessie.

'Oh! I saw a light, and I thought a ghost would come.' I had now got hold of Bessie's hand, and she did not snatch it from me.

'She has screamed out on purpose,' declared Abbot, in some disgust. 'And what a scream! If she had been in great pain one would have excused it, but she only wanted to bring us all here: I know her naughty tricks.'

'What is all this?' demanded another voice, peremptorily; and Mrs. Reed came along the corridor, her cap flying wide, her gown rustling stormily. 'Abbot and Bessie, I believe I gave orders that Jane Eyre should be left in the red-room till I came to her myself.'

'Miss Jane screamed so loud, ma'am,' pleaded Bessie.

'Let her go,' was the only answer. 'Loose Bessie's hand, child: you cannot succeed in getting out by these means, be assured. I abhor artifice, particularly in children; it is my duty to show you that tricks will not answer: you will now stay here an hour longer, and it is only on condition of perfect submission and stillness that I shall liberate you then.'

'Oh aunt, have pity! Forgive me! I cannot endure it—let me be punished some other way! I shall be killed if——'

'Silence! This violence is all most repulsive:' and so, no doubt, she felt it. I was a precocious actress in her eyes: she sincerely looked on me as a compound of virulent passions, mean spirit, and dangerous duplicity.

Bessie and Abbot having retreated, Mrs. Reed, impatient of my now frantic anguish and wild sobs, abruptly thrust me back and locked me in, without farther parley. I heard her sweeping away; and soon after she was gone I suppose I had a species of fit: unconsciousness closed the scene.

CHAPTER III

The next thing I remember is, waking up with a feeling as if I had had a frightful nightmare, and seeing before me a terrible red glare, crossed with thick black bars. I heard voices, too, speaking with a hollow sound, as if muffled by a rush of wind or water: agitation, uncertainty, and an all-predominating sense of terror confused my faculties. Ere long I became aware that some one was handling me; lifting me up and supporting me in a sitting posture, and that more tenderly than I had ever been raised or upheld before. I rested my head against a pillow or an arm, and felt easy.

In five minutes more the cloud of bewilderment dissolved: I knew quite well that I was in my own bed, and that the red glare was the nursery fire. It was night: a candle burnt on the table; Bessie stood at the bed-foot with a basin in her hand, and a gentleman sat in a chair near my pillow, leaning over me.

I felt an inexpressible relief, a soothing conviction of protection and security, when I knew that there was a stranger in the room, an individual not belonging to Gateshead, and not related to Mrs. Reed. Turning from Bessie (though her presence was far less obnoxious to me than that of Abbot, for instance, would have been), I scrutinised the face of the gentleman: I knew him; it was Mr. Lloyd, an apothecary, sometimes called in by Mrs. Reed when the servants were ailing: for herself and the children she employed a physician.

'Well, who am I?' he asked.

I pronounced his name, offering him at the same time my hand: he took it, smiling and saying, 'We shall do very well by-and-by.' Then he laid me down, and addressing Bessie, charged her to be very careful that I was not disturbed during the night. Having given some further directions, and intimated that he should call again the next day, he departed—to my grief: I felt so sheltered and befriended while he sat in the chair near my pillow; and as he closed the door after him all the room darkened and my heart again sank: inexpressible sadness weighed it down.

'Do you feel as if you should sleep, Miss?' asked Bessie, rather softly.

Scarcely dared I answer her; for I feared the next sentence might be rough. 'I will try.'

'Would you like to drink, or could you eat anything?'

'No, thank you, Bessie.'

'Then I think I shall go to bed, for it is past twelve o'clock; but you may call me if you want anything in the night.'

Wonderful civility this! It emboldened me to ask a question.

'Bessie, what is the matter with me? Am I ill?'

'You fell sick, I suppose, in the red-room with crying; you'll be better soon, no doubt.'

Bessie went into the housemaid's apartment, which was near. I heard her say—'Sarah, come and sleep with me in the nursery; I daren't for my life be alone with that poor child to-night; she might die; it's such a strange thing she should have that fit: I wonder if she saw anything. Missis was rather too hard.'

Sarah came back with her; they both went to bed; they were whispering together for half an hour before they fell asleep. I caught scraps of their conversation, from which I was able only too distinctly to infer the main subject discussed.

'Something passed her, all dressed in white, and vanished'—'A great black dog behind him'—'Three loud raps on the chamber door'—'A light in the churchyard just over his grave'—&c. &c.

At last both slept: the fire and the candle went out. For me, the watches of that long night passed in ghastly wakefulness; ear, eye, and mind were alike strained by dread: such dread as children only can feel.

No severe or prolonged bodily illness followed this incident of the red-room: it only gave my nerves a shock, of which I feel the reverberation to this day. Yes, Mrs. Reed, to you I owe some fearful pangs of mental suffering. But I ought to forgive you, for you knew not what you did: while rending my heart-strings, you thought you were only uprooting my bad propensities.

Next day, by noon, I was up and dressed, and sat wrapped in a shawl by the nursery hearth. I felt physically weak and broken down; but my worse ailment was an unutterable wretchedness of mind: a wretchedness which kept drawing from me silent tears; no sooner had I wiped one salt drop from my cheek than another followed. Yet I thought I ought to have been happy, for none of the Reeds were there, they were all gone out in the carriage with their mamma: Abbot, too, was sewing in another room, and Bessie, as she moved hither and thither, putting away toys and arranging drawers, addressed to me every now and then a word of unwonted kindness. This state of things should have been to me a paradise of peace, accustomed as I was to a life of ceaseless reprimand and thankless fagging; but, in fact, my racked nerves were now in such a state that no calm could soothe, and no pleasure excite them agreeably.

Bessie had been down into the kitchen, and she brought up with her a tart on a certain brightly painted china plate, whose bird of paradise, nestling in a wreath of convolvuli and rosebuds, had been wont to stir in me a most enthusiastic sense of admiration; and which plate I had often petitioned to be allowed to take in my hand in order to examine it more closely, but had always hitherto been deemed unworthy of such a privilege. This precious vessel was now placed on my knee, and I was cordially invited to eat the circlet of delicate pastry upon it. Vain favour!

coming, like most other favours long deferred and often wished for, too late! I could not eat the tart: and the plumage of the bird, the tints of the flowers, seemed strangely faded: I put both plate and tart away. Bessie asked if I would have a book: the word *book* acted as a transient stimulus, and I begged her to fetch 'Gulliver's Travels' from the library. This book I had again and again perused with delight. I considered it a narrative of facts, and discovered in it a vein of interest deeper than what I found in fairy tales: for as to the elves, having sought them in vain among foxglove leaves and bells, under mushrooms and beneath the ground-ivy mantling old wall-nooks, I had at length made up my mind to the sad truth, that they were all gone out of England to some savage country where the woods were wilder and thicker, and the population more scant; whereas, Liliput and Brobdingnag being, in my creed, solid parts of the earth's surface, I doubted not that I might one day, by taking a long voyage, see with my own eyes the little fields, houses, and trees, the diminutive people, the tiny cows, sheep, and birds of the one realm; and the corn-fields forest-high, the mighty mastiffs, the monster cats, the tower-like men and women, of the other. Yet when this cherished volume was now placed in my hand—when I turned over its leaves, and sought in its marvellous pictures the charm I had, till now, never failed to find—all was eerie and dreary; the giants were gaunt goblins, the pigmies malevolent and fearful imps, Gulliver a most desolate wanderer in most dread and dangerous regions. I closed the book, which I dared no longer peruse, and put it on the table, beside the untasted tart.

Bessie had now finished dusting and tidying the room, and having washed her hands, she opened a certain little drawer, full of splendid shreds of silk and satin, and began making a new bonnet for Georgiana's doll. Meantime she sang: her song was—

In the days when we went gipsying,
A long time ago.

I had often heard the song before, and always with lively delight; for Bessie had a sweet voice—at least I thought so. But now, though her voice was still sweet, I found in its melody an indescribable sadness. Sometimes, preoccupied with her work, she sang the refrain very low, very lingerly; 'A long time ago' came out like the saddest cadence of a funeral hymn. She passed into another ballad, this time a really doleful one.

My feet they are sore, and my limbs they are weary;
Long is the way, and the mountains are wild;
Soon will the twilight close moonless and dreary
Over the path of the poor orphan child.

Why did they send me so far and so lonely,
Up where the moors spread and grey rocks are piled?
Men are hard-hearted, and kind angels only
Watch o'er the steps of a poor orphan child.

Yet distant and soft the night-breeze is blowing,
Clouds there are none, and clear stars beam mild;
God, in His mercy, protection is showing,
Comfort and hope to the poor orphan child.

Ev'n should I fall o'er the broken bridge passing,
Or stray in the marshes, by false lights beguiled,
Still will my Father, with promise and blessing,
Take to His bosom the poor orphan child.

There is a thought that for strength should avail me,
Though both of shelter and kindred despoiled;
Heaven is a home, and a rest will not fail me;
God is a friend to the poor orphan child.

'Come, Miss Jane, don't cry,' said Bessie, as she finished. She might as well have said to the fire, 'don't burn!' but how could she divine the morbid suffering to which I was a prey? In the course of the morning Mr. Lloyd came again.

'What, already up!' said he, as he entered the nursery. 'Well, nurse, how is she?'

Bessie answered that I was doing very well.

'Then she ought to look more cheerful. Come here, Miss Jane; your name is Jane, is it not?'

'Yes, sir, Jane Eyre.'

'Well, you have been crying, Miss Jane Eyre; can you tell me what about? Have you any pain?'

'No, sir.'

'Oh! I daresay she is crying because she could not go out with Missis in the carriage,' interposed Bessie.

'Surely not! why, she is too old for such pettishness.'

I thought so too; and my self-esteem being wounded by the false charge, I answered promptly, 'I never cried for such a thing in my life: I hate going out in the carriage. I cry because I am miserable.'

'Oh fie, Miss!' said Bessie.

The good apothecary appeared a little puzzled. I was standing before him; he fixed his eyes on me very steadily: his eyes were small and grey: not very bright, but I daresay I should think them shrewd now: he had a hard-featured yet good-natured looking face. Having considered me at leisure, he said: 'What made you ill yesterday?'

'She had a fall,' said Bessie, again putting in her word.

'Fall! why that is like a baby again! Can't she manage to walk at her age? She must be eight or nine years old.'

'I was knocked down,' was the blunt explanation jerked out of me by another pang of mortified pride: 'but that did not make me ill,' I added; while Mr. Lloyd helped himself to a pinch of snuff.

As he was returning the box to his waistcoat pocket, a loud bell rang for the servants' dinner; he knew what it was. 'That's for you, nurse,' said he; 'you can go down; I'll give Miss Jane a lecture till you come back.'

Bessie would rather have stayed, but she was obliged to go, because punctuality at meals was rigidly enforced at Gateshead Hall.

'The fall did not make you ill; what did, then?' pursued Mr. Lloyd, when Bessie was gone.

'I was shut up in a room where there is a ghost till after dark.'

I saw Mr. Lloyd smile and frown at the same time:

'Ghost! What, you are a baby after all! You are afraid of ghosts?'

'Of Mr. Reed's ghost I am: he died in that room, and was laid out there. Neither Bessie nor any one else will go into it at night, if they can help it; and it was cruel to shut me up alone without a candle,—so cruel that I think I shall never forget it.'

'Nonsense! And is it that makes you so miserable? Are you afraid now in daylight?'

'No: but night will come again before long: and besides, —I am unhappy,—very unhappy, for other things.'

'What other things? Can you tell me some of them?'

How much I wished to reply fully to this question! How difficult it was to frame any answer! Children can feel, but they cannot analyse their feelings; and if the analysis is partially effected in thought, they know not how to express the result of the process in words. Fearful, however, of losing this first and only opportunity of relieving my grief by imparting it, I, after a disturbed pause, contrived to frame a meagre, though, as far as it went, true response.

'For one thing, I have no father or mother, brothers or sisters.'

'You have a kind aunt and cousins.'

Again I paused; then bunglingly enounced: 'But John Reed knocked me down, and my aunt shut me up in the red-room.'

Mr. Lloyd a second time produced his snuff-box.

'Don't you think Gateshead Hall a very beautiful house?' asked he. 'Are you not very thankful to have such a fine place to live at?'

'It is not my house, sir; and Abbot says I have less right to be here than a servant.'

'Pooh! you can't be silly enough to wish to leave such a splendid place?'

'If I had anywhere else to go, I should be glad to leave it; but I can never get away from Gateshead till I am a woman.'

'Perhaps you may—who knows? Have you any relations besides Mrs. Reed?'

'I think not, sir.'

'None belonging to your father?'

'I don't know: I asked aunt Reed once, and she said possibly I might have some poor, low relations called Eyre, but she knew nothing about them.'

'If you had such, would you like to go to them?'

I reflected. Poverty looks grim to grown people; still more so to children: they have not much idea of industrious, working, respectable poverty; they think of the word only as connected with ragged clothes, scanty food, fireless grates, rude manners, and debasing vices: poverty for me was synonymous with degradation.

'No; I should not like to belong to poor people,' was my reply.

'Not even if they were kind to you?'

I shook my head: I could not see how poor people had the means of being kind; and then to learn to speak like them, to adopt their manners, to be uneducated, to grow up like one of the poor women I saw sometimes nursing their children or washing their clothes at the cottage doors of the village of Gateshead: no, I was not heroic enough to purchase liberty at the price of caste.

'But are your relatives so very poor? Are they working people?'

'I cannot tell; aunt Reed says, if I have any, they must be a beggarly set: I should not like to go a begging.'

'Would you like to go to school?'

Again I reflected: I scarcely knew what school was; Bessie sometimes spoke of it as a place where young ladies sat in the stocks, wore backboards, and were expected to be exceedingly genteel and precise: John Reed hated his school, and abused his master; but John Reed's tastes were no rule for mine, and if Bessie's accounts of school discipline (gathered from the young ladies of a family where she had lived before coming to Gateshead) were somewhat appalling, her details of certain accomplishments attained by these same young ladies were, I thought, equally attractive. She boasted of beautiful paintings of landscapes and flowers by them executed; of songs they could sing and pieces they could play, of purses they could net, of French books they could translate; till my spirit was moved to emulation as I listened. Besides, school would be a complete change: it implied a long journey, an entire separation from Gateshead, an entrance into a new life.

'I should indeed like to go to school,' was the audible conclusion of my musings.

'Well, well; who knows what may happen?' said Mr. Lloyd, as he got up: 'The child ought to have change of air and scene,' he added, speaking to himself; 'nerves not in a good state.'

Bessie now returned; at the same moment the carriage was heard rolling up the gravel-walk.

'Is that your mistress, nurse?' asked Mr. Lloyd. 'I should like to speak to her before I go.'

Bessie invited him to walk into the breakfast-room, and led the way out. In the interview which followed between him and Mrs. Reed, I presume, from after-occurrences, that the apothecary ventured to recommend my being sent to school; and the recommendation was no doubt readily enough adopted; for as Abbot said, in discussing the subject with Bessie when both sat sewing in the nursery one night, after I was in bed, and, as they thought, asleep, 'Missis was, she dared say, glad enough to get rid of such a tiresome, ill-conditioned child, who always looked as if she were watching everybody, and scheming plots underhand.' Abbot, I think, gave me credit for being a sort of infantine Guy Fawkes.

On that same occasion I learned, for the first time, from Miss Abbot's communications to Bessie, that my father had been a poor clergyman; that my mother had married him against the wishes of her friends, who considered the match beneath her; that my grandfather Reed was so irritated at her disobedience, he cut her off without a shilling; that after my mother and father had been married a year, the latter caught the typhus fever while visiting among the poor of a large manufacturing town where his curacy was situated, and where that disease was then prevalent; that my mother took the infection from him, and both died within a month of each other.

Bessie, when she heard this narrative, sighed and said, 'Poor Miss Jane is to be pitied, too, Abbot.'

'Yes,' responded Abbot, 'if she were a nice, pretty child, one might compassionate her forlornness; but one really cannot care for such a little toad as that.'

'Not a great deal, to be sure,' agreed Bessie: 'at any rate, a beauty like Miss Georgiana would be more moving in the same condition.'

'Yes, I doat on Miss Georgiana!' cried the fervent Abbot. 'Little darling!—with her long curls and her blue eyes, and such a sweet colour as she has; just as if she were painted!—Bessie, I could fancy a Welsh rabbit for supper.'

'So could I—with a roast onion. Come, we'll go down.' They went.

CHAPTER IV

From my discourse with Mr. Lloyd, and from the above-reported conference between Bessie and Abbot, I gathered enough of hope to suffice as a motive for wishing to get well: a change seemed near,—I desired and waited it in silence. It tarried, however: days and weeks passed: I had regained my normal state of health, but no new allusion was made to the subject over which I brooded. Mrs. Reed surveyed me at times with a severe eye, but seldom addressed me: since my illness she had drawn a more marked line of separation than ever between me and her own children; appointing me a small closet to sleep in by myself, condemning me to take my meals alone, and pass all my time in the nursery, while my cousins were constantly in the drawing-room. Not a hint, however, did she drop about sending me to school: still I felt an instinctive certainty that she would not long endure me under the same roof with her; for her glance, now more than ever, when turned on me, expressed an insuperable and rooted aversion.

Eliza and Georgiana, evidently acting according to orders, spoke to me as little as possible: John thrust his tongue in his cheek whenever he saw me, and once attempted chastisement; but as I instantly turned against him, roused by the same sentiment of deep ire and desperate revolt which had stirred my corruption before, he thought it better to desist, and ran from me, uttering execrations, and vowing I had burst his nose. I had indeed levelled at that prominent feature as hard a blow as my knuckles could inflict; and when I saw that either that or my look daunted him, I had the greatest inclination to follow up my advantage to purpose; but he was already with his mamma. I heard him in a blubbering tone commence the tale of how 'that nasty Jane Eyre' had flown at him like a mad cat: he was stopped rather harshly—'Don't talk to me about her, John: I told you not to go near her; she is not worthy of notice; I do not choose that either you or your sisters should associate with her.'

Here, leaning over the banister, I cried out suddenly, and without at all deliberating on my words,—'They are not fit to associate with me.'

Mrs. Reed was rather a stout woman; but on hearing this strange and audacious declaration, she ran nimbly up the stair, swept me like a whirlwind into the nursery, and crushing me down on the edge of my crib, dared me in an emphatic voice to rise from that place, or utter one syllable, during the remainder of the day.

'What would uncle Reed say to you, if he were alive?' was my scarcely voluntary demand. I say scarcely voluntary, for it seemed as if my tongue pronounced words without my will consenting to their utterance: something spoke out of me over which I had no control.

'What?' said Mrs. Reed under her breath: her usually cold composed grey eye became troubled with a look like fear; she took her hand from my arm, and gazed at me as if she really did not know whether I were child or fiend. I was now in for it.

'My uncle Reed is in heaven, and can see all you do and think; and so can papa and mamma: they know how you shut me up all day long, and how you wish me dead.'

Mrs. Reed soon rallied her spirits: she shook me most soundly, she boxed both my ears, and then left me without a word. Bessie supplied the hiatus by a homily of an hour's length, in which she proved beyond a doubt that I was the most wicked and abandoned child ever reared under a roof. I half believed her; for I felt indeed only bad feelings surging in my breast.

November, December, and half of January passed away.

Christmas and the New Year had been celebrated at Gateshead with the usual festive cheer; presents had been interchanged, dinners and evening parties given. From every enjoyment I was, of course, excluded: my share of the gaiety consisted in witnessing the daily apparelling of Eliza and Georgiana, and seeing them descend to the drawing-room, dressed out in thin muslin frocks and scarlet sashes, with hair elaborately ringletted; and afterwards, in listening to the sound of the piano or the harp played below, to the passing to and fro of the butler and footman, to the jingling of glass and china as refreshments were handed, to the broken hum of conversation as the drawing-room doors opened and closed. When tired of this occupation, I would retire from the stairhead to the solitary and silent nursery: there, though somewhat sad, I was not miserable. To speak truth, I had not the least wish to go into company, for in company I was very rarely noticed; and if Bessie had but been kind and companionable, I should have deemed it a treat to spend the evenings quietly with her, instead of passing them under the formidable eye of Mrs. Reed, in a room full of ladies and gentlemen. But Bessie, as soon as she had dressed her young ladies, used to take herself off to the lively regions of the kitchen and housekeeper's room, generally bearing the candle along with her. I then sat with my doll on my knee, till the fire got low, glancing round occasionally to make sure that nothing worse than myself haunted the shadowy room; and when the embers sank to a dull red, I undressed hastily, tugging at knots and strings as I best might, and sought shelter from cold and darkness in my crib. To this crib I always took my doll; human beings must love something, and in the dearth of worthier objects of affection, I contrived to find a pleasure in loving and cherishing a faded graven image, shabby as a miniature scarecrow. It puzzles me now to remember with what absurd sincerity I doated on this little toy, half fancying it alive and capable of sensation. I could not sleep unless it was folded in my night-gown; and when it lay there safe and warm, I was comparatively happy, believing it to be happy likewise.

Long did the hours seem while I waited the departure of the company, and listened for the sound of Bessie's step on the stairs: sometimes she would come up in the interval to seek her thimble or her scissors, or perhaps to bring me something by way of supper—a bun or a cheese-cake—then she would sit on the bed while I ate it, and when I had finished, she would tuck the clothes round me, and twice she kissed me, and said, 'Good night, Miss Jane.' When thus gentle, Bessie seemed to me the best, prettiest, kindest being in the world; and I wished most intensely that she would always be so pleasant and amiable, and never push me about, or scold, or task me unreasonably, as she was too often wont to do. Bessie Lee must, I think, have been a girl of good natural capacity, for she was smart in all she did, and had a remarkable knack of narrative; so, at least, I judge from the impression made on me by her nursery tales. She was pretty, too, if my recollections of her face and person are correct. I remember her as a slim young woman, with black hair, dark eyes, very nice features, and good, clear complexion; but she had a capricious and hasty temper, and indifferent ideas of principle or justice: still, such as she was, I preferred her to any one else at Gateshead Hall.

It was the fifteenth of January, about nine o'clock in the morning: Bessie was gone down to breakfast; my cousins had not yet been summoned to their mamma; Eliza was putting on her bonnet and warm garden-coat to go and feed her poultry, an occupation of which she was fond: and not less so of selling the eggs to the housekeeper and hoarding up the money she thus obtained. She had a turn for traffic, and a marked propensity for saving; shown not only in the vending of eggs and chickens, but also in driving hard bargains with the gardener about flower-roots, seeds, and slips of plants; that functionary having orders from Mrs. Reed to buy of his young lady all the products of her parterre she wished to sell: and Eliza would have sold the hair off her head if she could have made a handsome profit thereby. As to her money, she first secreted it in odd corners, wrapped in a rag or an old curl-paper; but some of these hoards having been discovered by the housemaid, Eliza, fearful of one day losing her valued treasure, consented to intrust it to her mother, at a usurious rate of interest—fifty or sixty per cent.; which interest she exacted every quarter, keeping her accounts in a little book with anxious accuracy.

Georgiana sat on a high stool, dressing her hair at the glass, and interweaving her curls with artificial flowers and faded feathers, of which she had found a store in a drawer in the attic. I was making my bed, having received strict orders from Bessie to get it arranged before she returned (for Bessie now frequently employed me as a sort of under-nurserymaid, to tidy the room, dust the chairs, &c.). Having spread the quilt, and folded my night-dress, I went to the window-seat to put in order some picture-books and doll's house furniture scattered there; an abrupt command from Georgiana to let her playthings alone (for the tiny chairs and mirrors, the fairy plates and cups were her property) stopped my proceedings; and then, for lack of other occupation, I fell to breathing on the frost-flowers with which the window was fretted, and thus clearing a space in the glass through which I might look out on the grounds, where all was still and petrified under the influence of a hard frost.

From this window were visible the porter's lodge and the carriage-road, and just as I had dissolved so much of the silver-white foliage veiling the panes as left room to look out, I saw the gates thrown open and a carriage roll through. I watched it ascending the drive with indifference: carriages often came to Gateshead, but none ever brought visitors in whom I was interested; it stopped in front of the house, the door-bell rang loudly, the new-comer was admitted. All this being nothing to me, my vacant attention soon found livelier attraction in the spectacle of a little hungry robin, which came and chirruped on the twigs of the leafless cherry-tree nailed against the wall near the casement. The remains of my breakfast of bread and milk stood on the table, and having crumbled a morsel of roll, I was tugging at the sash to put out the crumbs on the window-sill, when Bessie came running upstairs into the nursery.

'Miss Jane, take off your pinafore: what are you doing there? Have you washed your hands and face this morning?' I gave another tug before I answered, for I wanted the bird to be secure of its bread: the sash yielded; I scattered the crumbs, some on the stone sill, some on the cherry-tree bough, then, closing the window, I replied:—'No, Bessie; I have only just finished dusting.'

'Troublesome, careless child! and what are you doing now? You look quite red, as if you had been about some mischief: what were you opening the window for?'

I was spared the trouble of answering, for Bessie seemed in too great a hurry to listen to explanations: she hauled me to the washstand, inflicted a merciless, but happily brief scrub on my face and hands with soap, water, and a coarse towel; disciplined my head with a bristly brush, denuded me of my pinafore, and then, hurrying me to the top of the stairs, bid me go down directly, as I was wanted in the breakfast-room.

I would have asked who wanted me: I would have demanded if Mrs. Reed was there; but Bessie was already gone, and had closed the nursery-door upon me: I slowly descended. For nearly three months I had never been called to Mrs. Reed's presence: restricted so long to the nursery, the breakfast, dining, and drawing-rooms were become for me awful regions, on which it dismayed me to intrude.

I now stood in the empty hall; before me was the breakfast-room door, and I stopped, intimidated and trembling. What a miserable little poltroon had fear, engendered of unjust punishment, made of me in those days! I feared to return to the nursery, and feared to go forward to the parlour; ten minutes I stood in agitated hesitation: the vehement ringing of the breakfast-room bell decided me; I *must* enter.

'Who could want me?' I asked inwardly, as with both hands I turned the stiff door-handle, which, for a second or two, resisted my efforts. 'What should I see besides aunt Reed in the apartment?—a man or a woman?' The handle turned, the door unclosed, and passing through and curtseying low I looked up at—a black pillar! such, at least, appeared to me, at first sight, the straight, narrow, sable-clad shape standing erect on the rug: the grim face at the top was like a carved mask, placed above the shaft by way of capital.

Mrs. Reed occupied her usual seat by the fireside: she made a signal to me to approach: I did so, and she introduced me to the stony stranger with the words: 'This is the little girl respecting whom I applied to you.'

He, for it was a man, turned his head slowly towards where I stood, and having examined me with the two inquisitive-looking grey eyes which twinkled under a pair of bushy brows, said solemnly, and in a bass voice: 'Her size is small: what is her age?'

'Ten years.'

'So much?' was the doubtful answer; and he prolonged his scrutiny for some minutes. Presently he addressed me:

'Your name, little girl?'

'Jane Eyre, sir.'

In uttering these words I looked up: he seemed to me a tall gentleman; but then I was very little: his features were large, and they and all the lines of his frame were equally harsh and prim.

'Well, Jane Eyre, and are you a good child?'

Impossible to reply to this in the affirmative: my little world held a contrary opinion: I was silent. Mrs. Reed answered for me by an expressive shake of the head, adding soon, 'Perhaps the less said on that subject the better, Mr. Brocklehurst.'

'Sorry indeed to hear it! she and I must have some talk;' and bending from the perpendicular, he installed his person in the arm-chair, opposite Mrs. Reed's. 'Come here,' he said.

I stepped across the rug; he placed me square and straight before him. What a face he had, now that it was almost on a level with mine! what a great nose! and what a mouth! and what large prominent teeth!

'No sight so sad as that of a naughty child,' he began, 'especially a naughty little girl. Do you know where the wicked go after death?'

'They go to hell,' was my ready and orthodox answer.

'And what is hell? Can you tell me that?'

'A pit full of fire.'

'And should you like to fall into that pit, and to be burning there for ever?'

'No, sir.'

'What must you do to avoid it?'

I deliberated a moment; my answer, when it did come, was objectionable: 'I must keep in good health and not die.'

'How can you keep in good health? Children younger than you die daily. I buried a little child of five years old only a day or two since,—a good little child, whose soul is now in heaven. It is to be feared the same could not be said of you, were you to be called hence.'

Not being in a condition to remove his doubt, I only cast my eyes down on the two large feet planted on the rug, and sighed, wishing myself far enough away.

'I hope that sigh is from the heart, and that you repent of ever having been the occasion of discomfort to your excellent benefactress.'

'Benefactress! benefactress!' said I, inwardly: 'they all call Mrs. Reed my benefactress; if so, a benefactress is a disagreeable thing.'

'Do you say your prayers night and morning?' continued my interrogator.

'Yes, sir.'

'Do you read your Bible?'

'Sometimes.'

'With pleasure? Are you fond of it?'

'I like Revelations, and the book of Daniel, and Genesis and Samuel, and a little bit of Exodus, and some parts of Kings and Chronicles, and Job and Jonah.'

'And the Psalms? I hope you like them?'

'No, sir.'

'No? Oh, shocking! I have a little boy, younger than you, who knows six Psalms by heart: and when you ask him which he would rather have, a gingerbread-nut to eat, or a verse of a Psalm to learn, he says: "Oh! the verse of a Psalm! angels sing Psalms," says he; "I wish to be a little angel here below;" he then gets two nuts in recompense for his infant piety.'

'Psalms are not interesting,' I remarked.

'That proves you have a wicked heart; and you must pray to God to change it: to give you a new and clean one: to take away your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.'

I was about to propound a question, touching the manner in which that operation of changing my heart was to be performed, when Mrs. Reed interposed, telling me to sit down; she then proceeded to carry on the conversation herself.

'Mr. Brocklehurst, I believe I intimated in the letter which I wrote to you three weeks ago, that this little girl has not quite the character and disposition I could wish: should you admit her into Lowood school, I should be glad if the superintendent and teachers were requested to keep a strict eye on her, and above all, to guard against her worst fault, a tendency to deceit. I mention this in your hearing, Jane, that you may not attempt to impose on Mr. Brocklehurst.'

Well might I dread, well might I dislike Mrs. Reed; for it was her nature to wound me cruelly: never was I happy in her presence: however carefully I obeyed, however strenuously I strove to please her, my efforts were still repulsed and repaid by such sentences as the above. Now, uttered before a stranger, the accusation cut me to the heart: I dimly perceived that she was already obliterating hope from the new phase of existence which she destined me to enter; I felt, though I could not have expressed the feeling, that she was sowing aversion and unkindness along my future path; I saw myself transformed under Mr. Brocklehurst's eye into an artful noxious child, and what could I do to remedy the injury?

'Nothing, indeed,' thought I, as I struggled to repress a sob, and hastily wiped away some tears, the impotent evidences of my anguish.

'Deceit is, indeed, a sad fault in a child,' said Mr. Brocklehurst; 'it is akin to falsehood, and all liars will have their portion in the lake burning with fire and brimstone: she shall, however, be watched, Mrs. Reed; I will speak to Miss Temple and the teachers.'

'I should wish her to be brought up in a manner suiting her prospects,' continued my benefactress; 'to be made useful, to be kept humble: as for the vacations, she will, with your permission, spend them always at Lowood.'

'Your decisions are perfectly judicious, madam,' returned Mr. Brocklehurst. 'Humility is a Christian grace, and one peculiarly appropriate to the pupils of Lowood: I, therefore, direct that especial care shall be bestowed on its cultivation amongst them. I have studied how best to mortify in them the worldly sentiment of pride; and, only the other day, I had a pleasing proof of my success. My second daughter, Augusta, went with her mamma to visit the school, and on her return she exclaimed: "Oh, dear papa, how quiet and plain all the girls at Lowood look; with their hair combed behind their ears, and their long pinafores, and those little holland pockets outside their frocks—they are almost like poor people's children! and," said she, "they looked at my dress and mamma's, as if they had never seen a silk gown before."'

'This is the state of things I quite approve,' returned Mrs. Reed; 'had I sought all England over, I could scarcely have found a system more exactly fitting a child like Jane Eyre. Consistency, my dear Mr. Brocklehurst; I advocate consistency in all things.'

'Consistency, madam, is the first of Christian duties; and it has been observed in every arrangement connected with the establishment of Lowood: plain fare, simple attire, unsophisticated accommodations, hardy and active habits; such is the order of the day in the house and its inhabitants.'

'Quite right, sir. I may then depend upon this child being received as a pupil at Lowood, and there being trained in conformity to her position and prospects?'

'Madam, you may: she shall be placed in that nursery of chosen plants—and I trust she will show herself grateful for the inestimable privilege of her election.'

'I will send her, then, as soon as possible, Mr. Brocklehurst; for, I assure you, I feel anxious to be relieved of a responsibility that was becoming too irksome.'

'No doubt, no doubt, madam, and now I wish you good morning. I shall return to Brocklehurst Hall in the course of a week or two: my good friend, the Archdeacon, will not permit me to leave him sooner. I shall send Miss Temple notice that she is to expect a new girl, so that there will be no difficulty about receiving her. Good-bye.'

'Good-bye, Mr. Brocklehurst; remember me to Mrs. and Miss Brocklehurst, and to Augusta and Theodore, and Master Broughton Brocklehurst.'

'I will, madam. Little girl, here is a book entitled the "Child's Guide"; read it with prayer, especially that part containing "an account of the awfully sudden death of Martha G——, a naughty child addicted to falsehood and deceit."'

With these words Mr. Brocklehurst put into my hand a thin pamphlet sewn in a cover, and having rung for his carriage, he departed.

Mrs. Reed and I were left alone: some minutes passed in silence: she was sewing, I was watching her. Mrs. Reed might be at that time some six or seven and thirty; she was a woman of robust frame, square-shouldered and strong-limbed, not tall, and, though stout, not obese: she had a somewhat large face, the under-jaw being much developed and very solid; her brow was low, her chin large and prominent, mouth and nose sufficiently regular; under her light eyebrows glimmered an eye devoid of ruth; her skin was dark and opaque, her hair nearly flaxen; her constitution was sound as a bell—illness never came near her; she was an exact, clever manager, her household and tenantry were thoroughly under her control; her children, only, at times defied her authority, and laughed it to scorn; she dressed well, and had a presence and port calculated to set off handsome attire.

Sitting on a low stool, a few yards from her arm-chair, I examined her figure; I perused her features. In my hand I held the tract containing the sudden death of the Liar: to which narrative my attention had been pointed as to an appropriate warning. What had just passed; what Mrs. Reed had said concerning me to Mr. Brocklehurst; the whole tenor of their conversation, was recent, raw, and stinging in my mind; I had felt every word as acutely as I had heard it plainly, and a passion of resentment fomented now within me.

Mrs. Reed looked up from her work; her eye settled on mine, her fingers at the same time suspended their nimble movements.

'Go out of the room; return to the nursery,' was her mandate. My look or something else must have struck her as offensive, for she spoke with extreme, though suppressed irritation. I got up, I went to the door; I came back again; I walked to the window, across the room, then close up to her.

Speak I must; I had been trodden on severely, and *must* turn: but how? What strength had I to dart retaliation at my antagonist? I gathered my energies and launched them in this blunt sentence:—'I am not deceitful: if I were, I should say I loved *you;* but I declare I do not love you: I dislike you the worst of anybody in the world except John Reed; and this book about the liar, you may give to your girl, Georgiana, for it is she who tells lies, and not I.'

Mrs. Reed's hands still lay on her work inactive: her eye of ice continued to dwell freezingly on mine.

'What more have you to say?' she asked, rather in the tone in which a person might address an opponent of adult age than such as is ordinarily used to a child.

That eye of hers, that voice stirred every antipathy I had. Shaking from head to foot, thrilled with ungovernable excitement, I continued:—'I am glad you are no relation of mine: I will never call you aunt again as long as I live. I will never come to see you when I am grown up; and if any one asks me how I liked you, and how you treated me, I will say the very thought of you makes me sick, and that you treated me with miserable cruelty.'

'How dare you affirm that, Jane Eyre?'

'How dare I, Mrs. Reed? How dare I? Because it is the *truth.* You think I have no feelings, and that I can do without one bit of love or kindness; but I cannot live so: and you have no pity. I shall remember how you thrust me back—roughly and violently thrust me back—into the red-room, and locked me up there, to my dying day; though I was in agony; though I cried out, while suffocating with distress, "Have mercy! Have mercy, aunt Reed!" And that punishment you made me suffer because your wicked boy struck me—knocked me down for nothing. I will tell anybody who asks me questions this exact tale. People think you a good woman, but you are bad; hard-hearted. *You* are deceitful!'

Ere I had finished this reply my soul began to expand, to exult, with the strangest sense of freedom, of triumph, I ever felt. It seemed as if an invisible bond had burst, and that I had struggled out into unhoped-for liberty. Not without cause was this sentiment: Mrs. Reed looked frightened; her work had slipped from her knee; she was lifting up her hands, rocking herself to and fro, and even twisting her face as if she would cry.

'Jane, you are under a mistake: what is the matter with you? Why do you tremble so violently? Would you like to drink some water?'

'No, Mrs. Reed.'

'Is there anything else you wish for, Jane? I assure you, I desire to be your friend.'

'Not you. You told Mr. Brocklehurst I had a bad character, a deceitful disposition; and I'll let everybody at Lowood know what you are, and what you have done.'

'Jane, you don't understand these things: children must be corrected for their faults.'

'Deceit is not my fault!' I cried out in a savage, high voice.

'But you are passionate, Jane, that you must allow: and now return to the nursery—there's a dear—and lie down a little.'

'I am not your dear; I cannot lie down: send me to school soon, Mrs. Reed, for I hate to live here.'

'I will indeed send her to school soon,' murmured Mrs. Reed, *sotto voce;* and gathering up her work, she abruptly quitted the apartment.

I was left there alone—winner of the field. It was the hardest battle I had fought, and the first victory I had gained: I stood awhile on the rug, where Mr. Brocklehurst had stood, and I enjoyed my conqueror's solitude. First, I smiled to myself and felt elate; but this fierce pleasure subsided in me as fast as did the accelerated throb of my pulses. A child cannot quarrel with its elders, as I had done; cannot give its furious feelings uncontrolled play, as I had given mine, without experiencing afterwards the pang of remorse and the chill of reaction. A ridge of lighted heath, alive, glancing, devouring, would have been a meet emblem of my mind when I accused and menaced Mrs. Reed:

the same ridge, black and blasted after the flames are dead, would have represented as meetly my subsequent condition, when half an hour's silence and reflection had shown me the madness of my conduct, and the dreariness of my hatred and hating position.

Something of vengeance I had tasted for the first time; as aromatic wine it seemed, on swallowing, warm and racy: its after-flavour, metallic and corroding, gave me a sensation as if I had been poisoned. Willingly would I now have gone and asked Mrs. Reed's pardon; but I knew, partly from experience and partly from instinct, that was the way to make her repulse me with double scorn, thereby re-exciting every turbulent impulse of my nature.

I would fain exercise some better faculty than that of fierce speaking; fain find nourishment for some less fiendish feeling than that of sombre indignation. I took a book—some Arabian tales; I sat down and endeavoured to read. I could make no sense of the subject; my own thoughts swam always between me and the page I had usually found fascinating. I opened the glass-door in the breakfast-room: the shrubbery was quite still: the black frost reigned, unbroken by sun or breeze, through the grounds. I covered my head and arms with the skirt of my frock, and went out to walk in a part of the plantation which was quite sequestered: but I found no pleasure in the silent trees, the falling fir-cones, the congealed relics of autumn, russet leaves, swept by past winds in heaps, and now stiffened together. I leaned against a gate, and looked into an empty field where no sheep were feeding, where the short grass was nipped and blanched. It was a very grey day; a most opaque sky, 'onding on snaw,' canopied all; thence flakes fell at intervals, which settled on the hard path and on the hoary lea without melting. I stood, a wretched child enough, whispering to myself over and over again, 'What shall I do?—what shall I do?'

All at once I heard a clear voice call, 'Miss Jane! where are you? Come to lunch!'

It was Bessie, I knew well enough; but I did not stir; her light step came tripping down the path.

'You naughty little thing!' she said. 'Why don't you come when you are called?'

Bessie's presence, compared with the thoughts over which I had been brooding, seemed cheerful; even though, as usual, she was somewhat cross. The fact is, after my conflict with and victory over Mrs. Reed, I was not disposed to care much for the nursemaid's transitory anger; and I *was* disposed to bask in her youthful lightness of heart. I just put my two arms round her, and said, 'Come, Bessie! don't scold.'

The action was more frank and fearless than any I was habituated to indulge in: somehow it pleased her.

'You are a strange child, Miss Jane,' she said, as she looked down at me: 'a little, roving, solitary thing: and you are going to school, I suppose?'

I nodded.

'And won't you be sorry to leave poor Bessie?'

'What does Bessie care for me? She is always scolding me.'

'Because you're such a queer, frightened, shy, little thing. You should be bolder.'

'What! to get more knocks?'

'Nonsense! But you are rather put upon, that's certain. My mother said, when she came to see me last week, that she would not like a little one of her own to be in your place. Now, come in, and I've some good news for you.'

'I don't think you have, Bessie.'

'Child! what do you mean? What sorrowful eyes you fix on me! Well! but Missis and the young ladies and Master John are going out to tea this afternoon, and you shall have tea with me. I'll ask cook to bake you a little cake, and then you shall help me to look over your drawers; for I am soon to pack your trunk. Missis intends you to leave Gateshead in a day or two, and you shall choose what toys you like to take with you.'

'Bessie, you must promise not to scold me any more till I go.'

'Well, I will: but mind you are a very good girl, and don't be afraid of me. Don't start when I chance to speak rather sharply: it's so provoking.'

'I don't think I shall ever be afraid of you again, Bessie, because I have got used to you; and I shall soon have another set of people to dread.'

'If you dread them, they'll dislike you.'

'As you do, Bessie?'

'I don't dislike you, Miss; I believe I am fonder of you than of all the others.'

'You don't show it.'

'You little sharp thing! you've got quite a new way of talking. What makes you so venturesome and hardy?'

'Why, I shall soon be away from you, and besides——' I was going to say something about what had passed between me and Mrs. Reed; but on second thoughts I considered it better to remain silent on that head.

'And so you're glad to leave me?'

'Not at all, Bessie; indeed, just now I am rather sorry.'

'Just now! and rather! How coolly my little lady says it! I daresay now if I were to ask you for a kiss you wouldn't give it me: you'd say you'd *rather* not.'

'I'll kiss you and welcome: bend your head down.' Bessie stooped; we mutually embraced, and I followed her into the house quite comforted. That afternoon lapsed in peace and harmony; and in the evening Bessie told me some of her most enchanting stories, and sang me some of her sweetest songs. Even for me life had its gleams of sunshine.

CHAPTER V

Five o'clock had hardly struck on the morning of the 19th of January, when Bessie brought a candle into my closet, and found me already up and nearly dressed. I had risen half an hour before her entrance, and had washed my face, and put on my clothes by the light of a half-moon just setting, whose rays streamed through the narrow window near my crib. I was to leave Gateshead that day by a coach which passed the lodge gates at six A.M. Bessie was the only person yet risen; she had lit a fire in the nursery, where she now proceeded to make my breakfast. Few children can eat when excited with the thoughts of a journey; nor could I. Bessie, having pressed me in vain to take a few spoonfuls of the boiled milk and bread she had prepared for me, wrapped up some biscuits in a paper and put them into my bag; then she helped me on with my pelisse and bonnet, and wrapping herself in a shawl, she and I left the nursery. As we passed Mrs. Reed's bedroom, she said, 'Will you go in and bid Missis good-bye?'

'No, Bessie: she came to my crib last night when you were gone down to supper, and said I need not disturb her in the morning, or my cousins either; and she told me to remember that she had always been my best friend, and to speak of her and be grateful to her accordingly.'

'What did you say, Miss?'

'Nothing: I covered my face with the bed-clothes, and turned from her to the wall.'

'That was wrong, Miss Jane.'

'It was quite right, Bessie: your Missis has not been my friend: she has been my foe.'

'Oh, Miss Jane! don't say so!'

'Good-bye to Gateshead!' cried I, as we passed through the hall and went out at the front door.

The moon was set, and it was very dark; Bessie carried a lantern, whose light glanced on wet steps and gravel road sodden by a recent thaw. Raw and chill was the winter morning: my teeth chattered as I hastened down the drive. There was a light in the porter's lodge: when we reached it, we found the porter's wife just kindling her fire: my trunk, which had been carried down the evening before, stood corded at the door. It wanted but a few minutes of six, and shortly after that hour had struck the distant roll of wheels announced the coming coach; I went to the door, and watched its lamps approach rapidly through the gloom.

'Is she going by herself?' asked the porter's wife.

'Yes.'

'And how far is it?'

'Fifty miles.'

'What a long way! I wonder Mrs. Reed is not afraid to trust her so far alone.'

The coach drew up; there it was at the gates with its four horses and its top laden with passengers: the guard and coachman loudly urged haste; my trunk was hoisted up; I was taken from Bessie's neck, to which I clung with kisses.

'Be sure and take good care of her,' cried she to the guard, as he lifted me into the inside.

'Ay, ay!' was the answer: the door was slapped to, a voice exclaimed, 'All right,' and on we drove. Thus was I severed from Bessie and Gateshead: thus whirled away to unknown, and, as I then deemed, remote and mysterious regions.

I remember but little of the journey: I only know that the day seemed to me of a preternatural length, and that we appeared to travel over hundreds of miles of road. We passed through several towns, and in one, a very large one, the coach stopped; the horses were taken out, and the passengers alighted to dine. I was carried into an inn, where the guard wanted me to have some dinner; but, as I had no appetite, he left me in an immense room with a fireplace at each end, a chandelier pendent from the ceiling, and a little red gallery high up against the wall filled with musical instruments. Here I walked about for a long time, feeling very strange, and mortally apprehensive of some one coming in and kidnapping me; for I believed in kidnappers, their exploits having frequently figured in Bessie's fireside chronicles. At last the guard returned: once more I was stowed away in the coach, my protector mounted his own seat, sounded his hollow horn, and away we rattled over the 'stony street' of L——.

The afternoon came on wet and somewhat misty: as it waned into dusk I began to feel that we were getting very far indeed from Gateshead: we ceased to pass through towns; the country changed; great grey hills heaved up round the horizon: as twilight deepened we descended a valley, dark with wood, and long after night had overclouded the prospect I heard a wild wind rushing amongst trees.

Lulled by the sound, I at last dropped asleep: I had not long slumbered when the sudden cessation of motion awoke me; the coach-door was open, and a person like a servant was standing at it: I saw her face and dress by the light of the lamps.

'Is there a little girl called Jane Eyre here?' she asked. I answered 'Yes,' and was then lifted out; my trunk was handed down, and the coach instantly drove away.

I was stiff with long sitting, and bewildered with the noise and motion of the coach: gathering my faculties, I looked about me. Rain, wind, and darkness filled the air; nevertheless, I dimly discerned a wall before me and a door open in it; through this door I passed with my new guide: she shut and locked it behind her. There was now visible a house or houses—for the building spread far—with many windows, and lights burning in some; we went up a broad pebbly path, splashing wet, and were admitted at a door; then the servant led me through a passage into a room with a fire, where she left me alone.

I stood and warmed my numbed fingers over the blaze, then I looked round; there was no candle, but the uncertain light from the hearth showed, by intervals, papered walls, carpet, curtains, shining mahogany furniture: it was a parlour, not so spacious or splendid as the drawing-room at Gateshead, but comfortable enough. I was puzzling to make out the subject of a picture on the wall, when the door opened, and an individual carrying a light entered; another followed close behind.

The first was a tall lady with dark hair, dark eyes, and a pale and large forehead; her figure was partly enveloped in a shawl, her countenance was grave, her bearing erect.

'The child is very young to be sent alone,' said she, putting her candle down on the table. She considered me attentively for a minute or two, then further added:

'She had better be put to bed soon; she looks tired: 'are you tired?' she asked, placing her hand on my shoulder.

'A little, ma'am.'

'And hungry too, no doubt: let her have some supper before she goes to bed, Miss Miller. Is this the first time you have left your parents to come to school, my little girl?'

I explained to her that I had no parents. She inquired how long they had been dead; then how old I was, what was my name, whether I could read, write, and sew a little: then she touched my cheek gently with her forefinger, and saying, 'She hoped I should be a good child,' dismissed me along with Miss Miller.

The lady I had left might be about twenty-nine; the one who went with me appeared some years younger: the first impressed me by her voice, look, and air. Miss Miller was more ordinary; ruddy in complexion, though of a careworn countenance; hurried in gait and action, like one who had always a multiplicity of tasks on hand: she looked, indeed, what I afterwards found she really was, an under-teacher. Led by her, I passed from compartment to compartment, from passage to passage, of a large and irregular building; till, emerging from the total and somewhat dreary silence pervading that portion of the house we had traversed, we came upon the hum of many voices, and presently entered a wide, long room, with great deal tables, two at each end, on each of which burnt a pair of candles, and seated all round on benches a congregation of girls of every age, from nine or ten to twenty. Seen by the dim light of the dips, their number to me appeared countless, though not in reality exceeding eighty; they were uniformly dressed in brown stuff frocks of quaint fashion, and long holland pinafores. It was the hour of study; they were engaged in conning over their to-morrow's task, and the hum I had heard was the combined result of their whispered repetitions.

Miss Miller signed to me to sit on a bench near the door, then walking up to the top of the long room, she cried out:

'Monitors, collect the lesson-books and put them away!'

Four tall girls arose from different tables, and going round, gathered the books and removed them. Miss Miller again gave the word of command:

'Monitors, fetch the supper-trays!'

The tall girls went out, and returned presently, each bearing a tray, with portions of something, I knew not what, arranged thereon, and a pitcher of water and mug in the middle of each tray. The portions were handed round; those who liked took a draught of the water, the mug being common to all. When it came to my turn, I drank, for I was thirsty, but did not touch the food, excitement and fatigue rendering me incapable of eating: I now saw, however, that it was a thin oaten cake, shared into fragments.

The meal over, prayers were read by Miss Miller, and the classes filed off, two and two, upstairs. Overpowered by this time with weariness, I scarcely noticed what sort of a place the bedroom was; except that, like the schoolroom, I saw it was very long. To-night I was to be Miss Miller's bedfellow; she helped me to undress: when laid down I glanced at the long rows of beds, each of which was quickly filled with two occupants; in ten minutes the single light was extinguished; amidst silence and complete darkness, I fell asleep.

The night passed rapidly: I was too tired even to dream; I only once awoke to hear the wind rave in furious gusts, and the rain fall in torrents, and to be sensible that Miss Miller had taken her place by my side. When I again unclosed my eyes, a loud bell was ringing: the girls were up and dressing; day had not yet begun to dawn, and a rushlight or two burnt in the room. I too rose reluctantly; it was bitter cold, and I dressed as well as I could for shivering, and washed when there was a basin at liberty, which did not occur soon, as there was but one basin to six girls on the stands down the middle of the room. Again the bell rang: all formed in file, two and two, and in that order descended the stairs and entered the cold and dimly-lit schoolroom: here prayers were read by Miss Miller; afterwards she called out:—'Form classes!'

A great tumult succeeded for some minutes, during which Miss Miller repeatedly exclaimed, 'Silence!' and 'Order!' When it subsided, I saw them all drawn up in four semicircles, before four chairs, placed at the four tables; all held books in their hands, and a great book, like a Bible, lay on each table, before the vacant seat. A pause of some seconds succeeded, filled up by the low, vague hum of numbers; Miss Miller walked from class to class, hushing this indefinite sound.

A distant bell tinkled: immediately three ladies entered the room, each walked to a table and took her seat; Miss Miller assumed the fourth vacant chair, which was that nearest the door, and around which the smallest of the children were assembled: to this inferior class I was called, and placed at the bottom of it.

Business now began: the day's Collect was repeated, then certain texts of Scripture were said, and to these succeeded a protracted reading of chapters in the Bible, which lasted an hour. By the time that exercise was terminated day had fully dawned. The indefatigable bell now sounded for the fourth time: the classes were marshalled and marched into another room to breakfast: how glad I was to behold a prospect of getting something to eat! I was now nearly sick from inanition, having taken so little the day before.

The refectory was a great, low-ceiled, gloomy room; on two long tables smoked basins of something hot, which, however, to my dismay, sent forth an odour far from inviting. I saw a universal manifestation of discontent when the fumes of the repast met the nostrils of those destined to swallow it: from the van of the procession, the tall girls of the first class, rose the whispered words:—'Disgusting! The porridge is burnt again!'

'Silence!' ejaculated a voice; not that of Miss Miller, but one of the upper teachers, a little and dark personage, smartly dressed, but of somewhat morose aspect, who installed herself at the top of one table, while a more buxom lady presided at the other. I looked in vain for her I had first seen the night before; she was not visible: Miss Miller occupied the foot of the table where I sat, and a strange, foreign looking, elderly lady, the French teacher, as I afterwards found, took the corresponding seat at the other board. A long grace was said and a hymn sung; then a servant brought in some tea for the teachers, and the meal began.

Ravenous, and now very faint, I devoured a spoonful or two of my portion without thinking of its taste; but the first edge of hunger blunted, I perceived I had got in hand a nauseous mess: burnt porridge is almost as bad as rotten potatoes; famine itself soon sickens over it. The spoons were moved slowly: I saw each girl taste her food and try to swallow it; but in most cases the effort was soon relinquished. Breakfast was over, and none had breakfasted. Thanks being returned for what we had not got, and a second hymn chanted, the refectory was evacuated for the schoolroom. I was one of the last to go out, and in passing the tables, I saw one teacher take a basin of the porridge and taste it; she looked at the others; all their countenances expressed displeasure, and one of them, the stout one, whispered :—'Abominable stuff! How shameful!'

A quarter of an hour passed before lessons again began, during which the schoolroom was in a glorious tumult; for that space of time, it seemed to be permitted to talk loud and more freely, and they used their privilege. The whole conversation ran on the breakfast, which one and all abused roundly. Poor things! it was the sole consolation they had. Miss Miller was now the only teacher in the room: a group of great girls standing about her, spoke with serious and sullen gestures. I heard the name of Mr. Brocklehurst pronounced by some lips; at which Miss Miller shook her head disapprovingly; but she made no great effort to check the general wrath: doubtless she shared in it.

A clock in the schoolroom struck nine; Miss Miller left her circle, and standing in the middle of the room, cried :—'Silence! To your seats!'

Discipline prevailed: in five minutes the confused throng was resolved into order, and comparative silence quelled the Babel clamour of tongues. The upper teachers now punctually resumed their posts: but still, all seemed to wait. Ranged on benches down the sides of the room, the eighty girls sat motionless and erect: a quaint assemblage they appeared, all with plain locks combed from their faces, not a curl visible; in brown dresses, made high and surrounded by a narrow tucker about the throat, with little pockets of holland (shaped something like a Highlander's purse) tied in front of their frocks, and destined to serve the purpose of a work-bag: all too wearing woollen stockings and country-made shoes, fastened with brass buckles. Above twenty of those clad in this costume were full-grown girls, or rather young women; it suited them ill, and gave an air of oddity even to the prettiest.

I was still looking at them, and also at intervals examining the teachers—none of whom precisely pleased me; for the stout one was a little coarse, the dark one not a little fierce, the foreigner harsh and grotesque, and Miss Miller, poor thing! looked purple, weatherbeaten, and overworked—when, as my eye wandered from face to face, the whole school rose simultaneously, as if moved by a common spring.

What was the matter? I had heard no order given: I was puzzled. Ere I had gathered my wits, the classes were again seated: but as all eyes were now turned to one point, mine followed the general direction, and encountered the personage who had received me last night. She stood at the bottom of the long room, on the hearth; for there was a fire at each end: she surveyed the two rows of girls silently and gravely. Miss Miller approaching, seemed to ask her a question, and having received her answer, went back to her place, and said aloud,—'Monitor of the first class, fetch the globes!'

While the direction was being executed, the lady consulted moved slowly up the room. I suppose I have a considerable organ of Veneration, for I retain yet the sense of admiring awe with which my eyes traced her steps. Seen now, in broad daylight, she looked tall, fair, and shapely; brown eyes, with a benignant light in their irids, and a fine pencilling of long lashes round, relieved the whiteness of her large front; on each of her temples her hair, of a very dark brown, was clustered in round curls, according to the fashion of those times, when neither smooth bands nor long ringlets were in vogue; her dress, also in the mode of the day, was of purple cloth, relieved by a sort of Spanish trimming of black velvet; a gold watch (watches were not so common then as now) shone at her girdle. Let the reader add, to complete the picture, refined features; a complexion, if pale, clear; and a stately air and carriage, and he will have, at least, as clearly as words can give it, a correct idea of the exterior of Miss Temple—Maria Temple, as I afterwards saw the name written in a prayer-book entrusted to me to carry to church.

The superintendent of Lowood (for such was this lady) having taken her seat before a pair of globes placed on one of the tables, summoned the first class round her, and commenced giving a lesson in geography; the lower classes were called by the teachers: repetitions in history, grammar, &c., went on for an hour; writing and arithmetic succeeded, and music lessons were given by Miss Temple to some of the elder girls. The duration of each lesson was measured by the clock, which at last struck twelve. The superintendent rose:—'I have a word to address to the pupils,' said she.

The tumult of cessation from lessons was already breaking forth, but it sank at her voice. She went on:—'You had this morning a breakfast which you could not eat; you must be hungry. I have ordered that a lunch of bread and cheese shall be served to all.'

The teachers looked at her with a sort of surprise.

'It is to be done on my responsibility,' she added, in an explanatory tone to them, and immediately afterwards left the room.

The bread and cheese was presently brought in and distributed, to the high delight and refreshment of the whole school. The order was now given, 'To the garden!' Each put on a coarse straw bonnet, with strings of coloured calico, and a cloak of grey frieze. I was similarly equipped, and, following the stream, I made my way into the open air.

The garden was a wide inclosure, surrounded with walls so high as to exclude every glimpse of prospect; a covered verandah ran down one side, and broad walks bordered a middle space divided into scores of little beds: these beds were assigned as gardens for the pupils to cultivate, and each bed had an owner. When full of flowers they would doubtless look pretty; but now, at the latter end of January, all was wintry blight and brown decay. I shuddered as I stood and looked round me: it was an inclement day for outdoor exercise; not positively rainy, but darkened by a drizzling yellow fog; all underfoot was still soaking wet with the floods of yesterday. The stronger among the girls ran about and engaged in active games, but sundry pale and thin ones herded together for shelter and warmth in the verandah; and amongst these, as the dense mist penetrated to their shivering frames, I heard frequently the sound of a hollow cough.

As yet I had spoken to no one, nor did anybody seem to take notice of me; I stood lonely enough: but to that feeling of isolation I was accustomed; it did not oppress me much. I leant against a pillar of the verandah, drew my grey mantle close about me, and, trying to forget the cold which nipped me without, and the unsatisfied hunger which gnawed me within, delivered myself up to the employment of watching and thinking. My reflections were too undefined and fragmentary to merit record: I hardly yet knew where I was; Gateshead and my past life seemed floated away to an immeasurable distance; the present was vague and strange, and of the future I could form no conjecture. I looked round the convent-like garden, and then up at the house; a large building, half of which seemed grey and old, the other half quite new. The new part, containing the schoolroom and dormitory, was lit by mullioned and latticed windows, which gave it a church-like aspect; a stone tablet over the door, bore this inscription:—

LOWOOD INSTITUTION.

THIS PORTION WAS REBUILT A.D. ——, BY NAOMI BROCKLEHURST,
OF BROCKLEHURST HALL, IN THIS COUNTY.

'Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.'—ST. MATT. v. 16.

I read these words over and over again: I felt that an explanation belonged to them, and was unable fully to penetrate their import. I was still pondering the signification of 'Institution,' and endeavouring to make out a connection between the first words and the verse of Scripture, when the sound of a cough close behind me, made me turn my head. I saw a girl sitting on a stone bench near; she was bent over a book, on the perusal of which she seemed intent: from where I stood I could see the title—it was 'Rasselas;' a name that struck me as strange, and consequently attractive. In turning a leaf she happened to look up, and I said to her directly:—'Is your book interesting?' I had already formed the intention of asking her to lend it to me some day.

'I like it,' she answered, after a pause of a second or two, during which she examined me.

'What is it about?' I continued. I hardly know where I found the hardihood thus to open a conversation with a stranger; the step was contrary to my nature and habits: but I think her occupation touched a chord of sympathy somewhere; for I too liked reading, though of a frivolous and childish kind; I could not digest or comprehend the serious or substantial.

'You may look at it,' replied the girl, offering me the book.

I did so; a brief examination convinced me that the contents were less taking than the title: 'Rasselas' looked dull to my trifling taste; I saw nothing about fairies, nothing about genii; no bright variety seemed spread over the closely printed pages. I returned it to her; she received it quietly, and without saying anything she was about to relapse into her former studious mood: again I ventured to disturb her:—'Can you tell me what the writing on that stone over the door means? What is Lowood Institution?'

'This house where you are come to live.'

'And why do they call it Institution? Is it in any way different from other schools?'

'It is partly a charity-school: you and I, and all the rest of us, are charity children. I suppose you are an orphan: are not either your father or your mother dead?'

'Both died before I can remember.'

'Well, all the girls here have lost either one or both parents, and this is called an institution for educating orphans.'

'Do we pay no money? Do they keep us for nothing?'

'We pay, or our friends pay, fifteen pounds a year for each.'

'Then why do they call us charity children?'

'Because fifteen pounds is not enough for board and teaching, and the deficiency is supplied by subscription.'

'Who subscribes?'

'Different benevolent-minded ladies and gentlemen in this neighbourhood and in London.'

'Who was Naomi Brocklehurst?'

'The lady who built the new part of this house as that tablet records, and whose son overlooks and directs everything here.'

'Why?'

'Because he is treasurer and manager of the establishment.'

'Then this house does not belong to that tall lady who wears a watch, and who said we were to have some bread and cheese.'

'To Miss Temple? Oh, no! I wish it did: she has to answer to Mr. Brocklehurst for all she does. Mr. Brocklehurst buys all our food and all our clothes.'

'Does he live here?'

'No—two miles off, at a large hall.'

'Is he a good man?'

'He is a clergyman, and is said to do a great deal of good.'

'Did you say that tall lady was called Miss Temple?'

'Yes.'

'And what are the other teachers called?'

'The one with red cheeks is called Miss Smith; she attends to the work, and cuts out—for we make our own clothes, our frocks, and pelisses, and everything; the little one with black hair is Miss Scatcherd; she teaches history and grammar, and hears the second class repetitions; and the one who wears a shawl, and has a pocket-handkerchief tied to her side with a yellow riband, is Madam Pierrot: she comes from Lisle, in France, and teaches French.'

'Do you like the teachers?'

'Well enough.'

'Do you like the little black one, and the Madame ——? —I cannot pronounce her name as you do.'

'Miss Scatcherd is hasty—you must take care not to offend her; Madame Pierrot is not a bad sort of person.'

'But Miss Temple is the best—isn't she?'

'Miss Temple is very good, and very clever: she is above the rest, because she knows far more than they do.'

'Have you been long here?'

'Two years.'

'Are you an orphan?'

'My mother is dead.'

'Are you happy here?'

'You ask rather too many questions. I have given you answers enough for the present: now I want to read.'

But at the moment the summons sounded for dinner: all re-entered the house. The odour which now filled the refectory was scarcely more appetising than that which had regaled our nostrils at breakfast: the dinner was served in two huge tin-plated vessels, whence rose a strong steam redolent of rancid fat. I found the mess to consist of indifferent potatoes and strange shreds of rusty meat, mixed and cooked together. Of this preparation a tolerably abundant plateful was apportioned to each pupil. I ate what I could, and wondered within myself whether every day's fare would be like this.

After dinner, we immediately adjourned to the schoolroom: lessons recommenced, and were continued till five o'clock.

The only marked event of the afternoon was, that I saw the girl with whom I had conversed in the verandah, dismissed in disgrace, by Miss Scatcherd, from a history class, and sent to stand in the middle of the large schoolroom. The punishment seemed to me in a high degree ignominious, especially for so great a girl—she looked thirteen or upwards. I expected she would show signs of great distress and shame; but to my surprise she neither wept nor blushed: composed, though grave, she stood, the central mark of all eyes. 'How can she bear it so quietly—so firmly?' I asked of myself. 'Were I in her place, it seems to me I should wish the earth to open and swallow me up. She looks as if she were thinking of something beyond her punishment—beyond her situation: of something not round her nor before her. I have heard of day-dreams—is she in a day-dream now? Her eyes are fixed on the floor, but I am sure they do not see it—her sight seems turned in, gone down into her heart: she is looking at what she can remember, I believe; not at what is really present. I wonder what sort of a girl she is—whether good or naughty?'

Soon after five P.M. we had another meal, consisting of a small mug of coffee, and half a slice of brown bread. I devoured my bread and drank my coffee with relish; but I should have been glad of as much more—I was still hungry. Half an hour's recreation succeeded, then study: then the glass of water and the piece of oat-cake, prayers and bed. Such was my first day at Lowood.

CHAPTER VI

The next day commenced as before, getting up and dressing by rush-light; but this morning we were obliged to dispense with the ceremony of washing: the water in the pitchers was frozen. A change had taken place in the weather the preceding evening, and a keen north-east wind, whistling through the crevices of our bedroom windows all night long, had made us shiver in our beds, and turned the contents of the ewers to ice.

Before the long hour and a half of prayers and Bible reading was over, I felt ready to perish with cold. Breakfast-time came at last, and this morning the porridge was not burnt; the quality was eatable, the quantity small; how small my portion seemed! I wished it had been doubled.

In the course of the day I was enrolled a member of the fourth class, and regular tasks and occupations were assigned me: hitherto, I had only been a spectator of the proceedings at Lowood, I was now to become an actor therein. At first, being little accustomed to learn by heart, the lessons appeared to me both long and difficult: the frequent change from task to task, too, bewildered me; and I was glad, when, about three o'clock in the afternoon, Miss Smith put into my hands a border of muslin two yards long, together with needle, thimble, &c., and sent me to sit in a quiet corner of the schoolroom, with directions to hem the same. At that hour most of the others were sewing likewise; but one class still stood round Miss Scatcherd's chair reading, and as all was quiet, the subject of their lessons could be heard, together with the manner in which each girl acquitted herself, and the animadversions or commendations of Miss Scatcherd on the performance. It was English history: among the readers, I observed my acquaintance of the verandah: at the commencement of the lesson, her place had been at the top of the class, but for some error of pronunciation or some inattention to stops, she was suddenly sent to the very bottom. Even in that obscure position, Miss Scatcherd continued to make her an object of constant notice: she was continually addressing to her such phrases as the following:—

'Burns' (such it seems was her name: the girls here were all called by their surnames, as boys are elsewhere), 'Burns, you are standing on the side of your shoe, turn your toes out immediately.' 'Burns, you poke your chin out most unpleasantly, draw it in.' 'Burns, I insist on your holding your head up: I will not have you before me in that attitude,' &c., &c.

A chapter having been read through twice, the books were closed and the girls examined. The lesson had comprised part of the reign of Charles I., and there were sundry questions about tonnage and poundage, and ship-money, which most of them appeared unable to answer; still, every little difficulty was solved instantly when it reached Burns: her memory seemed to have retained the substance of the whole lesson, and she was ready with answers on every point. I kept expecting that Miss Scatcherd would praise her attention; but, instead of that, she suddenly cried out:—

'You dirty, disagreeable girl! you have never cleaned your nails this morning!'

Burns made no answer: I wondered at her silence.

'Why,' thought I, 'does she not explain that she could neither clean her nails nor wash her face, as the water was frozen?'

My attention was now called off by Miss Smith desiring me to hold a skein of thread: while she was winding it, she talked to me from time to time, asking whether I had ever been at school before, whether I could mark, stitch, knit,

&c.; till she dismissed me, I could not pursue my observations on Miss Scatcherd's movements. When I returned to my seat, that lady was just delivering an order, of which I did not catch the import; but Burns immediately left the class, and, going into the small inner room where the books were kept, returned in half a minute, carrying in her hand a bundle of twigs tied together at one end. This ominous tool she presented to Miss Scatcherd with a respectful curtsy; then she quietly, and without being told, unloosed her pinafore, and the teacher instantly and sharply inflicted on her neck a dozen strokes with the bunch of twigs. Not a tear rose to Burns' eye; and, while I paused from my sewing, because my fingers quivered at this spectacle with a sentiment of unavailing and impotent anger, not a feature of her pensive face altered its ordinary expression.

'Hardened girl!' exclaimed Miss Scatcherd; 'nothing can correct you of your slatternly habits: carry the rod away.'

Burns obeyed: I looked at her narrowly as she emerged from the book-closet; she was just putting back her handkerchief into her pocket, and the trace of a tear glistened on her thin cheek.

The play-hour in the evening I thought the pleasantest fraction of the day at Lowood: the bit of bread, the draught of coffee swallowed at five o'clock had revived vitality, if it had not satisfied hunger; the long restraint of the day was slackened; the schoolroom felt warmer than in the morning—its fires being allowed to burn a little more brightly to supply, in some measure, the place of candles, not yet introduced; the ruddy gloaming, the licensed uproar, the confusion of many voices, gave one a welcome sense of liberty.

On the evening of the day on which I had seen Miss Scatcherd flog her pupil, Burns, I wandered as usual among the forms and tables and laughing groups without a companion, yet not feeling lonely; when I passed the windows, I now and then lifted a blind and looked out; it snowed fast, a drift was already forming against the lower panes; putting my ear close to the window, I could distinguish from the gleeful tumult within, the disconsolate moan of the wind outside.

Probably, if I had lately left a good home and kind parents, this would have been the hour when I should most keenly have regretted the separation: that wind would then have saddened my heart; this obscure chaos would have disturbed my peace: as it was, I derived from both a strange excitement, and reckless and feverish, I wished the wind to howl more wildly, the gloom to deepen to darkness, and the confusion to rise to clamour.

Jumping over forms, and creeping under tables, I made my way to one of the fire-places: there, kneeling by the high wire fender, I found Burns, absorbed, silent, abstracted from all round her by the companionship of a book, which she read by the dim glare of the embers.

'Is it still "Rasselas"?' I asked, coming behind her.

'Yes,' she said, 'and I have just finished it.'

And in five minutes more she shut it up. I was glad of this.

'Now,' thought I, 'I can perhaps get her to talk.' I sat down by her on the floor.

'What is your name besides Burns?'

'Helen.'

'Do you come a long way from here?'

'I come from a place further north; quite on the borders of Scotland.'

'Will you ever go back?'

'I hope so; but nobody can be sure of the future.'

'You must wish to leave Lowood?'

'No: why should I? I was sent to Lowood to get an education; and it would be of no use going away until I have attained that object.'

'But that teacher, Miss Scatcherd, is so cruel to you?'

'Cruel? Not at all! She is severe: she dislikes my faults.'

'And if I were in your place I should dislike her; I should resist her; if she struck me with that rod, I should get it from her hand; I should break it under her nose.'

'Probably you would do nothing of the sort: but if you did, Mr. Brocklehurst would expel you from the school; that would be a great grief to your relations. It is far better to endure patiently a smart which nobody feels but yourself, than to commit a hasty action whose evil consequences will extend to all connected with you; and, besides, the Bible bids us return good for evil.'

'But then it seems disgraceful to be flogged, and to be sent to stand in the middle of a room full of people; and you are such a great girl: I am far younger than you, and I could not bear it.'

'Yet it would be your duty to bear it, if you could not avoid it: it is weak and silly to say you *cannot bear* what it is your fate to be required to bear.'

I heard her with wonder: I could not comprehend this doctrine of endurance; and still less could I understand or sympathise with the forbearance she expressed for her chastiser. Still I felt that Helen Burns considered things by a light invisible to my eyes. I suspected she might be right and I wrong; but I would not ponder the matter deeply: like Felix, I put it off to a more convenient season.

'You say you have faults, Helen: what are they? To me you seem very good.'

'Then learn from me, not to judge by appearances: I am, as Miss Scatcherd said, slatternly; I seldom put, and never keep, things in order; I am careless; I forget rules; I read when I should learn my lessons; I have no method; and sometimes I say, like you, I cannot *bear* to be subjected to systematic arrangements. This is all very provoking to Miss Scatcherd, who is naturally neat, punctual, and particular.'

'And cross and cruel,' I added; but Helen Burns would not admit my addition: she kept silence.

'Is Miss Temple as severe to you as Miss Scatcherd?'

At the utterance of Miss Temple's name, a soft smile flitted over her grave face.

'Miss Temple is full of goodness: it pains her to be severe to any one, even the worst in the school; she sees my errors, and tells me of them gently; and, if I do anything worthy of praise, she gives me my meed liberally. One strong proof of my wretchedly defective nature is, that even her expostulations, so mild, so rational, have not influence to cure me of my faults; and even her praise, though I value it most highly, cannot stimulate me to continued care and foresight.'

'That is curious,' said I: 'it is so easy to be careful.'

'For *you* I have no doubt it is. I observed you in your class this morning, and saw you were closely attentive: your thoughts never seemed to wander while Miss Miller explained the lesson and questioned you. Now, mine continually rove away: when I should be listening to Miss Scatcherd, and collecting all she says with assiduity, often I lose the very sound of her voice; I fall into a sort of dream. Sometimes I think I am in Northumberland, and that the noises I hear round me are the bubbling of a little brook which runs through Deepden near our house;—then, when it comes to my turn to reply, I have to be wakened; and, having heard nothing of what was read for listening to the visionary brook, I have no answer ready.'

'Yet how well you replied this afternoon.'

'It was mere chance: the subject on which we had been reading had interested me. This afternoon, instead of dreaming of Deepden, I was wondering how a man who wished to do right could act so unjustly and unwisely as Charles the First sometimes did; and I thought what a pity it was that, with his integrity and conscientiousness, he could see no farther than the prerogatives of the crown. If he had but been able to look to a distance, and see to what they call the spirit of the age was tending! Still, I like Charles—I respect him—I pity him, poor murdered king!

Yes, his enemies were the worst: they shed blood they had no right to shed. How dared they kill him!'

Helen was talking to herself now: she had forgotten I could not very well understand her—that I was ignorant, or nearly so, of the subject she discussed. I recalled her to my level.

'And when Miss Temple teaches you, do your thoughts wander then?'

'No, certainly, not often; because Miss Temple has generally something to say which is newer than my own reflections: her language is singularly agreeable to me, and the information she communicates is often just what I wished to gain.'

'Well, then, with Miss Temple you are good?'

'Yes, in a passive way: I make no effort; I follow as inclination guides me. There is no merit in such goodness.'

'A great deal: you are good to those who are good to you. It is all I ever desire to be. If people were always kind and obedient to those who are cruel and unjust, the wicked people would have it all their own way; they would never feel afraid, and so they would never alter, but would grow worse and worse. When we are struck at without a reason, we should strike back again very hard; I am sure we should—so hard as to teach the person who struck us never to do it again.'

'You will change your mind, I hope, when you grow older: as yet you are but a little untaught girl.'

'But I feel this, Helen: I must dislike those who, whatever I do to please them, persist in disliking me; I must resist those who punish me unjustly. It is as natural as that I should love those who show me affection, or submit to punishment when I feel it is deserved.'

'Heathens and savage tribes hold that doctrine; but Christians and civilised nations disown it.'

'How? I don't understand.'

'It is not violence that best overcomes hate—nor vengeance that most certainly heals injury.'

'What then?'

'Read the New Testament, and observe what Christ says, and how he acts; make his word your rule, and his conduct your example.'

'What does he say?'

'Love your enemies; bless them that curse you; do good to them that hate you and despitefully use you.'

'Then I should love Mrs. Reed, which I cannot do; I should bless her son John, which is impossible.'

In her turn, Helen Burns asked me to explain, and I proceeded forthwith to pour out, in my own way, the tale of my sufferings and resentments. Bitter and truculent when excited, I spoke as I felt, without reserve or softening.

Helen heard me patiently to the end: I expected she would then make a remark, but she said nothing.

'Well,' I asked impatiently, 'is not Mrs. Reed a hard-hearted, bad woman?'

'She has been unkind to you, no doubt; because, you see, she dislikes your cast of character, as Miss Scatcherd does mine: but how minutely you remember all she has done and said to you! What a singularly deep impression her injustice seems to have made on your heart! No ill-usage so brands its record on my feelings. Would you not be happier if you tried to forget her severity, together with the passionate emotions it excited? Life appears to me too short to be spent in nursing animosity, or registering wrongs. We are, and must be, one and all, burdened with faults in this world: but the time will soon come when, I trust, we shall put them off in putting off our corruptible bodies; when debasement and sin will fall from us with this cumbrous frame of flesh, and only the spark of the spirit will remain,—the impalpable principle of life and thought, pure as when it left the Creator to inspire the creature: whence it came it will return; perhaps again to be communicated to some being higher than man—perhaps to pass through gradations of glory, from the pale human soul to brighten to the seraph! Surely it will never, on the contrary, be suffered to degenerate from man to fiend? No; I cannot believe that: I hold another creed; which no one ever taught me, and which I seldom mention; but in which I delight, and to which I cling: for it extends hope to all: it makes Eternity a rest—a mighty home, not a terror and an abyss. Besides, with this creed, I can so clearly distinguish between the criminal and his crime; I can so sincerely forgive the first while I abhor the last: with this creed revenge never worries my heart, degradation never too deeply disgusts me, injustice never crushes me too low: I live in calm, looking to the end.'

Helen's head, always drooping, sank a little lower as she finished this sentence. I saw by her look she wished no longer to talk to me, but rather to converse with her own thoughts. She was not allowed much time for meditation: a monitor, a great rough girl, presently came up, exclaiming in a strong Cumberland accent,—

'Helen Burns, if you don't go and put your drawer in order, and fold up your work this minute, I'll tell Miss Scatcherd to come and look at it!'

Helen sighed as her reverie fled, and getting up, obeyed the monitor without reply as without delay.

CHAPTER VII

MY first quarter at Lowood seemed an age; and not the golden age either: it comprised an irksome struggle with difficulties in habituating myself to new rules and unwonted tasks. The fear of failure in these points harassed me worse than the physical hardships of my lot; though these were no trifles.

During January, February, and part of March, the deep snows, and, after their melting, the almost impassable roads, prevented our stirring beyond the garden walls, except to go to church; but within these limits we had to pass an hour every day in the open air. Our clothing was insufficient to protect us from the severe cold: we had no boots, the snow got into our shoes and melted there; our ungloved hands became numbed and covered with chilblains, as were our feet: I remember well the distracting irritation I endured from this cause every evening, when my feet inflamed; and the torture of thrusting the swelled, raw, and stiff toes into my shoes in the morning. Then the scanty supply of food was distressing: with the keen appetites of growing children, we had scarcely sufficient to keep alive a delicate invalid. From this deficiency of nourishment resulted an abuse, which pressed hardly on the younger pupils: whenever the famished great girls had an opportunity, they would coax or menace the little ones out of their portion. Many a time I have shared between two claimants the precious morsel of brown bread distributed at tea-time; and after relinquishing to a third, half the contents of my mug of coffee, I have swallowed the remainder with an accompaniment of secret tears, forced from me by the exigency of hunger.

Sundays were dreary days in that wintry season. We had to walk two miles to Brocklebridge Church, where our patron officiated. We set out cold, we arrived at church colder: during the morning service we became almost paralysed. It was too far to return to dinner, and an allowance of cold meat and bread, in the same penurious proportion observed in our ordinary meals, was served round between the services.

At the close of the afternoon service we returned by an exposed and hilly road, where the bitter winter wind, blowing over a range of snowy summits to the north, almost flayed the skin from our faces.

I can remember Miss Temple walking lightly and rapidly along our drooping line, her plaid cloak, which the frosty wind fluttered, gathered close about her, and encouraging us, by precept and example, to keep up our spirits, and march forward, as she said, 'like stalwart soldiers.' The other teachers, poor things, were generally themselves too much dejected to attempt the task of cheering others.

How we longed for the light and heat of a blazing fire when we got back! But, to the little ones at least, this was denied: each hearth in the schoolroom was immediately surrounded by a double row of great girls, and behind them the younger children crouched in groups, wrapping their starved arms in their pinafores.

A little solace came at tea-time, in the shape of a double ration of bread—a whole, instead of a half, slice—with the delicious addition of a thin scrape of butter: it was the hebdomadal treat to which we all looked forward from Sabbath to Sabbath. I generally contrived to reserve a moiety of this bounteous repast for myself; but the remainder I was invariably obliged to part with.

The Sunday evening was spent in repeating, by heart, the Church Catechism, and the fifth, sixth, and seventh chapters of St. Matthew; and in listening to a long sermon, read by Miss Miller, whose irrepressible yawns attested her weariness. A frequent interlude of these performances was the enactment of the part of Eutychus by some half dozen of little girls; who, overpowered with sleep, would fall down, if not out of the third loft, yet off the fourth form, and be taken up half dead. The remedy was, to thrust them forward into the centre of the schoolroom, and oblige them to stand there till the sermon was finished. Sometimes their feet failed them, and they sank together in a heap; they were then propped up with the monitors' high stools.

I have not yet alluded to the visits of Mr. Brocklehurst; and indeed that gentleman was from home during the greater part of the first month after my arrival; perhaps prolonging his stay with his friend the archdeacon: his absence was a relief to me. I need not say that I had my own reasons for dreading his coming: but come he did at last.

One afternoon (I had then been three weeks at Lowood), as I was sitting with a slate in my hand, puzzling over a sum in long division, my eyes, raised in abstraction to the window, caught sight of a figure just passing: I recognised almost instinctively that gaunt outline; and when two minutes after, all the school, teachers included, rose *en masse*, it was not necessary for me to look up in order to ascertain whose entrance they thus greeted. A long stride measured the schoolroom, and presently beside Miss Temple, who herself had risen, stood the same black column which had frowned on me so ominously from the hearth-rug of Gateshead. I now glanced sideways at this piece of architecture. Yes, I was right: it was Mr. Brocklehurst, buttoned up in a surtout, and looking longer, narrower, and more rigid than ever.

I had my own reasons for being dismayed at this apparition: too well I remembered the perfidious hints given by Mrs. Reed about my disposition, &c.; the promise pledged by Mr. Brocklehurst to apprise Miss Temple and the teachers of my vicious nature. All along I had been dreading the fulfilment of this promise,—I had been looking out daily for the 'Coming Man,' whose information respecting my past life and conversation was to brand me as a bad child for ever: now there he was. He stood at Miss Temple's side; he was speaking low in her ear: I did not doubt he was making disclosures of my villainy; and I watched her eye with painful anxiety, expecting every moment to see its dark orb turn on me a glance of repugnance and contempt. I listened too; and as I happened to be seated quite at the top of the room, I caught most of what he said: its import relieved me from immediate apprehension.

'I suppose, Miss Temple, the thread I bought at Lowton will do; it struck me that it would be just of the quality for the calico chemises, and I sorted the needles to match. You may tell Miss Smith that I forgot to make a memorandum of the darning needles, but she shall have some papers sent in next week; and she is not, on any account, to give out more than one at a time to each pupil: if they have more, they are apt to be careless and lose them. And, oh ma'am! I wish the woollen stockings were better looked to! —when I was here last, I went into the kitchen-garden and examined the clothes drying on the line; there was a quantity of black hose in a very bad state of repair: from the size of the holes in them I was sure they had not been well mended from time to time.'

He paused.

'Your directions shall be attended to, sir,' said Miss Temple.

'And, ma'am,' he continued, 'the laundress tells me some of the girls have two clean tuckers in the week: it is too much; the rules limit them to one.'

'I think I can explain that circumstance, sir. Agnes and Catherine Johnstone were invited to take tea with some friends at Lowton last Thursday, and I gave them leave to put on clean tuckers for the occasion.'

Mr. Brocklehurst nodded.

'Well, for once it may pass; but please not to let the circumstance occur too often. And there is another thing which surprised me: I find, in settling accounts with the housekeeper, that a lunch, consisting of bread and cheese, has twice been served out to the girls during the past fortnight. How is this? I look over the regulations, and I find no such meal as lunch mentioned. Who introduced this innovation? and by what authority?'

'I must be responsible for the circumstance, sir,' replied Miss Temple: 'the breakfast was so ill-prepared that the pupils could not possibly eat it; and I dared not allow them to remain fasting till dinner-time.'

'Madam, allow me an instant. You are aware that my plan in bringing up these girls is, not to accustom them to habits of luxury and indulgence, but to render them hardy, patient, self-denying. Should any little accidental disappointment of the appetite occur, such as the spoiling of a meal, the under or the over dressing of a dish, the incident ought not to be neutralised by replacing with something more delicate the comfort lost, thus pampering the body and obviating the aim of this institution; it ought to be improved to the spiritual edification of the pupils, by encouraging them to evince fortitude under the temporary privation. A brief address on those occasions would not be mistimed, wherein a judicious instructor would take the opportunity of referring to the sufferings of the primitive Christians; to the torments of martyrs; to the exhortations of our blessed Lord himself, calling upon his disciples to take up their cross and follow him; to his warnings that man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God; to his divine consolations, "if ye suffer hunger or thirst for my sake, happy are ye." Oh, madam, when you put bread and cheese, instead of burnt porridge, into these children's mouths, you may indeed feed their vile bodies, but you little think how you starve their immortal souls!'

Mr. Brocklehurst again paused—perhaps overcome by his feelings. Miss Temple had looked down when he first began to speak to her; but she now gazed straight before her, and her face, naturally pale as marble, appeared to be assuming also the coldness and fixity of that material;

especially her mouth, closed as if it would have required a sculptor's chisel to open it, and her brow settled gradually into petrified severity.

Meantime, Mr. Brocklehurst, standing on the hearth with his hands behind his back, majestically surveyed the whole school. Suddenly his eye gave a blink, as if it had met something that either dazzled or shocked its pupil; turning, he said in more rapid accents than he had hitherto used:—'Miss Temple, Miss Temple, what—*what* is that girl with curled hair? Red hair, ma'am, curled—curled all over?' And extending his cane he pointed to the awful object, his hand shaking as he did so.

'It is Julia Severn,' replied Miss Temple, very quietly.

'Julia Severn, ma'am! And why has she, or any other, curled hair? Why, in defiance of every precept and principle of this house, does she conform to the world so openly—here in an evangelical, charitable establishment—as to wear her hair one mass of curls?'

'Julia's hair curls naturally,' returned Miss Temple, still more quietly.

'Naturally! Yes, but we are not to conform to nature: I wish these girls to be the children of Grace: and why that abundance? I have again and again intimated that I desire the hair to be arranged closely, modestly, plainly. Miss Temple, that girl's hair must be cut off entirely; I will send a barber to-morrow: and I see others who have far too much of the excrescence—that tall girl, tell her to turn round. Tell all the first form to rise up and direct their faces to the wall.'

Miss Temple passed her handkerchief over her lips, as if to smooth away the involuntary smile that curled them; she gave the order, however, and when the first class could take in what was required of them, they obeyed. Leaning a little back on my bench, I could see the looks and grimaces with which they commented on this manœuvre: it was a pity Mr. Brocklehurst could not see them too; he would perhaps have felt that, whatever he might do with the outside of the cup and platter, the inside was further beyond his interference than he imagined.

He scrutinised the reverse of these living medals some five minutes, then pronounced sentence. These words fell like the knell of doom:—'All those top-knots must be cut off.'

Miss Temple seemed to remonstrate.

'Madam,' he pursued, 'I have a master to serve whose kingdom is not of this world: my mission is to mortify in these girls the lusts of the flesh; to teach them to clothe themselves with shamefacedness and sobriety, not with braided hair and costly apparel; and each of the young persons before us has a string of hair twisted in plaits which vanity itself might have woven: these, I repeat, must be cut off; think of the time wasted, of——'

Mr. Brocklehurst was here interrupted: three other visitors, ladies, now entered the room. They ought to have come a little sooner to have heard his lecture on dress, for they were splendidly attired in velvet, silk, and furs. The two younger of the trio (fine girls of sixteen and seventeen) had grey beaver hats, then in fashion, shaded with ostrich plumes, and from under the brim of this graceful head-dress fell a profusion of light tresses, elaborately curled; the elder lady was enveloped in a costly velvet shawl, trimmed with ermine, and she wore a false front of French curls.

These ladies were deferentially received by Miss Temple, as Mrs. and the Misses Brocklehurst, and conducted to seats of honour at the top of the room. It seems they had come in the carriage with their reverend relative, and had been conducting a rummaging scrutiny of the rooms upstairs, while he transacted business with the housekeeper, questioned the laundress, and lectured the superintendent. They now proceeded to address divers remarks and reproofs to Miss Smith, who was charged with the care of the linen and the inspection of the dormitories: but I had no time to listen to what they said; other matters called off and enchained my attention.

Hitherto, while gathering up the discourse of Mr. Brocklehurst and Miss Temple, I had not, at the same time, neglected precautions to secure my personal safety; which I thought would be effected, if I could only elude observation. To this end, I had sat well back on the form, and while seeming to be busy with my sum, had held my slate in such a manner as to conceal my face: I might have escaped notice, had not my treacherous slate somehow happened to slip from my hand and falling with an obtrusive crash, directly drawn every eye upon me; I knew it was all over now, and, as I stooped to pick up the two fragments of slate, I rallied my forces for the worst. It came.

'A careless girl!' said Mr. Brocklehurst, and immediately after—'It is the new pupil, I perceive.' And before I could draw breath, 'I must not forget I have a word to say respecting her.' Then aloud: how loud it seemed to me! 'Let the child who broke her slate, come forward!'

Of my own accord, I could not have stirred: I was paralysed: but the two great girls who sat on each side of me, set me on my legs and pushed me towards the dread judge, and then Miss Temple gently assisted me to his very feet, and I caught her whispered counsel,—'Don't be afraid, Jane, I saw it was an accident; you shall not be punished.'

The kind whisper went to my heart like a dagger.

'Another minute, and she will despise me for a hypocrite,' thought I; and an impulse of fury against Reed, Brocklehurst, and Co. bounded in my pulses at the conviction. I was no Helen Burns.

'Fetch that stool,' said Mr. Brocklehurst, pointing to a very high one from which a monitor had just risen: it was brought.

'Place the child upon it.'

And I was placed there, by whom I don't know: I was in no condition to note particulars: I was only aware that they had hoisted me up to the height of Mr. Brocklehurst's nose, that he was within a yard of me, and that a spread of shot orange and purple silk pelisses, and a cloud of silvery plumage extended and waved below me.

Mr. Brocklehurst hemmed.

'Ladies,' said he, turning to his family; 'Miss Temple, teachers, and children, you all see this girl?'

Of course they did; for I felt their eyes directed like burning-glasses against my scorched skin.

'You see she is yet young; you observe she possesses the ordinary form of childhood; God has graciously given her the shape that he has given to all of us; no signal deformity points her out as a marked character. Who would think that the Evil One had already found a servant and agent in her? Yet such, I grieve to say, is the case.'

A pause—in which I began to steady the palsy of my nerves, and to feel that the Rubicon was passed; and that the trial, no longer to shirked, must be firmly sustained.

'My dear children,' pursued the black marble clergyman, with pathos, 'this is a sad, a melancholy occasion; for it becomes my duty to warn you, that this girl, who might be one of God's own lambs, is a little castaway: not a member of the true flock, but evidently an interloper and an alien. You must be on your guard against her; you must shun her example: if necessary, avoid her company, exclude her from your sports, and shut her out from your converse. Teachers, you must watch her: keep your eyes on her movements, weigh well her words, scrutinise her actions, punish her body to save her soul: if, indeed, such salvation be possible, for (my tongue falters while I tell it) this girl, this child, the native of a Christian land, worse than many a little heathen who says its prayers to Brahma and kneels before Juggernaut—this girl is—a liar!'

Now came a pause of ten minutes; during which I, by this time in perfect possession of my wits, observed all the female Brocklehursts produce their pocket-handkerchiefs and apply them to their optics, while the elderly lady swayed herself to and fro, and the two younger ones whispered, 'How shocking!'

Mr. Brocklehurst resumed.

'This I learned from her benefactress; from the pious and charitable lady who adopted her in her orphan state, reared her as her own daughter, and whose kindness, whose generosity the unhappy girl repaid by an ingratitude so bad, so dreadful, that at last her excellent patroness was obliged to separate her from her own young ones, fearful lest her vicious example should contaminate their purity: she has sent her here to be healed, even as the Jews of old sent their diseased to the troubled pool of Bethesda; and, teachers, superintendent, I beg of you not to allow the waters to stagnate round her.'

With this sublime conclusion, Mr. Brocklehurst adjusted the top button of his surtout, muttered something to his family, who rose, bowed to Miss Temple, and then all the great people sailed in state from the room. Turning at the door, my judge said:—'Let her stand half an hour longer on that stool, and let no one speak to her during the remainder of the day.'

There was I, then, mounted aloft: I, who had said I could not bear the shame of standing on my natural feet in the middle of the room, was now exposed to general view on a pedestal of infamy. What my sensations were, no language can describe: but just as they all rose, stifling my breath and constricting my throat, a girl came up and passed me: in passing, she lifted her eyes. What a strange light inspired them! What an extraordinary sensation that ray sent through me! How the new feeling bore me up! It was as if a martyr, a hero, had passed a slave or victim, and imparted strength in the transit. I mastered the rising hysteria, lifted up my head, and took a firm stand on the stool. Helen Burns asked some slight question about her work of Miss Smith, was chidden for the triviality of the inquiry, returned to her place, and smiled at me as she again went by. What a smile! I remember it now, and I know that it was the effluence of fine intellect, of true courage; it lit up her marked lineaments, her thin face, her sunken grey eye, like a reflection from the aspect of an angel. Yet at that moment Helen Burns wore on her arm 'the untidy badge'; scarcely an hour ago I had heard her condemned by Miss Scatcherd to a dinner of bread and water on the morrow, because she had blotted an exercise in copying it out. Such is the imperfect nature of man! such spots are there on the disc of the clearest planet; and eyes like Miss Scatcherd's can only see those minute defects, and are blind to the full brightness of the orb.

CHAPTER VIII

Ere the half-hour ended, five o'clock struck; school was dismissed and all were gone into the refectory to tea. I now ventured to descend: it was deep dusk; I retired into a corner and sat down on the floor. The spell by which I had been so far supported began to dissolve; reaction took place, and soon, so overwhelming was the grief that seized me, I sank prostrate with my face to the ground. Now I wept: Helen Burns was not here; nothing sustained me; left to myself I abandoned myself, and my tears watered the boards. I had meant to be so good, and to do so much at Lowood: to make so many friends, to earn respect, and win affection. Already I had made visible progress: that very morning I had reached the head of my class; Miss Miller had praised me warmly; Miss Temple had smiled approbation; she had promised to teach me drawing, and to let me learn French, if I continued to make similar improvement two months longer: and then I was well-received by my fellow-pupils; treated as an equal by those of my own age, and not molested by any; now, here I lay again crushed and trodden on; and could I ever rise more?

'Never,' I thought; and ardently I wished to die. While sobbing out this wish in broken accents, some one approached: I started up—again Helen Burns was near me; the fading fires just showed her coming up the long, vacant room; she brought my coffee and bread.

'Come, eat something,' she said; but I put both away from me, feeling as if a drop or a crumb would have choked me in my present condition. Helen regarded me, probably with surprise: I could not now abate my agitation, though I tried hard; I continued to weep aloud. She sat down on the ground near me, embraced her knees with her arms, and rested her head upon them; in that attitude she remained silent as an Indian. I was the first who spoke:—'Helen, why do you stay with a girl whom everybody believes to be a liar?'

'Everybody, Jane? Why, there are only eighty people who have heard you called so, and the world contains hundreds of millions.'

'But what have I to do with millions? The eighty I know despise me.'

'Jane, you are mistaken: probably not one in the school either despises or dislikes you: many, I am sure, pity you much.'

'How can they pity me after what Mr. Brocklehurst said?'

'Mr. Brocklehurst is not a god: nor is he even a great and admired man: he is little liked here; he never took steps to make himself liked. Had he treated you as an especial favourite, you would have found enemies, declared or covert, all around you: as it is, the greater number would offer you sympathy if they dared. Teachers and pupils may look coldly on you for a day or two, but friendly feelings are concealed in their hearts; and if you persevere in doing well, these feelings will ere long appear so much the more evident for their temporary suppression. Besides, Jane,'——she paused.

'Well, Helen?' said I, putting my hand into hers: she chafed my fingers gently to warm them, and went on:—

'If all the world hated you, and believed you wicked, while your own conscience approved you, and absolved you from guilt, you would not be without friends.'

'No; I know I should think well of myself; but that is not enough: if others don't love me, I would rather die than live—I cannot bear to be solitary and hated, Helen. Look here; to gain some real affection from you, or Miss Temple, or any other whom I truly love, I would willingly submit to have the bone of my arm broken, or to let a bull toss me, or to stand behind a kicking horse, and let it dash its hoof at my chest,'——

'Hush, Jane! you think too much of the love of human beings, you are too impulsive, too vehement: the sovereign hand that created your frame, and put life into it, has provided you with other resources than your feeble self, or than creatures feeble as you. Besides this earth, and besides the race of men, there is an invisible world and a kingdom of spirits: that world is round us, for it is everywhere; and those spirits watch us, for they are commissioned to guard us; and if we were dying in pain and shame, if scorn smote us on all sides, and hatred crushed us, angels see our tortures, recognise our innocence (if innocent we be: as I know you are of this charge which Mr. Brocklehurst has weakly and pompously repeated at second-hand from Mrs. Reed; for I read a sincere nature in your ardent eyes and on your clear front), and God waits only the separation of spirit from flesh to crown us with a full reward. Why, then, should we ever sink overwhelmed with distress, when life is so soon over, and death is so certain an entrance to happiness—to glory?'

I was silent: Helen had calmed me; but in the tranquillity she imparted there was an alloy of inexpressible sadness. I felt the impression of woe as she spoke, but I could not tell whence it came; and when, having done speaking, she breathed a little fast and coughed a short cough, I momentarily forgot my own sorrows to yield to a vague concern for her.

Resting my head on Helen's shoulder, I put my arms round her waist; she drew me to her, and we reposed in silence. We had not sat long thus, when another person came in. Some heavy clouds, swept from the sky by a rising wind, had left the moon bare; and her light, streaming in through a window near, shone full both on us and on the approaching figure, which we at once recognised as Miss Temple.

'I came on purpose to find you, Jane Eyre,' said she; 'I want you in my room; and as Helen Burns is with you, she may come too.'

We went; following the superintendent's guidance, we had to thread some intricate passages, and mount a staircase before we reached her apartment; it contained a good fire, and looked cheerful. Miss Temple told Helen Burns to be seated in a low arm-chair on one side of the hearth, and herself taking another, she called me to her side.

'Is it all over?' she asked, looking down at my face. 'Have you cried your grief away?'

'I am afraid I never shall do that.'

'Why?'

'Because I have been wrongly accused; and you, ma'am, and everybody else will now think me wicked.'

'We shall think you what you prove yourself to be, my child. Continue to act as a good girl, and you will satisfy me.'

'Shall I, Miss Temple?

'You will,' said she, passing her arm round me. 'And now tell me who is the lady whom Mr. Brocklehurst called your benefactress?'

'Mrs. Reed, my uncle's wife. My uncle is dead, and left me to her care.'

'Did she not, then, adopt you of her own accord?'

'No, ma'am; she was sorry to have to do it: but my uncle, as I have often heard the servants say, got her to promise before he died, that she would always keep me.'

'Well, now, Jane, you know, or at least I will tell you, that when a criminal is accused, he is always allowed to speak in his own defence. You have been charged with falsehood; defend yourself to me as well as you can. Say whatever your memory suggests as true; but add nothing and exaggerate nothing.'

I resolved, in the depth of my heart, that I would be most moderate—most correct; and, having reflected a few minutes in order to arrange coherently what I had to say, I told her all the story of my sad childhood. Exhausted by emotion, my language was more subdued than it generally was when it developed that sad theme; and mindful of Helen's warnings against the indulgence of resentment, I infused into the narrative far less of gall and wormwood than ordinary. Thus restrained and simplified, it sounded more credible: I felt as I went on that Miss Temple fully believed me.

In the course of the tale I had mentioned Mr. Lloyd as having come to see me after the fit: for I never forgot the, to me, frightful episode of the red-room; in detailing which, my excitement was sure, in some degree, to break bounds; for nothing could soften in my recollection the spasm of agony which clutched my heart when Mrs. Reed spurned my wild supplication for pardon, and locked me a second time in the dark and haunted chamber.

I had finished: Miss Temple regarded me a few minutes in silence; she then said:—'I know something of Mr. Lloyd; I shall write to him; if his reply agrees with your statement, you shall be publicly cleared from every imputation: to me, Jane, you are clear now.'

She kissed me, and still keeping me at her side (where I was well contented to stand, for I derived a child's pleasure from the contemplation of her face, her dress, her one or two ornaments, her white forehead, her clustered and shining curls, and beaming dark eyes), she proceeded to address Helen Burns.

'How are you to-night, Helen? Have you coughed much to-day?'

'Not quite so much, I think, ma'am.'

'And the pain in your chest?'

'It is a little better.'

Miss Temple got up, took her hand and examined her pulse; then she returned to her own seat: as she resumed it, I heard her sigh low. She was pensive a few minutes, then rousing herself, she said cheerfully:—'But you two are my visitors to-night; I must treat you as such.' She rang her bell.

'Barbara,' she said to the servant who answered it, 'I have not yet had tea; bring the tray, and place cups for these two young ladies.'

And a tray was soon brought. How pretty, to my eyes, did the china cups and bright teapot look, placed on the little round table near the fire! How fragrant was the steam of the beverage, and the scent of the toast! of which, however, I, to my dismay (for I was beginning to be hungry), discerned only a very small portion: Miss Temple discerned it too:—'Barbara,' said she, 'can you not bring a little more bread and butter? There is not enough for three.'

Barbara went out: she returned soon:—'Madam, Mrs. Harden says she has sent up the usual quantity.'

Mrs. Harden, be it observed, was the housekeeper: a woman after Mr. Brocklehurst's own heart, made up of equal parts of whalebone and iron.

'Oh, very well!' returned Miss Temple; 'we must make it do, Barbara, I suppose.' And as the girl withdrew, she added, smiling, 'Fortunately, I have it in my power to supply deficiencies for this once.'

Having invited Helen and me to approach the table, and placed before each of us a cup of tea with one delicious but thin morsel of toast, she got up, unlocked a drawer, and taking from it a parcel wrapped in paper, disclosed presently to our eyes a good-sized seed-cake.

'I meant to give each of you some of this to take with you,' said she; 'but as there is so little toast, you must have it now,' and she proceeded to cut slices with a generous hand.

We feasted that evening as on nectar and ambrosia; and not the least delight of the entertainment was the smile of gratification with which our hostess regarded us, as we satisfied our famished appetites on the delicate fare she liberally supplied. Tea over and the tray removed, she again summoned us to the fire; we sat one on each side of her, and now a conversation followed between her and Helen, which it was indeed a privilege to be admitted to hear.

Miss Temple had always something of serenity in her air, of state in her mien, of refined propriety in her language, which precluded deviation into the ardent, the excited, the eager: something which chastened the pleasure of those who looked on her and listened to her, by a controlling sense of awe; and such was my feeling now; but as to Helen Burns, I was struck with wonder.

The refreshing meal, the brilliant fire, the presence and kindness of her beloved instructress, or, perhaps, more than all these, something in her own unique mind, had roused her powers within her. They woke, they kindled: first, they glowed in the bright tint of her cheek, which till this hour I had never seen but pale and bloodless; then they shone in the liquid lustre of her eyes, which had suddenly acquired a beauty more singular than that of Miss Temple's—a beauty neither of fine colour nor long eyelash, nor pencilled brow, but of meaning, of movement, of radiance. Then her soul sat on her lips, and language flowed, from what source I cannot tell: has a girl of fourteen a heart large enough, vigorous enough, to hold the swelling spring of pure, full, fervid eloquence? Such was the characteristic of Helen's discourse on that, to me, memorable evening; her spirit seemed hastening to live within a very brief span as much as many live during a protracted existence.

They conversed of things I had never heard of: of nations and times past; of countries far away: of secrets of nature discovered or guessed at: they spoke of books: how many they had read! What stores of knowledge they possessed! Then they seemed so familiar with French names and French authors: but my amazement reached its climax when Miss Temple asked Helen if she sometimes snatched a moment to recall the Latin her father had taught her, and taking a book from a shelf, bade her read and construe a page of 'Virgil'; and Helen obeyed, my organ of Veneration expanding at every sounding line. She had scarcely finished ere the bell announced bedtime: no delay could be admitted; Miss Temple embraced us both, saying, as she drew us to her heart:—'God bless you, my children!'

Helen she held a little longer than me: she let her go more reluctantly; it was Helen her eye followed to the door; it was for her she a second time breathed a sad sigh; for her she wiped a tear from her cheek.

On reaching the bedroom, we heard the voice of Miss Scatcherd: she was examining drawers; she had just pulled out Helen Burns's, and when we entered Helen was greeted with a sharp reprimand, and told that to-morrow she should have half a dozen of untidily-folded articles pinned to her shoulder.

'My things were indeed in shameful disorder,' murmured Helen to me, in a low voice: 'I intended to have arranged them, but I forgot.'

Next morning, Miss Scatcherd wrote in conspicuous characters on a piece of pasteboard the word 'Slattern,' and bound it like a phylactery round Helen's large, mild, intelligent, and benign-looking forehead. She wore it till evening, patient, unresentful, regarding it as a deserved punishment. The moment Miss Scatcherd withdrew after afternoon-school, I ran to Helen, tore it off, and thrust it into the fire: the fury of which she was incapable had been burning in my soul all day, and tears, hot and large, had continually been scalding my cheek; for the spectacle of her sad resignation gave me an intolerable pain at the heart.

About a week subsequently to the incidents above narrated, Miss Temple, who had written to Mr. Lloyd, received his answer: it appeared that what he said went to corroborate my account. Miss Temple, having assembled the whole school, announced that inquiry had been made into the charges alleged against Jane Eyre, and that she was most happy to be able to pronounce her completely cleared from every imputation. The teachers then shook hands with me and kissed me, and a murmur of pleasure ran through the ranks of my companions.

Thus relieved of a grievous load, I from that hour set to work afresh, resolved to pioneer my way through every difficulty: I toiled hard, and my success was proportionate to my efforts; my memory, not naturally tenacious, improved with practice: exercise sharpened my wits; in a few weeks I was promoted to a higher class; in less than two months I was allowed to commence French and drawing. I learned the first two tenses of the verb *Etre*, and sketched my first cottage (whose walls, by-the-by, outrivalled in slope those of the leaning tower of Pisa), on the same day. That night, on going to bed, I forgot to prepare in imagination the Barmecide supper of hot roast potatoes, or white bread and new milk, with which I was wont to amuse my inward cravings: I feasted instead on the spectacle of ideal drawings, which I saw in the dark; all the work of my own hands: freely pencilled houses and trees, picturesque rocks and ruins, Cuyp-like groups of cattle, sweet paintings of butterflies hovering over unblown roses, of birds picking at ripe cherries, of wrens' nests enclosing pearl-like eggs, wreathed about with young ivy sprays. I examined, too, in thought, the possibility of my ever being able to translate currently a certain little French story-book which Madame Pierrot had that day shown me; nor was that problem solved to my satisfaction ere I fell sweetly asleep.

Well has Solomon said—'Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, than a stalled ox and hatred therewith.'

I would not now have exchanged Lowood with all its privations, for Gateshead and its daily luxuries.

CHAPTER IX

But the privations, or rather the hardships, of Lowood lessened. Spring drew on: she was indeed already come; the frosts of winter had ceased; its snows were melted, its cutting winds ameliorated. My wretched feet, flayed and swollen to lameness by the sharp air of January, began to heal and subside under the gentler breathings of April; the nights and mornings no longer by their Canadian temperature froze the very blood in our veins; we could now endure the play-hour passed in the garden: sometimes on a sunny day it began even to be pleasant and genial, and a greenness grew over those brown beds, which, freshening daily, suggested the thought that Hope traversed them at night, and left each morning brighter traces of her steps. Flowers peeped out amongst the leaves; snowdrops, crocuses, purple auriculas, and golden-eyed pansies. On Thursday afternoons (half-holidays) we now took walks, and found still sweeter flowers opening by the wayside, under the hedges.

I discovered, too, that a great pleasure, an enjoyment which the horizon only bounded, lay all outside the high and spike-guarded walls of our garden: this pleasure consisted in prospect of noble summits girdling a great hill-hollow, rich in verdure and shadow; in a bright beck, full of dark stones and sparkling eddies. How different had this scene looked when I viewed it laid out beneath the iron sky of winter, stiffened in frost, shrouded with snow!—when mists as chill as death wandered to the impulse of east winds along those purple peaks, and rolled down 'ing' and holm till they blended with the frozen fog of the beck! That beck itself was then a torrent, turbid and curbless: it tore asunder the wood, and sent a raving sound through the air, often thickened with wild rain or whirling sleet; and for the forest on its banks, *that* showed only ranks of skeletons.

April advanced to May: a bright, serene May it was; days of blue sky, placid sunshine, and soft western or southern gales filled up its duration. And now vegetation matured with vigour; Lowood shook loose its tresses; it became all green, all flowery; its great elm, ash, and oak skeletons were restored to majestic life; woodland plants sprang up profusely in its recesses; unnumbered varieties of moss filled its hollows, and it made a strange ground-sunshine out of the wealth of its wild primrose plants: I have seen their pale gold gleam in overshadowed spots like scatterings of the sweetest lustre. All this I enjoyed often and fully, free, unwatched, and almost alone: for this unwonted liberty and pleasure there was a cause, to which it now becomes my task to advert.

Have I not described a pleasant site for a dwelling, when I speak of it as bosomed in hill and wood, and rising from the verge of a stream? Assuredly, pleasant enough: but whether healthy or not is another question.

That forest-dell, where Lowood lay, was the cradle of fog and fog-bred pestilence; which, quickening with the quickening spring, crept into the Orphan Asylum, breathed typhus through its crowded schoolroom and dormitory, and, ere May arrived, transformed the seminary into a hospital.

Semi-starvation and neglected colds had predisposed most of the pupils to receive infection: forty-five out of the eighty girls lay ill at one time. Classes were broken up, rules relaxed. The few who continued well were allowed almost unlimited licence; because the medical attendant insisted on the necessity of frequent exercise to keep them in health: and had it been otherwise, no one had leisure to watch or restrain them. Miss Temple's whole attention was absorbed by the patients: she lived in the sick-room, never quitting it except to snatch a few hours' rest at night.

The teachers were fully occupied with packing up and making other necessary preparations for the departure of those girls who were fortunate enough to have friends and relations able and willing to remove them from the seat of contagion. Many, already smitten, went home only to die: some died at the school, and were buried quietly and quickly, the nature of the malady forbidding delay.

While disease had thus become an inhabitant of Lowood, and death its frequent visitor; while there was gloom and fear within its walls; while its rooms and passages steamed with hospital smells, the drug and the pastille striving vainly to overcome the effluvia of mortality, that bright May shone unclouded over the bold hills and beautiful woodland out of doors. Its garden, too, glowed with flowers; hollyhocks had sprung up tall as trees, lilies had opened, tulips and roses were in bloom; the borders of the little beds were gay with pink thrift and crimson double-daisies; the sweetbriers gave out, morning and evening, their scent of spice and apples; and these fragrant treasures were all useless for most of the inmates of Lowood, except to furnish now and then a handful of herbs and blossoms to put in a coffin.

But I, and the rest who continued well, enjoyed fully the beauties of the scene and season: they let us ramble in the wood, like gipses, from morning till night; we did what we liked, went where we liked: we lived better too. Mr. Brocklehurst and his family never came near Lowood now: household matters were not scrutinised into; the cross housekeeper was gone, driven away by the fear of infection; her successor, who had been matron at the Lowton Dispensary, unused to the ways of her new abode, provided with comparative liberality. Besides, there were fewer to feed: the sick could eat little; our breakfast-basins were better filled: when there was no time to prepare a regular dinner, which often happened, she would give us a large piece of cold pie, or a thick slice of bread and cheese, and this we carried away with us to the wood, where we each chose the spot we liked best, and dined sumptuously.

My favourite seat was a smooth and broad stone, rising white and dry from the very middle of the beck, and only to be got at by wading through the water; a feat I accomplished barefoot. The stone was just broad enough to accommodate, comfortably, another girl and me, at that time my chosen comrade—one Mary Ann Wilson; a shrewd, observant personage, whose society I took pleasure in, partly because she was witty and original, and partly because she had a manner which set me at my ease. Some years older than I, she knew more of the world, and could tell me many things I liked to hear: with her my curiosity found gratification: to my faults also she gave ample indulgence, never imposing curb or rein on anything I said. She had a turn for narrative, I for analysis; she liked to inform, I to question; so we got on swimmingly together, deriving much entertainment, if not much improvement, from our mutual intercourse.

And where, meantime, was Helen Burns? Why did I not spend these sweet days of liberty with her? Had I forgotten her? or was I so worthless as to have grown tired of her pure society? Surely the Mary Ann Wilson I have mentioned was inferior to my first acquaintance: she could only tell me amusing stories, and reciprocate any racy and pungent gossip I chose to indulge in; while, if I have spoken truth of Helen, she was qualified to give those who enjoyed the privilege of her converse, a taste of far higher things.

True, reader; and I knew and felt this: and though I am a defective being, with many faults and few redeeming points, yet I never tired of Helen Burns; nor ever ceased to cherish for her a sentiment of attachment, as strong, tender, and respectful as any that ever animated my heart. How could it be otherwise, when Helen, at all times and under all circumstances, evinced for me a quiet and faithful friendship, which ill-humour never soured, nor irritation ever troubled? But Helen was ill at present: for some weeks she had been removed from my sight to I knew not what room upstairs. She was not, I was told, in the hospital portion of the house with the fever patients; for her complaint was consumption, not typhus: and by consumption I, in my ignorance, understood something mild, which time and care would be sure to alleviate.

I was confirmed in this idea by the fact of her once or twice coming downstairs on very warm sunny afternoons, and being taken by Miss Temple into the garden: but, on these occasions, I was not allowed to go and speak to her; I only saw her from the schoolroom window, and then not distinctly; for she was much wrapped up, and sat at a distance under the verandah.

One evening, in the beginning of June, I had stayed out very late with Mary Ann in the wood; we had, as usual, separated ourselves from the others, and had wandered far: so far that we lost our way, and had to ask it at a lonely cottage, where a man and woman lived, who looked after a herd of half-wild swine that fed on the mast in the wood. When we got back, it was after moon-rise: a pony, which we knew to be the surgeon's, was standing at the garden door. Mary Ann remarked that she supposed some one must be very ill, as Mr. Bates had been sent for at that time of the evening. She went into the house; I stayed behind a few minutes to plant in my garden a handful of roots I had dug up in the forest, and which I feared would wither if I left them till the morning. This done, I lingered yet a little longer: the flowers smelt so sweet as the dew fell; it was such a pleasant evening, so serene, so warm; the still glowing west promised so fairly another fine day on the morrow; the moon rose with such majesty in the grave east. I was noting these things and enjoying them as a child might, when it entered my mind as it had never done before:—

'How sad to be lying now on a sick bed, and to be in danger of dying! This world is pleasant—it would be dreary to be called from it, and to have to go who knows where?'

And then my mind made its first earnest effort to comprehend what had been infused into it concerning heaven and hell: and for the first time it recoiled, baffled; and for the first time glancing behind, on each side, and before it, it saw all round an unfathomed gulf: it felt the one point where it stood—the present; all the rest was formless cloud and vacant depth: and it shuddered at the thought of tottering, and plunging amid that chaos. While pondering this new idea, I heard the front door open; Mr. Bates came out, and with him was a nurse. After she had seen him mount his horse and depart, she was about to close the door, but I ran up to her.

'How is Helen Burns?'

'Very poorly,' was the answer.

'Is it her Mr. Bates has been to see?'

'Yes.'

'And what does he say about her?'

'He says she'll not be here long.'

This phrase, uttered in my hearing yesterday, would have only conveyed the notion that she was about to be removed to Northumberland, to her own home. I should not have suspected that it meant she was dying; but I knew instantly now: it opened clear on my comprehension that Helen Burns was numbering her last days in this world, and that she was going to be taken to the region of spirits, if such region there were. I experienced a shock of horror, then a strong thrill of grief, then a desire—a necessity to see her, and I asked in what room she lay.

'She is in Miss Temple's room,' said the nurse.

'May I go up and speak to her?'

'Oh no, child! It is not likely; and now it is time for you to come in; you'll catch the fever if you stop out when the dew is falling.'

The nurse closed the front door; I went in by the side entrance which led to the schoolroom: I was just in time; it was nine o'clock, and Miss Miller was calling the pupils to go to bed.

It might be two hours later, probably near eleven, when I—not having been able to fall asleep, and deeming, from the perfect silence of the dormitory, that my companions were all wrapt in profound repose—rose softly, put on my frock over my night-dress, and, without shoes, crept from the apartment, and set off in quest of Miss Temple's room. It was quite at the other end of the house; but I knew my way; and the light of the unclouded summer moon, entering here and there at passage windows, enabled me to find it without difficulty. An odour of camphor and burnt vinegar warned me when I came near the fever room: and I passed its door quickly, fearful lest the nurse who sat up all night should hear me. I dreaded being discovered and sent back; for I *must* see Helen,—I must embrace her before she died, —I must give her one last kiss, exchange with her one last word.

Having descended a staircase, traversed a portion of the house below, and succeeded in opening and shutting, without noise, two doors, I reached another flight of steps; these I mounted, and then just opposite to me was Miss Temple's room. A light shone through the key-hole, and from under the door; a profound stillness pervaded the vicinity. Coming near, I found the door slightly ajar; probably to admit some fresh air into the close abode of sickness. Indisposed to hesitate, and full of impatient impulses—soul and senses quivering with keen throes—I put it back and looked in. My eye sought Helen, and feared to find death.

Close by Miss Temple's bed, and half covered with its white curtains, there stood a little crib. I saw the outline of a form under the clothes, but the face was hid by the hangings: the nurse I had spoken to in the garden sat in an easy-chair, asleep; an unsnuffed candle burnt dimly on the table. Miss Temple was not to be seen; I knew afterwards that she had been called to a delirious patient in the fever-room. I advanced; then paused by the crib side: my hand was on the curtain, but I preferred speaking before I withdrew it. I still recoiled at the dread of seeing a corpse.

'Helen!' I whispered softly, 'are you awake?'

She stirred herself, put back the curtain, and I saw her face, pale, wasted, but quite composed: she looked so little changed that my fear was instantly dissipated.

'Can it be you, Jane?' she asked in her own gentle voice.

'Oh!' I thought, 'she is not going to die: they are mistaken: she could not speak and look so calmly if she were.'

I got on to her crib and kissed her: her forehead was cold, and her cheek both cold and thin, and so were her hand and wrist; but she smiled as of old.

'Why are you come here, Jane? It is past eleven o'clock: I heard it strike some minutes since.'

'I came to see you, Helen: I heard you were very ill, and I could not sleep till I had spoken to you.'

'You came to bid me good-bye, then: you are just in time probably.'

'Are you going somewhere, Helen? Are you going home?'

'Yes; to my long home—my last home.'

'No, no, Helen!' I stopped distressed. While I tried to devour my tears, a fit of coughing seized Helen; it did not, however, wake the nurse; when it was over, she lay some minutes exhausted; then she whispered:—'Jane, your little feet are bare; lie down and cover yourself with my quilt.'

I did so: she put her arm over me, and I nestled close to her. After a long silence, she resumed; still whispering,—

'I am very happy, Jane; and when you hear that I am dead, you must be sure and not grieve: there is nothing to grieve about. We all must die one day, and the illness which is removing me is not painful; it is gentle and gradual: my mind is at rest. I leave no one to regret me much: I have only a father; and he is lately married, and will not miss me. By dying young, I shall escape great sufferings. I had not qualities or talents to make my way very well in the world; I should have been continually at fault.'

'But where are you going to, Helen? Can you see? Do you know?'

'I believe: I have faith: I am going to God.'

'Where is God? What is God?'

'My Maker and yours, who will never destroy what he created. I rely implicitly on his power, and confide wholly in his goodness: I count the hours till that eventful one arrives which shall restore me to him, reveal him to me.'

'You are sure, then, Helen, that there is such a place as heaven; and that our souls can get to it when we die?'

'I am sure there is a future state; I believe God is good; I can resign my immortal part to him without any misgiving. God is my father; God is my friend: I love him; I believe he loves me.

'And shall I see you again, Helen, when I die?'

'You will come to the same region of happiness: be received by the same mighty, universal Parent, no doubt, dear Jane.'

Again I questioned; but this time only in thought. 'Where is that region? Does it exist?' And I clasped my arms closer round Helen; she seemed dearer to me than ever; I felt as if I could not let her go; I lay with my face hidden on her neck. Presently she said in the sweetest tone,—'How comfortable I am! That last fit of coughing has tired me a little; I feel as if I could sleep: but don't leave me, Jane; I like to have you near me.'

'I'll stay with you, *dear* Helen: no one shall take me away.'

'Are you warm, darling?'

'Yes.'

'Good-night, Jane.'

'Good-night, Helen.'

She kissed me, and I her; and we both soon slumbered.

When I awoke it was day: an unusual movement roused me, I looked up; I was in somebody's arms; the nurse held me; she was carrying me through the passage back to the dormitory. I was not reprimanded for leaving my bed; people had something else to think about: no explanation was afforded then to my many questions; but a day or two afterwards I learned that Miss Temple, on returning to her own room at dawn, had found me laid in a little crib; my face against Helen Burns's shoulder, my arms round her neck. I was asleep, and Helen was—dead.

Her grave is in Brocklebridge churchyard: for fifteen years after her death it was only covered by a grassy mound; but now a grey marble tablet marks the spot, inscribed with her name, and the word 'Resurgam.'

CHAPTER X

HITHERTO I have recorded in detail the events of my insignificant existence: to the first ten years of my life, I have given almost as many chapters. But this is not to be a regular autobiography: I am only bound to invoke memory where I know her responses will possess some degree of interest; therefore I now pass a space of eight years almost in silence: a few lines only are necessary to keep up the links of connection.

When the typhus fever had fulfilled its mission of devastation at Lowood, it gradually disappeared from thence; but not till its virulence and the number of its victims had drawn public attention on the school. Inquiry was made into the origin of the scourge, and by degrees various facts came out which excited public indignation in a high degree. The unhealthy nature of the site; the quantity and quality of the children's food; the brackish, fetid water used in its preparation; the pupils' wretched clothing and accommodation: all these things were discovered; and the discovery produced a result mortifying to Mr. Brocklehurst, but beneficial to the institution.

Several wealthy and benevolent individuals in the county subscribed largely for the erection of a more convenient building in a better situation; new regulations were made; improvements in diet and clothing introduced; the funds of the school were entrusted to the management of a committee. Mr. Brocklehurst, who, from his wealth and family connections, could not be overlooked, still retained the post of treasurer; but he was aided in the discharge of his duties by gentlemen of rather more enlarged and sympathising minds: his office of inspector, too, was shared by those who knew how to combine reason with strictness, comfort with economy, compassion with uprightness. The school, thus improved, became in time a truly useful and noble institution. I remained an inmate of its walls, after its regeneration, for eight years: six as pupil, and two as teacher; and in both capacities I bear my testimony to its value and importance.

During these eight years my life was uniform: but not unhappy, because it was not inactive. I had the means of an excellent education placed within my reach. A fondness for some of my studies, and a desire to excel in all, together with a great delight in pleasing my teachers, especially such as I loved, urged me on: I availed myself fully of the advantages offered me. In time I rose to be the first girl of the first class; then I was invested with the office of teacher; which I discharged with zeal for two years; but at the end of that time I altered.

Miss Temple, through all changes, had thus far continued superintendent of the seminary: to her instruction I owed the best part of my acquirements; her friendship and society had been my continual solace: she had stood me in the stead of mother, governess, and, latterly, companion. At this period she married, removed with her husband (a clergyman, an excellent man, almost worthy of such a wife) to a distant county, and consequently was lost to me.

From the day she left I was no longer the same: with her was gone every settled feeling, every association that had made Lowood in some degree a home to me. I had imbibed from her something of her nature and much of her habits: more harmonious thoughts: what seemed better-regulated feelings had become the inmates of my mind. I had given in allegiance to duty and order; I was quiet; I believed I was content: to the eyes of others, usually even to my own, I appeared a disciplined and subdued character.

But destiny, in the shape of the Rev. Mr. Nasmyth, came between me and Miss Temple: I saw her in her travelling dress step into a post-chaise, shortly after the marriage ceremony; I watched the chaise mount the hill and disappear beyond its brow; and then retired to my own room, and there spent in solitude the greatest part of the half-holiday granted in honour of the occasion.

I walked about the chamber most of the time. I imagined myself only to be regretting my loss, and thinking how to repair it; but when my reflections were concluded, and I looked up and found that the afternoon was gone, and evening far advanced, another discovery dawned on me, namely, that in the interval I had undergone a transforming process; that my mind had put off all it had borrowed of Miss Temple —or rather that she had taken with her the serene atmosphere I had been breathing in her vicinity—and that now I was left in my natural element, and beginning to feel the stirring of old emotions. It did not seem as if a prop were withdrawn, but rather as if a motive were gone; it was not the power to be tranquil which had failed me, but the reason for tranquillity was no more. My world had for some years been in Lowood: my experience had been of its rules and systems; now I remembered that the real world was wide, and that a varied field of hopes and fears, of sensations and excitements, awaited those who had courage to go forth into its expanse, to seek real knowledge of life amidst its perils.

I went to my window, opened it, and looked out. There were the two wings of the building; there was the garden; there were the skirts of Lowood; there was the hilly horizon. My eye passed all other objects to rest on those most remote, the blue peaks: it was those I longed to surmount; all within their boundary of rock and heath seemed prison-ground, exile limits. I traced the white road winding round the base of one mountain, and vanishing in a gorge between two: how I longed to follow it further! I recalled the time when I had travelled that very road in a coach; I remembered descending that hill at twilight: an age seemed to have elapsed since the day which brought me first to Lowood, and I had never quitted it since. My vacations had all been spent at school: Mrs. Reed had never sent for me to

Gateshead; neither she nor any of her family had ever been to visit me. I had had no communication by letter or message with the outer world: school-rules, school-duties, school-habits and notions, and voices, and faces, and phrases, and costumes, and preferences, and antipathies: such was what I knew of existence. And now I felt that it was not enough: I tired of the routine of eight years in one afternoon. I desired liberty; for liberty I gasped; for liberty I uttered a prayer; it seemed scattered on the wind then faintly blowing. I abandoned it and framed a humbler supplication; for change, stimulus: that petition, too, seemed swept off into vague space: 'Then,' I cried, half desperate, 'grant me at least a new servitude!'

Here a bell, ringing the hour of supper, called me downstairs.

I was not free to resume the interrupted chain of my reflections till bedtime: even then a teacher who occupied the same room with me kept me from the subject to which I longed to recur, by a prolonged effusion of small talk. How I wished sleep would silence her! It seemed as if, could I but go back to the idea which had last entered my mind as I stood at the window, some inventive suggestion would rise for my relief.

Miss Gryce snored at last; she was a heavy Welshwoman, and till now her habitual nasal strains had never been regarded by me in any other light than as a nuisance; to-night I hailed the first deep notes with satisfaction; I was debarrassed of interruption; my half-effaced thought instantly revived.

'A new servitude! There is something in that,' I soliloquised (mentally, be it understood; I did not talk aloud). 'I know there is, because it does not sound too sweet; it is not like such words as Liberty, Excitement, Enjoyment: delightful sounds truly; but no more than sounds for me; and so hollow and fleeting that it is mere waste of time to listen to them. But Servitude! That must be matter of fact. Any one may serve: I have served here eight years; now all I want is to serve elsewhere. Can I not get so much of my own will? Is not the thing feasible? Yes—yes—the end is not so difficult; if I had only a brain active enough to ferret out the means of attaining it.'

I sat up in bed by way of arousing this said brain: it was a chilly night; I covered my shoulders with a shawl, and then I proceeded *to think* again with all my might.

'What do I want? A new place, in a new house, amongst new faces, under new circumstances: I want this because it is of no use wanting anything better. How do people do to get a new place? They apply to friends, I suppose: I have no friends. There are many others who have no friends, who must look about for themselves and be their own helpers; and what is their resource?'

I could not tell: nothing answered me; I then ordered my brain to find a response, and quickly. It worked and worked faster: I felt the pulses throb in my head and temples; but for nearly an hour it worked in chaos, and no result came of its efforts. Feverish with vain labour, I got up and took a turn in the room; undrew the curtain, noted a star or two, shivered with cold, and again crept to bed.

A kind fairy, in my absence, had surely dropped the required suggestion on my pillow; for as I lay down it came quietly and naturally to my mind:—'Those who want situations advertise; you must advertise in the *——shire Herald.*'

'How? I know nothing about advertising.'

Replies rose smooth and prompt now:—'You must inclose the advertisement and the money to pay for it under a cover directed to the Editor of the *Herald;* you must put it, the first opportunity you have, into the post at Lowton; answers must be addressed to J. E. at the post-office there: you can go and inquire in about a week after you send your letter, if any are come, and act accordingly.'

This scheme I went over twice, thrice; it was then digested in my mind: I had it in a clear practical form; I felt satisfied, and fell asleep.

With earliest day I was up: I had my advertisement written, inclosed, and directed before the bell rang to rouse the school: it ran thus:—

'A young lady accustomed to tuition' (had I not been a teacher two years?) 'is desirous of meeting with a situation in a private family where the children are under fourteen' (I thought that as I was barely eighteen, it would not do to undertake the guidance of pupils nearer my own age). 'She is qualified to teach the usual branches of a good English education, together with French, Drawing, and Music' (in those days, reader, this now narrow catalogue of accomplishments would have been held tolerably comprehensive). 'Address, J. E., Post-office, Lowton, ——shire.'

This document remained locked in my drawer all day: after tea, I asked leave of the new superintendent to go to Lowton, in order to perform some small commissions for myself and one or two of my fellow-teachers; permission was readily granted: I went. It was a walk of two miles, and the evening was wet, but the days were still long; I visited a shop or two, slipped the letter into the post-office, and came back through heavy rain, with streaming garments, but with a relieved heart.

The succeeding week seemed long: it came to an end at last, however, like all sublunary things, and once more, towards the close of a pleasant autumn day, I found myself afoot on the road to Lowton. A picturesque track it was, by the way, lying along the side of the beck and through the sweetest curves of the dale: but that day I thought more of the letters, that might or might not be awaiting me at the little burgh whither I was bound, than of the charms of lea and water.

My ostensible errand on this occasion was to get measured for a pair of shoes; so I discharged that business first, and when it was done, I stepped across the clean and quiet little street from the shoemaker's to the post-office; it was kept by an old dame, who wore horn spectacles on her nose and black mittens on her hands.

'Are there any letters for J. E.?' I asked.

She peered at me over her spectacles, and then she opened a drawer, and fumbled among its contents for a long time—so long that my hopes began to falter. At last, having held a document before her glasses for nearly five minutes, she presented it across the counter, accompanying the act by another inquisitive and mistrustful glance—it was for J. E.

'Is there only one?' I demanded.

'There are no more,' said she; and I put it in my pocket and turned my face homeward: I could not open it then; rules obliged me to be back by eight, and it was already half-past seven.

Various duties awaited me on my arrival: I had to sit with the girls during their hour of study; then it was my turn to read prayers; to see them to bed: afterwards I supped with the other teachers. Even when we finally retired for the night, the inevitable Miss Gryce was still my companion: we had only a short end of candle in our candlestick, and I dreaded lest she should talk till it was all burnt out: fortunately, however, the heavy supper she had eaten produced a soporific effect: she was already snoring before I had finished undressing. There still remained an inch of candle: I now took out my letter; the seal was an initial F.; I broke it: the contents were brief.

'If J. E., who advertised in the ——*shire Herald* of last Thursday, possesses the acquirements mentioned, and if she is in a position to give satisfactory references as to character and competency; a situation can be offered her where there is but one pupil—a little girl, under ten years of age—and where the salary is thirty pounds per annum. J. E. is requested to send references, name, address, and all particulars to the direction, "Mrs. Fairfax, Thornfield, near Millcote, ——shire."'

I examined the document long: the writing was old-fashioned and rather uncertain, like that of an elderly lady.

This circumstance was satisfactory: a private fear had haunted me that, in thus acting for myself, and by my own guidance, I ran the risk of getting into some scrape! and, above all things, I wished the result of my endeavours to be respectable, proper, *en règle*. I now felt that an elderly lady was no bad ingredient in the business I had on hand. Mrs. Fairfax! I saw her in a black gown and widow's cap,—frigid, perhaps, but not uncivil: a model of elderly English respectability. Thornfield! that, doubtless, was the name of her house—a neat, orderly spot, I was sure, though I failed in my efforts to conceive a correct plan of the premises. Millcote, ——shire. I brushed up my recollections of the map of England; yes, I saw it, both the shire and the town. ——shire was seventy miles nearer London than the remote county where I now resided; that was a recommendation to me. I longed to go where there was life and movement. Millcote was a large manufacturing town on the banks of the A——: a busy place, enough, doubtless: so much the better; it would be a complete change at least. Not that my fancy was much captivated by the idea of long chimneys and clouds of smoke—'but,' I argued, 'Thornfield will, probably, be a good way from the town.'

Here the socket of the candle dropped, and the wick went out.

Next day new steps were to be taken; my plans could no longer be confined to my own breast; I must impart them in order to achieve their success. Having sought and obtained an audience of the superintendent during the noontide recreation, I told her I had a prospect of getting a new situation where the salary would be double what I now received (for at Lowood I only got fifteen pounds per annum), and requested she would break the matter for me to Mr. Brocklehurst, or some of the committee, and ascertain whether they would permit me to mention them as references. She obligingly consented to act as mediatrix in the matter. The next day she laid the affair before Mr. Brocklehurst, who said that Mrs. Reed must be written to, as she was my natural guardian. A note was accordingly addressed to that lady, who returned for answer, that 'I might do as I pleased: she had long relinquished all interference in my affairs.' This note went the round of the committee, and, at last, after what appeared to me most tedious delay, formal leave was given me to better my condition if I could; and an assurance added that, as I had always conducted myself well, both as teacher and pupil, at Lowood, a testimonial of character and capacity, signed by the inspectors of that institution, should forthwith be furnished me.

This testimonial I accordingly received in about a month, forwarded a copy of it to Mrs. Fairfax, and got that lady's reply, stating that she was satisfied, and fixing that day fortnight as the period for my assuming the post of governess in her house.

I now busied myself in preparations: the fortnight passed rapidly. I had not a very large wardrobe, though it was adequate to my wants; and the last day sufficed to pack my trunk,—the same I had brought with me eight years ago from Gateshead.

The box was corded, the card nailed on. In half an hour the carrier was to call for it to take it to Lowton, whither I myself was to repair at an early hour the next morning to meet the coach. I had brushed my black stuff travelling dress, prepared my bonnet, gloves, and muff; sought in all my drawers to see that no article was left behind; and now, having nothing more to do, I sat down and tried to rest. I could not, though I had been on foot all day—I could not now repose an instant—I was too much excited. A phase of my life was closing to-night, a new one opening to-morrow: impossible to slumber in the interval; I must watch feverishly while the change was being accomplished.

'Miss,' said a servant who met me in the lobby, where I was wandering like a troubled spirit, 'a person below wishes to see you.'

'The carrier, no doubt,' I thought, and ran downstairs without inquiry. I was passing the back parlour, or teachers' sitting-room, the door of which was half-open, to go to the kitchen, when someone ran out.

'It's her, I am sure!—I could have told her anywhere!' cried the individual who stopped my progress and took my hand.

I looked. I saw a woman attired like a well-dressed servant, matronly, yet still young; very good-looking, with black hair and eyes, and lively complexion.

'Well, who is it?' she asked, in a voice and with a smile I half recognised! 'You've not quite forgotten me, I think, Miss Jane?'

In another second I was embracing and kissing her rapturously. 'Bessie! Bessie! Bessie!' that was all I said; whereat she half laughed, half cried, and we both went into the parlour. By the fire stood a little fellow of three years old, in plaid frock and trousers.

'That is my little boy,' said Bessie, directly.

'Then you are married, Bessie?'

'Yes: nearly five years since, to Robert Leaven, the coachman, and I've a little girl besides Bobby there that I've christened Jane.'

'And you don't live at Gateshead?'

'I live at the lodge: the old porter has left.'

'Well, and how do they all get on? Tell me everything about them, Bessie: but sit down first; and, Bobby, come and sit on my knee, will you?' But Bobby preferred sidling over to his mother.

'You're not grown so very tall, Miss Jane, nor so very stout,' continued Mrs. Leaven. 'I dare say they've not kept you too well at school: Miss Reed is the head and shoulders taller than you are; and Miss Georgiana would make two of you in breadth.'

'Georgiana is handsome, I suppose, Bessie?'

'Very. She went up to London last winter with her mamma, and there everybody admired her, and a young lord fell in love with her: but his relations were against the match; and—what do you think?—he and Miss Georgia a made it up to run away: but they were found out and stopped. It was Miss Reed that found them out: I believe she was envious; and now she and her sister lead a cat and dog life together; they are always quarrelling.'

'Well, and what of John Reed?'

'Oh, he is not doing so well as his mamma could wish. He went to college, and he got—plucked, I think they call it: and then his uncles wanted him to be a barrister, and study the law: but he is such a dissipated young man, they will never make much of him, I think.'

'What does he look like?'

'He is very tall: some people call him a fine-looking young man; but he has such thick lips.'

'And Mrs. Reed?'

'Missis looks stout and well enough in the face, but I think she's not quite easy in her mind: Mr. John's conduct does not please her—he spends a deal of money.'

'Did she send you here, Bessie?'

'No, indeed: but I have long wanted to see you, and when I heard that there had been a letter from you, and that you were going to another part of the country, I thought I'd just set off, and get a look at you before you were quite out of my reach.'

'I am afraid you are disappointed in me, Bessie.' I said this laughing: I perceived that Bessie's glance, though it expressed regard, did in no shape denote admiration.

'No, Miss Jane, not exactly: you are genteel enough; you look like a lady, and it is as much as ever I expected of you: you were no beauty as a child.'

I smiled at Bessie's frank answer: I felt that it was correct, but I confess I was not quite indifferent to its import: at eighteen most people wish to please, and the conviction that they have not an exterior likely to second that desire brings anything but gratification.

'I dare say you are clever, though,' continued Bessie, by way of solace. 'What can you do? Can you play on the piano?'

'A little.'

There was one in the room; Bessie went and opened it, and then asked me to sit down and give her a tune: I played a waltz or two, and she was charmed.

'The Miss Reeds could not play as well!' said she exultingly. 'I always said you would surpass them in learning: and can you draw?'

'That is one of my paintings over the chimney-piece.' It was a landscape in water colours, of which I had made a present to the superintendent, in acknowledgment of her obliging mediation with the committee on my behalf, and which she had framed and glazed.

'Well, that is beautiful, Miss Jane! It is as fine a picture as any Miss Reed's drawing-master could paint, let alone the young ladies themselves, who could not come near it: and have you learnt French?'

'Yes, Bessie, I can both read it and speak it.'

'And you can work on muslin and canvas?'

'I can.'

'Oh, you are quite a lady, Miss Jane! I knew you would be: you will get on whether your relations notice you or not. There was something I wanted to ask you. Have you ever heard anything from your father's kinsfolk, the Eyres?'

'Never in my life.'

'Well, you know Missis always said they were poor and quite despicable: and they may be poor; but I believe they are as much gentry as the Reeds are; for one day, nearly seven years ago, a Mr. Eyre came to Gateshead and wanted to see you. Missis said you were at school fifty miles off. He seemed so much disappointed, for he could not stay: he was going on a voyage to a foreign country, and the ship was to sail from London in a day or two. He looked quite a gentleman, and I believe he was your father's brother.'

'What foreign country was he going to, Bessie?'

'An island thousands of miles off, where they make wine—the butler did tell me'——

'Madeira?' I suggested.

'Yes, that is it—that is the very word.'

'So he went?'

'Yes; he did not stay many minutes in the house: Missis was very high with him; she called him afterwards a "sneaking tradesman." My Robert believes he was a wine-merchant.'

'Very likely,' I returned; 'or perhaps clerk or agent to a wine-merchant.'

Bessie and I conversed about old times an hour longer, and then she was obliged to leave me. I saw her again for a few minutes the next morning at Lowton, while I was waiting for the coach. We parted finally at the door of the 'Brocklehurst Arms' there. Each went our separate way: she set off for the brow of Lowood Fell to meet the conveyance which was to take her back to Gateshead; I mounted the vehicle which was to bear me to new duties and a new life in the unknown environs of Millcote.

CHAPTER XI

A NEW chapter in a novel is something like a new scene in a play: and when I draw up the curtain this time, reader, you must fancy you see a room in the 'George Inn' at Millcote, with such large figured papering on the walls as inn rooms have; such a carpet, such furniture, such ornaments on the mantelpiece, such prints; including a portrait of George the Third, and another of the Prince of Wales, and a representation of the death of Wolfe. All this is visible to you by the light of an oil lamp hanging from the ceiling, and by that of an excellent fire, near which I sit in my cloak and bonnet; my muff and umbrella lie on the table, and I am warming away the numbness and chill contracted by sixteen hours' exposure to the rawness of an October day: I left Lowton at four o'clock A.M., and the Millcote town clock is now just striking eight.

Reader, though I look comfortably accommodated, I am not very tranquil in my mind. I thought when the coach stopped here there would be someone to meet me; I looked anxiously round as I descended the wooden steps the 'boots' placed for my convenience, expecting to hear my name pronounced, and to see some description of carriage waiting to convey me to Thornfield. Nothing of the sort was visible; and when I asked a waiter if any one had been to inquire after a Miss Eyre, I was answered in the negative: so I had no resource but to request to be shown into a private room: and here I am waiting, while all sorts of doubts and fears are troubling my thoughts.

It is a very strange sensation to inexperienced youth to feel itself quite alone in the world, cut adrift from every connection, uncertain whether the port to which it is bound can be reached, and prevented by many impediments from returning to that it has quitted. The charm of adventure sweetens that sensation, the glow of pride warms it; but then the throb of fear disturbs it; and fear with me became predominant, when half an hour elapsed and still I was alone. I bethought myself to ring the bell.

'Is there a place in this neighbourhood called Thornfield?' I asked of the waiter who answered the summons.

'Thornfield? I don't know, ma'am; I'll inquire at the bar.' He vanished, but reappeared instantly:—'Is your name Eyre, Miss?'

'Yes.'

'Person here waiting for you.'

I jumped up, took my muff and umbrella, and hastened into the inn-passage: a man was standing by the open door, and in the lamp-lit street I dimly saw a one-horse conveyance.

'This will be your luggage, I suppose?' said the man rather abruptly when he saw me, pointing to my trunk in the passage.

'Yes.' He hoisted it on to the vehicle, which was a sort of car, and then I got in: before he shut me up I asked him how far it was to Thornfield.

'A matter of six miles.'

'How long shall we be before we get there?'

'Happen an hour and a half.'

He fastened the car door, climbed to his own seat outside, and we set off. Our progress was leisurely, and gave me ample time to reflect; I was content to be at length so near the end of my journey; and as I leaned back in the comfortable though not elegant conveyance, I meditated much at my ease.

'I suppose,' thought I, 'judging from the plainness of the servant and carriage, Mrs. Fairfax is not a very dashing person: so much the better; I never lived amongst fine people but once, and I was very miserable with them. I wonder if she lives alone except this little girl; if so, and if she is in any degree amiable, I shall surely be able to get on with her! I will do my best: it is a pity that doing one's best does not always answer. At Lowood, indeed, I took that resolution, kept it, and succeeded in pleasing; but with Mrs. Reed, I remember, my best was always spurned with scorn. I pray God Mrs. Fairfax may not turn out a second Mrs. Reed; but if she does, I am not bound to stay with her: let the worst come to the worst, I can advertise again. How far are we on our road now, I wonder?'

I let down the window and looked out: Millcote was behind us; judging by the number of its lights, it seemed a place of considerable magnitude, much larger than Lowton. We were now, as far as I could see, on a sort of common; but there were houses scattered all over the district; I felt we were in a different region to Lowood, more populous, less picturesque; more stirring, less romantic.

The roads were heavy, the night misty; my conductor let his horse walk all the way, and the hour and a half extended, I verily believe, to two hours; at last he turned in his seat and said: 'You're noan so far fro' Thornfield now.'

Again I looked out: we were passing a church: I saw its low broad tower against the sky, and its bell was tolling a quarter; I saw a narrow galaxy of lights too, on a hill-side, marking a village or hamlet. About ten minutes after the driver got down and opened a pair of gates; we passed through, and they clashed to behind us. We now slowly ascended a drive, and came upon the long front of a house: candle-light gleamed from one curtained bow-window; all the rest were dark. The car stopped at the front door; it was opened by a maidservant; I alighted and went in.

'Will you walk this way, ma'am,' said the girl; and I followed her across a square hall with high doors all round: she ushered me into a room whose double illumination of fire and candle at first dazzled me, contrasting as it did with the darkness to which my eyes had been for two hours inured; when I could see, however, a cozy and agreeable picture presented itself to my view.

A snug, small room; a round table by a cheerful fire; an armchair high-backed and old-fashioned, wherein sat the neatest imaginable little elderly lady, in widow's cap, black silk gown, and snowy muslin apron: exactly like what I had fancied Mrs. Fairfax, only less stately and milder-looking. She was occupied in knitting; a large cat sat demurely at her feet; nothing in short was wanting to complete the beau ideal of domestic comfort. A more reassuring introduction for a new governess could scarcely be conceived: there was no grandeur to overwhelm, no stateliness to embarrass; and then, as I entered, the old lady got up, and promptly and kindly came forward to meet me.

'How do you do, my dear? I am afraid you have had a tedious ride; John drives so slowly: you must be cold; come to the fire.'

'Mrs. Fairfax, I suppose?' said I.

'Yes, you are right: do sit down.'

She conducted me to her own chair, and then began to remove my shawl and untie my bonnet-strings. I begged she would not give herself so much trouble.

'Oh, it is no trouble; I dare say your own hands are almost numbed with cold. Leah, make a little hot negus and cut a sandwich or two: here are the keys of the storeroom.'

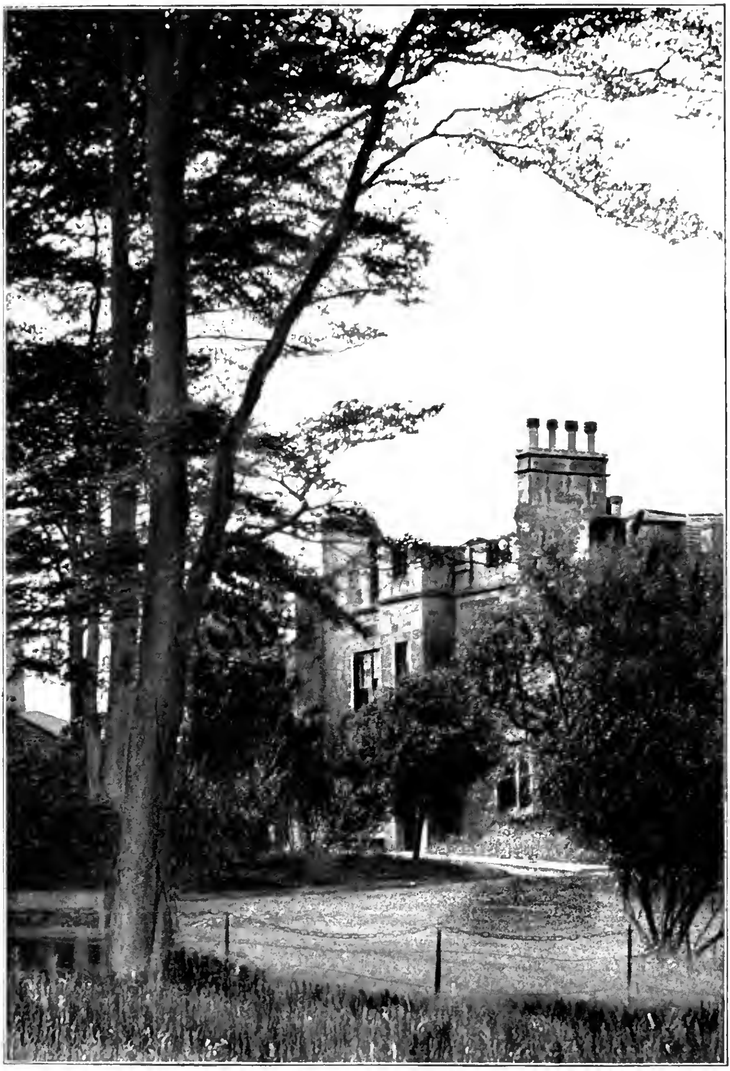
And she produced from her pocket a most housewifely bunch of keys, and delivered them to the servant.

'Now, then, draw nearer to the fire,' she conitnued. 'You've brought your luggage with you, haven't you, my dear?'

'Yes, ma'am.'

'I'll see it carried into your room,' she said, and bustled out.

'She treats me like a visitor,' thought I. 'I little expected such a reception; I anticipated only coldness and stiffness: this is not like what I have heard of the treatment of governesses; but I must not exult too soon.'



THE RYDINGS (THORNFIELD HALL).

She returned, with her own hands cleared her knitting apparatus and a book or two from the table, to make room for the tray which Leah now brought, and then herself handed me the refreshments. I felt rather confused at being the object of more attention than I had ever before received, and that, too, shown by my employer and superior; but as she did not herself seem to consider she was doing anything out of her place, I thought it better to take her civilities quietly.

'Shall I have the pleasure of seeing Miss Fairfax to-night?' I asked, when I had partaken of what she offered me.

'What did you say, my dear? I am a little deaf,' returned the good lady, approaching her ear to my mouth.

I repeated the question more distinctly.

'Miss Fairfax? Oh, you mean Miss Varens! Varens is the name of your future pupil.'

'Indeed! Then she is not your daughter?'

'No,—I have no family.'

I should have followed up my first inquiry by asking in what way Miss Varens was connected with her; but I recollected it was not polite to ask too many questions: besides, I was sure to hear in time.

'I am so glad,' she continued, as she sat down opposite to me, and took the cat on her knee; 'I am so glad you are come; it will be quite pleasant living here now with a companion. To be sure it is pleasant at any time; for Thornfield is a fine old hall, rather neglected of late years perhaps, but still it is a respectable place; yet you know in winter time one feels dreary quite alone, in the best quarters. I say alone—Leah is a nice girl to be sure, and John and his wife are very decent people; but then you see they are only servants, and one can't converse with them on terms of equality: one must keep them at due distance, for fear of losing one's authority. I'm sure last winter (it was a very severe one, if you recollect, and when it did not snow, it rained and blew) not a creature but the butcher and postman came to the house from

November till February; and I really got quite melancholy with sitting night after night alone. I had Leah in to read to me sometimes; but I don't think the poor girl liked the task much: she felt it confining. In spring and summer one got on better: sunshine and long days make such a difference; and then, just at the commencement of this autumn, little Adela Varens came and her nurse: a child makes a house alive all at once; and now you are here I shall be quite gay.'

My heart really warmed to the worthy lady as I heard her talk: and I drew my chair a little nearer to her, and expressed my sincere wish that she might find my company as agreeable as she anticipated.

'But I'll not keep you sitting up late to-night,' said she; 'it is on the stroke of twelve now, and you have been travelling all day: you must feel tired. If you have got your feet well warmed I'll show you your bedroom. I've had the room next to mine prepared for you; it is only a small apartment, but I thought you would like it better than one of the large front chambers: to be sure they have finer furniture, but they are so dreary and solitary, I never sleep in them myself.'

I thanked her for her considerate choice, and as I really felt fatigued with my long journey, expressed my readiness to retire. She took her candle, and I followed her from the room. First she went to see if the hall-door was fastened; having taken the key from the lock, she led the way upstairs. The steps and banisters were of oak; the staircase window was high and latticed; both it and the long gallery into which the bedroom doors opened looked as if they belonged to a church rather than a house. A very chill and vaultlike air pervaded the stairs and gallery, suggesting cheerless ideas of space and solitude; and I was glad when finally ushered into my chamber to find it of small dimensions, and furnished in ordinary modern style.

When Mrs. Fairfax had bidden me a kind good-night, and I had fastened my door, gazed leisurely round, and in some measure effaced the eerie impression made by that wide hall, that dark and spacious staircase, and that long, cold gallery, by the livelier aspect of my little room, I remembered that after a day of bodily fatigue and mental anxiety I was now at last in safe haven. The impulse of gratitude swelled my heart, and I knelt down at the bedside, and offered up thanks where thanks were due; not forgetting, ere I rose, to implore aid on my further path, and the power of meriting the kindness which seemed so frankly offered me before it was earned. My couch had no thorns in it that night; my solitary room no fears. At once weary and content, I slept soon and soundly: when I awoke it was broad day.

The chamber looked such a bright little place to me as the sun shone in between the gay blue chintz window curtains, showing papered walls and a carpeted floor, so unlike the bare planks and stained plaster of Lowood that my spirits rose at the view. Externals have a great effect on the young: I thought that a fairer era of life was beginning for me, one that was to have its flowers and pleasures, as well as its thorns and toils. My faculties, roused by the change of scene, the new field offered to hope, seemed all astir. I cannot precisely define what they expected, but it was something pleasant: not perhaps that day or that month, but at an indefinite future period.

I rose; I dressed myself with care: obliged to be plain —for I had no article of attire that was not made with extreme simplicity—I was still by nature solicitous to be neat. It was not my habit to be disregardful of appearance, or careless of the impression I made: on the contrary, I ever wished to look as well as I could, and to please as much as my want of beauty would permit. I sometimes regretted that I was not handsomer: I sometimes wished to have rosy cheeks, a straight nose, and small cherry mouth; I desired to be tall, stately, and finely developed in figure; I felt it a misfortune that I was so little, so pale, and had features so irregular and so marked. And why had I these aspirations and these regrets? It would be difficult to say: I could not then distinctly say it to myself; yet I had a reason, and a logical, natural reason too. However, when I had brushed my hair very smooth, and put on my black frock—which, Quaker-like as it was, at least had the merit of fitting to a nicety—and adjusted my clean white tucker, I thought I should do respectably enough to appear before Mrs. Fairfax; and that my new pupil would not at least recoil from me with antipathy. Having opened my chamber window, and seen that I left all things straight and neat on the toilet table, I ventured forth.

Traversing the long and matted gallery, I descended the slippery steps of oak; then I gained the hall: I halted there a minute: I looked at some pictures on the walls (one I remember represented a grim man in a cuirass, and one a lady with powdered hair and a pearl necklace), at a bronze lamp pendent from the ceiling, at a great clock whose case was of oak curiously carved, and ebon black with time and rubbing. Everything appeared very stately and imposing to me: but then I was so little accustomed to grandeur. The hall-door, which was half of glass, stood open; I stepped over the threshold. It was a fine autumn morning; the early sun shone serenely on embrowned groves and still green fields: advancing on to the lawn, I looked up and surveyed the front of the mansion. It was three stories high, of proportions not vast, though considerable: a gentleman's manor-house, not a nobleman's seat: battlements round the top gave it a picturesque look. Its grey front stood out well from the background of a rookery, whose cawing tenants were now on the wing: they flew over the lawn and grounds to alight in a great meadow, from which these were separated by a sunk fence, and where an array of mighty old thorn trees, strong, knotty, and broad as oaks, at once explained the etymology of the mansion's designation. Farther off were hills: not so lofty as those round Lowood, nor so craggy, nor so like barriers of separation from the living world; but yet quiet and lonely hills enough, and seeming to embrace Thornfield with a seclusion I had not expected to find existent so near the stirring locality of Millcote. A little hamlet whose roofs were blent with trees straggled up the side of one of these hills; the church of the district stood nearer Thornfield: its old tower-top looked over a knoll between the house and gates.

I was yet enjoying the calm prospect and pleasant fresh air, yet listening with delight to the cawing of the rooks, yet surveying the wide, hoary front of the hall, and thinking what a great place it was for one lonely little dame like Mrs. Fairfax to inhabit, when that lady appeared at the door.

'What! out already?' said she. 'I see you are an early riser.' I went up to her, and was received with an affable kiss and shake of the hand.

'How do you like Thornfield?' she asked. I told her I liked it very much.

'Yes,' she said, 'it is a pretty place: but I fear it will be getting out of order, unless Mr. Rochester should take it into his head to come and reside here permanently; or, at least, visit it rather oftener: great houses and fine grounds require the presence of the proprietor.'

'Mr. Rochester!' I exclaimed. 'Who is he?'

'The owner of Thornfield,' she responded quietly. 'Did you not know he was called Rochester?'

Of course I did not—I had never heard of him before; but the old lady seemed to regard his existence as a universally understood fact, with which everybody must be acquainted by instinct.

'I thought,' I continued, 'Thornfield belonged to you.'

'To me? Bless you, child; what an idea! To me? I am only the housekeeper—the manager. To be sure I am distantly related to the Rochesters by the mother's side; or, at least, my husband was: he was a clergyman, incumbent of Hay—that little village yonder on the hill—and that church near the gates was his. The present Mr. Rochester's mother was a Fairfax, and second cousin to my husband; but I never presume on the connection—in fact it is nothing to me; I consider myself quite in the light of an ordinary housekeeper: my employer is always civil, and I expect nothing more.'

'And the little girl—my pupil?'

'She is Mr. Rochester's ward; he commissioned me to find a governess for her. He intends to have her brought up in ——shire, I believe. Here she comes with her "bonne," as she calls her nurse. The enigma then was explained: this affable and kind little widow was no great dame, but a dependent like myself. I did not like her the worse for that; on the contrary, I felt better pleased than ever. The equality between her and me was real; not the mere result of condescension on her part: so much the better—my position was all the freer.

As I was meditating on this discovery, a little girl, followed by her attendant, came running up the lawn. I looked at my pupil, who did not at first appear to notice me: she was quite a child, perhaps seven or eight years old, slightly built, with a pale, small-featured face, and a redundancy of hair falling in curls to her waist.

'Good-morning, Miss Adela,' said Mrs. Fairfax. 'Come and speak to the lady who is to teach you, and to make you a clever woman some day.' She approached.

'C'est là ma gouvernante?' said she, pointing to me, and addressing her nurse; who answered: 'Mais oui, certainement.'

'Are they foreigners?' I inquired, amazed at hearing the French language.

'The nurse is a foreigner, and Adela was born on the Continent, and, I believe, never left it till within six months ago. When she first came here she could speak no English; now she can make shift to talk it a little: I don't understand her, she mixes it so with French; but you will make out her meaning very well, I daresay.'

Fortunately I had had the advantage of being taught French by a French lady; and as I had always made a point of conversing with Madame Pierrot as often as I could, and had, besides, during the last seven years, learnt a portion of French by heart daily—applying myself to take pains with my accent, and imitating as closely as possible the pronunciation of my teacher—I had acquired a certain degree of readiness and correctness in the language, and was not likely to be much at a loss with Mademoiselle Adela. She came and shook hands with me when she heard that I was her governess; and as I led her into breakfast I addressed some phrases to her in her own tongue: she replied briefly at first, but after we were seated at the table, and she had examined me some ten minutes with her large hazel eyes, she suddenly commenced chattering fluently.

'Ah!' cried she, in French, 'you speak my language as well as Mr. Rochester does: I can talk to you as I can to him, and so can Sophie. She will be glad: nobody here understands her: Madame Fairfax is all English. Sophie is my nurse; she came with me over the sea in a great ship with a chimney that smoked—how it did smoke!—and I was sick, and so was Sophie, and so was Mr. Rochester. Mr. Rochester lay down on a sofa in a pretty room called the salon, and Sophie and I had little beds in another place. I nearly fell out of mine; it was like a shelf. And Mademoiselle——what is your name?'

'Eyre—Jane Eyre.'

'Aire? Bah! I cannot say it. Well: our ship stopped in the morning, before it was quite daylight, at a great city—a huge city, with very dark houses and all smoky; not at all like the pretty clean town I came from; and Mr. Rochester carried me in his arms over a plank to the land, and Sophie came after, and we all got into a coach, which took us to a beautiful large house, larger than this and finer, called an hotel. We stayed there nearly a week. I and Sophie used to walk every day in a great green place full of trees, called the Park; and there were many children there besides me, and a pond with beautiful birds in it, that I fed with crumbs.'

'Can you understand her when she runs on so fast asked Mrs. Fairfax.

I understood her very well, for I had been accustomed to the fluent tongue of Madame Pierrot.

'I wish,' continued the good lady, 'you would ask her a question or two about her parents: I wonder if she remembers them?'

'Adèle,' I inquired, 'with whom did you live when you were in that pretty clean town you spoke of?'

'I lived long ago with mamma; but she is gone to the Holy Virgin. Mamma used to teach me to dance and sing, and to say verses. A great many gentlemen and ladies came to see mamma, and I used to dance before them, or to sit on their knees and sing to them: I liked it. Shall I let you hear me sing now?'

She had finished her breakfast, so I permitted her to give a specimen of her accomplishments. Descending from her chair, she came and placed herself on my knee; then, folding her little hands demurely before her, shaking back her curls and lifting her eyes to the ceiling, she commenced singing a song from some opera. It was the strain of a forsaken lady, who, after bewailing the perfidy of her lover, calls pride to her aid; desires her attendant to deck her in her brightest jewels and richest robes, and resolves to meet the false one that night at a ball, and prove to him, by the gaiety of her demeanour, how little his desertion has affected her.

The subject seemed strangely chosen for an infant singer; but I suppose the point of the exhibition lay in hearing the notes of love and jealousy warbled with the lisp of childhood; and in very bad taste that point was: at least I thought so.

Adèle sang the canzonette tunefully enough, and with the naïveté of her age. This achieved, she jumped from my knee and said, 'Now, Mademoiselle, I will repeat you some poetry.'

Assuming an attitude, she began 'La Ligue des Rats: fable de la Fontaine.' She then declaimed the little piece with an attention to punctuation and emphasis, a flexibility of voice and an appropriateness of gesture, very unusual indeed at her age, and which proved she had been carefully trained.

'Was it your mamma who taught you that piece?' I asked.

'Yes; and she just used to say it in this way: "Qu'avez vous donc? lui dit un de ces rats; parlez!" She made me lift my hand—so—to remind me to raise my voice at the question. 'Now shall I dance for you?'

'No, that will do: but after your mamma went to the Holy Virgin, as you say, with whom did you live then?'

'With Madame Frédéric and her husband: she took care of me, but she is nothing related to me. I think she is poor, for she had not so fine a house as mamma. I was not long there. Mr. Rochester asked me if I would like to go and live with him in England, and I said yes; for I knew Mr. Rochester before I knew Madame Frédéric, and he was always kind to me and gave me pretty dresses and toys. But you see he has not kept his word, for he has brought me to England, and now he is gone back again himself, and I never see him.'

After breakfast Adèle and I withdrew to the library; which room, it appears, Mr. Rochester had directed should be used as the schoolroom. Most of the books were locked up behind glass doors; but there was one bookcase left open, containing everything that could be needed in the way of elementary works, and several volumes of light literature, poetry, biography, travels, a few romances, &c. I suppose he had considered that these were all the governess would require for her private perusal; and, indeed, they contented me amply for the present; compared with the scanty pickings I had now and then been able to glean at Lowood, they seemed to offer an abundant harvest of entertainment and information. In this room, too, there was a cabinet piano, quite new and of superior tone; also an easel for painting, and a pair of globes.

I found my pupil sufficiently docile, though disinclined to apply: she had not been used to regular occupation of any kind. I felt it would be injudicious to confine her too much at first; so, when I had talked to her a great deal, and got her to learn a little, and when the morning had advanced to noon, I allowed her to return to her nurse. I then proposed to occupy myself till dinner-time in drawing some little sketches for her use.

As I was going upstairs to fetch my portfolio and pencils, Mrs. Fairfax called to me: 'Your morning school-hours are over now, I suppose,' said she. She was in a room the folding-doors of which stood open: I went in when she addressed me. It was a large, stately apartment, with purple chairs and curtains, a Turkey carpet, walnut-panelled walls, one vast window rich in stained glass, and a lofty ceiling, nobly moulded. Mrs. Fairfax was dusting some vases of fine purple spar, which stood on a sideboard.

'What a beautiful room!' I exclaimed, as I looked round; for I had never before seen any half so imposing.

'Yes; this is the dining-room. I have just opened the window, to let in a little air and sunshine; for everything gets so damp in apartments that are seldom inhabited: the drawing-room yonder feels like a vault.'

She pointed to a wide arch corresponding to the window, and hung like it with a Tyrian-dyed curtain, now looped up. Mounting to it by two broad steps and looking through, I thought I caught a glimpse of a fairy place, so bright to my novice eyes appeared the view beyond. Yet it was merely a very pretty drawing-room, and within it a boudoir, both spread with white carpets, on which seemed laid brilliant garlands of flowers; both ceiled with snowy mouldings of white grapes and vine-leaves, beneath which glowed in rich contrast crimson couches and ottomans; while the ornaments on the pale Parian mantelpiece were of sparkling Bohemian glass, ruby red; and between the windows large mirrors repeated the general blending of snow and fire.

'In what order you keep these rooms, Mrs. Faixfax!' said I. 'No dust, no canvas coverings: except that the air feels chilly, one would think they were inhabited daily.'

'Why, Miss Eyre, though Mr. Rochester's visits here are rare, they are always sudden and unexpected; and as I observed that it put him out to find everything swathed up, and to have a bustle of arrangement on his arrival, I thought it best to keep the rooms in readiness.'

'Is Mr. Rochester an exacting, fastidious sort of man?'

'Not particularly so; but he has a gentleman's tastes and habits, and he expects to have things managed in conformity to them.'

'Do you like him? Is he generally liked?'

'Oh, yes; the family have always been respected here. Almost all the land in this neighbourhood, as far as you can see, has belonged to the Rochesters time out of mind.'

'Well, but, leaving his land out of the question, do you like him? Is he liked for himself?'

'*I* have no cause to do otherwise than like him; and I believe he is considered a just and liberal landlord by his tenants: but he has never lived much amongst them.'

'But has he no peculiarities? What, in short, is his character?'

'Oh! his character is unimpeachable, I suppose. He is rather peculiar, perhaps: he has travelled a great deal, and seen a great deal of the world, I should think. I daresay he is clever: but I never had much conversation with him.'

'In what way is he peculiar?'

'I don't know—it is not easy to describe—nothing striking, but you feel it when he speaks to you: you cannot be always sure whether he is in jest or earnest, whether he is pleased or the contrary; you don't thoroughly understand him, in short—at least, I don't: but it is of no consequence, he is a very good master.'

This was all the account I got from Mrs. Fairfax of her employer and mine. There are people who seem to have no notion of sketching a character, or observing and describing salient points, either in persons or things: the good lady evidently belonged to this class; my queries puzzled, but did not draw her out. Mr. Rochester was Mr. Rochester in her eyes; a gentleman, a landed proprietor—nothing more: she inquired and searched no further, and evidently wondered at my wish to gain a more definite notion of his identity.

When we left the dining-room, she proposed to show me over the rest of the house; and I followed her upstairs and downstairs, admiring as I went; for all was well arranged and handsome. The large front chambers I thought especially grand; and some of the third-story rooms, though dark and low, were interesting from their air of antiquity. The furniture once appropriated to the lower apartments had from time to time been removed here, as fashions changed; and the imperfect light entering by their narrow casements showed bedsteads of a hundred years old; chests in oak or walnut, looking, with their strange carvings of palm branches and cherubs' heads, like types of the Hebrew ark; rows of venerable chairs, high-backed and narrow; stools still more antiquated, on whose cushioned tops were yet apparent traces of half-effaced embroideries, wrought by fingers that for two generations had been coffin-dust. All these relics gave to the third story of Thornfield Hall the aspect of a home of the past: a shrine of memory. I liked the hush, the gloom, the quaintness of these retreats in the day; but I by no means coveted a night's repose on one of those wide and heavy beds: shut in, some of them, with doors of oak; shaded, others, with wrought old-English hangings crusted with thick work, portraying effigies of strange flowers, and stranger birds, and strangest human beings,—all which would have looked strange, indeed, by the pallid gleam of moonlight.

'Do the servants sleep in these rooms?' I asked.

'No; they occupy a range of smaller apartments to the back; no one ever sleeps here: one would almost say that, if there were a ghost at Thornfield Hall, this would be its haunt.'

'So I think: you have no ghost, then?'

'None that I ever heard of,' returned Mrs. Fairfax, smiling.

'Nor any traditions of one? no legends or ghost stories?'

'I believe not. And yet it is said the Rochesters have been rather a violent than a quiet race in their time: perhaps, though, that is the reason they rest tranquilly in their graves now.'

'Yes—"after life's fitful fever they sleep well,"' I muttered. 'Where are you going now, Mrs. Fairfax?' for she was moving away.

'On to the leads; will you come and see the view from thence?' I followed still, up a very narrow staircase to the attics, and thence by a ladder and through a trap-door to the roof of the hall. I was now on a level with the crow colony, and could see into their nests. Leaning over the battlements and looking far down, I surveyed the grounds laid out like a map: the bright and velvet lawn closely girdling the grey base of the mansion; the field, wide as a park, dotted with its ancient timber; the wood, dun and sere, divided by a path visibly overgrown, greener with moss than the trees were with foliage; the church at the gates, the road, the tranquil hills, all reposing in the autumn day's sun: the horizon bounded by a propitious sky, azure, marbled with pearly white. No feature in the scene was extraordinary, but all was pleasing. When I turned from it and repassed the trap-door, I could scarcely see my way down the ladder: the attic seemed black as a vault compared with that arch of blue air to which I had been looking up, and to that sunlit scene of grove, pasture, and green hill of which the hall was the centre, and over which I had been gazing with delight.

Mrs. Fairfax stayed behind a moment to fasten the trap-door; I, by dint of groping, found the outlet from the attic, and proceeded to descend the narrow garret staircase. I lingered in the long passage to which this led, separating the front and back rooms of the third story: narrow, low, and dim, with only one little window at the far end, and looking, with its two rows of small black doors all shut, like a corridor in some Bluebeard's castle.

While I paced softly on the last sound I expected to hear in so still a region, a laugh, struck my ear. It was a curious laugh; distinct, formal, mirthless. I stopped: the sound ceased, only for an instant; it began again louder: for at first, though distinct, it was very low. It passed off in a clamorous peal that seemed to wake an echo in every lonely chamber; though it originated but in one, and I could have pointed out the door whence the accents issued.

'Mrs. Fairfax!' I called out: for I now heard her descending the great stairs. 'Did you hear that loud laugh? Who is it?'

'Some of the servants, very likely,' she answered: 'perhaps Grace Poole.'

'Did you hear it?' I again inquired.

'Yes, plainly: I often hear her; she sews in one of these rooms. Sometimes Leah is with her: they are frequently noisy together.'

The laugh was repeated in its low, syllabic tone, and terminated in an odd murmur.

'Grace!' exclaimed Mrs. Fairfax.

I really did not expect any Grace to answer; for the laugh was as tragic, as preternatural a laugh as any I ever heard; and, but that it was high noon, and that no circumstance of ghostliness accompanied the curious cachinnation, but that neither scene nor season favoured fear, I should have been superstitiously afraid. However, the event showed me I was a fool for entertaining a sense even of surprise.

The door nearest me opened, and a servant came out,—a woman of between thirty and forty; a set, square-made figure, red-haired, and with a hard, plain face: any apparition less romantic or less ghostly could scarcely be conceived.

'Too much noise, Grace,' said Mrs. Fairfax. 'Remember directions!' Grace curtseyed silently and went in.

'She is a person we have to sew and assist Leah in her housemaid's work,' continued the widow; 'not altogether unobjectionable in some points, but she does well enough. By-the-by, how have you got on with your new pupil this morning?'

The conversation, thus turned on Adèle, continued till we reached the light and cheerful region below. Adèle came running to meet us in the hall, exclaiming,—'Mesdames, vous êtes servies!' adding, 'J'ai bien faim, moi!'

We found dinner ready and waiting for us in Mrs. Fairfax's room.

CHAPTER XII

The promise of a smooth career, which my first calm introduction to Thornfield Hall seemed to pledge, was not belied on a longer aquaintance with the place and its inmates. Mrs. Fairfax turned out to be what she appeared, a placid-tempered, kind-natured woman, of competent education and average intelligence. My pupil was a lively child, who had been spoilt and indulged, and therefore was sometimes wayward; but as she was committed entirely to my care, and no injudicious interference from any quarter ever thwarted my plans for her improvement, she soon forgot her little freaks, and became obedient and teachable. She had no great talents, no marked traits of character, no peculiar development of feeling or taste which raised her one inch above the ordinary level of childhood; but neither had she any deficiency or vice which sunk her below it. She made reasonable progress, entertained for me a vivacious, though perhaps not very profound, affection; and by her simplicity, gay prattle, and efforts to please, inspired me, in return, with a degree of attachment sufficient to make us both content in each other's society.

This, *par parenthèse*, will be thought cool language by persons who entertain solemn doctrines about the angelic nature of children, and the duty of those charged with their education to conceive for them an idolatrous devotion: but I am not writing to flatter parental egotism, to echo cant, or prop up humbug; I am merely telling the truth. I felt a conscientious solicitude for Adèle's welfare and progress, and a quiet liking to her little self; just as I cherished towards Mrs. Fairfax a thankfulness for her kindness, and a pleasure in her society proportionate to the tranquil regard she had for me, and the moderation of her mind and character.

Anybody may blame me who likes when I add further that now and then, when I took a walk by myself in the grounds, when I went down to the gates and looked through them along the road, or when, while Adèle played with her nurse, and Mrs. Fairfax made jellies in the storeroom, I climbed the three staircases, raised the trap-door of the attic, and having reached the leads, looked out afar over sequestered field and hill, and along dim sky-line—that then I longed for a power of vision which might overpass that limit; which might reach the busy world, towns, regions full of life I had heard of but never seen: that then I desired more of practical experience than I possessed; more of intercourse with my kind, of acquaintance with variety of character, than was here within my reach. I valued what was good in Mrs. Fairfax, and what was good in Adèle; but I believed in the existence of other and more vivid kinds of goodness, and what I believed in I wished to behold.

Who blames me? Many, no doubt; and I shall be called discontented. I could not help it: the restlessness was in my nature; it agitated me to pain sometimes. Then my sole relief was to walk along the corridor of the third story, backwards and forwards, safe in the silence and solitude of the spot and allow my mind's eye to dwell on whatever bright visions rose before it—and, certainly, they were many and glowing; to let my heart be heaved by the exultant movement, which, while it swelled it in trouble, expanded it with life; and, best of all, to open my inward ear to a tale that was never ended—a tale my imagination created, and narrated continuously; quickened with all of incident, life, fire, feeling, that I desired and had not in my actual existence.

It is in vain to say human beings ought to be satisfied with tranquillity: they must have action; and they will make it if they cannot find it. Millions are condemned to a stiller doom than mine, and millions are in silent revolt against their lot. Nobody knows how many rebellions besides political rebellions ferment in the masses of life which people earth. Women are supposed to be very calm generally: but women feel just as men feel; they need exercise for their faculties and a field for their efforts as much as their brothers do; they suffer from too rigid a restraint, too absolute a stagnation, precisely as men would suffer; and it is narrow-minded in their more privileged fellow-creatures to say that they ought to confine themselves to making puddings and knitting stockings, to playing on the piano and embroidering bags. It is thoughtless to condemn them, or laugh at them, if they seek to do more or learn more than custom has pronounced necessary for their sex.

When thus alone I not unfrequently heard Grace Poole's laugh: the same peal, the same low, slow ha! ha! which, when first heard, had thrilled me: I heard, too, her eccentric murmurs; stranger than her laugh. There were days when she was quite silent; but there were others when I could not account for the sounds she made. Sometimes I saw her; she would come out of her room with a basin, or a plate, or a tray in her hand, go down to the kitchen, and shortly return, generally (oh, romantic reader, forgive me for telling the plain truth:) bearing a pot of porter. Her appearance always acted as a damper to the curiosity raised by her oral oddities: hard-featured and staid, she had no point to which interest could attach. I made some attempts to draw her into conversation, but she seemed a person of few words: a monosyllabic reply usually cut short every effort of that sort.

The other members of the household, viz. John and his wife, Leah the housemaid, and Sophie the French nurse, were decent people: but in no respect remarkable. With Sophie I used to talk French, and sometimes I asked her questions about her native country; but she was not of a descriptive or narrative turn, and generally gave such vapid and confused answers as were calculated rather to check than encourage inquiry.

October, November, December passed away. One afternoon in January Mrs. Fairfax had begged a holiday for Adèle because she had a cold; and, as Adèle seconded the request with an ardour that reminded me how precious occasional holidays had been to me in my own childhood, I accorded it, deeming that I did well in showing pliability on the point. It was a fine, calm day, though very cold; I was tired of sitting still in the library through a whole long morning: Mrs. Fairfax had just written a letter which was waiting to be posted, so I put on my bonnet and cloak and volunteered to carry it to Hay; the distance, two miles, would be a pleasant winter afternoon walk. Having seen Adèle comfortably seated in her little chair by Mrs. Fairfax's parlour fireside, and given her her best wax doll (which I usually kept enveloped in silver paper in a drawer) to play with, and a story-book for change of amusement; and having replied to her 'Revenez bientôt, ma bonne amie, ma chère Mdlle. Jeannette,' with a kiss, I set out.

The ground was hard, the air was still, my road was lonely; I walked fast till I got warm, and then I walked slowly to enjoy and analyse the species of pleasure brooding for me in the hour and situation. It was three o'clock; the church bell tolled as I passed under the belfry: the charm of the hour lay in its approaching dimness, in the low-gliding and pale-beaming sun. I was a mile from Thornfield, in a lane noted for wild roses in summer, for nuts and blackberries in autumn, and even now possessing a few coral treasures in hips and haws, but whose best winter delight lay in its utter solitude and leafless repose. If a breath of air stirred, it made no sound here; for there was not a holly, not an evergreen to rustle, and the stripped hawthorn and hazel bushes were as still as the white, worn stones which causewayed the middle of the path. Far and wide, on each side, there were only fields, where no cattle now browsed; and the little brown birds, which stirred occasionally in the hedge, looked like single russet leaves that had forgotten to drop.

This lane inclined uphill all the way to Hay: having reached the middle I sat down on a stile which led thence into a field. Gathering my mantle about me, and sheltering my hands in my muff, I did not feel the cold, though it froze keenly; as was attested by a sheet of ice covering the causeway, where a little brooklet, now congealed, had overflowed after a rapid thaw some days since. From my seat I could look down on Thornfield: the grey and battlemented hall was the principal object in the vale below me; its woods and dark rookery rose against the west. I lingered till the sun went down amongst the trees, and sank crimson and clear behind them. I then turned eastward.

On the hilltop above me sat the rising moon; pale yet as a cloud, but brightening momently: she looked over Hay, which, half lost in trees, sent up a blue smoke from its few chimneys; it was yet a mile distant, but in the absolute hush I could hear plainly its thin murmurs of life. My ear too felt the flow of currents; in what dales and depths I could not tell: but there were many hills beyond Hay, and doubtless many becks threading their passes. That evening calm betrayed alike the tinkle of the nearest streams, the sough of the most remote.

A rude noise broke on these fine ripplings and whisperings, at once so far away and so clear: a positive tramp, tramp; a metallic clatter, which effaced the soft wave-wanderings; as, in a picture, the solid mass of a crag, or the rough boles of a great oak, drawn in dark and strong on the foreground, efface the aërial distance of azure hill, sunny horizon, and blended clouds, where tint melts into tint.

The din was on the causeway; a horse was coming; the windings of the lane yet hid it, but it approached. I was just leaving the stile; yet, as the path was narrow, I sat still to let it go by. In those days I was young, and all sorts of fancies bright and dark tenanted my mind: the memories of nursery stories were there amongst other rubbish; and when they recurred, maturing youth added to them a vigour and vividness beyond what childhood could give. As this horse approached, and as I watched for it to appear through the dusk, I remembered certain of Bessie's tales, wherein figured a North-of-England spirit, called a 'Gytrash,' which, in the form of horse, mule, or large dog, haunted solitary ways, and sometimes came upon belated travellers, as this horse was now coming upon me.

It was very near, but not yet in sight, when, in addition to the tramp, tramp, I heard a rush under the hedge, and close down by the hazel stems glided a great dog, whose black and white colour made him a distinct object against the trees. It was exactly one mask of Bessie's Gytrash,—a lion-like creature with long hair and a huge head: it passed me, however, quietly enough; not staying to look up, with strange pretercanine eyes, in my face, as I half expected it would. The horse followed,—a tall steed, and on its back a rider. The man, the human being, broke the spell at once. Nothing ever rode the Gytrash: it was always alone; and goblins, to my notions, though they might tenant the dumb carcases of beasts, could scarce covet shelter in the commonplace human form. No Gytrash was this,—only a traveller taking the short cut to Millcote. He passed, and I went on: a few steps, and I turned: a sliding sound and an exclamation of 'What the deuce is to do now?' and a clattering tumble, arrested my attention. Man and horse were down; they had slipped on the sheet of ice which glazed the causeway. The dog came bounding back, and seeing his master in a predicament, and hearing the horse groan, barked till the evening hills echoed the sound, which was deep in proportion to his magnitude. He snuffed round the prostrate group, and then he ran up to me; it was all he could do,—there was no other help at hand to summon. I obeyed him, and walked down to the traveller, by this time struggling himself free of his steed. His efforts were so vigorous I thought he could not be much hurt; but I asked him the question:—'Are you injured, sir?'

I think he was swearing, but am not certain; however, he was pronouncing some formula which prevented him from replying to me directly.

'Can I do anything?' I asked again.

'You must just stand on one side,' he answered as he rose, first to his knees, and then to his feet. I did; whereupon began a heaving, stamping, clattering process, accompanied by a barking and baying which removed me effectually some yards' distance; but I would not be driven quite away till I saw the event. This was finally fortunate; the horse was re-established, and the dog was silenced with a 'Down, Pilot!' The traveller now, stooping, felt his foot and leg, as if trying whether they were sound; apparently something ailed them, for he halted to the stile whence I had just risen, and sat down.

I was in the mood for being useful, or at least officious, I think, for I now drew near him again.

'If you are hurt, and want help, sir, I can fetch some one either from Thornfield Hall or from Hay.'

'Thank you; I shall do: I have no broken bones—only a sprain;' and again he stood up and tried his foot, but the result extorted an involuntary 'Ugh!'

Something of daylight still lingered, and the moon was waxing bright: I could see him plainly. His figure was enveloped in a riding cloak, fur collared, and steel clasped; its details were not apparent, but I traced the general points of middle height, and considerable breadth of chest. He had a dark face, with stern features and a heavy brow; his eyes and gathered eyebrows looked ireful and thwarted just now; he was past youth, but had not reached middle age; perhaps he might be thirty-five. I felt no fear of him, and but little shyness. Had he been a handsome, heroic-looking young gentleman, I should not have dared to stand thus questioning him against his will, and offering my services unasked. I had hardly ever seen a handsome youth; never in my life spoken to one. I had a theoretical reverence and homage for beauty, elegance, gallantry, fascination; but had I met those qualities incarnate in masculine shape, I should have known instinctively that they neither had nor could have sympathy with anything in me, and should have shunned them as one would fire, lightning, or anything else that is bright but antipathetic.

If even this stranger had smiled and been good-humoured to me when I addressed him; if he had put off my offer of assistance gaily and with thanks, I should have gone on my way and not felt any vocation to renew inquiries: but the frown, the roughness of the traveller, set me at my ease: I retained my station when he waved to me to go, and announced:—'I cannot think of leaving you, sir, at so late an hour, in this solitary lane, till I see you are fit to mount your horse.'

He looked at me when I said this: he had hardly turned his eyes in my direction before.

'I should think you ought to be at home yourself,' said he, 'if you have a home in this neighbourhood: where do you come from?'

'From just below; and I am not at all afraid of being out late when it is moonlight: I will run over to Hay for you with pleasure, if you wish it; indeed, I am going there to post a letter.'

'You live just below—do you mean at that house with the battlements?' pointing to Thornfield Hall, on which the moon cast a hoary gleam, bringing it out distinct and pale from the woods, that, by contrast with the western sky, now seemed one mass of shadow.

'Yes, sir.'

'Whose house is it?'

'Mr. Rochester's.'

'Do you know Mr. Rochester?'

'No, I have never seen him.'

'He is not resident, then?'

'No.'

'Can you tell me where he is?'

'I cannot.'

'You are not a servant at the hall, of course. You are——' He stopped, ran his eye over my dress, which, as usual, was quite simple; a black merino cloak, a black beaver bonnet: neither of them half fine enough for a lady's-maid. He seemed puzzled to decide what I was: I helped him.

'I am the governess.'

'Ah, the governess!' he repeated; 'deuce take me, if I had not forgotten! The governess!' and again my raiment underwent scrutiny. In two minutes he rose from the stile: his face expressed pain when he tried to move.

'I cannot commission you to fetch help,' he said; 'but you may help me a little yourself, if you will be so kind.'

'Yes, sir.'

'You have not an umbrella that I can use as a stick?'

'No.'

'Try to get hold of my horse's bridle and lead him to me: you are not afraid!'

I should have been afraid to touch a horse when alone, but when told to do it I was disposed to obey. I put down my muff on the stile, and went up to the tall steed; I endeavoured to catch the bridle, but it was a spirited thing, and would not let me come near its head; I made effort on effort, though in vain: meantime, I was mortally afraid of its trampling fore-feet. The traveller waited and watched for some time, and at last he laughed.

'I see,' he said, 'the mountain will never be brought to Mahomet, so all you can do is to aid Mahomet to go to the mountain; I must beg of you to come here.'

I came. 'Excuse me,' he continued: 'necessity compels me to make you useful.' He laid a heavy hand on my shoulder, and leaning on me with some stress, limped to his horse. Having once caught the bridle, he mastered it directly, and sprang to his saddle; grimacing grimly as he made the effort, for it wrenched his sprain.'

'Now,' said he, releasing his under lip from a hard bite, 'just hand me my whip; it lies there under the hedge.'

I sought it and found it.

'Thank you: now make haste with the letter to Hay, and return as fast as you can.'

A touch of a spurred heel made his horse first start and rear, and then bound away; the dog rushed in his traces: all three vanished,

> Like heath that, in the wilderness,
> The wild wind whirls away.

I took up my muff and walked on. The incident had occurred and was gone for me: it *was* an incident of no moment, no romance, no interest in a sense; yet it marked with change one single hour of a monotonous life. My help had been needed and claimed; I had given it: I was pleased to have done something; trivial, transitory though the deed was, it was yet an active thing, and I was weary of an existence all passive. The new face, too, was like a new picture introduced to the gallery of memory; and it was dissimilar to all the others hanging there: firstly, because it was masculine; and, secondly, because it was dark, strong, and stern. I had it still before me when I entered Hay, and slipped the letter into the post-office; I saw it as I walked fast down hill all the way home. When I came to the stile, I stopped a minute, looked round and listened, with an idea that a horse's hoof might ring on the causeway again, and that a rider in a cloak, and a Gytrash-like Newfoundland dog, might be again apparent: I saw only the hedge and a pollard willow before me, rising up still and straight to meet the moonbeams; I heard only the faintest waft of wind roaming fitful among the trees round Thornfield, a mile distant; and when I glanced down in the direction of the murmur, my eye, traversing the hall-front, caught a light kindling in a window: it reminded me that I was late, and I hurried on.

I did not like re-entering Thornfield. To pass its threshold was to return to stagnation; to cross the silent hall, to ascend the darksome staircase, to seek my own lonely little room, and then to meet tranquil Mrs. Fairfax, and spend the long winter evening with her, and her only, was to quell wholly the faint excitement wakened by my walk,—to slip again over my faculties the viewless fetters of an uniform and too still existence; of an existence whose very privileges of security and ease I was becoming incapable of appreciating. What good it would have done me at that time to have been tossed in the storms of an uncertain struggling life, and to have been taught by rough and bitter experience to long for the calm amidst which I now repined! Yes, just as much good as it would do a man tired of sitting still in a 'too easy chair' to take a long walk; and just as natural was the wish to stir, under my circumstances, as it would be under his.

I lingered at the gates; I lingered on the lawn; I paced backwards and forwards on the pavement: the shutters of the glass door were closed; I could not see into the interior; and both my eyes and spirit seemed drawn from the gloomy house—from the grey hollow filled with rayless cells, as it appeared to me—to that sky expanded before me,—a blue sea absolved from taint of cloud; the moon ascending it in solemn march; her orb seeming to look up as she left the hilltops, from behind which she had come, far and farther below her, and aspired to the zenith, midnight-dark in its fathomless depth and measureless distance: and for those trembling stars that followed her course; they made my heart tremble, my veins glow when I viewed them. Little things recall us to earth: the clock struck in the hall; that sufficed; I turned from moon and stars, opened a side door, and went in.

The hall was not dark, nor yet was it lit, only by the high-hung bronze lamp: a warm glow suffused both it and the lower steps of the oak staircase. This ruddy shine issued from the great dining-room, whose two-leaved door stood open, and showed a genial fire in the grate, glancing on marble hearth and brass fireirons, and revealing purple draperies and polished furniture, in the most pleasant radiance. It revealed, too, a group near the mantelpiece: I had scarcely caught it, and scarcely become aware of a cheerful mingling of voices, amongst which I seemed to distinguish the tones of Adèle, when the door closed.

I hastened to Mrs. Fairfax's room: there was a fire there too, but no candle, and no Mrs. Fairfax. Instead, all alone, sitting upright on the rug, and gazing with gravity at the blaze, I beheld a great black and white long-haired dog, just like the Gytrash of the lane. It was so like it that I went forward and said—'Pilot,' and the thing got up and came to me and snuffed me. I caressed him, and he wagged his great tail: but he looked an eerie creature to be alone with, and I could not tell whence he had come. I rang the bell, for I wanted a candle; and I wanted, too, to get an account of this visitant. Leah entered.

'What dog is this?'

'He came with master.'

'With whom?'

'With master—Mr. Rochester—he is just arrived.'

'Indeed! and is Mrs. Fairfax with him?'

'Yes, and Miss Adela; they are in the dining-room, and John is gone for a surgeon: for master has had an accident; his horse fell and his ankle is sprained.'

'Did the horse fall in Hay Lane?'

'Yes, coming down hill; it slipped on some ice.'

'Ah! Bring me a candle, will you, Leah?'

Leah brought it; she entered, followed by Mrs. Fairfax, who repeated the news; adding that Mr. Carter the surgeon was come, and was now with Mr. Rochester: then she hurried out to give orders about tea, and I went upstairs to take off my things.

CHAPTER XIII

Mr. Rochester, it seems, by the surgeon's orders, went to bed early that night; nor did he rise soon next morning. When he did come down, it was to attend to business: his agent and some of his tenants were arrived, and waiting to speak with him.

Adèle and I had now to vacate the library: it would be in daily requisition as a reception-room for callers. A fire was lit in an apartment upstairs, and there I carried our books, and arranged it for the future schoolroom. I discerned in the course of the morning that Thornfield Hall was a changed place: no longer silent as a church, it echoed every hour or two to a knock at the door, or a clang of the bell; steps, too, often traversed the hall, and new voices spoke in different keys below; a rill from the outer world was flowing through it; it had a master: for my part I liked it better.

Adèle was not easy to teach that day; she could not apply: she kept running to the door and looking over the banisters to see if she could get a glimpse of Mr. Rochester; then she coined pretexts to go downstairs, in order, as I shrewdly suspected, to visit the library, where I knew she was not wanted; then, when I got a little angry, and made her sit still, she continued to talk incessantly of her 'ami, Monsieur Edouard Fairfax *de* Rochester,' as she dubbed him (I had not before heard his prenomens), and to conjecture what presents he had brought her: for it appears he had intimated the night before, that when his luggage came from

Millcote there would be found amongst it a little box in whose contents she had an interest.

'Et cela doit signifier,' said she, 'qu'il y aura là dedans un cadeau pour moi, et peutêtre pour vous aussi, mademoiselle. Monsieur a parlé de vous : il m'a demandé le nom de ma gouvernante, et si elle n'était pas une petite personne, assez mince et un peu pâle. J'ai dit qu'oui : car c'est vrai, n'est-ce pas, mademoiselle ?'

I and my pupil dined as usual in Mrs. Fairfax's parlour the afternoon was wild and snowy, and we passed it in the schoolroom. At dark I allowed Adèle to put away books and work, and to run downstairs ; for, from the comparative silence below, and from the cessation of appeals to the door-bell, I conjectured that Mr. Rochester was now at liberty. Left alone, I walked to the window ; but nothing was to be seen thence : twilight and snowflakes together thickened the air, and hid the very shrubs on the lawn. I let down the curtain and went back to the fireside.

In the clear embers I was tracing a view, not unlike a picture I remembered to have seen of the castle of Heidelberg, on the Rhine, when Mrs. Fairfax came in, breaking up by her entrance the fiery mosaic I had been piecing together, and scattering too some heavy unwelcome thoughts that were beginning to throng on my solitude.

'Mr. Rochester would be glad if you and your pupil would take tea with him in the drawing-room this evening,' said she : 'he has been so much engaged all day that he could not ask to see you before.'

'When is his tea-time ?' I inquired.

'Oh, at six o'clock : he keeps early hours in the country. You had better change your frock now ; I will go with you and fasten it. Here is a candle.'

'Is it necessary to change my frock ?'

'Yes, you had better : I always dress for the evening when Mr. Rochester is here.'

This additional ceremony seemed somewhat stately : however, I repaired to my room, and, with Mrs. Fairfax's aid, replaced my black stuff dress by one of black silk: the best and the only additional one I had, except one of light grey, which, in my Lowood notions of the toilette, I thought too fine to be worn, except on first-rate occasions.

'You want a brooch,' said Mrs. Fairfax. I had a single little pearl ornament which Miss Temple gave me as a parting keepsake: I put it on, and then we went downstairs. Unused as I was to strangers, it was rather a trial to appear thus formally summoned in Mr. Rochester's presence. I let Mrs. Fairfax precede me into the dining-room, and kept in her shade as we crossed that apartment; and, passing the arch, whose curtain was now dropped, entered the elegant recess beyond.

Two wax candles stood lighted on the table, and two on the mantelpiece; basking in the light and heat of a superb fire lay Pilot—Adèle knelt near him. Half reclined on a couch appeared Mr. Rochester, his foot supported by the cushion; he was looking at Adèle and the dog: the fire shone full on his face. I knew my traveller with his broad and jetty eyebrows; his square forehead, made squarer by the horizontal sweep of his black hair. I recognised his decisive nose, more remarkable for character than beauty; his full nostrils, denoting, I thought, choler; his grim mouth, chin, and jaw—yes, all three were very grim, and no mistake. His shape, now divested of cloak, I perceived harmonised in squareness with his physiognomy: I suppose it was a good figure in the athletic sense of the term—broad-chested and thin-flanked, though neither tall nor graceful.

Mr. Rochester must have been aware of the entrance of Mrs. Fairfax and myself; but it appeared he was not in the mood to notice us, for he never lifted his head as we approached.

'Here is Miss Eyre, sir,' said Mrs. Fairfax, in her quiet way. He bowed, still not taking his eyes from the group of the dog and child.

'Let Miss Eyre be seated,' said he: and there was something in the forced stiff bow, in the impatient yet formal tone, which seemed further to express, 'What the deuce is it to me whether Miss Eyre be there or not? At this moment I am not disposed to accost her.'

I sat down quite disembarrassed. A reception of finished politeness would probably have confused me: I could not have returned or repaid it by answering grace and elegance on my part; but harsh caprice laid me under no obligation; on the contrary, a decent quiescence, under the freak of manner, gave me advantage. Besides, the eccentricity of the proceeding was piquant: I felt interested to see how he would go on.

He went on as a statue would, that is, he neither spoke nor moved. Mrs. Fairfax seemed to think it necessary that some one should be amiable, and she began to talk. Kindly, as usual—and, as usual, rather trite—she condoled with him on the pressure of business he had had all day; on the annoyance it must have been to him with that painful sprain: then she commended his patience and perseverance in going through with it.

'Madam, I should like some tea,' was the sole rejoinder she got. She hastened to ring the bell; and, when the tray came, she proceeded to arrange the cups, spoons, &c., with assiduous celerity. I and Adèle went to the table; but the master did not leave his couch.

'Will you hand Mr. Rochester's cup?' said Mrs. Fairfax to me; 'Adèle might perhaps spill it.'

I did as requested. As he took the cup from my hand, Adèle, thinking the moment propitious for making a request in my favour, cried out:—'N'est-ce pas, monsieur, qu'il y a un cadeau pour Mademoiselle Eyre, dans votre petit coffre?'

'Who talks of cadeaux?' said he gruffly: 'did you expect a present, Miss Eyre? Are you fond of presents?' and he searched my face with eyes that I saw were dark, irate, and piercing.

'I hardly know, sir; I have little experience of them: they are generally thought pleasant things.'

'Generally thought? But what do *you* think?'

'I should be obliged to take time, sir, before I could give you an answer worthy of your acceptance: a present has many faces to it, has it not? and one should consider all before pronouncing an opinion as to its nature.'

'Miss Eyre, you are not so unsophisticated as Adèle: she demands a "cadeau," clamorously, the moment she sees me: you beat about the bush.'

'Because I have less confidence in my deserts than Adèle has: she can prefer the claim of old acquaintance, and the right too of custom; for she says you have always been in the habit of giving her playthings; but if I had to make out a case I should be puzzled, since I am a stranger, and have done nothing to entitle me to an acknowledgment.'

'Oh, don't fall back on over-modesty! I have examined Adèle, and find you have taken great pains with her; she is not bright, she has no talents; yet in a short time she has made much improvement.'

'Sir, you have now given me my "cadeau"; I am obliged to you: it is the meed teachers most covet; praise of their pupil's progress.'

'Humph!' said Mr. Rochester, and he took his tea in silence.

'Come to the fire,' said the master, when the tray was taken away, and Mrs. Fairfax had settled into a corner with her knitting; while Adèle was leading me by the hand round the room, showing me the beautiful books and ornaments on the consoles and chiffonnières. We obeyed, as in duty bound; Adèle wanted to take a seat on my knee, but she was ordered to amuse herself with Pilot.

'You have been resident in my house three months?'

'Yes, sir.'

'And you came from ——?'

'From Lowood school, in ——shire.'

'Ah! a charitable concern.—How long were you there?'

'Eight years.'

'Eight years! you must be tenacious of life. I thought half the time in such a place would have done up any constitution! No wonder you have rather the look of another world. I marvelled where you had got that sort of face. When you came on me in Hay Lane last night, I thought unaccountably of fairy tales, and had half a mind to demand whether you had bewitched my horse: I am not sure yet. Who are your parents?'

'I have none.'

'Nor ever had, I suppose: do you remember them?'

'No.'

'I thought not. And so you were waiting for your people when you sat on that stile?'

'For whom, sir?'

'For the men in green: it was a proper moonlight evening for them. Did I break through one of your rings, that you spread that damned ice on the causeway?'

I shook my head. 'The men in green all forsook England a hundred years ago,' said I, speaking as seriously as he had done. 'And not even in Hay Lane, or the fields about it, could you find a trace of them. I don't think either summer or harvest, or winter moon, will ever shine on their revels more.'

Mrs. Fairfax had dropped her knitting, and, with raised eyebrows, seemed wondering what sort of talk this was.

'Well,' resumed Mr. Rochester, 'if you disown parents you must have some sort of kinsfolk: uncles and aunts?'

'No; none that I ever saw.'

'And your home?'

'I have none.'

'Where do your brothers and sisters live?'

'I have no brothers or sisters.'

'Who recommended you to come here?'

'I advertised, and Mrs. Fairfax answered my advertisement.'

'Yes,' said the good lady, who now knew what ground we were upon, 'and I am daily thankful for the choice Providence led me to make. Miss Eyre has been an invaluable companion to me, and a kind and careful teacher to Adèle.'

'Don't trouble yourself to give her a character,' returned Mr. Rochester: 'eulogiums will not bias me; I shall judge for myself. She began by felling my horse.'

'Sir?' said Mrs. Fairfax.

'I have to thank her for this sprain.'

The widow looked bewildered.

'Miss Eyre, have you ever lived in a town?'

'No, sir.'

'Have you seen much society?'

'None but the pupils and teachers of Lowood; and now the inmates of Thornfield.'

'Have you read much?'

'Only such books as came in my way; and they have not been numerous or very learned.'

'You have lived the life of a nun: no doubt you are well drilled in religious forms;—Brocklehurst, who I understand directs Lowood, is a parson, is he not?'

'Yes, sir.'

'And you girls probably worshipped him, as a convent full of religieuses would worship their director?'

'Oh, no.'

'You are very cool! No! What! A novice not worship her priest! That sounds blasphemous.'

'I disliked Mr. Brocklehurst; and I was not alone in the feeling. He is a harsh man; at once pompous and meddling: he cut off our hair; and for economy's sake bought us bad needles and thread, with which we could hardly sew.'

'That was very false economy,' remarked Mrs. Fairfax, who now again caught the drift of the dialogue.

'And was that the head and front of his offending?' demanded Mr. Rochester.

'He starved us when he had the sole superintendence of the provision department, before the committee was appointed; and he bored us with long lectures once a week, and with evening readings from books of his own inditing, about sudden deaths and judgments, which made us afraid to go to bed.'

'What age were you when you went to Lowood?'

'About ten.'

'And you stayed there eight years: you are now, then, eighteen?'

I assented.

'Arithmetic, you see, is useful; without its aid I should hardly have been able to guess your age. It is a point difficult to fix where the features and countenance are so much at variance as in your case. And now, what did you learn at Lowood? Can you play?'

'A little.'

'Of course: that is the established answer. Go into the library—I mean, if you please. (Excuse my tone of command; I am used to say "Do this," and it is done: I cannot alter my customary habits for one new inmate.) Go, then, into the library; take a candle with you; leave the door open; sit down to the piano, and play a tune.'

I departed, obeying his directions.

'Enough!' he called out in a few minutes. 'You play *a little*, I see, like any other English schoolgirl: perhaps rather better than some, but not well.'

I closed the piano and returned. Mr. Rochester continued:

'Adèle showed me some sketches this morning which she said were yours. I don't know whether they were entirely of your doing: probably a master aided you?'

'No, indeed!' I interjected.

'Ah! that pricks pride. Well, fetch me your portfolio, if you can vouch for its contents being original; but don't pass your word unless you are certain: I can recognise patchwork.'

'Then I will say nothing, and you shall judge for yourself, sir.'

I brought the portfolio from the library.

'Approach the table,' said he; and I wheeled it to his couch. Adèle and Mrs. Fairfax drew near to see the pictures.

'No crowding,' said Mr. Rochester: 'take the drawings from my hand as I finish with them; but don't push your faces up to mine.'

He deliberately scrutinised each sketch and painting. Three he laid aside; the others, when he had examined them, he swept from him.

'Take them off to the other table, Mrs. Fairfax,' said he, 'and look at them with Adèle;—you' (glancing at me) 'resume your seat, and answer my questions. I perceive these pictures were done by one hand: was that hand yours?'

'Yes.'

'And when did you find time to do them? They have taken much time, and some thought.'

'I did them in the last two vacations I spent at Lowood, when I had no other occupation.'

'Where did you get your copies?'

'Out of my head.'

'That head I see now on your shoulders?'

Yes, sir.'

Has it other furniture of the same kind within?'

'I should think it may have: I should hope—better.'

He spread the pictures before him, and again surveyed them alternately.

While he is so occupied I will tell you, reader, what they are: and first, I must premise that they are nothing wonderful. The subjects had, indeed, risen vividly on my mind. As I saw them with the spiritual eye, before I attempted to embody them, they were striking; but my hand would not second my fancy, and in each case it had wrought out but a pale portrait of the thing I had conceived.

These pictures were in water-colours. The first represented clouds low and livid, rolling over a swollen sea: all the distance was in eclipse; so, too, was the foreground; or, rather, the nearest billows, for there was no land. One gleam of light lifted into relief a half-submerged mast, on which sat a cormorant, dark and large, with wings flecked with foam: its beak held a gold bracelet, set with gems, that I had touched with as brilliant tints as my palette could yield, and as glittering distinctness as my pencil could impart. Sinking below the bird and mast, a drowned corpse glanced through the green water; a fair arm was the only limb clearly visible, whence the bracelet had been washed or torn.

The second picture contained for foreground only the dim peak of a hill, with grass and some leaves slanting as if by a breeze. Beyond and above spread an expanse of sky, dark blue as at twilight: rising into the sky was a woman's shape to the bust, portrayed in tints as dusk and soft as I could combine. The dim forehead was crowned with a star; the lineaments below were seen as through the suffusion of vapour; the eyes shone dark and wild; the hair streamed shadowy, like a beamless cloud torn by storm or by electric travail. On the neck lay a pale reflection like moonlight; the same faint lustre touched the train of thin clouds from which rose and bowed this vision of the Evening Star.

The third showed the pinnacle of an iceberg piercing a polar winter sky: a muster of northern lights reared their dim lances, close serried, along the horizon. Throwing these into distance, rose, in the foreground, a head,—a colossal head, inclined towards the iceberg, and resting against it. Two thin hands, joined under the forehead, and supporting it, drew up before the lower features a sable veil; a brow quite bloodless, white as bone, and an eye hollow and fixed, blank of meaning but for the glassiness of despair, alone were visible. Above the temples, amidst wreathed turban folds of black drapery, vague in its character and consistency as cloud, gleamed a ring of white flame, gemmed with sparkles of a more lurid tinge. This pale crescent was 'The likeness of a Kingly Crown'; what it diademed was 'the shape which shape had none.'

'Were you happy when you painted these pictures?' asked Mr. Rochester, presently.

'I was absorbed, sir: yes, and I was happy. To paint them, in short, was to enjoy one of the keenest pleasures I have ever known.'

'That is not saying much. Your pleasures, by your own account, have been few; but I daresay you did exist in a kind of artist's dreamland while you blent and arranged these strange tints. Did you sit at them long each day?'

'I had nothing else to do, because it was the vacation, and I sat at them from morning till noon, and from noon till night: the length of the midsummer days favoured my inclination to apply.'

'And you felt self-satisfied with the result of your ardent labours?'

'Far from it. I was tormented by the contrast between my idea and my handiwork: in each case I had imagined something which I was quite powerless to realise.'

'Not quite: you have secured the shadow of your thought: but no more, probably. You had not enough of the artist's skill and science to give it full being: yet the drawings are, for a schoolgirl, peculiar. As to the thoughts, they are elfish. These eyes in the Evening Star you must have seen in a dream. How could you make them look so clear, and yet not at all brilliant? for the planet above quells their rays. And what meaning is that in their solemn depth? And who taught you to paint wind? There is a high gale in that sky, and on this hilltop. Where did you see Latmos? For that is Latmos. There,—put the drawings away!'

I had scarce tied the strings of the portfolio, when, looking at his watch, he said abruptly,—'It is nine o'clock: what are you about, Miss Eyre, to let Adèle sit up so long? Take her to bed.'

Adèle went to kiss him before quitting the room: he endured the caress, but scarcely seemed to relish it more than Pilot would have done, nor so much.

'I wish you all good-night, now,' said he, making a movement of the hand towards the door, in token that he was tired of our company, and wished to dismiss us. Mrs. Fairfax folded up her knitting: I took my portfolio: we curtseyed to him, received a frigid bow in return, and so withdrew.

'You said Mr. Rochester was not strikingly peculiar, Mrs. Fairfax,' I observed, when I rejoined her in her room, after putting Adèle to bed.

'Well, is he?'

'I think so: he is very changeful and abrupt.'

'True: no doubt he may appear so to a stranger, but I am so accustomed to his manner I never think of it; and then, if he has peculiarities of temper, allowance should be made.'

'Why?'

'Partly because it is his nature—and we can none of us help our nature; and, partly, he has painful thoughts, no doubt, to harass him, and make his spirits unequal.'

'What about?'

'Family troubles, for one thing.'

'But he has no family.'

'Not now, but he has had—or, at least, relatives. He lost his elder brother a few years since.'

'His *elder* brother?'

'Yes. The present Mr. Rochester has not been very long in possession of the property; only about nine years.'

'Nine years is a tolerable time. Was he so very fond of his brother as to be still inconsolable for his loss?'

'Why, no—perhaps not. I believe there were some misunderstandings between them. Mr. Rowland Rochester was not quite just to Mr. Edward; and, perhaps, he prejudiced his father against him. The old gentleman was fond of money, and anxious to keep the family estate together. He did not like to diminish the property by division, and yet he was anxious that Mr. Edward should have wealth too, to keep up the consequence of the name; and, soon after he was of age, some steps were taken that were not quite fair, and made a great deal of mischief. Old Mr. Rochester and Mr. Rowland combined to bring Mr. Edward into what he considered a painful position, for the sake of making his fortune: what the precise nature of that position was I never clearly knew, but his spirit could not brook what he had to suffer in it. He is not very forgiving: he broke with his family, and now for many years he has led an unsettled kind of life. I don't think he has ever been resident at Thornfield for a fortnight together since the death of his brother without a will left him master of the estate; and, indeed, no wonder he shuns the old place.'

'Why should he shun it?'

Perhaps he thinks it gloomy.'

The answer was evasive—I should have liked something clearer; but Mrs. Fairfax either could not, or would not, give me more explicit information of the origin and nature of Mr. Rochester's trials. She averred they were a mystery to herself, and that what she knew was chiefly from conjecture. It was evident, indeed, that she wished me to drop the subject, which I did accordingly.

CHAPTER XIV

For several subsequent days I saw little of Mr. Rochester. In the mornings he seemed much engaged with business, and in the afternoon gentlemen from Millcote or the neighbourhood called, and sometimes stayed to dine with him. When his sprain was well enough to admit of horse exercise, he rode out a good deal; probably to return these visits, as he generally did not come back till late at night.

During this interval even Adèle was seldom sent for to his presence, and all my acquaintance with him was confined to an occasional rencontre in the hall, on the stairs, or in the gallery, when he would sometimes pass me haughtily and coldly, just acknowledging my presence by a distant nod or a cool glance, and sometimes bow and smile with gentlemanlike affability. His changes of mood did not offend me, because I saw that I had nothing to do with their alternation; the ebb and flow depended on causes quite disconnected with me.

One day he had had company to dinner, and had sent for my portfolio; in order, doubtless, to exhibit its contents. The gentlemen went away early, to attend a public meeting at Millcote, as Mrs. Fairfax informed me; but the night being wet and inclement, Mr. Rochester did not accompany them. Soon after they were gone, he rang the bell: a message came that I and Adèle were to go downstairs. I brushed Adèle's hair and made her neat, and having ascertained that I was myself in my usual Quaker trim, where there was nothing to retouch—all being too close and plain, braided locks included, to admit of disarrangement—we descended, Adèle wondering whether the *petit coffre* was at length come; for, owing to some mistake, its arrival had hitherto been delayed. She was gratified: there it stood, a little carton, on the table when we entered the dining-room. She appeared to know it by instinct.

'Ma boîte! ma boîte!' exclaimed she, running towards it.

'Yes—there is your "boîte" at last: take it into a corner, you genuine daughter of Paris, and amuse yourself with disembowelling it,' said the deep and rather sarcastic voice of Mr. Rochester, proceeding from the depths of an immense easy-chair at the fireside. 'And mind,' he continued, 'don't bother me with any details of the anatomical process, or any notice of the condition of the entrails: let your operation be conducted in silence: tiens-toi tranquille, enfant; comprends-tu?'

Adèle seemed scarcely to need the warning; she had already retired to a sofa with her treasure, and was busy untying the cord which secured the lid. Having removed this impediment, and lifted certain silvery envelopes of tissue-paper, she merely exclaimed:—'Oh ciel! Que c'est beau!' and then remained absorbed in ecstatic contemplation.

'Is Miss Eyre there?' now demanded the master, half rising from his seat to look round to the door, near which I still stood.

'Ah! well; come forward: be seated here.' He drew a chair near his own. 'I am not fond of the prattle of children,' he continued; 'for, old bachelor as I am, I have no pleasant associations connected with their lisp. It would be intolerable to me to pass a whole evening *tête-à-tête* with a brat. Don't draw that chair further off, Miss Eyre; sit down exactly where I placed it—if you please, that is. Confound these civilities! I continually forget them. Nor do I particularly affect simple-minded old ladies. By-the-bye, I must have mine in mind; it won't do to neglect her; she is a Fairfax, or wed to one; and blood is said to be thicker than water.'

He rang and despatched an invitation to Mrs. Fairfax, who soon arrived, knitting-basket in hand.

'Good-evening, madam; I sent to you for a charitable purpose: I have forbidden Adèle to talk to me about her presents, and she is bursting with repletion; have the goodness to serve her as auditress and interlocutrice: it will be one of the most benevolent acts you ever performed.'

Adèle, indeed, no sooner saw Mrs. Fairfax than she summoned her to the sofa, and there quickly filled her lap with the porcelain, the ivory, the waxen contents of her 'boîte'; pouring out, meantime, explanations and raptures in such broken English as she was mistress of.

'Now I have performed the part of a good host,' pursued Mr. Rochester, 'put my guests into the way of amusing each other, I ought to be at liberty to attend to my own pleasure. Miss Eyre, draw your chair still a little further forward: you are yet too far back; I cannot see you without disturbing my position in this comfortable chair, which I have no mind to do.'

I did as I was bid, though I would much rather have remained somewhat in the shade: but Mr. Rochester had such a direct way of giving orders, it seemed a matter of course to obey him promptly.

We were, as I have said, in the dining-room: the lustre, which had been lit for dinner, filled the room with a festal breadth of light; the large fire was all red and clear; the purple curtains hung rich and ample before the lofty window and loftier arch; everything was still, save the subdued chat of Adèle (she dared not speak loud), and, filling up each pause, the beating of winter rain against the panes.

Mr. Rochester, as he sat in his damask-covered chair, looked different to what I had seen him look before; not quite so stern—much less gloomy. There was a smile on his lips, and his eyes sparkled, whether with wine or not I am not sure; but I think it very probable. He was, in short, in his after-dinner mood; more expanded and genial, and also more self-indulgent than the frigid and rigid temper of the morning: still he looked preciously grim, cushioning his massive head against the swelling back of his chair, and receiving the light of the fire on his granite-hewn features, and in his great, dark eyes; for he had great, dark eyes, and very fine eyes too—not without a certain change in their depths sometimes, which, if it was not softness, reminded you, at least, of that feeling.

He had been looking two minutes at the fire, and I had been looking the same length of time at him, when turning suddenly, he caught my gaze fastened on his physiognomy.

'You examine me, Miss Eyre,' said he: 'do you think me handsome?'

I should, if I had deliberated, have replied to this question by something conventionally vague and polite; but the answer somehow slipped from my tongue before I was aware:—'No, sir.'

'Ah! By my word! there is something singular about you,' said he: 'you have the air of a little nonnette; quaint, quiet, grave, and simple, as you sit with your hands before you, and your eyes generally bent on the carpet (except, by-the-bye, when they are directed piercingly to my face; as just now, for instance); and when one asks you a question, or makes a remark to which you are obliged to reply, you rap out a round rejoinder, which, if not blunt, is at least brusque. What do you mean by it?'

'Sir, I was too plain: I beg your pardon. I ought to have replied that it was not easy to give an impromptu answer to a question about appearances; that tastes differ; that beauty is of little consequence, or something of that sort.'

'You ought to have replied no such thing. Beauty of little consequence, indeed! And so, under pretence of softening the previous outrage, of stroking and soothing me into placidity, you stick a sly penknife under my ear! Go on: what fault do you find with me, pray? I suppose I have all my limbs and all my features like any other man?'

'Mr. Rochester, allow me to disown my first answer. I intended no pointed repartee: it was only a blunder.'

'Just so: I think so: and you shall be answerable for it. Criticise me: does my forehead not please you?'

He lifted up the sable waves of hair which lay horizontally over his brow, and showed a solid enough mass of intellectual organs, but an abrupt deficiency where the suave sign of benevolence should have risen.

'Now, ma'am, am I a fool?'

'Far from it, sir. You would, perhaps, think me rude if I inquired in return whether you are a philanthropist?'

'There again! Another stick of the penknife, when she pretended to pat my head: and that is because I said I did not like the society of children and old women (low be it spoken!). No, young lady, I am not a general philanthropist; but I bear a conscience;' and he pointed to the prominences which are said to indicate that faculty, and which, fortunately for him, were sufficiently conspicuous; giving, indeed, a marked breadth to the upper part of his head: 'and, besides, I once had a kind of rude tenderness of heart. When I was as old as you I was a feeling fellow enough; partial to the unfledged, unfostered, and unlucky; but fortune has knocked me about since: she has even kneaded me with her knuckles, and now I flatter myself I am hard and tough as an India-rubber ball; pervious, though, through a chink or two still, and with one sentient point in the middle of the lump. Yes: does that leave hope for me?'

'Hope of what, sir?'

'Of my final re-transformation from India-rubber back to flesh?'

'Decidedly he has had too much wine,' I thought; and I did not know what answer to make to his queer question: how could I tell whether he was capable of being re-transformed?

'You look very much puzzled, Miss Eyre; and though you are not pretty any more than I am handsome, yet a puzzled air becomes you; besides, it is convenient, for it keeps those searching eyes of yours away from my physiognomy, and busies them with the worsted flowers of the rug; so puzzle on. Young lady, I am disposed to be gregarious and communicative to-night.'

With this announcement he rose from his chair, and stood, leaning his arm on the marble mantelpiece: in that attitude his shape was seen plainly as well as his face; his unusual breadth of chest, disproportionate almost to his length of limb. I am sure most people would have thought him an ugly man; yet there was so much unconscious pride in his port; so much ease in his demeanour; such a look of complete indifference to his own external appearance; so haughty a reliance on the power of other qualities, intrinsic or adventitious, to atone for the lack of mere personal attractiveness, that, in looking at him, one inevitably shared the indifference, and, even in a blind, imperfect sense, put faith in the confidence.

'I am disposed to be gregarious and communicative to-night,' he repeated; 'and that is why I sent for you: the fire and the chandelier were not sufficient company for me; nor would Pilot have been, for none of these can talk. Adèle is a degree better, but still far below the mark; Mrs. Fairfax ditto; you, I am persuaded, can suit me if you will: you puzzled me the first evening I invited you down here. I have almost forgotten you since: other ideas have driven yours from my head; but to-night I am resolved to be at ease; to dismiss what importunes, and recall what pleases. It would please me now to draw you out—to learn more of you—therefore speak.'

Instead of speaking, I smiled; and not a very complacent or submissive smile either.

'Speak,' he urged.

'What about, sir?'

'Whatever you like. I leave both the choice of subject and the manner of treating it entirely to yourself.'

Accordingly I sat and said nothing: 'If he expects me to talk for the mere sake of talking and showing off, he will find he has addressed himself to the wrong person,' I thought.

'You are dumb, Miss Eyre.'

I was dumb still. He bent his head a little towards me, and with a single hasty glance seemed to dive into my eyes.

'Stubborn?' he said, 'and annoyed. Ah, it is consistent. I put my request in an absurd, almost insolent form. Miss Eyre, I beg your pardon. The fact is, once for all, I don't wish to treat you like an inferior: that is (correcting himself), I claim only such superiority as must result from twenty years' difference in age and a century's advance in experience. This is legitimate, et j'y tiens, as Adèle would say; and it is by virtue of this superiority and this alone that I desire you to have the goodness to talk to me a little now, and divert my thoughts, which are galled with dwelling on one point—cankering as a rusty nail.'

He had deigned an explanation; almost an apology: I did not feel insensible to his condescension, and would not seem so.

'I am willing to amuse you if I can, sir: quite willing; but I cannot introduce a topic, because how do I know what will interest you? Ask me questions, and I will do my best to answer them.'

'Then, in the first place, do you agree with me that I have a right to be a little masterful, abrupt; perhaps exacting, sometimes, on the grounds I stated; namely, that I am old enough to be your father, and that I have battled through a varied experience with many men of many nations, and roamed over half the globe, while you have lived quietly with one set of people in one house?'

'Do as you please, sir.'

'That is no answer; or rather it is a very irritating, because a very evasive one; reply clearly.'

'I don't think, sir, you have a right to command me merely because you are older than I, or because you have seen more of the world than I have; your claim to superiority depends on the use you have made of your time and experience.'

'Humph! Promptly spoken. But I won't allow that, seeing that it would never suit my case; as I have made an indifferent, not to say a bad, use of both advantages. Leaving superiority out of the question, then, you must still agree to receive my orders now and then, without being piqued or hurt by the tone of command—will you?'

I smiled: I thought to myself Mr. Rochester *is* peculiar—he seems to forget that he pays me 30*l.* per annum for receiving his orders.

'The smile is very well,' said he, catching instantly the passing expression; 'but speak too.'

'I was thinking, sir, that very few masters would trouble themselves to inquire whether or not their paid subordinates were piqued and hurt by their orders.'

'Paid subordinates! What, you are my paid subordinate, are you? Oh, yes, I had forgotten the salary! Well, then, on that mercenary ground, will you agree to let me hector a little?'

'No, sir, not on that ground: but, on the ground that you did forget it, and that you care whether or not a dependent is comfortable in his dependency, I agree heartily.'

'And will you consent to dispense with a great many conventional forms and phrases, without thinking that the omission arises from insolence?'

'I am sure, sir, I should never mistake informality for insolence: one I rather like, the other nothing free-born would submit to, even for a salary.'

'Humbug! Most things free-born will submit to anything for a salary; therefore, keep to yourself, and don't venture on generalities of which you are intensely ignorant. However, I mentally shake hands with you for your answer, despite its inaccuracy; and as much for the manner in which it was said as for the substance of the speech: the manner was frank and sincere; one does not often see such a manner: no, on the contrary, affectation, or coldness, or stupid, coarse-minded misapprehension of one's meaning are the usual rewards of candour. Not three in three thousand raw school-girl governesses would have answered me as you have just done. But I don't mean to flatter you: if you are cast in a different mould to the majority, it is no merit of yours: Nature did it. And then, after all, I go too fast in my conclusions: for what I yet know, you may be no better than the rest; you may have intolerable defects to counterbalance your few good points.'

'And so may you,' I thought. My eye met his as the idea crossed my mind: he seemed to read the glance, answering as if its import had been spoken as well as imagined:—

'Yes, yes, you are right,' said he; 'I have plenty of faults of my own: I know it, and I don't wish to palliate them, I assure you. God wot I need not be too severe about others; I have a past existence, a series of deeds, a colour of life to contemplate within my own breast, which might well call my sneers and censures from my neighbours to myself. I started, or rather (for, like other defaulters, I like to lay half the blame on ill fortune and adverse circumstances) was thrust on to a wrong tack at the age of one-and-twenty, and have never recovered the right course since: but I might have been very different; I might have been as good as you—wiser, almost as stainless. I envy you your peace of mind, your clean conscience, your unpolluted memory. Little girl, a memory without blot or contamination must be an exquisite treasure—an inexhaustible source of pure refreshment: is it not?'

'How was your memory when you were eighteen, sir?'

'All right then; limpid, salubrious: no gush of bilge water had turned it to fetid puddle. I was your equal at eighteen—quite your equal. Nature meant me to be, on the whole, a good man, Miss Eyre: one of the better kind; and you see I am not so. You would say you don't see it: at least I flatter myself I read as much in your eye (beware, by-the-bye, what you express with that organ, I am quick at interpreting its language). Then take my word for it,—I am not a villain: you are not to suppose that—not to attribute to me any such bad eminence; but, owing, I verily believe, rather to circumstances than to my natural bent, I am a trite commonplace sinner, hackneyed in all the poor petty dissipations with which the rich and worthless try to put on life. Do you wonder that I avow this to you? Know, that in the course of your future life you will often find yourself elected the involuntary confidant of your acquaintances' secrets: people will instinctively find out, as I have done, that it is not your forte to tell of yourself, but to listen while others talk of themselves; they will feel, too, that you listen with no malevolent scorn of their indiscretion, but with a kind of innate sympathy; not the less comforting and encouraging because it is very unobtrusive in its manifestations.'

'How do you know?—how can you guess all this, sir?'

'I know it well; therefore I proceed almost as freely as if I were writing my thoughts in a diary. You would say, I should have been superior to circumstances; so I should—so I should; but you see I was not. When fate wronged me, I had not the wisdom to remain cool: I turned desperate; then I degenerated. Now, when any vicious simpleton excites my disgust by his paltry ribaldry, I cannot flatter myself that I am better than he: I am forced to confess that he and I are on a level. I wish I had stood firm—God knows I do! Dread remorse when you are tempted to err, Miss Eyre: remorse is the poison of life.'

'Repentance is said to be its cure, sir.'

'It is not its cure. Reformation may be its cure; and I could reform—I have strength yet for that—if—but where is the use of thinking of it, hampered, burdened, cursed as I am? Besides, since happiness is irrevocably denied me, I have a right to get pleasure out of life: and I *will* get it, cost what it may.'

'Then you will degenerate still more, sir.'

'Possibly: yet why should I, if I can get sweet, fresh pleasure? And I may get it as sweet and fresh as the wild honey the bee gathers on the moor.'

'It will sting—it will taste bitter, sir.'

'How do you know?—you never tried it. How very serious—how very solemn you look: and you are as ignorant of the matter as this cameo head' (taking one from the mantelpiece). 'You have no right to preach to me, you neophyte, that have not passed the porch of life, and are absolutely unacquainted with its mysteries.'

'I only remind you of your own words, sir: you said error brought remorse, and you pronounced remorse the poison of existence.'

'And who talks of error now? I scarcely think the notion that flitted across my brain was an error. I believe it was an inspiration rather than a temptation: it was very genial, very soothing,—I know that. Here it comes again! It is no devil, I assure you; or if it be, it has put on the robes of an angel of light. I think I must admit so fair a guest when it asks entrance to my heart.'

'Distrust it, sir; it is not a true angel.'

'Once more, how do you know? By what instinct do you pretend to distinguish between a fallen seraph of the abyss and a messenger from the eternal throne—between a guide and a seducer?'

'I judged by your countenance, sir; which was troubled: when you said the suggestion had returned upon you. I feel sure it will work you more misery if you listen to it.'

'Not at all—it bears the most gracious message in the world: for the rest, you are not my conscience-keeper, so don't make yourself uneasy. Here, come in, bonny wanderer!'

He said this as if he spoke to a vision, viewless to any eye but his own; then, folding his arms, which he had half extended, on his chest, he seemed to enclose in their embrace the invisible being.

'Now,' he continued, again addressing me, 'I have received the pilgrim—a disguised deity, as I verily believe. Already it has done me good: my heart was a sort of charnel; it will now be a shrine.'

'To speak truth, sir, I don't understand you at all: I cannot keep up the conversation, because it has got out of my depth. Only one thing I know: you said you were not as good as you should like to be, and that you regretted your own imperfection;—one thing I can comprehend: you intimated that to have a sullied memory was a perpetual bane. It seems to me, that if you tried hard, you would in time find it possible to become what you yourself would approve; and that if from this day you began with resolution to correct your thoughts and actions, you would in a few years have laid up a new and stainless store of recollections, to which you might revert with pleasure.'

'Justly thought; rightly said, Miss Eyre; and, at this moment, I am paving hell with energy.'

'Sir?'

'I am laying down good intentions, which I believe durable as flint. Certainly, my associates and pursuits shall be other than they have been.'

'And better?'

'And better—so much better as pure ore is than foul dross. You seem to doubt me; I don't doubt myself: I know what my aim is, what my motives are; and at this moment I pass a law, unalterable as that of the Medes and Persians, that both are right.'

'They cannot be, sir, if they require a new statute to legalise them.'

'They are, Miss Eyre, though they absolutely require a new statute; unheard-of combinations of circumstances demand unheard-of rules.'

'That sounds a dangerous maxim, sir; because one can see at once that it is liable to abuse.'

'Sententious sage! so it is: but I swear by my household gods not to abuse it.'

'You are human and fallible.'

'I am: so are you—what then?'

'The human and fallible should not arrogate a power with which the divine and perfect alone can be safely entrusted.'

'What power?'

'That of saying of any strange, unsanctioned line of action,—"Let it be right."'

'"Let it be right"—the very words: you have pronounced them.'

'*May* it be right then,' I said, as I rose, deeming it useless to continue a discourse which was all darkness to me; and, besides, sensible that the character of my interlocutor was beyond my penetration; at least, beyond its present reach; and feeling the uncertainty, the vague sense of insecurity, which accompanies a conviction of ignorance.

'Where are you going?'

'To put Adèle to bed: it is past her bedtime.'

'You are afraid of me, because I talk like a Sphinx.'

'Your language is enigmatical, sir: but though I am bewildered, I am certainly not afraid.'

'You *are* afraid—your self-love dreads a blunder.'

'In that sense I do feel apprehensive—I have no wish to talk nonsense.'

'If you did, it would be in such a grave, quiet manner, I should mistake it for sense. Do you never laugh, Miss Eyre? Don't trouble yourself to answer—I see, you laugh rarely; but you can laugh very merrily: believe me, you are not naturally austere, any more than I am naturally vicious. The Lowood constraint still clings to you somewhat; controlling your features, muffling your voice, and restricting your limbs; and you fear in the presence of a man and a brother—or father, or master, or what you will—to smile too gaily, speak too freely, or move too quickly: but, in time, I think you will learn to be natural with me, as I find it impossible to be conventional with you; and then your looks and movements will have more vivacity and variety than they dare offer now. I see at intervals the glance of a curious sort of bird through the close-set bars of a cage; a vivid, restless, resolute captive is there; were it but free, it would soar cloud-high. You are still bent on going?'

'It has struck nine, sir.'

'Never mind,—wait a minute: Adèle is not ready to go to bed yet. My position, Miss Eyre, with my back to the fire, and my face to the room, favours observation. While talking to you, I have also occasionally watched Adèle; (I have my own reasons for thinking her a curious study,—reasons that I may, nay that I shall, impart to you some day;) she pulled out of her box, about ten minutes ago, a little pink silk frock; rapture lit her face as she unfolded it; coquetry runs in her blood, blends with her brains, and seasons the marrow of her bones. "Il faut que je l'essaie," cried she; "et à l'instant même!" and she rushed out of the room. She is now with Sophie, undergoing a robing process: in a few minutes she will re-enter; and I know what I shall see,—a miniature of Céline Varens, as she used to appear on the boards at the rising of ——: but never mind that. However, my tenderest feelings are about to receive a shock: such is my presentiment; stay now, to see whether it will be realised.'

Ere long Adèle's little foot was heard tripping across the hall. She entered, transformed as her guardian had predicted. A dress of rose-coloured satin, very short, and as full in the skirt as it could be gathered, replaced the brown frock she had previously worn; a wreath of rosebuds circled her forehead; her feet were dressed in silk stockings and small white satin sandals.

'Est-ce que ma robe va bien?' cried she, bounding forwards; 'et mes souliers? et mes bas? Tenez, je croix que je vais danser.'

And spreading out her dress, she chasséed across the room; till, having reached Mr. Rochester, she wheeled lightly round before him on tiptoe, then dropped on one knee at his feet, exclaiming:—

'Monsieur, je vous remercie mille fois de votre bonté'; then rising, she added, 'C'est comme cela que maman faisait, n'est-ce pas, monsieur?'

'Pre-cise-ly!' was the answer; 'and, "comme cela," she charmed my English gold out of my British breeches pocket. I have been green, too, Miss Eyre,—ay, grass green: not a more vernal tint freshens you now than once freshened me.

My Spring is gone, however: but it has left me that French floweret on my hands; which, in some moods, I would fain be rid of. Not valuing now the root whence it sprang; having found that it was of a sort which nothing but gold dust could manure, I have but half a liking to the blossom: especially when it looks so artificial as just now. I keep it and rear it rather on the Roman Catholic principle of expiating numerous sins, great or small, by one good work. I'll explain all this some day. Good-night.'

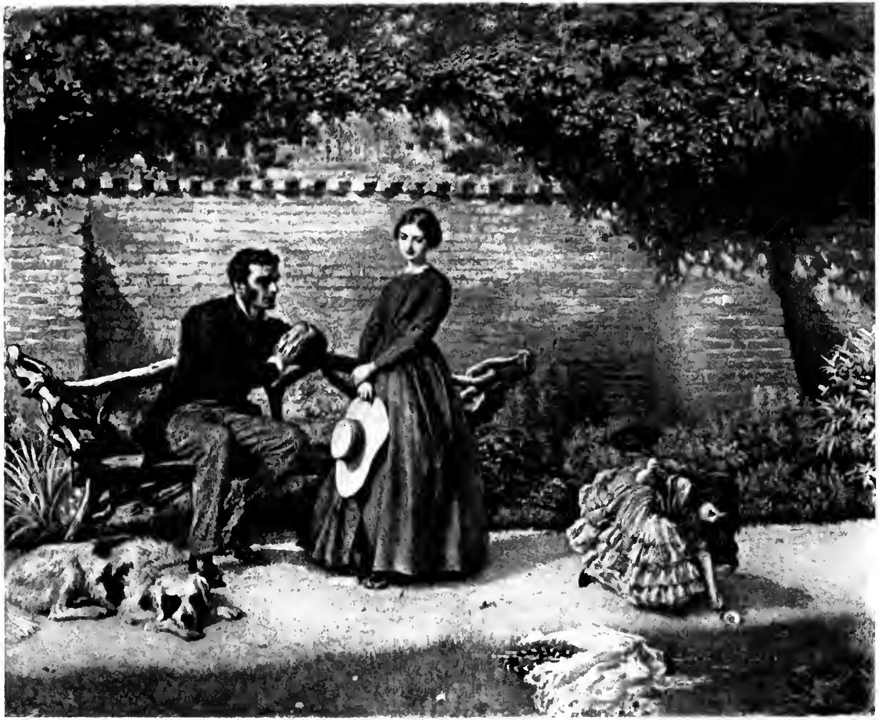
CHAPTER XV

Mr. Rochester did, on a future occasion, explain it.

It was one afternoon, when he chanced to meet me and Adèle in the grounds; and while she played with Pilot and her shuttlecock, he asked me to walk up and down a long beech avenue within sight of her.

He then said that she was the daughter of a French opera-dancer, Céline Varens, towards whom he had once cherished what he called a 'grande passion.' This passion Céline had professed to return with even superior ardour. He thought himself her idol; ugly as he was: he believed, as he said, that she preferred his 'taille d'athlète' to the elegance of the Apollo Belvidere.

'And, Miss Eyre, so much was I flattered by this preference of the Gallic sylph for her British gnome, that I installed her in an hotel; gave her a complete establishment of servants, a carriage, cashmeres, diamonds, dentelles, &c. In short, I began the process of ruining myself in the received style, like any other spoony. I had not, it seems, the originality to chalk out a new road to shame and destruction, but trod the old track with stupid exactness not to deviate an inch from the beaten centre. I had—as I deserved to have—the fate of all other spoonies. Happening to call one evening when Céline did not expect me, I found her out; but it was a warm night, and I was tired with strolling through Paris, so I sat down in her boudoir; happy to breathe the air consecrated so lately by her presence. No,—I exaggerate; I never thought there was any consecrating virtue about her: it was rather a sort of pastille perfume she had left, a scent of musk and amber, than an odour of sanctity. I was just



Rochester and Jane Eyre.

beginning to stifle with the fumes of conservatory flowers and sprinkled essences, when I bethought myself to open the window and step out on to the balcony. It was moonlight and gas-light besides, and very still and serene. The balcony was furnished with a chair or two; I sat down, took out a cigar,—I will take one now, if you will excuse me.'

Here ensued a pause, filled up by the producing and lighting of a cigar; having placed it to his lips and breathed a trail of Havannah incense on the freezing and sunless air, he went on:—

'I liked bonbons too, in those days, Miss Eyre, and I was *croquant*—overlook the barbarism—*croquant* chocolate comfits, and smoking alternately, watching meantime the equipages that rolled along the fashionable streets towards the neighbouring opera-house, when in an elegant close carriage drawn by a beautiful pair of English horses, and distinctly seen in the brilliant city-night, I recognised the "voiture" I had given Céline. She was returning: of course my heart thumped with impatience against the iron rails I leant upon. The carriage stopped, as I had expected, at the hotel door; my flame (that is the very word for an opera inamorata) alighted: though muffled in a cloak—an unnecessary encumbrance, by-the-bye, on so warm a June evening —I knew her instantly by her little foot, seen peeping from the skirt of her dress, as she skipped from the carriage-step. Bending over the balcony, I was about to murmur, "Mon ange"—in a tone, of course, which should be audible to the ear of love alone—when a figure jumped from the carriage after her; cloaked also; but that was a spurred heel which had rung on the pavement, and that was a hatted head which now passed under the arched *porte-cochère* of the hotel.

'You never felt jealousy, did you, Miss Eyre? Of course not: I need not ask you: because you never felt love. You have both sentiments yet to experience: your soul sleeps; the shock is yet to be given which shall waken it. You think all existence lapses in as quiet a flow as that in which your youth has hitherto slid away. Floating on with closed eyes and muffled ears, you neither see the rocks bristling not far off in the bed of the flood, nor hear the breakers boil at their base. But I tell you—and you may mark my words—you will come some day to a craggy pass of the channel, where the whole of life's stream will be broken up into whirl and tumult, foam and noise: either you will be dashed to atoms on crag points, or lifted up and borne on by some master wave into a calmer current—as I am now.

'I like this day: I like that sky of steel; I like the sternness and stillness of the world under this frost. I like Thornfield: its antiquity; its retirement; its old crow-trees and thorn-trees; its grey façade, and lines of dark windows reflecting that metal welkin: and yet how long have I abhorred the very thought of it; shunned it like a great plague-house! How I do still abhor——'

He ground his teeth and was silent: he arrested his step and struck his boot against the hard ground. Some hated thought seemed to have him in its grip, and to hold him so tightly that he could not advance.

We were ascending the avenue when he thus paused; the hall was before us. Lifting his eye to its battlements, he cast over them a glare such as I never saw before or since. Pain, shame, ire—impatience, disgust, detestation—seemed momentarily to hold a quivering conflict in the large pupil dilating under his ebon eyebrow. Wild was the wrestle which should be paramount; but another feeling rose and triumphed: something hard and cynical; self-willed and resolute: it settled his passion and petrified his countenance: he went on:—'During the moment I was silent, Miss Eyre, I was arranging a point with my destiny. She stood there, by that beech-trunk—a hag like one of those who appeared to "Macbeth" on the heath of Forres. "You like Thornfield?" she said, lifting her finger; and then she wrote in the air a memento, which ran in lurid hieroglyphics all along the house-front, between the upper and lower row of windows. "Like it if you can!" "Like it if you dare!"

'"I will like it," said I. "I dare like it;" and (he subjoined moodily) I will keep my word: I will break obstacles to happiness, to goodness—yes, goodness; I wish to be a better man than I have been; than I am—as Job's leviathan broke the spear, the dart and the habergeon, hindrances which others count as iron and brass I will esteem but straw and rotten wood.'

Adèle here ran before him with her shuttlecock. 'Away!' he cried harshly; 'keep at a distance, child; or go in to Sophie!' Continuing then to pursue his walk in silence, I ventured to recall him to the point whence he had abruptly diverged:—'Did you leave the balcony, sir,' I asked, 'when Mdlle. Varens entered?'

I almost expected a rebuff for this hardly well-timed question: but, on the contrary, waking out of his scowling abstraction, he turned his eyes towards me, and the shade seemed to clear off his brow. 'Oh, I had forgotten Céline! Well, to resume. When I saw my charmer thus come in accompanied by a cavalier, I seemed to hear a hiss, and the green snake of jealousy, rising on undulating coils from the moonlit balcony, glided within my waistcoat, and ate its way in two minutes to my heart's core. Strange!' he exclaimed, suddenly starting again from the point. 'Strange that I should choose you for the confidant of all this, young lady: passing strange that you should listen to me quietly, as if it were the most usual thing in the world for a man like me to tell stories of his opera-mistresses to a quaint, inexperienced girl like you! But the last singularity explains the first, as I intimated once before: you, with your gravity, considerateness, and caution, were made to be the recipient of secrets. Besides, I know what sort of a mind I have placed in communication with my own: I know it is one not liable to take infection: it is a peculiar mind; it is an unique one. Happily I do not mean to harm it: but, if I did, it would not take harm from me. The more you and I converse, the better; for while I cannot blight you, you may refresh me.' After this digression, he proceeded;—'I remained in the balcony. "They will come to her boudoir, no doubt," thought I: "let me prepare an ambush." So putting my hand in through the open window, I drew the curtain over it, leaving only an opening through which I could take observations; then I closed the casement, all but a chink just wide enough to furnish an outlet to lovers' whispered vows: then I stole back to my chair; and as I resumed it the pair came in. My eye was quickly at the aperture. Céline's chambermaid entered, lit a lamp, left it on the table, and withdrew. The couple were thus revealed to me clearly: both removed their cloaks, and there was "the Varens" shining in satin and jewels,—my gifts of course,—and there was her companion in an officer's uniform; and I knew him for a young roué of a vicomte—a brainless and vicious youth whom I had sometimes met in society, and had never thought of hating because I despised him so absolutely. On recognising him, the fang of the snake, jealousy, was instantly broken; because at the same moment my love for Céline sank under an extinguisher. A woman who could betray me for such a rival was not worth contending for: she deserved only scorn; less, however, than I, who had been her dupe.

'They began to talk; their conversation eased me completely: frivolous, mercenary, heartless, and senseless, it was rather calculated to weary than enrage a listener. A card of mine lay on the table; this being perceived, brought my name under discussion. Neither of them possessed energy or wit to belabour me soundly; but they insulted me as coarsely as they could in their little way: especially Céline; who even waxed rather brilliant on my personal defects—deformities she termed them. Now it had been her custom to launch out into fervent admiration of what she called my "beauté mâle": wherein she differed diametrically from you, who told me point-blank, at the second interview, that you did not think me handsome. The contrast struck me at the time, and——'

Adèle here came running up again.

'Monsieur, John has just been to say that your agent has called and wishes to see you.'

'Ah! in that case I must abridge. Opening the window, I walked in upon them; liberated Céline from my protection; gave her notice to vacate her hotel; offered her a purse for immediate exigencies; disregarded screams, hysterics, prayers, protestations, convulsions; made an appointment with the vicomte for a meeting at the Bois de Boulogne. Next morning I had the pleasure of encountering him; left a bullet in one of his poor etiolated arms, feeble as the wing of a chicken in the pip, and then thought I had done with the whole crew. But unluckily the Varens, six months before, had given me this filette Adèle; who she affirmed was my daughter; and perhaps she may be, though I see no proofs of such grim paternity written in her countenance. Pilot is more like me than she. Some years after I had broken with the mother she abandoned her child and ran away to Italy with a musician or singer. I acknowledged no natural claim on Adèle's part to be supported by me; nor do I now acknowledge any, for I am not her father; but hearing that she was quite destitute, I e'en took the poor thing out of the slime and mud of Paris, and transplanted it here, to grow up clean in the wholesome soil of an English country garden. Mrs. Fairfax found you to train it; but now you know that it is the illegitimate offspring of a French opera-girl, you will perhaps think differently of your post and protégée. You will be coming to me some day with notice that you have found another place—that you beg me to look out for a new governess, &c.—eh?'

'No. Adèle is not answerable for either her mother's faults or yours. I have a regard for her, and now that I know she is, in a sense, parentless—forsaken by her mother and disowned by you, sir—I shall cling closer to her than before. How could I possibly prefer the spoilt pet of a wealthy family, who would hate her governess as a nuisance, to a lonely little orphan, who leans towards her as a friend?'

'Oh, that is the light in which you view it! Well, I must go in now; and you too: it darkens.'

But I stayed out a few minutes longer with Adèle and Pilot—ran a race with her, and played a game of battledore and shuttlecock. When we went in, and I had removed her bonnet and coat, I took her on my knee; kept her there an hour, allowing her to prattle as she liked, not rebuking even some little freedoms and trivialities into which she was apt to stray when much noticed; and which betrayed in her a superficiality of character, inherited probably from her mother, hardly congenial to an English mind. Still she had her merits; and I was disposed to appreciate all that was good in her to the utmost. I sought in her countenance and features a likeness to Mr. Rochester, but found none—no trait, no turn of expression announced relationship. It was a pity: if she could but have been proved to resemble him, he would have thought more of her.

It was not till after I had withdrawn to my own chamber for the night that I steadily reviewed the tale Mr. Rochester had told me. As he had said, there was probably nothing at all extraordinary in the substance of the narrative itself—a wealthy Englishman's passion for a French dancer, and her treachery to him, were everyday matters enough, no doubt, in society—but there was something decidedly strange in the paroxysm of emotion which had suddenly seized him, when he was in the act of expressing the present contentment of his mood, and his newly-revived pleasure in the old hall and its environs. I meditated wonderingly on this incident: but gradually quitting it, as I found it for the present inexplicable, I turned to the consideration of my master's manner to myself. The confidence he had thought fit to repose in me seemed a tribute to my discretion. I regarded and accepted it as such. His deportment had now for some weeks been more uniform towards me than at the first. I never seemed in his way; he did not take fits of chilling hauteur; when he met me unexpectedly, the encounter seemed welcome—he had always a word and sometimes a smile for me; when summoned by formal invitation to his presence, I was honoured by a cordiality of reception that made me feel I really possessed the power to amuse him, and that these evening conferences were sought as much for his pleasure as for my benefit.

I, indeed, talked comparatively little; but I heard him talk with relish. It was his nature to be communicative—he liked to open to a mind unacquainted with the world glimpses of its scenes and ways (I do not mean its corrupt scenes and wicked ways, but such as derived their interest from the great scale on which they were acted, the strange novelty by which they were characterised); and I had a keen delight in receiving the new ideas he offered, in imagining the new pictures he portrayed, and following him in thought through the new regions he disclosed, never startled or troubled by one noxious allusion.

The ease of his manner freed me from painful restraint; the friendly frankness, as correct as cordial, with which he treated me, drew me to him. I felt at times as if he were my relation, rather than my master: yet he was imperious sometimes still; but I did not mind that; I saw it was his way. So happy, so gratified did I become with this new interest added to life, that I ceased to pine after kindred. My thin crescent-destiny seemed to enlarge; the blanks of existence were filled up; my bodily health improved; I gathered flesh and strength.

And was Mr. Rochester now ugly in my eyes? No, reader. Gratitude, and many associations, all pleasurable and genial, made his face the object I best liked to see; his presence in a room was more cheering than the brightest fire. Yet I had not forgotten his faults—indeed, I could not, for he brought them frequently before me. He was proud, sardonic, harsh to inferiority of every description. In my secret soul I knew that his great kindness to me was balanced by unjust severity to many others. He was moody, too—unaccountably so. I more than once, when sent for to read to him, found him sitting in his library alone, with his head bent on his folded arms; and, when he looked up, a morose, almost a malignant scowl, blackened his features. But I believed that his moodiness, his harshness, and his former faults of morality (I say *former*, for now he seemed corrected of them) had their source in some cruel cross of fate. I believed he was naturally a man of better tendencies, higher principles, and purer tastes than such as circumstances had developed, education instilled, or destiny encouraged. I thought there were excellent materials in him; though for the present they hung together somewhat spoiled and tangled. I cannot deny that I grieved for his grief, whatever that was, and would have given much to assuage it.

Though I had now extinguished my candle and was laid down in bed, I could not sleep for thinking of his look when he paused in the avenue, and told how his destiny had risen up before him, and dared him to be happy at Thornfield.

'Why not?' I asked myself. 'What alienates him from the house? Will he leave it again soon? Mrs. Fairfax said he seldom stayed here longer than a fortnight at a time, and he has now been resident eight weeks. If he does go, the change will be doleful. Suppose he should be absent spring, summer, and autumn: how joyless sunshine and fine days will seem.'

I hardly know whether I had slept or not after this musing; at any rate, I started wide awake on hearing a vague murmur, peculiar and lugubrious, which sounded, I thought, just above me. I wished I had kept my candle burning: the night was drearily dark; my spirits were depressed. I rose and sat up in bed, listening. The sound was hushed.

I tried again to sleep; but my heart beat anxiously: my inward tranquillity was broken. The clock, far down in the hall, struck two. Just then it seemed my chamber-door was touched; as if fingers had swept the panels in groping a way along the dark gallery outside. I said, 'Who is there?' Nothing answered. I was chilled with fear.

All at once I remembered that it might be Pilot: who, when the kitchen-door chanced to be left open, not unfrequently found his way up to the threshold of Mr. Rochester's chamber: I had seen him lying there myself, in the mornings. The idea calmed me somewhat: I lay down. Silence composes the nerves; and as an unbroken hush now reigned again through the whole house, I began to feel the return of slumber. But it was not fated that I should sleep that night. A dream had scarcely approached my ear, when it fled affrighted, scared by a marrow-freezing incident enough.

This was a demoniac laugh—low, suppressed, and deep—uttered, as it seemed, at the very key-hole of my chamber-door. The head of my bed was near the door, and I thought at first the goblin-laugher stood at my bedside—or rather, crouched by my pillow: but I rose, looked round, and could see nothing; while, as I still gazed, the unnatural sound was reiterated: and I knew it came from behind the panels. My first impulse was to rise and fasten the bolt; my next again, to cry out, 'Who is there?'

Something gurgled and moaned. Ere long, steps retreated up the gallery towards the third story staircase: a door had lately been made to shut in that staircase; I heard it open and close, and all was still.

'Was that Grace Poole? and is she possessed with a devil?' thought I. Impossible now to remain longer by myself: I must go to Mrs. Fairfax. I hurried on my frock and a shawl; I withdrew the bolt, and opened the door with a trembling hand. There was a candle burning just outside, left on the matting in the gallery. I was surprised at this circumstance: but still more was I amazed to perceive the air quite dim, as if filled with smoke; and, while looking to the right hand and left, to find whence these blue wreaths issued, I became further aware of a strong smell of burning.

Something creaked: it was a door ajar; and that door was Mr. Rochester's, and the smoke rushed in a cloud from thence. I thought no more of Mrs. Fairfax; I thought no more of Grace Poole or the laugh: in an instant, I was within the chamber. Tongues of flame darted round the bed: the curtains were on fire. In the midst of blaze and vapour, Mr. Rochester lay stretched motionless, in deep sleep.

'Wake! wake!' I cried—I shook him, but he only murmured and turned: the smoke had stupefied him. Not a moment could be lost: the very sheets were kindling. I rushed to his basin and ewer; fortunately, one was wide and the other deep, and both were filled with water. I heaved them up, deluged the bed and its occupant, flew back to my own room, brought my own water-jug, baptized the couch afresh, and, by God's aid, succeeded in extinguishing the flames which were devouring it.

The hiss of the quenched element, the breakage of a pitcher which I flung from my hand when I had emptied it, and, above all, the splash of the shower-bath I had liberally bestowed, roused Mr. Rochester at last. Though it was now dark, I knew he was awake; because I heard him fulminating strange anathemas at finding himself lying in a pool of water.

'Is there a flood?' he cried.

'No, sir,' I answered; 'but there has been a fire: get up, do, you are quenched now; I will fetch you a candle.'

'In the name of all the elves in Christendom, is that Jane Eyre?' he demanded. 'What have you done with me, witch, sorceress? Who is in the room beside you? Have you plotted to drown me?'

'I will fetch you a candle, sir; and, in Heaven's name, get up. Somebody has plotted something: you cannot too soon find out who and what it is.'

'There—I am up now; but at your peril you fetch a candle yet: wait two minutes till I get into some dry garments, if any dry there be—yes, here is my dressing-gown. Now run!'

I did run; I brought the candle which still remained in the gallery. He took it from my hand, held it up, and surveyed the bed, all blackened and scorched, the sheets drenched, the carpet round swimming in water.

'What is it? and who did it?' he asked.

I briefly related to him what had transpired: the strange laugh I had heard in the gallery: the step ascending to the third story; the smoke,—the smell of fire which had conducted me to his room; in what state I had found matters there, and how I had deluged him with all the water I could lay hands on.

He listened very gravely; his face, as I went on, expressed more concern than astonishment; he did not immediately speak when I had concluded.

'Shall I call Mrs. Fairfax?' I asked.

'Mrs. Fairfax? No: what the deuce would you call her for? What can she do? Let her sleep unmolested.'

'Then I will fetch Leah, and wake John and his wife.'

'Not at all: just be still. You have a shawl on? If you are not warm enough, you may take my cloak yonder; wrap it about you, and sit down in the arm-chair: there,—I will put it on. Now place your feet on the stool, to keep them out of the wet. I am going to leave you a few minutes. I shall take the candle. Remain where you are till I return: be as still as a mouse. I must pay a visit to the third story. Don't move, remember, or call any one.'

He went: I watched the light withdraw. He passed up the gallery very softly, unclosed the staircase door with as little noise as possible, shut it after him, and the last ray vanished. I was left in total darkness. I listened for some noise, but heard nothing. A very long time elapsed. I grew weary: it was cold, in spite of the cloak; and then I did not see the use of staying, as I was not to rouse the house. I was on the point of risking Mr. Rochester's displeasure, by disobeying his orders, when the light once more gleamed dimly on the gallery-wall, and I heard his unshod feet tread the matting. 'I hope it is he,' thought I, 'and not something worse.'

He re-entered, pale and very gloomy. 'I have found it all out,' said he, setting his candle down on the wash-stand; 'it is as I thought.'

'How, sir?'

He made no reply, but stood with his arms folded, looking on the ground. At the end of a few minutes, he inquired in rather a peculiar tone:—'I forget whether you said you saw anything when you opened your chamber door.'

'No, sir, only the candlestick on the ground.'

'But you heard an odd laugh? You have heard that laugh before, I should think, or something like it?'

'Yes, sir: there is a woman who sews here, called Grace Poole—she laughs in that way. She is a singular person.'

'Just so. Grace Poole—you have guessed it. She is, as you say, singular,—very. Well, I shall reflect on the subject. Meantime, I am glad that you are the only person, besides myself, acquainted with the precise details of to-night's incident. You are no talking fool: say nothing about it. I will account for this state of affairs (pointing to the bed): and now return to your own room. I shall do very well on the sofa in the library for the rest of the night. It is near four:—in two hours the servants will be up.'

'Good-night, then, sir,' said I, departing.

He seemed surprised—very inconsistently so, as he had just told me to go.

'What!' he exclaimed, 'are you quitting me already: and in that way?'

'You said I might go, sir.'

'But not without taking leave; not without a word or two of acknowledgment and good will: not, in short, in that brief, dry fashion. Why, you have saved my life!—snatched me from a horrible and excruciating death!—and you walk past me as if we were mutual strangers! At least shake hands.'

He held out his hand; I gave him mine: he took it first in one, then in both his own.

'You have saved my life: I have a pleasure in owing you so immense a debt. I cannot say more. Nothing else that has being would have been tolerable to me in the character of creditor for such an obligation : but you : it is different ;—I feel your benefits no burden, Jane.'

He paused ; gazed at me : words almost visible trembled on his lips,—but his voice was checked.

'Good night again, sir. There is no debt, benefit, burden, obligation, in the case.'

'I knew,' he continued, 'you would do me good in some way, at some time ;—I saw it in your eyes when I first beheld you : their expression and smile did not—(again he stopped)—did not (he proceeded hastily) strike delight to my very inmost heart so for nothing. People talk of natural sympathies ; I have heard of good genii—there are grains of truth in the wildest fable. My cherished preserver, good night ! '

Strange energy was in his voice, strange fire in his look.

'I am glad I happened to be awake,' I said ; and then I was going.

'What ! you *will* go ? '

'I am cold, sir.'

'Cold ? Yes,—and standing in a pool ! Go, then, Jane ; go ! ' But he still retained my hand, and I could not free it. I bethought myself of an expedient.

'I think I hear Mrs. Fairfax move, sir,' said I.

'Well, leave me.' He relaxed his fingers, and I was gone.

I regained my couch, but never thought of sleep. Till morning dawned I was tossed on a buoyant but unquiet sea, where billows of trouble rolled under surges of joy. I thought sometimes I saw beyond its wild waters a shore, sweet as the hills of Beulah ; and now and then a freshening gale wakened by hope, bore my spirit triumphantly towards the bourne ; but I could not reach it, even in fancy,—a counteracting breeze blew off land, and continually drove me back. Sense would resist delirium, judgment would warn passion. Too feverish to rest, I rose as soon as day dawned.

CHAPTER XVI

I BOTH wished and feared to see Mr. Rochester on the day which followed this sleepless night. I wanted to hear his voice again, yet feared to meet his eye. During the early part of the morning, I momentarily expected his coming. He was not in the frequent habit of entering the schoolroom; but he did step in for a few minutes sometimes, and I had the impression that he was sure to visit it that day.

But the morning passed just as usual. Nothing happened to interrupt the quiet course of Adèle's studies; only, soon after breakfast, I heard some bustle in the neighbourhood of Mr. Rochester's chamber, Mrs. Fairfax's voice, and Leah's, and the cook's—that is, John's wife—and even John's own gruff tones. There were exclamations of, 'What a mercy master was not burnt in his bed!' 'It is always dangerous to keep a candle lit at night.' 'How providential that he had presence of mind to think of the water-jug!' 'I wonder he waked nobody!' 'It is to be hoped he will not take cold with sleeping on the library sofa,' &c.

To much confabulation succeeded a sound of scrubbing and setting to-rights; and when I passed the room, in going downstairs to dinner, I saw through the open door that all was again restored to complete order—only the bed was stripped of its hangings. Leah stood up in the window-seat, rubbing the panes of glass dimmed with smoke. I was about to address her, for I wished to know what account had been given of the affair; but, on advancing, I saw a second person in the chamber—a woman sitting on a chair by the bedside, and sewing rings to new curtains. That woman was no other than Grace Poole.

There she sat, staid and taciturn-looking, as usual, in her brown stuff gown, her check apron, white handkerchief, and cap. She was intent on her work, in which her whole thoughts seemed absorbed. On her hard forehead, and in her commonplace features, was nothing either of the paleness or desperation one would have expected to see marking the countenance of a woman who had attempted murder, and whose intended victim had followed her last night to her lair, and (as I believed) charged her with the crime she wished to perpetrate. I was amazed—confounded. She looked up, while I still gazed at her: no start, no increase or failure of colour betrayed emotion, consciousness of guilt, or fear of detection. She said, 'Good morning, Miss,' in her usual phlegmatic and brief manner; and taking up another ring and more tape, went on with her sewing.

'I will put her to some test,' thought I. 'Such absolute impenetrability is past comprehension.'

'Good morning, Grace,' I said. 'Has anything happened here? I thought I heard the servants all talking together a while ago.'

'Only master had been reading in his bed last night. He fell asleep with his candle lit, and the curtains got on fire; but, fortunately, he awoke before the bed-clothes or the wood-work caught, and contrived to quench the flame with the water in the ewer.'

'A strange affair!' I said, in a low voice; then, looking at her fixedly, 'Did Mr. Rochester wake nobody? Did no one hear him move?'

She again raised her eyes to me; and this time there was something of consciousness in their expression. She seemed to examine me warily; then she answered, 'The servants sleep so far off, you know, Miss, they would not be likely to hear. Mrs. Fairfax's room and yours are the nearest to master's; but Mrs. Fairfax said she heard nothing: when people get elderly, they often sleep heavy.' She paused, and then added, with a sort of assumed indifference, but still in a marked and significant tone, 'But you are young, Miss, and I should say a light sleeper. Perhaps you may have heard a noise?'

'I did,' said I, dropping my voice, so that Leah, who was still polishing the panes, could not hear me, 'and at first I thought it was Pilot; but Pilot cannot laugh, and I am certain I heard a laugh, and a strange one.'

She took a new needleful of thread, waxed it carefully, threaded her needle with a steady hand, and then observed, with perfect composure,—'It is hardly likely master would laugh, I should think, Miss, when he was in such danger: you must have been dreaming.'

'I was not dreaming,' I said, with some warmth, for her brazen coolness provoked me. Again she looked at me, and with the same scrutinising and conscious eye.

'Have you told master that you heard a laugh?' she inquired.

'I have not had the opportunity of speaking to him this morning.'

'You did not think of opening your door and looking out into the gallery?' she further asked.

She appeared to be cross-questioning me—attempting to draw from me information unawares. The idea struck me that if she discovered I knew or suspected her guilt, she would be playing off some of her malignant pranks on me. I thought it advisable to be on my guard.

'On the contrary,' said I, 'I bolted my door.'

'Then you are not in the habit of bolting your door every night before you get into bed?'

'Fiend! she wants to know my habits, that she may lay her plans accordingly!' Indignation again prevailed over prudence; I replied sharply, 'Hitherto I have often omitted to fasten the bolt: I did not think it necessary. I was not aware any danger or annoyance was to be dreaded at Thornfield Hall; but in future' (and I laid marked stress on the words) 'I shall take good care to make all secure before I venture to lie down.'

'It will be wise so to do,' was her answer. 'This neighbourhood is as quiet as any I know, and I never heard of the hall being attempted by robbers since it was a house though there are hundreds of pounds' worth of plate in the plate-closet, as is well known. And you see, for such a large house, there are very few servants, because master has never lived here much, and when he does come, being a bachelor, he needs little waiting on; but I always think it best to err on the safe side: a door is soon fastened, and it is as well to have a drawn bolt between one and any mischief that may be about. A deal of people, Miss, are for trusting all to Providence; but I say Providence will not dispense with the means, though He often blesses them when they are used discreetly.' And here she closed her harangue: a long one for her, and uttered with the demureness of a Quakeress.

I still stood absolutely dumfoundered at what appeared to me her miraculous self-possession and most inscrutable hypocrisy, when the cook entered.

'Mrs. Poole,' said she, addressing Grace, 'the servants' dinner will soon be ready. Will you come down?'

'No. Just put my pint of porter and bit of pudding on a tray, and I'll carry it upstairs.'

'You'll have some meat?'

'Just a morsel, and a taste of cheese, that's all.'

'And the sago?'

'Never mind it at present. I shall be coming down before tea-time. I'll make it myself.'

The cook here turned to me, saying that Mrs. Fairfax was waiting for me: so I departed.

I hardly heard Mrs. Fairfax's account of the curtain conflagration during dinner, so much was I occupied in puzzling my brains over the enigmatical character of Grace Poole, and still more in pondering the problem of her position at Thornfield; in questioning why she had not been given into custody that morning, or, at the very least, dismissed from her master's service. He had almost as much as declared his conviction of her criminality last night: what mysterious cause withheld him from accusing her? Why had he enjoined me, too, to secrecy? It was strange—a bold, vindictive, and haughty gentleman seemed somehow in the power of one of the meanest of his dependants; so much in her power, that even when she lifted her hand against his life, he dared not openly charge her with the attempt, much less punish her for it.

Had Grace been young and handsome, I should have been tempted to think that tenderer feelings than prudence or fear influenced Mr. Rochester in her behalf; but, hard-favoured and matronly as she was, the idea could not be admitted. 'Yet,' I reflected, 'she has been young once; her youth would be contemporary with her master's. Mrs. Fairfax told me once she had lived here many years. I don't think she can ever have been pretty; but, for aught I know, she may possess originality and strength of character to compensate for the want of personal advantages. Mr. Rochester is an amateur of the decided and eccentric—Grace is eccentric at least. What if a former caprice (a freak very possible to a nature so sudden and headstrong as his) has delivered him into her power, and she now exercises over his actions a secret influence, the result of his own indiscretion, which he cannot shake off, and dare not disregard?' But, having reached this point of conjecture, Mrs. Poole's square, flat figure, and uncomely, dry, even coarse face, recurred so distinctly to my mind's eye, that I thought, 'No; impossible! my supposition cannot be correct. Yet,' suggested the secret voice which talks to us in our own hearts, '*you* are not beautiful either, and perhaps Mr. Rochester approves you—at any rate, you have often felt as if he did; and last night—remember his words; remember his look; remember his voice!'

I well remembered all—language, glance, and tone seemed at the moment vividly renewed. I was now in the schoolroom. Adèle was drawing. I bent over her and directed her pencil. She looked up with a sort of start.

'Qu'avez-vous, mademoiselle?' said she; 'Vos doigts tremblent comme la feuille, et vos joues sont rouges : mais, rouges comme des cerises ! '

'I am hot, Adèle, with stooping !' She went on sketching, I went on thinking.

I hastened to drive from my mind the hateful notion I had been conceiving respecting Grace Poole : it disgusted me. I compared myself with her, and found we were different. Bessie Leaven had said I was quite a lady ; and she spoke truth : I was a lady. And now I looked much better than I did when Bessie saw me : I had more colour and more flesh ; more life, more vivacity ; because I had brighter hopes and keener enjoyments.

'Evening approaches,' said I, as I looked towards the window. 'I have never heard Mr. Rochester's voice or step in the house to-day ; but surely I shall see him before night : I feared the meeting in the morning : now I desire it, because expectation has been so long baffled that it is grown impatient.'

When dusk actually closed, and when Adèle left me to go and play in the nursery with Sophie, I did most keenly desire it. I listened for the bell to ring below ; I listened for Leah coming up with a message ; I fancied sometimes I heard Mr. Rochester's own tread, and I turned to the door, expecting it to open and admit him. The door remained shut : darkness only came in through the window. Still it was not late : he often sent for me at seven and eight o'clock, and it was yet but six. Surely I should not be wholly disappointed to-night, when I had so many things to say to him ! I wanted again to introduce the subject of Grace Poole, and to hear what he would answer ; I wanted to ask him plainly if he really believed it was she who had made last night's hideous attempt ; and if so, why he kept her wickedness a secret. It little mattered whether my curiosity irritated him ; I knew the pleasure of vexing and soothing him by turns ; it was one I chiefly delighted in, and a sure instinct always prevented me from going too far : beyond the verge of provocation I never ventured ; on the extreme brink I liked well to try my skill. Retaining every minute form of respect, every propriety of my station, I could still meet him in argument without fear or uneasy restraint: this suited both him and me.

A tread creaked on the stairs at last; Leah made her appearance, but it was only to intimate that tea was ready in Mrs. Fairfax's room. Thither I repaired, glad at least to go downstairs, for that brought me, I imagined, nearer to Mr. Rochester's presence.

'You must want your tea,' said the good lady, as I joined her, 'you ate so little at dinner. I am afraid,' she continued, 'you are not well to-day, you look flushed and feverish.'

'Oh, quite well! I never felt better.'

'Then you must prove it by evincing a good appetite; will you fill the tea-pot while I knit off this needle?' Having completed her task, she rose to draw down the blind which she had hitherto kept up, by way, I suppose, of making the most of daylight: though dusk was now fast deepening into total obscurity.

'It is fair to-night,' said she, as she looked through the panes, 'though not starlight; Mr. Rochester has, on the whole, had a favourable day for his journey.'

'Journey!—Is Mr. Rochester gone anywhere? I did not know he was out.'

'Oh, he set off the moment he had breakfasted! He is gone to the Leas, Mr. Eshton's place, ten miles on the other side Millcote; I believe there is quite a party assembled there—Lord Ingram, Sir George Lynn, Colonel Dent, and others.'

'Do you expect him back to-night?'

'No—nor to-morrow either; I should think he is very likely to stay a week or more. When these fine, fashionable people get together, they are so surrounded by elegance and gaiety, so well provided with all that can please and entertain, they are in no hurry to separate. Gentlemen, especially, are often in request on such occasions; and Mr. Rochester is so talented and so lively in society, that I believe he is a general favourite—the ladies are very fond of him—though you would not think his appearance calculated to recommend him particularly in their eyes; but I suppose his acquirements and abilities, perhaps his wealth and good blood, make amends for any little fault of look.'

'Are there ladies at the Leas?'

'There are Mrs. Eshton and her three daughters—very elegant young ladies, indeed; and there are the Honourable Blanche and Mary Ingram—most beautiful women, I suppose: indeed, I have seen Blanche, six or seven years since, when she was a girl of eighteen. She came here to a Christmas ball and party Mr. Rochester gave. You should have seen the dining-room that day—how richly it was decorated, how brilliantly lit up! I should think there were fifty ladies and gentlemen present—all of the first county families; and Miss Ingram was considered the belle of the evening.'

'You saw her, you say, Mrs. Fairfax: what was she like?'

'Yes, I saw her. The dining-room doors were thrown open, and, as it was Christmas-time, the servants were allowed to assemble in the hall, to hear some of the ladies sing and play. Mr. Rochester would have me to come in, and I sat down in a quiet corner and watched them. I never saw a more splendid scene: the ladies were magnificently dressed; most of them—at least most of the younger ones—looked handsome, but Miss Ingram was certainly the queen.'

'And what was she like?'

'Tall, fine bust, sloping shoulders, long, graceful neck; olive complexion, dark and clear; noble features; eyes rather like Mr. Rochester's, large and black, and as brilliant as her jewels. And then she had such a fine head of hair, raven-black, and so becomingly arranged; a crown of thick plaits behind, and in front the longest, the glossiest curls I ever saw. She was dressed in pure white, an amber-coloured scarf was passed over her shoulder and across her breast, tied at the side, and descending in long, fringed ends below her knee. She wore an amber-coloured flower, too, in her hair: it contrasted well with the jetty mass of her curls.'

'She was greatly admired, of course?'

'Yes, indeed, and not only for her beauty, but for her accomplishments. She was one of the ladies who sang; a gentleman accompanied her on the piano. She and Mr. Rochester sang a duet.'

'Mr. Rochester? I was not aware he could sing.'

'Oh! he has a fine bass voice, and an excellent taste for music.'

'And Miss Ingram, what sort of a voice had she?'

'A very rich and powerful one—she sang delightfully—it was a treat to listen to her; and she played afterwards. I am no judge of music, but Mr. Rochester is, and I heard him say her execution was remarkably good.'

'And this beautiful and accomplished lady is not yet married?'

'It appears not: I fancy neither she nor her sister have very large fortunes. Old Lord Ingram's estates were chiefly entailed, and the eldest son came in for everything almost.'

'But I wonder no wealthy nobleman or gentleman has taken a fancy to her: Mr. Rochester, for instance. He is rich, is he not?'

'Oh! yes. But you see there is a considerable difference in age: Mr. Rochester is near forty; she is but twenty-five.'

'What of that? More unequal matches are made every day.'

'True: yet I should scarcely fancy Mr. Rochester would entertain an idea of the sort. But you eat nothing: you have scarcely tasted since you began tea.'

'No: I am too thirsty to eat. Will you let me have another cup?'

I was about again to revert to the probability of a union between Mr. Rochester and the beautiful Blanche; but Adèle came in, and the conversation was turned into another channel.

When once more alone, I reviewed the information I had got; looked into my heart, examined its thoughts and feelings, and endeavoured to bring back with a strict hand such as had been straying through imagination's boundless and trackless waste, into the safe fold of common sense.

Arraigned at my own bar, Memory having given her evidence of the hopes, wishes, sentiments I had been cherishing since last night—of the general state of mind in which I had indulged for nearly a fortnight past; Reason having come forward and told in her own quiet way, a plain, unvarnished tale, showing how I had rejected the real, and rabidly devoured the ideal;—I pronounced judgment to this effect:—That a greater fool than Jane Eyre had never breathed the breath of life: that a more fantastic idiot had never surfeited herself on sweet lies, and swallowed poison as if it were nectar.

'*You,*' I said, 'a favourite with Mr. Rochester? *You* gifted with the power of pleasing him? *You* of importance to him in any way? Go! your folly sickens me. And you have derived pleasure from occasional tokens of preference—equivocal tokens, shown by a gentleman of family, and a man of the world, to a dependant and a novice. How dared you? Poor stupid dupe!—Could not even self-interest make you wiser? You repeated to yourself this morning the brief scene of last night?—Cover your face and be ashamed! He said something in praise of your eyes, did he? Blind puppy! Open their bleared lids and look on your own accursed senselessness! It does good to no woman to be flattered by her superior, who cannot possibly intend to marry her; and it is madness in all women to let a secret love kindle within them, which, if unreturned and unknown, must devour the life that feeds it; and, if discovered and responded to, must lead, *ignis-fatuus*-like, into miry wilds, whence there is no extrication.

'Listen, then, Jane Eyre, to your sentence: to-morrow, place the glass before you, and draw in chalk your own picture, faithfully; without softening one defect: omit no harsh line, smooth away no displeasing irregularity; write under it, "Portrait of a Governess, disconnected, poor, and plain."

'Afterwards, take a piece of smooth ivory—you have one prepared in your drawing-box: take your palette, mix your freshest, finest, clearest tints; choose your most delicate camel-hair pencils; delineate carefully the loveliest face you can imagine; paint it in your softest shades and sweetest hues, according to the description given by Mrs. Fairfax of Blanche Ingram: remember the raven ringlets, the Oriental eye;—what! you revert to Mr. Rochester as a model! Order! No snivel!—no sentiment!—no regret! I will endure only sense and resolution. Recall the august yet harmonious lineaments, the Grecian neck and bust: let the round and dazzling arm be visible, and the delicate hand; omit neither diamond ring nor gold bracelet; portray faithfully the attire, aërial lace and glistening satin, graceful scarf and golden rose: call it "Blanche, an accomplished lady of rank."

'Whenever, in future, you should chance to fancy Mr. Rochester thinks well of you, take out these two pictures and compare them: say, "Mr. Rochester might probably win that noble lady's love, if he chose to strive for it; is it likely he would waste a serious thought on this indigent and insignificant plebeian?"'

'I'll do it,' I resolved: and having framed this determination, I grew calm, and fell asleep.

I kept my word. An hour or two sufficed to sketch my own portrait in crayons; and in less than a fortnight I had completed an ivory miniature of an imaginary Blanche Ingram. It looked a lovely face enough, and when compared with the real head in chalk, the contrast was as great as self-control could desire. I derived benefit from the task: it had kept my head and hands employed, and had given force and fixedness to the new impressions I wished to stamp indelibly on my heart.

Ere long, I had reason to congratulate myself on the course of wholesome discipline to which I had thus forced my feelings to submit: thanks to it, I was able to meet subsequent occurrences with a decent calm; which, had they found me unprepared, I should probably have been unequal to maintain, even externally.

CHAPTER XVII

A WEEK passed, and no news arrived of Mr. Rochester: ten days, and still he did not come. Mrs. Fairfax said she should not be surprised if he were to go straight from the Leas to London, and thence to the continent and not show his face again at Thornfield for a year to come: he had not unfrequently quitted it in a manner quite as abrupt and unexpected. When I heard this I was beginning to feel a strange chill and failing at the heart. I was actually permitting myself to experience a sickening sense of disappointment: but rallying my wits, and recollecting my principles, I at once called my sensations to order; and it was wonderful how I got over the temporary blunder—how I cleared up the mistake of supposing Mr. Rochester's movements a matter in which I had any cause to take a vital interest. Not that I humbled myself by a slavish notion of inferiority: on the contrary, I just said—'You have nothing to do with the master of Thornfield, further than to receive the salary he gives you for teaching his protégée, and to be grateful for such respectful and kind treatment as, if you do your duty, you have a right to expect at his hands. Be sure that is the only tie he seriously acknowledges between you and him: so don't make him the object of your fine feelings, your raptures, agonies, and so forth. He is not of your order: keep to your caste, and be too self-respecting to lavish the love of the whole heart, soul, and strength, where such a gift is not wanted and would be despised.'

I went on with my day's business tranquilly, but ever and anon vague suggestions kept wandering across my brain of reasons why I should quit Thornfield; and I kept involuntarily framing advertisements and pondering conjectures about new situations; these thoughts I did not think it necessary to check; they might germinate and bear fruit if they could.

Mr. Rochester had been absent upwards of a fortnight, when the post brought Mrs. Fairfax a letter.

'It is from the master,' said she as she looked at the direction. 'Now I suppose we shall know whether we are to expect his return or not.'

And while she broke the seal and perused the document, I went on taking my coffee (we were at breakfast); it was hot, and I attributed to that circumstance a fiery glow which suddenly rose to my face. Why my hand shook, and why I involuntarily spilt half the contents of my cup into my saucer, I did not choose to consider.

'Well—I sometimes think we are too quiet; but we run a chance of being busy enough now: for a little while at least,' said Mrs. Fairfax, still holding the note before her spectacles.

Ere I permitted myself to request an explanation, I tied the string of Adèle's pinafore, which happened to be loose: having helped her also to another bun, and refilled her mug with milk, I said, nonchalantly:—'Mr. Rochester is not likely to return soon, I suppose?'

'Indeed, he is—in three days, he says; that will be next Thursday; and not alone either. I don't know how many of the fine people at the Leas are coming with him. He sends directions for all the best bedrooms to be prepared; and the library and drawing-rooms are to be cleaned out; and I am to get more kitchen hands from the George Inn, at Millcote, and from wherever else I can; and the ladies will bring their maids and the gentlemen their valets: so we shall have a full house of it.' And Mrs. Fairfax swallowed her breakfast and hastened away to commence operations.

The three days were, as she had foretold, busy enough. I had thought all the rooms at Thornfield beautifully clean and well-arranged, but it appears I was mistaken. Three women were got to help; and such scrubbing, such brushing, such washing of paint and beating of carpets, such taking down and putting up of pictures, such polishing of mirrors and lustres, such lighting of fires in bedrooms, such airing of sheets and feather-beds on hearths, I never beheld either before or since. Adèle ran quite wild in the midst of it: the preparations for company, and the prospect of their arrival, seemed to throw her into ecstacies. She would have Sophie to look over all her 'toilettes,' as she called frocks; to furbish up any that were 'passées,' and to air and arrange the new. For herself, she did nothing but caper about in the front chambers, jump on and off the bedsteads, and lie on the mattresses and piled-up bolsters and pillows before the enormous fires roaring in the chimneys. From school duties she was exonerated: Mrs. Fairfax had pressed me into her service, and I was all day in the storeroom, helping (or hindering) her and the cook; learning to make custards and cheesecakes and French pastry, to truss game and garnish dessert dishes.

The party were expected to arrive on Thursday afternoon, in time for dinner at six. During the intervening period I had no time to nurse chimeras; and I believe I was as active and gay as anybody—Adèle excepted. Still, now and then, I received a damping check to my cheerfulness; and was, in spite of myself, thrown back on the region of doubts and portents, and dark conjectures. This was when I chanced to see the third story staircase door (which of late had always been kept locked) open slowly, and give passage to the form of Grace Poole, in prim cap, white apron, and handkerchief; when I watched her glide along the gallery, her quiet tread muffled in a list slipper; when I saw her look into the bustling, topsy-turvy bedrooms,—just say a word, perhaps, to the charwoman about the proper way to polish a grate, or clean a marble mantelpiece, or take stains from papered walls, and then pass on. She would thus descend to the kitchen once a day, eat her dinner, smoke a moderate pipe on the hearth, and go back, carrying her pot of porter with her, for her private solace, in her own gloomy, upper haunt. Only one hour in the twenty-four did she pass with her fellow-servants below; all the rest of her time was spent in some low-ceiled, oaken chamber of the third story: there she sat and sewed—and probably laughed drearily to herself—as companionless as a prisoner in his dungeon.

The strangest thing of all was, that not a soul in the house, except me, noticed her habits, or seemed to marvel at them; no one discussed her position or employment; no one pitied her solitude or isolation. I once, indeed, overheard part of a dialogue between Leah and one of the charwomen, of which Grace formed the subject. Leah had been saying something I had not caught, and the charwomen remarked—'She gets good wages, I guess?'

'Yes,' said Leah; 'I wish I had as good; not that mine are to complain of,—there's no stinginess at Thornfield; but they're not one-fifth of the sum Mrs. Poole receives. And she is laying by: she goes every quarter to the bank at Millcote. I should not wonder but she has saved enough to keep her independent if she liked to leave; but I suppose she's got used to the place; and then she's not forty yet, and strong and able for anything. It is too soon for her to give up business.'

'She is a good hand, I daresay,' said the charwoman.

'Ah! she understands what she has to do,—nobody better,' rejoined Leah, significantly; 'and it is not every one could fill her shoes; not for all the money she gets.'

'That it is not!' was the reply. 'I wonder whether master——'

The charwoman was going on; but here Leah turned and perceived me, and she instantly gave her companion a nudge.

'Doesn't she know?' I heard the woman whisper.

Leah shook her head, and the conversation was of course dropped. All I had gathered from it amounted to this,—that there was a mystery at Thornfield; and that from participation in that mystery I was purposely excluded.

Thursday came: all work had been completed the previous evening; carpets were laid down, bed-hangings festooned, radiant white counterpanes spread, toilet-tables arranged, furniture rubbed, flowers piled in vases: both chambers and saloons looked as fresh and bright as hands could make them. The hall, too, was scoured; and the great carved clock, as well as the steps and banisters of the staircase, were polished to the brightness of glass: in the dining-room, the sideboard flashed resplendent with plate; in the drawing-room and boudoir, vases of exotics bloomed on all sides.

Afternoon arrived: Mrs. Fairfax assumed her best black satin gown, her gloves, and her gold watch; for it was her part to receive the company—to conduct the ladies to their rooms, &c. Adèle, too, would be dressed: though I thought that she had little chance of being introduced to the party that day, at least. However, to please her, I allowed Sophie to apparel her in one of her short, full muslin frocks. For myself, I had no need to make any change; I should not be called upon to quit my sanctum of the schoolroom; for a sanctum it was now become to me—'a very pleasant refuge in time of trouble.'

It had been a mild, serene spring day; one of those days which, towards the end of March or the beginning of April, rise shining over the earth as heralds of summer. It was drawing to an end now; but the evening was even warm, and I sat at work in the schoolroom with the window open.

'It gets late,' said Mrs. Fairfax, entering in rustling state. 'I am glad I ordered dinner an hour after the time Mr. Rochester mentioned; for it is past six now. I have sent John down to the gates to see if there is anything on the road: one can see a long way from thence in the direction of Millcote.' She went to the window. 'Here he is!' said she. 'Well, John' (leaning out), 'any news?'

'They're coming, ma'am,' was the answer. 'They'll be here in ten minutes.'

Adèle flew to the window. I followed; taking care to stand on one side, so that, screened by the curtain, I could see without being seen.

The ten minutes John had given seemed very long, but at last wheels were heard; four equestrians galloped up the drive, and after them came two open carriages. Fluttering veils and waving plumes filled the vehicles; two of the cavaliers were young, dashing-looking gentlemen; the third was Mr. Rochester, on his black horse, Mesrour; Pilot bounding before him: at his side rode a lady, and he and she were the first of the party. Her purple riding-habit almost swept the ground, her veil streamed long on the breeze; mingling with its transparent folds, and gleaming through them, shone rich raven ringlets.

'Miss Ingram!' exclaimed Mrs. Fairfax, and away she hurried to her post below.

The cavalcade, following the sweep of the drive, quickly turned the angle of the house, and I lost sight of it. Adèle now petitioned to go down; but I took her on my knee and gave her to understand that she must not on any account think of venturing in sight of the ladies, either now or at any other time, unless expressly sent for; that Mr. Rochester would be very angry, &c. 'Some natural tears she shed' on being told this; but as I began to look very grave, she consented at last to wipe them.

A joyous stir was now audible in the hall; gentlemen's deep tones and ladies' silvery accents blent harmoniously together, and distinguishable above all, though not loud, was the sonorous voice of the master of Thornfield Hall, welcoming his fair and gallant guests under its roof. Then light steps ascended the stairs; and there was a tripping through the gallery, and soft cheerful laughs, and opening and closing doors, and, for a time, a hush.

'Elles changent de toilettes,' said Adèle; who, listening attentively had followed every movement; and she sighed.

Chez maman,' said she, 'quand il y avait du monde, je le suivais partout, au salon et à leurs chambres; souvent je regardais les femmes de chambre coiffer et habiller les dames, et c'était si amusant : comme cela on apprend.'

'Don't you feel hungry, Adèle ?'

'Mais oui, mademoiselle : voilà cinq ou six heures que nous n'avons pas mangé.'

'Well now, while the ladies are in their rooms, I will venture down and get you something to eat.'

And issuing from my asylum with precaution, I sought a backstairs which conducted directly to the kitchen. All in that region was fire and commotion ; the soup and fish were in the last stage of projection, and the cook hung over her crucibles in a frame of mind and body threatening spontaneous combustion. In the servants' hall two coachmen and three gentlemen's gentlemen stood or sat round the fire ; the Abigails, I suppose, were upstairs with their mistresses : the new servants that had been hired from Millcote were bustling about everywhere. Threading this chaos, I at last reached the larder ; there I took possession of a cold chicken, a roll of bread, some tarts, a plate or two, and a knife and fork : with this booty I made a hasty retreat. I had regained the gallery, and was just shutting the back-door behind me, when an accelerated hum warned me that the ladies were about to issue from their chambers. I could not proceed to the schoolroom without passing some of their doors, and running the risk of being surprised with my cargo of victualage ; so I stood still at this end, which, being windowless, was dark : quite dark now, for the sun was set and twilight gathering.

Presently the chambers gave up their fair tenants one after another ; each came out gaily and airily, with dress that gleamed lustrous through the dusk. For a moment they stood grouped together at the other extremity of the gallery, conversing in a key of sweet subdued vivacity ; they then descended the staircase almost as noiselessly as a bright mist rolls down a hill. Their collective appearance had left on me an impression of high-born elegance, such as I had never before received.

I found Adèle peeping through the schoolroom door, which she held ajar. 'What beautiful ladies!' cried she in English. 'Oh, I wish I might go to them! Do you think Mr. Rochester will send for us by-and-by, after dinner?'

'No, indeed, I don't; Mr. Rochester has something else to think about. Never mind the ladies to-night; perhaps you will see them to-morrow; here is your dinner.'

She was really hungry, so the chicken and tarts served to divert her attention for a time. It was well I secured this forage; or both she, I and Sophie, to whom I conveyed a share of our repast, would have run a chance of getting no dinner at all: every one downstairs was too much engaged to think of us. The dessert was not carried out till after nine; and at ten footmen were still running to and fro with trays and coffee-cups. I allowed Adèle to sit up much later than usual; for she declared she could not possibly go to sleep while the doors kept opening and shutting below, and people bustling about. Besides, she added, a message might possibly come from Mr. Rochester when she was undressed; 'et alors quel dommage!'

I told her stories as long as she would listen to them; and then for a change I took her out into the gallery. The hall lamp was now lit, and it amused her to look over the balustrade and watch the servants passing backwards and forwards. When the evening was far advanced, a sound of music issued from the drawing-room, whither the piano had been removed. Adèle and I sat down on the top step of the stairs to listen. Presently a voice blent with the rich tones of the instrument; it was a lady who sang, and very sweet her notes were. The solo over, a duet followed, and then a glee: a joyous conversational murmur filled up the intervals. I listened long: suddenly I discovered that my ear was wholly intent on analysing the mingled sounds, and trying to discriminate amidst the confusion of accents those of Mr. Rochester; and when it caught them, which it soon did, it found a further task in framing thet ones, rendered by distance inarticulate, into words.

The clock struck eleven. I looked at Adèle, whose head leant against my shoulder; her eyes were waxing heavy, so I took her up in my arms and carried her off to bed. It was near one before the gentlemen and ladies sought their chambers.

The next day was as fine as its predecessor; it was devoted by the party to an excursion to some sight in the neighbourhood. They set out early in the forenoon, some on horseback, the rest in carriages; I witnessed both the departure and the return. Miss Ingram, as before, was the only lady equestrian; and, as before, Mr. Rochester galloped at her side; the two rode a little apart from the rest. I pointed out this circumstance to Mrs. Fairfax, who was standing at the window with me:—

'You said it was not likely they should think of being married,' said I, 'but you see Mr. Rochester evidently prefers her to any of the other ladies.'

'Yes; I daresay: no doubt he admires her.'

'And she him,' I added; 'look how she leans her head towards him as if she were conversing confidentially; I wish I could see her face; I have never had a glimpse of it yet.'

'You will see her this evening,' answered Mrs. Fairfax. 'I happened to remark to Mr. Rochester how much Adèle wished to be introduced to the ladies, and he said: 'Oh! let her come into the drawing-room after dinner; and request Miss Eyre to accompany her.'

'Yes—he said that from mere politeness: I need not go, I am sure,' I answered.

'Well, I observed to him that as you were unused to company, I did not think you would like appearing before so gay a party—all strangers—and he replied, in his quick way: "Nonsense! If she objects, tell her it is my particular wish; and if she resists, say I shall come and fetch her in case of contumacy."'

'I will not give him that trouble,' I answered. 'I will go, if no better may be: but I don't like it. Shall you be there, Mrs. Fairfax?'

'No; I pleaded off, and he admitted my plea. I'll tell you how to manage so as to avoid the embarrassment of making a formal entrance, which is the most disagreeable part of the business. You must go into the drawing-room while it is empty, before the ladies leave the dinner-table; choose your seat in any quiet nook you like; you need not stay long after the gentlemen come in, unless you please: just let Mr. Rochester see you are there and then slip away—nobody will notice you.'

'Will these people remain long, do you think?'

'Perhaps two or three weeks; certainly not more. After the Easter recess, Sir George Lynn, who was lately elected member for Millcote, will have to go up to town and take his seat; I daresay Mr. Rochester will accompany him: it surprises me that he has already made so protracted a stay at Thornfield.'

It was with some trepidation that I perceived the hour approach when I was to repair with my charge to the drawing-room. Adèle had been in a state of ecstasy all day, after hearing she was to be presented to the ladies in the evening; and it was not till Sophie commenced the operation of dressing her that she sobered down. Then the importance of the process quickly steadied her; and by the time she had her curls arranged in well-smoothed, drooping clusters, her pink satin frock put on, her long sash tied, and her lace mittens adjusted, she looked as grave as any judge. No need to warn her not to disarrange her attire: when she was dressed, she sat demurely down in her little chair, taking care previously to lift up the satin skirt for fear she should crease it, and assured me she would not stir thence till I was ready. This I quickly was; my best dress (the silver-grey one, purchased for Miss Temple's wedding, and never worn since) was soon put on; my hair was soon smoothed; my sole ornament, the pearl brooch, soon assumed. We descended.

Fortunately there was another entrance to the drawing-room than that through the saloon where they were all seated at dinner. We found the apartment vacant, a large fire burning silently on the marble hearth, and wax candles shining in bright solitude, amid the exquisite flowers with which the tables were adorned. The crimson curtain hung before the arch : slight as was the separation this drapery formed from the party in the adjoining saloon, they spoke in so low a key that nothing of their conversation could be distinguished beyond a soothing murmur.

Adèle, who appeared to be still under the influence of a most solemnising impression, sat down, without a word, on the footstool I pointed out to her. I retired to a window-seat, and, taking a book from a table near, endeavoured to read. Adèle brought her stool to my feet ; ere long she touched my knee.

'What is it, Adèle ?'

'Est-ce que je ne puis pas prendre une seule de ces fleurs magnifiques, mademoiselle ? Seulement pour compléter ma toilette.'

'You think too much of your "toilette," Adèle, but you may have a flower.' And I took a rose from a vase and fastened it in her sash. She sighed a sigh of ineffable satisfaction, as if her cup of happiness were now full. I turned my face away to conceal a smile I could not suppress : there was something ludicrous as well as painful in the little Parisienne's earnest and innate devotion to matters of dress.

A soft sound of rising now became audible ; the curtain was swept back from the arch ; through it appeared the dining-room, with its lit lustre pouring down light on the silver and glass of a magnificent dessert-service covering a long table ; a band of ladies stood in the opening ; they entered, and the curtain fell behind them.

There were but eight, yet somehow as they flocked in, they gave the impression of a much larger number. Some of them were very tall, many were dressed in white, and all had a sweeping amplitude of array that seemed to magnify their persons as a mist magnifies the moon. I rose and curtseyed to them; one or two bent their heads in return, the others only stared at me.

They dispersed about the room, reminding me, by the lightness and buoyancy of their movements, of a flock of white plumy birds. Some of them threw themselves in half-reclining positions on the sofas and ottomans, some bent over the tables and examined the flowers and books, the rest gathered in a group round the fire—all talked in a low but clear tone which seemed habitual to them. I knew their names afterwards, and may as well mention them now.

First there was Mrs. Eshton and two of her daughters. She had evidently been a handsome woman, and was well preserved still. Of her daughters, the eldest, Amy, was rather little; naïve, and childlike in face and manner, and piquant in form: her white muslin dress and blue sash became her well. The second, Louisa, was taller and more elegant in figure, with a very pretty face, of that order the French term 'minois chiffonné': both sisters were fair as lilies.

Lady Lynn was a large and stout personage of about forty, very erect, very haughty-looking, richly dressed in a satin robe of changeful sheen: her dark hair shone glossily under the shade of an azure plume, and within the circlet of a band of gems.

Mrs. Colonel Dent was less showy, but, I thought, more ladylike. She had a slight figure, a pale, gentle face, and fair hair. Her black satin dress, her scarf of rich foreign lace, and her pearl ornaments, pleased me better than the rainbow radiance of the titled dame.

But the three most distinguished—partly, perhaps, because the tallest figures of the band—were the Dowager Lady Ingram and her daughters, Blanche and Mary. They were all three of the loftiest stature of woman. The dowager might be between forty and fifty; her shape was still fine; her hair (by candlelight at least) still black; her teeth, too, were still apparently perfect. Most people would have termed her a splendid woman of her age:

and so she was, no doubt, physically speaking; but then there was an expression of almost insupportable haughtiness in her bearing and countenance. She had Roman features and a double chin, disappearing into a throat like a pillar: these features appeared to me not only inflated and darkened, but even furrowed with pride; and the chin was sustained by the same principle, in a position of almost preternatural erectness. She had, likewise, a fierce and a hard eye: it reminded me of Mrs. Reed's; she mouthed her words in speaking; her voice was deep, its inflections very pompous, very dogmatical—very intolerable, in short. A crimson velvet robe, and a shawl turban of some gold-wrought Indian fabric, invested her (I suppose she thought) with a truly imperial dignity.

Blanche and Mary were of equal stature—straight and tall as poplars. Mary was too slim for her height; but Blanche was moulded like a Dian. I regarded her, of course, with special interest. First, I wished to see whether her appearance accorded with Mrs. Fairfax's description; secondly, whether it at all resembled the fancy miniature I had painted of her; and thirdly—it will out!—whether it were such as I should fancy likely to suit Mr. Rochester's taste.

As far as person went, she answered point for point, both to my picture and Mrs. Fairfax's description. The noble bust, the sloping shoulders, the graceful neck, the dark eyes and black ringlets were all there—but her face? Her face was like her mother's; a youthful unfurrowed likeness: the same low brow, the same high features, the same pride. It was not, however, so saturnine a pride: she laughed continually; her laugh was satirical, and so was the habitual expression of her arched and haughty lip.

Genius is said to be self-conscious: I cannot tell whether Miss Ingram was a genius, but she was self-conscious—remarkably self-conscious indeed. She entered into a discourse on botany with the gentle Mrs. Dent. It seems Mrs. Dent had not studied that science: though, as she said, she liked flowers, 'especially wild ones'; Miss Ingram had, and she ran over its vocabulary with an air. I presently perceived she was (what is vernacularly termed) *trailing* Mrs. Dent; that is playing on her ignorance; her *trail* might be clever, but it was decidedly not good-natured. She played; her execution was brilliant; she sang; her voice was fine; she talked French apart to her mamma; and she talked it well, with fluency and with a good accent.

Mary had a milder and more open countenance than Blanche; softer features too, and a skin some shades fairer (Miss Ingram was dark as a Spaniard)—but Mary was deficient in life; her face lacked expression, her eye lustre; she had nothing to say, and having once taken her seat, remained fixed like a statue in its niche. The sisters were both attired in spotless white.

And did I now think Miss Ingram such a choice as Mr. Rochester would be likely to make? I could not tell—I did not know his taste in female beauty. If he liked the majestic, she was the very type of majesty: then she was accomplished, sprightly. Most gentlemen would admire her, I thought; and that he *did* admire her, I already seemed to have obtained proof: to remove the last shade of doubt, it remained but to see them together.

You are not to suppose, reader, that Adèle has all this time been sitting, motionless, on the stool at my feet: no; when the ladies entered, she rose, advanced to meet them, made a stately reverence, and said, with gravity,—'Bon jour, mesdames.'

And Miss Ingram had looked down at her with a mocking air, and exclaimed, 'Oh, what a little puppet!'

Lady Lynn had remarked, 'It is Mr. Rochester's ward, I suppose—the little French girl he was speaking of.'

Mrs. Dent had kindly taken her hand, and given her a kiss. Amy and Louisa Eshton had cried out simultaneously—

'What a love of a child!'

And then they had called her to a sofa, where she now sat, ensconced between them, chattering alternately in French and broken English: absorbing not only the young ladies' attention, but that of Mrs. Eshton and Lady Lynn, and getting spoilt to her heart's content.

At last coffee is brought in, and the gentlemen are summoned. I sit in the shade—if any shade there be in this brilliantly-lit apartment; the window curtain half hides me. Again the arch yawns: they come. The collective appearance of the gentlemen, like that of the ladies, is very imposing: they are all costumed in black; most of them are tall, some young. Henry and Frederick Lynn are very dashing sparks, indeed; and Colonel Dent is a fine soldierly man. Mr. Eshton, the magistrate of the district, is gentleman-like: his hair is quite white, his eyebrows and whiskers still dark, which gives him something of the appearance of a 'père noble de théâtre.' Lord Ingram, like his sisters, is very tall; like them, also, he is handsome; but he shares Mary's apathetic and listless look: he seems to have more length of limb than vivacity of blood or vigour of brain.

And where is Mr. Rochester?

He comes in last: I am not looking at the arch, yet I see him enter. I try to concentrate my attention on those netting-needles, on the meshes of the purse I am forming—I wish to think only of the work I have in my hands, to see only the silver beads and silk threads that lie in my lap; whereas, I distinctly behold his figure, and I inevitably recall the moment when I last saw it: just after I had rendered him, what he deemed an essential service—and he, holding my hand, and looking down on my face, surveyed me with eyes that revealed a heart full and eager to overflow; in whose emotions I had a part. How near had I approached him at that moment! What had occurred since, calculated to change his and my relative positions? Yet now, how distant, how far estranged we were! So far estranged, that I did not expect him to come and speak to me. I did not wonder, when, without looking at me, he took a seat at the other side of the room, and began conversing with some of the ladies.

No sooner did I see that his attention was riveted on them, and that I might gaze without being observed, than my eyes were drawn involuntarily to his face: I could not keep their lids under control: they would rise, and the irids would fix on him. I looked, and had an acute pleasure in looking,—a precious, yet poignant pleasure; pure gold, with a steelly point of agony: a pleasure like what the thirst-perishing man might feel who knows the well to which he has crept is poisoned, yet stoops and drinks divine draughts nevertheless.

Most true is it that 'beauty is in the eye of the gazer.' My master's colourless, olive face, square, massive brow, broad and jetty eyebrows, deep eyes, strong features, firm, grim mouth,—all energy, decision, will,—were not beautiful, according to rule; but they were more than beautiful to me . they were full of an interest, an influence that quite mastered me,—that took my feelings from my own power and fettered them in his. I had not intended to love him: the reader knows I had wrought hard to extirpate from my soul the germs of love there detected; and now, at the first renewed view of him, they spontaneously revived, green and strong! He made me love him without looking at me.

I compared him with his guests. What was the gallant grace of the Lynns, the languid elegance of Lord Ingram,—even the military distinction of Colonel Dent, contrasted with his look of native pith and genuine power? I had no sympathy with their appearance, their expression; yet I could imagine that most observers would call them attractive, handsome, imposing; while they would pronounce Mr. Rochester at once harsh-featured and melancholy-looking. I saw them smile, laugh—it was nothing; the light of the candles had as much soul in it as their smile; the tinkle of the bell as much significance as their laugh. I saw Mr. Rochester smile—his stern features softened; his eye grew both brilliant and gentle, its ray both searching and sweet. He was talking, at the moment, to Louisa and Amy Eshton. I wondered to see them receive with calm that look which seemed to me so penetrating; I expected their eyes to fall.

their colour to rise under it; yet I was glad when I found they were in no sense moved. 'He is not to them what he is to me,' I thought: 'he is not of their kind. I believe he is of mine;—I am sure he is,—I feel akin to him,—I understand the language of his countenance and movements; though rank and wealth sever us widely, I have something in my brain and heart, in my blood and nerves, that assimilates me mentally to him. Did I say, a few days since, that I had nothing to do with him but to receive my salary at his hands? Did I forbid myself to think of him in any other light than as a paymaster? Blasphemy against nature! Every good, true, vigorous feeling I have, gathers impulsively round him. I know I must conceal my sentiments; I must smother hope; I must remember that he cannot care much for me. For when I say that I am of his kind, I do not mean that I have his force to influence, and his spell to attract; I mean only that I have certain tastes and feelings in common with him. I must then repeat continually that we are for ever sundered;—and yet, while I breathe and think I must love him.'

Coffee is handed. The ladies, since the gentlemen entered, have become lively as larks; conversation waxes brisk and merry. Colonel Dent and Mr. Eshton argue on politics; their wives listen. The two proud dowagers, Lady Lynn and Lady Ingram, confabulate together. Sir George—whom, by-the-by, I have forgotten to describe—a very big and very fresh-looking country gentleman, stands before their sofa, coffee-cup in hand, and occasionally puts in a word. Mr. Frederick Lynn has taken a seat beside Mary Ingram, and is showing her the engravings of a splendid volume; she looks, smiles now and then, but apparently says little. The tall and phlegmatic Lord Ingram leans with folded arms on the chair-back of the little and lively Amy Eshton; she glances up at him, and chatters like a wren: she likes him better than she does Mr. Rochester. Henry Lynn has taken possession of an ottoman at the feet of Louisa; Adèle shares it with him: he is trying to talk

French with her, and Louisa laughs at his blunders. With whom will Blanche Ingram pair? She is standing alone at the table, bending gracefully over an album. She seems waiting to be sought; but she will not wait too long: she herself selects a mate.

Mr. Rochester, having quitted the Eshtons, stands on the hearth as solitary as she stands by the table; she confronts him, taking her station on the opposite side of the mantelpiece.

'Mr. Rochester, I thought you were not fond of children?'

'Nor am I.'

'Then, what induced you to take charge of such a little doll as that?' (pointing to Adèle). 'Where did you pick her up?'

'I did not pick her up, she was left on my hands.'

'You should have sent her to school.'

'I could not afford it; schools are so dear.'

'Why, I suppose you have a governess for her; I saw a person with her just now—is she gone? Oh, no, there she is still behind the window-curtain. You pay her, of course. I should think it quite as expensive—more so, for you have them both to keep in addition.'

I feared—or should I say, hoped—the allusion to me would make Mr. Rochester glance my way; and I involuntarily shrank further into the shade; but he never turned his eyes.

'I have not considered the subject,' said he indifferently, looking straight before him.

'No—you men never do consider economy and common sense. You should hear mamma on the chapter of governesses. Mary and I have had, I should think, a dozen at least in our day; half of them detestable and the rest ridiculous, and all incubi—were they not, mamma?'

'Did you speak, my own?'

The young lady thus claimed as the dowager's special property reiterated her question with an explanation.

'My dearest, don't mention governesses; the word makes me nervous. I have suffered a martyrdom from their incompetency and caprice; I thank Heaven I have now done with them!'

Mrs. Dent here bent over to the pious lady, and whispered something in her ear; I suppose, from the answer elicited, it was a reminder that one of the anathematised race was present.

'Tant pis!' said her ladyship, 'I hope it may do her good.' Then, in a lower tone, but still loud enough for me to hear, 'I noticed her; I am a judge of physiognomy, and in hers I see all the faults of her class.'

'What are they, madam?' inquired Mr. Rochester aloud.

'I will tell you in your private ear,' replied she, wagging her turban three times with portentous significancy.

'But my curiosity will be past its appetite; it craves food now.'

'Ask Blanche; she is nearer you than I.'

'Oh, don't refer him to me, mamma! I have just one word to say of the whole tribe; they are a nuisance. Not that I ever suffered much from them; I took care to turn the tables. What tricks Theodore and I used to play on our Miss Wilsons, and Mrs. Greys, and Madame Jouberts! Mary was always too sleepy to join in a plot with spirit. The best fun was with Madame Joubert. Miss Wilson was a poor sickly thing, lachrymose and low-spirited: not worth the trouble of vanquishing, in short; and Mrs. Grey was coarse and insensible: no blow took effect on her. But poor Madame Joubert! I see her yet in her raging passions, when we had driven her to extremities—spilt our tea, crumbled our bread and butter, tossed our books up to the ceiling, and played a charivari with the ruler and desk, the fender and fire-irons. Theodore, do you remember those merry days?'

'Yaas, to be sure I do,' drawled Lord Ingram; 'and the poor old stick used to cry out, "Oh, you villains childs!" and then we sermonised her on the presumption of attempting to teach such clever blades as we were, when she was herself so ignorant.'

'We did; and Tedo, you know I helped you in prosecuting (or persecuting) your tutor, whey-faced Mr. Vining—the parson in the pip, as we used to call him. He and Miss Wilson took the liberty of falling in love with each other—at least Tedo and I thought so; we surprised sundry tender glances and sighs which we interpreted as tokens of "la belle passion," and I promise you the public soon had the benefit of our discovery; we employed it as a sort of lever to hoist our dead-weights from the house. Dear mamma, there, as soon as she got an inkling of the business, found out that it was of an immoral tendency. Did you not, my lady-mother?'

'Certainly, my best. And I was quite right, depend on that: there are a thousand reasons why liaisons between governesses and tutors should never be tolerated a moment in any well-regulated house; firstly,——'

'Oh, gracious, mamma! Spare us the enumeration! Au reste, we all know them: danger of bad example to innocence of childhood—distractions and consequent neglect of duty on the part of the attached—mutual alliance and reliance; confidence thence resulting—insolence accompanying—mutiny and general blow-up. Am I right, Baroness Ingram, of Ingram Park?'

'My lily-flower, you are right now, as always.'

'Then no more need be said; change the subject.'

Amy Eshton, not hearing or not heeding this dictum, joined in with her soft infantine tone: 'Louisa and I used to quiz our governess too; but she was such a good creature, she would bear anything; nothing put her out. She was never cross with us; was she, Louisa?'

'No, never; we might do what we pleased—ransack her desk and her workbox, and turn her drawers inside out; and she was so good-natured, she would give us anything we asked for.'

'I suppose now,' said Miss Ingram, curling her lips sarcastically, 'we shall have an abstract of the memoirs of all the governesses extant; in order to avert such a visitation, I again move the introduction of a new topic. Mr. Rochester, do you second my motion?'

'Madam, I support you on this point as on every other.'

'Then on me be the onus of bringing it forward. Signor Eduardo, are you in voice to-night?'

'Donna Bianca, if you command it, I will be.'

'Then, signor, I lay on you my sovereign behest to furbish up your lungs and other vocal organs, as they will be wanted on my royal service.'

'Who would not be the Rizzio of so divine a Mary?'

'A fig for Rizzio!' cried she, tossing her head with all its curls, as she moved to the piano. 'It is my opinion the fiddler David must have been an insipid sort of fellow; I like black Bothwell better. To my mind a man is nothing without a spice of the devil in him; and history may say what it will of James Hepburn, but I have a notion he was just the sort of wild, fierce, bandit hero whom I could have consented to gift with my hand.'

'Gentlemen, you hear! Now which of you most resembles Bothwell?' cried Mr. Rochester.

'I should say the preference lies with you,' responded Colonel Dent.

'On my honour, I am much obliged to you,' was the reply.

Miss Ingram, who had now seated herself with proud grace at the piano, spreading out her snowy robes in queenly amplitude, commenced a brilliant prelude; talking meantime. She appeared to be on her high-horse to-night; both her words and her air seemed intended to excite not only the admiration, but the amazement of her auditors; she was evidently bent on striking them as something very dashing and daring indeed.

'Oh, I am so sick of the young men of the present day!' exclaimed she, rattling away at the instrument. 'Poor puny things not fit to stir a step beyond papa's park-gates: nor to go even so far without mamma's permission and guardianship! Creatures so absorbed in care about their pretty faces and their white hands, and their small feet; as if a man had anything to do with beauty! As if loveliness were not the special prerogative of woman—her legitimate appanage and heritage! I grant an ugly *woman* is a blot on the fair face of creation; but as to the *gentlemen*, let them be solicitous to possess only strength and valour: let their motto be—Hunt, shoot, and fight; the rest is not worth a fillip. Such should be my device, were I a man.'

'Whenever I marry,' she continued after a pause which none interrupted, 'I am resolved my husband shall not be a rival, but a foil to me. I will suffer no competitor near the throne; I shall exact an undivided homage; his devotions shall not be shared between me and the shape he sees in his mirror. Mr. Rochester, now sing, and I will play for you.'

'I am all obedience,' was the response.

'Here then is a Corsair-song. Know that I doat on Corsairs; and for that reason, sing it "con spirito."'

'Commands from Miss Ingram's lips would put spirit into a mug of milk and water.'

'Take care, then: if you don't please me, I will shame you by showing how such things *should* be done.'

'That is offering a premium on incapacity; I shall now endeavour to fail.'

'Gardez-vous en bien! If you err wilfully, I shall devise a proportionate punishment.'

'Miss Ingram ought to be clement, for she has it in her power to inflict a chastisement beyond mortal endurance.'

'Ha! explain!' commanded the lady.

'Pardon me, madam; no need of explanation; your own fine sense must inform you that one of your frowns would be a sufficient substitute for capital punishment.'

'Sing!' said she, and again touching the piano, she commenced an accompaniment in spirited style.

'Now is my time to slip away,' thought I; but the tones that then severed the air arrested me. Mrs. Fairfax had said Mr. Rochester possessed a fine voice; he did—a mellow powerful bass, into which he threw his own feeling, his own force; finding a way through the ear to the heart, and there waking sensation strangely. I waited till the last deep and full vibration had expired—till the tide of talk, checked an instant, had resumed its flow; I then quitted my sheltered corner and made my exit by the side-door, which was fortunately near. Thence a narrow passage led into the hall; in crossing it, I perceived my sandal was loose; I stopped to tie it, kneeling down for that purpose on the mat at the foot of the staircase. I heard the dining-room door unclose; a gentleman came out; rising hastily, I stood face to face with him; it was Mr. Rochester.

'How do you do?' he asked.

'I am very well, sir.'

'Why did you not come and speak to me in the room?'

I thought I might have retorted the question on him who put it; but I would not take that freedom. I answered:—

'I did not wish to disturb you, as you seemed engaged, sir.'

'What have you been doing during my absence?'

'Nothing particular; teaching Adèle as usual.'

'And getting a good deal paler than you were—as I saw at first sight. What is the matter?'

'Nothing at all, sir.'

'Did you take any cold that night you half drowned me?'

'Not the least.'

'Return to the drawing-room; you are deserting too early.'

'I am tired, sir.'

He looked at me for a minute.

'And a little depressed,' he said. 'What about? Tell me.'

'Nothing—nothing, sir. I am not depressed.'

'But I affirm that you are: so much depressed that a few more words would bring tears to your eyes—indeed, they are there now, shining and swimming; and a bead has slipped from the lash and fallen on to the flag. If I had time, and was not in mortal dread of some prating prig of a servant passing, I would know what all this means. Well, to-night I excuse you; but understand that so long as my visitors stay, I expect you to appear in the drawing-room every evening; it is my wish; don't neglect it. Now go, and send Sophie for Adèle. Good-night, my——' He stopped, bit his lip, and abruptly left me.

CHAPTER XVIII

Merry days were these at Thornfield Hall; and busy days too: how different from the first three months of stillness, monotony, and solitude I had passed beneath its roof! All sad feelings seemed now driven from the house, all gloomy associations forgotten: there was life everywhere, movement all day long. You could not now traverse the gallery, once so hushed, nor enter the front chambers, once so tenantless, without encountering a smart lady's maid, or a dandy valet.

The kitchen, the butler's pantry, the servants' hall, the entrance hall, were equally alive; and the saloons were only left void and still when the blue sky and halcyon sunshine of the genial spring weather called their occupants out into the grounds. Even when that weather was broken, and continuous rain set in for some days, no damp seemed cast over enjoyment; indoor amusements only became more lively and varied, in consequence of the stop put to outdoor gaiety.

I wondered what they were going to do the first evening a change of entertainment was proposed; they spoke of 'playing charades,' but in my ignorance I did not understand the term. The servants were called in, the dining-room tables wheeled away, the lights otherwise disposed, the chairs placed in a semicircle opposite the arch. While Mr. Rochester and the other gentlemen directed these alterations, the ladies were running up and down stairs ringing for their maids. Mrs. Fairfax was summoned to give information respecting the resources of the house in shawls, dresses, draperies of any kind; and certain wardrobes of the third story were ransacked, and their contents, in the shape of brocaded and hooped petticoats, satin sacques, black modes, lace lappets, &c., were brought down in armfuls by the Abigails; then a selection was made, and such things as were chosen were carried to the boudoir within the drawing-room.

Meantime, Mr. Rochester had again summoned the ladies round him, and was selecting certain of their number to be of his party. 'Miss Ingram is mine, of course,' said he; afterwards he named the two Misses Eshton, and Mrs. Dent. He looked at me; I happened to be near him, as I had been fastening the clasp of Mrs. Dent's bracelet, which had got loose.

'Will you play?' he asked. I shook my head. He did not insist, which I rather feared he would have done; he allowed me to return quietly to my usual seat.

He and his aids now withdrew behind the curtain; the other party, which was headed by Colonel Dent, sat down on the crescent of chairs. One of the gentlemen, Mr. Eshton, observing me, seemed to propose that I should be asked to join them; but Lady Ingram instantly negatived the notion.

'No,' I heard her say: 'she looks too stupid for any game of the sort.'

Ere long, a bell tinkled, and the curtain drew up. Within the arch the bulky figure of Sir George Lynn, whom Mr. Rochester had likewise chosen, was seen enveloped in a white sheet; before him, on a table, lay open a large book; and at his side stood Amy Eshton, draped in Mr. Rochester's cloak, and holding a book in her hand. Somebody, unseen, rang the bell merrily; then Adèle (who had insisted on being one of her guardian's party), bounded forward, scattering round her the contents of a basket of flowers she carried on her arm. Then appeared the magnificent figure of Miss Ingram, clad in white, a long veil on her head, and a wreath of roses round her brow; by her side walked Mr. Rochester, and together they drew near the table. They knelt, while Mrs. Dent and Louisa Eshton, dressed also in white, took up their stations behind them. A ceremony followed, in dumb show, in which it was easy to recognise the pantomime of a marriage. At its termination Colonel Dent and his party consulted in whispers for two minutes, then the Colonel called out,—'Bride!' Mr. Rochester bowed, and the curtain fell.

A considerable interval elapsed before it again rose. Its second rising displayed a more elaborately prepared scene than the last. The drawing-room, as I have before observed, was raised two steps above the dining-room, and on the top of the upper step, placed a yard or two back within the room, appeared a large marble basin, which I recognised as an ornament of the conservatory—where it usually stood, surrounded by exotics, and tenanted by gold fish—and whence it must have been transported with some trouble, on account of its size and weight.

Seated on the carpet, by the side of this basin, was seen Mr. Rochester, costumed in shawls, with a turban on his head. His dark eyes and swarth skin and Paynim features suited the costume exactly: he looked the very model of an Eastern emir; an agent or a victim of the bowstring. Presently advanced into view Miss Ingram. She, too, was attired in Oriental fashion: a crimson scarf tied sash-like round the waist; an embroidered handkerchief knotted about her temples; her beautifully-moulded arms bare, one of them up-raised in the act of supporting a pitcher, poised gracefully on her head. Both her cast of form and feature, her complexion and her general air, suggested the idea of some Israelitish princess of the patriarchal days; and such was doubtless the character she intended to represent.

She approached the basin, and bent over it as if to fill her pitcher; she again lifted it to her head. The personage on the well-brink now seemed to accost her; to make some request,—'She hasted, let down her pitcher on her hand and gave him to drink.' From the bosom of his robe he then produced a casket, opened it and showed magnificent bracelets and earrings; she acted astonishment and admiration ; kneeling, he laid the treasure at her feet ; incredulity and delight were expressed by her looks and gestures ; the stranger fastened the bracelets on her arms, and the rings in her ears. It was Eliezer and Rebecca ; the camels only were wanting.

The divining party again laid their heads together ; apparently they could not agree about the word or syllable this scene illustrated. Colonel Dent, their spokesman, demanded 'the tableau of the Whole' ; whereupon the curtain again descended.

On its third rising only a portion of the drawing-room was disclosed ; the rest being concealed by a screen, hung with some sort of dark and coarse drapery. The marble basin was removed ; in its place stood a deal table and a kitchen chair : these objects were visible by a very dim light proceeding from a horn lantern, the wax candles being all extinguished.

Amidst this sordid scene sat a man with his clenched hands resting on his knees, and his eyes bent on the ground. I knew Mr. Rochester ; though the begrimed face, the disordered dress (his coat hanging loose from one arm, as if it had been almost torn from his back in a scuffle), the desperate and scowling countenance, the rough, bristling hair might well have disguised him. As he moved a chain clanked ; to his wrists were attached fetters.

'Bridewell !' exclaimed Colonel Dent, and the charade was solved.

A sufficient interval having elapsed for the performers to resume their ordinary costume, they re-entered the dining-room. Mr. Rochester led in Miss Ingram ; she was complimenting him on his acting.

'Do you know,' said she, 'that, of the three characters, I liked you in the last best ? Oh, had you but lived a few years earlier, what a gallant gentleman-highwayman you would have made !'

'Is all the soot washed from my face ?' he asked, turning it towards her.

'Alas, yes; the more's the pity! Nothing could be more becoming to your complexion than that ruffian's rouge.'

'You would like a hero of the road then?'

'An English hero of the road would be the next best thing to an Italian bandit; and that could only be surpassed by a Levantine pirate.'

'Well, whatever I am, remember you are my wife; we were married an hour since, in the presence of all these witnesses.' She giggled, and her colour rose.

'Now, Dent,' continued Mr. Rochester, 'it is your turn.' And as the other party withdrew, he and his band took the vacated seats. Miss Ingram placed herself at her leader's right hand; the other diviners filled the chairs on each side of him and her. I did not now watch the actors; I no longer waited with interest for the curtain to rise; my attention was absorbed by the spectators; my eyes, erewhile fixed on the arch, were now irresistibly attracted to the semicircle of chairs, What charade Colonel Dent and his party played, what word they chose, how they acquitted themselves, I no longer remember; but I still see the consultation which followed each scene: I see Mr. Rochester turn to Miss Ingram, and Miss Ingram to him; I see her incline her head towards him till the jetty curls almost touch his shoulder and wave against his cheek; I hear their mutual whisperings; I recall their interchanged glances; and something even of the feeling roused by the spectacle returns in memory at this moment.

I have told you, reader, that I had learnt to love Mr. Rochester; I could not unlove him now, merely because I found that he had ceased to notice me—because I might pass hours in his presence and he would never once turn his eyes in my direction—because I saw all his attentions appropriated by a great lady, who scorned to touch me with the hem of her robes as she passed; who, if ever her dark and imperious eye fell on me by chance, would withdraw it instantly as from an object too mean to merit observation. I could not unlove him, because I felt sure he would soon marry this very lady—because I read daily in her a proud security in his intentions respecting her—because I witnessed hourly in him a style of courtship which, if careless and choosing rather to be sought than to seek, was yet, in its very carelessness, captivating, and in its very pride, irresistible.

There was nothing to cool or banish love in these circumstances; though much to create despair. Much too, you will think, reader, to engender jealousy; if a woman, in my position, could presume to be jealous of a woman in Miss Ingram's. But I was not jealous; or very rarely;—the nature of the pain I suffered could not be explained by that word. Miss Ingram was a mark beneath jealousy: she was too inferior to excite the feeling. Pardon the seeming paradox; I mean what I say. She was very showy, but she was not genuine: she had a fine person, many brilliant attainments; but her mind was poor, her heart barren by nature; nothing bloomed spontaneously on that soil; no unforced natural fruit delighted by its freshness. She was not good; she was not original: she used to repeat sounding phrases from books: she never offered, nor had, an opinion of her own. She advocated a high tone of sentiment; but she did not know the sensations of sympathy and pity; tenderness and truth were not in her. Too often she betrayed this, by the undue vent she gave to a spiteful antipathy she had conceived against little Adèle: pushing her away with some contumelious epithet if she happened to approach her; sometimes ordering her from the room, and always treating her with coldness and acrimony. Other eyes besides mine watched these manifestations of character—watched them closely, keenly, shrewdly. Yes: the future bridegroom, Mr. Rochester himself, exercised over his intended a ceaseless surveillance: and it was from this sagacity—this guardedness of his—this perfect, clear consciousness of his fair one's defects—this obvious absence of passion in his sentiments towards her, that my ever-torturing pain arose.

I saw he was going to marry her, for family, perhaps political reasons; because her rank and connexions suited him; I felt he had not given her his love, and that her qualifications were ill adapted to win from him that treasure. This was the point—this was where the nerve was touched and teased—this was where the fever was sustained and fed: *she could not charm him.*

If she had managed the victory at once, and he had yielded and sincerely laid his heart at her feet, I should have covered my face, turned to the wall, and (figuratively) have died to them. If Miss Ingram had been a good and noble woman, endowed with force, fervour, kindness, sense, I should have had one vital struggle with two tigers—jealousy and despair: then, my heart torn out and devoured, I should have admired her—acknowledged her excellence, and been quiet for the rest of my days: and the more absolute her superiority, the deeper would have been my admiration—the more truly tranquil my quiescence. But as matters really stood, to watch Miss Ingram's efforts at fascinating Mr. Rochester; to witness their repeated failure—herself unconscious that they did fail; vainly fancying that each shaft launched hit the mark, and infatuatedly pluming herself on success, when her pride and self-complacency repelled further and further what she wished to allure—to witness *this*, was to be at once under ceaseless excitation and ruthless restraint.

Because, when she failed, I saw how she might have succeeded. Arrows that continually glanced off from Mr. Rochester's breast and fell harmless at his feet, might, I knew, if shot by a surer hand, have quivered keen in his proud heart—have called love into his stern eye and softness into his sardonic face; or, better still, without weapons a silent conquest might have been won.

'Why can she not influence him more, when she is privileged to draw so near to him?' I asked myself. 'Surely she cannot truly like him, or not like him with true affection. If she did, she need not coin her smiles so lavishly, flash her glances so unremittingly, manufacture airs so elaborate, graces so multitudinous. It seems to me that she might, by merely sitting quietly at his side, saying little and looking less, get nigher his heart. I have seen in his face a far different expression from that which hardens it now while she is so vivaciously accosting him; but then it came of itself, it was not elicited by meretricious arts and calculated manœuvres; and one had but to accept it—to answer what he asked without pretension, to address him when needful without grimace—and it increased and grew kinder and more genial, and warmed one like a fostering sunbeam. How will she manage to please him when they are married? I do not think she will manage it; and yet it might be managed and his wife might, I verily believe, be the very happiest woman the sun shines on.'

I have not yet said anything condemnatory of Mr Rochester's project of marrying for interest and connexions It surprised me when I first discovered that such was his intention; I had thought him a man unlikely to be influenced by motives so commonplace in his choice of a wife; but the longer I considered the position, education, &c., of the parties, the less I felt justified in judging and blaming either him or Miss Ingram, for acting in conformity to ideas and principles instilled into them, doubtless, from their childhood. All their class held these principles; I supposed, then, they had reasons for holding them such as I could not fathom. It seemed to me that, were I a gentleman like him, I would take to my bosom only such a wife as I could love; but the very obviousness of the advantages to the husband's own happiness, offered by this plan, convinced me that there must be arguments against its general adoption of which I was quite ignorant; otherwise I felt sure all the world would act as I wished to act.

But in other points, as well as this, I was growing very lenient to my master: I was forgetting all his faults, for which I had once kept a sharp look-out. It had formerly been my endeavour to study all sides of his character; to take the bad with the good; and from the just weighing of both to form an equitable judgment. Now I saw no bad. The sarcasm that had repelled, the harshness that had startled me once, were only like keen condiments in a choice dish: their presence was pungent, but their absence would be felt as comparatively insipid. And as for the vague something—was it a sinister or a sorrowful, a designing or a desponding expression?—that opened upon a careful observer, now and then, in his eye and closed again before one could fathom the strange depth partially disclosed; that something which used to make me fear and shrink, as if I had been wandering amongst volcanic-looking hills, and had suddenly felt the ground quiver, and seen it gape; that something I at intervals beheld still, and with throbbing heart, but not with palsied nerves. Instead of wishing to shun, I longed only to dare—to divine it; and I thought Miss Ingram happy, because one day she might look into the abyss at her leisure, explore its secrets, and analyse their nature.

Meantime, while I thought only of my master and his future bride—saw only them, heard only their discourse, and considered only their movements of importance—the rest of the party were occupied with their own separate interests and pleasures. The ladies Lynn and Ingram continued to consort in solemn conferences, when they nodded their two turbans at each other, and held up their four hands in confronting gestures of surprise, or mystery, or horror, according to the theme on which their gossip ran, like a pair of magnified puppets. Mild Mrs. Dent talked with good-natured Mrs. Eshton; and the two sometimes bestowed a courteous word or smile on me. Sir George Lynn, Colonel Dent, and Mr. Eshton discussed politics, or county affairs, or justice business. Lord Ingram flirted with Amy Eshton; Louisa played and sang to and with one of the Messrs. Lynn; and Mary Ingram listened languidly to the gallant speeches of the other. Sometimes all, as with one consent, suspended their by-play to observe and listen to the principal actors; for, after all, Mr. Rochester, and—because closely connected with him—Miss Ingram, were the life and soul of the party. If he was absent from the room an hour, a perceptible dulness seemed to steal over the spirits of his guests, and his re-entrance was sure to give a fresh impulse to the vivacity of conversation.

The want of his animating influence appeared to be peculiarly felt one day that he had been summoned to Millcote on business, and was not likely to return till late. The afternoon was wet: a walk the party had proposed to take to see a gipsy camp, lately pitched on a common beyond Hay, was consequently deferred. Some of the gentlemen were gone to the stables; the younger ones, together with the younger ladies, were playing billiards in the billiard-room. The dowagers Ingram and Lynn sought solace in a quiet game at cards. Blanche Ingram, after having repelled, by supercilious taciturnity, some efforts of Mrs. Dent and Mrs. Eshton to draw her into conversation, had first murmured over some sentimental tunes and airs on the piano, and then, having fetched a novel from the library, had flung herself in haughty listlessness on a sofa, and prepared to beguile, by the spell of fiction, the tedious hours of absence. The room and the house were silent; only now and then the merriment of the billiard players was heard from above.

It was verging on dusk, and the clock had already given warning of the hour to dress for dinner, when little Adèle, who knelt by me in the drawing-room window-seat, exclaimed,—'Voilà Monsieur Rochester, qui revient!'

I turned, and Miss Ingram darted forwards from her sofa; the others, too, looked up from their several occupations; for at the same time a crunching of wheels, and a splashing tramp of horse-hoofs became audible on the wet gravel. A post-chaise was approaching.

'What can possess him to come home in that style?' said Miss Ingram. 'He rode Mesrour (the black horse), did he not, when he went out? and Pilot was with him,—what has he done with the animals?'

As she said this, she approached her tall person and ample garments so near the window, that I was obliged to bend back almost to the breaking of my spine; in her eagerness she did not observe me at first, but when she did, she curled her lip and moved to another casement. The post-chaise stopped, the driver rang the door bell, and a gentleman alighted, attired in travelling garb; but it was not Mr. Rochester; it was a tall, fashionable-looking man, a stranger.

'Provoking!' exclaimed Miss Ingram: 'you tiresome monkey!' (apostrophising Adèle) 'who perched you up in the window to give false intelligence?' and she cast on me an angry glance, as if I were in fault.

Some parleying was audible in the hall, and soon the new-comer entered. He bowed to Lady Ingram, as deeming her the eldest lady present.

'It appears I come at an inopportune time, madam,' said he; 'when my friend, Mr. Rochester, is from home; but I arrive from a very long journey, and I think I may presume so far on old and intimate acquaintance as to instal myself here till he returns.'

His manner was polite; his accent, in speaking, struck me as being somewhat unusual,—not precisely foreign, but still not altogether English; his age might be about Mr. Rochester's,—between thirty and forty; his complexion was singularly sallow; otherwise he was a fine-looking man, at first sight especially. On closer examination you detected something in his face that displeased; or rather, that failed to please. His features were regular, but too relaxed; his eye was large and well cut, but the life looking out of it was a tame, vacant life—at least so I thought.

The sound of the dressing-bell dispersed the party. It was not till after dinner that I saw him again; he then seemed quite at his ease. But I liked his physiognomy even less than before; it struck me as being, at the same time, unsettled and inanimate. His eye wandered, and had no meaning in its wandering; this gave him an odd look, such as I never remembered to have seen. For a handsome and not an unamiable-looking man, he repelled me exceedingly; there was no power in that smooth-skinned face of a full oval shape; no firmness in that aquiline nose, and small cherry mouth; there was no thought on the low, even forehead; no command in that blank, brown eye.

As I sat in my usual nook, and looked at him with the light of the girandoles on the mantelpiece beaming full over him—for he occupied an arm-chair, drawn close to the fire, and kept shrinking still nearer, as if he were cold—I compared him with Mr. Rochester. I think (with deference be it spoken) the contrast could not be much greater between a sleek gander and a fierce falcon: between a meek sheep and the rough-coated keen-eyed dog, its guardian.

He had spoken of Mr. Rochester as an old friend. A curious friendship theirs must have been: a pointed illustration, indeed, of the old adage that 'extremes meet.'

Two or three of the gentlemen sat near him, and I caught at times scraps of their conversation across the room. At first I could not make much sense of what I heard; for the discourse of Louisa Eshton and Mary Ingram, who sat nearer to me, confused the fragmentary sentences that reached me at intervals. These last were discussing the stranger: they both called him a 'beautiful man.' Louisa said he was 'a love of a creature,' and she 'adored him': and Mary instanced his 'pretty little mouth, and nice nose,' as her ideal of the charming.

'And what a sweet-tempered forehead he has!' cried Louisa,—'so smooth—none of those frowning irregularities I dislike so much: and such a placid eye and smile!'

And then, to my great relief, Mr. Henry Lynn summoned them to the other side of the room, to settle some point about the deferred excursion to Hay Common.

I was now able to concentrate my attention on the group by the fire, and I presently gathered that the new-comer was called Mr. Mason: then I learnt that he was but just arrived in England, and that he came from some hot country: which was the reason, doubtless, his face was so sallow, and that he sat so near the hearth, and wore a surtout in the house. Presently the words, Jamaica, Kingston, Spanish Town, indicated the West Indies as his residence; and it was with no little surprise I gathered, ere long, that he had there first seen and become acquainted with Mr. Rochester. He spoke of his friend's dislike of the burning heats, the hurricanes, and rainy seasons of that region. I knew Mr. Rochester had been a traveller: Mrs. Fairfax had said so; but I thought the continent of Europe had bounded his wanderings: till now I had never heard a hint given of visits to more distant shores.

I was pondering these things, when an incident, and a somewhat unexpected one, broke the thread of my musings. Mr. Mason, shivering as some one chanced to open the door, asked for more coal to be put on the fire, which had burnt out its flame, though its mass of cinder still shone hot and red. The footman who brought the coal, in going out, stopped near Mr. Eshton's chair, and said something to him in a low voice, of which I heard only the words, 'old woman,'—'quite troublesome.'

'Tell her she shall be put in the stocks if she does not take herself off,' replied the magistrate.

'No—stop!' interrupted Colonel Dent. 'Don't send her away, Eshton; we might turn the thing to account; better consult the ladies.' And speaking aloud, he continued, 'Ladies, you talked of going to Hay Common to visit the gipsy camp; Sam, here, says that one of the old Mother Bunches is in the servants' hall at this moment, and insists upon being brought in before "the quality," to tell them their fortunes. Would you like to see her?'

'Surely, colonel,' cried Lady Ingram, 'you would not encourage such a low impostor. Dismiss her, by all means, at once!'

'But I cannot persuade her to go away, my lady,' said the footman; 'nor can any of the servants: Mrs. Fairfax is with her just now, entreating her to be gone; but she has taken a chair in the chimney-corner, and says nothing shall stir her from it till she gets leave to come in here.'

'What does she want?' asked Mrs. Eshton.

'"To tell the gentry their fortunes," she says, ma'am; and she swears she must and will do it.'

'What is she like?' inquired the Misses Eshton in a breath.

'A shockingly ugly old creature, miss; almost as black as a crock.'

'Why, she's a real sorceress!' cried Frederick Lynn. 'Let us have her in, of course.'

'To be sure,' rejoined his brother; 'it would be a thousand pities to throw away such a chance of fun.'

'My dear boys, what are you thinking about?' exclaimed Mrs. Lynn.

'I cannot possibly countenance any such inconsistent proceeding,' chimed in the Dowager Ingram.

'Indeed, mamma, but you can—and will,' pronounced the haughty voice of Blanche, as she turned round on the piano-stool; where till now she had sat silent, apparently examining sundry sheets of music. 'I have a curiosity to hear my fortune told: therefore, Sam, order the beldame forwards.'

'My darling Blanche! recollect——'

'I do—I recollect all you can suggest; and I must have my will—quick, Sam!'

'Yes—yes—yes!' cried all the juveniles, both ladies and gentlemen. 'Let her come—it will be excellent sport!'

The footman still lingered. 'She looks such a rough one,' said he.

'Go!' ejaculated Miss Ingram, and the man went.

Excitement instantly seized the whole party: a running fire of raillery and jests was proceeding when Sam returned.

'She won't come now,' said he. 'She says it's not her mission to appear before the "vulgar herd" (them's her words). I must show her into a room by herself, and then those who wish to consult her must go to her one by one.'

'You see now, my queenly Blanche,' began Lady Ingram, 'she encroaches. Be advised, my angel girl—and——'

'Show her into the library, of course,' cut in the 'angel girl.' 'It is not my mission to listen to her before the vulgar herd either: I mean to have her all to myself. Is there a fire in the library?'

'Yes, ma'am—but she looks such a tinkler.'

'Cease that chatter, blockhead! and do my bidding.'

Again Sam vanished; and mystery, animation, expectation rose to full flow once more.

'She's ready now,' said the footman, as he reappeared. 'She wishes to know who will be her first visitor.'

'I think I had better just look in upon her before any of the ladies go,' said Colonel Dent.

'Tell her, Sam, a gentleman is coming.'

Sam went and returned.

'She says, sir, that she'll have no gentlemen; they need not trouble themselves to come near her: nor,' he added, with difficulty suppressing a titter, 'any ladies either, except the young and single.'

'By Jove, she has taste!' exclaimed Henry Lynn.

Miss Ingram rose solemnly: 'I go first,' she said, in a tone which might have befitted the leader of a forlorn hope, mounting a breach in the van of his men.

'Oh, my best! oh, my dearest! pause—reflect!' was her mamma's cry; but she swept past her in stately silence, passed through the door which Colonel Dent held open, and we heard her enter the library.

A comparative silence ensued. Lady Ingram thought it 'le cas' to wring her hands: which she did accordingly. Miss Mary declared she felt, for her part, she never dared venture. Amy and Louisa Eshton tittered under their breath, and looked a little frightened.

The minutes passed very slowly: fifteen were counted before the library-door again opened. Miss Ingram returned to us through the arch.

Would she laugh? Would she take it as a joke? All eyes met her with a glance of curiosity, and she met all eyes with one of rebuff and coldness: she looked neither flurried nor merry; she walked stiffly to her seat, and took it in silence.

'Well, Blanche?' said Lord Ingram.

'What did she say, sister?' asked Mary.

'What did you think? How do you feel? Is she a real fortune-teller?' demanded the Misses Eshton.

'Now, now, good people,' returned Miss Ingram, 'don't press upon me. Really your organs of wonder and credulity are easily excited: you seem by the importance you all—my good mamma included—ascribe to this matter—absolutely to believe we have a genuine witch in the house, who is in close alliance with the old gentleman. I have seen a gipsy-vagabond; she has practised in hackneyed fashion the science of palmistry, and told me what such people usually tell. My whim is gratified; and now I think Mr. Eshton will do well to put the hag in the stocks to-morrow morning, as he threatened.'

Miss Ingram took a book, leant back in her chair, and so declined further conversation. I watched her for nearly half an hour: during all that time she never turned a page, and her face grew momently darker, more dissatisfied, and more sourly expressive of disappointment. She had obviously not heard anything to her advantage: and it seemed to me, from her prolonged fit of gloom and taciturnity, that she herself, notwithstanding her professed indifference, attached undue importance to whatever revelations had been made her.

Meantime, Mary Ingram, Amy and Louisa Eshton, declared they dared not go alone; and yet they all wished to go. A negotiation was opened through the medium of the ambassador, Sam; and after much pacing to and fro, till, I think, the said Sam's calves must have ached with the exercise, permission was at last, with great difficulty extorted from the rigorous Sibyl, for the three to wait upon her in a body.

Their visit was not so still as Miss Ingram's had been:

we heard hysterical giggling and little shrieks proceeding from the library; and at the end of about twenty minutes they burst the door open, and came running across the hall, as if they were half-scared out of their wits.

'I'm sure she is something not right!' they cried one and all. 'She told us such things! She knows all about us!' and they sank breathless into the various seats the gentlemen hastened to bring them.

Pressed for further explanation they declared she had told them of things they had said and done when they were mere children; described books and ornaments they had in their boudoirs at home; keepsakes that different relations had presented to them. They affirmed that she had even divined their thoughts, and had whispered in the ear of each the name of the person she liked best in the world, and informed them of what they most wished for.

Here the gentlemen interposed with earnest petitions to be further enlightened on these two last-named points; but they got only blushes, ejaculations, tremors, and titters, in return for their importunity. The matrons, meantime, offered vinaigrettes and wielded fans; and again and again reiterated the expression of their concern that their warning had not been taken in time; and the elder gentlemen laughed, and the younger urged their services on the agitated fair ones.

In the midst of the tumult, and while my eyes and ears were fully engaged in the scene before me, I heard a hem close at my elbow: I turned and saw Sam.

'If you please, miss, the gipsy declares that there is another young single lady in the room who has not been to her yet, and she swears she will not go till she has seen all. I thought it must be you: there is no one else for it. What shall I tell her?'

'Oh, I will go by all means,' I answered; and I was glad of the unexpected opportunity to gratify my much-excited curiosity. I slipped out of the room, unobserved by any eye —for the company were gathered in one mass about the trembling trio just returned—and I closed the door quietly behind me.

'If you like, miss,' said Sam, 'I'll wait in the hall for you; and if she frightens you, just call and I'll come in.'

'No, Sam, return to the kitchen: I am not in the least afraid.' Nor was I; but I was a good deal interested and excited.

CHAPTER XIX

The library looked tranquil enough as I entered it, and the Sibyl—if Sibyl she were—was seated snugly enough in an easy chair at the chimney-corner. She had on a red cloak and a black bonnet: or rather, a broad-brimmed gipsy hat, tied down with a striped handkerchief under her chin. An extinguished candle stood on the table: she was bending over the fire, and seemed reading in a little black book, like a prayer-book, by the light of the blaze: she muttered the words to herself, as most old women do, while she read; she did not desist immediately on my entrance: it appeared she wished to finish a paragraph.

I stood on the rug and warmed my hands, which were rather cold with sitting at a distance from the drawing-room fire. I felt now as composed as ever I did in my life: there was nothing indeed in the gipsy's appearance to trouble one's calm. She shut her book and slowly looked up; her hat-brim partially shaded her face, yet I could see as she raised it, that it was a strange one. It looked all brown and black: elf-locks bristled out from beneath a white band which passed under her chin, and came half over her cheeks or rather jaws; her eye confronted me at once, with a bold and direct gaze.

'Well, and you want your fortune told?' she said in a voice as decided as her glance, as harsh as her features.

'I don't care about it, mother; you may please yourself; but I ought to warn you, I have no faith.'

'It's like your impudence to say so: I expected it of you; I heard it in your step as you crossed the threshold.'

'Did you? You've a quick ear.'

'I have; and a quick eye, and a quick brain.'

'You need them all in your trade.'

'I do; especially when I've customers like you to deal with. Why don't you tremble?'

'I'm not cold.'

'Why don't you turn pale?'

'I am not sick.'

'Why don't you consult my art.'

'I'm not silly.'

The old crone 'nichered' a laugh under her bonnet and bandage: she then drew out a short, black pipe, and lighting it began to smoke. Having indulged a while in this sedative, she raised her bent body, took the pipe from her lips, and while gazing steadily at the fire, said very deliberately:—'You are cold; you are sick; and you are silly.'

'Prove it,' I rejoined.

'I will; in few words. You are cold, because you are alone: no contact strikes the fire from you that is in you. You are sick: because the best of feelings, the highest and the sweetest given to man, keeps far away from you. You are silly, because, suffer as you may, you will not beckon it to approach; nor will you stir one step to meet it where it waits you.'

She again put her short, black pipe to her lips, and renewed her smoking with vigour.

'You might say all that to almost any one who, you knew, lived as a solitary dependant in a great house.'

'I might say it to almost any one; but would it be true of almost any one?'

'In my circumstances.'

'Yes; just so, in *your* circumstances: but find me another precisely placed as you are.'

'It would be easy to find you thousands.'

'You could scarcely find me one. If you knew it, you are peculiarly situated: very near happiness; yes; within reach of it. The materials are all prepared; there only wants a movement to combine them. Chance laid them somewhat apart; let them be once approached and bliss results.'

'I don't understand enigmas. I never could guess a riddle in my life.'

'If you wish me to speak more plainly, show me your palm.'

'And I must cross it with silver, I suppose?'

'To be sure.'

I gave her a shilling: she put it into an old stocking-foot which she took out of her pocket, and having tied it round and returned it, she told me to hold out my hand. I did. She approached her face to the palm, and pored over it without touching it.

'It is too fine,' said she. 'I can make nothing of such a hand as that; almost without lines: besides, what is in a palm? Destiny is not written there.'

'I believe you,' said I.

'No,' she continued, 'it is in the face: on the forehead, about the eyes, in the eyes themselves, in the lines of the mouth. Kneel, and lift up your head.'

'Ah! now you are coming to reality,' I said as I obeyed her. 'I shall begin to put some faith in you presently.'

I knelt within half a yard of her. She stirred the fire, so that a ripple of light broke from the disturbed coal: the glare, however, as she sat, only threw her face into deeper shadow: mine, it illumined.

'I wonder with what feelings you came to me to-night,' she said, when she had examined me a while. 'I wonder what thoughts are busy in your heart during all the hours you sit in yonder room with the fine people flitting before you like shapes in a magic lantern: just as little sympathetic communion passing between you and them, as if they were really mere shadows of human forms and not the actual substance.'

'I feel tired often, sleepy sometimes; but seldom sad.'

'Then you have some secret hope to buoy you up and please you with whispers of the future?'

'Not I. The utmost I hope is, to save money enough out of my earnings to set up a school some day in a little house rented by myself.'

'A mean nutriment for the spirit to exist on: and sitting in that window-seat (you see I know your habits)——'

'You have learned them from the servants.'

'Ah! you think yourself sharp. Well—perhaps I have: to speak truth, I have an acquaintance with one of them—Mrs. Poole——'

I started to my feet when I heard the name.

'You have—have you?' thought I; 'there is diablerie in the business after all, then!'

'Don't be alarmed,' continued the strange being; 'she's a safe hand, is Mrs. Poole: close and quiet: any one may repose confidence in her. But, as I was saying: sitting in that window-seat, do you think of nothing but your future school? Have you no present interest in any of the company who occupy the sofas and chairs before you? Is there not one face you study? One figure whose movements you follow with, at least, curiosity?'

'I like to observe all the faces, and all the figures.'

'But do you never single one from the rest—or it may be, two?'

'I do frequently; when the gestures or looks of a pair seem telling a tale: it amuses me to watch them.'

'What tale do you like best to hear?'

'Oh, I have not much choice! They generally run on the same theme—courtship; and promise to end in the same catastrophe—marriage.'

'And do you like that monotonous theme?'

'Positively, I don't care about it: it is nothing to me.'

'Nothing to you? When a lady, young and full of life and health, charming with beauty and endowed with the gifts of rank and fortune, sits and smiles in the eyes of a gentleman you——'

'I what?'

'You know—and, perhaps, think well of?'

'I don't know the gentlemen here. I have scarcely interchanged a syllable with one of them; and as to thinking well of them, I consider some respectable and stately, and middle-aged, and others young, dashing, handsome and lively: but certainly they are all at liberty to be the recipients of whose smiles they please, without my feeling disposed to consider the transaction of any moment to me.'

'You don't know the gentlemen here? You have not exchanged a syllable with one of them? Will you say that of the master of the house?'

'He is not at home.'

'A profound remark! A most ingenious quibble! He went to Millcote this morning, and will be back here to-night, or to-morrow: does that circumstance exclude him from the list of your acquaintance—blot him, as it were, out of existence?'

'No: but I can scarcely see what Mr. Rochester has to do with the theme you had introduced.'

'I was talking of ladies smiling in the eyes of gentlemen; and of late so many smiles have been shed into Mr. Rochester's eyes that they overflow like two cups filled above the brim: have you never remarked that?'

'Mr. Rochester has a right to enjoy the society of his guests.'

'No question about his right: but have you never observed that, of all the tales told here about matrimony, Mr. Rochester has been favoured with the most lively and the most continuous?'

'The eagerness of a listener quickens the tongue of a narrator.' I said this rather to myself than to the gipsy; whose strange talk, voice, manner, had by this time wrapped me in a kind of dream. One unexpected sentence came from her lips after another, till I got involved in a web of mystification; and wondered what unseen spirit had been sitting for weeks by my heart watching its workings and taking record of every pulse.

'Eagerness of a listener!' repeated she: 'yes; Mr.

Rochester has sat by the hour, his ear inclined to the fascinating lips that took such delight in their task of communicating; and Mr. Rochester was so willing to receive and looked so grateful for the pastime given him: you have noticed this?'

'Grateful! I cannot remember detecting gratitude in his face.'

'Detecting! You have analysed, then. And what did you detect, if not gratitude?'

I said nothing.

'You have seen love: have you not?—and, looking forward, you have seen him married and beheld his bride happy?'

'Humph! Not exactly. Your witch's skill is rather at fault sometimes.'

'What the devil have you seen, then?'

'Never mind: I came here to inquire, not to confess. Is it known that Mr. Rochester is to be married?'

'Yes; and to the beautiful Miss Ingram.'

'Shortly?'

'Appearances would warrant that conclusion; and, no doubt (though, with an audacity that wants chastising out of you, you seem to question it), they will be a superlatively happy pair. He must love such a handsome, noble, witty, accomplished lady; and probably she loves him: or, if not his person, at least his purse. I know she considers the Rochester estate eligible to the last degree; though (God pardon me!) I told her something on that point about an hour ago, which made her look wondrous grave: the corners of her mouth fell half an inch. I would advise her black-aviced suitor to look out: if another comes with a longer, or clearer rent-roll,—he's dished——'

'But, mother, I did not come to hear Mr. Rochester's fortune: I came to hear my own; and you have told me nothing of it.'

'Your fortune is yet doubtful: when I examined your face, one trait contradicted another. Chance has meted you a measure of happiness: that I know. I knew it before I came here this evening. She has laid it carefully on one side for you. I saw her do it. It depends on yourself to stretch out your hand, and take it up; but whether you will do so, is the problem I study. Kneel again on the rug.'

'Don't keep me long; the fire scorches me.'

I knelt. She did not stoop towards me, but only gazed leaning back in her chair. She began muttering,—'The flame flickers in the eye, the eye shines like dew: it looks soft and full of feeling; it smiles at my jargon: it is susceptible; impression follows impression through its clear sphere; where it ceases to smile, it is sad; an unconscious lassitude weighs on the lid: that signifies melancholy resulting from loneliness. It turns from me; it will not suffer farther scrutiny; it seems to deny, by a mocking glance, the truth of the discoveries I have already made,—to disown the charge both of sensibility and chagrin: its pride and reserve only confirm me in my opinion. The eye is favourable.

'As to the mouth, it delights at times in laughter; it is disposed to impart all that the brain conceives; though I daresay it would be silent on much the heart experiences. Mobile and flexible, it was never intended to be compressed in the eternal silence of solitude: it is a mouth which should speak much and smile often and have human affection for its interlocutor. That feature too is propitious.

'I see no enemy to a fortunate issue but in the brow; and that brow professes to say,—"I can live alone, if self-respect and circumstances require me so to do. I need not sell my soul to buy bliss. I have an inward treasure, born with me, which can keep me alive if all extraneous delights should be withheld; or offered only at a price I cannot afford to give." The forehead declares, "Reason sits firm and holds the reins, and she will not let the feelings burst away and hurry her to wild chasms. The passions may rage furiously, like true heathens, as they are; and the desires may imagine all sorts of vain things: but judgment shall still have the last word in every argument, and the casting vote in every decision. Strong wind, earthquake-shock, and fire may pass by: but I shall follow the guiding of that still small voice which interprets the dictates of conscience."

'Well said, forehead; your declaration shall be respected. I have formed my plans—right plans I deem them—and in them I have attended to the claims of conscience, the counsels of reason. I know how soon youth would fade and bloom perish, if, in the cup of bliss offered, but one dreg of shame, or one flavour of remorse were detected; and I do not want sacrifice, sorrow, dissolution—such is not my taste. I wish to foster, not to blight—to earn gratitude, not to wring tears of blood—no, nor of brine: my harvest must be in smiles, in endearments, in sweet.—That will do. I think I rave in a kind of exquisite delirium. I should wish now to protract this moment *ad infinitum;* but I dare not. So far I have governed myself thoroughly. I have acted as I inwardly swore I would act; but farther might try me beyond my strength. Rise, Miss Eyre: leave me; "the play is played out."'

Where was I? Did I wake or sleep? Had I been dreaming? Did I dream still? The old woman's voice had changed: her accent, her gesture, and all were familiar to me as my own face in a glass—as the speech of my own tongue. I got up, but did not go. I looked; I stirred the fire, and I looked again: but she drew her bonnet and her bandage closer about her face, and again beckoned me to depart. The flame illuminated her hand stretched out: roused now, and on the alert for discoveries, I at once noticed that hand. It was no more the withered limb of eld than my own; it was a rounded supple member, with smooth fingers, symmetrically turned; a broad ring flashed on the little finger, and stooping forward, I looked at it, and saw a gem I had seen a hundred times before. Again I looked at the face; which was no longer turned from me—on the contrary, the bonnet was doffed, the bandage displaced, the head advanced.

'Well, Jane, do you know me?' asked the familiar voice.

'Only take off the red cloak, sir, and then—— '

'But the string is in a knot—help me.'

'Break it, sir.'

'There, then—"Off, ye lendings!"'

And Mr. Rochester stepped out of his disguise.

'Now, sir, what a strange idea!'

'But well carried out, eh? Don't you think so?'

'With the ladies you must have managed well.'

'But not with you?'

'You did not act the character of a gipsy with me.'

'What character did I act? My own?'

'No; some unaccountable one. In short, I believe you have been trying to draw me out—or in; you have been talking nonsense to make me talk nonsense. It is scarcely fair, sir.'

'Do you forgive me, Jane?'

'I cannot tell till I have thought it all over. If, on reflection, I find I have fallen into no great absurdity, I shall try to forgive you; but it was not right.'

'Oh! you have been very correct—very careful, very sensible.'

I reflected, and thought, on the whole, I had. It was a comfort; but, indeed, I had been on my guard almost from the beginning of the interview. Something of masquerade I suspected. I knew gipsies and fortune-tellers did not express themselves as this seeming old woman had expressed herself; besides, I had noted her feigned voice, her anxiety to conceal her features. But my mind had been running on Grace Poole—that living enigma, that mystery of mysteries, as I considered her. I had never thought of Mr. Rochester.

'Well,' said he, 'what are you musing about? What does that grave smile signify?'

'Wonder and self-congratulation, sir. I have your permission to retire now, I suppose?'

'No; stay a moment; and tell me what the people in the drawing-room yonder are doing.'

'Discussing the gipsy, I daresay.

'Sit down!—Let me hear what they said about me.'

'I had better not stay long, sir; it must be near eleven o'clock. Oh! are you aware, Mr. Rochester, that a stranger has arrived here since you left this morning?'

'A stranger!—no; who can it be? I expected no one; is he gone?'

'No; he said he had known you long, and that he could take the liberty of installing himself here till you returned.'

'The devil he did! Did he give his name?'

'His name is Mason, sir; and he comes from the West Indies; from Spanish Town, in Jamaica, I think.'

Mr. Rochester was standing near me; he had taken my hand, as if to lead me to a chair. As I spoke, he gave my wrist a convulsive grip; the smile on his lips froze: apparently a spasm caught his breath.

'Mason!—the West Indies!' he said, in the tone one might fancy a speaking automaton to enounce its single words; 'Mason!—the West Indies!' he reiterated; and he went over the syllables three times, growing, in the intervals of speaking, whiter than ashes: he hardly seemed to know what he was doing.

'Do you feel ill, sir?' I inquired.

'Jane, I've got a blow;—I've got a blow, Jane!' he staggered.

'Oh!—lean on me, sir.'

'Jane, you offered me your shoulder once before; let me have it now.'

'Yes, sir, yes; and my arm.'

He sat down, and made me sit beside him. Holding my hand in both his own, he chafed it; gazing on me, at the same time, with the most troubled and dreary look.

'My little friend!' said he, 'I wish I were in a quiet island with only you; and trouble, and danger, and hideous recollections removed from me.'

'Can I help you, sir?—I'd give my life to serve you.'

'Jane, if aid is wanted, I'll seek it at your hands; I promise you that.'

'Thank you, sir; tell me what to do,—I'll try, at least, to do it.'

'Fetch me now, Jane, a glass of wine from the dining-room; they will be at supper there; and tell me if Mason is with them, and what he is doing.'

I went. I found all the party in the dining-room at supper, as Mr. Rochester had said; they were not seated at table,—the supper was arranged on the side-board; each had taken what he chose, and they stood about here and there in groups, their plates and glasses in their hands. Every one seemed in high glee; laughter and conversation were general and animated. Mr. Mason stood near the fire, talking to Colonel and Mrs. Dent, and appeared as merry as any of them. I filled a wine-glass (I saw Miss Ingram watch me frowningly as I did so: she thought I was taking a liberty, I daresay), and I returned to the library.

Mr. Rochester's extreme pallor had disappeared, and he looked once more firm and stern. He took the glass from my hand.

'Here is to your health, ministrant spirit!' he said: he swallowed the contents and returned it to me. 'What are they doing, Jane?'

'Laughing and talking, sir.'

'They don't look grave and mysterious, as if they had heard something strange?'

'Not at all—they are full of jests and gaiety.'

'And Mason?'

'He was laughing too.'

'If all these people came in a body and spat at me, what would you do, Jane?'

'Turn them out of the room, sir, if I could.'

He half smiled. 'But if I were to go to them, and they only looked at me coldly, and whispered sneeringly amongst each other, and then dropt off and left me one by one, what then? Would you go with them?'

'I rather think not, sir: I should have more pleasure in staying with you.'

'To comfort me?'

'Yes, sir, to comfort you, as well as I could.'

'And if they laid you under a ban for adhering to me?'

'I, probably, should know nothing about their ban; and if I did, I should care nothing about it.'

'Then, you could dare censure for my sake?'

'I could dare it for the sake of any friend who deserved my adherence; as you, I am sure, do.'

'Go back now into the room; step quietly up to Mason, and whisper in his ear that Mr. Rochester is come and wishes to see him: show him in here and then leave me.'

'Yes, sir.'

I did his behest. The company all stared at me as I passed straight among them. I sought Mr. Mason, delivered the message, and preceded him from the room: I ushered him into the library, and then I went upstairs.

At a late hour, after I had been in bed some time, I heard the visitors repair to their chambers: I distinguished Mr. Rochester's voice, and heard him say, 'This way, Mason; this is your room.'

He spoke cheerfully: the gay tones set my heart at ease I was soon asleep.

CHAPTER XX

I HAD forgotten to draw my curtain, which I usually did; and also to let down my window-blind. The consequence was, that when the moon, which was full and bright (for the night was fine), came in her course to that space in the sky opposite my casement, and looked in at me through the unveiled panes, her glorious gaze roused me. Awaking in the dead of night, I opened my eyes on her disk—silver-white and crystal-clear. It was beautiful, but too solemn: I half rose, and stretched my arm to draw the curtain.

Good God! What a cry!

The night—its silence—its rest, was rent in twain, by a savage, a sharp, a shrilly sound that ran from end to end of Thornfield Hall.

My pulse stopped: my heart stood still; my stretched arm was paralysed. The cry died, and was not renewed. Indeed, whatever being uttered that fearful shriek could not soon repeat it: not the widest-winged condor on the Andes could, twice in succession, send out such a yell from the cloud shrouding his eyrie. The thing delivering such utterance must rest ere it could repeat the effort.

It came out of the third story; for it passed overhead. And overhead—yes, in the room just above my chamber ceiling—I now heard a struggle: a deadly one it seemed from the noise; and a half-smothered voice shouted—'Help! help! help!' three times rapidly.

'Will no one come?' it cried; and then, while the staggering and stamping went on wildly, I distinguished through plank and plaster:—'Rochester! Rochester! for God's sake, come!'

A chamber door opened: some one ran, or rushed, along the gallery. Another step stamped on the flooring above, and something fell; and there was silence.

I had put on some clothes, though horror shook all my limbs: I issued from my apartment. The sleepers were all aroused: ejaculations, terrified murmurs, sounded in every room; door after door unclosed: one looked out and another looked out; the gallery filled. Gentlemen and ladies alike had quitted their beds; and 'Oh! what is it?'—'Who is hurt?'—'What has happened?'—'Fetch a light!'—'Is it fire?'—'Are there robbers?'—'Where shall we run?' was demanded confusedly on all hands. But for the moonlight they would have been in complete darkness. They ran to and fro; they crowded together; some sobbed, some stumbled: the confusion was inextricable.

'Where the devil is Rochester?' cried Colonel Dent. 'I cannot find him in his bed.'

'Here! here!' was shouted in return. 'Be composed, all of you: I'm coming.'

And the door at the end of the gallery opened, and Mr. Rochester advanced with a candle: he had just descended from the upper story. One of the ladies ran to him directly; she seized his arm: it was Miss Ingram.

'What awful event has taken place?' said she. 'Speak! let us know the worst at once!'

'But don't pull me down or strangle me,' he replied: for the Misses Eshton were clinging about him now; and the two dowagers, in vast white wrappers, were bearing down on him like ships in full sail.

'All's right!—all's right!' he cried. 'It's a mere rehearsal of Much Ado About Nothing. Ladies, keep off; or I shall wax dangerous.'

And dangerous he looked: his black eyes darted sparks. Calming himself by an effort, he added:—'A servant has had the nightmare; that is all. She's an excitable, nervous person: she construed her dream into an apparition, or something of that sort, no doubt; and has taken a fit with fright. Now, then, I must see you all back into your rooms; for, till the house is settled she cannot be looked after. Gentlemen, have the goodness to set the ladies the example. Miss Ingram, I am sure you will not fail in evincing superiority to idle terrors. Amy and Louisa, return to your nests like a pair of doves, as you are. Mesdames' (to the dowagers), 'you will take cold to a dead certainty, if you stay in this chill gallery any longer.'

And so, by dint of alternate coaxing and commanding, he contrived to get them all once more enclosed in their separate dormitories. I did not wait to be ordered back to mine; but retreated unnoticed: as unnoticed I had left it.

Not, however, to go to bed: on the contrary, I began and dressed myself carefully. The sounds I had heard after the scream, and the words that had been uttered, had probably been heard only by me; for they had proceeded from the room above mine: but they assured me that it was not a servant's dream which had thus struck horror through the house; and that the explanation Mr. Rochester had given was merely an invention framed to pacify his guests. I dressed, then, to be ready for emergencies. When dressed, I sat a long time by the window, looking out over the silent grounds and silvered fields, and waiting for I knew not what. It seemed to me that some event must follow the strange cry, struggle, and call.

No: stillness returned: each murmur and movement ceased gradually, and in about an hour Thornfield Hall was again as hushed as a desert. It seemed that sleep and night had resumed their empire. Meantime the moon declined: she was about to set. Not liking to sit in the cold and darkness, I thought I would lie down on my bed, dressed as I was. I left the window, and moved with little noise across the carpet; as I stooped to take off my shoes, a cautious hand tapped low at the door.

'Am I wanted?' I asked.

'Are you up?' asked the voice I expected to hear, viz. my master's.

'Yes, sir.'

'And dressed?'

'Yes.'

'Come out, then, quietly.'

I obeyed. Mr. Rochester stood in the gallery, holding a light.

'I want you,' he said: 'come this way: take your time and make no noise.'

My slippers were thin: I could walk the matted floor as softly as a cat. He glided up the gallery and up the stairs, and stopped in the dark, low corridor of the fateful third story: I had followed and stood at his side.

'Have you a sponge in your room?' he asked in a whisper.

'Yes, sir.'

'Have you any salts—volatile salts?'

'Yes.'

'Go back and fetch both.'

I returned, sought the sponge on the wash-stand, the salts in my drawer, and once more retraced my steps. He still waited; he held a key in his hand: approaching one of the small, black doors, he put it in the lock; he paused and addressed me again.

'You don't turn sick at the sight of blood?'

'I think I shall not: I have never been tried yet.'

I felt a thrill while I answered him; but no coldness, and no faintness.

'Just give me your hand,' he said; 'it will not do to risk a fainting fit.'

I put my fingers into his. 'Warm and steady,' was his remark: he turned the key and opened the door.

I saw a room I remembered to have seen before; the day Mrs. Fairfax showed me over the house: it was hung with tapestry; but the tapestry was now looped up in one part, and there was a door apparent, which had then been concealed. This door was open; a light shone out of the room within: I heard thence a snarling, snatching sound, almost like a dog quarrelling. Mr. Rochester, putting down his candle, said to me, 'Wait a minute,' and he went forward to the inner apartment. A shout of laughter greeted his entrance; noisy at first, and terminating in Grace Poole's own goblin ha! ha! *She* then was there. He made some sort of arrangement, without speaking: though I heard a low voice address him: he came out and closed the door behind him.

'Here, Jane!' he said; and I walked round to the other side of a large bed, which with its drawn curtains concealed a considerable portion of the chamber. An easy-chair was near the bed-head: a man sat in it, dressed with the exception of his coat; he was still; his head leant back; his eyes were closed. Mr. Rochester held the candle over him; I recognised in his pale and seemingly lifeless face—the stranger, Mason: I saw too that his linen on one side, and one arm, was almost soaked in blood.

'Hold the candle,' said Mr. Rochester, and I took it; he fetched a basin of water from the wash-stand: 'Hold that,' said he. I obeyed. He took the sponge, dipped it in and moistened the corpse-like face: he asked for my smelling-bottle, and applied it to the nostrils. Mr. Mason shortly unclosed his eyes; he groaned. Mr. Rochester opened the shirt of the wounded man, whose arm and shoulder were bandaged: he sponged away blood, trickling fast down.

'Is there immediate danger,' murmured Mr. Mason.

'Pooh! No—a mere scratch. Don't be so overcome, man: bear up! I'll fetch a surgeon for you now, myself: you'll be able to be removed by morning, I hope. Jane,' he continued.

'Sir?'

'I shall have to leave you in this room with this gentleman, for an hour, or perhaps two hours; you will sponge the blood as I do when it returns: if he feels faint, you will put the glass of water on that stand to his lips, and your salts to his nose. You will not speak to him on any pretext—and—Richard—it will be at the peril of your life if you speak to her: open your lips—agitate yourself—and I'll not answer for the consequences.'

Again the poor man groaned: he looked as if he dared not move: fear, either of death or of something else, appeared almost to paralyse him. Mr. Rochester put the now bloody sponge into my hand, and I proceeded to use it as he had done. He watched me a second, then saying, 'Remember!—No conversation,' he left the room. I experienced a strange feeling as the key grated in the lock, and the sound of his retreating step ceased to be heard.

Here then I was in the third story, fastened into one of its mystic cells; night around me; a pale and bloody spectacle under my eyes and hands; a murderess hardly separated from me by a single door: yes—that was appalling—the rest I could bear; but I shuddered at the thought of Grace Poole bursting out upon me.

I must keep to my post, however. I must watch this ghastly countenance—these blue, still lips forbidden to unclose—these eyes now shut, now opening, now wandering through the room, now fixing on me, and ever glazed with the dulness of horror. I must dip my hand again and again in the basin of blood and water, and wipe away the trickling gore. I must see the light of the unsnuffed candle wane on my employment; the shadows darken on the wrought-antique tapestry round me, and grow black under the hangings of the vast old bed, and quiver strangely over the doors of a great cabinet opposite—whose front, divided into twelve panels, bore in grim design the heads of the twelve apostles, each inclosed in its separate panel as in a frame; while above them at the top rose an ebon crucifix and a dying Christ.

According as the shifting obscurity and flickering gleam hovered here or glanced there, it was now the bearded physician, Luke, that bent his brow; now St. John's long hair that waved; and anon the devilish face of Judas, that grew out of the panel, and seemed gathering life and threatening a revelation of the arch-traitor—of Satan himself—in his subordinate's form.

Amidst all this, I had to listen as well as watch: to listen for the movements of the wild beast or the fiend in yonder side den. But since Mr. Rochester's visit it seemed spellbound: all the night I heard but three sounds at three long intervals,—a step creak, a momentary renewal of the snarling, canine noise, and a deep human groan.

Then my own thoughts worried me. What crime was this, that lived incarnate in this sequestered mansion, and could neither be expelled nor subdued by the owner?—What mystery, that broke out, now in fire and now in blood, at the deadest hours of night? What creature was it, that, masked in an ordinary woman's face and shape, uttered the voice, now of a mocking demon, and anon of a carrion-seeking bird of prey?

And this man I bent over—this commonplace, quiet stranger—how had he become involved in the web of horror? and why had the Fury flown at him? What made him seek this quarter of the house at an untimely season, when he should have been asleep in bed? I had heard Mr. Rochester assign him an apartment below—what brought him here? And why, now, was he so tame under the violence or treachery done him? Why did he so quietly submit to the concealment Mr. Rochester enforced? Why *did* Mr. Rochester enforce this concealment? His guest had been outraged, his own life on a former occasion had been hideously plotted against; and both attempts he smothered in secrecy and sank in oblivion! Lastly, I saw Mr. Mason was submissive to Mr. Rochester; that the impetuous will of the latter held complete sway over the inertness of the former: the few words which had passed between them assured me of this. It was evident that in their former intercourse, the passive disposition of the one had been habitually influenced by the active energy of the other: whence then had arisen Mr. Rochester's dismay when he heard of Mr. Mason's arrival? Why had the mere name of this unresisting individual—whom his word now sufficed to control like a child—fallen on him, a few hours since, as a thunderbolt might fall on an oak?

Oh! I could not forget his look and his paleness when he whispered: 'Jane, I have got a blow—I have got a blow, Jane.' I could not forget how the arm had trembled which he had rested on my shoulder: and it was no light matter which could thus bow the resolute spirit and thrill the vigorous frame of Fairfax Rochester.

'When will he come? When will he come?' I cried inwardly, as the night lingered and lingered—as my bleeding patient drooped, moaned, sickened: and neither day nor aid arrived. I had, again and again, held the water to Mason's white lips; again and again offered him the stimulating salts: my efforts seemed ineffectual: either bodily or mental suffering, or loss of blood, or all three combined, were fast prostrating his strength. He moaned so, and looked so weak, wild, and lost, I feared he was dying; and I might not even speak to him.

The candle, wasted at last, went out; as it expired, I perceived streaks of grey light edging the window curtains: dawn was then approaching. Presently I heard Pilot bark far below, out of his distant kennel in the courtyard: hope revived. Nor was it unwarranted: in five minutes more the grating key, the yielding lock, warned me my watch was relieved. It could not have lasted more than two hours: many a week has seemed shorter.

Mr. Rochester entered, and with him the surgeon he had been to fetch.

'Now, Carter, be on the alert,' he said to this last: 'I give you but half an hour for dressing the wound, fastening the bandages, getting the patient downstairs and all.'

'But is he fit to move, sir?'

'No doubt of it; it is nothing serious: he is nervous, his spirits must be kept up. Come set to work.'

Mr. Rochester drew back the thick curtain, drew up the holland blind, let in all the daylight he could; and I was surprised and cheered to see how far dawn was advanced: what rosy streaks were beginning to brighten the east. Then he approached Mason, whom the surgeon was already handling.

'Now, my good fellow, how are you?' he asked.

'She's done for me, I fear,' was the faint reply.

'Not a whit!—courage! This day fortnight you'll hardly be a pin the worse of it: you've lost a little blood; that's all. Carter, assure him there's no danger.'

'I can do that conscientiously,' said Carter, who had now undone the bandages; 'only I wish I could have got here sooner: he would not have bled so much—but how is this? The flesh on the shoulder is torn as well as cut. This wound was not done with a knife: there have been teeth here!'

'She bit me,' he murmured. 'She worried me like a tigress, when Rochester got the knife from her.'

'You should not have yielded: you should have grappled with her at once,' said Mr. Rochester.

'But under such circumstances, what could one do?' returned Mason. 'Oh, it was frightful!' he added, shuddering. 'And I did not expect it: she looked so quiet at first.'

'I warned you,' was his friend's answer; 'I said—be on your guard when you go near her. Besides, you might have waited till to-morrow, and had me with you: it was mere folly to attempt the interview to-night and alone.'

'I thought I could have done some good.'

'You thought! you thought! Yes; it makes me impatient to hear you: but, however, you have suffered, and are likely to suffer enough for not taking my advice; so I'll say no more. Carter—hurry!—hurry! The sun will soon rise, and I must have him off.'

'Directly, sir; the shoulder is just bandaged. I must look to this other wound in the arm: she has had her teeth here too, I think.'

'She sucked the blood: she said she'd drain my heart,' said Mason.

I saw Mr. Rochester shudder: a singularly marked expression of disgust, horror, hatred, warped his countenance almost to distortion; but he only said:—'Come, be silent, Richard, and never mind her gibberish: don't repeat it.'

'I wish I could forget it,' was the answer.

'You will when you are out of the country: when you get back to Spanish Town, you may think of her as dead and buried—or rather, you need not think of her at all.'

'Impossible to forget this night!'

'It is not impossible: have some energy, man. You thought you were as dead as a herring two hours since, and you are all alive and talking now. There!—Carter has done with you or nearly so; I'll make you decent in a trice. Jane' (he turned to me for the first time since his re-entrance), 'take this key: go down into my bedroom, and walk straight forward into my dressing-room; open the top drawer of the wardrobe and take out a clean shirt and neck-handkerchief: bring them here; and be nimble.'

I went; sought the repository he had mentioned, found the articles named and returned with them.

'Now,' said he, 'go to the other side of the bed while I order his toilet; but don't leave the room: you may be wanted again.'

I retired as directed.

'Was anybody stirring below when you went down, Jane?' inquired Mr. Rochester, presently.

'No, sir; all was very still.'

'We shall get you off cannily, Dick: and it will be better, both for your sake, and for that of the poor creature in yonder. I have striven long to avoid exposure, and I should not like it to come at last. Here, Carter, help him on with his waistcoat. Where did you leave your furred cloak? You can't travel a mile without that, I know, in this damned cold climate. In your room?—Jane, run down to Mr. Mason's room,—the one next mine,—and fetch a cloak you will see there.'

Again I ran, and again returned, bearing an immense mantle lined and edged with fur.

'Now I've another errand for you,' said my untiring master; 'you must away to my room again. What a mercy you are shod with velvet, Jane!—a clod-hopping messenger would never do at this juncture. You must open the middle drawer of my toilet-table and take out a little phial and a little glass you will find there,—quick!'

I flew thither and back, bringing the desired vessels.

'That's well! Now, doctor, I shall take the liberty of administering a dose myself; on my own responsibility. I got this cordial at Rome of an Italian charlatan—a fellow you would have kicked, Carter. It is not a thing to be used indiscriminately, but it is good upon occasion: as now, for instance. Jane, a little water.'

He held out the tiny glass, and I half filled it from the water bottle on the wash-stand.

'That will do—now wet the lip of the phial.'

I did so: he measured twelve drops of a crimson liquid, and presented it to Mason.

'Drink, Richard: it will give you the heart you lack, for an hour or so.'

'But will it hurt me?—is it inflammatory?'

'Drink! drink! drink!'

Mr. Mason obeyed, because it was evidently useless to resist. He was dressed now: he still looked pale, but he was no longer gory and sullied. Mr. Rochester let him sit three minutes after he had swallowed the liquid; he then took his arm.

'Now I am sure you can get on your feet,' he said—'try.'

The patient rose.

'Carter, take him under the other shoulder. Be of good cheer, Richard; step out—that's it!'

'I do feel better,' remarked Mr. Mason.

'I am sure you do. Now, Jane, trip on before us away to the backstairs; unbolt the side-passage door, and tell the driver of the post-chaise you will see in the yard—or just outside, for I told him not to drive his rattling wheels over the pavement—to be ready; we are coming: and, Jane, if any one is about, come to the foot of the stairs and hem.'

It was by this time half-past five, and the sun was on the point of rising; but I found the kitchen still dark and silent. The side-passage door was fastened; I opened it with as little noise as possible: all the yard was quiet; but the gates stood wide open, and there was a post-chaise, with horses ready harnessed, and driver seated on the box, stationed outside. I approached him, and said the gentlemen were coming; he nodded: then I looked carefully round and listened. The stillness of early morning slumbered everywhere; the curtains were yet drawn over the servants' chamber windows; little birds were just twittering in the blossom-blanched orchard trees, whose boughs drooped like white garlands over the wall enclosing one side of the yard; the carriage horses stamped from time to time in their closed stables: all else was still.

The gentlemen now appeared. Mason, supported by Mr. Rochester and the surgeon, seemed to walk with tolerable ease: they assisted him into the chaise; Carter followed.

'Take care of him,' said Mr. Rochester to the latter, 'and keep him at your house till he is quite well: I shall ride over in a day or two to see how he gets on. Richard, how is it with you?'

'The fresh air revives me, Fairfax.'

'Leave the window open on his side, Carter; there is no wind—good-bye, Dick.'

'Fairfax——'

'Well, what is it?'

'Let her be taken care of; let her be treated as tenderly as may be: let her——' he stopped and burst into tears.

'I do my best; and have done it, and will do it,' was the answer: he shut up the chaise door, and the vehicle drove away.

'Yet would to God there was an end of all this!' added

Mr. Rochester, as he closed and barred the heavy yard-gates. This done, he moved with slow step and abstracted air towards a door in the wall bordering the orchard. I, supposing he had done with me, prepared to return to the house; again, however, I heard him call 'Jane!' He had opened the portal and stood at it, waiting for me.

'Come where there is some freshness, for a few moments,' he said; 'that house is a mere dungeon: don't you feel it so?'

'It seems to me a splendid mansion, sir.'

'The glamour of inexperience is over your eyes,' he answered; 'and you see it through a charmed medium: you cannot discern that the gilding is slime and the silk draperies cobwebs; that the marble is sordid slate, and the polished woods mere refuse chips and scaly bark. Now *here*' (he pointed to the leafy enclosure we had entered) 'all is real, sweet, and pure.'

He strayed down a walk edged with box; with apple trees, pear trees, and cherry trees on one side, and a border on the other, full of all sorts of old-fashioned flowers, stocks, sweet-williams, primroses, pansies, mingled with southernwood, sweet-briar, and various fragrant herbs. They were fresh now as a succession of April showers and gleams, followed by a lovely spring morning, could make them: the sun was just entering the dappled east, and his light illumined the wreathed and dewy orchard trees and shone down the quiet walks under them.

'Jane, will you have a flower?'

He gathered a half-blown rose, the first on the bush, and offered it to me.

'Thank you, sir.'

'Do you like this sunrise, Jane? That sky with its high and light clouds which are sure to melt away as the day waxes warm—this placid and balmy atmosphere?'

'I do, very much.'

'You have passed a strange night, Jane.'

'Yes, sir.'

'And it has made you look pale—were you afraid when I left you alone with Mason?'

'I was afraid of some one coming out of the inner room.'

'But I had fastened the door—I had the key in my pocket: I should have been a careless shepherd if I had left a lamb—my pet lamb—so near a wolf's den, unguarded: you were safe.'

'Will Grace Poole live here still, sir?'

'Oh, yes! don't trouble your head about her—put the thing out of your thoughts.'

'Yet it seems to me your life is hardly secure while she stays.'

'Never fear—I will take care of myself.'

'Is the danger you apprehended last night gone by now sir?'

'I cannot vouch for that till Mason is out of England: nor even then. To live, for me, Jane, is to stand on a crater-crust which may crack and spue fire any day.'

'But Mr. Mason seems a man easily led. Your influence, sir, is evidently potent with him: he will never set you at defiance, or wilfully injure you.'

'Oh, no! Mason will not defy me; nor, knowing it, will he hurt me—but, unintentionally, he might in a moment, by one careless word, deprive me, if not of life, yet for ever of happiness.'

'Tell him to be cautious, sir: let him know what you fear, and show him how to avert the danger.'

He laughed sardonically, hastily took my hand, and as hastily threw it from him.

'If I could do that, simpleton, where would the danger be? Annihilated in a moment. Ever since I have known Mason I have only had to say to him "Do that," and the thing has been done. But I cannot give him orders in this case: I cannot say "Beware of harming me, Richard"; for it is imperative that I should keep him ignorant that harm to me is possible. Now you look puzzled; and I will puzzle you farther. You are my little friend, are you not?'

'I like to serve you, sir, and to obey you in all that is right.'

'Precisely: I see you do. I see genuine contentment in your gait and mien, your eye and face, when you are helping me and pleasing me—working for me, and with me, in, as you characteristically say, '*all that is right*': for if I bid you do what you thought wrong, there would be no light-footed running, no neat-handed alacrity, no lively glance and animated complexion. My friend would then turn to me, quiet and pale, and would say, "No, sir; that is impossible: I cannot do it, because it is wrong;" and would become immutable as a fixed star. Well, you too have power over me, and may injure me: yet I dare not show you where I am vulnerable, lest, faithful and friendly as you are, you should transfix me at once.'

'If you have no more to fear from Mr. Mason than you have from me, sir, you are very safe.'

'God grant it may be so! Here, Jane, is an arbour; sit down.'

The arbour was an arch in the wall, lined with ivy; it contained a rustic seat. Mr. Rochester took it, leaving room, however, for me: but I stood before him.

'Sit,' he said; 'the bench is long enough for two. You don't hesitate to take a place at my side, do you? Is that wrong, Jane?'

I answered him by assuming it: to refuse would, I felt, have been unwise.

'Now, my little friend, while the sun drinks the dew—while all the flowers in this old garden awake and expand, and the birds fetch their young ones' breakfast out of the cornfield, and the early bees do their first spell of work—I'll put a case to you; which you must endeavour to suppose your own: but first, look at me, and tell me you are at ease, and not fearing that I err in detaining you, or that you err in staying.'

'No, sir; I am content.'

'Well then, Jane, call to aid your fancy—suppose you were no longer a girl well reared and disciplined, but a wild boy indulged from childhood upwards; imagine yourself in a remote foreign land; conceive that you there commit a capital error, no matter of what nature or from what motives, but one whose consequences must follow you through life and taint all your existence. Mind, I don't say a *crime*; I am not speaking of shedding of blood or any other guilty act, which might make the perpetrator amenable to the law: my word is *error*. The results of what you have done become in time to you utterly insupportable; you take measures to obtain relief: unusual measures, but neither unlawful nor culpable. Still you are miserable; for hope has quitted you on the very confines of life: your sun at noon darkens in an eclipse, which you feel will not leave it till the time of setting. Bitter and base associations have become the sole food of your memory: you wander here and there, seeking rest in exile: happiness in pleasure—I mean in heartless, sensual pleasure—such as dulls intellect and blights feeling. Heart-weary and soul-withered, you come home after years of voluntary banishment; you make a new acquaintance—how or where no matter: you find in this stranger much of the good and bright qualities which you have sought for twenty years, and never before encountered; and they are all fresh, healthy, without soil and without taint. Such society revives, regenerates: you feel better days come back—higher wishes, purer feelings; you desire to recommence your life, and to spend what remains to you of days in a way more worthy of an immortal being. To attain this end, are you justified in overleaping an obstacle of custom—a mere conventional impediment, which neither your conscience sanctifies nor your judgment approves?'

He paused for an answer: and what was I to say? Oh, for some good spirit to suggest a judicious and satisfactory response! Vain aspiration! The west wind whispered in the ivy round me; but no gentle Ariel borrowed its breath as a medium of speech: the birds sang in the tree-tops; but their song, however sweet, was inarticulate.

Again Mr. Rochester propounded his query.

'Is the wandering and sinful, but now rest-seeking and repentant, man justified in daring the world's opinion, in order to attach to him for ever this gentle, gracious, genial stranger; thereby securing his own peace of mind and regeneration of life?'

'Sir,' I answered, 'a wanderer's repose or a sinner's reformation should never depend on a fellow-creature. Men and women die; philosophers falter in wisdom, and Christians in goodness: if any one you know has suffered and erred, let him look higher than his equals for strength to amend, and solace to heal.'

'But the instrument—the instrument! God, who does the work, ordains the instrument. I have myself—I tell it you without parable—been a wordly, dissipated, restless man; and I believe I have found the instrument for my cure, in——'

He paused: the birds went on carolling, the leaves lightly rustling. I almost wondered they did not check their songs and whispers to catch the suspended revelation: but they would have had to wait many minutes—so long was the silence protracted. At last I looked up at the tardy speaker: he was looking eagerly at me.

'Little friend,' said he, in quite a changed tone—while his face changed too; losing all its softness and gravity, and becoming harsh and sarcastic—'you have noticed my tender penchant for Miss Ingram: don't you think if I married her she would regenerate me with a vengeance?'

He got up instantly, went quite to the other end of the walk, and when he came back he was humming a tune.

'Jane, Jane,' said he, stopping before me, 'you are quite pale with your vigils: don't you curse me for disturbing your rest?'

'Curse you? No sir.'

'Shake hands in confirmation of the word. What cold fingers! They were warmer last night when I touched them at the door of the mysterious chamber. Jane, when will you watch with me again?'

'Whenever I can be useful, sir.'

'For instance, the night before I am married! I am sure I shall not be able to sleep. Will you promise to sit up with me to bear me company? To you I can talk of my lovely one: for now you have seen her and know her.'

'Yes, sir.'

'She's a rare one, is she not, Jane?'

'Yes, sir.'

'A strapper—a real strapper, Jane: big, brown, and buxom; with hair just such as the ladies of Carthage must have had. Bless me! there's Dent and Lynn in the stables! Go in by the shrubbery, through that wicket.'

As I went one way, he went another, and I heard him in the yard, saying cheeringly:—'Mason got the start of you all this morning; he was gone before sunrise: I rose at four to see him off.'

CHAPTER XXI

Presentiments are strange things! and so are sympathies; and so are signs: and the three combined make one mystery to which humanity has not yet found the key. I never laughed at presentiments in my life; because I have had strange ones of my own. Sympathies, I believe, exist: (for instance, between far-distant, long-absent, wholly estranged relatives; asserting, notwithstanding their alienation, the unity of the source to which each traces his origin) whose workings baffle mortal comprehension. And signs, for aught we know, may be but the sympathies of Nature with man.

When I was a little girl, only six years old, I, one night, heard Bessie Leaven say to Martha Abbot that she had been dreaming about a little child; and that to dream of children was a sure sign of trouble, either to one's self or one's kin. The saying might have worn out of my memory, had not a circumstance immediately followed which served indelibly to fix it there. The next day Bessie was sent for home to the deathbed of her little sister.

Of late I had often recalled this saying and this incident; for during the past week scarcely a night had gone over my couch that had not brought with it a dream of an infant: which I sometimes hushed in my arms, sometimes dandled on my knee, sometimes watched playing with daisies on a lawn; or again, dabbling its hands in running water. It was a wailing child this night, and a laughing one the next: now it nestled close to me, and now it ran from me; but whatever mood the apparition evinced, whatever aspect it wore, it failed not for seven successive nights to meet me the moment I entered the land of slumber.

I did not like this iteration of one idea—this strange recurrence of one image; and I grew nervous as bedtime approached, and the hour of the vision drew near. It was from companionship with this baby-phantom I had been roused on that moonlight night when I heard the cry; and it was on the afternoon of the day following I was summoned downstairs by a message that some one wanted me in Mrs. Fairfax's room. On repairing thither, I found a man waiting for me, having the appearance of a gentleman's servant: he was dressed in deep mourning, and the hat he held in his hand was surrounded with a crape band.

'I daresay you hardly remember me, miss,' he said, rising as I entered; 'but my name is Leaven: I lived coachman with Mrs. Reed when you were at Gateshead eight or nine years since, and I live there still.'

'Oh, Robert! how do you do? I remember you very well: you used to give me a ride sometimes on Miss Georgiana's bay pony. And how is Bessie? You are married to Bessie?'

'Yes, miss: my wife is very hearty, thank you; she brought me another little one about two months since—we have three now—and both mother and child are thriving.'

'And are the family well at the house, Robert?'

'I am sorry I can't give you better news of them, miss: they are very badly at present—in great trouble.'

'I hope no one is dead,' I said glancing at his black dress. He too looked down at the crape round his hat and replied, —'Mr. John died yesterday was a week, at his chambers in London.'

'Mr. John?'

'Yes.'

'And how does his mother bear it?'

'Why you see, Miss Eyre, it is not a common mishap: his life has been very wild: these last three years he gave himself up to strange ways; and his death was shocking.'

'I heard from Bessie he was not doing well.'

'Doing well! He could not do worse; he ruined his health and his estate amongst the worst men and the worst women. He got into debt and into jail: his mother helped him out twice, but as soon as he was free he returned to his old companions and habits. His head was not strong: the knaves he lived amongst fooled him beyond anything I ever heard. He came down to Gateshead about three weeks ago and wanted missus to give up all to him. Missis refused: her means have long been much reduced by his extravagance; so he went back again, and the next news was that he was dead. How he died, God knows!—they say he killed himself.'

I was silent: the tidings were frightful. Robert Leaven resumed:—'Missis had been out of health herself for some time: she had got very stout, but was not strong with it; and the loss of money and fear of poverty were quite breaking her down. The information about Mr. John's death and the manner of it came too suddenly: it brought on a stroke. She was three days without speaking; but last Tuesday she seemed rather better: she appeared as if she wanted to say something, and kept making signs to my wife and mumbling. It was only yesterday morning, however, that Bessie understood she was pronouncing your name; and at last she made out the words, "Bring Jane—fetch Jane Eyre: I want to speak to her." Bessie is not sure whether she is in her right mind, or means anything by the words; but she told Miss Reed and Miss Georgiana, and advised them to send for you. The young ladies put it off at first: but their mother grew so restless, and said, "Jane, Jane," so many times, that at last they consented. I left Gateshead yesterday; and if you can get ready, miss, I should like to take you back with me early to-morrow morning.'

'Yes, Robert, I shall be ready: it seems to me that I ought to go.'

'I think so too, miss. Bessie said she was sure you would not refuse: but I suppose you will have to ask leave before you can get off?'

'Yes; and I will do it now'; and having directed him to the servants' hall, and recommended him to the care of John's wife, and the attentions of John himself, I went in search of Mr. Rochester.

He was not in any of the lower rooms; he was not in the yard, the stables, or the grounds. I asked Mrs. Fairfax if she had seen him;—yes: she believed he was playing billiards with Miss Ingram. To the billiard-room I hastened: the click of balls and the hum of voices resounded thence: Mr. Rochester, Miss Ingram, the two Misses Eshton, and their admirers, were all busied in the game. It required some courage to disturb so interesting a party; my errand, however, was one I could not defer, so I approached the master where he stood at Miss Ingram's side. She turned as I drew near and looked at me haughtily: her eyes seemed to demand, 'What can the creeping creature want now?' and when I said, in a low voice, 'Mr. Rochester,' she made a movement as if tempted to order me away. I remember her appearance at the moment,—it was very graceful and very striking: she wore a morning robe of sky-blue crape; a gauzy azure scarf was twisted in her hair. She had been all animation with the game, and irritated pride did not lower the expression of her haughty lineaments.

'Does that person want you?' she inquired of Mr. Rochester; and Mr. Rochester turned to see who the 'person' was. He made a curious grimace,—one of his strange and equivocal demonstrations—threw down his cue and followed me from the room.

'Well, Jane?' he said, as he rested his back against the schoolroom door, which he had shut.

'If you please, sir, I want leave of absence for a week or two.'

'What to do?—Where to go?'

'To see a sick lady who has sent for me.'

'What sick lady?—Where does she live?'

'At Gateshead, in ——shire.'

'——shire? That is a hundred miles off! Who may she be that sends for people to see her that distance?'

'Her name is Reed, sir,—Mrs. Reed.'

'Reed of Gateshead? There was a Reed of Gateshead, a magistrate.'

'It is his widow, sir.'

'And what have you to do with her? How do you know her?'

'Mr. Reed was my uncle,—my mother's brother.'

'The deuce he was! You never told me that before: you always said you had no relations.'

'None that would own me, sir. Mr. Reed is dead, and his wife cast me off.'

'Why?'

'Because I was poor, and burdensome, and she disliked me.'

'But Reed left children?—you must have cousins? Sir George Lynn was talking of a Reed of Gateshead, yesterday—who, he said, was one of the veriest rascals on town; and Ingram was mentioning a Georgiana Reed of the same place, who was much admired for her beauty, a season or two ago, in London.'

'John Reed is dead, too, sir: he ruined himself and half-ruined his family, and is supposed to have committed suicide. The news so shocked his mother that it brought on an apoplectic attack.'

'And what good can you do her? Nonsense, Jane! I would never think of running a hundred miles to see an old lady who will, perhaps, be dead before you reach her: besides, you say she cast you off.'

'Yes, sir, but that is long ago; and when her circumstances were very different: I could not be easy to neglect her wishes now.'

'How long will you stay?

'As short a time as possible, sir.'

'Promise me only to stay a week——'

'I had better not pass my word: I might be obliged to break it.'

'At all events you *will* come back: you will not be induced under any pretext to take up a permanent residence with her.'

'Oh, no! I shall certainly return if all be well.'

'And who goes with you? You don't travel a hundred miles alone.'

'No, sir, she has sent her coachman.'

'A person to be trusted?'

'Yes, sir, he has lived ten years in the family.'

Mr. Rochester meditated. 'When do you wish to go?'

'Early to-morrow morning, sir.'

'Well, you must have some money; you can't travel without money, and I daresay you have not much: I have given you no salary yet. How much have you in the world, Jane?' he asked, smiling.

I drew out my purse; a meagre thing it was. 'Five shillings, sir.' He took the purse, poured the hoard into his palm and chuckled over it as if its scantiness pleased him. Soon he produced his pocket-book: 'Here,' said he, offering me a note: it was fifty pounds, and he owed me but fifteen. I told him I had no change.

'I don't want change: you know that. Take your wages.'

I declined accepting more than was my due. He scowled at first; then, as if recollecting something, he said:—'Right, right! Better not give you all now: you would, perhaps, stay away three months if you had fifty pounds. There are ten: is it not plenty?'

'Yes, sir, but now you owe me five.'

'Come back for it then: I am your banker for forty pounds.'

'Mr. Rochester, I may as well mention another matter of business to you while I have the opportunity.'

'Matter of business? I'm curious to hear it.'

'You have as good as informed me, sir, that you are going shortly to be married?'

'Yes: what then?'

'In that case, sir, Adèle ought to go to school: I am sure you will perceive the necessity of it.'

'To get her out of my bride's way; who might otherwise walk over her rather too emphatically. There's sense in the suggestion; not a doubt of it: Adèle, as you say, must go to school; and you, of course, must march straight to—the devil?'

'I hope not, sir: but I must seek another situation somewhere.'

'In course!' he exclaimed, with a twang of voice and a distortion of features equally fantastic and ludicrous. He looked at me some minutes.

'And old Madam Reed, or the Misses, her daughters, will be solicited by you to seek a place, I suppose?'

'No, sir; I am not on such terms with my relatives as would justify me in asking favours of them—but I shall advertise.'

'You shall walk up the pyramids of Egypt!' he growled. At your peril you advertise! I wish I had only offered you a sovereign instead of ten pounds. Give me back nine pounds, Jane; I've a use for it.'

'And so have I, sir,' I returned, putting my hands and my purse behind me. 'I could not spare the money on any account.'

'Little niggard!' said he, 'refusing me a pecuniary request! Give me five pounds, Jane.'

'Not five shillings, sir; nor five pence.'

'Just let me look at the cash.'

'No, sir; you are not to be trusted.'

'Jane!'

'Sir?'

'Promise me one thing.'

'I'll promise you anything, sir, that I think I am likely to perform.'

Not to advertise: and to trust this quest of a situation to me. I'll find you one in time.'

'I shall be glad so to do, sir, if you, in your turn, will promise that I and Adèle shall be both safe out of the house before your bride enters it.'

'Very well! very well! I'll pledge my word on it. You go to-morrow, then?'

'Yes, sir; early.'

'Shall you come down to the drawing-room after dinner?'

'No, sir, I must prepare for the journey.'

'Then you and I must bid good-bye for a little while?'

'I suppose so, sir.'

'And how do people perform that ceremony of parting, Jane? Teach me; I'm not quite up to it.'

'They say, Farewell; or any other form they prefer.'

'Then say it.'

'Farewell, Mr. Rochester, for the present.'

'What must I say?'

'The same, if you like, sir.'

'Farewell, Miss Eyre, for the present: is that all?'

'Yes.'

'It seems stingy, to my notions, and dry and unfriendly. I should like something else: a little addition to the rite. If one shook hands, for instance; but no—that would not content me either. So you'll do no more than say Farewell, Jane?'

'It is enough, sir: as much good-will may be conveyed in one hearty word as in many.'

'Very likely; but it is blank and cool—"farewell."'

'How long is he going to stand with his back against that door?' I asked myself; 'I want to commence my packing.' The dinner-bell rang, and suddenly away he bolted, without another syllable: I saw him no more during the day, and was off before he had risen in the morning.

I reached the lodge at Gateshead about five o'clock in the afternoon of the first of May: I stepped in there before going up to the hall. It was very clean and neat: the ornamental windows were hung with little white curtains; the floor was spotless; the grate and fire-irons were burnished bright, and the fire burnt clear. Bessie sat on the hearth nursing her last-born, and Robert and his sister played quietly in a corner.

'Bless you!—I knew you would come!' exclaimed Mrs. Leaven, as I entered.

'Yes, Bessie,' said I, after I had kissed her; 'and I trust I am not too late. How is Mrs. Reed?—Alive still, I hope.'

'Yes, she is alive; and more sensible and collected than she was. The doctor says she may linger a week or two yet; but he hardly thinks she will finally recover.'

'Has she mentioned me lately?'

'She was talking of you only this morning, and wishing you would come: but she is sleeping now; or was ten minutes ago, when I was up at the house. She generally lies in a kind of lethargy all the afternoon, and wakes up about six or seven. Will you rest yourself here an hour, miss, and then I will go up with you?'

Robert here entered, and Bessie laid her sleeping child in the cradle and went to welcome him: afterwards she insisted on my taking off my bonnet and having some tea; for she said I looked pale and tired. I was glad to accept her hospitality; and I submitted to be relieved of my travelling garb just as passively as I used to let her undress me when a child.

Old times crowded fast back on me as I watched her bustling about—setting out the tea-tray with her best china, cutting bread-and-butter, toasting a tea-cake, and, between whiles, giving little Robert or Jane an occasional tap or push, just as she used to give me in former days. Bessie had retained her quick temper as well as her light foot and good looks.

Tea ready, I was going to approach the table; but she desired me to sit still, quite in her old, peremptory tones. I must be served at the fireside, she said; and she placed before me a little round stand with my cup and a plate of toast, absolutely as she used to accommodate me with some privately purloined dainty on a nursery chair: and I smiled and obeyed her as in bygone days.

She wanted to know if I was happy at Thornfield Hall, and what sort of a person the mistress was; and when I told her there was only a master, whether he was a nice gentleman, and if I liked him. I told her he was rather an ugly man, but quite a gentleman; and that he treated me kindly, and I was content. Then I went on to describe to her the gay company that had lately been staying at the house: and to these details Bessie listened with interest: they were precisely of the kind she relished.

In such conversation an hour was soon gone: Bessie restored to me my bonnet, &c., and, accompanied by her, I quitted the lodge for the hall. It was also accompanied by her that I had, nearly nine years ago, walked down the path I was now ascending. On a dark, misty, raw morning in January, I had left a hostile roof with a desperate and embittered heart—a sense of outlawry and almost of reprobation—to seek the chilly harbourage of Lowood: that bourne so far away and unexplored. The same hostile roof now again rose before me: my prospects were doubtful yet; and I had yet an aching heart. I still felt as a wanderer on the face of the earth; but I experienced firmer trust in myself and my own powers, and less withering dread of oppression. The gaping wound of my wrongs, too, was now quite healed; and the flame of resentment extinguished.

'You shall go into the breakfast-room first,' said Bessie, as she preceded me through the hall; 'the young ladies will be there.'

In another moment I was within that apartment. There was every article of furniture looking just as it did on the morning I was first introduced to Mr. Brocklehurst: the very rug he had stood upon still covered the hearth. Glancing at the book-cases, I thought I could distinguish the two volumes of 'Bewick's British Birds' occupying their old place on the third shelf, and 'Gulliver's Travels' and the 'Arabian Nights' ranged just above. The inanimate objects were not changed: but the living things had altered past recognition.

Two young ladies appeared before me; one very tall, almost as tall as Miss Ingram,—very thin too, with a sallow face and severe mien. There was something ascetic in her look, which was augmented by the extreme plainness of a straight-skirted, black, stuff dress, a starched linen collar, hair combed away from the temples, and the nun-like ornament of a string of ebony beads and a crucifix. This I felt sure was Eliza, though I could trace little resemblance to her former self in that elongated and colourless visage.

The other was as certainly Georgiana: but not the Georgiana I remembered—the slim and fairy-like girl of eleven. This was a full-blown, very plump damsel, fair as wax-work; with handsome and regular features, languishing blue eyes, and ringleted yellow hair. The hue of her dress was black too; but its fashion was so different from her sister's—so much more flowing and becoming—it looked as stylish as the other's looked puritanical.

In each of the sisters there was one trait of the mother—and only one: the thin and pallid elder daughter had her parent's Cairngorm eye: the blooming and luxuriant younger girl had her contour of jaw and chin,—perhaps a little softened, but still imparting an indescribable hardness to the countenance, otherwise so voluptuous and buxom.

Both ladies, as I advanced, rose to welcome me, and both addressed me by the name of 'Miss Eyre.' Eliza's greeting was delivered in a short, abrupt voice, without a smile; and then she sat down again, fixed her eyes on the fire, and seemed to forget me. Georgiana added to her 'How d'ye do?' several common-places about my journey, the weather and so on, uttered in rather a drawling tone: and accompanied by sundry side-glances that measured me from head to foot—now traversing the folds of my drab merino pelisse, and now lingering on the plain trimming of my cottage bonnet. Young ladies have a remarkable way of letting you know that they think you a 'quiz' without actually saying the words. A certain superciliousness of look, coolness of manner, nonchalance of tone, express fully their sentiments on the point, without committing them by any positive rudeness in word or deed.

A sneer, however, whether covert or open, had now no longer that power over me it once possessed: as I sat between my cousins, I was surprised to find how easy I felt under the total neglect of the one and the semi-sarcastic attentions of the other—Eliza did not mortify, nor Georgiana ruffle me. The fact was, I had other things to think about; within the last few months feelings had been stirred in me so much more potent than any they could raise—pains and pleasures so much more acute and exquisite had been excited, than any it was in their power to inflict or bestow—that their airs gave me no concern either for good or bad.

'How is Mrs. Reed?' I asked soon, looking calmly at Georgiana; who thought fit to bridle at the direct address, as if it were an unexpected liberty.

'Mrs. Reed? Ah! mama you mean; she is extremely poorly: I doubt if you can see her to-night.'

'If,' said I, 'you would just step upstairs and tell her I am come, I should be much obliged to you.'

Georgiana almost started, and she opened her blue eyes wild and wide. 'I know she had a particular wish to see me,' I added, 'and I would not defer attending to her desire longer than is absolutely necessary.'

'Mama dislikes being disturbed in an evening,' remarked Eliza. I soon rose, quietly took off my bonnet and gloves, uninvited, and said I would just step out to Bessie—who was, I dared say, in the kitchen—and ask her to ascertain whether Mrs. Reed was disposed to receive me or not to-night. I went, and having found Bessie and despatched her on my errand, I proceeded to take further measures. It had heretofore been my habit always to shrink from arrogance: received as I had been to-day, I should, a year ago, have resolved to quit Gateshead the very next morning; now, it was disclosed to me all at once, that that would be a foolish plan. I had taken a journey of a hundred miles to see my aunt, and I must stay with her till she was better—or dead: as to her daughters' pride or folly, I must put it on one side; make myself independent of it. So I addressed the housekeeper; asked her to show me a room, told her I should probably be a visitor here for a week or two, had my trunk conveyed to my chamber, and followed it thither myself: I met Bessie on the landing.

'Missis is awake,' said she; 'I have told her you are here: come and let us see if she will know you.'

I did not need to be guided to the well-known room: to which I had so often been summoned for chastisement or reprimand in former days. I hastened before Bessie, I softly opened the door: a shaded light stood on the table, for it was now getting dark. There was the great four-post bed with amber hangings as of old: there the toilet-table, the arm-chair, and the foot-stool: at which I had a hundred times been sentenced to kneel, to ask pardon for offences, by me, uncommitted. I looked into a certain corner near, half-expecting to see the slim outline of a once-dreaded switch; which used to lurk there, waiting to leap out imp-like and lace my quivering palm or shrinking neck. I approached the bed; I opened the curtains and leant over the high-piled pillows.

Well did I remember Mrs. Reed's face, and I eagerly sought the familiar image. It is a happy thing that time quells the longings of vengeance, and hushes the promptings of rage and aversion: I had left this woman in bitterness and hate, and I came back to her now with no other emotion than a sort of ruth for her great sufferings, and a strong yearning to forget and forgive all injuries—to be reconciled and clasp hands in amity.

The well-known face was there: stern, relentless as ever—there was that peculiar eye which nothing could melt; and the somewhat raised, imperious, despotic eyebrow. How often had it lowered on me menace and hate! and how the recollection of childhood's terrors and sorrows revived as I traced its harsh line now! And yet I stooped down and kissed her: she looked at me.

'Is this Jane Eyre?' she said.

'Yes, aunt Reed. How are you, dear aunt?'

I had once vowed that I would never call her aunt again: I thought it no sin to forget and break that vow now. My fingers had fastened on her hand which lay outside the sheet: had she pressed mine kindly, I should at that moment have experienced true pleasure. But unimpressionable natures are not so soon softened, nor are natural antipathies so readily eradicated: Mrs. Reed took her hand away, and, turning her face rather from me, she remarked that the night was warm. Again she regarded me, so icily, I felt at once that her opinion of me—her feeling towards me—was unchanged, and unchangeable. I knew by her stony eye—opaque to tenderness, indissoluble to tears—that she was resolved to consider me bad to the last; because to believe me good, would give her no generous pleasure: only a sense of mortification.

I felt pain, and then I felt ire; and then I felt a determination to subdue her—to be her mistress in spite both of her nature and her will. My tears had risen, just as in childhood: I ordered them back to their source. I brought a chair to the bed-head: I sat down and leaned over the pillow.

'You sent for me,' I said, 'and I am here; and it is my intention to stay till I see how you get on.'

'Oh, of course! You have seen my daughters?'

'Yes.'

'Well, you may tell them I wish you to stay till I can talk some things over with you I have on my mind: to-night it is too late, and I have a difficulty in recalling them. But there was something I wished to say—let me see——'

The wandering look and changed utterance told what wreck had taken place in her once-vigorous frame. Turning restlessly, she drew the bed-clothes round her; my elbow, resting on a corner of the quilt, fixed it down: she was at once irritated.

'Sit up!' said she; 'don't annoy me with holding the clothes fast—are you Jane Eyre?'

'I am Jane Eyre.'

'I have had more trouble with that child than any one would believe. Such a burden to be left on my hands—and so much annoyance as she caused me, daily and hourly, with her incomprehensible disposition, and her sudden starts of temper, and her continual, unnatural watchings of one's movements! I declare she talked to me once like something mad, or like a fiend—no child ever spoke or looked as she did; I was glad to get her away from the house. What did they do with her at Lowood? The fever broke out there, and many of the pupils died. She, however, did not die: but I said she did—I wish she had died!'

'A strange wish, Mrs. Reed: why do you hate her so?'

'I had a dislike to her mother always; for she was my husband's only sister, and a great favourite with him: he opposed the family's disowning her when she made her low marriage; and when news came of her death, he wept like a simpleton. He would send for the baby; though I entreated him rather to put it out to nurse and pay for its maintenance. I hated it the first time I set my eyes on it—a sickly, whining, pining thing! It would wail in its cradle all night long—not screaming heartily like any other child, but whimpering and moaning. Reed pitied it; and he used to nurse it and notice it as if it had been his own: more, indeed, than he ever noticed his own at that age. He would try to make my children friendly to the little beggar: the darlings could not bear it, and he was angry with them when they showed their dislike. In his last illness, he had it brought continually to his bedside; and but an hour before he died, he bound me by vow to keep the creature. I would as soon have been charged with a pauper brat out of a workhouse: but he was weak, naturally weak. John does not at all resemble his father, and I am glad of it: John is like me and like my brothers—he is quite a Gibson. Oh, I wish he would cease tormenting me with letters for money! I have no more money to give him: we are getting poor. I must send away half the servants and shut up part of the house; or let it off. I can never submit to do that—yet how are we to get on? Two-thirds of my income goes in paying the interest of mortgages. John gambles dreadfully, and always loses—poor boy! He is beset by sharpers: John is sunk and degraded—his look is frightful—I feel ashamed for him when I see him.'

She was getting much excited. 'I think I had better leave her now,' said I to Bessie, who stood on the other side of the bed.

'Perhaps you had, miss: but she often talks in this way towards night—in the morning she is calmer.'

I rose. 'Stop!' exclaimed Mrs. Reed. 'There is another thing I wished to say. He threatens me—he continually threatens me with his own death, or mine: and I dream sometimes that I see him laid out with a great wound in his throat, or with a swollen and blackened face. I am come to a strange pass: I have heavy troubles. What is to be done? How is the money to be had?'

Bessie now endeavoured to persuade her to take a sedative draught: she succeeded with difficulty. Soon after, Mrs. Reed grew more composed, and sank into a dozing state. I then left her.

More than ten days elapsed before I had again any conversation with her. She continued either delirious or lethargic; and the doctor forbade every thing which could painfully excite her. Meantime, I got on as well as I could with Georgiana and Eliza. They were very cold, indeed, at first. Eliza would sit half the day sewing, reading, or writing, and scarcely utter a word either to me or her sister. Georgiana would chatter nonsense to her canary bird by the hour, and take no notice of me. But I was determined not to seem at a loss for occupation or amusement: I had brought my drawing materials with me, and they served me for both.

Provided with a case of pencils, and some sheets of paper, I used to take a seat apart from them, near the window, and busy myself in sketching fancy vignettes, representing any scene that happened momentarily to shape itself in the ever-shifting kaleidoscope of imagination: a glimpse of sea between two rocks; the rising moon, and a ship crossing its disk; a group of reeds and water-flags, and a naiad's head crowned with lotus-flowers, rising out of them; an elf sitting in a hedge-sparrow's nest, under a wreath of hawthorn-bloom.

One morning I fell to sketching a face: what sort of a face it was to be, I did not care or know. I took a soft black pencil, gave it a broad point, and worked away. Soon I had traced on the paper a broad and prominent forehead, and a square lower outline of visage: that contour gave me pleasure; my fingers proceeded actively to fill it with features. Strongly-marked horizontal eyebrows must be traced under that brow; then followed, naturally, a well-defined nose, with a straight ridge and full nostrils; then a flexible-looking mouth, by no means narrow; then a firm chin, with a decided cleft down the middle of it: of course, some black whiskers were wanted, and some jetty hair, tufted on the temples, and waved above the forehead. Now for the eyes: I had left them to the last, because they required the most careful working. I drew them large; I shaped them well: the eyelashes I traced long and sombre; the irids lustrous and large. 'Good! but not quite the thing,' I thought, as I surveyed the effect: 'They want more force and spirit;' and I wrought the shades blacker, that the lights might flash more brilliantly—a happy touch or two secured success. There, I had a friend's face under my gaze; and what did it signify that those young ladies turned their backs on me? I looked at it; I smiled at the speaking likeness: I was absorbed and content.

'Is that a portrait of some one you know?' asked Eliza, who had approached me unnoticed. I responded that it was merely a fancy head, and hurried it beneath the other sheets. Of course, I lied: it was, in fact, a very faithful representation of Mr. Rochester. But what was that to her, or to any one but myself? Georgiana also advanced to look. The other drawings pleased her much, but she called that 'an ugly man.' They both seemed surprised at my skill. I offered to sketch their portraits; and each, in turn, sat for a pencil outline. Then Georgiana produced her album. I promised to contribute a water-colour drawing: this put her at once into good humour. She proposed a walk in the grounds. Before we had been out two hours, we were deep in a confidential conversation: she had favoured me with a description of the brilliant winter she had spent in London two seasons ago—of the admiration she had there excited—the attention she had received: and I even got hints of the titled conquest she had made. In the course of the afternoon and evening these hints were enlarged on: various soft conversations were reported, and sentimental scenes represented; and, in short, a volume of a novel of fashionable life was that day improvised by her for my benefit. The communications were renewed from day to day: they always ran on the same theme—herself, her loves, and woes. It was strange she never once adverted either to her mother's illness, or her brother's death, or the present gloomy state of the family prospects. Her mind seemed wholly taken up with reminiscences of past gaiety, and aspirations after dissipations to come. She passed about five minutes each day in her mother's sick-room and no more.

Eliza still spoke little: she had evidently no time to talk. I never saw a busier person than she seemed to be: yet it was difficult to say what she did: or rather, to discover any result of her diligence. She had an alarum to call her up early. I know not how she occupied herself before breakfast, but after that meal she divided her time into regular portions; and each hour had its allotted task. Three times a day she studied a little book, which I found, on inspection, was a Common Prayer-book. I asked her once what was the great attraction of that volume, and she said 'the Rubric.' Three hours she gave to stitching, with gold thread, the border of a square crimson cloth, almost large enough for a carpet. In answer to my inquiries after the use of this article, she informed me it was a covering for the altar of a new church lately erected near Gateshead. Two hours she devoted to her diary; two to working by herself in the kitchen-garden; and one to the regulation of her accounts. She seemed to want no company; no conversation. I believe she was happy in her way: this routine sufficed to her; and nothing annoyed her so much as the occurrence of any incident which forced her to vary its clockwork regularity.

She told me one evening, when more disposed to be communicative than usual, that John's conduct, and the threatened ruin of the family, had been a source of profound affliction to her: but she had now, she said, settled her mind, and formed her resolution. Her own fortune she had taken care to secure; and when her mother died,—and it was wholly improbable, she tranquilly remarked, that she should either recover or linger long,—she would execute a long-cherished project: seek a retirement where punctual habits would be permanently secured from disturbance, and place safe barriers between herself and a frivolous world. I asked if Georgiana would accompany her.

'Of course not. Georgiana and she had nothing in common: they never had had. She would not be burdened with her society for any consideration. Georgiana should take her own course; and she, Eliza, would take hers.'

Georgiana, when not unburdening her heart to me, spent most of her time in lying on the sofa, fretting about the dulness of the house, and wishing over and over again that her aunt Gibson would send her an invitation up to town. 'It would be so much better,' she said, 'if she could only get out of the way for a month or two, till all was over.' I did not ask what she meant by 'all being over,' but I suppose she referred to the expected decease of her mother and the gloomy sequel of funeral rites. Eliza generally took no more notice of her sister's indolence and complaints than if no such murmuring, lounging object had been before her. One day, however, as she put away her account book, and unfolded her embroidery, she suddenly took her up thus:—'Georgiana, a more vain and absurd animal than you, was certainly never allowed to cumber the earth. You had no right to be born: for you make no use of life. Instead of living for, in, and with yourself, as a reasonable being ought, you seek only to fasten your feebleness on some other person's strength: if no one can be found willing to burden her or himself with such a fat, weak, puffy, useless thing, you cry out that you are ill-treated, neglected, miserable. Then, too, existence for you must be a scene of continual change and excitement, or else the world is a dungeon: you must be admired, you must be courted, you must be flattered—you must have music, dancing, and society—or you languish, you die away. Have you no sense to devise a system which will make you independent of all efforts, and all wills, but your own? Take one day; share it into sections; to each section apportion its task: leave no stray unemployed quarters of an hour, ten minutes, five minutes, include all; do each piece of business in its turn with method, with rigid regularity. The day will close almost before you are aware it has begun; and you are indebted to no one for helping you to get rid of one vacant moment; you have had to seek no one's company, conversation, sympathy, forbearance: you have lived, in short, as an independent being ought to do. Take this advice: the first and last I shall offer you; then you will not want me or anyone else, happen what may. Neglect it—go on as heretofore, craving, whining, and idling—and suffer the results of your idiocy, however bad and insufferable they may be. I tell you this plainly; and listen: for though I shall no more repeat what I am now about to say, I shall steadily act on it. After my mother's death, I wash my hands of you: from the day her coffin is carried to the vault in Gateshead Church, you and I will be as separate as if we had never known each other. You need not think that because we chanced to be born of the same parents, I shall suffer you to fasten me down by even the feeblest claim; I can tell you this—if the whole human race, ourselves excepted, were swept away, and we two stood alone on the earth, I would leave you in the old world, and betake myself to the new.'

She closed her lips.

'You might have spared yourself the trouble of delivering that tirade,' answered Georgiana. 'Everybody knows you are the most selfish, heartless creature in existence: and *I* know your spiteful hatred towards me; I have had a specimen of it before in the trick you played me about Lord Edwin Vere: you could not bear me to be raised above you, to have a title, to be received into circles where you dare not show your face, and so you acted the spy and informer, and ruined my prospects for ever.' Georgiana took out her handkerchief and blew her nose for an hour afterwards; Eliza sat cold, impassible, and assiduously industrious.

True, generous feeling is made small account of by some: but here were two natures rendered, the one intolerably acrid, the other despicably savourless for the want of it. Feeling without judgment is a washy draught indeed; but judgment untempered by feeling is too bitter and husky a morsel for human deglutition.

It was a wet and windy afternoon: Georgiana had fallen asleep on the sofa over the perusal of a novel; Eliza was gone to attend a saint's-day service at the new church—for in matters of religion she was a rigid formalist: no weather ever prevented the punctual discharge of what she considered her devotional duties: fair or foul, she went to church thrice every Sunday, and as often on week-days as there were prayers.

I bethought myself to go upstairs and see how the dying woman sped, who lay there almost unheeded: the very servants paid her but a remittent attention: the hired nurse, being little looked after, would slip out of the room whenever she could. Bessie was faithful; but she had her own family to mind, and could only come occasionally to the hall. I found the sick-room unwatched, as I had expected: no nurse was there; the patient lay still, and seemingly lethargic; her livid face sunk in the pillows: the fire was dying in the grate. I renewed the fuel, re-arranged the bedclothes, gazed awhile on her who could not now gaze on me, and then I moved away to the window.

The rain beat strongly against the panes, the wind blew tempestuously: 'One lies there,' I thought, 'who will soon be beyond the war of earthly elements. Whither will that spirit—now struggling to quit its material tenement—flit when at length released?'

In pondering the great mystery, I thought of Helen Burns, recalled her dying words—her faith—her doctrine of the equality of disembodied souls. I was still listening in thought to her well-remembered tones—still picturing her pale and spiritual aspect, her wasted face and sublime gaze, as she lay on her placid deathbed, and whispered her longing to be restored to her divine Father's bosom—when a feeble voice murmured from the couch behind: 'Who is that?'

I knew Mrs. Reed had not spoken for days: was she reviving? I went up to her.

'It is I, aunt Reed.'

'Who—I?' was her answer. 'Who are you?' looking at me with surprise and a sort of alarm, but still not wildly. 'You are quite a stranger to me—where is Bessie?'

'She is at the lodge, aunt.'

'Aunt!' she repeated. 'Who calls me aunt? You are not one of the Gibsons; and yet I know you—that face, and the eyes and forehead are quite familiar to me: you are like—why, you are like Jane Eyre!'

I said nothing: I was afraid of occasioning some shock by declaring my identity.

'Yet,' said she, 'I am afraid it is a mistake: my thoughts deceive me. I wished to see Jane Eyre, and I fancy a likeness where none exists: besides, in eight years she must be so changed.'

I now gently assured her that I was the person she supposed and desired me to be: and seeing that I was understood, and that her senses were quite collected, I explained how Bessie had sent her husband to fetch me from Thornfield.

'I am very ill, I know,' she said ere long. 'I was trying to turn myself a few minutes since, and find I cannot move a limb. It is as well I should ease my mind before I die: what we think little of in health, burdens us at such an hour as the present is to me. Is the nurse here? or is there no one in the room but you?'

I assured her we were alone.

'Well, I have twice done you a wrong which I regret now. One was in breaking the promise which I gave my husband to bring you up as my own child; the other——' she stopped. 'After all, it is of no great importance, perhaps,' she murmured to herself: 'and then I may get better; and to humble myself so to her is painful.'

She made an effort to alter her position, but failed: her face changed; she seemed to experience some inward sensation—the precursor, perhaps, of the last pang.

'Well: I must get it over. Eternity is before me: I had better tell her.—Go to my dressing-case, open it, and take out a letter you will see there.'

I obeyed her directions.

'Read the letter,' she said.

It was short, and thus conceived:—

'MADAM,—

'WILL you have the goodness to send me the address of my niece, Jane Eyre, and to tell me how she is: it is my intention to write shortly and desire her to come to me at Madeira. Providence has blessed my endeavours to secure a competency; and as I am unmarried and childless, I wish to adopt her during my life, and bequeath her at my death whatever I may have to leave.

'I am, Madam, &c. &c.
'JOHN EYRE, Madeira.'

It was dated three years back.

'Why did I never hear of this?' I asked.

'Because I disliked you too fixedly and thoroughly ever to lend a hand in lifting you to prosperity. I could not forget your conduct to me, Jane—the fury with which you once turned on me; the tone in which you declared you abhorred me the worst of anybody in the world; the unchildlike look and voice with which you affirmed that the very thought of me made you sick, and asserted that I had treated you with miserable cruelty. I could not forget my own sensations when you thus started up and poured out the venom of your mind: I felt fear, as if an animal that I had struck or pushed had looked up at me with human eyes and cursed me in a man's voice.—Bring me some water! Oh, make haste!'

'Dear Mrs. Reed,' said I, as I offered her the draught she required, 'think no more of all this, let it pass away from your mind. Forgive me for my passionate language: I was a child then; eight, nine years have passed since that day.'

She heeded nothing of what I said; but when she had tasted the water and drawn breath, she went on thus:—'I tell you I could not forget it; and I took my revenge: for you to be adopted by your uncle, and placed in a state of ease and comfort, was what I could not endure. I wrote to him; I said I was sorry for his disappointment, but Jane Eyre was dead: she had died of typhus fever at Lowood. Now act as you please: write and contradict my assertion—expose my falsehood as soon as you like. You were born, I think, to be my torment: my last hour is racked by the recollection of a deed which, but for you, I should never have been tempted to commit.'

'If you could but be persuaded to think no more of it, aunt, and to regard me with kindness and forgiveness'——

'You have a very bad disposition,' said she, 'and one to this day I feel it impossible to understand: how for nine years you could be patient and quiescent under any treatment, and in the tenth break out all fire and violence, I can never comprehend.'

'My disposition is not so bad as you think: I am passionate, but not vindictive. Many a time, as a little child, I should have been glad to love you if you would have let me; and I long earnestly to be reconciled to you now: kiss me, aunt.'

I approached my cheek to her lips: she would not touch it. She said I oppressed her by leaning over the bed; and again demanded water. As I laid her down—for I raised her and supported her on my arm while she drank—I covered her ice-cold and clammy hand with mine: the feeble fingers shrank from my touch—the glazing eyes shunned my gaze.

'Love me, then, or hate me, as you will,' I said at last; 'you have my full and free forgiveness: ask now for God's; and be at peace.'

Poor, suffering woman! it was too late for her to make now the effort to change her habitual frame of mind: living, she had ever hated me—dying, she must hate me still.

The nurse now entered, and Bessie followed. I yet lingered half an hour longer, hoping to see some sign of amity: but she gave none. She was fast relapsing into stupor; nor did her mind again rally: at twelve o'clock that night she died. I was not present to close her eyes; nor were either of her daughters. They came to tell us the next morning that all was over. She was by that time laid out. Eliza and I went to look at her: Georgiana, who had burst out into loud weeping, said she dared not go. There was stretched Sarah Reed's once robust and active frame, rigid and still: her eye of flint was covered with its cold lid; her brow and strong traits wore yet the impress of her inexorable soul. A strange and solemn object was that corpse to me. I gazed on it with gloom and pain: nothing soft, nothing sweet, nothing pitying, or hopeful, or subduing, did it inspire; only a grating anguish for *her* woes—not *my* loss—and a sombre tearless dismay at the fearfulness of death in such a form.

Eliza surveyed her parent calmly. After a silence of some minutes she observed, ‘With her constitution she should have lived to a good old age: her life was shortened by trouble.’ And then a spasm constricted her mouth for an instant: as it passed away she turned and left the room, and so did I. Neither of us had dropped a tear.

CHAPTER XXII

Mr. Rochester had given me but one week's leave of absence: yet a month elapsed before I quitted Gateshead. I wished to leave immediately after the funeral; but Georgiana entreated me to stay till she could get off to London: whither she was now at last invited by her uncle, Mr. Gibson; who had come down to direct his sister's interment and settle the family affairs. Georgiana said she dreaded being left alone with Eliza; from her she got neither sympathy in her dejection, support in her fears, nor aid in her preparations; so I bore with her feeble-minded quailings, and selfish lamentations, as well as I could, and did my best in sewing for her, and packing her dresses. It is true that while I worked she would idle; and I thought to myself, 'If you and I were destined to live always together, cousin, we would commence matters on a different footing. I should not settle tamely down into being the forbearing party; I should assign you your share of labour, and compel you to accomplish it, or else it should be left undone: I should insist, also, on your keeping some of those drawling, half-insincere complaints hushed in your own breast. It is only because our connection happens to be very transitory, and comes at a peculiarly mournful season, that I consent thus to render it so patient and compliant on my part.'

At last I saw Georgiana off; but now it was Eliza's turn to request me to stay another week. Her plans required all her time and attention, she said: she was about to depart for some unknown bourne; and all day long she stayed in her own room, her door bolted within, filling trunks, empty-ing drawers, burning papers, and holding no communication with anyone. She wished me to look after the house, to see callers, and answer notes of condolence.

One morning she told me I was at liberty. 'And,' she added, 'I am obliged to you for your valuable services and discreet conduct! There is some difference between living with such a one as you, and with Georgiana: you perform your own part in life, and burden no one. To-morrow,' she continued, 'I set out for the Continent. I shall take up my abode in a religious house near Lisle—a nunnery you would call it: there I shall be quiet and unmolested. I shall devote myself for a time to the examination of the Roman Catholic dogmas, and to a careful study of the workings of their system; if I find it to be, as I half suspect it is, the one best calculated to ensure the doing of all things decently and in order, I shall embrace the tenets of Rome and probably take the veil.'

I neither expressed surprise at this resolution nor attempted to dissuade her from it. 'The vocation will fit you to a hair,' I thought: 'much good may it do you!'

When we parted, she said: 'Good-bye, cousin Jane Eyre; I wish you well: you have some sense.'

I then returned: 'You are not without sense, cousin Eliza; but what you have I suppose in another year will be walled up alive in a French convent. However, it is not my business, and so it suits you—I don't much care.'

'You are in the right,' said she: and with these words we each went our separate way. As I shall not have occasion to refer either to her or her sister again, I may as well mention here that Georgiana made an advantageous match with a wealthy worn-out man of fashion; and that Eliza actually took the veil, and is at this day superior of the convent where she passed the period of her novitiate: and which she endowed with her fortune.

How people feel when they are returning home from an absence, long or short, I did not know: I had never experienced the sensation. I had known what it was to come back to Gateshead when a child, after a long walk—to be scolded for looking cold or gloomy; and later, what it was to come back from church to Lowood—to long for a plenteous meal and a good fire, and to be unable to get either.

Neither of these returnings were very pleasant or desirable: no magnet drew me to a given point, increasing in its strength of attraction the nearer I came. The return to Thornfield was yet to be tried.

My journey seemed tedious—very tedious: fifty miles one day, a night spent at an inn; fifty miles the next day. During the first twelve hours I thought of Mrs. Reed in her last moments: I saw her disfigured and discoloured face, and heard her strangely altered voice. I mused on the funeral day, the coffin, the hearse, the black train of tenants and servants—few was the number of relatives—the gaping vault, the silent church, the solemn service. Then I thought of Eliza and Georgiana: I beheld one the cynosure of a ball-room, the other the inmate of a convent cell; and I dwelt on and analysed their separate peculiarities of person and character. The evening arrival at the great town of —— scattered these thoughts; night gave them quite another turn: laid down on my traveller's bed, I left reminiscence for anticipation.

I was going back to Thornfield: but how long was I to stay there? Not long; of that I was sure. I had heard from Mrs. Fairfax in the interim of my absence: the party at the hall was dispersed; Mr. Rochester had left for London three weeks ago, but he was then expected to return in a fortnight. Mrs. Fairfax surmised that he was gone to make arrangements for his wedding, as he had talked of purchasing a new carriage: she said the idea of his marrying Miss Ingram still seemed strange to her; but from what everybody said, and from what she had herself seen, she could no longer doubt that the event would shortly take place. 'You would be strangely incredulous if you did doubt it,' was my mental comment. 'I don't doubt it.'

The question followed, 'Where was I to go?' I dreamt of Miss Ingram all the night: in a vivid morning dream I saw her closing the gates of Thornfield against me and pointing me out another road; and Mr. Rochester looked on with his arms folded—smiling sardonically, as it seemed, at both her and me.

I had not notified to Mrs. Fairfax the exact day of my return; for I did not wish either car or carriage to meet me at Millcote. I proposed to walk the distance quietly by myself; and very quietly, after leaving my box in the ostler's care, did I slip away from the George Inn, about six o'clock of a June evening, and take the old road to Thornfield: a road which lay chiefly through fields, and was now little frequented.

It was not a bright or splendid summer evening, though fair and soft: the haymakers were at work all along the road; and the sky, though far from cloudless, was such as promised well for the future: its blue—where blue was visible—was mild and settled, and its cloud strata high and thin. The west, too, was warm: no watery gleam chilled it—it seemed as if there was a fire lit, an altar burning behind its screen of marbled vapour, and out of apertures shone a golden redness.

I felt glad as the road shortened before me: so glad that I stopped once to ask myself what that joy meant: and to remind reason that it was not to my home I was going, or to a permanent resting-place, or to a place where fond friends looked out for me and waited my arrival. 'Mrs. Fairfax will smile you a calm welcome, to be sure,' said I; 'and little Adèle will clap her hands and jump to see you: but you know very well you are thinking of another than they; and that he is not thinking of you.'

But what is so headstrong as youth? What so blind as inexperience? These affirmed that it was pleasure enough to have the privilege of again looking on Mr. Rochester, whether he looked on me or not; and they added—'Hasten! hasten! be with him while you may: but a few more days or weeks, at most, and you are parted with him for ever!'

And then I strangled a new-born agony—a deformed thing which I could not persuade myself to own and rear—and ran on.

They are making hay, too, in Thornfield meadows: or, rather, the labourers are just quitting their work, and returning home with their rakes on their shoulders: now, at the hour I arrive. I have but a field or two to traverse, and then I shall cross the road and reach the gates. How full the hedges are of roses! But I have no time to gather any; I want to be at the house. I passed a tall briar, shooting leafy and flowery branches across the path; I see the narrow stile with stone steps; and I see—Mr. Rochester sitting there, a book and a pencil in his hand: he is writing.

Well, he is not a ghost; yet every nerve I have is unstrung: for a moment I am beyond my own mastery. What does it mean? I did not think I should tremble in this way when I saw him—or lose my voice or the power of motion in his presence. I will go back as soon as I can stir: I need not make an absolute fool of myself. I know another way to the house. It does not signify if I knew twenty ways; for he has seen me.

'Hillo!' he cries; and he puts up his book and his pencil. 'There you are! Come on, if you please.'

I suppose I do come on; though in what fashion I know not: being scarcely cognisant of my movements, and solicitous only to appear calm; and, above all, to control the working muscles of my face—which I feel rebel insolently against my will, and struggle to express what I had resolved to conceal. But I have a veil—it is down: I may make shift yet to behave with decent composure.

'And this is Jane Eyre? Are you coming from Millcote, and on foot? Yes—just one of your tricks: not to send for a carriage, and come clattering over street and road like a common mortal, but to steal into the vicinage of your home along with twilight, just as if you were a dream or a shade. What the deuce have you done with yourself this last month?'

'I have been with my aunt, sir, who is dead.'

'A true Janian reply! Good angels be my guard! She comes from the other world—from the abode of people who are dead; and tells me so when she meets me alone here in the gloaming! If I dared, I'd touch you, to see if you are substance or shadow, you elf!—but I'd as soon offer to take hold of a blue *ignis fatuus* light in a marsh. Truant! truant!' he added, when he had paused an instant. 'Absent from me a whole month: and forgetting me quite, I'll be sworn!'

I knew there would be pleasure in meeting my master again; even though broken by the fear that he was so soon to cease to be my master, and by the knowledge that I was nothing to him: but there was ever in Mr. Rochester (so at least I thought) such a wealth of the power of communicating happiness, that to taste but of the crumbs he scattered to stray and stranger birds like me was to feast genially. His last words were balm: they seemed to imply that it imported something to him whether I forgot him or not. And he had spoken of Thornfield as my home—would that it were my home!

He did not leave the stile, and I hardly liked to ask to go by. I inquired soon if he had not been to London.

'Yes: I suppose you found that out by second-sight.'

'Mrs. Fairfax told me in a letter.'

'And did she inform you what I went to do?'

'Oh, yes, sir! Everybody knew your errand.'

'You must see the carriage, Jane, and tell me if you don't think it will suit Mrs. Rochester exactly; and whether she won't look like Queen Boadicea, leaning back against those purple cushions. I wish, Jane, I were a trifle better adapted to match with her externally. Tell me now, fairy as you are,—can't you give me a charm, or a philter, or something of that sort, to make me a handsome man?'

'It would be past the power of magic, sir;' and, in thought, I added, 'A loving eye is all the charm needed: to such you are handsome enough; or rather, your sternness has a power beyond beauty.'

Mr. Rochester had sometimes read my unspoken thoughts with an acumen to me incomprehensible: in the present instance he took no notice of my abrupt vocal response; but he smiled at me with a certain smile he had of his own, and which he used but on rare occasions. He seemed to think it too good for common purposes: it was the real sunshine of feeling—he shed it over me now.

'Pass, Janet,' said he, making room for me to cross the stile: 'go up home, and stay your weary little wandering feet at a friend's threshold.'

All I had now to do was to obey him in silence: no need for me to colloquise further. I got over the stile without a word, and meant to leave him calmly. An impulse held me fast,—a force turned me round. I said—or something in me said for me, and in spite of me:—

'Thank you, Mr. Rochester, for your great kindness. I am strangely glad to get back again to you; and wherever you are is my home—my only home.'

I walked on so fast that even he could hardly have overtaken me had he tried. Little Adèle was half wild with delight when she saw me. Mrs. Fairfax received me with her usual plain friendliness. Leah smiled; and even Sophie bid me 'bon soir' with glee. This was very pleasant: there is no happiness like that of being loved by your fellow-creatures, and feeling that your presence is an addition to their comfort.

I, that evening, shut my eyes resolutely against the future: I stopped my ears against the voice that kept warning me of near separation and coming grief. When tea was over and Mrs. Fairfax had taken her knitting, and I had assumed a low seat near her, and Adèle, kneeling on the carpet, had nestled close up to me, and a sense of mutual affection seemed to surround us with a ring of golden peace, I uttered a silent prayer that we might not be parted far or soon; but when, as we thus sat, Mr. Rochester entered, unannounced, and looking at us, seemed to take pleasure in the spectacle of a group so amicable—when he said he supposed the old lady was all right now that she had got her adopted daughter back again, and added that he saw Adèle was 'prête à croquer sa petite maman Anglaise'—I half ventured to hope that he would, even after his marriage, keep us together somewhere under the shelter of his protection, and not quite exiled from the sunshine of his presence.

A fortnight of dubious calm succeeded my return to Thornfield Hall. Nothing was said of the master's marriage, and I saw no preparation going on for such an event. Almost every day I asked Mrs. Fairfax if she had yet heard anything decided: her answer was always in the negative. Once, she said, she had actually put the question to Mr. Rochester as to when he was going to bring his bride home; but he had answered her only by a joke, and one of his queer looks, and she could not tell what to make of him.

One thing specially surprised me, and that was, there were no journeyings backward and forward, no visits to Ingram Park: to be sure it was twenty miles off, on the borders of another county; but what was that distance to an ardent lover? To so practised and indefatigable a horseman as Mr. Rochester it would be but a morning's ride. I began to cherish hopes I had no right to conceive: that the match was broken off; that rumour had been mistaken; that one or both parties had changed their minds. I used to look at my master's face to see if it were sad or fierce; but I could not remember the time when it had been so uniformly clear of clouds or evil feelings. If, in the moments I and my pupil spent with him, I lacked spirits and sank into inevitable dejection, he became even gay. Never had he called me more frequently to his presence; never been kinder to me when there—and, alas! never had I loved him so well.

CHAPTER XXIII

A SPLENDID Midsummer shone over England : skies so pure, suns so radiant as were then seen in long succession, seldom favour, even singly, our wave-girt land. It was as if a band of Italian days had come from the South, like a flock of glorious passenger birds, and lighted to rest them on the cliffs of Albion. The hay was all got in ; the fields round Thornfield were green and shorn ; the roads white and baked ; the trees were in their dark prime ; hedge and wood, full-leaved and deeply tinted, contrasted well with the sunny hue of the cleared meadows between.

On Midsummer-eve, Adèle, weary with gathering wild strawberries in Hay Lane half the day, had gone to bed with the sun. I watched her drop asleep, and when I left her I sought the garden.

It was now the sweetest hour of the twenty-four :—'Day its fervid fires had wasted,' and dew fell cool on panting plain and scorched summit. Where the sun had gone down in simple state—pure of the pomp of clouds—spread a solemn purple, burning with the light of red jewel and furnace flame at one point, on one hill-peak, and extending high and wide, soft and still softer, over half heaven. The east had its own charm of fine, deep blue, and its own modest gem, a rising and solitary star : soon it would boast the moon ; but she was yet beneath the horizon.

I walked a while on the pavement ; but a subtle, well-known scent—that of a cigar—stole from some window ; I saw the library casement open a handbreath ; I knew I might be watched thence ; so I went apart into the orchard. No nook in the grounds more sheltered and more Eden-like ; it was full of trees, it bloomed with flowers: a very high wall shut it out from the court, on one side; on the other, a beech avenue screened it from the lawn. At the bottom was a sunk fence; its sole separation from lonely fields; a winding walk, bordered with laurels and terminating in a giant horse-chestnut, circled at the base by a seat, led down to the fence. Here one could wander unseen. While such honey-dew fell, such silence reigned, such gloaming gathered, I felt as if I could haunt such shade for ever: but in threading the flower and fruit parterres at the upper part of the inclosure, enticed there by the light the now-rising moon casts on this more open quarter, my step is stayed—not by sound, not by sight, but once more by a warning fragrance.

Sweet briar and southernwood, jasmine, pink, and rose, have long been yielding their evening sacrifice of incense: this new scent is neither of shrub nor flower; it is—I know it well—it is Mr. Rochester's cigar. I look round, and I listen. I see trees laden with ripening fruit. I hear a nightingale warbling in a wood half a mile off; no moving form is visible, no coming step audible; but that perfume increases: I must flee. I make for the wicket leading to the shrubbery, and I see Mr. Rochester entering. I step aside into the ivy recess; he will not stay long: he will soon return whence he came, and if I sit still he will never see me.

But no—eventide is as pleasant to him as to me, and this antique garden as attractive; and he strolls on, now lifting the gooseberry tree branches to look at the fruit, large as plums, with which they are laden; now taking a ripe cherry from the wall; now stooping towards a knot of flowers, either to inhale their fragrance or to admire the dew-beads on their petals. A great moth goes humming by me; it alights on a plant at Mr. Rochester's foot: he sees it, and bends to examine it.

'Now he has his back towards me,' thought I, 'and he is occupied too; perhaps, if I walk softly, I can slip away unnoticed.'

I trod on an edging of turf that the crackle of the pebbly gravel might not betray me: he was standing among the beds at a yard or two distant from where I had to pass; the moth apparently engaged him. 'I shall get by very well,' I meditated. As I crossed his shadow, thrown long over the garden by the moon, not yet risen high, he said quietly without turning:—'Jane, come and look at this fellow.'

I had made no noise: he had not eyes behind—could his shadow feel? I started at first, and then I approached him.

'Look at his wings,' said he; 'he reminds me rather of a West Indian insect; one does not often see so large and gay a night-rover in England: there! he is flown.'

The moth roamed away. I was sheepishly retreating also; but Mr. Rochester followed me, and when we reached the wicket, he said:—'Turn back: on so lovely a night it is a shame to sit in the house; and surely no one can wish to go to bed while sunset is thus at meeting with moonrise.'

It is one of my faults that, though my tongue is sometimes prompt enough at an answer, there are times when it sadly fails me in framing an excuse; and always the lapse occurs at some crisis, when a facile word or plausible pretext is specially wanted to get me out of painful embarrassment. I did not like to walk at this hour alone with Mr. Rochester in the shadowy orchard; but I could not find a reason to allege for leaving him. I followed with lagging step, and thoughts busily bent on discovering a means of extrication; but he himself looked so composed, and so grave also, I became ashamed of feeling any confusion: the evil—if evil existent or prospective there was—seemed to lie with me only; his mind was unconscious and quiet.

'Jane,' he recommenced, as we entered the laurel walk, and slowly strayed down in the direction of the sunk fence and the horse-chestnut, 'Thornfield is a pleasant place in summer, is it not?'

'Yes, sir.'

'You must have become in some degree attached to the house,—you, who have an eye for natural beauties, and a good deal of the organ of Adhesiveness?'

'I am attached to it, indeed.'

'And though I don't comprehend how it is, I perceive you have acquired a degree of regard for that foolish little child, Adèle, too; and even for simple dame Fairfax?'

'Yes, sir; in different ways, I have an affection for both.'

'And would be sorry to part with them?'

'Yes.'

'Pity!' he said, and sighed and paused. 'It is always the way of events in this life,' he continued presently: 'no sooner have you got settled in a pleasant resting-place, than a voice calls out to you to rise and move on, for the hour of repose is expired.'

'Must I move on, sir?' I asked. 'Must I leave Thornfield?'

'I believe you must, Jane. I am sorry, Janet, but I believe indeed you must.'

This was a blow: but I did not let it prostrate me.

'Well, sir, I shall be ready when the order to march comes.'

'It is come now—I must give it to-night.'

'Then you are going to be married, sir?'

'Ex-act-ly—pre-cise-ly: with your usual acuteness, you have hit the nail straight on the head.'

'Soon, sir?'

'Very soon, my——that is, Miss Eyre: and you'll re-remember, Jane, the first time I, or Rumour, plainly intimated to you that it was my intention to put my old bachelor's neck into the sacred noose, to enter into the holy estate of matrimony—to take Miss Ingram to my bosom, in short (she's an extensive armful: but that's not to the point—one can't have too much of such a very excellent thing as my beautiful Blanche): well, as I was saying—listen to me, Jane! You're not turning your head to look after more moths, are you? That was only a lady-clock, child, 'flying away home.' I wish to remind you that it was you who first said to me, with that discretion I respect in you—with that foresight, prudence, and humility which befit your responsible and dependent position—that in case I married Miss Ingram—both you and little Adèle had better trot forthwith. I pass over the sort of slur conveyed in this suggestion on the character of my beloved; indeed, when you are far away, Janet, I'll try to forget it: I shall notice only its wisdom; which is such that I have made it my law of action. Adèle must go to school; and you, Miss Eyre, must get a new situation.'

'Yes, sir, I will advertise immediately: and meantime, I suppose'—— I was going to say, 'I suppose I may stay here till I find another shelter to betake myself to:' but I stopped, feeling it would not do to risk a long sentence, for my voice was not quite under command.

'In about a month I hope to be a bridegroom,' continued Mr. Rochester; 'and in the interim I shall myself look out for employment and an asylum for you.'

'Thank you, sir; I am sorry to give——'

'Oh, no need to apologise! I consider that when a dependent does her duty as well as you have done yours, she has a sort of claim upon her employer for any little assistance he can conveniently render her; indeed I have already, through my future mother-in-law, heard of a place that *I* think will suit: it is to undertake the education of the five daughters of Mrs. Dionysius O'Gall, of Bitternutt Lodge, Connaught, Ireland. You'll like Ireland, I think: they're such warm-hearted people there, they say.'

'It is a long way off, sir.'

'No matter—a girl of your sense will not object to the voyage or the distance.'

'Not the voyage, but the distance: and then the sea is a barrier——'

'From what, Jane?'

'From England and from Thornfield: and——'

'Well?'

'From *you*, sir.'

I said this almost involuntarily; and, with as little sanction of free will, my tears gushed out. I did not cry so as to be heard, however; I avoided sobbing. The thought of Mrs. O'Gall and Bitternutt Lodge struck cold to my heart; and colder the thought of all the brine and foam, destined, as it seemed, to rush between me and the master at whose side I now walked! and coldest the remembrance of the wider ocean—wealth, caste, custom intervened between me and what I naturally and inevitably loved.

'It is a long way,' I again said.

'It is to be sure; and when you get to Bitternutt Lodge, Connaught, Ireland, I shall never see you again, Jane: that's morally certain. I never go over to Ireland, not having myself much of a fancy for the country. We have been good friends, Jane; have we not?'

'Yes, sir.'

'And when friends are on the eve of separation, they like to spend the little time that remains to them close to each other. Come—we'll talk over the voyage and the parting quietly, half an hour or so, while the stars enter into their shining life up in heaven yonder: here is the chestnut tree: here is the bench at its old roots. Come, we will sit there in peace to-night, though we should never more be destined to sit there together.' He seated me and himself.

'It is a long way to Ireland, Janet, and I am sorry to send my little friend on such weary travels; but if I can't do better, how is it to be helped? Are you anything akin to me, do you think, Jane?'

I could risk no sort of answer by this time: my heart was full.

'Because,' he said, 'I sometimes have a queer feeling with regard to you—especially when you are near me, as now: it is as if I had a string somewhere under my left ribs, tightly and inextricably knotted to a similar string situated in the corresponding quarter of your little frame. And if that boisterous channel, and two hundred miles or so of land come broad between us, I am afraid that cord of communion will be snapt; and then I've a nervous notion I should take to bleeding inwardly. As for you—you'd forget me.'

'That I *never* should, sir: you know'—impossible to proceed.

'Jane, do you hear that nightingale singing in the wood? Listen!'

In listening, I sobbed convulsively; for I could repress what I endured no longer; I was obliged to yield, and I was shaken from head to foot with acute distress. When I did speak, it was only to express an impetuous wish that I had never been born, or never come to Thornfield.

'Because you are sorry to leave it?'

The vehemence of emotion, stirred by grief and love within me, was claiming mastery, and struggling for full sway; and asserting a right to predominate: to overcome, to live, rise, and reign at last; yes,—and to speak.

'I grieve to leave Thornfield: I love Thornfield—I love it, because I have lived in it a full and delightful life,—momentarily at least. I have not been trampled on. I have not been petrified. I have not been buried with inferior minds, and excluded from every glimpse of communion with what is bright and energetic, and high. I have talked, face to face, with what I reverence; with what I delight in,—with an original, a vigorous, an expanded mind. I have known you, Mr. Rochester; and it strikes me with terror and anguish to feel I absolutely must be torn from you for ever. I see the necessity of departure; and it is like looking on the necessity of death.'

'Where do you see the necessity?' he asked, suddenly.

'Where? You, sir, have placed it before me.'

'In what shape?'

'In the shape of Miss Ingram; a noble and beautiful woman,—your bride.'

'My bride! What bride? I have no bride!'

'But you will have.'

'Yes;—I will!—I will!' He set his teeth.

'Then I must go—you have said it yourself.'

'No: you must stay! I swear it—and the oath shall be kept.'

'I tell you I must go!' I retorted, roused to something like passion. 'Do you think I can stay to become nothing to you? Do you think I am an automaton?—a machine without feelings? and can bear to have my morsel of bread snatched from my lips, and my drop of living water dashed from my cup? Do you think, because I am poor, obscure, plain, and little, I am soulless and heartless? You think wrong!—I have as much soul as you,—and full as much heart! And if God had gifted me with some beauty and much wealth, I should have made it as hard for you to leave me, as it is now for me to leave you. I am not talking to you now through the medium of custom, conventionalities, nor even of mortal flesh—it is my spirit that addresses your spirit; just as if both had passed through the grave, and we stood at God's feet, equal,—as we are!'

'As we are!' repeated Mr. Rochester — 'so,' he added, enclosing me in his arms, gathering me to his breast, pressing his lips on my lips: 'so, Jane!'

'Yes, so, sir,' I rejoined: 'and yet not so; for you are a married man—or as good as a married man, and wed to one inferior to you—to one with whom you have no sympathy—whom I do not believe you truly love; for I have seen and heard you sneer at her. I would scorn such a union: therefore I am better than you—let me go!'

'Where, Jane? To Ireland?'

'Yes—to Ireland. I have spoken my mind, and can go anywhere now.'

'Jane, be still; don't struggle so, like a wild, frantic bird that is rending its own plumage in its desperation.'

'I am no bird; and no net ensnares me: I am a free human being with an independent will; which I now exert to leave you.'

Another effort set me at liberty, and I stood erect before him.

'And your will shall decide your destiny,' he said: 'I offer you my hand, my heart, and a share of all my possessions.'

'You play a farce, which I merely laugh at.'

'I ask you to pass through life at my side—to be my second self, and best earthly companion.'

'For that fate you have already made your choice, and must abide by it.'

'Jane, be still a few moments; you are over-excited: I will be still too.'

A waft of wind came sweeping down the laurel walk, and trembled through the boughs of the chestnut: it wandered away—away—to an indefinite distance—it died. The nightingale's song was then the only voice of the hour: in listening to it, I again wept. Mr. Rochester sat quiet, looking at me gently and seriously. Some time passed before he spoke; he at last said:—'Come to my side, Jane, and let us explain and understand one another.'

'I will never again come to your side: I am torn away now, and cannot return.'

'But, Jane, I summon you as my wife: it is you only I intend to marry.'

I was silent: I thought he mocked me.

'Come, Jane—come hither.'

'Your bride stands between us.'

He rose, and with a stride reached me.

'My bride is here,' he said, again drawing me to him, 'because my equal is here, and my likeness. Jane, will you marry me?'

Still I did not answer, and still I writhed myself from his grasp: for I was still incredulous.

'Do you doubt me, Jane?'

'Entirely.'

'You have no faith in me?'

'Not a whit.'

'Am I a liar in your eyes?' he asked passionately. 'Little sceptic, you *shall* be convinced. What love have I for Miss Ingram? None: and that you know. What love has she for me? None: as I have taken pains to prove; I caused a rumour to reach her that my fortune was not a third of what was supposed, and after that I presented myself to see the result; it was coldness both from her and her mother. I would not—I could not—marry Miss Ingram. You—you strange—you almost unearthly thing!—I love as my own flesh. You—poor and obscure, and small and plain as you are—I entreat to accept me as a husband.'

'What, me!' I ejaculated: beginning in his earnestness—and especially in his incivility—to credit his sincerity: 'me who have not a friend in the world but you—if you are my friend: not a shilling but what you have given me?'

'You, Jane. I must have you for my own—entirely my own. Will you be mine? Say yes, quickly.'

'Mr. Rochester, let me look at your face: turn to the moonlight.'

'Why?'

'Because I want to read your countenance; turn!'

'There: you will find it scarcely more legible than a crumpled, scratched page. Read on: only make haste, for I suffer.'

His face was very much agitated and very much flushed, and there were strong workings in the features, and strange gleams in the eyes.

'Oh, Jane, you torture me!' he exclaimed. 'With that searching and yet faithful and generous look, you torture me!'

'How can I do that? If you are true, and your offer real, my only feelings to you must be gratitude and devotion—they cannot torture.'

'Gratitude!' he ejaculated; and added wildly—'Jane, accept me quickly. Say, Edward—give me my name—Edward—I will marry you.'

'Are you in earnest?—Do you truly love me?—Do you sincerely wish me to be your wife?'

'I do; and if an oath is necessary to satisfy you, I swear it.'

'Then, sir, I will marry you.'

'Edward—my little wife!'

'Dear Edward!'

'Come to me—come to me entirely now,' said he: and added, in his deepest tone, speaking in my ear as his cheek was laid on mine, 'Make my happiness—I will make yours.'

'God pardon me!' he subjoined ere long; 'and man meddle not with me: I have her, and will hold her.'

'There is no one to meddle, sir. I have no kindred to interfere.'

'No—that is the best of it,' he said.

And if I had loved him less I should have thought his accent and look of exultation savage; but, sitting by him, roused from the nightmare of parting—called to the paradise of union—I thought only of the bliss given me to drink in so abundant a flow. Again and again he said, 'Are you happy, Jane?' And again and again I answered, 'Yes.' After which he murmured, 'It will atone—it will atone. Have I not found her friendless, and cold, and comfortless? Will I not guard, and cherish, and solace her? Is there not love in my heart, and constancy in my resolves? It will expiate at God's tribunal. I know my Maker sanctions what I do. For the world's judgment—I wash my hands thereof. For man's opinion—I defy it.'

But what had befallen the night? The moon was not yet set, and we were all in shadow: I could scarcely see my master's face, near as I was. And what ailed the chestnut tree? it writhed and groaned; while wind roared in the laurel walk, and came sweeping over us.

'We must go in,' said Mr. Rochester: 'the weather changes. I could have sat with thee till morning, Jane.'

'And so,' thought I, 'could I with you.' I should have said so, perhaps, but a livid, vivid spark leapt out of a cloud at which I was looking, and there was a crack, a crash, and a close rattling peal; and I thought only of hiding my dazzled eyes against Mr. Rochester's shoulder.

The rain rushed down. He hurried me up the walk, through the grounds, and into the house; but we were quite wet before we could pass the threshold. He was taking off my shawl in the hall, and shaking the water out of my loosened hair, when Mrs. Fairfax emerged from her room. I did not observe her at first, nor did Mr. Rochester. The lamp was lit. The clock was on the stroke of twelve.

'Hasten to take off your wet things,' said he; 'and before you go, good-night—good-night, my darling!'

He kissed me repeatedly. When I looked up, on leaving his arms, there stood the widow, pale, grave, and amazed. I only smiled at her, and ran upstairs. 'Explanation will do for another time,' thought I. Still, when I reached my chamber, I felt a pang at the idea that she should even temporarily misconstrue what she had seen. But joy soon effaced every other feeling; and loud as the wind blew, near and deep as the thunder crashed, fierce and frequent as the lightning gleamed, cataract-like as the rain fell during a storm of two hours' duration, I experienced no fear, and little awe. Mr. Rochester came thrice to my door in the course of it, to ask if I was safe and tranquil: and that was comfort, that was strength for anything.

Before I left my bed in the morning, little Adèle came running in to tell me that the great horse-chestnut at the bottom of the orchard had been struck by lightning in the night, and half of it split away.

CHAPTER XXIV

As I rose and dressed, I thought over what had happened, and wondered if it were a dream. I could not be certain of the reality till I had seen Mr. Rochester again, and heard him renew his words of love and promise.

While arranging my hair, I looked at my face in the glass, and felt it was no longer plain: there was hope in its aspect, and life in its colour; and my eyes seemed as if they had beheld the fount of fruition, and borrowed beams from the lustrous ripple. I had often been unwilling to look at my master, because I feared he could not be pleased at my look; but I was sure I might lift my face to his now, and not cool his affection by its expression. I took a plain but clean and light summer dress from my drawer and put it on: it seemed no attire had ever so well become me; because none had I ever worn in so blissful a mood.

I was not surprised, when I ran down into the hall, to see that a brilliant June morning had succeeded to the tempest of the night; and to feel, through the open glass door, the breathing of a fresh and fragrant breeze. Nature must be gladsome when I was so happy. A beggar-woman and her little boy—pale, ragged objects both—were coming up the walk, and I ran down and gave them all the money I happened to have in my purse—some three or four shillings: good or bad, they must partake of my jubilee. The rooks cawed, and blither birds sang; but nothing was so merry or so musical as my own rejoicing heart.

Mrs. Fairfax surprised me by looking out of the window with a sad countenance, and saying gravely:—'Miss Eyre, will you come to breakfast?' During the meal she was quiet and cool: but I could not undeceive her then. I must wait for my master to give explanations; and so must she. I ate what I could, and then I hastened upstairs. I met Adèle leaving the school-room.

'Where are you going? It is time for lessons.'

'Mr. Rochester has sent me away to the nursery.'

'Where is he?'

'In there,' pointing to the apartment she had left; and I went in, and there he stood.

'Come and bid me good-morning,' said he. I gladly advanced; and it was not merely a cold word now, or even a shake of the hand that I received, but an embrace and a kiss. It seemed natural; it seemed genial to be so well-loved, so caressed by him.

'Jane, you look blooming, and smiling, and pretty,' said he: 'truly pretty this morning. Is this my pale, little elf? Is this my mustard-seed? This little sunny-faced girl with the dimpled cheek and rosy lips; the satin-smooth hazel hair, and the radiant hazel eyes?' (I had green eyes, reader; but you must excuse the mistake: for him they were new-dyed, I suppose.)

'It is Jane Eyre, sir.'

'Soon to be Jane Rochester,' he added: 'in four weeks, Janet, not a day more. Do you hear that?'

I did, and I could not quite comprehend it: it made me giddy. The feeling, the announcement sent through me, was something stronger than was consistent with joy—something that smote and stunned: it was, I think, almost fear.

'You blushed, and now you are white, Jane: what is that for?'

'Because you gave me a new name—Jane Rochester; and it seems so strange.'

'Yes, Mrs. Rochester,' said he; 'young Mrs. Rochester—Fairfax Rochester's girl-bride.'

'It can never be, sir; it does not sound likely. Human beings never enjoy complete happiness in this world. I was not born for a different destiny to the rest of my species;

to imagine such a lot befalling me is a fairy tale—a day-dream.'

'Which I can and will realise. I shall begin to-day. This morning I wrote to my banker in London to send me certain jewels he has in his keeping,—heir-looms for the ladies of Thornfield. In a day or two I hope to pour them into your lap: for every privilege, every attention shall be yours, that I would accord a peer's daughter, if about to marry her.'

'Oh, sir!—never mind jewels! I don't like to hear them spoken of. Jewels for Jane Eyre sounds unnatural and strange: I would rather not have them.'

'I will myself put the diamond chain round your neck, and the circlet on your forehead,—which it will become: for nature, at least, has stamped her patent of nobility on this brow, Jane; and I will clasp the bracelets on these fine wrists, and load these fairy-like fingers with rings.'

'No, no, sir! think of other subjects, and speak of other things, and in another strain. Don't address me as if I were a beauty; I am your plain, Quakerish governess.'

'You are a beauty, in my eyes; and a beauty just after the desire of my heart,—delicate and aërial.'

'Puny and insignificant, you mean. You are dreaming, sir,—or you are sneering. For God's sake, don't be ironical!'

'I will make the world acknowledge you a beauty too,' he went on, while I really became uneasy at the strain he had adopted; because I felt he was either deluding himself, or trying to delude me. 'I will attire my Jane in satin and lace, and she shall have roses in her hair; and I will cover the head I love best with a priceless veil.'

'And then you won't know me, sir; and I shall not be your Jane Eyre any longer, but an ape in a harlequin's jacket,—a jay in borrowed plumes. I would as soon see you, Mr. Rochester, tricked out in stage-trappings, as myself clad in a court-lady's robe; and I don't call you handsome, sir, though I love you most dearly: far too dearly to flatter you. Don't flatter me.'

He pursued his theme, however, without noticing my deprecation. 'This very day I shall take you in the carriage to Millcote, and you must choose some dresses for yourself. I told you we shall be married in four weeks. The wedding is to take place quietly, in the church down below yonder; and then I shall waft you away at once to town. After a brief stay there, I shall bear my treasure to regions nearer the sun: to French vineyards and Italian plains; and she shall see whatever is famous in old story and in modern record: she shall taste, too, of the life of cities; and she shall learn to value herself by just comparison with others.'

'Shall I travel?—and with you, sir?'

'You shall sojourn at Paris, Rome, and Naples: at Florence, Venice, and Vienna: all the ground I have wandered over shall be re-trodden by you: wherever I stamped my hoof, your sylph's foot shall step also. Ten years since, I flew through Europe half mad; with disgust, hate, and rage, as my companions; now I shall revisit it healed and cleansed, with a very angel as my comforter.'

I laughed at him as he said this. 'I am not an angel,' I asserted; 'and I will not be one till I die: I will be myself. Mr. Rochester, you must neither expect nor exact anything celestial of me—for you will not get it, any more than I shall get it of you: which I do not at all anticipate.'

'What do you anticipate of me?'

'For a little while you will perhaps be as you are now,—a very little while; and then you will turn cool; and then you will be capricious; and then you will be stern, and I shall have much ado to please you: but when you get well used to me, you will perhaps like me again—*like* me, I say, not *love* me. I suppose your love will effervesce in six months, or less. I have observed in books written by men, that period assigned as the farthest to which a husband's ardour extends. Yet, after all, as a friend and companion, I hope never to become quite distasteful to my dear master.'

'Distasteful! and like you again! I think I shall like you again and yet again: and I will make you confess I do not only *like*, but *love* you—with truth, fervour, constancy.'

'Yet are you not capricious, sir?'

'To women who please me only by their faces, I am the very devil when I find out they have neither souls nor hearts—when they open to me a perspective of flatness, triviality, and perhaps imbecility, coarseness, and ill-temper: but to the clear eye and eloquent tongue, to the soul made of fire, and the character that bends but does not break—at once supple and stable, tractable and consistent—I am ever tender and true.'

'Had you ever experience of such a character, sir? Did you ever love such an one?'

'I love it now.'

'But before me: if I, indeed, in any respect come up to that difficult standard?'

'I never met your likeness. Jane: you please me, and you master me—you seem to submit, and I like the sense of pliancy you impart: and while I am twining the soft, silken skein round my finger, it sends a thrill up my arm to my heart. I am influenced—conquered; and the influence is sweeter than I can express; and the conquest I undergo has a witchery beyond any triumph *I* can win. Why do you smile, Jane? What does that inexplicable, that uncanny turn of countenance mean?'

'I was thinking, sir (you will excuse the idea; it was involuntary), I was thinking of Hercules and Samson with their charmers——'

'You were, you little elfish——'

'Hush, sir! You don't talk very wisely just now; any more than those gentlemen acted very wisely. However, had they been married, they would no doubt by their severity as husbands have made up for their softness as suitors; and so will you, I fear. I wonder how you will answer me a year hence, should I ask a favour it does not suit your convenience or pleasure to grant.'

'Ask me something now, Janet—the least thing: I desire to be entreated——'

'Indeed, I will, sir; I have my petition all ready.'

'Speak! But if you look up and smile with that countenance, I shall swear concession before I know to what, and that will make a fool of me.'

'Not at all, sir; I ask only this: don't send for the jewels, and don't crown me with roses: you might as well put a border of gold lace round that plain pocket handkerchief you have there.'

'I might as well "gild refined gold." I know it: your request is granted then—for the time. I will remand the order I despatched to my banker. But you have not yet asked for anything; you have prayed a gift to be withdrawn: try again.'

'Well, then, sir; have the goodness to gratify my curiosity, which is much piqued on one point.'

He looked disturbed. 'What? what?' he said hastily. 'Curiosity is a dangerous petition: it is well I have not taken a vow to accord every request——'

'But there can be no danger in complying with this, sir.'

'Utter it, Jane: but I wish that instead of a mere inquiry into perhaps, a secret, it was a wish for half my estate.'

'Now, king Ahasuerus! What do I want with half your estate? Do you think I am a Jew-usurer, seeking good investment in land? I would much rather have all your confidence. You will not exclude me from your confidence, if you admit me to your heart?'

'You are welcome to all my confidence that is worth having, Jane: but for God's sake don't desire a useless burden! Don't long for poison—don't turn out a downright Eve on my hands!'

'Why not, sir? You have just been telling me how much you liked to be conquered, and how pleasant over-persuasion is to you. Don't you think I had better take advantage of the confession, and begin and coax, and entreat—even cry and be sulky if necessary—for the sake of a mere essay of my power?'

'I dare you to any such experiment. Encroach, presume, and the game is up.'

'Is it, sir? You soon give in. How stern you look now! Your eyebrows have become as thick as my finger, and your forehead resembles, what, in some very astonishing poetry, I once saw styled "a blue-piled thunderloft." That will be your married look, sir, I suppose?'

'If that will be *your* married look, I, as a Christian, will soon give up the notion of consorting with a mere sprite or salamander. But what had you to ask, thing?—out with it!'

'There, you are less than civil now; and I like rudeness a great deal better than flattery. I had rather be a *thing* than an angel. This is what I have to ask:—Why did you take such pains to make me believe you wished to marry Miss Ingram?'

'Is that all? Thank God, it is no worse!'

And now he unknit his black brows; looked down, smiling at me, and stroked my hair, as if well pleased at seeing a danger averted.

'I think I may confess,' he continued, 'even although I should make you a little indignant, Jane—and I have seen what a fire-spirit you can be when you are indignant. You glowed in the cool moonlight last night, when you mutinied against fate, and claimed your rank as my equal. Janet, by-the-by, it was you who made me the offer.'

'Of course, I did. But to the point if you please, sir—Miss Ingram?'

'Well, I feigned courtship of Miss Ingram, because I wished to render you as madly in love with me as I was with you; and I knew jealousy would be the best ally I could call in for the furtherance of that end.'

'Excellent!—now you are small—not one whit bigger than the end of my little finger. It was a burning shame, and a scandalous disgrace to act in that way. Did you think nothing of Miss Ingram's feelings, sir?'

'Her feelings are concentrated in one--pride; and that needs humbling. Were you jealous, Jane?'

'Never mind, Mr. Rochester: it is in no way interesting to you to know that. Answer me truly once more. Do you think Miss Ingram will not suffer from your dishonest coquetry? Won't she feel forsaken and deserted?'

'Impossible!—when I told you how she, on the contrary, deserted me: the idea of my insolvency cooled, or rather extinguished, her flame in a moment.'

'You have a curious designing mind, Mr. Rochester. I am afraid your principles on some points are eccentric.'

'My principles were never trained, Jane: they may have grown a little awry for want of attention.'

'Once again, seriously; may I enjoy the great good that has been vouchsafed to me, without fearing that any one else is suffering the bitter pain I myself felt a while ago?'

'That you may, my good little girl: there is not another being in the world has the same pure love for me as yourself—for I lay that pleasant unction to my soul, Jane, a belief in your affection.'

I turned my lips to the hand that lay on my shoulder. I loved him very much—more than I could trust myself to say—more than words had power to express.

'Ask something more,' he said presently; 'it is my delight to be entreated, and to yield.'

I was again ready with my request.

'Communicate your intentions to Mrs. Fairfax, sir: she saw me with you last night in the hall, and she was shocked. Give her some explanation before I see her again. It pains me to be misjudged by so good a woman.'

'Go to your room, and put on your bonnet,' he replied. 'I mean you to accompany me to Millcote this morning; and while you prepare for the drive, I will enlighten the old lady's understanding. Did she think, Janet, you had given the world for love, and considered it well lost?'

'I believe she thought I had forgotten my station, and yours, sir.'

'Station! station!—your station is in my heart, and on the necks of those who would insult you, now or hereafter—Go.'

I was soon dressed; and when I heard Mr. Rochester quit Mrs. Fairfax's parlour, I hurried down to it. The old lady had been reading her morning portion of Scripture—the lesson for the day; her Bible lay open before her, and her spectacles were upon it. Her occupation, suspended by Mr. Rochester's announcement, seemed now forgotten: her eyes, fixed on the blank wall opposite, expressed the surprise of a quiet mind, stirred by unwonted tidings. Seeing me, she roused herself: she made a sort of effort to smile, and framed a few words of congratulation; but the smile expired, and the sentence was abandoned unfinished. She put up her spectacles, shut the Bible, and pushed her chair back from the table.

'I feel so astonished,' she began, 'I hardly know what to say to you, Miss Eyre. I have surely not been dreaming, have I? Sometimes I half fall asleep when I am sitting alone, and fancy things that have never happened. It has seemed to me more than once when I have been in a doze, that my dear husband, who died fifteen years since, has come in and sat down beside me; and that I have even heard him call me by my name, Alice, as he used to do. Now, can you tell me whether it is actually true that Mr. Rochester has asked you to marry him? Don't laugh at me. But I really thought he came in here five minutes ago, and said, that in a month you would be his wife.'

'He has said the same thing to me,' I replied.

'He has! Do you believe him? Have you accepted him?'

'Yes.'

She looked at me bewildered.

'I could never have thought it. He is a proud man: all the Rochesters were proud: and his father, at least, liked money. He, too, has always been called careful. He means to marry you?'

'He tells me so.'

She surveyed my whole person: in her eyes I read that they had there found no charm powerful enough to solve the enigma.

'It passes me!' she continued: 'but no doubt it is true since you say so. How it will answer, I cannot tell: I really don't know. Equality of position and fortune is often advisable in such cases; and there are twenty years of difference in your ages. He might almost be your father.'

'No, indeed, Mrs. Fairfax!' exclaimed I, nettled: 'he is nothing like my father! No one, who saw us together, would suppose it for an instant. Mr. Rochester looks as young, and is as young, as some men at five-and-twenty.'

'Is it really for love he is going to marry you?' she asked.

I was so hurt by her coldness and scepticism that the tears rose to my eyes.

'I am sorry to grieve you,' pursued the widow; 'but you are so young, and so little acquainted with men, I wished to put you on your guard. It is an old saying that "all is not gold that glitters;" and in this case I do fear there will be something found to be different to what either you or I expect.'

'Why?—am I a monster?' I said: 'is it impossible that Mr. Rochester should have a sincere affection for me?'

'No: you are very well; and much improved of late: and Mr. Rochester, I daresay, is fond of you. I have always noticed that you were a sort of pet of his. There are times when, for your sake, I have been a little uneasy at his marked preference, and have wished to put you on your guard: but I did not like to suggest even the possibility of wrong. I knew such an idea would shock, perhaps offend you; and you were so discreet, and so thoroughly modest and sensible, I hoped you might be trusted to protect yourself. Last night I cannot tell you what I suffered when I sought all over the house, and could find you nowhere, nor the master either; and then, at twelve o'clock, saw you come in with him.'

'Well, never mind that now,' I interrupted impatiently: 'it is enough that all was right.'

'I hope all will be right in the end,' she said: 'but believe me, you cannot be too careful. Try and keep Mr. Rochester at a distance: distrust yourself as well as him. Gentlemen in his station are not accustomed to marry their governesses.'

I was growing truly irritated: happily, Adèle ran in.

'Let me go,—let me go to Millcote too!' she cried. 'Mr. Rochester won't: though there is so much room in the new carriage. Beg him to let me go, mademoiselle.'

'That I will, Adèle;' and I hastened away with her, glad to quit my gloomy monitress. The carriage was ready: they were bringing it round to the front, and my master was pacing the pavement, Pilot following him backwards and forwards.

'Adèle may accompany us, may she not, sir?'

'I told her no. I'll have no brats!—I'll have only you.'

'Do let her go, Mr. Rochester, if you please: it would be better.'

'Not it: she will be a restraint.'

He was quite peremptory, both in look and voice. The chill of Mrs. Fairfax's warnings, and the damp of her doubts were upon me: something of unsubstantiality and uncertainty had beset my hopes. I half lost the sense of power over him. I was about mechanically to obey him, without further remonstrance; but as he helped me into the carriage, he looked at my face.

'What is the matter?' he asked; 'all the sunshine is gone. Do you really wish the bairn to go? Will it annoy you if she is left behind?'

'I would far rather she went, sir.'

'Then off for your bonnet, and back, like a flash of lightning!' cried he to Adèle.

She obeyed him with what speed she might.

'After all, a single morning's interruption will not matte much,' said he, 'when I mean shortly to claim you—your thoughts, conversation, and company—for life.'

Adèle, when lifted in, commenced kissing me, by way of expressing her gratitude for my intercession: she was instantly stowed away into a corner on the other side of him. She then peeped round to where I sat; so stern a neighbour was too restrictive: to him, in his present fractious mood she dared whisper no observations, nor ask of him any information.

'Let her come to me,' I entreated: 'she will, perhaps, trouble you, sir: there is plenty of room on this side.'

He handed her over as if she had been a lap-dog; 'I'll send her to school yet,' he said, but now he was smiling.

Adèle heard him, and asked if she was to go to school 'sans mademoiselle.'

'Yes,' he replied, 'absolutely sans mademoiselle; for I am to take mademoiselle to the moon, and there I shall seek a cave in one of the white valleys among the volcano-tops, and mademoiselle shall live with me there, and only me.'

'She will have nothing to eat: you will starve her,' observed Adèle.

'I shall gather manna for her morning and night: the plains and hillsides in the moon are bleached with manna, Adèle.'

'She will want to warm herself: what will she do for a fire?'

'Fire rises out of the lunar mountains: when she is cold, I'll carry her up to a peak and lay her down on the edge of a crater.'

'Oh, qu'elle y sera mal—peu confortable! And her clothes, they will wear out: how can she get new ones?'

Mr. Rochester professed to be puzzled. 'Hem?' said he. 'What would you do, Adèle? Cudgel your brains for an expedient. How would a white or a pink cloud answer for a gown, do you think? And one could cut a pretty enough scarf out of a rainbow.'

'She is far better as she is,' concluded Adèle, after musing some time: 'besides, she would get tired of living with only you in the moon. If I were mademoiselle, I would never consent to go with you.'

'She has consented: she has pledged her word.'

'But you can't get her there: there is no road to the moon: it is all air; and neither you nor she can fly.'

'Adèle, look at that field.' We were now outside Thornfield gates, and bowling lightly along the smooth road to Millcote, where the dust was well-laid by the thunder-storm, and where the low hedges and lofty timber trees on each side glistened green, and rain-refreshed.

'In that field, Adèle, I was walking late one evening about a fortnight since—the evening of the day you helped me to make hay in the orchard meadows; and as I was tired with raking swaths, I sat down to rest me on a stile; and there I took out a little book and a pencil, and began to write about a misfortune that befell me long ago and a wish I had for happy days to come: I was writing away very fast, though daylight was fading from the leaf, when something came up the path and stopped two yards off me. I looked at it. It was a little thing with a veil of gossamer on its head. I beckoned it to come near me; it stood soon at my knee. I never spoke to it, and it never spoke to me, in words: but I read its eyes, and it read mine; and our speechless colloquy was to this effect:—It was a fairy, and come from Elf-land, it said; and its errand was to make me happy: I must go with it out of the common world to a lonely place—such as the moon, for instance—and it nodded its head towards her horn, rising over Hay-hill: it told me of the alabaster cave and silver vale where we might live. I said I should like to go; but reminded it, as you did me, that I had no wings to fly.'

'"Oh," returned the fairy, "that does not signify! Here is a talisman will remove all difficulties;" and she held out a pretty gold ring. "Put it," she said, "on the fourth finger of my left hand, and I am yours, and you are mine; and we shall leave earth, and make our own heaven yonder." She nodded again at the moon. The ring, Adèle, is in my breeches-pocket, under the disguise of a sovereign: but I mean soon to change it to a ring again.'

'But what has mademoiselle to do with it? I don't care for the fairy: you said it was mademoiselle you would take to the moon?'——

'Mademoiselle is a fairy,' he said, whispering mysteriously. Whereupon I told her not to mind his badinage; and she, on her part, evinced a fund of genuine French scepticism: denominating Mr. Rochester 'un vrai menteur,' and assuring him that she had made no account whatever of his 'Contes de fée,' and that 'du reste, il n'y avait pas de fées, et quand même il y en avait,' she was sure they would never appear to him, nor ever give him rings, or offer to live with him in the moon. The hour spent at Millcote was a somewhat harassing one to me. Mr. Rochester obliged me to go to a certain silk warehouse: there I was ordered to choose half a dozen dresses. I hated the business, I begged leave to defer it: no—it should be gone through with now. By dint of entreaties expressed in energetic whispers I reduced the half-dozen to two: these, however, he vowed he would select himself. With anxiety I watched his eye rove over the gay stores: he fixed on a rich silk of the most brilliant amethyst dye, and a superb pink satin. I told him in a new series of whispers, that he might as well buy me a gold gown and a silver bonnet at once: I should certainly never venture to wear his choice. With infinite difficulty, for he was stubborn as a stone, I persuaded him to make an exchange in favour of a sober black satin and pearl-grey silk. 'It might pass for the present,' he said; 'but he would yet see me glittering like a parterre.'

Glad was I to get him out of the silk warehouse, and then out of a jeweller's shop: the more he bought me, the more my cheek burned with a sense of annoyance and degradation.

As we re-entered the carriage, and I sat back feverish and fagged, I remembered what in the hurry of events, dark and bright, I had wholly forgotten—the letter of my uncle, John Eyre, to Mrs. Reed: his intention to adopt me and make me his legatee. 'It would, indeed, be a relief,' I thought, 'if I had ever so small an independency; I never can bear being dressed like a doll by Mr. Rochester, or sitting like a second Danae with the golden shower falling daily round me. I will write to Madeira the moment I get home, and tell my uncle John I am going to be married, and to whom: if I had but a prospect of one day bringing Mr. Rochester an accession of fortune, I could better endure to be kept by him now.' And somewhat relieved by this idea (which I failed not to execute that day), I ventured once more to meet my master's and lover's eye; which most pertinaciously sought mine, though I averted both face and gaze. He smiled; and I thought his smile was such as a sultan might, in a blissful and fond moment, bestow on a slave his gold and gems had enriched: I crushed his hand, which was ever hunting mine, vigorously, and thrust it back to him red with the passionate pressure——

'You need not look in that way,' I said: 'if you do I'll wear nothing but my old Lowood frocks to the end of the chapter. I'll be married in this lilac gingham—you may make a dressing-gown for yourself out of the pearl-grey silk, and an infinite series of waistcoats out of the black satin.'

He chuckled; he rubbed his hands: 'Oh, it is rich to see and hear her!' he exclaimed. 'Is she original? Is she piquant? I would not exchange this one little English girl for the grand Turk's whole seraglio; gazelle-eyes, houri forms, and all!'

The Eastern allusion bit me again: 'I'll not stand you an inch in the stead of a seraglio,' I said; 'so don't consider me an equivalent for one; if you have a fancy for anything in that line, away with you, sir, to the bazaars of Stamboul without delay; and lay out in extensive slave-purchases some of that spare cash you seem at a loss to spend satisfactorily here.'

'And what will you do, Janet, while I am bargaining for so many tons of flesh and such an assortment of black eyes?'

'I'll be preparing myself to go out as a missionary to preach liberty to them that are enslaved—your harem inmates amongst the rest. I'll get admitted there, and I'll stir up mutiny; and you, three-tailed bashaw as you are, sir, shall in a trice find yourself fettered amongst our hands: nor will I, for one, consent to cut your bonds till you have signed a charter, the most liberal that despot ever yet conferred.'

'I would consent to be at your mercy, Jane.'

'I would have no mercy, Mr. Rochester, if you supplicated for it with an eye like that. While you looked so, I should be certain that whatever charter you might grant under coercion, your first act, when released, would be to violate its conditions.'

'Why, Jane, what would you have? I fear you will compel me to go through a private marriage ceremony, besides that performed at the altar. You will stipulate, I see, for peculiar terms—what will they be?'

'I only want an easy mind, sir; not crushed by crowded obligations. Do you remember what you said of Céline Varens?—of the diamonds, the cashmeres you gave her? I will not be your English Céline Varens. I shall continue to act as Adèle's governess; by that I shall earn my board and lodging, and thirty pounds a year besides. I'll furnish my own wardrobe out of that money, and you shall give me nothing but'——

'Well, but what?'

'Your regard: and if I give you mine in return, that debt will be quit.'

'Well, for cool native impudence, and pure innate pride, you haven't your equal,' said he. We were now approaching

Thornfield. 'Will it please you to dine with me to-day?' he asked, as we re-entered the gates.

'No, thank you, sir.'

'And what for, "no, thank you," if one may inquire?'

'I never have dined with you, sir: and I see no reason why I should now: till'——

'Till what? You delight in half-phrases.'

'Till I can't help it.'

'Do you suppose I eat like an ogre, or a ghoul, that you dread being the companion of my repast?'

'I have formed no supposition on the subject, sir; but I want to go on as usual for another month.'

'You will give up your governessing slavery at once.'

'Indeed! begging your pardon, sir, I shall not. I shall just go on with it as usual. I shall keep out of your way all day, as I have been accustomed to do: you may send for me in the evening, when you feel disposed to see me, and I'll come then; but at no other time.'

'I want a smoke, Jane, or a pinch of snuff, to comfort me under all this, "pour me donner une contenance," as Adèle would say; and unfortunately I have neither my cigar-case, nor my snuff-box. But listen—whisper—it is your time now, little tyrant, but it will be mine presently: and when once I have fairly seized you, to have and to hold, I'll just —figuratively speaking—attach you to a chain like this' (touching his watch-guard). 'Yes, bonny wee thing, I'll wear you in my bosom, lest my jewel I should tyne.'

He said this as he helped me to alight from the carriage; and while he afterwards lifted out Adèle, I entered the house, and made good my retreat upstairs.

He duly summoned me to his presence in the evening. I had prepared an occupation for him; for I was determined not to spend the whole time in a *tête-à-tête* conversation. I remembered his fine voice; I knew he liked to sing—good singers generally do. I was no vocalist myself, and, in his fastidious judgment, no musician either; but I delighted in listening when the performance was good. No sooner had twilight, that hour of romance, began to lower her blue and starry banner over the lattice, than I rose, opened the piano, and entreated him, for the love of heaven, to give me a song. He said I was a capricious witch, and that he would rather sing another time; but I averred that no time was like the present.

'Did I like his voice?' he asked.

'Very much.' I was not fond of pampering that susceptible vanity of his; but for once, and from motives of expediency, I would e'en soothe and stimulate it.

'Then, Jane, you must play the accompaniment.'

'Very well, sir; I will try.'

I did try, but was presently swept off the stool and denominated 'a little bungler.' Being pushed unceremoniously to one side—which was precisely what I wished—he usurped my place, and proceeded to accompany himself: for he could play as well as sing. I hied me to the window-recess; and while I sat there and looked out on the still trees and dim lawn, to a sweet air was sung in mellow tones the following strain:—

The truest love that ever heart
  Felt at its kindled core
Did through each vein, in quickened start,
  The tide of being pour.

Her coming was my hope each day,
  Her parting was my pain;
The chance that did her steps delay
  Was ice in every vein.

I dreamed it would be nameless bliss,
  As I loved, loved to be;
And to this object did I press
  As blind as eagerly.

But wide as pathless was the space
  That lay, our lives, between,
And dangerous as the foamy race
  Of ocean-surges green.

And haunted as a robber-path
  Through wilderness or wood;
For Might and Right, and Woe and Wrath,
  Between our spirits stood.

I dangers dared; I hind'rance scorned;
  I omens did defy:
Whatever menaced, harassed, warned,
  I passed impetuous by.

On sped my rainbow, fast as light;
  I flew as in a dream;
For glorious rose upon my sight
  That child of Shower and Gleam.

Still bright on clouds of suffering dim
  Shines that soft, solemn joy;
Nor care I now, how dense and grim
  Disasters gather nigh.

I care not in this moment sweet,
  Though all I have rushed o'er
Should come on pinion, strong and fleet,
  Proclaiming vengeance sore:

Though haughty Hate should strike me down,
  Right, bar approach to me;
And grinding Might, with furious frown,
  Swear endless enmity.

My love has placed her little hand
  With noble faith in mine,
And vowed that wedlock's sacred band
  Our nature shall entwine.

My love has sworn, with sealing kiss,
  With me to live—to die;
I have at last my nameless bliss:
  As I love—loved am I!

He rose and came towards me, and I saw his face all kindled, and his full falcon-eye flashing, and tenderness and passion in every lineament. I quailed momentarily—then I rallied. Soft scene, daring demonstration, I would not have; and I stood in peril of both: a weapon of defence must be prepared—I whetted my tongue: as he reached me, I asked with asperity, 'whom he was going to marry now?'

'That was a strange question to be put by his darling Jane.'

'Indeed! I considered it a very natural and necessary one: he had talked of his future wife dying with him. What did he mean by such a pagan idea? *I* had no intention of dying with him—he might depend on that.'

'Oh, all he longed, all he prayed for, was that I might live with him! Death was not for such as I.'

'Indeed it was: I had as good a right to die when my time came as he had: but I should bide that time, and not be hurried away in a suttee.'

'Would I forgive him for the selfish idea, and prove my pardon by a reconciling kiss?'

'No: I would rather be excused.'

Here I heard myself apostrophised as a 'hard little thing;' and it was added, 'any other woman would have been melted to marrow at hearing such stanzas crooned in her praise.'

I assured him I was naturally hard—very flinty, and that he would often find me so; and that, moreover, I was determined to show him divers rugged points in my character before the ensuing four weeks elapsed: he should know fully what sort of a bargain he had made, while there was yet time to rescind it.

'Would I be quiet, and talk rationally?'

'I would be quiet if he liked; and as to talking rationally, I flattered myself I was doing that now.'

He fretted, pished and pshawed. 'Very good,' I thought; 'you may fume and fidget as you please: but this is the best plan to pursue with you, I am certain. I like you more than I can say; but I'll not sink into a bathos of sentiment: and with this needle of repartee I'll keep you from the edge of the gulph too; and, moreover, maintain by its pungent aid that distance between you and myself most conducive to our real mutual advantage.'

From less to more, I worked him up to considerable irritation; then, after he had retired, in dudgeon, quite to the other end of the room, I got up, and saying, 'I wish you good-night, sir,' in my natural and wonted respectful manner, I slipped out by the side-door and got away.

The system thus entered on I pursued during the whole season of probation; and with the best success. He was kept, to be sure, rather cross and crusty: but on the whole I could see he was excellently entertained; and that a lamb-like submission and turtle-dove sensibility, while fostering his despotism more, would have pleased his judgment, satisfied his common-sense, and even suited his taste, less.

In other people's presence I was, as formerly, deferential and quiet; any other line of conduct being uncalled for: it was only in the evening conferences I thus thwarted and afflicted him. He continued to send for me punctually the moment the clock struck seven; though when I appeared before him now, he had no such honeyed terms as 'love' and 'darling' on his lips: the best words at my service were 'provoking puppet,' 'malicious elf,' 'sprite,' 'changeling,' &c. For caresses, too, I now got grimaces; for a pressure of the hand, a pinch on the arm; for a kiss on the cheek, a severe tweak of the ear. It was all right: at present I decidedly preferred these fierce favours to anything more tender. Mrs. Fairfax, I saw, approved me: her anxiety on my account vanished; therefore I was certain I did well. Meantime, Mr. Rochester affirmed I was wearing him to skin and bone, and threatened awful vengeance for my present conduct at some period fast coming. I laughed in my sleeve at his menaces: 'I can keep you in reasonable check now,' I reflected; 'and I don't doubt to be able to do it hereafter: if one expedient loses its virtue, another must be devised.'

Yet after all my task was not an easy one; often I would rather have pleased than teased him. My future husband was becoming to me my whole world; and more than the world: almost my hope of heaven. He stood between me and every thought of religion, as an eclipse intervenes between man and the broad sun. I could not, in those days, see God for his creature: of whom I had made an idol.

CHAPTER XXV

The month of courtship had wasted: its very last hours were being numbered. There was no putting off the day that advanced—the bridal day; and all preparations for its arrival were complete. *I*, at least, had nothing more to do: there were my trunks, packed, locked, corded, ranged in a row along the wall of my little chamber: to-morrow, at this time, they would be far on their road to London: and so should I (D.V.),—or rather, not I, but one Jane Rochester, a person whom as yet I knew not. The cards of address alone remained to nail on: they lay, four little squares, on the drawer. Mr. Rochester had himself written the direction, 'Mrs. Rochester, —— Hotel, London,' on each: I could not persuade myself to affix them, or to have them affixed. Mrs. Rochester! She did not exist: she would not be born till to-morrow, some time after eight o'clock A.M.; and I would wait to be assured she had come into the world alive before I assigned to her all that property. It was enough that in yonder closet, opposite my dressing-table, garments said to be hers had already displaced my black stuff Lowood frock and straw bonnet: for not to me appertained that suit of wedding raiment, the pearl-coloured robe, the vapoury veil, pendent from the usurped portmanteau. I shut the closet, to conceal the strange, wraith-like apparel it contained; which, at this evening hour—nine o'clock—gave out certainly a most ghostly shimmer through the shadow of my apartment. 'I will leave you by yourself, white dream,' I said. 'I am feverish: I hear the wind blowing: I will go out of doors and feel it.'

It was not only the hurry of preparation that made me feverish; not only the anticipation of the great change—the new life which was to commence to-morrow: both these circumstances had their share, doubtless, in producing that restless, excited mood which hurried me forth at this late hour into the darkening grounds; but a third cause influenced my mind more than they.

I had at heart a strange and anxious thought. Something had happened which I could not comprehend; no one knew of or had seen the event but myself: it had taken place the preceding night. Mr. Rochester that night was absent from home; nor was he yet returned: business had called him to a small estate of two or three farms he possessed thirty miles off—business it was requisite he should settle in person, previously to his meditated departure from England. I waited now his return; eager to disburthen my mind, and to seek of him the solution of the enigma that perplexed me. Stay till he comes, reader; and, when I disclose my secret to him, you shall share the confidence.

I sought the orchard: driven to its shelter by the wind, which all day had blown strong and full from the south; without, however, bringing a speck of rain. Instead of subsiding as night drew on, it seemed to augment its rush and deepen its roar: the trees blew steadfastly one way, never writhing round, and scarcely tossing back their boughs once in an hour; so continuous was the strain bending their branchy heads northward—the clouds drifted from pole to pole, fast following, mass on mass: no glimpse of blue sky had been visible that July day.

It was not without a certain wild pleasure I ran before the wind delivering my trouble of mind to the measureless air-torrent thundering through space. Descending the laurel-walk, I faced the wreck of the chestnut-tree; it stood up, black and riven: the trunk, split down the centre, gasped ghastly. The cloven halves were not broken from each other, for the firm base and strong roots kept them unsundered below; though community of vitality was destroyed—the sap could flow no more: their great boughs on each side were dead, and next winter's tempests would be sure to fell one or both to earth: as yet, however, they might be said to form one tree—a ruin, but an entire ruin.

'You did right to hold fast to each other,' I said: as if the monster splinters were living things, and could hear me. 'I think, scathed as you look, and charred and scorched, there must be a little sense of life in you yet; rising out of that adhesion at the faithful, honest roots: you will never have green leaves more—never more see birds making nests and singing idyls in your boughs; the time of pleasure and love is over with you; but you are not desolate: each of you has a comrade to sympathise with him in his decay.' As I looked up at them, the moon appeared momentarily in that part of the sky which filled their fissure; her disk was blood-red and half overcast; she seemed to throw on me one bewildered, dreary glance, and buried herself again instantly in the deep drift of cloud. The wind fell, for a second, round Thornfield; but far away over wood and water, poured a wild, melancholy wail: it was sad to listen to, and I ran off again.

Here and there I strayed through the orchard, gathered up the apples with which the grass round the tree roots was thickly strewn: then I employed myself in dividing the ripe from the unripe; I carried them into the house and put them away in the store-room. Then I repaired to the library to ascertain whether the fire was lit; for, though summer, I knew on such a gloomy evening Mr. Rochester would like to see a cheerful hearth when he came in: yes, the fire had been kindled some time, and burnt well. I placed his arm-chair by the chimney-corner: I wheeled the table near it: I let down the curtain, and had the candles brought in ready for lighting. More restless than ever, when I had completed these arrangements I could not sit still, nor even remain in the house: a little timepiece in the room and the old clock in the hall simultaneously struck ten.

'How late it grows!' I said: 'I will run down to the gates: it is moonlight at intervals; I can see a good way on the road. He may be coming now, and to meet him will save some minutes of suspense.

The wind roared high in the great trees which embowered the gates; but the road as far as I could see, to the right hand and the left, was all still and solitary: save for the shadows of clouds crossing it at intervals, as the moon looked out, it was but a long pale line, unvaried by one moving speck.

A puerile tear dimmed my eye while I looked—a tear of disappointment and impatience: ashamed of it, I wiped it away. I lingered; the moon shut herself wholly within her chamber, and drew close her curtain of dense cloud; the night grew dark; rain came driving fast on the gale.

'I wish he would come! I wish he would come!' I exclaimed, seized with hypochondriac foreboding. I had expected his arrival before tea; now it was dark: what could keep him? Had an accident happened? The event of last night again recurred to me. I interpreted it as a warning of disaster. I feared my hopes were too bright to be realised; and I had enjoyed so much bliss lately that I imagined my fortune had passed its meridian, and must now decline.

'Well, I cannot return to the house,' I thought; 'I cannot sit by the fireside while he is abroad in inclement weather: better tire my limbs than strain my heart; I will go forward and meet him.'

I set out; I walked fast, but not far: ere I had measured a quarter of a mile I heard the tramp of hoofs; a horseman came on, full gallop; a dog ran by his side. Away with evil presentiment! It was he: here he was, mounted on Mesrour, followed by Pilot. He saw me; for the moon had opened a blue field in the sky, and rode in it watery bright: he took his hat off, and waved it round his head. I now ran to meet him.

'There!' he exclaimed, as he stretched out his hand and bent from the saddle: 'You can't do without me, that is evident. Step on my boot-toe; give me both hands: mount!'

I obeyed; joy made me agile: I sprang up before him. A hearty kissing I got for a welcome; and some boastful triumph; which I swallowed as well as I could. He checked himself in his exultation to demand, 'But is there anything the matter, Janet, that you come to meet me at such an hour? Is there anything wrong?'

'No; but I thought you would never come. I could not bear to wait in the house for you, especially with this rain and wind.'

'Rain and wind, indeed! Yes, you are dripping like a mermaid; pull my cloak round you: but I think you are feverish, Jane: both your cheek and hand are burning hot. I ask again, is there anything the matter?'

'Nothing, now: I am neither afraid nor unhappy.'

'Then you have been both?'

'Rather: but I'll tell you all about it by-and-by, sir; and I daresay you will only laugh at me for my pains.'

'I'll laugh at you heartily when to-morrow is past; till then I dare not: my prize is not certain. This is you; who have been as slippery as an eel this last month, and as thorny as a briar-rose. I could not lay a finger anywhere but I was pricked; and now I seem to have gathered up a stray lamb in my arms: you wandered out of the fold to seek your shepherd, did you, Jane?'

'I wanted you: but don't boast. Here we are at Thornfield: now let me get down.'

He landed me on the pavement. As John took his horse, and he followed me into the hall, he told me to make haste and put something dry on, and then return to him in the library; and he stopped me, as I made for the staircase, to extort a promise that I would not be long: nor was I long: in five minutes I rejoined him. I found him at supper.

'Take a seat and bear me company, Jane: please God, it is the last meal but one you will eat at Thornfield Hall for a long time.'

I sat down near him; but told him I could not eat.

'Is it because you have the prospect of a journey before you, Jane? Is it the thoughts of going to London that takes away your appetite?'

'I cannot see my prospects clearly to-night, sir; and I hardly know what thoughts I have in my head. Everything in life seems unreal.'

'Except me: I am substantial enough:—touch me.'

'You, sir, are the most phantom-like of all: you are a mere dream.'

He held out his hand, laughing: 'Is that a dream?' said he, placing it close to my eyes. He had a rounded, muscular, and vigorous hand, as well as a long, strong arm.

'Yes; though I touch it, it is a dream,' said I, as I put it down from before my face. 'Sir, have you finished supper?'

'Yes, Jane.'

I rang the bell, and ordered away the tray. When we were again alone, I stirred the fire, and then took a low seat at my master's knee.

'It is near midnight,' I said.

'Yes: but remember, Jane, you promised to wake with me the night before my wedding.'

'I did; and I will keep my promise, for an hour or two at least: I have no wish to go to bed.'

'Are all your arrangements complete?'

'All, sir.'

'And on my part, likewise,' he returned, 'I have settled everything; and we shall leave Thornfield to-morrow, within half an hour after our return from church.'

'Very well, sir.'

'With what an extraordinary smile you uttered that word—"very well," Jane! What a bright spot of colour you have on each cheek! and how strangely your eyes glitter! Are you well?'

'I believe I am.'

'Believe! What is the matter?—Tell me what you feel.'

'I could not, sir: no words could tell you what I feel. I wish this present hour would never end: who knows with what fate the next may come charged?'

'This is hypochondria, Jane. You have been over-excited, or over-fatigued.'

'Do you, sir, feel calm and happy?'

'Calm?—no: but happy—to the heart's core.'

I looked up at him to read the signs of bliss in his face: it was ardent and flushed.

'Give me your confidence, Jane,' he said: 'relieve your mind of any weight that oppresses it by imparting it to me. What do you fear?—that I shall not prove a good husband?'

'It is the idea farthest from my thoughts.'

'Are you apprehensive of the new sphere you are about to enter?—of the new life into which you are passing?'

'No.'

'You puzzle me, Jane: your look and tone of sorrowful audacity perplex and pain me. I want an explanation.'

'Then, sir—listen. You were from home last night?'

'I was: I know that; and you hinted a while ago at something which had happened in my absence:—nothing, probably, of consequence; but, in short, it has disturbed you. Let me hear it. Mrs. Fairfax has said something, perhaps? or you have overheard the servants talk?—your sensitive self-respect has been wounded?'

'No, sir.' It struck twelve—I waited till the timepiece had concluded its silver chime, and the clock its hoarse, vibrating stroke, and then I proceeded.

'All day yesterday I was very busy, and very happy in my ceaseless bustle; for I am not, as you seem to think, troubled by any haunting fears about the new sphere, et cetera: I think it a glorious thing to have the hope of living with you, because I love you. No, sir, don't caress me now—let me talk undisturbed. Yesterday I trusted well in

Providence, and believed that events were working together for your good and mine: it was a fine day, if you recollect —the calmness of the air and sky forbade apprehensions respecting your safety or comfort on your journey. I walked a little while on the pavement after tea, thinking of you; and I beheld you in imagination so near me I scarcely missed your actual presence. I thought of the life that lay before me—*your* life, sir,—an existence more expansive and stirring than my own: as much more so as the depths of the sea to which the brook runs are than the shallows of its own strait channel. I wondered why moralists call this world a dreary wilderness: for me it blossomed like a rose. Just at sunset the air turned cold and the sky cloudy: I went in. Sophie called me upstairs to look at my wedding-dress, which they had just brought; and under it in the box I found your present—the veil which, in your princely extravagance, you sent for from London: resolved, I suppose, since I would not have jewels, to cheat me into accepting something as costly. I smiled as I unfolded it, and devised how I would tease you about your aristocratic tastes, and your efforts to masque your plebeian bride in the attributes of a peeress. I thought how I would carry down to you the square of unembroidered blond I had myself prepared as a covering for my low-born head, and ask if that was not good enough for a woman who could bring her husband neither fortune, beauty, nor connections. I saw plainly how you would look; and heard your impetuous republican answers, and your haughty disavowal of any necessity on your part to augment your wealth, or elevate your standing, by marrying either a purse or a coronet.'

'How well you read me, you witch!' interposed Mr. Rochester; 'but what did you find in the veil besides its embroidery? Did you find poison, or a dagger, that you look so mournful now?'

'No, no, sir; besides the delicacy and richness of the fabric, I found nothing save Fairfax Rochester's pride; and that did not scare me, because I am used to the sight of the demon. But, sir, as it grew dark the wind rose: it blew yesterday evening, not as it blows now—wild and high—but "with a sullen, moaning sound" far more eerie. I wished you were at home. I came into this room, and the sight of the empty chair and fireless hearth chilled me. For some time after I went to bed I could not sleep—a sense of anxious excitement distressed me. The gale still rising seemed to my ear to muffle a mournful under-sound; whether in the house or abroad I could not at first tell, but it recurred, doubtful yet doleful at every lull: at last I made out it must be some dog howling at a distance. I was glad when it ceased. On sleeping, I continued in dreams the idea of a dark and gusty night. I continued also the wish to be with you, and experienced a strange, regretful consciousness of some barrier dividing us. During all my first sleep I was following the windings of an unknown road; total obscurity environed me; rain pelted me; I was burdened with the charge of a little child: a very small creature, too young and feeble to walk, and which shivered in my cold arms and wailed piteously in my ear. I thought, sir, that you were on the road a long way before me; and I strained every nerve to overtake you, and made effort on effort to utter your name and entreat you to stop—but my movements were fettered; and my voice still died away inarticulate; while you, I felt, withdrew farther and farther every moment.'

'And these dreams weigh on your spirits now, Jane, when I am close to you? Little nervous subject! Forget visionary woe, and think only of real happiness! You say you love me, Janet: yes—I will not forget that; and you cannot deny it. *Those* words did not die inarticulate on your lips. I heard them clear and soft: a thought too solemn perhaps, but sweet as music—"I think it is a glorious thing to have the hope of living with you, Edward, because I love you."—Do you love me, Jane? Repeat it.'

'I do, sir.—I do with my whole heart.'

'Well,' he said, after some minutes' silence, 'it is strange;

but that sentence has penetrated my breast painfully. Why? I think because you said it with such an earnest, religious energy: and because your upward gaze at me now is the very sublime of faith, truth, and devotion: it is too much as if some spirit were near me. Look wicked, Jane; as you know well how to look; coin one of your wild, shy, provoking smiles; tell me you hate me—tease me, vex me; do anything but move me: I would rather be incensed than saddened.'

'I will tease you and vex you to your heart's content when I have finished my tale: but hear me to the end.'

'I thought, Jane, you had told me all. I thought I had found the source of your melancholy in a dream!'

I shook my head. 'What! is there more? But I will not believe it to be anything important. I warn you of incredulity beforehand. Go on.'

The disquietude of his air, the somewhat apprehensive impatience of his manner, surprised me: but I proceeded.

'I dreamt another dream, sir: that Thornfield Hall was a dreary ruin, the retreat of bats and owls. I thought that of all the stately front nothing remained but a shell-like wall, very high, and very fragile-looking. I wandered, on a moonlight night, through the grass-grown enclosure within: here I stumbled over a marble hearth, and there over a fallen fragment of cornice. Wrapped up in a shawl, I still carried the unknown little child: I might not lay it down anywhere, however tired were my arms—however much its weight impeded my progress, I must retain it. I heard the gallop of a horse at a distance on the road: I was sure it was you; and you were departing for many years, and for a distant country. I climbed the thin wall with frantic, perilous haste, eager to catch one glimpse of you from the top: the stones rolled from under my feet, the ivy branches I grasped gave way, the child clung round my neck in terror, and almost strangled me: at last I gained the summit. I saw you like a speck on a white track, lessening every moment. The blast blew so strong I could not stand. I sat down on the narrow ledge; I hushed the scared infant in my lap: you turned an angle of the road; I bent forward to take a last look; the wall crumbled; I was shaken; the child rolled from my knee, I lost my balance, fell, and woke.'

'Now, Jane, that is all.'

'All the preface, sir; the tale is yet to come. On waking, a gleam dazzled my eyes: I thought—oh, it is daylight! But I was mistaken: it was only candlelight. Sophie, I supposed, had come in. There was a light on the dressing-table, and the door of the closet, where, before going to bed, I had hung my wedding-dress and veil, stood open: I heard a rustling there. I asked, "Sophie, what are you doing?" No one answered; but a form emerged from the closet: it took the light, held it aloft, and surveyed the garments pendent from the portmanteau. "Sophie! Sophie!" I again cried: and still it was silent. I had risen up in bed; I bent forward: first, surprise, then bewilderment, came over me; and then my blood crept cold through my veins. Mr. Rochester, this was not Sophie, it was not Leah, it was not Mrs. Fairfax: it was not—no, I was sure of it, and am still—it was not even that strange woman, Grace Poole.'

'It must have been one of them,' interrupted my master.

'No, sir, I solemnly assure you to the contrary. The shape standing before me had never crossed my eyes within the precincts of Thornfield Hall before; the height, the contour, were new to me.'

'Describe it, Jane.'

'It seemed, sir, a woman, tall and large, with thick and dark hair hanging long down her back. I know not what dress she had on: it was white and straight; but whether gown, sheet, or shroud, I cannot tell.'

'Did you see her face?'

'Not at first. But presently she took my veil from its place; she held it up, gazed at it long, and then she threw it over her own head, and turned to the mirror. At that moment I saw the reflection of the visage and features quite distinctly in the dark oblong glass.'

'And how were they?'

'Fearful and ghastly to me—oh, sir, I never saw a face like it! It was a discoloured face—it was a savage face. I wish I could forget the roll of the red eyes and the fearful blackened inflation of the lineaments.'

'Ghosts are usually pale, Jane.'

'This, sir, was purple: the lips were swelled and dark; the brow furrowed; the black eyebrows widely raised over the bloodshot eyes. Shall I tell you of what it reminded me?'

'You may.'

'Of the foul German spectre—the Vampyre.'

'Ah?—What did it do?'

'Sir, it removed my veil from its gaunt head, rent it in two parts, and flinging both on the floor, trampled on them.'

'Afterwards?'

'It drew aside the window-curtain and looked out: perhaps it saw dawn approaching, for, taking the candle, it retreated to the door. Just at my bedside the figure stopped: the fiery eye glared upon me—she thrust up her candle close to my face, and extinguished it under my eyes. I was aware her lurid visage flamed over mine, and I lost consciousness: for the second time in my life—only the second time—I became insensible from terror.'

'Who was with you when you revived?'

'No one, sir; but the broad day. I rose, bathed my head and face in water, drank a long draught; felt that though enfeebled I was not ill, and determined that to none but you would I impart this vision. Now, sir, tell me who and what that woman was?'

'The creature of an over-stimulated brain; that is certain. I must be careful of you, my treasure: nerves like yours were not made for rough handling.'

'Sir, depend on it, my nerves were not in fault; the thing was real: the transaction actually took place.'

'And your previous dreams: were they real too? Is Thornfield Hall a ruin? Am I severed from you by insuperable obstacles? Am I leaving you without a tear—without a kiss—without a word?'

'Not yet.'

'Am I about to do it?—Why, the day is already commenced which is to bind us indissolubly; and when we are once united, there shall be no recurrence of these mental terrors: I guarantee that.'

'Mental terrors, sir! I wish I could believe them to be only such: I wish it more now than ever; since even you cannot explain to me the mystery of that awful visitant.'

'And since I cannot do it, Jane, it must have been unreal.'

'But, sir, when I said so to myself on rising this morning, and when I looked round the room to gather courage and comfort from the cheerful aspect of each familiar object in full daylight, there—on the carpet—I saw what gave the distinct lie to my hypothesis,—the veil, torn from top to bottom, in two halves!'

I felt Mr. Rochester start and shudder; he hastily flung his arms round me.

'Thank God!' he exclaimed, 'that if anything malignant did come near you last night, it was only the veil that was harmed.—Oh, to think what might have happened!'

He drew his breath short, and strained me so close to him I could scarcely pant. After some minutes' silence, he continued, cheerily:—'Now, Janet, I'll explain to you all about it. It was half dream, half reality: a woman did, I doubt not, enter your room: and that woman was—must have been—Grace Poole. You call her a strange being yourself: from all you know you have reason so to call her—what did she do to me? what to Mason? In a state between sleeping and waking you noticed her entrance and her actions; but feverish, almost delirious as you were, you ascribed to her a goblin appearance different from her own: the long dishevelled hair, the swelled black face, the exaggerated stature, were figments of imagination; results of nightmare: the spiteful tearing of the veil was real: and it is like her. I see you would ask why I keep such a woman in my house: when we have been married a year and a day, I will tell you; but not now. Are you satisfied, Jane? Do you accept my solution of the mystery?'

I reflected, and in truth it appeared to me the only possible one: satisfied I was not, but to please him I endeavoured to appear so—relieved, I certainly did feel; so I answered him with a contented smile. And now, as it was long past one, I prepared to leave him.

'Does not Sophie sleep with Adèle in the nursery?' he asked, as I lit my candle.

'Yes, sir.'

'And there is room enough in Adèle's little bed for you. You must share it with her to-night, Jane: it is no wonder that the incident you have related should make you nervous, and I would rather you did not sleep alone: promise me to go to the nursery.'

'I shall be very glad to do so, sir.'

'And fasten the door securely on the inside. Wake Sophie when you go upstairs, under pretence of requesting her to rouse you in good time to-morrow; for you must be dressed and have finished breakfast before eight. And now, no more sombre thoughts: chase dull care away, Janet. Don't you hear to what soft whispers the wind has fallen? and there is no more beating of rain against the window-panes: look here' (he lifted up the curtain)—'it is a lovely night!'

It was. Half heaven was pure and stainless: the clouds, now trooping before the wind, which had shifted to the west, were filing off eastward in long, silvered columns. The moon shone peacefully.

'Well,' said Mr. Rochester, gazing inquiringly into my eyes, 'how is my Janet now?'

'The night is serene, sir; and so am I.'

'And you will not dream of separation and sorrow to-night; but of happy love and blissful union.'

This prediction was but half fulfilled: I did not indeed dream of sorrow, but as little did I dream of joy; for I never slept at all. With little Adèle in my arms, I watched the slumber of childhood—so tranquil, so passionless, so innocent—and waited for the coming day: all my life was awake and astir in my frame; and as soon as the sun rose I rose too. I remember Adèle clung to me as I left her; I remember I kissed her as I loosened her little hands from my neck; and I cried over her with strange emotion, and quitted her because I feared my sobs would break her still sound repose. She seemed the emblem of my past life; and he, I was now to array myself to meet, the dread, but adored, type of my unknown future day.

CHAPTER XXVI

SOPHIE came at seven to dress me; she was very long indeed in accomplishing her task—so long that Mr. Rochester, grown, I suppose, impatient of my delay, sent up to ask why I did not come. She was just fastening my veil (the plain square of blond after all) to my hair with a brooch; I hurried from under her hands as soon as I could.

'Stop!' she cried in French. 'Look at yourself in the mirror: you have not taken one peep.'

So I turned at the door: I saw a robed and veiled figure, so unlike my usual self that it seemed almost the image of a stranger. 'Jane!' called a voice, and I hastened down. I was received at the foot of the stairs by Mr. Rochester.

'Lingerer,' he said, 'my brain is on fire with impatience; and you tarry so long!'

He took me into the dining-room, surveyed me keenly all over, pronounced me 'fair as a lily, and not only the pride of his life, but the desire of his eyes,' and then, telling me he would give me but ten minutes to eat some breakfast, he rang the bell. One of his lately hired servants, a footman, answered it.

'Is John getting the carriage ready?'

'Yes, sir.'

'Is the luggage brought down?'

'They are bringing it down, sir.'

'Go you to the church: see if Mr. Wood (the clergyman) and the clerk are there: return and tell me.'

The church, as the reader knows, was but just beyond the gates; the footman soon returned.

'Mr. Wood is in the vestry, sir, putting on his surplice.'

'And the carriage?'

'The horses are harnessing.'

'We shall not want it to go to church; but it must be ready the moment we return, all the boxes and luggage arranged and strapped on, and the coachman in his seat.'

'Yes, sir.'

'Jane, are you ready?'

I rose. There were no groomsmen, no bridesmaids, no relatives to wait for or marshal: none but Mr. Rochester and I. Mrs. Fairfax stood in the hall as we passed. I would fain have spoken to her, but my hand was held by a grasp of iron: I was hurried along by a stride I could hardly follow; and to look at Mr. Rochester's face was to feel that not a second of delay would be tolerated for any purpose. I wonder what other bridegroom ever looked as he did—so bent up to a purpose, so grimly resolute: or who, under such steadfast brows, ever revealed such flaming and flashing eyes.

I know not whether the day was fair or foul; in descending the drive, I gazed neither on sky nor earth; my heart was with my eyes; and both seemed migrated into Mr. Rochester's frame. I wanted to see the invisible thing on which, as we went along, he appeared to fasten a glance fierce and fell. I wanted to feel the thoughts whose force he seemed breasting and resisting.

At the churchyard wicket he stopped: he discovered I was quite out of breath.

'Am I cruel in my love?' he said. 'Delay an instant: lean on me, Jane.'

And now I can recall the picture of the grey old house of God rising calm before me, of a rook wheeling round the steeple, of a ruddy morning sky beyond. I remember something, too, of the green grave-mounds; and I have not forgotten, either, two figures of strangers, straying amongst the low hillocks, and reading the mementoes graven on the few mossy head-stones. I noticed them, because, as they saw us, they passed round to the back of the church; and I doubted not they were going to enter by the side-aisle door, and witness the ceremony. By Mr. Rochester they were not observed; he was earnestly looking at my face, from which the blood had, I daresay, momentarily fled: for I felt my forehead dewy, and my cheeks and lips cold. When I rallied, which I soon did, he walked gently with me up the path to the porch.

We entered the quiet and humble temple; the priest waited in his white surplice at the lowly altar, the clerk beside him. All was still: two shadows only moved in a remote corner. My conjecture had been correct: the strangers had slipped in before us, and they now stood by the vault of the Rochesters, their backs towards us, viewing through the rails the old time-stained marble tomb, where a kneeling angel guarded the remains of Damer de Rochester, slain at Marston Moor in the time of the civil wars; and of Elizabeth, his wife.

Our place was taken at the communion rails. Hearing a cautious step behind me, I glanced over my shoulder: one of the strangers—a gentleman, evidently—was advancing up the chancel. The service began. The explanation of the intent of matrimony was gone through; and then the clergyman came a step further forward, and, bending slightly towards Mr. Rochester, went on.

'I require and charge you both (as ye will answer at the dreadful day of judgment, when the secrets of all hearts shall be disclosed), that if either of you know any impediment why ye may not lawfully be joined together in matrimony, ye do now confess it; for be ye well assured that so many as are coupled together otherwise than God's word doth allow, are not joined together by God, neither is their matrimony lawful.'

He paused, as the custom is. When is the pause after that sentence ever broken by reply? Not, perhaps, once in a hundred years. And the clergyman, who had not lifted his eyes from his book, and had held his breath but for a moment, was proceeding: his hand was already stretched towards Mr. Rochester, as his lips unclosed to ask, 'Wilt thou have this woman for thy wedded wife?'—when a distinct and near voice said:—'The marriage cannot go on: I declare the existence of an impediment.'

The clergyman looked up at the speaker, and stood mute; the clerk did the same; Mr. Rochester moved slightly, as if an earthquake had rolled under his feet: taking a firmer footing, and not turning his head or eyes, he said, 'Proceed.'

Profound silence fell when he had uttered that word, with deep but low intonation. Presently Mr. Wood said:—'I cannot proceed without some investigation into what has been asserted, and evidence of its truth or falsehood.'

'The ceremony is quite broken off,' subjoined the voice behind us. 'I am in a condition to prove my allegation: an insuperable impediment to this marriage exists.'

Mr. Rochester heard, but heeded not: he stood stubborn and rigid: making no movement, but to possess himself of my hand. What a hot and strong grasp he had!—and how like quarried marble was his pale, firm, massive front at this moment! How his eye shone, still, watchful, and yet wild beneath!

Mr. Wood seemed at a loss. 'What is the nature of the impediment?' he asked. 'Perhaps it may be got over—explained away?'

'Hardly,' was the answer: 'I have called it insuperable, and I speak advisedly.'

The speaker came forwards, and leaned on the rails. He continued, uttering each word distinctly, calmly, steadily, but not loudly.

'It simply consists in the existence of a previous marriage. Mr. Rochester has a wife now living.'

My nerves vibrated to those low-spoken words as they had never vibrated to thunder—my blood felt their subtle violence as it had never felt frost or fire: but I was collected, and in no danger of swooning. I looked at Mr. Rochester: I made him look at me. His whole face was colourless rock: his eye was both spark and flint. He disavowed nothing: he seemed as if he would defy all things. Without speaking, without smiling, without seeming to recognise in me a human being, he only twined my waist with his arm, and riveted me to his side.

'Who are you?' he asked of the intruder.

'My name is Briggs—a solicitor of —— Street, London.'

'And you would thrust on me a wife?'

'I would remind you of your lady's existence, sir; which the law recognises, if you do not.'

'Favour me with an account of her—with her name, her parentage, her place of abode.'

'Certainly.' Mr. Briggs calmly took a paper from his pocket, and read out in a sort of official, nasal voice:—

'"I affirm and can prove that on the 20th of October, A.D. —— (a date of fifteen years back), Edward Fairfax Rochester, of Thornfield Hall, in the county of——, and of Ferndean Manor, in ——shire, England, was married to my sister, Bertha Antoinetta Mason, daughter of Jonas Mason, merchant, and of Antoinetta his wife, a Creole—at —— church, Spanish Town, Jamaica. The record of the marriage will be found in the register of that church—a copy of it is now in my possession. Signed, Richard Mason."'

'That—if a genuine document—may prove I have been married, but it does not prove that the woman mentioned therein as my wife is still living.'

'She was living three months ago,' returned the lawyer.

'How do you know?'

'I have a witness to the fact, whose testimony even you, sir, will scarcely controvert.'

'Produce him—or go to hell.'

'I will produce him first—he is on the spot: Mr. Mason, have the goodness to step forward.'

Mr. Rochester, on hearing the name, set his teeth; he experienced, too, a sort of strong convulsive quiver; near to him as I was, I felt the spasmodic movement of fury or despair run through his frame. The second stranger, who had hitherto lingered in the background, now drew near; a pale face looked over the solicitor's shoulder—yes, it was Mason himself. Mr. Rochester turned and glared at him. His eye, as I have often said, was a black eye: it had now a tawny, nay a bloody light in its gloom; and his face flushed—olive cheek and hueless forehead received a glow, as from spreading, ascending heart-fire: and he stirred, lifted his strong arm—he could have struck Mason—dashed him on the church-floor—shocked by ruthless blow the breath from his body—but Mason shrank away, and cried faintly, 'Good God!' Contempt fell cool on Mr. Rochester—his passion died as if a blight had shrivelled it up: he only asked, 'What have *you* to say?'

An inaudible reply escaped Mason's white lips.

'The devil is in it if you cannot answer distinctly. I again demand, what have *you* to say?'

'Sir—sir'—interrupted the clergyman, 'do not forget you are in a sacred place.' Then, addressing Mason, he inquired gently, 'Are you aware, sir, whether or not this gentleman's wife is still living?'

'Courage,' urged the lawyer,—'speak out.'

'She is now living at Thornfield Hall,' said Mason, in more articulate tones: 'I saw her there last April. I am her brother.'

'At Thornfield Hall!' ejaculated the clergyman. 'Impossible! I am an old resident in this neighbourhood, sir, and I never heard of a Mrs. Rochester at Thornfield Hall.'

I saw a grim smile contort Mr. Rochester's lip, and he muttered:—'No—by God! I took care that none should hear of it—or of her under that name.' He mused—for ten minutes he held counsel with himself: he formed his resolve, and announced it:—'Enough—all shall bolt out at once, like a bullet from the barrel.—Wood, close your book, and take off your surplice; John Green (to the clerk) leave the church: there will be no wedding to-day:' the man obeyed.

Mr. Rochester continued, hardily and recklessly:

'Bigamy is an ugly word!—I meant, however, to be a bigamist; but fate has outmanœuvred me; or Providence has checked me,—perhaps the last. I am little better than a devil at this moment; and, as my pastor there would tell me, deserve no doubt the sternest judgments of God,—even to the quenchless fire and deathless worm. Gentlemen, my plan is broken up!—what this lawyer and his client say is true: I have been married; and the woman to whom I was married lives! You say you never heard of a Mrs. Rochester at the house up yonder, Wood: but I dare say you have many a time inclined your ear to gossip about the mysterious lunatic kept there under watch and ward. Some have whispered to you that she is my bastard half-sister: some, my cast-off mistress; I now inform you that she is my wife, whom I married fifteen years ago,—Bertha Mason by name; sister of this resolute personage, who is now, with his quivering limbs and white cheeks, showing you what a stout heart men may bear. Cheer up, Dick!—never fear me!—I'd almost as soon strike a woman as you. Bertha Mason is mad; and she came of a mad family;—idiots and maniacs through three generations! Her mother, the Creole, was both a mad woman and a drunkard!—as I found out after I had wed the daughter: for they were silent on family secrets before. Bertha, like a dutiful child, copied her parent in both points. I had a charming partner—pure, wise, modest: you can fancy I was a happy man.—I went through rich scenes! Oh! my experience has been heavenly, if you only knew it! But I owe you no further explanation. Briggs, Wood, Mason,—I invite you all to come up to the house and visit Mrs. Poole's patient, and *my wife!* You shall see what sort of a being I was cheated into espousing, and judge whether or not I had a right to break the compact, and seek sympathy with something at least human. This girl,' he continued, looking at me, 'knew no more than you, Wood, of the disgusting secret: she thought all was fair and legal; and never dreamt she was going to be entrapped into a feigned union with a defrauded wretch, already bound to a bad, mad, and embruted partner! Come, all of you, follow.'

Still holding me fast, he left the church: the three gentlemen came after. At the front door of the hall we found the carriage.

'Take it back to the coach-house, John,' said Mr. Rochester, coolly; 'it will not be wanted to-day.'

At our entrance Mrs. Fairfax, Adèle, Sophie, Leah, advanced to meet and greet us.

'To the right about—every soul!' cried the master: 'away with your congratulations! Who wants them?—Not I!—they are fifteen years too late!'

He passed on and ascended the stairs, still holding my hand, and still beckoning the gentlemen to follow him; which they did. We mounted the first staircase, passed up the gallery, proceeded to the third storey: the low, black door, opened by Mr. Rochester's master key, admitted us to the tapestried room, with its great bed and its pictorial cabinet.

'You know this place, Mason,' said our guide; 'she bit and stabbed you here.'

He lifted the hangings from the wall, uncovering the second door: this, too, he opened. In a room without a window there burnt a fire, guarded by a high and strong fender, and a lamp suspended from the ceiling by a chain. Grace Poole bent over the fire, apparently cooking something in a saucepan. In the deep shade, at the further end of the room, a figure ran backwards and forwards. What it was, whether beast or human being, one could not, at first sight, tell: it grovelled, seemingly, on all fours; it snatched and growled like some strange wild animal: but it was covered with clothing; and a quantity of dark, grizzled hair, wild as a mane, hid its head and face.

'Good-morrow, Mrs. Poole!' said Mr. Rochester. 'How are you? and how is your charge to-day?'

'We're tolerable, sir, I thank you,' replied Grace, lifting the boiling mess carefully on to the hob: 'rather snappish, but not 'rageous.'

A fierce cry seemed to give the lie to her favourable report: the clothed hyena rose up, and stood tall on its hind feet.

'Ah, sir, she sees you!' exclaimed Grace: 'you'd better not stay.'

'Only a few moments, Grace: you must allow me a few moments.'

'Take care then, sir!—for God's sake, take care!'

The maniac bellowed: she parted her shaggy locks from her visage, and gazed wildly at her visitors. I recognised well that purple face—those bloated features. Mrs. Poole advanced.

'Keep out of the way,' said Mr. Rochester, thrusting her aside: 'she has no knife now, I suppose? and I'm on my guard.'

'One never knows what she has, sir: she is so cunning: it is not in mortal discretion to fathom her craft.'

'We had better leave her,' whispered Mason.

'Go to the devil!' was his brother-in-law's recommendation.

'Ware!' cried Grace. The three gentlemen retreated simultaneously. Mr. Rochester flung me behind him: the lunatic sprang and grappled his throat viciously, and laid her teeth to his cheek: they struggled. She was a big woman, in stature almost equalling her husband, and corpulent besides: she showed virile force in the contest—more than once she almost throttled him, athletic as he was. He could have settled her with a well-planted blow; but he would not strike: he would only wrestle. At last he mastered her arms; Grace Poole gave him a cord, and he pinioned them behind her: with more rope, which was at hand, he bound her to a chair. The operation was performed amidst the fiercest yells and the most convulsive plunges. Mr. Rochester then turned to the spectators: he looked at them with a smile both acrid and desolate.

'That is *my wife*,' said he. 'Such is the sole conjugal embrace I am ever to know—such are the endearments which are to solace my leisure hours! And *this* is what I wished to have' (laying his hand on my shoulder): 'this young girl, who stands so grave and quiet at the mouth of hell, looking collectedly at the gambols of a demon. I wanted her just as a change after that fierce ragout. Wood and Briggs, look at the difference! Compare these clear eyes with the red balls yonder—this face with that mask—this form with that bulk; then judge me, priest of the gospel and man of the law, and remember, with what judgment ye judge ye shall be judged! Off with you now. I must shut up my prize.'

We all withdrew. Mr. Rochester stayed a moment behind us to give some further order to Grace Poole. The solicitor addressed me as he descended the stair.

'You, madam,' said he, 'are cleared from all blame: your uncle will be glad to hear it—if, indeed, he should be still living—when Mr. Mason returns to Madeira.'

'My uncle! What of him? Do you know him?'

'Mr. Mason does: Mr. Eyre has been the Funchal correspondent of his house for some years. When your uncle received your letter intimating the contemplated union between yourself and Mr. Rochester, Mr. Mason, who was staying at Madeira to recruit his health, on his way back to Jamaica, happened to be with him. Mr. Eyre mentioned the intelligence; for he knew that my client here was acquainted with a gentleman of the name of Rochester. Mr. Mason, astonished and distressed as you may suppose, revealed the real state of matters. Your uncle, I am sorry to say, is now on a sick bed; from which, considering the nature of his disease—decline—and the stage it has reached, it is unlikely he will ever rise. He could not then hasten to England himself, to extricate you from the snare into which you had fallen, but he implored Mr. Mason to lose no time in taking steps to prevent the false marriage. He referred him to me for assistance. I used all despatch, and am thankful I was not too late: as you, doubtless, must be also. Were I not morally certain that your uncle will be dead ere you reach Madeira, I would advise you to accompany Mr. Mason back: but as it is, I think you had better remain in England till you can hear further, either from or of Mr. Eyre. Have we anything else to stay for?' he inquired of Mr. Mason.

'No, no—let us be gone,' was the anxious reply; and without waiting to take leave of Mr. Rochester, they made their exit at the hall door. The clergyman stayed to exchange a few sentences, either of admonition or reproof, with his haughty parishioner: this duty done, he too departed.

I heard him go as I stood at the half-open door of my own room, to which I had now withdrawn. The house cleared, I shut myself in, fastened the bolt that none might intrude, and proceeded—not to weep, not to mourn, I was yet too calm for that, but—mechanically to take off the wedding-dress, and replace it by the stuff gown I had worn yesterday, as I thought, for the last time. I then sat down: I felt weak and tired. I leaned my arms on a table, and my head dropped on them. And now I thought: till now I had only heard, seen, moved—followed up and down where I was led or dragged—watched event rush on event, disclosure open beyond disclosure: but *now, I thought.*

The morning had been a quiet morning enough—all except the brief scene with the lunatic: the transaction in the church had not been noisy; there was no explosion of passion, no loud altercation, no dispute, no defiance or challenge, no tears, no sobs: a few words had been spoken, a calmly pronounced objection to the marriage made; some stern, short questions put by Mr. Rochester; answers, explanations given, evidence adduced; an open admission of the truth had been uttered by my master; then the living proof had been seen: the intruders were gone, and all was over.

I was in my own room as usual—just myself, without obvious change: nothing had smitten me, or scathed me, or maimed me. And yet, where was the Jane Eyre of yesterday?—where was her life?—where were her prospects?

Jane Eyre, who had been an ardent, expectant woman—almost a bride—was a cold, solitary girl again: her life was pale; her prospects were desolate. A Christmas frost had come at midsummer; a white December storm had whirled over June; ice glazed the ripe apples, drifts crushed the blowing roses; on hay-field and corn-field lay a frozen shroud: lanes which last night blushed full of flowers, to-day were pathless with untrodden snow; and the woods, which twelve hours since waved leafy and fragrant as groves between the tropics, now spread, waste, wild, and white as pine-forests in wintry Norway. My hopes were all dead—struck with a subtle doom, such as, in one night, fell on all the first-born in the land of Egypt. I looked on my cherished wishes, yesterday so blooming and glowing: they lay stark, chill, livid corpses that could never revive. I looked at my love: that feeling which was my master's—which he had created; it shivered in my heart, like a suffering child in a cold cradle; sickness and anguish had seized it; it could not seek Mr. Rochester's arms—it could not derive warmth from his breast. Oh, never more could it turn to him; for faith was blighted—confidence destroyed! Mr. Rochester was not to me what he had been; for he was not what I had thought him. I would not ascribe vice to him; I would not say he had betrayed me: but the attribute of stainless truth was gone from his idea; and from his presence I must go; *that* I perceived well. When—how—whither, I could not yet discern; but he himself, I doubted not, would hurry me from Thornfield. Real affection, it seemed, he could not have for me; it had been only fitful passion: that was balked; he would want me no more. I should fear even to cross his path now: my view must be hateful to him. Oh, how blind had been my eyes! How weak my conduct!

My eyes were covered and closed: eddying darkness seemed to swim round me, and reflection came in as black and confused a flow. Self-abandoned, relaxed, and effortless, I seemed to have laid me down in the dried-up bed of a great river; I heard a flood loosened in remote mountains, and felt the torrent come: to rise I had no will, to flee I had no strength. I lay faint; longing to be dead. One idea only still throbbed life-like within me—a remembrance of God: it begot an unuttered prayer: these words went wandering up and down in my rayless mind, as something that should be whispered; but no energy was found to express them:—'Be not far from me, for trouble is near: there is none to help.'

It was near: and as I had lifted no petition to Heaven to avert it—as I had neither joined my hands, nor bent my knees, nor moved my lips—it came: in full, heavy swing the torrent poured over me. The whole consciousness of my life lorn, my love lost, my hope quenched, my faith death-struck, swayed full and mighty above me in one sullen mass. That bitter hour cannot be described: in truth, 'the waters came into my soul; I sank in deep mire: I felt no standing; I came into deep waters; the floods overflowed me.'

CHAPTER XXVII

Some time in the afternoon I raised my head, and looking round and seeing the western sun gilding the sign of its decline on the wall, I asked, 'What am I to do?'

But the answer my mind gave—'Leave Thornfield at once'—was so prompt, so dread, that I stopped my ears: I said, I could not bear such words now. 'That I am not Edward Rochester's bride is the least part of my woe,' I alleged: 'that I have wakened out of most glorious dreams, and found them all void and vain, is a horror I could bear and master; but that I must leave him decidedly, instantly, entirely, is intolerable. I cannot do it.'

But, then, a voice within me averred that I could do it; and foretold that I should do it. I wrestled with my own resolution: I wanted to be weak that I might avoid the awful passage of further suffering I saw laid out for me; and conscience, turned tyrant, held passion by the throat, told her tauntingly she had yet but dipped her dainty foot in the slough, and swore that with that arm of iron he would thrust her down to unsounded depths of agony.

'Let me be torn away, then!' I cried 'Let another help me!'

'No; you shall tear yourself away, none shall help you: you shall, yourself, pluck out your right eye: yourself cut off your right hand: your heart shall be the victim; and you, the priest, to transfix it.'

I rose up suddenly, terror-struck at the solitude which so ruthless a judge haunted,—at the silence which so awful a voice filled. My head swam as I stood erect: I perceived that I was sickening from excitement and inanition; neither meat nor drink had passed my lips that day, for I had taken no breakfast. And, with a strange pang, I now reflected that, long as I had been shut up here, no message had been sent to ask how I was, or to invite me to come down: not even little Adèle had tapped at the door; not even Mrs. Fairfax had sought me. 'Friends always forget those whom fortune forsakes,' I murmured, as I undrew the bolt and passed out. I stumbled over an obstacle: my head was still dizzy, my sight was dim, and my limbs were feeble. I could not soon recover myself. I fell, but not on to the ground; an outstretched arm caught me; I looked up—I was supported by Mr. Rochester, who sat in a chair across my chamber threshold.

'You come out at last,' he said. 'Well, I have been waiting for you long, and listening: yet not one movement have I heard, nor one sob: five minutes more of that death-like hush, and I should have forced the lock like a burglar. So, you shun me?—you shut yourself up and grieve alone! I would rather you had come and upbraided me with vehemence. You are passionate: I expected a scene of some kind. I was prepared for the hot rain of tears; only I wanted them to be shed on my breast: now a senseless floor has received them, or your drenched handkerchief. But I err: you have not wept at all! I see a white cheek and a faded eye, but no trace of tears. I suppose, then, your heart has been weeping blood?

'Well, Jane; not a word of reproach? Nothing bitter—nothing poignant? Nothing to cut a feeling or sting a passion? You sit quietly where I have placed you, and regard me with a weary, passive look.

'Jane, I never meant to wound you thus. If the man who had but one little ewe lamb that was dear to him as a daughter, that ate of his bread and drank of his cup, and lay in his bosom, had by some mistake slaughtered it at the shambles, he would not have rued his bloody blunder more than I now rue mine. Will you ever forgive me?'

Reader!—I forgave him at the moment, and on the spot.

There was such deep remorse in his eye, such true pity in his tone, such manly energy in his manner; and, besides, there was such unchanged love in his whole look and mien —I forgave him all: yet not in words, not outwardly; only at my heart's core.

'You know I am a scoundrel, Jane?' ere long he inquired wistfully—wondering, I suppose, at my continued silence and tameness: the result rather of weakness than of will.

'Yes, sir.'

'Then tell me so roundly and sharply—don't spare me.'

'I cannot: I am tired and sick. I want some water.' He heaved a sort of shuddering sigh, and taking me in his arms, carried me downstairs. At first I did not know to what room he had borne me; all was cloudy to my glazed sight: presently I felt the reviving warmth of a fire; for, summer as it was, I had become icy cold in my chamber. He put wine to my lips; I tasted it and revived; then I ate something he offered me, and was soon myself. I was in the library—sitting in his chair—he was quite near. 'If I could go out of life now, without too sharp a pang, it would be well for me,' I thought; 'then I should not have to make the effort of cracking my heart-strings in rending them from among Mr. Rochester's. I must leave him, it appears. I do not want to leave him—I cannot leave him.'

'How are you now, Jane?'

'Much better, sir: I shall be well soon.'

'Taste the wine again, Jane.'

I obeyed him; then he put the glass on the table, stood before me, and looked at me attentively. Suddenly he turned away, with an inarticulate exclamation, full of passionate emotion of some kind; he walked fast through the room and came back: he stooped towards me as if to kiss me; but I remembered caresses were now forbidden. I turned my face away, and put his aside.

'What!—How is this?' he exclaimed hastily. 'Oh, I know! you won't kiss the husband of Bertha Mason? You consider my arms filled and my embraces appropriated?'

'At any rate, there is neither room nor claim for me, sir.'

'Why, Jane? I will spare you the trouble of much talking: I will answer for you—because I have a wife already, you would reply.—I guess rightly?'

'Yes.'

'If you think so, you must have a strange opinion of me: you must regard me as a plotting profligate—a base and low rake who has been simulating disinterested love in order to draw you into a snare deliberately laid, and strip you of honour, and rob you of self-respect. What do you say to that? I see you can say nothing: in the first place, you are faint still, and have enough to do to draw your breath; in the second place, you cannot yet accustom yourself to accuse and revile me; and, besides, the flood-gates of tears are opened, and they would rush out if you spoke much; and you have no desire to expostulate, to upbraid, to make a scene: you are thinking how *to act,—talking*, you consider, is of no use. I know you—I am on my guard.'

'Sir, I do not wish to act against you,' I said; and my unsteady voice warned me to curtail my sentence.

'Not in *your* sense of the word, but in *mine*, you are scheming to destroy me. You have as good as said that I am a married man—as a married man you will shun me, keep out of my way: just now you have refused to kiss me. You intend to make yourself a complete stranger to me; to live under this roof only as Adèle's governess: if ever I say a friendly word to you, if ever a friendly feeling inclines you again to me, you will say,—"That man had nearly made me his mistress: I must be ice and rock to him;" and ice and rock you will accordingly become.'

I cleared and steadied my voice to reply: 'All is changed about me, sir; I must change too—there is no doubt of that; and to avoid fluctuations of feeling, and continual combats with recollections and associations, there is only one way—Adèle must have a new governess, sir.'

'Oh, Adèle will go to school—I have settled that already; nor do I mean to torment you with the hideous associations and recollections of Thornfield Hall—this accursed place—this tent of Achan—this insolent vault, offering the ghastliness of living death to the light of the open sky—this narrow stone hell, with its one real fiend, worse than a legion of such as we imagine.—Jane, you shall not stay here, nor will I. I was wrong ever to bring you to Thornfield Hall, knowing as I did how it was haunted. I charged them to conceal from you, before I ever saw you, all knowledge of the curse of the place; merely because I feared Adèle never would have a governess to stay if she knew with what inmate she was housed, and my plans would not permit me to remove the maniac elsewhere—though I possess an old house, Ferndean Manor, even more retired and hidden than this, where I could have lodged her safely enough, had not a scruple about the unhealthiness of the situation, in the heart of a wood, made my conscience recoil from the arrangement. Probably those damp walls would soon have eased me of her charge: but to each villain his own vice; and mine is not a tendency to indirect assassination, even of what I most hate.

'Concealing the mad-woman's neighbourhood from you, however, was something like covering a child with a cloak, and laying it down near a upas-tree: that demon's vicinage is poisoned, and always was. But I'll shut up Thornfield Hall: I'll nail up the front door, and board the lower windows; I'll give Mrs. Poole two hundred a year to live here with *my wife*, as you term that fearful hag: Grace will do much for money, and she shall have her son, the keeper at Grimsby Retreat, to bear her company and be at hand to give her aid in the paroxysms when *my wife* is prompted by her familiar to burn people in their beds at night, to stab them, to bite their flesh from their bones, and so on'——

'Sir,' I interrupted him, 'you are inexorable for that unfortunate lady: you speak of her with hate—with vindictive antipathy. It is cruel—she cannot help being mad.'

'Jane, my little darling (so I will call you, for so you are), you don't know what you are talking about; you misjudge me again: it is not because she is mad I hate her. If you were mad, do you think I should hate you?'

'I do indeed, sir.'

'Then you are mistaken, and you know nothing about me, and nothing about the sort of love of which I am capable. Every atom of your flesh is as dear to me as my own: in pain and sickness it would still be dear. Your mind is my treasure, and if it were broken, it would be my treasure still: if you raved, my arms should confine you, and not a strait waistcoat—your grasp, even in fury, would have a charm for me: if you flew at me as wildly as that woman did this morning, I should receive you in an embrace at least as fond as it would be restrictive. I should not shrink from you with disgust as I did from her: in your quiet moments you should have no watcher and no nurse but me; and I could hang over you with untiring tenderness, though you gave me no smile in return; and never weary of gazing into your eyes, though they had no longer a ray of recognition for me.—But why do I follow that train of ideas? I was talking of removing you from Thornfield. All, you know, is prepared for prompt departure: to-morrow you shall go. I only ask you to endure one more night under this roof, Jane: and then, farewell to its miseries and terrors for ever! I have a place to repair to which will be a secure sanctuary from hateful reminiscences, from unwelcome intrusion—even from falsehood and slander.'

'And take Adèle with you, sir,' I interrupted; 'she will be a companion for you.'

'What do you mean, Jane? I told you I would send Adèle to school: and what do I want with a child for a companion? and not my own child,—a French dancer's bastard. Why do you importune me about her? I say, why do you assign Adèle to me for a companion?'

'You spoke of a retirement, sir; and retirement and solitude are dull: too dull for you.'

Solitude! solitude!' he reiterated, with irritation. 'I see I must come to an explanation. I don't know what sphinx-like expression is forming in your countenance. *You* are to share my solitude. Do you understand?'

I shook my head: it required a degree of courage, excited as he was becoming, even to risk that mute sign of dissent. He had been walking fast about the room, and he stopped, as if suddenly rooted to one spot. He looked at me long and hard: I turned my eyes from him, fixed them on the fire, and tried to assume and maintain a quiet, collected aspect.

'Now for the hitch in Jane's character,' he said at last, speaking more calmly than from his look I had expected him to speak. 'The reel of silk has run smoothly enough so far; but I always knew there would come a knot and a puzzle: here it is. Now for vexation, and exasperation, and endless trouble! By God! I long to exert a fraction of Samson's strength, and break the entanglement like tow!'

He recommenced his walk: but soon again stopped, and this time just before me.

'Jane! will you hear reason?' (he stooped and approached his lips to my ear) 'because, if you won't, I'll try violence.' His voice was hoarse; his look that of a man who is just about to burst an insufferable bond and plunge headlong into wild license. I saw that in another moment, and with one impetus of frenzy more, I should be able to do nothing with him. The present—the passing second of time—was all I had in which to control and restrain him: a movement of repulsion, flight, fear, would have sealed my doom,—and his. But I was not afraid: not in the least. I felt an inward power; a sense of influence, which supported me. The crisis was perilous; but not without its charm: such as the Indian, perhaps, feels when he slips over the rapid in his canoe. I took hold of his clenched hand; loosened the contorted fingers, and said to him, soothingly,—'Sit down; I'll talk to you as long as you like, and hear all you have to say, whether reasonable or unreasonable.'

He sat down: but he did not get leave to speak directly. I had been struggling with tears for some time; I had taken great pains to repress them, because I knew he would not like to see me weep. Now, however, I considered it well to let them flow as freely and as long as they liked. If the flood annoyed him, so much the better. So I gave way and cried heartily.

Soon I heard him earnestly entreating me to be composed. I said I could not while he was in such a passion.

'But I am not angry, Jane: I only love you too well; and you had steeled your little pale face with such a resolute, frozen look, I could not endure it. Hush, now, and wipe your eyes.'

His softened voice announced that he was subdued; so I, in my turn, became calm. Now he made an effort to rest his head on my shoulder; but I would not permit it. Then he would draw me to him: no.

'Jane! Jane!' he said, in such an accent of bitter sadness it thrilled along every nerve I had, 'you don't love me, then? It was only my station, and the rank of my wife, that you valued? Now that you think me disqualified to become your husband you recoil from my touch as if I were some toad or ape.'

These words cut me: yet what could I do or say? I ought probably to have done or said nothing: but I was so tortured by a sense of remorse at thus hurting his feelings I could not control the wish to drop balm where I had wounded.

'I *do* love you,' I said, 'more than ever: but I must not show or indulge the feeling: and this is the last time I must express it.'

'The last time, Jane! What! do you think you can live with me, and see me daily, and yet, if you still love me, be always cold and distant?'

'No, sir; that I am certain I could not; and therefore I see there is but one way: but you will be furious if I mention it.'

'Oh, mention it! If I storm, you have the art of weeping.'

'Mr. Rochester, I must leave you.'

'For how long, Jane? For a few minutes, while you smooth your hair—which is somewhat dishevelled; and bathe your face—which looks feverish?'

'I must leave Adèle and Thornfield. I must part with you for my whole life: I must begin a new existence amongst strange faces and strange scenes.'

'Of course: I told you you should. I pass over the madness about parting from me. You mean you must become a part of me. As to the new existence, it is all right: you shall yet be my wife: I am not married. You shall be Mrs. Rochester—both virtually and nominally. I shall keep only to you so long as you and I live. You shall go to a place I have in the south of France: a white-washed villa on the shores of the Mediterranean. There you shall live a happy, and guarded, and most innocent life. Never fear that I wish to lure you into error—to make you my mistress. Why do you shake your head? Jane, you must be reasonable; or in truth I shall again become frantic.'

His voice and hand quivered; his large nostrils dilated; his eye blazed; still I dared to speak:—'Sir, your wife is living: that is a fact acknowledged this morning by yourself. If I lived with you as you desire, I should then be your mistress: to say otherwise is sophistical—is false.'

'Jane, I am not a gentle-tempered man—you forget that: I am not long-enduring; I am not cool and dispassionate. Out of pity to me and yourself, put your finger on my pulse, feel how it throbs, and—beware!'

He bared his wrist and offered it to me: the blood was forsaking his cheek and lips; they were growing livid; I was distressed on all hands. To agitate him thus deeply, by a resistance he so abhorred, was cruel: to yield was out of the question. I did what human beings do instinctively when they are driven to utter extremity—looked for aid to one higher than man: the words 'God help me!' burst involuntarily from my lips.

'I am a fool!' cried Mr. Rochester suddenly. 'I keep telling her I am not married, and do not explain to her why. I forget she knows nothing of the character of that woman, or of the circumstances attending my infernal union with her. Oh, I am certain Jane will agree with me in opinion when she knows all that I know! Just put your hand in mine, Janet, that I may have the evidence of touch as well as sight to prove you are near me—and I will in a few words show you the real state of the case. Can you listen to me?'

'Yes, sir; for hours if you will.'

'I ask only minutes. Jane, did you ever hear or know that I was not the eldest son of my house; that I had once a brother older than I?'

'I remember Mrs. Fairfax told me so once.'

'And did you ever hear that my father was an avaricious grasping man?'

'I have understood something to that effect.'

'Well, Jane, being so, it was his resolution to keep the property together; he could not bear the idea of dividing his estate and leaving me a fair portion: all, he resolved, should go to my brother Rowland. Yet as little could he endure that a son of his should be a poor man. I must be provided for by a wealthy marriage. He sought me a partner betimes. Mr. Mason, a West India planter and merchant, was his old acquaintance. He was certain his possessions were real and vast: he made inquiries. Mr. Mason, he found, had a son and daughter; and he learned from him that he could and would give the latter a fortune of thirty thousand pounds: that sufficed. When I left college I was sent out to Jamaica, to espouse a bride already courted for me. My father said nothing about her money; but he told me Miss Mason was the boast of Spanish Town for her beauty: and this was no lie. I found her a fine woman, in the style of Blanche Ingram; tall, dark, and majestic. Her family wished to secure me, because I was of a good race; and so did she. They showed her to me in parties, splendidly dressed. I seldom saw her alone, and had very little private conversation with her. She flattered me, and lavishly displayed for my pleasure her charms and accomplishments. All the men in her circle seemed to admire her and envy me. I was dazzled, stimulated: my senses were excited; and being ignorant, raw, and inexperienced, I thought I loved her. There is no folly so besotted that the idiotic rivalries of society, the prurience, the rashness, the blindness of youth, will not hurry a man to its commission. Her relatives encouraged me; competitors piqued me; she allured me: a marriage was achieved almost before I knew where I was. Oh, I have no respect for myself when I think of that act! —an agony of inward contempt masters me. I never loved, I never esteemed, I did not even know her. I was not sure of the existence of one virtue in her nature: I had marked neither modesty, nor benevolence, nor candour, nor refinement in her mind or manners—and, I married her:—gross, grovelling, mole-eyed blockhead that I was! With less sin I might have—but let me remember to whom I am speaking.

'My bride's mother I had never seen: I understood she was dead. The honeymoon over, I learned my mistake; she was only mad, and shut up in a lunatic asylum. There was a younger brother, too, a complete dumb idiot. The elder one, whom you have seen (and whom I cannot hate, whilst I abhor all his kindred, because he has some grains of affection in his feeble mind; shown in the continued interest he takes in his wretched sister, and also in a dog-like attachment he once bore me), will probably be in the same state one day. My father, and my brother Rowland, knew all this; but they thought only of the thirty thousand pounds, and joined in the plot against me.

'These were vile discoveries; but, except for the treachery of concealment, I should have made them no subject of reproach to my wife: even when I found her nature wholly alien to mine; her tastes obnoxious to me; her cast of mind common, low, narrow, and singularly incapable of being led to anything higher, expanded to anything larger—when I found that I could not pass a single evening, nor even a single hour of the day, with her in comfort: that kindly conversation could not be sustained between us, because whatever topic I started immediately received from her a turn at once coarse and trite, perverse and imbecile—when I perceived that I should never have a quiet or settled household, because no servant would bear the continued outbreaks of her violent and unreasonable temper, or the vexations of her absurd, contradictory, exacting orders—even then I restrained myself: I eschewed upbraiding, I curtailed remonstrance; I tried to devour my repentance and disgust in secret; I repressed the deep antipathy I felt.

'Jane, I will not trouble you with abominable details: some strong words shall express what I have to say. I lived with that woman upstairs four years, and before that time she had tried me indeed: her character ripened and developed with frightful rapidity; her vices sprang up fast and rank: they were so strong, only cruelty could check them; and I would not use cruelty. What a pigmy intellect she had—and what giant propensities! How fearful were the curses those propensities entailed on me! Bertha Mason,—the true daughter of an infamous mother,—dragged me through all the hideous and degrading agonies which must attend a man bound to a wife at once intemperate and unchaste.

'My brother in the interval was dead; and at the end of the four years my father died too. I was rich enough now—yet poor to hideous indigence: a nature the most gross, impure, depraved, I ever saw, was associated with mine, and called by the law and by society a part of me. And I could not rid myself of it by any legal proceedings: for the doctors now discovered that *my wife* was mad—her excesses had prematurely developed the germs of insanity:—Jane, you don't like my narrative; you look almost sick—shall I defer the rest to another day?'

'No, sir, finish it now: I pity you—I do earnestly pity you.'

'Pity, Jane, from some people is a noxious and insulting sort of tribute, which one is justified in hurling back in the teeth of those who offer it; but that is the sort of pity native to callous, selfish hearts: it is a hybrid, egotistical pain at hearing of woes, crossed with ignorant contempt for those who have endured them. But that is not your pity, Jane: it is not the feeling of which your whole face is full at this moment—with which your eyes are now almost overflowing—with which your heart is heaving—with which your hand is trembling in mine. Your pity, my darling, is the suffering mother of love: its anguish is the very natal pang of the divine passion. I accept it, Jane; let the daughter have free advent—my arms wait to receive her.'

'Now, sir, proceed: what did you do when you found she was mad?'

'Jane—I approached the verge of despair: a remnant of self-respect was all that intervened between me and the gulf. In the eyes of the world I was doubtless covered with grimy dishonour: but I resolved to be clean in my own sight—and to the last I repudiated the contamination of her crimes, and wrenched myself from connection with her mental defects. Still, society associated my name and person with hers! I yet saw her and heard her daily: something of her breath (faugh!) mixed with the air I breathed; and, besides, I remembered I had once been her husband—that recollection was then, and is now, inexpressibly odious to me: moreover, I knew that while she lived I could never be the husband of another and better wife; and though five years my senior (her family and her father had lied to me even in the particular of her age), she was likely to live as long as I, being as robust in frame as she was infirm in mind. Thus, at the age of twenty-six, I was hopeless.

'One night I had been awakened by her yells—(since the medical men had pronounced her mad she had of course been shut up)—it was a fiery West Indian night; one of the description that frequently precede the hurricanes of those climates; being unable to sleep in bed, I got up and opened the window. The air was like sulphur-steams—I could find no refreshment anywhere. Mosquitoes came buzzing in and hummed sullenly round the room; the sea, which I could hear from thence, rumbled dull like an earthquake—black clouds were casting up over it; the moon was setting in the waves, broad and red, like a hot cannon-ball—she threw her last bloody glance over a world quivering with the ferment of tempest. I was physically influenced by the atmosphere and scene, and my ears were filled with the curses the maniac still shrieked out; wherein she momentarily mingled my name with such a tone of demon-hate, with such language!—no professed harlot ever had a fouler vocabulary than she: though two rooms off, I heard every word—the thin partitions of the West India house opposing but slight obstruction to her wolfish cries.

'"This life," said I at last, "is hell! this is the air—those are the sounds of the bottomless pit! I have a right to deliver myself from it if I can. The sufferings of this mortal state will leave me with the heavy flesh that now cumbers my soul. Of the fanatic's burning eternity I have no fear; there is not a future state worse than this present one—let me break away, and go home to God!"

'I said this whilst I knelt down at and unlocked a trunk which contained a brace of loaded pistols: I meant to shoot myself. I only entertained the intention for a moment; for not being insane, the crisis of exquisite and unalloyed despair which had originated the wish and design of self-destruction was past in a second.

'A wind fresh from Europe blew over the ocean and rushed through the open casement: the storm broke, streamed, thundered, blazed, and the air grew pure. I then framed and fixed a resolution. While I walked under the dripping orange-trees of my wet garden, and amongst its drenched pomegranates and pine-apples, and while the refulgent dawn of the tropics kindled round me—I reasoned thus, Jane:—and now listen; for it was true Wisdom that consoled me in that hour, and showed me the right path to follow.

'The sweet wind from Europe was still whispering in the refreshed leaves, and the Atlantic was thundering in glorious liberty; my heart, dried up and scorched for a long time, swelled to the tone, and filled with living blood—my being longed for renewal—my soul thirsted for a pure draught. I saw Hope revive—and felt Regeneration possible. From a flowery arch at the bottom of my garden I gazed over the sea—bluer than the sky: the old world was beyond; clear prospects opened thus:—

'"Go," said Hope, "and live again in Europe: there it is not known what a sullied name you bear, nor what a filthy burden is bound to you. You may take the maniac with you to England; confine her with due attendance and precautions at Thornfield: then travel yourself to what clime you will, and form what new tie you like. That woman, who has so abused your long-suffering—so sullied your name; so outraged your honour; so blighted your youth—is not your wife; nor are you her husband. See that she is cared for as her condition demands, and you have done all that God and Humanity require of you. Let her identity, her connection with yourself, be buried in oblivion: you are bound to impart them to no living being. Place her in safety and comfort: shelter her degradation with secrecy, and leave her."

'I acted precisely on this suggestion. My father and brother had not made my marriage known to their acquaintance; because, in the very first letter I wrote to apprise them of the union—having already begun to experience extreme disgust of its consequences; and from the family character and constitution seeing a hideous future opening to me—I added an urgent charge to keep it secret; and very soon the infamous conduct of the wife my father had selected for me was such as to make him blush to own her as his daughter-in-law. Far from desiring to publish the connection, he became as anxious to conceal it as myself.

'To England, then, I conveyed her; a fearful voyage I had with such a monster in the vessel. Glad was I when I at last got her to Thornfield, and saw her safely lodged in that third-storey room, of whose secret inner cabinet she has now for ten years made a wild beast's den—a goblin's cell. I had some trouble in finding an attendant for her: as it was necessary to select one on whose fidelity dependence could be placed; for her ravings would inevitably betray my secret: besides, she had lucid intervals of days—sometimes weeks—which she filled up with abuse of me. At last I hired Grace Poole, from the Grimsby Retreat. She and the surgeon, Carter (who dressed Mason's wounds that night he was stabbed and worried), are the only two I have ever admitted to my confidence. Mrs. Fairfax may indeed have suspected something; but she could have gained no precise knowledge as to facts. Grace has, on the whole, proved a good keeper; though, owing partly to a fault of her own, of which it appears nothing can cure her, and which is incident to her harassing profession, her vigilance has been more than once lulled and baffled. The lunatic is both cunning and malignant; she has never failed to take advantage of her guardian's temporary lapses; once to secrete the knife with which she stabbed her brother, and twice to possess herself of the key of her cell, and issue therefrom in the night-time. On the first of these occasions she perpetrated the attempt to burn me in my bed; on the second she paid that ghastly visit to you. I thank Providence, who watched over you, that she then spent her fury on your wedding apparel; which perhaps brought back vague reminiscences of her own bridal days: but on what might have happened I cannot endure to reflect. When I think of the thing which flew at my throat this morning hanging its black and scarlet visage over the nest of my dove my blood curdles'——

'And what, sir,' I asked, while he paused, 'did you do when you had settled her here? Where did you go?'

'What did I do, Jane? I transformed myself into a Will-o'-the-wisp. Where did I go? I pursued wanderings as wild as those of the March-spirit. I sought the Continent, and went devious through all its lands. My fixed desire was to seek and find a good and intelligent woman whom I could love: a contrast to the fury I left at Thornfield '——

'But you could not marry, sir.'

'I had determined, and was convinced that I could and ought. It was not my original intention to deceive, as I have deceived you. I meant to tell my tale plainly, and make my proposals openly: and it appeared to me so absolutely rational that I should be considered free to love and be loved, I never doubted some woman might be found willing and able to understand my case and accept me, in spite of the curse with which I was burdened.'

'Well, sir?'

'When you are inquisitive, Jane, you always make me smile. You open your eyes like an eager bird, and make every now and then a restless movement; as if answers in speech did not flow fast enough for you, and you wanted to read the tablet of one's heart. But before I go on tell me what you mean by your "Well, sir?" It is a small phrase very frequent with you; and which many a time has drawn me on and on through interminable talk: I don't very well know why.'

'I mean—What next? How did you proceed? What came of such an event?'

'Precisely: and what do you wish to know now?'

'Whether you found any one you liked: whether you asked her to marry you; and what she said.'

'I can tell you whether I found any one I liked, and whether I asked her to marry me: but what she said is yet to be recorded in the book of Fate. For ten long years I roved about, living first in one capital, then another: sometimes in St. Petersburg; oftener in Paris; occasionally in Rome, Naples, and Florence. Provided with plenty of money and the passport of an old name, I could choose my own society: no circles were closed against me. I sought my ideal of a woman amongst English ladies, French countesses, Italian signoras, and German gräfinnen. I could not find her. Sometimes, for a fleeting moment, I thought I caught a glance, heard a tone, beheld a form, which announced the realisation of my dream: but I was presently undeceived. You are not to suppose that I desired perfection, either of mind or person. I longed only for what suited me—for the antipodes of the Creole: and I longed vainly. Amongst them all I found not one whom, had I been ever so free, I—warned as I was of the risks, the horrors, the loathings of incongruous unions—would have asked to marry me. Disappointment made me reckless. I tried dissipation—never debauchery: that I hated, and hate. That was my Indian Messalina's attribute: rooted disgust at it and her restrained me much, even in pleasure. Any enjoyment that bordered on riot seemed to approach me to her and her vices, and I eschewed it.

'Yet I could not live alone; so I tried the companionship of mistresses. The first I chose was Céline Varens—another of those steps which make a man spurn himself when he recalls them. You already know what she was, and how my liaison with her terminated. She had two successors: an Italian, Giacinta, and a German, Clara; both considered singularly handsome. What was their beauty to me in a few weeks? Giacinta was unprincipled and violent: I tired of her in three months. Clara was honest and quiet; but heavy, mindless, unimpressible: not one whit to my taste. I was glad to give her a sufficient sum to set her up in a good line of business, and so get decently rid of her. But, Jane, I see by your face you are not forming a very favourable opinion of me just now. You think me an unfeeling, loose-principled rake: don't you?'

'I don't like you so well as I have done sometimes, indeed, sir. Did it not seem to you in the least wrong to live in that way: first with one mistress and then another? You talk of it as a mere matter of course.'

'It was with me: and I did not like it. It was a grovelling fashion of existence: I should never like to return to it. Hiring a mistress is the next worst thing to buying a slave: both are often by nature, and always by position, inferior: and to live familiarly with inferiors is degrading. I now hate the recollection of the time I passed with Céline, Giacinta, and Clara.'

I felt the truth of these words; and I drew from them the certain inference, that if I were so far to forget myself and all the teaching that had ever been instilled into me as—under any pretext—with any justification—through any temptation—to become the successor of these poor girls, he would one day regard me with the same feeling which now in his mind desecrated their memory. I did not give utterance to this conviction: it was enough to feel it. I impressed it on my heart, that it might remain there to serve me as aid in the time of trial.

'Now, Jane, why don't you say "Well, sir?" I have not done. You are looking grave. You disapprove of me still, I see. But let me come to the point. Last January, rid of all mistresses—in a harsh, bitter frame of mind, the result of a useless, roving, lonely life—corroded with disappointment, sourly disposed against all men, and especially against all *woman*kind (for I began to regard the notion of an intellectual, faithful, loving woman as a mere dream), recalled by business, I came back to England.

'On a frosty winter afternoon I rode in sight of Thornfield Hall. Abhorred spot! I expected no peace—no pleasure there. On a stile in Hay Lane I saw a quiet little figure sitting by itself. I passed it as negligently as I did the pollard willow opposite to it; I had no presentiment of what it would be to me; no inward warning that the arbitress of my life—my genius for good or evil—waited there in humble guise. I did not know it even when, on the occasion of Mesrour's accident, it came up and gravely offered me help. Childish and slender creature! It seemed as if a linnet had hopped on my foot and proposed to bear me on its tiny wing. I was surly; but the thing would not go: it stood by me with strange perseverance, and looked and spoke with a sort of authority. I must be aided, and by that hand: and aided I was.

'When once I had pressed the frail shoulder, something new—a fresh sap and sense—stole into my frame. It was well I had learnt that this elf must return to me—that it belonged to my house down below—or I could not have felt it pass away from under my hand, and seen it vanish behind the dim hedge, without singular regret. I heard you come home that night, Jane: though probably you were not aware that I thought of you, or watched for you. The next day I observed you—myself unseen—for half an hour, while you played with Adèle in the gallery. It was a snowy day, I recollect, and you could not go out of doors. I was in my room; the door was ajar: I could both listen and watch. Adèle claimed your outward attention for a while; yet I fancied your thoughts were elsewhere: but you were very patient with her, my little Jane; you talked to her and amused her a long time. When at last she left you, you lapsed at once into deep reverie: you betook yourself slowly to pace the gallery. Now and then, in passing a casement you glanced out at the thick-falling snow; you listened to the sobbing wind, and again you paced gently on and dreamed. I think those day visions were not dark; there was a pleasurable illumination in your eye occasionally, a soft excitement in your aspect, which told of no bitter, bilious, hypochondriac brooding: your look revealed rather the sweet musings of youth, when its spirit follows on willing wings the flight of Hope, up and on to an ideal heaven. The voice of Mrs. Fairfax, speaking to a servant in the hall, wakened you: and how curiously you smiled to and at yourself, Janet! There was much sense in your smile: it was very shrewd, and seemed to make light of your own abstraction. It seemed to say—"My fine visions are all very well, but I must not forget they are absolutely unreal. I have a rosy sky, and a green flowery Eden in my brain; but without, I am perfectly aware, lies at my feet a rough tract to travel, and around me gather black tempests to encounter." You ran downstairs and demanded of Mrs. Fairfax some occupation: the weekly house accounts to make up, or something of that sort, I think it was. I was vexed with you for getting out of my sight.

'Impatiently I waited for evening, when I might summon you to my presence. An unusual—to me—a perfectly new character I suspected was yours: I desired to search it deeper, and know it better. You entered the room with a look and air at once shy and independent: you were quaintly dressed—much as you are now. I made you talk—ere long I found you full of strange contrasts. Your garb and manner were restricted by rule; your air was often diffident, and altogether that of one refined by nature, but absolutely unused to society, and a good deal afraid of making herself disadvantageously conspicuous by some solecism or blunder; yet when addressed you lifted a keen, a daring, and a glowing eye to your interlocutor's face: there was penetration and power in each glance you gave; when plied by close questions, you found ready and round answers. Very soon you seemed to get used to me; I believe you felt the existence of sympathy between you and your grim and cross master, Jane; for it was astonishing to see how quickly a certain pleasant ease tranquillised your manner: snarl as I would, you showed no surprise, fear, annoyance, or displeasure at my moroseness; you watched me, and now and then smiled at me with a simple yet sagacious grace I cannot describe. I was at once content and stimulated with what I saw: I liked what I had seen, and wished to see more. Yet, for a long time, I treated you distantly, and sought your company rarely. I was an intellectual epicure, and wished to prolong the gratification of making this novel and piquant acquaintance: besides, I was for a while troubled with a haunting fear that if I handled the flower freely its bloom would fade—the sweet charm of freshness would leave it. I did not then know that it was no transitory blossom; but rather the radiant resemblance of one, cut in an indestructible gem. Moreover, I wished to see whether you would seek me if I shunned you—but you did not: you kept in the school-room as still as your own desk and easel; if by chance I met you, you passed me as soon, and with as little token of recognition, as was consistent with respect. Your habitual expression in those days, Jane, was a thoughtful look not despondent, for you were not sickly; but not buoyant, for you had little hope, and no actual pleasure. I wondered what you thought of me—or if you ever thought of me; to find this out I resumed my notice of you. There was something glad in your glance and genial in your manner when you conversed: I saw you had a social heart; it was the silent school-room—it was the tedium of your life—that made you mournful. I permitted myself the delight of being kind to you; kindness stirred emotion soon: your face became soft in expression, your tones gentle; I liked my name pronounced by your lips in a grateful, happy accent. I used to enjoy a chance meeting with you, Jane, at this time: there was a curious hesitation in your manner: you glanced at me with a slight trouble—a hovering doubt: you did not know what my caprice might be—whether I was going to play the master and be stern, or the friend and be benignant. I was now too fond of you often to stimulate the first whim; and, when I stretched my hand out cordially, such bloom and light and bliss rose to your young, wistful features, I had much ado often to avoid straining you then and there to my heart.'

'Don't talk any more of those days, sir,' I interrupted, furtively dashing away some tears from my eyes; his language was torture to me; for I knew what I must do—and do soon—and all these reminiscences and these revelations of his feelings only made my work more difficult.

'No, Jane,' he returned: 'what necessity is there to dwell on the Past, when the Present is so much surer—the Future so much brighter?'

I shuddered to hear the infatuated assertion.

'You see now how the case stands—do you not?' he continued. 'After a youth and manhood passed half in unutterable misery and half in dreary solitude, I have for the first time found what I can truly love—I have found *you.* You are my sympathy—my better self—my good angel—I am bound to you with a strong attachment. I think you good, gifted, lovely: a fervent, a solemn passion is conceived in my heart; it leans to you, draws you to my centre and spring of life, wraps my existence about you—and, kindling in pure, powerful flame, fuses you and me in one.

'It was because I felt and knew this that I resolved to marry you. To tell me that I had already a wife is empty mockery: you know now that I had but a hideous demon. I was wrong to attempt to deceive you; but I feared a stubbornness that exists in your character. I feared early instilled prejudice: I wanted to have you safe before hazarding confidences. This was cowardly: I should have appealed to your nobleness and magnanimity at first, as I do now—opened to you plainly my life of agony—described to you my hunger and thirst after a higher and worthier existence—shown to you, not my *resolution* (that word is weak), but my resistless *bent* to love faithfully and well where I am faithfully and well loved in return. Then I should have asked you to accept my pledge of fidelity, and to give me yours: Jane—give it me now.'

A pause.

'Why are you silent, Jane?'

I was experiencing an ordeal: a hand of fiery iron grasped my vitals. Terrible moment: full of struggle, blackness, burning! Not a human being that ever lived could wish to be loved better than I was loved; and him who thus loved me I absolutely worshipped: and I must renounce love and idol. One drear word comprised my intolerable duty—'Depart!'

'Jane, you understand what I want of you? Just this promise—"I will be yours, Mr. Rochester."'

'Mr. Rochester, I will *not* be yours.'

Another long silence.

'Jane!' recommenced he, with a gentleness that broke me down with grief, and turned me stone-cold with ominous terror—for this still voice was the pant of a lion rising—

'Jane, do you mean to go one way in the world, and to let me go another?'

'I do.'

'Jane' (bending towards and embracing me), 'do you mean it now?'

'I do.'

'And now?' softly kissing my forehead and cheek.

'I do'—extricating myself from restraint rapidly and completely.

'Oh, Jane, this is bitter! This—this is wicked. It would not be wicked to love me.'

'It would to obey you.'

A wild look raised his brows—crossed his features: he rose; but he forbore yet. I laid my hand on the back of a chair for support: I shook, I feared—but I resolved.

'One instant, Jane. Give one glance to my horrible life when you are gone. All happiness will be torn away with you. What then is left? For a wife I have but the maniac upstairs: as well might you refer me to some corpse in yonder churchyard. What shall I do, Jane? Where turn for a companion, and for some hope?'

'Do as I do: trust in God and yourself. Believe in heaven. Hope to meet again there.'

'Then you will not yield?'

'No.'

'Then you condemn me to live wretched, and to die accursed?' His voice rose.

'I advise you to live sinless; and I wish you to die tranquil.'

'Then you snatch love and innocence from me? You fling me back on lust for a passion—vice for an occupation?'

'Mr. Rochester, I no more assign this fate to you than I grasp at it for myself. We were born to strive and endure—you as well as I: do so. You will forget me before I forget you.'

'You make me a liar by such language: you sully my honour. I declared I could not change: you tell me to my face I shall change soon. And what a distortion in your judgment, what a perversity in your ideas, is proved by your conduct! Is it better to drive a fellow-creature to despair than to transgress a mere human law—no man being injured by the breach? for you have neither relatives nor acquaintances whom you need fear to offend by living with me.'

This was true: and while he spoke my very conscience and reason turned traitors against me, and charged me with crime in resisting him. They spoke almost as loud as Feeling: and that clamoured wildly. 'Oh, comply!' it said. 'Think of his misery; think of his danger—look at his state when left alone; remember his headlong nature; consider the recklessness following on despair—soothe him; save him; love him; tell him you love him and will be his. Who in the world cares for *you*? or who will be injured by what you do?'

Still indomitable was the reply—'*I* care for myself. The more solitary, the more friendless, the more unsustained I am, the more I will respect myself. I will keep the law given by God; sanctioned by man. I will hold to the principles received by me when I was sane, and not mad—as I am now. Laws and principles are not for the times when there is no temptation: they are for such moments as this, when body and soul rise in mutiny against their rigour; stringent are they; inviolate they shall be. If at my individual convenience I might break them, what would be their worth? They have a worth—so I have always believed; and if I cannot believe it now, it is because I am insane—quite insane: with my veins running fire, and my heart beating faster than I can count its throbs. Preconceived opinions, foregone determinations, are all I have at this hour to stand by: there I plant my foot.'

I did. Mr. Rochester, reading my countenance, saw I had done so. His fury was wrought to the highest: he must yield to it for a moment, whatever followed; he crossed the floor and seized my arm, and grasped my waist. He seemed to devour me with his flaming glance: physically, I felt, at the moment, powerless as stubble exposed to the draught and glow of a furnace—mentally, I still possessed my soul, and with it the certainty of ultimate safety. The soul, fortunately, has an interpreter—often an unconscious, but still a truthful interpreter—in the eye. My eye rose to his; and while I looked in his fierce face, I gave an involuntary sigh: his grip was painful, and my overtasked strength almost exhausted.

'Never,' said he, as he ground his teeth, 'never was anything at once so frail and so indomitable. A mere reed she feels in my hand!' (And he shook me with the force of his hold.) 'I could bend her with my finger and thumb: and what good would it do if I bent, if I uptore, if I crushed her? Consider that eye: consider the resolute, wild, free thing looking out of it, defying me, with more than courage—with a stern triumph. Whatever I do with its cage, I cannot get at it—the savage, beautiful creature! If I tear, if I rend the slight prison, my outrage will only let the captive loose. Conqueror I might be of the house; but the inmate would escape to heaven before I could call myself possessor of its clay dwelling-place. And it is you, spirit—with will and energy, and virtue and purity—that I want: not alone your brittle frame. Of yourself, you could come with soft flight and nestle against my heart, if you would: seized against your will you will elude the grasp like an essence—you will vanish ere I inhale your fragrance. Oh! come, Jane, come!'

As he said this he released me from his clutch, and only looked at me. The look was far worse to resist than the frantic strain: only an idiot, however, would have succumbed now. I had dared and baffled his fury; I must elude his sorrow: I retired to the door.

'You are going, Jane?'

'I am going, sir.'

'You are leaving me?'

'Yes.'

'You will not come?—You will not be my comforter, my rescuer?—My deep love, my wild woe, my frantic prayer, are all nothing to you?'

What unutterable pathos was in his voice! How hard it was to reiterate firmly, 'I am going.'

'Jane!'

'Mr. Rochester!'

'Withdraw, then,—I consent—but remember, you leave me here in anguish. Go up to your own room; think over all I have said, and, Jane, cast a glance on my sufferings—think of me.'

He turned away; he threw himself on his face on the sofa. 'Oh, Jane! my hope—my love—my life!' broke in anguish from his lips. Then came a deep, strong sob.

I had already gained the door: but, reader, I walked back—walked back as determinedly as I had retreated. I knelt down by him; I turned his face from the cushion to me; I kissed his cheek; I smoothed his hair with my hand.

'God bless you, my dear master!' I said. 'God keep you from harm and wrong—direct you, solace you—reward you well for your past kindness to me.'

'Little Jane's love would have been my best reward,' he answered: 'without it, my heart is broken. But Jane will give me her love: yes—nobly, generously.'

Up the blood rushed to his face; forth flashed the fire from his eyes; erect he sprang; he held his arms out; but I evaded the embrace, and at once quitted the room.

'Farewell!' was the cry of my heart as I left him. Despair added, 'Farewell, for ever!'

. . . .

That night I never thought to sleep; but a slumber fell on me as soon as I lay down in bed. I was transported in thought to the scenes of childhood; I dreamt I lay in the red-room at Gateshead; that the night was dark, and my mind impressed with strange fears. The light that long ago had struck me into syncope, recalled in this vision, seemed glidingly to mount the wall, and tremblingly to pause in the centre of the obscured ceiling. I lifted up my head to look:

the roof resolved to clouds, high and dim; the gleam was such as the moon imparts to vapours she is about to sever. I watched her come—watched with the strangest anticipation; as though some word of doom were to be written on her disk. She broke forth as never moon yet burst from cloud: a hand first penetrated the sable folds and waved them away; then, not a moon, but a white human form shone in the azure, inclining a glorious brow earthward. It gazed and gazed on me. It spoke to my spirit: immeasurably distant was the tone, yet so near, it whispered in my heart—'My daughter, flee temptation!'

'Mother, I will.'

So I answered after I had waked from the trance-like dream. It was yet night, but July nights are short: soon after midnight dawn comes. 'It cannot be too early to commence the task I have to fulfil,' thought I. I rose: I was dressed; for I had taken off nothing but my shoes. I knew where to find in my drawers some linen, a locket, a ring. In seeking these articles I encountered the beads of a pearl necklace Mr. Rochester had forced me to accept a few days ago. I left that; it was not mine: it was the visionary bride's, who had melted in air. The other articles I made up in a parcel; my purse, containing twenty shillings (it was all I had), I put in my pocket: I tied on my straw bonnet, pinned my shawl, took the parcel and my slippers, which I would not put on yet, and stole from my room.

'Farewell, kind Mrs. Fairfax!' I whispered, as I glided past her door. 'Farewell, my darling Adèle!' I said, as I glanced towards the nursery. No thought could be admitted of entering to embrace her. I had to deceive a fine ear: for aught I knew, it might now be listening.

I would have got past Mr. Rochester's chamber without a pause; but my heart momentarily stopping its beat at that threshold, my foot was forced to stop also. No sleep was there: the inmate was walking restlessly from wall to wall; and again and again he sighed while I listened. There was a heaven—a temporary heaven—in this room for me, if I chose: I had but to go in and to say—'Mr. Rochester, I will love you and live with you through life till death,' and a fount of rapture would spring to my lips. I thought of this.

That kind master, who could not sleep now, was waiting with impatience for day. He would send for me in the morning; I should be gone. He would have me sought for: vainly. He would feel himself forsaken; his love rejected: he would suffer; perhaps grow desperate. I thought of this too. My hand moved towards the lock; I caught it back, and glided on.

Drearily I wound my way downstairs: I knew what I had to do, and I did it mechanically. I sought the key of the side-door in the kitchen; I sought, too, a phial of oil and a feather; I oiled the key and the lock. I got some water, I got some bread: for perhaps I should have to walk far; and my strength, sorely shaken of late, must not break down. All this I did without one sound. I opened the door, passed out, shut it softly. Dim dawn glimmered in the yard. The great gates were closed and locked; but a wicket in one of them was only latched. Through that I departed: it, too, I shut; and now I was out of Thornfield.

A mile off, beyond the fields, lay a road which stretched in the contrary direction to Millcote; a road I had never travelled, but often noticed, and wondered where it led: thither I bent my steps. No reflection was to be allowed now: not one glance was to be cast back; not even one forward. Not one thought was to be given either to the past or the future. The first was a page so heavenly sweet—so deadly sad—that to read one line of it would dissolve my courage and break down my energy. The last was an awful blank: something like the world when the deluge was gone by.

I skirted fields, and hedges, and lanes, till after sunrise. I believe it was a lovely summer morning: I know my shoes, which I had put on when I left the house, were soon wet with dew. But I looked neither to rising sun, nor smiling sky, nor wakening nature. He who is taken out to pass through a fair scene to the scaffold thinks not of the flowers that smile on his road, but of the block and axe-edge; of the disseverment of bone and vein; of the grave gaping at the end: and I thought of drear flight and homeless wandering—and, oh! with agony I thought of what I left. I could not help it. I thought of him now—in his room—watching the sunrise; hoping I should soon come to say I would stay with him, and be his. I longed to be his; I panted to return: it was not too late; I could yet spare him the bitter pang of bereavement. As yet my flight, I was sure, was undiscovered. I could go back and be his comforter—his pride; his redeemer from misery; perhaps from ruin. Oh, that fear of his self-abandonment—far worse than my abandonment—how it goaded me! It was a barbed arrow-head in my breast; it tore me when I tried to extract it; it sickened me when remembrance thrust it further in. Birds began singing in brake and copse: birds were faithful to their mates; birds were emblems of love. What was I? In the midst of my pain of heart, and frantic effort of principle, I abhorred myself. I had no solace from self approbation: none even from self-respect. I had injured—wounded—left my master. I was hateful in my own eyes. Still I could not turn, nor retrace one step. God must have led me on. As to my own will or conscience, impassioned grief had trampled one and stifled the other. I was weeping wildly as I walked along my solitary way: fast, fast I went, like one delirious. A weakness, beginning inwardly, extending to the limbs, seized me, and I fell: I lay on the ground some minutes, pressing my face to the wet turf. I had some fear—or hope—that here I should die: but I was soon up; crawling forwards on my hands and knees, and then again raised to my feet—as eager and as determined as ever to reach the road.

When I got there I was forced to sit to rest me under the hedge; and while I sat, I heard wheels, and saw a coach come on. I stood up and lifted my hand; it stopped. I asked where it was going: the driver named a place a long way off, and where I was sure Mr. Rochester had no connections. I asked for what sum he would take me there; he said thirty shillings; I answered I had but twenty; well, he would try to make it do. He further gave me leave to get into the inside, as the vehicle was empty: I entered, was shut in, and it rolled on its way.

Gentle reader, may you never feel what I then felt! May your eyes never shed such stormy, scalding, heart-wrung tears as poured from mine. May you never appeal to Heaven in prayers so hopeless and so agonised as in that hour left my lips: for never may you, like me, dread to be the instrument of evil to what you wholly love.

CHAPTER XXVIII

Two days are passed. It is a summer evening; the coachman has set me down at a place called Whitcross; he could take me no farther for the sum I had given, and I was not possessed of another shilling in the world. The coach is a mile off by this time; I am alone. At this moment I discover that I forgot to take my parcel out of the pocket of the coach, where I had placed it for safety; there it remains, there it must remain; and now, I am absolutely destitute.

Whitcross is no town, nor even a hamlet; it is but a stone pillar set up where four roads meet: white-washed, I suppose, to be more obvious at a distance and in darkness. Four arms spring from its summit: the nearest town to which these point is, according to the inscription, distant ten miles; the farthest, above twenty. From the well-known names of these towns I learn in what county I have lighted; a north-midland shire, dusk with moorland, ridged with mountain: this I see. There are great moors behind and on each hand of me; there are waves of mountains far beyond that deep valley at my feet. The population here must be thin, and I see no passengers on these roads: they stretch out east, west, north, and south—white, broad, lonely; they are all cut in the moor, and the heather grows deep and wild to their very verge. Yet a chance traveller might pass by; and I wish no eye to see me now: strangers would wonder what I am doing, lingering here at the sign-post, evidently objectless and lost. I might be questioned: I could give no answer but what would sound incredible and excite suspicion. Not a tie holds me to human society at this moment—not a charm or hope calls me where my fellow-creatures are—none that saw me would have a kind thought or a good wish for me. I have no relative but the universal mother, Nature: I will seek her breast and ask repose.

I struck straight into the heath; I held on to a hollow I saw deeply furrowing the brown moorside; I waded knee-deep in its dark growth; I turned with its turnings, and finding a moss-blackened granite crag in a hidden angle, I sat down under it. High banks of moor were about me; the crag protected my head: the sky was over that.

Some time passed before I felt tranquil even here: I had a vague dread that wild cattle might be near, or that some sportsman or poacher might discover me. If a gust of wind swept the waste, I looked up, fearing it was the rush of a bull; if a plover whistled, I imagined it a man. Finding my apprehensions unfounded, however, and calmed by the deep silence that reigned as evening declined at nightfall, I took confidence. As yet I had not thought; I had only listened, watched, dreaded; now I regained the faculty of reflection.

What was I to do? Where to go? Oh, intolerable questions, when I could do nothing and go nowhere!—when a long way must yet be measured by my weary, trembling limbs, before I could reach human habitation—when cold charity must be entreated before I could get a lodging: reluctant sympathy importuned: almost certain repulse incurred: before my tale could be listened to, or one of my wants relieved!

I touched the heath: it was dry, and yet warm with the heat of the summer-day. I looked at the sky; it was pure: a kindly star twinkled just above the chasm ridge. The dew fell, but with propitious softness; no breeze whispered. Nature seemed to me benign and good; I thought she loved me, outcast as I was; and I, who from man could anticipate only mistrust, rejection, insult, clung to her with filial fondness. To-night, at least, I would be her guest—as I was her child: my mother would lodge me without money and without price. I had one morsel of bread yet: the remnant of a roll I had bought in a town we passed through at noon with a stray penny—my last coin. I saw ripe bilberries gleaming here and there, like jet beads in the heath: I gathered a handful and ate them with the bread. My hunger, sharp before, was, if not satisfied, appeased by this hermit's meal. I said my evening prayers at its conclusion, and then chose my couch.

Beside the crag the heath was very deep: when I lay down my feet were buried in it; rising high on each side, it left only a narrow space for the night-air to invade. I folded my shawl double, and spread it over me for a coverlet; a low, mossy swell was my pillow. Thus lodged, I was not, at least at the commencement of the night, cold.

My rest might have been blissful enough, only a sad heart broke it. It plained of its gaping wounds, its inward bleeding, its riven chords. It trembled for Mr. Rochester and his doom: it bemoaned him with bitter pity; it demanded him with ceaseless longing: and, impotent as a bird with both wings broken, it still quivered its shattered pinions in vain attempts to seek him.

Worn out with this torture of thought, I rose to my knees. Night was come, and her planets were risen: a safe, still night; too serene for the companionship of fear. We know that God is everywhere; but certainly we feel His presence most when His works are on the grandest scale spread before us: and it is in the unclouded night-sky, where His worlds wheel their silent course, that we read clearest His infinitude, His omnipotence, His omnipresence. I had risen to my knees to pray for Mr. Rochester. Looking up, I, with tear-dimmed eyes, saw the mighty Milky Way. Remembering what it was—what countless systems there swept space like a soft trace of light—I felt the might and strength of God. Sure was I of His efficiency to save what He had made: convinced I grew that neither earth should perish nor one of the souls it treasured. I turned my prayer to thanksgiving: the Source of Life was also the Saviour of spirits. Mr. Rochester was safe: he was God's, and by God would he be guarded. I again nestled to the breast of the hill; and ere long, in sleep, forgot sorrow.

But next day Want came to me, pale and bare. Long after the little birds had left their nests; long after bees had come in the sweet prime of day to gather the heath honey before the dew was dried—when the long morning shadows were curtailed, and the sun filled earth and sky—I got up, and I looked round me.

What a still, hot, perfect day! What a golden desert this spreading moor! Everywhere sunshine. I wished I could live in it and on it. I saw a lizard run over the crag; I saw a bee busy among the sweet bilberries. I would fain at the moment have become bee or lizard, that I might have found fitting nutriment, permanent shelter here. But I was a human being, and had a human being's wants: I must not linger where there was nothing to supply them. I rose; I looked back at the bed I had left. Hopeless of the future, I wished but this—that my Maker had that night thought good to require my soul of me while I slept; and that this weary frame, absolved by death from further conflict with fate, had now but to decay quietly, and mingle in peace with the soil of this wilderness. Life, however, was yet in my possession; with all its requirements, and pains, and responsibilities. The burden must be carried; the want provided for; the suffering endured; the responsibility fulfilled. I set out.

Whitcross regained, I followed a road which led from the sun, now fervent and high. By no other circumstance had I will to decide my choice. I walked a long time, and when I thought I had nearly done enough, and might conscientiously yield to the fatigue that almost overpowered me—might relax this forced action, and, sitting down on a stone I saw near, submit resistlessly to the apathy that clogged heart and limb—I heard a bell chime—a church bell.

I turned in the direction of the sound, and there, amongst the romantic hills, whose changes and aspect I had ceased to note an hour ago, I saw a hamlet and a spire. All the valley at my right hand was full of pasture-fields, and cornfields, and wood; and a glittering stream ran zig-zag through the varied shades of green, the mellowing grain, the sombre wood-land, the clear and sunny lea. Recalled by the rumbling of wheels to the road before me, I saw a heavily-laden waggon labouring up the hill; and not far beyond were two cows and their drover. Human life and human labour were near. I must struggle on: strive to live and bend to toil like the rest.

About two o'clock P.M. I entered the village. At the bottom of its one street there was a little shop with some cakes of bread in the window. I coveted a cake of bread. With that refreshment I could perhaps regain a degree of energy; without it, it would be difficult to proceed. The wish to have some strength and some vigour returned to me as soon as I was amongst my fellow-beings. I felt it would be degrading to faint with hunger on the causeway of a hamlet. Had I nothing about me I could offer in exchange for one of these rolls? I considered. I had a small silk handkerchief tied round my throat; I had my gloves. I could hardly tell how men and women in extremities of destitution proceeded. I did not know whether either of these articles would be accepted: probably they would not; but I must try.

I entered the shop: a woman was there. Seeing a respectably-dressed person, a lady as she supposed, she came forward with civility. How could she serve me? I was seized with shame: my tongue would not utter the request I had prepared. I dared not offer her the half-worn gloves, the creased handkerchief: besides, I felt it would be absurd. I only begged permission to sit down a moment, as I was tired. Disappointed in the expectation of a customer, she coolly acceded to my request. She pointed to a seat; I sank into it. I felt sorely urged to weep; but conscious how unseasonable such a manifestation would be, I restrained it. Soon I asked her, 'if there were any dressmaker or plain-work-woman in the village?'

'Yes; two or three. Quite as many as there was employment for.'

I reflected. I was driven to the point now. I was brought face to face with Necessity. I stood in the position of one without a resource: without a friend; without a coin. I must do something. What? I must apply somewhere. Where?

'Did she know of any place in the neighbourhood where a servant was wanted?'

'Nay; she couldn't say.'

'What was the chief trade in this place? What did most of the people do?'

'Some were farm labourers; a good deal worked at Mr. Oliver's needle-factory, and at the foundry.'

'Did Mr. Oliver employ women?'

'Nay; it was men's work.'

'And what do the women do?'

'I knawn't,' was the answer. 'Some does one thing, and some another. Poor folk mun get on as they can.'

She seemed to be tired of my questions: and, indeed, what claim had I to importune her? A neighbour or two came in; my chair was evidently wanted. I took leave.

I passed up the street, looking as I went at all the houses to the right hand and to the left: but I could discover no pretext, nor see an inducement, to enter any. I rambled round the hamlet, going sometimes to a little distance and returning again, for an hour or more. Much exhausted, and suffering greatly now for want of food, I turned aside into a lane and sat down under the hedge. Ere many minutes had elapsed I was again on my feet, however, and again searching for something—a resource, or at least an informant. A pretty little house stood at the top of the lane, with a garden before it; exquisitely neat, and brilliantly blooming. I stopped at it. What business had I to approach the white door or touch the glittering knocker? In what way could it possibly be the interest of the inhabitants of that dwelling to serve me? Yet I drew near and knocked. A mild-looking, cleanly-attired young woman opened the door. In such a voice as might be expected from a hopeless heart and fainting frame—a voice wretchedly low and faltering—I asked if a servant was wanted here?

'No,' said she; 'we do not keep a servant.'

'Can you tell me where I could get employment of any kind?' I continued. 'I am a stranger, without acquaintance, in this place. I want some work: no matter what.'

But it was not her business to think for me, or to seek a place for me: besides, in her eyes, how doubtful must have appeared my character, position, tale. She shook her head; she 'was sorry she could give me no information,' and the white door closed, quite gently and civilly: but it shut me out. If she had held it open a little longer, I believe I should have begged a piece of bread; for I was now brought low.

I could not bear to return to the sordid village; where, besides, no prospect of aid was visible. I should have longed rather to deviate to a wood I saw not far off, which appeared in its thick shade to offer inviting shelter; but I was so sick, so weak, so gnawed with nature's cravings, instinct kept me roaming round abodes where there was a chance of food. Solitude would be no solitude—rest no rest—while the vulture, hunger, thus sank beak and talons in my side.

I drew near houses; I left them, and came back again, and again I wandered away: always repelled by the consciousness of having no claim to ask—no right to expect interest in my isolated lot. Meantime the afternoon advanced, while I thus wandered about like a lost and starving dog. In crossing a field I saw the church spire before me: I hastened towards it. Near the churchyard, and in the middle of a garden, stood a well-built though small house, which I had no doubt was the parsonage. I remembered that strangers who arrive at a place where they have no friends, and who want employment, sometimes apply to the clergyman for introduction and aid. It is the clergyman's function to help—at least with advice—those who wished to help themselves. I seemed to have something like a right to seek counsel here. Renewing, then, my courage, and gathering my feeble remains of strength, I pushed on. I reached the house, and knocked at the kitchen-door. An old woman opened: I asked was this the parsonage?

'Yes.'

'Was the clergyman in?'

'No.'

'Would he be in soon?'

'No, he was gone from home.'

'To a distance?'

'Not so far—happen three mile. He had been called away by the sudden death of his father: he was at Marsh End now, and would very likely stay there a fortnight longer.'

'Was there any lady of the house?'

'Nay, there was naught but her, and she was housekeeper;' and of her, reader, I could not bear to ask the relief for want of which I was sinking; I could not yet beg; and again I crawled away.

Once more I took off my handkerchief—once more I thought of the cakes of bread in the little shop. Oh, for but a crust! for but one mouthful to allay the pang of famine! Instinctively I turned my face again to the village; I found the shop again, and I went in; and though others were there besides the woman, I ventured the request: 'Would she give me a roll for this handkerchief?'

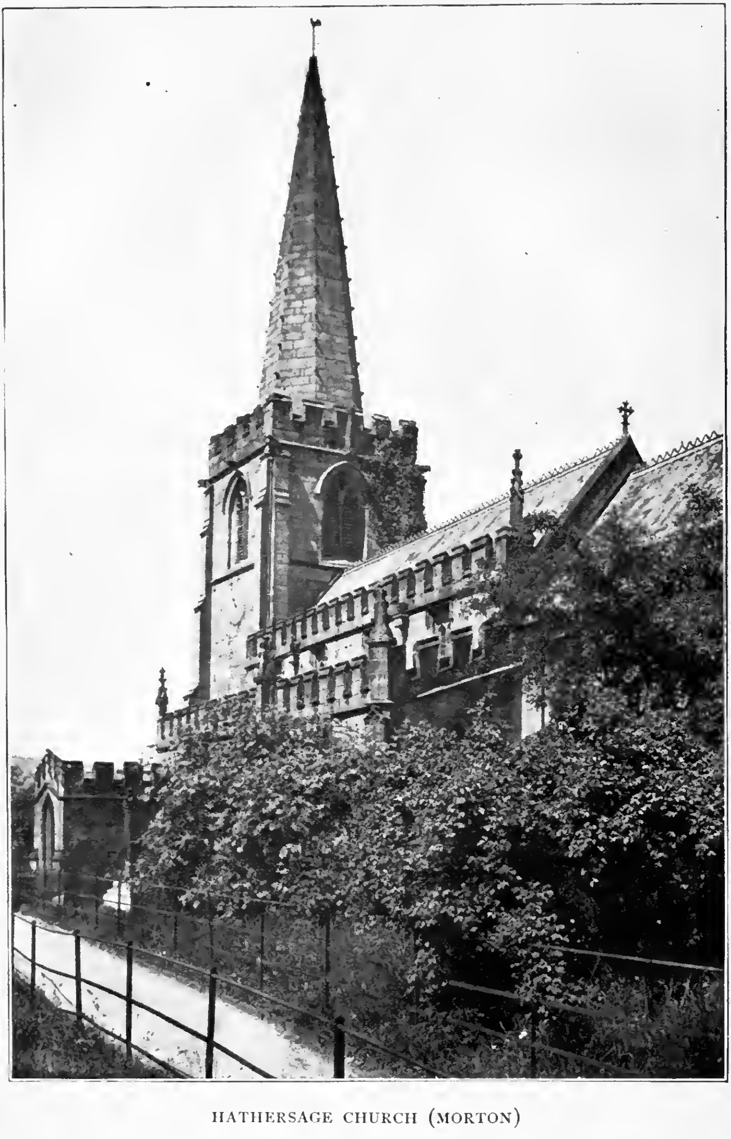
She looked at me with evident suspicion: 'Nay, she never sold stuff i' that way.'

Almost desperate, I asked for half a cake; she again refused. 'How could she tell where I had got the handkerchief?' she said.

'Would she take my gloves?'

'No! what could she do with them?'

Reader, it is not pleasant to dwell on these details. Some say there is enjoyment in looking back to painful experience



HATHERSAGE CHURCH (MORTON)

past; but at this day I can scarcely bear to review the times to which I allude: the moral degradation, blent with the physical suffering, form too distressing a recollection ever to be willingly dwelt on. I blamed none of those who repulsed me. I felt it was what was to be expected, and what could not be helped: an ordinary beggar is frequently an object of suspicion; a well-dressed beggar inevitably so. To be sure what I begged was employment: but whose business was it to provide me with employment? Not, certainly, that of persons who saw me then for the first time, and who knew nothing about my character. And as to the woman who would not take my handkerchief in exchange for her bread, why, she was right; if the offer appeared to her sinister, or the exchange unprofitable. Let me condense now. I am sick of the subject.

A little before dark I passed a farm-house, at the open door of which the farmer was sitting, eating his supper of bread and cheese; I stopped, and said:—'Will you give me a piece of bread? for I am very hungry.' He cast on me a glance of surprise; but without answering he cut a thick slice from his loaf, and gave it to me. I imagine he did not think I was a beggar, but only an eccentric sort of lady, who had taken a fancy to his brown loaf. As soon as I was out of sight of his house, I sat down and ate it.

I could not hope to get a lodging under a roof, and sought it in the wood I have before alluded to. But my night was wretched, my rest broken: the ground was damp, the air cold: besides intruders passed near me more than once, and I had again and again to change my quarters: no sense of safety or tranquillity befriended me. Towards morning it rained; the whole of the following day was wet. Do not ask me, reader, to give a minute account of that day; as before, I sought work; as before, I was repulsed; as before, I starved; but once did food pass my lips. At the door of a cottage I saw a little girl about to throw a mess of cold porridge into a pig trough. 'Will you give me that?' I asked.

She stared at me. 'Mother!' she exclaimed; 'there is a woman wants me to give her these porridge.'

'Well, lass,' replied a voice within, 'give it her if she's a beggar. T' pig doesn't want it.'

The girl emptied the stiffened mould into my hand, and I devoured it ravenously.

As the wet twilight deepened, I stopped in a solitary bridle-path, which I had been pursuing an hour or more.

'My strength is quite failing me,' I said, in soliloquy. 'I feel I cannot go much further. Shall I be an outcast again this night? While the rain descends so, must I lay my head on the cold, drenched ground? I fear I cannot do otherwise: for who will receive me? But it will be very dreadful: with this feeling of hunger, faintness, chill, and this sense of desolation—this total prostration of hope. In all likelihood, though, I should die before morning. And why cannot I reconcile myself to the prospect of death? Why do I struggle to retain a valueless life? Because I know, or believe, Mr. Rochester is still living: and then, to die of want and cold, is a fate to which nature cannot submit passively. Oh, Providence! sustain me a little longer! Aid—direct me!'

My glazed eye wandered over the dim and misty landscape. I saw I had strayed far from the village: it was quite out of sight. The very cultivation surrounding it had disappeared. I had, by cross-ways and by-paths, once more drawn near the tract of moorland; and now, only a few fields, almost as wild and unproductive as the heath from which they were scarcely reclaimed, lay between me and the dusky hill.

'Well, I would rather die yonder than in a street, or on a frequented road,' I reflected. 'And far better that crows and ravens—if any ravens there be in these regions—should pick my flesh from my bones, than that they should be prisoned in a workhouse coffin and moulder in a pauper's grave.'

To the hill, then, I turned. I reached it. It remained now only to find a hollow where I could lie down, and feel at least hidden, if not secure: but all the surface of the waste looked level. It showed no variation but of tint; green, where rush and moss overgrew the marshes; black, where the dry soil bore only heath. Dark as it was getting, I could still see these changes; though but as mere alternations of light and shade: for colour had faded with the daylight.

My eye still roved over the sullen swell, and along the moor-edge, vanishing amidst the wildest scenery; when at one dim point, far in among the marshes and the ridges, a light sprang up. 'That is an *ignis fatuus,*' was my first thought; and I expected it would soon vanish. It burnt on, however, quite steadily; neither receding nor advancing. 'Is it, then, a bonfire just kindled?' I questioned. I watched to see whether it would spread: but no; as it did not diminish, so it did not enlarge. 'It may be a candle in a house,' I then conjectured: 'but if so, I can never reach it. It is much too far away: and were it within a yard of me, what would it avail? I should but knock at the door to have it shut in my face.'

And I sank down where I stood, and hid my face against the ground. I lay still a while: the night-wind swept over the hill and over me, and died moaning in the distance; the rain fell fast, wetting me afresh to the skin. Could I but have stiffened to the still frost—the friendly numbness of death—it might have pelted on: I should not have felt it; but my yet living flesh shuddered to its chilling influence. I rose ere long.

The light was yet there: shining dim, but constant, through the rain. I tried to walk again: I dragged my exhausted limbs slowly towards it. It led me aslant over the hill, through a wide bog; which would have been impassable in winter, and was splashy and shaking even now, in the height of summer. Here I fell twice; but as often I rose and rallied my faculties. This light was my forlorn hope: I must gain it.

Having crossed the marsh, I saw a trace of white over the moor. I approached it; it was a road or a track: it led straight up to the light, which now beamed from a sort of knoll, amidst a clump of trees—firs, apparently, from what I could distinguish of the character of their forms and foliage through the gloom. My star vanished as I drew near: some obstacle had intervened between me and it. I put out my hand to feel the dark mass before me; I discriminated the rough stones of a low wall—above it, something like palisades, and within, a high and prickly hedge. I groped on. Again a whitish object gleamed before me: it was a gate—a wicket; it moved on its hinges as I touched it. On each side stood a sable bush—holly or yew.

Entering the gate and passing the shrubs, the silhouette of a house rose to view; black, low, and rather long; but the guiding light shone nowhere. All was obscurity. Were the inmates retired to rest? I feared it must be so. In seeking the door, I turned an angle: there shot out the friendly gleam again, from the lozenged panes of a very small latticed window, within a foot of the ground; made still smaller by the growth of ivy or some other creeping plant, whose leaves clustered thick over the portion of the house wall in which it was set. The aperture was so screened and narrow that curtain or shutter had been deemed unnecessary; and when I stooped down and put aside the spray of foliage shooting over it, I could see all within. I could see clearly a room with a sanded floor, clean scoured; a dresser of walnut, with pewter plates ranged in rows, reflecting the redness and radiance of a glowing peat-fire. I could see a clock, a white deal table, some chairs. The candle, whose ray had been my beacon, burnt on the table; and by its light an elderly woman, somewhat rough-looking, but scrupulously clean, like all about her, was knitting a stocking.

I noticed these objects cursorily only—in them there was nothing extraordinary. A group of more interest appeared near the hearth, sitting still amidst the rosy peace and warmth suffusing it. Two young, graceful women—ladies in every point—sat, one in a low rocking-chair, the other on a lower stool; both wore deep mourning of crape and bombazeen, which sombre garb singularly set off very fair necks and faces: a large old pointer dog rested its massive head on the knee of one girl—in the lap of the other was cushioned a black cat.

A strange place was this humble kitchen for such occupants! Who were they? They could not be the daughters of the elderly person at the table; for she looked like a rustic, and they were all delicacy and cultivation. I had nowhere seen such faces as theirs: and yet, as I gazed on them, I seemed intimate with every lineament. I cannot call them handsome—they were too pale and grave for the word: as they each bent over a book, they looked thoughtful almost to severity. A stand between them supported a second candle and two great volumes, to which they frequently referred; comparing them seemingly with the smaller books they held in their hands, like people consulting a dictionary to aid them in the task of translation. This scene was as silent as if all the figures had been shadows, and the fire-lit apartment a picture: so hushed was it, I could hear the cinders fall from the grate, the clock tick in its obscure corner; and I even fancied I could distinguish the click-click of the woman's knitting-needles. When, therefore, a voice broke the strange stillness at last, it was audible enough to me.

'Listen, Diana,' said one of the absorbed students; 'Franz and old Daniel are together in the night-time, and Franz is telling a dream from which he has awakened in terror—listen!' And in a low voice she read something, of which not one word was intelligible to me; for it was in an unknown tongue—neither French nor Latin. Whether it were Greek or German I could not tell.

'That is strong,' she said, when she had finished: 'I relish it.' The other girl, who had lifted her head to listen to her sister, repeated, while she gazed at the fire, a line of what had been read. At a later day, I knew the language and the book; therefore I will here quote the line: though when I first heard it it was only like a stroke on sounding brass to me—conveying no meaning:—'"Da trat hervor Einer, anzusehen wie die Sternen Nacht." Good! good!' she exclaimed, while her dark and deep eye sparkled. 'There you have a dim and mighty archangel fitly set before you! The line is worth a hundred pages of fustian. "Ich wäge die Gedanken in der Schale meines Zornes und die Werke mit dem Gewichte meines Grimms." I like it!'

Both were again silent.

'Is there ony country where they talk i' that way?' asked the old woman, looking up from her knitting.

'Yes, Hannah—a far larger country than England; where they talk in no other way.'

'Well, for sure case, I knawn't how they can understand t' one t' other: and if either o' ye went there, ye could tell what they said, I guess?'

'We could probably tell something of what they said, but not all—for we are not as clever as you think us, Hannah. We don't speak German, and we cannot read it without a dictionary to help us.'

'And what good does it do you?'

'We mean to teach it some time—or at least the elements, as they say; and then we shall get more money than we do now.'

'Varry like: but give ower studying: ye've done enough for to-night.'

'I think we have: at least I'm tired. Mary, are you?'

'Mortally: after all, it's tough work fagging away at a language with no master but a lexicon.'

'It is: especially such a language as this crabbed but glorious Deutsch. I wonder when St. John will come home.'

'Surely he will not be long now: it is just ten' (looking at a little gold watch she drew from her girdle). 'It rains fast. Hannah, will you have the goodness to look at the fire in the parlour?'

The woman rose: she opened a door, through which I dimly saw a passage: soon I heard her stir a fire in an inner room; she presently came back.

'Ah, childer!' said she, 'it fair troubles me to go into yond' room now: it looks so lonesome wi' the chair empty and set back in a corner.'

She wiped her eyes with her apron: the two girls, grave before, looked sad now.

'But he is in a better place,' continued Hannah: 'we shouldn't wish him here again. And then, nobody need to have a quieter death nor he had.'

'You say he never mentioned us?' inquired one of the ladies.

'He hadn't time, bairn: he was gone in a minute—was your father. He had been a bit ailing like the day before, but naught to signify; and when Mr. St. John asked if he would like either o' ye to be sent for, he fair laughed at him. He began again with a bit of a heaviness in his head the next day—that is, a fortnight sin'—and he went to sleep and niver wakened: he wor' a'most stark when your brother went into t' chamber and fand him. Ah, childer! that's t' last o' t' old stock—for ye and Mr. St. John is like of a different soart to them 'at's gone; for all your mother wor mich i' your way; and a'most as book-learned. She wor the pictur' o' ye, Mary: Diana is more like your father.'

I thought them so similar I could not tell where the old servant (for such I now concluded her to be) saw the difference. Both were fair complexioned and slenderly made; both possessed faces full of distinction and intelligence. One, to be sure, had hair a shade darker than the other, and there was a difference in their style of wearing it: Mary's pale brown locks were parted and braided smooth; Diana's duskier tresses covered her neck with thick curls. The clock struck ten.

'Ye'll want your supper, I am sure,' observed Hannah; 'and so will Mr. St. John when he comes in.'

And she proceeded to prepare the meal. The ladies rose;

they seemed about to withdraw to the parlour. Till this moment I had been so intent on watching them, their appearance and conversation had excited in me so keen an interest, I had half-forgotten my own wretched position: now it recurred to me. More desolate, more desperate than ever, it seemed from contrast. And how impossible did it appear to touch the inmates of this house with concern on my behalf; to make them believe in the truth of my wants and woes—to induce them to vouchsafe a rest for my wanderings! As I groped out the door, and knocked at it hesitatingly, I felt that last idea to be a mere chimera. Hannah opened.

'What do you want?' she inquired, in a voice of surprise, as she surveyed me by the light of the candle she held.

'May I speak to your mistresses?' I said.

'You had better tell me what you have to say to them. Where do you come from?'

'I am a stranger.'

'What is your business here at this hour?'

'I want a night's shelter in an outhouse or anywhere, and a morsel of bread to eat.'

Distrust, the very feeling I dreaded, appeared in Hannah's face. 'I'll give you a piece of bread,' she said, after a pause; 'but we can't take in a vagrant to lodge. It isn't likely.'

'Do let me speak to your mistresses.'

'No; not I. What can they do for you? You should not be roving about now; it looks very ill.'

'But where shall I go if you drive me away? What shall I do?'

'Oh, I'll warrant you know where to go, and what to do. Mind you don't do wrong, that's all. Here is a penny; now go'——

'A penny cannot feed me, and I have no strength to go farther. Don't shut the door:—oh, don't, for God's sake!'

'I must; the rain is driving in'——

Tell the young ladies.—Let me see them'——

'Indeed, I will not. You are not what you ought to be or you wouldn't make such a noise. Move off.'

'But I must die if I am turned away.'

'Not you. I'm fear'd you have some ill plans agate, that bring you about folk's houses at this time o' night. If you've any followers—housebreakers or such like—anywhere near, you may tell them we are not by ourselves in the house; we have a gentleman, and dogs, and guns.' Here the honest but inflexible servant clapped the door to and bolted it within.

This was the climax. A pang of exquisite suffering—a throe of true despair—rent and heaved my heart. Worn out, indeed, I was; not another step could I stir. I sank on the wet door-step: I groaned—I wrung my hands—I wept in utter anguish. Oh, this spectre of death! Oh, this last hour, approaching in such horror! Alas, this isolation—this banishment from my kind! Not only the anchor of home, but the footing of fortitude was gone—at least for a moment: but the last I soon endeavoured to regain.

'I can but die,' I said, 'and I believe in God. Let me try to wait His will in silence.'

These words I not only thought, but uttered; and thrusting back all my misery into my heart, I made an effort to compel it to remain there—dumb and still.

'All men must die,' said a voice quite close at hand; 'but all are not condemned to meet a lingering and premature doom, such as yours would be if you perished here of want.'

'Who or what speaks?' I asked, terrified at the unexpected sound, and incapable now of deriving from any occurrence a hope of aid. A form was near—what form the pitch-dark night and my enfeebled vision prevented me from distinguishing. With a loud long knock the new comer appealed to the door.

'Is it you, Mr. St. John?' cried Hannah.

'Yes—yes; open quickly.'

'Well, how wet and cold you must be, such a wild night as it is! Come in—your sisters are quite uneasy about you, and I believe there are bad folks about. There has been a beggar-woman—I declare she is not gone yet!—laid down there. Get up! for shame! Move off, I say!'

'Hush, Hannah! I have a word to say to the woman. You have done your duty in excluding, now let me do mine in admitting her. I was near, and listened to both you and her. I think this is a peculiar case—I must at least examine into it. Young woman, rise, and pass before me into the house.'

With difficulty I obeyed him. Presently I stood within that clean, bright kitchen—on the very hearth—trembling, sickening; conscious of an aspect in the last degree ghastly, wild, and weather-beaten. The two ladies, their brother, Mr. St. John, the old servant, were all gazing at me.

'St. John, who is it?' I heard one ask.

'I cannot tell: I found her at the door,' was the reply.

'She does look white,' said Hannah.

'As white as clay or death,' was responded. 'She will fall: let her sit.'

And indeed my head swam: I dropped; but a chair received me. I still possessed my senses; though just now I could not speak.

'Perhaps a little water would restore her. Hannah, fetch some. But she is worn to nothing. How very thin, and how very bloodless!'

'A mere spectre!'

'Is she ill, or only famished?'

'Famished, I think. Hannah, is that milk? Give it me, and a piece of bread.'

Diana (I knew her by the long curls which I saw drooping between me and the fire as she bent over me) broke some bread, dipped it in milk, and put it to my lips. Her face was near mine: I saw there was pity in it, and I felt sympathy in her hurried breathing. In her simple words, too, the same balm-like emotion spoke: 'Try to eat.'

'Yes—try,' repeated Mary gently; and Mary's hand removed my sodden bonnet and lifted my head. I tasted what they offered me: feebly at first, eagerly soon.

'Not too much at first—restrain her,' said the brother; 'she has had enough.' And he withdrew the cup of milk and the plate of bread.

'A little more, St. John—look at the avidity in her eyes.'

'No more at present, sister. Try if she can speak now—ask her her name.'

I felt I could speak, and I answered—'My name is Jane Elliott.' Anxious as ever to avoid discovery, I had before resolved to assume an *alias.*

'And where do you live? Where are your friends?'

I was silent.

'Can we send for any one you know?'

I shook my head.

'What account can you give of yourself?'

Somehow, now that I had once crossed the threshold of this house, and once was brought face to face with its owners, I felt no longer outcast, vagrant, and disowned by the wide world. I dared to put off the mendicant—to resume my natural manner and character. I began once more to know myself; and when Mr. St. John demanded an account—which at present I was far too weak to render—I said after a brief pause,—'Sir, I can give you no details to-night.'

'But what, then,' said he, 'do you expect me to do for you?'

'Nothing,' I replied. My strength sufficed for but short answers. Diana took the word:—

'Do you mean,' she asked, 'that we have now given you what aid you require? and that we may dismiss you to the moor and the rainy night?'

I looked at her. She had, I thought, a remarkable countenance; instinct both with power and goodness. I took sudden courage. Answering her compassionate gaze with a smile, I said: 'I will trust you. If I were a master-less and stray dog, I know that you would not turn me from your hearth to-night: as it is, I really have no fear. Do with me and for me as you like; but excuse me from much discourse—my breath is short—I feel a spasm when I speak.' All three surveyed me, and all three were silent.

'Hannah,' said Mr. St. John at last, 'let her sit there at present, and ask her no questions; in ten minutes more, give her the remainder of that milk and bread. Mary and Diana, let us go into the parlour and talk the matter over.'

They withdrew. Very soon one of the ladies returned—I could not tell which. A kind of pleasant stupor was stealing over me as I sat by the genial fire. In an undertone she gave some directions to Hannah. Ere long, with the servant's aid, I contrived to mount a staircase; my dripping clothes were removed; soon a warm, dry bed received me. I thanked God—experienced amidst unutterable exhaustion a glow of grateful joy—and slept.

CHAPTER XXIX

The recollection of about three days and nights succeeding this is very dim in my mind. I can recall some sensations felt in that interval; but few thoughts framed, and no actions performed. I knew I was in a small room, and in a narrow bed. To that bed I seemed to have grown; I lay on it motionless as a stone; and to have torn me from it would have been almost to kill me. I took no note of the lapse of time—of the change from morning to noon, from noon to evening. I observed when any one entered or left the apartment; I could even tell who they were; I could understand what was said when the speaker stood near to me; but I could not answer; to open my lips or move my limbs was equally impossible. Hannah, the servant, was my most frequent visitor. Her coming disturbed me. I had a feeling that she wished me away: that she did not understand me or my circumstances: that she was prejudiced against me. Diana and Mary appeared in the chamber once or twice a day. They would whisper sentences of this sort at my bedside:—

'It is very well we took her in.'

'Yes; she would certainly have been found dead at the door in the morning, had she been left out all night. I wonder what she has gone through?'

'Strange hardships, I imagine—poor, emaciated, pallid wanderer!'

'She is not an uneducated person, I should think, by her manner of speaking; her accent was quite pure; and the clothes she took off, though splashed and wet, were little worn and fine.'

'She has a peculiar face; fleshless and haggard as it is, I rather like it; and when in good health and animated, I can fancy her physiognomy would be agreeable.'

Never once in their dialogues did I hear a syllable of regret at the hospitality they had extended to me; or of suspicion of, or aversion to, myself. I was comforted.

Mr. St. John came but once: he looked at me, and said my state of lethargy was the result of reaction from excessive and protracted fatigue. He pronounced it needless to send for a doctor: nature, he was sure, would manage best left to herself. He said every nerve had been overstrained in some way, and the whole system must sleep torpid awhile. There was no disease. He imagined my recovery would be rapid enough when once commenced. These opinions he delivered in a few words, in a quiet, low voice; and added, after a pause, in the tone of a man little accustomed to expansive comment, 'rather an unusual physiognomy; certainly not indicative of vulgarity or degradation.'

'Far otherwise,' responded Diana. 'To speak truth, St. John, my heart rather warms to the poor little soul. I wish we may be able to benefit her permanently.'

'That is hardly likely,' was the reply. 'You will find she is some young lady who has had a misunderstanding with her friends and has probably injudiciously left them. We may, perhaps, succeed in restoring her to them, if she is not obstinate: but I trace lines of force in her face which make me sceptical of her tractability.' He stood considering me some minutes; then added, 'She looks sensible, but not at all handsome.'

'She is so ill, St. John.'

'Ill or well, she would always be plain. The grace and harmony of beauty are quite wanting in those features.'

On the third day I was better; on the fourth, I could speak, move, rise in bed, and turn. Hannah had brought me some gruel and dry toast, about, as I supposed, the dinner hour. I had eaten with relish: the food was good—

void of the feverish flavour which had hitherto poisoned what I had swallowed. When she left me, I felt comparatively strong and revived; ere long satiety of repose and desire for action stirred me. I wished to rise; but what could I put on? Only my damp and bemired apparel, in which I had slept on the ground and fallen in the marsh. I felt ashamed to appear before my benefactors so clad. I was spared the humiliation.

On a chair by the bedside were all my own things, clean and dry. My black silk frock hung against the wall. The traces of the bog were removed from it; the creases left by the wet smoothed out: it was quite decent. My very shoes and stockings were purified and rendered presentable. There were the means of washing in the room, and a comb and brush to smooth my hair. After a weary process, and resting every five minutes, I succeeded in dressing myself. My clothes hung loose on me, for I was much wasted; but I covered deficiencies with a shawl, and once more, clean and respectable-looking—no speck of the dirt, no trace of the disorder I so hated, and which seemed so to degrade me, left—I crept down a stone staircase with the aid of the banisters to a narrow low passage, and found my way presently to the kitchen.

It was full of the fragrance of new bread and the warmth of a generous fire. Hannah was baking. Prejudices, it is well known, are most difficult to eradicate from the heart whose soil has never been loosened or fertilised by education: they grow there, firm as weeds among stones. Hannah had been cold and stiff, indeed, at the first: latterly she had begun to relent a little; and when she saw me come in tidy and well-dressed, she even smiled.

'What, you have got up?' she said. 'You are better, then. You may sit you down in my chair on the hearthstone, if you will.'

She pointed to the rocking-chair: I took it. She bustled about, examining me every now and then with the corner of her eye. Turning to me, as she took some loaves from the oven, she asked, bluntly—'Did you ever go a-begging afore you came here?'

I was indignant for a moment; but remembering that anger was out of the question, and that I had indeed appeared as a beggar to her, I answered quietly, but still not without a certain marked firmness—'You are mistaken in supposing me a beggar. I am no beggar: any more than yourself or your young ladies.'

After a pause, she said, 'I dunnut understand that: you've like no house, nor no brass, I guess?'

'The want of house or brass (by which I suppose you mean money) does not make a beggar in your sense of the word.'

'Are you book-learned?' she inquired, presently.

'Yes, very.'

'But you've never been to a boarding-school!'

'I was at a boarding-school eight years.'

She opened her eyes wide.

'Whatever cannot ye keep yourself for, then?'

'I have kept myself; and, I trust, shall keep myself again. What are you going to do with these gooseberries?' I inquired, as she brought out a basket of the fruit.

'Mak'em into pies.'

'Give them to me and I'll pick them.'

'Nay; I dunnut want ye to do nought.'

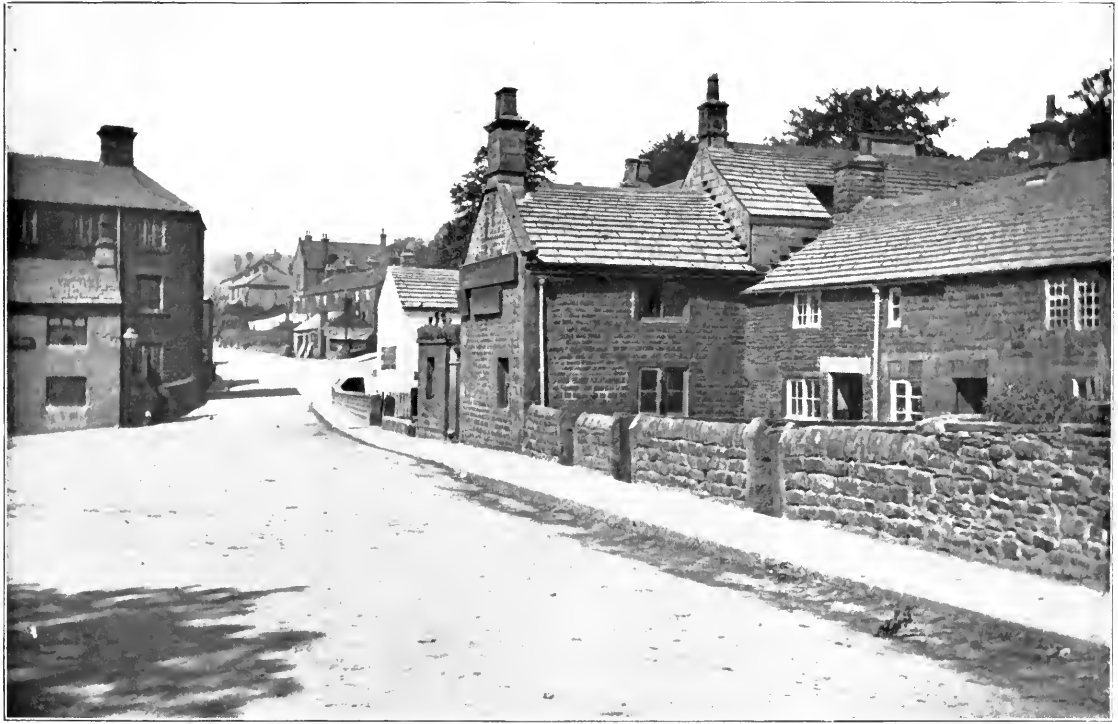
'But I must do something. Let me have them.'

She consented; and she even brought me a clean towel to spread over my dress, 'lest,' as she said, 'I should mucky it.'

'Ye've not been used to sarvant's wark, I see by your hands,' she remarked. 'Happen ye've been a dressmaker.'

'No, you are wrong. And, now, never mind what I have been: don't trouble your head further about me; but tell me the name of the house where we are.'

'Some calls it Marsh End, and some calls it Moor House.'



THE VILLAGE OF HATHERSAGE (MORTON).

'And the gentleman who lives here is called Mr. St. John?'

'Nay; he doesn't live here: he is only staying a while. When he is at home, he is in his own parish at Morton.'

'That village a few miles off?'

'Aye.'

'And what is he?'

'He is a parson.'

I remembered the answer of the old housekeeper at the parsonage, when I had asked to see the clergyman. 'This, then, was his father's residence?'

'Aye; old Mr. Rivers lived here, and his father, and grandfather, and gurt (great) grandfather afore him.'

'The name, then, of that gentleman is Mr. St. John Rivers?'

'Aye; St. John is like his kirstened name.'

'And his sisters are called Diana and Mary Rivers?'

'Yes.'

'Their father is dead?'

'Dead three weeks sin' of a stroke.'

'They have no mother?'

'The mistress has been dead this mony a year.'

'Have you lived with the family long?'

'I've lived here thirty year. I nursed them all three.'

'That proves you must have been an honest and faithful servant. I will say so much for you, though you have had the incivility to call me a beggar.'

She again regarded me with a surprised stare. 'I believe,' she said, 'I was quite mista'en in my thoughts of you: but there is so mony cheats goes about, you mun forgie me.'

'And though,' I continued, rather severely, 'you wished to turn me from the door, on a night when you should not have shut out a dog.'

'Well, it was hard: but what can a body do? I thought more o' th' childer nor of mysel': poor things! They've like nobody to tak' care on 'em but me. I'm like to look sharpish.'

I maintained a grave silence for some minutes.

'You munnut think too hardly of me,' she again remarked.

'But I do think hardly of you,' I said; 'and I'll tell you why—not so much because you refused to give me shelter, or regarded me as an impostor, as because you just now made it a species of reproach that I had no "brass," and no house. Some of the best people that ever lived have been as destitute as I am; and if you are a Christian, you ought not to consider poverty a crime.'

'No more I ought,' said she: 'Mr. St. John tells me so too; and I see I wor wrang—but I've clear a different notion on you now to what I had. You look a raight down dacent little crater.'

'That will do—I forgive you now. Shake hands.'

She put her floury and horny hand into mine; another and heartier smile illumined her rough face: and from that moment we were friends.

Hannah was evidently fond of talking. While I picked the fruit and she made the paste for the pies, she proceeded to give me sundry details about her deceased master and mistress, and 'the childer,' as she called the young people.

Old Mr. Rivers, she said, was a plain man enough; but a gentleman, and of as ancient a family as could be found. Marsh End had belonged to the Rivers' ever since it was a house: and it was, she affirmed, 'aboon two hundred year old—for all it looked but a small, humble place, naught to compare wi' Mr. Oliver's grand hall down i' Morton Vale. But she could remember Bill Oliver's father a journeyman needle-maker; and th' Rivers' wor gentry i' thi' owd days o' th' Henrys, as onybody might see by looking into th' registers i' Morton Church vestry.' Still, she allowed, 'the owd maister was like other folk—naught mich out o' t' common way: stark mad o' shooting, and farming, and sich like.' The mistress was different. She was a great reader, and studied a deal; and the 'bairns' had taken after her. There was nothing like them in these parts, nor ever had been; they had liked learning, all three, almost from the time they could speak; and they had always been 'of a mak' of their own.' Mr. St. John, when he grew up, would go to college and be a parson; and the girls, as soon as they left school, would seek places as governesses: for they had told her their father had some years ago lost a great deal of money by a man he had trusted turning bankrupt; and as he was now not rich enough to give them fortunes, they must provide for themselves. They had lived very little at home for a long while, and were only come now to stay a few weeks on account of their father's death: but they did so like Marsh End and Morton, and all these moors and hills about. They had been in London, and many other grand towns; but they always said there was no place like home; and then they were so agreeable with each other—never fell out nor 'threaped.' She did not know where there was such a family for being united.

Having finished my task of gooseberry picking, I asked where the two ladies and their brother were now.

'Gone over to Morton for a walk; but they would be back in half an hour to tea.'

They returned within the time Hannah had allotted them: they entered by the kitchen door. Mr. St. John, when he saw me, merely bowed and passed through; the two ladies stopped: Mary, in a few words, kindly and calmly expressed the pleasure she felt in seeing me well enough to be able to come down; Diana took my hand: she shook her head at me.

'You should have waited for my leave to descend,' she said. 'You still look very pale—and so thin! Poor child!—poor girl!'

Diana had a voice toned, to my ear, like the cooing of a dove. She possessed eyes whose gaze I delighted to encounter. Her whole face seemed to me full of charm. Mary's countenance was equally intelligent—her features equally pretty: but her expression was more reserved; and her manners, though gentle, more distant. Diana looked and spoke with a certain authority: she had a will, evidently. It was my nature to feel pleasure in yielding to an authority supported like hers: and to bend, where my conscience and self-respect permitted, to an active will.

'And what business have you here?' she continued. 'It is not your place. Mary and I sit in the kitchen sometimes, because at home we like to be free, even to licence—but you are a visitor, and must go into the parlour.'

'I am very well here.'

'Not at all—with Hannah bustling about and covering you with flour.'

'Besides, the fire is too hot for you,' interposed Mary.

'To be sure,' added her sister. 'Come, you must be obedient.' And still holding my hand, she made me rise, and led me into the inner room.

'Sit there,' she said, placing me on the sofa, 'while we take our things off and get the tea ready; it is another privilege we exercise in our little moorland home—to prepare our own meals when we are so inclined; or when Hannah is baking, brewing, washing, or ironing.'

She closed the door, leaving me solus with Mr. St. John, who sat opposite, a book or newspaper in his hand. I examined, first, the parlour, and then its occupant.

The parlour was rather a small room, very plainly furnished; yet comfortable, because clean and neat. The old-fashioned chairs were very bright, and the walnut-wood table was like a looking-glass. A few strange antique portraits of the men and women of other days decorated the stained walls; a cupboard with glass doors contained some books and an ancient set of china. There was no superfluous ornament in the room—not one modern piece of furniture, save a brace of work-boxes and a lady's desk in rosewood, which stood on a side-table: everything—including the carpet and curtains—looked at once well worn and well saved.

Mr. St. John—sitting as still as one of the dusky pictures on the walls, keeping his eyes fixed on the page he perused and his lips mutely sealed, was easy enough to examine. Had he been a statue instead of a man, he could not have been easier. He was young—perhaps from twenty-eight to thirty—tall, slender; his face riveted the eye; it was like a Greek face, very pure in outline: quite a straight, classic nose; quite an Athenian mouth and chin. It is seldom, indeed, an English face comes so near the antique models as did his. He might well be a little shocked at the irregularity of my lineaments, his own being so harmonious. His eyes were large and blue, with brown lashes; his high forehead, colourless as ivory, was partially streaked over by careless locks of fair hair.

This is a gentle delineation, is it not, reader? Yet he whom it describes scarcely impressed one with the idea of a gentle, a yielding, an impressible, or even of a placid nature. Quiescent as he now sat, there was somthing about his nostril, his mouth, his brow, which, to my perceptions, indicated elements within either restless, or hard, or eager. He did not speak to me one word, nor even direct to me one glance, till his sisters returned. Diana, as she passed in and out in the course of preparing tea, brought me a little cake, baked on the top of the oven.

'Eat that now,' she said: 'you must be hungry. Hannah says you have had nothing but some gruel since breakfast.'

I did not refuse it, for my appetite was awakened and keen. Mr. Rivers now closed his book, approached the table, and, as he took a seat, fixed his blue pictorial-looking eyes full on me. There was an unceremonious directness, a searching, decided steadfastness in his gaze now, which told that intention, and not diffidence, had hitherto kept it averted from the stranger.

'You are very hungry,' he said.

'I am, sir.' It is my way—it always was my way, by instinct—ever to meet the brief with brevity, the direct with plainness.

'It is well for you that a low fever has forced you to abstain for the last three days: there would have been danger in yielding to the cravings of your appetite at first. Now you may eat; though still not immoderately.'

'I trust I shall not eat long at your expense, sir,' was my very clumsily-contrived, unpolished answer.

'No,' he said, coolly: 'when you have indicated to us the residence of your friends, we can write to them, and you may be restored to home.'

'That, I must plainly tell you, is out of my power to do; being absolutely without home and friends.'

The three looked at me, but not distrustfully; I felt there was no suspicion in their glances: there was more of curiosity. I speak particularly of the young ladies. St. John's eyes, though clear enough in a literal sense, in a figurative one were difficult to fathom. He seemed to use them rather as instruments to search other people's thoughts, than as agents to reveal his own: the which combination of keenness and reserve was considerably more calculated to embarrass than to encourage.

'Do you mean to say,' he asked, 'that you are completely isolated from every connection?'

'I do. Not a tie links me to any living thing: not a claim do I possess to admittance under any roof in England.'

'A most singular position at your age!'

Here I saw his glance directed to my hands, which were folded on the table before me. I wondered what he sought there: his words soon explained the quest.

'You have never been married? You are a spinster?'

Diana laughed.

'Why, she can't be above seventeen or eighteen years old, St. John,' said she.

'I am near nineteen: but I am not married. No.'

I felt a burning glow mount to my face; for bitter and agitating recollections were awakened by the allusion to marriage. They all saw the embarrassment and the emotion. Diana and Mary relieved me by turning their eyes elsewhere than to my crimsoned visage; but the colder and sterner brother continued to gaze, till the trouble he had excited forced out tears as well as colour.

'Where did you last reside?' he now asked.

'You are too inquisitive, St. John,' murmured Mary, in a low voice; but he leaned over the table and required an answer by a second firm and piercing look.

'The name of the place where, and of the person with whom I lived, is my secret,' I replied, concisely.

'Which, if you like, you have, in my opinion, a right to keep both from St. John and every other questioner,' remarked Diana.

'Yet if I know nothing about you or your history, I cannot help you,' he said. 'And you need help: do you not?'

'I need it, and I seek it; so far, sir, that some true philanthropist will put me in the way of getting work which I can do, and the remuneration for which will keep me: if but in the barest necessaries of life.'

'I know not whether I am a true philanthropist; yet I am willing to aid you to the utmost of my power, in a purpose so honest. First, then, tell me what you have been accustomed to do, and what you *can* do.'

I had now swallowed my tea. I was mightily refreshed by the beverage; as much so as a giant with wine: it gave new tone to my unstrung nerves, and enabled me to address this penetrating young judge steadily.

'Mr. Rivers,' I said, turning to him, and looking at him, as he looked at me, openly and without diffidence, 'you and your sisters have done me a great service—the greatest man can do his fellow-being; you have rescued me, by your noble hospitality, from death. This benefit conferred gives you an unlimited claim on my gratitude; and a claim, to a certain extent, on my confidence. I will tell you as much of the history of the wanderer you have harboured as I can tell without compromising my own peace of mind—my own security, moral and physical, and that of others.

'I am an orphan; the daughter of a clergyman. My parents died before I could know them. I was brought up a dependent; educated in a charitable institution. I will even tell you the name of the establishment where I passed six years as a pupil and two as a teacher—Lowood Orphan

Asylum, ——shire: you will have heard of it, Mr. Rivers?—the Rev. Robert Brocklehurst is the treasurer.'

'I have heard of Mr. Brocklehurst, and I have seen the school.'

'I left Lowood nearly a year since to become a private governess. I obtained a good situation, and was happy. This place I was obliged to leave four days before I came here. The reason of my departure I cannot and ought not to explain: it would be useless—dangerous; and would sound incredible. No blame attached to me; I am as free from culpability as any one of you three. Miserable I am, and must be for a time; for the catastrophe which drove me from a house I had found a paradise was of a strange and direful nature. I observed but two points in planning my departure—speed, secrecy: to secure these I had to leave behind me everything I possessed except a small parcel; which, in my hurry and trouble of mind, I forgot to take out of the coach that brought me to Whitcross. To this neighbourhood, then, I came, quite destitute. I slept two nights in the open air, and wandered about two days without crossing a threshold: but twice in that space of time did I taste food; and it was when brought by hunger, exhaustion and despair almost to the last gasp that you, Mr. Rivers, forbade me to perish of want at your door, and took me under the shelter of your roof. I know all your sisters have done for me since—for I have not been insensible during my seeming torpor—and I owe to their spontaneous, genuine, genial compassion, as large a debt as to your evangelical charity.'

'Don't make her talk any more now, St. John,' said Diana, as I paused; 'she is evidently not yet fit for excitement. Come to the sofa, and sit down now, Miss Elliott.'

I gave an involuntary half-start at hearing the *alias*; I had forgotten my new name. Mr. Rivers, whom nothing seemed to escape, noticed it at once.

'You said your name was Jane Elliott?' he observed.

'I did say so; and it is the name by which I think it expedient to be called at present: but it is not my real name, and when I hear it, it sounds strange to me.'

'Your real name you will not give?'

'No: I fear discovery above all things; and whatever disclosure would lead to it, I avoid.'

'You are quite right, I am sure,' said Diana. 'Now do, brother, let her be at peace a while.'

But when St. John had mused a few moments, he recommenced, as imperturbably, and with as much acumen as ever.

'You would not like to be long dependent on our hospitality—you would wish, I see, to dispense as soon as may be with my sisters' compassion; and, above all, with my *charity* (I am quite sensible of the distinction drawn, nor do I resent it—it is just): you desire to be independent of us?'

'I do: I have already said so. Show me how to work, or how to seek work: that is all I now ask; then let me go, if it be but to the meanest cottage—but *till then* allow me to stay here: I dread another essay of the horrors of homeless destitution.'

'Indeed, you *shall* stay here,' said Diana, putting her white hand on my head.

'You *shall*,' repeated Mary, in the tone of undemonstrative sincerity which seemed natural to her.

'My sisters, you see, have a pleasure in keeping you,' said Mr. St. John, 'as they would have a pleasure in keeping and cherishing a half-frozen bird some wintry wind might have driven through their casement. *I* feel more inclination to put you in the way of keeping yourself: and shall endeavour to do so: but observe, my sphere is narrow. I am but the incumbent of a poor country parish: my aid must be of the humblest sort. And if you are inclined to despise the day of small things, seek some more efficient succour than such as I can offer.'

'She has already said that she is willing to do anything honest she *can* do,' answered Diana for me; 'and you know, St. John she has no choice of helpers: she is forced to put up with such crusty people as you.'

'I will be a dressmaker: I will be a plain-work-woman; I will be a servant, a nurse-girl, if I can be no better,' I answered.

'Right,' said Mr. St. John, quite coolly. 'If such is your spirit, I promise to aid you; in my own time and way.'

He now resumed the book with which he had been occupied before tea. I soon withdrew; for I had talked as much, and sat up as long, as my present strength would permit.

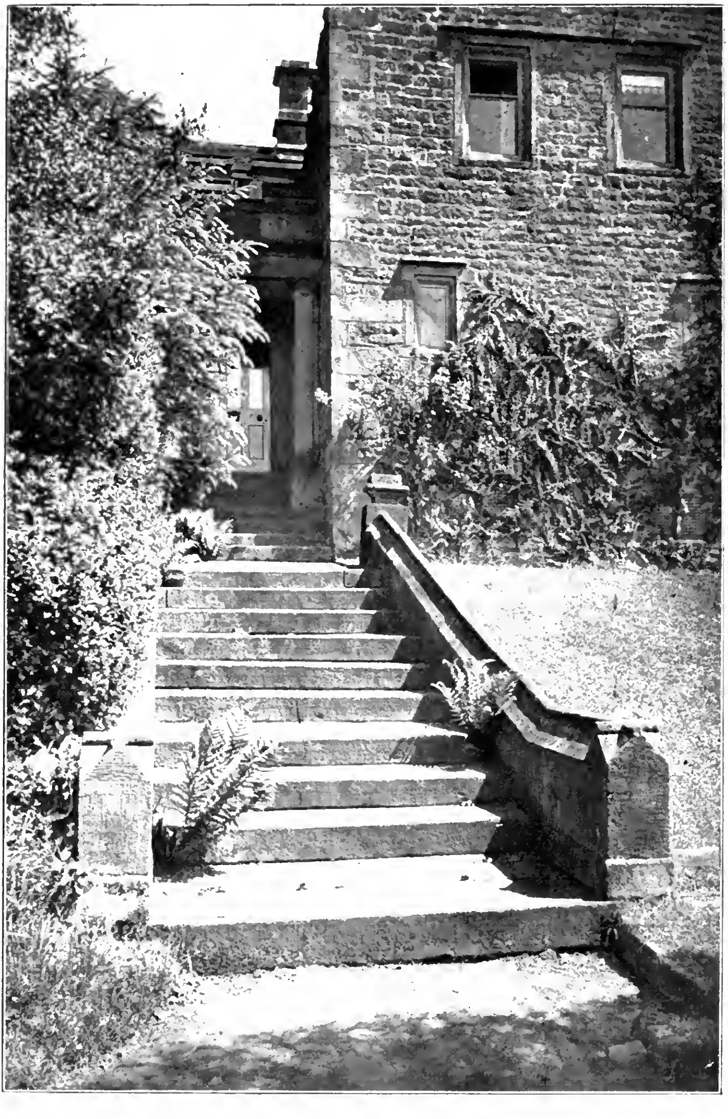
CHAPTER XXX

THE more I knew of the inmates of Moor House, the better I liked them. In a few days I had so far recovered my health that I could sit up all day, and walk out sometimes. I could join with Diana and Mary in all their occupations; converse with them as much as they wished, and aid them when and where they would allow me. There was a reviving pleasure in this intercourse, of a kind now tasted by me for the first time—the pleasure arising from perfect congeniality of tastes, sentiments, and principles.

I liked to read what they liked to read: what they enjoyed, delighted me; what they approved, I reverenced. They loved their sequestered home. I, too, in the grey, small, antique structure, with its low roof, its latticed casements, its mouldering walls, its avenue of aged firs—all grown aslant under the stress of mountain winds; its garden, dark with yew and holly—and where no flowers but of the hardiest species would bloom—found a charm both potent and permanent. They clung to the purple moors behind and around their dwelling—to the hollow vale into which the pebbly bridle-path leading from their gate descended; and which wound between fern-banks first, and then amongst a few of the wildest little pasture-fields that ever bordered a wilderness of heath, or gave sustenance to a flock of grey moorland sheep, with their little mossy-faced lambs:—they clung to this scene, I say, with a perfect enthusiasm of attachment. I could comprehend the feeling, and share both its strength and truth. I saw the fascination of the locality. I felt the consecration of its loneliness: my eye feasted on the outline of swell and sweep—on the wild colouring communicated to ridge and dell by moss, by heath-bell, by flower-sprinkled turf, by brilliant bracken, and mellow granite crag. These details were just to me what they were to them—so many pure and sweet sources of pleasure. The strong blast and the soft breeze; the rough and the halcyon day; the hours of sunrise and sunset; the moonlight and the clouded night, developed for me, in these regions, the same attraction as for them—wound round my faculties the same spell that entranced theirs.

Indoors we agreed equally well. They were both more accomplished and better read than I was: but with eagerness I followed in the path of knowledge they had trodden before me. I devoured the books they lent me: then it was full satisfaction to discuss with them in the evening what I had perused during the day. Thought fitted thought; opinion met opinion: we coincided, in short, perfectly.

If in our trio there was a superior and a leader, it was Diana. Physically, she far excelled me: she was handsome; she was vigorous. In her animal spirits there was an affluence of life and certainty of flow, such as excited my wonder, while it baffled my comprehension. I could talk a while when the evening commenced: but the first gush of vivacity and fluency gone, I was fain to sit on a stool at Diana's feet, to rest my head on her knee, and listen alternately to her and Mary; while they sounded thoroughly the topic on which I had but touched. Diana offered to teach me German. I liked to learn of her: I saw the part of instructress pleased and suited her; that of scholar pleased and suited me no less. Our natures dovetailed: mutual affection—of the strongest kind—was the result. They discovered I could draw: their pencils and colour-boxes were immediately at my service. My skill, greater in this one point than theirs, surprised and charmed them. Mary would sit and watch me by the hour together: then she would take lessons; and a docile, intelligent, assiduous pupil she made. Thus occupied, and mutually entertained, days passed like hours and weeks like days.



MOORSEATS, HATHERSAGE (MOORHOUSE, MORTON).

As to Mr. St. John, the intimacy which had arisen so naturally and rapidly between me and his sisters did not extend to him. One reason of the distance yet observed between us was that he was comparatively seldom at home: a large proportion of his time appeared devoted to visiting the sick and poor among the scattered population of his parish.

No weather seemed to hinder him in these pastoral excursions: rain or fair, he would, when his hours of morning study were over, take his hat, and, followed by his father's old pointer Carlo, go out on his mission of love or duty—I scarcely know in which light he regarded it. Sometimes, when the day was very unfavourable, his sisters would expostulate. He would then say, with a peculiar smile, more solemn than cheerful,—'And if I let a gust of wind or a sprinkling of rain turn me aside from these easy tasks, what preparation would such sloth be for the future I propose to myself?'

Diana and Mary's general answer to this question was a sigh, and some minutes of apparently mournful meditation.

But besides his frequent absences, there was another barrier to friendship with him: he seemed of a reserved, an abstracted, and even of a brooding nature. Zealous in his ministerial labours, blameless in his life and habits, he yet did not appear to enjoy that mental serenity, that inward content, which should be the reward of every sincere Christian and practical philanthropist. Often, of an evening, when he sat at the window, his desk and papers before him, he would cease reading or writing, rest his chin on his hand, and deliver himself up to I know not what course of thought; but that it was perturbed and exciting might be seen in the frequent flash and changeful dilation of his eye.

I think, moreover, that Nature was not to him that treasury of delight it was to his sisters. He expressed once, and but once in my hearing, a strong sense of the rugged charm of the hills, and an inborn affection for the dark roof and hoary walls he called his home; but there was more of gloom than pleasure in the tone and words in which the sentiment was manifested; and never did he seem to roam the moors for the sake of their soothing silence—never seek out or dwell upon the thousand peaceful delights they could yield.

Incommunicative as he was, some time elapsed before I had an opportunity of gauging his mind. I first got an idea of its calibre when I heard him preach in his own church at Morton. I wish I could describe that sermon; but it is past my power. I cannot even render faithfully the effect it produced on me.

It began calm—and indeed, as far as delivery and pitch of voice went, it was calm to the end: an earnestly felt, yet strictly restrained zeal breathed soon in the distinct accents, and prompted the nervous language. This grew to force—compressed, condensed, controlled. The heart was thrilled, the mind astonished, by the power of the preacher: neither was softened. Throughout there was a strange bitterness; an absence of consolatory gentleness; stern allusions to Calvinistic doctrines—election, predestination, reprobation—were frequent; and each reference to these points sounded like a sentence pronounced for doom. When he had done, instead of feeling better, calmer, more enlightened by his discourse, I experienced an inexpressible sadness; for it seemed to me—I know not whether equally so to others—that the eloquence to which I had been listening had sprung from a depth where lay turbid dregs of disappointment—where moved troubling impulses of insatiate yearnings and disquieting aspirations. I was sure St. John Rivers—pure-lived, conscientious, zealous as he was—had not yet found that peace of God which passeth all understanding; he had no more found it, I thought, than had I; with my concealed and racking regrets for my broken idol and lost elysium—regrets to which I have latterly avoided referring; but which possessed me and tyrannised over me ruthlessly.

Meantime a month was gone. Diana and Mary were soon to leave Moor House, and return to the far different life and scene which awaited them, as governesses in a large, fashionable, south-of-England city; where each held a situation in families, by whose wealthy and haughty members they were regarded only as humble dependents, and who neither knew nor sought one of their innate excellences, and appreciated only their acquired accomplishments as they appreciated the skill of their cook or the taste of their waiting-woman. Mr. St. John had said nothing to me yet about the employment he had promised to obtain for me; yet it became urgent that I should have a vocation of some kind. One morning, being left alone with him a few minutes in the parlour, I ventured to approach the window-recess—which his table, chair, and desk consecrated as a kind of study—and I was going to speak; though not very well knowing in what words to frame my inquiry—for it is at all times difficult to break the ice of reserve glassing over such natures as his—when he saved me the trouble by being the first to commence a dialogue.

Looking up as I drew near—'You have a question to ask of me?' he said.

'Yes; I wish to know whether you have heard of any service I can offer myself to undertake.'

'I found or devised something for you three weeks ago; but as you seemed both useful and happy here—as my sisters had evidently become attached to you, and your society gave them unusual pleasure—I deemed it inexpedient to break in on your mutual comfort till their approaching departure from Marsh End should render yours necessary.'

'And they will go in three days now?' I said.

'Yes; and when they go I shall return to the parsonage at Morton: Hannah will accompany me; and this old house will be shut up.'

I waited a few moments, expecting he would go on with the subject first broached; but he seemed to have entered another train of reflection; his look denoted abstraction from me and my business. I was obliged to recall him to a theme which was of necessity one of close and anxious interest to me.

'What is the employment you had in view, Mr. Rivers? I hope this delay will not have increased the difficulty of securing it.'

'Oh, no; since it is an employment which depends only on me to give, and you to accept.'

He again paused: there seemed a reluctance to continue. I grew impatient: a restless movement or two, and an eager and exacting glance fastened on his face, conveyed the feeling to him as effectually as words could have done, and with less trouble.

'You need be in no hurry to hear,' he said; 'let me frankly tell you, I have nothing eligible or profitable to suggest. Before I explain, recall, if you please, my notice, clearly given, that if I helped you, it must be as the blind man would help the lame. I am poor; for I find that, when I have paid my father's debts, all the patrimony remaining to me will be this crumbling grange, the row of scathed firs behind, and the patch of moorish soil, with the yew-trees and holly-bushes in front. I am obscure: Rivers is an old name; but of the three sole descendants of the race, two earn the dependent's crust among strangers, and the third considers himself an alien from his native country—not only for life, but in death. Yes, and deems, and is bound to deem, himself honoured by the lot, and aspires but after the day when the cross of separation from fleshly ties shall be laid on his shoulders, and when the Head of that church-militant, of whose humblest members he is one, shall give the word, "Rise, follow Me!"'

St. John said these words as he pronounced his sermons, with a quiet, deep voice; with an unflushed cheek, and a coruscating radiance of glance. He resumed:—'And since I am myself poor and obscure, I can offer you but a service of poverty and obscurity. *You* may even think it degrading—for I see now your habits have been what the world calls refined: your tastes lean to the ideal; and your society has at least been amongst the educated—but *I* consider that no service degrades which can better our race. I hold that the more arid and unreclaimed the soil where the Christian labourer's task of tillage is appointed him—the scantier the meed his toil brings—the higher the honour. His, under such circumstances, is the destiny of the pioneer; and the first pioneers of the Gospel were the Apostles—their captain was Jesus, the Redeemer, Himself.'

'Well?' I said, as he again paused—'proceed.'

He looked at me before he proceeded: indeed, he seemed leisurely to read my face, as if its features and lines were characters on a page. The conclusions drawn from this scrutiny he partially expressed in his succeeding observations.

'I believe you will accept the post I offer you,' said he; 'and hold it for a while: not permanently, though: any more than I could permanently keep the narrow and narrowing—the tranquil, hidden office of English country incumbent: for in your nature is an alloy as detrimental to repose as that in mine; though of a different kind.'

'Do explain,' I urged, when he halted once more.

'I will; and you shall hear how poor the proposal is,—how trivial—how cramping. I shall not stay long at Morton, now that my father is dead, and that I am my own master. I shall leave the place probably in the course of a twelvemonth: but while I do stay I will exert myself to the utmost for its improvement. Morton, when I came to it two years ago, had no school: the children of the poor were excluded from every hope of progress. I established one for boys: I mean now to open a second school for girls. I have hired a building for the purpose, with a cottage of two rooms attached to it for the mistress's house. Her salary will be thirty pounds a year; her house is already furnished, very simply, but sufficiently, by the kindness of a lady, Miss Oliver; the only daughter of the sole rich man in my parish—Mr. Oliver, the proprietor of a needle-factory and iron-foundry in the valley. The same lady pays for the education and clothing of an orphan from the workhouse; on condition that she shall aid the mistress in such menial offices connected with her own house and the school as her occupation of teaching will prevent her having time to discharge in person. Will you be this mistress?'

He put the question rather hurriedly; he seemed half to expect an indignant, or at least a disdainful, rejection of the offer: not knowing all my thoughts and feelings, though guessing some, he could not tell in what light the lot would appear to me. In truth it was humble—but then it was sheltered, and I wanted a safe asylum: it was plodding—but then, compared with that of a governess in a rich house, it was independent; and the fear of servitude with strangers entered my soul like iron: it was not ignoble—not unworthy—not mentally degrading. I made my decision.

'I thank you for the proposal, Mr. Rivers; and I accept it with all my heart.'

'But you comprehend me?' he said. 'It is a village school; your scholars will be only poor girls—cottagers' children—at the best, farmers' daughters. Knitting, sewing, reading, writing, cyphering, will be all you will have to teach. What will you do with your accomplishments? What with the largest portion of your mind—sentiments—tastes?'

'Save them till they are wanted. They will keep.'

'You know what you undertake, then?'

'I do.'

He now smiled: and not a bitter or a sad smile, but one well pleased and deeply gratified.

'And when will you commence the exercise of your function?'

'I will go to my house to-morrow; and open the school, if you like, next week.'

'Very well: so be it.'

He rose and walked through the room. Standing still, he again looked at me. He shook his head.

'What do you disapprove of, Mr. Rivers?' I asked.

'You will not stay at Morton long: no, no!'

'Why! What is your reason for saying so?'

'I read it in your eye; it is not of that description which promises the maintenance of an even tenor in life.'

'I am not ambitious.'

He started at the word 'ambitious.' He repeated, 'No. What made you think of ambition? Who is ambitious? I know I am: but how did you find it out?'

'I was speaking of myself.'

'Well, if you are not ambitious, you are'—— He paused.

'What?'

'I was going to say, impassioned: but perhaps you would have misunderstood the word, and been displeased. I mean, that human affections and sympathies have a most powerful hold on you. I am sure you cannot long be content to pass your leisure in solitude, and to devote your working hours to a monotonous labour wholly void of stimulus; any more than I can be content,' he added, with emphasis, 'to live here buried in morass, pent in with mountain—my nature, that God gave me, contravened; my faculties, heaven-bestowed, paralysed—made useless. You hear now how I contradict myself. I, who preached contentment with a humble lot, and justified the vocation even of hewers of wood, and drawers of water, in God's service—I, His ordained minister, almost rave in my restlessness. Well, propensities and principles must be reconciled by some means.'

He left the room. In this brief hour I had learnt more of him than in the whole previous month: yet still he puzzled me.

Diana and Mary Rivers became more sad and silent as the day approached for leaving their brother and their home. They both tried to appear as usual; but the sorrow they had to struggle against was one that could not be entirely conquered or concealed. Diana intimated that this would be a different parting from any they had ever yet known. It would probably, as far as St. John was concerned, be a parting for years: it might be a parting for life.

'He will sacrifice all to his long-framed resolves,' she said: 'natural affection and feelings more potent still. St. John looks quiet, Jane; but he hides a fever in his vitals. You would think him gentle, yet in some things he is inexorable as death; and the worst of it is, my conscience will hardly permit me to dissuade him from his severe decision: certainly, I cannot for a moment blame him for it. It is right, noble, Christian: yet it breaks my heart.' And the tears gushed to her fine eyes. Mary bent her head low over her work.

'We are now without father: we shall soon be without home and brother,' she murmured.

At that moment a little accident supervened which seemed decreed by fate purposely to prove the truth of the adage that 'misfortunes never come singly:' and to add to their distresses the vexing one of the slip between the cup and the lip. St. John passed the window reading a letter. He entered.

'Our uncle John is dead,' said he.

Both the sisters seemed struck: not shocked or appalled; the tidings appeared in their eyes rather momentous than afflicting.

'Dead?' repeated Diana.

'Yes.'

She riveted a searching gaze on her brother's face. 'And what then?' she demanded, in a low voice.

'What then, Die?' he replied, maintaining a marble immobility of feature. 'What then? Why—nothing. Read.'

He threw the letter into her lap. She glanced over it, and handed it to Mary. Mary perused it in silence, and returned it to her brother. All three looked at each other, and all three smiled—a dreary, pensive smile enough.

'Amen! We can yet live,' said Diana at last

'At any rate, it makes us no worse off than we were before,' remarked Mary.

'Only it forces rather strongly on the mind the picture of what *might have been,*' said Mr. Rivers; 'and contrasts it somewhat too vividly with what *is.*'

He folded the letter, locked it in his desk, and again went out.

For some minutes no one spoke. Diana then turned to me.

'Jane, you will wonder at us and our mysteries,' she said, 'and think us hard-hearted beings not to be more moved at the death of so near a relation as an uncle; but we have never seen him or known him. He was my mother's brother. My father and he quarrelled long ago. It was by his advice that my father risked most of his property in the speculation that ruined him. Mutual recrimination passed between them: they parted in anger, and were never reconciled. My uncle engaged afterwards in more prosperous undertakings: it appears he realised a fortune of twenty thousand pounds. He was never married, and had no near kindred but ourselves, and one other person, not more closely related than we. My father always cherished the idea that he would atone for his error by leaving his possessions to us: that letter informs us that he has bequeathed every penny to the other relation; with the exception of thirty guineas, to be divided between St. John, Diana, and Mary Rivers, for the purchase of three mourning rings. He had a right, of course, to do as he pleased: and yet a momentary damp is cast on the spirits by the receipt of such news. Mary and I would have esteemed ourselves rich with a thousand pounds each; and to St. John such a sum would have been valuable, for the good it would have enabled him to do.'

This explanation given, the subject was dropped, and no further reference made to it, by either Mr. Rivers or his sisters. The next day I left Marsh End for Morton. The day after, Diana and Mary quitted it for distant B——. In a week, Mr. Rivers and Hannah repaired to the parsonage: and so the old grange was abandoned.

CHAPTER XXXI

My home, then,—when I at last find a home,—is a cottage: a little room with white-washed walls and a sanded floor; containing four painted chairs and a table, a clock, a cupboard, with two or three plates and dishes, and a set of tea-things in delf. Above, a chamber of the same dimensions as the kitchen, with a deal bedstead, and chest of drawers; small, yet too large to be filled with my scanty wardrobe: though the kindness of my gentle and generous friends has increased that by a modest stock of such things as are necessary.

It is evening. I have dismissed, with the fee of an orange, the little orphan who serves me as a handmaid. I am sitting alone on the hearth. This morning the village school opened. I had twenty scholars. But three of the number can read: none write or cypher. Several knit, and a few sew a little. They speak with the broadest accent of the district. At present they and I have a difficulty in understanding each other's language. Some of them are unmannered, rough, intractable, as well as ignorant; but others are docile, have a wish to learn, and evince a disposition that pleases me. I must not forget that these coarsely-clad little peasants are of flesh and blood as good as the scions of gentlest genealogy; and that the germs of native excellence, refinement, intelligence, kind feeling, are as likely to exist in their hearts as in those of the best-born. My duty will be to develop these germs: surely I shall find some happiness in discharging that office. Much enjoyment I do not expect in the life opening before me: yet it will, doubtless, if I regulate my mind, and exert my powers as I ought, yield me enough to live on from day to day.

Was I very gleeful, settled, content, during the hours I passed in yonder bare, humble school-room this morning and afternoon? Not to deceive myself, I must reply—No: I felt desolate to a degree. I felt—yes, idiot that I am—I felt degraded. I doubted I had taken a step which sank instead of raising me in the scale of social existence. I was weakly dismayed at the ignorance, the poverty, the coarseness of all I heard and saw round me. But let me not hate and despise myself too much for these feelings: I know them to be wrong—that is a great step gained; I shall strive to overcome them. To-morrow, I trust, I shall get the better of them partially; and in a few weeks, perhaps, they will be quite subdued. In a few months, it is possible, the happiness of seeing progress, and a change for the better in my scholars, may substitute gratification for disgust.

Meantime, let me ask myself one question—Which is better?—To have surrendered to temptation listened to passion; made no painful effort—no struggle;—but to have sunk down in the silken snare; fallen asleep on the flowers covering it; wakened in a southern clime, amongst the luxuries of a pleasure villa: to have been now living in France, Mr. Rochester's mistress; delirious with his love half my time—for he would—oh, yes, he would have loved me well for a while. He *did* love me—no one will ever love me so again. I shall never more know the sweet homage given to beauty, youth, and grace—for never to any one else shall I seem to possess these charms. He was fond and proud of me—it is what no man besides will ever be.—But where am I wandering, and what am I saying; and, above all, feeling? Whether is it better, I ask, to be a slave in a fool's paradise at Marseilles—fevered with delusive bliss one hour—suffocating with the bitterest tears of remorse and shame the next—or to be a village schoolmistress, free and honest, in a breezy mountain nook in the healthy heart of England?

Yes; I feel now that I was right when I adhered to principle and law, and scorned and crushed the insane promptings of a frenzied moment. God directed me to a correct choice: I thank His providence for the guidance.

Having brought my eventide musings to this point, I rose, went to my door, and looked at the sunset of the harvest-day, and at the quiet fields before my cottage; which, with the school, was distant half a mile from the village. The birds were singing their last strains—

> The air was mild; the dew was balm.

While I looked, I thought myself happy, and was surprised to find myself ere long weeping—and why? For the doom which had reft me from adhesion to my master: for him I was no more to see; for the desperate grief and fatal fury—consequences of my departure—which might now, perhaps, be dragging him from the path of right, too far to leave hope of ultimate restoration thither. At this thought, I turned my face aside from the lovely sky of eve and lonely vale of Morton—I say *lonely*, for in that bend of it visible to me there was no building apparent save the church and the parsonage, half-hid in trees; and, quite at the extremity, the roof of Vale Hall, where the rich Mr. Oliver and his daughter lived. I hid my eyes, and leant my head against the stone frame of my door; but soon a slight noise near the wicket which shut in my tiny garden from the meadow beyond it made me look up. A dog—old Carlo, Mr. Rivers' pointer, as I saw in a moment—was pushing the gate with his nose, and St. John himself leant upon it with folded arms; his brow knit, his gaze, grave almost to displeasure, fixed on me. I asked him to come in

'No, I cannot stay; I have only brought you a little parcel my sisters left for you. I think it contains a colour-box, pencils, and paper.'

I approached to take it: a welcome gift it was. He examined my face, I thought, with austerity, as I came near: the traces of tears were doubtless very visible upon it.

'Have you found your first day's work harder than you expected?' he asked.

'Oh, no! On the contrary, I think in time I shall get on with my scholars very well.'

'But perhaps your accommodations—your cottage—your furniture—have disappointed your expectations? They are, in truth, scanty enough; but'——

I interrupted:—'My cottage is clean and weather-proof; my furniture sufficient and commodious. All I see has made me thankful, not despondent. I am not absolutely such a fool and sensualist as to regret the absence of a carpet, a sofa, and silver plate: besides, five weeks ago I had nothing—I was an outcast, a beggar, a vagrant; now I have acquaintance, a home, a business. I wonder at the goodness of God; the generosity of my friends; the bounty of my lot. I do not repine.'

'But you feel solitude an oppression? The little house there behind you is dark and empty.'

'I have hardly had time yet to enjoy a sense of tranquillity, much less to grow impatient under one of loneliness.'

'Very well; I hope you feel the content you express: at any rate, your good sense will tell you that it is too soon yet to yield to the vacillating fears of Lot's wife. What you had left before I saw you, of course I do not know; but I counsel you to resist, firmly, every temptation which would incline you to look back: pursue your present career steadily, for some months at least.'

'It is what I mean to do,' I answered.

St. John continued:—'It is hard work to control the workings of inclination, and turn the bent of nature: but that it may be done I know from experience. God has given us, in a measure, the power to make our own fate; and when our energies seem to demand a sustenance they cannot get—when our will strains after a path we may not follow—we need neither starve from inanition, nor stand still in despair: we have but to seek another nourishment for the mind, as strong as the forbidden fruit it longed to taste—and perhaps purer; and to hew out for the adventurous foot a road as direct and broad as the one Fortune has blocked up against us, if rougher than it.

'A year ago I was myself intensely miserable, because I thought I had made a mistake in entering the ministry: its uniform duties wearied me to death. I burnt for the more active life of the world—for the more exciting toils of a literary career—for the destiny of an artist, author, orator; anything rather than that of a priest: yes, the heart of a politician, of a soldier, of a votary of glory, a lover of renown, a luster after power, beat under my curate's surplice. I considered; my life was so wretched, it must be changed, or I must die. After a season of darkness and struggling, light broke and relief fell: my cramped existence all at once spread out to a plain without bounds—my powers heard a call from heaven to rise, gather their full strength, spread their wings, and mount beyond ken. God had an errand for me; to bear which afar, to deliver it well, skill and strength, courage and eloquence, the best qualifications of soldier, statesman, and orator, were all needed: for these all centre in the good missionary.

'A missionary I resolved to be. From that moment my state of mind changed; the fetters dissolved and dropped from every faculty, leaving nothing of bondage but its galling soreness—which time only can heal. My father, indeed, opposed the determination, but since his death I have not a legitimate obstacle to contend with; some affairs settled, a successor for Morton provided, an entanglement or two of the feelings broken through or cut asunder—a last conflict with human weakness, in which I know I shall overcome, because I have vowed that I *will* overcome—and I leave Europe for the East.'

He said this in his peculiar, subdued, yet emphatic voice; looking, when he had ceased speaking, not at me, but at the setting sun, at which I looked too. Both he and I had our backs towards the path leading up the field to the wicket.

We had heard no step on that grass-grown track; the water running in the vale was the one lulling sound of the hour and scene; we might well then start when a gay voice, sweet as a silver bell, exclaimed:—'Good evening, Mr. Rivers. And good evening, old Carlo. Your dog is quicker to recognise his friends than you are, sir; he pricked his ears and wagged his tail when I was at the bottom of the field, and you have your back towards me now.'

It was true. Though Mr. Rivers had started at the first of those musical accents, as if a thunderbolt had split a cloud over his head, he stood yet, at the close of the sentence, in the same attitude in which the speaker had surprised him—his arm resting on the gate, his face directed towards the west. He turned at last, with measured deliberation. A vision, as it seemed to me, had risen at his side. There appeared, within three feet of him, a form clad in pure white—a youthful, graceful form: full, yet fine in contour; and when, after bending to caress Carlo, it lifted up its head, and threw back a long veil, there bloomed under his glance a face of perfect beauty. Perfect beauty is a strong expression; but I do not retrace or qualify it: as sweet features as ever the temperate clime of Albion moulded; as pure hues of rose and lily as ever her humid gales and vapoury skies generated and screened justified, in this instance, the term. No charm was wanting, no defect was perceptible; the young girl had regular and delicate lineaments; eyes shaped and coloured as we see them in lovely pictures, large, and dark, and full; the long and shadowy eyelash which encircles a fine eye with so soft a fascination; the pencilled brow which gives such clearness; the white, smooth forehead, which adds such repose to the livelier beauties of tint and ray; the cheek, oval, fresh, and smooth; the lips, fresh too, ruddy, healthy, sweetly formed; the even and gleaming teeth without flaw; the small dimpled chin; the ornament of rich, plenteous tresses—all advantages, in short, which, combined, realise the ideal of beauty were fully hers. I wondered, as I looked at this fair creature: I admired her with my whole heart. Nature had surely formed her in a partial mood; and, forgetting her usual stinted stepmother dole of gifts, had endowed this, her darling, with a granddame's bounty.

What did St. John Rivers think of this earthly angel? I naturally asked myself that question as I saw him turn to her and look at her; and, as naturally, I sought the answer to the inquiry in his countenance. He had already withdrawn his eye from the Peri, and was looking at a humble tuft of daisies which grew by the wicket.

'A lovely evening, but late for you to be out alone,' he said, as he crushed the snowy heads of the closed flowers with his foot.

'Oh, I only came home from S——' (she mentioned the name of a large town some twenty miles distant) 'this afternoon. Papa told me you had opened your school, and that the new mistress was come; and so I put on my bonnet after tea, and ran up the valley to see her: this is she?' pointing to me.

'It is,' said St. John.

'Do you think you shall like Morton?' she asked of me, with a direct and naïve simplicity of tone and manner, pleasing, if child-like.

'I hope I shall. I have many inducements to do so.'

'Did you find your scholars as attentive as you expected?'

'Quite.'

'Do you like your house?'

'Very much.'

'Have I furnished it nicely?'

'Very nicely indeed.'

'And made a good choice of an attendant for you in Alice Wood?'

'You have, indeed. She is teachable and handy.' (This, then, I thought, is Miss Oliver, the heiress; favoured, it seems, in the gifts of fortune, as well as in those of nature! What happy combination of the planets presided over her birth, I wonder?)

'I shall come up and help you to teach sometimes,' she added. 'It will be a change for me to visit you now and then; and I like a change. Mr. Rivers, I have been *so* gay during my stay at S——. Last night, or rather this morning, I was dancing till two o'clock. The ——th regiment are stationed there since the riots; and the officers are the most agreeable men in the world: they put all our young knife-grinders and scissor merchants to shame.'

It seemed to me that Mr. St. John's under lip protruded, and his upper lip curled a moment. His mouth certainly looked a good deal compressed, and the lower part of his face unusually stern and square, as the laughing girl gave him this information. He lifted his gaze, too, from the daisies, and turned it on her. An unsmiling, a searching, a meaning gaze it was. She answered it with a second laugh, and laughter well became her youth, her roses, her dimples, her bright eyes.

As he stood, mute and grave, she again fell to caressing Carlo.

'Poor Carlo loves me,' said she. '*He* is not stern and distant to his friends; and if he could speak, he would not be silent.'

As she patted the dog's head, bending with native grace before his young and austere master, I saw a glow rise to that master's face. I saw his solemn eye melt with sudden fire, and flicker with resistless emotion. Flushed and kindled thus, he looked nearly as beautiful for a man as she for a woman. His chest heaved once, as if his large heart, weary of despotic constriction, had expanded, despite the will, and made a vigorous bound for the attainment of liberty. But he curbed it, I think, as a resolute rider would curb a rearing steed. He responded neither by word nor movement to the gentle advances made him.

'Papa says you never come to see us now,' continued Miss Oliver, looking up. 'You are quite a stranger at Vale Hall. He is alone this evening, and not very well: will you return with me and visit him?'

'It is not a seasonable hour to intrude on Mr. Oliver,' answered St. John.

'Not a seasonable hour! But I declare it is. It is just the hour when papa most wants company: when the works are closed, and he has no business to occupy him. Now, Mr. Rivers, *do* come. Why are you so very shy, and so very sombre?'

She filled up the hiatus his silence left by a reply of her own.

'I forgot!' she exclaimed, shaking her beautiful curled head, as if shocked at herself. 'I am so giddy and thoughtless! *Do* excuse me. It had slipped my memory that you have good reasons to be indisposed for joining in my chatter. Diana and Mary have left you, and Moor House is shut up, and you are so lonely. I am sure I pity you. Do come and see papa.'

'Not to-night, Miss Rosamond, not to-night.'

Mr. St. John spoke almost like an automaton: himself only knew the effort it cost him thus to refuse.

'Well, if you are so obstinate, I will leave you; for I dare not stay any longer: the dew begins to fall. Good-evening!'

She held out her hand. He just touched it. 'Good-evening!' he repeated, in a voice low and hollow as an echo. She turned; but in a moment returned.

'Are you well?' she asked. Well might she put the question: his face was blanched as her gown.

'Quite well,' he enunciated; and, with a bow, he left the gate. She went one way; he another. She turned twice to gaze after him, as she tripped fairy-like down the field; he, as he strode firmly across, never turned at all.

This spectacle of another's suffering and sacrifice rapt my thoughts from exclusive meditation on my own. Diana Rivers had designated her brother 'inexorable as death.' She had not exaggerated.

CHAPTER XXXII

I CONTINUED the labours of the village-school as actively and faithfully as I could. It was truly hard work at first. Some time elapsed before, with all my efforts, I could comprehend my scholars and their nature. Wholly untaught, with faculties quite torpid, they seemed to me hopelessly dull; and, at first sight, all dull alike: but I soon found I was mistaken. There was a difference amongst them as amongst the educated; and when I got to know them, and they me, this difference rapidly developed itself. Their amazement at me, my language, my rules, and ways, once subsided, I found some of these heavy-looking, gaping rustics wake up into sharp-witted girls enough. Many showed themselves obliging, and amiable too; and I discovered amongst them not a few examples of natural politeness and innate self-respect, as well as of excellent capacity, that won both my goodwill and my admiration. These soon took a pleasure in doing their work well; in keeping their persons neat; in learning their tasks regularly; in acquiring quiet and orderly manners. The rapidity of their progress, in some instances, was even surprising; and an honest and happy pride I took in it: besides, I began personally to like some of the best girls; and they liked me. I had amongst my scholars several farmers' daughters: young women grown, almost. These could already read, write, and sew; and to them I taught the elements of grammar, geography, history, and the finer kinds of needlework. I found estimable characters amongst them—characters desirous of information, and disposed for improvement—with whom I passed many a pleasant evening hour in their own homes. Their parents then (the farmer and his wife) loaded me with attentions. There was an enjoyment in accepting their simple kindness, and in repaying it by a consideration—a scrupulous regard to their feelings—to which they were not, perhaps, at all times accustomed, and which both charmed and benefited them; because, while it elevated them in their own eyes, it made them emulous to merit the deferential treatment they received.

I felt I became a favourite in the neighbourhood. Whenever I went out, I heard on all sides cordial salutations, and was welcomed with friendly smiles. To live amidst general regard, though it be but the regard of working-people, is like 'sitting in sunshine, calm and sweet:' serene inward feelings bud and bloom under the ray. At this period of my life my heart far oftener swelled with thankfulness than sank with dejection: and yet, reader, to tell you all, in the midst of this calm, this useful existence—after a day passed in honourable exertion amongst my scholars, an evening spent in drawing or reading contentedly alone—I used to rush into strange dreams at night: dreams many-coloured, agitated, full of the ideal, the stirring, the stormy—dreams where, amidst unusual scenes, charged with adventure, with agitating risk and romantic chance, I still again and again met Mr. Rochester, always at some exciting crisis; and then the sense of being in his arms, hearing his voice, meeting his eye, touching his hand and cheek, loving him, being loved by him—the hope of passing a lifetime at his side, would be renewed, with all its first force and fire. Then I awoke. Then I recalled where I was, and how situated. Then I rose up on my curtainless bed, trembling and quivering; and then the still, dark night witnessed the convulsion of despair and heard the burst of passion. By nine o'clock the next morning I was punctually opening the school; tranquil, settled, prepared for the steady duties of the day.

Rosamond Oliver kept her word in coming to visit me. Her call at the school was generally made in the course of her morning ride. She would canter up to the door on her pony, followed by a mounted livery servant. Anything more exquisite than her appearance, in her purple habit, with her Amazon's cap of black velvet placed gracefully above the long curls that kissed her cheek and floated to her shoulders, can scarcely be imagined: and it was thus she would enter the rustic building, and glide through the dazzled ranks of the village children. She generally came at the hour when Mr. Rivers was engaged in giving his daily catechising lesson. Keenly, I fear, did the eye of the visitress pierce the young pastor's heart. A sort of instinct seemed to warn him of her entrance, even when he did not see it; and when he was looking quite away from the door, if she appeared at it his cheek would glow and his marble-seeming features, though they refused to relax, changed indescribably: and in their very quiescence became expressive of a repressed fervour, stronger than working muscle or darting glance could indicate.

Of course she knew her power: indeed, he did not, because he could not, conceal it from her. In spite of his Christian stoicism, when she went up and addressed him, and smiled gaily, encouragingly, even fondly in his face, his hand would tremble and his eye burn. He seemed to say, with his sad and resolute look, if he did not say it with his lips, 'I love you, and I know you prefer me. It is not despair of success that keeps me dumb. If I offered my heart, I believe you would accept it. But that heart is already laid on a sacred altar: the fire is arranged round it. It will soon be no more than a sacrifice consumed.'

And then she would pout like a disappointed child; a pensive cloud would soften her radiant vivacity; she would withdraw her hand hastily from his, and turn in transient petulance from his aspect, at once so heroic and so martyr-like. St. John, no doubt, would have given the world to follow, recall, retain her, when she thus left him: but he would not give one chance of Heaven; nor relinquish, for the elysium of her love, one hope of the true, eternal Paradise. Besides, he could not bound all that he had in his nature—the rover, the aspirant, the poet, the priest—in the limits of a single passion. He could not—he would not—renounce his wild field of mission warfare for the parlours and the peace of Vale Hall. I learnt so much from himself, in an inroad I once, despite his reserve, had the daring to make on his confidence.

Miss Oliver already honoured me with frequent visits to my cottage. I had learnt her whole character; which was without mystery or disguise: she was coquettish, but not heartless; exacting, but not worthlessly selfish. She had been indulged from her birth, but was not absolutely spoilt. She was hasty, but good-humoured; vain (she could not help it, when every glance in the glass showed her such a flush of loveliness), but not affected; liberal-handed; innocent of the pride of wealth; ingenuous; sufficiently intelligent; gay, lively, and unthinking: she was very charming, in short, even to a cool observer of her own sex like me; but she was not profoundly interesting or thoroughly impressive. A very different sort of mind was hers from that, for instance, of the sisters of St. John. Still, I liked her almost as I liked my pupil Adèle: except that for a child whom we have watched over and taught a closer affection is engendered than we can give an equally attractive adult acquaintance.

She had taken an amiable caprice to me. She said I was like Mr. Rivers (only, certainly, she allowed, 'not one-tenth so handsome: though I was a nice neat little soul enough, but he was an angel'). I was, however, good, clever, composed, and firm, like him. I was a *lusus naturæ*, she affirmed, as a village schoolmistress: she was sure my previous history, if known, would make a delightful romance.

One evening, while, with her usual childlike activity, and thoughtless yet not offensive inquisitiveness, she was rummaging the cupboard and the table-drawer of my little kitchen, she discovered first two French books, a volume of Schiller, a German grammar and dictionary; and then my drawing-materials and some sketches, including a pencil-head of a pretty little cherub-like girl, one of my scholars,

MOORLAND SCENE NEAR HATHERSAGE (MORTON).

and sundry views from nature, taken in the Vale of Morton and on the surrounding moors. She was first transfixed with surprise, and then electrified with delight.

'Had I done these pictures? Did I know French and German? What a love—what a miracle I was! I drew better than her master in the first school in S——. Would I sketch a portrait of her, to show to papa?'

'With pleasure,' I replied; and I felt a thrill of artist-delight at the idea of copying from so perfect and radiant a model. She had then on a dark-blue silk dress; her arms and her neck were bare; her only ornament was her chesnut tresses, which waved over her shoulders with all the wild grace of natural curls. I took a sheet of fine cardboard, and drew a careful outline. I promised myself the pleasure of colouring it; and, as it was getting late then, I told her she must come and sit another day.

She made such a report of me to her father that Mr. Oliver himself accompanied her next evening—a tall, massive-featured, middle-aged, and grey-headed man, at whose side his lovely daughter looked like a bright flower near a hoary turret. He appeared a taciturn, and perhaps a proud personage; but he was very kind to me. The sketch of Rosamond's portrait pleased him highly: he said I must make a finished picture of it. He insisted, too, on my coming the next day to spend the evening at Vale Hall.

I went. I found it a large, handsome residence, showing abundant evidences of wealth in the proprietor. Rosamond was full of glee and pleasure all the time I stayed. Her father was affable; and when he entered into conversation with me after tea, he expressed in strong terms his approbation of what I had done in Morton school; and said he only feared, from what he saw and heard, I was too good for the place, and would soon quit it for one more suitable.

'Indeed!' cried Rosamond, 'she is clever enough to be a governess in a high family, papa.'

I thought—I would far rather be where I am than in any high family in the land. Mr. Oliver spoke of Mr. Rivers—

of the Rivers family—with great respect. He said it was a very old name in that neighborhood; that the ancestors of the house were wealthy; that all Morton had once belonged to them, that even now he considered the representative of that house might, if he liked, make an alliance with the best. He accounted it a pity that so fine and talented a young man should have formed the design of going out as a missionary; it was quite throwing a valuable life away. It appeared, then, that her father would throw no obstacle in the way of Rosamond's union with St. John. Mr. Oliver evidently regarded the young clergyman's good birth, old name, and sacred profession as sufficient compensation for the want of fortune.

It was the 5th of November, and a holiday. My little servant, after helping me to clean my house, was gone, well satisfied with the fee of a penny for her aid. All about me was spotless and bright—scoured floor, polished grate, and well-rubbed chairs. I had also made myself neat, and had now the afternoon before me to spend as I would.

The translation of a few pages of German occupied an hour; then I got my palette and pencils, and fell to the more soothing, because easier, occupation of completing Rosamond Oliver's miniature. The head was finished already: there was but the background to tint and the drapery to shade off; a touch of carmine, too, to add to the ripe lips—a soft curl here and there to the tresses—a deeper tinge to the shadow of the lash under the azured eyelid. I was absorbed in the execution of these nice details when, after one rapid tap, my door unclosed, admitting St. John Rivers.

'I am come to see how you are spending your holiday,' he said. 'Not, I hope, in thought? No, that is well: while you draw you will not feel lonely. You see, I mistrust you still: though you have borne up wonderfully so far. I have brought you a book for evening solace,' and he laid on the table a new publication—a poem: one of those genuine productions so often vouchsafed to the fortunate public of those days—the golden age of modern literature. Alas! the readers of our era are less favoured. But, courage! I will not pause either to accuse or repine. I know poetry is not dead, nor genius lost; nor has Mammon gained power over either, to bind or slay: they will both assert their existence, their presence, their liberty and strength again one day. Powerful angels, safe in heaven! they smile when sordid souls triumph, and feeble ones weep over their destruction. Poetry destroyed? Genius banished? No! Mediocrity, no: do not let envy prompt you to the thought. No; they not only live, but reign, and redeem: and without their divine influence spread everywhere you would be in hell—the hell of your own meanness.

While I was eagerly glancing at the bright pages of Marmion (for Marmion it was) St. John stooped to examine my drawing. His tall figure sprang erect again with a start: he said nothing. I looked up at him: he shunned my eye. I knew his thoughts well, and could read his heart plainly; at the moment I felt calmer and cooler than he: I had then temporarily the advantage of him; and I conceived an inclination to do him some good, if I could.

'With all his firmness and self-control,' thought I, 'he tasks himself too far: locks every feeling and pang within—expresses, confesses, imparts nothing. I am sure it would benefit him to talk a little about this sweet Rosamond, whom he thinks he ought not to marry: I will make him talk.'

I said first: 'Take a chair, Mr. Rivers.' But he answered, as he always did, that he could not stay. 'Very well,' I responded, mentally, 'stand if you like; but you shall not go just yet, I am determined: solitude is at least as bad for you as it is for me. I'll try if I cannot discover the secret spring of your confidence, and find an aperture in that marble breast through which I can shed one drop of the balm of sympathy.'

'Is this portrait like?' I asked bluntly.

'Like! Like whom? I did not observe it closely.'

'You did, Mr. Rivers.'

He almost started at my sudden and strange abruptness:

he looked at me astonished. 'Oh, that is nothing yet,' I muttered within. 'I don't mean to be baffled by a little stiffness on your part; I'm prepared to go to considerable lengths.' I continued, 'You observed it closely and distinctly: but I have no objection to your looking at it again,' and I rose and placed it in his hand.

'A well-executed picture,' he said; 'very soft, clear colouring; very graceful and correct drawing.'

'Yes, yes; I know all that. But what of the resemblance? Who is it like?'

Mastering some hesitation, he answered, 'Miss Oliver, I presume.'

'Of course. And now, sir, to reward you for the accurate guess I will promise to paint you a careful and faithful duplicate of this very picture, provided you admit that the gift would be acceptable to you. I don't wish to throw away my time and trouble on an offering you would deem worthless.'

He continued to gaze at the picture: the longer he looked, the firmer he held it, the more he seemed to covet it. 'It is like!' he murmured; 'the eye is well managed: the colour, light, expression, are perfect. It smiles!'

'Would it comfort or would it wound you to have a similar painting? Tell me that. When you are at Madagascar, or at the Cape, or in India, would it be a consolation to have that memento in your possession? or would the sight of it bring recollections calculated to enervate and distress?'

He now furtively raised his eyes: he glanced at me, irresolute, disturbed; he again surveyed the picture.

'That I should like to have it is certain: whether it would be judicious or wise is another question.'

Since I had ascertained that Rosamond really preferred him, and that her father was not likely to oppose the match, I—less exalted in my views than St. John—had been strongly disposed in my own heart to advocate their union. It seemed to me that, should he become the possessor of Mr. Oliver's large fortune, he might do as much good with it as if he went and laid his genius out to wither and his strength to waste under a tropical sun. With this persuasion I now answered :—'As far as I can see, it would be wiser and more judicious if you were to take to yourself the original at once.'

By this time he had sat down : he had laid the picture on the table before him, and with his brow supported on both hands hung fondly over it. I discerned he was now neither angry nor shocked at my audacity. I saw even that to be thus frankly addressed on a subject he had deemed unapproachable—to hear it thus freely handled—was beginning to be felt by him as a new pleasure—an unhoped-for relief. Reserved people often really need the frank discussion of their sentiments and griefs more than the expansive. The sternest-seeming stoic is human after all; and to 'burst' with boldness and goodwill into 'the silent sea' of their souls is often to confer on them the first of obligations.

'She likes you, I am sure,' said I, as I stood behind his chair, 'and her father respects you. Moreover, she is a sweet girl—rather thoughtless; but you would have sufficient thought for both yourself and her. You ought to marry her.'

'*Does* she like me?' he asked.

'Certainly; better than she likes any one else. She talks of you continually: there is no subject she enjoys so much or touches upon so often.'

'It is very pleasant to hear this,' he said—'very: go on for another quarter of an hour.' And he actually took out his watch and laid it upon the table to measure the time.

'But where is the use of going on,' I asked, 'when you are probably preparing some iron blow of contradiction, or forging a fresh chain to fetter your heart?'

'Don't imagine such hard things. Fancy me yielding and melting, as I am doing : human love rising like a freshly opened fountain in my mind and overflowing with sweet inundation all the field I have so carefully, and with such labour prepared—so assiduously sown with the seeds of good intentions, of self-denying plans. And now it is deluged with a nectarous flood—the young germs swamped—delicious poison cankering them: now I see myself stretched on an ottoman in the drawing-room at Vale Hall, at my bride Rosamond Oliver's feet: she is talking to me with her sweet voice—gazing down on me with those eyes your skilful hand has copied so well—smiling at me with these coral lips. She is mine—I am hers—this present life and passing world suffice to me. Hush! say nothing—my heart is full of delight—my senses are entranced—let the time I marked pass in peace.'

I humoured him: the watch ticked on: he breathed fast and low: I stood silent. Amidst this hush the quarter sped; he replaced the watch, laid the picture down, rose, and stood on the hearth.

'Now,' said he, 'that little space was given to delirium and delusion. I rested my temples on the breast of temptation, and put my neck voluntarily under her yoke of flowers; I tasted her cup. The pillow was burning; there is an asp in the garland; the wine has a bitter taste; her promises are hollow—her offers false; I see and know all this.'

I gazed at him in wonder.

'It is strange,' pursued he, 'that while I love Rosamond Oliver so wildly—with all the intensity, indeed, of a first passion, the object of which is exquisitely beautiful, graceful, and fascinating—I experience at the same time a calm, unwarped consciousness that she would not make me a good wife; that she is not the partner suited to me; that I should discover this within a year after marriage; and that to twelve months' rapture would succeed a lifetime of regret. This I know.'

'Strange, indeed!' I could not help ejaculating.

'While something in me,' he went on, 'is acutely sensible to her charms, something else is as deeply impressed with her defects; they are such that she could sympathise in nothing I aspired to—co-operate in nothing I undertook.

Rosamond a sufferer, a labourer, a female apostle? Rosamond a missionary's wife? No!'

'But you need not be a missionary. You might relinquish that scheme.'

'Relinquish! What! my vocation? My great work? My foundation laid on earth for a mansion in heaven? My hopes of being numbered in the band who have merged all ambitions in the glorious one of bettering their race—of carrying knowledge into the realms of ignorance—of substituting peace for war—freedom for bondage—religion for superstition—the hope of heaven for the fear of hell? Must I relinquish that? It is dearer than the blood in my veins. It is what I have to look forward to and to live for.'

After a considerable pause, I said,—'And Miss Oliver? Are her disappointment and sorrow of no interest to you?'

'Miss Oliver is ever surrounded by suitors and flatterers; in less than a month my image will be effaced from her heart. She will forget me; and will marry, probably, some one who will make her far happier than I should do.'

'You speak coolly enough; but you suffer in the conflict. You are wasting away.'

'No. If I get a little thin, it is with anxiety about my prospects, yet unsettled—my departure, continually procrastinated. Only this morning I received intelligence that the successor, whose arrival I have been so long expecting, cannot be ready to replace me for three months to come yet; and perhaps the three months may extend to six.'

'You tremble and become flushed whenever Miss Oliver enters the school-room.'

Again the surprised expression crossed his face. He had not imagined that a woman would dare to speak so to a man. For me, I felt at home in this sort of discourse. I could never rest in communication with strong, discreet, and refined minds, whether male or female, till I had passed the outworks of conventional reserve, and crossed the threshold of confidence, and won a place by their heart's very hearthstone.

'You *are* original,' said he, 'and not timid. There is something brave in your spirit, as well as penetrating in your eye; but allow me to assure you that you partially misinterpret my emotions. You think them more profound and potent than they are. You give me a larger allowance of sympathy than I have a just claim to. When I colour, and when I shake before Miss Oliver, I do not pity myself. I scorn the weakness. I know it is ignoble; a mere fever of the flesh: not, I declare, a convulsion of the soul. *That* is just as fixed as a rock firm set in the depths of a restless sea. Know me to be what I am—a cold, hard man.'

I smiled incredulously.

'You have taken my confidence by storm,' he continued: 'and now it is much at your service. I am simply, in my original state—stripped of that blood-bleached robe with which Christianity covers human deformity—a cold, hard, ambitious man. Natural affection only, of all the sentiments, has permanent power over me. Reason, and not Feeling, is my guide: my ambition is unlimited; my desire to rise higher, to do more than others, insatiable. I honour endurance, perseverance, industry, talent; because these are the means by which men achieve great ends and mount to lofty eminence. I watch your career with interest, because I consider you a specimen of a diligent, orderly, energetic woman; not because I deeply compassionate what you have gone through, or what you still suffer.'

'You would describe yourself as a mere pagan philosopher,' I said.

'No. There is this difference between me and deistic philosophers: I believe; and I believe the Gospel. You missed your epithet. I am not a pagan, but a Christian philosopher—a follower of the sect of Jesus. As His disciple I adopt His pure, His merciful, His benignant doctrines. I advocate them: I am sworn to spread them. Won in youth to religion, she has cultivated my original qualities thus:—From the minute germ, natural affection, she has developed the overshadowing tree, philanthropy. From the wild, stringy root of human uprightness, she has reared a due sense of the Divine justice. Of the ambition to win power and renown for my wretched self, she has formed the ambition to spread my Master's kingdom; to achieve victories for the standard of the cross. So much has religion done for me; turning the original materials to the best account; pruning and training nature. But she could not eradicate nature: nor will it be eradicated "till this mortal shall put on immortality."'

Having said this, he took his hat, which lay on the table beside my palette. Once more he looked at the portrait.

'She *is* lovely,' he murmured. 'She is well named the Rose of the World, indeed!'

'And may I not paint one like it for you?'

'*Cui bono?* No.'

He drew over the picture the sheet of thin paper on which I was accustomed to rest my hand in painting to prevent the cardboard from being sullied. What he suddenly saw on this blank paper it was impossible for me to tell; but something had caught his eye. He took it up with a snatch; he looked at the edge; then shot a glance at me, inexpressibly peculiar and quite incomprehensible: a glance that seemed to take and make note of every point in my shape, face, and dress; for it traversed all, quick, keen as lightning. His lips parted, as if to speak: but he checked the coming sentence, whatever it was.

'What is the matter?' I asked.

'Nothing in the world,' was the reply; and, replacing the paper, I saw him dexterously tear a narrow slip from the margin. It disappeared in his glove; and, with one hasty nod and 'good-afternoon,' he vanished.

'Well!' I exclaimed, using an expression of the district, 'that caps the globe, however!'

I, in my turn, scrutinised the paper, but saw nothing on it save a few dingy stains of paint where I had tried the tint in my pencil. I pondered the mystery a minute or two; but finding it insolvable, and being certain it could not be of much moment, I dismissed and soon forgot it.

CHAPTER XXXIII

When Mr. St. John went it was beginning to snow; the whirling storm continued all night. The next day a keen wind brought fresh and blinding falls; by twilight the valley was drifted up and almost impassable. I had closed my shutter, laid a mat to the door to prevent the snow from blowing in under it, trimmed my fire, and after sitting nearly an hour on the hearth listening to the muffled fury of the tempest, I lit a candle, took down Marmion, and beginning—

Day set on Norham's castled steep,
And Tweed's fair river broad and deep,
    And Cheviot's mountains lone;
The massive towers, the donjon keep,
The flanking walls that round them sweep,
    In yellow lustre shone,

I soon forgot storm in music.

I heard a noise: the wind, I thought, shook the door. No; it was St. John Rivers, who, lifting the latch, came in out of the frozen hurricane—the howling darkness—and stood before me: the cloak that covered his tall figure all white as a glacier. I was almost in consternation; so little had I expected any guest from the blocked-up vale that night.

'Any ill news?' I demanded. 'Has anything happened?'

'No. How very easily alarmed you are!' he answered, removing his cloak and hanging it up against the door, towards which he again coolly pushed the mat which his entrance had deranged. He stamped the snow from his boots.

'I shall sully the purity of your floor,' said he, 'but you must excuse me for once.' Then he approached the fire: 'I have had hard work to get here, I assure you,' he observed, as he warmed his hands over the flame. 'One drift took me up to the waist; happily the snow is quite soft yet.'

'But why are you come?' I could not forbear saying.

'Rather an inhospitable question to put to a visitor; but since you ask it, I answer simply to have a little talk with you; I got tired of my mute books and empty rooms. Besides, since yesterday I have experienced the excitement of a person to whom a tale has been half-told, and who is impatient to hear the sequel.'

He sat down. I recalled his singular conduct of yesterday, and really I began to fear his wits were touched. If he were insane, however, his was a very cool and collected insanity: I had never seen that handsome-featured face of his look more like chiselled marble than it did just now, as he put aside his snow-wet hair from his forehead and let the firelight shine free on his pale brow and cheek as pale, where it grieved me to discover the hollow trace of care or sorrow now so plainly graved. I waited, expecting he would say something I could at least comprehend; but his hand was now at his chin, his finger on his lip: he was thinking. It struck me that his hand looked wasted like his face. A perhaps uncalled-for gush of pity came over my heart: I was moved to say:—'I wish Diana or Mary would come and live with you: it is too bad that you should be quite alone; and you are recklessly rash about your own health.'

'Not at all,' said he: 'I care for myself when necessary; I am well now. What do you see amiss in me?'

This was said with a careless, abstracted indifference, which showed that my solicitude was, at least in his opinion, wholly superfluous. I was silenced.

He still slowly moved his finger over his upper lip, and still his eye dwelt dreamily on the glowing grate.

Thinking it urgent to say something, I asked him presently if he felt any cold draught from the door, which was behind him.

'No, no,' he responded, shortly and somewhat testily.

'Well,' I reflected, 'if you won't talk, you may be still; I'll let you alone now, and return to my book.'

So I snuffed the candle, and resumed the perusal of Marmion. He soon stirred; my eye was instantly drawn to his movements; he only took out a morocco pocket-book, thence produced a letter, which he read in silence, folded it, put it back, relapsed into meditation. It was vain to try to read with such an inscrutable fixture before me; nor could I, in my impatience, consent to be dumb; he might rebuff me if he liked, but talk I would.

'Have you heard from Diana and Mary lately?'

'Not since the letter I showed you a week ago.'

'There has not been any change made about your own arrangements? You will not be summoned to leave England sooner than you expected?'

'I fear not, indeed: such chance is too good to befall me.' Baffled so far I changed my ground—I bethought myself to talk about the school and my scholars.

'Mary Garrett's mother is better, and Mary came back to the school this morning, and I shall have four new girls next week from the Foundry Close—they would have come to-day but for the snow.'

'Indeed!'

'Mr. Oliver pays for two.'

'Does he?'

'He means to give the whole school a treat at Christmas.'

'I know.'

'Was it your suggestion?'

'No.'

'Whose, then?'

'His daughter's, I think.'

'It is like her: she is so good-natured.'

'Yes.'

Again came the blank of a pause: the clock struck eight strokes. It aroused him; he uncrossed his legs, sat erect, turned to me.

'Leave your book a moment, and come a little nearer the fire,' he said.

Wondering, and of my wonder finding no end, I complied.

'Half an hour ago,' he pursued, 'I spoke of my impatience to hear the sequel of a tale: on reflection, I find the matter will be better managed by my assuming the narrator's part, and converting you into a listener. Before commencing it is but fair to warn you that the story will sound somewhat hackneyed in your ears: but stale details often regain a degree of freshness when they pass through new lips. For the rest, whether trite or novel, it is short.

'Twenty years ago a poor curate—never mind his name at this moment—fell in love with a rich man's daughter; she fell in love with him, and married him, against the advice of all her friends; who consequently disowned her immediately after the wedding. Before two years passed the rash pair were both dead, and laid quietly side by side under one slab. (I have seen their grave; it formed part of the pavement of a huge churchyard surrounding the grim, soot-black old cathedral of an overgrown manufacturing town in ——shire. They left a daughter, which, at its very birth, Charity received in her lap—cold as that of the snow-drift I almost stuck fast in to-night. Charity carried the friendless thing to the house of its rich maternal relations; it was reared by an aunt-in-law called (I come to names now) Mrs. Reed, of Gateshead—you start—did you hear a noise? I daresay it is only a rat scrambling along the rafters of the adjoining schoolroom: it was a barn before I had it repaired and altered, and barns are generally haunted by rats.—To proceed. Mrs. Reed kept the orphan ten years: whether it was happy or not with her I cannot say, never having been told; but at the end of that time she transferred it to a place you know—being no other than Lowood School, where you so long resided yourself. It seems her career there was very honourable: from a pupil she became a teacher, like yourself—really it strikes me there are parallel points in her history and yours—she left it to be a governess: there, again, your fates were analogous; she undertook the education of the ward of a certain Mr. Rochester.'

'Mr. Rivers!' I interrupted.

'I can guess your feelings,' he said, 'but restrain them for a while: I have nearly finished; hear me to the end. Of Mr. Rochester's character I know nothing, but the one fact that he professed to offer honourable marriage to this young girl, and that at the very altar she discovered he had a wife yet alive, though a lunatic. What his subsequent conduct and proposals were is a matter of pure conjecture; but when an event transpired which rendered inquiry after the governess necessary, it was discovered she was gone—no one could tell when, where, or how. She had left Thornfield Hall in the night; every research after her course had been vain: the country had been scoured far and wide; no vestige of information could be gathered respecting her. Yet that she should be found is become a matter of serious urgency: advertisements have been put in all the papers; I myself have received a letter from one Mr. Briggs, a solicitor, communicating the details I have just imparted. Is it not an odd tale?'

'Just tell me this,' said I, 'and since you know so much you surely *can* tell it me—what of Mr. Rochester? How and where is he? What is he doing? Is he well?'

'I am ignorant of all concerning Mr. Rochester: the letter never mentions him but to narrate the fraudulent and illegal attempt I have adverted to. You should rather ask the name of the governess—the nature of the event which requires her appearance.'

'Did no one go to Thornfield Hall then? Did no one see Mr. Rochester?'

'I suppose not.'

'But they wrote to him?'

'Of course.'

'And what did he say? Who has his letters?'

'Mr. Briggs intimates that the answer to his application was not from Mr. Rochester, but from a lady: it is signed "Alice Fairfax."'

I felt cold and dismayed: my worst fears then were probably true: he had in all probability left England, and rushed in reckless desperation to some former haunt on the Continent. And what opiate for his severe sufferings—what object for his strong passions—had he sought there? I dared not answer the question. Oh, my poor master—once almost my husband—whom I had often called 'my dear Edward!'

'He must have been a bad man,' observed Mr. Rivers.

'You don't know him—don't pronounce an opinion upon him,' I said, with warmth.

'Very well,' he answered, quietly: 'and indeed my head is otherwise occupied than with him: I have my tale to finish. Since you won't ask the governess's name, I must tell it of my own accord—stay—I have it here—it is always more satisfactory to see important points written down, fairly committed to black and white.'

And the pocket-book was again deliberately produced, opened, sought through; from one of its compartments was extracted a shabby slip of paper, hastily torn off: I recognised in its texture and its stains of ultramarine and lake and vermilion the ravished margin of the portrait-cover. He got up, held it close to my eyes: and I read, traced in Indian ink, in my own handwriting, the words 'Jane Eyre'—the work doubtless of some moment of abstraction.

'Briggs wrote to me of a Jane Eyre,' he said; 'the advertisements demanded a Jane Eyre: I knew a Jane Elliott.—I confess I had my suspicions, but it was only yesterday afternoon they were at once resolved into certainty. You own the name and renounce the *alias?*'

'Yes—yes—but where is Mr. Briggs? He perhaps knows more of Mr. Rochester than you do.'

'Briggs is in London; I should doubt his knowing anything at all about Mr. Rochester; it is not in Mr. Rochester he is interested. Meantime you forget essential points in pursuing trifles: you do not inquire why Mr. Briggs sought after you—what he wanted with you.'

'Well, what did he want?'

'Merely to tell you that your uncle, Mr. Eyre of Madeira, is dead; that he has left you all his property, and that you are now rich—merely that—nothing more.'

'I! rich?'

'Yes, you, rich—quite an heiress.'

Silence succeeded.

'You must prove your identity, of course,' resumed St. John, presently: 'a step which will offer no difficulties: you can then enter on immediate possession. Your fortune is vested in the English funds; Briggs has the will and the necessary documents.'

Here was a new card turned up! It is a fine thing, reader, to be lifted in a moment from indigence to wealth—a very fine thing: but not a matter one can comprehend, or consequently enjoy, all at once. And then there are other chances in life far more thrilling and rapture-giving; *this* is solid, an affair of the actual world, nothing ideal about it: all its associations are solid and sober, and its manifestations are the same. One does not jump, and spring, and shout hurrah! at hearing one has got a fortune; one begins to consider responsibilities and to ponder business; on a base of steady satisfaction rise certain grave cares—and we contain ourselves, and brood over our bliss with a solemn brow.

Besides, the words Legacy, Bequest, go side by side with the words Death, Funeral. My uncle I had heard was dead—my only relative; ever since being made aware of his existence I had cherished the hope of one day seeing him: now, I never should. And then this money came only to me: not to me and a rejoicing family, but to my isolated self. It was a grand boon doubtless; and independence would be glorious—yes, I felt that—*that* thought swelled my heart.

'You unbend your forehead at last,' said Mr. Rivers: 'I thought Medusa had looked at you, and that you were turning to stone—perhaps now you will ask how much you are worth?'

'How much am I worth?'

'Oh, a trifle! Nothing of course to speak of—twenty thousand pounds, I think they say—but what is that?'

'Twenty thousand pounds?'

Here was a new stunner—I had been calculating on four or five thousand. This news actually took my breath for a moment: Mr. St. John, whom I had never heard laugh before, laughed now.

'Well,' said he, 'if you had committed a murder, and I had told you your crime was discovered, you could scarcely look more aghast.'

'It is a large sum—don't you think there is a mistake?'

'No mistake at all.'

'Perhaps you have read the figures wrong—it may be 2,000!'

'It is written in letters, not figures,—twenty thousand.'

I again felt rather like an individual of but average gastronomical powers sitting down to feast alone at a table spread with provisions for a hundred. Mr. Rivers rose now and put his cloak on.

'If it were not such a very wild night,' he said, 'I would send Hannah down to keep you company: you look too desperately miserable to be left alone. But Hannah, poor woman! could not stride the drifts so well as I: her legs are not quite so long: so I must e'en leave you to your sorrows. Good-night.'

He was lifting the latch: a sudden thought occurred to me.

'Stop one minute!' I cried.

'Well?'

'It puzzles me to know why Mr. Briggs wrote to you about me; or how he knew you, or could fancy that you, living in such an out-of-the-way place, had the power to aid in my discovery.'

'Oh! I am a clergyman,' he said; 'and the clergy are often appealed to about odd matters.'

Again the latch rattled.

'No: that does not satisfy me!' I exclaimed: and, indeed, there was something in the hasty and unexplanatory reply which, instead of allaying, piqued my curiosity more than ever.

'It is a very strange piece of business,' I added. 'I must know more about it.'

'Another time.'

'No: to-night!—to-night!' and as he turned from the door I placed myself between it and him. He looked rather embarrassed.

'You certainly shall not go till you have told me all!' I said.

'I would rather not, just now.'

'You shall!—you must!'

'I would rather Diana or Mary informed you.'

Of course these objections wrought my eagerness to a climax: gratified it must be, and that without delay; and I told him so.

'But I apprised you that I was a hard man,' said he; 'difficult to persuade.'

'And I am a hard woman,—impossible to put off.'

'And then,' he pursued, 'I am cold: no fervour infects me.'

'Whereas I am hot, and fire dissolves ice. The blaze there has thawed all the snow from your cloak; by the same token it has streamed on to my floor, and made it like a trampled street. As you hope ever to be forgiven, Mr. Rivers, the high crime and misdemeanour of spoiling a sanded kitchen, tell me what I wish to know.'

'Well, then,' he said, 'I yield; if not to your earnestness, to your perseverance: as stone is worn by continual dropping. Besides, you must know some day,—as well now as later. Your name is Jane Eyre?'

'Of course: that was all settled before.'

'You are not, perhaps, aware that I am your namesake?—that I was christened St. John Eyre Rivers?'

'No, indeed! I remember now seeing the letter E comprised in your initials written in books you have at different times lent me; but I never asked for what name it stood. But what then? Surely'——

I stopped: I could not trust myself to entertain, much less to express, the thought that rushed upon me—that embodied itself,—that, in a second, stood out a strong, solid probability. Circumstances knit themselves, fitted themselves, shot into order: the chain that had been lying hitherto a formless lump of links was drawn out straight,—every ring was perfect, the connection complete. I knew, by instinct, how the matter stood before St. John had said another word: but I cannot expect the reader to have the same intuitive perception, so I must repeat his explanation.

'My mother's name was Eyre; she had two brothers; one a clergyman, who married Miss Jane Reed, of Gateshead; the other, John Eyre, Esq., merchant, late of Funchal, Madeira. Mr. Briggs, being Mr. Eyre's solicitor, wrote to us last August to inform us of our uncle's death; and to say that he had left his property to his brother the clergyman's orphan daughter; overlooking us, in consequence of a quarrel, never forgiven, between him and my father. He wrote again a few weeks since, to intimate that the heiress was lost; and asking if we knew anything of her. A name casually written on a slip of paper has enabled me to find her out. You know the rest.' Again he was going, but I set my back against the door.

'Do let me speak,' I said; 'let me have one moment to draw breath and reflect.' I paused—he stood before me, hat in hand, looking composed enough. I resumed: 'Your mother was my father's sister?'

'Yes.'

'My aunt, consequently?'

He bowed.

'My uncle John was your uncle John? You, Diana and Mary, are his sister's children; as I am his brother's child?'

'Undeniably.'

'You three, then, are my cousins; half our blood on each side flows from the same source?'

'We are cousins; yes.'

I surveyed him. It seemed I had found a brother: one I could be proud of,—one I could love; and two sisters whose qualities were such that, when I knew them but as mere strangers, they had inspired me with genuine affection and admiration. The two girls on whom, kneeling down on the wet ground, and looking through the low, latticed window of Moor House kitchen, I had gazed with so bitter a mixture of interest and despair were my near kinswomen; and the young and stately gentleman who had found me almost dying at his threshold was my blood relation. Glorious discovery to a lonely wretch! This was wealth indeed!—wealth to the heart!—a mine of pure, genial affections. This was a blessing, bright, vivid, and exhilarating;—not like the ponderous gift of gold: rich and welcome enough in its way, but sobering from its weight. I now clapped my hands in sudden joy—my pulse bounded, my veins thrilled.

'Oh, I am glad!—I am glad!' I exclaimed.

St. John smiled. 'Did I not say you neglected essential points to pursue trifles?' he asked. 'You were serious when I told you you had got a fortune; and now, for a matter of no moment, you are excited.'

'What *can* you mean? It may be of no moment to you; you have sisters, and don't care for a cousin; but I had nobody; and now three relations,—or two, if you don't choose to be counted,—are born into my world full grown. I say again, I am glad!'

I walked fast through the room: I stopped, half suffocated with the thoughts that rose faster than I could receive, comprehend, settle them:—thoughts of what might, could, would, and should be, and that ere long. I looked at the blank wall: it seemed a sky, thick with ascending stars,—every one lit me to a purpose or delight. Those who had saved my life, whom till this hour I had loved barrenly, I could now benefit. They were under a yoke: I could free them: they were scattered,—I could reunite them—the independence, the affluence which was mine might be theirs too. Were we not four? Twenty thousand pounds shared equally would be five thousand each, enough and to spare: justice would be done,—mutual happiness secured. Now the wealth did not weigh on me: now it was not a mere bequest of coin,—it was a legacy of life, hope, enjoyment.

How I looked while these ideas were taking my spirit by storm I cannot tell; but I perceived soon that Mr. Rivers had placed a chair behind me, and was gently attempting to make me sit down on it. He also advised me to be composed: I scorned the insinuation of helplessness and distraction, shook off his hand, and began to walk about again.

'Write to Diana and Mary to-morrow,' I said, 'and tell them to come home directly; Diana said they would both consider themselves rich with a thousand pounds, so with five thousand they will do very well.'

'Tell me where I can get you a glass of water,' said St. John; 'you must really make an effort to tranquillise your feelings.'

'Nonsense! and what sort of an effect will the bequest have on you? Will it keep you in England, induce you to marry Miss Oliver, and settle down like an ordinary mortal?'

'You wander: your head becomes confused. I have been too abrupt in communicating the news; it has excited you beyond your strength.'

'Mr. Rivers! you quite put me out of patience; I am rational enough; it is you who misunderstand; or rather who affect to misunderstand.'

'Perhaps if you explained yourself a little more fully I should comprehend better.'

'Explain! What is there to explain? You cannot fail to see that twenty thousand pounds, the sum in question, divided equally between the nephew and three nieces of our uncle will give five thousand to each? What I want is, that you should write to your sisters and tell them of the fortune that has accrued to them.'

'To you, you mean.'

'I have intimated my view of the case: I am incapable of taking any other. I am not brutally selfish, blindly unjust, or fiendishly ungrateful. Besides, I am resolved I will have a home and connections. I like Moor House, and I will live at Moor House; I like Diana and Mary, and I will attach myself for life to Diana and Mary. It would please and benefit me to have five thousand pounds; it would torment and oppress me to have twenty thousand; which, moreover, could never be mine in justice, though it might in law. I abandon to you, then, what is absolutely superfluous to me. Let there be no opposition, and no discussion about it; let us agree amongst each other, and decide the point at once.'

'This is acting on first impulses; you must take days to consider such a matter, ere your word can be regarded as valid.'

'Oh! if all you doubt is my sincerity, I am easy: you see the justice of the case?'

'I *do* see a certain justice; but it is contrary to all custom. Besides, the entire fortune is your right: my uncle gained it by his own efforts; he was free to leave it to whom he would: he left it to you. After all, justice permits you to keep it: you may, with a clear conscience, consider it absolutely your own.'

'With me,' said I, 'it is fully as much a matter of feeling as of conscience: I must indulge my feelings; I so seldom have had an opportunity of doing so. Were you to argue, object, and annoy me for a year, I could not forego the delicious pleasure of which I have caught a glimpse—that of repaying, in part, a mighty obligation, and winning to myself life-long friends.'

'You think so now,' rejoined St. John; 'because you do not know what it is to possess, nor consequently to enjoy wealth: you cannot form a notion of the importance twenty thousand pounds would give you; of the place it would enable you to take in society; of the prospects it would open to you: you cannot——'

'And you,' I interrupted, 'cannot at all imagine the craving I have for fraternal and sisterly love. I never had a home, I never had brothers or sisters; I must and will have them now: you are not reluctant to admit me and own me, are you?'

'Jane: I will be your brother—my sisters will be your sisters—without stipulating for this sacrifice of your just rights.'

'Brother? Yes; at the distance of a thousand leagues! Sisters? Yes; slaving amongst strangers! I, wealthy—gorged with gold I never earned and do not merit! You, penniless! Famous equality and fraternisation! Close union! Intimate attachment!'

'But, Jane, your aspirations after family ties and domestic happiness may be realised otherwise than by the means you contemplate: you may marry.'

'Nonsense again! Marry! I don't want to marry, and never shall marry.'

'That is saying too much: such hazardous affirmations are a proof of the excitement under which you labour.'

'It is not saying too much: I know what I feel, and how averse are my inclinations to the bare thought of marriage. No one would take me for love; and I will not be regarded in the light of a mere money-speculation. And I do not want a stranger—unsympathising alien, different from me; I want my kindred: those with whom I have full fellow-feeling. Say again you will be my brother: when you uttered the words I was satisfied, happy; repeat them, if you can repeat them sincerely.'

'I think I can. I know I have always loved my own sisters; and I know on what my affection for them is grounded,—respect for their worth and admiration of their talents. You too have principle and mind: your tastes and habits resemble Diana's and Mary's; your presence is always agreeable to me; in your conversation I have already for some time found a salutary solace. I feel I can easily and naturally make room in my heart for you, as my third and youngest sister.'

'Thank you: that contents me for to-night. Now you had better go; for if you stay longer you will perhaps irritate me afresh by some mistrustful scruple.'

'And the school, Miss Eyre? It must now be shut up, I suppose?'

'No. I will retain my post of mistress till you get a substitute.'

He smiled approbation: we shook hands, and he took leave.

I need not narrate in detail the further struggles I had and arguments I used to get matters regarding the legacy settled as I wished. My task was a very hard one: but, as I was absolutely resolved—as my cousins saw at length that my mind was really and immutably fixed on making a just division of the property—as they must in their own hearts have felt the equity of the intention; and must, besides, have been innately conscious that in my place they would have done precisely what I wished to do—they yielded at length so far as to consent to put the affair to arbitration. The judges chosen were Mr. Oliver and an able lawyer: both coincided in my opinion: I carried my point. The instruments of transfer were drawn out: St. John, Diana, Mary, and I, each became possessed of a competency.

CHAPTER XXXIV

It was near Christmas by the time all was settled: the season of general holiday approached. I now closed Morton school, taking care that the parting should not be barren on my side. Good fortune opens the hand as well as the heart wonderfully; and to give somewhat when we have largely received, is but to afford a vent to the unusual ebullition of the sensations. I had long felt with pleasure that many of my rustic scholars liked me, and when we parted that consciousness was confirmed: they manifested their affection plainly and strongly. Deep was my gratification to find I had really a place in their unsophisticated hearts: I promised them that never a week should pass in future that I did not visit them, and give them an hour's teaching in their school.

Mr. Rivers came up, as—having seen the classes, now numbering sixty girls, file out before me, and locked the door—I stood with the key in my hand, exchanging a few words of special farewell with some half-dozen of my best scholars: as decent, respectable, modest, and well-informed young women as could be found in the ranks of the British peasantry. And that is saying a great deal; for after all the British peasantry are the best taught, best mannered, most self-respecting of any in Europe: since those days I have seen paysannes and Bäuerinnen: and the best of them seemed to me ignorant, coarse, and besotted, compared with my Morton girls.

'Do you consider you have got your reward for a season of exertion?' asked Mr. Rivers when they were gone.

'Does not the consciousness of having done some real good in your day and generation give pleasure?'

'Doubtless.'

'And you have only toiled a few months! Would not a life devoted to the task of regenerating your race be well spent?'

'Yes,' I said; 'but I could not go on for ever so: I want to enjoy my own faculties as well as to cultivate those of other people. I must enjoy them now; don't recall either my mind or body to the school: I am out of it, and disposed for full holiday.'

He looked grave. 'What now? What sudden eagerness is this you evince? What are you going to do?'

'To be active: as active as I can. And first I must beg you to set Hannah at liberty, and get somebody else to wait on you.'

'Do you want her?'

'Yes, to go with me to Moor House: Diana and Mary will be at home in a week, and I want to have everything in order against their arrival.'

'I understand: I thought you were for flying off on some excursion. It is better so: Hannah shall go with you.'

'Tell her to be ready by to-morrow then; and here is the schoolroom key: I will give you the key of my cottage in the morning.'

He took it. 'You give it up very gleefully,' said he: 'I don't quite understand your light-heartedness; because I cannot tell what employment you propose to yourself as a substitute for the one you are relinquishing. What aim, what purpose, what ambition in life have you now?'

'My first aim will be to *clean down* (do you comprehend the full force of the expression?) to *clean down* Moor House from chamber to cellar; my next to rub it up with beeswax, oil, and an indefinite number of cloths, till it glitters again; my third, to arrange every chair, table, bed, carpet, with mathematical precision; afterwards I shall go near to ruin you in coals and peat to keep up good fires in every room;

and lastly, the two days preceding that on which your sisters are expected will be devoted by Hannah and me to such a beating of eggs, sorting of currants, grating of spices, compounding of Christmas cakes, chopping up of materials for mince-pies, and solemnising of other culinary rites, as words can convey but an inadequate notion of to the uninitiated like you. My purpose, in short, is to have all things in an absolutely perfect state of readiness for Diana and Mary before next Thursday; and my ambition is to give them a beau-ideal of a welcome when they come.'

St. John smiled slightly: still he was dissatisfied.

'It is all very well for the present,' said he: 'but seriously, I trust that when the first flush of vivacity is over you will look a little higher than domestic endearments and households joys.'

'The best things the world has!' I interrupted.

'No, Jane, no: this world is not the scene of fruition; do not attempt to make it so: nor of rest; do not turn slothful.'

'I mean, on the contrary, to be busy.'

'Jane, I excuse you for the present: two months' grace I allow you for the full enjoyment of your new position, and for pleasing yourself with this late-found charm of relationship; but *then* I hope you will begin to look beyond Moor House and Morton, and sisterly society, and the selfish calm and sensual comfort of civilised affluence I hope your energies will then once more trouble you with their strength.'

I looked at him with surprise.

'St. John,' I said, 'I think you are almost wicked to talk so. I am disposed to be as content as a queen, and you try to stir me up to restlessness! To what end?'

'To the end of turning to profit the talents which God has committed to your keeping; and of which He will surely one day demand a strict account. Jane, I shall watch you closely and anxiously—I warn you of that. And try to restrain the disproportionate fervour with which you throw yourself into common-place home pleasures. Don't cling so tenaciously to ties of the flesh; save your constancy and ardour for an adequate cause; forbear to waste them on trite transient objects. Do you hear, Jane?'

'Yes; just as if you were speaking Greek. I feel I have adequate cause to be happy, and I *will* be happy. Good-bye!'

Happy at Moor House I was, and hard I worked; and so did Hannah: she was charmed to see how jovial I could be amidst the bustle of a house turned topsy-turvy—how I could brush, and dust, and clean, and cook. And really after a day or two of confusion worse confounded it was delightful, by degrees, to invoke order from the chaos ourselves had made. I had previously taken a journey to S—— to purchase some new furniture: my cousins having given me carte blanche to effect what alterations I pleased, and a sum having been set aside for that purpose. The ordinary sitting-room and bedrooms I left much as they were: for I knew Diana and Mary would derive more pleasure from seeing again the old homely tables and chairs and beds than from the spectacle of the smartest innovations. Still some novelty was necessary, to give to their return the piquancy with which I wished it to be invested. Dark handsome new carpets and curtains, an arrangement of some carefully selected antique ornaments in porcelain and bronze, new coverings, and mirrors, and dressing-cases for the toilet-tables, answered the end: they looked fresh without being glaring. A spare parlour and bedroom I refurnished entirely with old mahogany and crimson upholstery: I laid canvas on the passage and carpets on the stairs. When all was finished, I thought Moor House as complete a model of bright modest snugness within as it was, at this season, a specimen of wintry waste and desert dreariness without.

The eventful Thursday at length came. They were expected about dark, and ere dusk fires were lit upstairs and below; the kitchen was in perfect trim; Hannah and I were dressed, and all was in readiness.

St John arrived first. I had entreated him to keep quite clear of the house till everything was arranged: and, indeed, the bare idea of the commotion, at once sordid and trivial, going on within its walls sufficed to scare him to estrangement. He found me in the kitchen, watching the progress of certain cakes for tea, then baking. Approaching the hearth, he asked, 'If I was at last satisfied with housemaid's work?' I answered by inviting him to accompany me on a general inspection of the result of my labours. With some difficulty I got him to make the tour of the house. He just looked in at the doors I opened; and when he had wandered upstairs and downstairs, he said I must have gone through a great deal of fatigue and trouble to have effected such considerable changes in so short a time: but not a syllable did he utter indicating pleasure in the improved aspect of his abode.

This silence damped me. I thought perhaps the alterations had disturbed some old associations he valued. I inquired whether this was the case: no doubt in a somewhat crestfallen tone.

'Not at all; he had, on the contrary, remarked that I had scrupulously respected every association: he feared, indeed, I must have bestowed more thought on the matter than it was worth. How many minutes, for instance, had I devoted to studying the arrangement of this very room?—By-the-bye, could I tell him where such a book was?'

I showed him the volume on the shelf: he took it down, and withdrawing to his accustomed window recess, he began to read it.

Now, I did not like this, reader. St. John was a good man; but I began to feel he had spoken truth of himself when he said he was hard and cold. The humanities and amenities of life had no attraction for him—its peaceful enjoyments no charm. Literally, he lived only to aspire—after what was good and great, certainly; but still he would never rest; nor approve of others resting round him. As I looked at his lofty forehead, still and pale as a white stone—at his fine lineaments fixed in study—I comprehended all at once that he would hardly make a good husband: that it would be a trying thing to be his wife. I understood, as by inspiration, the nature of his love for Miss Oliver; I agreed with him that it was but a love of the senses. I comprehended how he should despise himself for the feverish influence it exercised over him; how he should wish to stifle and destroy it; how he should mistrust its ever conducing permanently to his happiness, or hers. I saw he was of the material from which nature hews her heroes—Christian and Pagan—her lawgivers, her statesmen, her conquerors; a steadfast bulwark for great interests to rest upon; but, at the fireside, too often a cold cumbrous column, gloomy and out of place.

'This parlour is not his sphere,' I reflected; 'the Himalayan ridge, or Caffre bush, even the plague-cursed Guinea Coast swamp, would suit him better. Well may he eschew the calm of domestic life; it is not his element: there his faculties stagnate—they cannot develop or appear to advantage. It is in scenes of strife and danger—where courage is proved, and energy exercised, and fortitude tasked—that he will speak and move, the leader and superior. A merry child would have the advantage of him on this hearth. He is right to choose a missionary's career—I see it now.'

'They are coming! they are coming!' cried Hannah, throwing open the parlour door. At the same moment old Carlo barked joyfully. Out I ran. It was now dark: but a rumbling of wheels was audible. Hannah soon had a lantern lit. The vehicle had stopped at the wicket; the driver opened the door: first one well-known form, then another, stepped out. In a minute I had my face under their bonnets, in contact first with Mary's soft cheek, then with Diana's flowing curls. They laughed—kissed me—then Hannah: patted Carlo, who was half wild with delight, asked eagerly if all was well; and being assured in the affirmative, hastened into the house.

They were stiff with their long and jolting drive from

Whitcross, and chilled with the frosty night-air; but their pleasant countenances expanded to the cheerful fire-light. While the driver and Hannah brought in the boxes, they demanded St. John. At this moment he advanced from the parlour. They both threw their arms round his neck at once. He gave each one quiet kiss, said in a low tone a few words of welcome, stood a while to be talked to, and then, intimating that he supposed they would soon rejoin him in the parlour, withdrew there as to a place of refuge.

I had lit their candles to go upstairs, but Diana had first to give hospitable orders respecting the driver; this done, both followed me. They were delighted with the renovation and decoration of their rooms; with the new drapery, and fresh carpets, and rich tinted china vases: they expressed their gratification ungrudgingly. I had the pleasure of feeling that my arrangements met their wishes exactly; and that what I had done added a vivid charm to their joyous return home.

Sweet was that evening. My cousins, full of exhilaration, were so eloquent in narrative and comment, that their fluency covered St. John's taciturnity: he was sincerely glad to see his sisters; but in their glow of fervour and flow of joy he could not sympathise. The event of the day—that is, the return of Diana and Mary—pleased him; but the accompaniments of that event, the glad tumult, the garrulous glee of reception, irked him: I saw he wished the calmer morrow was come. In the very meridian of the night's enjoyment, about an hour after tea, a rap was heard at the door. Hannah entered with the intimation that 'a poor lad was come, at that unlikely time, to fetch Mr. Rivers to see his mother, who was drawing away.'

'Where does she live, Hannah?'

'Clear up at Whitcross Brow, almost four miles off; and moor and moss all the way.'

'Tell him I will go.'

'I'm sure, sir, you had better not. It's the worst road to travel after dark that can be: there's no track at all over the bog. And then it is such a bitter night—the keenest wind you ever felt. You had better send word, sir, that you will be there in the morning.'

But he was already in the passage, putting on his cloak; and without one objection, one murmur, he departed. It was then nine o'clock: he did not return till midnight. Starved and tired enough he was: but he looked happier than when he set out. He had performed an act of duty; made an exertion; felt his own strength to do and deny, and was on better terms with himself.

I am afraid the whole of the ensuing week tried his patience. It was Christmas week: we took to no settled employment, but spent it in a sort of merry domestic dissipation. The air of the moors, the freedom of home, the dawn of prosperity, acted on Diana and Mary's spirits like some life-giving elixir: they were gay from morning till noon, and from noon till night. They could always talk; and their discourse, witty, pithy, original, had such charms for me, that I preferred listening to, and sharing in it, to doing anything else. St. John did not rebuke our vivacity; but he escaped from it: he was seldom in the house; his parish was large, the population scattered, and he found daily business in visiting the sick and poor in its different districts.

One morning, at breakfast, Diana, after looking a little pensive for some minutes, asked him, 'If his plans were yet unchanged?'

'Unchanged and unchangeable,' was the reply. And he proceeded to inform us that his departure from England was now definitively fixed for the ensuing year.

'And Rosamond Oliver?' suggested Mary: the words seeming to escape her lips involuntarily: for no sooner had she uttered them, than she made a gesture as if wishing to recall them. St. John had a book in his hand—it was his unsocial custom to read at meals—he closed it, and looked up.

'Rosamond Oliver,' said he, 'is about to be married to

Mr. Granby; one of the best connected and most estimable residents in S——, grandson and heir to Sir Frederic Granby: I had the intelligence from her father yesterday.'

His sisters looked at each other, and at me; we all three looked at him: he was serene as glass.

'The match must have been got up hastily,' said Diana: 'they cannot have known each other long.'

'But two months: they met in October at the county ball at S——. But where there are no obstacles to a union, as in the present case, where the connection is in every point desirable, delays are unnecessary: they will be married as soon as S—— Place, which Sir Frederic gives up to them, can be refitted for their reception.'

The first time I found St. John alone after this communication, I felt tempted to inquire if the event distressed him: but he seemed so little to need sympathy, that, so far from venturing to offer him more, I experienced some shame at the recollection of what I had already hazarded. Besides, I was out of practice in talking to him: his reserve was again frozen over, and my frankness was congealed beneath it. He had not kept his promise of treating me like his sisters; he continually made little chilling differences between us, which did not at all tend to the development of cordiality: in short, now that I was acknowledged his kinswoman, and lived under the same roof with him, I felt the distance between us to be far greater than when he had known me only as the village schoolmistress. When I remembered how far I had once been admitted to his confidence, I could hardly comprehend his present frigidity.

Such being the case, I felt not a little surprised when he raised his head suddenly from the desk over which he was stooping, and said:—'You see, Jane, the battle is fought and the victory won.'

Startled at being thus addressed, I did not immediately reply: after a moment's hesitation I answered:—'But are you sure you are not in the position of those conquerors whose triumphs have cost them too dear? Would not such another ruin you?'

'I think not; and if I were, it does not much signify; I shall never be called upon to contend for such another. The event of the conflict is decisive: my way is now clear; I thank God for it!' So saying, he returned to his papers and his silence.

As our mutual happiness (*i.e.* Diana's, Mary's, and mine) settled into a quieter character, and we resumed our usual habits and regular studies, St. John stayed more at home: he sat with us in the same room, sometimes for hours together. While Mary drew, Diana pursued a course of encyclopædic reading she had (to my awe and amazement) undertaken, and I fagged away at German, he pondered a mystic lore of his own: that of some Eastern tongue, the acquisition of which he thought necessary to his plans.

Thus engaged, he appeared, sitting in his own recess, quiet and absorbed enough; but that blue eye of his had a habit of leaving the outlandish-looking grammar, and wandering over, and sometimes fixing upon us, his fellow students, with a curious intensity of observation: if caught, it would be instantly withdrawn; yet ever and anon it returned searchingly to our table. I wondered what it meant: I wondered, too, at the punctual satisfaction he never failed to exhibit on an occasion that seemed to me of small moment, namely,—my weekly visit to Morton school; and still more was I puzzled when, if the day was unfavourable, if there was snow, or rain, or high wind, and his sisters urged me not to go, he would invariably make light of their solicitude, and encourage me to accomplish the task without regard to the elements.

'Jane is not such a weakling as you would make her,' he would say: 'she can bear a mountain blast, or a shower, or a few flakes of snow, as well as any of us. Her constitution is both sound and elastic;—better calculated to endure variations of climate than many more robust.'

And when I returned, sometimes a good deal tired and not a little weather-beaten, I never dared complain, because I saw that to murmur would be to vex him: on all occasions fortitude pleased him; the reverse was a special annoyance.

One afternoon, however, I got leave to stay at home, because I really had a cold. His sisters were gone to Morton in my stead: I sat reading Schiller; he, deciphering his crabbed Oriental scrolls. As I exchanged a translation for an exercise, I happened to look his way: there I found myself under the influence of the ever-watchful blue eye. How long it had been searching me through and through, and over and over, I cannot tell: so keen was it, and yet so cold, I felt for the moment superstitious—as if I were sitting in the room with something uncanny.

'Jane, what are you doing?'

'Learning German.'

'I want you to give up German, and learn Hindostanee.'

'You are not in earnest?'

'In such earnest that I must have it so: and I will tell you why.'

He then went on to explain that Hindostanee was the language he was himself at present studying: that, as he advanced, he was apt to forget the commencement; that it would assist him greatly to have a pupil with whom he might again and again go over the elements, and so fix them thoroughly in his mind; that his choice had hovered for some time between me and his sisters; but that he had fixed on me, because he saw I could sit at a task the longest of the three. Would I do him this favour? I should not, perhaps, have to make the sacrifice long; as it wanted now barely three months to his departure.

St. John was not a man to be lightly refused: you felt that every impression made on him, either for pain or pleasure, was deep-graved and permanent. I consented. When Diana and Mary returned, the former found her scholar transferred from her to her brother: she laughed;

and both she and Mary agreed that St. John should never have persuaded them to such a step. He answered, quietly: 'I know it.'

I found him a very patient, very forbearing, and yet an exacting master: he expected me to do a great deal; and when I fulfilled his expectations, he, in his own way, fully testified his approbation. By degrees, he acquired a certain influence over me that took away my liberty of mind: his praise and notice were more restraining than his indifference. I could no longer talk or laugh freely when he was by, because a tiresomely importunate instinct reminded me that vivacity (at least in me) was distasteful to him. I was so fully aware that only serious moods and occupations were acceptable, that in his presence every effort to sustain or follow any other became vain: I fell under a freezing spell. When he said 'go,' I went; 'come,' I came; 'do this,' I did it. But I did not love my servitude: I wished, many a time, he had continued to neglect me.

One evening when, at bedtime, his sisters and I stood round him, bidding him good-night, he kissed each of them, as was his custom; and, as was equally his custom, he gave me his hand. Diana, who chanced to be in a frolicsome humour (*she* was not painfully controlled by his will; for hers, in another way, was as strong), exclaimed:—'St. John! you used to call Jane your third sister, but you don't treat her as such: you should kiss her too.'

She pushed me towards him. I thought Diana very provoking, and felt uncomfortably confused; and while I was thus thinking and feeling, St. John bent his head; his Greek face was brought to a level with mine, his eyes questioned my eyes piercingly—he kissed me. There are no such things as marble kisses, or ice kisses, or I should say my ecclesiastical cousin's salute belonged to one of these classes; but there may be experiment kisses, and his was an experiment kiss. When given, he viewed me to learn the result; it was not striking: I am sure I did not blush; perhaps I might have turned a little pale, for I felt as if this kiss were a seal affixed to my fetters. He never omitted the ceremony afterwards, and the gravity and quiescence with which I underwent it seemed to invest it for him with a certain charm.

As for me, I daily wished more to please him: but to do so, I felt daily more and more that I must disown half my nature, stifle half my faculties, wrest my tastes from their original bent, force myself to the adoption of pursuits for which I had no natural vocation. He wanted to train me to an elevation I could never reach; it racked me hourly to aspire to the standard he uplifted. The thing was as impossible as to mould my irregular features to his correct and classic pattern, to give to my changeable green eyes the sea-blue tint and solemn lustre of his own.

Not his ascendancy alone, however, held me in thrall at present. Of late it had been easy enough for me to look sad: a cankering evil sat at my heart and drained my happiness at its source—the evil of suspense.

Perhaps you think I had forgotten Mr. Rochester, reader, amidst these changes of place and fortune. Not for a moment. His idea was still with me; because it was not a vapour sunshine could disperse; nor a sand-traced effigy storms could wash away: it was a name graven on a tablet, fated to last as long as the marble it inscribed. The craving to know what had become of him followed me everywhere; when I was at Morton, I re-entered my cottage every evening to think of that: and now at Moor House, I sought my bedroom each night to brood over it.

In the course of my necessary correspondence with Mr. Briggs about the will, I had inquired if he knew anything of Mr. Rochester's present residence and state of health; but, as St. John had conjectured, he was quite ignorant of all concerning him. I then wrote to Mrs. Fairfax, entreating information on the subject. I had calculated with certainty on this step answering my end: I felt sure it would elicit an early answer. I was astonished when a fortnight passed without reply; but when two months wore away, and day after day the post arrived and brought nothing for me, I fell a prey to the keenest anxiety.

I wrote again: there was a chance of my first letter having missed. Renewed hope followed renewed effort: it shone like the former for some weeks, then, like it, it faded, flickered: not a line, not a word reached me. When half a year wasted in vain expectancy my hope died out: and then I felt dark indeed.

A fine spring shone round me, which I could not enjoy. Summer approached; Diana tried to cheer me: she said I looked ill, and wished to accompany me to the sea-side. This St. John opposed; he said I did not want dissipation, I wanted employment; my present life was too purposeless; I required an aim; and, I suppose, by way of supplying deficiencies, he prolonged still further my lessons in Hindostanee, and grew more urgent in requiring their accomplishment: and I, like a fool, never thought of resisting him—I could not resist him.

One day I had come to my studies in lower spirits than usual; the ebb was occasioned by a poignantly felt disappointment: Hannah had told me in the morning there was a letter for me, and when I went down to take it, almost certain that the long looked-for tidings were vouchsafed me at last, I found only an unimportant note from Mr. Briggs on business. The bitter check had wrung from me some tears; and now as I sat poring over the crabbed characters and flourishing tropes of an Indian scribe, my eyes filled again.

St. John called me to his side to read; in attempting to do this my voice failed me: words were lost in sobs. He and I were the only occupants of the parlour: Diana was practising her music in the drawing-room, Mary was gardening—it was a very fine May-day, clear, sunny, and breezy. My companion expressed no surprise at this emotion, nor did he question me as to its cause; he only said:—'We will wait a few minutes, Jane, till you are more composed.' And while I smothered the paroxysm with all haste, he sat calm and patient, leaning on his desk and looking like a physician watching with the eye of science an expected and fully-understood crisis in a patient's malady. Having stifled my sobs, wiped my eyes, and muttered something about not being very well that morning, I resumed my task, and succeeded in completing it. St. John put away my books and his, locked his desk, and said:—'Now, Jane, you shall take a walk; and with me.'

'I will call Diana and Mary.'

'No. I want only one companion this morning, and that must be you: put on your things; go out by the kitchen door; take the road towards the head of Marsh Glen: I will join you in a moment.'

I know no medium: I never in my life have known any medium in my dealings with positive, hard characters, antagonistic to my own, between absolute submission and determined revolt. I have always faithfully observed the one, up to the very moment of bursting, sometimes with volcanic vehemence, into the other; and as neither present circumstances warranted, nor my present mood inclined me to mutiny, I observed careful obedience to St. John's directions; and in ten minutes I was treading the wild track of the glen, side by side with him.

The breeze was from the west: it came over the hill, sweet with scents of heath and rush; the sky was of stainless blue; the stream descending the ravine, swelled with past spring rains, poured along plentiful and clear, catching golden gleams from the sun, and sapphire tints from the firmament. As we advanced and left the track, we trod a soft turf, mossy fine and emerald green, minutely enamelled with a tiny white flower and spangled with a star-like yellow blossom: the hills, meantime, shut us quite in; for the glen, towards its head, wound to their very core.

'Let us rest here,' said St. John, as we reached the first stragglers of a battalion of rocks, guarding a sort of pass, beyond which the beck rushed down a waterfall; and where, still a little further, the mountain shook off turf and flower, had only heath for raiment, and crag for gem—where it exaggerated the wild to the savage, and exchanged the fresh for the frowning—where it guarded the forlorn hope of solitude, and a last refuge for silence.

I took a seat: St. John stood near me. He looked up the pass and down the hollow; his glance wandered away with the stream, and returned to traverse the unclouded heaven which coloured it: he removed his hat, let the breeze stir his hair and kiss his brow. He seemed in communion with the genius of the haunt: with his eye he bade farewell to something.

'And I shall see it again,' he said aloud, 'in dreams, when I sleep by the Ganges: and again, in a more remote hour—when another slumber overcomes me—on the shore of a darker stream.'

Strange words of a strange love! An austere patriot's passion for his fatherland! He sat down; for half an hour we never spoke; neither he to me nor I to him: that interval past, he recommenced:—'Jane, I go in six weeks; I have taken my berth in an East Indiaman which sails on the twentieth of June.'

'God will protect you; for you have undertaken His work,' I answered.

'Yes,' said he, 'there is my glory and joy. I am the servant of an infallible master. I am not going out under human guidance, subject to the defective laws and erring control of my feeble fellow-worms: my king, my lawgiver, my captain, is the All-perfect. It seems strange to me that all round me do not burn to enlist under the same banner,—to join in the same enterprise.'

'All have not your powers: and it would be folly for the feeble to wish to march with the strong.'

'I do not speak to the feeble, or think of them: I address only such as are worthy of the work, and competent to accomplish it.'

'Those are few in number, and difficult to discover.'

'You say truly: but when found, it is right to stir them up—to urge and exhort them to the effort—to show them what their gifts are, and why they were given—to speak Heaven's message in their ear,—to offer them, direct from God, a place in the ranks of His chosen.'

'If they are really qualified for the task, will not their own hearts be the first to inform them of it?'

I felt as if an awful charm was framing round and gathering over me: I trembled to hear some fatal word spoken which would at once declare and rivet the spell.

'And what does *your* heart say?' demanded St. John.

'My heart is mute,—my heart is mute,' I answered, struck and thrilled.

'Then I must speak for it,' continued the deep, relentless voice. 'Jane, come with me to India: come as my help-meet and fellow-labourer.'

The glen and sky spun round: the hills heaved! It was as if I had heard a summons from Heaven—as if a visionary messenger, like him of Macedonia, had enounced, 'Come over and help us!' But I was no apostle,—I could not behold the herald,—I could not receive his call.

'Oh, St. John!' I cried, 'have some mercy!'

I appealed to one who, in the discharge of what he believed his duty, knew neither mercy nor remorse. He continued:—'God and nature intended you for a missionary's wife. It is not personal, but mental endowments they have given you: you are formed for labour, not for love. A missionary's wife you must—shall be. You shall be mine: I claim you—not for my pleasure, but for my Sovereign's service.'

'I am not fit for it: I have no vocation,' I said.

He had calculated on these first objections: he was not irritated by them. Indeed, as he leaned back against the crag behind him, folded his arms on his chest, and fixed his countenance, I saw he was prepared for a long and trying opposition, and had taken in a stock of patience to last him to its close—resolved, however, that that close should be conquest for him.

'Humility, Jane,' said he, 'is the groundwork of Christian virtues: you say right that you are not fit for the work. Who is fit for it? Or who, that ever was truly called, believed himself worthy of the summons? I, for instance, am but dust and ashes. With St. Paul, I acknowledge myself the chiefest of sinners: but I do not suffer this sense of my personal vileness to daunt me. I know my Leader: that He is just as well as mighty; and while He has chosen a feeble instrument to perform a great task, He will, from the boundless stores of His providence, supply the inadequacy of the means to the end. Think like me, Jane—trust like me. It is the Rock of Ages I ask you to lean on: do not doubt but it will bear the weight of your human weakness.'

'I do not understand a missionary life: I have never studied missionary labours.'

'There, I, humble as I am, can give you the aid you want: I can set you your task from hour to hour; stand by you always; help you from moment to moment. This I could do in the beginning: soon (for I know your powers) you would be as strong and apt as myself, and would not require my help.'

'But my powers—where are they for this undertaking? I do not feel them. Nothing speaks or stirs in me while you talk. I am sensible of no light kindling—no life quickening—no voice counselling or cheering. Oh, I wish I could make you see how much my mind is at this moment like a rayless dungeon, with one shrinking fear fettered in its depths—the fear of being persuaded by you to attempt what I cannot accomplish!'

'I have an answer for you—hear it. I have watched you ever since we first met: I have made you my study for ten months. I have proved you in that time by sundry tests: and what have I seen and elicited? In the village school I found you could perform well, punctually, uprightly, labour uncongenial to your habits and inclinations; I saw you could perform it with capacity and tact: you could win while you controlled. In the calm with which you learnt you had become suddenly rich, I read a mind clear of the vice of Demas:—lucre had no undue power over you. In the resolute readiness with which you cut your wealth into four shares, keeping but one to yourself, and relinquishing the three others to the claim of abstract justice, I recognised a soul that revelled in the flame and excitement of sacrifice. In the tractability with which, at my wish, you forsook a study in which you were interested, and adopted another because it interested me; in the untiring assiduity with which you have since persevered in it—in the unflagging energy and unshaken temper with which you have met its difficulties—I acknowledge the complement of the qualities I seek. Jane, you are docile, diligent, disinterested, faithful, constant, and courageous; very gentle, and very heroic: cease to mistrust yourself—I can trust you unreservedly. As a conductress of Indian schools, and a helper amongst Indian women, your assistance will be to me invaluable.'

My iron shroud contracted round me; persuasion advanced with slow sure step. Shut my eyes as I would, these last words of his succeeded in making the way, which had seemed blocked up, comparatively clear. My work, which had appeared so vague, so hopelessly diffuse, condensed itself as he proceeded, and assumed a definite form under his shaping hand. He waited for an answer. I demanded a quarter of an hour to think, before I again hazarded a reply

'Very willingly,' he rejoined: and rising, he strode a little distance up the pass, threw himself down on a swell of heath, and there lay still.

'I *can* do what he wants me to do: I am forced to see and acknowledge that,' I meditated—'That is, if life be spared me. But I feel mine is not the existence to be long protracted under an Indian sun.—What then? He does not care for that: when my time came to die he would resign me, in all serenity and sanctity, to the God who gave me. The case is very plain before me. In leaving England, I should leave a loved but empty land—Mr. Rochester is not there: and if he were, what is, what can that ever be to me? My business is to live without him now: nothing so absurd, so weak as to drag on from day to day, as if I were waiting some impossible change in circumstances, which might reunite me to him. Of course (as St. John once said) I must seek another interest in life to replace the one lost: is not the occupation he now offers me truly the most glorious man can adopt or God assign? Is it not, by its noble cares and sublime results, the one best calculated to fill the void left by uptorn affections and demolished hopes? I believe I must say, Yes—and yet I shudder. Alas! If I join St. John, I abandon half myself: if I go to India, I go to premature death. And how will the interval between leaving England for India, and India for the grave, be filled? Oh, I know well! That, too, is very clear to my vision. By straining to satisfy St. John till my sinews ache, I *shall* satisfy him—to the finest central point and farthest outward circle of his expectations. If I *do* go with him—if I *do* make the sacrifice he urges, I will make it absolutely: I will throw all on the altar—heart, vitals, the entire victim. He will never love me; but he shall approve me; I will show him energies he has not yet seen, resources he has never suspected. Yes: I can work as hard as he can; and with as little grudging.

'Consent, then, to his demand is possible: but for one item—one dreadful item. It is—that he asks me to be his wife, and has no more of a husband's heart for me than that frowning giant of a rock, down which the stream is foaming in yonder gorge. He prizes me as a soldier would a good weapon; and that is all. Unmarried to him, this would never grieve me; but can I let him complete his calculations—coolly put into practice his plans—go through the wedding ceremony? Can I receive from him the bridal ring, endure all the forms of love (which I doubt not he would scrupulously observe) and know that the spirit was quite absent? Can I bear the consciousness that every endearment he bestows is a sacrifice made on principle? No: such a martyrdom would be monstrous. I will never undergo it. As his sister, I might accompany him—not as his wife: I will tell him so.'

I looked towards the knoll: there he lay, still as a prostrate column; his face turned to me: his eye beaming watchful, and keen. He started to his feet, and approached me.

'I am ready to go to India, if I may go free.'

'Your answer requires a commentary,' he said; 'it is not clear.'

'You have hitherto been my adopted brother: I, your adopted sister; let us continue as such: you and I had better not marry.'

He shook his head. 'Adopted fraternity will not do in this case. If you were my real sister it would be different: I should take you and seek no wife. But as it is, either our union must be consecrated and sealed by marriage, or it cannot exist: practical obstacles oppose themselves to any other plan. Do you not see it, Jane? Consider a moment—your strong sense will guide you.'

I did consider: and still my sense, such as it was, directed me only to the fact that we did not love each other as man and wife should; and therefore it inferred we ought not to marry. I said so. 'St. John,' I returned, 'I regard you as a brother—you, me as a sister: so let us continue.'

'We cannot—we cannot,' he answered, with short, sharp determination: 'it would not do. You have said you will go with me to India: remember—you have said that.'

'Conditionally.'

'Well—well. To the main point—the departure with me from England, the co-operation with me in my future labours—you do not object. You have already as good as put your hand to the plough: you are too consistent to withdraw it. You have but one end to keep in view—how the work you have undertaken can best be done. Simplify your complicated interests, feelings, thoughts, wishes, aims; merge all considerations in one purpose: that of fulfilling with effect—with power—the mission of your great Master. To do so, you must have a coadjutor—not a brother; that is a loose tie: but a husband. I, too, do not want a sister; a sister might any day be taken from me. I want a wife: the sole helpmeet I can influence efficiently in life and retain absolutely till death.'

I shuddered as he spoke: I felt his influence in my marrow—his hold on my limbs.

'Seek one elsewhere than in me, St. John: seek one fitted to you.'

'One fitted to my purpose, you mean—fitted to my vocation. Again I tell you it is not the insignificant private individual—the mere man, with the man's selfish senses—I wish to mate: it is the missionary.'

'And I will give the missionary my energies—it is all he wants—but not myself: that would be only adding the husk and shell to the kernel. For them he has no use: I retain them.'

'You cannot—you ought not. Do you think God will be satisfied with half an oblation? Will He accept a mutilated sacrifice? It is the cause of God I advocate: it is under His standard I enlist you. I cannot accept on His behalf a divided allegiance: it must be entire.'

'Oh! I will give my heart to God,' I said. '*You* do not want it.'

I will not swear, reader, that there was not something of repressed sarcasm both in the tone in which I uttered this sentence, and in the feeling that accompanied it. I had silently feared St. John till now, because I had not understood him. He had held me in awe, because he had held me in doubt. How much of him was saint, how much mortal, I could not heretofore tell: but revelations were being made in this conference: the analysis of his nature was proceeding before my eyes. I saw his fallibilities: I comprehended them. I understood that, sitting there where I did, on the bank of heath, and with that handsome form before me, I sat at the feet of a man, erring as I. The veil fell from his hardness and despotism. Having felt in him the presence of these qualities, I felt his imperfection, and took courage. I was with an equal—one with whom I might argue—one whom, if I saw good, I might resist.

He was silent after I had uttered the last sentence, and I presently risked an upward glance at his countenance. His eye, bent on me, expressed at once stern surprise and keen inquiry. 'Is she sarcastic, and sarcastic to *me!*' it seemed to say. 'What does this signify?'

'Do not let us forget that this is a solemn matter,' he said ere long: 'one of which we may neither think nor talk lightly without sin. I trust, Jane, you are in earnest when you say you will give your heart to God: it is all I want. Once wrench your heart from man, and fix it on your Maker, the advancement of that Maker's spiritual kingdom on earth will be your chief delight and endeavour; you will be ready to do at once whatever furthers that end. You will see what impetus would be given to your efforts and mine by our physical and mental union in marriage: the only union that gives a character of permanent conformity to the destinies and designs of human beings: and, passing over all minor caprices—all trivial difficulties and delicacies of feeling—all scruple about the degree, kind, strength or tenderness of mere personal inclination—you will hasten to enter into that union at once.'

'Shall I?' I said briefly; and I looked at his features, beautiful in their harmony, but strangely formidable in their still severity; at his brow, commanding but not open; at his eyes, bright and deep, and searching, but never soft; at his tall, imposing figure; and fancied myself in idea *his wife*. Oh! it would never do! As his curate, his comrade, all would be right: I would cross oceans with him in that capacity; toil under eastern suns, in Asian deserts with him in that office; admire and emulate his courage and devotion, and vigour; accommodate quietly to his masterhood; smile undisturbed at his ineradicable ambition; discriminate the Christian from the man: profoundly esteem the one, and freely forgive the other. I should suffer often, no doubt, attached to him only in this capacity: my body would be under rather a stringent yoke, but my heart and mind would be free. I should still have my unblighted self to turn to: my natural unenslaved feelings with which to communicate in moments of loneliness. There would be recesses in my mind which would be only mine, to which he never came; and sentiments growing there fresh and sheltered, which his austerity could never blight, nor his measured warrior-march trample down: but as his wife—at his side always, and always restrained, and always checked—forced to keep the fire of my nature continually low, to compel it to burn inwardly and never utter a cry, though the imprisoned flame consumed vital after vital—*this* would be unendurable.

'St. John! I exclaimed, when I had got so far in my meditation.

'Well?' he answered icily.

'I repeat: I freely consent to go with you as your fellow-missionary; but not as your wife; I cannot marry you and become part of you.'

'A part of me you must become,' he answered steadily; 'otherwise the whole bargain is void. How can I, a man not yet thirty, take out with me to India a girl of nineteen, unless she be married to me? How can we be for ever together—sometimes in solitudes, sometimes amidst savage tribes—and unwed?'

'Very well,' I said shortly; 'under the circumstances, quite as well as if I were either your real sister, or a man and a clergyman like yourself.'

'It is known that you are not my sister; I cannot introduce you as such: to attempt it would be to fasten injurious suspicions on us both. And for the rest, though you have a man's vigorous brain, you have a woman's heart, and—it would not do.'

'It would do,' I affirmed with some disdain, 'perfectly well. I have a woman's heart; but not where you are concerned; for you I have only a comrade's constancy; a fellow-soldier's frankness, fidelity, fraternity, if you like; a neophyte's respect and submission to his hierophant: nothing more—don't fear.'

'It is what I want,' he said, speaking to himself; 'it is just what I want. And there are obstacles in the way: they must be hewn down. Jane, you would not repent marrying me; be certain of that; we *must* be married. I repeat it: there is no other way; and undoubtedly enough of love would follow upon marriage to render the union right even in your eyes.'

'I scorn your idea of love,' I could not help saying, as I rose up and stood before him, leaning my back against the rock. 'I scorn the counterfeit sentiment you offer: yes, St. John, and I scorn you when you offer it.'

He looked at me fixedly: compressing his well-cut lips while he did so. Whether he was incensed or surprised, or what, it was not easy to tell: he could command his countenance thoroughly.

'I scarcely expected to hear that expression from you,' he said: 'I think I have done and uttered nothing to deserve scorn.'

I was touched by his gentle tone, and overawed by his high, calm mien.

'Forgive me the words, St. John: but it is your own fault that I have been roused to speak so unguardedly. You have introduced a topic on which our natures are at variance—a topic we should never discuss: the very name of love is an apple of discord between us—if the reality were required what should we do? How should we feel? My dear cousin, abandon your scheme of marriage—forget it.'

'No,' said he; 'it is a long-cherished scheme, and the only one which can secure my great end: but I shall urge you no further at present. To-morrow I leave home for Cambridge: I have many friends there to whom I should wish to say farewell. I shall be absent a fortnight—take that space of time to consider my offer: and do not forget that if you reject it, it is not me you deny, but God. Through my means, He opens to you a noble career; as my wife only can you enter upon it. Refuse to be my wife, and you limit yourself for ever to a track of selfish ease and barren obscurity. Tremble lest in that case you should be numbered with those who have denied the faith, and are worse than infidels!'

He had done. Turning from me, he once more

> Looked to river, looked to hill:

But this time his feelings were all pent in his heart: I was not worthy to hear them uttered. As I walked by his side homeward, I read well in his iron silence all he felt towards me: the disappointment of an austere and despotic nature, which has met resistance where it expected submission—the disapprobation of a cool, inflexible judgment, which has detected in another feelings and views in which it has no power to sympathise: in short, as a man, he would have wished to coerce me into obedience: it was only as a sincere Christian he bore so patiently with my perversity, and allowed so long a space for reflection and repentance.

That night, after he had kissed his sisters, he thought proper to forget even to shake hands with me; but left the room in silence. I—who, though I had no love, had much friendship for him—was hurt by the marked omission: so much hurt that tears started to my eyes.

'I see you and St. John have been quarrelling, Jane,' said Diana, 'during your walk on the moor. But go after him; he is now lingering in the passage, expecting you—he will make it up.'

I have not much pride under such circumstances: I would always rather be happy than dignified; and I ran after him—he stood at the foot of the stairs.

'Good-night, St. John,' said I.

'Good-night, Jane,' he replied calmly.

'Then shake hands,' I added.

What a cold, loose touch he impressed on my fingers!

He was deeply displeased by what had occurred that day: cordiality would not warm, nor tears move him. No happy reconciliation was to be had with him—no cheering smile or generous word: but still the Christian was patient and placid; and when I asked him if he forgave me, he answered that he was not in the habit of cherishing the remembrance of vexation; that he had nothing to forgive: not having been offended.

And with that answer he left me. I would much rather he had knocked me down.

CHAPTER XXXV

He did not leave for Cambridge the next day, as he had said he would. He deferred his departure a whole week; and during that time he made me feel what severe punishment a good yet stern, a conscientious yet implacable man can inflict on one who has offended him. Without one overt act of hostility, one upbraiding word, he contrived to impress me momently with the conviction that I was put beyond the pale of his favour.

Not that St. John harboured a spirit of unchristian vindictiveness—not that he would have injured a hair of my head, if it had been fully in his power to do so. Both by nature and principle he was superior to the mean gratification of vengeance: he had forgiven me for saying I scorned him and his love, but he had not forgotten the words; and as long as he and I lived he never would forget them. I saw by his look, when he turned to me, that they were always written on the air between me and him; whenever I spoke, they sounded in my voice to his ear; and their echo toned every answer he gave me.

He did not abstain from conversing with me: he even called me as usual each morning to join him at his desk; and I fear the corrupt man within him had a pleasure unimparted to, and unshared by, the pure Christian, in evincing with what skill he could, while acting and speaking apparently just as usual, extract from every deed and every phrase the spirit of interest and approval which had formerly communicated a certain austere charm to his language and manner. To me, he was in reality become no longer flesh, but marble; his eye was a cold, bright, blue gem; his tongue, a speaking instrument—nothing more.

All this was torture to me—refined, lingering torture. It kept up a slow fire of indignation, and a trembling trouble of grief, which harassed and crushed me altogether. I felt how, if I were his wife, this good man, pure as the deep sunless source, could soon kill me: without drawing from my veins a single drop of blood, or receiving on his own crystal conscience the faintest stain of crime. Especially I felt this when I made any attempt to propitiate him. No ruth met my ruth. *He* experienced no suffering from estrangement—no yearning after reconciliation; and though, more than once, my fast falling tears blistered the page over which we both bent, they produced no more effect on him than if his heart had been really a matter of stone or metal. To his sisters, meantime, he was somewhat kinder than usual: as if afraid that mere coldness would not sufficiently convince me how completely I was banished and banned, he added the force of contrast: and this I am sure he did, not by malice, but on principle.

The night before he left home, happening to see him walking in the garden about sunset, and remembering, as I looked at him, that this man, alienated as he now was, had once saved my life, and that we were near relations, I was moved to make a last attempt to regain his friendship. I went out and approached him, as he stood leaning over the little gate: I spoke to the point at once.

'St. John, I am unhappy, because you are still angry with me. Let us be friends.'

'I hope we are friends,' was the unmoved reply; while he still watched the rising of the moon, which he had been contemplating as I approached.

'No, St. John, we are not friends as we were. You know that.'

'Are we not? That is wrong. For my part, I wish you no ill and all good.'

'I believe you, St. John; for I am sure you are incapable of wishing any one ill: but, as I am your kinswoman, I should desire somewhat more of affection than that sort of general philanthropy you extend to mere strangers.'

'Of course,' he said. 'Your wish is reasonable; and I am far from regarding you as a stranger.'

This, spoken in a cool, tranquil tone, was mortifying and baffling enough. Had I attended to the suggestions of pride and ire, I should immediately have left him: but something worked within me more strongly than those feelings could. I deeply venerated my cousin's talent and principle. His friendship was of value to me: to lose it tried me severely. I would not so soon relinquish the attempt to reconquer it.

'Must we part in this way, St. John? And when you go to India, will you leave me so, without a kinder word than you have yet spoken?'

He now turned quite from the moon, and faced me.

'When I go to India, Jane, will I leave you? What! do you not go to India?'

'You said I could not, unless I married you.'

'And you will not marry me? You adhere to that resolution?'

Reader, do you know, as I do, what terror those cold people can put into the ice of their questions? How much of the fall of the avalanche is in their anger? of the breaking up of the frozen sea in their displeasure?

'No, St. John, I will not marry you. I adhere to my resolution.'

The avalanche had shaken and slid a little forward; but it did not yet crash down.

'Once more, why this refusal?' he asked.

'Formerly,' I answered, 'because you did not love me; now, I reply, because you almost hate me. If I were to marry you, you would kill me. You are killing me now.'

His lips and cheeks turned white—quite white.

'*I should kill you—I am killing you?* Your words are such as ought not to be used: violent, unfeminine, and untrue. They betray an unfortunate state of mind: they merit severe reproof: they would seem inexcusable; but that it is the duty of man to forgive his fellow, even until seventy-and-seven times.'

I had finished the business now. While earnestly wishing to erase from his mind the trace of my former offence, I had stamped on that tenacious surface another and far deeper impression: I had burnt it in.

'Now, you will indeed hate me,' I said. 'It is useless to attempt to conciliate you: I see I have made an eternal enemy of you.'

A fresh wrong did these words inflict: the worse because they touched on the truth. That bloodless lip quivered to a temporary spasm. I knew the steely ire I had whetted. I was heart-wrung.

'You utterly misinterpret my words,' I said, at once seizing his hand: 'I have no intention to grieve or pain you—indeed, I have not.'

Most bitterly he smiled—most decidedly he withdrew his hand from mine. 'And now you recall your promise, and will not go to India at all, I presume?' said he, after a considerable pause.

'Yes I will, as your assistant,' I answered.

A very long silence succeeded. What struggle there was in him between Nature and Grace in this interval I cannot tell; only singular gleams scintillated in his eyes, and strange shadows passed over his face. He spoke at last.

'I before proved to you the absurdity of a single woman of your age proposing to accompany abroad a single man of mine. I proved it to you in such terms as, I should have thought, would have prevented your ever again alluding to the plan. That you have done so, I regret—for your sake.'

I interrupted him. Anything like a tangible reproach gave me courage at once. 'Keep to common sense, St. John: you are verging on nonsense. You pretend to be shocked by what I have said. You are not really shocked; for, with your superior mind, you cannot be either so dull or so conceited as to misunderstand my meaning. I say again, I will be your curate, if you like, but never your wife.'

Again he turned lividly pale; but, as before, controlled his passion perfectly. He answered emphatically, but calmly: 'A female curate, who is not my wife, would never suit me. With me, then, it seems, you cannot go: but if you are sincere in your offer, I will, while in town, speak to a married missionary, whose wife needs a coadjutor. Your own fortune will make you independent of the Society's aid; and thus you may still be spared the dishonour of breaking your promise, and deserting the band you engaged to join.'

Now I never had, as the reader knows, either given any formal promise, or entered into any engagement; and this language was all much too hard, and much too despotic for the occasion. I replied: 'There is no dishonour; no breach of promise; no desertion in the case. I am not under the slightest obligation to go to India: especially with strangers. With you I would have ventured much; because I admire, confide in, and, as a sister, I love you: but I am convinced that, go when and with whom I would, I should not live long in that climate.'

'Ah! you are afraid of yourself,' he said, curling his lip.

'I am. God did not give me my life to throw away; and to do as you wish me would, I begin to think, be almost equivalent to committing suicide. Moreover, before I definitively resolve on quitting England, I will know for certain whether I cannot be of greater use by remaining in it than by leaving it.'

'What do you mean?'

'It would be fruitless to attempt to explain: but there is a point on which I have long endured painful doubt; and I can go nowhere till by some means that doubt is removed.'

'I know where your heart turns, and to what it clings. The interest you cherish is lawless and unconsecrated. Long since you ought to have crushed it: now you should blush to allude to it. You think of Mr. Rochester?'

It was true. I confessed it by silence.

'Are you going to seek Mr. Rochester?'

'I must find out what is become of him.'

'It remains for me, then,' he said, 'to remember you in my prayers; and to entreat God for you, in all earnestness, that you may not indeed become a castaway. I had thought I recognised in you one of the chosen. But God sees not as man sees: *His* will be done.'

He opened the gate, passed through it, and strayed away down the glen. He was soon out of sight.

On re-entering the parlour, I found Diana standing at the window, looking very thoughtful. Diana was a great deal taller than I: she put her hand on my shoulder, and, stooping, examined my face.

'Jane,' she said, 'you are always agitated and pale now. I am sure there is something the matter. Tell we what business St. John and you have on hand. I have watched you this half-hour from the window: you must forgive my being such a spy, but for a long time I have fancied I hardly know what. St. John is a strange being——'

She paused—I did not speak: soon she resumed:—'That brother of mine cherishes peculiar views of some sort respecting you, I am sure: he has long distinguished you by a notice and interest he never showed to any one else—to what end? I wish he loved you—does he, Jane?'

I put her cool hand to my hot forehead: 'No, Die, not one whit.'

'Then why does he follow you so with his eyes—and get you so frequently alone with him, and keep you so continually at his side? Mary and I had both concluded he wished you to marry him.'

'He does—he has asked me to be his wife.'

Diana clapped her hands. 'That is just what we hoped and thought! And you will marry him, Jane, won't you? And then he will stay in England.'

'Far from that, Diana; his sole idea in proposing to me is to procure a fitting fellow-labourer in his Indian toils.'

'What! He wishes you to go to India?'

'Yes.'

'Madness!' she exclaimed. 'You would not live three months there, I am certain. You never shall go: you have not consented—have you, Jane?'

'I have refused to marry him——'

'And have consequently displeased him?' she suggested.

'Deeply: he will never forgive me, I fear: yet I offered to accompany him as his sister.'

'It was frantic folly to do so, Jane. Think of the task you undertook—one of incessant fatigue: where fatigue kills even the strong; and you are weak. St. John—you know him—would urge you to impossibilities: with him there would be no permission to rest during the hot hours; and unfortunately, I have noticed, whatever he exacts, you force yourself to perform. I am astonished you found courage to refuse his hand. You do not love him then, Jane?'

'Not as a husband.'

'Yet he is a handsome fellow.'

'And I am so plain you see, Die. We should never suit.'

'Plain! You? Not at all. You are much too pretty, as well as too good, to be grilled alive in Calcutta.' And again she earnestly conjured me to give up all thoughts of going out with her brother.

'I must, indeed,' I said; 'for when just now I repeated the offer of serving him for a deacon, he expressed himself shocked at my want of decency. He seemed to think I had committed an impropriety in proposing to accompany him unmarried: as if I had not from the first hoped to find in him a brother; and habitually regarded him as such.'

'What makes you say he does not love you, Jane?'

'You should hear himself on the subject. He has again and again explained that it is not himself, but his office he wishes to mate. He has told me I am formed for labour—not for love: which is true, no doubt. But, in my opinion, if I am not formed for love, it follows that I am not formed for marriage. Would it not be strange, Die, to be chained for life to a man who regarded one but as a useful tool?'

'Insupportable—unnatural—out of the question!

'And then,' I continued, 'though I have only sisterly affection for him now, yet, if forced to be his wife, I can imagine the possibility of conceiving an inevitable, strange, torturing kind of love for him: because he is so talented; and there is often a certain heroic grandeur in his look, manner, and conversation. In that case, my lot would become unspeakably wretched. He would not want me to love him; and if I showed the feeling, he would make me sensible that it was a superfluity, unrequired by him, unbecoming in me. I know he would.'

'And yet St. John is a good man,' said Diana.

'He is a good and a great man: but he forgets, pitilessly, the feelings and claims of little people, in pursuing his own large views. It is better, therefore, for the insignificant to keep out of his way; lest, in his progress, he should trample them down. Here he comes! I will leave you, Diana.' And I hastened upstairs, as I saw him entering the garden.

But I was forced to meet him again at supper. During that meal he appeared just as composed as usual. I had thought he would hardly speak to me, and I was certain he had given up the pursuit of his matrimonial scheme: the sequel showed I was mistaken on both points. He addressed me precisely in his ordinary manner; or what had, of late, been his ordinary manner; one scrupulously polite. No doubt he had invoked the help of the Holy Spirit to subdue the anger I had roused in him, and now believed he had forgiven me once more.

For the evening reading before prayers, he selected the twenty-first chapter of Revelation. It was at all times pleasant to listen while from his lips fell the words of the Bible: never did his fine voice sound at once so sweet and full—never did his manner become so impressive in its noble simplicity, as when he delivered the oracles of God: and to-night that voice took a more solemn tone—that manner a more thrilling meaning—as he sat in the midst of his household circle (the May moon shining in through the uncurtained window, and rendering almost unnecessary the light of the candle on the table): as he sat there, bending over the great old Bible, and described from its page the vision of the new heaven and the new earth—told how God would come to dwell with men, how He would wipe away all tears from their eyes, and promised that there should be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, nor any more pain, because the former things were passed away.

The succeeding words thrilled me strangely as he spoke them: especially as I felt, by the slight, indescribable alteration in sound, that in uttering them, his eye had turned on me.

'He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son. But,' was slowly, distinctly read, 'the fearful, the unbelieving, &c. shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.'

Henceforward I knew what fate St. John feared for me.

A calm, subdued triumph, blent with a longing earnestness, marked his enunciation of the last glorious verses of that chapter. The reader believed his name was already written in the Lamb's book of life, and he yearned after the hour which should admit him to the city to which the kings of the earth bring their glory and honour; which has no need of sun or moon to shine in it, because the glory of God lightens it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.

In the prayer following the chapter, all his energy gathered—all his stern zeal woke: he was in deep earnest, wrestling with God, and resolved on a conquest. He supplicated strength for the weak-hearted; guidance for wanderers from the fold: a return, even at the eleventh hour, for those whom the temptations of the world and the flesh were luring from the narrow path. He asked, he urged, he claimed the boon of a brand snatched from the burning.

Earnestness is ever deeply solemn: first, as I listened to that prayer, I wondered at his; then, when it continued and rose, I was touched by it, and at last awed. He felt the greatness and goodness of his purpose so sincerely: others who heard him plead for it, could not but feel it too.

The prayer over, we took leave of him: he was to go at a very early hour in the morning. Diana and Mary having kissed him, left the room—in compliance, I think, with a whispered hint from him: I tendered my hand, and wished him a pleasant journey.

'Thank you, Jane. As I said, I shall return from Cambridge in a fortnight: that space, then, is yet left you for reflection. If I listened to human pride, I should say no more to you of marriage with me; but I listen to my duty, and keep steadily in view my first aim—to do all things to the glory of God. My Master was long-suffering: so will I be. I cannot give you up to perdition as a vessel of wrath: repent—resolve; while there is yet time. Remember, we are bid to work while it is day—warned that "the night cometh when no man shall work." Remember the fate of Dives, who had his good things in this life. God give you strength to choose that better part which shall not be taken from you!'

He laid his hand on my head as he uttered the last words. He had spoken earnestly, mildly: his look was not, indeed, that of a lover beholding his mistress; but it was that of a pastor recalling his wandering sheep—or better, of a guardian angel watching the soul for which he is responsible. All men of talent, whether they be men of feeling or not; whether they be zealots, or aspirants, or despots—provided only they be sincere—have their sublime moments: when they subdue and rule. I felt veneration for St. John—veneration so strong that its impetus thrust me at once to the point I had so long shunned. I was tempted to cease struggling with him—to rush down the torrent of his will into the gulf of his existence, and there lose my own. I was almost as hard beset by him now as I had been once before, in a different way, by another. I was a fool both times. To have yielded then would have been an error of principle; to have yielded now would have been an error of judgment. So I think at this hour, when I look back to the crisis through the quiet medium of time: I was unconscious of folly at the instant.

I stood motionless under my hierophant's touch. My refusals were forgotten—my fears overcome—my wrestlings paralysed. The impossible—*i.e.* my marriage with St. John—was fast becoming the Possible. All was changing utterly, with a sudden sweep. Religion called—Angels beckoned—God commanded—life rolled together like a scroll—death's gates opening, showed eternity beyond: it seemed, that for safety and bliss there, all here might be sacrificed in a second. The dim room was full of visions.

'Could you decide now?' asked the missionary. The inquiry was put in gentle tones: he drew me to him as gently. Oh, that gentleness! how far more potent is it than force! I could resist St. John's wrath: I grew pliant as a reed under his kindness. Yet I knew all the time, if I yielded now, I should not the less be made to repent, some day, of my former rebellion. His nature was not changed by one hour of solemn prayer: it was only elevated.

'I could decide if I were but certain,' I answered: 'were I but convinced that it is God's will I should marry you, I could vow to marry you here and now—come afterwards what would!'

'My prayers are heard!' ejaculated St. John. He pressed his hand firmer on my head, as if he claimed me: he surrounded me with his arm, *almost* as if he loved me (I say *almost*—I knew the difference—for I had felt what it was to be loved; but, like him, I had now put love out of the question, and thought only of duty): I contended with my inward dimness of vision, before which clouds yet rolled. I sincerely, deeply, fervently longed to do what was right; and only that. 'Show me, show me the path!' I entreated of Heaven. I was excited more than I had ever been; and whether what followed was the effect of excitement, the reader shall judge.

All the house was still; for I believe all, except St. John and myself, were now retired to rest. The one candle was dying out: the room was full of moonlight. My heart beat fast and thick: I heard its throb. Suddenly it stood still to an inexpressible feeling that thrilled it through, and passed at once to my head and extremities. The feeling was not like an electric shock; but it was quite as sharp, as strange, as startling: it acted on my senses as if their utmost activity hitherto had been but torpor; from which they were now summoned, and forced to wake. They rose expectant: eye and ear waited, while the flesh quivered on my bones.

'What have you heard? What do you see?' asked St. John. I saw nothing: but I heard a voice somewhere cry—'Jane! Jane! Jane!' nothing more.

'Oh God! what is it?' I gasped.

I might have said, 'Where is it?' for it did not seem in the room—nor in the house—nor in the garden: it did not come out of the air—nor from under the earth—nor from overhead. I had heard it—where, or whence, for ever impossible to know! And it was the voice of a human being—a known, loved, well-remembered voice—that of Edward Fairfax Rochester; and it spoke in pain and woe wildly, eerily, urgently.

'I am coming!' I cried. 'Wait for me! Oh, I will come!' I flew to the door, and looked into the passage: it was dark. I ran out into the garden: it was void.

'Where are you?' I exclaimed.

The hills beyond Marsh Glen sent the answer faintly back—'Where are you?' I listened. The wind sighed low in the firs: all was moorland loneliness and midnight hush.

'Down superstition!' I commented, as that spectre rose up black by the black yew at the gate. 'This is not thy deception, nor thy witchcraft: it is the work of nature. She was roused, and did—no miracle—but her best.'

I broke from St. John, who had followed, and would have detained me. It was *my* time to assume ascendancy. *My* powers were in play, and in force. I told him to forbear question or remark; I desired him to leave me: I must, and would be alone. He obeyed at once. Where there is energy to command well enough, obedience never fails. I mounted to my chamber; locked myself in; fell on my knees; and prayed in my way—a different way to St. John's, but effective in its own fashion. I seemed to penetrate very near a Mighty Spirit; and my soul rushed out in gratitude at His feet. I rose from the thanksgiving—took a resolve—and lay down, unscared, enlightened—eager but for the daylight.

CHAPTER XXXVI

The daylight came. I rose at dawn. I busied myself for an hour or two with arranging my things in my chamber, drawers, and wardrobe, in the order wherein I should wish to leave them during a brief absence. Meantime, I heard St. John quit his room. He stopped at my door: I feared he would knock—no, but a slip of paper was passed under the door. I took it up. It bore these words—

'You left me too suddenly last night. Had you stayed but a little longer, you would have laid your hand on the Christian's cross and the angel's crown. I shall expect your clear decision when I return this day fortnight. Meantime, watch and pray that you enter not into temptation: the spirit, I trust, is willing, but the flesh, I see, is weak. I shall pray for you hourly,—Yours, St. John.'

'My spirit,' I answered mentally, 'is willing to do what is right; and my flesh, I hope, is strong enough to accomplish the will of Heaven, when once that will is distinctly known to me. At any rate, it shall be strong enough to search—inquire—to grope an outlet from this cloud of doubt, and find the open day of certainty.'

It was the first of June; yet the morning was overcast and chilly: rain beat fast on my casement. I heard the front-door open, and St. John pass out. Looking through the window, I saw him traverse the garden. He took the way over the misty moors in the direction of Whitcross—there he would meet the coach.

'In a few more hours I shall succeed you in that track, cousin,' thought I: 'I too have a coach to meet at Whitcross. I too have some to see and ask after in England, before I depart for ever.'

It wanted yet two hours of breakfast-time. I filled the interval in walking softly about my room, and pondering the visitation which had given my plans their present bent. I recalled that inward sensation I had experienced: for I could recall it, with all its unspeakable strangeness. I recalled the voice I had heard; again I questioned whence it came, as vainly as before: it seemed in *me*—not in the external world. I asked, was it a mere nervous impression—a delusion? I could not conceive or believe: it was more like an inspiration. The wondrous shock of feeling had come like the earthquake which shook the foundations of Paul and Silas's prison: it had opened the doors of the soul's cell, and loosed its bands—it had wakened it out of its sleep, whence it sprang trembling, listening, aghast; then vibrated thrice a cry on my startled ear, and in my quaking heart, and through my spirit; which neither feared nor shook, but exulted as if in joy over the success of one effort it had been privileged to make, independent of the cumbrous body.

'Ere many days,' I said, as I terminated my musings, 'I will know something of him whose voice seemed last night to summon me. Letters have proved of no avail—personal inquiry shall replace them.'

At breakfast I announced to Diana and Mary that I was going a journey, and should be absent at least four days.

'Alone, Jane?' they asked.

'Yes; it was to see, or hear news of, a friend about whom I had for some time been uneasy.'

They might have said, as I have no doubt they thought, that they had believed me to be without any friends save them: for, indeed, I had often said so; but with their true natural delicacy, they abstained from comment: except that Diana asked me if I was sure I was well enough to travel. I looked very pale, she observed. I replied, that nothing ailed me save anxiety of mind, which I hoped soon to alleviate.

It was easy to make my further arrangements; for I was troubled with no inquiries—no surmises. Having once explained to them that I could not now be explicit about my plans, they kindly and wisely acquiesced in the silence with which I pursued them; according to me the privilege of free action I should, under similar circumstances, have accorded them.

I left Moor House at three o'clock P.M., and soon after four I stood at the foot of the sign-post of Whitcross, waiting the arrival of the coach which was to take me to distant Thornfield. Amidst the silence of those solitary roads and desert hills, I heard it approach from a great distance. It was the same vehicle whence, a year ago, I had alighted one summer evening on this very spot—how desolate, and hopeless, and objectless! It stopped as I beckoned. I entered—not now obliged to part with my whole fortune as the price of its accommodation. Once more on the road to Thornfield, I felt like the messenger-pigeon flying home.

It was a journey of six-and-thirty hours. I had set out from Whitcross on a Tuesday afternoon, and early on the succeeding Thursday morning the coach stopped to water the horses at a wayside inn, situated in the midst of scenery whose green hedges and large fields and low pastoral hills (how mild of feature and verdant of hue compared with the stern north-midland moors of Morton!) met my eye like the lineaments of a once familiar face. Yes, I knew the character of this landscape: I was sure we were near my bourne.

'How far is Thornfield Hall from here?' I asked of the ostler.

'Just two miles, ma'am, across the fields.'

'My journey is closed,' I thought to myself. I got out of the coach, gave a box I had into the ostler's charge, to be kept till I called for it; paid my fare; satisfied the coachman, and was going: the brightening day gleamed on the sign of the inn, and I read in gilt letters, 'The Rochester

Arms.' My heart leapt up: I was already on my master's very lands. It fell again: the thought struck it:—

'Your master himself may be beyond the British Channel, for aught you know: and then, if he is at Thornfield Hall, towards which you hasten, who besides him is there? His lunatic wife: and you have nothing to do with him: you dare not speak to him or seek his presence. You have lost your labour—you had better go no farther,' urged the monitor. 'Ask information of the people at the inn; they can give you all you seek: they can solve your doubts at once. Go up to that man, and inquire if Mr. Rochester be at home.'

The suggestion was sensible; and yet I could not force myself to act on it. I so dreaded a reply that would crush me with despair. To prolong doubt was to prolong hope. I might yet once more see the Hall under the ray of her star. There was the stile before me—the very fields through which I had hurried, blind, deaf, distracted, with a revengeful fury tracking and scourging me, on the morning I fled from Thornfield: ere I well knew what course I had resolved to take, I was in the midst of them. How fast I walked! How I ran sometimes! How I looked forward to catch the first view of the well-known woods! With what feelings I welcomed single trees I knew, and familiar glimpses of meadow and hill between them!

At last the woods rose; the rookery clustered dark; a loud cawing broke the morning stillness. Strange delight inspired me: on I hastened. Another field crossed—a lane threaded—and there were the courtyard walls—the back offices: the house itself, the rookery still hid. 'My first view of it shall be in front,' I determined, 'where its bold battlements will strike the eye nobly at once, and where I can single out my master's very window: perhaps he will be standing at it—he rises early: perhaps he is now walking in the orchard, or on the pavement in front. Could I but see him!—but a moment! Surely, in that case, I should not be so mad as to run to him? I cannot tell—I am not certain. And if I did—what then? God bless him! What then? Who would be hurt by my once more tasting the life his glance can give me?—I rave: perhaps at this moment he is watching the sun rise over the Pyrenees, or on the tideless sea of the south.'

I had coasted along the lower wall of the orchard—turned its angle: there was a gate just there, opening into the meadow, between two stone pillars, crowned by stone balls. From behind one pillar I could peep round quietly at the full front of the mansion. I advanced my head with precaution, desirous to ascertain if any bedroom window-blinds were yet drawn up: battlements, windows, long front—all from this sheltered station were at my command.

The crows sailing overhead perhaps watched me while I took this survey. I wonder what they thought: they must have considered I was very careful and timid at first, and that gradually I grew very bold and reckless. A peep, and then a long stare; and then a departure from my niche and a straying out into the meadow; and a sudden stop full in front of the great mansion, and a protracted, hardy gaze towards it. 'What affectation of diffidence was this at first?' they might have demanded. 'What stupid regardlessness now?'

Hear an illustration, reader

A lover finds his mistress asleep on a mossy bank; he wishes to catch a glimpse of her fair face without waking her. He steals softly over the grass, careful to make no sound; he pauses—fancying she has stirred: he withdraws; not for worlds would he be seen. All is still: he again advances: he bends above her; a light veil rests on her features: he lifts it, bends lower; now his eyes anticipate the vision of beauty—warm, and blooming, and lovely, in rest. How hurried was their first glance! But how they fix! How he starts! How he suddenly and vehemently clasps in both arms the form he dared not, a moment since, touch with his finger! How he calls aloud a name, and drops his burden, and gazes on it wildly! He thus grasps and cries, and gazes, because he no longer fears to waken by any sound he can utter—by any movement he can make. He thought his love slept sweetly: he finds she is stone-dead.

I looked with timorous joy towards a stately house: I saw a blackened ruin.

No need to cower behind a gate-post, indeed!—to peep up at chamber lattices, fearing life was astir behind them! No need to listen for doors opening—to fancy steps on the pavement or the gravel-walk! The lawn, the grounds were trodden and waste: the portal yawned void. The front was, as I had once seen it in a dream, but a shell-like wall, very high and very fragile looking, perforated with paneless windows: no roof, no battlements, no chimneys—all had crashed in.

And there was the silence of death about it: the solitude of a lonesome wild. No wonder that letters addressed to people here had never received an answer: as well despatch epistles to a vault in a church aisle. The grim blackness of the stones told by what fate the Hall had fallen—by conflagration: but how kindled? What story belonged to this disaster? What loss, besides mortar and marble and wood-work, had followed upon it? Had life been wrecked, as well as property? If so, whose? Dreadful question: there was no one here to answer it—not even dumb sign, mute token.

In wandering round the shattered walls and through the devastated interior, I gathered evidence that the calamity was not of late occurrence. Winter snows, I thought, had drifted through that void arch; winter rains beaten in at those hollow casements; for, amidst the drenched piles of rubbish, spring had cherished vegetation: grass and weed grew here and there between the stones and fallen rafters. And oh! where, meantime, was the hapless owner of this wreck? In what land? Under what auspices? My eye involuntarily wandered to the grey church tower near the gates, and I asked, 'Is he with Damer de Rochester, sharing the shelter of his narrow marble house?'

Some answer must be had to these questions. I could find it nowhere but at the inn, and thither, ere long, I returned. The host himself brought my breakfast into the parlour. I requested him to shut the door and sit down: I had some questions to ask him. But when he complied, I scarcely knew how to begin; such horror had I of the possible answers. And yet the spectacle of desolation I had just left prepared me in a measure for a tale of misery. The host was a respectable-looking, middle-aged man.

'You know Thornfield Hall, of course?' I managed to say at last.

'Yes, ma'am; I lived there once.'

'Did you?' Not in my time, I thought: you are a stranger to me.

'I was the late Mr. Rochester's butler,' he added.

The late! I seemed to have received with full force the blow I had been trying to evade.

'The late!' I gasped. 'Is he dead?'

'I mean the present gentleman, Mr. Edward's father,' he explained.

I breathed again: my blood resumed its flow. Fully assured by these words that Mr. Edward—*my* Mr. Rochester (God bless him, wherever he was!)—was at least alive: was, in short, 'the present gentleman.' Gladdening words! It seemed I could hear all that was to come—whatever the disclosures might be—with comparative tranquillity. Since he was not in the grave, I could bear, I thought, to learn that he was at the Antipodes.

'Is Mr. Rochester living at Thornfield Hall now?' I asked, knowing, of course, what the answer would be, but yet desirous of deferring the direct question as to where he really was.

'No, ma'am—oh, no! No one is living there. I suppose you are a stranger in these parts, or you would have heard what happened last autumn,—Thornfield Hall is quite a ruin: it was burnt down just about harvest time. A dreadful calamity! such an immense quantity of valuable property destroyed: hardly any of the furniture could be saved. The fire broke out at dead of night, and before the engines arrived from Millcote, the building was one mass of flame. It was a terrible spectacle: I witnessed it myself.'

'At dead of night!' I muttered. Yes, that was ever the hour of fatality at Thornfield. 'Was it known how it originated?' I demanded.

'They guessed, ma'am: they guessed. Indeed, I should say it was ascertained beyond a doubt. You are not perhaps aware,' he continued, edging his chair a little nearer the table, and speaking low, 'that there was a lady,—a—a lunatic, kept in the house?'

'I have heard something of it.'

'She was kept in very close confinement, ma'am; people even for some years was not absolutely certain of her existence. No one saw her: they only knew by rumour that such a person was at the Hall; and who or what she was it was difficult to conjecture. They said Mr. Edward had brought her from abroad; and some believed she had been his mistress. But a queer thing happened a year since—a very queer thing.'

I feared now to hear my own story. I endeavoured to recall him to the main fact.

'And this lady?'

'This lady, ma'am,' he answered, 'turned out to be Mr. Rochester's wife! The discovery was brought about in the strangest way. There was a young lady, a governess at the Hall, that Mr. Rochester fell in ——'

'But the fire,' I suggested.

'I'm coming to that, ma'am—that Mr. Edward fell in love with. The servants say they never saw anybody so much in love as he was: he was after her continually. They used to watch him—servants will, you know, ma'am—and he set store on her past everything: for all, nobody but him thought her so very handsome. She was a little small thing, they say, almost like a child. I never saw her myself; but I've heard Leah, the housemaid, tell of her. Leah liked her well enough. Mr. Rochester was about forty, and this governess not twenty; and you see, when gentlemen of his age fall in love with girls, they are often like as if they were bewitched: well, he would marry her.'

'You shall tell me this part of the story another time,' I said; 'but now I have a particular reason for wishing to hear all about the fire. Was it suspected that this lunatic, Mrs. Rochester, had any hand in it?'

'You've hit it, ma'am: it's quite certain that it was her and nobody but her, that set it going. She had a woman to take care of her called Mrs. Poole—an able woman in her line, and very trustworthy, but for one fault—a fault common to a deal of them nurses and matrons—*she kept a private bottle of gin by her*, and now and then took a drop over much. It is excusable, for she had a hard life of it: but still it was dangerous; for when Mrs. Poole was fast asleep, after the gin-and-water, the mad lady, who was as cunning as a witch, would take the keys out of her pocket, let herself out of her chamber, and go roaming about the house, doing any wild mischief that came into her head. They say she had nearly burnt her husband in his bed once: but I don't know about that. However, on this night, she set fire first to the hangings of the room next her own; and then she got down to a lower story, and made her way to the chamber that had been the governess's—(she was like as if she knew somehow how matters had gone on, and had a spite at her)—and she kindled the bed there; but there was nobody sleeping in it fortunately. The governess had run away two months before; and for all Mr. Rochester sought her as if she had been the most precious thing he had in the world, he never could hear a word of her; and he grew savage—quite savage on his disappointment: he never was a wild man, but he got dangerous after he lost her. He would be alone, too. He sent Mrs. Fairfax, the housekeeper, away to her friends at a distance; but he did it handsomely, for he settled an annuity on her for life: and she deserved it—she was a very good woman. Miss Adèle, a ward he had, was put to school. He broke off acquaintance with all the gentry, and shut himself up, like a hermit, at the Hall.'

'What! did he not leave England?'

'Leave England? Bless you, no! He would not cross the door-stones of the house; except at night, when he walked just like a ghost about the grounds and in the orchard as if he had lost his senses—which it is my opinion he had; for a more spirited, bolder, keener gentleman than he was before that midge of a governess crossed him, you never saw, ma'am. He was not a man given to wine, or cards, or racing, as some are, and he was not so very handsome; but he had a courage and a will of his own, if ever man had. I knew him from a boy, you see: and for my part I have often wished that Miss Eyre had been sunk in the sea before she came to Thornfield Hall.'

'Then Mr. Rochester was at home when the fire broke out?'

'Yes, indeed was he; and he went up to the attics when all was burning above and below, and got the servants out of their beds and helped them down himself—and went back to get his mad wife out of her cell. And then they called out to him that she was on the roof; where she was standing, waving her arms, above the battlements, and shouting out till they could hear her a mile off; I saw her and heard her with my own eyes. She was a big woman, and had long black hair: we could see it streaming against the flames as she stood. I witnessed, and several more witnessed Mr. Rochester ascend through the skylight on to the roof: we heard him call "Bertha!" We saw him approach her; and then, ma'am, she yelled, and gave a spring, and the next minute she lay smashed on the pavement.'

'Dead?'

'Dead? Ay, dead as the stones on which her brains and blood were scattered.'

'Good God!'

'You may well say so, ma'am: it was frightful!'

He shuddered.

'And afterwards?' I urged.

'Well, ma'am, afterwards the house was burnt to the ground: there are only some bits of walls standing now.'

'Were any other lives lost?'

'No—perhaps it would have been better if there had.'

'What do you mean?'

'Poor Mr. Edward!' he ejaculated, 'I little thought ever to have seen it! Some say it was a just judgment on him for keeping his first marriage secret, and wanting to take another wife while he had one living: but I pity him, for my part.'

'You said he was alive?' I exclaimed.

'Yes, yes: he is alive; but many think he had better be dead.'

'Why? How?' My blood was again running cold.

'Where is he?' I demanded. 'Is he in England?'

'Ay—ay—he's in England; he can't get out of England, I fancy—he's a fixture now.'

What agony was this! And the man seemed resolved to protract it.

'He is stone-blind,' he said at last. 'Yes—he is stone-blind—is Mr. Edward.'

I had dreaded worse. I had dreaded he was mad. I summoned strength to ask what had caused this calamity.

'It was all his own courage, and a body may say, his kindness, in a way, ma'am: he wouldn't leave the house till every one else was out before him. As he came down the great staircase at last, after Mrs. Rochester had flung herself from the battlements, there was a great crash—all fell. He was taken out from under the ruins, alive, but sadly hurt: a beam had fallen in such a way as to protect him partly; but one eye was knocked out, and one hand so crushed that Mr. Carter, the surgeon, had to amputate it directly. The other eye inflamed: he lost the sight of that also. He is now helpless, indeed—blind and a cripple.'

'Where is he? Where does he now live?'

'At Ferndean, a manor-house on a farm he has, about thirty miles off: quite a desolate spot.'

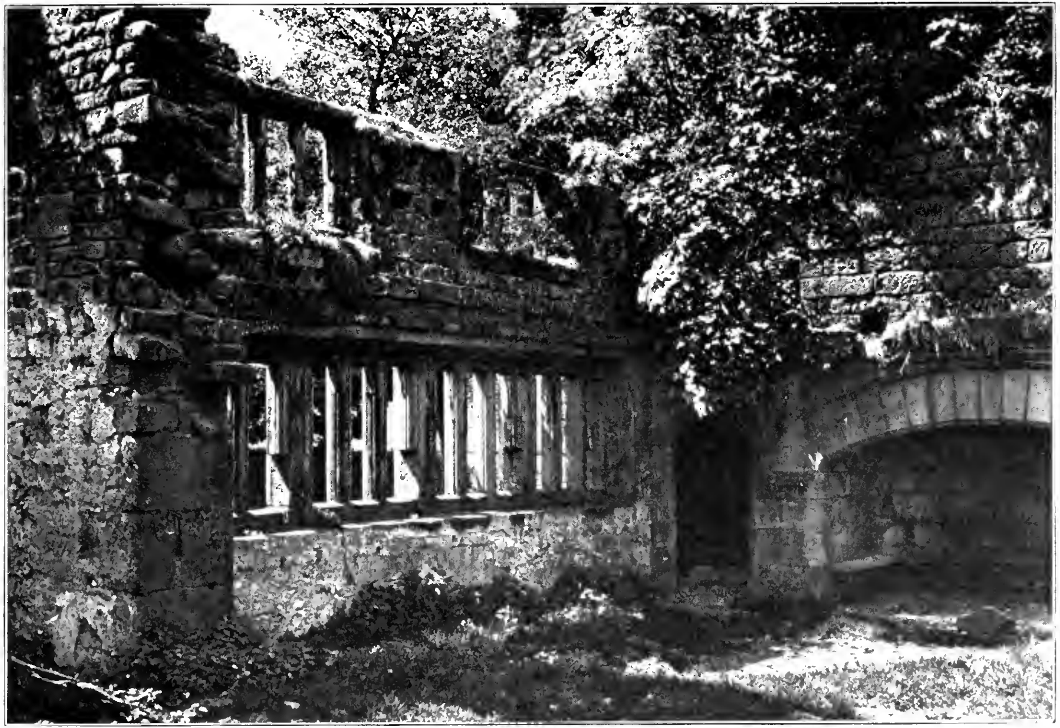
'Who is with him?'

'Old John and his wife: he would have none else. He is quite broken down, they say.'

'Have you any sort of conveyance?'

'We have a chaise, ma'am, a very handsome chaise.'

'Let it be got ready instantly; and if your post-boy can drive me to Ferndean before dark this day, I'll pay both you and him twice the hire you usually demand.'



WYCOLLER HALL (FERNDEAN MANOR).

CHAPTER XXXVII

THE manor-house of Ferndean was a building of considerable antiquity, moderate size, and no architectural pretensions, deep buried in a wood. I had heard of it before. Mr. Rochester often spoke of it, and sometimes went there. His father had purchased the estate for the sake of the game covers. He would have let the house; but could find no tenant, in consequence of its ineligible and insalubrious site. Ferndean then remained uninhabited and unfurnished; with the exception of some two or three rooms fitted up for the accommodation of the squire when he went there in the season to shoot.

To this house I came, just ere dark, on an evening marked by the characteristics of sad sky, cold gale, and continued small, penetrating rain. The last mile I performed on foot, having dismissed the chaise and driver with the double remuneration I had promised. Even when within a very short distance of the manor-house you could see nothing of it; so thick and dark grew the timber of the gloomy wood about it. Iron gates between granite pillars showed me where to enter, and passing through them, I found myself at once in the twilight of close-ranked trees. There was a grass-grown track descending the forest aisle, between hoar and knotty shafts and under branched arches. I followed it, expecting soon to reach the dwelling; but it stretched on and on, it wound far and farther: no sign of habitation or grounds was visible.

I thought I had taken a wrong direction and lost my way. The darkness of natural as well as of sylvan dusk gathered over me. I looked round in search of another road. There was none: all was interwoven stem, columnar trunk, dense, summer foliage—no opening anywhere.

I proceeded: at last my way opened, the trees thinned a little; presently I beheld a railing, then the house—scarce, by this dim light, distinguishable from the trees; so dank and green were its decaying walls. Entering a portal, fastened only by a latch, I stood amidst a space of enclosed ground, from which the wood swept away in a semicircle. There were no flowers, no garden-beds; only a broad gravel-walk girdling a grass-plat, and this set in the heavy frame of the forest. The house presented two pointed gables in its front; the windows were latticed and narrow; the front door was narrow too, one step led up to it. The whole looked, as the host of the Rochester Arms had said, 'quite a desolate spot.' It was as still as a church on a week-day: the pattering rain on the forest leaves was the only sound audible in its vicinage.

'Can there be life here?' I asked.

Yes: life of some kind there was: for I heard a movement—that narrow front door was unclosing, and some shape was about to issue from the grange.

It opened slowly: a figure came out into the twilight and stood on the step; a man without a hat: he stretched forth his hand as if to feel whether it rained. Dusk as it was, I had recognised him—it was my master, Edward Fairfax Rochester, and no other.

I stayed my step, almost my breath, and stood to watch him—to examine him, myself unseen, and alas! to him invisible. It was a sudden meeting, and one in which rapture was kept well in check by pain. I had no difficulty in restraining my voice from exclamation, my step from hasty advance.

His form was of the same strong and stalwart contour as ever: his port was still erect, his hair was still raven-black; nor were his features altered or sunk: not in one year's space, by any sorrow, could his athletic strength be quelled, or his vigorous prime blighted. But in his countenance I saw a change: that looked desperate and brooding—that reminded me of some wronged and fettered wild beast or bird, dangerous to approach in his sullen woe. The caged eagle, whose gold-ringed eyes cruelty has extinguished, might look as looked that sightless Samson.

And, reader, do you think I feared him in his blind ferocity?—if you do, you little know me. A soft hope blent with my sorrow that soon I should dare to drop a kiss on that brow of rock, and on those lips so sternly sealed beneath it: but not yet. I would not accost him yet.

He descended the one step, and advanced slowly and gropingly towards the grass-plat. Where was his daring stride now? Then he paused, as if he knew not which way to turn. He lifted his hand and opened his eyelids; gazed blank, and with a straining effort, on the sky, and towards the amphitheatre of trees: one saw that all to him was void darkness. He stretched his right hand (the left arm, the mutilated one, he kept hidden in his bosom); he seemed to wish by touch to gain an idea of what lay around him: he met but vacancy still; for the trees were some yards off where he stood. He relinquished the endeavour, folded his arms, and stood quiet and mute in the rain, now falling fast on his uncovered head. At this moment John approached him from some quarter.

'Will you take my arm, sir?' he said; 'there is a heavy shower coming on: had you not better go in?'

'Let me alone,' was the answer.

John withdrew, without having observed me. Mr. Rochester now tried to walk about: vainly,—all was too uncertain. He groped his way back to the house, and, re-entering it, closed the door.

I now drew near and knocked: John's wife opened for me. 'Mary,' I said, 'how are you?'

She started as if she had seen a ghost: I calmed her. To her hurried 'Is it really you, miss, come at this late hour to this 'only place?' I answered by taking her hand; and then I followed her into the kitchen, where John now sat by a good fire. I explained to them, in few words, that I had heard all which had happened since I left Thornfield, and that I was come to see Mr. Rochester. I asked John to go down to the turnpike-house, where I had dismissed the chaise, and bring my trunk, which I had left there: and then, while I removed my bonnet and shawl, I questioned Mary as to whether I could be accommodated at the Manor House for the night; and finding that arrangements to that effect, though difficult, would not be impossible, I informed her I should stay. Just at this moment the parlour-bell rang.

'When you go in,' said I, 'tell your master that a person wishes to speak to him, but do not give my name.'

'I don't think he will see you,' she answered; 'he refuses everybody.'

When she returned I inquired what he had said.

'You are to send in your name and your business,' she replied. She then proceeded to fill a glass with water, and place it on a tray, together with candles.

'Is that what he rang for?' I asked.

'Yes: he always has candles brought in at dark, though he is blind.'

'Give the tray to me, I will carry it in.'

I took it from her hand: she pointed me out the parlour door. The tray shook as I held it; the water spilt from the glass; my heart struck my ribs loud and fast. Mary opened the door for me, and shut it behind me.

This parlour looked gloomy: a neglected handful of fire burnt low in the grate; and, leaning over it, with his head supported against the high, old-fashioned mantelpiece, appeared the blind tenant of the room. His old dog, Pilot, lay on one side, removed out of the way, and coiled up as if afraid of being inadvertently trodden upon. Pilot pricked up his ears when I came in: then he jumped up with a yelp and a whine, and bounded towards me: he almost knocked the tray from my hands. I set it on the table; then patted him, and said softly, 'Lie down!' Mr. Rochester turned mechanically to *see* what the commotion was: but as he *saw* nothing, he re-turned and sighed.

'Give me the water, Mary,' he said.

I approached him with the now only half-filled glass. Pilot followed me, still excited.

'What is the matter?' he inquired.

'Down, Pilot!' I again said. He checked the water on its way to his lips, and seemed to listen: he drank, and put the glass down. 'This is you, Mary, is it not?'

'Mary is in the kitchen,' I answered.

He put out his hand with a quick gesture, but not seeing where I stood, he did not touch me. 'Who is this? Who is this?' he demanded, trying, as it seemed, to *see* with those sightless eyes—unavailing and distressing attempt! 'Answer me—speak again!' he ordered, imperiously and aloud.

'Will you have a little more water, sir? I spilt half of what was in the glass,' I said.

'*Who* is it? *What* is it? Who speaks?'

'Pilot knows me, and John and Mary know I am here. I came only this evening,' I answered.

'Great God!—what delusion has come over me? What sweet madness has seized me?'

'No delusion—no madness: your mind, sir, is too strong for delusion, your health too sound for frenzy.'

'And where is the speaker? Is it only a voice? Oh! I *cannot* see, but I must feel, or my heart will stop and my brain burst. Whatever—whoever you are—be perceptible to the touch or I cannot live!'

He groped; I arrested his wandering hand, and prisoned it in both mine.

'Her very fingers!' he cried; 'her small, slight fingers! If so, there must be more of her.'

The muscular hand broke from my custody; my arm was seized, my shoulder—neck—waist—I was entwined and gathered to him.

'Is it Jane? *What* is it? This is her shape—this is her size——'

'And this her voice,' I added. 'She is all here: her heart, too. God bless you, sir! I am glad to be so near you again.'

'Jane Eyre!—Jane Eyre!' was all he said.

'My dear master,' I answered, 'I am Jane Eyre: I have found you out—I am come back to you.'

'In truth?—in the flesh? My living Jane?'

'You touch me, sir,—you hold me, and fast enough; I am not cold like a corpse, nor vacant like air, am I?'

'My living darling! These are certainly her limbs, and these her features; but I cannot be so blest, after all my misery. It is a dream; such dreams as I have had at night when I have clasped her once more to my heart, as I do now; and kissed her, as thus—and felt that she loved me, and trusted that she would not leave me.'

'Which I never will, sir, from this day.'

'Never will, says the vision? But I always woke and found it an empty mockery; and I was desolate and abandoned—my life dark, lonely, hopeless—my soul athirst and forbidden to drink—my heart famished and never to be fed. Gentle, soft dream, nestling in my arms now, you will fly, too, as your sisters have all fled before you: but kiss me before you ago—embrace me, Jane.'

'There, sir—and there!'

I pressed my lips to his once brilliant and now rayless eyes—I swept his hair from his brow, and kissed that too. He suddenly seemed to arouse himself: the conviction of the reality of all this seized him.

'It is you—is it Jane? You are come back to me then?'

'I am.'

'And you do not lie dead in some ditch under some stream? And you are not a pining outcast amongst strangers?'

'No, sir; I am an independent woman now.'

'Independent! What do you mean, Jane?'

'My uncle in Madeira is dead, and he left me five thousand pounds.'

'Ah, this is practical—this is real!' he cried: 'I should never dream that. Besides, there is that peculiar voice of hers, so animating and piquant, as well as soft: it cheers my withered heart; it puts life into it.—What, Janet! Are you an independent woman? A rich woman?'

'Quite rich, sir. If you won't let me live with you, I can build a house of my own close up to your door, and you may come and sit in my parlour when you want company of an evening.'

'But as you are rich, Jane, you have now, no doubt, friends who will look after you, and not suffer you to devote yourself to a blind lameter like me?'

'I told you I am independent, sir, as well as rich: I am my own mistress.'

'And you will stay with me?'

'Certainly—unless you object. I will be your neighbour, your nurse, your housekeeper. I find you lonely: I will be your companion—to read to you, to walk with you, to sit with you, to wait on you, to be eyes and hands to you. Cease to look so melancholy, my dear master; you shall not be left desolate, so long as I live.'

He replied not: he seemed serious—abstracted; he sighed; he half-opened his lips as if to speak: he closed them again. I felt a little embarrassed. Perhaps I had too rashly overleaped conventionalities; and he, like St. John, saw impropriety in my inconsiderateness. I had indeed made my proposal from the idea that he wished and would ask me to be his wife: an expectation, not the less certain because unexpressed, had buoyed me up, that he would claim me at once as his own. But no hint to that effect escaping him, and his countenance becoming more overcast, I suddenly remembered that I might have been all wrong, and was perhaps playing the fool unwittingly; and I began gently to withdraw myself from his arms—but he eagerly snatched me closer.

'No—no—Jane: you must not go. No—I have touched you, heard you, felt the comfort of your presence—the sweetness of your consolation: I cannot give up these joys. I have little left in myself—I must have you. The world may laugh—may call me absurd, selfish—but it does not signify. My very soul demands you: it will be satisfied: or it will take deadly vengeance on its frame.'

'Well, sir, I will stay with you: I have said so.'

'Yes—but you understand one thing by staying with me; and I understand another. You, perhaps, could make up your mind to be about my hand and chair—to wait on me as a kind little nurse (for you have an affectionate heart and a generous spirit, which prompt you to make sacrifices for those you pity), and that ought to suffice for me no doubt. I suppose I should now entertain none but fatherly feelings for you: do you think so? Come—tell me.'

'I will think what you like, sir: I am content to be only your nurse, if you think it better.'

'But you cannot always be my nurse, Janet: you are young—you must marry one day.'

'I don't care about being married.'

'You should care, Janet: if I were what I once was, I would try to make you care—but—a sightless block!'

He relapsed again into gloom. I, on the contrary, became more cheerful, and took fresh courage: these last words gave me an insight as to where the difficulty lay; and as it was no difficulty with me, I felt quite relieved from my previous embarrassment. I resumed a livelier vein of conversation.

'It is time some one undertook to rehumanise you,' said I, parting his thick and long uncut locks; 'for I see you are being metamorphosed into a lion, or something of that sort. You have a "faux air" of Nebuchadnezzar in the fields about you, that is certain: your hair reminds me of eagle's feathers; whether your nails are grown like bird's claws or not, I have not yet noticed.'

'On this arm I have neither hand nor nails,' he said, drawing the mutilated limb from his breast, and showing it to me. 'It is a mere stump—a ghastly sight! Don't you think so, Jane?'

'It is a pity to see it; and a pity to see your eyes—and the scar of fire on your forehead: and the worst of it is, one is in danger of loving you too well for all this; and making too much of you.'

'I thought you would be revolted, Jane, when you saw my arm and my cicatrised visage.'

'Did you? Don't tell me so—lest I should say something disparaging to your judgment. Now, let me leave you an instant, to make a better fire, and have the hearth swept up. Can you tell when there is a good fire?'

'Yes, with the right eye I see a glow—a ruddy haze.'

'And you see the candles?'

'Very dimly—each is a luminous cloud.'

'Can you see me?'

'No, my fairy: but I am only too thankful to hear and feel you.'

'When do you take supper?'

'I never take supper.'

'But you shall have some to-night. I am hungry: so are you, I daresay, only you forget.'

Summoning Mary, I soon had the room in more cheerful order: I prepared him, likewise, a comfortable repast. My spirits were excited, and with pleasure and ease I talked to him during supper, and for a long time after. There was no harassing restraint, no repressing of glee and vivacity with him; for with him I was at perfect ease, because I knew I suited him: all I said or did seemed either to console or revive him. Delightful consciousness! It brought to life and light my whole nature: in his presence I thoroughly lived; and he lived in mine. Blind as he was, smiles played over his face, joy dawned on his forehead; his lineaments softened and warmed.

After supper he began to ask me many questions, of where I had been, what I had been doing, how I had found him out; but I gave him only very partial replies: it was too late to enter into particulars that night. Besides, I wished to touch no deep-thrilling chord—to open no fresh well of emotion in his heart: my sole present aim was to cheer him. Cheered, as I have said, he was: and yet but by fits. If a moment's silence broke the conversation, he would turn restless, touch me, then say, 'Jane.'

'You are altogether a human being, Jane? You are certain of that?'

'I conscientiously believe so, Mr. Rochester.'

'Yet how, on this dark and doleful evening, could you so suddenly rise on my lone hearth? I stretched my hand to take a glass of water from a hireling, and it was given me by you: I asked a question, expecting John's wife to answer me, and your voice spoke at my ear.'

'Because I had come in, in Mary's stead, with the tray.'

'And there is enchantment in the very hour I am now spending with you. Who can tell what a dark, dreary, hopeless life I have dragged on for months past? Doing nothing, expecting nothing; merging night in day; feeling but the sensation of cold when I let the fire go out, of hunger when I forgot to eat: and then a ceaseless sorrow, and, at times, a very delirium of desire to behold my Jane again. Yes: for her restoration I longed, far more than for that of my lost sight. How can it be that Jane is with me, and says she loves me? Will she not depart as suddenly as she came? To-morrow, I fear, I shall find her no more.'

A common-place, practical reply, out of the train of his own disturbed ideas, was, I was sure, the best and most reassuring for him in this frame of mind. I passed my finger over his eyebrows, and remarked that they were scorched, and that I would apply something which should make them grow as broad and black as ever.

'Where is the use of doing me good in any way, beneficent spirit, when, at some fatal moment, you will again desert me—passing like a shadow, whither and how to me unknown; and for me remaining afterwards undiscoverable?'

'Have you a pocket comb about you, sir?'

'What for, Jane?'

'Just to comb out this shaggy black mane. I find you rather alarming when I examine you close at hand: you talk of my being a fairy; but I am sure you are more like a brownie.'

'Am I hideous, Jane?'

'Very, sir: you always were, you know.'

'Humph! The wickedness has not been taken out of you, wherever you have sojourned.'

'Yet I have been with good people; far better than you: a hundred times better people; possessed of ideas and views you never entertained in your life: quite more refined and exalted.'

'Who the deuce have you been with?'

'If you twist in that way you will make me pull the hair out of your head; and then I think you will cease to entertain doubts of my substantiality.'

'Who have you been with, Jane?'

'You shall not get it out of me to-night, sir; you must wait till to-morrow; to leave my tale half told will, you know, be a sort of security that I shall appear at your breakfast table to finish it. By-the-bye, I must mind not to rise on your hearth with only a glass of water, then: I must bring an egg at the least, to say nothing of fried ham.'

'You mocking changeling—fairy-born and human-bred! You make me feel as I have not felt these twelve months. If Saul could have had you for his David, the evil spirit would have been exorcised without the aid of the harp.'

'There, sir, you are redd up and made decent. Now I'll leave you: I have been travelling these last three days, and I believe I am tired. Good-night.'

'Just one word, Jane: were there only ladies in the house where you have been?'

I laughed and made my escape, still laughing as I ran upstairs. 'A good idea!' I thought, with glee. 'I see I have the means of fretting him out of his melancholy for some time to come.'

Very early the next morning I heard him up and astir, wandering from one room to another. As soon as Mary came down I heard the question: 'Is Miss Eyre here?' Then, 'Which room did you put her into? Was it dry? Is she up? Go and ask if she wants anything; and when she will come down.'

I came down as soon as I thought there was a prospect of breakfast. Entering the room very softly, I had a view of him before he discovered my presence. It was mournful indeed to witness the subjugation of that vigorous spirit to a corporeal infirmity He sat in his chair,—still, but not at rest. expectant evidently; the lines of now habitual sadness marking his strong features. His countenance reminded one of a lamp quenched, waiting to be relit—and alas! it was not himself that could now kindle the lustre of animated expression: he was dependent on another for that office! I had meant to be gay and careless, but the powerlessness of the strong man touched my heart to the quick: still I accosted him with what vivacity I could: 'It is a bright, sunny morning, sir,' I said. 'The rain is over and gone, and there is a tender shining after it: you shall have a walk soon.'

I had wakened the glow: his features beamed.

'Oh, you are indeed there, my sky-lark! Come to me. You are not gone: not vanished? I heard one of your kind an hour ago, singing high over the wood: but its song had no music for me, any more than the rising sun had rays. All the melody on earth is concentrated in my Jane's tongue to my ear (I am glad it is not naturally a silent one): all the sunshine I can feel is in her presence.'

The water stood in my eyes to hear this avowal of his dependence: just as if a royal eagle, chained to a perch, should be forced to entreat a sparrow to become its purveyor. But I would not be lachrymose: I dashed off the salt drops, and busied myself with preparing breakfast.

Most of the morning was spent in the open air. I led him out of the wet and wild wood into some cheerful fields: I described to him how brilliantly green they were; how the flowers and hedges looked refreshed; how sparklingly blue was the sky. I sought a seat for him in a hidden and lovely spot: a dry stump of a tree: nor did I refuse to let him, when seated, place me on his knee: why should I, when both he and I were happier near than apart? Pilot lay beside us: all was quiet. He broke out suddenly while clasping me in his arms: 'Cruel, cruel deserter! Oh, Jane, what did I feel when I discovered you had fled from Thornfield, and when I could nowhere find you; and, after examining your apartment, ascertained that you had taken no money, nor anything which could serve as an equivalent! A pearl necklace I had given you lay untouched in its little casket; your trunks were left corded and locked as they had been prepared for the bridal tour. What could my darling do, I asked, left destitute and penniless? And what did she do? Let me hear now.'

Thus urged, I began the narrative of my experience for the last year. I softened considerably what related to the three days of wandering and starvation, because to have told him all would have been to inflict unnecessary pain: the little I did say lacerated his faithful heart deeper than I wished.

I should not have left him thus, he said, without any means of making my way: I should have told him my intention. I should have confided in him: he would never have forced me to be his mistress. Violent as he had seemed in his despair, he, in truth, loved me far too well and too tenderly to constitute himself my tyrant: he would have given me half his fortune, without demanding so much as a kiss in return, rather than I should have flung myself friendless on the wide world. I had endured, he was certain, more than I had confessed to him.

'Well, whatever my sufferings had been, they were very short,' I answered: and then I proceeded to tell him how I had been received at Moor House; how I had obtained the office of schoolmistress, &c. The accession of fortune, the discovery of my relations, followed in due order. Of course St. John Rivers' name came in frequently in the progress of my tale. When I had done that name was immediately taken up.

'This St. John, then, is your cousin?'

'Yes.'

'You have spoken of him often: do you like him?'

'He was a very good man, sir; I could not help liking him.'

'A good man? Does that mean a respectable, well-conducted man of fifty? Or what does it mean?'

'St. John was only twenty-nine, sir.'

'"*Jeune encore*," as the French say. Is he a person of low stature, phlegmatic, and plain? A person whose goodness consists rather in his guiltlessness of vice than in his prowess in virtue?'

'He is untiringly active. Great and exalted deeds are what he lives to perform.'

'But his brain? That is probably rather soft? He means well: but you shrug your shoulders to hear him talk?'

'He talks little, sir: what he does say is ever to the point. His brain is first-rate, I should think not impressible, but vigorous.'

'Is he an able man, then?'

'Truly able.'

'A thoroughly educated man?'

'St. John is an accomplished and profound scholar.'

'His manners, I think, you said are not to your taste?—priggish and parsonic?'

'I never mentioned his manners; but, unless I had a very bad taste, they must suit it; they are polished, calm, and gentlemanlike.'

'His appearance,—I forget what description you gave of his appearance;—a sort of raw curate, half-strangled with his white neckcloth, and stilted up on his thick-soled highlows, eh?'

'St. John dresses well. He is a handsome man: tall, fair, with blue eyes and a Grecian profile.'

(*Aside.*) 'Damn him!'—(*To me.*) 'Did you like him, Jane?'

'Yes, Mr. Rochester, I liked him: but you asked me that before.'

I perceived, of course, the drift of my interlocutor. Jealousy had got hold of him: she stung him; but the sting was salutary: it gave him respite from the gnawing fang of melancholy. I would not, therefore, immediately charm the snake.

'Perhaps you would rather not sit any longer on my knee, Miss Eyre?' was the next somewhat unexpected observation.

'Why not, Mr. Rochester?'

'The picture you have just drawn is suggestive of a rather too overwhelming contrast. Your words have delineated very prettily a graceful Apollo: he is present to your imagination,—tall, fair, blue-eyed, and with a Grecian profile. Your eyes dwell on a Vulcan,—a real blacksmith, brown, broad-shouldered; and blind and lame into the bargain.'

'I never thought of it before; but you certainly are rather like Vulcan, sir.'

'Well,—you can leave me, ma'am: but before you go' (and he retained me by a firmer grasp than ever), 'you will be pleased just to answer me a question or two.' He paused.

'What questions, Mr. Rochester?'

Then followed this cross-examination.

'St. John made you schoolmistress of Morton before he knew you were his cousin?'

'Yes.'

'You would often see him? He would visit the school sometimes?'

'Daily.'

'He would approve of your plans, Jane? I know they would be clever, for you are a talented creature.'

'He approved of them—yes.'

'He would discover many things in you he could not have expected to find? Some of your accomplishments are not ordinary.'

'I don't know about that.'

'You had a little cottage near the school, you say: did he ever come there to see you?'

'Now and then.'

'Of an evening?'

'Once or twice.'

A pause.

'How long did you reside with him and his sisters after the cousinship was discovered?'

'Five months.'

'Did Rivers spend much time with the ladies of his family?'

'Yes; the back parlour was both his study and ours: he sat near the window, and we by the table.'

'Did he study much?'

'A good deal.'

'What?'

'Hindostanee.'

'And what did you do meantime?'

'I learnt German, at first.'

'Did he teach you?'

'He did not understand German.'

'Did he teach you nothing?'

'A little Hindostanee.'

'Rivers taught you Hindostanee?'

'Yes, sir.'

'And his sisters also?'

'No.'

'Only you?'

'Only me.'

'Did you ask to learn?'

'No.'

'He wished to teach you?'

'Yes.'

A second pause.

'Why did he wish it? Of what use could Hindostanee be to you?'

'He intended me to go with him to India.'

'Ah! here I reach the root of the matter. He wanted you to marry him?'

'He asked me to marry him.'

'That is a fiction—an impudent invention to vex me.'

'I beg your pardon, it is the literal truth: he asked me more than once, and was as stiff about urging his point as ever you could be.'

'Miss Eyre, I repeat it, you can leave me. How often am I to say the same thing? Why do you remain pertinaciously perched on my knee, when I have given you notice to quit?'

'Because I am comfortable there.'

'No, Jane, you are not comfortable there, because your heart is not with me: it is with this cousin—this St. John. Oh, till this moment I thought my little Jane was all mine! I had a belief she loved me even when she left me: that was an atom of sweet in much bitter. Long as we have been parted, hot tears as I have wept over our separation, I never thought that while I was mourning her she was loving another! But it is useless grieving. Jane, leave me: go and marry Rivers.'

'Shake me off, then, sir—push me away, for I'll not leave you of my own accord.'

'Jane, I ever like your tone of voice: it still renews hope, it sounds so truthful. When I hear it, it carries me back a year. I forget that you have formed a new tie. But I am not a fool—go——'

'Where must I go, sir?'

'Your own way—with the husband you have chosen.'

'Who is that?'

'You know—this St. John Rivers.'

'He is not my husband, nor ever will be. He does not love me: I do not love him. He loves (as he *can* love, and that is not as you love) a beautiful young lady called Rosamond. He wanted to marry me only because he thought I should make a suitable missionary's wife, which she would not have done. He is good and great, but severe; and, for me, cold as an iceberg. He is not like you, sir: I am not happy at his side, nor near him, nor with him. He has no indulgence for me—no fondness. He sees nothing attractive in me; not even youth—only a few useful mental points.—Then I must leave you, sir, to go to him?'

I shuddered involuntarily, and clung instinctively closer to my blind but beloved master. He smiled.

'What, Jane! Is this true? Is such really the state of matters between you and Rivers?'

'Absolutely, sir. Oh, you need not be jealous! I wanted to tease you a little to make you less sad: I thought anger would be better than grief. But if you wish me to love you, could you but see how much I *do* love you, you would be proud and content. All my heart is yours, sir: it belongs to you; and with you it would remain were fate to exile the rest of me from your presence for ever.'

Again, as he kissed me, painful thoughts darkened his aspect.

'My seared vision! my crippled strength!' he murmured regretfully.

I caressed, in order to soothe him. I knew of what he was thinking, and wanted to speak for him; but dared not. As he turned aside his face a minute I saw a tear slide from under the sealed eyelid, and trickle down the manly cheek. My heart swelled.

'I am no better than the old lightning-struck chestnut-tree in Thornfield orchard,' he remarked ere long. 'And what right would that ruin have to bid a budding woodbine cover its decay with freshness?'

'You are no ruin, sir—no lightning-struck tree: you are green and vigorous. Plants will grow about your roots, whether you ask them or not, because they take delight in your bountiful shadow; and as they grow they will lean towards you, and wind round you, because your strength offers them so safe a prop.'

Again he smiled: I gave him comfort.

'You speak of friends, Jane?' he asked.

'Yes: of friends,' I answered rather hesitatingly: for I knew I meant more than friends, but could not tell what other word to employ. He helped me.

'Ah! Jane. But I want a wife.'

'Do you, sir?'

'Yes: is it news to you?'

'Of course: you said nothing about it before.'

'Is it unwelcome news?'

'That depends on circumstances, sir—on your choice.'

'Which you shall make for me, Jane. I will abide by your decision.'

'Choose then, sir—*her who loves you best.*'

'I will at least choose—*her I love best.* Jane, will you marry me?'

'Yes, sir.

'A poor blind man, whom you will have to lead about by the hand?'

'Yes, sir.'

'A crippled man, twenty years older than you, whom you will have to wait on?'

'Yes, sir.'

'Truly, Jane?'

'Most truly, sir.'

'Oh! my darling! God bless you and reward you!'

'Mr. Rochester, if ever I did a good deed in my life—if ever I thought a good thought—if ever I prayed a sincere and blameless prayer—if ever I wished a righteous wish,—I am rewarded now. To be your wife is, for me, to be as happy as I can be on earth.'

'Because you delight in sacrifice.'

'Sacrifice! What do I sacrifice? Famine for food, expectation for content. To be privileged to put my arms round what I value—to press my lips to what I love—to repose on what I trust: is that to make a sacrifice? If so, then certainly I delight in sacrifice.'

'And to bear with my infirmities, Jane: to overlook my deficiencies.'

'Which are none, sir, to me. I love you better now, when I can really be useful to you, than I did in your state of proud independence, when you disdained every part but that of the giver and protector.'

'Hitherto I have hated to be helped—to be led: henceforth, I feel, I shall hate it no more. I did not like to put my hand into a hireling's, but it is pleasant to feel it circled by Jane's little fingers. I preferred utter loneliness to the constant attendance of servants; but Jane's soft ministry will be a perpetual joy. Jane suits me: do I suit her?'

'To the finest fibre of my nature, sir.'

'The case being so, we have nothing in the world to wait for: we must be married instantly.'

He looked and spoke with eagerness: his old impetuosity was rising.

'We must become one flesh without any delay, Jane: there is but the licence to get—then we marry.'

'Mr. Rochester, I have just discovered the sun is far declined from its meridian, and Pilot is actually gone home to his dinner. Let me look at your watch.'

'Fasten it into your girdle, Janet, and keep it henceforward: I have no use for it.'

'It is nearly four o'clock in the afternoon, sir. Don't you feel hungry?'

'The third day from this must be our wedding-day, Jane. Never mind fine clothes and jewels now: all that is not worth a fillip.'

'The sun has dried up all the rain-drops, sir. The breeze is still: it is quite hot.'

'Do you know, Jane, I have your little pearl necklace at this moment fastened round my bronze scrag under my cravat? I have worn it since the day I lost my only treasure: as a memento of her.'

'We will go home through the wood: that will be the shadiest way.'

He pursued his own thoughts without heeding me.

'Jane! you think me, I daresay, an irreligious dog: but my heart swells with gratitude to the beneficent God of this earth just now. He sees not as man sees, but far clearer: judges not as man judges, but far more wisely. I did wrong: I would have sullied my innocent flower—breathed guilt on its purity: the Omnipotent snatched it from me. I, in my stiff-necked rebellion, almost cursed the dispensation: instead of bending to the decree, I defied it. Divine justice pursued its course; disasters came thick on me: I was forced to pass through the valley of the shadow of death. *His* chastisements are mighty; and one smote me which has humbled me for ever. You know I was proud of my strength; but what is it now, when I must give it over to foreign guidance, as a child does its weakness? Of late, Jane—only—only of late—I began to see and acknowledge the hand of God in my doom. I began to experience remorse, repentance; the wish for reconcilement to my Maker. I began sometimes to pray: very brief prayers they were, but very sincere.

'Some days since: nay, I can number them—four; it was last Monday night, a singular mood came over me: one in which grief replaced frenzy—sorrow, sullenness. I had long had the impression that since I could nowhere find you, you must be dead. Late that night—perhaps it might be between eleven and twelve o'clock—ere I retired to my dreary rest, I supplicated God that, if it seemed good to Him, I might soon be taken from this life, and admitted to that world to come, where there was still hope of rejoining Jane.

'I was in my own room, and sitting by the window, which was open: it soothed me to feel the balmy night-air: though I could see no stars and only by a vague, luminous haze, knew the presence of a moon. I longed for thee, Janet! Oh, I longed for thee both with soul and flesh! I asked of God, at once in anguish and humility, if I had not been long enough desolate, afflicted, tormented; and might not soon taste bliss and peace once more. That I merited all I endured I acknowledged—that I could scarcely endure more I pleaded; and the Alpha and Omega of my heart's wishes broke involuntarily from my lips in the words—"Jane! Jane! Jane!"'

'Did you speak these words aloud?'

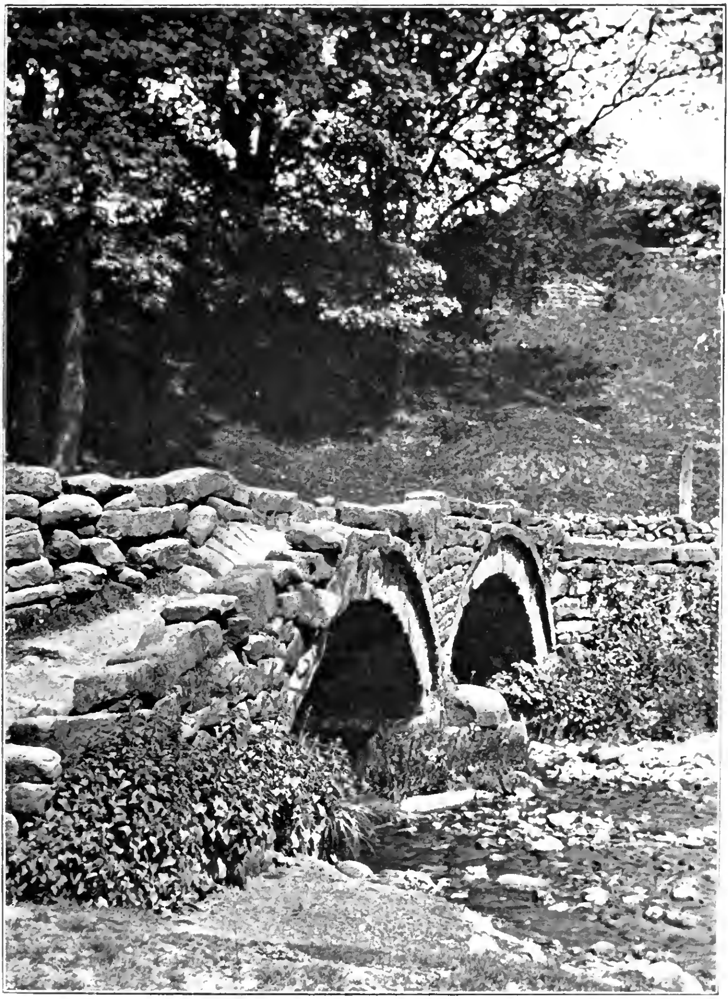
'I did, Jane. If any listener had heard me, he would have thought me mad: I pronounced them with such frantic energy.'

'And it was last Monday night: somewhere near midnight?'

'Yes; but the time is of no consequence: what followed is the strange point. You will think me superstitious,—some superstition I have in my blood, and always had: nevertheless, this is true—true at least it is that I heard what I now relate.

'As I exclaimed "Jane! Jane! Jane!" a voice—I cannot tell whence the voice came, but I know whose voice it was—replied, "I am coming: wait for me;" and a moment after went whispering on the wind the words—"Where are you?"

'I'll tell you, if I can, the idea, the picture these words opened to my mind: yet it is difficult to express what I want to express. Ferndean is buried, as you see, in a heavy wood, where sound falls dull, and dies unreverberating. "Where are you?" seemed spoken amongst mountains; for I heard a hill-sent echo repeat the words. Cooler and fresher at the moment the gale seemed to visit my brow: I could have deemed that in some wild, lone scene, I and Jane were meeting. In spirit, I believe, we must have met. You no doubt were, at that hour, in unconscious sleep, Jane:



WYCOLLER BRIDGE (FERNDEAN MANOR).

perhaps your soul wandered from its cell to comfort mine; for those were your accents—as certain as I live—they were yours!'

Reader, it was on Monday night—near midnight—that I too had received the mysterious summons: those were the very words by which I replied to it. I listened to Mr. Rochester's narrative; but made no disclosure in return. The coincidence struck me as too awful and inexplicable to be communicated or discussed. If I told anything, my tale would be such as must necessarily make a profound impression on the mind of my hearer: and that mind, yet from its sufferings too prone to gloom, needed not the deeper shade of the supernatural. I kept these things then, and pondered them in my heart.

'You cannot now wonder,' continued my master, 'that when you rose upon me so unexpectedly last night I had difficulty in believing you any other than a mere voice and vision: something that would melt to silence and annihilation, as the midnight whisper and mountain echo had melted before. Now, I thank God! I know it to be otherwise. Yes, I thank God!'

He put me off his knee, rose, and reverently lifting his hat from his brow, and bending his sightless eyes to the earth, he stood in mute devotion. Only the last words of the worship were audible.

'I thank my Maker that in the midst of judgment He has remembered mercy. I humbly entreat my Redeemer to give me strength to lead henceforth a purer life than I have done hitherto!'

Then he stretched his hand out to be led. I took that dear hand, held it a moment to my lips, then let it pass round my shoulder: being so much lower of stature than he, I served both for his prop and guide. We entered the wood, and wended homeward.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

CONCLUSION

Reader, I married him. A quiet wedding we had: he and I, the parson and clerk, were alone present. When we got back from church, I went into the kitchen of the manor-house, where Mary was cooking the dinner, and John cleaning the knives, and I said: 'Mary, I have been married to Mr. Rochester this morning.' The housekeeper and her husband were both of that decent phlegmatic order of people to whom one may at any time safely communicate a remarkable piece of news without incurring the danger of having one's ears pierced by some shrill ejaculation, and subsequently stunned by a torrent of wordy wonderment. Mary did look up, and she did stare at me: the ladle with which she was basting a pair of chickens roasting at the fire did for some three minutes hang suspended in air; and for the same space of time John's knives also had rest from the polishing process: but Mary, bending again over the roast, said only: 'Have you, Miss? Well, for sure!'

A short time after she pursued: 'I seed you go out with the master, but I didn't know you were gone to church to be wed;' and she basted away. John, when I turned to him, was grinning from ear to ear.

'I telled Mary how it would be,' he said: 'I knew what Mr. Edward' (John was an old servant, and had known his master when he was the cadet of the house, therefore he often gave him his Christian name)—'I knew what Mr. Edward would do; and I was certain he would not wait long neither:

and he's done right, for aught I know. I wish you joy, Miss!' and he politely pulled his forelock.

'Thank you, John. Mr. Rochester told me to give you and Mary this.' I put into his hand a five-pound note. Without waiting to hear more, I left the kitchen. In passing the door of that sanctum some time after I caught the words: 'She'll happen do better for him nor ony o' t' grand ladies.' And again, 'If she ben't one o' th' handsomest, she's noan faâl and varry good-natured; and i' his een she's fair beautiful, onybody may see that.'

I wrote to Moor House and to Cambridge immediately to say what I had done: fully explaining also why I had thus acted. Diana and Mary approved the step unreservedly. Diana announced that she would just give me time to get over the honeymoon, and then she would come and see me.

'She had better not wait till then, Jane,' said Mr. Rochester, when I read her letter to him; 'if she does, she will be too late, for our honeymoon will shine our life-long: its beams will only fade over your grave or mine.'

How St. John received the news I don't know; he never answered the letter in which I communicated it: yet six months after he wrote to me; without, however, mentioning Mr. Rochester's name, or alluding to my marriage. His letter was then calm: and though very serious, kind. He has maintained a regular, though not frequent correspondence ever since: he hopes I am happy, and trusts I am not of those who live without God in the world, and only mind earthly things.

You have not quite forgotten little Adèle, have you, reader? I had not; I soon asked and obtained leave of Mr. Rochester to go and see her at the school where he had placed her. Her frantic joy at beholding me again moved me much. She looked pale and thin: she said she was not happy. I found the rules of the establishment were too strict, its course of study too severe, for a child of her age: I took her home with me. I meant to become her governess once more; but I soon found this impracticable; my time and cares were now required by another—my husband needed them all. So I sought out a school conducted on a more indulgent system; and near enough to permit of my visiting her often, and bringing her home sometimes. I took care she should never want for anything that could contribute to her comfort: she soon settled in her new abode, became very happy there, and made fair progress in her studies. As she grew up a sound English education corrected in a great measure her French defects; and when she left school I found in her a pleasing and obliging companion: docile, good-tempered, and well-principled. By her grateful attention to me and mine she has long since well repaid any little kindness I ever had in my power to offer her.

My tale draws to its close: one word respecting my experience of married life, and one brief glance at the fortunes of those whose names have most frequently recurred in this narrative, and I have done.

I have now been married ten years. I know what it is to live entirely for and with what I love best on earth. I hold myself supremely blest—blest beyond what language can express; because I am my husband's life as fully as he is mine. No woman was ever nearer to her mate than I am; ever more absolutely bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh.

I know no weariness of my Edward's society: he knows none of mine, any more than we each do of the pulsation of the heart that beats in our separate bosoms; consequently, we are ever together. To be together is for us to be at once as free as in solitude, as gay as in company. We talk, I believe, all day long: to talk to each other is but a more animated and an audible thinking. All my confidence is bestowed on him, all his confidence is devoted to me; we are precisely suited in character—perfect concord is the result.

Mr. Rochester continued blind the first two years of our union: perhaps it was that circumstance that drew us so very near—that knit us so very close! for I was then his vision, as I am still his right hand. Literally, I was (what he often called me) the apple of his eye. He saw nature—he saw books through me; and never did I weary of gazing for his behalf, and of putting into words the effect of field, tree, town, river, cloud, sunbeam—of the landscape before us; of the weather round us—and impressing by sound on his ear what light could no longer stamp on his eye. Never did I weary of reading to him: never did I weary of conducting him where he wished to go: of doing for him what he wished to be done. And there was a pleasure in my services, most full, most exquisite, even though sad—because he claimed these services without painful shame or damping humiliation. He loved me so truly that he knew no reluctance in profiting by my attendance: he felt I loved him so fondly that to yield that attendance was to indulge my sweetest wishes.

One morning at the end of the two years, as I was writing a letter to his dictation, he came and bent over me, and said—'Jane, have you a glittering ornament round your neck?'

I had a gold watch-chain: I answered, 'Yes.'

'And have you a pale blue dress on?'

I had. He informed me then that for some time he had fancied the obscurity clouding one eye was becoming less dense; and that now he was sure of it.

He and I went up to London. He had the advice of an eminent oculist; and he eventually recovered the sight of that one eye. He cannot now see very distinctly: he cannot read or write much; but he can find his way without being led by the hand: the sky is no longer a blank to him—the earth no longer a void. When his firstborn was put into his arms, he could see that the boy had inherited his own eyes, as they once were—large, brilliant, and black. On that occasion he again, with a full heart, acknowledged that God had tempered judgment with mercy.

My Edward and I, then, are happy: and the more so because those we most love are happy likewise. Diana and Mary Rivers are both married: alternately, once every year, they come to see us, and we go to see them. Diana's husband is a captain in the navy; a gallant officer and a good man. Mary's is a clergyman: a college friend of her brother's; and, from his attainments and principles, worthy of the connection. Both Captain Fitzjames and Mr. Wharton love their wives, and are loved by them.

As to St. John Rivers, he left England: he went to India. He entered on the path he had marked for himself; he pursues it still. A more resolute, indefatigable pioneer never wrought amidst rocks and dangers. Firm, faithful, and devoted; full of energy, and zeal, and truth, he labours for his race: he clears their painful way to improvement: he hews down like a giant the prejudices of creed and caste that encumber it. He may be stern; he may be exacting: he may be ambitious yet; but his is the sternness of the warrior Greatheart, who guards his pilgrim convoy from the onslaught of Apollyon. His is the exaction of the apostle, who speaks but for Christ when he says—'Whosoever will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me.' His is the ambition of the high master-spirit, which aims to fill a place in the first rank of those who are redeemed from the earth—who stand without fault before the throne of God; who share the last mighty victories of the Lamb; who are called, and chosen, and faithful.

St. John is unmarried: he never will marry now. Himself has hitherto sufficed to the toil; and the toil draws near its close: his glorious sun hastens to its setting. The last letter I received from him drew from my eyes human tears, and yet filled my heart with Divine joy: he anticipated his sure reward, his incorruptible crown. I know that a stranger's hand will write to me next, to say that the good and faithful servant has been called at length into the joy of his Lord. And why weep for this? No fear of death will darken St. John's last hour: his mind will be unclouded;

his heart will be undaunted; his hope will be sure; his faith steadfast. His own words are a pledge of this:—'My Master,' he says, 'has forewarned me. Daily he announces more distinctly,—"Surely I come quickly!" and hourly I more eagerly respond,—"Amen; even so come, Lord Jesus!"'

THE END

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Frankenstein

Mary Shelley

1818

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PREFACE

THE event on which this fiction is founded has been supposed, by Dr. Darwin, and some of the physiological writers of Germany, as not of impossible occurrence. I shall not be supposed as according the remotest degree of serious faith to such an imagination; yet, in assuming it as the basis of a work of fancy, I have not considered myself as merely weaving a series of supernatural terrors. The event on which the interest of the story depends is exempt from the disadvantages of a mere tale of spectres or enchantment. It was recommended by the novelty of the situations which it developes; and, however impossible as a physical fact, affords a point of view to the imagination for the delineating of human passions more comprehensive and commanding than any which the ordinary relations of existing events can yield.

I have thus endeavoured to preserve the truth of the elementary principles of human nature, while I have not scrupled to innovate upon their combinations. The *Iliad*, the tragic poetry of Greece, — Shakespeare, in the *Tempest* and *Midsummer Night's Dream*, — and most especially Milton, in *Paradise Lost*, conform to this rule; and the most humble novelist, who seeks to confer or receive amusement from his labours, may, without presumption, apply to prose fiction a licence, or rather a rule, from the adoption of which so many exquisite combinations of human feeling have resulted in the highest specimens of poetry.

The circumstance on which my story rests was suggested in casual conversation. It was commenced, partly as a source of amusement, and partly as an expedient for exercising any untried resources of mind. Other motives were mingled with these, as the work proceeded. I am by no means indifferent to the manner in which whatever moral tendencies exist in the sentiments or characters it contains shall affect the reader; yet my chief concern in this respect has been limited to the avoiding of the enervating effects of the novels of the present day, and to the exhibition of the amiableness of domestic affection, and the excellence of universal virtue. The opinions which naturally spring from the character and situation of the hero are by no means to be conceived as existing always in my own conviction; nor is any inference justly to be drawn from the following pages as prejudicing any philosophical doctrine of whatever kind.

It is a subject also of additional interest to the author, that this story was begun in the majestic region where the scene is principally laid, and in society which cannot cease to be regretted. I passed the summer of 1816 in the environs of Geneva. The season was cold and rainy, and in the evenings we crowded around a blazing wood fire, and occasionally amused ourselves with some German stories of ghosts, which happened to fall into our hands. These tales excited in us a playful desire of imitation. Two other friends (a tale from the pen of one of whom would be far more acceptable to the public than any thing I can ever hope to produce) and myself agreed to write each a story, founded on some supernatural occurrence.

The weather, however, suddenly became serene; and my two friends left me on a journey among the Alps, and lost, in the magnificent scenes which they present, all memory of their ghostly visions. The following tale is the only one which has been completed.

Volume I

Letter I

To Mrs. SAVILLE, *England*.

St. Petersburgh, Dec. 11th, 17—.

YOU will rejoice to hear that no disaster has accompanied the commencement of an enterprise which you have regarded with such evil forebodings. I arrived here yesterday; and my first task is to assure my dear sister of my welfare, and increasing confidence in the success of my undertaking.

I am already far north of London; and as I walk in the streets of Petersburgh, I feel a cold northern breeze play upon my cheeks, which braces my nerves, and fills me with delight. Do you understand this feeling? This breeze, which has travelled from the regions towards which I am advancing, gives me a foretaste of those icy climes. Inspirited by this wind of promise, my day dreams become more fervent and vivid. I try in vain to be persuaded that the pole is the seat of frost and desolation; it ever presents itself to my imagination as the region of beauty and delight. There, Margaret, the sun is for ever visible; its broad disk just skirting the horizon, and diffusing a perpetual splendour. There — for with your leave, my sister, I will put some trust in preceding navigators — there snow and frost are banished; and, sailing over a calm sea, we may be wafted to a land surpassing in wonders and in beauty every region hitherto discovered on the habitable globe. Its productions and features may be without example, as the phænomena of the heavenly bodies undoubtedly are in those undiscovered solitudes. What may not be expected in a country of eternal light? I may there discover the wondrous power which attracts the needle; and may regulate a thousand celestial observations, that require only this voyage to render their seeming eccentricities consistent for ever. I shall satiate my ardent curiosity with the sight of a part of the world never before visited, and may tread a land never before imprinted by the foot of man. These are my enticements, and they are sufficient to conquer all fear of danger or death, and to induce me to commence this laborious voyage with the joy a child feels when he embarks in a little boat, with his holiday mates, on an expedition of discovery up his native river. But, supposing all these conjectures to be false, you cannot contest the inestimable benefit which I shall confer on all mankind to the last generation, by discovering a passage near the pole to those countries, to reach which at present so many months are requisite; or by ascertaining the secret of the magnet, which, if at all possible, can only be effected by an undertaking such as mine.

These reflections have dispelled the agitation with which I began my letter, and I feel my heart glow with an enthusiasm which elevates me to heaven; for nothing contributes so much to tranquillize the mind as a steady purpose, — a point on which the soul may fix its intellectual eye. This expedition has been the favourite dream of my early years. I have read with ardour the accounts of the various voyages which have been made in the prospect of arriving at the North Pacific Ocean through the seas which surround the pole. You may remember, that a history of all the voyages made for purposes of discovery composed the whole of our good uncle Thomas's library. My education was neglected, yet I was passionately fond of reading. These volumes were my study day and night, and my familiarity with them increased that regret which I had felt, as a child, on learning that my father's dying injunction had forbidden my uncle to allow me to embark in a sea-faring life.

These visions faded when I perused, for the first time, those poets whose effusions entranced my soul, and lifted it to heaven. I also became a poet, and for one year lived in a Paradise of my own creation; I imagined that I also might obtain a niche in the temple where the names of Homer and Shakespeare are consecrated. You are well acquainted with my failure, and how heavily I bore the disappointment. But just at that time I inherited the fortune of my cousin, and my thoughts were turned into the channel of their earlier bent.

Six years have passed since I resolved on my present undertaking. I can, even now, remember the hour from which I dedicated myself to this great enterprise. I commenced by inuring my body to hardship. I accompanied the whale-fishers on several expeditions to the North Sea; I voluntarily endured cold, famine, thirst, and want of sleep; I often worked harder than the common sailors during the day, and devoted my nights to the study of mathematics, the theory of medicine, and those branches of physical science from which a naval adventurer might derive the greatest practical advantage. Twice I actually hired myself as an under-mate in a Greenland whaler, and acquitted myself to admiration. I must own I felt a little proud, when my captain offered me the second dignity in the vessel, and entreated me to remain with the greatest earnestness; so valuable did he consider my services.

And now, dear Margaret, do I not deserve to accomplish some great purpose. My life might have been passed in ease and luxury; but I preferred glory to every enticement that wealth placed in my path. Oh, that some encouraging voice would answer in the affirmative! My courage and my resolution is firm; but my hopes fluctuate, and my spirits are often depressed. I am about to proceed on a long and difficult voyage; the emergencies of which will demand all my fortitude: I am required not only to raise the spirits of others, but sometimes to sustain my own, when their's are failing.

This is the most favourable period for travelling in Russia. They fly quickly over the snow in their sledges; the motion is pleasant, and, in my opinion, far more agreeable than that of an English stagecoach. The cold is not excessive, if you are wrapt in furs, a dress which I have already adopted; for there is a great difference between walking the deck and remaining seated motionless for hours, when no exercise prevents the blood from actually freezing in your veins. I have no ambition to lose my life on the post-road between St. Petersburgh and Archangel.

I shall depart for the latter town in a fortnight or three weeks; and my intention is to hire a ship there, which can easily be done by paying the insurance for the owner, and to engage as many sailors as I think necessary among those who are accustomed to the whale-fishing. I do not intend to sail until the month of June: and when shall I return? Ah, dear sister, how can I answer this question? If I succeed, many, many months, perhaps years, will pass before you and I may meet. If I fail, you will see me again soon, or never.

Farewell, my dear, excellent, Margaret. Heaven shower down blessings on you, and save me, that I may again and again testify my gratitude for all your love and kindness.

Your affectionate brother,
R. WALTON.

Letter II

To Mrs. SAVILLE, *England*.

Archangel, 28th March, 17—.

HOW slowly the time passes here, encompassed as I am by frost and snow; yet a second step is taken towards my enterprise. I have hired a vessel, and am occupied in collecting my sailors; those whom I have already engaged appear to be men on whom I can depend, and are certainly possessed of dauntless courage.

But I have one want which I have never yet been able to satisfy; and the absence of the object of which I now feel as a most severe evil. I have no friend, Margaret: when I am glowing with the enthusiasm of success, there will be none to participate my joy; if I am assailed by disappointment, no one will endeavour to sustain me in dejection. I shall commit my thoughts to paper, it is true; but that is a poor medium for the communication of feeling. I desire the company of a man who could sympathize with me; whose eyes would reply to mine. You may deem me romantic, my dear sister, but I bitterly feel the want of a friend. I have no one near me, gentle yet courageous, possessed of a cultivated as well as of a capacious mind, whose tastes are like my own, to approve or amend my plans. How would such a friend repair the faults of your poor brother! I am too ardent in execution, and too impatient of difficulties. But it is a still greater evil to me that I am self-educated: for the first fourteen years of my life I ran wild on a common, and read nothing but our uncle Thomas's books of voyages. At that age I became acquainted with the celebrated poets of our own country; but it was only when it had ceased to be in my power to derive its most important benefits from such a conviction, that I perceived the necessity of becoming acquainted with more languages than that of my native country. Now I am twenty-eight, and am in reality more illiterate than many school-boys of fifteen. It is true that I have thought more, and that my day dreams are more extended and magnificent; but they want (as the painters call it) *keeping*; and I greatly need a friend who would have sense enough not to despise me as romantic, and affection enough for me to endeavour to regulate my mind.

Well, these are useless complaints; I shall certainly find no friend on the wide ocean, nor even here in Archangel, among merchants and seamen. Yet some feelings, unallied to the dross of human nature, beat even in these rugged bosoms. My lieutenant, for instance, is a man of wonderful courage and enterprise; he is madly desirous of glory. He is an Englishman, and in the midst of national and professional prejudices, unsoftened by cultivation, retains some of the noblest endowments of humanity. I first became acquainted with him on board a whale vessel: finding that he was unemployed in this city, I easily engaged him to assist in my enterprise.

The master is a person of an excellent disposition, and is remarkable in the ship for his gentleness, and the mildness of his discipline. He is, indeed, of so amiable a nature, that he will not hunt (a favourite, and almost the only amusement here), because he cannot endure to spill blood. He is, moreover, heroically generous. Some years ago he loved a young Russian lady, of moderate fortune; and having amassed a considerable sum in prize-money, the father of the girl consented to the match. He saw his mistress once before the destined ceremony; but she was bathed in tears, and, throwing herself at his feet, entreated him to spare her, confessing at the same time that she loved another, but that he was poor, and that her father would never consent to the union. My generous friend reassured the suppliant, and on being informed of the name of her lover instantly abandoned his pursuit. He had already bought a farm with his money, on which he had designed to pass the remainder of his life; but he bestowed the whole on his rival, together with the remains of his prize-money to purchase stock, and then himself solicited the young woman's father to consent to her marriage with her lover. But the old man decidedly refused, thinking himself bound in honour to my friend; who, when he found the father inexorable, quitted his country, nor returned until he heard that his former mistress was married according to her inclinations. "What a noble fellow!" you will exclaim. He is so; but then he has passed all his life on board a vessel, and has scarcely an idea beyond the rope and the shroud.

But do not suppose that, because I complain a little, or because I can conceive a consolation for my toils which I may never know, that I am wavering in my resolutions. Those are as fixed as fate; and my voyage is only now delayed until the weather shall permit my embarkation. The winter has been dreadfully severe; but the spring promises well, and it is considered as a remarkably early season; so that, perhaps, I may sail sooner than I expected. I shall do nothing rashly; you know me sufficiently to confide in my prudence and considerateness whenever the safety of others is committed to my care.

I cannot describe to you my sensations on the near prospect of my undertaking. It is impossible to communicate to you a conception of the trembling sensation, half pleasurable and half fearful, with which I am preparing to depart. I am going to unexplored regions, to “the land of mist and snow;” but I shall kill no albatross, therefore do not be alarmed for my safety.

Shall I meet you again, after having traversed immense seas, and returned by the most southern cape of Africa or America? I dare not expect such success, yet I cannot bear to look on the reverse of the picture. Continue to write to me by every opportunity: I may receive your letters (though the chance is very doubtful) on some occasions when I need them most to support my spirits. I love you very tenderly. Remember me with affection, should you never hear from me again.

Your affectionate brother,
ROBERT WALTON.

Letter III

To Mrs. SAVILLE, *England*.

July 7th, 17—.

MY DEAR SISTER,

I WRITE a few lines in haste, to say that I am safe, and well advanced on my voyage. This letter will reach England by a merchant-man now on its homeward voyage from Archangel; more fortunate than I, who may not see my native land, perhaps, for many years. I am, however, in good spirits: my men are bold, and apparently firm of purpose; nor do the floating sheets of ice that continually pass us, indicating the dangers of the region towards which we are advancing, appear to dismay them. We have already reached a very high latitude; but it is the height of summer, and although not so warm as in England, the southern gales, which blow us speedily towards those shores which I so ardently desire to attain, breathe a degree of renovating warmth which I had not expected.

No incidents have hitherto befallen us, that would make a figure in a letter. One or two stiff gales, and the breaking of a mast, are accidents which experienced navigators scarcely remember to record; and I shall be well content, if nothing worse happen to us during our voyage.

Adieu, my dear Margaret. Be assured, that for my own sake, as well as your's, I will not rashly encounter danger. I will be cool, persevering, and prudent.

Remember me to all my English friends.

Most affectionately yours,
R. W.

Letter IV

To Mrs. SAVILLE, *England*.

August 5th, 17—.

SO strange an accident has happened to us, that I cannot forbear recording it, although it is very probable that you will see me before these papers can come into your possession.

Last Monday (July 31st), we were nearly surrounded by ice, which closed in the ship on all sides, scarcely leaving her the sea room in which she floated. Our situation was somewhat dangerous, especially as we were compassed round by a very thick fog. We accordingly lay to, hoping that some change would take place in the atmosphere and weather.

About two o'clock the mist cleared away, and we beheld, stretched out in every direction, vast and irregular plains of ice, which seemed to have no end. Some of my comrades groaned, and my own mind began to grow watchful with anxious thoughts, when a strange sight suddenly attracted our attention, and diverted our solicitude from our own situation. We perceived a low carriage, fixed on a sledge and drawn by dogs, pass on towards the north, at the distance of half a mile: a being which had the shape of a man, but apparently of gigantic stature, sat in the sledge, and guided the dogs. We watched the rapid progress of the traveller with our telescopes, until he was lost among the distant inequalities of the ice.

This appearance excited our unqualified wonder. We were, as we believed, many hundred miles from any land; but this apparition seemed to denote that it was not, in reality, so distant as we had supposed. Shut in, however, by ice, it was impossible to follow his track, which we had observed with the greatest attention.

About two hours after this occurrence, we heard the ground sea; and before night the ice broke, and freed our ship. We, however, lay to until the morning, fearing to encounter in the dark those large loose masses which float about after the breaking up of the ice. I profited of this time to rest for a few hours.

In the morning, however, as soon as it was light, I went upon deck, and found all the sailors busy on one side of the vessel, apparently talking to some one in the sea. It was, in fact, a sledge, like that we had seen before, which had drifted towards us in the night, on a large fragment of ice. Only one dog remained alive; but there was a human being within it, whom the sailors were persuading to enter the vessel. He was not, as the other traveller seemed to be, a savage inhabitant of some undiscovered island, but an European. When I appeared on deck, the master said, “Here is our captain, and he will not allow you to perish on the open sea.”

On perceiving me, the stranger addressed me in English, although with a foreign accent. “Before I come on board your vessel,” said he, “will you have the kindness to inform me whither you are bound?”

You may conceive my astonishment on hearing such a question addressed to me from a man on the brink of destruction, and to whom I should have supposed that my vessel would have been a resource which he would not have exchanged for the most precious wealth the earth can afford. I replied, however, that we were on a voyage of discovery towards the northern pole.

Upon hearing this he appeared satisfied, and consented to come on board. Good God! Margaret, if you had seen the man who thus capitulated for his safety, your surprise would have been boundless. His limbs were nearly frozen, and his body dreadfully emaciated by fatigue and suffering. I never saw a man in so wretched a condition. We attempted to carry him into the cabin; but as soon as he had quitted the fresh air, he fainted. We accordingly brought him back to the deck, and restored him to animation by rubbing him with brandy, and forcing him to swallow a small quantity. As soon as he shewed signs of life, we wrapped him up in blankets, and placed him near the chimney of the kitchen-stove. By slow degrees he recovered, and ate a little soup, which restored him wonderfully.

Two days passed in this manner before he was able to speak; and I often feared that his sufferings had deprived him of understanding. When he had in some measure recovered, I removed him to my own cabin, and attended on him as much as my duty would permit. I never saw a more interesting creature: his eyes have generally an expression of wildness, and even madness; but there are moments when, if any one performs an act of kindness towards him, or does him any the most trifling service, his whole countenance is lighted up, as it were, with a beam of benevolence and sweetness that I never saw equalled. But he is generally melancholy and despairing; and sometimes he gnashes his teeth, as if impatient of the weight of woes that oppresses him.

When my guest was a little recovered, I had great trouble to keep off the men, who wished to ask him a thousand questions; but I would not allow him to be tormented by their idle curiosity, in a state of body and mind whose restoration evidently depended upon entire repose. Once, however, the lieutenant asked, Why he had come so far upon the ice in so strange a vehicle?

His countenance instantly assumed an aspect of the deepest gloom; and he replied, “To seek one who fled from me.”

“And did the man whom you pursued travel in the same fashion?”

“Yes.”

“Then I fancy we have seen him; for, the day before we picked you up, we saw some dogs drawing a sledge, with a man in it, across the ice.”

This aroused the stranger’s attention; and he asked a multitude of questions concerning the route which the dæmon, as he called him, had pursued. Soon after, when he was alone with me, he said, “I have, doubtless, excited your curiosity, as well as that of these good people; but you are too considerate to make inquiries."

"Certainly; it would indeed be very impertinent and inhuman in me to trouble you with any inquisitiveness of mine."

"And yet you rescued me from a strange and perilous situation; you have benevolently restored me to life."

Soon after this he inquired, if I thought that the breaking up of the ice had destroyed the other sledge? I replied, that I could not answer with any degree of certainty; for the ice had not broken until near midnight, and the traveller might have arrived at a place of safety before that time; but of this I could not judge.

From this time the stranger seemed very eager to be upon deck, to watch for the sledge which had before appeared; but I have persuaded him to remain in the cabin, for he is far too weak to sustain the rawness of the atmosphere. But I have promised that some one should watch for him, and give him instant notice if any new object should appear in sight.

Such is my journal of what relates to this strange occurrence up to the present day. The stranger has gradually improved in health, but is very silent, and appears uneasy when any one except myself enters his cabin. Yet his manners are so conciliating and gentle, that the sailors are all interested in him, although they have had very little communication with him. For my own part, I begin to love him as a brother; and his constant and deep grief fills me with sympathy and compassion. He must have been a noble creature in his better days, being even now in wreck so attractive and amiable.

I said in one of my letters, my dear Margaret, that I should find no friend on the wide ocean; yet I have found a man who, before his spirit had been broken by misery, I should have been happy to have possessed as the brother of my heart.

I shall continue my journal concerning the stranger at intervals, should I have any fresh incidents to record.

August 13th, 17—.

My affection for my guest increases every day. He excites at once my admiration and my pity to an astonishing degree. How can I see so noble a creature destroyed by misery without feeling the most poignant grief? He is so gentle, yet so wise; his mind is so cultivated; and when he speaks, although his words are culled with the choicest art, yet they flow with rapidity and unparalleled eloquence.

He is now much recovered from his illness, and is continually on the deck, apparently watching for the sledge that preceded his own. Yet, although unhappy, he is not so utterly occupied by his own misery, but that he interests himself deeply in the employments of others. He has asked me many questions concerning my design; and I have related my little history frankly to him. He appeared pleased with the confidence, and suggested several alterations in my plan, which I shall find exceedingly useful. There is no pedantry in his manner; but all he does appears to spring solely from the interest he instinctively takes in the welfare of those who surround him. He is often overcome by gloom, and then he sits by himself, and tries to overcome all that is sullen or unsocial in his humour. These paroxysms pass from him like a cloud from before the sun, though his dejection never leaves him. I have endeavoured to win his confidence; and I trust that I have succeeded. One day I mentioned to him the desire I had always felt of finding a friend who might sympathize with me, and direct me by his counsel. I said, I did not belong to that class of men who are offended by advice. "I am self-educated, and perhaps I hardly rely sufficiently upon my own powers. I wish therefore that my companion should be wiser and more experienced than myself, to confirm and support me; nor have I believed it impossible to find a true friend."

"I agree with you," replied the stranger, "in believing that friendship is not only a desirable, but a possible acquisition. I once had a friend, the most noble of human creatures, and am entitled, therefore, to judge respecting friendship. You have hope, and the world before you, and have no cause for despair. But I —— I have lost every thing, and cannot begin life anew."

As he said this, his countenance became expressive of a calm settled grief, that touched me to the heart. But he was silent, and presently retired to his cabin.

Even broken in spirit as he is, no one can feel more deeply than he does the beauties of nature. The starry sky, the sea, and every sight afforded by these wonderful regions, seems still to have the power of elevating his soul from earth. Such a man has a double existence: he may suffer misery, and be overwhelmed by disappointments; yet when he has retired into himself, he will be like a celestial spirit, that has a halo around him, within whose circle no grief or folly ventures.

Will you laugh at the enthusiasm I express concerning this divine wanderer? If you do, you must have certainly lost that simplicity which was once your characteristic charm. Yet, if you will, smile at the warmth of my expressions, while I find every day new causes for repeating them.

August 19th, 17—.

Yesterday the stranger said to me, “You may easily perceive, Captain Walton, that I have suffered great and unparalleled misfortunes. I had determined, once, that the memory of these evils should die with me; but you have won me to alter my determination. You seek for knowledge and wisdom, as I once did; and I ardently hope that the gratification of your wishes may not be a serpent to sting you, as mine has been. I do not know that the relation of my misfortunes will be useful to you, yet, if you are inclined, listen to my tale. I believe that the strange incidents connected with it will afford a view of nature, which may enlarge your faculties and understanding. You will hear of powers and occurrences, such as you have been accustomed to believe impossible: but I do not doubt that my tale conveys in its series internal evidence of the truth of the events of which it is composed.”

You may easily conceive that I was much gratified by the offered communication; yet I could not endure that he should renew his grief by a recital of his misfortunes. I felt the greatest eagerness to hear the promised narrative, partly from curiosity, and partly from a strong desire to ameliorate his fate, if it were in my power. I expressed these feelings in my answer.

"I thank you," he replied, "for your sympathy, but it is useless; my fate is nearly fulfilled. I wait but for one event, and then I shall repose in peace. I understand your feeling," continued he, perceiving that I wished to interrupt him; "but you are mistaken, my friend, if thus you will allow me to name you; nothing can alter my destiny: listen to my history, and you will perceive how irrevocably it is determined."

He then told me, that he would commence his narrative the next day when I should be at leisure. This promise drew from me the warmest thanks. I have resolved every night, when I am not engaged, to record, as nearly as possible in his own words, what he has related during the day. If I should be engaged, I will at least make notes. This manuscript will doubtless afford you the greatest pleasure: but to me, who know him, and who hear it from his own lips, with what interest and sympathy shall I read it in some future day!

Chapter I

I AM by birth a Genevese; and my family is one of the most distinguished of that republic. My ancestors had been for many years counsellors and syndics; and my father had filled several public situations with honour and reputation. He was respected by all who knew him for his integrity and indefatigable attention to public business. He passed his younger days perpetually occupied by the affairs of his country; and it was not until the decline of life that he thought of marrying, and bestowing on the state sons who might carry his virtues and his name down to posterity.

As the circumstances of his marriage illustrate his character, I cannot refrain from relating them. One of his most intimate friends was a merchant, who, from a flourishing state, fell, through numerous mischances, into poverty. This man, whose name was Beaufort, was of a proud and unbending disposition, and could not bear to live in poverty and oblivion in the same country where he had formerly been distinguished for his rank and magnificence. Having paid his debts, therefore, in the most honourable manner, he retreated with his daughter to the town of Lucerne, where he lived unknown and in wretchedness. My father loved Beaufort with the truest friendship, and was deeply grieved by his retreat in these unfortunate circumstances. He grieved also for the loss of his society, and resolved to seek him out and endeavour to persuade him to begin the world again through his credit and assistance.

Beaufort had taken effectual measures to conceal himself; and it was ten months before my father discovered his abode. Overjoyed at this discovery, he hastened to the house, which was situated in a mean street, near the Reuss. But when he entered, misery and despair alone welcomed him. Beaufort had saved but a very small sum of money from the wreck of his fortunes; but it was sufficient to provide him with sustenance for some months, and in the mean time he hoped to procure some respectable employment in a merchant's house. The interval was consequently spent in inaction; his grief only became more deep and rankling, when he had leisure for reflection; and at length it took so fast hold of his mind, that at the end of three months he lay on a bed of sickness, incapable of any exertion.

His daughter attended him with the greatest tenderness; but she saw with despair that their little fund was rapidly decreasing, and that there was no other prospect of support. But Caroline Beaufort possessed a mind of an uncommon mould; and her courage rose to support her in her adversity. She procured plain work; she plaited straw; and by various means contrived to earn a pittance scarcely sufficient to support life.

Several months passed in this manner. Her father grew worse; her time was more entirely occupied in attending him; her means of subsistence decreased; and in the tenth month her father died in her arms, leaving her an orphan and a beggar. This last blow overcame her; and she knelt by Beaufort's coffin, weeping bitterly, when my father entered the chamber. He came like a protecting spirit to the poor girl, who committed herself to his care, and after the interment of his friend he conducted her to Geneva, and placed her under the protection of a relation. Two years after this event Caroline became his wife.

When my father became a husband and a parent, he found his time so occupied by the duties of his new situation, that he relinquished many of his public employments, and devoted himself to the education of his children. Of these I was the eldest, and the destined successor to all his labours and utility. No creature could have more tender parents than mine. My improvement and health were their constant care, especially as I remained for several years their only child. But before I continue my narrative, I must record an incident which took place when I was four years of age.

My father had a sister, whom he tenderly loved, and who had married early in life an Italian gentleman. Soon after her marriage, she had accompanied her husband into her native country, and for some years my father had very little communication with her. About the time I mentioned she died; and a few months afterwards he received a letter from her husband, acquainting him with his intention of marrying an Italian lady, and requesting my father to take charge of the infant Elizabeth, the only child of his deceased sister. "It is my wish," he said, "that you should consider her as your own daughter, and educate her thus. Her mother's fortune is secured to her, the documents of which I will commit to your keeping. Reflect upon this proposition; and decide whether you would prefer educating your niece yourself to her being brought up by a stepmother."

My father did not hestitate, and immediately went to Italy, that he might accompany the little Elizabeth to her future home. I have often heard my mother say, that she was at that time the most beautiful child she had ever seen, and shewed signs even then of a gentle and affectionate disposition. These indications, and a desire to bind as closely as possible the ties of domestic love, determined my mother to consider Elizabeth as my future wife; a design which she never found reason to repent.

From this time Elizabeth Lavenza became my playfellow, and, as we grew older, my friend. She was docile and good tempered, yet gay and playful as a summer insect. Although she was lively and animated, her feelings were strong and deep, and her disposition uncommonly affectionate. No one could better enjoy liberty, yet no one could submit with more grace than she did to constraint and caprice. Her imagination was luxuriant, yet her capability of application was great. Her person was the image of her mind; her hazel eyes, although as lively as a bird's, possessed an attractive softness. Her figure was light and airy; and, though capable of enduring great fatigue, she appeared the most fragile creature in the world. While I admired her understanding and fancy, I loved to tend on her, as I should on a favourite animal; and I never saw so much grace both of person and mind united to so little pretension.

Every one adored Elizabeth. If the servants had any request to make, it was always through her intercession. We were strangers to any species of disunion and dispute; for although there was a great dissimilitude in our characters, there was an harmony in that very dissimilitude. I was more calm and philosophical than my companion; yet my temper was not so yielding. My application was of longer endurance; but it was not so severe whilst it endured. I delighted in investigating the facts relative to the actual world; she busied herself in following the aërial creations of the poets. The world was to me a secret, which I desired to discover; to her it was a vacancy, which she sought to people with imaginations of her own.

My brothers were considerably younger than myself; but I had a friend in one of my schoolfellows, who compensated for this deficiency. Henry Clerval was the son of a merchant of Geneva, an intimate friend of my father. He was a boy of singular talent and fancy. I remember, when he was nine years old, he wrote a fairy tale, which was the delight and amazement of all his companions. His favourite study consisted in books of chivalry and romance; and when very young, I can remember, that we used to act plays composed by him out of these favourite books, the principal characters of which were Orlando, Robin Hood, Amadis, and St. George.

No youth could have passed more happily than mine. My parents were indulgent, and my companions amiable. Our studies were never forced; and by some means we always had an end placed in view, which excited us to ardour in the prosecution of them. It was by this method, and not by emulation, that we were urged to application. Elizabeth was not incited to apply herself to drawing, that her companions might not outstrip her; but through the desire of pleasing her aunt, by the representation of some favourite scene done by her own hand. We learned Latin and English, that we might read the writings in those languages; and so far from study being made odious to us through punishment, we loved application, and our amusements would have been the labours of other children. Perhaps we did not read so many books, or learn languages so quickly, as those who are disciplined according to the ordinary methods; but what we learned was impressed the more deeply on our memories.

In this description of our domestic circle I include Henry Clerval; for he was constantly with us. He went to school with me, and generally passed the afternoon at our house; for being an only child, and destitute of companions at home, his father was well pleased that he should find associates at our house; and we were never completely happy when Clerval was absent.

I feel pleasure in dwelling on the recollections of childhood, before misfortune had tainted my mind, and changed its bright visions of extensive usefulness into gloomy and narrow reflections upon self.

But, in drawing the picture of my early days, I must not omit to record those events which led, by insensible steps to my after tale of misery: for when I would account to myself for the birth of that passion, which afterwards ruled my destiny, I find it arise, like a mountain river, from ignoble and almost forgotten sources; but, swelling as it proceeded, it became the torrent which, in its course, has swept away all my hopes and joys.

Natural philosophy is the genius that has regulated my fate; I desire therefore, in this narration, to state those facts which led to my predilection for that science. When I was thirteen years of age, we all went on a party of pleasure to the baths near Thonon: the inclemency of the weather obliged us to remain a day confined to the inn. In this house I chanced to find a volume of the works of Cornelius Agrippa. I opened it with apathy; the theory which he attempts to demonstrate, and the wonderful facts which he relates, soon changed this feeling into enthusiasm. A new light seemed to dawn upon my mind; and, bounding with joy, I communicated my discovery to my father. I cannot help remarking here the many opportunities instructors possess of directing the attention of their pupils to useful knowledge, which they utterly neglect. My father looked carelessly at the title-page of my book, and said, “Ah! Cornelius Agrippa! My dear Victor, do not waste your time upon this; it is sad trash.”

If, instead of this remark, my father had taken the pains, to explain to me, that the principles of Agrippa had been entirely exploded, and that a modern system of science had been introduced, which possessed much greater powers than the ancient, because the powers of the latter were chimerical, while those of the former were real and practical; under such circumstances, I should certainly have thrown Agrippa aside, and, with my imagination warmed as it was, should probably have applied myself to the more rational theory of chemistry which has resulted from modern discoveries. It is even possible, that the train of my ideas would never have received the fatal impulse that led to my ruin. But the cursory glance my father had taken of my volume by no means assured me that he was acquainted with its contents; and I continued to read with the greatest avidity.

When I returned home, my first care was to procure the whole works of this author, and afterwards of Paracelsus and Albertus Magnus. I read and studied the wild fancies of these writers with delight; they appeared to me treasures known to few beside myself; and although I often wished to communicate these secret stores of knowledge to my father, yet his indefinite censure of my favourite Agrippa always withheld me. I disclosed my discoveries to Elizabeth, therefore, under a promise of strict secrecy; but she did not interest herself in the subject, and I was left by her to pursue my studies alone.

It may appear very strange, that a disciple of Albertus Magnus should arise in the eighteenth century; but our family was not scientifical, and I had not attended any of the lectures given at the schools of Geneva. My dreams were therefore undisturbed by reality; and I entered with the greatest diligence into the search of the philosopher's stone and the elixir of life. But the latter obtained my most undivided attention: wealth was an inferior object; but what glory would attend the discovery, if I could banish disease from the human frame, and render man invulnerable to any but a violent death!

Nor were these my only visions. The raising of ghosts or devils was a promise liberally accorded by my favourite authors, the fulfilment of which I most eagerly sought; and if my incantations were always unsuccessful, I attributed the failure rather to my own inexperience and mistake, than to a want of skill or fidelity in my instructors.

The natural phænomena that take place every day before our eyes did not escape my examinations. Distillation, and the wonderful effects of steam, processes of which my favourite authors were utterly ignorant, excited my astonishment; but my utmost wonder was engaged by some experiments on an air-pump, which I saw employed by a gentleman whom we were in the habit of visiting.

The ignorance of the early philosophers on these and several other points served to decrease their credit with me: but I could not entirely throw them aside, before some other system should occupy their place in my mind.

When I was about fifteen years old, we had retired to our house near Belrive, when we witnessed a most violent and terrible thunder-storm. It advanced from behind the mountains of Jura; and the thunder burst at once with frightful loudness from various quarters of the heavens. I remained, while the storm lasted, watching its progress with curiosity and delight. As I stood at the door, on a sudden I beheld a stream of fire issue from an old and beautiful oak, which stood about twenty yards from our house; and so soon as the dazzling light vanished, the oak had disappeared, and nothing remained but a blasted stump. When we visited it the next morning, we found the tree shattered in a singular manner. It was not splintered by the shock, but entirely reduced to thin ribbands of wood. I never beheld any thing so utterly destroyed.

The catastrophe of this tree excited my extreme astonishment; and I eagerly inquired of my father the nature and origin of thunder and lightning. He replied, “Electricity;” describing at the same time the various effects of that power. He constructed a small electrical machine, and exhibited a few experiments; he made also a kite, with a wire and string, which drew down that fluid from the clouds.

This last stroke completed the overthrow of Cornelius Agrippa, Albertus Magnus, and Paracelsus, who had so long reigned the lords of my imagination. But by some fatality I did not feel inclined to commence the study of any modern system; and this disinclination was influenced by the following circumstance.

My father expressed a wish that I should attend a course of lectures upon natural philosophy, to which I cheerfully consented. Some accident prevented my attending these lectures until the course was nearly finished. The lecture, being therefore one of the last, was entirely incomprehensible to me. The professor discoursed with the greatest fluency of potassium and boron, of sulphates and oxyds, terms to which I could affix no idea; and I became disgusted with the science of natural philosophy, although I still read Pliny and Buffon with delight, authors, in my estimation, of nearly equal interest and utility.

My occupations at this age were principally the mathematics, and most of the branches of study appertaining to that science. I was busily employed in learning languages; Latin was already familiar to me, and I began to read some of the easiest Greek authors without the help of a lexicon. I also perfectly understood English and German. This is the list of my accomplishments at the age of seventeen; and you may conceive that my hours were fully employed in acquiring and maintaining a knowledge of this various literature.

Another task also devolved upon me, when I became the instructor of my brothers. Ernest was six years younger than myself, and was my principal pupil. He had been afflicted with ill health from his infancy, through which Elizabeth and I had been his constant nurses: his disposition was gentle, but he was incapable of any severe application. William, the youngest of our family, was yet an infant, and the most beautiful little fellow in the world; his lively blue eyes, dimpled cheeks, and endearing manners, inspired the tenderest affection.

Such was our domestic circle, from which care and pain seemed for ever banished. My father directed our studies, and my mother partook of our enjoyments. Neither of us possessed the slightest pre-eminence over the other; the voice of command was never heard amongst us; but mutual affection engaged us all to comply with and obey the slightest desire of each other.

Chapter II

WHEN I had attained the age of seventeen, my parents resolved that I should become a student at the university of Ingolstadt. I had hitherto attended the schools of Geneva; but my father thought it necessary, for the completion of my education, that I should be made acquainted with other customs than those of my native country. My departure was therefore fixed at an early date; but, before the day resolved upon could arrive, the first misfortune of my life occurred — an omen, as it were, of my future misery.

Elizabeth had caught the scarlet fever; but her illness was not severe, and she quickly recovered. During her confinement, many arguments had been urged to persuade my mother to refrain from attending upon her. She had, at first, yielded to our entreaties; but when she heard that her favourite was recovering, she could no longer debar herself from her society, and entered her chamber long before the danger of infection was past. The consequences of this imprudence were fatal. On the third day my mother sickened; her fever was very malignant, and the looks of her attendants prognosticated the worst event. On her death-bed the fortitude and benignity of this admirable woman did not desert her. She joined the hands of Elizabeth and myself: “My children,” she said, “my firmest hopes of future happiness were placed on the prospect of your union. This expectation will now be the consolation of your father. Elizabeth, my love, you must supply my place to your younger cousins. Alas! I regret that I am taken from you; and, happy and beloved as I have been, is it not hard to quit you all? But these are not thoughts befitting me; I will endeavour to resign myself cheerfully to death, and will indulge a hope of meeting you in another world."

She died calmly; and her countenance expressed affection even in death. I need not describe the feelings of those whose dearest ties are rent by that most irreparable evil, the void that presents itself to the soul, and the despair that is exhibited on the countenance. It is so long before the mind can persuade itself that she, whom we saw every day, and whose very existence appeared a part of our own, can have departed for ever — that the brightness of a beloved eye can have been extinguished, and the sound of a voice so familiar, and dear to the ear, can be hushed, never more to be heard. These are the reflections of the first days; but when the lapse of time proves the reality of the evil, then the actual bitterness of grief commences. Yet from whom has not that rude hand rent away some dear connexion; and why should I describe a sorrow which all have felt, and must feel? The time at length arrives, when grief is rather an indulgence than a necessity; and the smile that plays upon the lips, although it may be deemed a sacrilege, is not banished. My mother was dead, but we had still duties which we ought to perform; we must continue our course with the rest, and learn to think ourselves fortunate, whilst one remains whom the spoiler has not seized.

My journey to Ingolstadt, which had been deferred by these events, was now again determined upon. I obtained from my father a respite of some weeks. This period was spent sadly; my mother's death, and my speedy departure, depressed our spirits; but Elizabeth endeavoured to renew the spirit of cheerfulness in our little society. Since the death of her aunt, her mind had acquired new firmness and vigour. She determined to fulfil her duties with the greatest exactness; and she felt that that most imperious duty, of rendering her uncle and cousins happy, had devolved upon her. She consoled me, amused her uncle, instructed my brothers; and I never beheld her so enchanting as at this time, when she was continually endeavouring to contribute to the happiness of others, entirely forgetful of herself.

The day of my departure at length arrived. I had taken leave of all my friends, excepting Clerval, who spent the last evening with us. He bitterly lamented that he was unable to accompany me: but his father could not be persuaded to part with him, intending that he should become a partner with him in business, in compliance with his favourite theory, that learning was superfluous in the commerce of ordinary life. Henry had a refined mind; he had no desire to be idle, and was well pleased to become his father's partner, but he believed that a man might be a very good trader, and yet possess a cultivated understanding.

We sat late, listening to his complaints, and making many little arrangements for the future. The next morning early I departed. Tears gushed from the eyes of Elizabeth; they proceeded partly from sorrow at my departure, and partly because she reflected that the same journey was to have taken place three months before, when a mother's blessing would have accompanied me.

I threw myself into the chaise that was to convey me away, and indulged in the most melancholy reflections. I, who had ever been surrounded by amiable companions, continually engaged in endeavouring to bestow mutual pleasure, I was now alone. In the university, whither I was going, I must form my own friends, and be my own protector. My life had hitherto been remarkably secluded and domestic; and this had given me invincible repugnance to new countenances. I loved my brothers, Elizabeth, and Clerval; these were "old familiar faces;" but I believed myself totally unfitted for the company of strangers. Such were my reflections as I commenced my journey; but as I proceeded, my spirits and hopes rose. I ardently desired the acquisition of knowledge. I had often, when at home, thought it hard to remain during my youth cooped up in one place, and had longed to enter the world, and take my station among other human beings. Now my desires were complied with, and it would, indeed, have been folly to repent.

I had sufficient leisure for these and many other reflections during my journey to Ingolstadt, which was long and fatiguing. At length the high white steeple of the town met my eyes. I alighted, and was conducted to my solitary apartment, to spend the evening as I pleased.

The next morning I delivered my letters of introduction, and paid a visit to some of the principal professors, and among others to M. Krempe, professor of natural philosophy. He received me with politeness, and asked me several questions concerning my progress in the different branches of science appertaining to natural philosophy. I mentioned, it is true, with fear and trembling, the only authors I had ever read upon those subjects. The professor stared: "Have you," he said, "really spent your time in studying such nonsense?"

I replied in the affirmative. "Every minute," continued M. Krempe with warmth, "every instant that you have wasted on those books is utterly and entirely lost. You have burdened your memory with exploded systems, and useless names. Good God!

in what desert land have you lived, where no one was kind enough to inform you that these fancies, which you have so greedily imbibed, are a thousand years old, and as musty as they are ancient? I little expected in this enlightened and scientific age to find a disciple of Albertus Magnus and Paracelsus. My dear Sir, you must begin your studies entirely anew."

So saying, he stept aside, and wrote down a list of several books treating of natural philosophy, which he desired me to procure, and dismissed me, after mentioning that in the beginning of the following week he intended to commence a course of lectures upon natural philosophy in its general relations, and that M. Waldman, a fellow-professor, would lecture upon chemistry the alternate days that he missed.

I returned home, not disappointed, for I had long considered those authors useless whom the professor had so strongly reprobated; but I did not feel much inclined to study the books which I procured at his recommendation. M. Krempe was a little squat man, with a gruff voice and repulsive countenance; the teacher, therefore, did not prepossess me in favour of his doctrine. Besides, I had a contempt for the uses of modern natural philosophy. It was very different, when the masters of the science sought immortality and power; such views, although futile, were grand: but now the scene was changed. The ambition of the inquirer seemed to limit itself to the annihilation of those visions on which my interest in science was chiefly founded. I was required to exchange chimeras of boundless grandeur for realities of little worth.

Such were my reflections during the first two or three days spent almost in solitude. But as the ensuing week commenced, I thought of the information which M. Krempe had given me concerning the lectures. And although I could not consent to go and hear that little conceited fellow deliver sentences out of a pulpit, I recollected what he had said of M. Waldman, whom I had never seen, as he had hitherto been out of town.

Partly from curiosity, and partly from idleness, I went into the lecturing room, which M. Waldman entered shortly after. This professor was very unlike his colleague. He appeared about fifty years of age, but with an aspect expressive of the greatest benevolence; a few gray hairs covered his temples, but those at the back of his head were nearly black. His person was short, but remarkably erect; and his voice the sweetest I had ever heard. He began his lecture by a recapitulation of the history of chemistry and the various improvements made by different men of learning, pronouncing with fervour the names of the most distinguished discoverers. He then took a cursory view of the present state of the science, and explained many of its elementary terms. After having made a few preparatory experiments, he concluded with a panegyric upon modern chemistry, the terms of which I shall never forget:—

“The ancient teachers of this science,” said he, “promised impossibilities, and performed nothing. The modern masters promise very little; they know that metals cannot be transmuted, and that the elixir of life is a chimera. But these philosophers, whose hands seem only made to dabble in dirt, and their eyes to pour over the microscope or crucible, have indeed performed miracles. They penetrate into the recesses of nature, and shew how she works in her hiding places. They ascend into the heavens; they have discovered how the blood circulates, and the nature of the air we breathe. They have acquired new and almost unlimited powers; they can command the thunders of heaven, mimic the earthquake, and even mock the invisible world with its own shadows."

I departed highly pleased with the professor and his lecture, and paid him a visit the same evening. His manners in private were even more mild and attractive than in public; for there was a certain dignity in his mien during his lecture, which in his own house was replaced by the greatest affability and kindness. He heard with attention my little narration concerning my studies, and smiled at the names of Cornelius Agrippa, and Paracelsus, but without the contempt that M. Krempe had exhibited. He said, that "these were men to whose indefatigable zeal modern philosophers were indebted for most of the foundations of their knowledge. They had left to us, as an easier task, to give new names, and arrange in connected classifications, the facts which they in a great degree had been the instruments of bringing to light. The labours of men of genius, however erroneously directed, scarcely ever fail in ultimately turning to the solid advantage of mankind." I listened to his statement, which was delivered without any presumption or affectation; and then added, that his lecture had removed my prejudices against modern chemists; and I, at the same time, requested his advice concerning the books I ought to procure.

"I am happy," said M. Waldman, "to have gained a disciple; and if your application equals your ability, I have no doubt of your success. Chemistry is that branch of natural philosophy in which the greatest improvements have been and may be made; it is on that account that I have made it my peculiar study; but at the same time I have not neglected the other branches of science. A man would make but a very sorry chemist, if he attended to that department of human knowledge alone. If your wish is to become really a man of science, and not merely a petty experimentalist, I should advise you to apply to every branch of natural philosophy, including mathematics."

He then took me into his laboratory, and explained to me the uses of his various machines; instructing me as to what I ought to procure, and promising me the use of his own, when I should have advanced far enough in the science not to derange their mechanism. He also gave me the list of books which I had requested; and I took my leave.

Thus ended a day memorable to me; it decided my future destiny.

Chapter III

FROM this day natural philosophy, and particularly chemistry, in the most comprehensive sense of the term, became nearly my sole occupation. I read with ardour those works, so full of genius and discrimination, which modern inquirers have written on these subjects. I attended the lectures, and cultivated the acquaintance, of the men of science of the university; and I found even in M. Krempe a great deal of sound sense and real information, combined, it is true, with a repulsive physiognomy and manners, but not on that account the less valuable. In M. Waldman I found a true friend. His gentleness was never tinged by dogmatism; and his instructions were given with an air of frankness and good nature, that banished every idea of pedantry. It was, perhaps, the amiable character of this man that inclined me more to that branch of natural philosophy which he professed, than an intrinsic love for the science itself. But this state of mind had place only in the first steps towards knowledge: the more fully I entered into the science, the more exclusively I pursued it for its own sake. That application, which at first had been a matter of duty and resolution, now became so ardent and eager, that the stars often disappeared in the light of morning whilst I was yet engaged in my laboratory.

As I applied so closely, it may be easily conceived that I improved rapidly. My ardour was indeed the astonishment of the students; and my proficiency, that of the masters. Professor Krempe often asked me, with a sly smile, how Cornelius Agrippa went on? whilst M. Waldman expressed the most heart-felt exultation in my progress. Two years passed in this manner, during which I paid no visit to Geneva, but was engaged, heart and soul, in the pursuit of some discoveries, which I hoped to make. None but those who have experienced them can conceive of the enticements of science. In other studies you go as far as others have gone before you, and there is nothing more to know; but in a scientific pursuit there is continual food for discovery and wonder. A mind of moderate capacity, which closely pursues one study, must infallibly arrive at great proficiency in that study; and I, who continually sought the attainment of one object of pursuit, and was solely wrapt up in this, improved so rapidly, that, at the end of two years, I made some discoveries in the improvement of some chemical instruments, which procured me great esteem and admiration at the university. When I had arrived at this point, and had become as well acquainted with the theory and practice of natural philosophy as depended on the lessons of any of the professors at Ingolstadt, my residence there being no longer conducive to my improvements, I thought of returning to my friends and my native town, when an incident happened that protracted my stay.

One of the phænonema which had peculiarly attracted my attention was the structure of the human frame, and, indeed, any animal endued with life. Whence, I often asked myself, did the principle of life proceed? It was a bold question, and one which has ever been considered as a mystery; yet with how many things are we upon the brink of becoming acquainted, if cowardice or carelessness did not restrain our inquiries. I revolved these circumstances in my mind, and determined thenceforth to apply myself more particularly to those branches of natural philosophy which relate to physiology. Unless I had been animated by an almost supernatural enthusiasm, my application to this study would have been irksome, and almost intolerable. To examine the causes of life, we must first have recourse to death. I became acquainted with the science of anatomy: but this was not sufficient; I must also observe the natural decay and corruption of the human body. In my education my father had taken the greatest precautions that my mind should be impressed with no supernatural horrors. I do not ever remember to have trembled at a tale of superstition, or to have feared the apparition of a spirit. Darkness had no effect upon my fancy; and a church-yard was to me merely the receptacle of bodies deprived of life, which, from being the seat of beauty and strength, had become food for the worm. Now I was led to examine the cause and progress of this decay, and forced to spend days and nights in vaults and charnel houses. My attention was fixed upon every object the most insupportable to the delicacy of the human feelings. I saw how the fine form of man was degraded and wasted; I beheld the corruption of death succeed to the blooming cheek of life; I saw how the worm inherited the wonders of the eye and brain. I paused, examining and analysing all the minutiæ of causation, as exemplified in the change from life to death, and death to life, until from the midst of this darkness a sudden light broke in upon me — a light so brilliant and wondrous, yet so simple, that while I became dizzy with the immensity of the prospect which it illustrated, I was surprised that among so many men of genius, who had directed their inquiries towards the same science, that I alone should be reserved to discover so astonishing a secret.

Remember, I am not recording the vision of a madman. The sun does not more certainly shine in the heavens, than that which I now affirm is true. Some miracle might have produced it, yet the stages of the discovery were distinct and probable. After days and nights of incredible labour and fatigue, I succeeded in discovering the cause of generation and life; nay, more, I became myself capable of bestowing animation upon lifeless matter.

The astonishment which I had at first experienced on this discovery soon gave place to delight and rapture. After so much time spent in painful labour, to arrive at once at the summit of my desires, was the most gratifying consummation of my toils. But this discovery was so great and overwhelming, that all the steps by which I had been progressively led to it were obliterated, and I beheld only the result. What had been the study and desire of the wisest men since the creation of the world, was now within my grasp. Not that, like a magic scene, it all opened upon me at once: the information I had obtained was of a nature rather to direct my endeavours so soon as I should point them towards the object of my search, than to exhibit that object already accomplished. I was like the Arabian who had been buried with the dead, and found a passage to life aided only by one glimmering, and seemingly ineffectual light.

I see by your eagerness, and the wonder and hope which your eyes express, my friend, that you expect to be informed of the secret with which I am acquainted; that cannot be: listen patiently until the end of my story, and you will easily perceive why I am reserved upon that subject. I will not lead you on, unguarded and ardent as I then was, to your destruction and infallible misery. Learn from me, if not by my precepts, at least by my example, how dangerous is the acquirement of knowledge, and how much happier that man is who believes his native town to be the world, than he who aspires to become greater than his nature will allow.

When I found so astonishing a power placed within my hands, I hesitated a long time concerning the manner in which I should employ it. Although I possessed the capacity of bestowing animation, yet to prepare a frame for the reception of it, with all its intricacies of fibres, muscles, and veins, still remained a work of inconceivable difficulty and labour. I doubted at first whether I should attempt the creation of a being like myself or one of simpler organization; but my imagination was too much exalted by my first success to permit me to doubt of my ability to give life to an animal as complex and wonderful as man. The materials at present within my command hardly appeared adequate to so arduous an undertaking; but I doubted not that I should ultimately succeed. I prepared myself for a multitude of reverses; my operations might be incessantly baffled, and at last my work be imperfect: yet, when I considered the improvement which every day takes place in science and mechanics, I was encouraged to hope my present attempts would at least lay the foundations of future success. Nor could I consider the magnitude and complexity of my plan as any argument of its impracticability. It was with these feelings that I began the creation of a human being. As the minuteness of the parts formed a great hindrance to my speed, I resolved, contrary to my first intention, to make the being of a gigantic stature; that is to say, about eight feet in height, and proportionably large. After having formed this determination, and having spent some months in successfully collecting and arranging my materials, I began.

No one can conceive the variety of feelings which bore me onwards, like a hurricane, in the first enthusiasm of success. Life and death appeared to me ideal bounds, which I should first break through, and pour a torrent of light into our dark world. A new species would bless me as its creator and source; many happy and excellent natures would owe their being to me. No father could claim the gratitude of his child so completely as I should deserve their's.

Pursuing these reflections, I thought, that if I could bestow animation upon lifeless matter, I might in process of time (although I now found it impossible) renew life where death had apparently devoted the body to corruption.

These thoughts supported my spirits, while I pursued my undertaking with unremitting ardour. My cheek had grown pale with study, and my person had become emaciated with confinement. Sometimes, on the very brink of certainty, I failed; yet still I clung to the hope which the next day or the next hour might realize. One secret which I alone possessed was the hope to which I had dedicated myself; and the moon gazed on my midnight labours, while, with unrelaxed and breathless eagerness, I pursued nature to her hiding places. Who shall conceive the horrors of my secret toil, as I dabbled among the unhallowed damps of the grave, or tortured the living animal to animate the lifeless clay? My limbs now tremble, and my eyes swim with the remembrance; but then a resistless, and almost frantic impulse, urged me forward; I seemed to have lost all soul or sensation but for this one pursuit. It was indeed but a passing trance, that only made me feel with renewed acuteness so soon as, the unnatural stimulus ceasing to operate, I had returned to my old habits. I collected bones from charnel houses; and disturbed, with profane fingers, the tremendous secrets of the human frame. In a solitary chamber, or rather cell, at the top of the house, and separated from all the other apartments by a gallery and staircase, I kept my workshop of filthy creation; my eyeballs were starting from their sockets in attending to the details of my employment. The dissecting room and the slaughter-house furnished many of my materials; and often did my human nature turn with loathing from my occupation, whilst, still urged on by an eagerness which perpetually increased, I brought my work near to a conclusion.

The summer months passed while I was thus engaged, heart and soul, in one pursuit. It was a most beautiful season; never did the fields bestow a more plentiful harvest, or the vines yield a more luxuriant vintage: but my eyes were insensible to the charms of nature. And the same feelings which made me neglect the scenes around me caused me also to forget those friends who were so many miles absent, and whom I had not seen for so long a time. I knew my silence disquieted them; and I well remembered the words of my father: “I know that while you are pleased with yourself, you will think of us with affection, and we shall hear regularly from you. You must pardon me, if I regard any interruption in your correspondence as a proof that your other duties are equally neglected.”

I knew well therefore what would be my father’s feelings; but I could not tear my thoughts from my employment, loathsome in itself, but which had taken an irresistible hold of my imagination. I wished, as it were, to procrastinate all that related to my feelings of affection until the great object, which swallowed up every habit of my nature, should be completed.

I then thought that my father would be unjust if he ascribed my neglect to vice, or faultiness on my part; but I am now convinced that he was justified in conceiving that I should not be altogether free from blame. A human being in perfection ought always to preserve a calm and peaceful mind, and never to allow passion or a transitory desire to disturb his tranquillity. I do not think that the pursuit of knowledge is an exception to this rule. If the study to which you apply yourself has a tendency to weaken your affections, and to destroy your taste for those simple pleasures in which no alloy can possibly mix, then that study is certainly unlawful, that is to say, not befitting the human mind. If this rule were always observed; if no man allowed any pursuit whatsoever to interfere with the tranquillity of his domestic affections, Greece had not been enslaved; Cæsar would have spared his country; America would have been discovered more gradually; and the empires of Mexico and Peru had not been destroyed.

But I forget that I am moralizing in the most interesting part of my tale; and your looks remind me to proceed.

My father made no reproach in his letters; and only took notice of my silence by inquiring into my occupations more particularly than before. Winter, spring, and summer, passed away during my labours; but I did not watch the blossom or the expanding leaves — sights which before always yielded me supreme delight, so deeply was I engrossed in my occupation. The leaves of that year had withered before my work drew near to a close; and now every day shewed me more plainly how well I had succeeded. But my enthusiasm was checked by my anxiety, and I appeared rather like one doomed by slavery to toil in the mines, or any other unwholesome trade, than an artist occupied by his favourite employment. Every night I was oppressed by a slow fever, and I became nervous to a most painful degree; a disease that I regretted the more because I had hitherto enjoyed most excellent health, and had always boasted of the firmness of my nerves. But I believed that exercise and amusement would soon drive away such symptoms; and I promised myself both of these, when my creation should be complete.

Chapter IV

It was on a dreary night of November, that I beheld the accomplishment of my toils. With an anxiety that almost amounted to agony, I collected the instruments of life around me, that I might infuse a spark of being into the lifeless thing that lay at my feet. It was already one in the morning; the rain pattered dismally against the panes, and my candle was nearly burnt out, when, by the glimmer of the half-extinguished light, I saw the dull yellow eye of the creature open; it breathed hard, and a convulsive motion agitated its limbs.

How can I describe my emotions at this catastrophe, or how delineate the wretch whom with such infinite pains and care I had endeavoured to form? His limbs were in proportion, and I had selected his features as beautiful. Beautiful! — Great God! His yellow skin scarcely covered the work of muscles and arteries beneath; his hair was of a lustrous black, and flowing; his teeth of a pearly whiteness; but these luxuriances only formed a more horrid contrast with his watery eyes, that seemed almost of the same colour as the dun white sockets in which they were set, his shrivelled complexion, and straight black lips.

The different accidents of life are not so changeable as the feelings of human nature. I had worked hard for nearly two years, for the sole purpose of infusing life into an inanimate body. For this I had deprived myself of rest and health. I had desired it with an ardour that far exceeded moderation; but now that I had finished, the beauty of the dream vanished, and breathless horror and disgust filled my heart. Unable to endure the aspect of the being

I had created, I rushed out of the room, and continued a long time traversing my bed-chamber, unable to compose my mind to sleep. At length lassitude succeeded to the tumult I had before endured; and I threw myself on the bed in my clothes, endeavouring to seek a few moments of forgetfulness. But it was in vain: I slept indeed, but I was disturbed by the wildest dreams. I thought I saw Elizabeth, in the bloom of health, walking in the streets of Ingolstadt. Delighted and surprised, I embraced her; but as I imprinted the first kiss on her lips, they became livid with the hue of death; her features appeared to change, and I thought that I held the corpse of my dead mother in my arms; a shroud enveloped her form, and I saw the grave-worms crawling in the folds of the flannel. I started from my sleep with horror; a cold dew covered my forehead, my teeth chattered, and every limb became convulsed; when, by the dim and yellow light of the moon, as it forced its way through the window-shutters, I beheld the wretch — the miserable monster whom I had created. He held up the curtain of the bed; and his eyes, if eyes they may be called, were fixed on me. His jaws opened, and he muttered some inarticulate sounds, while a grin wrinkled his cheeks. He might have spoken, but I did not hear; one hand was stretched out, seemingly to detain me, but I escaped, and rushed down stairs. I took refuge in the court-yard belonging to the house which I inhabited; where I remained during the rest of the night, walking up and down in the greatest agitation, listening attentively, catching and fearing each sound as if it were to announce the approach of the demoniacal corpse to which I had so miserably given life.

Oh! no mortal could support the horror of that countenance. A mummy again endued with animation could not be so hideous as that wretch. I had gazed on him while unfinished; he was ugly then; but when those muscles and joints were rendered capable of motion, it became a thing such as even Dante could not have conceived.

I passed the night wretchedly. Sometimes my pulse beat so quickly and hardly, that I felt the palpitation of every artery; at others, I nearly sank to the ground through languor and extreme weakness. Mingled with this horror, I felt the bitterness of disappointment: dreams that had been my food and pleasant rest for so long a space, were now become a hell to me; and the change was so rapid, the overthrow so complete!

Morning, dismal and wet, at length dawned, and discovered to my sleepless and aching eyes the church of Ingolstadt, its white steeple and clock, which indicated the sixth hour. The porter opened the gates of the court, which had that night been my asylum, and I issued into the streets, pacing them with quick steps, as if I sought to avoid the wretch whom I feared every turning of the street would present to my view. I did not dare return to the apartment which I inhabited, but felt impelled to hurry on, although wetted by the rain, which poured from a black and comfortless sky.

I continued walking in this manner for some time, endeavouring, by bodily exercise, to ease the load that weighed upon my mind. I traversed the streets, without any clear conception of where I was, or what I was doing. My heart palpitated in the sickness of fear; and I hurried on with irregular steps, not daring to look about me:

> Like one who, on a lonely road,
>   Doth walk in fear and dread,
> And, having once turn'd round, walks on,
>   And turns no more his head;
> Because he knows a frightful fiend
>   Doth close behind him tread.

Continuing thus, I came at length opposite to the inn at which the various diligences and carriages usually stopped. Here I paused, I knew not why; but I remained some minutes with my eyes fixed on a coach that was coming towards me from the other end of the street. As it drew nearer, I observed that it was the Swiss diligence: it stopped just where I was standing; and, on the door being opened, I perceived Henry Clerval, who, on seeing me, instantly sprung out. "My dear Frankenstein," exclaimed he, “how glad I am to see you! how fortunate that you should be here at the very moment of my alighting!”

Nothing could equal my delight on seeing Clerval; his presence brought back to my thoughts my father, Elizabeth, and all those scenes of home so dear to my recollection. I grasped his hand, and in a moment forgot my horror and misfortune; I felt suddenly, and for the first time during many months, calm and serene joy. I welcomed my friend, therefore, in the most cordial manner, and we walked towards my college. Clerval continued talking for some time about our mutual friends, and his own good fortune in being permitted to come to Ingolstadt. “You may easily believe,” said he, “how great was the difficulty to persuade my father that it was not absolutely necessary for a merchant not to understand any thing except book-keeping; and, indeed, I believe I left him incredulous to the last, for his constant answer to my unwearied entreaties was the same as that of the Dutch schoolmaster in the Vicar of Wakefield: ‘I have ten thousand florins a year without Greek, I eat heartily without Greek.' But his affection for me at length overcame his dislike of learning, and he has permitted me to undertake a voyage of discovery to the land of knowledge."

"It gives me the greatest delight to see you; but tell me how you left my father, brothers, and Elizabeth."

"Very well, and very happy, only a little uneasy that they hear from you so seldom. By the bye, I mean to lecture you a little upon their account myself. — But, my dear Frankenstein," continued he, stopping short, and gazing full in my face, "I did not before remark how very ill you appear; so thin and pale; you look as if you had been watching for several nights."

"You have guessed right; I have lately been so deeply engaged in one occupation, that I have not allowed myself sufficient rest, as you see: but I hope, I sincerely hope, that all these employments are now at an end, and that I am at length free."

I trembled excessively; I could not endure to think of, and far less to allude to the occurrences of the preceding night. I walked with a quick pace, and we soon arrived at my college. I then reflected, and the thought made me shiver, that the creature whom I had left in my apartment might still be there, alive, and walking about. I dreaded to behold this monster; but I feared still more that Henry should see him. Entreating him therefore to remain a few minutes at the bottom of the stairs, I darted up towards my own room. My hand was already on the lock of the door before I recollected myself. I then paused; and a cold shivering came over me. I threw the door forcibly open, as children are accustomed to do when they expect a spectre to stand in waiting for them on the other side; but nothing appeared. I stepped fearfully in: the apartment was empty; and my bedroom was also freed from its hideous guest. I could hardly believe that so great a good-fortune could have befallen me; but when I became assured that my enemy had indeed fled, I clapped my hands for joy, and ran down to Clerval.

We ascended into my room, and the servant presently brought breakfast; but I was unable to contain myself. It was not joy only that possessed me; I felt my flesh tingle with excess of sensitiveness, and my pulse beat rapidly. I was unable to remain for a single instant in the same place; I jumped over the chairs, clapped my hands, and laughed aloud. Clerval at first attributed my unusual spirits to joy on his arrival; but when he observed me more attentively, he saw a wildness in my eyes for which he could not account; and my loud, unrestrained, heartless laughter, frightened and astonished him.

"My dear Victor," cried he, "what, for God's sake, is the matter? Do not laugh in that manner. How ill you are! What is the cause of all this?"

"Do not ask me," cried I, putting my hands before my eyes, for I thought I saw the dreaded spectre glide into the room; "*he* can tell. — Oh, save me! save me!" I imagined that the monster seized me; I struggled furiously, and fell down in a fit.

Poor Clerval! what must have been his feelings? A meeting, which he anticipated with such joy, so strangely turned to bitterness. But I was not the witness of his grief; for I was lifeless, and did not recover my senses for a long, long time.

This was the commencement of a nervous fever, which confined me for several months. During all that time Henry was my only nurse. I afterwards learned that, knowing my father's advanced age, and unfitness for so long a journey, and how wretched my sickness would make Elizabeth, he spared them this grief by concealing the extent of my disorder. He knew that I could not have a more kind and attentive nurse than himself; and, firm in the hope he felt of my recovery, he did not doubt that, instead of doing harm, he performed the kindest action that he could towards them.

But I was in reality very ill; and surely nothing but the unbounded and unremitting attentions of my friend could have restored me to life. The form of the monster on whom I had bestowed existence was for ever before my eyes, and I raved incessantly concerning him. Doubtless my words surprised Henry: he at first believed them to be the wanderings of my disturbed imagination; but the pertinacity with which I continually recurred to the same subject persuaded him that my disorder indeed owed its origin to some uncommon and terrible event.

By very slow degrees, and with frequent relapses, that alarmed and grieved my friend, I recovered. I remember the first time I became capable of observing outward objects with any kind of pleasure, I perceived that the fallen leaves had disappeared, and that the young buds were shooting forth from the trees that shaded my window. It was a divine spring; and the season contributed greatly to my convalescence. I felt also sentiments of joy and affection revive in my bosom; my gloom disappeared, and in a short time I became as cheerful as before I was attacked by the fatal passion.

“Dearest Clerval,” exclaimed I, “how kind, how very good you are to me. This whole winter, instead of being spent in study, as you promised yourself, has been consumed in my sick room. How shall I ever repay you? I feel the greatest remorse for the disappointment of which I have been the occasion;

but you will forgive me."

"You will repay me entirely, if you do not discompose yourself, but get well as fast as you can; and since you appear in such good spirits, I may speak to you on one subject, may I not?"

I trembled. One subject! what could it be? Could he allude to an object on whom I dared not even think?

"Compose yourself," said Clerval, who observed my change of colour, "I will not mention it, if it agitates you; but your father and cousin would be very happy if they received a letter from you in your own hand-writing. They hardly know how ill you have been, and are uneasy at your long silence."

"Is that all? my dear Henry. How could you suppose that my first thought would not fly towards those dear, dear friends whom I love, and who are so deserving of my love."

"If this is your present temper, my friend, you will perhaps be glad to see a letter that has been lying here some days for you: it is from your cousin, I believe."

Chapter V

CLERVAL then put the following letter into my hands.

"*To* V. FRANKENSTEIN.

"MY DEAR COUSIN,

"I cannot describe to you the uneasiness we have all felt concerning your health. We cannot help imagining that your friend Clerval conceals the extent of your disorder: for it is now several months since we have seen your hand-writing; and all this time you have been obliged to dictate your letters to Henry. Surely, Victor, you must have been exceedingly ill; and this makes us all very wretched, as much so nearly as after the death of your dear mother. My uncle was almost persuaded that you were indeed dangerously ill, and could hardly be restrained from undertaking a journey to Ingolstadt. Clerval always writes that you are getting better; I eagerly hope that you will confirm this intelligence soon in your own hand-writing; for indeed, indeed, Victor, we are all very miserable on this account. Relieve us from this fear, and we shall be the happiest creatures in the world. Your father's health is now so vigorous, that he appears ten years younger since last winter. Ernest also is so much improved, that you would hardly know him: he is now nearly sixteen, and has lost that sickly appearance which he had some years ago; he is grown quite robust and active.

"My uncle and I conversed a long time last night about what profession Ernest should follow. His constant illness when young has deprived him of the habits of application; and now that he enjoys good health, he is continually in the open air, climbing the hills, or rowing on the lake. I therefore proposed that he should be a farmer; which you know, Cousin, is a favourite scheme of mine. A farmer's is a very healthy happy life; and the least hurtful, or rather the most beneficial profession of any. My uncle had an idea of his being educated as an advocate, that through his interest he might become a judge. But, besides that he is not at all fitted for such an occupation, it is certainly more creditable to cultivate the earth for the sustenance of man, than to be the confidant, and sometimes the accomplice, of his vices; which is the profession of a lawyer. I said, that the employments of a prosperous farmer, if they were not a more honourable, they were at least a happier species of occupation than that of a judge, whose misfortune it was always to meddle with the dark side of human nature. My uncle smiled, and said, that I ought to be an advocate myself, which put an end to the conversation on that subject.

"And now I must tell you a little story that will please, and perhaps amuse you. Do you not remember Justine Moritz? Probably you do not; I will relate her history, therefore, in a few words. Madame Moritz, her mother, was a widow with four children, of whom Justine was the third. This girl had always been the favourite of her father; but, through a strange perversity, her mother could not endure her, and, after the death of M. Moritz, treated her very ill. My aunt observed this; and, when Justine was twelve years of age, prevailed on her mother to allow her to live at her house. The republican institutions of our country have produced simpler and happier manners than those which prevail in the great monarchies that surround it. Hence there is less distinction between the several classes of its inhabitants; and the lower orders being neither so poor nor so despised, their manners are more refined and moral. A servant in Geneva does not mean the same thing as a servant in France and England. Justine, thus received in our family, learned the duties of a servant; a condition which, in our fortunate country, does not include the idea of ignorance, and a sacrifice of the dignity of a human being.

“After what I have said, I dare say you well remember the heroine of my little tale: for Justine was a great favourite of your’s; and I recollect you once remarked, that if you were in an ill humour, one glance from Justine could dissipate it, for the same reason that Ariosto gives concerning the beauty of Angelica — she looked so frank-hearted and happy. My aunt conceived a great attachment for her, by which she was induced to give her an education superior to that which she had at first intended. This benefit was fully repaid; Justine was the most grateful little creature in the world: I do not mean that she made any professions, I never heard one pass her lips; but you could see by her eyes that she almost adored her protectress. Although her disposition was gay, and in many respects inconsiderate, yet she paid the greatest attention to every gesture of my aunt. She thought her the model of all excellence, and endeavoured to imitate her phraseology and manners, so that even now she often reminds me of her.

“When my dearest aunt died, every one was too much occupied in their own grief to notice poor Justine, who had attended her during her illness with the most anxious affection. Poor Justine was very ill; but other trials were reserved for her.

“One by one, her brothers and sister died; and her mother, with the exception of her neglected daughter, was left childless. The conscience of the woman was troubled; she began to think that the deaths of her favourites was a judgment from heaven to chastise her partiality. She was a Roman Catholic; and I believe her confessor confirmed the idea which she had conceived. Accordingly, a few months after your departure for Ingolstadt, Justine was called home by her repentant mother. Poor girl! she wept when she quitted our house: she was much altered since the death of my aunt; grief had given softness and a winning mildness to her manners, which had before been remarkable for vivacity. Nor was her residence at her mother’s house of a nature to restore her gaiety. The poor woman was very vacillating in her repentance. She sometimes begged Justine to forgive her unkindness, but much oftener accused her of having caused the deaths of her brothers and sister. Perpetual fretting at length threw Madame Moritz into a decline, which at first increased her irritability, but she is now at peace for ever. She died on the first approach of cold weather, at the beginning of this last winter. Justine has returned to us; and I assure you I love her tenderly. She is very clever and gentle, and extremely pretty; as I mentioned before, her mien and her expressions continually remind me of my dear aunt.

"I must say also a few words to you, my dear cousin, of little darling William. I wish you could see him; he is very tall of his age, with sweet laughing blue eyes, dark eye-lashes, and curling hair. When he smiles, two little dimples appear on each cheek, which are rosy with health. He has already had one or two little *wives*, but Louisa Biron is his favourite, a pretty little girl of five years of age.

"Now, dear Victor, I dare say you wish to be indulged in a little gossip concerning the good people of Geneva. The pretty Miss Mansfield has already received the congratulatory visits on her approaching marriage with a young Englishman, John Melbourne, Esq. Her ugly sister, Manon, married M. Duvillard, the rich banker, last autumn. Your favourite schoolfellow, Louis Manoir, has suffered several misfortunes since the departure of Clerval from Geneva. But he has already recovered his spirits, and is reported to be on the point of marrying a very lively pretty Frenchwoman, Madame Tavernier. She is a widow, and much older than Manoir; but she is very much admired, and a favourite with every body.

“I have written myself into good spirits, dear cousin; yet I cannot conclude without again anxiously inquiring concerning your health. Dear Victor, if you are not very ill, write yourself, and make your father and all of us happy; or —— I cannot bear to think of the other side of the question; my tears already flow. Adieu, my dearest cousin.”

“ELIZABETH LAVENZA.
“Geneva, March 18th, 17— .”

“Dear, dear Elizabeth!” I exclaimed when I had read her letter, “I will write instantly, and relieve them from the anxiety they must feel.” I wrote, and this exertion greatly fatigued me; but my convalescence had commenced, and proceeded regularly. In another fortnight I was able to leave my chamber.

One of my first duties on my recovery was to introduce Clerval to the several professors of the university. In doing this, I underwent a kind of rough usage, ill befitting the wounds that my mind had sustained. Ever since the fatal night, the end of my labours, and the beginning of my misfortunes, I had conceived a violent antipathy even to the name of natural philosophy. When I was otherwise quite restored to health, the sight of a chemical instrument would renew all the agony of my nervous symptoms. Henry saw this, and had removed all my apparatus from my view. He had also changed my apartment; for he perceived that I had acquired a dislike for the room which had previously been my laboratory. But these cares of Clerval were made of no avail when I visited the professors. M. Waldman inflicted torture when he praised, with kindness and warmth, the astonishing progress I had made in the sciences. He soon perceived that I disliked the subject; but, not guessing the real cause, he attributed my feelings to modesty, and changed the subject from my improvement to the science itself, with a desire, as I evidently saw, of drawing me out. What could I do? He meant to please, and he tormented me. I felt as if he had placed carefully, one by one, in my view those instruments which were to be afterwards used in putting me to a slow and cruel death. I writhed under his words, yet dared not exhibit the pain I felt. Clerval, whose eyes and feelings were always quick in discerning the sensations of others, declined the subject, alleging, in excuse, his total ignorance; and the conversation took a more general turn. I thanked my friend from my heart, but I did not speak. I saw plainly that he was surprised, but he never attempted to draw my secret from me; and although I loved him with a mixture of affection and reverence that knew no bounds, yet I could never persuade myself to confide to him that event which was so often present to my recollection, but which I feared the detail to another would only impress more deeply.

M. Krempe was not equally docile; and in my condition at that time, of almost insupportable sensitiveness, his harsh blunt encomiums gave me even more pain than the benevolent approbation of M. Waldman. “D—n the fellow!” cried he; “why, M. Clerval, I assure you he has outstript us all. Aye, stare if you please; but it is nevertheless true. A youngster who, but a few years ago, believed Cornelius Agrippa as firmly as the gospel, has now set himself at the head of the university; and if he is not soon pulled down, we shall all be out of countenance. — Aye, aye,” continued he, observing my face expressive of suffering, “M. Frankenstein is modest; an excellent quality in a young man. Young men should be diffident of themselves, you know, M. Clerval; I was myself when young: but that wears out in a very short time."

M. Krempe had now commenced an eulogy on himself, which happily turned the conversation from a subject that was so annoying to me.

Clerval was no natural philosopher. His imagination was too vivid for the minutiæ of science. Languages were his principal study; and he sought, by acquiring their elements, to open a field for self-instruction on his return to Geneva. Persian, Arabic, and Hebrew, gained his attention, after he had made himself perfectly master of Greek and Latin. For my own part, idleness had ever been irksome to me; and now that I wished to fly from reflection, and hated my former studies, I felt great relief in being the fellow-pupil with my friend, and found not only instruction but consolation in the works of the orientalists. Their melancholy is soothing, and their joy elevating to a degree I never experienced in studying the authors of any other country. When you read their writings, life appears to consist in a warm sun and garden of roses, — in the smiles and frowns of a fair enemy, and the fire that consumes your own heart. How different from the manly and heroical poetry of Greece and Rome.

Summer passed away in these occupations, and my return to Geneva was fixed for the latter end of autumn; but being delayed by several accidents, winter and snow arrived, the roads were deemed impassable, and my journey was retarded until the ensuing spring. I felt this delay very bitterly; for I longed to see my native town, and my beloved friends. My return had only been delayed so long from an unwillingness to leave Clerval in a strange place, before he had become acquainted with any of its inhabitants. The winter, however, was spent cheerfully; and although the spring was uncommonly late, when it came, its beauty compensated for its dilatoriness.

The month of May had already commenced, and I expected the letter daily which was to fix the date of my departure, when Henry proposed a pedestrian tour in the environs of Ingolstadt that I might bid a personal farewell to the country I had so long inhabited. I acceded with pleasure to this proposition: I was fond of exercise, and Clerval had always been my favourite companion in the rambles of this nature that I had taken among the scenes of my native country.

We passed a fortnight in these perambulations: my health and spirits had long been restored, and they gained additional strength from the salubrious air I breathed, the natural incidents of our progress, and the conversation of my friend. Study had before secluded me from the intercourse of my fellow-creatures, and rendered me unsocial; but Clerval called forth the better feelings of my heart; he again taught me to love the aspect of nature, and the cheerful faces of children. Excellent friend! how sincerely did you love me, and endeavour to elevate my mind, until it was on a level with your own. A selfish pursuit had cramped and narrowed me, until your gentleness and affection warmed and opened my senses; I became the same happy creature who, a few years ago, loving and beloved by all, had no sorrow or care. When happy, inanimate nature had the power of bestowing on me the most delightful sensations. A serene sky and verdant fields filled me with ecstacy. The present season was indeed divine; the flowers of spring bloomed in the hedges, while those of summer were already in bud: I was undisturbed by thoughts which during the preceding year had pressed upon me, notwithstanding my endeavours to throw them off, with an invincible burden.

Henry rejoiced in my gaiety, and sincerely sympathized in my feelings: he exerted himself to amuse me, while he expressed the sensations that filled his soul. The resources of his mind on this occasion were truly astonishing: his conversation was full of imagination; and very often, in imitation of the Persian and Arabic writers, he invented tales of wonderful fancy and passion. At other times he repeated my favourite poems, or drew me out into arguments, which he supported with great ingenuity.

We returned to our college on a Sunday afternoon: the peasants were dancing, and every one we met appeared gay and happy. My own spirits were high, and I bounded along with feelings of unbridled joy and hilarity.

Chapter VI

ON my return, I found the following letter from my father:

"*To* V. FRANKENSTEIN.

"MY DEAR VICTOR,

"You have probably waited impatiently for a letter to fix the date of your return to us; and I was at first tempted to write only a few lines, merely mentioning the day on which I should expect you. But that would be a cruel kindness, and I dare not do it. What would be your surprise, my son, when you expected a happy and gay welcome, to behold, on the contrary, tears and wretchedness? And how, Victor, can I relate our misfortune? Absence cannot have rendered you callous to our joys and griefs; and how shall I inflict pain on an absent child? I wish to prepare you for the woeful news, but I know it is impossible; even now your eye skims over the page, to seek the words which are to convey to you the horrible tidings.

"William is dead! — that sweet child, whose smiles delighted and warmed my heart, who was so gentle, yet so gay! Victor, he is murdered!

"I will not attempt to console you; but will simply relate the circumstances of the transaction.

"Last Thursday (May 7th) I, my niece, and your two brothers, went to walk in Plainpalais. The evening was warm and serene, and we prolonged our walk farther than usual. It was already dusk before we thought of returning; and then we discovered that William and Ernest, who had gone on before, were not to be found. We accordingly rested on a seat until they should return. Presently Ernest came, and inquired if we had seen his brother: he said, that they had been playing together, that William had run away to hide himself, and that he vainly sought for him, and afterwards waited for him a long time, but that he did not return.

“This account rather alarmed us, and we continued to search for him until night fell, when Elizabeth conjectured that he might have returned to the house. He was not there. We returned again, with torches; for I could not rest, when I thought that my sweet boy had lost himself, and was exposed to all the damps and dews of night: Elizabeth also suffered extreme anguish. About five in the morning I discovered my lovely boy, whom the night before I had seen blooming and active in health, stretched on the grass livid and motionless: the print of the murderer’s finger was on his neck.

“He was conveyed home, and the anguish that was visible in my countenance betrayed the secret to Elizabeth. She was very earnest to see the corpse. At first I attempted to prevent her; but she persisted, and entering the room where it lay, hastily examined the neck of the victim, and clasping her hands exclaimed, ‘O God! I have murdered my darling infant!’

“She fainted, and was restored with extreme difficulty. When she again lived, it was only to weep and sigh. She told me, that that same evening William had teazed her to let him wear a very valuable miniature that she possessed of your mother. This picture is gone, and was doubtless the temptation which urged the murderer to the deed. We have no trace of him at present, although our exertions to discover him are unremitted; but they will not restore my beloved William.

“Come, dearest Victor; you alone can console Elizabeth. She weeps continually, and accuses herself unjustly as the cause of his death; her words pierce my heart. We are all unhappy; but will not that be an additional motive for you, my son, to return and be our comforter? Your dear mother! Alas, Victor! I now say, Thank God she did not live to witness the cruel, miserable death of her youngest darling!

“Come, Victor; not brooding thoughts of vengeance against the assassin, but with feelings of peace and gentleness, that will heal, instead of festering the wounds of our minds. Enter the house of mourning, my friend, but with kindness and affection for those who love you, and not with hatred for your enemies.

“Your affectionate and afflicted father,

“ALPHONSE FRANKENSTEIN.
“Geneva, May 12th, 17—.”

Clerval, who had watched my countenance as I read this letter, was surprised to observe the despair that succeeded to the joy I at first expressed on receiving news from my friends. I threw the letter on the table, and covered my face with my hands.

“My dear Frankenstein,” exclaimed Henry, when he perceived me weep with bitterness, “are you always to be unhappy? My dear friend, what has happened?”

I motioned to him to take up the letter, while I walked up and down the room in the extremest agitation. Tears also gushed from the eyes of Clerval, as he read the account of my misfortune.

"I can offer you no consolation, my friend," said he; "your disaster is irreparable. What do you intend to do?"

"To go instantly to Geneva: come with me, Henry, to order the horses."

During our walk, Clerval endeavoured to raise my spirits. He did not do this by common topics of consolation, but by exhibiting the truest sympathy. "Poor William!" said he, "that dear child; he now sleeps with his angel mother. His friends mourn and weep, but he is at rest: he does not now feel the murderer's grasp; a sod covers his gentle form, and he knows no pain. He can no longer be a fit subject for pity; the survivors are the greatest sufferers, and for them time is the only consolation. Those maxims of the Stoics, that death was no evil, and that the mind of man ought to be superior to despair on the eternal absence of a beloved object, ought not to be urged. Even Cato wept over the dead body of his brother."

Clerval spoke thus as we hurried through the streets; the words impressed themselves on my mind, and I remembered them afterwards in solitude. But now, as soon as the horses arrived, I hurried into a cabriole, and bade farewell to my friend.

My journey was very melancholy. At first I wished to hurry on, for I longed to console and sympathize with my loved and sorrowing friends; but when I drew near my native town, I slackened my progress. I could hardly sustain the multitude of feelings that crowded into my mind. I passed through scenes familiar to my youth, but which I had not seen for nearly six years. How altered every thing might be during that time? One sudden and desolating change had taken place; but a thousand little circumstances might have by degrees worked other alterations which, although they were done more tranquilly, might not be the less decisive. Fear overcame me; I dared not advance, dreading a thousand nameless evils that made me tremble, although I was unable to define them.

I remained two days at Lausanne, in this painful state of mind. I contemplated the lake: the waters were placid; all around was calm, and the snowy mountains, “the palaces of nature,” were not changed. By degrees the calm and heavenly scene restored me, and I continued my journey towards Geneva.

The road ran by the side of the lake, which became narrower as I approached my native town. I discovered more distinctly the black sides of Jura, and the bright summit of Mont Blânc; I wept like a child: “Dear mountains! my own beautiful lake! how do you welcome your wanderer? Your summits are clear; the sky and lake are blue and placid. Is this to prognosticate peace, or to mock at my unhappiness?”

I fear, my friend, that I shall render myself tedious by dwelling on these preliminary circumstances; but they were days of comparative happiness, and I think of them with pleasure. My country, my beloved country! who but a native can tell the delight I took in again beholding thy streams, thy mountains, and, more than all, thy lovely lake.

Yet, as I drew nearer home, grief and fear again overcame me. Night also closed around; and when I could hardly see the dark mountains, I felt still more gloomily. The picture appeared a vast and dim scene of evil, and I foresaw obscurely that I was destined to become the most wretched of human beings. Alas! I prophesied truly, and failed only in one single circumstance, that in all the misery I imagined and dreaded, I did not conceive the hundredth part of the anguish I was destined to endure.

It was completely dark when I arrived in the environs of Geneva; the gates of the town were already shut; and I was obliged to pass the night at Secheron, a village half a league to the east of the city. The sky was serene; and, as I was unable to rest, I resolved to visit the spot where my poor William had been murdered. As I could not pass through the town, I was obliged to cross the lake in a boat to arrive at Plainpalais. During this short voyage I saw the lightnings playing on the summit of Mont Blânc in the most beautiful figures. The storm appeared to approach rapidly; and, on landing, I ascended a low hill, that I might observe its progress. It advanced; the heavens were clouded, and I soon felt the rain coming slowly in large drops, but its violence quickly increased.

I quitted my seat, and walked on, although the darkness and storm increased every minute, and the thunder burst with a terrific crash over my head. It was echoed from Salêve, the Juras, and the Alps of Savoy; vivid flashes of lightning dazzled my eyes, illuminating the lake, making it appear like a vast sheet of fire; then for an instant every thing seemed of a pitchy darkness, until the eye recovered itself from the preceding flash. The storm, as is often the case in Switzerland, appeared at once in various parts of the heavens. The most violent storm hung exactly north of the town, over that part of the lake which lies between the promontory of Belrive and the village of Copêt. Another storm enlightened

Jura with faint flashes; and another darkened and sometimes disclosed the Môle, a peaked mountain to the east of the lake.

While I watched the storm, so beautiful yet terrific, I wandered on with a hasty step. This noble war in the sky elevated my spirits; I clasped my hands, and exclaimed aloud, “William, dear angel! this is thy funeral, this thy dirge!” As I said these words, I perceived in the gloom a figure which stole from behind a clump of trees near me; I stood fixed, gazing intently: I could not be mistaken. A flash of lightning illuminated the object, and discovered its shape plainly to me; its gigantic stature, and the deformity of its aspect, more hideous than belongs to humanity, instantly informed me that it was the wretch, the filthy dæmon to whom I had given life. What did he there? Could he be (I shuddered at the conception) the murderer of my brother? No sooner did that idea cross my imagination, than I became convinced of its truth; my teeth chattered, and I was forced to lean against a tree for support. The figure passed me quickly, and I lost it in the gloom.

Nothing in human shape could have destroyed that fair child. *He* was the murderer! I could not doubt it. The mere presence of the idea was an irresistible proof of the fact. I thought of pursuing the devil; but it would have been in vain, for another flash discovered him to me hanging among the rocks of the nearly perpendicular ascent of Mont Salêve, a hill that bounds Plainpalais on the south. He soon reached the summit, and disappeared.

I remained motionless. The thunder ceased; but the rain still continued, and the scene was enveloped in an impenetrable darkness. I revolved in my mind the events which I had until now sought to forget: the whole train of my progress towards the creation; the appearance of the work of my own hands alive at my bed side; its departure. Two years had now nearly elapsed since the night on which he first received life; and was this his first crime? Alas! I had turned loose into the world a depraved wretch, whose delight was in carnage and misery; had he not murdered my brother?

No one can conceive the anguish I suffered during the remainder of the night, which I spent, cold and wet, in the open air. But I did not feel the inconvenience of the weather; my imagination was busy in scenes of evil and despair. I considered the being whom I had cast among mankind, and endowed with the will and power to effect purposes of horror, such as the deed which he had now done, nearly in the light of my own vampire, my own spirit let loose from the grave, and forced to destroy all that was dear to me.

Day dawned; and I directed my steps towards the town. The gates were open; and I hastened to my father's house. My first thought was to discover what I knew of the murderer, and cause instant pursuit to be made. But I paused when I reflected on the story that I had to tell. A being whom I myself had formed, and endued with life, had met me at midnight among the precipices of an inaccessible mountain. I remembered also the nervous fever with which I had been seized just at the time that I dated my creation, and which would give an air of delirium to a tale otherwise so utterly improbable. I well knew that if any other had communicated such a relation to me, I should have looked upon it as the ravings of insanity. Besides, the strange nature of the animal would elude all pursuit, even if I were so far credited as to persuade my relatives to commence it. Besides, of what use would be pursuit? Who could arrest a creature capable of scaling the overhanging sides of Mont Salêve? These reflections determined me, and I resolved to remain silent.

It was about five in the morning when I entered my father's house. I told the servants not to disturb the family, and went into the library to attend their usual hour of rising.

Six years had elapsed, passed as a dream but for one indelible trace, and I stood in the same place where I had last embraced my father before my departure for Ingolstadt. Beloved and respectable parent! He still remained to me. I gazed on the picture of my mother, which stood over the mantlepiece. It was an historical subject, painted at my father's desire, and represented Caroline Beaufort in an agony of despair, kneeling by the coffin of her dead father. Her garb was rustic, and her cheek pale; but there was an air of dignity and beauty, that hardly permitted the sentiment of pity. Below this picture was a miniature of William; and my tears flowed when I looked upon it. While I was thus engaged, Ernest entered: he had heard me arrive, and hastened to welcome me. He expressed a sorrowful delight to see me: “Welcome, my dearest Victor,” said he. “Ah! I wish you had come three months ago, and then you would have found us all joyous and delighted. But we are now unhappy; and, I am afraid, tears instead of smiles will be your welcome. Our father looks so sorrowful: this dreadful event seems to have revived in his mind his grief on the death of Mamma. Poor Elizabeth also is quite inconsolable.” Ernest began to weep as he said these words.

“Do not,” said I, “welcome me thus; try to be more calm, that I may not be absolutely miserable the moment I enter my father’s house after so long an absence. But, tell me, how does my father support his misfortunes? and how is my poor Elizabeth?"

"She indeed requires consolation; she accused herself of having caused the death of my brother, and that made her very wretched. But since the murderer has been discovered —— "

"The murderer discovered! Good God! how can that be? who could attempt to pursue him? It is impossible; one might as well try to overtake the winds, or confine a mountain-stream with a straw."

"I do not know what you mean; but we were all very unhappy when she was discovered. No one would believe it at first; and even now Elizabeth will not be convinced, notwithstanding all the evidence. Indeed, who would credit that Justine Moritz, who was so amiable, and fond of all the family, could all at once become so extremely wicked?"

"Justine Moritz! Poor, poor girl, is she the accused? But it is wrongfully; every one knows that; no one believes it, surely, Ernest?"

"No one did at first; but several circumstances came out, that have almost forced conviction upon us: and her own behaviour has been so confused, as to add to the evidence of facts a weight that, I fear, leaves no hope for doubt. But she will be tried to-day, and you will then hear all."

He related that, the morning on which the murder of poor William had been discovered, Justine had been taken ill, and confined to her bed; and, after several days, one of the servants, happening to examine the apparel she had worn on the night of the murder, had discovered in her pocket the picture of my mother, which had been judged to be the temptation of the murderer. The servant instantly shewed it to one of the others, who, without saying a word to any of the family, went to a magistrate; and, upon their deposition, Justine was apprehended. On being charged with the fact, the poor girl confirmed the suspicion in a great measure by her extreme confusion of manner.

This was a strange tale, but it did not shake my faith; and I replied earnestly, "You are all mistaken; I know the murderer. Justine, poor, good Justine, is innocent."

At that instant my father entered. I saw unhappiness deeply impressed on his countenance, but he endeavoured to welcome me cheerfully; and, after we had exchanged our mournful greeting, would have introduced some other topic than that of our disaster, had not Ernest exclaimed, “Good God, Papa! Victor says that he knows who was the murderer of poor William.”

“We do also, unfortunately,” replied my father; “for indeed I had rather have been for ever ignorant than have discovered so much depravity and ingratitude in one I valued so highly.”

“My dear father, you are mistaken; Justine is innocent.”

“If she is, God forbid that she should suffer as guilty. She is to be tried to-day, and I hope, I sincerely hope, that she will be acquitted.”

This speech calmed me. I was firmly convinced in my own mind that Justine, and indeed every human being, was guiltless of this murder. I had no fear, therefore, that any circumstantial evidence could be brought forward strong enough to convict her; and, in this assurance, I calmed myself, expecting the trial with eagerness, but without prognosticating an evil result.

We were soon joined by Elizabeth. Time had made great alterations in her form since I had last beheld her. Six years before she had been a pretty, good-humoured girl, whom every one loved and caressed. She was now a woman in stature and expression of countenance, which was uncommonly lovely. An open and capacious forehead gave indications of a good understanding, joined to great frankness of disposition. Her eyes were hazel, and expressive of mildness, now through recent affliction allied to sadness. Her hair was of a rich, dark auburn, her complexion fair, and her figure slight and graceful. She welcomed me with the greatest affection. “Your arrival, my dear cousin,” said she, “fills me with hope. You perhaps will find some means to justify my poor guiltless Justine. Alas! who is safe, if she be convicted of crime? I rely on her innocence as certainly as I do upon my own. Our misfortune is doubly hard to us; we have not only lost that lovely darling boy, but this poor girl, whom I sincerely love, is to be torn away by even a worse fate. If she is condemned, I never shall know joy more. But she will not, I am sure she will not; and then I shall be happy again, even after the sad death of my little William."

"She is innocent, my Elizabeth," said I, "and that shall be proved; fear nothing, but let your spirits be cheered by the assurance of her acquittal."

"How kind you are! every one else believes in her guilt, and that made me wretched; for I knew that it was impossible: and to see every one else prejudiced in so deadly a manner, rendered me hopeless and despairing." She wept.

"Sweet niece," said my father, "dry your tears. If she is, as you believe, innocent, rely on the justice of our judges, and the activity with which I shall prevent the slightest shadow of partiality."

Chapter VII

WE passed a few sad hours, until eleven o'clock, when the trial was to commence. My father and the rest of the family being obliged to attend as witnesses, I accompanied them to the court. During the whole of this wretched mockery of justice, I suffered living torture. It was to be decided, whether the result of my curiosity and lawless devices would cause the death of two of my fellow-beings: one a smiling babe, full of innocence and joy; the other far more dreadfully murdered, with every aggravation of infamy that could make the murder memorable in horror. Justine also was a girl of merit, and possessed qualities which promised to render her life happy: now all was to be obliterated in an ignominious grave; and I the cause! A thousand times rather would I have confessed myself guilty of the crime ascribed to Justine; but I was absent when it was committed, and such a declaration would have been considered as the ravings of a madman, and would not have exculpated her who suffered through me.

The appearance of Justine was calm. She was dressed in mourning; and her countenance, always engaging, was rendered, by the solemnity of her feelings, exquisitely beautiful. Yet she appeared confident in innocence, and did not tremble, although gazed on and execrated by thousands; for all the kindness which her beauty might otherwise have excited, was obliterated in the minds of the spectators by the imagination of the enormity she was supposed to have committed. She was tranquil, yet her tranquillity was evidently constrained; and as her confusion had before been adduced as a proof of her guilt, she worked up her mind to an appearance of courage. When she entered the court, she threw her eyes round it, and quickly discovered where we were seated. A tear seemed to dim her eye when she saw us; but she quickly recovered herself, and a look of sorrowful affection seemed to attest her utter guiltlessness.

The trial began; and after the advocate against her had stated the charge, several witnesses were called. Several strange facts combined against her, which might have staggered any one who had not such proof of her innocence as I had. She had been out the whole of the night on which the murder had been committed, and towards morning had been perceived by a market-woman not far from the spot where the body of the murdered child had been afterwards found. The woman asked her what she did there; but she looked very strangely, and only returned a confused and unintelligible answer. She returned to the house about eight o'clock; and when one inquired where she had passed the night, she replied, that she had been looking for the child, and demanded earnestly, if any thing had been heard concerning him. When shewn the body, she fell into violent hysterics, and kept her bed for several days. The picture was then produced, which the servant had found in her pocket; and when Elizabeth, in a faltering voice, proved that it was the same which, an hour before the child had been missed, she had placed round his neck, a murmur of horror and indignation filled the court.

Justine was called on for her defence. As the trial had proceeded, her countenance had altered. Surprise, horror, and misery, were strongly expressed. Sometimes she struggled with her tears; but when she was desired to plead, she collected her powers, and spoke in an audible although variable voice:—

“God knows,” she said, “how entirely I am innocent. But I do not pretend that my protestations should acquit me: I rest my innocence on a plain and simple explanation of the facts which have been adduced against me; and I hope the character I have always borne will incline my judges to a favourable interpretation, where any circumstance appears doubtful or suspicious."

She then related that, by the permission of Elizabeth, she had passed the evening of the night on which the murder had been committed, at the house of an aunt at Chêne, a village situated at about a league from Geneva. On her return, at about nine o'clock, she met a man, who asked her if she had seen any thing of the child who was lost. She was alarmed by this account, and passed several hours in looking for him, when the gates of Geneva were shut, and she was forced to remain several hours of the night in a barn belonging to a cottage, being unwilling to call up the inhabitants, to whom she was well known. Unable to rest or sleep, she quitted her asylum early, that she might again endeavour to find my brother. If she had gone near the spot where his body lay, it was without her knowledge. That she had been bewildered when questioned by the market-woman, was not surprising, since she had passed a sleepless night, and the fate of poor William was yet uncertain. Concerning the picture she could give no account.

“I know,” continued the unhappy victim, “how heavily and fatally this one circumstance weighs against me, but I have no power of explaining it; and when I have expressed my utter ignorance, I am only left to conjecture concerning the probabilities by which it might have been placed in my pocket. But here also I am checked. I believe that I have no enemy on earth, and none surely would have been so wicked as to destroy me wantonly. Did the murderer place it there? I know of no opportunity afforded him for so doing; or if I had, why should he have stolen the jewel, to part with it again so soon?

“I commit my cause to the justice of my judges, yet I see no room for hope. I beg permission to have a few witnesses examined concerning my character; and if their testimony shall not overweigh my supposed guilt, I must be condemned, although I would pledge my salvation on my innocence.”

Several witnesses were called, who had known her for many years, and they spoke well of her; but fear, and hatred of the crime of which they supposed her guilty, rendered them timorous, and unwilling to come forward. Elizabeth saw even this last resource, her excellent dispositions and irreproachable conduct, about to fail the accused, when, although violently agitated, she desired permission to address the court.

"I am," said she, "the cousin of the unhappy child who was murdered, or rather his sister, for I was educated by and have lived with his parents ever since and even long before his birth. It may therefore be judged indecent in me to come forward on this occasion; but when I see a fellow-creature about to perish through the cowardice of her pretended friends, I wish to be allowed to speak, that I may say what I know of her character. I am well acquainted with the accused. I have lived in the same house with her, at one time for five, and at another for nearly two years. During all that period she appeared to me the most amiable and benevolent of human creatures. She nursed Madame Frankenstein, my aunt, in her last illness with the greatest affection and care; and afterwards attended her own mother during a tedious illness, in a manner that excited the admiration of all who knew her. After which she again lived in my uncle's house, where she was beloved by all the family. She was warmly attached to the child who is now dead, and acted towards him like a most affectionate mother. For my own part, I do not hesitate to say, that, notwithstanding all the evidence produced against her, I believe and rely on her perfect innocence. She had no temptation for such an action: as to the bauble on which the chief proof rests, if she had earnestly desired it, I should have willingly given it to her; so much do I esteem and value her."

Excellent Elizabeth! A murmur of approbation was heard; but it was excited by her generous interference, and not in favour of poor Justine, on whom the public indignation was turned with renewed violence, charging her with the blackest ingratitude. She herself wept as Elizabeth spoke, but she did not answer. My own agitation and anguish was extreme during the whole trial. I believed in her innocence; I knew it. Could the dæmon, who had

(I did not for a minute doubt) murdered my brother, also in his hellish sport have betrayed the innocent to death and ignominy. I could not sustain the horror of my situation; and when I perceived that the popular voice, and the countenances of the judges, had already condemned my unhappy victim, I rushed out of the court in agony. The tortures of the accused did not equal mine; she was sustained by innocence, but the fangs of remorse tore my bosom, and would not forego their hold.

I passed a night of unmingled wretchedness. In the morning I went to the court; my lips and throat were parched. I dared not ask the fatal question; but I was known, and the officer guessed the cause of my visit. The ballots had been thrown; they were all black, and Justine was condemned.

I cannot pretend to describe what I then felt. I had before experienced sensations of horror; and I have endeavoured to bestow upon them adequate expressions, but words cannot convey an idea of the heart-sickening despair that I then endured. The person to whom I addressed myself added, that Justine had already confessed her guilt. “That evidence,” he observed, “was hardly required in so glaring a case, but I am glad of it; and, indeed, none of our judges like to condemn a criminal upon circumstantial evidence, be it ever so decisive.”

When I returned home, Elizabeth eagerly demanded the result.

“My cousin,” replied I, “it is decided as you may have expected; all judges had rather that ten innocent should suffer, than that one guilty should escape. But she has confessed.”

This was a dire blow to poor Elizabeth, who had relied with firmness upon Justine’s innocence. “Alas!” said she, “how shall I ever again believe in human benevolence? Justine, whom I loved and esteemed as my sister, how could she put on those smiles of innocence only to betray; her mild eyes seemed incapable of any severity or ill-humour, and yet she has committed a murder.”

Soon after we heard that the poor victim had expressed a wish to see my cousin. My father wished her not to go; but said, that he left it to her own judgment and feelings to decide. “Yes,” said Elizabeth, “I will go, although she is guilty; and you, Victor, shall accompany me: I cannot go alone.” The idea of this visit was torture to me, yet I could not refuse.

We entered the gloomy prison-chamber, and beheld Justine sitting on some straw at the further end; her hands were manacled, and her head rested on her knees. She rose on seeing us enter; and when we were left alone with her, she threw herself at the feet of Elizabeth, weeping bitterly. My cousin wept also.

“Oh, Justine!” said she, “why did you rob me of my last consolation. I relied on your innocence; and although I was then very wretched, I was not so miserable as I am now.”

“And do you also believe that I am so very, very wicked? Do you also join with my enemies to crush me?” Her voice was suffocated with sobs.

“Rise, my poor girl,” said Elizabeth, “why do you kneel, if you are innocent? I am not one of your enemies; I believed you guiltless, notwithstanding every evidence, until I heard that you had yourself declared your guilt. That report, you say, is false; and be assured, dear Justine, that nothing can shake my confidence in you for a moment, but your own confession."

"I did confess; but I confessed a lie. I confessed, that I might obtain absolution; but now that falsehood lies heavier at my heart than all my other sins. The God of heaven forgive me! Ever since I was condemned, my confessor has besieged me; he threatened and menaced, until I almost began to think that I was the monster that he said I was. He threatened excommunication and hell fire in my last moments, if I continued obdurate. Dear lady, I had none to support me; all looked on me as a wretch doomed to ignominy and perdition. What could I do? In an evil hour I subscribed to a lie; and now only am I truly miserable."

She paused, weeping, and then continued — "I thought with horror, my sweet lady, that you should believe your Justine, whom your blessed aunt had so highly honoured, and whom you loved, was a creature capable of a crime which none but the devil himself could have perpetrated. Dear William! dearest blessed child! I soon shall see you again in heaven, where we shall all be happy; and that consoles me, going as I am to suffer ignominy and death."

"Oh, Justine! forgive me for having for one moment distrusted you. Why did you confess? But do not mourn, my dear girl; I will every where proclaim your innocence, and force belief. Yet you must die; you, my playfellow, my companion, my more than sister. I never can survive so horrible a misfortune."

"Dear, sweet Elizabeth, do not weep. You ought to raise me with thoughts of a better life, and elevate me from the petty cares of this world of injustice and strife. Do not you, excellent friend, drive me to despair."

"I will try to comfort you; but this, I fear, is an evil too deep and poignant to admit of consolation, for there is no hope. Yet heaven bless thee, my dearest Justine, with resignation, and a confidence elevated beyond this world. Oh! how I hate its shews and mockeries! when one creature is murdered, another is immediately deprived of life in a slow torturing manner; then the executioners, their hands yet reeking with the blood of innocence, believe that they have done a great deed. They call this *retribution*. Hateful name! When that word is pronounced, I know greater and more horrid punishments are going to be inflicted than the gloomiest tyrant has ever invented to satiate his utmost revenge. Yet this is not consolation for you, my Justine, unless indeed that you may glory in escaping from so miserable a den. Alas! I would I were in peace with my aunt and my lovely William, escaped from a world which is hateful to me, and the visages of men which I abhor."

Justine smiled languidly. "This, dear lady, is despair, and not resignation. I must not learn the lesson that you would teach me. Talk of something else, something that will bring peace, and not increase of misery."

During this conversation I had retired to a corner of the prison-room, where I could conceal the horrid anguish that possessed me. Despair! Who dared talk of that? The poor victim, who on the morrow was to pass the dreary boundary between life and death, felt not as I did, such deep and bitter agony. I gnashed my teeth, and ground them together, uttering a groan that came from my inmost soul. Justine started. When she saw who it was, she approached me, and said, "Dear Sir, you are very kind to visit me; you, I hope, do not believe that I am guilty."

I could not answer. "No, Justine," said Elizabeth; "he is more convinced of your innocence than I was; for even when he heard that you had confessed, he did not credit it."

"I truly thank him. In these last moments I feel the sincerest gratitude towards those who think of me with kindness. How sweet is the affection of others to such a wretch as I am! It removes more than half my misfortune; and I feel as if I could die in peace, now that my innocence is acknowledged by you, dear lady, and your cousin."

Thus the poor sufferer tried to comfort others and herself. She indeed gained the resignation she desired. But I, the true murderer, felt the never-dying worm alive in my bosom, which allowed of no hope or consolation. Elizabeth also wept, and was unhappy; but her's also was the misery of innocence, which, like a cloud that passes over the fair moon, for a while hides, but cannot tarnish its brightness. Anguish and despair had penetrated into the core of my heart; I bore a hell within me, which nothing could extinguish. We staid several hours with Justine; and it was with great difficulty that Elizabeth could tear herself away. "I wish," cried she, "that I were to die with you; I cannot live in this world of misery."

Justine assumed an air of cheerfulness, while she with difficulty repressed her bitter tears. She embraced Elizabeth, and said, in a voice of half-suppressed emotion, "Farewell, sweet lady, dearest Elizabeth, my beloved and only friend; may heaven in its bounty bless and preserve you; may this be the last misfortune that you will ever suffer. Live, and be happy, and make others so."

As we returned, Elizabeth said, “You know not, my dear Victor, how much I am relieved, now that I trust in the innocence of this unfortunate girl. I never could again have known peace, if I had been deceived in my reliance on her. For the moment that I did believe her guilty, I felt an anguish that I could not have long sustained. Now my heart is lightened. The innocent suffers; but she whom I thought amiable and good has not betrayed the trust I reposed in her, and I am consoled.”

Amiable cousin! such were your thoughts, mild and gentle as your own dear eyes and voice. But I — I was a wretch, and none ever conceived of the misery that I then endured.

Volume II

Chapter I

NOTHING is more painful to the human mind, than, after the feelings have been worked up by a quick succession of events, the dead calmness of inaction and certainty which follows, and deprives the soul both of hope and fear. Justine died; she rested; and I was alive. The blood flowed freely in my veins, but a weight of despair and remorse pressed on my heart, which nothing could remove. Sleep fled from my eyes; I wandered like an evil spirit, for I had committed deeds of mischief beyond description horrible, and more, much more, (I persuaded myself) was yet behind. Yet my heart overflowed with kindness, and the love of virtue. I had begun life with benevolent intentions, and thirsted for the moment when I should put them in practice, and make myself useful to my fellow-beings. Now all was blasted: instead of that serenity of conscience, which allowed me to look back upon the past with self-satisfaction, and from thence to gather promise of new hopes, I was seized by remorse and the sense of guilt, which hurried me away to a hell of intense tortures, such as no language can describe.

This state of mind preyed upon my health, which had entirely recovered from the first shock it had sustained. I shunned the face of man; all sound of joy or complacency was torture to me; solitude was my only consolation — deep, dark, death-like solitude.

My father observed with pain the alteration perceptible in my disposition and habits, and endeavoured to reason with me on the folly of giving way to immoderate grief. “Do you think, Victor,” said he, “that I do not suffer also? No one could love a child more than I loved your brother;” (tears came into his eyes as he spoke); “but is it not a duty to the survivors, that we should refrain from augmenting their unhappiness by an appearance of immoderate grief? It is also a duty owed to yourself; for excessive sorrow prevents improvement or enjoyment, or even the discharge of daily usefulness, without which no man is fit for society.”

This advice, although good, was totally inapplicable to my case; I should have been the first to hide my grief, and console my friends, if remorse had not mingled its bitterness with my other sensations. Now I could only answer my father with a look of despair, and endeavour to hide myself from his view.

About this time we retired to our house at Belrive. This change was particularly agreeable to me. The shutting of the gates regularly at ten o’clock, and the impossibility of remaining on the lake after that hour, had rendered our residence within the walls of Geneva very irksome to me. I was now free. Often, after the rest of the family had retired for the night, I took the boat, and passed many hours upon the water. Sometimes, with my sails set, I was carried by the wind; and sometimes, after rowing into the middle of the lake, I left the boat to pursue its own course, and gave way to my own miserable reflections. I was often tempted, when all was at peace around me, and I the only unquiet thing that wandered restless in a scene so beautiful and heavenly, if I except some bat, or the frogs, whose harsh and interrupted croaking was heard only when I approached the shore — often, I say, I was tempted to plunge into the silent lake, that the waters might close over me and my calamities for ever. But I was restrained, when I thought of the heroic and suffering Elizabeth, whom I tenderly loved, and whose existence was bound up in mine. I thought also of my father, and surviving brother: should I by my base desertion leave them exposed and unprotected to the malice of the fiend whom I had let loose among them?

At these moments I wept bitterly, and wished that peace would revisit my mind only that I might afford them consolation and happiness. But that could not be. Remorse extinguished every hope. I had been the author of unalterable evils; and I lived in daily fear, lest the monster whom I had created should perpetrate some new wickedness. I had an obscure feeling that all was not over, and that he would still commit some signal crime, which by its enormity should almost efface the recollection of the past. There was always scope for fear, so long as any thing I loved remained behind. My abhorrence of this fiend cannot be conceived. When I thought of him, I gnashed my teeth, my eyes became inflamed, and I ardently wished to extinguish that life which I had so thoughtlessly bestowed. When I reflected on his crimes and malice, my hatred and revenge burst all bounds of moderation. I would have made a pilgrimage to the highest peak of the Andes, could I, when there, have precipitated him to their base. I wished to see him again, that I might wreak the utmost extent of anger on his head, and avenge the deaths of William and Justine.

Our house was the house of mourning. My father's health was deeply shaken by the horror of the recent events. Elizabeth was sad and desponding; she no longer took delight in her ordinary occupations; all pleasure seemed to her sacrilege toward the dead; eternal woe and tears she then thought was the just tribute she should pay to innocence so blasted and destroyed. She was no longer that happy creature, who in earlier youth wandered with me on the banks of the lake, and talked with ecstacy of our future prospects. She had become grave, and often conversed of the inconstancy of fortune, and the instability of human life.

"When I reflect, my dear cousin," said she, "on the miserable death of Justine Moritz, I no longer see the world and its works as they before appeared to me. Before, I looked upon the accounts of vice and injustice, that I read in books or heard from others, as tales of ancient days, or imaginary evils; at least they were remote, and more familiar to reason than to the imagination; but now misery has come home, and men appear to me as monsters thirsting for each other's blood. Yet I am certainly unjust. Every body believed that poor girl to be guilty; and if she could have committed the crime for which she suffered, assuredly she would have been the most depraved of human creatures. For the sake of a few jewels, to have murdered the son of her benefactor and friend, a child whom she had nursed from its birth, and appeared to love as if it had been her own! I could not consent to the death of any human being; but certainly I should have thought such a creature unfit to remain in the society of men. Yet she was innocent. I know, I feel she was innocent; you are of the same opinion, and that confirms me. Alas! Victor, when falsehood can look so like the truth, who can assure themselves of certain happiness? I feel as if I were walking on the edge of a precipice, towards which thousands are crowding, and endeavouring to plunge me into the abyss. William and Justine were assassinated, and the murderer escapes; he walks about the world free, and perhaps respected. But even if I were condemned to suffer on the scaffold for the same crimes, I would not change places with such a wretch."

I listened to this discourse with the extremest agony. I, not in deed, but in effect, was the true murderer. Elizabeth read my anguish in my countenance, and kindly taking my hand said, “My dearest cousin, you must calm yourself. These events have affected me, God knows how deeply; but I am not so wretched as you are. There is an expression of despair, and sometimes of revenge, in your countenance, that makes me tremble. Be calm, my dear Victor; I would sacrifice my life to your peace. We surely shall be happy: quiet in our native country, and not mingling in the world, what can disturb our tranquillity?”

She shed tears as she said this, distrusting the very solace that she gave; but at the same time she smiled, that she might chase away the fiend that lurked in my heart. My father, who saw in the unhappiness that was painted in my face only an exaggeration of that sorrow which I might naturally feel, thought that an amusement suited to my taste would be the best means of restoring to me my wonted serenity. It was from this cause that he had removed to the country; and, induced by the same motive, he now proposed that we should all make an excursion to the valley of Chamounix. I had been there before, but Elizabeth and Ernest never had; and both had often expressed an earnest desire to see the scenery of this place, which had been described to them as so wonderful and sublime. Accordingly we departed from Geneva on this tour about the middle of the month of August, nearly two months after the death of Justine.

The weather was uncommonly fine; and if mine had been a sorrow to be chased away by any fleeting circumstance, this excursion would certainly have had the effect intended by my father. As it was, I was somewhat interested in the scene; it sometimes lulled, although it could not extinguish my grief. During the first day we travelled in a carriage. In the morning we had seen the mountains at a distance, towards which we gradually advanced. We perceived that the valley through which we wound, and which was formed by the river Arve, whose course we followed, closed in upon us by degrees;

and when the sun had set, we beheld immense mountains and precipices overhanging us on every side, and heard the sound of the river raging among rocks, and the dashing of water-falls around.

The next day we pursued our journey upon mules; and as we ascended still higher, the valley assumed a more magnificent and astonishing character. Ruined castles hanging on the precipices of piny mountains; the impetuous Arve, and cottages every here and there peeping forth from among the trees, formed a scene of singular beauty. But it was augmented and rendered sublime by the mighty Alps, whose white and shining pyramids and domes towered above all, as belonging to another earth, the habitations of another race of beings.

We passed the bridge of Pelissier, where the ravine, which the river forms, opened before us, and we began to ascend the mountain that overhangs it. Soon after we entered the valley of Chamounix. This valley is more wonderful and sublime, but not so beautiful and picturesque as that of Servox, through which we had just passed. The high and snowy mountains were its immediate boundaries; but we saw no more ruined castles and fertile fields. Immense glaciers approached the road; we heard the rumbling thunder of the falling avalanche, and marked the smoke of its passage. Mont Blânc, the supreme and magnificent Mont Blânc, raised itself from the surrounding *aiguilles*, and its tremendous *dome* overlooked the valley.

During this journey, I sometimes joined Elizabeth, and exerted myself to point out to her the various beauties of the scene. I often suffered my mule to lag behind, and indulged in the misery of reflection. At other times I spurred on the animal before my companions, that I might forget them, the world, and, more than all, myself. When at a distance, I alighted, and threw myself on the grass, weighed down by horror and despair. At eight in the evening I arrived at Chamounix. My father and Elizabeth were very much fatigued; Ernest, who accompanied us, was delighted, and in high spirits: the only circumstance that detracted from his pleasure was the south wind, and the rain it seemed to promise for the next day.

We retired early to our apartments, but not to sleep; at least I did not. I remained many hours at the window, watching the pallid lightning that played above Mont Blânc, and listening to the rushing of the Arve, which ran below my window.

Chapter II

THE next day, contrary to the prognostications of our guides, was fine, although clouded. We visited the source of the Arveiron, and rode about the valley until evening. These sublime and magnificent scenes afforded me the greatest consolation that I was capable of receiving. They elevated me from all littleness of feeling; and although they did not remove my grief, they subdued and tranquillized it. In some degree, also, they diverted my mind from the thoughts over which it had brooded for the last month. I returned in the evening, fatigued, but less unhappy, and conversed with my family with more cheerfulness than had been my custom for some time. My father was pleased, and Elizabeth overjoyed. “My dear cousin,” said she, “you see what happiness you diffuse when you are happy; do not relapse again!”

The following morning the rain poured down in torrents, and thick mists hid the summits of the mountains. I rose early, but felt unusually melancholy. The rain depressed me; my old feelings recurred, and I was miserable. I knew how disappointed my father would be at this sudden change, and I wished to avoid him until I had recovered myself so far as to be enabled to conceal those feelings that overpowered me. I knew that they would remain that day at the inn; and as I had ever inured myself to rain, moisture, and cold, I resolved to go alone to the summit of Montanvert. I remembered the effect that the view of the tremendous and ever-moving glacier had produced upon my mind when I first saw it. It had then filled me with a sublime ecstacy that gave wings to the soul, and allowed it to soar from the obscure world to light and joy.

The sight of the awful and majestic in nature had indeed always the effect of solemnizing my mind, and causing me to forget the passing cares of life. I determined to go alone, for I was well acquainted with the path, and the presence of another would destroy the solitary grandeur of the scene.

The ascent is precipitous, but the path is cut into continual and short windings, which enable you to surmount the perpendicularity of the mountain. It is a scene terrifically desolate. In a thousand spots the traces of the winter avalanche may be perceived, where trees lie broken and strewed on the ground; some entirely destroyed, others bent, leaning upon the jutting rocks of the mountain, or transversely upon other trees. The path, as you ascend higher, is intersected by ravines of snow, down which stones continually roll from above; one of them is particularly dangerous, as the slightest sound, such as even speaking in a loud voice, produces a concussion of air sufficient to draw destruction upon the head of the speaker. The pines are not tall or luxuriant, but they are sombre, and add an air of severity to the scene. I looked on the valley beneath; vast mists were rising from the rivers which ran through it, and curling in thick wreaths around the opposite mountains, whose summits were hid in the uniform clouds, while rain poured from the dark sky, and added to the melancholy impression I received from the objects around me. Alas! why does man boast of sensibilities superior to those apparent in the brute; it only renders them more necessary beings. If our impulses were confined to hunger, thirst, and desire, we might be nearly free; but now we are moved by every wind that blows, and a chance word or scene that that word may convey to us.

We rest; a dream has power to poison sleep.
  We rise; one wand'ring thought pollutes the day.
We feel, conceive, or reason; laugh, or weep,
  Embrace fond woe, or cast our cares away;
It is the same: for, be it joy or sorrow,
  The path of its departure still is free.

Man’s yesterday may ne’er be like his morrow;
Nought may endure but mutability!

It was nearly noon when I arrived at the top of the ascent. For some time I sat upon the rock that overlooks the sea of ice. A mist covered both that and the surrounding mountains. Presently a breeze dissipated the cloud, and I descended upon the glacier. The surface is very uneven, rising like the waves of a troubled sea, descending low, and interspersed by rifts that sink deep. The field of ice is almost a league in width, but I spent nearly two hours in crossing it. The opposite mountain is a bare perpendicular rock. From the side where I now stood Montanvert was exactly opposite, at the distance of a league; and above it rose Mont Blânc, in awful majesty. I remained in a recess of the rock, gazing on this wonderful and stupendous scene. The sea, or rather the vast river of ice, wound among its dependent mountains, whose aërial summits hung over its recesses. Their icy and glittering peaks shone in the sunlight over the clouds. My heart, which was before sorrowful, now swelled with something like joy; I exclaimed — “Wandering spirits, if indeed ye wander, and do not rest in your narrow beds, allow me this faint happiness, or take me, as your companion, away from the joys of life.”

As I said this, I suddenly beheld the figure of a man, at some distance, advancing towards me with superhuman speed. He bounded over the crevices in the ice, among which I had walked with caution; his stature also, as he approached, seemed to exceed that of man. I was troubled: a mist came over my eyes, and I felt a faintness seize me; but I was quickly restored by the cold gale of the mountains. I perceived, as the shape came nearer, (sight tremendous and abhorred!) that it was the wretch whom I had created. I trembled with rage and horror, resolving to wait his approach, and then close with him in mortal combat. He approached; his countenance bespoke bitter anguish, combined with disdain and malignity, while its unearthly ugliness rendered it almost too horrible for human eyes. But I scarcely observed this; anger and hatred had at first deprived me of utterance, and I recovered only to overwhelm him with words expressive of furious detestation and contempt.

“Devil!” I exclaimed, “do you dare approach me? and do not you fear the fierce vengeance of my arm wreaked on your miserable head? Begone, vile insect! or rather stay, that I may trample you to dust! and, oh, that I could, with the extinction of your miserable existence, restore those victims whom you have so diabolically murdered!”

“I expected this reception,” said the dæmon. “All men hate the wretched; how then must I be hated, who am miserable beyond all living things! Yet you, my creator, detest and spurn me, thy creature, to whom thou art bound by ties only dissoluble by the annihilation of one of us. You purpose to kill me. How dare you sport thus with life? Do your duty towards me, and I will do mine towards you and the rest of mankind. If you will comply with my conditions, I will leave them and you at peace; but if you refuse, I will glut the maw of death, until it be satiated with the blood of your remaining friends.”

“Abhorred monster! fiend that thou art! the tortures of hell are too mild a vengeance for thy crimes. Wretched devil! you reproach me with your creation; come on then, that I may extinguish the spark which I so negligently bestowed.”

My rage was without bounds; I sprang on him, impelled by all the feelings which can arm one being against the existence of another.

He easily eluded me, and said,

“Be calm! I entreat you to hear me, before you give vent to your hatred on my devoted head. Have I not suffered enough, that you seek to increase my misery? Life, although it may only be an accumulation of anguish, is dear to me, and I will defend it. Remember, thou hast made me more powerful than thyself; my height is superior to thine; my joints more supple. But I will not be tempted to set myself in opposition to thee. I am thy creature, and I will be even mild and docile to my natural lord and king, if thou wilt also perform thy part, the which thou owest me. Oh, Frankenstein, be not equitable to every other, and trample upon me alone, to whom thy justice, and even thy clemency and affection, is most due. Remember, that I am thy creature: I ought to be thy Adam; but I am rather the fallen angel, whom thou drivest from joy for no misdeed. Every where I see bliss, from which I alone am irrevocably excluded. I was benevolent and good; misery made me a fiend. Make me happy, and I shall again be virtuous."

"Begone! I will not hear you. There can be no community between you and me; we are enemies. Begone, or let us try our strength in a fight, in which one must fall."

"How can I move thee? Will no entreaties cause thee to turn a favourable eye upon thy creature, who implores thy goodness and compassion? Believe me, Frankenstein: I was benevolent; my soul glowed with love and humanity: but am I not alone, miserably alone? You, my creator, abhor me; what hope can I gather from your fellow-creatures, who owe me nothing? they spurn and hate me. The desert mountains and dreary glaciers are my refuge. I have wandered here many days; the caves of ice, which I only do not fear, are a dwelling to me, and the only one which man does not grudge. These bleak skies I hail, for they are kinder to me than your fellow-beings. If the multitude of mankind knew of my existence, they would do as you do, and arm themselves for my destruction. Shall I not then hate them who abhor me? I will keep no terms with my enemies. I am miserable, and they shall share my wretchedness. Yet it is in your power to recompense me, and deliver them from an evil which it only remains for you to make so great, that not only you and your family, but thousands of others, shall be swallowed up in the whirlwinds of its rage. Let your compassion be moved, and do not disdain me. Listen to my tale: when you have heard that, abandon or commiserate me, as you shall judge that I deserve. But hear me. The guilty are allowed, by human laws, bloody as they may be, to speak in their own defence before they are condemned. Listen to me, Frankenstein. You accuse me of murder; and yet you would, with a satisfied conscience, destroy your own creature. Oh, praise the eternal justice of man! Yet I ask you not to spare me: listen to me; and then, if you can, and if you will, destroy the work of your hands."

"Why do you call to my remembrance circumstances of which I shudder to reflect, that I have been the miserable origin and author? Cursed be the day, abhorred devil, in which you first saw light! Cursed (although I curse myself) be the hands that formed you! You have made me wretched beyond expression. You have left me no power to consider whether I am just to you, or not. Begone! relieve me from the sight of your detested form."

"Thus I relieve thee, my creator," he said, and placed his hated hands before my eyes, which I flung from me with violence; "thus I take from thee a sight which you abhor. Still thou canst listen to me, and grant me thy compassion. By the virtues that I once possessed, I demand this from you. Hear my tale; it is long and strange, and the temperature of this place is not fitting to your fine sensations; come to the hut upon the mountain. The sun is yet high in the heavens; before it descends to hide itself behind yon snowy precipices, and illuminate another world, you will have heard my story, and can decide. On you it rests, whether I quit for ever the neighbourhood of man, and lead a harmless life, or become the scourge of your fellow-creatures, and the author of your own speedy ruin."

As he said this, he led the way across the ice: I followed. My heart was full, and I did not answer him; but, as I proceeded, I weighed the various arguments that he had used, and determined at least to listen to his tale. I was partly urged by curiosity, and compassion confirmed my resolution. I had hitherto supposed him to be the murderer of my brother, and I eagerly sought a confirmation or denial of this opinion. For the first time, also, I felt what the duties of a creator towards his creature were, and that I ought to render him happy before I complained of his wickedness. These motives urged me to comply with his demand. We crossed the ice, therefore, and ascended the opposite rock. The air was cold, and the rain again began to descend: we entered the hut, the fiend with an air of exultation, I with a heavy heart, and depressed spirits. But I consented to listen; and, seating myself by the fire which my odious companion had lighted, he thus began his tale.

Chapter III

"It is with considerable difficulty that I remember the original æra of my being: all the events of that period appear confused and indistinct. A strange multiplicity of sensations seized me, and I saw, felt, heard, and smelt, at the same time; and it was, indeed, a long time before I learned to distinguish between the operations of my various senses. By degrees, I remember, a stronger light pressed upon my nerves, so that I was obliged to shut my eyes. Darkness then came over me, and troubled me; but hardly had I felt this, when, by opening my eyes, as I now suppose, the light poured in upon me again. I walked, and, I believe, descended; but I presently found a great alteration in my sensations. Before, dark and opaque bodies had surrounded me, impervious to my touch or sight; but I now found that I could wander on at liberty, with no obstacles which I could not either surmount or avoid. The light became more and more oppressive to me; and, the heat wearying me as I walked, I sought a place where I could receive shade. This was the forest near Ingolstadt; and here I lay by the side of a brook resting from my fatigue, until I felt tormented by hunger and thirst. This roused me from my nearly dormant state, and I ate some berries which I found hanging on the trees, or lying on the ground. I slaked my thirst at the brook; and then lying down, was overcome by sleep.

"It was dark when I awoke; I felt cold also, and half-frightened as it were instinctively, finding myself so desolate. Before I had quitted your apartment, on a sensation of cold, I had covered myself with some clothes; but these were insufficient to secure me from the dews of night. I was a poor, helpless, miserable wretch; I knew, and could distinguish, nothing; but, feeling pain invade me on all sides, I sat down and wept.

“Soon a gentle light stole over the heavens, and gave me a sensation of pleasure. I started up, and beheld a radiant form rise from among the trees. I gazed with a kind of wonder. It moved slowly, but it enlightened my path; and I again went out in search of berries. I was still cold, when under one of the trees I found a huge cloak, with which I covered myself, and sat down upon the ground. No distinct ideas occupied my mind; all was confused. I felt light, and hunger, and thirst, and darkness; innumerable sounds rung in my ears, and on all sides various scents saluted me: the only object that I could distinguish was the bright moon, and I fixed my eyes on that with pleasure.

“Several changes of day and night passed, and the orb of night had greatly lessened when I began to distinguish my sensations from each other. I gradually saw plainly the clear stream that supplied me with drink, and the trees that shaded me with their foliage. I was delighted when I first discovered that a pleasant sound, which often saluted my ears, proceeded from the throats of the little winged animals who had often intercepted the light from my eyes. I began also to observe, with greater accuracy, the forms that surrounded me, and to perceive the boundaries of the radiant roof of light which canopied me. Sometimes I tried to imitate the pleasant songs of the birds, but was unable. Sometimes I wished to express my sensations in my own mode, but the uncouth and inarticulate sounds which broke from me frightened me into silence again.

“The moon had disappeared from the night, and again, with a lessened form, shewed itself, while I still remained in the forest. My sensations had, by this time, become distinct, and my mind received every day additional ideas. My eyes became accustomed to the light, and to perceive objects in their right forms; I distinguished the insect from the herb, and, by degrees, one herb from another. I found that the sparrow uttered none but harsh notes, whilst those of the blackbird and thrush were sweet and enticing.

"One day, when I was oppressed by cold, I found a fire which had been left by some wandering beggars, and was overcome with delight at the warmth I experienced from it. In my joy I thrust my hand into the live embers, but quickly drew it out again with a cry of pain. How strange, I thought, that the same cause should produce such opposite effects! I examined the materials of the fire, and to my joy found it to be composed of wood. I quickly collected some branches; but they were wet, and would not burn. I was pained at this, and sat still watching the operation of the fire. The wet wood which I had placed near the heat dried, and itself became inflamed. I reflected on this; and, by touching the various branches, I discovered the cause, and busied myself in collecting a great quantity of wood, that I might dry it, and have a plentiful supply of fire. When night came on, and brought sleep with it, I was in the greatest fear lest my fire should be extinguished. I covered it carefully with dry wood and leaves, and placed wet branches upon it; and then, spreading my cloak, I lay on the ground, and sunk into sleep.

“It was morning when I awoke, and my first care was to visit the fire. I uncovered it, and a gentle breeze quickly fanned it into a flame. I observed this also, and contrived a fan of branches, which roused the embers when they were nearly extinguished. When night came again, I found, with pleasure, that the fire gave light as well as heat; and that the discovery of this element was useful to me in my food; for I found some of the offals that the travellers had left had been roasted, and tasted much more savoury than the berries I gathered from the trees. I tried, therefore, to dress my food in the same manner, placing it on the live embers. I found that the berries were spoiled by this operation, and the nuts and roots much improved.

“Food, however, became scarce; and I often spent the whole day searching in vain for a few acorns to assuage the pangs of hunger. When I found this, I resolved to quit the place that I had hitherto inhabited, to seek for one where the few wants I experienced would be more easily satisfied. In this emigration, I exceedingly lamented the loss of the fire which I had obtained through accident, and knew not how to re-produce it. I gave several hours to the serious consideration of this difficulty; but I was obliged to relinquish all attempt to supply it; and, wrapping myself up in my cloak, I struck across the wood towards the setting sun. I passed three days in these rambles, and at length discovered the open country. A great fall of snow had taken place the night before, and the fields were of one uniform white; the appearance was disconsolate, and I found my feet chilled by the cold damp substance that covered the ground.

“It was about seven in the morning, and I longed to obtain food and shelter; at length I perceived a small hut, on a rising ground, which had doubtless been built for the convenience of some shepherd. This was a new sight to me; and I examined the structure with great curiosity. Finding the door open, I entered. An old man sat in it, near a fire, over which he was preparing his breakfast. He turned on hearing a noise; and, perceiving me, shrieked loudly, and, quitting the hut, ran across the fields with a speed of which his debilitated form hardly appeared capable. His appearance, different from any I had ever before seen, and his flight, somewhat surprised me. But I was enchanted by the appearance of the hut: here the snow and rain could not penetrate; the ground was dry; and it presented to me then as exquisite and divine a retreat as Pandæmonium appeared to the dæmons of hell after their sufferings in the lake of fire. I greedily devoured the remnants of the shepherd's breakfast, which consisted of bread, cheese, milk, and wine; the latter, however, I did not like. Then overcome by fatigue, I lay down among some straw, and fell asleep.

"It was noon when I awoke; and, allured by the warmth of the sun, which shone brightly on the white ground, I determined to recommence my travels; and, depositing the remains of the peasant's breakfast in a wallet I found, I proceeded across the fields for several hours, until at sunset I arrived at a village. How miraculous did this appear! the huts, the neater cottages, and stately houses, engaged my admiration by turns. The vegetables in the gardens, the milk and cheese that I saw placed at the windows of some of the cottages, allured my appetite. One of the best of these I entered; but I had hardly placed my foot within the door, before the children shrieked, and one of the women fainted. The whole village was roused; some fled, some attacked me, until, grievously bruised by stones and many other kinds of missile weapons, I escaped to the open country, and fearfully took refuge in a low hovel, quite bare, and making a wretched appearance after the palaces I had beheld in the village. This hovel, however, joined a cottage of a neat and pleasant appearance; but, after my late dearly-bought experience, I dared not enter it. My place of refuge was constructed of wood, but so low, that I could with difficulty sit upright in it. No wood, however, was placed on the earth, which formed the floor, but it was dry; and although the wind entered it by innumerable chinks, I found it an agreeable asylum from the snow and rain.

“Here then I retreated, and lay down, happy to have found a shelter, however miserable, from the inclemency of the season, and still more from the barbarity of man.

“As soon as morning dawned, I crept from my kennel, that I might view the adjacent cottage, and discover if I could remain in the habitation I had found. It was situated against the back of the cottage, and surrounded on the sides which were exposed by a pig-stye and a clear pool of water. One part was open, and by that I had crept in; but now I covered every crevice by which I might be perceived with stones and wood, yet in such a manner that I might move them on occasion to pass out: all the light I enjoyed came through the stye, and that was sufficient for me.

“Having thus arranged my dwelling, and carpeted it with clean straw, I retired; for I saw the figure of a man at a distance, and I remembered too well my treatment the night before, to trust myself in his power. I had first, however, provided for my sustenance for that day, by a loaf of coarse bread, which I purloined, and a cup with which I could drink, more conveniently than from my hand, of the pure water which flowed by my retreat. The floor was a little raised, so that it was kept perfectly dry, and by its vicinity to the chimney of the cottage it was tolerably warm.

"Being thus provided, I resolved to reside in this hovel, until something should occur which might alter my determination. It was indeed a paradise, compared to the bleak forest, my former residence, the rain-dropping branches, and dank earth. I ate my breakfast with pleasure, and was about to remove a plank to procure myself a little water, when I heard a step, and, looking through a small chink, I beheld a young creature, with a pail on her head, passing before my hovel. The girl was young and of gentle demeanour, unlike what I have since found cottagers and farm-house servants to be. Yet she was meanly dressed, a coarse blue petticoat and a linen jacket being her only garb; her fair hair was plaited, but not adorned; she looked patient, yet sad. I lost sight of her; and in about a quarter of an hour she returned, bearing the pail, which was now partly filled with milk. As she walked along, seemingly incommoded by the burden, a young man met her, whose countenance expressed a deeper despondence. Uttering a few sounds with an air of melancholy, he took the pail from her head, and bore it to the cottage himself. She followed, and they disappeared. Presently I saw the young man again, with some tools in his hand, cross the field behind the cottage; and the girl was also busied, sometimes in the house, and sometimes in the yard.

“On examining my dwelling, I found that one of the windows of the cottage had formerly occupied a part of it, but the panes had been filled up with wood. In one of these was a small and almost imperceptible chink, through which the eye could just penetrate. Through this crevice, a small room was visible, white-washed and clean, but very bare of furniture. In one corner, near a small fire, sat an old man, leaning his head on his hands in a disconsolate attitude. The young girl was occupied in arranging the cottage; but presently she took something out of a drawer, which employed her hands, and she sat down beside the old man, who, taking up an instrument, began to play, and to produce sounds, sweeter than the voice of the thrush or the nightingale. It was a lovely sight, even to me, poor wretch! who had never beheld aught beautiful before. The silver hair and benevolent countenance of the aged cottager, won my reverence; while the gentle manners of the girl enticed my love. He played a sweet mournful air, which I perceived drew tears from the eyes of his amiable companion, of which the old man took no notice, until she sobbed audibly; he then pronounced a few sounds, and the fair creature, leaving her work, knelt at his feet. He raised her, and smiled with such kindness and affection, that I felt sensations of a peculiar and over-powering nature: they were a mixture of pain and pleasure, such as I had never before experienced, either from hunger or cold, warmth or food; and I withdrew from the window, unable to bear these emotions.

"Soon after this the young man returned, bearing on his shoulders a load of wood. The girl met him at the door, helped to relieve him of his burden, and, taking some of the fuel into the cottage, placed it on the fire; then she and the youth went apart into a nook of the cottage, and he shewed her a large loaf and a piece of cheese. She seemed pleased; and went into the garden for some roots and plants, which she placed in water, and then upon the fire. She afterwards continued her work, whilst the young man went into the garden, and appeared busily employed in digging and pulling up roots. After he had been employed thus about an hour, the young woman joined him, and they entered the cottage together.

"The old man had, in the mean time, been pensive; but, on the appearance of his companions, he assumed a more cheerful air, and they sat down to eat. The meal was quickly dispatched. The young woman was again occupied in arranging the cottage; the old man walked before the cottage in the sun for a few minutes, leaning on the arm of the youth. Nothing could exceed in beauty the contrast between these two excellent creatures. One was old, with silver hairs and a countenance beaming with benevolence and love: the younger was slight and graceful in his figure, and his features were moulded with the finest symmetry; yet his eyes and attitude expressed the utmost sadness and despondency. The old man returned to the cottage; and the youth, with tools different from those he had used in the morning, directed his steps across the fields.

"Night quickly shut in; but, to my extreme wonder, I found that the cottagers had a means of prolonging light, by the use of tapers, and was delighted to find, that the setting of the sun did not put an end to the pleasure I experienced in watching my human neighbours. In the evening, the young girl and her companion were employed in various occupations which I did not understand; and the old man again took up the instrument, which produced the divine sounds that had enchanted me in the morning. So soon as he had finished, the youth began, not to play, but to utter sounds that were monotonous, and neither resembling the harmony of the old man's instrument or the songs of the birds; I since found that he read aloud, but at that time I knew nothing of the science of words or letters.

"The family, after having been thus occupied for a short time, extinguished their lights, and retired, as I conjectured, to rest."

Chapter IV

"I LAY on my straw, but I could not sleep. I thought of the occurrences of the day. What chiefly struck me was the gentle manners of these people; and I longed to join them, but dared not. I remembered too well the treatment I had suffered the night before from the barbarous villagers, and resolved, whatever course of conduct I might hereafter think it right to pursue, that for the present I would remain quietly in my hovel, watching, and endeavouring to discover the motives which influenced their actions.

"The cottagers arose the next morning before the sun. The young woman arranged the cottage, and prepared the food; and the youth departed after the first meal.

“This day was passed in the same routine as that which preceded it. The young man was constantly employed out of doors, and the girl in various laborious occupations within. The old man, whom I soon perceived to be blind, employed his leisure hours on his instrument, or in contemplation. Nothing could exceed the love and respect which the younger cottagers exhibited towards their venerable companion. They performed towards him every little office of affection and duty with gentleness; and he rewarded them by his benevolent smiles.

“They were not entirely happy. The young man and his companion often went apart, and appeared to weep. I saw no cause for their unhappiness; but I was deeply affected by it. If such lovely creatures were miserable, it was less strange that I, an imperfect and solitary being, should be wretched. Yet why were these gentle beings unhappy? They possessed a delightful house (for such it was in my eyes), and every luxury; they had a fire to warm them when chill, and delicious viands when hungry; they were dressed in excellent clothes; and, still more, they enjoyed one another's company and speech, interchanging each day looks of affection and kindness. What did their tears imply? Did they really express pain? I was at first unable to solve these questions; but perpetual attention, and time, explained to me many appearances which were at first enigmatic.

"A considerable period elapsed before I discovered one of the causes of the uneasiness of this amiable family; it was poverty: and they suffered that evil in a very distressing degree. Their nourishment consisted entirely of the vegetables of their garden, and the milk of one cow, who gave very little during the winter, when its masters could scarcely procure food to support it. They often, I believe, suffered the pangs of hunger very poignantly, especially the two younger cottagers; for several times they placed food before the old man, when they reserved none for themselves.

"This trait of kindness moved me sensibly. I had been accustomed, during the night, to steal a part of their store for my own consumption; but when I found that in doing this I inflicted pain on the cottagers, I abstained, and satisfied myself with berries, nuts, and roots, which I gathered from a neighbouring wood.

“I discovered also another means through which I was enabled to assist their labours. I found that the youth spent a great part of each day in collecting wood for the family fire; and, during the night, I often took his tools, the use of which I quickly discovered, and brought home firing sufficient for the consumption of several days.

“I remember, the first time that I did this, the young woman, when she opened the door in the morning, appeared greatly astonished on seeing a great pile of wood on the outside. She uttered some words in a loud voice, and the youth joined her, who also expressed surprise. I observed, with pleasure, that he did not go to the forest that day, but spent it in repairing the cottage, and cultivating the garden.

“By degrees I made a discovery of still greater moment. I found that these people possessed a method of communicating their experience and feelings to one another by articulate sounds. I perceived that the words they spoke sometimes produced pleasure or pain, smiles or sadness, in the minds and countenances of the hearers. This was indeed a godlike science, and I ardently desired to become acquainted with it. But I was baffled in every attempt I made for this purpose. Their pronunciation was quick; and the words they uttered, not having any apparent connexion with visible objects, I was unable to discover any clue by which I could unravel the mystery of their reference. By great application, however, and after having remained during the space of several revolutions of the moon in my hovel, I discovered the names that were given to some of the most familiar objects of discourse: I learned and applied the words *fire*, *milk*, *bread*, and *wood*. I learned also the names of the cottagers themselves. The youth and his companion had each of them several names, but the old man had only one, which was *father*. The girl was called *sister*, or *Agatha*; and the youth *Felix*, *brother*, or *son*. I cannot describe the delight I felt when I learned the ideas appropriated to each of these sounds, and was able to pronounce them. I distinguished several other words, without being able as yet to understand or apply them; such as *good*, *dearest*, *unhappy*.

"I spent the winter in this manner. The gentle manners and beauty of the cottagers greatly endeared them to me: when they were unhappy, I felt depressed; when they rejoiced, I sympathized in their joys. I saw few human beings beside them; and if any other happened to enter the cottage, their harsh manners and rude gait only enhanced to me the superior accomplishments of my friends. The old man, I could perceive, often endeavoured to encourage his children, as sometimes I found that he called them, to cast off their melancholy. He would talk in a cheerful accent, with an expression of goodness that bestowed pleasure even upon me. Agatha listened with respect, her eyes sometimes filled with tears, which she endeavoured to wipe away unperceived; but I generally found that her countenance and tone were more cheerful after having listened to the exhortations of her father. It was not thus with Felix. He was always the saddest of the groupe; and, even to my unpractised senses, he appeared to have suffered more deeply than his friends. But if his countenance was more sorrowful, his voice was more cheerful than that of his sister, especially when he addressed the old man.

“I could mention innumerable instances, which, although slight, marked the dispositions of these amiable cottagers. In the midst of poverty and want, Felix carried with pleasure to his sister the first little white flower that peeped out from beneath the snowy ground. Early in the morning before she had risen, he cleared away the snow that obstructed her path to the milk-house, drew water from the well, and brought the wood from the out-house, where, to his perpetual astonishment, he found his store always replenished by an invisible hand. In the day, I believe, he worked sometimes for a neighbouring farmer, because he often went forth, and did not return until dinner, yet brought no wood with him. At other times he worked in the garden; but, as there was little to do in the frosty season, he read to the old man and Agatha.

"This reading had puzzled me extremely at first; but, by degrees, I discovered that he uttered many of the same sounds when he read as when he talked. I conjectured, therefore, that he found on the paper signs for speech which he understood, and I ardently longed to comprehend these also; but how was that possible, when I did not even understand the sounds for which they stood as signs? I improved, however, sensibly in this science, but not sufficiently to follow up any kind of conversation, although I applied my whole mind to the endeavour: for I easily perceived that, although I eagerly longed to discover myself to the cottagers, I ought not to make the attempt until I had first become master of their language; which knowledge might enable me to make them overlook the deformity of my figure; for with this also the contrast perpetually presented to my eyes had made me acquainted.

“I had admired the perfect forms of my cottagers — their grace, beauty, and delicate complexions: but how was I terrified, when I viewed myself in a transparent pool! At first I started back, unable to believe that it was indeed I who was reflected in the mirror; and when I became fully convinced that I was in reality the monster that I am, I was filled with the bitterest sensations of despondence and mortification. Alas! I did not yet entirely know the fatal effects of this miserable deformity.

“As the sun became warmer, and the light of day longer, the snow vanished, and I beheld the bare trees and the black earth. From this time Felix was more employed; and the heart-moving indications of impending famine disappeared. Their food, as I afterwards found, was coarse, but it was wholesome; and they procured a sufficiency of it. Several new kinds of plants sprung up in the garden, which they dressed; and these signs of comfort increased daily as the season advanced.

“The old man, leaning on his son, walked each day at noon, when it did not rain, as I found it was called when the heavens poured forth its waters. This frequently took place; but a high wind quickly dried the earth, and the season became far more pleasant than it had been.

“My mode of life in my hovel was uniform. During the morning I attended the motions of the cottagers; and when they were dispersed in various occupations, I slept: the remainder of the day was spent in observing my friends. When they had retired to rest, if there was any moon, or the night was star-light, I went into the woods, and collected my own food and fuel for the cottage. When I returned, as often as it was necessary, I cleared their path from the snow, and performed those offices that I had seen done by Felix. I afterwards found that these labours, performed by an invisible hand, greatly astonished them; and once or twice I heard them, on these occasions, utter the words *good spirit*, *wonderful*; but I did not then understand the signification of these terms.

“My thoughts now became more active, and

I longed to discover the motives and feelings of these lovely creatures; I was inquisitive to know why Felix appeared so miserable, and Agatha so sad. I thought (foolish wretch!) that it might be in my power to restore happiness to these deserving people. When I slept, or was absent, the forms of the venerable blind father, the gentle Agatha, and the excellent Felix, flitted before me. I looked upon them as superior beings, who would be the arbiters of my future destiny. I formed in my imagination a thousand pictures of presenting myself to them, and their reception of me. I imagined that they would be disgusted, until, by my gentle demeanour and conciliating words, I should first win their favour, and afterwards their love.

“These thoughts exhilarated me, and led me to apply with fresh ardour to the acquiring the art of language. My organs were indeed harsh, but supple; and although my voice was very unlike the soft music of their tones, yet I pronounced such words as I understood with tolerable ease. It was as the ass and the lap-dog; yet surely the gentle ass, whose intentions were affectionate, although his manners were rude, deserved better treatment than blows and execration.

“The pleasant showers and genial warmth of spring greatly altered the aspect of the earth. Men, who before this change seemed to have been hid in caves, dispersed themselves, and were employed in various arts of cultivation. The birds sang in more cheerful notes, and the leaves began to bud forth on the trees. Happy, happy earth! fit habitation for gods, which, so short a time before, was bleak, damp, and unwholesome. My spirits were elevated by the enchanting appearance of nature; the past was blotted from my memory, the present was tranquil, and the future gilded by bright rays of hope, and anticipations of joy.”

Chapter V

"I NOW hasten to the more moving part of my story. I shall relate events that impressed me with feelings which, from what I was, have made me what I am.

"Spring advanced rapidly; the weather became fine, and the skies cloudless. It surprised me, that what before was desert and gloomy should now bloom with the most beautiful flowers and verdure. My senses were gratified and refreshed by a thousand scents of delight, and a thousand sights of beauty.

"It was on one of these days, when my cottagers periodically rested from labour — the old man played on his guitar, and the children listened to him — I observed that the countenance of Felix was melancholy beyond expression: he sighed frequently; and once his father paused in his music, and I conjectured by his manner that he inquired the cause of his son's sorrow. Felix replied in a cheerful accent, and the old man was recommencing his music, when some one tapped at the door.

"It was a lady on horseback, accompanied by a countryman as a guide. The lady was dressed in a dark suit, and covered with a thick black veil. Agatha asked a question; to which the stranger only replied by pronouncing, in a sweet accent, the name of Felix. Her voice was musical, but unlike that of either of my friends. On hearing this word, Felix came up hastily to the lady; who, when she saw him, threw up her veil, and I beheld a countenance of angelic beauty and expression. Her hair of a shining raven black, and curiously braided; her eyes were dark, but gentle, although animated; her features of a regular proportion, and her complexion wondrously fair, each cheek tinged with a lovely pink.

“Felix seemed ravished with delight when he saw her, every trait of sorrow vanished from his face, and it instantly expressed a degree of ecstatic joy, of which I could hardly have believed it capable; his eyes sparkled, as his cheek flushed with pleasure; and at that moment I thought him as beautiful as the stranger. She appeared affected by different feelings; wiping a few tears from her lovely eyes, she held out her hand to Felix, who kissed it rapturously, and called her, as well as I could distinguish, his sweet Arabian. She did not appear to understand him, but smiled. He assisted her to dismount, and, dismissing her guide, conducted her into the cottage. Some conversation took place between him and his father; and the young stranger knelt at the old man’s feet, and would have kissed his hand, but he raised her, and embraced her affectionately.

“I soon perceived, that although the stranger uttered articulate sounds, and appeared to have a language of her own, she was neither understood by, or herself understood, the cottagers. They made many signs which I did not comprehend; but I saw that her presence diffused gladness through the cottage, dispelling their sorrow as the sun dissipates the morning mists. Felix seemed peculiarly happy, and with smiles of delight welcomed his Arabian. Agatha, the ever-gentle Agatha, kissed the hands of the lovely stranger; and, pointing to her brother, made signs which appeared to me to mean that he had been sorrowful until she came. Some hours passed thus, while they, by their countenances, expressed joy, the cause of which I did not comprehend. Presently I found, by the frequent recurrence of one sound which the stranger repeated after them, that she was endeavouring to learn their language; and the idea instantly occurred to me, that I should make use of the same instructions to the same end. The stranger learned about twenty words at the first lesson, most of them indeed were those which I had before understood, but I profited by the others.

“As night came on, Agatha and the Arabian retired early. When they separated, Felix kissed the hand of the stranger, and said, ‘Good night, sweet Safie.’ He sat up much longer, conversing with his father; and, by the frequent repetition of her name, I conjectured that their lovely guest was the subject of their conversation. I ardently desired to understand them, and bent every faculty towards that purpose, but found it utterly impossible.

“The next morning Felix went out to his work; and, after the usual occupations of Agatha were finished, the Arabian sat at the feet of the old man, and, taking his guitar, played some airs so entrancingly beautiful, that they at once drew tears of sorrow and delight from my eyes. She sang, and her voice flowed in a rich cadence, swelling or dying away, like a nightingale of the woods.

“When she had finished, she gave the guitar to Agatha, who at first declined it. She played a simple air, and her voice accompanied it in sweet accents, but unlike the wondrous strain of the stranger. The old man appeared enraptured, and said some words, which Agatha endeavoured to explain to Safie, and by which he appeared to wish to express that she bestowed on him the greatest delight by her music.

“The days now passed as peaceably as before, with the sole alteration, that joy had taken place of sadness in the countenances of my friends. Safie was always gay and happy; she and I improved rapidly in the knowledge of language, so that in two months I began to comprehend most of the words uttered by my protectors.

“In the meanwhile also the black ground was covered with herbage, and the green banks interspersed with innumerable flowers, sweet to the scent and the eyes, stars of pale radiance among the moonlight woods; the sun became warmer, the nights clear and balmy; and my nocturnal rambles were an extreme pleasure to me, although they were considerably shortened by the late setting and early rising of the sun; for I never ventured abroad during daylight, fearful of meeting with the same treatment as I had formerly endured in the first village which I entered.

“My days were spent in close attention, that I might more speedily master the language; and I may boast that I improved more rapidly than the Arabian, who understood very little, and conversed in broken accents, whilst I comprehended and could imitate almost every word that was spoken.

“While I improved in speech, I also learned the science of letters, as it was taught to the stranger; and this opened before me a wide field for wonder and delight.

“The book from which Felix instructed Safie was Volney’s *Ruins of Empires*. I should not have understood the purport of this book, had not Felix, in reading it, given very minute explanations. He had chosen this work, he said, because the declamatory style was framed in imitation of the eastern authors. Through this work I obtained a cursory knowledge of history, and a view of the several empires at present existing in the world; it gave me an insight into the manners, governments, and religions of the different nations of the earth. I heard of the slothful Asiatics; of the stupendous genius and mental activity of the Grecians; of the wars and wonderful virtue of the early Romans — of their subsequent degeneration — of the decline of that mighty empire; of chivalry, Christianity, and kings. I heard of the discovery of the American hemisphere, and wept with Safie over the hapless fate of its original inhabitants.

“These wonderful narrations inspired me with strange feelings. Was man, indeed, at once so powerful, so virtuous, and magnificent, yet so vicious and base? He appeared at one time a mere scion of the evil principle, and at another as all that can be conceived of noble and godlike. To be a great and virtuous man appeared the highest honour that can befall a sensitive being; to be base and vicious, as many on record have been, appeared the lowest degradation, a condition more abject than that of the blind mole or harmless worm. For a long time I could not conceive how one man could go forth to murder his fellow, or even why there were laws and governments; but when I heard details of vice and bloodshed, my wonder ceased, and I turned away with disgust and loathing.

“Every conversation of the cottagers now opened new wonders to me. While I listened to the instructions which Felix bestowed upon the Arabian, the strange system of human society was explained to me. I heard of the division of property, of immense wealth and squalid poverty; of rank, descent, and noble blood.

“The words induced me to turn towards myself. I learned that the possessions most esteemed by your fellow-creatures were, high and unsullied descent united with riches. A man might be respected with only one of these acquisitions; but without either he was considered, except in very rare instances, as a vagabond and a slave, doomed to waste his powers for the profit of the chosen few. And what was I? Of my creation and creator I was absolutely ignorant; but I knew that I possessed no money, no friends, no kind of property. I was, besides, endowed with a figure hideously deformed and loathsome; I was not even of the same nature as man. I was more agile than they, and could subsist upon coarser diet; I bore the extremes of heat and cold with less injury to my frame; my stature far exceeded their's. When I looked around, I saw and heard of none like me. Was I then a monster, a blot upon the earth, from which all men fled, and whom all men disowned?

“I cannot describe to you the agony that these reflections inflicted upon me; I tried to dispel them, but sorrow only increased with knowledge. Oh, that I had for ever remained in my native wood, nor known or felt beyond the sensations of hunger, thirst, and heat!

“Of what a strange nature is knowledge! It clings to the mind, when it has once seized on it, like a lichen on the rock. I wished sometimes to shake off all thought and feeling; but I learned that there was but one means to overcome the sensation of pain, and that was death — a state which I feared yet did not understand. I admired virtue and good feelings, and loved the gentle manners and amiable qualities of my cottagers; but I was shut out from intercourse with them, except through means which I obtained by stealth, when I was unseen and unknown, and which rather increased than satisfied the desire I had of becoming one among my fellows. The gentle words of Agatha, and the animated smiles of the charming Arabian, were not for me. The mild exhortations of the old man, and the lively conversation of the loved Felix, were not for me. Miserable, unhappy wretch!

"Other lessons were impressed upon me even more deeply. I heard of the difference of sexes; of the birth and growth of children; how the father doated on the smiles of the infant, and the lively sallies of the older child; how all the life and cares of the mother were wrapt up in the precious charge; how the mind of youth expanded and gained knowledge; of brother, sister, and all the various relationships which bind one human being to another in mutual bonds.

"But where were my friends and relations? No father had watched my infant days, no mother had blessed me with smiles and caresses; or if they had, all my past life was now a blot, a blind vacancy in which I distinguished nothing. From my earliest remembrance I had been as I then was in height and proportion. I had never yet seen a being resembling me, or who claimed any intercourse with me. What was I? The question again recurred, to be answered only with groans.

"I will soon explain to what these feelings tended; but allow me now to return to the cottagers, whose story excited in me such various feelings of indignation, delight, and wonder, but which all terminated in additional love and reverence for my protectors (for so I loved, in an innocent, half painful self-deceit, to call them)."

Chapter VI

"SOME time elapsed before I learned the history of my friends. It was one which could not fail to impress itself deeply on my mind, unfolding as it did a number of circumstances each interesting and wonderful to one so utterly inexperienced as I was.

"The name of the old man was De Lacey. He was descended from a good family in France, where he had lived for many years in affluence, respected by his superiors, and beloved by his equals. His son was bred in the service of his country; and Agatha had ranked with ladies of the highest distinction. A few months before my arrival, they had lived in a large and luxurious city, called Paris, surrounded by friends, and possessed of every enjoyment which virtue, refinement of intellect, or taste, accompanied by a moderate fortune, could afford.

"The father of Safie had been the cause of their ruin. He was a Turkish merchant, and had inhabited Paris for many years, when, for some reason which I could not learn, he became obnoxious to the government. He was seized and cast into prison the very day that Safie arrived from Constantinople to join him. He was tried, and condemned to death. The injustice of his sentence was very flagrant; all Paris was indignant; and it was judged that his religion and wealth, rather than the crime alleged against him, had been the cause of his condemnation.

"Felix had been present at the trial; his horror and indignation were uncontrollable, when he heard the decision of the court. He made, at that moment, a solemn vow to deliver him, and then looked around for the means. After many fruitless attempts to gain admittance to the prison, he found a strongly grated window in an unguarded part of the building, which lighted the dungeon of the unfortunate Mahometan; who, loaded with chains, waited in despair the execution of the barbarous sentence. Felix visited the grate at night, and made known to the prisoner his intentions in his favour. The Turk, amazed and delighted, endeavoured to kindle the zeal of his deliverer by promises of reward and wealth. Felix rejected his offers with contempt; yet when he saw the lovely Safie, who was allowed to visit her father, and who, by her gestures, expressed her lively gratitude, the youth could not help owning to his own mind, that the captive possessed a treasure which would fully reward his toil and hazard.

“The Turk quickly perceived the impression that his daughter had made on the heart of Felix, and endeavoured to secure him more entirely in his interests by the promise of her hand in marriage, so soon as he should be conveyed to a place of safety. Felix was too delicate to accept this offer; yet he looked forward to the probability of that event as to the consummation of his happiness.

"During the ensuing days, while the preparations were going forward for the escape of the merchant, the zeal of Felix was warmed by several letters that he received from this lovely girl, who found means to express her thoughts in the language of her lover by the aid of an old man, a servant of her father's, who understood French. She thanked him in the most ardent terms for his intended services towards her father; and at the same time she gently deplored her own fate.

"I have copies of these letters; for I found means, during my residence in the hovel, to procure the implements of writing; and the letters were often in the hands of Felix or Agatha. Before I depart, I will give them to you, they will prove the truth of my tale; but at present, as the sun is already far declined, I shall only have time to repeat the substance of them to you.

"Safie related, that her mother was a Christian Arab, seized and made a slave by the Turks; recommended by her beauty, she had won the heart of the father of Safie, who married her. The young girl spoke in high and enthusiastic terms of her mother, who, born in freedom spurned the bondage to which she was now reduced. She instructed her daughter in the tenets of her religion, and taught her to aspire to higher powers of intellect, and an independence of spirit, forbidden to the female followers of Mahomet. This lady died; but her lessons were indelibly impressed on the mind of Safie, who sickened at the prospect of again returning to Asia, and the being immured within the walls of a haram, allowed only to occupy herself with puerile amusements, ill suited to the temper of her soul, now accustomed to grand ideas and a noble emulation for virtue. The prospect of marrying a Christian, and remaining in a country where women were allowed to take a rank in society, was enchanting to her.

“The day for the execution of the Turk was fixed; but, on the night previous to it, he had quitted prison, and before morning was distant many leagues from Paris. Felix had procured passports in the name of his father, sister, and himself. He had previously communicated his plan to the former, who aided the deceit by quitting his house, under the pretence of a journey, and concealed himself, with his daughter, in an obscure part of Paris.

“Felix conducted the fugitives through France to Lyons, and across Mont Cenis to Leghorn, where the merchant had decided to wait a favourable opportunity of passing into some part of the Turkish dominions.

“Safie resolved to remain with her father until the moment of his departure, before which time the Turk renewed his promise that she should be united to his deliverer; and Felix remained with them in expectation of that event; and in the mean time he enjoyed the society of the Arabian, who exhibited towards him the simplest and tenderest affection. They conversed with one another through the means of an interpreter, and sometimes with the interpretation of looks; and Safie sang to him the divine airs of her native country.

“The Turk allowed this intimacy to take place, and encouraged the hopes of the youthful lovers, while in his heart he had formed far other plans. He loathed the idea that his daughter should be united to a Christian; but he feared the resentment of Felix if he should appear lukewarm; for he knew that he was still in the power of his deliverer, if he should choose to betray him to the Italian state which they inhabited. He revolved a thousand plans by which he should be enabled to prolong the deceit until it might be no longer necessary, and secretly to take his daughter with him when he departed. His plans were greatly facilitated by the news which arrived from Paris.

"The government of France were greatly enraged at the escape of their victim, and spared no pains to detect and punish his deliverer. The plot of Felix was quickly discovered, and De Lacey and Agatha were thrown into prison. The news reached Felix, and roused him from his dream of pleasure. His blind and aged father, and his gentle sister, lay in a noisome dungeon, while he enjoyed the free air, and the society of her whom he loved. This idea was torture to him. He quickly arranged with the Turk, that if the latter should find a favourable opportunity for escape before Felix could return to Italy, Safie should remain as a boarder at a convent at Leghorn; and then, quitting the lovely Arabian, he hastened to Paris, and delivered himself up to the vengeance of the law, hoping to free De Lacey and Agatha by this proceeding.

“He did not succeed. They remained confined for five months before the trial took place; the result of which deprived them of their fortune, and condemned them to a perpetual exile from their native country.

“They found a miserable asylum in the cottage in Germany, where I discovered them. Felix soon learned that the treacherous Turk, for whom he and his family endured such unheard-of oppression, on discovering that his deliverer was thus reduced to poverty and impotence, became a traitor to good feeling and honour, and had quitted Italy with his daughter, insultingly sending Felix a pittance of money to aid him, as he said, in some plan of future maintenance.

"Such were the events that preyed on the heart of Felix, and rendered him, when I first saw him, the most miserable of his family. He could have endured poverty, and when this distress had been the meed of his virtue, he would have gloried in it: but the ingratitude of the Turk, and the loss of his beloved Safie, were misfortunes more bitter and irreparable. The arrival of the Arabian now infused new life into his soul.

"When the news reached Leghorn, that Felix was deprived of his wealth and rank, the merchant commanded his daughter to think no more of her lover, but to prepare to return with him to her native country. The generous nature of Safie was outraged by this command; she attempted to expostulate with her father, but he left her angrily, reiterating his tyrannical mandate.

"A few days after, the Turk entered his daughter's apartment, and told her hastily, that he had reason to believe that his residence at Leghorn had been divulged, and that he should speedily be delivered up to the French government; he had, consequently, hired a vessel to convey him to Constantinople, for which city he should sail in a few hours. He intended to leave his daughter under the care of a confidential servant, to follow at her leisure with the greater part of his property, which had not yet arrived at Leghorn.

"When alone, Safie resolved in her own mind the plan of conduct that it would become her to pursue in this emergency. A residence in Turkey was abhorrent to her; her religion and feelings were alike adverse to it. By some papers of her father's, which fell into her hands, she heard of the exile of her lover, and learnt the name of the spot where he then resided. She hesitated some time, but at length she formed her determination. Taking with her some jewels that belonged to her, and a small sum of money, she quitted Italy, with an attendant, a native of Leghorn, but who understood the common language of Turkey, and departed for Germany.

"She arrived in safety at a town about twenty leagues from the cottage of De Lacey, when her attendant fell dangerously ill. Safie nursed her with the most devoted affection; but the poor girl died, and the Arabian was left alone, unacquainted with the language of the country, and utterly ignorant of the customs of the world. She fell, however, into good hands. The Italian had mentioned the name of the spot for which they were bound; and, after her death, the woman of the house in which they had lived took care that Safie should arrive in safety at the cottage of her lover.”

Chapter VII

"SUCH was the history of my beloved cottagers. It impressed me deeply. I learned, from the views of social life which it developed, to admire their virtues, and to deprecate the vices of mankind.

"As yet I looked upon crime as a distant evil; benevolence and generosity were ever present before me, inciting within me a desire to become an actor in the busy scene where so many admirable qualities were called forth and displayed. But, in giving an account of the progress of my intellect, I must not omit a circumstance which occurred in the beginning of the month of August of the same year.

“One night, during my accustomed visit to the neighbouring wood, where I collected my own food, and brought home firing for my protectors, I found on the ground a leathern portmanteau, containing several articles of dress and some books. I eagerly seized the prize, and returned with it to my hovel. Fortunately the books were written in the language the elements of which I had acquired at the cottage; they consisted of *Paradise Lost*, a volume of *Plutarch’s Lives*, and the *Sorrows of Werter*. The possession of these treasures gave me extreme delight; I now continually studied and exercised my mind upon these histories, whilst my friends were employed in their ordinary occupations.

“I can hardly describe to you the effect of these books. They produced in me an infinity of new images and feelings, that sometimes raised me to ecstacy, but more frequently sunk me into the lowest dejection. In the *Sorrows of Werter*, besides the interest of its simple and affecting story, so many opinions are canvassed, and so many lights thrown upon what had hitherto been to me obscure subjects, that I found in it a never-ending source of speculation and astonishment. The gentle and domestic manners it described, combined with lofty sentiments and feelings, which had for their object something out of self, accorded well with my experience among my protectors, and with the wants which were for ever alive in my own bosom. But I thought Werter himself a more divine being than I had ever beheld or imagined; his character contained no pretension, but it sunk deep. The disquisitions upon death and suicide were calculated to fill me with wonder. I did not pretend to enter into the merits of the case, yet I inclined towards the opinions of the hero, whose extinction I wept, without precisely understanding it.

“As I read, however, I applied much personally to my own feelings and condition. I found myself similar, yet at the same time strangely unlike the beings concerning whom I read, and to whose conversation I was a listener. I sympathized with, and partly understood them, but I was unformed in mind; I was dependent on none, and related to none. ‘The path of my departure was free;' and there was none to lament my annihilation. My person was hideous, and my stature gigantic: what did this mean? Who was I? What was I? Whence did I come? What was my destination? These questions continually recurred, but I was unable to solve them.

"The volume of *Plutarch's Lives* which I possessed, contained the histories of the first founders of the ancient republics. This book had a far different effect upon me from the *Sorrows of Werter*. I learned from Werter's imaginations despondency and gloom: but Plutarch taught me high thoughts; he elevated me above the wretched sphere of my own reflections, to admire and love the heroes of past ages. Many things I read surpassed my understanding and experience. I had a very confused knowledge of kingdoms, wide extents of country, mighty rivers, and boundless seas. But I was perfectly unacquainted with towns, and large assemblages of men. The cottage of my protectors had been the only school in which I had studied human nature; but this book developed new and mightier scenes of action. I read of men concerned in public affairs governing or massacring their species. I felt the greatest ardour for virtue rise within me, and abhorrence for vice, as far as I understood the signification of those terms, relative as they were, as I applied them, to pleasure and pain alone. Induced by these feelings, I was of course led to admire peaceable law-givers, Numa, Solon, and Lycurgus, in preference to Romulus and Theseus. The patriarchal lives of my protectors caused these impressions to take a firm hold on my mind; perhaps, if my first introduction to humanity had been made by a young soldier, burning for glory and slaughter, I should have been imbued with different sensations.

"But *Paradise Lost* excited different and far deeper emotions. I read it, as I had read the other volumes which had fallen into my hands, as a true history. It moved every feeling of wonder and awe, that the picture of an omnipotent God warring with his creatures was capable of exciting. I often referred the several situations, as their similarity struck me, to my own. Like Adam, I was created apparently united by no link to any other being in existence; but his state was far different from mine in every other respect. He had come forth from the hands of God a perfect creature, happy and prosperous, guarded by the especial care of his Creator; he was allowed to converse with, and acquire knowledge from beings of a superior nature: but I was wretched, helpless, and alone. Many times I considered Satan as the fitter emblem of my condition; for often, like him, when I viewed the bliss of my protectors, the bitter gall of envy rose within me.

“Another circumstance strengthened and confirmed these feelings. Soon after my arrival in the hovel, I discovered some papers in the pocket of the dress which I had taken from your laboratory. At first I had neglected them; but now that I was able to decypher the characters in which they were written, I began to study them with diligence. It was your journal of the four months that preceded my creation. You minutely described in these papers every step you took in the progress of your work;

this history was mingled with accounts of domestic occurrences. You, doubtless, recollect these papers. Here they are. Every thing is related in them which bears reference to my accursed origin; the whole detail of that series of disgusting circumstances which produced it is set in view; the minutest description of my odious and loathsome person is given, in language which painted your own horrors, and rendered mine ineffaceable. I sickened as I read. 'Hateful day when I received life!' I exclaimed in agony. 'Cursed creator! Why did you form a monster so hideous that even you turned from me in disgust? God in pity made man beautiful and alluring, after his own image; but my form is a filthy type of your's, more horrid from its very resemblance. Satan had his companions, fellow-devils, to admire and encourage him; but I am solitary and detested.'

"These were the reflections of my hours of despondency and solitude; but when I contemplated the virtues of the cottagers, their amiable and benevolent dispositions, I persuaded myself that when they should become acquainted with my admiration of their virtues, they would compassionate me, and overlook my personal deformity. Could they turn from their door one, however monstrous, who solicited their compassion and friendship? I resolved, at least, not to despair, but in every way to fit myself for an interview with them which would decide my fate. I postponed this attempt for some months longer; for the importance attached to its success inspired me with a dread lest I should fail. Besides, I found that my understanding improved so much with every day's experience, that I was unwilling to commence this undertaking until a few more months should have added to my wisdom.

"Several changes, in the mean time, took place in the cottage. The presence of Safie diffused happiness among its inhabitants; and I also found that a greater degree of plenty reigned there. Felix and Agatha spent more time in amusement and conversation, and were assisted in their labours by servants. They did not appear rich, but they were contented and happy; their feelings were serene and peaceful, while mine became every day more tumultuous. Increase of knowledge only discovered to me more clearly what a wretched outcast I was. I cherished hope, it is true; but it vanished, when I beheld my person reflected in water, or my shadow in the moon-shine, even as that frail image and that inconstant shade.

“I endeavoured to crush these fears, and to fortify myself for the trial which in a few months I resolved to undergo; and sometimes I allowed my thoughts, unchecked by reason, to ramble in the fields of Paradise, and dared to fancy amiable and lovely creatures sympathizing with my feelings and cheering my gloom; their angelic countenances breathed smiles of consolation. But it was all a dream: no Eve soothed my sorrows, or shared my thoughts; I was alone. I remembered Adam’s supplication to his Creator; but where was mine? he had abandoned me, and, in the bitterness of my heart, I cursed him.

“Autumn passed thus. I saw, with surprise and grief, the leaves decay and fall, and nature again assume the barren and bleak appearance it had worn when I first beheld the woods and the lovely moon. Yet I did not heed the bleakness of the weather; I was better fitted by my conformation for the endurance of cold than heat. But my chief delights were the sight of the flowers, the birds, and all the gay apparel of summer; when those deserted me, I turned with more attention towards the cottagers. Their happiness was not decreased by the absence of summer. They loved, and sympathized with one another; and their joys, depending on each other, were not interrupted by the casualties that took place around them. The more I saw of them, the greater became my desire to claim their protection and kindness; my heart yearned to be known and loved by these amiable creatures: to see their sweet looks turned towards me with affection, was the utmost limit of my ambition. I dared not think that they would turn them from me with disdain and horror. The poor that stopped at their door were never driven away. I asked, it is true, for greater treasures than a little food or rest; I required kindness and sympathy; but I did not believe myself utterly unworthy of it.

“The winter advanced, and an entire revolution of the seasons had taken place since I awoke into life. My attention, at this time, was solely directed towards my plan of introducing myself into the cottage of my protectors. I revolved many projects; but that on which I finally fixed was, to enter the dwelling when the blind old man should be alone. I had sagacity enough to discover, that the unnatural hideousness of my person was the chief object of horror with those who had formerly beheld me. My voice, although harsh, had nothing terrible in it; I thought, therefore, that if, in the absence of his children, I could gain the good-will and mediation of the old De Lacy, I might, by his means, be tolerated by my younger protectors.

“One day, when the sun shone on the red leaves that strewed the ground, and diffused cheerfulness, although it denied warmth, Safie, Agatha, and Felix, departed on a long country walk, and the old man, at his own desire, was left alone in the cottage.

When his children had departed, he took up his guitar, and played several mournful, but sweet airs, more sweet and mournful than I had ever heard him play before. At first his countenance was illuminated with pleasure, but, as he continued, thoughtfulness and sadness succeeded; at length, laying aside the instrument, he sat absorbed in reflection.

“My heart beat quick; this was the hour and moment of trial, which would decide my hopes, or realize my fears. The servants were gone to a neighbouring fair. All was silent in and around the cottage: it was an excellent opportunity; yet, when I proceeded to execute my plan, my limbs failed me, and I sunk to the ground. Again I rose; and, exerting all the firmness of which I was master, removed the planks which I had placed before my hovel to conceal my retreat. The fresh air revived me, and, with renewed determination, I approached the door of their cottage.

“I knocked. ‘Who is there?’ said the old man — ‘Come in.’

“I entered; ‘Pardon this intrusion,’ said I, ‘I am a traveller in want of a little rest; you would greatly oblige me, if you would allow me to remain a few minutes before the fire.'

"'Enter,' said De Lacy; 'and I will try in what manner I can relieve your wants; but, unfortunately, my children are from home, and, as I am blind, I am afraid I shall find it difficult to procure food for you.'

"'Do not trouble yourself, my kind host, I have food; it is warmth and rest only that I need.'

"I sat down, and a silence ensued. I knew that every minute was precious to me, yet I remained irresolute in what manner to commence the interview; when the old man addressed me —

"'By your language, stranger, I suppose you are my countryman; — are you French?'

"'No; but I was educated by a French family, and understand that language only. I am now going to claim the protection of some friends, whom I sincerely love, and of whose favour I have some hopes.'

"'Are these Germans?'

"'No, they are French. But let us change the subject. I am an unfortunate and deserted creature; I look around, and I have no relation or friend upon earth. These amiable people to whom I go have never seen me, and know little of me. I am full of fears; for if I fail there, I am an outcast in the world for ever.'

"'Do not despair. To be friendless is indeed to be unfortunate; but the hearts of men, when unprejudiced by any obvious self-interest, are full of brotherly love and charity. Rely, therefore, on your hopes; and if these friends are good and amiable, do not despair.'

"'They are kind — they are the most excellent creatures in the world; but, unfortunately, they are prejudiced against me. I have good dispositions; my life has been hitherto harmless, and, in some degree, beneficial; but a fatal prejudice clouds their eyes, and where they ought to see a feeling and kind friend, they behold only a detestable monster.'

"'That is indeed unfortunate; but if you are really blameless, cannot you undeceive them?'

"'I am about to undertake that task; and it is on that account that I feel so many overwhelming terrors. I tenderly love these friends; I have, unknown to them, been for many months in the habits of daily kindness towards them; but they believe that I wish to injure them, and it is that prejudice which I wish to overcome.’

“ ‘Where do these friends reside?’

“ ‘Near this spot.’

“The old man paused, and then continued, ‘If you will unreservedly confide to me the particulars of your tale, I perhaps may be of use in undeceiving them. I am blind, and cannot judge of your countenance, but there is something in your words which persuades me that you are sincere. I am poor, and an exile; but it will afford me true pleasure to be in any way serviceable to a human creature.’

“ ‘Excellent man! I thank you, and accept your generous offer. You raise me from the dust by this kindness; and I trust that, by your aid, I shall not be driven from the society and sympathy of your fellow-creatures.’

“ ‘Heaven forbid! even if you were really criminal;

for that can only drive you to desperation, and not instigate you to virtue. I also am unfortunate; I and my family have been condemned, although innocent: judge, therefore, if I do not feel for your misfortunes.'

" 'How can I thank you, my best and only benefactor? from your lips first have I heard the voice of kindness directed towards me; I shall be for ever grateful; and your present humanity assures me of success with those friends whom I am on the point of meeting.'

" 'May I know the names and residence of those friends?'

"I paused. This, I thought, was the moment of decision, which was to rob me of, or bestow happiness on me for ever. I struggled vainly for firmness sufficient to answer him, but the effort destroyed all my remaining strength; I sank on the chair, and sobbed aloud. At that moment I heard the steps of my younger protectors. I had not a moment to lose; but, seizing the hand of the old man, I cried, 'Now is the time! — save and protect me! You and your family are the friends whom I seek. Do not you desert me in the hour of trial!'

"'Great God!' exclaimed the old man, 'who are you?'

"At that instant the cottage door was opened, and Felix, Safie, and Agatha entered. Who can describe their horror and consternation on beholding me? Agatha fainted; and Safie, unable to attend to her friend, rushed out of the cottage. Felix darted forward, and with supernatural force tore me from his father, to whose knees I clung: in a transport of fury, he dashed me to the ground, and struck me violently with a stick. I could have torn him limb from limb, as the lion rends the antelope. But my heart sunk within me as with bitter sickness, and I refrained. I saw him on the point of repeating his blow, when, overcome by pain and anguish, I quitted the cottage, and in the general tumult escaped unperceived to my hovel."

Chapter VIII

“CURSED, cursed creator! Why did I live? Why, in that instant, did I not extinguish the spark of existence which you had so wantonly bestowed? I know not; despair had not yet taken possession of me; my feelings were those of rage and revenge. I could with pleasure have destroyed the cottage and its inhabitants, and have glutted myself with their shrieks and misery.

“When night came, I quitted my retreat, and wandered in the wood; and now, no longer restrained by the fear of discovery, I gave vent to my anguish in fearful howlings. I was like a wild beast that had broken the toils; destroying the objects that obstructed me, and ranging through the wood with a stag-like swiftness. Oh! what a miserable night I passed! the cold stars shone in mockery, and the bare trees waved their branches above me: now and then the sweet voice of a bird burst forth amidst the universal stillness. All, save I, were at rest or in enjoyment: I, like the arch fiend, bore a hell within me; and, finding myself unsympathized with, wished to tear up the trees, spread havoc and destruction around me, and then to have sat down and enjoyed the ruin.

“But this was a luxury of sensation that could not endure; I became fatigued with excess of bodily exertion, and sank on the damp grass in the sick impotence of despair. There was none among the myriads of men that existed who would pity or assist me; and should I feel kindness towards my enemies? No: from that moment I declared everlasting war against the species, and, more than all, against him who had formed me, and sent me forth to this insupportable misery.

"The sun rose; I heard the voices of men, and knew that it was impossible to return to my retreat during that day. Accordingly I hid myself in some thick underwood, determining to devote the ensuing hours to reflection on my situation.

"The pleasant sunshine, and the pure air of day, restored me to some degree of tranquillity; and when I considered what had passed at the cottage, I could not help believing that I had been too hasty in my conclusions. I had certainly acted imprudently. It was apparent that my conversation had interested the father in my behalf, and I was a fool in having exposed my person to the horror of his children. I ought to have familiarized the old De Lacy to me, and by degrees have discovered myself to the rest of his family, when they should have been prepared for my approach. But I did not believe my errors to be irretrievable; and, after much consideration, I resolved to return to the cottage, seek the old man, and by my representations win him to my party.

"These thoughts calmed me, and in the afternoon I sank into a profound sleep; but the fever of my blood did not allow me to be visited by peaceful dreams. The horrible scene of the preceding day was for ever acting before my eyes; the females were flying, and the enraged Felix tearing me from his father's feet. I awoke exhausted; and, finding that it was already night, I crept forth from my hiding-place, and went in search of food.

"When my hunger was appeased, I directed my steps towards the well-known path that conducted to the cottage. All there was at peace. I crept into my hovel, and remained in silent expectation of the accustomed hour when the family arose. That hour past, the sun mounted high in the heavens, but the cottagers did not appear. I trembled violently, apprehending some dreadful misfortune. The inside of the cottage was dark, and I heard no motion; I cannot describe the agony of this suspence.

"Presently two countrymen passed by; but, pausing near the cottage, they entered into conversation, using violent gesticulations; but I did not understand what they said, as they spoke the language of the country, which differed from that of my protectors. Soon after, however, Felix approached with another man: I was surprised, as I knew that he had not quitted the cottage that morning, and waited anxiously to discover, from his discourse, the meaning of these unusual appearances.

"'Do you consider,' said his companion to him, 'that you will be obliged to pay three months' rent, and to lose the produce of your garden? I do not wish to take any unfair advantage, and I beg therefore that you will take some days to consider of your determination.'

"'It is utterly useless,' replied Felix, 'we can never again inhabit your cottage. The life of my father is in the greatest danger, owing to the dreadful circumstance that I have related. My wife and my sister will never recover their horror. I entreat you not to reason with me any more. Take possession of your tenement, and let me fly from this place.'

"Felix trembled violently as he said this. He and his companion entered the cottage, in which they remained for a few minutes, and then departed. I never saw any of the family of De Lacy more.

"I continued for the remainder of the day in my hovel in a state of utter and stupid despair. My protectors had departed, and had broken the only link that held me to the world. For the first time the feelings of revenge and hatred filled my bosom, and I did not strive to controul them; but, allowing myself to be borne away by the stream, I bent my mind towards injury and death. When I thought of my friends, of the mild voice of De Lacy, the gentle eyes of Agatha, and the exquisite beauty of the Arabian, these thoughts vanished, and a gush of tears somewhat soothed me. But again, when I reflected that they had spurned and deserted me, anger returned, a rage of anger; and, unable to injure any thing human, I turned my fury towards inanimate objects. As night advanced, I placed a variety of combustibles around the cottage; and, after having destroyed every vestige of cultivation in the garden, I waited with forced impatience until the moon had sunk to commence my operations.

"As the night advanced, a fierce wind arose from the woods, and quickly dispersed the clouds that had loitered in the heavens: the blast tore along like a mighty avalanche, and produced a kind of insanity in my spirits, that burst all bounds of reason and reflection. I lighted the dry branch of a tree, and danced with fury around the devoted cottage, my eyes still fixed on the western horizon, the edge of which the moon nearly touched. A part of its orb was at length hid, and I waved my brand; it sunk, and, with a loud scream, I fired the straw, and heath, and bushes, which I had collected. The wind fanned the fire, and the cottage was quickly enveloped by the flames, which clung to it, and licked it with their forked and destroying tongues.

"As soon as I was convinced that no assistance could save any part of the habitation, I quitted the scene, and sought for refuge in the woods.

"And now, with the world before me, whither should I bend my steps? I resolved to fly far from the scene of my misfortunes; but to me, hated and despised, every country must be equally horrible. At length the thought of you crossed my mind. I learned from your papers that you were my father, my creator; and to whom could I apply with more fitness than to him who had given me life? Among the lessons that Felix had bestowed upon Safie geography had not been omitted: I had learned from these the relative situations of the different countries of the earth. You had mentioned Geneva as the name of your native town; and towards this place I resolved to proceed.

"But how was I to direct myself? I knew that I must travel in a south-westerly direction to reach my destination; but the sun was my only guide. I did not know the names of the towns that I was to pass through, nor could I ask information from a single human being; but I did not despair. From you only could I hope for succour, although towards you I felt no sentiment but that of hatred. Unfeeling, heartless creator! you had endowed me with perceptions and passions, and then cast me abroad an object for the scorn and horror of mankind. But on you only had I any claim for pity and redress, and from you I determined to seek that justice which I vainly attempted to gain from any other being that wore the human form.

"My travels were long, and the sufferings I endured intense. It was late in autumn when I quitted the district where I had so long resided. I travelled only at night, fearful of encountering the visage of a human being. Nature decayed around me, and the sun became heatless; rain and snow poured around me; mighty rivers were frozen; the surface of the earth was hard, and chill, and bare, and I found no shelter. Oh, earth! how often did I imprecate curses on the cause of my being! The mildness of my nature had fled, and all within me was turned to gall and bitterness. The nearer I approached to your habitation, the more deeply did I feel the spirit of revenge enkindled in my heart. Snow fell, and the waters were hardened, but I rested not. A few incidents now and then directed me, and I possessed a map of the country; but I often wandered wide from my path. The agony of my feelings allowed me no respite: no incident occurred from which my rage and misery could not extract its food; but a circumstance that happened when I arrived on the confines of Switzerland, when the sun had recovered its warmth, and the earth again began to look green, confirmed in an especial manner the bitterness and horror of my feelings.

“I generally rested during the day, and travelled only when I was secured by night from the view of man. One morning, however, finding that my path lay through a deep wood, I ventured to continue my journey after the sun had risen; the day, which was one of the first of spring, cheered even me by the loveliness of its sunshine and the balminess of the air. I felt emotions of gentleness and pleasure, that had long appeared dead, revive within me. Half surprised by the novelty of these sensations, I allowed myself to be borne away by them; and, forgetting my solitude and deformity, dared to be happy. Soft tears again bedewed my cheeks, and I even raised my humid eyes with thankfulness towards the blessed sun which bestowed such joy upon me.

“I continued to wind among the paths of the wood, until I came to its boundary, which was skirted by a deep and rapid river, into which many of the trees bent their branches, now budding with the fresh spring. Here I paused, not exactly knowing what path to pursue, when I heard the sound of voices, that induced me to conceal myself under the shade of a cypress. I was scarcely hid, when a young girl came running towards the spot where I was concealed, laughing as if she ran from some one in sport. She continued her course along the precipitous sides of the river, when suddenly her foot slipt, and she fell into the rapid stream. I rushed from my hiding place, and, with extreme labour from the force of the current, saved her, and dragged her to shore. She was senseless; and I endeavoured, by every means in my power, to restore animation, when I was suddenly interrupted by the approach of a rustic, who was probably the person from whom she had playfully fled. On seeing me, he darted towards me, and, tearing the girl from my arms, hastened towards the deeper parts of the wood. I followed speedily, I hardly knew why; but when the man saw me draw near, he aimed a gun, which he carried, at my body, and fired. I sunk to the ground, and my injurer, with increased swiftness, escaped into the wood.

"This was then the reward of my benevolence! I had saved a human being from destruction, and, as a recompence, I now writhed under the miserable pain of a wound, which shattered the flesh and bone. The feelings of kindness and gentleness, which I had entertained but a few moments before, gave place to hellish rage and gnashing of teeth. Inflamed by pain, I vowed eternal hatred and vengeance to all mankind. But the agony of my wound overcame me; my pulses paused, and I fainted.

"For some weeks I led a miserable life in the woods, endeavouring to cure the wound which I had received. The ball had entered my shoulder, and I knew not whether it had remained there or passed through; at any rate I had no means of extracting it. My sufferings were augmented also by the oppressive sense of the injustice and ingratitude of their infliction. My daily vows rose for revenge —

a deep and deadly revenge, such as would alone compensate for the outrages and anguish I had endured.

“After some weeks my wound healed, and I continued my journey. The labours I endured were no longer to be alleviated by the bright sun or gentle breezes of spring; all joy was but a mockery, which insulted my desolate state, and made me feel more painfully that I was not made for the enjoyment of pleasure.

“But my toils now drew near a close; and, two months from this time, I reached the environs of Geneva.

“It was evening when I arrived, and I retired to a hiding-place among the fields that surround it, to meditate in what manner I should apply to you. I was oppressed by fatigue and hunger, and far too unhappy to enjoy the gentle breezes of evening, or the prospect of the sun setting behind the stupendous mountains of Jura.

“At this time a slight sleep relieved me from the pain of reflection, which was disturbed by the approach of a beautiful child, who came running into the recess I had chosen with all the sportiveness of infancy. Suddenly, as I gazed on him, an idea seized me, that this little creature was unprejudiced, and had lived too short a time to have imbibed a horror of deformity. If, therefore, I could seize him, and educate him as my companion and friend, I should not be so desolate in this peopled earth.

“Urged by this impulse, I seized on the boy as he passed, and drew him towards me. As soon as he beheld my form, he placed his hands before his eyes, and uttered a shrill scream: I drew his hand forcibly from his face, and said, ‘Child, what is the meaning of this? I do not intend to hurt you; listen to me.’

“He struggled violently; ‘Let me go,’ he cried; ‘monster! ugly wretch! you wish to eat me, and tear me to pieces — You are an ogre — Let me go, or I will tell my papa.’

“ ‘Boy, you will never see your father again; you must come with me.’

“ ‘Hideous monster! let me go; My papa is a

Syndic — he is M. Frankenstein — he would punish you. You dare not keep me.'

" 'Frankenstein! you belong then to my enemy — to him towards whom I have sworn eternal revenge; you shall be my first victim.'

"The child still struggled, and loaded me with epithets which carried despair to my heart: I grasped his throat to silence him, and in a moment he lay dead at my feet.

"I gazed on my victim, and my heart swelled with exultation and hellish triumph: clapping my hands, I exclaimed, 'I, too, can create desolation; my enemy is not impregnable; this death will carry despair to him, and a thousand other miseries shall torment and destroy him.'

"As I fixed my eyes on the child, I saw something glittering on his breast. I took it; it was a portrait of a most lovely woman. In spite of my malignity, it softened and attracted me. For a few moments I gazed with delight on her dark eyes, fringed by deep lashes, and her lovely lips; but presently my rage returned: I remembered that I was for ever deprived of the delights that such beautiful creatures could bestow; and that she whose resemblance I contemplated would, in regarding me, have changed that air of divine benignity to one expressive of disgust and affright.

“Can you wonder that such thoughts transported me with rage? I only wonder that at that moment, instead of venting my sensations in exclamations and agony, I did not rush among mankind, and perish in the attempt to destroy them.

“While I was overcome by these feelings, I left the spot where I had committed the murder, and was seeking a more secluded hiding-place, when I perceived a woman passing near me. She was young, not indeed so beautiful as her whose portrait I held, but of an agreeable aspect, and blooming in the loveliness of youth and health. Here, I thought, is one of those whose smiles are bestowed on all but me; she shall not escape: thanks to the lessons of Felix, and the sanguinary laws of man, I have learned how to work mischief. I approached her unperceived, and placed the portrait securely in one of the folds of her dress.

"For some days I haunted the spot where these scenes had taken place; sometimes wishing to see you, sometimes resolved to quit the world and its miseries for ever. At length I wandered towards these mountains, and have ranged through their immense recesses, consumed by a burning passion which you alone can gratify. We may not part until you have promised to comply with my requisition. I am alone, and miserable; man will not associate with me; but one as deformed and horrible as myself would not deny herself to me. My companion must be of the same species, and have the same defects. This being you must create."

Chapter IX

THE being finished speaking, and fixed his looks upon me in expectation of a reply. But I was bewildered, perplexed, and unable to arrange my ideas sufficiently to understand the full extent of his proposition. He continued —

“You must create a female for me, with whom I can live in the interchange of those sympathies necessary for my being. This you alone can do; and I demand it of you as a right which you must not refuse.”

The latter part of his tale had kindled anew in me the anger that had died away while he narrated his peaceful life among the cottagers, and, as he said this, I could no longer suppress the rage that burned within me.

"I do refuse it," I replied; "and no torture shall ever extort a consent from me. You may render me the most miserable of men, but you shall never make me base in my own eyes. Shall I create another like yourself, whose joint wickedness might desolate the world. Begone! I have answered you; you may torture me, but I will never consent."

"You are in the wrong," replied the fiend; "and, instead of threatening, I am content to reason with you. I am malicious because I am miserable; am I not shunned and hated by all mankind? You, my creator, would tear me to pieces, and triumph; remember that, and tell me why I should pity man more than he pities me? You would not call it murder, if you could precipitate me into one of those ice-rifts, and destroy my frame, the work of your own hands. Shall I respect man, when he contemns me? Let him live with me in the interchange of kindness, and, instead of injury, I would bestow every benefit upon him with tears of gratitude at his acceptance. But that cannot be; the human senses are insurmountable barriers to our union. Yet mine shall not be the submission of abject slavery. I will revenge my injuries: if I cannot inspire love, I will cause fear; and chiefly towards you my arch-enemy, because my creator, do I swear inextinguishable hatred. Have a care: I will work at your destruction, nor finish until I desolate your heart, so that you curse the hour of your birth."

A fiendish rage animated him as he said this; his face was wrinkled into contortions too horrible for human eyes to behold; but presently he calmed himself, and proceeded —

"I intended to reason. This passion is detrimental to me; for you do not reflect that you are the cause of its excess. If any being felt emotions of benevolence towards me, I should return them an hundred and an hundred fold; for that one creature's sake, I would make peace with the whole kind! But I now indulge in dreams of bliss that cannot be realized. What I ask of you is reasonable and moderate; I demand a creature of another sex, but as hideous as myself: the gratification is small, but it is all that I can receive, and it shall content me. It is true, we shall be monsters, cut off from all the world; but on that account we shall be more attached to one another. Our lives will not be happy, but they will be harmless, and free from the misery I now feel. Oh! my creator, make me happy; let me feel gratitude towards you for one benefit! Let me see that I excite the sympathy of some existing thing; do not deny me my request!”

I was moved. I shuddered when I thought of the possible consequences of my consent; but I felt that there was some justice in his argument. His tale, and the feelings he now expressed, proved him to be a creature of fine sensations; and did I not, as his maker, owe him all the portion of happiness that it was in my power to bestow? He saw my change of feeling, and continued —

“If you consent, neither you nor any other human being shall ever see us again: I will go to the vast wilds of South America. My food is not that of man; I do not destroy the lamb and the kid, to glut my appetite; acorns and berries afford me sufficient nourishment. My companion will be of the same nature as myself, and will be content with the same fare. We shall make our bed of dried leaves; the sun will shine on us as on man, and will ripen our food. The picture I present to you is peaceful and human, and you must feel that you could deny it only in the wantonness of power and cruelty. Pitiless as you have been towards me, I now see compassion in your eyes: let me seize the favourable moment, and persuade you to promise what I so ardently desire."

"You propose," replied I, "to fly from the habitations of man, to dwell in those wilds where the beasts of the field will be your only companions. How can you, who long for the love and sympathy of man, persevere in this exile? You will return, and again seek their kindness, and you will meet with their detestation; your evil passions will be renewed, and you will then have a companion to aid you in the task of destruction. This may not be; cease to argue the point, for I cannot consent."

“How inconstant are your feelings! but a moment ago you were moved by my representations, and why do you again harden yourself to my complaints? I swear to you, by the earth which I inhabit, and by you that made me, that, with the companion you bestow, I will quit the neighbourhood of man, and dwell, as it may chance, in the most savage of places. My evil passions will have fled, for I shall meet with sympathy; my life will flow quietly away, and, in my dying moments, I shall not curse my maker.”

His words had a strange effect upon me. I compassionated him, and sometimes felt a wish to console him; but when I looked upon him, when I saw the filthy mass that moved and talked, my heart sickened, and my feelings were altered to those of horror and hatred. I tried to stifle these sensations; I thought, that as I could not sympathize with him, I had no right to withhold from him the small portion of happiness which was yet in my power to bestow.

“You swear,” I said, “to be harmless; but have you not already shewn a degree of malice that should reasonably make me distrust you? May not even this be a feint that will increase your triumph by affording a wider scope for your revenge?"

"How is this? I thought I had moved your compassion, and yet you still refuse to bestow on me the only benefit that can soften my heart, and render me harmless. If I have no ties and no affections, hatred and vice must be my portion; the love of another will destroy the cause of my crimes, and I shall become a thing, of whose existence every one will be ignorant. My vices are the children of a forced solitude that I abhor; and my virtues will necessarily arise when I live in communion with an equal. I shall feel the affections of a sensitive being, and become linked to the chain of existence and events, from which I am now excluded."

I paused some time to reflect on all he had related, and the various arguments which he had employed. I thought of the promise of virtues which he had displayed on the opening of his existence, and the subsequent blight of all kindly feeling by the loathing and scorn which his protectors had manifested towards him. His power and threats were not omitted in my calculations: a creature who could exist in the ice caves of the glaciers, and hide himself from pursuit among the ridges of inaccessible precipices, was a being possessing faculties it would be vain to cope with. After a long pause of reflection, I concluded, that the justice due both to him and my fellow-creatures demanded of me that I should comply with his request. Turning to him, therefore, I said —

“I consent to your demand, on your solemn oath to quit Europe for ever, and every other place in the neighbourhood of man, as soon as I shall deliver into your hands a female who will accompany you in your exile.”

“I swear,” he cried, “by the sun, and by the blue sky of heaven, that if you grant my prayer, while they exist you shall never behold me again. Depart to your home, and commence your labours: I shall watch their progress with unutterable anxiety; and fear not but that when you are ready I shall appear.”

Saying this, he suddenly quitted me, fearful, perhaps, of any change in my sentiments. I saw him descend the mountain with greater speed than the flight of an eagle, and quickly lost him among the undulations of the sea of ice.

His tale had occupied the whole day; and the sun was upon the verge of the horizon when he departed. I knew that I ought to hasten my descent towards the valley, as I should soon be encompassed in darkness; but my heart was heavy, and my steps slow. The labour of winding among the little paths of the mountains, and fixing my feet firmly as I advanced, perplexed me, occupied as I was by the emotions which the occurrences of the day had produced. Night was far advanced, when I came to the half-way resting-place, and seated myself beside the fountain. The stars shone at intervals, as the clouds passed from over them; the dark pines rose before me, and every here and there a broken tree lay on the ground: it was a scene of wonderful solemnity, and stirred strange thoughts within me. I wept bitterly; and, clasping my hands in agony, I exclaimed, “Oh! stars, and clouds, and winds, ye are all about to mock me: if ye really pity me, crush sensation and memory; let me become as nought; but if not, depart, depart and leave me in darkness."

These were wild and miserable thoughts; but I cannot describe to you how the eternal twinkling of the stars weighed upon me, and how I listened to every blast of wind, as if it were a dull ugly siroc on its way to consume me.

Morning dawned before I arrived at the village of Chamounix; but my presence, so haggard and strange, hardly calmed the fears of my family, who had waited the whole night in anxious expectation of my return.

The following day we returned to Geneva. The intention of my father in coming had been to divert my mind, and to restore me to my lost tranquillity; but the medicine had been fatal. And, unable to account for the excess of misery I appeared to suffer, he hastened to return home, hoping the quiet and monotony of a domestic life would by degrees alleviate my sufferings from whatsoever cause they might spring.

For myself, I was passive in all their arrangements; and the gentle affection of my beloved Elizabeth was inadequate to draw me from the depth of my despair. The promise I had made to the dæmon weighed upon my mind, like Dante's iron cowl on the heads of the hellish hypocrites. All pleasures of earth and sky passed before me like a dream, and that thought only had to me the reality of life. Can you wonder, that sometimes a kind of insanity possessed me, or that I saw continually about me a multitude of filthy animals inflicting on me incessant torture, that often extorted screams and bitter groans?

By degrees, however, these feelings became calmed. I entered again into the every-day scene of life, if not with interest, at least with some degree of tranquillity.

Volume III

Chapter I

DAY after day, week after week, passed away on my return to Geneva; and I could not collect the courage to recommence my work. I feared the vengeance of the disappointed fiend, yet I was unable to overcome my repugnance to the task which was enjoined me. I found that I could not compose a female without again devoting several months to profound study and laborious disquisition. I had heard of some discoveries having been made by an English philosopher, the knowledge of which was material to my success, and I sometimes thought of obtaining my father's consent to visit England for this purpose; but I clung to every pretence of delay, and could not resolve to interrupt my returning tranquillity. My health, which had hitherto declined, was now much restored; and my spirits, when unchecked by the memory of my unhappy promise, rose proportionably. My father saw this change with pleasure, and he turned his thoughts towards the best method of eradicating the remains of my melancholy, which every now and then would return by fits, and with a devouring blackness overcast the approaching sunshine. At these moments I took refuge in the most perfect solitude. I passed whole days on the lake alone in a little boat, watching the clouds, and listening to the rippling of the waves, silent and listless. But the fresh air and bright sun seldom failed to restore me to some degree of composure; and, on my return, I met the salutations of my friends with a readier smile and a more cheerful heart.

It was after my return from one of these rambles that my father, calling me aside, thus addressed me:—

"I am happy to remark, my dear son, that you have resumed your former pleasures, and seem to be returning to yourself. And yet you are still unhappy, and still avoid our society. For some time I was lost in conjecture as to the cause of this; but yesterday an idea struck me, and if it is well founded, I conjure you to avow it. Reserve on such a point would be not only useless, but draw down treble misery on us all."

I trembled violently at this exordium, and my father continued —

"I confess, my son, that I have always looked forward to your marriage with your cousin as the tie of our domestic comfort, and the stay of my declining years. You were attached to each other from your earliest infancy; you studied together, and appeared, in dispositions and tastes, entirely suited to one another. But so blind is the experience of man, that what I conceived to be the best assistants to my plan may have entirely destroyed it. You, perhaps, regard her as your sister, without any wish that she might become your wife. Nay, you may have met with another whom you may love; and, considering yourself as bound in honour to your cousin, this struggle may occasion the poignant misery which you appear to feel."

"My dear father, re-assure yourself. I love my cousin tenderly and sincerely. I never saw any woman who excited, as Elizabeth does, my warmest admiration and affection. My future hopes and prospects are entirely bound up in the expectation of our union."

"The expression of your sentiments on this subject, my dear Victor, gives me more pleasure than I have for some time experienced. If you feel thus, we shall assuredly be happy, however present events may cast a gloom over us. But it is this gloom, which appears to have taken so strong a hold of your mind, that I wish to dissipate. Tell me, therefore, whether you object to an immediate solemnization of the marriage. We have been unfortunate, and recent events have drawn us from that every-day tranquillity befitting my years and infirmities. You are younger; yet I do not suppose, possessed as you are of a competent fortune, that an early marriage would at all interfere with any future plans of honour and utility that you may have formed. Do not suppose, however, that I wish to dictate happiness to you, or that a delay on your part would cause me any serious uneasiness. Interpret my words with candour, and answer me, I conjure you, with confidence and sincerity."

I listened to my father in silence, and remained for some time incapable of offering any reply. I revolved rapidly in my mind a multitude of thoughts, and endeavoured to arrive at some conclusion. Alas! to me the idea of an immediate union with my cousin was one of horror and dismay. I was bound by a solemn promise, which I had not yet fulfilled, and dared not break; or, if I did, what manifold miseries might not impend over me and my devoted family! Could I enter into a festival with this deadly weight yet hanging round my neck, and bowing me to the ground. I must perform my engagement, and let the monster depart with his mate, before I allowed myself to enjoy the delight of an union from which I expected peace.

I remembered also the necessity imposed upon me of either journeying to England, or entering into a long correspondence with those philosophers of that country, whose knowledge and discoveries were of indispensable use to me in my present undertaking. The latter method of obtaining the desired intelligence was dilatory and unsatisfactory: besides, any variation was agreeable to me, and I was delighted with the idea of spending a year or two in change of scene and variety of occupation, in absence from my family; during which period some event might happen which would restore me to them in peace and happiness: my promise might be fulfilled, and the monster have departed; or some accident might occur to destroy him, and put an end to my slavery for ever.

These feelings dictated my answer to my father. I expressed a wish to visit England; but, concealing the true reasons of this request, I clothed my desires under the guise of wishing to travel and see the world before I sat down for life within the walls of my native town.

I urged my entreaty with earnestness, and my father was easily induced to comply; for a more indulgent and less dictatorial parent did not exist upon earth. Our plan was soon arranged. I should travel to Strasburgh, where Clerval would join me. Some short time would be spent in the towns of Holland, and our principal stay would be in England. We should return by France; and it was agreed that the tour should occupy the space of two years.

My father pleased himself with the reflection, that my union with Elizabeth should take place immediately on my return to Geneva. "These two years," said be, "will pass swiftly, and it will be the last delay that will oppose itself to your happiness. And, indeed, I earnestly desire that period to arrive, when we shall all be united, and neither hopes or fears arise to disturb our domestic calm."

"I am content," I replied, "with your arrangement. By that time we shall both have become wiser, and I hope happier, than we at present are." I sighed; but my father kindly forbore to question me further concerning the cause of my dejection. He hoped that new scenes, and the amusement of travelling, would restore my tranquillity.

I now made arrangements for my journey; but one feeling haunted me, which filled me with fear and agitation. During my absence I should leave my friends unconscious of the existence of their enemy, and unprotected from his attacks, exasperated as he might be by my departure. But he had promised to follow me wherever I might go; and would he not accompany me to England? This imagination was dreadful in itself, but soothing, inasmuch as it supposed the safety of my friends. I was agonized with the idea of the possibility that the reverse of this might happen. But through the whole period during which I was the slave of my creature, I allowed myself to be governed by the impulses of the moment; and my present sensations strongly intimated that the fiend would follow me, and exempt my family from the danger of his machinations.

It was in the latter end of August that I departed, to pass two years of exile. Elizabeth approved of the reasons of my departure, and only regretted that she had not the same opportunities of enlarging her experience, and cultivating her understanding. She wept, however, as she bade me farewell, and entreated me to return happy and tranquil. "We all," said she, "depend upon you; and if you are miserable, what must be our feelings?"

I threw myself into the carriage that was to convey me away, hardly knowing whither I was going, and careless of what was passing around. I remembered only, and it was with a bitter anguish that I reflected on it, to order that my chemical instruments should be packed to go with me: for I resolved to fulfil my promise while abroad, and return, if possible, a free man. Filled with dreary imaginations, I passed through many beautiful and majestic scenes; but my eyes were fixed and unobserving. I could only think of the bourne of my travels, and the work which was to occupy me whilst they endured.

After some days spent in listless indolence, during which I traversed many leagues, I arrived at

Strasburgh, where I waited two days for Clerval. He came. Alas, how great was the contrast between us! He was alive to every new scene; joyful when he saw the beauties of the setting sun, and more happy when he beheld it rise, and recommence a new day. He pointed out to me the shifting colours of the landscape, and the appearances of the sky. “This is what it is to live;” he cried, “now I enjoy existence! But you, my dear Frankenstein, wherefore are you desponding and sorrowful?” In truth, I was occupied by gloomy thoughts, and neither saw the descent of the evening star, nor the golden sun-rise reflected in the Rhine. — And you, my friend, would be far more amused with the journal of Clerval, who observed the scenery with an eye of feeling and delight, than to listen to my reflections. I, a miserable wretch, haunted by a curse that shut up every avenue to enjoyment.

We had agreed to descend the Rhine in a boat from Strasburgh to Rotterdam, whence we might take shipping for London. During this voyage, we passed by many willowy islands, and saw several beautiful towns. We staid a day at Manheim, and, on the fifth from our departure from Strasburgh, arrived at Mayence. The course of the Rhine below Mayence becomes much more picturesque. The river descends rapidly, and winds between hills, not high, but steep, and of beautiful forms. We saw many ruined castles standing on the edges of precipices, surrounded by black woods, high and inaccessible. This part of the Rhine, indeed, presents a singularly variegated landscape. In one spot you view rugged hills, ruined castles overlooking tremendous precipices, with the dark Rhine rushing beneath; and, on the sudden turn of a promontory, flourishing vineyards, with green sloping banks, and a meandering river, and populous towns, occupy the scene.

We travelled at the time of the vintage, and heard the song of the labourers, as we glided down the stream. Even I, depressed in mind, and my spirits continually agitated by gloomy feelings, even I was pleased. I lay at the bottom of the boat, and, as I gazed on the cloudless blue sky, I seemed to drink in a tranquillity to which I had long been a stranger. And if these were my sensations, who can describe those of Henry? He felt as if he had been transported to Fairy-land, and enjoyed a happiness seldom tasted by man. “I have seen,” he said, “the most beautiful scenes of my own country; I have visited the lakes of Lucerne and Uri, where the snowy mountains descend almost perpendicularly to the water, casting black and impenetrable shades, which would cause a gloomy and mournful appearance, were it not for the most verdant islands that relieve the eye by their gay appearance; I have seen this lake agitated by a tempest, when the wind tore up whirlwinds of water, and gave you an idea of what the water-spout must be on the great ocean, and the waves dash with fury the base of the mountain, where the priest and his mistress were overwhelmed by an avalanche, and where their dying voices are still said to be heard amid the pauses of the nightly wind; I have seen the mountains of La Valais, and the Pays de Vaud: but this country, Victor, pleases me more than all those wonders. The mountains of Switzerland are more majestic and strange; but there is a charm in the banks of this divine river, that I never before saw equalled. Look at that castle which overhangs yon precipice; and that also on the island, almost concealed amongst the foliage of those lovely trees; and now that group of labourers coming from among their vines; and that village half-hid in the recess of the mountain. Oh, surely, the spirit that inhabits and guards this place has a soul more in harmony with man, than those who pile the glacier, or retire to the inaccessible peaks of the mountains of our own country."

Clerval! beloved friend! even now it delights me to record your words, and to dwell on the praise of which you are so eminently deserving. He was a being formed in the "very poetry of nature." His wild and enthusiastic imagination was chastened by the sensibility of his heart. His soul overflowed with ardent affections, and his friendship was of that devoted and wondrous nature that the worldly-minded teach us to look for only in the imagination. But even human sympathies were not sufficient to satisfy his eager mind. The scenery of external nature, which others regard only with admiration, he loved with ardour:

> —— —— "The sounding cataract
> Haunted *him* like a passion: the tall rock,
> The mountain, and the deep and gloomy wood,
> Their colours and their forms, were then to him
> An appetite; a feeling, and a love,
> That had no need of a remoter charm,
> By thought supplied, or any interest
> Unborrowed from the eye."

And where does he now exist? Is this gentle and lovely being lost for ever? Has this mind so replete with ideas, imaginations fanciful and magnificent, which formed a world, whose existence depended on the life of its creator; has this mind perished? Does it now only exist in my memory? No, it is not thus; your form so divinely wrought, and beaming with beauty, has decayed, but your spirit still visits and consoles your unhappy friend.

Pardon this gush of sorrow; these ineffectual words are but a slight tribute to the unexampled worth of Henry, but they soothe my heart, overflowing with the anguish which his remembrance creates. I will proceed with my tale.

Beyond Cologne we descended to the plains of Holland; and we resolved to post the remainder of our way; for the wind was contrary, and the stream of the river was too gentle to aid us.

Our journey here lost the interest arising from beautiful scenery; but we arrived in a few days at Rotterdam, whence we proceeded by sea to England. It was on a clear morning, in the latter days of December, that I first saw the white cliffs of Britain. The banks of the Thames presented a new scene; they were flat, but fertile, and almost every town was marked by the remembrance of some story. We saw Tilbury Fort, and remembered the Spanish armada; Gravesend, Woolwich, and Greenwich, places which I had heard of even in my country.

At length we saw the numerous steeples of London, St. Paul’s towering above all, and the Tower famed in English history.

Chapter II

LONDON was our present point of rest; we determined to remain several months in this wonderful and celebrated city. Clerval desired the intercourse of the men of genius and talent who flourished at this time; but this was with me a secondary object; I was principally occupied with the means of obtaining the information necessary for the completion of my promise, and quickly availed myself of the letters of introduction that I had brought with me, addressed to the most distinguished natural philosophers.

If this journey had taken place during my days of study and happiness, it would have afforded me inexpressible pleasure. But a blight had come over my existence, and I only visited these people for the sake of the information they might give me on the subject in which my interest was so terribly profound. Company was irksome to me; when alone, I could fill my mind with the sights of heaven and earth; the voice of Henry soothed me, and I could thus cheat myself into a transitory peace. But busy uninteresting joyous faces brought back despair to my heart. I saw an insurmountable barrier placed between me and my fellow-men; this barrier was sealed with the blood of William and Justine; and to reflect on the events connected with those names filled my soul with anguish.

But in Clerval I saw the image of my former self; he was inquisitive, and anxious to gain experience and instruction. The difference of manners which he observed was to him an inexhaustible source of instruction and amusement. He was for ever busy; and the only check to his enjoyments was my sorrowful and dejected mien. I tried to conceal this as much as possible, that I might not debar him from the pleasures natural to one who was entering on a new scene of life, undisturbed by any care or bitter recollection. I often refused to accompany him, alleging another engagement, that I might remain alone. I now also began to collect the materials necessary for my new creation, and this was to me like the torture of single drops of water continually falling on the head. Every thought that was devoted to it was an extreme anguish, and every word that I spoke in allusion to it caused my lips to quiver, and my heart to palpitate.

After passing some months in London, we received a letter from a person in Scotland, who had formerly been our visitor at Geneva. He mentioned the beauties of his native country, and asked us if those were not sufficient allurements to induce us to prolong our journey as far north as Perth, where he resided. Clerval eagerly desired to accept this invitation; and I, although I abhorred society, wished to view again mountains and streams, and all the wondrous works with which Nature adorns her chosen dwelling-places.

We had arrived in England at the beginning of October, and it was now February. We accordingly determined to commence our journey towards the north at the expiration of another month. In this expedition we did not intend to follow the great road to Edinburgh, but to visit Windsor, Oxford, Matlock, and the Cumberland lakes, resolving to arrive at the completion of this tour about the end of July. I packed my chemical instruments, and the materials I had collected, resolving to finish my labours in some obscure nook in the northern highlands of Scotland.

We quitted London on the 27th of March, and remained a few days at Windsor, rambling in its beautiful forest. This was a new scene to us mountaineers; the majestic oaks, the quantity of game, and the herds of stately deer, were all novelties to us.

From thence we proceeded to Oxford. As we entered this city, our minds were filled with the remembrance of the events that had been transacted there more than a century and a half before. It was here that Charles I. had collected his forces. This city had remained faithful to him, after the whole nation had forsaken his cause to join the standard of parliament and liberty. The memory of that unfortunate king, and his companions, the amiable Falkland, the insolent Gower, his queen, and son, gave a peculiar interest to every part of the city, which they might be supposed to have inhabited. The spirit of elder days found a dwelling here, and we delighted to trace its footsteps. If these feelings had not found an imaginary gratification, the appearance of the city had yet in itself sufficient beauty to obtain our admiration. The colleges are ancient and picturesque; the streets are almost magnificent; and the lovely Isis, which flows beside it through meadows of exquisite verdure, is spread forth into a placid expanse of waters, which reflects its majestic assemblage of towers, and spires, and domes, embosomed among aged trees.

I enjoyed this scene; and yet my enjoyment was embittered both by the memory of the past, and the anticipation of the future. I was formed for peaceful happiness. During my youthful days discontent never visited my mind; and if I was ever overcome by *ennui*, the sight of what is beautiful in nature, or the study of what is excellent and sublime in the productions of man, could always interest my heart, and communicate elasticity to my spirits. But I am a blasted tree; the bolt has entered my soul; and I felt then that I should survive to exhibit, what I shall soon cease to be — a miserable spectacle of wrecked humanity, pitiable to others, and abhorrent to myself.

We passed a considerable period at Oxford, rambling among its environs, and endeavouring to identify every spot which might relate to the most animating epoch of English history. Our little voyages of discovery were often prolonged by the successive objects that presented themselves. We visited the tomb of the illustrious Hampden, and the field on which that patriot fell. For a moment my soul was elevated from its debasing and miserable fears to contemplate the divine ideas of liberty and self-sacrifice, of which these sights were the monuments and the remembrancers. For an instant I dared to shake off my chains, and look around me with a free and lofty spirit; but the iron had eaten into my flesh, and I sank again, trembling and hopeless, into my miserable self.

We left Oxford with regret, and proceeded to Matlock, which was our next place of rest. The country in the neighbourhood of this village resembled, to a greater degree, the scenery of Switzerland; but every thing is on a lower scale, and the green hills want the crown of distant white Alps, which always attend on the piny mountains of my native country. We visited the wondrous cave, and the little cabinets of natural history, where the curiosities are disposed in the same manner as in the collections at Servox and Chamounix. The latter name made me tremble, when pronounced by Henry; and I hastened to quit Matlock, with which that terrible scene was thus associated.

From Derby still journeying northward, we passed two months in Cumberland and Westmoreland. I could now almost fancy myself among the Swiss mountains. The little patches of snow which yet lingered on the northern sides of the mountains, the lakes, and the dashing of the rocky streams, were all familiar and dear sights to me. Here also we made some acquaintances, who almost contrived to cheat me into happiness. The delight of Clerval was proportionably greater than mine; his mind expanded in the company of men of talent, and he found in his own nature greater capacities and resources than he could have imagined himself to have possessed while he associated with his inferiors. "I could pass my life here," said he to me; "and among these mountains I should scarcely regret Switzerland and the Rhine."

But he found that a traveller's life is one that includes much pain amidst its enjoyments. His feelings are for ever on the stretch; and when he begins to sink into repose, he finds himself obliged to quit that on which he rests in pleasure for something new, which again engages his attention, and which also he forsakes for other novelties.

We had scarcely visited the various lakes of Cumberland and Westmoreland, and conceived an affection for some of the inhabitants, when the period of our appointment with our Scotch friend approached, and we left them to travel on. For my own part I was not sorry. I had now neglected my promise for some time, and I feared the effects of the dæmon's disappointment. He might remain in Switzerland, and wreak his vengeance on my relatives. This idea pursued me, and tormented me at every moment from which I might otherwise have snatched repose and peace. I waited for my letters with feverish impatience: if they were delayed, I was miserable, and overcome by a thousand fears; and when they arrived, and I saw the superscription of Elizabeth or my father, I hardly dared to read and ascertain my fate. Sometimes I thought that the fiend followed me, and might expedite my remissness by murdering my companion. When these thoughts possessed me, I would not quit Henry for a moment, but followed him as his shadow, to protect him from the fancied rage of his destroyer. I felt as if I had committed some great crime, the consciousness of which haunted me. I was guiltless, but I had indeed drawn down a horrible curse upon my head, as mortal as that of crime.

I visited Edinburgh with languid eyes and mind; and yet that city might have interested the most unfortunate being. Clerval did not like it so well as Oxford; for the antiquity of the latter city was more pleasing to him. But the beauty and regularity of the new town of Edinburgh, its romantic castle, and its environs, the most delightful in the world, Arthur's Seat, St. Bernard's Well, and the Pentland Hills, compensated him for the change, and filled him with cheerfulness and admiration. But I was impatient to arrive at the termination of my journey.

We left Edinburgh in a week, passing through Coupar, St. Andrews, and along the banks of the Tay, to Perth, where our friend expected us. But I was in no mood to laugh and talk with strangers, or enter into their feelings or plans with the good humour expected from a guest; and accordingly I told

Clerval that I wished to make the tour of Scotland alone. “Do you,” said I, “enjoy yourself, and let this be our rendezvous. I may be absent a month or two; but do not interfere with my motions, I entreat you: leave me to peace and solitude for a short time; and when I return, I hope it will be with a lighter heart, more congenial to your own temper.”

Henry wished to dissuade me; but, seeing me bent on this plan, ceased to remonstrate. He entreated me to write often. “I had rather be with you,” he said, “in your solitary rambles, than with these Scotch people, whom I do not know: hasten then, my dear friend, to return, that I may again feel myself somewhat at home, which I cannot do in your absence.”

Having parted from my friend, I determined to visit some remote spot of Scotland, and finish my work in solitude. I did not doubt but that the monster followed me, and would discover himself to me when I should have finished, that he might receive his companion.

With this resolution I traversed the northern highlands, and fixed on one of the remotest of the Orkneys as the scene labours. It was a place fitted for such a work, being hardly more than a rock, whose high sides were continually beaten upon by the waves. The soil was barren, scarcely affording pasture for a few miserable cows, and oatmeal for its inhabitants, which consisted of five persons, whose gaunt and scraggy limbs gave tokens of their miserable fare. Vegetables and bread, when they indulged in such luxuries, and even fresh water, was to be procured from the main land, which was about five miles distant.

On the whole island there were but three miserable huts, and one of these was vacant when I arrived. This I hired. It contained but two rooms, and these exhibited all the squalidness of the most miserable penury. The thatch had fallen in, the walls were unplastered, and the door was off its hinges. I ordered it to be repaired, bought some furniture, and took possession; an incident which would, doubtless, have occasioned some surprise, had not all the senses of the cottagers been benumbed by want and squalid poverty. As it was, I lived ungazed at and unmolested, hardly thanked for the pittance of food and clothes which I gave; so much does suffering blunt even the coarsest sensations of men.

In this retreat I devoted the morning to labour; but in the evening, when the weather permitted, I walked on the stony beach of the sea, to listen to the waves as they roared, and dashed at my feet. It was a monotonous, yet ever-changing scene. I thought of Switzerland; it was far different from this desolate and appalling landscape. Its hills are covered with vines, and its cottages are scattered thickly in the plains. Its fair lakes reflect a blue and gentle sky; and, when troubled by the winds, their tumult is but as the play of a lively infant, when compared to the roarings of the giant ocean.

In this manner I distributed my occupations when I first arrived; but, as I proceeded in my labour, it became every day more horrible and irksome to me. Sometimes I could not prevail on myself to enter my laboratory for several days; and at other times I toiled day and night in order to complete my work. It was indeed a filthy process in which I was engaged. During my first experiment, a kind of enthusiastic frenzy had blinded me to the horror of my employment; my mind was intently fixed on the sequel of my labour, and my eyes were shut to the horror of my proceedings. But now I went to it in cold blood, and my heart often sickened at the work of my hands.

Thus situated, employed in the most detestable occupation, immersed in a solitude where nothing could for an instant call my attention from the actual scene in which I was engaged, my spirits became unequal; I grew restless and nervous. Every moment I feared to meet my persecutor. Sometimes I sat with my eyes fixed on the ground, fearing to raise them lest they should encounter the object which I so much dreaded to behold. I feared to wander from the sight of my fellow-creatures, lest when alone he should come to claim his companion.

In the mean time I worked on, and my labour was already considerably advanced. I looked towards its completion with a tremulous and eager hope, which I dared not trust myself to question, but which was intermixed with obscure forebodings of evil, that made my heart sicken in my bosom.

Chapter III

I SAT one evening in my laboratory; the sun had set, and the moon was just rising from the sea; I had not sufficient light for my employment, and I remained idle, in a pause of consideration of whether I should leave my labour for the night, or hasten its conclusion by an unremitting attention to it. As I sat, a train of reflection occurred to me, which led me to consider the effects of what I was now doing. Three years before I was engaged in the same manner, and had created a fiend whose unparalleled barbarity had desolated my heart, and filled it for ever with the bitterest remorse. I was now about to form another being, of whose dispositions I was alike ignorant; she might become ten thousand times more malignant than her mate, and delight, for its own sake, in murder and wretchedness. He had sworn to quit the neighbourhood of man, and hide himself in deserts; but she had not; and she, who in all probability was to become a thinking and reasoning animal, might refuse to comply with a compact made before her creation. They might even hate each other; the creature who already lived loathed his own deformity, and might he not conceive a greater abhorence for it when it came before his eyes in the female form? She also might turn with disgust from him to the superior beauty of man; she might quit him, and he be again alone, exasperated by the fresh provocation of being deserted by one of his own species.

Even if they were to leave Europe, and inhabit the deserts of the new world, yet one of the first results of those sympathies for which the dæmon thirsted would be children, and a race of devils would be propagated upon the earth, who might make the very existence of the species of man a condition precarious and full of terror. Had I a right, for my own benefit, to inflict this curse upon everlasting generations? I had before been moved by the sophisms of the being I had created; I had been struck senseless by his fiendish threats: but now, for the first time, the wickedness of my promise burst upon me; I shuddered to think that future ages might curse me as their pest, whose selfishness had not hesitated to buy its own peace at the price perhaps of the existence of the whole human race.

I trembled, and my heart failed within me; when, on looking up, I saw, by the light of the moon, the dæmon at the casement. A ghastly grin wrinkled his lips as he gazed on me, where I sat fulfilling the task which he had allotted to me. Yes, he had followed me in my travels; he had loitered in forests, hid himself in caves, or taken refuge in wide and desert heaths; and he now came to mark my progress, and claim the fulfilment of my promise.

As I looked on him, his countenance expressed the utmost extent of malice and treachery. I thought with a sensation of madness on my promise of creating another like to him, and, trembling with passion, tore to pieces the thing on which I was engaged. The wretch saw me destroy the creature on whose future existence he depended for happiness, and, with a howl of devilish despair and revenge, withdrew.

I left the room, and, locking the door, made a solemn vow in my own heart never to resume my labours; and then, with trembling steps, I sought my own apartment. I was alone; none were near me to dissipate the gloom, and relieve me from the sickening oppression of the most terrible reveries.

Several hours past, and I remained near my window gazing on the sea; it was almost motionless, for the winds were hushed, and all nature reposed under the eye of the quiet moon. A few fishing vessels alone specked the water, and now and then the gentle breeze wafted the sound of voices, as the fishermen called to one another. I felt the silence, although I was hardly conscious of its extreme profundity until my ear was suddenly arrested by the paddling of oars near the shore, and a person landed close to my house.

In a few minutes after, I heard the creaking of my door, as if some one endeavoured to open it softly. I trembled from head to foot; I felt a presentiment of who it was, and wished to rouse one of the peasants who dwelt in a cottage not far from mine; but I was overcome by the sensation of helplessness, so often felt in frightful dreams, when you in vain endeavour to fly from an impending danger, and was rooted to the spot.

Presently I heard the sound of footsteps along the passage; the door opened, and the wretch whom I dreaded appeared. Shutting the door, he approached me, and said, in a smothered voice —

“You have destroyed the work which you began; what is it that you intend? Do you dare to break your promise? I have endured toil and misery: I left Switzerland with you; I crept along the shores of the Rhine, among its willow islands, and over the summits of its hills. I have dwelt many months in the heaths of England, and among the deserts of

Scotland. I have endured incalculable fatigue, and cold, and hunger; do you dare destroy my hopes?"

"Begone! I do break my promise; never will I create another like yourself, equal in deformity and wickedness."

"Slave, I before reasoned with you, but you have proved yourself unworthy of my condescension. Remember that I have power; you believe yourself miserable, but I can make you so wretched that the light of day will be hateful to you. You are my creator, but I am your master; — obey!"

"The hour of my weakness is past, and the period of your power is arrived. Your threats cannot move me to do an act of wickedness; but they confirm me in a resolution of not creating you a companion in vice. Shall I, in cool blood, set loose upon the earth a dæmon, whose delight is in death and wretchedness. Begone! I am firm, and your words will only exasperate my rage."

The monster saw my determination in my face, and gnashed his teeth in the impotence of anger. "Shall each man," cried he, "find a wife for his bosom, and each beast have his mate, and I be alone? I had feelings of affection, and they were requited by detestation and scorn. Man, you may hate; but beware! Your hours will pass in dread and misery, and soon the bolt will fall which must ravish from you your happiness for ever. Are you to be happy, while I grovel in the intensity of my wretchedness? You can blast my other passions; but revenge remains — revenge, henceforth dearer than light or food! I may die; but first you, my tyrant and tormentor, shall curse the sun that gazes on your misery. Beware; for I am fearless, and therefore powerful. I will watch with the wiliness of a snake, that I may sting with its venom. Man, you shall repent of the injuries you inflict."

"Devil, cease; and do not poison the air with these sounds of malice. I have declared my resolution to you, and I am no coward to bend beneath words. Leave me; I am inexorable."

"It is well. I go; but remember, I shall be with you on your wedding-night."

I started forward, and exclaimed, "Villain! before you sign my death-warrant, be sure that you are yourself safe.”

I would have seized him; but he eluded me, and quitted the house with precipitation: in a few moments I saw him in his boat, which shot across the waters with an arrowy swiftness, and was soon lost amidst the waves.

All was again silent; but his words rung in my ears. I burned with rage to pursue the murderer of my peace, and precipitate him into the ocean. I walked up and down my room hastily and perturbed, while my imagination conjured up a thousand images to torment and sting me. Why had I not followed him, and closed with him in mortal strife? But I had suffered him to depart, and he had directed his course towards the main land. I shuddered to think who might be the next victim sacrificed to his insatiate revenge. And then I thought again of his words — “*I will be with you on your wedding-night*.” That then was the period fixed for the fulfilment of my destiny. In that hour I should die, and at once satisfy and extinguish his malice. The prospect did not move me to fear; yet when I thought of my beloved Elizabeth, — of her tears and endless sorrow, when she should find her lover so barbarously snatched from her, — tears, the first I had shed for many months, streamed from my eyes, and I resolved not to fall before my enemy without a bitter struggle.

The night passed away, and the sun rose from the ocean; my feelings became calmer, if it may be called calmness, when the violence of rage sinks into the depths of despair. I left the house, the horrid scene of the last night's contention, and walked on the beach of the sea, which I almost regarded as an insuperable barrier between me and my fellow-creatures; nay, a wish that such should prove the fact stole across me. I desired that I might pass my life on that barren rock, wearily it is true, but uninterrupted by any sudden shock of misery. If I returned, it was to be sacrificed, or to see those whom I most loved die under the grasp of a dæmon whom I had myself created.

I walked about the isle like a restless spectre, separated from all it loved, and miserable in the separation. When it became noon, and the sun rose higher, I lay down on the grass, and was overpowered by a deep sleep. I had been awake the whole of the preceding night, my nerves were agitated, and my eyes inflamed by watching and misery. The sleep into which I now sunk refreshed me; and when I awoke, I again felt as if I belonged to a race of human beings like myself, and I began to reflect upon what had passed with greater composure; yet still the words of the fiend rung in my ears like a death-knell, they appeared like a dream, yet distinct and oppressive as a reality.

The sun had far descended, and I still sat on the shore, satisfying my appetite, which had become ravenous, with an oaten cake, when I saw a fishing-boat land close to me, and one of the men brought me a packet; it contained letters from Geneva, and one from Clerval, entreating me to join him. He said that nearly a year had elapsed since we had quitted Switzerland, and France was yet unvisited. He entreated me, therefore, to leave my solitary isle, and meet him at Perth, in a week from that time, when we might arrange the plan of our future proceedings. This letter in a degree recalled me to life, and I determined to quit my island at the expiration of two days.

Yet, before I departed, there was a task to perform, on which I shuddered to reflect: I must pack my chemical instruments; and for that purpose I must enter the room which had been the scene of my odious work, and I must handle those utensils, the sight of which was sickening to me. The next morning, at day-break, I summoned sufficient courage, and unlocked the door of my laboratory. The remains of the half-finished creature, whom I had destroyed, lay scattered on the floor, and I almost felt as if I had mangled the living flesh of a human being. I paused to collect myself, and then entered the chamber. With trembling hand I conveyed the instruments out of the room; but I reflected that I ought not to leave the relics of my work to excite the horror and suspicion of the peasants, and I accordingly put them into a basket, with a great quantity of stones, and laying them up, determined to throw them into the sea that very night; and in the mean time I sat upon the beach, employed in cleaning and arranging my chemical apparatus.

Nothing could be more complete than the alteration that had taken place in my feelings since the night of the appearance of the dæmon. I had before regarded my promise with a gloomy despair, as a thing that, with whatever consequences, must be fulfilled; but I now felt as if a film had been taken from before my eyes, and that I, for the first time, saw clearly. The idea of renewing my labours did not for one instant occur to me; the threat I had heard weighed on my thoughts, but I did not reflect that a voluntary act of mine could avert it. I had resolved in my own mind, that to create another like the fiend I had first made would be an act of the basest and most atrocious selfishness; and I banished from my mind every thought that could lead to a different conclusion.

Between two and three in the morning the moon rose; and I then, putting my basket aboard a little skiff, sailed out about four miles from the shore. The scene was perfectly solitary: a few boats were returning towards land, but I sailed away from them. I felt as if I was about the commission of a dreadful crime, and avoided with shuddering anxiety any encounter with my fellow-creatures. At one time the moon, which had before been clear, was suddenly overspread by a thick cloud, and I took advantage of the moment of darkness, and cast my basket into the sea; I listened to the gurgling sound as it sunk, and then sailed away from the spot. The sky became clouded; but the air was pure, although chilled by the north-east breeze that was then rising. But it refreshed me, and filled me with such agreeable sensations, that I resolved to prolong my stay on the water, and fixing the rudder in a direct position, stretched myself at the bottom of the boat. Clouds hid the moon, every thing was obscure, and I heard only the sound of the boat, as its keel cut through the waves; the murmur lulled me, and in a short time I slept soundly.

I do not know how long I remained in this situation, but when I awoke I found that the sun had already mounted considerably. The wind was high, and the waves continually threatened the safety of my little skiff. I found that the wind was north-east, and must have driven me far from the coast from which I had embarked. I endeavoured to change my course, but quickly found that if I again made the attempt the boat would be instantly filled with water. Thus situated, my only resource was to drive before the wind. I confess that I felt a few sensations of terror. I had no compass with me, and was so little acquainted with the geography of this part of the world that the sun was of little benefit to me. I might be driven into the wide Atlantic, and feel all the tortures of starvation, or be swallowed up in the immeasurable waters that roared and buffeted around me. I had already been out many hours, and felt the torment of a burning thirst, a prelude to my other sufferings. I looked on the heavens, which were covered by clouds that flew before the wind only to be replaced by others: I looked upon the sea, it was to be my grave. “Fiend,” I exclaimed, “your task is already fulfilled!” I thought of Elizabeth, of my father, and of Clerval; and sunk into a reverie, so despairing and frightful, that even now, when the scene is on the point of closing before me for ever, I shudder to reflect on it.

Some hours passed thus; but by degrees, as the sun declined towards the horizon, the wind died away into a gentle breeze, and the sea became free from breakers. But these gave place to a heavy swell; I felt sick, and hardly able to hold the rudder, when suddenly I saw a line of high land towards the south.

Almost spent, as I was, by fatigue, and the dreadful suspense I endured for several hours, this sudden certainty of life rushed like a flood of warm joy to my heart, and tears gushed from my eyes.

How mutable are our feelings, and how strange is that clinging love we have of life even in the excess of misery! I constructed another sail with a part of my dress, and eagerly steered my course towards the land. It had a wild and rocky appearance;

but as I approached nearer, I easily perceived the traces of cultivation. I saw vessels near the shore, and found myself suddenly transported back to the neighbourhood of civilized man. I eagerly traced the windings of the land, and hailed a steeple which I at length saw issuing from behind a small promontory. As I was in a state of extreme debility, I resolved to sail directly towards the town as a place where I could most easily procure nourishment. Fortunately I had money with me. As I turned the promontory, I perceived a small neat town and a good harbour, which I entered, my heart bounding with joy at my unexpected escape.

As I was occupied in fixing the boat and arranging the sails, several people crowded towards the spot. They seemed very much surprised at my appearance; but, instead of offering me any assistance, whispered together with gestures that at any other time might have produced in me a slight sensation of alarm. As it was, I merely remarked that they spoke English; and I therefore addressed them in that language: “My good friends,” said I, “will you be so kind as to tell me the name of this town, and inform me where I am?"

"You will know that soon enough," replied a man with a gruff voice. "May be you are come to a place that will not prove much to your taste; but you will not be consulted as to your quarters, I promise you."

I was exceedingly surprised on receiving so rude an answer from a stranger; and I was also disconcerted on perceiving the frowning and angry countenances of his companions. "Why do you answer me so roughly?" I replied: "surely it is not the custom of Englishmen to receive strangers so inhospitably."

"I do not know," said the man, "what the custom of the English may be; but it is the custom of the Irish to hate villains."

While this strange dialogue continued, I perceived the crowd rapidly increase. Their faces expressed a mixture of curiosity and anger, which annoyed, and in some degree alarmed me. I inquired the way to the inn; but no one replied. I then moved forward, and a murmuring sound arose from the crowd as they followed and surrounded me; when an ill-looking man approaching, tapped me on the shoulder, and said, “Come, Sir, you must follow me to Mr. Kirwin’s, to give an account of yourself.”

“Who is Mr. Kirwin? Why am I to give an account of myself? Is not this a free country?”

“Aye, Sir, free enough for honest folks. Mr. Kirwin is a magistrate; and you are to give an account of the death of a gentleman who was found murdered here last night.”

This answer startled me; but I presently recovered myself. I was innocent; that could easily be proved: accordingly I followed my conductor in silence, and was led to one of the best houses in the town. I was ready to sink from fatigue and hunger; but, being surrounded by a crowd, I thought it politic to rouse all my strength, that no physical debility might be construed into apprehension or conscious guilt. Little did I then expect the calamity that was in a few moments to overwhelm me, and extinguish in horror and despair all fear of ignominy or death.

I must pause here; for it requires all my fortitude to recall the memory of the frightful events which I am about to relate, in proper detail, to my recollection.

Chapter IV

I WAS soon introduced into the presence of the magistrate, an old benevolent man, with calm and mild manners. He looked upon me, however, with some degree of severity; and then, turning towards my conductors, he asked who appeared as witnesses on this occasion.

About half a dozen men came forward; and one being selected by the magistrate, he deposed, that he had been out fishing the night before with his son and brother-in-law, Daniel Nugent, when, about ten o'clock, they observed a strong northerly blast rising, and they accordingly put in for port. It was a very dark night, as the moon had not yet risen; they did not land at the harbour, but, as they had been accustomed, at a creek about two miles below. He walked on first, carrying a part of the fishing tackle, and his companions followed him at some distance. As he was proceeding along the sands, he struck his foot against something, and fell all his length on the ground. His companions came up to assist him; and, by the light of their lantern, they found that he had fallen on the body of a man, who was to all appearance dead. Their first supposition was, that it was the corpse of some person who had been drowned, and was thrown on shore by the waves; but, upon examination, they found that the clothes were not wet, and even that the body was not then cold. They instantly carried it to the cottage of an old woman near the spot, and endeavoured, but in vain, to restore it to life. He appeared to be a handsome young man, about five and twenty years of age. He had apparently been strangled; for there was no sign of any violence, except the black mark of fingers on his neck.

The first part of this deposition did not in the least interest me; but when the mark of the fingers was mentioned, I remembered the murder of my brother, and felt myself extremely agitated; my limbs trembled, and a mist came over my eyes, which obliged me to lean on a chair for support. The magistrate observed me with a keen eye, and of course drew an unfavourable augury from my manner.

The son confirmed his father's account: but when Daniel Nugent was called, he swore positively that, just before the fall of his companion, he saw a boat, with a single man in it, at a short distance from the shore; and, as far as he could judge by the light of a few stars, it was the same boat in which I had just landed.

A woman deposed, that she lived near the beach, and was standing at the door of her cottage, waiting for the return of the fishermen, about an hour before she heard of the discovery of the body, when she saw a boat, with only one man in it, push off from that part of the shore where the corpse was afterwards found.

Another woman confirmed the account of the fishermen having brought the body into her house; it was not cold. They put it into a bed, and rubbed it; and Daniel went to the town for an apothecary, but life was quite gone.

Several other men were examined concerning my landing; and they agreed, that, with the strong north wind that had arisen during the night, it was very probable that I had beaten about for many hours, and had been obliged to return nearly to the same spot from which I had departed. Besides, they observed that it appeared that I had brought the body from another place, and it was likely, that as I did not appear to know the shore, I might have put into the harbour ignorant of the distance of the town of —— from the place where I had deposited the corpse.

Mr. Kirwin, on hearing this evidence, desired that I should be taken into the room where the body lay for interment that it might be observed what effect the sight of it would produce upon me. This idea was probably suggested by the extreme agitation I had exhibited when the mode of the murder had been described. I was accordingly conducted, by the magistrate and several other persons, to the inn. I could not help being struck by the strange coincidences that had taken place during this eventful night; but, knowing that I had been conversing with several persons in the island I had inhabited about the time that the body had been found, I was perfectly tranquil as to the consequences of the affair.

I entered the room where the corpse lay, and was led up to the coffin. How can I describe my sensations on beholding it? I feel yet parched with horror, nor can I reflect on that terrible moment without shuddering and agony, that faintly reminds me of the anguish of the recognition. The trial, the presence of the magistrate and witnesses, passed like a dream from my memory, when I saw the lifeless form of Henry Clerval stretched before me. I gasped for breath; and, throwing myself on the body, I exclaimed, “Have my murderous machinations

deprived you also, my dearest Henry, of life? Two I have already destroyed; other victims await their destiny: but you, Clerval, my friend, my benefactor”
——

The human frame could no longer support the agonizing suffering that I endured, and I was carried out of the room in strong convulsions.

A fever succeeded to this. I lay for two months on the point of death: my ravings, as I afterwards heard, were frightful; I called myself the murderer of William, of Justine, and of Clerval. Sometimes I entreated my attendants to assist me in the destruction of the fiend by whom I was tormented; and, at others, I felt the fingers of the monster already grasping my neck, and screamed aloud with agony and terror. Fortunately, as I spoke my native language, Mr. Kirwin alone understood me; but my gestures and bitter cries were sufficient to affright the other witnesses.

Why did I not die? More miserable than man ever was before, why did I not sink into forgetfulness and rest? Death snatches away many blooming children, the only hopes of their doating parents: how many brides and youthful lovers have been one day in the bloom of health and hope, and the next a prey for worms and the decay of the tomb! Of what materials was I made, that I could thus resist so many shocks, which, like the turning of the wheel, continually renewed the torture.

But I was doomed to live; and, in two months, found myself as awaking from a dream, in a prison, stretched on a wretched bed, surrounded by gaolers, turnkeys, bolts, and all the miserable apparatus of a dungeon. It was morning, I remember, when I thus awoke to understanding: I had forgotten the particulars of what had happened, and only felt as if some great misfortune had suddenly overwhelmed me; but when I looked around, and saw the barred windows, and the squalidness of the room in which I was, all flashed across my memory, and I groaned bitterly.

This sound disturbed an old woman who was sleeping in a chair beside me. She was a hired nurse, the wife of one of the turnkeys, and her countenance expressed all those bad qualities which often characterize that class. The lines of her face were hard and rude, like that of persons accustomed to see without sympathizing in sights of misery. Her tone expressed her entire indifference; she addressed me in English, and the voice struck me as one that I had heard during my sufferings:

“Are you better now, Sir?” said she.

I replied in the same language, with a feeble voice, “I believe I am; but if it be all true, if indeed I did not dream, I am sorry that I am still alive to feel this misery and horror.”

“For that matter,” replied the old woman, “if you mean about the gentleman you murdered, I believe that it were better for you if you were dead, for I fancy it will go hard with you; but you will be hung when the next sessions come on. However, that’s none of my business, I am sent to nurse you, and get you well; I do my duty with a safe conscience, it were well if every body did the same.”

I turned with loathing from the woman who could utter so unfeeling a speech to a person just saved, on the very edge of death; but I felt languid, and unable to reflect on all that had passed. The whole series of my life appeared to me as a dream; I sometimes doubted if indeed it were all true, for it never presented itself to my mind with the force of reality.

As the images that floated before me became more distinct, I grew feverish; a darkness pressed around me; no one was near me who soothed me with the gentle voice of love; no dear hand supported me. The physician came and prescribed medicines, and the old woman prepared them for me; but utter carelessness was visible in the first, and the expression of brutality was strongly marked in the visage of the second. Who could be interested in the fate of a murderer, but the hangman who would gain his fee?

These were my first reflections; but I soon learned that Mr. Kirwin had shewn me extreme kindness. He had caused the best room in the prison to be prepared for me (wretched indeed was the best); and it was he who had provided a physician and a nurse. It is true, he seldom came to see me; for, although he ardently desired to relieve the sufferings of every human creature, he did not wish to be present at the agonies and miserable ravings of a murderer. He came, therefore, sometimes to see that I was not neglected; but his visits were short, and at long intervals.

One day, when I was gradually recovering, I was seated in a chair, my eyes half open, and my cheeks livid like those in death, I was overcome by gloom and misery, and often reflected I had better seek death than remain miserably pent up only to be let loose in a world replete with wretchedness. At one time I considered whether I should not declare myself guilty, and suffer the penalty of the law, less innocent than poor Justine had been. Such were my thoughts, when the door of my apartment was opened, and Mr. Kirwin entered. His countenance expressed sympathy and compassion; he drew a chair close to mine, and addressed me in French —

“I fear that this place is very shocking to you; can I do any thing to make you more comfortable?”

“I thank you; but all that you mention is nothing to me: on the whole earth there is no comfort which I am capable of receiving.”

“I know that the sympathy of a stranger can be but of little relief to one borne down as you are by so strange a misfortune. But you will, I hope, soon quit this melancholy abode; for, doubtless, evidence can easily be brought to free you from the criminal charge.”

“That is my least concern: I am, by a course of strange events, become the most miserable of mortals. Persecuted and tortured as I am and have been, can death be any evil to me?”

“Nothing indeed could be more unfortunate and agonizing than the strange chances that have lately occurred. You were thrown, by some surprising accident, on this shore, renowned for its hospitality: seized immediately, and charged with murder. The first sight that was presented to your eyes was the body of your friend, murdered in so unaccountable a manner, and placed, as it were, by some fiend across your path.”

As Mr. Kirwin said this, notwithstanding the agitation I endured on this retrospect of my sufferings, I also felt considerable surprise at the knowledge he seemed to possess concerning me. I suppose some astonishment was exhibited in my countenance; for Mr. Kirwin hastened to say —

“It was not until a day or two after your illness that I thought of examining your dress, that I might discover some trace by which I could send to your relations an account of your misfortune and illness. I found several letters, and, among others, one which I discovered from its commencement to be from your father. I instantly wrote to Geneva: nearly two months have elapsed since the departure of my letter. — But you are ill; even now you tremble: you are unfit for agitation of any kind.”

“This suspense is a thousand times worse than the most horrible event: tell me what new scene of death has been acted, and whose murder I am now to lament.”

“Your family is perfectly well,” said Mr. Kirwin, with gentleness; “and some one, a friend, is come to visit you."

I know not by what chain of thought the idea presented itself, but it instantly darted into my mind that the murderer had come to mock at my misery, and taunt me with the death of Clerval, as a new incitement for me to comply with his hellish desires. I put my hand before my eyes, and cried out in agony —

"Oh! take him away! I cannot see him; for God's sake, do not let him enter!"

Mr. Kirwin regarded me with a troubled countenance. He could not help regarding my exclamation as a presumption of my guilt, and said, in rather a severe tone —

"I should have thought, young man, that the presence of your father would have been welcome, instead of inspiring such violent repugnance."

"My father!" cried I, while every feature and every muscle was relaxed from anguish to pleasure. "Is my father, indeed, come? How kind, how very kind. But where is he, why does he not hasten to me?"

My change of manner surprised and pleased the magistrate; perhaps he thought that my former exclamation was a momentary return of delirium, and now he instantly resumed his former benevolence. He rose, and quitted the room with my nurse, and in a moment my father entered it.

Nothing, at this moment, could have given me greater pleasure than the arrival of my father. I stretched out my hand to him, and cried —

"Are you then safe — and Elizabeth — and Ernest?"

My father calmed me with assurances of their welfare, and endeavoured, by dwelling on these subjects so interesting to my heart, to raise my desponding spirits; but he soon felt that a prison cannot be the abode of cheerfulness. "What a place is this that you inhabit, my son!" said he, looking mournfully at the barred windows, and wretched appearance of the room. "You travelled to seek happiness, but a fatality seems to pursue you. And poor Clerval — "

The name of my unfortunate and murdered

friend was an agitation too great to be endured in my weak state; I shed tears.

“Alas! yes, my father,” replied I; “some destiny of the most horrible kind hangs over me, and I must live to fulfil it, or surely I should have died on the coffin of Henry.”

We were not allowed to converse for any length of time, for the precarious state of my health rendered every precaution necessary that could insure tranquillity. Mr. Kirwin came in, and insisted that my strength should not be exhausted by too much exertion. But the appearance of my father was to me like that of my good angel, and I gradually recovered my health.

As my sickness quitted me, I was absorbed by a gloomy and black melancholy, that nothing could dissipate. The image of Clerval was for ever before me, ghastly and murdered. More than once the agitation into which these reflections threw me made my friends dread a dangerous relapse. Alas! why did they preserve so miserable and detested a life? It was surely that I might fulfil my destiny, which is now drawing to a close. Soon, oh, very soon, will death extinguish these throbbings, and relieve me from the mighty weight of anguish that bears me to the dust; and, in executing the award of justice, I shall also sink to rest. Then the appearance of death was distant, although the wish was ever present to my thoughts; and I often sat for hours motionless and speechless, wishing for some mighty revolution that might bury me and my destroyer in its ruins.

The season of the assizes approached. I had already been three months in prison; and although I was still weak, and in continual danger of a relapse, I was obliged to travel nearly a hundred miles to the county-town, where the court was held. Mr. Kirwin charged himself with every care of collecting witnesses, and arranging my defence. I was spared the disgrace of appearing publicly as a criminal, as the case was not brought before the court that decides on life and death. The grand jury rejected the bill, on its being proved that I was on the Orkney Islands at the hour the body of my friend was found, and a fortnight after my removal I was liberated from prison.

My father was enraptured on finding me freed from the vexations of a criminal charge, that I was again allowed to breathe the fresh atmosphere, and allowed to return to my native country. I did not participate in these feelings; for to me the walls of a dungeon or a palace were alike hateful. The cup of life was poisoned for ever; and although the sun shone upon me, as upon the happy and gay of heart, I saw around me nothing but a dense and frightful darkness, penetrated by no light but the glimmer of two eyes that glared upon me. Sometimes they were the expressive eyes of Henry, languishing in death, the dark orbs nearly covered by the lids, and the long black lashes that fringed them; sometimes it was the watery clouded eyes of the monster, as I first saw them in my chamber at Ingolstadt.

My father tried to awaken in me the feelings of affection. He talked of Geneva, which I should soon visit — of Elizabeth, and Ernest; but these words only drew deep groans from me. Sometimes, indeed, I felt a wish for happiness; and thought, with melancholy delight, of my beloved cousin; or longed, with a devouring *maladie du pays*, to see once more the blue lake and rapid Rhone, that had been so dear to me in early childhood: but my general state of feeling was a torpor, in which a prison was as welcome a residence as the divinest scene in nature; and these fits were seldom interrupted, but by paroxysms of anguish and despair. At these moments I often endeavoured to put an end to the existence I loathed; and it required unceasing attendance and vigilance to restrain me from committing some dreadful act of violence.

I remember, as I quitted the prison, I heard one of the men say, “He may be innocent of the murder, but he has certainly a bad conscience.” These words struck me. A bad conscience! yes, surely I had one. William, Justine, and Clerval, had died through my infernal machinations; “And whose death,” cried I, “is to finish the tragedy? Ah! my father, do not remain in this wretched country; take me where I may forget myself, my existence, and all the world."

My father easily acceded to my desire; and, after having taken leave of Mr. Kirwin, we hastened to Dublin. I felt as if I was relieved from a heavy weight, when the packet sailed with a fair wind from Ireland, and I had quitted for ever the country which had been to me the scene of so much misery.

It was midnight. My father slept in the cabin; and I lay on the deck, looking at the stars, and listening to the dashing of the waves. I hailed the darkness that shut Ireland from my sight, and my pulse beat with a feverish joy, when I reflected that I should soon see Geneva. The past appeared to me in the light of a frightful dream; yet the vessel in which I was, the wind that blew me from the detested shore of Ireland, and the sea which surrounded me, told me too forcibly that I was deceived by no vision, and that Clerval, my friend and dearest companion, had fallen a victim to me and the monster of my creation. I repassed, in my memory, my whole life; my quiet happiness while residing with my family in

Geneva, the death of my mother, and my departure for Ingolstadt. I remembered shuddering at the mad enthusiasm that hurried me on to the creation of my hideous enemy, and I called to mind the night during which he first lived. I was unable to pursue the train of thought; a thousand feelings pressed upon me, and I wept bitterly.

Ever since my recovery from the fever I had been in the custom of taking every night a small quantity of laudanum; for it was by means of this drug only that I was enabled to gain the rest necessary for the preservation of life. Oppressed by the recollection of my various misfortunes, I now took a double dose, and soon slept profoundly. But sleep did not afford me respite from thought and misery; my dreams presented a thousand objects that scared me. Towards morning I was possessed by a kind of night-mare; I felt the fiend's grasp in my neck, and could not free myself from it; groans and cries rung in my ears. My father, who was watching over me, perceiving my restlessness, awoke me, and pointed to the port of Holyhead, which we were now entering.

Chapter V

WE had resolved not to go to London, but to cross the country to Portsmouth, and thence to embark for Havre. I preferred this plan principally because I dreaded to see again those places in which I had enjoyed a few moments of tranquillity with my beloved Clerval. I thought with horror of seeing again those persons whom we had been accustomed to visit together, and who might make inquiries concerning an event, the very remembrance of which made me again feel the pang I endured when I gazed on his lifeless form in the inn at ——.

As for my father, his desires and exertions were bounded to the again seeing me restored to health and peace of mind. His tenderness and attentions were unremitting; my grief and gloom was obstinate, but he would not despair. Sometimes he thought that I felt deeply the degradation of being obliged to answer a charge of murder, and he endeavoured to prove to me the futility of pride.

“Alas! my father,” said I, “how little do you know me. Human beings, their feelings and passions, would indeed be degraded, if such a wretch as I felt pride. Justine, poor unhappy Justine, was as innocent as I, and she suffered the same charge; she died for it; and I am the cause of this — I murdered her. William, Justine, and Henry — they all died by my hands.”

My father had often, during my imprisonment, heard me make the same assertion; when I thus accused myself, he sometimes seemed to desire an explanation, and at others he appeared to consider it as caused by delirium, and that, during my illness, some idea of this kind had presented itself to my imagination, the remembrance of which I preserved in my convalescence. I avoided explanation, and maintained a continual silence concerning the wretch I had created. I had a feeling that I should be supposed mad, and this for ever chained my tongue, when I would have given the whole world to have confided the fatal secret.

Upon this occasion my father said, with an expression of unbounded wonder, “What do you mean, Victor? are you mad? My dear son, I entreat you never to make such an assertion again.”

“I am not mad,” I cried energetically; “the sun and the heavens, who have viewed my operations, can bear witness of my truth. I am the assassin of those most innocent victims; they died by my machinations. A thousand times would I have shed my own blood, drop by drop, to have saved their lives; but I could not, my father, indeed I could not sacrifice the whole human race.”

The conclusion of this speech convinced my father that my ideas were deranged, and he instantly changed the subject of our conversation, and endeavoured to alter the course of my thoughts. He wished as much as possible to obliterate the memory of the scenes that had taken place in Ireland, and never alluded to them, or suffered me to speak of my misfortunes.

As time passed away I became more calm: misery had her dwelling in my heart, but I no longer talked in the same incoherent manner of my own crimes; sufficient for me was the consciousness of them. By the utmost self-violence, I curbed the imperious voice of wretchedness, which sometimes desired to declare itself to the whole world; and my manners were calmer and more composed than they had ever been since my journey to the sea of ice.

We arrived at Havre on the 8th of May, and instantly proceeded to Paris, where my father had some business which detained us a few weeks. In this city, I received the following letter from Elizabeth:—

"*To* VICTOR FRANKENSTEIN.

“MY DEAREST FRIEND,

“It gave me the greatest pleasure to receive a letter from my uncle dated at Paris; you are no longer at a formidable distance, and I may hope to see you in less than a fortnight. My poor cousin, how much you must have suffered! I expect to see you looking even more ill than when you quitted Geneva. This winter has been passed most miserably, tortured as I have been by anxious suspense; yet I hope to see peace in your countenance, and to find that your heart is not totally devoid of comfort and tranquillity.

“Yet I fear that the same feelings now exist that made you so miserable a year ago, even perhaps augmented by time. I would not disturb you at this period, when so many misfortunes weigh upon you; but a conversation that I had with my uncle previous to his departure renders some explanation necessary before we meet.

“Explanation! you may possibly say; what can Elizabeth have to explain? If you really say this, my questions are answered, and I have no more to do than to sign myself your affectionate cousin. But you are distant from me, and it is possible that you may dread, and yet be pleased with this explanation; and, in a probability of this being the case, I dare not any longer postpone writing what, during your absence, I have often wished to express to you, but have never had the courage to begin.

"You well know, Victor, that our union had been the favourite plan of your parents ever since our infancy. We were told this when young, and taught to look forward to it as an event that would certainly take place. We were affectionate playfellows during childhood, and, I believe, dear and valued friends to one another as we grew older. But as brother and sister often entertain a lively affection towards each other, without desiring a more intimate union, may not such also be our case? Tell me, dearest Victor. Answer me, I conjure you, by our mutual happiness, with simple truth — Do you not love another?

"You have travelled; you have spent several years of your life at Ingolstadt; and I confess to you, my friend, that when I saw you last autumn so unhappy, flying to solitude, from the society of every creature, I could not help supposing that you might regret our connexion, and believe yourself bound in honour to fulfil the wishes of your parents, although they opposed themselves to your inclinations. But this is false reasoning. I confess to you, my cousin, that I love you, and that in my airy dreams of futurity you have been my constant friend and companion. But it is your happiness I desire as well as my own, when I declare to you, that our marriage would render me eternally miserable, unless it were the dictate of your own free choice. Even now I weep to think, that, borne down as you are by the cruelest misfortunes, you may stifle, by the word *honour*, all hope of that love and happiness which would alone restore you to yourself. I, who have so interested an affection for you, may increase your miseries ten-fold, by being an obstacle to your wishes. Ah, Victor, be assured that your cousin and playmate has too sincere a love for you not to be made miserable by this supposition. Be happy, my friend; and if you obey me in this one request, remain satisfied that nothing on earth will have the power to interrupt my tranquillity.

“Do not let this letter disturb you; do not answer it to-morrow, or the next day, or even until you come, if it will give you pain. My uncle will send me news of your health; and if I see but one smile on your lips when we meet, occasioned by this or any other exertion of mine, I shall need no other happiness.

“ELIZABETH LAVENZA.

“Geneva, May 18th, 17— .”

This letter revived in my memory what I had before forgotten, the threat of the fiend — “*I will be with you on your wedding-night!*” Such was my sentence, and on that night would the dæmon employ every art to destroy me, and tear me from the glimpse of happiness which promised partly to console my sufferings. On that night he had determined to consummate his crimes by my death. Well, be it so; a deadly struggle would then assuredly take place, in which if he was victorious, I should be at peace, and his power over me be at an end. If he were vanquished, I should be a free man. Alas! what freedom? such as the peasant enjoys when his family have been massacred before his eyes, his cottage burnt, his lands laid waste, and he is turned adrift, homeless, pennyless, and alone, but free. Such would be my liberty, except that in my Elizabeth I possessed a treasure; alas! balanced by those horrors of remorse and guilt, which would pursue me until death.

Sweet and beloved Elizabeth! I read and re-read her letter, and some softened feelings stole into my heart, and dared to whisper paradisaical dreams of love and joy; but the apple was already eaten, and the angel's arm bared to drive me from all hope. Yet I would die to make her happy. If the monster executed his threat, death was inevitable; yet, again, I considered whether my marriage would hasten my fate. My destruction might indeed arrive a few months sooner; but if my torturer should suspect that I postponed it, influenced by his menaces, he would surely find other, and perhaps more dreadful means of revenge. He had vowed *to be with me on my wedding-night*, yet he did not consider that threat as binding him to peace in the mean time; for, as if to shew me that he was not yet satiated with blood, he had murdered Clerval immediately after the enunciation of his threats. I resolved, therefore, that if my immediate union with my cousin would conduce either to her's or my father's happiness, my adversary's designs against my life should not retard it a single hour.

In this state of mind I wrote to Elizabeth. My letter was calm and affectionate. "I fear, my beloved girl," I said, "little happiness remains for us on earth; yet all that I may one day enjoy is concentered in you. Chase away your idle fears; to you alone do I consecrate my life, and my endeavours for contentment. I have one secret, Elizabeth, a dreadful one; when revealed to you, it will chill your frame with horror, and then, far from being surprised at my misery, you will only wonder that I survive what

I have endured. I will confide this tale of misery and terror to you the day after our marriage shall take place; for, my sweet cousin, there must be perfect confidence between us. But until then, I conjure you, do not mention or allude to it. This I most earnestly entreat, and I know you will comply."

In about a week after the arrival of Elizabeth's letter, we returned to Geneva. My cousin welcomed me with warm affection; yet tears were in her eyes, as she beheld my emaciated frame and feverish cheeks. I saw a change in her also. She was thinner, and had lost much of that heavenly vivacity that had before charmed me; but her gentleness, and soft looks of compassion, made her a more fit companion for one blasted and miserable as I was.

The tranquillity which I now enjoyed did not endure. Memory brought madness with it; and when I thought on what had passed, a real insanity possessed me; sometimes I was furious, and burnt with rage, sometimes low and despondent. I neither spoke or looked, but sat motionless, bewildered by the multitude of miseries that overcame me.

Elizabeth alone had the power to draw me from these fits; her gentle voice would soothe me when transported by passion, and inspire me with human feelings when sunk in torpor. She wept with me, and for me. When reason returned, she would remonstrate, and endeavour to inspire me with resignation. Ah! it is well for the unfortunate to be resigned, but for the guilty there is no peace. The agonies of remorse poison the luxury there is otherwise sometimes found in indulging the excess of grief.

Soon after my arrival my father spoke of my immediate marriage with my cousin. I remained silent.

“Have you, then, some other attachment?”

“None on earth. I love Elizabeth, and look forward to our union with delight. Let the day therefore be fixed; and on it I will consecrate myself, in life or death, to the happiness of my cousin.”

“My dear Victor, do not speak thus. Heavy misfortunes have befallen us; but let us only cling closer to what remains, and transfer our love for those whom we have lost to those who yet live. Our circle will be small, but bound close by the ties of affection and mutual misfortune. And when time shall have softened your despair, new and dear objects of care will be born to replace those of whom we have been so cruelly deprived."

Such were the lessons of my father. But to me the remembrance of the threat returned: nor can you wonder, that, omnipotent as the fiend had yet been in his deeds of blood, I should almost regard him as invincible; and that when he had pronounced the words, "*I shall be with you on your wedding-night*," I should regard the threatened fate as unavoidable. But death was no evil to me, if the loss of Elizabeth were balanced with it; and I therefore, with a contented and even cheerful countenance, agreed with my father, that if my cousin would consent, the ceremony should take place in ten days, and thus put, as I imagined, the seal to my fate.

Great God! if for one instant I had thought what might be the hellish intention of my fiendish adversary, I would rather have banished myself for ever from my native country, and wandered a friendless outcast over the earth, than have consented to this miserable marriage. But, as if possessed of magic powers, the monster had blinded me to his real intentions; and when I thought that I prepared only my own death, I hastened that of a far dearer victim.

As the period fixed for our marriage drew nearer, whether from cowardice or a prophetic feeling, I felt my heart sink within me. But I concealed my feelings by an appearance of hilarity, that brought smiles and joy to the countenance of my father, but hardly deceived the ever-watchful and nicer eye of Elizabeth. She looked forward to our union with placid contentment, not unmingled with a little fear, which past misfortunes had impressed, that what now appeared certain and tangible happiness, might soon dissipate into an airy dream, and leave no trace but deep and everlasting regret.

Preparations were made for the event; congratulatory visits were received; and all wore a smiling appearance. I shut up, as well as I could, in my own heart the anxiety that preyed there, and entered with seeming earnestness into the plans of my father, although they might only serve as the decorations of my tragedy. A house was purchased for us near Cologny, by which we should enjoy the pleasures of the country, and yet be so near Geneva as to see my father every day; who would still reside within the walls, for the benefit of Ernest, that he might follow his studies at the schools.

In the mean time I took every precaution to defend my person, in case the fiend should openly attack me. I carried pistols and a dagger constantly about me, and was ever on the watch to prevent artifice; and by these means gained a greater degree of tranquillity. Indeed, as the period approached, the threat appeared more as a delusion, not to be regarded as worthy to disturb my peace, while the happiness I hoped for in my marriage wore a greater appearance of certainty, as the day fixed for its solemnization drew nearer, and I heard it continually spoken of as an occurrence which no accident could possibly prevent.

Elizabeth seemed happy; my tranquil demeanour contributed greatly to calm her mind. But on the day that was to fulfil my wishes and my destiny, she was melancholy, and a presentiment of evil pervaded her; and perhaps also she thought of the dreadful secret, which I had promised to reveal to her the following day. My father was in the mean time overjoyed, and, in the bustle of preparation, only observed in the melancholy of his niece the diffidence of a bride.

After the ceremony was performed, a large party assembled at my father's; but it was agreed that Elizabeth and I should pass the afternoon and night at Evian, and return to Cologny the next morning. As the day was fair, and the wind favourable, we resolved to go by water.

Those were the last moments of my life during which I enjoyed the feeling of happiness. We passed rapidly along: the sun was hot, but we were sheltered from its rays by a kind of canopy, while we enjoyed the beauty of the scene, sometimes on one side of the lake, where we saw Mont Salêve, the pleasant banks of Montalêgre, and at a distance, surmounting all, the beautiful Mont Blânc, and the assemblage of snowy mountains that in vain endeavour to emulate her; sometimes coasting the opposite banks, we saw the mighty Jura opposing its dark side to the ambition that would quit its native country, and an almost insurmountable barrier to the invader who should wish to enslave it.

I took the hand of Elizabeth: "You are sorrowful, my love. Ah! if you knew what I have suffered, and what I may yet endure, you would endeavour to let me taste the quiet, and freedom from despair, that this one day at least permits me to enjoy."

"Be happy, my dear Victor," replied Elizabeth; "there is, I hope, nothing to distress you; and be assured that if a lively joy is not painted in my face, my heart is contented. Something whispers to me not to depend too much on the prospect that is opened before us; but I will not listen to such a sinister voice. Observe how fast we move along, and how the clouds which sometimes obscure, and sometimes rise above the dome of Mont Blânc, render this scene of beauty still more interesting. Look also at the innumerable fish that are swimming in the clear waters, where we can distinguish every pebble that lies at the bottom. What a divine day! how happy and serene all nature appears!"

Thus Elizabeth endeavoured to divert her thoughts and mine from all reflection upon melancholy subjects. But her temper was fluctuating; joy for a few instants shone in her eyes, but it continually gave place to distraction and reverie.

The sun sunk lower in the heavens; we passed the river Drance, and observed its path through the chasms of the higher, and the glens of the lower hills. The Alps here come closer to the lake, and we approached the amphitheatre of mountains which forms its eastern boundary. The spire of Evian shone under the woods that surrounded it, and the range of mountain above mountain by which it was overhung.

The wind, which had hitherto carried us along with amazing rapidity, sunk at sunset to a light breeze; the soft air just ruffled the water, and caused a pleasant motion among the trees as we approached the shore, from which it wafted the most delightful scent of flowers and hay. The sun sunk beneath the horizon as we landed; and as I touched the shore, I felt those cares and fears revive, which soon were to clasp me, and cling to me for ever.

Chapter VI

IT was eight o’clock when we landed; we walked for a short time on the shore, enjoying the transitory light, and then retired to the inn, and contemplated the lovely scene of waters, woods, and mountains, obscured in darkness, yet still displaying their black outlines.

The wind, which had fallen in the south, now rose with great violence in the west. The moon had reached her summit in the heavens, and was beginning to descend; the clouds swept across it swifter than the flight of the vulture, and dimmed her rays, while the lake reflected the scene of the busy heavens, rendered still busier by the restless waves that were beginning to rise. Suddenly a heavy storm of rain descended.

I had been calm during the day; but so soon as night obscured the shapes of objects, a thousand fears arose in my mind. I was anxious and watchful, while my right hand grasped a pistol which was hidden in my bosom; every sound terrified me; but I resolved that I would sell my life dearly, and not relax the impending conflict until my own life, or that of my adversary, were extinguished.

Elizabeth observed my agitation for some time in timid and fearful silence; at length she said, “What is it that agitates you, my dear Victor? What is it you fear?”

“Oh! peace, peace, my love,” replied I, “this night, and all will be safe: but this night is dreadful, very dreadful.”

I passed an hour in this state of mind, when suddenly I reflected how dreadful the combat which I momentarily expected would be to my wife, and I earnestly entreated her to retire, resolving not to join her until I had obtained some knowledge as to the situation of my enemy.

She left me, and I continued some time walking up and down the passages of the house, and inspecting every corner that might afford a retreat to my adversary. But I discovered no trace of him, and was beginning to conjecture that some fortunate chance had intervened to prevent the execution of his menaces; when suddenly I heard a shrill and dreadful scream. It came from the room into which Elizabeth had retired. As I heard it, the whole truth rushed into my mind, my arms dropped, the motion of every muscle and fibre was suspended; I could feel the blood trickling in my veins, and tingling in the extremities of my limbs. This state lasted but for an instant; the scream was repeated, and I rushed into the room.

Great God! why did I not then expire! Why am I here to relate the destruction of the best hope, and the purest creature of earth. She was there, lifeless and inanimate, thrown across the bed, her head hanging down, and her pale and distorted features half covered by her hair. Every where I turn I see the same figure — her bloodless arms and relaxed form flung by the murderer on its bridal bier. Could I behold this, and live? Alas! life is obstinate, and clings closest where it is most hated. For a moment only did I lose recollection; I fainted.

When I recovered, I found myself surrounded by the people of the inn; their countenances expressed a breathless terror: but the horror of others appeared only as a mockery, a shadow of the feelings that oppressed me. I escaped from them to the room where lay the body of Elizabeth, my love, my wife, so lately living, so dear, so worthy. She had been moved from the posture in which I had first beheld her; and now, as she lay, her head upon her arm, and a handkerchief thrown across her face and neck, I might have supposed her asleep. I rushed towards her, and embraced her with ardour; but the deathly languor and coldness of the limbs told me, that what I now held in my arms had ceased to be the Elizabeth whom I had loved and cherished. The murderous mark of the fiend's grasp was on her neck, and the breath had ceased to issue from her lips.

While I still hung over her in the agony of despair, I happened to look up. The windows of the room had before been darkened; and I felt a kind of panic on seeing the pale yellow light of the moon illuminate the chamber. The shutters had been thrown back; and, with a sensation of horror not to be described, I saw at the open window a figure the most hideous and abhorred. A grin was on the face of the monster; he seemed to jeer, as with his fiendish finger he pointed towards the corpse of my wife. I rushed towards the window, and drawing a pistol from my bosom, shot; but he eluded me, leaped from his station, and, running with the swiftness of lightning, plunged into the lake.

The report of the pistol brought a crowd into the room. I pointed to the spot where he had disappeared, and we followed the track with boats; nets were cast, but in vain. After passing several hours, we returned hopeless, most of my companions believing it to have been a form conjured by my fancy.

After having landed, they proceeded to search the country, parties going in different directions among the woods and vines.

I did not accompany them; I was exhausted: a film covered my eyes, and my skin was parched with the heat of fever. In this state I lay on a bed, hardly conscious of what had happened; my eyes wandered round the room, as if to seek something that I had lost.

At length I remembered that my father would anxiously expect the return of Elizabeth and myself, and that I must return alone. This reflection brought tears into my eyes, and I wept for a long time; but my thoughts rambled to various subjects, reflecting on my misfortunes, and their cause. I was bewildered in a cloud of wonder and horror. The death of William, the execution of Justine, the murder of Clerval, and lastly of my wife; even at that moment I knew not that my only remaining friends were safe from the malignity of the fiend; my father even now might be writhing under his grasp, and Ernest might be dead at his feet. This idea made me shudder, and recalled me to action. I started up, and resolved to return to Geneva with all possible speed.

There were no horses to be procured, and I must return by the lake; but the wind was unfavourable, and the rain fell in torrents. However, it was hardly morning, and I might reasonably hope to arrive by night. I hired men to row, and took an oar myself, for I had always experienced relief from mental torment in bodily exercise. But the overflowing misery I now felt, and the excess of agitation that I endured, rendered me incapable of any exertion. I threw down the oar; and, leaning my head upon my hands, gave way to every gloomy idea that arose. If I looked up, I saw the scenes which were familiar to me in my happier time, and which I had contemplated but the day before in the company of her who was now but a shadow and a recollection. Tears streamed from my eyes. The rain had ceased for a moment, and I saw the fish play in the waters as they had done a few hours before; they had then been observed by Elizabeth. Nothing is so painful to the human mind as a great and sudden change. The sun might shine, or the clouds might lour; but nothing could appear to me as it had done the day before. A fiend had snatched from me every hope of future happiness: no creature had ever been so miserable as I was; so frightful an event is single in the history of man.

But why should I dwell upon the incidents that followed this last overwhelming event. Mine has been a tale of horrors; I have reached their *acme*, and what I must now relate can but be tedious to you. Know that, one by one, my friends were snatched away; I was left desolate. My own strength is exhausted; and I must tell, in a few words, what remains of my hideous narration.

I arrived at Geneva. My father and Ernest yet lived; but the former sunk under the tidings that I bore. I see him now, excellent and venerable old man! his eyes wandered in vacancy, for they had lost their charm and their delight — his niece, his more than daughter, whom he doated on with all that affection which a man feels, who, in the decline of life, having few affections, clings more earnestly to those that remain. Cursed, cursed be the fiend that brought misery on his grey hairs, and doomed him to waste in wretchedness! He could not live under the horrors that were accumulated around him; an apoplectic fit was brought on, and in a few days he died in my arms.

What then became of me? I know not; I lost sensation, and chains and darkness were the only objects that pressed upon me. Sometimes, indeed, I dreamt that I wandered in flowery meadows and pleasant vales with the friends of my youth; but awoke, and found myself in a dungeon. Melancholy followed, but by degrees I gained a clear conception of my miseries and situation, and was then released from my prison. For they had called me mad; and during many months, as I understood, a solitary cell had been my habitation.

But liberty had been a useless gift to me had I not, as I awakened to reason, at the same time awakened to revenge. As the memory of past misfortunes pressed upon me, I began to reflect on their cause — the monster whom I had created, the miserable dæmon whom I had sent abroad into the world for my destruction. I was possessed by a maddening rage when I thought of him, and desired and ardently prayed that I might have him within my grasp to wreak a great and signal revenge on his cursed head.

Nor did my hate long confine itself to useless wishes; I began to reflect on the best means of securing him; and for this purpose, about a month after my release, I repaired to a criminal judge in the town, and told him that I had an accusation to make; that I knew the destroyer of my family; and that I required him to exert his whole authority for the apprehension of the murderer.

The magistrate listened to me with attention and kindness: “Be assured, sir,” said he, “no pains or exertions on my part shall be spared to discover the villain.”

“I thank you,” replied I; “listen, therefore, to the deposition that I have to make. It is indeed a tale so strange, that I should fear you would not credit it, were there not something in truth which, however wonderful, forces conviction. The story is too connected to be mistaken for a dream, and I have no motive for falsehood." My manner, as I thus addressed him, was impressive, but calm; I had formed in my own heart a resolution to pursue my destroyer to death; and this purpose quieted my agony, and provisionally reconciled me to life. I now related my history briefly, but with firmness and precision, marking the dates with accuracy, and never deviating into invective or exclamation.

The magistrate appeared at first perfectly incredulous, but as I continued he became more attentive and interested; I saw him sometimes shudder with horror, at others a lively surprise, unmingled with disbelief, was painted on his countenance.

When I had concluded my narration, I said. "This is the being whom I accuse, and for whose detection and punishment I call upon you to exert your whole power. It is your duty as a magistrate, and I believe and hope that your feelings as a man will not revolt from the execution of those functions on this occasion."

This address caused a considerable change in the physiognomy of my auditor. He had heard my story with that half kind of belief that is given to a tale of spirits and supernatural events; but when he was called upon to act officially in consequence, the whole tide of his incredulity returned. He, however, answered mildly, “I would willingly afford you every aid in your pursuit; but the creature of whom you speak appears to have powers which would put all my exertions to defiance. Who can follow an animal which can traverse the sea of ice, and inhabit caves and dens, where no man would venture to intrude? Besides, some months have elapsed since the commission of his crimes, and no one can conjecture to what place he has wandered, or what region he may now inhabit.”

“I do not doubt that he hovers near the spot which I inhabit; and if he has indeed taken refuge in the Alps, he may be hunted like the chamois, and destroyed as a beast of prey. But I perceive your thoughts: you do not credit my narrative, and do not intend to pursue my enemy with the punishment which is his desert.”

As I spoke, rage sparkled in my eyes; the magistrate was intimidated; “You are mistaken,” said he, “I will exert myself; and if it is in my power to seize the monster, be assured that he shall suffer punishment proportionate to his crimes. But I fear, from what you have yourself described to be his properties, that this will prove impracticable, and that, while every proper measure is pursued, you should endeavour to make up your mind to disappointment.”

“That cannot be; but all that I can say will be of little avail. My revenge is of no moment to you; yet, while I allow it to be a vice, I confess that it is the devouring and only passion of my soul. My rage is unspeakable, when I reflect that the murderer, whom I have turned loose upon society, still exists. You refuse my just demand: I have but one resource; and I devote myself, either in my life or death, to his destruction.”

I trembled with excess of agitation as I said this; there was a phrenzy in my manner, and something, I doubt not, of that haughty fierceness, which the martyrs of old are said to have possessed. But to a Genevan magistrate, whose mind was occupied by far other ideas than those of devotion and heroism, this elevation of mind had much the appearance of madness. He endeavoured to soothe me as a nurse does a child, and reverted to my tale as the effects of delirium.

“Man,” I cried, “how ignorant art thou in thy pride of wisdom! Cease; you know not what it is you say.”

I broke from the house angry and disturbed, and retired to meditate on some other mode of action.

Chapter VII

MY present situation was one in which all voluntary thought was swallowed up and lost. I was hurried away by fury; revenge alone endowed me with strength and composure; it modelled my feelings, and allowed me to be calculating and calm, at periods when otherwise delirium or death would have been my portion.

My first resolution was to quit Geneva for ever; my country, which, when I was happy and beloved, was dear to me, now, in my adversity, became hateful. I provided myself with a sum of money, together with a few jewels which had belonged to my mother, and departed.

And now my wanderings began, which are to cease but with life. I have traversed a vast portion of the earth, and have endured all the hardships which travellers, in deserts and barbarous countries, are wont to meet. How I have lived I hardly know; many times have I stretched my failing limbs upon the sandy plain, and prayed for death. But revenge kept me alive; I dared not die, and leave my adversary in being.

When I quitted Geneva, my first labour was to gain some clue by which I might trace the steps of my fiendish enemy. But my plan was unsettled; and I wandered many hours around the confines of the town, uncertain what path I should pursue. As night approached, I found myself at the entrance of the cemetery where William, Elizabeth, and my father, reposed. I entered it, and approached the tomb which marked their graves. Every thing was silent, except the leaves of the trees, which were gently agitated by the wind; the night was nearly dark; and the scene would have been solemn and affecting even to an uninterested observer. The spirits of the departed seemed to flit around, and to cast a shadow, which was felt but seen not, around the head of the mourner.

The deep grief which this scene had at first excited quickly gave way to rage and despair. They were dead, and I lived; their murderer also lived, and to destroy him I must drag out my weary existence. I knelt on the grass, and kissed the earth, and with quivering lips exclaimed, “By the sacred earth on which I kneel, by the shades that wander near me, by the deep and eternal grief that I feel, I swear; and by thee, O Night, and by the spirits that preside over thee, I swear to pursue the dæmon, who caused this misery, until he or I shall perish in mortal conflict. For this purpose I will preserve my life: to execute this dear revenge, will I again behold the sun, and tread the green herbage of earth, which otherwise should vanish from my eyes for ever. And I call on you, spirits of the dead; and on you, wandering ministers of vengeance, to aid and conduct me in my work. Let the cursed and hellish monster drink deep of agony; let him feel the despair that now torments me."

I had begun my adjuration with solemnity, and an awe which almost assured me that the shades of my murdered friends heard and approved my devotion; but the furies possessed me as I concluded, and rage choaked my utterance.

I was answered through the stillness of night by a loud and fiendish laugh. It rung on my ears long and heavily; the mountains re-echoed it, and I felt as if all hell surrounded me with mockery and laughter. Surely in that moment I should have been possessed by phrenzy, and have destroyed my miserable existence, but that my vow was heard, and that I was reserved for vengeance. The laughter died away: when a well-known and abhorred voice, apparently close to my ear, addressed me in an audible whisper — "I am satisfied: miserable wretch! you have determined to live, and I am satisfied."

I darted towards the spot from which the sound proceeded; but the devil eluded my grasp. Suddenly the broad disk of the moon arose, and shone full upon his ghastly and distorted shape, as he fled with more than mortal speed.

I pursued him; and for many months this has been my task. Guided by a slight clue, I followed the windings of the Rhone, but vainly. The blue Mediterranean appeared; and, by a strange chance, I saw the fiend enter by night, and hide himself in a vessel bound for the Black Sea. I took my passage in the same ship; but he escaped, I know not how.

Amidst the wilds of Tartary and Russia, although he still evaded me, I have ever followed in his track. Sometimes the peasants, scared by this horrid apparition, informed me of his path; sometimes he himself, who feared that if I lost all trace I should despair and die, often left some mark to guide me. The snows descended on my head, and I saw the print of his huge step on the white plain. To you first entering on life, to whom care is new, and agony unknown, how can you understand what I have felt, and still feel? Cold, want, and fatigue, were the least pains which I was destined to endure; I was cursed by some devil, and carried about with me my eternal hell; yet still a spirit of good followed and directed my steps, and, when I most murmured, would suddenly extricate me from seemingly insurmountable difficulties. Sometimes, when nature, overcome by hunger, sunk under the exhaustion, a repast was prepared for me in the desert, that restored and inspirited me. The fare was indeed coarse, such as the peasants of the country ate; but I may not doubt that it was set there by the spirits that I had invoked to aid me. Often, when all was dry, the heavens cloudless, and I was parched by thirst, a slight cloud would bedim the sky, shed the few drops that revived me, and vanish.

I followed, when I could, the courses of the rivers; but the dæmon generally avoided these, as it was here that the population of the country chiefly collected. In other places human beings were seldom seen; and I generally subsisted on the wild animals that crossed my path. I had money with me, and gained the friendship of the villagers by distributing it, or bringing with me some food that I had killed, which, after taking a small part, I always presented to those who had provided me with fire and utensils for cooking.

My life, as it passed thus, was indeed hateful to me, and it was during sleep alone that I could taste joy. O blessed sleep! often, when most miserable, I sank to repose, and my dreams lulled me even to rapture. The spirits that guarded me had provided these moments, or rather hours, of happiness, that I might retain strength to fulfil my pilgrimage. Deprived of this respite, I should have sunk under my hardships. During the day I was sustained and inspirited by the hope of night: for in sleep I saw my friends, my wife, and my beloved country; again I saw the benevolent countenance of my father, heard the silver tones of my Elizabeth's voice, and beheld Clerval enjoying health and youth. Often, when wearied by a toilsome march, I persuaded myself that I was dreaming until night should come, and that I should then enjoy reality in the arms of my dearest friends. What agonizing fondness did

I feel for them! how did I cling to their dear forms, as sometimes they haunted even my waking hours, and persuade myself that they still lived! At such moments vengeance, that burned within me, died in my heart, and I pursued my path towards the destruction of the dæmon, more as a task enjoined by heaven, as the mechanical impulse of some power of which I was unconscious, than as the ardent desire of my soul.

What his feelings were whom I pursued, I cannot know. Sometimes, indeed, he left marks in writing on the barks of the trees, or cut in stone, that guided me, and instigated my fury. “My reign is not yet over,” (these words were legible in one of these inscriptions); “you live, and my power is complete. Follow me; I seek the everlasting ices of the north, where you will feel the misery of cold and frost, to which I am impassive. You will find near this place, if you follow not too tardily, a dead hare; eat, and be refreshed. Come on, my enemy; we have yet to wrestle for our lives; but many hard and miserable hours must you endure, until that period shall arrive.”

Scoffing devil! Again do I vow vengeance; again do I devote thee, miserable fiend, to torture and death. Never will I omit my search, until he or I perish; and then with what ecstacy shall I join my Elizabeth, and those who even now prepare for me the reward of my tedious toil and horrible pilgrimage.

As I still pursued my journey to the northward, the snows thickened, and the cold increased in a degree almost too severe to support. The peasants were shut up in their hovels, and only a few of the most hardy ventured forth to seize the animals whom starvation had forced from their hiding-places to seek for prey. The rivers were covered with ice, and no fish could be procured; and thus I was cut off from my chief article of maintenance.

The triumph of my enemy increased with the difficulty of my labours. One inscription that he left was in these words: “Prepare! your toils only begin: wrap yourself in furs, and provide food, for we shall soon enter upon a journey where your sufferings will satisfy my everlasting hatred."

My courage and perseverance were invigorated by these scoffing words; I resolved not to fail in my purpose; and, calling on heaven to support me, I continued with unabated fervour to traverse immense deserts, until the ocean appeared at a distance, and formed the utmost boundary of the horizon. Oh! how unlike it was to the blue seas of the south! Covered with ice, it was only to be distinguished from land by its superior wildness and ruggedness. The Greeks wept for joy when they beheld the Mediterranean from the hills of Asia, and hailed with rapture the boundary of their toils. I did not weep; but I knelt down, and, with a full heart, thanked my guiding spirit for conducting me in safety to the place where I hoped, notwithstanding my adversary's gibe, to meet and grapple with him.

Some weeks before this period I had procured a sledge and dogs, and thus traversed the snows with inconceivable speed. I know not whether the fiend possessed the same advantages; but I found that, as before I had daily lost ground in the pursuit, I now gained on him; so much so, that when I first saw the ocean, he was but one day's journey in advance, and I hoped to intercept him before he should reach the beach. With new courage, therefore, I pressed on, and in two days arrived at a wretched hamlet on the seashore. I inquired of the inhabitants concerning the fiend, and gained accurate information. A gigantic monster, they said, had arrived the night before, armed with a gun and many pistols; putting to flight the inhabitants of a solitary cottage, through fear of his terrific appearance. He had carried off their store of winter food, and, placing it in a sledge, to draw which he had seized on a numerous drove of trained dogs, he had harnessed them, and the same night, to the joy of the horror-struck villagers, had pursued his journey across the sea in a direction that led to no land; and they conjectured that he must speedily be destroyed by the breaking of the ice, or frozen by the eternal frosts.

On hearing this information, I suffered a temporary access of despair. He had escaped me; and I must commence a destructive and almost endless journey across the mountainous ices of the ocean, — amidst cold that few of the inhabitants could long endure, and which I, the native of a genial and sunny climate, could not hope to survive. Yet at the idea that the fiend should live and be triumphant, my rage and vengeance returned, and, like a mighty tide, overwhelmed every other feeling. After a slight repose, during which the spirits of the dead hovered round, and instigated me to toil and revenge, I prepared for my journey.

I exchanged my land sledge for one fashioned for the inequalities of the frozen ocean; and, purchasing a plentiful stock of provisions, I departed from land.

I cannot guess how many days have passed since then; but I have endured misery, which nothing but the eternal sentiment of a just retribution burning within my heart could have enabled me to support. Immense and rugged mountains of ice often barred up my passage, and I often heard the thunder of the ground sea, which threatened my destruction. But again the frost came, and made the paths of the sea secure.

By the quantity of provision which I had consumed I should guess that I had passed three weeks in this journey; and the continual protraction of hope, returning back upon the heart, often wrung bitter drops of despondency and grief from my eyes. Despair had indeed almost secured her prey, and I should soon have sunk beneath this misery; when once, after the poor animals that carried me had with incredible toil gained the summit of a sloping ice mountain, and one sinking under his fatigue died, I viewed the expanse before me with anguish, when suddenly my eye caught a dark speck upon the dusky plain. I strained my sight to discover what it could be, and uttered a wild cry of ecstacy when I distinguished a sledge, and the distorted proportions of a well-known form within. Oh! with what a burning gush did hope revisit my heart! warm tears filled my eyes, which I hastily wiped away, that they might not intercept the view I had of the dæmon; but still my sight was dimmed by the burning drops, until, giving way to the emotions that oppressed me, I wept aloud.

But this was not the time for delay; I disencumbered the dogs of their dead companion, gave them a plentiful portion of food; and, after an hour's rest, which was absolutely necessary, and yet which was bitterly irksome to me, I continued my route. The sledge was still visible; nor did I again lose sight of it, except at the moments when for a short time some ice rock concealed it with its intervening crags. I indeed perceptibly gained on it; and when, after nearly two days' journey, I beheld my enemy at no more than a mile distant, my heart bounded within me.

But now, when I appeared almost within grasp of my enemy, my hopes were suddenly extinguished, and I lost all trace of him more utterly than I had ever done before. A ground sea was heard; the thunder of its progress, as the waters rolled and swelled beneath me, became every moment more ominous and terrific. I pressed on, but in vain. The wind arose; the sea roared; and, as with the mighty shock of an earthquake, it split, and cracked with a tremendous and overwhelming sound. The work was soon finished: in a few minutes a tumultuous sea rolled between me and my enemy, and I was left drifting on a scattered piece of ice, that was continually lessening, and thus preparing for me a hideous death.

In this manner many appalling hours passed; several of my dogs died; and I myself was about to sink under the accumulation of distress, when I saw your vessel riding at anchor, and holding forth to me hopes of succour and life. I had no conception that vessels ever came so far north, and was astounded at the sight. I quickly destroyed part of my sledge to construct oars; and by these means was enabled, with infinite fatigue, to move my ice-raft in the direction of your ship. I had determined, if you were going southward, still to trust myself to the mercy of the seas, rather than abandon my purpose. I hoped to induce you to grant me a boat with which I could still pursue my enemy. But your direction was northward. You took me on board when my vigour was exhausted, and I should soon have sunk under my multiplied hardships into a death, which I still dread, — for my task is unfulfilled.

Oh! when will my guiding spirit, in conducting me to the dæmon, allow me the rest I so much desire; or must I die, and he yet live? If I do, swear to me, Walton, that he shall not escape; that you will seek him, and satisfy my vengeance in his death. Yet, do I dare ask you to undertake my pilgrimage, to endure the hardships that I have undergone? No; I am not so selfish. Yet, when I am dead, if he should appear; if the ministers of vengeance should conduct him to you, swear that he shall not live — swear that he shall not triumph over my accumulated woes, and live to make another such a wretch as I am. He is eloquent and persuasive; and once his words had even power over my heart: but trust him not. His soul is as hellish as his form, full of treachery and fiend-like malice. Hear him not; call on the manes of William, Justine, Clerval, Elizabeth, my father, and of the wretched Victor, and thrust your sword into his heart. I will hover near, and direct the steel aright.

WALTON, *in continuation*.

August 26th, 17— .

YOU have read this strange and terrific story, Margaret; and do you not feel your blood congealed with horror, like that which even now curdles mine? Sometimes, seized with sudden agony, he could not continue his tale; at others, his voice broken, yet piercing, uttered with difficulty the words so replete with agony. His fine and lovely eyes were now lighted up with indignation, now subdued to downcast sorrow, and quenched in infinite wretchedness. Sometimes he commanded his countenance and tones, and related the most horrible incidents with a tranquil voice, suppressing every mark of agitation; then, like a volcano bursting forth, his face would suddenly change to an expression of the wildest rage, as he shrieked out imprecations on his persecutor.

His tale is connected, and told with an appearance of the simplest truth; yet I own to you that the letters of Felix and Safie, which he shewed me, and the apparition of the monster, seen from our ship, brought to me a greater conviction of the truth of his narrative than his asseverations, however earnest and connected. Such a monster has then really existence; I cannot doubt it; yet I am lost in surprise and admiration. Sometimes I endeavoured to gain from Frankenstein the particulars of his creature's formation; but on this point he was impenetrable.

"Are you mad, my friend?" said he, "or whither does your senseless curiosity lead you? Would you also create for yourself and the world a demoniacal enemy? Or to what do your questions tend? Peace, peace! learn my miseries, and do not seek to increase your own."

Frankenstein discovered that I made notes concerning his history: he asked to see them, and then himself corrected and augmented them in many places; but principally in giving the life and spirit to the conversations he held with his enemy. "Since you have preserved my narration," said he, "I would not that a mutilated one should go down to posterity."

Thus has a week passed away, while I have listened to the strangest tale that ever imagination formed. My thoughts, and every feeling of my soul, have been drunk up by the interest for my guest, which this tale, and his own elevated and gentle manners have created. I wish to soothe him; yet can I counsel one so infinitely miserable, so destitute of every hope of consolation, to live? Oh, no! the only joy that he can now know will be when he composes his shattered feelings to peace and death. Yet he enjoys one comfort, the offspring of solitude and delirium: he believes, that, when in dreams he holds converse with his friends, and derives from that communion consolation for his miseries, or excitements to his vengeance, that they are not the creations of his fancy, but the real beings who visit him from the regions of a remote world. This faith gives a solemnity to his reveries that render them to me almost as imposing and interesting as truth.

Our conversations are not always confined to his own history and misfortunes. On every point of general literature he displays unbounded knowledge, and a quick and piercing apprehension. His eloquence is forcible and touching; nor can I hear him, when he relates a pathetic incident, or endeavours to move the passions of pity or love, without tears. What a glorious creature must he have been in the days of his prosperity, when he is thus noble and godlike in ruin. He seems to feel his own worth, and the greatness of his fall.

“When younger,” said he, “I felt as if I were destined for some great enterprise. My feelings are profound; but I possessed a coolness of judgment that fitted me for illustrious achievements. This sentiment of the worth of my nature supported me, when others would have been oppressed; for I deemed it criminal to throw away in useless grief those talents that might be useful to my fellow-creatures. When I reflected on the work I had completed, no less a one than the creation of a sensitive and rational animal, I could not rank myself with the herd of common projectors. But this feeling, which supported me in the commencement of my career, now serves only to plunge me lower in the dust. All my speculations and hopes are as nothing; and, like the archangel who aspired to omnipotence, I am chained in an eternal hell. My imagination was vivid, yet my powers of analysis and application were intense; by the union of these qualities I conceived the idea, and executed the creation of a man. Even now I cannot recollect, without passion, my reveries while the work was incomplete. I trod heaven in my thoughts, now exulting in my powers, now burning with the idea of their effects. From my infancy I was imbued with high hopes and a lofty ambition; but how am I sunk! Oh! my friend, if you had known me as I once was, you would not recognize me in this state of degradation. Despondency rarely visited my heart; a high destiny seemed to bear me on, until I fell, never, never again to rise."

Must I then lose this admirable being? I have longed for a friend; I have sought one who would sympathize with and love me. Behold, on these desert seas I have found such a one; but, I fear, I have gained him only to know his value, and lose him. I would reconcile him to life, but he repulses the idea.

“I thank you, Walton,” he said, “for your kind intentions towards so miserable a wretch; but when you speak of new ties, and fresh affections, think you that any can replace those who are gone? Can any man be to me as Clerval was; or any woman another Elizabeth? Even where the affections are not strongly moved by any superior excellence, the companions of our childhood always possess a certain power over our minds, which hardly any later friend can obtain. They know our infantine dispositions, which, however they may be afterwards modified, are never eradicated; and they can judge of our actions with more certain conclusions as to the integrity of our motives. A sister or a brother can never, unless indeed such symptoms have been shewn early, suspect the other of fraud or false dealing, when another friend, however strongly he may be attached, may, in spite of himself, be invaded with suspicion. But I enjoyed friends, dear not only through habit and association, but from their own merits; and, wherever I am, the soothing voice of my Elizabeth, and the conversation of Clerval, will be ever whispered in my ear. They are dead; and but one feeling in such a solitude can persuade me to preserve my life. If I were engaged in any high undertaking or design, fraught with extensive utility to my fellow-creatures, then could I live to fulfil it. But such is not my destiny; I must pursue and destroy the being to whom I gave existence; then my lot on earth will be fulfilled, and I may die."

September 2d.

MY BELOVED SISTER,

I write to you, encompassed by peril, and ignorant whether I am ever doomed to see again dear England, and the dearer friends that inhabit it. I am surrounded by mountains of ice, which admit of no escape, and threaten every moment to crush my vessel. The brave fellows, whom I have persuaded to be my companions, look towards me for aid; but I have none to bestow. There is something terribly appalling in our situation, yet my courage and hopes do not desert me. We may survive; and if we do not, I will repeat the lessons of my Seneca, and die with a good heart.

Yet what, Margaret, will be the state of your mind? You will not hear of my destruction, and you will anxiously await my return. Years will pass, and you will have visitings of despair, and yet be tortured by hope. Oh! my beloved sister, the sickening failings of your heart-felt expectations are, in prospect, more terrible to me than my own death. But you have a husband, and lovely children; you may be happy: heaven bless you, and make you so!

My unfortunate guest regards me with the tenderest compassion. He endeavours to fill me with hope; and talks as if life were a possession which he valued. He reminds me how often the same accidents have happened to other navigators, who have attempted this sea, and, in spite of myself, he fills me with cheerful auguries. Even the sailors feel the power of his eloquence: when he speaks, they no longer despair; he rouses their energies, and, while they hear his voice, they believe these vast mountains of ice are mole-hills, which will vanish before the resolutions of man. These feelings are transitory; each day's expectation delayed fills them with fear, and I almost dread a mutiny caused by this despair.

September 5th.

A scene has just passed of such uncommon interest, that although it is highly probable that these papers may never reach you, yet I cannot forbear recording it.

We are still surrounded by mountains of ice, still in imminent danger of being crushed in their conflict. The cold is excessive, and many of my unfortunate comrades have already found a grave amidst this scene of desolation. Frankenstein has daily declined in health: a feverish fire still glimmers in his eyes; but he is exhausted, and, when suddenly roused to any exertion, he speedily sinks again into apparent lifelessness.

I mentioned in my last letter the fears I entertained of a mutiny. This morning, as I sat watching the wan countenance of my friend — his eyes half closed, and his limbs hanging listlessly, — I was roused by half a dozen of the sailors, who desired admission into the cabin. They entered; and their leader addressed me. He told me that he and his companions had been chosen by the other sailors to come in deputation to me, to make me a demand, which, in justice, I could not refuse. We were immured in ice, and should probably never escape; but they feared that if, as was possible, the ice should dissipate, and a free passage be opened, I should be rash enough to continue my voyage, and lead them into fresh dangers, after they might happily have surmounted this. They desired, therefore, that I should engage with a solemn promise, that if the vessel should be freed, I would instantly direct my coarse southward.

This speech troubled me. I had not despaired; nor had I yet conceived the idea of returning, if set free. Yet could I, in justice, or even in possibility, refuse this demand? I hesitated before I answered; when Frankenstein, who had at first been silent, and, indeed, appeared hardly to have force enough to attend, now roused himself; his eyes sparkled, and his cheeks flushed with momentary vigour. Turning towards the men, he said —

“What do you mean? What do you demand of your captain? Are you then so easily turned from your design? Did you not call this a glorious expedition? and wherefore was it glorious? Not because the way was smooth and placid as a southern sea, but because it was full of dangers and terror; because, at every new incident, your fortitude was to be called forth, and your courage exhibited; because danger and death surrounded, and these dangers you were to brave and overcome. For this was it a glorious, for this was it an honourable undertaking. You were hereafter to be hailed as the benefactors of your species; your name adored, as belonging to brave men who encountered death for honour and the benefit of mankind. And now, behold, with the first imagination of danger, or, if you will, the first mighty and terrific trial of your courage, you shrink away, and are content to be handed down as men who had not strength enough to endure cold and peril; and so, poor souls, they were chilly, and returned to their warm fire-sides. Why, that requires not this preparation; ye need not have come thus far, and dragged your captain to the shame of a defeat, merely to prove yourselves cowards. Oh! be men, or be more than men. Be steady to your purposes, and firm as a rock. This ice is not made of such stuff as your hearts might be; it is mutable, cannot withstand you, if you say that it shall not. Do not return to your families with the stigma of disgrace marked on your brows. Return as heroes who have fought and conquered, and who know not what it is to turn their backs on the foe."

He spoke this with a voice so modulated to the different feelings expressed in his speech, with an eye so full of lofty design and heroism, that can you wonder that these men were moved. They looked at one another, and were unable to reply. I spoke; I told them to retire, and consider of what had been said: that I would not lead them further north, if they strenuously desired the contrary; but that I hoped that, with reflection, their courage would return.

They retired, and I turned towards my friend; but he was sunk in languor, and almost deprived of life.

How all this will terminate, I know not; but I had rather die, than return shamefully, — my purpose unfulfilled. Yet I fear such will be my fate; the men, unsupported by ideas of glory and honour, can never willingly continue to endure their present hardships.

September 7th.

The die is cast; I have consented to return, if we are not destroyed. Thus are my hopes blasted by cowardice and indecision; I come back ignorant and disappointed. It requires more philosophy than I possess, to bear this injustice with patience.

September 12th.

It is past; I am returning to England. I have lost my hopes of utility and glory; — I have lost my friend. But I will endeavour to detail these bitter circumstances to you, my dear sister; and, while I am wafted towards England, and towards you, I will not despond.

September 19th, the ice began to move, and roarings like thunder were heard at a distance, as the islands split and cracked in every direction. We were in the most imminent peril; but, as we could only remain passive, my chief attention was occupied by my unfortunate guest, whose illness increased in such a degree, that he was entirely confined to his bed. The ice cracked behind us, and was driven with force towards the north; a breeze sprung from the west, and on the 11th the passage towards the south became perfectly free. When the sailors saw this, and that their return to their native country was apparently assured, a shout of tumultuous joy broke from them, loud and long-continued. Frankenstein, who was dozing, awoke, and asked the cause of the tumult. “They shout,” I said, “because they will soon return to England.”

“Do you then really return?”

“Alas! yes; I cannot withstand their demands. I cannot lead them unwillingly to danger, and I must return.”

“Do so, if you will; but I will not. You may give up your purpose; but mine is assigned to me by heaven, and I dare not. I am weak; but surely the spirits who assist my vengeance will endow me with sufficient strength.” Saying this, he endeavoured to spring from the bed, but the exertion was too great for him; he fell back, and fainted.

It was long before he was restored; and I often thought that life was entirely extinct. At length he opened his eyes, but he breathed with difficulty, and was unable to speak. The surgeon gave him a composing draught, and ordered us to leave him undisturbed. In the mean time he told me, that my friend had certainly not many hours to live.

His sentence was pronounced; and I could only grieve, and be patient. I sat by his bed watching him; his eyes were closed, and I thought he slept; but presently he called to me in a feeble voice, and, bidding me come near, said — "Alas! the strength I relied on is gone; I feel that I shall soon die, and he, my enemy and persecutor, may still be in being. Think not, Walton, that in the last moments of my existence I feel that burning hatred, and ardent desire of revenge, I once expressed, but I feel myself justified in desiring the death of my adversary. During these last days I have been occupied in examining my past conduct; nor do I find it blameable. In a fit of enthusiastic madness I created a rational creature, and was bound towards him, to assure, as far as was in my power, his happiness and well-being. This was my duty; but there was another still paramount to that. My duties towards my fellow-creatures had greater claims to my attention, because they included a greater proportion of happiness or misery. Urged by this view, I refused, and I did right in refusing, to create a companion for the first creature. He shewed unparalleled malignity and selfishness, in evil: he destroyed my friends; he devoted to destruction beings who possessed exquisite sensations, happiness, and wisdom; nor do I know where this thirst for vengeance may end. Miserable himself, that he may render no other wretched, he ought to die. The task of his destruction was mine, but I have failed. When actuated by selfish and vicious motives, I asked you to undertake my unfinished work; and I renew this request now, when I am only induced by reason and virtue.

“Yet I cannot ask you to renounce your country and friends, to fulfil this task; and now, that you are returning to England, you will have little chance of meeting with him. But the consideration of these points, and the well-balancing of what you may esteem your duties, I leave to you; my judgment and ideas are already disturbed by the near approach of death. I dare not ask you to do what I think right, for I may still be misled by passion.

“That he should live to be an instrument of mischief disturbs me; in other respects this hour, when I momentarily expect my release, is the only happy one which I have enjoyed for several years. The forms of the beloved dead flit before me, and I hasten to their arms. Farewell, Walton! Seek happiness in tranquillity, and avoid ambition, even if it be only the apparently innocent one of distinguishing yourself in science and discoveries. Yet why do I say this? I have myself been blasted in these hopes, yet another may succeed.”

His voice became fainter as he spoke; and at length, exhausted by his effort, he sunk into silence. About half an hour afterwards he attempted again to speak, but was unable; he pressed my hand feebly, and his eyes closed for ever, while the irradiation of a gentle smile passed away from his lips.

Margaret, what comment can I make on the untimely extinction of this glorious spirit? What can I say, that will enable you to understand the depth of my sorrow? All that I should express would be inadequate and feeble. My tears flow; my mind is overshadowed by a cloud of disappointment. But I journey towards England, and I may there find consolation.

I am interrupted. What do these sounds portend? It is midnight; the breeze blows fairly, and the watch on deck scarcely stir. Again; there is a sound as of a human voice, but hoarser; it comes from the cabin where the remains of Frankenstein still lie. I must arise, and examine. Good night, my sister.

Great God! what a scene has just taken place! I am yet dizzy with the remembrance of it. I hardly know whether I shall have the power to detail it; yet the tale which I have recorded would be incomplete without this final and wonderful catastrophe.

I entered the cabin, where lay the remains of my ill-fated and admirable friend. Over him hung a form which I cannot find words to describe; gigantic in stature, yet uncouth and distorted in its proportions. As he hung over the coffin, his face was concealed by long locks of ragged hair; but one vast hand was extended, in colour and apparent texture like that of a mummy. When he heard the sound of my approach, he ceased to utter exclamations of grief and horror, and sprung towards the window. Never did I behold a vision so horrible as his face, of such loathsome, yet appalling hideousness. I shut my eyes involuntarily, and endeavoured to recollect what were my duties with regard to this destroyer. I called on him to stay.

He paused, looking on me with wonder; and, again turning towards the lifeless form of his creator, he seemed to forget my presence, and every feature and gesture seemed instigated by the wildest rage of some uncontrollable passion.

“That is also my victim!” he exclaimed; “in his murder my crimes are consummated; the miserable series of my being is wound to its close! Oh, Frankenstein! generous and self-devoted being! what does it avail that I now ask thee to pardon me? I, who irretrievably destroyed thee by destroying all thou lovedst. Alas! he is cold; he may not answer me.”

His voice seemed suffocated; and my first impulses, which had suggested to me the duty of obeying the dying request of my friend, in destroying his enemy, were now suspended by a mixture of curiosity and compassion. I approached this tremendous being; I dared not again raise my looks upon his face, there was something so scaring and unearthly in his ugliness. I attempted to speak, but the words died away on my lips. The monster continued to utter wild and incoherent self-reproaches. At length I gathered resolution to address him, in a pause of the tempest of his passion: "Your repentance," I said, "is now superfluous. If you had listened to the voice of conscience, and heeded the stings of remorse, before you had urged your diabolical vengeance to this extremity, Frankenstein would yet have lived."

"And do you dream?" said the dæmon; "do you think that I was then dead to agony and remorse? — He," he continued, pointing to the corpse, "he suffered not more in the consummation of the deed; — oh! not the ten-thousandth portion of the anguish that was mine during the lingering detail of its execution. A frightful selfishness hurried me on, while my heart was poisoned with remorse. Think ye that the groans of Clerval were music to my ears? My heart was fashioned to be susceptible of love and sympathy; and, when wrenched by misery to vice and hatred, it did not endure the violence of the change without torture such as you cannot even imagine.

"After the murder of Clerval, I returned to Switzerland, heart-broken and overcome. I pitied Frankenstein; my pity amounted to horror: I abhorred myself. But when I discovered that he, the author at once of my existence and of its unspeakable torments, dared to hope for happiness; that while he accumulated wretchedness and despair upon me, he sought his own enjoyment in feelings and passions from the indulgence of which I was for ever barred, then impotent envy and bitter indignation filled me with an insatiable thirst for vengeance. I recollected my threat, and resolved that it should be accomplished. I knew that I was preparing for myself a deadly torture; but I was the slave, not the master of an impulse, which I detested, yet could not disobey. Yet when she died! — nay, then I was not miserable. I had cast off all feeling, subdued all anguish to riot in the excess of my despair. Evil thenceforth became my good. Urged thus far, I had no choice but to adapt my nature to an element which I had willingly chosen. The completion of my demoniacal design became an insatiable passion. And now it is ended; there is my last victim!"

I was at first touched by the expressions of his misery; yet when I called to mind what Frankenstein had said of his powers of eloquence and persuasion, and when I again cast my eyes on the lifeless form of my friend, indignation was re-kindled within me. "Wretch!" I said, "it is well that you come here to whine over the desolation that you have made. You throw a torch into a pile of buildings, and when they are consumed you sit among the ruins, and lament the fall. Hypocritical fiend! if he whom you mourn still lived, still would he be the object, again would he become the prey of your accursed vengeance.

It is not pity that you feel; you lament only because the victim of your malignity is withdrawn from your power."

"Oh, it is not thus — not thus," interrupted the being; "yet such must be the impression conveyed to you by what appears to be the purport of my actions. Yet I seek not a fellow-feeling in my misery. No sympathy may I ever find. When I first sought it, it was the love of virtue, the feelings of happiness and affection with which my whole being overflowed, that I wished to be participated. But now, that virtue has become to me a shadow, and that happiness and affection are turned into bitter and loathing despair, in what should I seek for sympathy? I am content to suffer alone, while my sufferings shall endure: when I die, I am well satisfied that abhorrence and opprobrium should load my memory. Once my fancy was soothed with dreams of virtue, of fame, and of enjoyment. Once I falsely hoped to meet with beings, who, pardoning my outward form, would love me for the excellent qualities which I was capable of bringing forth. I was nourished with high thoughts of honour and devotion. But now vice has degraded me beneath the meanest animal. No crime, no mischief, no malignity, no misery, can be found comparable to mine. When I call over the frightful catalogue of my deeds, I cannot believe that I am he whose thoughts were once filled with sublime and transcendant visions of the beauty and the majesty of goodness. But it is even so; the fallen angel becomes a malignant devil. Yet even that enemy of God and man had friends and associates in his desolation; I am quite alone.

“You, who call Frankenstein your friend, seem to have a knowledge of my crimes and his misfortunes. But, in the detail which he gave you of them, he could not sum up the hours and months of misery which I endured, wasting in impotent passions. For whilst I destroyed his hopes, I did not satisfy my own desires. They were for ever ardent and craving; still I desired love and fellowship, and I was still spurned. Was there no injustice in this? Am I to be thought the only criminal, when all human kind sinned against me? Why do you not hate Felix, who drove his friend from his door with contumely? Why do you not execrate the rustic who sought to destroy the saviour of his child? Nay, these are virtuous and immaculate beings! I, the miserable and the abandoned, am an abortion, to be spurned at, and kicked, and trampled on. Even now my blood boils at the recollection of this injustice.

“But it is true that I am a wretch. I have murdered the lovely and the helpless; I have strangled the innocent as they slept, and grasped to death his throat who never injured me or any other living thing. I have devoted my creator, the select specimen of all that is worthy of love and admiration among men, to misery; I have pursued him even to that irremediable ruin. There he lies, white and cold in death. You hate me; but your abhorrence cannot equal that with which I regard myself. I look on the hands which executed the deed; I think on the heart in which the imagination of it was conceived, and long for the moment when they will meet my eyes, when it will haunt my thoughts, no more.

“Fear not that I shall be the instrument of future mischief. My work is nearly complete. Neither your’s nor any man’s death is needed to consummate the series of my being, and accomplish that which must be done; but it requires my own. Do not think that I shall be slow to perform this sacrifice. I shall quit your vessel on the ice-raft which brought me hither, and shall seek the most northern extremity of the globe; I shall collect my funeral pile, and consume to ashes this miserable frame, that its remains may afford no light to any curious and unhallowed wretch, who would create such another as I have been. I shall die. I shall no longer feel the agonies which now consume me, or be the prey of feelings unsatisfied, yet unquenched. He is dead who called me into being; and when I shall be no more, the very remembrance of us both will speedily vanish. I shall no longer see the sun or stars, or feel the winds play on my cheeks. Light, feeling, and sense, will pass away; and in this condition must I find my happiness. Some years ago, when the images which this world affords first opened upon me, when I felt the cheering warmth of summer, and heard the rustling of the leaves and the chirping of the birds, and these were all to me, I should have wept to die; now it is my only consolation. Polluted by crimes, and torn by the bitterest remorse, where can I find rest but in death?

“Farewell! I leave you, and in you the last of human kind whom these eyes will ever behold. Farewell, Frankenstein! If thou wert yet alive, and yet cherished a desire of revenge against me, it would be better satiated in my life than in my destruction. But it was not so; thou didst seek my extinction, that I might not cause greater wretchedness; and if yet, in some mode unknown to me, thou hast not yet ceased to think and feel, thou desirest not my life for my own misery. Blasted as thou wert, my agony was still superior to thine; for the bitter sting of remorse may not cease to rankle in my wounds until death shall close them for ever.

“But soon,” he cried, with sad and solemn enthusiasm, “I shall die, and what I now feel be no longer felt. Soon these burning miseries will be extinct. I shall ascend my funeral pile triumphantly, and exult in the agony of the torturing flames. The light of that conflagration will fade away; my ashes will be swept into the sea by the winds. My spirit will sleep in peace; or if it thinks, it will not surely think thus. Farewell."

He sprung from the cabin-window, as he said this, upon the ice-raft which lay close to the vessel. He was soon borne away by the waves, and lost in darkness and distance.

THE END.

ANN WARD RADCLIFFE

THE MYSTERIES OF UDOLPHO

A ROMANCE
INTERSPERSED WITH SOME PIECES OF POETRY
BY THE AUTHOR OF THE ROMANCE OF THE FOREST, ETC.

Fate sits on these dark battlements, and frowns,
And, as the portals open to receive me,
Her voice, in sullen echoes through the courts,
Tells of a nameless deed.

LONDON:
PRINTED FOR G. G. AND J. ROBINSON, PATERNOSTER - ROW. 1794.

VOLUME I

CHAPTER I

> ‘_____home is the resort
>
> Of love, of joy, of peace and plenty, where,
> Supporting and supported, polish’d friends
> And dear relations mingle into bliss.’
> Thomson [*The Seasons*, ‘Autumn’][1]

On the pleasant banks of the Garonne, in the province of Gascony, stood, in the year 1584, the chateau of Monsieur St Aubert. From its windows were seen the pastoral landscapes of Guienne and Gascony, stretching along the river, gay with luxuriant woods and vines, and plantations of olives. To the south, the view was bounded by the majestic Pyrenées, whose summits, veiled in clouds, or exhibiting awful forms, seen, and lost again, as the partial vapours rolled along, were sometimes barren, and gleamed through the blue tinge of air, and sometimes frowned with forests of gloomy pine, that swept downward to their base. These tremendous precipices were contrasted by the soft green of the pastures and woods that hung upon their skirts; among whose flocks, and herds, and simple cottages, the eye, after having scaled the cliffs above, delighted to repose. To the north, and to the east, the plains of Guienne and Languedoc were lost in the mist of distance; on the west, Gascony was bounded by the waters of Biscay.

M. St Aubert loved to wander, with his wife and daughter, on the margin of the Garonne, and to listen to the music that floated on its waves. He had known life in other forms than those of pastoral simplicity, having mingled in the gay and in the busy scenes of the world; but the flattering portrait of mankind, which his heart had delineated in early youth, his experience had too sorrowfully corrected. Yet, amidst the changing visions of life, his principles remained unshaken, his benevolence unchilled; and he retired from the multitude ‘more in *pity* than in anger,’[2] to scenes of simple nature, to the pure delights of literature, and to the exercise of domestic virtues.

He was a descendant from the younger branch of an illustrious family, and it was designed, that the deficiency of his patrimonial wealth should be supplied either by a splendid alliance in marriage, or by success in the intrigues of public affairs. But St Aubert had too nice a sense of honour to fulfil the latter hope, and too small a portion of ambition to sacrifice what he called happiness, to the attainment of wealth. After the death of his father he married a very amiable woman, his equal in birth, and not his superior in fortune. The late Monsieur St Aubert’s liberality, or extravagance, had so much involved his affairs, that his son found it necessary to dispose of a part of the family domain, and, some years after his marriage, he sold it to Monsieur Quesnel, the brother of his wife, and retired to a small estate in Gascony, where conjugal felicity, and parental duties, divided his attention with the treasures of knowledge and the illuminations of genius.

To this spot he had been attached from his infancy. He had often made excursions to it when a boy, and the impressions of delight given to his mind by the homely kindness of the grey-headed peasant, to whom it was intrusted, and whose fruit and cream never failed, had not been obliterated by succeeding circumstances. The green pastures along which he had so often bounded in the exultation of health, and youthful freedom – the woods, under whose refreshing shade he had first indulged that pensive melancholy, which afterwards made a strong feature of his character – the wild walks of the mountains, the river, on whose waves he had floated, and the distant plains, which seemed boundless as his early hopes – were never after remembered by St Aubert but with enthusiasm and regret. At length he disengaged himself from the world, and retired hither, to realize the wishes of many years.

The building, as it then stood, was merely a summer cottage, rendered interesting to a stranger by its neat simplicity, or the beauty of the surrounding scene; and considerable additions were necessary to make it a comfortable family residence. St Aubert felt a kind of affection for every part of the fabric, which he remembered in his youth, and would not suffer a stone of it to be removed, so that the new building, adapted to the style of the old one, formed with it only a simple and elegant residence. The taste of Madame St Aubert was conspicuous in its internal finishing, where the same chaste simplicity was observable in the furniture, and in the few ornaments of the apartments, that characterised the manners of its inhabitants.

The library occupied the west side of the chateau, and was enriched by a collection of the best books in the ancient and modern languages. This room opened upon a grove, which stood on the brow of a gentle declivity, that fell towards the river, and the tall trees gave it a melancholy and pleasing shade; while from the windows the eye caught, beneath the spreading branches, the gay and luxuriant landscape stretching to the west, and overlooked on the left by the bold precipices of the Pyrenées. Adjoining the library was a green-house, stored with scarce and beautiful plants; for one of the amusements of St Aubert was the study of botany, and among the neighbouring mountains, which afforded a luxurious feast to the mind of the naturalist, he often passed the day in the pursuits of his favourite science. He was sometimes accompanied in these little excursions by Madame St Aubert, and frequently by his daughter; when, with a small osier basket to receive plants, and another filled with cold refreshments, such as the cabin of the shepherd did not afford, they wandered away among the most romantic and magnificent scenes, nor suffered the charms of Nature's lowly children to abstract them from the observance of her stupendous works. When weary of sauntering among cliffs that seemed scarcely accessible but to the steps of the enthusiast, and where no track appeared on the vegetation, but what the foot of the izard[3] had left; they would seek one of those green recesses, which so beautifully adorn the bosom of these mountains, where, under the shade of the lofty larch, or cedar, they enjoyed their simple repast, made sweeter by the waters of the cool stream, that crept along the turf, and by the breath of wild flowers and aromatic plants, that fringed the rocks, and inlaid the grass.

Adjoining the eastern side of the green-house, looking towards the plains of Languedoc, was a room, which Emily called hers, and which contained her books, her drawings, her musical instruments, with some favourite birds and plants. Here she usually exercised herself in elegant arts, cultivated only because they were congenial to her taste, and in which native genius, assisted by the instructions of Monsieur and Madame St Aubert, made her an early proficient. The windows of this room were particularly pleasant; they descended to the floor, and, opening upon the little lawn that surrounded the house, the eye was led between groves of almond, palm-trees, flowering-ash, and myrtle, to the distant landscape, where the Garonne wandered.

The peasants of this gay climate were often seen on an evening, when the day's labour was done, dancing in groups on the margin of the river. Their sprightly melodies, *debonnaire* steps, the fanciful figure of their dances, with the tasteful and capricious manner in which the girls adjusted their simple dress, gave a character to the scene entirely French.

The front of the chateau, which, having a southern aspect, opened upon the grandeur of the mountains, was occupied on the ground floor by a rustic hall, and two excellent sitting rooms. The first floor, for the cottage had no second story, was laid out in bed-chambers, except one apartment that opened to a balcony, and which was generally used for a breakfast-room.

In the surrounding ground, St Aubert had made very tasteful improvements;[4] yet, such was his attachment to objects he had remembered from his boyish days, that he had in some instances sacrificed taste to sentiment. There were two old larches that shaded the building, and interrupted the prospect; St Aubert had sometimes declared that he believed he should have been weak enough to have wept at their fall. In addition to these larches he planted a little grove of beech, pine, and mountain-ash. On a lofty terrace, formed by the swelling bank of the river, rose a plantation of orange, lemon and palm trees, whose fruit, in the coolness of evening, breathed delicious fragrance. With these were mingled a few trees of other species. Here, under the ample shade of a plane-tree, that spread its majestic canopy towards the river, St Aubert loved to sit in the fine evenings of summer, with his wife and children, watching, beneath its foliage, the setting-sun, the mild splendour of its light fading from the distant landscape, till the shadows of twilight melted its various features into one tint of sober gray. Here, too, he loved to read, and to converse with Madame St Aubert; or to play with his children, resigning himself to the influence of those sweet affections, which are ever attendant on simplicity and nature. He has often said, while tears of pleasure trembled in his eyes, that these were moments infinitely more delightful than any passed amid the brilliant and tumultuous scenes that are courted by the world. His heart was occupied; it had, what can be so rarely said, no wish for a happiness beyond what it experienced. The consciousness of acting right diffused a serenity over his manners, which nothing else could impart to a man of moral perceptions like his, and which refined his sense of every surrounding blessing.

The deepest shade of twilight did not send him from his favourite plane-tree. He loved the soothing hour, when the last tints of light die away; when the stars, one by one, tremble through æther, and are reflected on the dark mirror of the waters; that hour, which, of all others, inspires the mind with pensive tenderness, and often elevates it to sublime contemplation. When the moon shed her soft rays among the foliage, he still lingered, and his pastoral supper of cream and fruits was often spread beneath it. Then, on the stillness of night, came the song of the nightingale, breathing sweetness, and awakening melancholy.

The first interruptions to the happiness he had known since his retirement, were occasioned by the death of his two sons. He lost them at that age when infantine simplicity is so fascinating; and though, in consideration of Madame St Aubert's distress, he restrained the expression of his own, and endeavoured to bear it, as he meant, with philosophy, he had, in truth, no philosophy that could render him calm to such losses. One daughter was now his only surviving child; and, while he watched the unfolding of her infant character, with anxious fondness, he endeavoured, with unremitting effort, to counteract those traits in her disposition, which might hereafter lead her from happiness. She had discovered in her early years uncommon delicacy of mind, warm affections, and ready benevolence; but with these was observable a degree of susceptibility too exquisite to admit of lasting peace. As she advanced in youth, this sensibility gave a pensive tone to her spirits, and a softness to her manner, which added grace to beauty, and rendered her a very interesting object to persons of a congenial disposition. But St Aubert had too much good sense to prefer a charm to a virtue; and had penetration enough to see, that this charm was too dangerous to its possessor to be allowed the character of a blessing. He endeavoured, therefore, to strengthen her mind; to enure her to habits of self-command; to teach her to reject the first impulse of her feelings, and to look, with cool examination, upon the disappointments he sometimes threw in her way. While he instructed her to resist first impressions, and to acquire that steady dignity of mind, that can alone counterbalance the passions, and bear us, as far as is compatible with our nature, above the reach of circumstances, he taught himself a lesson of fortitude; for he was often obliged to witness, with seeming indifference, the tears and struggles which his caution occasioned her.

In person, Emily resembled her mother; having the same elegant symmetry of form, the same delicacy of features, and the same blue eyes, full of tender sweetness. But, lovely as was her person, it was the varied expression of her countenance, as conversation awakened the nicer emotions of her mind, that threw such a captivating grace around her:

'Those tend'rer tints, that shun the careless eye,

And, in the world's contagious circle, die.'[5]

St Aubert cultivated her understanding with the most scrupulous care. He gave her a general view of the sciences, and an exact acquaintance with every part of elegant literature. He taught her Latin and English, chiefly that she might understand the sublimity of their best poets.[6] She discovered in her early years a taste for works of genius; and it was St Aubert's principle, as well as his inclination, to promote every innocent means of happiness. 'A well-informed mind,' he would say, 'is the best security against the contagion of folly and of vice.' The vacant mind is ever on the watch for relief, and ready to plunge into error, to escape from the languor of idleness. Store it with ideas, teach it the pleasure of thinking; and the temptations of the world without, will be counteracted by the gratifications derived from the world within. Thought, and cultivation, are necessary equally to the happiness of a country and a city life; in the first they prevent the uneasy sensations of indolence, and afford a sublime pleasure in the taste they create for the beautiful, and the grand; in the latter, they make dissipation less an object of necessity, and consequently of interest.

It was one of Emily's earliest pleasures to ramble among the scenes of nature; nor was it in the soft and glowing landscape that she most delighted; she loved more the wild wood-walks, that skirted the mountain; and still more the mountain's stupendous recesses, where the silence and grandeur of solitude impressed a sacred awe upon her heart, and lifted her thoughts to the GOD OF HEAVEN AND EARTH. In scenes like these she would often linger alone, wrapt in a melancholy charm,[7] till the last gleam of day faded from the west; till the lonely sound of a sheep-bell, or the distant bark of a watch-dog, were all that broke on the stillness of the evening. Then, the gloom of the woods; the trembling of their leaves, at intervals, in the breeze; the bat, flitting on the twilight; the cottage-lights, now seen, and now lost – were circumstances that awakened her mind into effort, and led to enthusiasm and poetry.[8]

Her favourite walk was to a little fishing-house, belonging to St Aubert, in a woody glen, on the margin of a rivulet that descended from the Pyrenées, and, after foaming among their rocks, wound its silent way beneath the shades it reflected. Above the woods, that screened this glen, rose the lofty summits of the Pyrenées, which often burst boldly on the eye through the glades below. Sometimes the shattered face of a rock only was seen, crowned with wild shrubs; or a shepherd's cabin seated on a cliff, overshadowed by dark cypress, or waving ash. Emerging from the deep recesses of the woods, the glade opened to the distant landscape, where the rich pastures and vine-covered slopes of Gascony gradually declined to the plains; and there, on the winding shores of the Garonne, groves, and hamlets, and villas, – their outlines softened by distance, melted from the eye into one rich harmonious tint.

This, too, was the favourite retreat of St Aubert, to which he frequently withdrew from the fervour of noon, with his wife, his daughter, and his books; or came at the sweet evening hour to welcome the silent dusk, or to listen for the music of the nightingale. Sometimes, too, he brought music of his own, and awakened every fairy echo with the tender accents of his oboe; and often have the tones of Emily's voice drawn sweetness from the waves, over which they trembled.

It was in one of her excursions to this spot, that she observed the following lines written with a pencil[9] on a part of the wainscot:

SONNET

Go, pencil! faithful to thy master's sighs!

Go – tell the Goddess of this fairy scene,
When next her light steps wind these wood-walks green,
Whence all his tears, his tender sorrows, rise:
Ah! paint her form, her soul-illumin'd eyes,
The sweet expression of her pensive face,
The light'ning smile, the animated grace –
The portrait well the lover's voice supplies;
Speaks all his heart must feel, his tongue would say:
Yet ah! not all his heart must sadly feel!

How oft the flow’ret’s silken leaves conceal
The drug that steals the vital spark away!
And who that gazes on that angel-smile,
Would fear its charm, or think it could beguile!

These lines were not inscribed to any person; Emily therefore could not apply them to herself, though she was undoubtedly the nymph of these shades. Having glanced round the little circle of her acquaintance without being detained by a suspicion as to whom they could be addressed, she was compelled to rest in uncertainty; an uncertainty which would have been more painful to an idle mind than it was to hers. She had no leisure to suffer this circumstance, trifling at first, to swell into importance by frequent remembrance. The little vanity it had excited (for the incertitude which forbade her to presume upon having inspired the sonnet, forbade her also to disbelieve it) passed away, and the incident was dismissed from her thoughts amid her books, her studies, and the exercise of social charities.

Soon after this period, her anxiety was awakened by the indisposition of her father, who was attacked with a fever; which, though not thought to be of a dangerous kind, gave a severe shock to his constitution. Madame St Aubert and Emily attended him with unremitting care; but his recovery was very slow, and, as he advanced towards health, Madame seemed to decline.

The first scene he visited, after he was well enough to take the air, was his favourite fishing-house. A basket of provisions was sent thither, with books, and Emily’s lute; for fishing-tackle he had no use, for he never could find amusement in torturing or destroying.

After employing himself, for about an hour, in botanizing, dinner was served. It was a repast, to which gratitude, for being again permitted to visit this spot, gave sweetness; and family happiness once more smiled beneath these shades. Monsieur St Aubert conversed with unusual cheerfulness; every object delighted his senses. The refreshing pleasure from the first view of nature, after the pain of illness, and the confinement of a sick-chamber, is above the conceptions, as well as the descriptions, of those in health. The green woods and pastures; the flowery turf; the blue concave of the heavens; the balmy air; the murmur of the limpid stream; and even the hum of every little insect of the shade, seem to revivify the soul, and make mere existence bliss.

Madame St Aubert, reanimated by the cheerfulness and recovery of her husband, was no longer sensible of the indisposition which had lately oppressed her; and, as she sauntered along the wood-walks of this romantic glen, and conversed with him, and with her daughter, she often looked at them alternately with a degree of tenderness, that filled her eyes with tears. St Aubert observed this more than once, and gently reproved her for the emotion; but she could only smile, clasp his hand, and that of Emily, and weep the more. He felt the tender enthusiasm stealing upon himself in a degree that became almost painful; his features assumed a serious air, and he could not forbear secretly sighing – ‘Perhaps I shall some time look back to these moments, as to the summit of my happiness, with hopeless regret. But let me not misuse them by useless anticipation; let me hope I shall not live to mourn the loss of those who are dearer to me than life.’

To relieve, or perhaps to indulge, the pensive temper of his mind, he bade Emily fetch the lute she knew how to touch with such sweet pathos. As she drew near the fishing-house, she was surprised to hear the tones of the instrument, which were awakened by the hand of taste, and uttered a plaintive air, whose exquisite melody engaged all her attention. She listened in profound silence, afraid to move from the spot, lest the sound of her steps should occasion her to lose a note of the music, or should disturb the musician. Every thing without the building was still, and no person appeared. She continued to listen, till timidity succeeded to surprise and delight; a timidity, increased by a remembrance of the pencilled lines she had formerly seen, and she hesitated whether to proceed, or to return.

While she paused, the music ceased; and, after a momentary hesitation, she recollected courage[10] to advance to the fishing-house, which she entered with faltering steps, and found unoccupied! Her lute lay on the table; every thing seemed undisturbed, and she began to believe it was another instrument she had heard, till she remembered, that, when she followed M. and Madame St Aubert from this spot, her lute was left on a window seat. She felt alarmed, yet knew not wherefore; the melancholy gloom of evening, and the profound stillness of the place, interrupted only by the light trembling of leaves, heightened her fanciful apprehensions, and she was desirous of quitting the building, but perceived herself grow faint, and sat down. As she tried to recover herself, the pencilled lines on the wainscot met her eye; she started, as if she had seen a stranger; but, endeavouring to conquer the tremour of her spirits, rose, and went to the window. To the lines before noticed she now perceived that others were added, in which her name appeared.

Though no longer suffered to doubt that they were addressed to herself, she was as ignorant, as before, by whom they could be written. While she mused, she thought she heard the sound of a step without the building, and again alarmed, she caught up her lute, and hurried away. Monsieur and Madame St Aubert she found in a little path that wound along the sides of the glen.

Having reached a green summit, shadowed by palm-trees, and overlooking the vallies and plains of Gascony, they seated themselves on the turf; and while their eyes wandered over the glorious scene, and they inhaled the sweet breath of flowers and herbs that enriched the grass, Emily played and sung several of their favourite airs, with the delicacy of expression in which she so much excelled.

Music and conversation detained them in this enchanting spot, till the sun’s last light slept upon the plains; till the white sails that glided beneath the mountains, where the Garonne wandered, became dim, and the gloom of evening stole over the landscape. It was a melancholy but not unpleasing gloom. St Aubert and his family rose, and left the place with regret; alas! Madame St Aubert knew not that she left it for ever.

When they reached the fishing-house she missed her bracelet, and recollected that she had taken it from her arm after dinner, and had left it on the table when she went to walk. After a long search, in which Emily was very active, she was compelled to resign herself to the loss of it. What made this bracelet valuable to her was a miniature of her daughter to which it was attached, esteemed a striking resemblance, and which had been painted only a few months before. When Emily was convinced that the bracelet was really gone, she blushed, and became thoughtful. That some stranger had been in the fishing-house, during her absence, her lute, and the additional lines of a pencil, had already informed her: from the purport of these lines it was not unreasonable to believe, that the poet, the musician, and the thief were the same person. But though the music she had heard, the written lines she had seen, and the disappearance of the picture, formed a combination of circumstances very remarkable, she was irresistibly restrained from mentioning them; secretly determining, however, never again to visit the fishing-house without Monsieur or Madame St Aubert.

They returned pensively to the chateau, Emily musing on the incident which had just occurred; St Aubert reflecting, with placid gratitude, on the blessings he possessed; and Madame St Aubert somewhat disturbed, and perplexed, by the loss of her daughter's picture. As they drew near the house, they observed an unusual bustle about it; the sound of voices was distinctly heard, servants and horses were seen passing between the trees, and, at length, the wheels of a carriage rolled along. Having come within view of the front of the chateau, a landau, with smoking horses, appeared on the little lawn before it. St Aubert perceived the liveries of his brother-in-law, and in the parlour he found Monsieur and Madame Quesnel already entered. They had left Paris some days before, and were on the way to their estate, only ten leagues distant from La Vallée, and which Monsieur Quesnel had purchased several years before of St Aubert. This gentleman was the only brother of Madame St Aubert, but the ties of relationship having never been strengthened by congeniality of character, the intercourse between them had not been frequent. M. Quesnel had lived altogether in the world; his aim had been consequence; splendour was the object of his taste; and his address and knowledge of character had carried him forward to the attainment of almost all that he had courted. By a man of such a disposition, it is not surprising that the virtues of St Aubert should be overlooked; or that his pure taste, simplicity, and moderated wishes, were considered as marks of a weak intellect, and of confined views. The marriage of his sister with St Aubert had been mortifying to his ambition, for he had designed that the matrimonial connection she formed should assist him to attain the consequence which he so much desired; and some offers were made her by persons whose rank and fortune flattered his warmest hope. But his sister, who was then addressed also by St Aubert, perceived, or thought she perceived, that happiness and splendour were not the same, and she did not hesitate to forego the last for the attainment of the former. Whether Monsieur Quesnel thought them the same, or not, he would readily have sacrificed his sister's peace to the gratification of his own ambition; and, on her marriage with St Aubert, expressed in private his contempt of her spiritless conduct, and of the connection which it permitted. Madame St Aubert, though she concealed this insult from her husband, felt, perhaps, for the first time, resentment lighted in her heart; and, though a regard for her own dignity, united with considerations of prudence, restrained her expression of this resentment, there was ever after a mild reserve in her manner towards M. Quesnel, which he both understood and felt.

In his own marriage he did not follow his sister's example. His lady was an Italian, and an heiress by birth; and, by nature and education, was a vain and frivolous woman.

They now determined to pass the night with St Aubert; and as the chateau was not large enough to accommodate their servants, the latter were dismissed to the neighbouring village. When the first compliments were over, and the arrangements for the night made, M. Quesnel began the display of his intelligence and his connections; while St Aubert, who had been long enough in retirement to find these topics recommended by their novelty, listened, with a degree of patience and attention, which his guest mistook for the humility of wonder. The latter, indeed, described the few festivities which the turbulence of that period permitted to the court of Henry the Third,[11] with a minuteness, that somewhat recompensed for his ostentation; but, when he came to speak of the character of the Duke de Joyeuse, of a secret treaty, which he knew to be negociating with the Porte, and of the light in which Henry of Navarre was received, M. St Aubert recollected enough of his former experience to be assured, that his guest could be only of an inferior class of politicians; and that, from the importance of the subjects upon which he committed himself, he could not be of the rank to which he pretended to belong. The opinions delivered by M. Quesnel, were such as St Aubert forbore to reply to, for he knew that his guest had neither humanity to feel, nor discernment to perceive, what is just.

Madame Quesnel, meanwhile, was expressing to Madame St Aubert her astonishment, that she could bear to pass her life in this remote corner of the world, as she called it, and describing, from a wish, probably, of exciting envy, the splendour of the balls, banquets, and processions which had just been given by the court, in honour of the nuptials of the Duke de Joyeuse with Margaretta of Lorrain, the sister of the Queen. She described with equal minuteness the magnificence she had seen, and that from which she had been excluded; while Emily's vivid fancy, as she listened with the ardent curiosity of youth, heightened the scenes she heard of; and Madame St Aubert, looking on her family, felt, as a tear stole to her eye, that though splendour may grace happiness, virtue only can bestow it.

'It is now twelve years, St Aubert,' said M. Quesnel, 'since I purchased your family estate.' – 'Somewhere thereabout,' replied St Aubert, suppressing a sigh. 'It is near five years since I have been there,' resumed Quesnel; 'for Paris and its neighbourhood is the only place in the world to live in, and I am so immersed in politics, and have so many affairs of moment on my hands, that I find it difficult to steal away even for a month or two.' St Aubert remaining silent, M. Quesnel proceeded: 'I have sometimes wondered how you, who have lived in the capital, and have been accustomed to company, can exist elsewhere; – especially in so remote a country as this, where you can neither hear nor see any thing, and can in short be scarcely conscious of life.'

'I live for my family and myself,' said St Aubert; 'I am now contented to know only happiness; – formerly I knew life.'

'I mean to expend thirty or forty thousand livres[12] on improvements,' said M. Quesnel, without seeming to notice the words of St Aubert; 'for I design, next summer, to bring here my friends, the Duke de Durefort and the Marquis Ramont, to pass a month or two with me.' To St Aubert's enquiry, as to these intended improvements, he replied, that he should take down the old east wing of the chateau, and raise upon the site a set of stables. 'Then I shall build,' said he, 'a *salle à manger*,a *salon*,a *salle au commune* ,[13] and a number of rooms for servants; for at present there is not accommodation for a third part of my own people.'

'It accommodated our father's household,' said St Aubert, grieved that the old mansion was to be thus improved, 'and that was not a small one.'

'Our notions are somewhat enlarged since those days,' said M. Quesnel; – 'what was then thought a decent style of living would not now be endured.' Even the calm St Aubert blushed at these words, but his anger soon yielded to contempt. 'The ground about the chateau is encumbered with trees; I mean to cut some of them down.'

'Cut down the trees too!' said St Aubert.

'Certainly. Why should I not? they interrupt my prospects. There is a chesnut which spreads its branches before the whole south side of the chateau, and which is so ancient that they tell me the hollow of its trunk will hold a dozen men. Your enthusiasm will scarcely contend that there can be either use, or beauty, in such a sapless old tree as this.'

'Good God!' exclaimed St Aubert, 'you surely will not destroy that noble chesnut, which has flourished for centuries, the glory of the estate! It was in its maturity when the present mansion was built. How often, in my youth, I have climbed among its broad branches, and sat embowered amidst a world of leaves, while the heavy shower has pattered above, and not a rain drop reached me! How often I have sat with a book in my hand, sometimes reading, and sometimes looking out between the branches upon the wide landscape, and the setting sun, till twilight came, and brought the birds home to their little nests among the leaves! How often – but pardon me,' added St Aubert, recollecting that he was speaking to a man who could neither comprehend, nor allow for his feelings, 'I am talking of times and feelings as old-fashioned as the taste that would spare that venerable tree.'

'It will certainly come down,' said M. Quesnel; 'I believe I shall plant some Lombardy poplars among the clumps of chesnut, that I shall leave of the avenue; Madame Quesnel is partial to the poplar, and tells me how much it adorns a villa of her uncle, not far from Venice.'

'On the banks of the Brenta, indeed,' continued St Aubert, 'where its spiry form is intermingled with the pine, and the cypress, and where it plays over light and elegant porticos and colonnades, it, unquestionably, adorns the scene, but among the giants of the forest, and near a heavy gothic mansion—'

'Well, my good sir,' said M. Quesnel, 'I will not dispute with you. You must return to Paris before our ideas can at all agree. But *à-propos* of Venice; I have some thoughts of going thither, next summer; events may call me to take possession of that same villa, too, which they tell me is the most charming that can be imagined. In that case I shall leave the improvements I mention to another year, and I may, perhaps, be tempted to stay some time in Italy.'

Emily was somewhat surprised to hear him talk of being tempted to remain abroad, after he had mentioned his presence to be so necessary at Paris, that it was with difficulty he could steal away for a month or two; but St Aubert understood the self-importance of the man too well to wonder at this trait; and the possibility, that these projected improvements might be deferred, gave him a hope, that they might never take place.

Before they separated for the night, M. Quesnel desired to speak with St Aubert alone, and they retired to another room, where they remained a considerable time. The subject of this conversation was not known; but, whatever it might be, St Aubert, when he returned to the supper-room, seemed much disturbed, and a shade of sorrow sometimes fell upon his features, that alarmed Madame St Aubert. When they were alone she was tempted to enquire the occasion of it, but the delicacy of mind, which had ever appeared in his conduct, restrained her: she considered that, if St Aubert wished her to be acquainted with the subject of his concern, he would not wait for her enquiries.

On the following day, before M. Quesnel departed, he had a second conference with St Aubert.

The guests, after dining at the chateau, set out in the cool of the day for Epourville, whither they gave him and Madame St Aubert a pressing invitation, prompted rather by the vanity of displaying their splendour, than by a wish to make their friends happy.

Emily returned, with delight, to the liberty which their presence had restrained, to her books, her walks, and the rational conversation of M. and Madame St Aubert, who seemed to rejoice, no less, that they were delivered from the shackles, which arrogance and frivolity had imposed.

Madame St Aubert excused herself from sharing their usual evening walk, complaining that she was not quite well, and St Aubert and Emily went out together.

They chose a walk towards the mountains, intending to visit some old pensioners of St Aubert, which, from his very moderate income, he contrived to support, though it is probable M. Quesnel, with his very large one, could not have afforded this.

After distributing to his pensioners their weekly stipends, listening patiently to the complaints of some, redressing the grievances of others, and softening the discontents of all, by the looks of sympathy, and the smile of benevolence, St

Aubert returned home through the woods,

___'where

At fall of eve the fairy-people throng,
In various games and revelry to pass
The summer night, as village stories tell.'[*]

'The evening gloom of woods was always delightful to me,' said St Aubert, whose mind now experienced the sweet calm, which results from the consciousness of having done a beneficent action, and which disposes it to receive pleasure from every surrounding object. 'I remember that in my youth this gloom used to call forth to my fancy a thousand fairy visions, and romantic images; and, I own, I am not yet wholly insensible of that high enthusiasm, which wakes the poet's dream. I can linger, with solemn steps, under the deep shades, send forward a transforming eye into the distant obscurity, and listen with thrilling delight to the mystic murmuring of the woods.'

'O my dear father,' said Emily, while a sudden tear started to her eye, 'how exactly you describe what I have felt so often, and which I thought nobody had ever felt but myself ! But hark! here comes the sweeping sound over the wood-tops; – now it dies away; – how solemn the stillness that succeeds! Now the breeze swells again. It is like the voice of some supernatural being – the voice of the spirit of the woods, that watches over them by night. Ah! what light is yonder? But it is gone. And now it gleams again, near the root of that large chesnut: look, sir!'

'Are you such an admirer of nature,' said St Aubert, 'and so little acquainted with her appearances as not to know that for the glow-worm? But come,' added he gaily, 'step a little further, and we shall see fairies, perhaps; they are often companions. The glow-worm lends his light, and they in return charm him with music, and the dance. Do you see nothing tripping yonder?'

Emily laughed. 'Well, my dear sir,' said she, 'since you allow of this alliance, I may venture to own I have anticipated you; and almost dare venture to repeat some verses I made one evening in these very woods.'

'Nay,' replied St Aubert, 'dismiss the *almost*, and venture quite; let us hear what vagaries fancy has been playing in your mind. If she has given you one of her spells, you need not envy those of the fairies.'

'If it is strong enough to enchant your judgment, sir,' said Emily, 'while I disclose her images, I need *not* envy them. The lines go in a sort of tripping measure, which I thought might suit the subject well enough, but I fear they are too irregular.

THE GLOW - WORM[15]

How pleasant is the green-wood's deep-matted shade
On a mid-summer's eve, when the fresh rain is o'er;
When the yellow beams slope, and sparkle thro' the glade,
And swiftly in the thin air the light swallows soar!

But sweeter, sweeter still, when the sun sinks to rest,
And twilight comes on, with the fairies so gay
Tripping through the forest-walk, where flow'rs, unprest,
Bow not their tall heads beneath their frolic play.

To music's softest sounds they dance away the hour,
Till moon-light steals down among the trembling leaves,
And checquers all the ground, and guides them to the bow'r,
The long haunted bow'r, where the nightingale grieves.

Then no more they dance, till her sad song is done,
But, silent as the night, to her mourning attend;
And often as her dying notes their pity have won,
They vow all her sacred haunts from mortals to defend.

When, down among the mountains, sinks the ev'ning star,
And the changing moon forsakes this shadowy sphere,
How cheerless would they be, tho' they fairies are,
If I, with my pale light, came not near!

Yet cheerless tho' they'd be, they're ungrateful to my love!
For, often when the traveller's benighted on his way,
And I glimmer in his path, and would guide him thro' the grove,

They bind me in their magic spells to lead him far astray;

And in the mire to leave him, till the stars are all burnt out,

While, in strange-looking shapes, they frisk about the ground,
And, afar in the woods, they raise a dismal shout,

Till I shrink into my cell again for terror of the sound!

But, see where all the tiny elves come dancing in a ring,

With the merry, merry pipe, and the tabor, and the horn,

And the timbrel so clear, and the lute with dulcet string;

Then round about the oak they go till peeping of the morn.

Down yonder glade two lovers steal, to shun the fairy-queen,

Who frowns upon their plighted vows, and jealous is of me,
That yester-eve I lighted them, along the dew green,

To seek the purple flow'r, whose juice from all her spells can free.

And now, to punish me, she keeps afar her jocund band,

With the merry, merry pipe, and the tabor, and the lute;
If I creep near yonder oak she will wave her fairy wand,

And to me the dance will cease, and the music all be mute.

O! had I but that purple flow'r whose leaves her charms can foil,

And knew like fays[16] to draw the juice, and throw it on the wind,
I'd be her slave no longer, nor the traveller beguile,

And help all faithful lovers, nor fear the fairy kind!

But soon the *vapour of the woods* will wander afar,

And the fickle moon will fade, and the stars disappear.
Then, cheerless will they be, tho' they fairies are,

If I, with my pale light, come not near!

Whatever St Aubert might think of the stanzas, he would not deny his daughter the pleasure of believing that he approved them; and, having given his commendation, he sunk into a reverie, and they walked on in silence.

_____'A faint erroneous ray
Glanc'd from th' imperfect surfaces of things,
Flung half an image on the straining eye;
While waving woods, and villages, and streams,
And rocks, and mountain-tops, that long retain
The ascending gleam, are all one swimming scene,

Uncertain if beheld.'*

St Aubert continued silent till he reached the chateau, where his wife had retired to her chamber. The languor and dejection, that had lately oppressed her, and which the exertion called forth by the arrival of her guests had suspended, now returned with increased effect. On the following day, symptoms of fever appeared, and St Aubert, having sent for medical advice, learned, that her disorder was a fever of the same nature as that, from which he had lately recovered. She had, indeed, taken the infection, during her attendance upon him, and, her constitution being too weak to throw out the disease immediately, it had lurked in her veins, and occasioned the heavy languor of which she had complained. St Aubert, whose anxiety for his wife overcame every other consideration, detained the physician in his house. He remembered the feelings and the reflections that had called a momentary gloom upon his mind, on the day when he had last visited the fishing-house, in company with Madame St Aubert, and he now admitted a presentiment, that this illness would be a fatal one. But he effectually concealed this from her, and from his daughter, whom he endeavoured to re-animate with hopes that her constant assiduities would not be unavailing. The physician, when asked by St Aubert for his opinion of the disorder, replied, that the event of it depended upon circumstances which he could not ascertain. Madame St Aubert seemed to have formed a more decided one; but her eyes only gave hints of this. She frequently fixed them upon her anxious friends with an expression of pity, and of tenderness, as if she anticipated the sorrow that awaited them, and that seemed to say, it was for their sakes only, for their sufferings, that she regretted life. On the seventh day, the disorder was at its crisis. The physician assumed a graver manner, which she observed, and took occasion, when her family had once quitted the chamber, to tell him, that she perceived her death was approaching. ‘Do not attempt to deceive me,’ said she, ‘I feel that I cannot long survive. I am prepared for the event, I have long, I hope, been preparing for it. Since I have not long to live, do not suffer a mistaken compassion to induce you to flatter my family with false hopes. If you do, their affliction will only be the heavier when it arrives: I will endeavour to teach them resignation by my example.’

The physician was affected; he promised to obey her, and told St Aubert, somewhat abruptly, that there was nothing to expect. The latter was not philosopher enough to restrain his feelings when he received this information; but a consideration of the increased affliction which the observance of his grief would occasion his wife, enabled him, after some time, to command himself in her presence. Emily was at first overwhelmed with the intelligence; then, deluded by the strength of her wishes, a hope sprung up in her mind that her mother would yet recover, and to this she pertinaciously adhered almost to the last hour.

The progress of this disorder was marked, on the side of Madame St Aubert, by patient suffering, and subjected wishes. The composure, with which she awaited her death, could be derived only from the retrospect of a life governed, as far as human frailty permits, by a consciousness of being always in the presence of the Deity, and by the hope of an higher world. But her piety could not entirely subdue the grief of parting from those whom she so dearly loved. During these her last hours, she conversed much with St Aubert and Emily, on the prospect of futurity, and on other religious topics. The resignation she expressed, with the firm hope of meeting in a future world the friends she left in this, and the effort which sometimes appeared to conceal her sorrow at this temporary separation, frequently affected St Aubert so much as to oblige him to leave the room. Having indulged his tears awhile, he would dry them and return to the chamber with a countenance composed by an endeavour which did but increase his grief.

Never had Emily felt the importance of the lessons, which had taught her to restrain her sensibility, so much as in these moments, and never had she practised them with a triumph so complete. But when the last was over, she sunk at once under the pressure of her sorrow, and then perceived that it was hope, as well as fortitude, which had hitherto supported her. St Aubert was for a time too devoid of comfort himself to bestow any on his daughter.

CHAPTER II

> ‘I could a tale unfold, whose lightest word
> Would harrow up thy soul.’
>
> Shakespeare [*Hamlet*][1]

Madame St Aubert was interred in the neighbouring village church; her husband and daughter attended her to the grave, followed by a long train of the peasantry, who were sincere mourners of this excellent woman.

On his return from the funeral, St Aubert shut himself in his chamber. When he came forth, it was with a serene countenance, though pale in sorrow. He gave orders that his family should attend him. Emily only was absent; who, overcome with the scene she had just witnessed, had retired to her closet[2] to weep alone. St Aubert followed her thither: he took her hand in silence, while she continued to weep; and it was some moments before he could so far command his voice as to speak. It trembled while he said, ‘My Emily, I am going to prayers with my family; you will join us. We must ask support from above. Where else ought we to seek it – where else can we find it?’

Emily checked her tears, and followed her father to the parlour, where, the servants being assembled, St Aubert read, in a low and solemn voice, the evening service, and added a prayer for the soul of the departed. During this, his voice often faltered, his tears fell upon the book, and at length he paused. But the sublime emotions of pure devotion gradually elevated his views above this world, and finally brought comfort to his heart.

When the service was ended, and the servants were withdrawn, he tenderly kissed Emily, and said, ‘I have endeavoured to teach you, from your earliest youth, the duty of self-command; I have pointed out to you the great importance of it through life, not only as it preserves us in the various and dangerous temptations that call us from rectitude and virtue, but as it limits the indulgences which are termed virtuous, yet which, extended beyond a certain boundary, are vicious, for their consequence is evil. All excess is vicious; even that sorrow, which is amiable in its origin, becomes a selfish and unjust passion, if indulged at the expence of our duties – by our duties I mean what we owe to ourselves, as well as to others. The indulgence of excessive grief enervates the mind, and almost incapacitates it for again partaking of those various innocent enjoyments which a benevolent God designed to be the sun-shine of our lives. My dear Emily, recollect and practise the precepts I have so often given you, and which your own experience has so often shewn you to be wise.

‘Your sorrow is useless. Do not receive this as merely a common-place remark, but let reason *therefore* restrain sorrow. I would not annihilate your feelings, my child, I would only teach you to command them; for whatever may be the evils resulting from a too susceptible heart, nothing can be hoped from an insensible one; that, on the other hand, is all vice – vice, of which the deformity is not softened, or the effect consoled for, by any semblance or possibility of good. You know my sufferings, and are, therefore, convinced that mine are not the light words which, on these occasions, are so often repeated to destroy even the sources of honest emotion, or which merely display the selfish ostentation of a false philosophy. I will shew my Emily, that I can practise what I advise. I have said thus much, because I cannot bear to see you wasting in useless sorrow, for want of that resistance which is due from mind; and I have not said it till now, because there is a period when all reasoning must yield to nature; that is past: and another, when excessive indulgence, having sunk into habit, weighs down the elasticity of the spirits so as to render conquest nearly impossible; this is to come. You, my Emily, will shew that you are willing to avoid it.’

Emily smiled through her tears upon her father: ‘Dear Sir,’ said she, and her voice trembled; she would have added, ‘I will shew myself worthy of being your daughter;’ but a mingled emotion of gratitude, affection, and grief overcame her. St Aubert suffered her to weep without interruption, and then began to talk on common topics.

The first person who came to condole with St Aubert was an M. Barreaux, an austere and seemingly unfeeling man. A taste for botany had introduced them to each other, for they had frequently met in their wanderings among the mountains. M. Barreaux had retired from the world, and almost from society, to live in a pleasant chateau, on the skirts of the woods, near La Vallée. He also had been disappointed in his opinion of mankind; but he did not, like St Aubert, pity and mourn for them; he felt more indignation at their vices, than compassion for their weaknesses.

St Aubert was somewhat surprised to see him; for, though he had often pressed him to come to the chateau, he had never till now accepted the invitation; and now he came without ceremony or reserve, entering the parlour as an old friend. The claims of misfortune appeared to have softened down all the ruggedness and prejudices of his heart. St Aubert unhappy, seemed to be the sole idea that occupied his mind. It was in manners, more than in words, that he appeared to sympathize with his friends: he spoke little on the subject of their grief; but the minute attention he gave them, and the modulated voice, and softened look that accompanied it, came from his heart, and spoke to theirs.

At this melancholy period, St Aubert was likewise visited by Madame Cheron, his only surviving sister, who had been some years a widow, and now resided on her own estate near Tholouse[3]. The intercourse between them had not been very frequent. In her condolements, words were not wanting; she understood not the magic of the look that speaks at once to the soul, or the voice that sinks like balm to the heart: but she assured St Aubert that she sincerely sympathized with him, praised the virtues of his late wife, and then offered what she considered to be consolation. Emily wept unceasingly while she spoke; St Aubert was tranquil, listened to what she said in silence, and then turned the discourse upon another subject.

At parting she pressed him and her niece to make her an early visit. ‘Change of place will amuse you,’ said she, ‘and it is wrong to give way to grief.’ St Aubert acknowledged the truth of these words of course; but, at the same time, felt more reluctant than ever to quit the spot which his past happiness had consecrated. The presence of his wife had sanctified every surrounding scene, and, each day, as it gradually softened the acuteness of his suffering, assisted the tender enchantment that bound him to home.

But there were calls which must be complied with, and of this kind was the visit he paid to his brother-in-law M. Quesnel. An affair of an interesting nature made it necessary that he should delay this visit no longer, and, wishing to rouse Emily from her dejection, he took her with him to Epourville.

As the carriage entered upon the forest that adjoined his paternal domain, his eyes once more caught, between the chesnut avenue, the turreted corners of the chateau. He sighed to think of what had passed since he was last there, and that it was now the property of a man who neither revered nor valued it. At length he entered the avenue, whose lofty trees had so often delighted him when a boy, and whose melancholy shade was now so congenial with the tone of his spirits. Every feature of the edifice, distinguished by an air of heavy grandeur, appeared successively between the branches of the trees – the broad turret, the arched gate-way that led into the courts, the drawbridge, and the dry fosse which surrounded the whole.

The sound of carriage wheels brought a troop of servants to the great gate, where St Aubert alighted, and from which he led Emily into the gothic hall, now no longer hung with the arms and ancient banners of the family. These were displaced, and the oak wainscotting, and beams that crossed the roof, were painted white. The large table, too, that used to stretch along the upper end of the hall, where the master of the mansion loved to display his hospitality, and whence the peal of laughter, and the song of conviviality, had so often resounded, was now removed; even the benches that had surrounded the hall were no longer there. The heavy walls were hung with frivolous ornaments, and every thing that appeared denoted the false taste and corrupted sentiments of the present owner.

St Aubert followed a gay Parisian servant to a parlour, where sat Mons. and Madame Quesnel, who received him with a stately politeness, and, after a few formal words of condolement, seemed to have forgotten, that they ever had a sister.

Emily felt tears swell into her eyes, and then resentment checked them. St Aubert, calm and deliberate, preserved his dignity without assuming importance, and Quesnel was depressed by his presence without exactly knowing wherefore.

After some general conversation, St Aubert requested to speak with him alone; and Emily, being left with Madame Quesnel, soon learned that a large party was invited to dine at the chateau, and was compelled to hear that nothing which was past and irremediable ought to prevent the festivity of the present hour.

St Aubert, when he was told that company were expected, felt a mixed emotion of disgust and indignation against the insensibility of Quesnel, which prompted him to return home immediately. But he was informed, that Madame Cheron had been asked to meet him; and, when he looked at Emily, and considered that a time might come when the enmity of her uncle would be prejudicial to her, he determined not to incur it himself, by conduct which would be resented as indecorous, by the very persons who now shewed so little sense of decorum.

Among the visitors assembled at dinner were two Italian gentlemen, of whom one was named Montoni, a distant relation of Madame Quesnel, a man about forty, of an uncommonly hand some person, with features manly and expressive, but whose countenance exhibited, upon the whole, more of the haughtiness of command, and the quickness of discernment, than of any other character.

Signor Cavigni, his friend, appeared to be about thirty – his inferior in dignity, but equal to him in penetration of countenance, and superior in insinuation of manner.

Emily was shocked by the salutation with which Madame Cheron met her father – ‘Dear brother,’ said she, ‘I am concerned to see you look so very ill; do, pray, have advice!’ St Aubert answered, with a melancholy smile, that he felt himself much as usual; but Emily’s fears made her now fancy that her father looked worse than he really did.

Emily would have been amused by the new characters she saw, and the varied conversation that passed during dinner, which was served in a style of splendour she had seldom seen before, had her spirits been less oppressed. Of the guests, Signor Montoni was lately come from Italy, and he spoke of the commotions which at that period agitated the country; talked of party differences with warmth, and then lamented the probable consequences of the tumults.[4] His friend spoke with equal ardour, of the politics of his country; praised the government and prosperity of Venice, and boasted of its decided superiority over all the other Italian states. He then turned to the ladies, and talked with the same eloquence, of Parisian fashions, the French opera,[5] and French manners; and on the latter subject he did not fail to mingle what is so particularly agreeable to French taste. The flattery was not detected by those to whom it was addressed, though its effect, in producing submissive attention, did not escape his observation. When he could disengage himself from the assiduities of the other ladies, he sometimes addressed Emily: but she knew nothing of Parisian fashions, or Parisian operas; and her modesty, simplicity, and correct manners formed a decided contrast to those of her female companions.

After dinner, St Aubert stole from the room to view once more the old chesnut which Quesnel talked of cutting down. As he stood under its shade, and looked up among its branches, still luxuriant, and saw here and there the blue sky trembling between them; the pursuits and events of his early days crowded fast to his mind, with the figures and characters of friends – long since gone from the earth; and he now felt himself to be almost an insulated being, with nobody but his Emily for his heart to turn to.

He stood lost amid the scenes of years which fancy called up, till the succession closed with the picture of his dying wife, and he started away, to forget it, if possible, at the social board.

St Aubert ordered his carriage at an early hour, and Emily observed, that he was more than unusually silent and dejected on the way home; but she considered this to be the effect of his visit to a place which spoke so eloquently of former times, nor suspected that he had a cause of grief which he concealed from her.

On entering the chateau she felt more depressed than ever, for she more than ever missed the presence of that dear parent, who, whenever she had been from home, used to welcome her return with smiles and fondness; now, all was silent and forsaken.

But what reason and effort may fail to do, time effects. Week after week passed away, and each, as it passed, stole something from the harshness of her affliction, till it was mellowed to that tenderness which the feeling heart cherishes as sacred. St Aubert, on the contrary, visibly declined in health; though Emily, who had been so constantly with him, was almost the last person who observed it. His constitution had never recovered from the late attack of the fever, and the succeeding shock it had received from Madame St Aubert's death had produced its present infirmity. His physician now ordered him to travel; for it was perceptible that sorrow had seized upon his nerves, weakened as they had been by the preceding illness; and variety of scene, it was probable, would, by amusing his mind, restore them to their proper tone.

For some days Emily was occupied in preparations to attend him; and he, by endeavours to diminish his expences at home during the journey – a purpose which determined him at length to dismiss his domestics. Emily seldom opposed her father's wishes by questions or remonstrances, or she would now have asked why he did not take a servant, and have represented that his infirm health made one almost necessary. But when, on the eve of their departure, she found that he had dismissed Jacques, Francis, and Mary, and detained only Theresa the old housekeeper, she was extremely surprised, and ventured to ask his reason for having done so. 'To save expences, my dear,' he replied – 'we are going on an expensive excursion.'

The physician had prescribed the air of Languedoc and Provence; and St Aubert determined, therefore, to travel leisurely along the shores of the Mediterranean, towards Provence.

They retired early to their chamber on the night before their departure; but Emily had a few books and other things to collect, and the clock had struck twelve before she had finished, or had remembered that some of her drawing instruments, which she meant to take with her, were in the parlour below. As she went to fetch these, she passed her father's room, and, perceiving the door half open, concluded that he was in his study – for, since the death of Madame St Aubert, it had been frequently his custom to rise from his restless bed, and go thither to compose his mind. When she was below stairs she looked into this room, but without finding him; and as she returned to her chamber, she tapped at his door, and receiving no answer, stepped softly in, to be certain whether he was there.

The room was dark, but a light glimmered through some panes of glass that were placed in the upper part of a closet-door. Emily believed her father to be in the closet, and, surprised that he was up at so late an hour, apprehended he was unwell, and was going to enquire; but, considering that her sudden appearance at this hour might alarm him, she removed her light to the stair-case, and then stepped softly to the closet. On looking through the panes of glass, she saw him seated at a small table, with papers before him, some of which he was reading with deep attention and interest, during which he often wept, and sobbed aloud. Emily, who had come to the door to learn whether her father was ill, was now detained there by a mixture of curiosity and tenderness. She could not witness his sorrow, without being anxious to know the subject of it; and she therefore continued to observe him in silence, concluding that those papers were letters of her late mother. Presently he knelt down, and with a look so solemn as she had seldom seen him assume, and which was mingled with a certain wild expression, that partook more of horror than of any other character, he prayed silently for a considerable time.

When he rose, a ghastly paleness was on his countenance. Emily was hastily retiring; but she saw him turn again to the papers, and she stopped. He took from among them a small case, and from thence a miniature picture. The rays of light fell strongly upon it, and she perceived it to be that of a lady, but not of her mother.

St Aubert gazed earnestly and tenderly upon this portrait, put it to his lips, and then to his heart, and sighed with a convulsive force. Emily could scarcely believe what she saw to be real. She never knew till now that he had a picture of any other lady than her mother, much less that he had one which he evidently valued so highly; but having looked repeatedly, to be certain that it was not the resemblance of Madame St Aubert she became entirely convinced that it was designed for that of some other person.

At length St Aubert returned the picture into its case; and Emily, recollecting that she was intruding upon his private sorrows, softly withdrew from the chamber.

CHAPTER III

'O how canst thou renounce the boundless store
Of charms which nature to her vot'ry yields!
The warbling woodland, the resounding shore,
The pomp of groves, and garniture of fields;
All that the genial ray of morning gilds,
And all that echoes to the song of even;
All that the mountain's shelt'ring bosom shields,
And all the dread magnificence of heaven;
O how canst thou renounce, and hope to be forgiven!'
. . . .
'These charms shall work thy soul's eternal health,
And love, and gentleness, and joy impart.'
[BEATTIE] *The Minstrel*[1]

St Aubert, instead of taking the more direct road, that ran along the feet of the Pyrenées to Languedoc, chose one that, winding over the heights, afforded more extensive views and greater variety of romantic scenery. He turned a little out of his way to take leave of M. Barreaux, whom he found botanizing in the wood near his chateau, and who, when he was told the purpose of St Aubert's visit, expressed a degree of concern, such as his friend had thought it was scarcely possible for him to feel on any similar occasion. They parted with mutual regret.

'If any thing could have tempted me from my retirement,' said M. Barreaux, 'it would have been the pleasure of accompanying you on this little tour. I do not often offer compliments; you may, therefore, believe me, when I say, that I shall look for your return with impatience.'

The travellers proceeded on their journey. As they ascended the heights, St Aubert often looked back upon his chateau, in the plain below; tender images crowded to his mind; his melancholy imagination suggested that he should return no more; and though he checked this wandering thought, still he continued to look, till the haziness of distance blended his home with the general landscape, and St Aubert seemed to

'Drag at each remove a lengthening chain.'[2]

He and Emily continued sunk in musing silence for some leagues,[3] from which melancholy reverie Emily first awoke, and her young fancy, struck with the grandeur of the objects around, gradually yielded to delightful impressions. The road now descended into glens, confined by stupendous walls of rock, grey and barren, except where shrubs fringed their summits, or patches of meagre vegetation tinted their recesses, in which the wild goat was frequently browsing. And now, the way led to the lofty cliffs, from whence the landscape was seen extending in all its magnificence.

Emily could not restrain her transport as she looked over the pine forests of the mountains upon the vast plains, that, enriched with woods, towns, blushing vines, and plantations of almonds, palms and olives, stretched along, till their various colours melted in distance into one harmonious hue, that seemed to unite earth with heaven. Through the whole of this glorious scene the majestic Garonne wandered; descending from its source among the Pyrenées, and winding its blue waves towards the Bay of Biscay.

The ruggedness of the unfrequented road often obliged the wanderers to alight from their little carriage, but they thought themselves amply repaid for this inconvenience by the grandeur of the scenes; and, while the muleteer led his animals slowly over the broken ground, the travellers had leisure to linger amid these solitudes, and to indulge the sublime reflections, which soften, while they elevate, the heart, and fill it with the certainty of a present God! Still the enjoyment of St Aubert was touched with that pensive melancholy, which gives to every object a mellower tint, and breathes a sacred charm over all around.

They had provided against part of the evil to be encountered from a want of convenient inns, by carrying a stock of provisions in the carriage, so that they might take refreshment on any pleasant spot, in the open air, and pass the nights where-ever they should happen to meet with a comfortable cottage. For the mind, also, they had provided, by a work on botany, written by M. Barreaux, and by several of the Latin and Italian poets; while Emily's pencil enabled her to preserve some of those combinations of forms, which charmed her at every step.

The loneliness of the road, where, only now and then, a peasant was seen driving his mule, or some mountaineer-children at play among the rocks, heightened the effect of the scenery. St Aubert was so much struck with it, that he determined, if he could hear of a road, to penetrate further among the mountains, and, bending his way rather more to the south, to emerge into Rousillon, and coast the Mediterranean along part of that country to Languedoc.

Soon after mid-day, they reached the summit of one of those cliffs, which, bright with the verdure of palm trees, adorn, like gems, the tremendous walls of the rocks, and which overlooked the greater part of Gascony, and part of Languedoc. Here was shade, and the fresh water of a spring, that, gliding among the turf, under the trees, thence precipitated itself from rock to rock, till its dashing murmurs were lost in the abyss, though its white foam was long seen amid the darkness of the pines below.

This was a spot well suited for rest, and the travellers alighted to dine, while the mules were unharnessed to browse on the savoury herbs that enriched this summit.

It was some time before St Aubert or Emily could withdraw their attention from the surrounding objects, so as to partake of their little repast. Seated in the shade of the palms, St Aubert pointed out to her observation the course of the rivers, the situation of great towns, and the boundaries of provinces, which science, rather than the eye, enabled him to describe.[4] Notwithstanding this occupation, when he had talked awhile he suddenly became silent, thoughtful, and tears often swelled to his eyes, which Emily observed, and the sympathy of her own heart told her their cause. The scene before them bore some resemblance, though it was on a much grander scale, to a favourite one of the late Madame St Aubert, within view of the fishing-house. They both observed this, and thought how delighted she would have been with the present landscape, while they knew that her eyes must never, never more open upon this world. St Aubert remembered the last time of his visiting that spot in company with her, and also the mournfully presaging thoughts which had then arisen in his mind, and were now, even thus soon, realized! The recollections subdued him, and he abruptly rose from his seat, and walked away to where no eye could observe his grief.

When he returned, his countenance had recovered its usual serenity; he took Emily's hand, pressed it affectionately, without speaking, and soon after called to the muleteer, who sat at a little distance, concerning a road among the mountains towards Rousillon. Michael said, there were several that way, but he did not know how far they extended, or even whether they were passable; and St Aubert, who did not intend to travel after sun-set, asked what village they could reach about that time. The muleteer calculated, that they could easily reach Mateau, which was in their present road; but that, if they took a road that sloped more to the south, towards Rousillon, there was a hamlet, which he thought they could gain before the evening shut in.

St Aubert, after some hesitation, determined to take the latter course, and Michael, having finished his meal, and harnessed his mules, again set forward, but soon stopped; and St Aubert saw him doing homage to a cross, that stood on a rock impending over their way. Having concluded his devotions, he smacked his whip in the air, and, in spite of the rough road, and the pain of his poor mules, which he had been lately lamenting, rattled, in a full gallop, along the edge of a precipice, which it made the eye dizzy to look down. Emily was terrified almost to fainting; and St Aubert, apprehending still greater danger from suddenly stopping the driver, was compelled to sit quietly, and trust his fate to the strength and discretion of the mules, who seemed to possess a greater portion of the latter quality than their master; for they carried the travellers safely into the valley, and there stopped upon the brink of the rivulet that watered it.

Leaving the splendour of extensive prospects, they now entered this narrow valley screened by

> Rocks on rocks piled, as if by magic spell,
>
> Here scorch'd by lightnings, there with ivy green.[5]

The scene of barrenness was here and there interrupted by the spreading branches of the larch and cedar, which threw their gloom over the cliff, or athwart the torrent that rolled in the vale. No living creature appeared, except the izard, scrambling among the rocks, and often hanging upon points so dangerous, that fancy shrunk from the view of them. This was such a scene as *Salvator* would have chosen, had he then existed,[6] for his canvass; St Aubert, impressed by the romantic character of the place, almost expected to see banditti[7] start from behind some projecting rock, and he kept his hand upon the arms with which he always travelled.

As they advanced, the valley opened; its savage features gradually softened, and, towards evening, they were among heathy mountains, stretched in far perspective, along which the solitary sheep-bell was heard, and the voice of the shepherd calling his wandering flocks to the nightly fold. His cabin, partly shadowed by the cork-tree and the ilex, which St Aubert observed to flourish in higher regions of the air than any other trees, except the fir, was all the human habitation that yet appeared. Along the bottom of this valley the most vivid verdure was spread; and, in the little hollow recesses of the mountains, under the shade of the oak and chesnut, herds of cattle were grazing. Groups of them, too, were often seen reposing on the banks of the rivulet or laving[8] their sides in the cool stream, and sipping its wave.

The sun was now setting upon the valley; its last light gleamed upon the water, and heightened the rich yellow and purple tints of the heath and broom, that overspread the mountains. St Aubert enquired of Michael the distance to the hamlet he had mentioned, but the man could not with certainty tell; and Emily began to fear that he had mistaken the road. Here was no human being to assist, or direct them; they had left the shepherd and his cabin far behind, and the scene became so obscured in twilight, that the eye could not follow the distant perspective of the valley in search of a cottage, or a hamlet. A glow of the horizon still marked the west, and this was of some little use to the travellers. Michael seemed endeavouring to keep up his courage by singing; his music, however, was not of a kind to disperse melancholy;

he sung, in a sort of chant, one of the most dismal ditties his present auditors had ever heard, and St Aubert at length discovered it to be a vesper-hymn to his favourite saint.

They travelled on, sunk in that thoughtful melancholy, with which twilight and solitude impress the mind. Michael had now ended his ditty, and nothing was heard but the drowsy murmur of the breeze among the woods, and its light flutter, as it blew freshly into the carriage. They were at length roused by the sound of fire-arms. St Aubert called to the muleteer to stop, and they listened. The noise was not repeated; but presently they heard a rustling among the brakes.[9] St Aubert drew forth a pistol, and ordered Michael to proceed as fast as possible, who had not long obeyed, before a horn sounded, that made the mountains ring. He looked again from the window, and then saw a young man spring from the bushes into the road, followed by a couple of dogs. The stranger was in a hunter's dress. His gun was slung across his shoulders, the hunter's horn hung from his belt, and in his hand was a small pike, which, as he held it, added to the manly grace of his figure, and assisted the agility of his steps.

After a moment's hesitation, St Aubert again stopped the carriage, and waited till he came up, that they might enquire concerning the hamlet they were in search of. The stranger informed him, that it was only half a league distant, that he was going thither himself, and would readily shew the way. St Aubert thanked him for the offer, and, pleased with his chevalier-like air and open countenance, asked him to take a seat in the carriage, which the stranger, with an acknowledgment, declined, adding that he would keep pace with the mules. 'But I fear you will be wretchedly accommodated,' said he: 'the inhabitants of these mountains are a simple people, who are not only without the luxuries of life, but almost destitute of what in other places are held to be its necessaries.'

'I perceive you are not one of its inhabitants, sir,' said St Aubert.

'No, sir, I am only a wanderer here.'

The carriage drove on, and the increasing dusk made the travellers very thankful that they had a guide; the frequent glens, too, that now opened among the mountains would likewise have added to their perplexity. Emily, as she looked up one of these, saw something at a great distance like a bright cloud in the air. 'What light is yonder, sir?' said she. St Aubert looked, and perceived that it was the snowy summit of a mountain, so much higher than any around it, that it still reflected the sun's rays, while those below lay in deep shade.

At length, village lights were seen to twinkle through the dusk, and, soon after, some cottages were discovered in the valley, or rather were seen by reflection in the stream, on whose margin they stood, and which still gleamed with the evening light.

The stranger now came up, and St Aubert, on further enquiry, found not only that there was no inn in the place, but not any sort of house of public reception. The stranger, however, offered to walk on, and enquire for a cottage to accommodate them; for which further civility St Aubert returned his thanks, and said, that, as the village was so near, he would alight, and walk with him. Emily followed slowly in the carriage.

On the way, St Aubert asked his companion what success he had had in the chase. 'Not much, sir,' he replied, 'nor do I aim at it. I am pleased with the country, and mean to saunter away a few weeks among its scenes. My dogs I take with me more for companionship than for game. This dress, too, gives me an ostensible business, and procures me that respect from the people, which would, perhaps, be refused to a lonely stranger, who had no visible motive for coming among them.'

'I admire your taste,' said St Aubert, 'and, if I was a younger man, should like to pass a few weeks in your way exceedingly. I, too, am a wanderer, but neither my plan nor pursuits are exactly like yours – I go in search of health, as much as of amusement.' St Aubert sighed, and paused; and then, seeming to recollect himself, he resumed: 'If I can hear of a tolerable road, that shall afford decent accommodation, it is my intention to pass into Rousillon, and along the sea-shore to Languedoc. You, sir, seem to be acquainted with the country, and can, perhaps, give me information on the subject.'

The stranger said, that what information he could give was entirely at his service; and then mentioned a road rather more to the east, which led to a town, whence it would be easy to proceed into Rousillon.

They now arrived at the village, and commenced their search for a cottage, that would afford a night's lodging. In several, which they entered, ignorance, poverty, and mirth seemed equally to prevail; and the owners eyed St Aubert with a mixture of curiosity and timidity. Nothing like a bed could be found, and he had ceased to enquire for one, when Emily joined him, who observed the languor of her father's countenance, and lamented, that he had taken a road so ill provided with the comforts necessary for an invalid. Other cottages, which they examined, seemed somewhat less savage than the former, consisting of two rooms, if such they could be called; the first of these occupied by mules and pigs, the second by the family, which generally consisted of six or eight children, with their parents, who slept on beds of skins and dried beech leaves, spread upon a mud floor. Here, light was admitted, and smoke discharged, through an aperture in the roof; and here the scent of spirits (for the travelling smugglers, who haunted the Pyrenées, had made this rude people familiar with the use of liquors) was generally perceptible enough. Emily turned from such scenes, and looked at her father with anxious tenderness, which the young stranger seemed to observe; for, drawing St Aubert aside, he made him an offer of his own bed. 'It is a decent one,' said he, 'when compared with what we have just seen, yet such as in other circumstances I should be ashamed to offer you.' St Aubert acknowledged how much he felt himself obliged by this kindness, but refused to accept it, till the young stranger would take no denial. 'Do not give me the pain of knowing, sir,' said he, 'that an invalid, like you, lies on hard skins, while I sleep in a bed. Besides, sir, your refusal wounds my pride; I must believe you think my offer unworthy your acceptance. Let me shew you the way. I have no doubt my landlady can accommodate this young lady also.'

St Aubert, at length, consented, that, if this could be done, he would accept his kindness, though he felt rather surprised, that the stranger had proved himself so deficient in gallantry, as to administer to the repose of an infirm man, rather than to that of a very lovely young woman, for he had not once offered the room for Emily. But she thought not of herself, and the animated smile she gave him, told how much she felt herself obliged for the preference of her father.

On their way, the stranger, whose name was Valancourt, stepped on first to speak to his hostess, and she came out to welcome St Aubert into a cottage, much superior to any he had seen. This good woman seemed very willing to accommodate the strangers, who were soon compelled to accept the only two beds in the place. Eggs and milk were the only food the cottage afforded; but against scarcity of provisions St Aubert had provided, and he requested Valancourt to stay, and partake with him of less homely fare, an invitation, which was readily accepted, and they passed an hour in intelligent conversation. St Aubert was much pleased with the manly frankness, simplicity, and keen susceptibility to the grandeur of nature, which his new acquaintance discovered; and, indeed, he had often been heard to say, that, without a certain simplicity of heart, this taste could not exist in any strong degree.

The conversation was interrupted by a violent uproar without, in which the voice of the muleteer was heard above every other sound. Valancourt started from his seat, and went to enquire the occasion; but the dispute continued so long afterwards, that St Aubert went himself, and found Michael quarrelling with the hostess, because she had refused to let his mules lie in a little room where he and three of her sons were to pass the night. The place was wretched enough but there was no other for these people to sleep in; and, with somewhat more of delicacy than was usual among the inhabitants of this wild tract of country, she persisted in refusing to let the animals have the same *bed-chamber* with her children. This was a tender point with the muleteer; his honour was wounded when his mules were treated with disrespect, and he would have received a blow, perhaps, with more meekness. He declared that his beasts were as honest beasts, and as good beasts, as any in the whole province; and that they had a right to be well treated wherever they went. 'They are as harmless as lambs,' said he, 'if people don't affront them. I never knew them behave themselves amiss above once or twice in my life, and then they had good reason for doing so. Once, indeed, they kicked at a boy's leg that lay asleep in the stable, and broke it; but I told them they were out there, and by Saint Anthony! I believe they understood me, for they never did so again.'

He concluded this eloquent harangue with protesting, that they should share with him, go where he would.

The dispute was at length settled by Valancourt, who drew the hostess aside, and desired she would let the muleteer and his beasts have the place in question to themselves, while her sons should have the bed of skins designed for him, for that he would wrap himself in his cloak, and sleep on the bench by the cottage door. But this she thought it her duty to oppose, and she felt it to be her inclination to disappoint the muleteer. Valancourt, however, was positive, and the tedious affair was at length settled.

It was late when St Aubert and Emily retired to their rooms, and Valancourt to his station at the door, which, at this mild season, he preferred to a close cabin and a bed of skins. St Aubert was somewhat surprised to find in his room volumes of Homer, Horace, and Petrarch;[10] but the name of Valancourt, written in them, told him to whom they belonged.

CHAPTER IV

‘In truth he was a strange and wayward wight,

Fond of each gentle, and each dreadful scene,
In darkness, and in storm he found delight;
Nor less than when on ocean-wave serene
The southern sun diffus’d his dazzling sheen.
Even sad vicissitude amus’d his soul;
And if a sigh would sometimes intervene,
And down his cheek a tear of pity roll,
A sigh, a tear, so sweet, he wish’d not to controul.’
[BEATTIE] *The Minstrel*[1]

St Aubert awoke at an early hour, refreshed by sleep, and desirous to set forward. He invited the stranger to breakfast with him; and, talking again of the road, Valancourt said, that, some months past, he had travelled as far as Beaujeu, which was a town of some consequence on the way to Rousillon. He recommended it to St Aubert to take that route, and the latter determined to do so.

‘The road from this hamlet,’ said Valancourt, ‘and that to Beaujeu, part at the distance of about a league and an half from hence; if you will give me leave, I will direct your muleteer so far. I must wander somewhere, and your company would make this a pleasanter ramble than any other I could take.’

St Aubert thankfully accepted his offer, and they set out together, the young stranger on foot, for he refused the invitation of St Aubert to take a seat in his little carriage.

The road wound along the feet of the mountains through a pastoral valley, bright with verdure, and varied with groves of dwarf oak, beech, and sycamore, under whose branches herds of cattle reposed. The mountain-ash too, and the weeping birch, often threw their pendant foliage over the steeps above, where the scanty soil scarcely concealed their roots, and where their light branches waved to every breeze that fluttered from the mountains.

The travellers were frequently met at this early hour, for the sun had not yet risen upon the valley, by shepherds driving immense flocks from their folds to feed upon the hills. St Aubert had set out thus early, not only that he might enjoy the first appearance of sun-rise, but that he might inhale the first pure breath of morning, which above all things is refreshing to the spirits of the invalid. In these regions it was particularly so, where an abundance of wild flowers and aromatic herbs breathed forth their essence on the air.

The dawn, which softened the scenery with its peculiar grey tint, now dispersed, and Emily watched the progress of the day, first trembling on the tops of the highest cliffs, then touching them with splendid light, while their sides and the vale below were still wrapt in dewy mist. Meanwhile, the sullen grey of the eastern clouds began to blush, then to redden, and then to glow with a thousand colours, till the golden light darted over all the air, touched the lower points of the mountain’s brow, and glanced in long sloping beams upon the valley and its stream. All nature seemed to have awakened from death into life; the spirit of St Aubert was renovated. His heart was full; he wept, and his thoughts ascended to the Great Creator.

Emily wished to trip along the turf, so green and bright with dew, and to taste the full delight of that liberty, which the izard seemed to enjoy as he bounded along the brow of the cliffs; while Valancourt often stopped to speak with the travellers, and with social feeling to point out to them the peculiar objects of his admiration. St Aubert was pleased with him: ‘Here is the real ingenuousness and ardour of youth,’ said he to himself; ‘this young man has never been at Paris.’

He was sorry when they came to the spot where the roads parted, and his heart took a more affectionate leave of him than is usual after so short an acquaintance. Valancourt talked long by the side of the carriage; seemed more than once to be going, but still lingered, and appeared to search anxiously for topics of conversation to account for his delay. At length he took leave. As he went, St Aubert observed him look with an earnest and pensive eye at Emily, who bowed to him with a countenance full of timid sweetness, while the carriage drove on. St Aubert, for whatever reason, soon after looked from the window, and saw Valancourt standing upon the bank of the road, resting on his pike with folded arms, and following the carriage with his eyes. He waved his hand, and Valancourt, seeming to awake from his reverie, returned the salute, and started away.

The aspect of the country now began to change, and the travellers soon found themselves among mountains covered from their base nearly to their summits with forests of gloomy pine, except where a rock of granite shot up from the vale, and lost its snowy top in the clouds. The rivulet, which had hitherto accompanied them, now expanded into a river; and, flowing deeply and silently along, reflected, as in a mirror, the blackness of the impending shades. Sometimes a cliff was seen lifting its bold head above the woods and the vapours, that floated mid-way down the mountains; and sometimes a face of perpendicular marble rose from the water's edge, over which the larch threw his gigantic arms, here scathed with lightning, and there floating in luxuriant foliage.

They continued to travel over a rough and unfrequented road, seeing now and then at a distance the solitary shepherd, with his dog, stalking along the valley, and hearing only the dashing of torrents, which the woods concealed from the eye, the long sullen murmur of the breeze, as it swept over the pines, or the notes of the eagle and the vulture, which were seen towering round the beetling cliff.

Often, as the carriage moved slowly over uneven ground, St Aubert alighted, and amused himself with examining the curious plants that grew on the banks of the road, and with which these regions abound; while Emily, wrapt in high enthusiasm, wandered away under the shades, listening in deep silence to the lonely murmur of the woods.

Neither village nor hamlet was seen for many leagues; the goat-herd's or the hunter's cabin, perched among the cliffs of the rocks, were the only human habitations that appeared.

The travellers again took their dinner in the open air, on a pleasant spot in the valley, under the spreading shade of cedars; and then set forward towards Beaujeu.

The road now began to ascend, and, leaving the pine forests behind, wound among rocky precipices. The evening twilight again fell over the scene, and the travellers were ignorant how far they might yet be from Beaujeu. St Aubert, however, conjectured that the distance could not be very great, and comforted himself with the prospect of travelling on a more frequented road after reaching that town, where he designed to pass the night. Mingled woods, and rocks, and heathy mountains were now seen obscurely through the dusk; but soon even these imperfect images faded in darkness. Michael proceeded with caution, for he could scarcely distinguish the road; his mules, however, seemed to have more sagacity, and their steps were sure.

On turning the angle of a mountain, a light appeared at a distance, that illumined the rocks, and the horizon to a great extent. It was evidently a large fire, but whether accidental, or otherwise, there were no means of knowing. St Aubert thought it was probably kindled by some of the numerous banditti, that infested the Pyrenées, and he became watchful and anxious to know whether the road passed near this fire. He had arms with him, which, on an emergency, might afford some protection, though certainly a very unequal one, against a band of robbers, so desperate too as those usually were who haunted these wild regions. While many reflections rose upon his mind, he heard a voice shouting from the road behind, and ordering the muleteer to stop. St Aubert bade him proceed as fast as possible; but either Michael, or his mules were obstinate, for they did not quit the old pace. Horses' feet were now heard; a man rode up to the carriage, still ordering the driver to stop; and St Aubert, who could no longer doubt his purpose, was with difficulty able to prepare a pistol for his defence, when his hand was upon the door of the chaise. The man staggered on his horse, the report of the pistol was followed by a groan, and St Aubert's horror may be imagined, when in the next instant he thought he heard the faint voice of Valancourt. He now himself bade the muleteer stop; and pronouncing the name of Valancourt, was answered in a voice, that no longer suffered him to doubt. St Aubert, who instantly alighted and went to his assistance, found him still sitting on his horse, but bleeding profusely, and appearing to be in great pain, though he endeavoured to soften the terror of St Aubert by assurances that he was not materially hurt, the wound being only in his arm. St Aubert, with the muleteer, assisted him to dismount, and he sat down on the bank of the road, where St Aubert tried to bind up his arm, but his hands trembled so excessively that he could not accomplish it; and, Michael being now gone in pursuit of the horse, which, on being disengaged from his rider, had galloped off, he called Emily to his assistance. Receiving no answer, he went to the carriage, and found her sunk on the seat in a fainting fit. Between the distress of this circumstance and that of leaving Valancourt bleeding, he scarcely knew what he did; he endeavoured, however, to raise her, and called to Michael to fetch water from the rivulet that flowed by the road, but Michael was gone beyond the reach of his voice. Valancourt, who heard these calls, and also the repeated name of Emily, instantly understood the subject of his distress; and, almost forgetting his own condition, he hastened to her relief. She was reviving when he reached the carriage; and then, understanding that anxiety for him had occasioned her indisposition, he assured her, in a voice that trembled, but not from anguish, that his wound was of no consequence. While he said this St Aubert turned round, and perceiving that he was still bleeding, the subject of his alarm changed again, and he hastily formed some handkerchiefs into a bandage. This stopped the effusion of the blood; but St Aubert, dreading the consequence of the wound, enquired repeatedly how far they were from Beaujeu; when, learning that it was at two leagues distance, his distress increased, since he knew not how Valancourt, in his present state, would bear the motion of the carriage, and perceived that he was already faint from loss of blood. When he mentioned the subject of his anxiety, Valancourt entreated that he would not suffer himself to be thus alarmed on his account, for that he had no doubt he should be able to support himself very well; and then he talked of the accident as a slight one. The muleteer being now returned with Valancourt's horse, assisted him into the chaise; and, as Emily was now revived, they moved slowly on towards Beaujeu.

St Aubert, when he had recovered from the terror occasioned him by this accident, expressed surprise on seeing Valancourt, who explained his unexpected appearance by saying, 'You, Sir, renewed my taste for society; when you had left the hamlet, it did indeed appear a solitude. I determined, therefore, since my object was merely amusement, to change the scene; and I took this road, because I knew it led through a more romantic tract of mountains than the spot I have left. Besides,' added he, hesitating for an instant, 'I will own, and why should I not? that I had some hope of overtaking you.'

'And I have made you a very unexpected return for the compliment,' said St Aubert, who lamented again the rashness which had produced the accident, and explained the cause of his late alarm. But Valancourt seemed anxious only to remove from the minds of his companions every unpleasant feeling relative to himself; and, for that purpose, still struggled against a sense of pain, and tried to converse with gaiety. Emily meanwhile was silent, except when Valancourt particularly addressed her, and there was at those times a tremulous tone in his voice that spoke much.

They were now so near the fire, which had long flamed at a distance on the blackness of night, that it gleamed upon the road, and they could distinguish figures moving about the blaze. The way winding still nearer, they perceived in the valley one of those numerous bands of gipsies, which at that period particularly haunted the wilds of the Pyrenées, and lived partly by plundering the traveller. Emily looked with some degree of terror on the savage countenances of these people, shewn by the fire, which heightened the romantic effect of the scenery, as it threw a red dusky gleam upon the rocks and on the foliage of the trees, leaving heavy masses of shade and regions of obscurity, which the eye feared to penetrate.

They were preparing their supper; a large pot stood by the fire, over which several figures were busy. The blaze discovered a rude kind of tent, round which many children and dogs were playing, and the whole formed a picture highly grotesque. The travellers saw plainly their danger. Valancourt was silent, but laid his hand on one of St Aubert's pistols; St Aubert drew forth another, and Michael was ordered to proceed as fast as possible. They passed the place, however, without being attacked; the rovers being probably unprepared for the opportunity, and too busy about their supper to feel much interest, at the moment, in any thing besides.

After a league and a half more, passed in darkness, the travellers arrived at Beaujeu, and drove up to the only inn the place afforded; which, though superior to any they had seen since they entered the mountains, was bad enough.

The surgeon of the town was immediately sent for, if a surgeon he could be called, who prescribed for horses as well as for men, and shaved faces at least as dexterously as he set bones. After examining Valancourt's arm, and perceiving that the bullet had passed through the flesh without touching the bone, he dressed it, and left him with a solemn prescription of quiet, which his patient was not inclined to obey. The delight of ease had now succeeded to pain; for ease may be allowed to assume a positive quality when contrasted with anguish; and, his spirits thus re-animated, he wished to partake of the conversation of St Aubert and Emily, who, released from so many apprehensions, were uncommonly cheerful. Late as it was, however, St Aubert was obliged to go out with the landlord to buy meat for supper; and Emily, who, during this interval, had been absent as long as she could, upon excuses of looking to their accommodation, which she found rather better than she expected, was compelled to return, and converse with Valancourt alone. They talked of the character of the scenes they had passed, of the natural history of the country, of poetry, and of St Aubert; a subject on which Emily always spoke and listened to with peculiar pleasure.

The travellers passed an agreeable evening, but St Aubert was fatigued with his journey; and, as Valancourt seemed again sensible of pain, they separated soon after supper.

In the morning St Aubert found that Valancourt had passed a restless night; that he was feverish, and his wound very painful. The surgeon, when he dressed it, advised him to remain quietly at Beaujeu; advice which was too reasonable to be rejected. St Aubert, however, had no favourable opinion of this practitioner, and anxious to commit Valancourt into more skilful hands; but learning, upon enquiry, that there was no town within several leagues which seemed more likely to afford better advice, he altered the plan of his journey, and determined to await the recovery of Valancourt, who, with somewhat more ceremony than sincerity, made many objections to this delay.

By order of his surgeon, Valancourt did not go out of the house that day; but St Aubert and Emily surveyed with delight the environs of the town, situated at the feet of the Pyrenean Alps, that rose, some in abrupt precipices, and others swelling with woods of cedar, fir, and cypress, which stretched nearly to their highest summits. The cheerful green of the beech and mountain-ash was sometimes seen, like a gleam of light, amidst the dark verdure of the forest; and sometimes a torrent poured its sparkling flood, high among the woods.

Valancourt's indisposition detained the travellers at Beaujeu several days, during which interval St Aubert had observed his disposition and his talents with the philosophic enquiry so natural to him. He saw a frank and generous nature, full of ardour, highly susceptible of whatever is grand and beautiful, but impetuous, wild, and somewhat romantic. Valancourt had known little of the world. His perceptions were clear, and his feelings just; his indignation of an unworthy, or his admiration of a generous action, were expressed in terms of equal vehemence. St Aubert sometimes smiled at his warmth, but seldom checked it, and often repeated to himself, 'This young man has never been at Paris.' A sigh sometimes followed this silent ejaculation. He determined not to leave Valancourt till he should be perfectly recovered; and, as he was now well enough to travel, though not able to manage his horse, St Aubert invited him to accompany him for a few days in the carriage. This he the more readily did, since he had discovered that Valancourt was of a family of the same name in Gascony, with whose respectability he was well acquainted. The latter accepted the offer with great pleasure, and they again set forward among these romantic wilds towards Rousillon.

They travelled leisurely; stopping where-ever a scene uncommonly grand appeared; frequently alighting to walk to an eminence, whither the mules could not go, from which the prospect opened in greater magnificence; and often sauntering over hillocks covered with lavender, wild thyme, juniper, and tamarisc; and under the shades of woods, between whose boles they caught the long mountain-vista, sublime beyond any thing that Emily had ever imagined.

St Aubert sometimes amused himself with botanizing, while Valancourt and Emily strolled on; he pointing out to her notice the objects that particularly charmed him, and reciting beautiful passages from such of the Latin and Italian poets as he had heard her admire. In the pauses of conversation, when he thought himself not observed, he frequently fixed his eyes pensively on her countenance, which expressed with so much animation the taste and energy of her mind; and when he spoke again, there was a peculiar tenderness in the tone of his voice, that defeated any attempt to conceal his sentiments. By degrees these silent pauses became more frequent; till Emily, only, betrayed an anxiety to interrupt them; and she, who had been hitherto reserved, would now talk again, and again, of the woods and the vallies and the mountains, to avoid the danger of sympathy and silence.

From Beaujeu the road had constantly ascended, conducting the travellers into the higher regions of the air, where immense glaciers exhibited their frozen horrors, and eternal snow whitened the summits of the mountains. They often paused to contemplate these stupendous scenes, and, seated on some wild cliff, where only the ilex or the larch could flourish, looked over dark forests of fir, and precipices where human foot had never wandered, into the glen – so deep, that the thunder of the torrent, which was seen to foam along the bottom, was scarcely heard to murmur. Over these crags rose others of stupendous height, and fantastic shape; some shooting into cones; others impending far over their base, in huge masses of granite, along whole broken ridges was often lodged a weight of snow, that, trembling even to the vibration of a sound, threatened to bear destruction in its course to the vale. Around, on every side, far as the eye could penetrate, were seen only forms of grandeur – the long perspective of mountain-tops, tinged with ethereal blue, or white with snow; vallies of ice, and forests of gloomy fir. The serenity and clearness of the air in these high regions were particularly delightful to the travellers; it seemed to inspire them with a finer spirit, and diffused an indescribable complacency over their minds. They had no words to express the sublime emotions they felt. A solemn expression characterized the feelings of St Aubert; tears often came to his eyes, and he frequently walked away from his companions. Valancourt now and then spoke, to point to Emily's notice some feature of the scene. The thinness of the atmosphere, through which every object came so distinctly to the eye, surprised and deluded her; who could scarcely believe that objects, which appeared so near, were, in reality, so distant. The deep silence of these solitudes was broken only at intervals by the scream of the vultures, seen cowering round some cliff below, or by the cry of the eagle sailing high in the air; except when the travellers listened to the hollow thunder that sometimes muttered at their feet. While, above, the deep blue of the heavens was unobscured by the lightest cloud, half way down the mountains, long billows of vapour were frequently seen rolling, now wholly excluding the country below, and now opening, and partially revealing its features. Emily delighted to observe the grandeur of these clouds as they changed in shape and tints, and to watch their various effect on the lower world, whose features, partly veiled, were continually assuming new forms of sublimity.

After traversing these regions for many leagues, they began to descend towards Rousillon, and features of beauty then mingled with the scene. Yet the travellers did not look back without some regret to the sublime objects they had quitted; though the eye, fatigued with the extension of its powers, was glad to repose on the verdure of woods and pastures, that now hung on the margin of the river below; to view again the humble cottage shaded by cedars, the playful group of mountaineer-children, and the flowery nooks that appeared among the hills.

As they descended, they saw at a distance, on the right, one of the grand passes of the Pyrenées into Spain, gleaming with its battlements and towers to the splendour of the setting rays, yellow tops of woods colouring the steeps below, while far above aspired the snowy points of the mountains, still reflecting a rosy hue.

St Aubert began to look out for the little town he had been directed to by the people of Beaujeu, and where he meant to pass the night; but no habitation yet appeared. Of its distance Valancourt could not assist him to judge, for he had never been so far along this chain of Alps before. There was, however, a road to guide them; and there could be little doubt that it was the right one; for, since they had left Beaujeu, there had been no variety of tracks to perplex or mislead.

The sun now gave his last light, and St Aubert bade the muleteer proceed with all possible dispatch. He found, indeed, the lassitude of illness return upon him, after a day of uncommon fatigue, both of body and mind, and he longed for repose. His anxiety was not soothed by observing a numerous train, consisting of men, horses, and loaded mules, winding down the steeps of an opposite mountain, appearing and disappearing at intervals among the woods, so that its numbers could not be judged of. Something bright, like arms, glanced in the setting ray, and the military dress was distinguishable upon the men who were in the van, and on others scattered among the troop that followed. As these wound into the vale, the rear of the party emerged from the woods, and exhibited a band of soldiers. St Aubert's apprehensions now subsided; he had no doubt that the train before him consisted of smugglers, who, in conveying prohibited goods over the Pyrenées, had been encountered, and conquered by a party of troops.

The travellers had lingered so long among the sublimer scenes of these mountains, that they found themselves entirely mistaken in their calculation that they could reach Montigny at sun-set; but, as they wound along the valley, they saw, on a rude Alpine bridge, that united two lofty crags of the glen, a group of mountaineer-children, amusing themselves with dropping pebbles into a torrent below, and watching the stones plunge into the water, that threw up its white spray high in the air as it received them, and returned a sullen sound, which the echoes of the mountains prolonged. Under the bridge was seen a perspective of the valley, with its cataract descending among the rocks, and a cottage on a cliff, overshadowed with pines. It appeared, that they could not be far from some small town. St Aubert bade the muleteer stop, and then called to the children to enquire if he was near Montigny; but the distance, and the roaring of the waters, would not suffer his voice to be heard; and the crags, adjoining the bridge, were of such tremendous height and steepness, that to have climbed either would have been scarcely practicable to a person unacquainted with the ascent. St Aubert, therefore, did not waste more moments in delay. They continued to travel long after twilight had obscured the road, which was so broken, that, now thinking it safer to walk than to ride, they all alighted. The moon was rising, but her light was yet too feeble to assist them. While they stepped carefully on, they heard the vesper-bell of a convent. The twilight would not permit them to distinguish any thing like a building, but the sounds seemed to come from some woods, that overhung an acclivity to the right. Valancourt proposed to go in search of this convent. 'If they will not accommodate us with a night's lodging,' said he, 'they may certainly inform us how far we are from Montigny, and direct us towards it.' He was bounding forward, without waiting St Aubert's reply, when the latter stopped him. 'I am very weary,' said St Aubert, 'and wish for nothing so much as for immediate rest. We will all go to the convent; your good looks would defeat our purpose; but when they see mine and Emily's exhausted countenances, they will scarcely deny us repose.'

As he said this, he took Emily's arm within his, and, telling Michael to wait a while in the road with the carriage, they began to ascend towards the woods, guided by the bell of the convent. His steps were feeble, and Valancourt offered him his arm, which he accepted. The moon now threw a faint light over their path, and, soon after, enabled them to distinguish some towers rising above the tops of the woods. Still following the note of the bell, they entered the shade of those woods, lighted only by the moon-beams, that glided down between the leaves, and threw a tremulous uncertain gleam upon the steep track they were winding. The gloom and the silence that prevailed, except when the bell returned upon the air, together with the wildness of the surrounding scene, struck Emily with a degree of fear, which, however, the voice and conversation of Valancourt somewhat repressed. When they had been some time ascending, St Aubert complained of weariness, and they stopped to rest upon a little green summit, where the trees opened, and admitted the moon-light. He sat down upon the turf, between Emily and Valancourt. The bell had now ceased, and the deep repose of the scene was undisturbed by any sound, for the low dull murmur of some distant torrents might be said to sooth, rather than to interrupt, the silence.

Before them, extended the valley they had quitted; its rocks, and woods to the left, just silvered by the rays, formed a contrast to the deep shadow, that involved the opposite cliffs, whose fringed summits only were tipped with light; while the distant perspective of the valley was lost in the yellow mist of moon-light. The travellers sat for some time wrapt in the complacency which such scenes inspire.

'These scenes,' said Valancourt, at length, 'soften the heart, like the notes of sweet music, and inspire that delicious melancholy which no person, who had felt it once, would resign for the gayest pleasures. They waken our best and purest feelings, disposing us to benevolence, pity, and friendship. Those whom I love – I always seem to love more in such an hour as this.' His voice trembled, and he paused.

St Aubert was silent; Emily perceived a warm tear fall upon the hand he held; she knew the object of his thoughts; hers too had, for some time, been occupied by the remembrance of her mother. He seemed by an effort to rouse himself. 'Yes,' said he, with an half-suppressed sigh, 'the memory of those we love – of times for ever past! in such an hour as this steals upon the mind, like a strain of distant music in the stillness of night; – all tender and harmonious as this landscape, sleeping in the mellow moon-light.' After the pause of a moment, St Aubert added, 'I have always fancied, that I thought with more clearness, and precision, at such an hour than at any other, and that heart must be insensible in a great degree, that does not soften to its influence. But many such there are.'

Valancourt sighed.

'Are there, indeed, many such?' said Emily.

'A few years hence, my Emily,' replied St Aubert, 'and you may smile at the recollection of that question – if you do not weep to it. But come, I am somewhat refreshed, let us proceed.'

Having emerged from the woods, they saw, upon a turfy hillock above, the convent of which they were in search. An high wall, that surrounded it, led them to an ancient gate, at which they knocked; and the poor monk, who opened it, conducted them into a small adjoining room, where he desired they would wait while he informed the superior of their request. In this interval, several friars came in separately to look at them; and at length the first monk returned, and they followed him to a room, where the superior was sitting in an arm-chair, with a large folio volume, printed in black letter, open on a desk before him. He received them with courtesy, though he did not rise from his seat; and, having asked them a few questions, granted their request. After a short conversation, formal and solemn on the part of the superior, they withdrew to the apartment where they were to sup, and Valancourt, whom one of the inferior friars civilly desired to accompany, went to seek Michael and his mules. They had not descended half way down the cliffs, before they heard the voice of the muleteer echoing far and wide. Sometimes he called on St Aubert, and sometimes on Valancourt; who having, at length, convinced him that he had nothing to fear either for himself, or his master, and having disposed of him, for the night, in a cottage on the skirts of the woods, returned to sup with his friends, on such sober fare as the monks thought it prudent to set before them. While St Aubert was too much indisposed to share it, Emily, in her anxiety for her father, forgot herself; and Valancourt, silent and thoughtful, yet never inattentive to them, appeared particularly solicitous to accommodate and relieve St Aubert, who often observed, while his daughter was pressing him to eat, or adjusting the pillow she had placed in the back of his arm-chair, that Valancourt fixed on her a look of pensive tenderness, which he was not displeased to understand.

They separated at an early hour, and retired to their respective apartments. Emily was shown to hers by a nun of the convent, whom she was glad to dismiss, for her heart was melancholy, and her attention so much abstracted, that conversation with a stranger was painful. She thought her father daily declining, and attributed his present fatigue more to the feeble state of his frame, than to the difficulty of the journey. A train of gloomy ideas haunted her mind, till she fell asleep.

In about two hours after, she was awakened by the chiming of a bell, and then heard quick steps pass along the gallery, into which her chamber opened. She was so little accustomed to the manners of a convent, as to be alarmed by this circumstance; her fears, ever alive for her father, suggested that he was very ill, and she rose in haste to go to him. Having paused, however, to let the persons in the gallery pass before she opened her door, her thoughts, in the mean time, recovered from the confusion of sleep, and she understood that the bell was the call of the monks to prayers. It had now ceased, and, all being again still, she forbore to go to St Aubert's room. Her mind was not disposed for immediate sleep, and the moon-light, that shone into her chamber, invited her to open the casement, and look out upon the country.

It was a still and beautiful night, the sky was unobscured by any cloud, and scarce a leaf of the woods beneath trembled in the air. As she listened, the mid-night hymn of the monks rose softly from a chapel, that stood on one of the lower cliffs, an holy strain, that seemed to ascend through the silence of night to heaven, and her thoughts ascended with it. From the consideration of his works, her mind arose to the adoration of the Deity, in his goodness and power; wherever she turned her view, whether on the sleeping earth, or to the vast regions of space, glowing with worlds beyond the reach of human thought, the sublimity of God, and the majesty of his presence appeared. Her eyes were filled with tears of awful love and admiration; and she felt that pure devotion, superior to all the distinctions of human system, which lifts the soul above this world, and seems to expand it into a nobler nature; such devotion as can, perhaps, only be experienced, when the mind, rescued, for a moment, from the humbleness of earthly considerations, aspires to contemplate His power in the sublimity of His works, and His goodness in the infinity of His blessings.

___'Is it not now the hour,

The holy hour, when to the cloudless height
Of yon starred concave climbs the full-orbed moon,
And to this nether world in solemn stillness
Gives sign, that to the list'ning ear of Heaven
Religion's voice should plead? The very babe
Knows this, and, 'chance awak'd, his little hands
Lifts to the gods, and on his innocent couch
Calls down a blessing.'[*]

The midnight chant of the monks soon after dropped into silence; but Emily remained at the casement, watching the setting moon, and the valley sinking into deep shade, and willing to prolong her present state of mind. At length she retired to her mattress, and sunk into tranquil slumber.

CHAPTER V

____While in the rosy vale
Love breath'd his infant sighs, from anguish free.
Thomson [*The Seasons*, 'Spring'][1]

St Aubert, sufficiently restored by a night's repose to pursue his journey, set out in the morning, with his family and Valancourt, for Rousillon, which he hoped to reach before night-fall. The scenes, through which they now passed, were as wild and romantic, as any they had yet observed, with this difference, that beauty, every now and then, softened the landscape into smiles. Little woody recesses appeared among the mountains, covered with bright verdure and flowers; or a pastoral valley opened its grassy bosom in the shade of the cliffs, with flocks and herds loitering along the banks of a rivulet, that refreshed it with perpetual green. St Aubert could not repent the having taken this fatiguing road, though he was this day, also, frequently obliged to alight, to walk along the rugged precipice, and to climb the steep and flinty mountain. The wonderful sublimity and variety of the prospects repaid him for all this, and the enthusiasm, with which they were viewed by his young companions, heightened his own, and awakened a remembrance of all the delightful emotions of his early days, when the sublime charms of nature were first unveiled to him. He found great pleasure in conversing with Valancourt, and in listening to his ingenuous remarks. The fire and simplicity of his manners seemed to render him a characteristic figure in the scenes around them; and St Aubert discovered in his sentiments the justness and the dignity of an elevated mind, unbiassed by intercourse with the world. He perceived, that his opinions were formed, rather than imbibed; were more the result of thought, than of learning. Of the world he seemed to know nothing; for he believed well of all mankind, and this opinion gave him the reflected image of his own heart.

St Aubert, as he sometimes lingered to examine the wild plants in his path, often looked forward with pleasure to Emily and Valancourt, as they strolled on together; he, with a countenance of animated delight, pointing to her attention some grand feature of the scene; and she, listening and observing with a look of tender seriousness, that spoke the elevation of her mind. They appeared like two lovers who had never strayed beyond these their native mountains; whose situation had secluded them from the frivolities of common life, whose ideas were simple and grand, like the landscapes among which they moved, and who knew no other happiness, than in the union of pure and affectionate hearts. St Aubert smiled, and sighed at the romantic picture of felicity his fancy drew; and sighed again to think, that nature and simplicity were so little known to the world, as that their pleasures were thought romantic.

'The world,' said he, pursuing this train of thought, 'ridicules a passion which it seldom feels; its scenes, and its interests, distract the mind, deprave the taste, corrupt the heart, and love cannot exist in a heart that has lost the meek dignity of innocence. Virtue and taste are nearly the same, for virtue is little more than active taste, and the most delicate affections of each combine in real love. How then are we to look for love in great cities, where selfishness, dissipation, and insincerity supply the place of tenderness, simplicity and truth?'

It was near noon, when the travellers, having arrived at a piece of steep and dangerous road, alighted to walk. The road wound up an ascent, that was clothed with wood, and, instead of following the carriage, they entered the refreshing shade. A dewy coolness was diffused upon the air, which, with the bright verdure of turf, that grew under the trees, the mingled fragrance of flowers and of balm, thyme, and lavender, that enriched it, and the grandeur of the pines, beech, and chesnuts, that overshadowed them, rendered this a most delicious retreat. Sometimes, the thick foliage excluded all view of the country; at others, it admitted some partial catches of the distant scenery, which gave hints to the imagination to picture landscapes more interesting, more impressive, than any that had been presented to the eye. The wanderers often lingered to indulge in these reveries of fancy.

The pauses of silence, such as had formerly interrupted the conversations of Valancourt and Emily, were more frequent today than ever. Valancourt often dropped suddenly from the most animating vivacity into fits of deep musing, and there was, sometimes, an unaffected melancholy in his smile, which Emily could not avoid understanding, for her heart was interested in the sentiment it spoke.

St Aubert was refreshed by the shades, and they continued to saunter under them, following, as nearly as they could guess, the direction of the road, till they perceived that they had totally lost it. They had continued near the brow of the precipice, allured by the scenery it exhibited, while the road wound far away over the cliff above. Valancourt called loudly to Michael, but heard no voice, except his own, echoing among the rocks, and his various efforts to regain the road were equally unsuccessful. While they were thus circumstanced, they perceived a shepherd's cabin, between the boles of the trees at some distance, and Valancourt bounded on first to ask assistance. When he reached it, he saw only two little children, at play, on the turf before the door. He looked into the hut, but no person was there, and the eldest of the boys told him that their father was with his flocks, and their mother was gone down into the vale, but would be back presently. As he stood, considering what was further to be done, on a sudden he heard Michael's voice roaring forth most manfully among the cliffs above, till he made their echoes ring. Valancourt immediately answered the call, and endeavoured to make his way through the thicket that clothed the steeps, following the direction of the sound. After much struggle over brambles and precipices, he reached Michael, and at length prevailed with him to be silent, and to listen to him. The road was at a considerable distance from the spot where St Aubert and Emily were; the carriage could not easily return to the entrance of the wood, and, since it would be very fatiguing for St Aubert to climb the long and steep road to the place where it now stood, Valancourt was anxious to find a more easy ascent, by the way he had himself passed.

Meanwhile St Aubert and Emily approached the cottage, and rested themselves on a rustic bench, fastened between two pines, which overshadowed it, till Valancourt, whose steps they had observed, should return.

The eldest of the children desisted from his play, and stood still to observe the strangers, while the younger continued his little gambols, and teased his brother to join in them. St Aubert looked with pleasure upon this picture of infantine simplicity, till it brought to his remembrance his own boys, whom he had lost about the age of these, and their lamented mother; and he sunk into a thoughtfulness, which Emily observing, she immediately began to sing one of those simple and lively airs he was so fond of, and which she knew how to give with the most captivating sweetness. St Aubert smiled on her through his tears, took her hand and pressed it affectionately, and then tried to dissipate the melancholy reflections that lingered in his mind.

While she sung, Valancourt approached, who was unwilling to interrupt her, and paused at a little distance to listen. When she had concluded, he joined the party, and told them, that he had found Michael, as well as a way, by which he thought they could ascend the cliff to the carriage. He pointed to the woody steeps above, which St Aubert surveyed with an anxious eye. He was already wearied by his walk, and this ascent was formidable to him. He thought, however, it would be less toilsome than the long and broken road, and he determined to attempt it; but Emily, ever watchful of his ease, proposing that he should rest, and dine before they proceeded further, Valancourt went to the carriage for the refreshments deposited there.

On his return, he proposed removing a little higher up the mountain, to where the woods opened upon a grand and extensive prospect; and thither they were preparing to go, when they saw a young woman join the children, and caress and weep over them.

The travellers, interested by her distress, stopped to observe her. She took the youngest, of the children in her arms, and, perceiving the strangers, hastily dried her tears, and proceeded to the cottage. St Aubert, on enquiring the occasion of her sorrow, learned that her husband, who was a shepherd, and lived here in the summer months to watch over the flocks he led to feed upon these mountains, had lost, on the preceding night, his little all. A gang of gipsies, who had for some time infested the neighbourhood, had driven away several of his master's sheep. 'Jacques,' added the shepherd's wife, 'had saved a little money, and had bought a few sheep with it, and now they must go to his master for those that are stolen; and what is worse than all, his master, when he comes to know how it is, will trust him no longer with the care of his flocks, for he is a hard man! and then what is to become of our children!'

The innocent countenance of the woman, and the simplicity of her manner in relating her grievance, inclined St Aubert to believe her story, and Valancourt, convinced that it was true, asked eagerly what was the value of the stolen sheep; on hearing which he turned away with a look of disappointment. St Aubert put some money into her hand, Emily too gave something from her little purse, and they walked towards the cliff; but Valancourt lingered behind, and spoke to the shepherd's wife, who was now weeping with gratitude and surprise. He enquired how much money was yet wanting to replace the stolen sheep, and found, that it was a sum very little short of all he had about him. He was perplexed and distressed. 'This sum then,' said he to himself, 'would make this poor family completely happy – it is in my power to give it – to make them completely happy! But what is to become of me? – how shall I contrive to reach home with the little money that will remain?' For a moment he stood, unwilling to forego the luxury of raising a family from ruin to happiness, yet considering the difficulties of pursuing his journey with so small a sum as would be left.

While he was in this state of perplexity, the shepherd himself appeared: his children ran to meet him; he took one of them in his arms, and, with the other clinging to his coat, came forward with a loitering step. His forlorn and melancholy look determined Valancourt at once; he threw down all the money he had, except a very few louis,[2] and bounded away after St Aubert and Emily, who were proceeding slowly up the steep. Valancourt had seldom felt his heart so light as at this moment; his gay spirits danced with pleasure, every object around him appeared more interesting, or beautiful, than before. St Aubert observed the uncommon vivacity of his countenance: 'What has pleased you so much?' said he. 'O what a lovely day,' replied Valancourt, 'how brightly the sun shines, how pure is this air, what enchanting scenery!' 'It is indeed enchanting,' said St Aubert, whom early experience had taught to understand the nature of Valancourt's present feelings. 'What pity that the wealthy, who can command such sunshine, should ever pass their days in gloom – in the cold shade of selfishness! For you, my young friend, may the sun always shine as brightly as at this moment; may your own conduct always give you the sunshine of benevolence and reason united!'

Valancourt, highly flattered by this compliment, could make no reply but by a smile of gratitude.

They continued to wind under the woods, between the grassy knolls of the mountain, and, as they reached the shady summit, which he had pointed out, the whole party burst into an exclamation. Behind the spot where they stood, the rock rose perpendicularly in a massy wall to a considerable height, and then branched out into overhanging crags. Their grey tints were well contrasted by the bright hues of the plants and wild flowers, that grew in their fractured sides, and were deepened by the gloom of the pines and cedars, that waved above. The steeps below, over which the eye passed abruptly to the valley, were fringed with thickets of alpine shrubs; and, lower still, appeared the tufted tops of the chesnut woods, that clothed their base, among which peeped forth the shepherd's cottage, just left by the travellers, with its blueish smoke curling high in the air. On every side appeared the majestic summits of the Pyrenées, some exhibiting tremendous crags of marble, whose appearance was changing every instant, as the varying lights fell upon their surface; others, still higher, displaying only snowy points, while their lower steeps were covered almost invariably with forests of pine, larch, and oak, that stretched down to the vale. This was one of the narrow vallies, that open from the Pyrenées into the country of Rousillon, and whose green pastures, and cultivated beauty, form a decided and wonderful contrast to the romantic grandeur that environs it. Through a vista of the mountains appeared the lowlands of Rousillon, tinted with the blue haze of distance, as they united with the waters of the Mediterranean; where, on a promontory, which marked the boundary of the shore, stood a lonely beacon, over which were seen circling flights of sea-fowl. Beyond, appeared, now and then, a stealing sail, white with the sun-beam, and whose progress was perceivable by its approach to the lighthouse. Sometimes, too, was seen a sail so distant, that it served only to mark the line of separation between the sky and the waves.

On the other side of the valley, immediately opposite to the spot where the travellers rested, a rocky pass opened toward Gascony. Here no sign of cultivation appeared. The rocks of granite, that screened the glen, rose abruptly from their base, and stretched their barren points to the clouds, unvaried with woods, and uncheered even by a hunter's cabin. Sometimes, indeed, a gigantic larch threw its long shade over the precipice, and here and there a cliff reared on its brow a monumental cross, to tell the traveller the fate of him who had ventured thither before. This spot seemed the very haunt of banditti, and Emily, as she looked down upon it, almost expected to see them stealing out from some hollow cave to look for their prey. Soon after an object not less terrific struck her, – a gibbet standing on a point of rock near the entrance of the pass, and immediately over one of the crosses she had before observed. These were hieroglyphics that told a plain and dreadful story. She forbore to point it out to St Aubert, but it threw a gloom over her spirits, and made her anxious to hasten forward, that they might with certainty reach Rousillon before night-fall. It was necessary, however, that St Aubert should take some refreshment, and, seating themselves on the short dry turf, they opened the basket of provisions, while

> ____'by breezy murmurs cool'd,
>
> Broad o'er *their* heads the verdant cedars wave,
> And high palmetos lift their graceful shade.'
> _______________ '*they* draw
> Ethereal soul, there drink reviving gales
> Profusely breathing from the piney groves,
> And vales of fragrance; there at distance hear
>
> The roaring floods, and cataracts.'[*]

St Aubert was revived by rest, and by the serene air of this summit; and Valancourt was so charmed with all around, and with the conversation of his companions, that he seemed to have forgotten he had any further to go. Having concluded their simple repast, they gave a long farewell look to the scene, and again began to ascend. St Aubert rejoiced when he reached the carriage, which Emily entered with him; but Valancourt, willing to take a more extensive view of the enchanting country, into which they were about to descend, than he could do from a carriage, loosened his dogs, and once more bounded with them along the banks of the road. He often quitted it for points that promised a wider prospect, and the slow pace, at which the mules travelled, allowed him to overtake them with ease. Whenever a scene of uncommon magnificence appeared, he hastened, to inform St Aubert, who, though he was too much tired to walk himself, sometimes made the chaise wait, while Emily went to the neighbouring cliff.

It was evening when they descended the lower alps, that bind Rousillon, and form a majestic barrier round that charming country, leaving it open only on the east to the Mediterranean. The gay tints of cultivation once more beautified the landscape; for the lowlands were coloured with the richest hues, which a luxuriant climate, and an industrious people can awaken into life. Groves of orange and lemon perfumed the air, their ripe fruit glowing among the foliage; while, sloping to the plains, extensive vineyards spread their treasures. Beyond these woods and pastures, and mingled towns and hamlets stretched towards the sea, on whose bright surface gleamed many a distant sail; while, over the whole scene, was diffused the purple glow of evening. This landscape with the surrounding alps did, indeed, present a perfect picture of the lovely and the sublime, of 'beauty sleeping in the lap of horror.'[4]

The travellers, having reached the plains, proceeded, between hedges of flowering myrtle and pomegranate, to the town of Arles, where they purposed to rest for the night. They met with simple, but neat accommodation, and would have passed an happy evening, after the toils and the delights of this day, had not the approaching separation thrown a gloom over their spirits. It was St Aubert's plan to proceed, on the morrow, to the borders of the Mediterranean, and travel along its shores into Languedoc; and Valancourt, since he was now nearly recovered, and had no longer a pretence for continuing with his new friends, resolved to leave them here. St Aubert, who was much pleased with him, invited him to go further, but did not repeat the invitation, and Valancourt had resolution enough to forego the temptation of accepting it, that he might prove himself not unworthy of the favour. On the following morning, therefore, they were to part, St Aubert to pursue his way to Languedoc, and Valancourt to explore new scenes among the mountains, on his return home. During this evening he was often silent and thoughtful; St Aubert's manner towards him was affectionate, though grave, and Emily was serious, though she made frequent efforts to appear cheerful. After one of the most melancholy evenings they had yet passed together, they separated for the night.

CHAPTER VI

'I care not, Fortune! what you me deny;

You cannot rob me of free nature's grace;
You cannot shut the windows of the sky,
Through which Aurora shews her brightening face;
You cannot bar my constant feet to trace
The woods and lawns, by living stream, at eve:
Let health my nerves and finer fibres brace,
And I their toys to the great children leave:
Of fancy, reason, virtue, nought can me bereave.'

THOMSON [*The Castle of Indolence*][1]

In the morning, Valancourt breakfasted with St Aubert and Emily, neither of whom seemed much refreshed by sleep. The languor of illness still hung over St Aubert, and to Emily's fears his disorder appeared to be increasing fast upon him. She watched his looks with anxious affection, and their expression was always faithfully reflected in her own.

At the commencement of their acquaintance, Valancourt had made known his name and family. St Aubert was not a stranger to either, for the family estates, which were now in the possession of an elder brother of Valancourt, were little more than twenty miles distant from La Vallée, and he had sometimes met the elder Valancourt on visits in the neighbourhood. This knowledge had made him more willingly receive his present companion; for, though his countenance and manners would have won him the acquaintance of St Aubert, who was very apt to trust to the intelligence of his own eyes, with respect to countenances, he would not have accepted these, as sufficient introductions to that of his daughter.

The breakfast was almost as silent as the supper of the preceding night; but their musing was at length interrupted by the sound of the carriage-wheels, which were to bear away St Aubert and Emily. Valancourt started from his chair, and went to the window; it was indeed the carriage, and he returned to his seat without speaking. The moment was now come when they must part. St Aubert told Valancourt, that he hoped he would never pass La Vallée without favouring him with a visit; and Valancourt, eagerly thanking him, assured him that he never would; as he said which he looked timidly at Emily, who tried to smile away the seriousness of her spirits. They passed a few minutes in interesting conversation, and St Aubert then led the way to the carriage, Emily and Valancourt following in silence. The latter lingered at the door several minutes after they were seated, and none of the party seemed to have courage enough to say – Farewell. At length, St Aubert pronounced the melancholy word, which Emily passed to Valancourt, who returned it, with a dejected smile, and the carriage drove on.

The travellers remained, for some time, in a state of tranquil pensiveness, which is not unpleasing. St Aubert, interrupted it by observing, 'This is a very promising young man; it is many years since I have been so much pleased with any person, on so short an acquaintance. He brings back to my memory the days of my youth, when every scene was new and delightful!' St Aubert sighed, and sunk again into a reverie; and, as Emily looked back upon the road they had passed, Valancourt was seen, at the door of the little inn, following them with his eyes. He perceived her, and waved his hand; and she returned the adieu, till the winding road shut her from his sight.

'I remember when I was about his age,' resumed St Aubert, 'and I thought, and felt exactly as he does. The world was opening upon me then, now – it is closing.'

'My dear sir, do not think so gloomily,' said Emily in a trembling voice, 'I hope you have many, many years to live – for your own sake – for *my* sake.'

'Ah, my Emily!' replied St Aubert, 'for thy sake! Well – I hope it is so.' He wiped away a tear, that was stealing down his cheek, threw a smile upon his countenance, and said in a cheering voice, 'There is something in the ardour and ingenuousness of youth, which is particularly pleasing to the contemplation of an old man, if his feelings have not been entirely corroded by the world. It is cheering and reviving, like the view of spring to a sick person; his mind catches somewhat of the spirit of the season, and his eyes are lighted up with a transient sunshine. Valancourt is this spring to me.'

Emily, who pressed her father's hand affectionately, had never before listened with so much pleasure to the praises he bestowed; no, not even when he had bestowed them on herself.

They travelled on, among vineyards, woods, and pastures, delighted with the romantic beauty of the landscape, which was bounded, on one side, by the grandeur of the Pyrenées, and, on the other, by the ocean; and, soon after noon, they reached the town of Colioure, situated on the Mediterranean. Here they dined, and rested till towards the cool of day, when they pursued their way along the shores – those enchanting shores! which extend to Languedoc. Emily gazed with enthusiasm on the vastness of the sea, its surface varying, as the lights and shadows fell, and on its woody banks, mellowed with autumnal tints.

St Aubert was impatient to reach Perpignan, where he expected letters from M. Quesnel; and it was the expectation of these letters, that had induced him to leave Colioure, for his feeble frame had required immediate rest. After travelling a few miles, he fell asleep; and Emily, who had put two or three books into the carriage, on leaving La Vallée, had now the leisure for looking into them. She sought for one, in which Valancourt had been reading the day before, and hoped for the pleasure of re-tracing a page, over which the eyes of a beloved friend had lately passed, of dwelling on the passages, which he had admired, and of permitting them to speak to her in the language of his own mind, and to bring himself to her presence. On searching for the book, she could find it no where, but in its stead perceived a volume of Petrarch's poems, that had belonged to Valancourt, whose name was written in it, and from which he had frequently read passages to her, with all the pathetic expression, that characterized the feelings of the author. She hesitated in believing, what would have been sufficiently apparent to almost any other person, that he had purposely left this book, instead of the one she had lost, and that love had prompted the exchange; but, having opened it with impatient pleasure, and observed the lines of his pencil drawn along the various passages he had read aloud, and under others more descriptive of delicate tenderness than he had dared to trust his voice with, the conviction came, at length, to her mind. For some moments she was conscious only of being beloved; then, a recollection of all the variations of tone and countenance, with which he had recited these sonnets, and of the soul, which spoke in their expression, pressed to her memory, and she wept over the memorial of his affection.

They arrived at Perpignan soon after sun-set, where St Aubert found, as he had expected, letters from M. Quesnel, the contents of which so evidently and grievously affected him, that Emily was alarmed, and pressed him, as far as her delicacy would permit, to disclose the occasion of his concern; but he answered her only by tears, and immediately began to talk on other topics. Emily, though she forbore to press the one most interesting to her, was greatly affected by her father's manner, and passed a night of sleepless solicitude.

In the morning they pursued their journey along the coast towards Leucate, another town on the Mediterranean, situated on the borders of Languedoc and Rousillon. On the way, Emily renewed the subject of the preceding night, and appeared so deeply affected by St Aubert's silence and dejection, that he relaxed from his reserve. 'I was unwilling, my dear Emily,' said he, 'to throw a cloud over the pleasure you receive from these scenes, and meant, therefore, to conceal, for the present, some circumstances, with which, however, you must at length have been made acquainted. But your anxiety has defeated my purpose; you suffer as much from this, perhaps, as you will do from a knowledge of the facts I have to relate. M. Quesnel's visit proved an unhappy one to me; he came to tell me a part of the news he has now confirmed. You may have heard me mention an M. Motteville, of Paris, but you did not know that the chief of my personal property was invested in his hands. I had great confidence in him, and I am yet willing to believe, that he is not wholly unworthy of my esteem. A variety of circumstances have concurred to ruin him, and – I am ruined with him.'

St Aubert paused, to conceal his emotion.

'The letters I have just received from M. Quesnel,' resumed he, struggling to speak with firmness, 'enclosed others from Motteville, which confirmed all I dreaded.'

'Must we then quit La Vallée?' said Emily, after a long pause of silence. 'That is yet uncertain,' replied St Aubert, 'it will depend upon the compromise Motteville is able to make with his creditors. My income, you know, was never large, and now it will be reduced to little indeed! It is for you, Emily, for you, my child, that I am most afflicted.' His last words faltered; Emily smiled tenderly upon him through her tears, and then, endeavouring to overcome her emotion, 'My dear father,' said she, 'do not grieve for me, or for yourself; we may yet be happy; – if La Vallée remains for us, we must be happy. We will retain only one servant, and you shall scarcely perceive the change in your income. Be comforted, my dear sir; we shall not feel the want of those luxuries, which others value so highly, since we never had a taste for them; and poverty cannot deprive us of many consolations. It cannot rob us of the affection we have for each other, or degrade us in our own opinion, or in that of any person, whose opinion we ought to value.'

St Aubert concealed his face with his handkerchief, and was unable to speak; but Emily continued to urge to her father the truths, which himself had impressed upon her mind.

'Besides, my dear sir, poverty cannot deprive us of intellectual delights. It cannot deprive you of the comfort of affording me examples of fortitude and benevolence; nor me of the delight of consoling a beloved parent. It cannot deaden our taste for the grand, and the beautiful, or deny us the means of indulging it; for the scenes of nature – those sublime spectacles, so infinitely superior to all artificial luxuries! are open for the enjoyment of the poor, as well as of the rich. Of what, then, have we to complain, so long as we are not in want of necessaries? Pleasures, such as wealth cannot buy, will still be ours. We retain, then, the sublime luxuries of nature, and lose only the frivolous ones of art.'

St Aubert could not reply: he caught Emily to his bosom, their tears flowed together, but – they were not tears of sorrow. After this language of the heart, all other would have been feeble, and they remained silent for some time. Then, St Aubert conversed as before; for, if his mind had not recovered its natural tranquillity, it at least assumed the appearance of it.

They reached the romantic town of Leucate early in the day, but St Aubert was weary, and they determined to pass the night there. In the evening, he exerted himself so far as to walk with his daughter to view the environs that overlook the lake of Leucate, the Mediterranean, part of Rousillon, with the Pyrenées, and a wide extent of the luxuriant province of Languedoc, now blushing with the ripened vintage, which the peasants were beginning to gather. St Aubert and Emily saw the busy groups, caught the joyous song, that was wafted on the breeze, and anticipated, with apparent pleasure, their next day's journey over this gay region. He designed, however, still to wind along the sea-shore. To return home immediately was partly his wish, but from this he was with-held by a desire to lengthen the pleasure, which the journey gave his daughter, and to try the effect of the sea air on his own disorder.

On the following day, therefore, they recommenced their journey through Languedoc, winding the shores of the Mediterranean; the Pyrenées still forming the magnificent back-ground of their prospects, while on their right was the ocean, and, on their left, wide extended plains melting into the blue horizon. St Aubert was pleased, and conversed much with Emily, yet his cheerfulness was sometimes artificial, and sometimes a shade of melancholy would steal upon his countenance, and betray him. This was soon chased away by Emily's smile; who smiled, however, with an aching heart, for she saw that his misfortunes preyed upon his mind, and upon his enfeebled frame.

It was evening when they reached a small village of Upper Languedoc, where they meant to pass the night, but the place could not afford them beds; for here, too, it was the time of the vintage, and they were obliged to proceed to the next post. The languor of illness and of fatigue, which returned upon St Aubert, required immediate repose, and the evening was now far advanced; but from necessity there was no appeal, and he ordered Michael to proceed.

The rich plains of Languedoc, which exhibited all the glories of the vintage, with the gaieties of a French festival, no longer awakened St Aubert to pleasure, whose condition formed a mournful contrast to the hilarity and youthful beauty which surrounded him. As his languid eyes moved over the scene, he considered, that they would soon, perhaps, be closed for ever on this world. 'Those distant and sublime mountains,' said he secretly, as he gazed on a chain of the Pyrenées that stretched towards the west, 'these luxuriant plains, this blue vault, the cheerful light of day, will be shut from my eyes! The song of the peasant, the cheering voice of man – will no longer sound for me!'

The intelligent eyes of Emily seemed to read what passed in the mind of her father, and she fixed them on his face, with an expression of such tender pity, as recalled his thoughts from every desultory object of regret, and he remembered only, that he must leave his daughter without protection. This reflection changed regret to agony; he sighed deeply, and remained silent, while she seemed to understand that sigh, for she pressed his hand affectionately, and then turned to the window to conceal her tears. The sun now threw a last yellow gleam on the waves of the Mediterranean, and the gloom of twilight spread fast over the scene, till only a melancholy ray appeared on the western horizon, marking the point where the sun had set amid the vapours of an autumnal evening. A cool breeze now came from the shore, and Emily let down the glass; but the air, which was refreshing to health, was as chilling to sickness, and St Aubert desired, that the window might be drawn up. Increasing illness made him now more anxious than ever to finish the day's journey, and he stopped the muleteer to enquire how far they had yet to go to the next post. He replied, Nine miles. 'I feel I am unable to proceed much further,' said St Aubert; 'enquire, as you go, if there is any house on the road that would accommodate us for the night.' He sunk back in the carriage, and Michael, cracking his whip in the air, set off, and continued on the full gallop, till St Aubert, almost fainting, called to him to stop. Emily looked anxiously from the window, and saw a peasant walking at some little distance on the road, for whom they waited, till he came up, when he was asked, if there was any house in the neighbourhood that accommodated travellers. He replied, that he knew of none. 'There is a chateau, indeed, among those woods on the right,' added he, 'but I believe it receives nobody, and I cannot shew you the way, for I am almost a stranger here.' St Aubert was going to ask him some further question concerning the chateau, but the man abruptly passed on. After some consideration, he ordered Michael to proceed slowly to the woods. Every moment now deepened the twilight, and increased the difficulty of finding the road. Another peasant soon after passed. 'Which is the way to the chateau in the woods?' cried Michael.

'The chateau in the woods!' exclaimed the peasant, 'Do you mean that, with the turret, yonder?'

'I don't know as for the turret, as you call it,' said Michael, 'I mean that white piece of a building, that we see at a distance there, among the trees.'

'Yes, that is the turret; why, who are you, that you are going thither?' said the man with surprise.

St Aubert, on hearing this odd question, and observing the peculiar tone in which it was delivered, looked out from the carriage. 'We are travellers,' said he, 'who are in search of a house of accommodation for the night; is there any hereabout?'

'None, Monsieur, unless you have a mind to try your luck yonder,' replied the peasant, pointing to the woods, 'but I would not advise you to go there.'

'To whom does the chateau belong?'

'I scarcely know myself, Monsieur.'

'It is uninhabited, then.' 'No, not uninhabited; the steward and housekeeper are there, I believe.'

On hearing this, St Aubert determined to proceed to the chateau, and risque the refusal of being accommodated for the night; he therefore desired the countryman would shew Michael the way, and bade him expect reward for his trouble. The man was for a moment silent, and then said, that he was going on other business, but that the road could not be missed, if they went up an avenue to the right, to which he pointed. St Aubert was going to speak, but the peasant wished him good night, and walked on.

The carriage now moved towards the avenue, which was guarded by a gate, and Michael having dismounted to open it, they entered between rows of antient oak and chesnut, whose intermingled branches formed a lofty arch above. There was something so gloomy and desolate in the appearance of this avenue, and its lonely silence, that Emily almost shuddered as she passed along; and, recollecting the manner in which the peasant had mentioned the chateau, she gave a mysterious meaning to his words, such as she had not suspected when he uttered them. These apprehensions, however, she tried to check, considering that they were probably the effect of a melancholy imagination, which her father's situation, and a consideration of her own circumstances, had made sensible to every impression.

They passed slowly on, for they were now almost in darkness, which, together with the unevenness of the ground, and the frequent roots of old trees, that shot up above the soil, made it necessary to proceed with caution. On a sudden Michael stopped the carriage; and, as St Aubert looked from the window to enquire the cause, he perceived a figure at some distance moving up the avenue. The dusk would not permit him to distinguish what it was, but he bade Michael go on.

'This seems a strange wild place,' said Michael; 'there is no house hereabout, don't your honour think we had better turn back?'

'Go a little further, and if we see no house then, we will return to the road,' replied St Aubert.

Michael proceeded with reluctance, and the extreme slowness of his pace made St Aubert look again from the window to hasten him, when again he saw the same figure. He was somewhat startled: probably the gloominess of the spot made him more liable to alarm than usual; however this might be, he now stopped Michael, and bade him call to the person in the avenue.

'Please your honour, he may be a robber,' said Michael. 'It does not please me,' replied St Aubert, who could not forbear smiling at the simplicity of his phrase, 'and we will, therefore, return to the road, for I see no probability of meeting here with what we seek.'

Michael turned about immediately, and was retracing his way with alacrity, when a voice was heard from among the trees on the left. It was not the voice of command, or distress, but a deep hollow tone, which seemed to be scarcely human. The man whipped his mules till they went as fast as possible, regardless of the darkness, the broken ground, and the necks of the whole party, nor once stopped till he reached the gate, which opened from the avenue into the high-road, where he went into a more moderate pace.

'I am very ill,' said St Aubert, taking his daughter's hand. 'You are worse, then, sir!' said Emily, extremely alarmed by his manner, 'you are worse, and here is no assistance. Good God! what is to be done!' He leaned his head on her shoulder, while she endeavoured to support him with her arm, and Michael was again ordered to stop. When the rattling of the wheels had ceased, music was heard on the air; it was to Emily the voice of Hope. 'Oh! we are near some human habitation!' said she, 'help may soon be had.'

She listened anxiously; the sounds were distant, and seemed to come from a remote part of the woods that bordered the road; and, as she looked towards the spot whence they issued, she perceived in the faint moon-light something like a chateau. It was difficult, however, to reach this; St Aubert was now too ill to bear the motion of the carriage; Michael could not quit his mules; and Emily, who still supported her father, feared to leave him, and also feared to venture alone to such a distance, she knew not whither, or to whom. Something, however, it was necessary to determine upon immediately; St Aubert, therefore, told Michael to proceed slowly; but they had not gone far, when he fainted, and the carriage was again stopped. He lay quite senseless. – 'My dear, dear father,' cried Emily in great agony, and who began to fear that he was dying, 'speak, if it is only one word to let me hear the sound of your voice!' But no voice spoke in reply. In an agony of terror she bade Michael bring water from the rivulet, that flowed along the road; and, having received some in the man's hat, with trembling hands she sprinkled it over her father's face, which, as the moon's rays now fell upon it, seemed to bear the impression of death. Every emotion of selfish fear now gave way to a stronger influence, and, committing St Aubert to the care of Michael, who refused to go far from his mules, she stepped from the carriage in search of the chateau she had seen at a distance. It was a still moon-light night, and the music, which yet sounded on the air, directed her steps from the high road, up a shadowy lane, that led to the woods. Her mind was for some time so entirely occupied by anxiety and terror for her father, that she felt none for herself, till the deepening gloom of the overhanging foliage, which now wholly excluded the moon-light, and the wildness of the place, recalled her to a sense of her adventurous situation. The music had ceased, and she had no guide but chance. For a moment she paused in terrified perplexity, till a sense of her father's condition again overcoming every consideration for herself, she proceeded. The lane terminated in the woods, but she looked round in vain for a house, or a human being, and as vainly listened for a sound to guide her. She hurried on, however, not knowing whither, avoiding the recesses of the woods, and endeavouring to keep along their margin, till a rude kind of avenue, which opened upon a moon-light spot, arrested her attention. The wildness of this avenue brought to her recollection the one leading to the turreted chateau, and she was inclined to believe, that this was a part of the same domain, and probably led to the same point. While she hesitated, whether to follow it or not, a sound of many voices in loud merriment burst upon her ear. It seemed not the laugh of cheerfulness, but of riot, and she stood appalled. While she paused, she heard a distant voice, calling from the way she had come, and, not doubting but it was that of Michael, her first impulse was to hasten back; but a second thought changed her purpose; she believed that nothing less than the last extremity could have prevailed with Michael to quit his mules, and fearing that her father was now dying, she rushed forward, with a feeble hope of obtaining assistance from the people in the woods. Her heart beat with fearful expectation, as she drew near the spot whence the voices issued, and she often startled when her steps disturbed the fallen leaves. The sounds led her towards the moon-light glade she had before noticed; at a little distance from which she stopped, and saw, between the boles of the trees, a small circular level of green turf, surrounded by the woods, on which appeared a group of figures. On drawing nearer, she distinguished these, by their dress, to be peasants, and perceived several cottages scattered round the edge of the woods, which waved loftily over this spot. While she gazed, and endeavoured to overcome the apprehensions that with-held her steps, several peasant girls came out of a cottage; music instantly struck up, and the dance began. It was the joyous music of the vintage! the same she had before heard upon the air. Her heart, occupied with terror for her father, could not feel the contrast, which this gay scene offered to her own distress; she stepped hastily forward towards a group of elder peasants, who were seated at the door of a cottage, and, having explained her situation, entreated their assistance. Several of them rose with alacrity, and, offering any service in their power, followed Emily, who seemed to move on the wind, as fast as they could towards the road.

When she reached the carriage, she found St Aubert restored to animation. On the recovery of his senses, having heard from Michael whither his daughter was gone, anxiety for her overcame every regard for himself, and he had sent him in search of her. He was, however, still languid, and, perceiving himself unable to travel much further, he renewed his enquiries for an inn, and concerning the chateau in the woods. 'The chateau cannot accommodate you, sir,' said a venerable peasant who had followed Emily from the woods, 'it is scarcely inhabited; but, if you will do me the honour to visit my cottage, you shall be welcome to the best bed it affords.'

St Aubert was himself a Frenchman; he, therefore, was not surprised at French courtesy; but, ill as he was, he felt the value of the offer enhanced by the manner which accompanied it. He had too much delicacy to apologize, or to appear to hesitate about availing himself of the peasant's hospitality, but immediately accepted it with the same frankness with which it was offered.

The carriage again moved slowly on; Michael following the peasants up the lane, which Emily had just quitted, till they came to the moon-light glade. St Aubert's spirits were so far restored by the courtesy of his host, and the near prospect of repose, that he looked with a sweet complacency upon the moon-light scene, surrounded by the shadowy woods, through which, here and there, an opening admitted the streaming splendour, discovering a cottage, or a sparkling rivulet. He listened, with no painful emotion, to the merry notes of the guitar and tamborine; and, though tears came to his eyes, when he saw the *debonnaire* dance of the peasants, they were not merely tears of mournful regret. With Emily it was otherwise; immediate terror for her father had now subsided into a gentle melancholy, which every note of joy, by awakening comparison, served to heighten.

The dance ceased on the approach of the carriage, which was a phenomenon in these sequestered woods, and the peasantry flocked round it with eager curiosity. On learning that it brought a sick stranger, several girls ran across the turf, and returned with wine and baskets of grapes, which they presented to the travellers, each with kind contention pressing for a preference. At length, the carriage stopped at a neat cottage, and his venerable conductor, having assisted St Aubert to alight, led him and Emily to a small inner room, illumined only by moon-beams, which the open casement admitted. St Aubert, rejoicing in rest, seated himself in an arm-chair, and his senses were refreshed by the cool and balmy air, that lightly waved the embowering honeysuckles, and wafted their sweet breath into the apartment. His host, who was called La Voisin, quitted the room, but soon returned with fruits, cream, and all the pastoral luxury his cottage afforded; having set down which, with a smile of unfeigned welcome, he retired behind the chair of his guest. St Aubert insisted on his taking a seat at the table, and, when the fruit had allayed the fever of his palate, and he found himself somewhat revived, he began to converse with his host, who communicated several particulars concerning himself and his family, which were interesting, because they were spoken from the heart, and delineated a picture of the sweet courtesies of family kindness. Emily sat by her father, holding his hand, and, while she listened to the old man, her heart swelled with the affectionate sympathy he described, and her tears fell to the mournful consideration, that death would probably soon deprive her of the dearest blessing she then possessed. The soft moon-light of an autumnal evening, and the distant music, which now sounded a plaintive strain, aided the melancholy of her mind. The old man continued to talk of his family, and St Aubert remained silent. 'I have only one daughter living,' said La Voisin, 'but she is happily married, and is every thing to me. When I lost my wife,' he added with a sigh, 'I came to live with Agnes, and her family; she has several children, who are all dancing on the green yonder, as merry as grasshoppers – and long may they be so! I hope to die among them, monsieur. I am old now, and cannot expect to live long, but there is some comfort in dying surrounded by one's children.'

'My good friend,' said St Aubert, while his voice trembled, 'I hope you will long live surrounded by them.'

'Ah, sir! at my age I must not expect that!' replied the old man, and he paused: 'I can scarcely wish it,' he resumed, 'for I trust that whenever I die I shall go to heaven, where my poor wife is gone before me. I can sometimes almost fancy I see her of a still moon-light night, walking among these shades she loved so well. Do you believe, monsieur, that we shall be permitted to revisit the earth, after we have quitted the body?'

Emily could no longer stifle the anguish of her heart; her tears fell fast upon her father's hand, which she yet held. He made an effort to speak, and at length said in a low voice, 'I hope we shall be permitted to look down on those we have left on the earth, but I can only hope it. Futurity is much veiled from our eyes, and faith and hope are our only guides concerning it. We are not enjoined to believe, that disembodied spirits watch over the friends they have loved, but we may innocently hope it. It is a hope which I will never resign,' continued he, while he wiped the tears from his daughter's eyes, 'it will sweeten the bitter moments of death!' Tears fell slowly on his cheeks; La Voisin wept too, and there was a pause of silence. Then, La Voisin, renewing the subject, said, 'But you believe, sir, that we shall meet in another world the relations we have loved in this; I must believe this.' 'Then do believe it,' replied St Aubert, 'severe, indeed, would be the pangs of separation, if we believed it to be eternal. Look up, my dear Emily, we shall meet again!' He lifted his eyes towards heaven, and a gleam of moon-light, which fell upon his countenance, discovered peace and resignation, stealing on the lines of sorrow.

La Voisin felt that he had pursued the subject too far, and he dropped it, saying, ‘We are in darkness, I forgot to bring a light.’

‘No,’ said St Aubert, ‘this is a light I love. Sit down, my good friend. Emily, my love, I find myself better than I have been all day; this air refreshes me. I can enjoy this tranquil hour, and that music, which floats so sweetly at a distance. Let me see you smile. Who touches that guitar so tastefully? are there two instruments, or is it an echo I hear?’

‘It is an echo, monsieur, I fancy. That guitar is often heard at night, when all is still, but nobody knows who touches it, and it is sometimes accompanied by a voice so sweet, and so sad, one would almost think the woods were haunted.’ ‘They certainly are haunted,’ said St Aubert with a smile, ‘but I believe it is by mortals.’ ‘I have sometimes heard it at midnight, when I could not sleep,’ rejoined La Voisin, not seeming to notice this remark, ‘almost under my window, and I never heard any music like it. It has often made me think of my poor wife till I cried. I have sometimes got up to the window to look if I could see any body, but as soon as I opened the casement all was hushed, and nobody to be seen; and I have listened, and listened till I have been so timorous, that even the trembling of the leaves in the breeze has made me start. They say it often comes to warn people of their death, but I have heard it these many years, and outlived the warning.’

Emily, though she smiled at the mention of this ridiculous superstition, could not, in the present tone of her spirits, wholly resist its contagion.

‘Well, but, my good friend,’ said St Aubert, ‘has nobody had courage to follow the sounds? If they had, they would probably have discovered who is the musician.’ ‘Yes, sir, they have followed them some way into the woods, but the music has still retreated, and seemed as distant as ever, and the people have at last been afraid of being led into harm, and would go no further. It is very seldom that I have heard these sounds so early in the evening. They usually come about midnight, when that bright planet, which is rising above the turret yonder, sets below the woods on the left.’

‘What turret?’ asked St Aubert with quickness, ‘I see none.’

‘Your pardon, monsieur, you do see one indeed, for the moon shines full upon it; – up the avenue yonder, a long way off; the chateau it belongs to is hid among the trees.’

‘Yes, my dear sir,’ said Emily pointing, ‘don’t you see something glitter above the dark woods? It is a fane,[2] I fancy, which the rays fall upon.’

‘O yes, I see what you mean; and who does the chateau belong to?’

‘The Marquis de Villeroi was its owner,’ replied La Voisin, emphatically.

‘Ah!’ said St Aubert with a deep sigh, ‘are we then so near Le-Blanc!’ He appeared much agitated.

‘It used to be the Marquis’s favourite residence,’ resumed La Voisin, ‘but he took a dislike to the place, and has not been there for many years. We have heard lately that he is dead, and that it is fallen into other hands.’ St Aubert, who had sat in deep musing, was roused by the last words. ‘Dead!’ he exclaimed, ‘Good God! when did he die?’

‘He is reported to have died about five weeks since,’ replied La Voisin. ‘Did you know the Marquis, sir?’

‘This is very extraordinary!’ said St Aubert without attending to the question. ‘Why is it so, my dear sir?’ said Emily, in a voice of timid curiosity. He made no reply, but sunk again into a reverie; and in a few moments, when he seemed to have recovered himself, asked who had succeeded to the estates. ‘I have forgot his title, monsieur,’ said La Voisin; ‘but my lord resides at Paris chiefly; I hear no talk of his coming hither.’

‘The chateau is shut up then, still?’

‘Why, little better, sir; the old housekeeper, and her husband the steward, have the care of it, but they live generally in a cottage hard by.’

‘The chateau is spacious, I suppose,’ said Emily, ‘and must be desolate for the residence of only two persons.’

‘Desolate enough, mademoiselle,’ replied La Voisin, ‘I would not pass one night in the chateau, for the value of the whole domain.’

‘What is that?’ said St Aubert, roused again from thoughtfulness. As his host repeated his last sentence, a groan escaped from St Aubert, and then, as if anxious to prevent it from being noticed, he hastily asked La Voisin how long he had lived in this neighbourhood. ‘Almost from my childhood, sir,’ replied his host.

‘You remember the late marchioness, then?’ said St Aubert in an altered voice.

‘Ah, monsieur! – that I do well. There are many beside me who remember her.’

‘Yes – ’ said St Aubert, ‘and I am one of those.’

‘Alas, sir! you remember, then, a most beautiful and excellent lady. She deserved a better fate.’

Tears stood in St Aubert’s eyes; ‘Enough,’ said he, in a voice almost stifled by the violence of his emotions, – ‘it is enough, my friend.’

Emily, though extremely surprised by her father’s manner, forbore to express her feelings by any question. La Voisin began to apologize, but St Aubert interrupted him; ‘Apology is quite unnecessary,’ said he, ‘let us change the topic. You was speaking of the music we just now heard.’

‘I was, monsieur, – but hark! – it comes again; listen to that voice!’ They were all silent;

> ‘At last a soft and solemn-breathing sound
>
> Rose, like a stream of rich distilled perfumes,

And stole upon the air, that even Silence Was
took ere she was 'ware, and wished she might
Deny her nature, and be never more
Still, to be so displaced.'[*]

In a few moments the voice died into air, and the instrument, which had been heard before, sounded in low symphony. St Aubert now observed, that it produced a tone much more full and melodious than that of a guitar, and still more melancholy and soft than the lute. They continued to listen, but the sounds returned no more. 'This is strange!' said St Aubert, at length interrupting the silence. 'Very strange!' said Emily. 'It is so,' rejoined La Voisin, and they were again silent.

After a long pause, 'It is now about eighteen years since I first heard that music,' said La Voisin; 'I remember it was on a fine summer's night, much like this, but later, that I was walking in the woods, and alone. I remember, too, that my spirits were very low, for one of my boys was ill, and we feared we should lose him. I had been watching at his bed-side all the evening while his mother slept; for she had sat up with him the night before. I had been watching, and went out for a little fresh air, the day had been very sultry. As I walked under the shades and mused, I heard music at a distance, and thought it was Claude playing upon his flute, as he often did of a fine evening, at the cottage door. But, when I came to a place, where the trees opened, (I shall never forget it!) and stood looking up at the north-lights, which shot up the heaven to a great height, I heard all of a sudden such sounds! – they came so as I cannot describe. It was like the music of angels, and I looked up again almost expecting to see them in the sky. When I came home, I told what I had heard, but they laughed at me, and said it must be some of the shepherds playing on their pipes, and I could not persuade them to the contrary. A few nights after, however, my wife herself heard the same sounds, and was as much surprised as I was, and father Denis frightened her sadly by saying, that it was music come to warn her of her child's death, and that music often came to houses where there was a dying person.'

Emily, on hearing this, shrunk with a superstitious dread entirely new to her, and could scarcely conceal her agitation from St Aubert.

'But the boy lived, monsieur, in spite of father Denis.'

'Father Denis!' said St Aubert, who had listened to 'narrative old age' [4] with patient attention, 'are we near a convent, then?'

'Yes, sir, the convent of St Clair stands at no great distance, on the sea shore yonder.'

'Ah!' said St Aubert, as if struck with some sudden remembrance, 'the convent of St Clair!' Emily observed the clouds of grief, mingled with a faint expression of horror, gathering on his brow; his countenance became fixed, and, touched as it now was by the silver whiteness of the moon-light, he resembled one of those marble statues of a monument, which seem to bend, in hopeless sorrow, over the ashes of the dead, shewn

'____by the blunted light
That the dim moon through painted casements lends.'[*]

'But, my dear sir,' said Emily, anxious to dissipate his thoughts, 'you forget that repose is necessary to you. If our kind host will give me leave, I will prepare your bed, for I know how you like it to be made.' St Aubert, recollecting himself, and smiling affectionately, desired she would not add to her fatigue by that attention; and La Voisin, whose consideration for his guest had been suspended by the interests which his own narrative had recalled, now started from his seat, and, apologizing for not having called Agnes from the green, hurried out of the room.

In a few moments he returned with his daughter, a young woman of a pleasing countenance, and Emily learned from her, what she had not before suspected, that, for their accommodation, it was necessary part of La Voisin's family should leave their beds; she lamented this circumstance, but Agnes, by her reply, fully proved that she inherited, at least, a share of her father's courteous hospitality. It was settled, that some of her children and Michael should sleep in the neighbouring cottage.

'If I am better, to-morrow, my dear,' said St Aubert when Emily returned to him, 'I mean to set out at an early hour, that we may rest, during the heat of the day, and will travel towards home. In the present state of my health and spirits, I cannot look on a longer journey with pleasure, and I am also very anxious to reach La Vallée.' Emily, though she also desired to return, was grieved at her father's sudden wish to do so, which she thought indicated a greater degree of indisposition than he would acknowledge. St Aubert now retired to rest, and Emily to her little chamber, but not to immediate repose. Her thoughts returned to the late conversation, concerning the state of departed spirits; a subject, at this time, particularly affecting to her, when she had every reason to believe, that her dear father would ere long be numbered with them. She leaned pensively on the little open casement, and in deep thought fixed her eyes on the heaven, whose blue unclouded concave was studded thick with stars, the worlds, perhaps, of spirits, unsphered of mortal mould. As her eyes wandered along the boundless æther, her thoughts rose, as before, towards the sublimity of the Deity, and to the contemplation of futurity. No busy note of this world interrupted the course of her mind; the merry dance had ceased, and every cottager had retired to his home. The still air seemed scarcely to breathe upon the woods, and, now and then, the distant sound of a solitary sheep-bell, or of a closing casement, was all that broke on silence. At length, even this hint of human being was heard no more. Elevated and enwrapt, while her eyes were often wet with tears of sublime devotion and solemn awe, she continued at the casement, till the gloom of mid-night hung over the earth, and the planet, which La Voisin had pointed out, sunk below the woods. She then recollected what he had said concerning this planet, and the mysterious music; and, as she lingered at the window, half hoping and half fearing that it would return, her mind was led to the remembrance of the extreme emotion her father had shewn on mention of the Marquis de Villeroi's death, and of the fate of the Marchioness, and she felt strongly interested concerning the remote cause of this emotion. Her surprise and curiosity were indeed the greater, because she did not recollect ever to have heard him mention the name of Villeroi.

No music, however, stole on the silence of the night, and Emily, perceiving the lateness of the hour, returned to a scene of fatigue, remembered that she was to rise early in the morning, and withdrew from the window to repose.

CHAPTER VII

_____‘Let those deplore their doom,

Whose hope still grovels in this dark sojourn.
But lofty souls can look beyond the tomb,
Can smile at fate, and wonder how they mourn.
Shall Spring to these sad scenes no more return?
Is yonder wave the sun’s eternal bed?
– Soon shall the orient with new lustre burn,
And Spring shall soon her vital influence shed,
Again attune the grove, again adorn the mead!’
BEATTIE *The Minstrel*[1]

Emily, called, as she had requested, at an early hour, awoke, little refreshed by sleep, for uneasy dreams had pursued her, and marred the kindest blessing of the unhappy, But, when she opened her casement, looked out upon the woods, bright with the morning sun, and inspired the pure air, her mind was soothed. The scene was filled with that cheering freshness, which seems to breathe the very spirit of health, and she heard only sweet and *picturesque* sounds, if such an expression may be allowed – the matin-bell of a distant convent, the faint murmur of the sea-waves, the song of birds, and the far-off low of cattle, which she saw coming slowly on between the trunks of the trees. Struck with the circumstances of imagery around her, she indulged the pensive tranquillity which they inspired, and while she leaned on her window, waiting till St Aubert should descend to breakfast, her ideas arranged themselves in the following lines:

THE FIRST HOUR OF MORNING

How sweet to wind the forest’s tangled shade,
  When early twilight, from the eastern bound,
Dawns on the sleeping landscape in the glade,
  And fades as morning spreads her blush around!

When ev’ry infant flower, that wept in night,
  Lifts its chill head soft glowing with a tear,
Expands its tender blossom to the light,
  And gives its incense to the genial air.

How fresh the breeze that wafts the rich perfume,
  And swells the melody of waking birds;
The hum of bees, beneath the verdant gloom,
  And woodman’s song, and low of distant herds!

Then, doubtful gleams the mountain’s hoary head,
  Seen through the parting foliage from afar;
And, farther still, the ocean’s misty bed,
  With flitting sails, that partial sun-beams share.

But, vain the sylvan shade – the breath of May,
  The voice of music floating on the gale,
And forms, that beam through morning’s dewy veil,
  If health no longer bid the heart be gay!

O balmy hour! ’tis thine her wealth to give,
Here spread her blush, and bid the parent live!

Emily now heard persons moving below in the cottage, and presently the voice of Michael, who was talking to his mules, as he led them forth from a hut adjoining. As she left her room, St Aubert, who was now risen, met her at the door, apparently as little restored by sleep as herself. She led him down stairs to the little parlour, in which they had supped on the preceding night, where they found a neat breakfast set out, while the host and his daughter waited to bid them good morrow.

‘I envy you this cottage, my good friends,’ said St Aubert, as he met them, ‘it is so pleasant, so quiet, and so neat; and this air, that one breathes – if any thing could restore lost health, it would surely be this air.’

La Voisin bowed gratefully, and replied, with the gallantry of a Frenchman, ‘Our cottage may be envied, sir, since you and Mademoiselle have honoured it with your presence.’ St Aubert gave him a friendly smile for his compliment, and sat down to a table, spread with cream, fruit, new cheese, butter, and coffee.[2] Emily, who had observed her father with attention, and thought he looked very ill, endeavoured to persuade him to defer travelling till the afternoon; but he seemed very anxious to be at home, and his anxiety he expressed repeatedly, and with an earnestness that was unusual with him. He now said, he found himself as well as he had been of late, and that he could bear travelling better in the cool hour of the morning, than at any other time. But, while he was talking with his venerable host, and thanking him for his kind attentions, Emily observed his countenance change, and, before she could reach him, he fell back in his chair. In a few moments he recovered from the sudden faintness that had come over him, but felt so ill, that he perceived himself unable to set out, and, having remained a little while, struggling against the pressure of indisposition, he begged he might be helped up stairs to bed. This request renewed all the terror which Emily had suffered on the preceding evening; but, though scarcely able to support herself, under the sudden shock, it gave her, she tried to conceal her apprehensions from St Aubert, and gave her trembling arm to assist him to the door of his chamber.

When he was once more in bed, he desired that Emily, who was then weeping in her own room, might be called; and, as she came, he waved his hand for every other person to quit the apartment. When they were alone, he held out his hand to her, and fixed his eyes upon her countenance, with an expression so full of tenderness and grief, that all her fortitude forsook her, and she burst into an agony of tears. St Aubert seemed struggling to acquire firmness, but was still unable to speak; he could only press her hand, and check the tears that stood trembling in his eyes. At length, he commanded his voice, ‘My dear child,’ said he, trying to smile through his anguish, ‘my dear Emily!’ – and paused again. He raised his eyes to heaven, as if in prayer, and then, in a firmer tone, and with a look, in which the tenderness of the father was dignified by the pious solemnity of the saint, he said, ‘My dear child, I would soften the painful truth I have to tell you, but I find myself quite unequal to the art. Alas! I would, at this moment, conceal it from you, but that it would be most cruel to deceive you. It cannot be long before we must part; let us talk of it, that our thoughts and our prayers may prepare us to bear it.’ His voice faltered, while Emily, still weeping, pressed his hand close to her heart, which swelled with a convulsive sigh, but she could not look up.

‘Let me not waste these moments,’ said St Aubert, recovering himself, ‘I have much to say. There is a circumstance of solemn consequence, which I have to mention, and a solemn promise to obtain from you; when this is done I shall be easier. You have observed, my dear, how anxious I am to reach home, but know not all my reasons for this. Listen to what I am going to say. – Yet stay – before I say more give me this promise, a promise made to your dying father!’—St Aubert was interrupted; Emily, struck by his last words, as if for the first time, with a conviction of his immediate danger, raised her head; her tears stopped, and, gazing at him for a moment with an expression of unutterable anguish, a slight convulsion seized her, and she sunk senseless in her chair. St Aubert’s cries brought La Voisin and his daughter to the room, and they administered every means in their power to restore her, but, for a considerable time, without effect. When she recovered, St Aubert was so exhausted by the scene he had witnessed, that it was many minutes before he had strength to speak; he was, however, somewhat revived by a cordial, which Emily gave him; and, being again alone with her, he exerted himself to tranquillize her spirits, and to offer her all the comfort of which her situation admitted. She threw herself into his arms, wept on his neck, and grief made her so insensible to all he said, that he ceased to offer the alleviations, which he himself could not, at this moment, feel, and mingled his silent tears with hers. Recalled, at length, to a sense of duty, she tried to spare her father from farther view of her suffering; and, quitting his embrace, dried her tears, and said something, which she meant for consolation. ‘My dear Emily,’ replied St Aubert, ‘my dear child, we must look up with humble confidence to that Being, who has protected and comforted us in every danger, and in every affliction we have known; to whose eye every moment of our lives has been exposed; he will not, he does not, forsake us now; I feel his consolations in my heart. I shall leave you, my child, still in his care; and, though I depart from this world, I shall be still in his presence. Nay, weep not again, my Emily. In death there is nothing new, or surprising, since we all know, that we are born to die; and nothing terrible to those, who can confide in an all-powerful God. Had my life been spared now, after a very few years, in the course of nature, I must have resigned it; old age, with all its train of infirmity, its privations and its sorrows, would have been mine; and then, at last, death would have come, and called forth the tears you now shed. Rather, my child, rejoice, that I am saved from such suffering, and that I am permitted to die with a mind unimpaired, and sensible of the comforts of faith and of resignation.’ St Aubert paused, fatigued with speaking. Emily again endeavoured to assume an air of composure; and, in replying to what he had said, tried to sooth him with a belief, that he had not spoken in vain.

When he had reposed a while, he resumed the conversation. ‘Let me return,’ said he, ‘to a subject, which is very near my heart. I said I had a solemn promise to receive from you; let me receive it now, before I explain the chief circumstance which it concerns; there are others, of which your peace requires that you should rest in ignorance. Promise, then, that you will perform exactly what I shall enjoin.'

Emily, awed by the earnest solemnity of his manner, dried her tears, that had begun again to flow, in spite of her efforts to suppress them; and, looking eloquently at St Aubert, bound herself to do what ever he should require by a vow, at which she shuddered, yet knew not why.

He proceeded: 'I know you too well, my Emily, to believe, that you would break any promise, much less one thus solemnly given; your assurance gives me peace, and the observance of it is of the utmost importance to your tranquillity. Hear, then, what I am going to tell you. The closet, which adjoins my chamber at La Vallée, has a sliding board in the floor. You will know it by a remarkable knot in the wood, and by its being the next board, except one, to the wainscot, which fronts the door. At the distance of about a yard from that end, nearer the window, you will perceive a line across it, as if the plank had been joined; – the way to open it is this: – Press your foot upon the line, the end of the board will then sink, and you may slide it with ease beneath the other. Below, you will see a hollow place.' St Aubert paused for breath, and Emily sat fixed in deep attention. 'Do you understand these directions, my dear?' said he. Emily, though scarcely able to speak, assured him, that she did.

'When you return home, then,' he added with a deep sigh –

At the mention of her return home, all the melancholy circumstances, that must attend this return, rushed upon her fancy; she burst into convulsive grief, and St Aubert himself, affected beyond the resistance of the fortitude which he had, at first, summoned, wept with her. After some moments, he composed himself. 'My dear child,' said he, 'be comforted. When I am gone, you will not be forsaken – I leave you only in the more immediate care of that Providence, which has never yet forsaken me. Do not afflict me with this excess of grief; rather teach me by your example to bear my own.' He stopped again, and Emily, the more she endeavoured to restrain her emotion, found it the less possible to do so.

St Aubert, who now spoke with pain, resumed the subject. 'That closet, my dear, – when you return home, go to it; and, beneath the board I have described, you will find a packet of written papers. Attend to me now, for the promise you have given particularly relates to what I shall direct. These papers you must burn – and, solemnly I command you, *without examining them.*'

Emily's surprise, for a moment, overcame her grief, and she ventured to ask, why this must be? St Aubert replied, that, if it had been right for him to explain his reasons, her late promise would have been unnecessarily exacted. 'It is sufficient for you, my love, to have a deep sense of the importance of observing me in this instance.' St Aubert proceeded. 'Under that board you will also find about two hundred louis d'ors, wrapped in a silk purse; indeed, it was to secure whatever money might be in the chateau, that this secret place was contrived, at a time when the province was over-run by troops of men, who took advantage of the tumults,[3] and became plunderers.

'But I have yet another promise to receive from you, which is – that you will never, whatever may be your future circumstances, *sell* the chateau.' St Aubert even enjoined her, whenever she might marry, to make it an article in the contract, that the chateau should always be hers. He then gave her a more minute account of his present circumstances than he had yet done, adding, 'The two hundred louis, with what money you will now find in my purse, is all the ready money I have to leave you. I have told you how I am circumstanced with M. Motteville, at Paris. Ah, my child! I leave you poor – but not destitute,' he added, after a long pause. Emily could make no reply to any thing he now said, but knelt at the bed-side, with her face upon the quilt, weeping over the hand she held there.

After this conversation, the mind of St Aubert appeared to be much more at ease; but, exhausted by the effort of speaking, he sunk into a kind of doze, and Emily continued to watch and weep beside him, till a gentle tap at the chamber door roused her. It was La Voisin, come to say, that a confessor from the neighbouring convent was below, ready to attend St Aubert. Emily would not suffer her father to be disturbed, but desired, that the priest might not leave the cottage. When St Aubert awoke from this doze, his senses were confused, and it was some moments before he recovered them sufficiently to know, that it was Emily who sat beside him. He then moved his lips, and stretched forth his hand to her; as she received which, she sunk back in her chair, overcome by the impression of death on his countenance. In a few minutes he recovered his voice, and Emily then asked, if he wished to see the confessor; he replied, that he did; and, when the holy father appeared, she withdrew. They remained alone together above half an hour; when Emily was called in, she found St Aubert more agitated than when she had left him, and she gazed, with a slight degree of resentment, at the friar, as the cause of this; who, however, looked mildly and mournfully at her, and turned away. St Aubert, in a tremulous voice, said, he wished her to join in prayer with him, and asked if La Voisin would do so too. The old man and his daughter came; they both wept, and knelt with Emily round the bed, while the holy father read in a solemn voice the service for the dying. St Aubert lay with a serene countenance, and seemed to join fervently in the devotion, while tears often stole from beneath his closed eye-lids, and Emily's sobs more than once interrupted the service.

When it was concluded, and extreme unction had been administered, the friar withdrew. St Aubert then made a sign for La Voisin to come nearer. He gave him his hand, and was, for a moment, silent. At length, he said, in a trembling voice, 'My good friend, our acquaintance has been short, but long enough to give you an opportunity of shewing me much kind attention. I cannot doubt, that you will extend this kindness to my daughter, when I am gone; she will have need of it. I entrust her to your care during the few days she will remain here. I need say no more – you know the feelings of a father, for you have children; mine would be, indeed, severe if I had less confidence in you.' He paused. La Voisin assured him, and his tears bore testimony to his sincerity, that he would do all he could to soften her affliction, and that, if St Aubert wished it, he would even attend her into Gascony; an offer so pleasing to St Aubert, that he had scarcely words to acknowledge his sense of the old man's kindness, or to tell him, that he accepted it. The scene, that followed between St Aubert and Emily, affected La Voisin so much, that he quitted the chamber, and she was again left alone with her father, whose spirits seemed fainting fast, but neither his senses, or his voice, yet failed him; and, at intervals, he employed much of these last awful moments in advising his daughter, as to her future conduct. Perhaps, he never had thought more justly, or expressed himself more clearly, than he did now.

'Above all, my dear Emily,' said he, 'do not indulge in the pride of fine feeling, the romantic error of amiable minds. Those, who really possess sensibility, ought early to be taught, that it is a dangerous quality, which is continually extracting the excess of misery, or delight, from every surrounding circumstance. And, since, in our passage through this world, painful circumstances occur more frequently than pleasing ones, and since our sense of evil is, I fear, more acute than our sense of good, we become the victims of our feelings, unless we can in some degree command them. I know you will say, (for you are young, my Emily) I know you will say, that you are contented sometimes to suffer, rather than to give up your refined sense of happiness, at others; but, when your mind has been long harassed by vicissitude, you will be content to rest, and you will then recover from your delusion. You will perceive, that the phantom of happiness is exchanged for the substance; for happiness arises in a state of peace, not of tumult. It is of a temperate and uniform nature, and can no more exist in a heart, that is continually alive to minute circumstances, than in one that is dead to feeling. You see, my dear, that, though I would guard you against the dangers of sensibility, I am not an advocate for apathy. At your age I should have said *that* is a vice more hateful than all the errors of sensibility, and I say so still. I call it a *vice*, because it leads to positive evil; in this, however, it does no more than an ill-governed sensibility, which, by such a rule, might also be called a vice; but the evil of the former is of more general consequence. I have exhausted myself,' said St Aubert, feebly, 'and have wearied you, my Emily; but, on a subject so important to your future comfort, I am anxious to be perfectly understood.'

Emily assured him, that his advice was most precious to her, and that she would never forget it, or cease from endeavouring to profit by it. St Aubert smiled affectionately and sorrowfully upon her. 'I repeat it,' said he, 'I would not teach you to become insensible, if I could; I would only warn you of the evils of susceptibility, and point out how you may avoid them. Beware, my love, I conjure you, of that self-delusion, which has been fatal to the peace of so many persons; beware of priding yourself on the gracefulness of sensibility; if you yield to this vanity, your happiness is lost for ever. Always remember how much more valuable is the strength of fortitude, than the grace of sensibility. Do not, however, confound fortitude with apathy; apathy cannot know the virtue. Remember, too, that one act of beneficence, one act of real usefulness, is worth all the abstract sentiment in the world. Sentiment is a disgrace, instead of an ornament, unless it lead us to good actions. The miser, who thinks himself respectable, merely because he possesses wealth, and thus mistakes the means of doing good, for the actual accomplishment of it, is not more blameable than the man of sentiment, without active virtue. You may have observed persons, who delight so much in this sort of sensibility to sentiment, which excludes that to the calls of any practical virtue, that they turn from the distressed, and, because their sufferings are painful to be contemplated, do not endeavour to relieve them. How despicable is that humanity, which can be contented to pity, where it might assuage!'

St Aubert, some time after, spoke of Madame Cheron, his sister. 'Let me inform you of a circumstance, that nearly affects your welfare,' he added. 'We have, you know, had little intercourse for some years; but, as she is now your only female relation, I have thought it proper to consign you to her care, as you will see in my will, till you are of age, and to recommend you to her protection afterwards. She is not exactly the person, to whom I would have committed my Emily, but I had no alternative, and I believe her to be upon the whole – a good kind of woman. I need not recommend it to your prudence, my love, to endeavour to conciliate her kindness; you will do this for his sake, who has often wished to do so for yours.'

Emily assured him, that, whatever he requested she would religiously perform to the utmost of her ability. 'Alas!' added she, in a voice interrupted by sighs, 'that will soon be all which remains for me; it will be almost my only consolation to fulfil your wishes.'

St Aubert looked up silently in her face, as if he would have spoken, but his spirit sunk a while, and his eyes became heavy and dull. She felt that look at her heart. 'My dear father!' she exclaimed; and then, checking herself, pressed his hand closer, and hid her face with her handkerchief. Her tears were concealed, but St Aubert heard her convulsive sobs. His spirits returned. 'O my child!' said he, faintly, 'let my consolations be yours. I die in peace; for I know, that I am about to return to the bosom of my Father, who will still be your Father, when I am gone. Always trust in him, my love, and he will support you in these moments, as he supports me.'

Emily could only listen, and weep; but the extreme composure of his manner, and the faith and hope he expressed, somewhat soothed her anguish. Yet, whenever she looked upon his emaciated countenance, and saw the lines of death beginning to prevail over it – saw his sunk eyes, still bent on her, and their heavy lids pressing to a close, there was a pang in her heart, such as defied expression, though it required filial virtue, like hers, to forbear the attempt.

He desired once more to bless her; 'Where are you, my dear?' said he, as he stretched forth his hands. Emily had turned to the window, that he might not perceive her anguish; she now understood, that his sight had failed him. When he had given her his blessing, and it seemed to be the last effort of expiring life, he sunk back on his pillow. She kissed his forehead; the damps of death had settled there, and, forgetting her fortitude for a moment, her tears mingled with them. St Aubert lifted up his eyes; the spirit of a father returned to them, but it quickly vanished, and he spoke no more.

St Aubert lingered till about three o'clock in the afternoon, and, thus gradually sinking into death, he expired without a struggle, or a sigh.

Emily was led from the chamber by La Voisin and his daughter, who did what they could to comfort her. The old man sat and wept with her. Agnes was more erroneously officious.

CHAPTER VIII

‘O’er him, whose doom thy virtues grieve,

Aerial forms shall sit at eve,
And bend the pensive head.’
COLLINS [‘Ode to a Lady on the death of

Colonel Ross in the Action of Fontenoy’][1]

The monk, who had before appeared, returned in the evening to offer consolation to Emily, and brought a kind message from the lady abbess, inviting her to the convent. Emily, though she did not accept the offer, returned an answer expressive of her gratitude. The holy conversation of the friar, whose mild benevolence of manners bore some resemblance to those of St Aubert, soothed the violence of her grief, and lifted her heart to the Being, who, extending through all place and all eternity, looks on the events of this little world as on the shadows of a moment, and beholds equally, and in the same instant, the soul that has passed the gates of death, and that, which still lingers in the body. ‘In the sight of God,’ said Emily, ‘my dear father now exists, as truly as he yesterday existed to me; it is to me only that he is dead; to God and to himself he yet lives!’

The good monk left her more tranquil than she had been since St Aubert died; and, before she retired to her little cabin for the night, she trusted herself so far as to visit the corpse. Silent, and without weeping, she stood by its side. The features, placid and serene, told the nature of the last sensations, that had lingered in the now deserted frame. For a moment she turned away, in horror of the stillness in which death had fixed that countenance, never till now seen otherwise than animated; then gazed on it with a mixture of doubt and awful astonishment. Her reason could scarcely overcome an involuntary and unaccountable expectation of seeing that beloved countenance still susceptible. She continued to gaze wildly; took up the cold hand; spoke; still gazed, and then burst into a transport of grief. La Voisin, hearing her sobs, came into the room to lead her away, but she heard nothing, and only begged that he would leave her.

Again alone, she indulged her tears, and, when the gloom of evening obscured the chamber, and almost veiled from her eyes the object of her distress, she still hung over the body; till her spirits, at length, were exhausted, and she became tranquil. La Voisin again knocked at the door, and entreated that she would come to the common apartment. Before she went, she kissed the lips of St Aubert, as she was wont to do when she bade him good night. Again she kissed them; her heart felt as if it would break, a few tears of agony started to her eyes, she looked up to heaven, then at St Aubert, and left the room.

Retired to her lonely cabin, her melancholy thoughts still hovered round the body of her deceased parent; and, when she sunk into a kind of slumber, the images of her waking mind still haunted her fancy. She thought she saw her father approaching her with a benign countenance; then, smiling mournfully and pointing upwards, his lips moved, but, instead of words, she heard sweet music borne on the distant air, and presently saw his features glow with the mild rapture of a superior being. The strain seemed to swell louder, and she awoke. The vision was gone, but music yet came to her ear in strains such as angels might breathe. She doubted, listened, raised herself in the bed, and again listened. It was music, and not an illusion of her imagination. After a solemn steady harmony, it paused; then rose again, in mournful sweetness, and then died, in a cadence, that seemed to bear away the listening soul to heaven. She instantly remembered the music of the preceding night, with the strange circumstances, related by La Voisin, and the affecting conversation it had led to, concerning the state of departed spirits. All that St Aubert had said, on that subject, now pressed upon her heart, and overwhelmed it. What a change in a few hours! He, who then could only conjecture, was now made acquainted with truth; was himself become one of the departed! As she listened, she was chilled with superstitious awe, her tears stopped; and she rose, and went to the window. All without was obscured in shade; but Emily, turning her eyes from the massy darkness of the woods, whose waving outline appeared on the horizon, saw, on the left, that effulgent planet, which the old man had pointed out, setting over the woods. She remembered what he had said concerning it, and, the music now coming at intervals on the air, she unclosed the casement to listen to the strains, that soon gradually sunk to a greater distance, and tried to discover whence they came. The obscurity prevented her from distinguishing any object on the green platform below; and the sounds became fainter and fainter, till they softened into silence. She listened, but they returned no more. Soon after, she observed the planet trembling between the fringed tops of the woods, and, in the next moment, sink behind them. Chilled with a melancholy awe, she retired once more to her bed, and, at length, forgot for a while her sorrows in sleep.

On the following morning, she was visited by a sister of the convent, who came, with kind offices and a second invitation from the lady abbess; and Emily, though she could not forsake the cottage, while the remains of her father were in it, consented, however painful such a visit must be, in the present state of her spirits, to pay her respects to the abbess, in the evening.

About an hour before sun-set, La Voisin shewed her the way through the woods to the convent, which stood in a small bay of the Mediterranean, crowned by a woody amphitheatre; and Emily, had she been less unhappy, would have admired the extensive sea view, that appeared from the green slope, in front of the edifice, and the rich shores, hung with woods and pastures, that extended on either hand. But her thoughts were now occupied by one sad idea, and the features of nature were to her colourless and without form. The bell for vespers struck, as she passed the ancient gate of the convent, and seemed the funereal note for St Aubert. Little incidents affect a mind, enervated by sorrow; Emily struggled against the sickening faintness, that came over her, and was led into the presence of the abbess, who received her with an air of maternal tenderness; an air of such gentle solicitude and consideration, as touched her with an instantaneous gratitude; her eyes were filled with tears, and the words she would have spoken faltered on her lips. The abbess led her to a seat, and sat down beside her, still holding her hand and regarding her in silence, as Emily dried her tears and attempted to speak. 'Be composed, my daughter,' said the abbess in a soothing voice, 'do not speak yet; I know all you would say. Your spirits must be soothed. We are going to prayers; – will you attend our evening service? It is comfortable, my child, to look up in our afflictions to a father, who sees and pities us, and who chastens in his mercy.'

Emily's tears flowed again, but a thousand sweet emotions mingled with them. The abbess suffered her to weep without interruption, and watched over her with a look of benignity, that might have characterized the countenance of a guardian angel. Emily, when she became tranquil, was encouraged to speak without reserve, and to mention the motive, that made her unwilling to quit the cottage, which the abbess did not oppose even by a hint; but praised the filial piety of her conduct, and added a hope, that she would pass a few days at the convent, before she returned to La Vallée. 'You must allow yourself a little time to recover from your first shock, my daughter, before you encounter a second; I will not affect to conceal from you how much I know your heart must suffer, on returning to the scene of your former happiness. Here, you will have all, that quiet and sympathy and religion can give, to restore your spirits. But come,' added she, observing the tears swell in Emily's eyes, 'we will go to the chapel.'

Emily followed to the parlour, where the nuns were assembled, to whom the abbess committed her, saying, 'This is a daughter, for whom I have much esteem; be sisters to her.'

They passed on in a train to the chapel, where the solemn devotion, with which the service was performed, elevated her mind, and brought to it the comforts of faith and resignation.

Twilight came on, before the abbess's kindness would suffer Emily to depart, when she left the convent, with a heart much lighter than she had entered it, and was reconducted by La Voisin through the woods, the pensive gloom of which was in unison with the temper of her mind; and she pursued the little wild path, in musing silence, till her guide suddenly stopped, looked round, and then struck out of the path into the high grass, saying he had mistaken the road. He now walked on quickly, and Emily, proceeding with difficulty over the obscured and uneven ground, was left at some distance, till her voice arrested him, who seemed unwilling to stop, and still hurried on. 'If you are in doubt about the way,' said Emily, 'had we not better enquire it at the chateau yonder, between the trees?'

'No,' replied La Voisin, 'there is no occasion. When we reach that brook, ma'amselle, (you see the light upon the water there, beyond the woods) when we reach that brook, we shall be at home presently. I don't know how I happened to mistake the path; I seldom come this way after sun-set.'

'It is solitary enough,' said Emily, 'but you have no banditti here.' 'No, ma'amselle – no banditti.'

'What are you afraid of then, my good friend? you are not superstitious?' 'No, not superstitious; but, to tell you the truth, lady, nobody likes to go near that chateau, after dusk.' 'By whom is it inhabited,' said Emily, 'that it is so formidable?' 'Why, ma'amselle, it is scarcely inhabited, for our lord the Marquis, and the lord of all these fine woods, too, is dead. He had not once been in it, for these many years, and his people, who have the care of it, live in a cottage close by.' Emily now understood this to be the chateau, which La Voisin had formerly pointed out, as having belonged to the Marquis Villeroi, on the mention of which her father had appeared so much affected.

'Ah! it is a desolate place now,' continued La Voisin, 'and such a grand, fine place, as I remember it!' Emily enquired what had occasioned this lamentable change; but the old man was silent, and Emily, whose interest was awakened by the fear he had expressed, and above all by a recollection of her father's agitation, repeated the question, and added, 'If you are neither afraid of the inhabitants, my good friend, nor are superstitious, how happens it, that you dread to pass near that chateau in the dark?'

'Perhaps, then, I am a little superstitious, ma'amselle; and, if you knew what I do, you might be so too. Strange things have happened there. Monsieur, your good father, appeared to have known the late Marchioness.' 'Pray inform me what did happen?' said Emily, with much emotion.

'Alas! ma'amselle,' answered La Voisin, 'enquire no further: it is not for me to lay open the domestic secrets of my lord.' – Emily, surprised by the old man's words, and his manner of delivering them, forbore to repeat her question; a nearer interest, the remembrance of St Aubert, occupied her thoughts, and she was led to recollect the music she heard on the preceding night, which she mentioned to La Voisin. 'You was not alone, ma'amselle, in this,' he replied, 'I heard it too; but I have so often heard it, at the same hour, that I was scarcely surprised.'

'You doubtless believe this music to have some connection with the chateau,' said Emily suddenly, 'and are, therefore, superstitious.' 'It may be so, ma'amselle, but there are other circumstances, belonging to that chateau, which I remember, and sadly too.' A heavy sigh followed: but Emily's delicacy restrained the curiosity these words revived, and she enquired no further.

On reaching the cottage, all the violence of her grief returned; it seemed as if she had escaped its heavy pressure only while she was removed from the object of it. She passed immediately to the chamber, where the remains of her father were laid, and yielded to all the anguish of hopeless grief. La Voisin, at length, persuaded her to leave the room, and she returned to her own, where, exhausted by the sufferings of the day, she soon fell into deep sleep, and awoke considerably refreshed.

When the dreadful hour arrived, in which the remains of St Aubert were to be taken from her for ever, she went alone to the chamber to look upon his countenance yet once again, and La Voisin, who had waited patiently below stairs, till her despair should subside, with the respect due to grief, forbore to interrupt the indulgence of it, till surprise, at the length of her stay, and then apprehension overcame his delicacy, and he went to lead her from the chamber. Having tapped gently at the door, without receiving an answer, he listened attentively, but all was still; no sigh, no sob of anguish was heard. Yet more alarmed by this silence, he opened the door, and found Emily lying senseless across the foot of the bed, near which stood the coffin. His calls procured assistance, and she was carried to her room, where proper applications, at length, restored her.

During her state of insensibility, La Voisin had given directions for the coffin to be closed, and he succeeded in persuading Emily to forbear revisiting the chamber. She, indeed, felt herself unequal to this, and also perceived the necessity of sparing her spirits, and recollecting fortitude sufficient to bear her through the approaching scene. St Aubert had given a particular injunction, that his remains should be interred in the church of the convent of St Clair, and, in mentioning the north chancel, near the ancient tomb of the Villerois, had pointed out the exact spot, where he wished to be laid. The superior had granted this place for the interment, and thither, therefore, the sad procession now moved, which was met, at the gates, by the venerable priest, followed by a train of friars. Every person, who heard the solemn chant of the anthem, and the peal of the organ, that struck up, when the body entered the church, and saw also the feeble steps, and the assumed tranquillity of Emily, gave her involuntary tears. She shed none, but walked, her face partly shaded by a thin black veil, between two persons, who supported her, preceded by the abbess, and followed by nuns, whose plaintive voices mellowed the swelling harmony of the dirge. When the procession came to the grave the music ceased. Emily drew the veil entirely over her face, and, in a momentary pause, between the anthem and the rest of the service, her sobs were distinctly audible. The holy father began the service, and Emily again commanded her feelings, till the coffin was let down, and she heard the earth rattle on its lid. Then, as she shuddered, a groan burst from her heart, and she leaned for support on the person who stood next to her. In a few moments she recovered; and, when she heard those affecting and sublime words: ‘His body is buried in peace, and his soul returns to Him that gave it,’ her anguish softened into tears.

The abbess led her from the church into her own parlour, and there administered all the consolations, that religion and gentle sympathy can give. Emily struggled against the pressure of grief; but the abbess, observing her attentively, ordered a bed to be prepared, and recommended her to retire to repose. She also kindly claimed her promise to remain a few days at the convent, and Emily, who had no wish to return to the cottage, the scene of all her sufferings, had leisure, now that no immediate care pressed upon her attention, to feel the indisposition, which disabled her from immediately travelling.

Meanwhile, the maternal kindness of the abbess, and the gentle attentions of the nuns did all, that was possible, towards soothing her spirits and restoring her health. But the latter was too deeply wounded, through the medium of her mind, to be quickly revived. She lingered for some weeks at the convent, under the influence of a slow fever, wishing to return home, yet unable to go thither; often even reluctant to leave the spot where her father’s relics were deposited, and sometimes soothing herself with the consideration, that, if she died here, her remains would repose beside those of St Aubert. In the meanwhile, she sent letters to Madame Cheron and to the old housekeeper, informing them of the sad event, that had taken place, and of her own situation. From her aunt she received an answer, abounding more in common-place condolement, than in traits of real sorrow, which assured her, that a servant should be sent to conduct her to La Vallé, for that her own time was so much occupied by company, that she had no leisure to undertake so long a journey. However Emily might prefer La Vallé to Tholouse, she could not be insensible of the indecorous and unkind conduct of her aunt, in suffering her to return thither, where she had no longer a relation to console and protect her; a conduct, which was the more culpable, since St Aubert had appointed Madame Cheron the guardian of his orphan daughter.

Madame Cheron’s servant made the attendance of the good La Voisin unnecessary; and Emily, who felt sensibly her obligations to him, for all his kind attention to her late father, as well as to herself, was glad to spare him a long, and what, at his time of life, must have been a troublesome journey.

During her stay at the convent, the peace and sanctity that reigned within, the tranquil beauty of the scenery without, and the delicate attentions of the abbess and the nuns, were circumstances so soothing to her mind, that they almost tempted her to leave a world, where she had lost her dearest friends, and devote herself to the cloister, in a spot, rendered sacred to her by containing the tomb of St Aubert. The pensive enthusiasm, too, so natural to her temper, had spread a beautiful illusion over the sanctified retirement of a nun, that almost hid from her view the selfishness of its security. But the touches, which a melancholy fancy, slightly tinctured with superstition, gave to the monastic scene, began to fade, as her spirits revived, and brought once more to her heart an image, which had only transiently been banished thence. By this she was silently awakened to hope and comfort and sweet affections; visions of happiness gleamed faintly at a distance, and, though she knew them to be illusions, she could not resolve to shut them out for ever. It was the remembrance of Valancourt, of his taste, his genius, and of the countenance which glowed with both, that, perhaps, alone determined her to return to the world. The grandeur and sublimity of the scenes, amidst which they had first met, had fascinated her fancy, and had imperceptibly contributed to render Valancourt more interesting by seeming to communicate to him somewhat of their own character. The esteem, too, which St Aubert had repeatedly expressed for him, sanctioned this kindness; but, though his countenance and manner had continually expressed his admiration of her, he had no otherwise declared it; and even the hope of seeing him again was so distant, that she was scarcely conscious of it, still less that it influenced her conduct on this occasion.

It was several days after the arrival of Madame Cheron's servant before Emily was sufficiently recovered to undertake the journey to La Vallé. On the evening preceding her departure, she went to the cottage to take leave of La Voisin and his family, and to make them a return for their kindness. The old man she found sitting on a bench at his door, between his daughter, and his son-in-law, who was just returned from his daily labour, and who was playing upon a pipe, that, in tone, resembled an oboe. A flask of wine stood beside the old man, and, before him, a small table with fruit and bread, round which stood several of his grandsons, fine rosy children, who were taking their supper, as their mother distributed it. On the edge of the little green, that spread before the cottage, were cattle and a few sheep reposing under the trees. The landscape was touched with the mellow light of the evening sun, whose long slanting beams played through a vista of the woods, and lighted up the distant turrets of the chateau. She paused a moment, before she emerged from the shade, to gaze upon the happy group before her – on the complacency and ease of healthy age, depictured on the countenance of La Voisin; the maternal tenderness of Agnes, as she looked upon her children, and the innocency of infantine pleasures, reflected in their smiles. Emily looked again at the venerable old man, and at the cottage; the memory of her father rose with full force upon her mind, and she hastily stepped forward, afraid to trust herself with a longer pause. She took an affectionate and a Vecting leave of La Voisin and his family; he seemed to love her as his daughter, and shed tears; Emily shed many. She avoided going into the cottage, since she knew it would revive emotions, such as she could not now endure.

One painful scene yet awaited her, for she determined to visit again her father's grave; and that she might not be interrupted, or observed in the indulgence of her melancholy tenderness, she deferred her visit, till every inhabitant of the convent, except the nun who promised to bring her the key of the church, should be retired to rest. Emily remained in her chamber, till she heard the convent bell strike twelve, when the nun came, as she had appointed, with the key of a private door, that opened into the church, and they descended together the narrow winding stair-case, that led thither. The nun offered to accompany Emily to the grave, adding, 'It is melancholy to go alone at this hour;' but the former, thanking her for the consideration, could not consent to have any witness of her sorrow; and the sister, having unlocked the door, gave her the lamp. 'You will remember, sister,' said she, 'that in the east aisle, which you must pass, is a newly opened grave; hold the light to the ground, that you may not stumble over the loose earth.' Emily, thanking her again, took the lamp, and, stepping into the church, sister Mariette departed. But Emily paused a moment at the door; a sudden fear came over her, and she returned to the foot of the stair-case, where, as she heard the steps of the nun ascending, and, while she held up the lamp, saw her black veil waving over the spiral balusters, she was tempted to call her back. While she hesitated, the veil disappeared, and, in the next moment, ashamed of her fears, she returned to the church. The cold air of the aisles chilled her, and their deep silence and extent, feebly shone upon by the moon-light, that streamed through a distant gothic window, would at any other time have awed her into superstition; now, grief occupied all her attention. She scarcely heard the whispering echoes of her own steps, or thought of the open grave, till she found herself almost on its brink. A friar of the convent had been buried there on the preceding evening, and, as she had sat alone in her chamber at twilight, she heard, at distance, the monks chanting the requiem for his soul. This brought freshly to her memory the circumstances of her father's death; and, as the voices, mingling with a low querulous peal of the organ, swelled faintly, gloomy and affecting visions had arisen upon her mind. Now she remembered them, and, turning aside to avoid the broken ground, these recollections made her pass on with quicker steps to the grave of St Aubert, when in the moonlight, that fell athwart a remote part of the aisle, she thought she saw a shadow gliding between the pillars. She stopped to listen, and, not hearing any footstep, believed that her fancy had deceived her, and, no longer apprehensive of being observed, proceeded. St Aubert was buried beneath a plain marble, bearing little more than his name and the date of his birth and death, near the foot of the stately monument of the Villerois. Emily remained at his grave, till a chime, that called the monks to early prayers, warned her to retire; then, she wept over it a last farewel, and forced herself from the spot. After this hour of melancholy indulgence, she was refreshed by a deeper sleep, than she had experienced for a long time, and, on awakening, her mind was more tranquil and resigned, than it had been since St Aubert's death.

But, when the moment of her departure from the convent arrived, all her grief returned; the memory of the dead, and the kindness of the living attached her to the place; and for the sacred spot, where her father's remains were interred, she seemed to feel all those tender affections which we conceive for home. The abbess repeated many kind assurances of regard at their parting, and pressed her to return, if ever she should find her condition elsewhere unpleasant; many of the nuns also expressed unaffected regret at her depar- ture, and Emily left the convent with many tears, and followed by sincere wishes for her happiness.

She had travelled several leagues, before the scenes of the country, through which she passed, had power to rouse her for a moment from the deep melancholy, into which she was sunk, and, when they did, it was only to remind her, that, on her last view of them St Aubert was at her side, and to call up to her remembrance the remarks he had delivered on similar scenery. Thus, without any particular occurrence, passed the day in languor and dejection. She slept that night at a town on the skirts of Languedoc, and, on the following morning, entered Gascony.

Towards the close of this day, Emily came within view of the plains in the neighbourhood of La Vallé, and the well-known objects of former times began to press upon her notice, and with them recollections, that awakened all her tenderness and grief. Often, while she looked through her tears upon the wild grandeur of the Pyrenés, now varied with the rich lights and shadows of evening, she remembered, that, when last she saw them, her father partook with her of the pleasure they inspired. Suddenly some scene, which he had particularly pointed out to her, would present itself, and the sick languor of despair would steal upon her heart. ‘There!’ she would exclaim, ‘there are the very cliffs, there the wood of pines, which he looked at with such delight, as we passed this road together for the last time. There, too, under the crag of that mountain, is the cottage, peeping from among the cedars, which he bade me remember, and copy with my pencil. O my father, shall I never see you more!’

As she drew near the chateau, these melancholy memorials of past times multiplied. At length, the chateau itself appeared amid the glowing beauty of St Aubert’s favourite landscape. This was an object, which called for fortitude, not for tears; Emily dried hers, and prepared to meet with calmness the trying moment of her return to that home, where there was no longer a parent to welcome her. ‘Yes,’ said she, ‘let me not forget the lessons he has taught me! How often he has pointed out the necessity of resisting even virtuous sorrow; how often we have admired together the greatness of a mind, that can at once suffer and reason! O my father! if you are permitted to look down upon your child, it will please you to see, that she remembers, and endeavours to practise, the precepts you have given her.’

A turn on the road now allowed a nearer view of the chateau, the chimneys, tipped with light, rising from behind St Aubert’s favourite oaks, whose foliage partly concealed the lower part of the building. Emily could not suppress a heavy sigh. ‘This, too, was his favourite hour,’ said she, as she gazed upon the long evening shadows, stretched athwart the landscape. ‘How deep the repose, how lovely the scene! lovely and tranquil as in former days!’

Again she resisted the pressure of sorrow, till her ear caught the gay melody of the dance, which she had so often listened to, as she walked with St Aubert, on the margin of the Garonne, when all her fortitude forsook her, and she continued to weep, till the carriage stopped at the little gate, that opened upon what was now her own territory. She raised her eyes on the sudden stopping of the carriage, and saw her father’s old housekeeper coming to open the gate. Manchon also came running, and barking before her; and, when his young mistress alighted, fawned, and played round her, gasping with joy.

‘Dear ma’amselle!’ said Theresa, and paused, and looked as if she would have offered something of condolement to Emily, whose tears now prevented reply. The dog still fawned and ran round her, and then flew towards the carriage, with a short quick bark. ‘Ah, ma’amselle! – my poor master!’ said Theresa, whose feelings were more awakened than her delicacy, ‘Manchon’s gone to look for him.’ Emily sobbed aloud; and, on looking towards the carriage, which still stood with the door open, saw the animal spring into it, and instantly leap out, and then with his nose on the ground run round the horses.

‘Don’t cry so, ma’amselle,’ said Theresa, ‘it breaks my heart to see you.’ The dog now came running to Emily, then returned to the carriage, and then back again to her, whining and discontented. ‘Poor rogue!’ said Theresa, ‘thou hast lost thy master, thou mayst well cry! But come, my dear young lady, be comforted. What shall I get to refresh you?’ Emily gave her hand to the old servant, and tried to restrain her grief, while she made some kind enquiries concerning her health. But she still lingered in the walk which led to the chateau, for within was no person to meet her with the kiss of affection; her own heart no longer palpitated with impatient joy to meet again the well-known smile, and she dreaded to see objects, which would recall the full remembrance of her former happiness. She moved slowly towards the door, paused, went on, and paused again. How silent, how forsaken, how forlorn did the chateau appear! Trembling to enter it, yet blaming herself for delaying what she could not avoid, she, at length, passed into the hall; crossed it with a hurried step, as if afraid to look round, and opened the door of that room, which she was wont to call her own. The gloom of evening gave solemnity to its silent and deserted air. The chairs, the tables, every article of furniture, so familiar to her in happier times, spoke eloquently to her heart. She seated herself, without immediately observing it, in a window, which opened upon the garden, and where St Aubert had often sat with her, watching the sun retire from the rich and extensive prospect, that appeared beyond the groves.

Having indulged her tears for some time, she became more composed; and, when Theresa, after seeing the baggage deposited in her lady’s room, again appeared, she had so far recovered her spirits, as to be able to converse with her.

‘I have made up the green bed for you, ma’amselle,’ said Theresa, as she set the coffee upon the table. ‘I thought you would like it better than your own now; but I little thought this day month, that you would come back alone. A-well-a-day! the news almost broke my heart, when it did come. Who would have believed, that my poor master, when he went from home, would never return again!’ Emily hid her face with her handkerchief, and waved her hand.

‘Do taste the coffee,’ said Theresa. ‘My dear young lady, be comforted – we must all die. My dear master is a saint above.’ Emily took the handkerchief from her face, and raised her eyes full of tears towards heaven; soon after she dried them, and, in a calm, but tremulous voice, began to enquire concerning some of her late father’s pensioners.

‘Alas-a-day!’ said Theresa, as she poured out the coffee, and handed it to her mistress, ‘all that could come, have been here every day to enquire after you and my master.’ She then proceeded to tell, that some were dead whom they had left well; and others, who were ill, had recovered. ‘And see, ma’amselle,’ added Theresa, ‘there is old Mary coming up the garden now; she has looked every day these three years as if she would die, yet she is alive still. She has seen the chaise at the door, and knows you are come home.’

The sight of this poor old woman would have been too much for Emily, and she begged Theresa would go and tell her, that she was too ill to see any person that night. ‘To-morrow I shall be better, perhaps; but give her this token of my remembrance.’

Emily sat for some time, given up to sorrow. Not an object, on which her eye glanced, but awakened some remembrance, that led immediately to the subject of her grief. Her favourite plants, which St Aubert had taught her to nurse; the little drawings, that adorned the room, which his taste had instructed her to execute; the books, that he had selected for her use, and which they had read together; her musical instruments, whose sounds he loved so well, and which he sometimes awakened himself – every object gave new force to sorrow. At length, she roused herself from this melancholy indulgence, and, summoning all her resolution, stepped forward to go into those forlorn rooms, which, though she dreaded to enter, she knew would yet more powerfully affect her, if she delayed to visit them.

Having passed through the green-house, her courage for a moment forsook her, when she opened the door of the library; and, perhaps, the shade, which evening and the foliage of the trees near the windows threw across the room, heightened the solemnity of her feelings on entering that apartment, where every thing spoke of her father. There was an arm-chair, in which he used to sit; she shrunk when she observed it, for she had so often seen him seated there, and the idea of him rose so distinctly to her mind, that she almost fancied she saw him before her. But she checked the illusions of a distempered imagination, though she could not subdue a certain degree of awe, which now mingled with her emotions. She walked slowly to the chair, and seated herself in it; there was a reading-desk before it, on which lay a book open, as it had been left by her father. It was some moments before she recovered courage enough to examine it, and, when she looked at the open page, she immediately recollected, that St Aubert, on the evening before his departure from the chateau, had read to her some passages from this his favourite author. The circumstance now affected her extremely; she looked at the page, wept, and looked again. To her the book appeared sacred and invaluable, and she would not have moved it, or closed the page, which he had left open, for the treasures of the Indies. Still she sat before the desk, and could not resolve to quit it, though the increasing gloom, and the profound silence of the apartment, revived a degree of painful awe. Her thoughts dwelt on the probable state of departed spirits, and she remembered the affecting conversation, which had passed between St Aubert and La Voisin, on the night preceding his death.

As she mused she saw the door slowly open, and a rustling sound in a remote part of the room startled her. Through the dusk she thought she perceived something move. The subject she had been considering, and the present tone of her spirits, which made her imagination respond to every impression of her senses, gave her a sudden terror of something supernatural. She sat for a moment motionless, and then, her dissipated reason returning, ‘What should I fear?’ said she. ‘If the spirits of those we love ever return to us, it is in kindness.’

The silence, which again reigned, made her ashamed of her late fears, and she believed, that her imagination had deluded her, or that she had heard one of those unaccountable noises, which sometimes occur in old houses. The same sound, however, returned, and, distinguishing something moving towards her, and in the next instant press beside her into the chair, she shrieked; her fleeting senses were instantly recalled, on perceiving that it was Manchon who sat by her, and who now licked her hands affectionately.

Perceiving her spirits unequal to the task she had assigned herself of visiting the deserted rooms of the chateau this night, when she left the library, she walked into the garden, and down to the terrace, that over-hung the river. The sun was now set; but, under the dark branches of the almond trees, was seen the saffron glow of the west, spreading beyond the twilight of middle air. The bat flitted silently by; and, now and then, the mourning note of the nightingale was heard. The circumstances of the hour brought to her recollection some lines, which she had once heard St Aubert recite on this very spot, and she had now a melancholy pleasure in repeating them.

SONNET

Now the bat circles on the breeze of eve,

That creeps, in shudd’ring fits, along the wave,
And trembles ’mid the woods, and through the cave
Whose lonely sighs the wanderer deceive;
For oft, when melancholy charms his mind,
He thinks the Spirit of the rock he hears,
Nor listens, but with sweetly-thrilling fears,
To the low, mystic murmurs of the wind!
Now the bat circles, and the twilight-dew
Falls silent round, and, o’er the mountain-cliff,
The gleaming wave and far-discover’d skiff,
Spreads the gray veil of soft, harmonious hue.
So falls o’er Grief the dew of pity’s tear

Dimming her lonely visions of despair.

Emily, wandering on, came to St Aubert’s favourite plane-tree, where so often, at this hour, they had sat beneath the shade together, and with her dear mother so often had conversed on the subject of a future state. How often, too, had her father expressed the comfort he derived from believing, that they should meet in another world! Emily, overcome by these recollections, left the plane-tree, and, as she leaned pensively on the wall of the terrace, she observed a group of peasants dancing gaily on the banks of the Garonne, which spread in broad expanse below, and reflected the evening light. What a contrast they formed to the desolate, unhappy Emily! They were gay and *debonnaire*, as they were wont to be when she, too, was gay – when St Aubert used to listen to their merry music, with a countenance beaming pleasure and benevolence. Emily, having looked for a moment on this sprightly band, turned away, unable to bear the remembrances it excited; but where, alas! could she turn, and not meet new objects to give acuteness to grief?

As she walked slowly towards the house, she was met by Theresa. ‘Dear ma’amselle,’ said she, ‘I have been seeking you up and down this half hour, and was afraid some accident had happened to you. How can you like to wander about so in this night air! Do come into the house. Think what my poor master would have said, if he could see you. I am sure, when my dear lady died, no gentleman could take it more to heart than he did, yet you know he seldom shed a tear.’

‘Pray, Theresa, cease,’ said Emily, wishing to interrupt this ill-judged, but well-meaning harangue; Theresa’s loquacity, however, was not to be silenced so easily. ‘And when you used to grieve so,’ she added, ‘he often told you how wrong it was – for that my mistress was happy. And, if she was happy, I am sure he is so too; for the prayers of the poor, they say, reach heaven.’ During this speech, Emily had walked silently into the chateau, and Theresa lighted her across the hall into the common sitting parlour, where she had laid the cloth, with one solitary knife and fork, for supper. Emily was in the room before she perceived that it was not her own apartment, but she checked the emotion which inclined her to leave it, and seated herself quietly by the little supper table. Her father’s hat hung upon the opposite wall; while she gazed at it, a faintness came over her. Theresa looked at her, and then at the object, on which her eyes were settled, and went to remove it; but Emily waved her hand – ‘No,’ said she, ‘let it remain. I am going to my chamber.’ ‘Nay, ma’amselle, supper is ready.’ ‘I cannot take it,’ replied Emily, ‘I will go to my room, and try to sleep. To-morrow I shall be better.’

‘This is poor doings!’ said Theresa. ‘Dear lady! do take some food! I have dressed a pheasant, and a fine one it is. Old Monsieur Barreaux sent it this morning, for I saw him yesterday, and told him you were coming. And I know nobody that seemed more concerned, when he heard the sad news, than he.’

‘Did he?’ said Emily, in a tender voice, while she felt her poor heart warmed for a moment by a ray of sympathy.

At length, her spirits were entirely overcome, and she retired to her room.

CHAPTER IX

'Can Music's voice, can Beauty's eye,
Can Painting's glowing hand supply
A charm so suited to my mind,
As blows this hollow gust of wind?
As drops this little weeping rill,
Soft tinkling down the moss-grown hill;
While, through the west, where sinks the crimson day,
Meek Twilight slowly sails, and waves her banners gray?'
Mason ['Ode; To a Friend'][1]

Emily, some time after her return to La Vallée, received letters from her aunt, Madame Cheron, in which, after some common-place condolement and advice, she invited her to Tholouse, and added, that, as her late brother had entrusted Emily's *education* to her, she should consider herself bound to overlook her conduct. Emily, at this time, wished only to remain at La Vallée, in the scenes of her early happiness, now rendered infinitely dear to her, as the late residence of those, whom she had lost for ever, where she could weep unobserved, retrace their steps, and remember each minute particular of their manners. But she was equally anxious to avoid the displeasure of Madame Cheron.

Though her affection would not suffer her to question, even a moment, the propriety of St Aubert's conduct in appointing Madame for her guardian, she was sensible, that this step had made her happiness depend, in a great degree, on the humour of her aunt. In her reply, she begged permission to remain, at present, at La Vallée, mentioning the extreme dejection of her spirits, and the necessity she felt for quiet and retirement to restore them. These she knew were not to be found at Madame Cheron's, whose inclinations led her into a life of dissipation, which her ample fortune encouraged; and, having given her answer, she felt somewhat more at ease.

In the first days of her affliction, she was visited by Monsieur Barreaux, a sincere mourner for St Aubert. 'I may well lament my friend,' said he, 'for I shall never meet with his resemblance. If I could have found such a man in what is called society, I should not have left it.'

M. Barreaux's admiration of her father endeared him extremely to Emily, whose heart found almost its first relief in conversing of her parents, with a man, whom she so much revered, and who, though with such an ungracious appearance, possessed so much goodness of heart and delicacy of mind.

Several weeks passed away in quiet retirement, and Emily's affliction began to soften into melancholy. She could bear to read the books she had before read with her father; to sit in his chair in the library – to watch the flowers his hand had planted – to awaken the tones of that instrument his fingers had pressed, and sometimes even to play his favourite air.

When her mind had recovered from the first shock of affliction, perceiving the danger of yielding to indolence, and that activity alone could restore its tone, she scrupulously endeavoured to pass all her hours in employment. And it was now that she understood the full value of the education she had received from St Aubert, for in cultivating her understanding he had secured her an asylum from indolence, without recourse to dissipation, and rich and varied amusement and information, independent of the society, from which her situation secluded her. Nor were the good effects of this education confined to selfish advantages, since, St Aubert having nourished every amiable quality of her heart, it now expanded in benevolence to all around her, and taught her, when she could not remove the misfortunes of others, at least to soften them by sympathy and tenderness; – a benevolence that taught her to feel for all, that could suffer.

Madame Cheron returned no answer to Emily's letter, who began to hope, that she should be permitted to remain some time longer in her retirement, and her mind had now so far recovered its strength, that she ventured to view the scenes, which most powerfully recalled the images of past times. Among these was the fishing-house; and, to indulge still more the affectionate melancholy of the visit, she took thither her lute, that she might again hear there the tones, to which St Aubert and her mother had so often delighted to listen. She went alone, and at that still hour of the evening, which is so soothing to fancy and to grief. The last time she had been here she was in company with Monsieur and Madame St Aubert, a few days preceding that, on which the latter was seized with a fatal illness. Now, when Emily again entered the woods, that surrounded the building, they awakened so forcibly the memory of former times, that her resolution yielded for a moment to excess of grief. She stopped, leaned for support against a tree, and wept for some minutes, before she had recovered herself sufficiently to proceed. The little path, that led to the building, was overgrown with grass, and the flowers which St Aubert had scattered carelessly along the border were almost choked with weeds – the tall thistle – the fox-glove, and the nettle. She often paused to look on the desolate spot, now so silent and forsaken, and when, with a trembling hand, she opened the door of the fishing-house, 'Ah!' said she, 'every thing – every thing remains as when I left it last – left it with those who never must return!' She went to a window, that overhung the rivulet, and, leaning over it, with her eyes fixed on the current, was soon lost in melancholy reverie. The lute she had brought lay forgotten beside her; the mournful sighing of the breeze, as it waved the high pines above, and its softer whispers among the osiers, that bowed upon the banks below, was a kind of music more in unison with her feelings. It did not vibrate on the chords of unhappy memory, but was soothing to the heart as the voice of Pity. She continued to muse, unconscious of the gloom of evening, and that the sun's last light trembled on the heights above, and would probably have remained so much longer, if a sudden footstep, without the building, had not alarmed her attention, and first made her recollect that she was unprotected. In the next moment, a door opened, and a stranger appeared, who stopped on perceiving Emily, and then began to apologize for his intrusion. But Emily, at the sound of his voice, lost her fear in a stronger emotion; its tones were familiar to her ear, and, though she could not readily distinguish through the dusk the features of the person who spoke, she felt a remembrance too strong to be distrusted.

He repeated his apology, and Emily then said something in reply, when the stranger, eagerly advancing, exclaimed, 'Good God! can it be – surely I am not mistaken – ma'amselle St Aubert – is it not?'

'It is indeed,' said Emily, who was confirmed in her first conjecture, for she now distinguished the countenance of Valancourt, lighted up with still more than its usual animation. A thousand painful recollections crowded to her mind, and the effort, which she made to support herself, only served to increase her agitation. Valancourt, meanwhile, having enquired anxiously after her health, and expressed his hopes, that M. St Aubert had found benefit from travelling, learned from the flood of tears, which she could no longer repress, the fatal truth. He led her to a seat, and sat down by her, while Emily continued to weep, and Valancourt to hold the hand, which she was unconscious he had taken, till it was wet with the tears, which grief for St Aubert and sympathy for herself had called forth.

'I feel,' said he at length, 'I feel how insufficient all attempt at consolation must be on this subject. I can only mourn with you, for I cannot doubt the source of your tears. Would to God I were mistaken!'

Emily could still answer only by tears, till she rose, and begged they might leave the melancholy spot, when Valancourt, though he saw her feebleness, could not offer to detain her, but took her arm within his, and led her from the fishing-house. They walked silently through the woods, Valancourt anxious to know, yet fearing to ask any particulars concerning St Aubert; and Emily too much distressed to converse. After some time, however, she acquired fortitude enough to speak of her father, and to give a brief account of the manner of his death; during which recital Valancourt's countenance betrayed strong emotion, and, when he heard that St Aubert had died on the road, and that Emily had been left among strangers, he pressed her hand between his, and involuntarily exclaimed, 'Why was I not there!' but in the next moment recollected himself, for he immediately returned to the mention of her father; till, perceiving that her spirits were exhausted, he gradually changed the subject, and spoke of himself. Emily thus learned, that, after they had parted, he had wandered, for some time, along the shores of the Mediterranean, and had then returned through Languedoc into Gascony, which was his native province, and where he usually resided.

When he had concluded his little narrative, he sunk into a silence, which Emily was not disposed to interrupt, and it continued, till they reached the gate of the chateau, when he stopped, as if he had known this to be the limit of his walk. Here, saying, that it was his intention to return to Estuviere on the following day, he asked her if she would permit him to take leave of her in the morning; and Emily, perceiving that she could not reject an ordinary civility, without expressing by her refusal an expectation of something more, was compelled to answer, that she should be at home.

She passed a melancholy evening, during which the retrospect of all that had happened, since she had seen Valancourt, would rise to her imagination; and the scene of her father's death appeared in tints as fresh, as if it had passed on the preceding day. She remembered particularly the earnest and solemn manner, in which he had required her to destroy the manuscript papers, and, awakening from the lethargy, in which sorrow had held her, she was shocked to think she had not yet obeyed him, and determined, that another day should not reproach her with the neglect.

CHAPTER X

‘Can such things be,

And overcome us like a summer’s cloud,
Without our special wonder?’
[Shakespeare] *Macbeth*[1]

On the next morning, Emily ordered a fire to be lighted in the stove of the chamber, where St Aubert used to sleep; and, as soon as she had breakfasted, went thither to burn the papers. Having fastened the door to prevent interruption, she opened the closet where they were concealed, as she entered which, she felt an emotion of unusual awe, and stood for some moments surveying it, trembling, and almost afraid to remove the board. There was a great chair in one corner of the closet, and, opposite to it, stood the table, at which she had seen her father sit, on the evening that preceded his departure, looking over, with so much emotion, what she believed to be these very papers.

The solitary life, which Emily had led of late, and the melancholy subjects, on which she had suffered her thoughts to dwell, had rendered her at times sensible to the ‘thick-coming fancies’[2] of a mind greatly enervated. It was lamentable, that her excellent understanding should have yielded, even for a moment, to the reveries of superstition, or rather to those starts of imagination, which deceive the senses into what can be called nothing less than momentary madness. Instances of this temporary failure of mind had more than once occurred since her return home; particularly when, wandering through this lonely mansion in the evening twilight, she had been alarmed by appearances, which would have been unseen in her more cheerful days. To this infirm state of her nerves may be attributed what she imagined, when, her eyes glancing a second time on the arm-chair, which stood in an obscure part of the closet, the countenance of her dead father appeared there. Emily stood fixed for a moment to the floor, after which she left the closet. Her spirits, however, soon returned; she reproached herself with the weakness of thus suffering interruption in an act of serious importance, and again opened the door. By the directions which St Aubert had given her, she readily found the board he had described in an opposite corner of the closet, near the window; she distinguished also the line he had mentioned, and, pressing it as he had bade her, it slid down, and disclosed the bundle of papers, together with some scattered ones, and the purse of louis. With a trembling hand she removed them, replaced the board, paused a moment, and was rising from the floor, when, on looking up, there appeared to her alarmed fancy the same countenance in the chair. The illusion, another instance of the unhappy effect which solitude and grief had gradually produced upon her mind, subdued her spirits; she rushed forward into the chamber, and sunk almost senseless into a chair. Returning reason soon overcame the dreadful, but pitiable attack of imagination, and she turned to the papers, though still with so little recollection, that her eyes involuntarily settled on the writing of some loose sheets, which lay open; and she was unconscious, that she was transgressing her father’s strict injunction, till a sentence of dreadful import awakened her attention and her memory together. She hastily put the papers from her; but the words, which had roused equally her curiosity and terror, she could not dismiss from her thoughts. So powerfully had they affected her, that she even could not resolve to destroy the papers immediately; and the more she dwelt on the circumstance, the more it inflamed her imagination. Urged by the most forcible, and apparently the most necessary, curiosity to enquire farther, concerning the terrible and mysterious subject, to which she had seen an allusion, she began to lament her promise to destroy the papers. For a moment, she even doubted, whether it could justly be obeyed, in contradiction to such reasons as there appeared to be for further information. But the delusion was momentary.

‘I have given a solemn promise,’ said she, ‘to observe a solemn injunction, and it is not my business to argue, but to obey. Let me hasten to remove the temptation, that would destroy my innocence, and embitter my life with the consciousness of irremediable guilt, while I have strength to reject it.’

Thus re-animated with a sense of her duty, she completed the triumph of integrity over temptation, more forcible than any she had ever known, and consigned the papers to the flames. Her eyes watched them as they slowly consumed, she shuddered at the recollection of the sentence she had just seen, and at the certainty, that the only opportunity of explaining it was then passing away for ever.

It was long after this, that she recollected the purse, and as she was depositing it, unopened, in a cabinet, perceiving that it contained something of a size larger than coin, she examined it. ‘His hand deposited them here,’ said she, as she kissed some pieces of the coin, and wetted them with her tears, ‘his hand – which is now dust!’ At the bottom of the purse was a small packet, having taken out which, and unfolded paper after paper, she found to be an ivory case, containing the miniature of a – lady! She started – ‘The same,’ said she, ‘my father wept over!’ On examining the countenance she could recollect no person that it resembled. It was of uncommon beauty, and was characterized by an expression of sweetness, shaded with sorrow, and tempered by resignation.

St Aubert had given no directions concerning this picture, nor had even named it; she, therefore, thought herself justified in preserving it. More than once remembering his manner, when he had spoken of the Marchioness of Villeroi, she felt inclined to believe that this was her resemblance; yet there appeared no reason why he should have preserved a picture of that lady, or, having preserved it, why he should lament over it in a manner so striking and affecting as she had witnessed on the night preceding his departure.

Emily still gazed on the countenance, examining its features, but she knew not where to detect the charm that captivated her attention, and inspired sentiments of such love and pity. Dark brown hair played carelessly along the open forehead; the nose was rather inclined to aquiline; the lips spoke in a smile, but it was a melancholy one; the eyes were blue, and were directed upwards with an expression of peculiar meekness, while the soft cloud of the brow spoke the fine sensibility of the temper.

Emily was roused from the musing mood into which the picture had thrown her, by the closing of the garden gate; and, on turning her eyes to the window, she saw Valancourt coming towards the chateau. Her spirits agitated by the subjects that had lately occupied her mind, she felt unprepared to see him, and remained a few moments in the chamber to recover herself.

When she met him in the parlour, she was struck with the change that appeared in his air and countenance since they had parted in Rousillon, which twilight and the distress she suffered on the preceding evening had prevented her from observing. But dejection and languor disappeared, for a moment, in the smile that now enlightened his countenance, on perceiving her. 'You see,' said he, 'I have availed myself of the permission with which you honoured me – of bidding *you* farewell, whom I had the happiness of meeting only yesterday.'

Emily smiled faintly, and, anxious to say something, asked if he had been long in Gascony. 'A few days only,' replied Valancourt, while a blush passed over his cheek. 'I engaged in a long ramble after I had the misfortune of parting with the friends who had made my wanderings among the Pyrenées so delightful.'

A tear came to Emily's eye, as Valancourt said this, which he observed; and, anxious to draw off her attention from the remembrance that had occasioned it, as well as shocked at his own thoughtlessness, he began to speak on other subjects; expressing his admiration of the chateau, and its prospects. Emily, who felt somewhat embarrassed how to support a conversation, was glad of such an opportunity to continue it on indifferent topics. They walked down to the terrace, where Valancourt was charmed with the river scenery, and the views over the opposite shores of Guienne.

As he leaned on the wall of the terrace, watching the rapid current of the Garonne, 'I was a few weeks ago,' said he, 'at the source of this noble river; I had not then the happiness of knowing you, or I should have regretted your absence – it was a scene so exactly suited to your taste. It rises in a part of the Pyrenées, still wilder and more sublime, I think, than any we passed in the way to Rousillon.' He then described its fall among the precipices of the mountains, where its waters, augmented by the streams that descend from the snowy summits around, rush into the Vallée d'Aran, between whose romantic heights it foams along, pursuing its way to the north west till it emerges upon the plains of Languedoc. Then, washing the walls of Tholouse, and turning again to the north west, it assumes a milder character, as it fertilizes the pastures of Gascony and Guienne, in its progress to the Bay of Biscay.

Emily and Valancourt talked of the scenes they had passed among the Pyrenean Alps; as he spoke of which there was often a tremulous tenderness in his voice, and sometimes he expatiated on them with all the fire of genius, sometimes would appear scarcely conscious of the topic, though he continued to speak. This subject recalled forcibly to Emily the idea of her father, whose image appeared in every landscape, which Valancourt particularized, whose remarks dwelt upon her memory, and whose enthusiasm still glowed in her heart. Her silence, at length, reminded Valancourt how nearly his conversation approached to the occasion of her grief, and he changed the subject, though for one scarcely less affecting to Emily. When he admired the grandeur of the plane-tree, that spread its wide branches over the terrace, and under whose shade they now sat, she remembered how often she had sat thus with St Aubert, and heard him express the same admiration.

'This was a favourite tree with my dear father,' said she; 'he used to love to sit under its foliage with his family about him, in the fine evenings of summer.'

Valancourt understood her feelings, and was silent; had she raised her eyes from the ground she would have seen tears in his. He rose, and leaned on the wall of the terrace, from which, in a few moments, he returned to his seat, then rose again, and appeared to be greatly agitated, while Emily found her spirits so much depressed, that several of her attempts to renew the conversation were ineffectual. Valancourt again sat down, but was still silent, and trembled. At length he said, with a hesitating voice, 'This lovely scene! – I am going to leave – to leave you – perhaps for ever! These moments may never return; I cannot resolve to neglect, though I scarcely dare to avail myself of them. Let me, however, without offending the delicacy of your sorrow, venture to declare the admiration I must always feel of your goodness, – O! that at some future period I might be permitted to call it love!'

Emily's emotion would not suffer her to reply; and Valancourt, who now ventured to look up, observing her countenance change, expected to see her faint, and made an involuntary effort to support her, which recalled Emily to a sense of her situation, and to an exertion of her spirits. Valancourt did not appear to notice her indisposition, but, when he spoke again, his voice told the tenderest love. 'I will not presume,' he added, 'to intrude this subject longer upon your attention at this time, but I may, perhaps, be permitted to mention, that these parting moments would lose much of their bitterness if I might be allowed to hope the declaration I have made would not exclude me from your presence in future.'

Emily made another effort to overcome the confusion of her thoughts, and to speak. She feared to trust the preference her heart acknowledged towards Valancourt, and to give him any encouragement for hope, on so short an acquaintance.

For though in this narrow period she had observed much that was admirable in his taste and disposition, and though these observations had been sanctioned by the opinion of her father, they were not sufficient testimonies of his general worth to determine her upon a subject so infinitely important to her future happiness as that, which now solicited her attention. Yet, though the thought of dismissing Valancourt was so very painful to her, that she could scarcely endure to pause upon it, the consciousness of this made her fear the partiality of her judgment, and hesitate still more to encourage that suit, for which her own heart too tenderly pleaded. The family of Valancourt, if not his circumstances, had been known to her father, and known to be unexceptionable. Of his circumstances, Valancourt himself hinted as far as delicacy would permit, when he said he had at present little else to offer but an heart, that adored her. He had solicited only for a distant hope, and she could not resolve to forbid, though she scarcely dared to permit it; at length, she acquired courage to say, that she must think herself honoured by the good opinion of any person, whom her father had esteemed.

‘And was I, then, thought worthy of his esteem?’ said Valancourt, in a voice trembling with anxiety; then checking himself, he added, ‘But pardon the question; I scarcely know what I say. If I might dare to hope, that you think me not unworthy such honour, and might be permitted sometimes to enquire after your health, I should now leave you with comparative tranquillity.’

Emily, after a moment’s silence, said, ‘I will be ingenuous with you, for I know you will understand, and allow for my situation; you will consider it as a proof of my – my esteem that I am so. Though I live here in what was my father’s house, I live here alone. I have, alas! no longer a parent – a parent, whose presence might sanction your visits. It is unnecessary for me to point out the impropriety of my receiving them.’

‘Nor will I affect to be insensible of this,’ replied Valancourt, adding mournfully – ‘but what is to console me for my candour? I distress you, and would now leave the subject, if I might carry with me a hope of being some time permitted to renew it, of being allowed to make myself known to your family.’

Emily was again confused, and again hesitated what to reply; she felt most acutely the difficulty – the forlornness of her situation, which did not allow her a single relative, or friend, to whom she could turn for even a look, that might support and guide her in the present embarrassing circumstances. Madame Cheron, who was her only relative, and ought to have been this friend, was either occupied by her own amusements, or so resentful of the reluctance her niece had shewn to quit La Vallée, that she seemed totally to have abandoned her.

‘Ah! I see,’ said Valancourt, after a long pause, during which Emily had begun, and left unfinished two or three sentences, ‘I see that I have nothing to hope; my fears were too just, you think me unworthy of your esteem. That fatal journey! which I considered as the happiest period of my life – those delightful days were to embitter all my future ones. How often I have looked back to them with hope and fear – yet never till this moment could I prevail with myself to regret their enchanting influence.’

His voice faltered, and he abruptly quitted his seat and walked on the terrace. There was an expression of despair on his countenance, that affected Emily. The pleadings of her heart overcame, in some degree, her extreme timidity, and, when he resumed his seat, she said, in an accent that betrayed her tenderness, ‘You do both yourself and me injustice when you say I think you unworthy of my esteem; I will acknowledge that you have long possessed it, and – and –’

Valancourt waited impatiently for the conclusion of the sentence, but the words died on her lips. Her eyes, however, reflected all the emotions of her heart. Valancourt passed, in an instant, from the impatience of despair, to that of joy and tenderness. ‘O Emily!’ he exclaimed, ‘my own Emily – teach me to sustain this moment! Let me seal it as the most sacred of my life!’

He pressed her hand to his lips, it was cold and trembling; and, raising his eyes, he saw the paleness of her countenance. Tears came to her relief, and Valancourt watched in anxious silence over her. In a few moments, she recovered herself, and smiling faintly through her tears, said, ‘Can you excuse this weakness? My spirits have not yet, I believe, recovered from the shock they lately received.’

‘I cannot excuse myself,’ said Valancourt, ‘but I will forbear to renew the subject, which may have contributed to agitate them, now that I can leave you with the sweet certainty of possessing your esteem.’

Then, forgetting his resolution, he again spoke of himself. ‘You know not,’ said he, ‘the many anxious hours I have passed near you lately, when you believed me, if indeed you honoured me with a thought, far away. I have wandered, near the chateau, in the still hours of the night, when no eye could observe me. It was delightful to know I was so near you, and there was something particularly soothing in the thought, that I watched round your habitation, while you slept. These grounds are not entirely new to me. Once I ventured within the fence, and spent one of the happiest, and yet most melancholy hours of my life in walking under what I believed to be your window.’

Emily enquired how long Valancourt had been in the neighbourhood. ‘Several days,’ he replied. ‘It was my design to avail myself of the permission M. St Aubert had given me. I scarcely know how to account for it; but, though I anxiously wished to do this, my resolution always failed, when the moment approached, and I constantly deferred my visit. I lodged in a village at some distance, and wandered with my dogs, among the scenes of this charming country, wishing continually to meet you, yet not daring to visit you.’

Having thus continued to converse, without perceiving the flight of time, Valancourt, at length, seemed to recollect himself. ‘I must go,’ said he mournfully, ‘but it is with the hope of seeing you again, of being permitted to pay my respects to your family; let me hear this hope confirmed by your voice.’ ‘My family will be happy to see any friend of my dear father,’ said Emily. Valancourt kissed her hand, and still lingered, unable to depart, while Emily sat silently with her eyes bent on the ground; and Valancourt, as he gazed on her, considered that it would soon be impossible for him to recall, even to his memory, the exact resemblance of the beautiful countenance he then beheld; at this moment an hasty footstep approached from behind the plane-tree, and, turning her eyes, Emily saw Madame Cheron. She felt a blush steal upon her cheek, and her frame trembled with the emotion of her mind; but she instantly rose to meet her visitor. 'So niece,' said Madame Cheron, casting a look of surprise and enquiry on Valancourt, 'so niece, how do you do? But I need not ask, your looks tell me you have already recovered your loss.'

'My looks do me injustice then, Madam, my loss I know can never be recovered.'

'Well – well! I will not argue with you; I see you have exactly your father's disposition; and let me tell you it would have been much happier for him, poor man! if it had been a different one.'

A look of dignified displeasure, with which Emily regarded Madame Cheron, while she spoke, would have touched almost any other heart: she made no other reply, but introduced Valancourt, who could scarcely stifle the resentment he felt, and whose bow Madame Cheron returned with a slight curtesy, and a look of supercilious examination. After a few moments he took leave of Emily, in a manner, that hastily expressed his pain both at his own departure, and at leaving her to the society of Madame Cheron.

'Who is that young man?' said her aunt, in an accent, which equally implied inquisitiveness and censure. 'Some idle admirer of yours I suppose; but I believed niece you had a greater sense of propriety, than to have received the visits of any young man in your present unfriended situation. Let me tell you the world will observe those things, and it will talk, aye and very freely too.'

Emily, extremely shocked at this coarse speech, attempted to interrupt it; but Madame Cheron would proceed, with all the self-importance of a person, to whom power is new.

'It is very necessary you should be under the eye of some person more able to guide you than yourself. I, indeed, have not much leisure for such a task; however, since your poor father made it his last request, that I should overlook your conduct – I must even take you under my care. But this let me tell you niece, that, unless you will determine to be very conformable to my direction, I shall not trouble myself longer about you.'

Emily made no attempt to interrupt Madame Cheron a second time, grief and the pride of conscious innocence kept her silent, till her aunt said, 'I am now come to take you with me to Thoulouse; I am sorry to find, that your poor father died, after all, in such indifferent circumstances; however, I shall take you home with me. Ah! poor man, he was always more generous than provident, or he would not have left his daughter dependent on his relations.'

'Nor has he done so, I hope, madam,' said Emily calmly, 'nor did his pecuniary misfortunes arise from that noble generosity, which always distinguished him. The affairs of M. de Motteville may, I trust, yet be settled without deeply injuring his creditors, and in the mean time I should be very happy to remain at La Vallée.'

'No doubt you would,' replied Madame Cheron, with a smile of irony, 'and I shall no doubt consent to this, since I see how necessary tranquillity and retirement are to restore your spirits. I did not think you capable of so much duplicity, niece; when you pleaded this excuse for remaining here, I foolishly believed it to be a just one, nor expected to have found with you so agreeable a companion as this M. LaVal—, I forget his name.'

Emily could no longer endure these cruel indignities. 'It was a just one, madam,' said she; 'and now, indeed, I feel more than ever the value of the retirement I then solicited; and, if the purport of your visit is only to add insult to the sorrows of your brother's child, she could well have spared it.'

'I see that I have undertaken a very troublesome task,' said Madame Cheron, colouring highly. 'I am sure, madam,' said Emily mildly, and endeavouring to restrain her tears, 'I am sure my father did not mean it should be such. I have the happiness to reflect, that my conduct under his eye was such as he often delighted to approve. It would be very painful to me to disobey the sister of such a parent, and, if you believe the task will really be so troublesome, I must lament, that it is yours.'

'Well! niece, fine speaking signifies little. I am willing, in consideration of my poor brother, to overlook the impropriety of your late conduct, and to try what your future will be.'

Emily interrupted her, to beg she would explain what was the impropriety she alluded to.

'What impropriety! why that of receiving the visits of a lover unknown to your family,' replied Madame Cheron, not considering the impropriety of which she had herself been guilty, in exposing her niece to the possibility of conduct so erroneous.

A faint blush passed over Emily's countenance; pride and anxiety struggled in her breast; and, till she recollected, that appearances did, in some degree, justify her aunt's suspicions, she could not resolve to humble herself so far as to enter into the defence of a conduct, which had been so innocent and undesigning on her part. She mentioned the manner of Valancourt's introduction to her father; the circumstance of his receiving the pistol-shot, and of their afterwards travelling together; with the accidental way, in which she had met him, on the preceding evening. She owned he had declared a partiality for her, and that he had asked permission to address her family.

'And who is this young adventurer, pray?' said Madame Cheron, ' and what are his pretensions?' 'These he must himself explain, madam,' replied Emily. 'Of his family my father was not ignorant, and I believe it is unexceptionable.' She then proceeded to mention what she knew concerning it.

'O, then, this it seems is a younger brother,' exclaimed her aunt, 'and of course a beggar. A very fine tale indeed! And so my brother took a fancy to this young man after only a few days acquaintance! – but that was so like him! In his youth he was always taking these likes and dislikes, when no other person saw any reason for them at all; nay, indeed, I have often thought the people he disapproved were much more agreeable than those he admired; – but there is no accounting for tastes. He was always so much influenced by people's countenances; now I, for my part, have no notion of this, it is all ridiculous enthusiasm. What has a man's face to do with his character? Can a man of good character help having a disagreeable face?' – which last sentence Madame Cheron delivered with the decisive air of a person who congratulates herself on having made a grand discovery, and believes the question to be unanswerably settled.

Emily, desirous of concluding the conversation, enquired if her aunt would accept some refreshment, and Madame Cheron accompanied her to the chateau, but without desisting from a topic, which she discussed with so much complacency to herself, and severity to her niece.

'I am sorry to perceive, niece,' said she, in allusion to somewhat that Emily had said, concerning physiognomy, 'that you have a great many of your father's prejudices, and among them are those sudden predilections for people from their looks. I can perceive, that you imagine yourself to be violently in love with this young adventurer, after an acquaintance of only a few days. There was something, too, so charmingly romantic in the manner of your meeting!'

Emily checked the tears, that trembled in her eyes, while she said, 'When my conduct shall deserve this severity, madam, you will do well to exercise it; till then justice, if not tenderness, should surely restrain it. I have never willingly offended you; now I have lost my parents, you are the only person to whom I can look for kindness. Let me not lament more than ever the loss of such parents.' The last words were almost stifled by her emotions, and she burst into tears. Remembering the delicacy and the tenderness of St Aubert, the happy, happy days she had passed in these scenes, and contrasting them with the coarse and unfeeling behaviour of Madame Cheron, and with the future hours of mortification she must submit to in her presence – a degree of grief seized her, that almost reached despair. Madame Cheron, more offended by the reproof, which Emily's words conveyed, than touched by the sorrow they expressed, said nothing, that might soften her grief; but, notwithstanding an apparent reluctance to receive her niece, she desired her company. The love of sway was her ruling passion, and she knew it would be highly gratified by taking into her house a young orphan, who had no appeal from her decisions, and on whom she could exercise without controul the capricious humour of the moment.

On entering the chateau, Madame Cheron expressed a desire, that she would put up what she thought necessary to take to Tholouse, as she meant to set off immediately. Emily now tried to persuade her to defer the journey, at least, till the next day, and, at length, with much difficulty, prevailed.

The day passed in the exercise of petty tyranny on the part of Madame Cheron, and in mournful regret and melancholy anticipation on that of Emily, who, when her aunt retired to her apartment for the night, went to take leave of every other room in this her dear native home, which she was now quitting for she knew not how long, and for a world, to which she was wholly a stranger. She could not conquer a presentiment, which frequently occurred to her, this night – that she should never more return to La Vallée. Having passed a considerable time in what had been her father's study, having selected some of his favourite authors, to put up with her clothes, and shed many tears, as she wiped the dust from their covers, she seated herself in his chair before the reading desk, and sat lost in melancholy reflection, till Theresa opened the door to examine, as was her custom before she went to bed, if all was safe. She started, on observing her young lady, who bade her come in, and then gave her some directions for keeping the chateau in readiness for her reception at all times.

'Alas-a day! that you should leave it!' said Theresa, 'I think you would be happier here than where you are going, if one may judge.' Emily made no reply to this remark; the sorrow Theresa proceeded to express at her departure affected her, but she found some comfort in the simple affection of this poor old servant, to whom she gave such directions as might best conduce to her comfort, during her own absence.

Having dismissed Theresa to bed, Emily wandered through every lonely apartment of the chateau, lingering long in what had been her father's bed-room, indulging melancholy, yet not unpleasing, emotions, and, having often returned within the door to take another look at it, she withdrew to her own chamber. From her window she gazed upon the garden below, shewn faintly by the moon, rising over the tops of the palm-trees, and, at length, the calm beauty of the night increased a desire of indulging the mournful sweetness of bidding farewel to the beloved shades of her childhood, till she was tempted to descend. Throwing over her the light veil, in which she usually walked, she silently passed into the garden, and, hastening towards the distant groves, was glad to breathe once more the air of liberty, and to sigh unobserved. The deep repose of the scene, the rich scents, that floated on the breeze, the grandeur of the wide horizon and of the clear blue arch, soothed and gradually elevated her mind to that sublime complacency, which renders the vexations of this world so insignificant and mean in our eyes, that we wonder they have had power for a moment to disturb us. Emily forgot Madame Cheron and all the circumstances of her conduct, while her thoughts ascended to the contemplation of those unnumbered worlds, that lie scattered in the depths of aether, thousands of them hid from human eyes, and almost beyond the flight of human fancy. As her imagination soared through the regions of space, and aspired to that Great First Cause, which pervades and governs all being, the idea of her father scarcely ever left her; but it was a pleasing idea, since she resigned him to God in the full confidence of a pure and holy faith. She pursued her way through the groves to the terrace, often pausing as memory awakened the pang of affection, and as reason anticipated the exile, into which she was going.

And now the moon was high over the woods, touching their summits with yellow light, and darting between the foliage long level beams; while on the rapid Garonne below the trembling radiance was faintly obscured by the lightest vapour. Emily long watched the playing lustre, listened to the soothing murmur of the current, and the yet lighter sounds of the air, as it stirred, at intervals, the lofty palm-trees. 'How delightful is the sweet breath of these groves,' said she. 'This lovely scene! – I how often shall I remember and regret it, when I am far away. Alas! what events may occur before I see it again! O, peaceful, happy shades! – scenes of my infant delights, of parental tenderness now lost for ever! – why must I leave ye! – In your retreats I should still find safety and repose. Sweet hours of my childhood – I am now to leave even your last memorials! No objects, that would revive your impressions, will remain for me!'

Then drying her tears and looking up, her thoughts rose again to the sublime subject she had contemplated; the same divine complacency stole over her heart, and, hushing its throbs, inspired hope and confidence and resignation to the will of the Deity, whose works filled her mind with adoration.

Emily gazed long on the plane-tree, and then seated herself, for the last time, on the bench under its shade, where she had so often sat with her parents, and where, only a few hours before, she had conversed with Valancourt, at the remembrance of whom, thus revived, a mingled sensation of esteem, tenderness and anxiety rose in her breast. With this remembrance occurred a recollection of his late confession – that he had often wandered near her habitation in the night, having even passed the boundary of the garden, and it immediately occurred to her, that he might be at this moment in the grounds. The fear of meeting him, particularly after the declaration he had made, and of incurring a censure, which her aunt might so reasonably bestow, if it was known, that she was met by her lover, at this hour, made her instantly leave her beloved plane-tree, and walk towards the chateau. She cast an anxious eye around, and often stopped for a moment to examine the shadowy scene before she ventured to proceed, but she passed on without perceiving any person, till, having reached a clump of almond trees, not far from the house, she rested to take a retrospect of the garden, and to sigh forth another adieu. As her eyes wandered over the landscape she thought she perceived a person emerge from the groves, and pass slowly along a moon-light alley that led between them; but the distance, and the imperfect light would not suffer her to judge with any degree of certainty whether this was fancy or reality. She continued to gaze for some time on the spot, till on the dead stillness of the air she heard a sudden sound, and in the next instant fancied she distinguished footsteps near her. Wasting not another moment in conjecture, she hurried to the chateau, and, having reached it, retired to her chamber, where, as she closed her window she looked upon the garden, and then again thought she distinguished a figure, gliding between the almond trees she had just left. She immediately withdrew from the casement, and, though much agitated, sought in sleep the refreshment of a short oblivion.

CHAPTER XI

____'I leave that flowery path for aye
Of childhood, where I sported many a day,
Warbling and sauntering carelessly along;
Where every face was innocent and gay,
Each vale romantic, tuneful every tongue,
Sweet, wild, and artless all.'
[BEATTIE] *The Minstrel.*[1]

At an early hour, the carriage, which was to take Emily and Madame Cheron to Tholouse, appeared at the door of the chateau, and Madame was already in the breakfast-room, when her niece entered it. The repast was silent and melancholy on the part of Emily; and Madame Cheron, whose vanity was piqued on observing her dejection, reproved her in a manner that did not contribute to remove it. It was with much reluctance, that Emily's request to take with her the dog, which had been a favourite of her father, was granted. Her aunt, impatient to be gone, ordered the carriage to draw up; and, while she passed to the hall door, Emily gave another look into the library, and another farewell glance over the garden, and then followed. Old Theresa stood at the door to take leave of her young lady. 'God for ever keep you, ma'amselle!' said she, while Emily gave her hand in silence, and could answer only with a pressure of her hand, and a forced smile.

At the gate, which led out of the grounds, several of her father's pensioners were assembled to bid her farewell, to whom she would have spoken, if her aunt would have suffered the driver to stop; and, having distributed to them almost all the money she had about her, she sunk back in the carriage, yielding to the melancholy of her heart. Soon after, she caught, between the steep banks of the road, another view of the chateau, peeping from among the high trees, and surrounded by green slopes and tufted groves, the Garonne winding its way beneath their shades, sometimes lost among the vineyards, and then rising in greater majesty in the distant pastures. The towering precipices of the Pyrenées, that rose to the south, gave Emily a thousand interesting recollections of her late journey; and these objects of her former enthusiastic admiration, now excited only sorrow and regret. Having gazed on the chateau and its lovely scenery, till the banks again closed upon them, her mind became too much occupied by mournful reflections, to permit her to attend to the conversation, which Madame Cheron had begun on some trivial topic, so that they soon travelled in profound silence.

Valancourt, mean while, was returned to Estuviere, his heart occupied with the image of Emily; sometimes indulging in reveries of future happiness, but more frequently shrinking with dread of the opposition he might encounter from her family. He was the younger son of an ancient family of Gascony; and, having lost his parents at an early period of his life, the care of his education and of his small portion had devolved to his brother, the Count de Duvarney, his senior by nearly twenty years. Valancourt had been educated in all the accomplishments of his age, and had an ardour of spirit, and a certain grandeur of mind, that gave him particular excellence in the exercises then thought heroic. His little fortune had been diminished by the necessary expences of his education; but M. La Valancourt, the elder, seemed to think, that his genius and accomplishments would amply supply the deficiency of his inheritance. They offered flattering hopes of promotion in the military profession, in those times almost the only one in which a gentleman could engage without incurring a stain on his name; and La Valancourt was of course enrolled in the army. The general genius of his mind was but little understood by his brother. That ardour for whatever is great and good in the moral world, as well as in the natural one, displayed itself in his infant years; and the strong indignation, which he felt and expressed at a criminal, or a mean action, sometimes drew upon him the displeasure of his tutor; who reprobated it under the general term of violence of temper; and who, when haranguing on the virtues of mildness and moderation, seemed to forget the gentleness and compassion, which always appeared in his pupil towards objects of misfortune.

He had now obtained leave of absence from his regiment when he made the excursion into the Pyreneées, which was the means of introducing him to St Aubert; and, as this permission was nearly expired, he was the more anxious to declare himself to Emily's family, from whom he reasonably apprehended opposition, since his fortune, though, with a moderate addition from hers, it would be sufficient to support them, would not satisfy the views, either of vanity, or ambition. Valancourt was not without the latter, but he saw golden visions of promotion in the army; and believed, that with Emily he could, in the mean time, be delighted to live within the limits of his humble income. His thoughts were now occupied in considering the means of making himself known to her family, to whom, however, he had yet no address, for he was entirely ignorant of Emily's precipitate departure from La Valleée, of whom he hoped to obtain it.

Meanwhile, the travellers pursued their journey; Emily making frequent efforts to appear chearful, and too often relapsing into silence and dejection. Madame Cheron, attributing her melancholy solely to the circumstance of her being removed to a distance from her lover, and believing, that the sorrow, which her niece still expressed for the loss of St Aubert, proceeded partly from an affectation of sensibility, endeavoured to make it appear ridiculous to her, that such deep regret should continue to be felt so long after the period usually allowed for grief.

At length, these unpleasant lectures were interrupted by the arrival of the travellers at Tholouse; and Emily, who had not been there for many years, and had only a very faint recollection of it, was surprised at the ostentatious style exhibited in her aunt's house and furniture; the more so, perhaps, because it was so totally different from the modest elegance, to which she had been accustomed. She followed Madame Cheron through a large hall, where several servants in rich liveries appeared, to a kind of saloon,[2] fitted up with more shew than taste; and her aunt, complaining of fatigue, ordered supper immediately. 'I am glad to find myself in my own house again,' said she, throwing herself on a large settee, 'and to have my own people about me. I detest travelling; though, indeed, I ought to like it, for what I see abroad always makes me delighted to return to my own chateau. What makes you so silent, child? — What is it that disturbs you now?'

Emily suppressed a starting tear, and tried to smile away the expression of an oppressed heart; she was thinking of *her* home, and felt too sensibly the arrogance and ostentatious vanity of Madame Cheron's conversation. 'Can this be my father's sister!' said she to herself; and then the conviction that she was so, warming her heart with something like kindness towards her, she felt anxious to soften the harsh impression her mind had received of her aunt's character, and to shew a willingness to oblige her. The effort did not entirely fail; she listened with apparent chearfulness, while Madame Cheron expatiated on the splendour of her house, told of the numerous parties she entertained, and what she should expect of Emily, whose diffidence assumed the air of a reserve, which her aunt, believing it to be that of pride and ignorance united, now took occasion to reprehend. She knew nothing of the conduct of a mind, that fears to trust its own powers; which, possessing a nice judgment, and inclining to believe, that every other person perceives still more critically, fears to commit itself to censure, and seeks shelter in the obscurity of silence. Emily had frequently blushed at the fearless manners, which she had seen admired, and the brilliant nothings, which she had heard applauded; yet this applause, so far from encouraging her to imitate the conduct that had won it, rather made her shrink into the reserve, that would protect her from such absurdity.

Madame Cheron looked on her niece's diffidence with a feeling very near to contempt, and endeavoured to overcome it by reproof, rather than to encourage it by gentleness.

The entrance of supper somewhat interrupted the complacent discourse of Madame Cheron and the painful considerations, which it had forced upon Emily. When the repast, which was rendered ostentatious by the attendance of a great number of servants, and by a profusion of plate, was over, Madame Cheron retired to her chamber, and a female servant came to shew Emily to hers. Having passed up a large stair-case, and through several galleries, they came to a flight of back stairs, which led into a short passage in a remote part of the chateau, and there the servant opened the door of a small chamber, which she said was Ma'amselle Emily's, who, once more alone, indulged the tears she had long tried to restrain.

Those, who know, from experience, how much the heart becomes attached even to inanimate objects, to which it has been long accustomed, how unwillingly it resigns them; how with the ostentations of an old friend it meets them, after temporary absence, will understand the forlornness of Emily's feelings, of Emily shut out from the only home she had known from her infancy, and thrown upon a scene, and among persons, disagreeable for more qualities than their novelty. Her father's favourite dog, now in the chamber, thus seemed to acquire the character and importance of a friend; and, as the animal fawned over her when she wept, and licked her hands, 'Ah, poor Manchon!' said she, 'I have nobody now to love me – but you!' and she wept the more. After some time, her thoughts returning to her father's injunctions, she remembered how often he had blamed her for indulging useless sorrow; how often he had pointed out to her the necessity of fortitude and patience, assuring her, that the faculties of the mind strengthen by exertion, till they finally unnerve affliction, and triumph over it. These recollections dried her tears, gradually soothed her spirits, and inspired her with the sweet emulation of practising precepts, which her father had so frequently inculcated.

CHAPTER XII

‘Some pow’r impart the spear and shield,

At which the wizard passions fly,
By which the giant follies die.’

COLLINS [‘The Manners. An Ode’][1]

Madame Cheron’s house stood at a little distance from the city of Tholouse, and was surrounded by extensive gardens, in which Emily, who had arisen early, amused herself with wandering before breakfast, From a terrace, that extended along the highest part of them, was a wide view over Languedoc. On the distant horizon to the south, she discovered the wild summits of the Pyrénees, and her fancy immediately painted the green pastures of Gascony at their feet. Her heart pointed to her peaceful home – to the neighbourhood where Valancourt was – where St Aubert had been; and her imagination, piercing the veil of distance, brought that home to her eyes in all its interesting and romantic beauty. She experienced an inexpressible pleasure in believing, that she beheld the country around it, though no feature could be distinguished, except the retiring chain of the Pyrenées, and, inattentive to the scene immediately before her, and to the flight of time, she continued to lean on the window of a pavilion, that terminated the terrace, with her eyes fixed on Gascony, and her mind occupied with the interesting ideas which the view of it awakened, till a servant came to tell her breakfast was ready. Her thoughts thus recalled to the surrounding objects, the straight walks, square parterres, and artificial fountains of the garden,[2] could not fail, as she passed through it, to appear the worse, opposed to the negligent graces, and natural beauties of the grounds at La Valleée, upon which her recollection had been so intensely employed,

‘Whither have you been rambling so early?’ said Madame Cheron, as her niece entered the breakfast-room. ‘I don’t approve of these solitary walks,’ and Emily was surprised, when, having informed her aunt, that she had been no further than the gardens, she understood these to be included in the reproof. ‘I desire you will not walk there again at so early an hour unattended,’ said Madame Cheron; ‘my gardens are very extensive, and a young woman, who can make assignations by moon-light, at La Valleée, is not to be trusted to her own inclinations elsewhere.’

Emily, extremely surprised and shocked, had scarcely power to beg an explanation of these words, and, when she did, her aunt absolutely refused to give it, though, by her severe looks, and half sentences, she appeared anxious to impress Emily with a belief, that she was well informed of some degrading circumstances of her conduct. Conscious innocence could not prevent a blush from stealing over Emily’s cheek; she trembled, and looked confusedly under the bold eye of Madame Cheron, who blushed also; but hers was the blush of triumph, such as sometimes stains the countenance of a person, congratulating himself on the penetration which had taught him to suspect another, and who loses both pity for the supposed criminal, and indignation of his guilt, in the gratification of his own vanity.

Emily, not doubting that her aunt’s mistake arose from the having observed her ramble in the garden on the night preceding her departure from La Valleée, now mentioned the motive of it, at which Madame Cheron smiled contemptuously, refusing either to accept this explanation, or to give her reasons for refusing it; and, soon after, she concluded the subject by saying, ‘I never trust people’s assertions, I always judge of them by their actions; but I am willing to try what will be your behaviour in future.’

Emily, less surprised by her aunt’s moderation and mysterious silence, than by the accusation she had received, deeply considered the latter, and scarcely doubted, that it was Valancourt whom she had seen at night in the gardens of La Vallée, and that he had been observed there by Madame Cheron; who now passing from one painful topic only to revive another almost equally so, spoke of the situation of her niece’s property, in the hands of M. Motteville. While she thus talked with ostentatious pity of Emily’s misfortunes, she failed not to inculcate the duties of humility and gratitude, or to render Emily fully sensible of every cruel mortification, who soon perceived, that she was to be considered as a dependent, not only by her aunt, but by her aunt’s servants.

She was now informed, that a large party were expected to dinner, on which account Madame Cheron repeated the lesson of the preceding night, concerning her conduct in company, and Emily wished, that she might have courage enough to practise it. Her aunt then proceeded to examine the simplicity of her dress, adding, that she expected to see her attired with gaiety and taste; after which she condescended to shew Emily the splendour of her chateau, and to point out the particular beauty, or elegance, which she thought distinguished each of her numerous suites of apartments. She then withdrew to her toilet,[3] the throne of her homage, and Emily to her chamber, to unpack her books, and to try to charm her mind by reading, till the hour of dressing.

When the company arrived, Emily entered the saloon with an air of timidity, which all her efforts could not overcome, and which was increased by the consciousness of Madame Cheron’s severe observation. Her mourning dress, the mild dejection of her beautiful countenance, and the retiring diffidence of her manner, rendered her a very interesting object to many of the company; among whom she distinguished Signor Montoni, and his friend Cavigni, the late visitors at M. Quesnel's, who now seemed to converse with Madame Cheron with the familiarity of old acquaintance, and she to attend to them with particular pleasure.

This Signor Montoni had an air of conscious superiority, animated by spirit, and strengthened by talents, to which every person seemed involuntarily to yield. The quickness of his perceptions was strikingly expressed on his countenance, yet that countenance could submit implicitly to occasion; and, more than once in this day, the triumph of art over nature might have been discerned in it. His visage was long, and rather narrow, yet he was called handsome; and it was, perhaps, the spirit and vigour of his soul, sparkling through his features, that triumphed for him. Emily felt admiration, but not the admiration that leads to esteem; for it was mixed with a degree of fear she knew not exactly wherefore.

Cavigni was gay and insinuating as formerly; and, though he paid almost incessant attention to Madame Cheron, he found some opportunities of conversing with Emily, to whom he directed, at first, the sallies of his wit, but now and then assumed an air of tenderness, which she observed, and shrunk from. Though she replied but little, the gentleness and sweetness of her manners encouraged him to talk, and she felt relieved when a young lady of the party, who spoke incessantly, obtruded herself on his notice. This lady, who possessed all the sprightliness of a Frenchwoman, with all her coquetry, affected to understand every subject, or rather there was no affectation in the case; for, never looking beyond the limits of her own ignorance, she believed she had nothing to learn. She attracted notice from all; amused some, disgusted others for a moment, and was then forgotten.

This day passed without any material occurrence; and Emily, though amused by the characters she had seen, was glad when she could retire to the recollections, which had acquired with her the character of duties.

A fortnight passed in a round of dissipation and company, and Emily, who attended Madame Cheron in all her visits, was sometimes entertained, but oftener wearied. She was struck by the apparent talents and knowledge displayed in the various conversations she listened to, and it was long before she discovered, that the talents were for the most part those of imposture, and the knowledge nothing more than was necessary to assist them. But what deceived her most, was the air of constant gaiety and good spirits, displayed by every visitor, and which she supposed to arise from content as constant, and from benevolence as ready. At length, from the over-acting of some, less accomplished than the others, she could perceive, that, though contentment and benevolence are the only sure sources of cheerfulness, the immoderate and feverish animation, usually exhibited in large parties, results partly from an insensibility to the cares, which benevolence must sometimes derive from the sufferings of others, and partly from a desire to display the appearance of that prosperity, which they know will command submission and attention to themselves.

Emily's pleasantest hours were passed in the pavilion of the terrace, to which she retired, when she could steal from observation, with a book to overcome, or a lute to indulge, her melancholy. There, as she sat with her eyes fixed on the far-distant Pyrenées, and her thoughts on Valancourt and the beloved scenes of Gascony, she would play the sweet and melancholy songs of her native province – the popular songs she had listened to from her childhood.

One evening, having excused herself from accompanying her aunt abroad, she thus withdrew to the pavilion, with books and her lute. It was the mild and beautiful evening of a sultry day, and the windows, which fronted the west, opened upon all the glory of a setting sun. Its rays illuminated, with strong splendour, the cliffs of the Pyrenées, and touched their snowy tops with a roseate hue, that remained, long after the sun had sunk below the horizon, and the shades of twilight had stolen over the landscape. Emily touched her lute with that fine melancholy expression, which came from her heart. The pensive hour and the scene, the evening light on the Garonne, that flowed at no great distance, and whose waves, as they passed towards La Vallée, she often viewed with a sigh, – these united circumstances disposed her mind to tenderness, and her thoughts were with Valancourt; of whom she had heard nothing since her arrival at Tholouse, and now that she was removed from him, and in uncertainty, she perceived all the interest he held in her heart. Before she saw Valancourt she had never met a mind and taste so accordant with her own, and, though Madame Cheron told her much of the arts of dissimulation, and that the elegance and propriety of thought, which she so much admired in her lover, were assumed for the purpose of pleasing her, she could scarcely doubt their truth. This possibility, however, faint as it was, was sufficient to harass her mind with anxiety, and she found, that few conditions are more painful than that of uncertainty, as to the merit of a beloved object; an uncertainty, which she would not have suffered, had her confidence in her own opinions been greater.

She was awakened from her musing by the sound of horses' feet along a road, that wound under the windows of the pavilion, and a gentleman passed on horseback, whose resemblance to Valancourt, in air and figure, for the twilight did not permit a view of his features, immediately struck her. She retired hastily from the lattice, fearing to be seen, yet wishing to observe further, while the stranger passed on without looking up, and, when she returned to the lattice, she saw him faintly through the twilight, winding under the high trees, that led to Tholouse. This little incident so much disturbed her spirits, that the temple and its scenery were no longer interesting to her, and, after walking awhile on the terrace, she returned to the chateau.

Madame Cheron, whether she had seen a rival admired, had lost at play, or had witnessed an entertainment more splendid than her own, was returned from her visit with a temper more than usually discomposed; and Emily was glad, when the hour arrived, in which she could retire to the solitude of her own apartment.

On the following morning, she was summoned to Madame Cheron, whose countenance was inflamed with resentment, and, as Emily advanced, she held out a letter to her.

'Do you know this hand?' said she, in a severe tone, and with a look that was intended to search her heart, while Emily examined the letter attentively, and assured her, that she did not.

'Do not provoke me,' said her aunt; 'you do know it, confess the truth immediately. I insist upon your confessing the truth instantly.'

Emily was silent, and turned to leave the room, but Madame called her back. 'O you are guilty then,' said she, 'you do know the hand.' 'If you was before in doubt of this, madam,' replied Emily calmly, 'why did you accuse me of having told a falsehood.' Madame Cheron did not blush; but her niece did, a moment after, when she heard the name of Valancourt. It was not, however, with the consciousness of deserving reproof, for, if she ever had seen his hand-writing, the present characters did not bring it to her recollection.

'It is useless to deny it,' said Madame Cheron, 'I see in your countenance, that you are no stranger to this letter; and, I dare say, you have received many such from this impertinent young man, without my knowledge, in my own house.'

Emily, shocked at the indelicacy of this accusation, still more than by the vulgarity of the former, instantly forgot the pride, that had imposed silence, and endeavoured to vindicate herself from the aspersion, but Madame Cheron was not to be convinced.

'I cannot suppose,' she resumed, 'that this young man would have taken the liberty of writing to me, if you had not encouraged him to so, and I must now' – 'You will allow me to remind you, madam,' said Emily timidly, 'of some particulars of a conversation we had at La Valleée. I then told you truly, that I had only not forbade Monsieur Valancourt from addressing my family.'

'I will not be interrupted,' said Madame Cheron, interrupting her niece, 'I was going to say – I – I – have forgot what I was going to say. But how happened it that you did not forbid him?' Emily was silent. 'How happened it that you encouraged him to trouble me with this letter? – A young man that nobody knows; – an utter stranger in the place, – a young adventurer, no doubt, who is looking out for a good fortune. However, on that point he has mistaken his aim.'

'His family was known to my father,' said Emily modestly; and without appearing to be sensible of the last sentence.

'O! that is no recommendation at all,' replied her aunt, with her usual readiness upon this topic; 'he took such strange fancies to people! He was always judging persons by their countenances, and was continually deceived.' 'Yet it was but now, madam, that you judged me guilty by my countenance,' said Emily, with a design of reproving Madame Cheron, to which she was induced by this disrespectful mention of her father.

'I called you here,' resumed her aunt, colouring, 'to tell you, that I will not be disturbed in my own house by any letters, or visits from young men, who may take a fancy to flatter you. This M. de Valantine – I think you call him, has the impertinence to beg I will permit him to pay his respects to me! I shall send him a proper answer. And for you, Emily, I repeat it once for all – if you are not contented to conform to my directions, and to my way of life, I shall give up the task of overlooking your conduct – I shall no longer trouble myself with your education, but shall send you to board in a convent.'

'Dear madam,' said Emily, bursting into tears, and overcome by the rude suspicions her aunt had expressed, 'how have I deserved these reproofs!' She could say no more; and so very fearful was she of acting with any degree of impropriety in the affair itself, that, at the present moment, Madame Cheron might perhaps have prevailed with her to bind herself by a promise to renounce Valancourt for ever. Her mind, weakened by her terrors, would no longer suffer her to view him as she had formerly done; she feared the error of her own judgment, not that of Madame Cheron, and feared also, that, in her former conversation with him, at La Vallée she had not conducted herself with sufficient reserve. She knew, that she did not deserve the coarse suspicions, which her aunt had thrown out, but a thousand scruples rose to torment her, such as would never have disturbed the peace of Madame Cheron. Thus rendered anxious to avoid every opportunity of erring, and willing to submit to any restrictions, that her aunt should think proper, she expressed an obedience, to which Madame Cheron did not give much confidence, and which she seemed to consider as the consequence of either fear, or artifice.

'Well then,' said she, 'promise me that you will neither see this young man, nor write to him without my consent.' – 'Dear, madam,' replied Emily, 'can you suppose I would do either, unknown to you!' 'I don't know what to suppose; there is no knowing how young women will act. It is difficult to place any confidence in them, for they have seldom sense enough to wish for the respect of the world.'

'Alas, madam!' said Emily, 'I am anxious for my own respect; my father taught me the value of that; he said if I deserved my own esteem, that of the world would follow of course.'

'My brother was a good kind of a man,' replied Madame Cheron, 'but he did not know the world. I am sure I have always felt a proper respect for myself, yet —'. She stopped, but she might have added, that the world had not always shewn respect to her, and this without impeaching its judgment.

'Well!' resumed Madame Cheron, 'you have not given me the promise, though, that I demand.' Emily readily gave it, and, being then suffered to withdraw, she walked in the garden; tried to compose her spirits, and, at length, arrived at her favourite pavilion at the end of the terrace, where, seating herself at one of the embowered windows, that opened upon a balcony, the stillness and seclusion of the scene allowed her to recollect her thoughts, and to arrange them so as to form a clearer judgment of her former conduct. She endeavoured to review with exactness all the particulars of her conversation with Valancourt at La Vallée, had the satisfaction to observe nothing, that could alarm her delicate pride, and thus to be confirmed in the self-esteem, which was so necessary to her peace. Her mind then became tranquil, and she saw Valancourt amiable and intelligent, as he had formerly appeared, and Madame Cheron neither the one, or the other. The remembrance of her lover, however, brought with it many very painful emotions, for it by no means reconciled her to the thought of resigning him; and, Madame Cheron having already shewn how highly she disapproved of the attachment, she foresaw much suffering from the opposition of interests; yet with all this was mingled a degree of delight, which, in spite of reason, partook of hope. She determined, however, that no consideration should induce her to permit a clandestine correspondence, and to observe in her conversation with Valancourt, should they ever meet again, the same nicety of reserve, which had hitherto marked her conduct. As she repeated the words – 'should we ever meet again!' she shrunk as if this was a circumstance, which had never before occurred to her, and tears came to her eyes, which she hastily dried, for she heard footsteps approaching, and then the door of the pavilion open, and, on turning, she saw – Valancourt. An emotion of mingled pleasure, surprise and apprehension pressed so suddenly upon her heart as almost to overcome her spirits; the colour left her cheeks, then returned brighter than before, and she was for a moment unable to speak, or to rise from her chair. His countenance was the mirror, in which she saw her own emotions reflected, and it roused her to self-command. The joy, which had animated his features, when he entered the pavilion, was suddenly repressed, as, approaching, he perceived her agitation, and, in a tremulous voice, enquired after her health. Recovered from her first surprise, she answered him with a tempered smile; but a variety of opposite emotions still assailed her heart, and struggled to subdue the mild dignity of her manner. It was difficult to tell which predominated – the joy of seeing Valancourt, or the terror of her aunt's displeasure, when she should hear of this meeting. After some short and embarrassed conversation, she led him into the gardens, and enquired if he had seen Madame Cheron. 'No,' said he, 'I have not yet seen her, for they told me she was engaged, and as soon as I learned that you were in the gardens, I came hither.' He paused a moment, in great agitation, and then added, 'May I venture to tell you the purport of my visit, without incurring your displeasure, and to hope, that you will not accuse me of precipitation in now availing myself of the permission you once gave me of addressing your family?' Emily, who knew not what to reply, was spared from further perplexity, and was sensible only of fear, when, on raising her eyes, she saw Madame Cheron turn into the avenue. As the consciousness of innocence returned, this fear was so far dissipated as to permit her to appear tranquil, and, instead of avoiding her aunt, she advanced with Valancourt to meet her. The look of haughty and impatient displeasure, with which Madame Cheron regarded them, made Emily shrink, who understood from a single glance, that this meeting was believed to have been more than accidental: having mentioned Valancourt's name, she became again too much agitated to remain with them, and returned into the chateau; where she awaited long, in a state of trembling anxiety, the conclusion of the conference. She knew not how to account for Valancourt's visit to her aunt, before he had received the permission he solicited, since she was ignorant of a circumstance, which would have rendered the request useless, even if Madame Cheron had been inclined to grant it. Valancourt, in the agitation of his spirits, had forgotten to date his letter, so that it was impossible for Madame Cheron to return an answer; and, when he recollected this circumstance, he was, perhaps, not so sorry for the omission as glad of the excuse it allowed him for waiting on her before she could send a refusal.

Madame Cheron had a long conversation with Valancourt, and, when she returned to the chateau, her countenance expressed ill-humour, but not the degree of severity, which Emily had apprehended. 'I have dismissed this young man, at last,' said she, 'and I hope my house will never again be disturbed with similar visits. He assures me, that your interview was not preconcerted.'

'Dear madam!' said Emily in extreme emotion, 'you surely did not ask him the question!' 'Most certainly I did; you could not suppose I should be so imprudent as to neglect it.'

'Good God!' exclaimed Emily, 'what an opinion must he form of me, since you, Madam, could express a suspicion of such ill conduct!'

'It is of very little consequence what opinion he may form of you,' replied her aunt, 'for I have put an end to the affair; but I believe he will not form a worse opinion of me for my prudent conduct. I let him see, that I was not to be trifled with; and that I had more delicacy, than to permit any clandestine correspondence to be carried on in my house.'

Emily had frequently heard Madame Cheron use the word delicacy, but she was now more than usually perplexed to understand how she meant to apply it in this instance, in which her whole conduct appeared to merit the very reverse of the term.

'It was very inconsiderate of my brother,' resumed Madame Cheron, 'to leave the trouble of overlooking your conduct to me, I wish you was well settled in life. But if I find, that I am to be further troubled with such visitors as this M. Valancourt, I shall place you in a convent at once; – so remember the alternative. This young man has the impertinence to own to me, – he owns it! that his fortune is very small, and that he is chiefly dependent on an elder brother and on the profession he has chosen! He should have concealed these circumstances, at least, if he expected to succeed with me. Had he the presumption to suppose I would marry my niece to a person such as he describes himself !'

Emily dried her tears when she heard of the candid confession of Valancourt; and, though the circumstances it discovered were afflicting to her hopes, his artless conduct gave her a degree of pleasure, that overcame every other emotion. But she was compelled, even thus early in life, to observe, that good sense and noble integrity are not always sufficient to cope with folly and narrow cunning; and her heart was pure enough to allow her, even at this trying moment, to look with more pride on the defeat of the former, than with mortification on the conquests of the latter.

Madame Cheron pursued her triumph. – 'He has also thought proper to tell me, that he will receive his dismission from no person but yourself; this favour, however, I have absolutely refused him. He shall learn, that it is quite sufficient, that I disapprove him. And I take this opportunity of repeating, – that if you concert any means of interview unknown to me, you shall leave my house immediately.'

'How little do you know me, madam, that you should think such an injunction necessary!' said Emily, trying to suppress her emotion, 'how little of the dear parents, who educated me!'

Madame Cheron now went to dress for an engagement, which she had made for the evening; and Emily, who would gladly have been excused from attending her aunt, did not ask to remain at home lest her request should be attributed to an improper motive. When she retired to her own room, the little fortitude, which had supported her in the presence of her relation, forsook her; she remembered only that Valancourt, whose character appeared more amiable from every circumstance that unfolded it, was banished from her presence, perhaps, for ever, and she passed the time in weeping, which, according to her aunt's direction, she ought to have employed in dressing. This important duty was, however, quickly dispatched; though, when she joined Madame Cheron at table, her eyes betrayed, that she had been in tears, and drew upon her a severe reproof.

Her efforts to appear cheerful did not entirely fail when she joined the company at the house of Madame Clairval, an elderly widow lady, who had lately come to reside at Tholouse, on an estate of her late husband. She had lived many years at Paris in a splendid style; had naturally a gay temper, and, since her residence at Tholouse, had given some of the most magnificent entertainments, that had been seen in that neighbourhood.

These excited not only the envy, but the trifling ambition of Madame Cheron, who, since she could not rival the splendour of her festivities, was desirous of being ranked in the number of her most intimate friends. For this purpose she paid her the most obsequious attention, and made a point of being disengaged, whenever she received an invitation from Madame Clairval, of whom she talked, wherever she went, and derived much self-consequence from impressing a belief on her general acquaintance, that they were on the most familiar footing.

The entertainments of this evening consisted of a ball and supper; it was a fancy ball, and the company danced in groups in the gardens, which were very extensive. The high and luxuriant trees, under which the groups assembled, were illuminated with a profusion of lamps, disposed with taste and fancy. The gay and various dresses of the company, some of whom were seated on the turf, conversing at their ease, observing the cotillons,[4] taking refreshments, and sometimes touching sportively a guitar; the gallant manners of the gentlemen, the exquisitely capricious air of the ladies; the light fantastic steps of their dances; the musicians, with the lute, the hautboy, and the tabor, seated at the foot of an elm, and the sylvan scenery of woods around were circumstances, that unitedly formed a characteristic and striking picture of French festivity. Emily surveyed the gaiety of the scene with a melancholy kind of pleasure, and her emotion may be imagined when, as she stood with her aunt, looking at one of the groups, she perceived Valancourt; saw him dancing with a young and beautiful lady, saw him conversing with her with a mixture of attention and familiarity, such as she had seldom observed in his manner. She turned hastily from the scene, and attempted to draw away Madame Cheron, who was conversing with Signor Cavigni, and neither perceived Valancourt, or was willing to be interrupted. A faintness suddenly came over Emily, and, unable to support herself, she sat down on a turf bank beneath the trees, where several other persons were seated. One of these, observing the extreme paleness of her countenance, enquired if she was ill, and begged she would allow him to fetch her a glass of water, for which politeness she thanked him, but did not accept it. Her apprehension lest Valancourt should observe her emotion made her anxious to overcome it, and she succeeded so far as to re-compose her countenance. Madame Cheron was still conversing with Cavigni; and the Count Bauvillers, who had addressed Emily, made some observations upon the scene, to which she answered almost unconsciously, for her mind was still occupied with the idea of Valancourt, to whom it was with extreme uneasiness that she remained so near. Some remarks, however, which the Count made upon the dance obliged her to turn her eyes towards it, and, at that moment, Valancourt's met hers. Her colour faded again, she felt, that she was relapsing into faintness, and instantly averted her looks, but not before she had observed the altered countenance of Valancourt, on perceiving her. She would have left the spot immediately, had she not been conscious, that this conduct would have shewn him more obviously the interest he held in her heart; and, having tried to attend to the Count's conversation and to join in it, she, at length, recovered her spirits. But, when he made some observation on Valancourt's partner, the fear of shewing, that she was interested in the remark, would have betrayed it to him, had not the Count, while he spoke, looked towards the person of whom he was speaking. 'The lady,' said he, 'dancing with that young chevalier, who appears to be accomplished in every thing, but in dancing, is ranked among the beauties of Tholouse. She is handsome, and her fortune will be very large. I hope she will make a better choice in a partner for life than she has done in a partner for the dance, for I observe he has just put the set into great confusion; he does nothing but commit blunders. I am surprised, that, with his air and figure, he has not taken more care to accomplish himself in dancing.'

Emily, whose heart trembled at every word, that was now uttered, endeavoured to turn the conversation from Valancourt, by enquiring the name of the lady, with whom he danced; but, before the Count could reply, the dance concluded, and Emily, perceiving that Valancourt was coming towards her, rose and joined Madame Cheron.

'Here is the Chevalier Valancourt, madam,' said she in a whisper, 'pray let us go.' Her aunt immediately moved on, but not before Valancourt had reached them, who bowed lowly to Madame Cheron, and with an earnest and dejected look to Emily, with whom, notwithstanding all her effort, an air of more than common reserve prevailed. The presence of Madame Cheron prevented Valancourt from remaining, and he passed on with a countenance, whose melancholy reproached her for having increased it. Emily was called from the musing fit, into which she had fallen, by the Count Bauvillers, who was known to her aunt.

'I have your pardon to beg, ma'amselle,' said he, 'for a rudeness, which you will readily believe was quite unintentional. I did not know, that the Chevalier was your acquaintance, when I so freely criticised his dancing.' Emily blushed and smiled, and Madame Cheron spared her the difficulty of replying. 'If you mean the person, who has just passed us,' said she, 'I can assure you he is no acquaintance of either mine, or ma'amselle St Aubert's: I know nothing of him.'

'O! that is the chevalier Valancourt,' said Cavigni carelessly, and looking back. 'You know him then?' said Madame Cheron. 'I am not acquainted with him,' replied Cavigni. 'You don't know, then, the reason I have to call him impertinent; – he has had the presumption to admire my niece!'

'If every man deserves the title of impertinent, who admires ma'amselle St Aubert,' replied Cavigni, 'I fear there are a great many impertinents, and I am willing to acknowledge myself one of the number.'

'O signor!' said Madame Cheron, with an affected smile, 'I perceive you have learnt the art of complimenting, since you came into France. But it is cruel to compliment children, since they mistake flattery for truth.'

Cavigni turned away his face for a moment, and then said with a studied air, 'Whom then are we to compliment, madam? for it would be absurd to compliment a woman of refined understanding; *she* is above all praise.' As he finished the sentence he gave Emily a sly look, and the smile, that had lurked in his eye, stole forth. She perfectly understood it, and blushed for Madame Cheron, who replied, 'You are perfectly right, signor, no woman of understanding can endure compliment.'

'I have heard signor Montoni say,' rejoined Cavigni, 'that he never knew but one woman who deserved it.'

'Well!' exclaimed Madame Cheron, with a short laugh, and a smile of unutterable complacency, 'and who could she be?'

'O!' replied Cavigni, 'it is impossible to mistake her, for certainly there is not more than one woman in the world, who has both the merit to deserve compliment and the wit to refuse it. Most women reverse the case entirely.' He looked again at Emily, who blushed deeper than before for her aunt, and turned from him with displeasure.

'Well, signor!' said Madame Cheron, 'I protest you are a Frenchman; I never heard a foreigner say any thing half so gallant as that!'

'True, madam,' said the Count, who had been some time silent, and with a low bow, 'but the gallantry of the compliment had been utterly lost, but for the ingenuity that discovered the application.'

Madame Cheron did not perceive the meaning of this too satirical sentence, and she, therefore, escaped the pain, which Emily felt on her account. 'O! here comes signor Montoni himself,' said her aunt, 'I protest I will tell him all the fine things you have been saying to me.' The signor, however, passed at this moment into another walk. 'Pray, who is it, that has so much engaged your friend this evening?' asked Madame Cheron, with an air of chagrin, 'I have not seen him once.'

'He had a very particular engagement with the Marquis La Rivieère,' replied Cavigni, 'which has detained him, I perceive, till this moment, or he would have done himself the honour of paying his respects to you, madam, sooner, as he commissioned me to say. But, I know not how it is – your conversation is so fascinating – that it can charm even memory, I think, or I should certainly have delivered my friend's apology before.'

'The apology, sir, would have been more satisfactory from himself,' said Madame Cheron, whose vanity was more mortified by Montoni's neglect, than flattered by Cavigni's compliment. Her manner, at this moment, and Cavigni's late conversation, now awakened a suspicion in Emily's mind, which, notwithstanding that some recollections served to confirm it, appeared preposterous. She thought she perceived, that Montoni was paying serious addresses to her aunt, and that she not only accepted them, but was jealously watchful of any appearance of neglect on his part. – That Madame Cheron at her years should elect a second husband was ridiculous, though her vanity made it not impossible; but that Montoni, with his discernment, his figure, and pretensions, should make a choice of Madame Cheron – appeared most wonderful. Her thoughts, however, did not dwell long on the subject; nearer interests pressed upon them; Valancourt, rejected of her aunt, and Valancourt dancing with a gay and beautiful partner, alternately tormented her mind. As she passed along the gardens she looked timidly forward, half fearing and half hoping that he might appear in the crowd; and the disappointment she felt on not seeing him, told her, that she had hoped more than she had feared.

Montoni soon after joined the party. He muttered over some short speech about regret for having been so long detained elsewhere, when he knew he should have the pleasure of seeing Madame Cheron here; and she, receiving the apology with the air of a pettish girl, addressed herself entirely to Cavigni, who looked archly at Montoni, as if he would have said, 'I will not triumph over you too much; I will have the goodness to bear my honours meekly; but look sharp, signor, or I shall certainly run away with your prize.'

The supper was served in different pavilions in the gardens, as well as in one large saloon of the chateau, and with more of taste, than either of splendour, or even of plenty. Madame Cheron and her party supped with Madame Clairval in the saloon, and Emily, with difficulty, disguised her emotion, when she saw Valancourt placed at the same table with herself. There, Madame Cheron having surveyed him with high displeasure, said to some person who sat next to her, 'Pray, who *is* that young man?' 'It is the Chevalier Valancourt,' was the answer. 'Yes, I am not ignorant of his name, but who is this Chevalier Valancourt that thus intrudes himself at this table?' The attention of the person, to whom she spoke, was called off before she received a second reply. The table, at which they sat, was very long, and, Valancourt being seated, with his partner, near the bottom, and Emily near the top, the distance between them may account for his not immediately perceiving her. She avoided looking to that end of the table, but, whenever her eyes happened to glance towards it, she observed him conversing with his beautiful companion, and the observation did not contribute to restore her peace, any more than the accounts she heard of the fortune and accomplishments of this same lady.

Madame Cheron, to whom these remarks were sometimes addressed, because they supported topics for trivial conversation, seemed indefatigable in her attempts to depreciate Valancourt, towards whom she felt all the petty resentment of a narrow pride. 'I admire the lady,' said she, 'but I must condemn her choice of a partner.' 'Oh, the

Chevalier Valancourt is one of the most accomplished young men we have,' replied the lady, to whom this remark was addressed; 'it is whispered, that Mademoiselle d'Emery, and her very large fortune, are to be his.'

'Impossible!' exclaimed Madame Cheron, reddening with vexation, 'it is impossible that she can be so destitute of taste; he has so little the air of a person of condition, that, if I did not see him at the table of Madame Clairval, I should never have suspected him to be one. I have besides particular reasons for believing the report to be erroneous.'

'I cannot doubt the truth of it,' replied the lady gravely, disgusted by the abrupt contradiction she had received, concerning her opinion of Valancourt's merit. 'You will, perhaps, doubt it,' said Madame Cheron, 'when I assure you, that it was only this morning that I rejected his suit.' This was said without any intention of imposing the meaning it conveyed, but simply from a habit of considering herself to be the most important person in every affair that concerned her niece, and because literally she had rejected Valancourt. 'Your reasons are indeed such as cannot be doubted,' replied the lady, with an ironical smile. – 'Any more than the discernment of the Chevalier Valancourt,' added Cavigni, who stood by the chair of Madame Cheron, and had heard her arrogate to herself, as he thought, a distinction which had been paid to her niece. 'His discernment *may* be justly questioned, signor,' said Madame Cheron, who was not flattered by what she understood to be an encomium upon Emily.

'Alas!' exclaimed Cavigni, surveying Madame Cheron with affected ecstasy, 'how vain is that assertion, while that face – that shape – that air – combine to refute it! Unhappy Valancourt! his discernment has been his destruction.'

Emily looked surprised and embarrassed; the lady, who had lately spoken, astonished, and Madame Cheron, who, though she did not perfectly understand this speech, was very ready to believe herself complimented by it, said smilingly, 'O Signor! you are very gallant; but those, who hear you vindicate the chevalier's discernment, will suppose that I am the object of it.'

'They cannot doubt it,' replied Cavigni, bowing low.

'And would not that be very mortifying, Signor?'

'Unquestionably it would,' said Cavigni.

'I cannot endure the thought,' said Madame Cheron.

'It is not to be endured,' replied Cavigni.

'What can be done to prevent so humiliating a mistake?' rejoined Madame Cheron.

'Alas! I cannot assist you,' replied Cavigni, with a deliberating air. 'Your only chance of refuting the calumny, and of making people understand what you wish them to believe, is to persist in your first assertion; for, when they are told of the chevalier's want of discernment, it is possible they may suppose he never presumed to distress you with his admiration. – But then again – that diffidence, which renders you so insensible to your own perfections – they will consider this, and Valancourt's taste will not be doubted, though you arraign it. In short, they will, in spite of your endeavours, continue to believe, what might very naturally have occurred to them without any hint of mine – that the chevalier has taste enough to admire a beautiful woman.'

'All this is very distressing!' said Madame Cheron, with a profound sigh.

'May I be allowed to ask what is so distressing?' said Madame Clairval, who was struck with the rueful countenance and doleful accent, with which this was delivered.

'It is a delicate subject,' replied Madame Cheron, 'a very mortifying one to me.' 'I am concerned to hear it,' said Madame Clairval, 'I hope nothing has occurred, this evening, particularly to distress you?' 'Alas, yes! within this half hour; and I know not where the report may end; – my pride was never so shocked before, but I assure you the report is totally void of foundation.' 'Good God!' exclaimed Madame Clairval, 'what can be done? Can you point out any way, by which I can assist, or console you?'

'The only way, by which you can do either,' replied Madame Cheron, 'is to contradict the report wherever you go.'

'Well! but pray inform me what I am to contradict.'

'It is so very humiliating, that I know not how to mention it,' continued Madame Cheron, 'but you shall judge. Do you observe that young man seated near the bottom of the table, who is conversing with Mademoiselle d'Emery?' 'Yes, I perceive whom you mean.' 'You observe how little he has the air of a person of condition; I was saying just now, that I should not have thought him a gentleman, if I had not seen him at this table.' 'Well! but the report,' said Madame Clairval, 'let me understand the subject of your distress.' 'Ah! the subject of my distress,' replied Madame Cheron; 'this person, whom nobody knows – (I beg pardon, madam, I did not consider what I said) – this impertinent young man, having had the presumption to address my niece, has, I fear, given rise to a report, that he had declared himself my admirer. Now only consider how very mortifying such a report must be! You, I know, will feel for my situation. A woman of my condition! – think how degrading even the rumour of such an alliance must be.'

'Degrading indeed, my poor friend!' said Madame Clairval. 'You may rely upon it I will contradict the report wherever I go;' as she said which, she turned her attention upon another part of the company; and Cavigni, who had hitherto appeared a grave spectator of the scene, now fearing he should be unable to smother the laugh, that convulsed him, walked abruptly away.

'I perceive you do not know,' said the lady who sat near Madame Cheron, 'that the gentleman you have been speaking of is Madame Clairval's nephew!' 'Impossible!' exclaimed Madame Cheron, who now began to perceive, that she had been totally mistaken in her judgment of Valancourt, and to praise him aloud with as much servility, as she had before censured him with frivolous malignity.

Emily, who, during the greater part of this conversation, had been so absorbed in thought as to be spared the pain of hearing it, was now extremely surprised by her aunt's praise of Valancourt, with whose relationship to Madame Clairval she was unacquainted; but she was not sorry when Madame Cheron, who, though she now tried to appear unconcerned, was really much embarrassed, prepared to withdraw immediately after supper. Montoni then came to hand Madame Cheron to her carriage, and Cavigni, with an arch solemnity of countenance, followed with Emily, who, as she wished them good night, and drew up the glass, saw Valancourt among the crowd at the gates. Before the carriage drove off, he disappeared. Madame Cheron forbore to mention him to Emily, and, as soon as they reached the chateau, they separated for the night.

On the following morning, as Emily sat at breakfast with her aunt, a letter was brought to her, of which she knew the hand-writing upon the cover; and, as she received it with a trembling hand, Madame Cheron hastily enquired from whom it came. Emily, with her leave, broke the seal, and, observing the signature of Valancourt, gave it unread to her aunt, who received it with impatience; and as she looked it over, Emily endeavoured to read on her countenance its contents. Having returned the letter to her niece, whose eyes asked if she might examine it, 'Yes, read it, child,' said Madame Cheron, in a manner less severe than she had expected, and Emily had, perhaps, never before so willingly obeyed her aunt. In this letter Valancourt said little of the interview of the preceding day, but concluded with declaring, that he would accept his dismission from Emily only, and with entreating, that she would allow him to wait upon her, on the approaching evening. When she read this, she was astonished at the moderation of Madame Cheron, and looked at her with timid expectation, as she said sorrowfully – 'What am I to say, madam?'

'Why – we must see the young man, I believe,' replied her aunt, 'and hear what he has further to say for himself. You may tell him he may come.' Emily dared scarcely credit what she heard. 'Yet, stay,' added Madame Cheron, 'I will tell him so myself.' She called for pen and ink; Emily still not daring to trust the emotions she felt, and almost sinking beneath them. Her surprise would have been less had she overheard, on the preceding evening, what Madame Cheron had not forgotten – that Valancourt was the nephew of Madame Clairval.

What were the particulars of her aunt's note Emily did not learn, but the result was a visit from Valancourt in the evening, whom Madame Cheron received alone, and they had a long conversation before Emily was called down. When she entered the room, her aunt was conversing with complacency, and she saw the eyes of Valancourt, as he impatiently rose, animated with hope.

'We have been talking over this affair,' said Madame Cheron, 'the chevalier has been telling me, that the late Monsieur Clairval was the brother of the Countess de Duvarney, his mother. I only wish he had mentioned his relationship to Madame Clairval before, I certainly should have considered that circumstance as a sufficient introduction to my house.' Valancourt bowed, and was going to address Emily, but her aunt prevented him. 'I have, therefore, consented, that you shall receive his visits; and, though I will not bind myself by any promise, or say, that I shall consider him as my nephew, yet I shall permit the intercourse, and shall look forward to any further connection as an event, which may possibly take place in a course of years, provided the chevalier rises in his profession, or any circumstance occurs, which may make it prudent for him to take a wife. But Mons. Valancourt will observe, and you too, Emily, that, till that happens, I positively forbid any thoughts of marrying.'

Emily's countenance, during this coarse speech, varied every instant, and, towards its conclusion, her distress had so much increased, that she was on the point of leaving the room. Valancourt, meanwhile, scarcely less embarrassed, did not dare to look at her, for whom he was thus distressed; but, when Madame Cheron was silent, he said, 'Flattering, madam, as your approbation is to me – highly as I am honoured by it – I have yet so much to fear, that I scarcely dare to hope.' 'Pray, sir, explain your self,' said Madame Cheron; an unexpected requisition, which embarrassed Valancourt again, and almost overcame him with confusion, at circumstances, on which, had he been only a spectator of the scene, he would have smiled.

'Till I receive Mademoiselle St Aubert's permission to accept your indulgence,' said he, falteringly – 'till she allows me to hope –'

'O! is that all?' interrupted Madame Cheron. 'Well, I will take upon me to answer for her. But at the same time, sir, give me leave to observe to you, that I am her guardian, and that I expect, in every instance, that my will is hers.'

As she said this, she rose and quitted the room, leaving Emily and Valancourt in a state of mutual embarrassment; and, when Valancourt's hopes enabled him to overcome his fears, and to address her with the zeal and sincerity so natural to him, it was a considerable time before she was sufficiently recovered to hear with distinctness his solicitations and enquiries.

The conduct of Madame Cheron in this affair had been entirely governed by selfish vanity. Valancourt, in his first interview, had with great candour laid open to her the true state of his present circumstances, and his future expectancies, and she, with more prudence than humanity, had absolutely and abruptly rejected his suit. She wished her niece to marry ambitiously, not because she desired to see her in possession of the happiness, which rank and wealth are usually believed to bestow, but because she desired to partake the importance, which such an alliance would give. When, therefore, she discovered that Valancourt was the nephew of a person of so much consequence as Madame Clairval, she became anxious for the connection, since the prospect it afforded of future fortune and distinction for Emily, promised the exaltation she coveted for herself. Her calculations concerning fortune in this alliance were guided rather by her wishes, than by any hint of Valancourt, or strong appearance of probability; and, when she rested her expectation on the wealth of Madame Clairval, she seemed totally to have forgotten, that the latter had a daughter. Valancourt, however, had not forgotten this circumstance, and the consideration of it had made him so modest in his expectations from

Madame Clairval, that he had not even named the relationship in his first conversation with Madame Cheron. But, whatever might be the future fortune of Emily, the present distinction, which the connection would afford for herself, was certain, since the splendour of Madame Clairval's establishment was such as to excite the general envy and partial imitation of the neighbourhood. Thus had she consented to involve her niece in an engagement, to which she saw only a distant and uncertain conclusion, with as little consideration of her happiness, as when she had so precipitately forbade it: for though she herself possessed the means of rendering this union not only certain, but prudent, yet to do so was no part of her present intention.

From this period Valancourt made frequent visits to Madame Cheron, and Emily passed in his society the happiest hours she had known since the death of her father. They were both too much engaged by the present moments to give serious consideration to the future. They loved and were beloved, and saw not, that the very attachment, which formed the delight of their present days, might possibly occasion the sufferings of years. Meanwhile, Madame Cheron's intercourse with Madame Clairval became more frequent than before, and her vanity was already gratified by the opportunity of proclaiming, wherever she went, the attachment that subsisted between their nephew and niece.

Montoni was now also become a daily guest at the chateau, and Emily was compelled to observe, that he really was a suitor, and a favoured suitor, to her aunt.

Thus passed the winter months, not only in peace, but in happiness, to Valancourt and Emily; the station of his regiment being so near Tholouse, as to allow this frequent intercourse. The pavilion on the terrace was the favourite scene of their interviews, and there Emily, with Madame Cheron, would work, while Valancourt read aloud works of genius and taste, listened to her enthusiasm, expressed his own, and caught new opportunities of observing, that their minds were formed to constitute the happiness of each other, the same taste, the same noble and benevolent sentiments animating each.

CHAPTER XIII

> 'As when a shepherd of the Hebrid-Isles,
>
> Placed far amid the melancholy main,
> (Whether it be lone fancy him beguiles,
> Or that aerial beings sometimes deign
> To stand embodied to our senses plain)
> Sees on the naked hill, or valley low,
> The whilst in ocean Phœbus dips his wain,
> A vast assembly moving to and fro,
> Then all at once in air dissolves the wondrous show.'
> [THOMSON] *Castle of Indolence*[1]

Madame Cheron's avarice at length yielded to her vanity. Some very splendid entertainments, which Madame Clairval had given, and the general adulation, which was paid her, made the former more anxious than before to secure an alliance, that would so much exalt her in her own opinion and in that of the world. She proposed terms for the immediate marriage of her niece, and offered to give Emily a dower, provided Madame Clairval observed equal terms, on the part of her nephew. Madame Clairval listened to the proposal, and, considering that Emily was the apparent heiress of her aunt's wealth, accepted it. Meanwhile, Emily knew nothing of the transaction, till Madame Cheron informed her, that she must make preparation for the nuptials, which would be celebrated without further delay; then, astonished and wholly unable to account for this sudden conclusion, which Valancourt had not solicited (for he was ignorant of what had passed between the elder ladies, and had not dared to hope such good fortune), she decisively objected to it. Madame Cheron, however, quite as jealous of contradiction now, as she had been formerly, contended for a speedy marriage with as much vehemence as she had formerly opposed whatever had the most remote possibility of leading to it; and Emily's scruples disappeared, when she again saw Valancourt, who was now informed of the happiness, designed for him, and came to claim a promise of it from herself.

While preparations were making for these nuptials, Montoni became the acknowledged lover of Madame Cheron; and, though Madame Clairval was much displeased, when she heard of the approaching connection, and was willing to prevent that of Valancourt with Emily, her conscience told her, that she had no right thus to trifle with their peace, and Madame Clairval, though a woman of fashion, was far less advanced than her friend in the art of deriving satisfaction from distinction and admiration, rather than from conscience.

Emily observed with concern the ascendancy, which Montoni had acquired over Madame Cheron, as well as the increasing frequency of his visits; and her own opinion of this Italian was confirmed by that of Valancourt, who had always expressed a dislike of him. As she was, one morning, sitting at work in the pavilion, enjoying the pleasant freshness of spring, whose colours were now spread upon the landscape, and listening to Valancourt, who was reading, but who often laid aside the book to converse, she received a summons to attend Madame Cheron immediately, and had scarcely entered the dressing-room, when she observed with surprise the dejection of her aunt's countenance, and the contrasted gaiety of her dress. 'So, niece!' – said Madame, and she stopped under some degree of embarrassment. – 'I sent for you, – I – I wished to see you; I have news to tell you. From this hour you must consider the signor Montoni as your uncle – we were married this morning.'

Astonished – not so much at the marriage, as at the secrecy with which it had been concluded, and the agitation with which it was announced, Emily, at length, attributed the privacy to the wish of Montoni, rather than of her aunt. His wife, however, intended, that the contrary should be believed, and therefore added, 'You see I wished to avoid a bustle; but now the ceremony is over I shall do so no longer; and I wish to announce to my servants, that they must receive the signor Montoni for their master.' Emily made a feeble attempt to congratulate her on these apparently imprudent nuptials. 'I shall now celebrate my marriage with some splendour,' continued Madame Montoni, 'and to save time I shall avail myself of the preparation that has been made for yours, which will, of course, be delayed a little while. Such of your wedding clothes as are ready I shall expect you will appear in, to do honour to this festival. I also wish you to inform Monsieur Valancourt, that I have changed my name, and he will acquaint Madame Clairval. In a few days I shall give a grand entertainment, at which I shall request their presence.'

Emily was so lost in surprise and various thought, that she made Madame Montoni scarcely any reply, but, at her desire, she returned to inform Valancourt of what had passed. Surprise was not his predominant emotion on hearing of these hasty nuptials; and, when he learned, that they were to be the means of delaying his own, and that the very ornaments of the chateau, which had been prepared to grace the nuptial day of his Emily, were to be degraded to the celebration of Madame Montoni's, grief and indignation agitated him alternately. He could conceal neither from the observation of Emily, whose efforts to abstract him from these serious emotions, and to laugh at the apprehensive considerations, that assailed him, were ineffectual; and, when, at length, he took leave, there was an earnest tenderness in his manner, that extremely affected her; she even shed tears, when he disappeared at the end of the terrace, yet knew not exactly why she should do so.

Montoni now took possession of the chateau and the command of its inhabitants, with the ease of a man, who had long considered it to be his own. His friend Cavigni, who had been extremely serviceable, in having paid Madame Cheron the attention and flattery, which she required, but from which Montoni too often revolted, had apartments assigned to him, and received from the domestics an equal degree of obedience with the master of the mansion.

Within a few days, Madame Montoni, as she had promised, gave a magnificent entertainment to a very numerous company, among whom was Valancourt; but at which Madame Clairval excused herself from attending. There was a concert, ball and supper. Valancourt was, of course, Emily's partner, and though, when he gave a look to the decorations of the apartments, he could not but remember, that they were designed for other festivities, than those they now contributed to celebrate, he endeavoured to check his concern by considering, that a little while only would elapse before they would be given to their original destination. During this evening, Madame Montoni danced, laughed and talked incessantly; while Montoni, silent, reserved and somewhat haughty, seemed weary of the parade, and of the frivolous company it had drawn together.

This was the first and the last entertainment, given in celebration of their nuptials. Montoni, though the severity of his temper and the gloominess of his pride prevented him from enjoying such festivities, was extremely willing to promote them. It was seldom, that he could meet in any company a man of more address, and still seldomer one of more understanding, than himself; the balance of advantage in such parties, or in the connections, which might arise from them, must, therefore, be on his side; and, knowing, as he did, the selfish purposes, for which they are generally frequented, he had no objection to measure his talents of dissimulation with those of any other competitor for distinction and plunder. But his wife, who, when her own interest was immediately concerned, had sometimes more discernment than vanity, acquired a consciousness of her inferiority to other women, in personal attractions, which, uniting with the jealousy natural to the discovery, counteracted his readiness for mingling with all the parties Tholouse could afford. Till she had, as she supposed, the affections of an husband to lose, she had no motive for discovering the unwelcome truth, and it had never obtruded itself upon her; but, now that it influenced her policy, she opposed her husband's inclination for company, with the more eagerness, because she believed him to be really as well received in the female society of the place, as, during his addresses to her, he had affected to be.

A few weeks only had elapsed, since the marriage, when Madame Montoni informed Emily, that the signor intended to return to Italy, as soon as the necessary preparation could be made for so long a journey. 'We shall go to Venice,' said she, 'where the signor has a fine mansion, and from thence to his estate in Tuscany. Why do you look so grave, child? – You, who are so fond of a romantic country and fine views, will doubtless be delighted with this journey.'

'Am I then to be of the party, madame?' said Emily, with extreme surprise and emotion. 'Most certainly,' replied her aunt, 'how could you imagine we should leave you behind? But I see you are thinking of the Chevalier; he is not yet, I believe, informed of the journey, but he very soon will be so. Signor Montoni is gone to acquaint Madame Clairval of our journey, and to say, that the proposed connection between the families must from this time be thought of no more.'

The unfeeling manner, in which Madame Montoni thus informed her niece, that she must be separated, perhaps for ever, from the man, with whom she was on the point of being united for life, added to the dismay, which she must otherwise have suffered at such intelligence. When she could speak she asked the cause of the sudden change in Madame's sentiments towards Valancourt, but the only reply she could obtain was that the Signor had forbade the connection, considering it to be greatly inferior to what Emily might reasonably expect.

'I now leave the affair entirely to the Signor,' added Madame Montoni, 'but I must say, that M. Valancourt never was a favourite with me, and I was overpersuaded, or I should not have given my consent to the connection. I was weak enough – I am so foolish sometimes! – to suffer other people's uneasiness to affect me, and so my better judgment yielded to your affliction. But the Signor has very properly pointed out the folly of this, and he shall not have to reprove me a second time. I am determined, that you shall submit to those, who know how to guide you better than yourself – I am determined, that you shall be conformable.'

Emily would have been astonished at the assertions of this eloquent speech, had not her mind been so overwhelmed by the sudden shock it had received, that she scarcely heard a word of what was latterly addressed to her. Whatever were the weaknesses of Madame Montoni, she might have avoided to accuse herself with those of compassion and tenderness to the feelings of others, and especially to those of Emily. It was the same ambition, that lately prevailed upon her to solicit an alliance with Madame Clairval's family, which induced her to withdraw from it, now that her marriage with Montoni had exalted her self-consequence, and, with it, her views for her niece.

Emily was, at this time, too much affected to employ either remonstrance, or entreaty on this topic; and when, at length, she attempted the latter, her emotion overcame her speech, and she retired to her apartment, to think, if in the present state of her mind to think was possible, upon this sudden and overwhelming subject. It was very long, before her spirits were sufficiently composed to permit the reflection, which, when it came, was dark and even terrible. She saw, that Montoni sought to aggrandise himself in his disposal of her, and it occurred, that his friend Cavigni was the person, for whom he was interested. The prospect of going to Italy was still rendered darker, when she considered the tumultuous situation of that country, then torn by civil commotion, where every petty state was at war with its neighbour, and even every castle liable to the attack of an invader. She considered the person, to whose immediate guidance she would be committed, and the vast distance, that was to separate her from Valancourt, and, at the recollection of him, every other image vanished from her mind, and every thought was again obscured by grief.

In this perturbed state she passed some hours, and, when she was summoned to dinner, she entreated permission to remain in her own apartment; but Madame Montoni was alone, and the request was refused. Emily and her aunt said little during the repast; the one occupied by her griefs, the other engrossed by the disappointment, which the unexpected absence of Montoni occasioned; for not only was her vanity piqued by the neglect, but her jealousy alarmed by what she considered as a mysterious engagement. When the cloth was drawn and they were alone, Emily renewed the mention of Valancourt; but her aunt, neither softened to pity, or awakened to remorse, became enraged, that her will should be opposed, and the authority of Montoni questioned, though this was done by Emily with her usual gentleness, who, after a long, and torturing conversation, retired in tears.

As she crossed the hall, a person entered it by the great door, whom, as her eyes hastily glanced that way, she imagined to be Montoni, and she was passing on with quicker steps, when she heard the well-known voice of Valancourt.

‘Emily, O! my Emily!’ cried he in a tone faltering with impatience, while she turned, and, as he advanced, was alarmed at the expression of his countenance and the eager desperation of his air. ‘In tears, Emily! I would speak with you,’ said he, ‘I have much to say; conduct me where we may converse. But you tremble – you are ill! Let me lead you to a seat.’

He observed the open door of an apartment, and hastily took her hand to lead her thither; but she attempted to withdraw it, and said, with a languid smile, ‘I am better already; if you wish to see my aunt she is in the dining-parlour.’ ‘I must speak with *you*, my Emily,’ replied Valancourt, ‘Good God! is it already come to this? Are you indeed so willing to resign me? But this is an improper place – I am overheard. Let me entreat your attention, if only for a few minutes.’ ‘When you have seen my aunt,’ said Emily. ‘I was wretched enough when I came hither,’ exclaimed Valancourt, ‘do not increase my misery by this coldness – this cruel refusal.’

The despondency, with which he spoke this, affected her almost to tears, but she persisted in refusing to hear him, till he had conversed with Madame Montoni. ‘Where is her husband, where, then, is Montoni?’ said Valancourt, in an altered tone, ‘it is he, to whom I must speak.’

Emily, terrified for the consequence of the indignation, that flashed in his eyes, tremblingly assured him, that Montoni was not at home, and entreated he would endeavour to moderate his resentment. At the tremulous accents of her voice, his eyes softened instantly from wildness into tenderness. ‘You are ill, Emily,’ said he, ‘they will destroy us both! Forgive me, that I dared to doubt your affection.’

Emily no longer opposed him, as he led her into an adjoining parlour; the manner, in which he had named Montoni, had so much alarmed her for his own safety, that she was now only anxious to prevent the consequences of his just resentment. He listened to her entreaties, with attention, but replied to them only with looks of despondency and tenderness, concealing, as much as possible, the sentiments he felt toward Montoni, that he might sooth the apprehensions, which distressed her. But she saw the veil he had spread over his resentment, and, his assumed tranquillity only alarming her more, she urged, at length, the impolicy of forcing an interview with Montoni, and of taking any measure, which might render their separation irremediable. Valancourt yielded to these remonstrances, and her affecting entreaties drew from him a promise, that, however Montoni might persist in his design of disuniting them, he would not seek to redress his wrongs by violence. ‘For my sake,’ said Emily, ‘let the consideration of what I should suffer deter you from such a mode of revenge!’ ‘For your sake, Emily,’ replied Valancourt, his eyes filling with tears of tenderness and grief, while he gazed upon her. ‘Yes – yes – I shall subdue myself. But, though I have given you my solemn promise to do this, do not expect, that I can tamely submit to the authority of Montoni; if I could, I should be unworthy of you. Yet, O Emily! how long may he condemn me to live without you, – how long may it be before you return to France!’

Emily endeavoured to sooth him with assurances of her unalterable affection, and by representing, that, in little more than a year, she should be her own mistress, as far as related to her aunt, from whose guardianship her age would then release her; assurances, which gave little consolation to Valancourt, who considered, that she would then be in Italy and in the power of those, whose dominion over her would not cease with their rights; but he affected to be consoled by them. Emily, comforted by the promise she had obtained, and by his apparent composure, was about to leave him, when her aunt entered the room. She threw a glance of sharp reproof upon her niece, who immediately withdrew, and of haughty displeasure upon Valancourt.

‘This is not the conduct I should have expected from you, sir,’ said she, ‘I did not expect to see you in my house, after you had been informed, that your visits were no longer agreeable, much less, that you would seek a clandestine interview with my niece, and that she would grant one.’

Valancourt, perceiving it necessary to vindicate Emily from such a design, explained, that the purpose of his own visit had been to request an interview with Montoni, and he then entered upon the subject of it, with the tempered spirit which the sex, rather than the respectability, of Madame Montoni, demanded.

His expostulations were answered with severe rebuke; she lamented again, that her prudence had ever yielded to what she termed compassion, and added, that she was so sensible of the folly of her former consent, that, to prevent the possibility of a repetition, she had committed the affair entirely to the conduct of Signor Montoni.

The feeling eloquence of Valancourt, however, at length, made her sensible in some measure of her unworthy conduct, and she became susceptible to shame, but not to remorse: she hated Valancourt, who awakened her to this painful sensation, and, in proportion as she grew dissatisfied with herself, her abhorrence of him increased. This was also the more inveterate, because his tempered words and manner were such as, without accusing her, compelled her to accuse herself, and neither left her a hope, that the odious portrait was the caricature of his prejudice, or afforded her an excuse for expressing the violent resentment, with which she contemplated it. At length, her anger rose to such an height, that Valancourt was compelled to leave the house abruptly, lest he should forfeit his own esteem by an intemperate reply. He was then convinced, that from Madame Montoni he had nothing to hope, for what of either pity, or justice could be expected from a person, who could feel the pain of guilt, without the humility of repentance?

To Montoni he looked with equal despondency, since it was nearly evident, that this plan of separation originated with him, and it was not probable, that he would relinquish his own views to entreaties, or remonstrances, which he must have foreseen and have been prepared to resist. Yet, remembering his promise to Emily, and more solicitous, concerning his love, than jealous of his consequence, Valancourt was careful to do nothing that might unnecessarily irritate Montoni; he wrote to him, therefore, not to demand an interview, but to solicit one, and, having done this, he endeavoured to await with calmness his reply.

Madame Clairval was passive in the affair. When she gave her approbation to Valancourt's marriage, it was in the belief, that Emily would be the heiress of Madame Montoni's fortune; and, though, upon the nuptials of the latter, when she perceived the fallacy of this expectation, her conscience had withheld her from adopting any measure to prevent the union, her benevolence was not sufficiently active to impel her towards any step, that might now promote it. She was, on the contrary, secretly pleased, that Valancourt was released from an engagement, which she considered to be as inferior, in point of fortune, to his merit, as his alliance was thought by Montoni to be humiliating to the beauty of Emily; and, though her pride was wounded by this rejection of a member of her family, she disdained to shew resentment otherwise, than by silence.

Montoni, in his reply to Valancourt, said, that as an interview could neither remove the objections of the one, or overcome the wishes of the other, it would serve only to produce useless altercation between them. He, therefore, thought proper to refuse it.

In consideration of the policy, suggested by Emily, and of his promise to her, Valancourt restrained the impulse, that urged him to the house of Montoni, to demand what had been denied to his entreaties. He only repeated his solicitations to see him; seconding them with all the arguments his situation could suggest. Thus several days passed, in remonstrance, on one side, and inflexible denial, on the other; for, whether it was fear, or shame, or the hatred, which results from both, that made Montoni shun the man he had injured, he was peremptory in his refusal, and was neither softened to pity by the agony, which Valancourt's letters pourtrayed, or awakened to a repentance of his own injustice by the strong remonstrances he employed. At length, Valancourt's letters were returned unopened, and then, in the first moments of passionate despair, he forgot every promise to Emily, except the solemn one, which bound him to avoid violence, and hastened to Montoni's chateau, determined to see him by whatever other means might be necessary. Montoni was denied, and Valancourt, when he afterwards enquired for Madame, and Ma'amselle St Aubert, was absolutely refused admittance by the servants. Not choosing to submit himself to a contest with these, he, at length, departed, and, returning home in a state of mind approaching to frenzy, wrote to Emily of what had passed, expressed without restraint all the agony of his heart, and entreated, that, since he must not otherwise hope to see her immediately, she would allow him an interview unknown to Montoni. Soon after he had dispatched this, his passions becoming more temperate, he was sensible of the error he had committed in having given Emily new subject of distress in the strong mention of his own suffering, and would have given half the world, had it been his, to recover the letter. Emily, however, was spared the pain she must have received from it by the suspicious policy of Madame Montoni, who had ordered, that all letters, addressed to her niece, should be delivered to herself, and who, after having perused this and indulged the expressions of resentment, which Valancourt's mention of Montoni provoked, had consigned it to the flames.

Montoni, meanwhile, every day more impatient to leave France, gave repeated orders for dispatch to the servants employed in preparations for the journey, and to the persons, with whom he was transacting some particular business. He preserved a steady silence to the letters in which Valancourt, despairing of greater good, and having subdued the passion, that had transgressed against his policy, solicited only the indulgence of being allowed to bid Emily farewell. But, when the latter[2] learned, that she was really to set out in a very few days, and that it was designed he should see her no more, forgetting every consideration of prudence, he dared, in a second letter to Emily, to propose a clandestine marriage. This also was transmitted to Madame Montoni, and the last day of Emily's stay at Tholouse arrived, without affording Valancourt even a line to sooth his sufferings, or a hope, that he should be allowed a parting interview.

During this period of torturing suspense to Valancourt, Emily was sunk into that kind of stupor, with which sudden and irremediable misfortune sometimes overwhelms the mind. Loving him with the tenderest affection, and having long been accustomed to consider him as the friend and companion of all her future days, she had no ideas of happiness, that were not connected with him. What, then, must have been her suffering, when thus suddenly they were to be separated, perhaps, for ever, certainly to be thrown into distant parts of the world, where they could scarcely hear of each other's existence; and all this in obedience to the will of a stranger, for such was Montoni, and of a person, who had but lately been anxious to hasten their nuptials! It was in vain, that she endeavoured to subdue her grief, and resign herself to an event, which she could not avoid. The silence of Valancourt afflicted more than it surprised her, since she attributed it to its just occasion; but, when the day, preceding that, on which she was to quit Tholouse, arrived, and she heard no mention of his being permitted to take leave of her, grief overcame every consideration, that had made her reluctant to speak of him, and she enquired of Madame Montoni, whether this consolation had been refused. Her aunt informed her that it had, adding, that, after the provocation she had herself received from Valancourt, in their last interview, and the persecution, which the Signor had suffered from his letters, no entreaties should avail to procure it.

'If the Chevalier expected this favour from us,' said she, 'he should have conducted himself in a very different manner; he should have waited patiently, till he knew whether we were disposed to grant it, and not have come and reproved me, because I did not think proper to bestow my niece upon him, – and then have persisted in troubling the Signor, because he did not think proper to enter into any dispute about so childish an affair. His behaviour throughout has been extremely presumptuous and impertinent, and I desire, that I may never hear his name repeated, and that you will get the better of those foolish sorrows and whims, and look like other people, and not appear with that dismal countenance, as if you were ready to cry. For, though you say nothing, you cannot conceal your grief from my penetration. I can see you are ready to cry at this moment, though I am reproving you for it; aye, even now, in spite of my commands.'

Emily, having turned away to hide her tears, quitted the room to indulge them, and the day was passed in an intensity of anguish, such as she had, perhaps, never known before. When she withdrew to her chamber for the night, she remained in the chair where she had placed herself, on entering the room, absorbed in her grief, till long after every member of the family, except herself, was retired to rest. She could not divest herself of a belief, that she had parted with Valancourt to meet no more; a belief, which did not arise merely from foreseen circumstances, for, though the length of the journey she was about to commence, the uncertainty as to the period of her return, together with the prohibitions she had received, seemed to justify it, she yielded also to an impression, which she mistook for a pre-sentiment, that she was going from Valancourt for ever. How dreadful to her imagination, too, was the distance that would separate them – the Alps, those tremendous barriers! would rise, and whole countries extend between the regions where each must exist![3] To live in adjoining provinces, to live even in the same country, though without seeing him, was comparative happiness to the conviction of this dreadful length of distance.

Her mind was, at length, so much agitated by the consideration of her state, and the belief, that she had seen Valancourt for the last time, that she suddenly became very faint, and, looking round the chamber for something, that might revive her, she observed the casements, and had just strength to throw one open, near which she seated herself. The air recalled her spirits, and the still moon-light, that fell upon the elms of a long avenue, fronting the window, somewhat soothed them, and determined her to try whether exercise and the open air would not relieve the intense pain that bound her temples. In the chateau all was still; and, passing down the great stair-case into the hall, from whence a passage led immediately to the garden, she softly and unheard, as she thought, unlocked the door, and entered the avenue. Emily passed on with steps now hurried, and now faltering, as, deceived by the shadows among the trees, she fancied she saw some person move in the distant perspective, and feared, that it was a spy of Madame Montoni. Her desire, however, to re-visit the pavilion, where she had passed so many happy hours with Valancourt, and had admired with him the extensive prospect over Languedoc and her native Gascony, overcame her apprehension of being observed, and she moved on towards the terrace, which, running along the upper garden, commanded the whole of the lower one, and communicated with it by a flight of marble steps, that terminated the avenue.

Having reached these steps, she paused a moment to look round, for her distance from the chateau now increased the fear, which the stillness and obscurity of the hour had awakened. But, perceiving nothing that could justify it, she ascended to the terrace, where the moon-light shewed the long broad walk, with the pavilion at its extremity, while the rays silvered the foliage of the high trees and shrubs, that bordered it on the right, and the tufted summits of those, that rose to a level with the balustrade on the left, from the garden below. Her distance from the chateau again alarming her, she paused to listen; the night was so calm, that no sound could have escaped her, but she heard only the plaintive sweetness of the nightingale, with the light shiver of the leaves, and she pursued her way towards the pavilion, having reached which, its obscurity did not prevent the emotion, that a fuller view of its well-known scene would have excited. The lattices were thrown back, and shewed beyond their embowered arch the moon-light landscape, shadowy and soft; its groves, and plains extending gradually and indistinctly to the eye, its distant mountains catching a stronger gleam, and the nearer river reflecting the moon, and trembling to her rays.

Emily, as she approached the lattice, was sensible of the features of this scene only as they served to bring Valancourt more immediately to her fancy. 'Ah!' said she, with a heavy sigh, as she threw herself into a chair by the window, 'how often have we sat together in this spot – often have looked upon that landscape! Never, never more shall we view it together – never – never more, perhaps, shall we look upon each other!'

Her tears were suddenly stopped by terror – a voice spoke near her in the pavilion; she shrieked – it spoke again, and she distinguished the well-known tones of Valancourt. It was indeed Valancourt who supported her in his arms! For some moments their emotion would not suffer either to speak. 'Emily!' said Valancourt at length, as he pressed her hand in his, 'Emily!' and he was again silent, but the accent, in which he had pronounced her name, expressed all his tenderness and sorrow.

'O my Emily!' he resumed, after a long pause, 'I do then see you once again, and hear again the sound of that voice! I have haunted this place – these gardens, for many – many nights, with a faint, very faint hope of seeing you. This was the only chance that remained for me, and, thank heaven! it has at length succeeded – I am not condemned to absolute despair!'

Emily said something, she scarcely knew what, expressive of her unalterable affection, and endeavoured to calm the agitation of his mind; but Valancourt could for some time only utter incoherent expressions of his emotions; and, when he was somewhat more composed, he said, 'I came hither, soon after sun-set, and have been watching in the gardens, and in this pavilion ever since, for, though I had now given up all hope of seeing you, I could not resolve to tear myself from a place so near to you, and should probably have lingered about the chateau till morning dawned. O how heavily the moments have passed, yet with what various emotion have they been marked, as I sometimes thought I heard footsteps, and fancied you were approaching, and then again – perceived only a dead and dreary silence! But, when you opened the door of the pavilion, and the darkness prevented my distinguishing with certainty, whether it was my love – my heart beat so strongly with hopes and fears, that I could not speak. The instant I heard the plaintive accents of your voice, my doubts vanished, but not my fears, till you spoke of me; then, losing the apprehension of alarming you in the excess of my emotion, I could no longer be silent. O Emily! these are moments, in which joy and grief struggle so powerfully for pre-eminence, that the heart can scarcely support the contest!'

Emily's heart acknowledged the truth of this assertion, but the joy she felt on thus meeting Valancourt, at the very moment when she was lamenting, that they must probably meet no more, soon melted into grief, as reflection stole over her thoughts, and imagination prompted visions of the future. She struggled to recover the calm dignity of mind, which was necessary to support her through this last interview, and which Valancourt found it utterly impossible to attain, for the transports of his joy changed abruptly into those of suffering, and he expressed in the most impassioned language his horror of this separation, and his despair of their ever meeting again. Emily wept silently as she listened to him, and then, trying to command her own distress, and to sooth his, she suggested every circumstance that could lead to hope. But the energy of his fears led him instantly to detect the friendly fallacies, which she endeavoured to impose on herself and him, and also to conjure up illusions too powerful for his reason.

'You are going from me,' said he, 'to a distant country, O how distant! – to new society, new friends, new admirers, with people too, who will try to make you forget me, and to promote new connections! How can I know this, and not know, that you will never return for me – never can be mine.' His voice was stifled by sighs.

'You believe, then,' said Emily, 'that the pangs I suffer proceed from a trivial and temporary interest; you believe –'

'Suffer!' interrupted Valancourt, 'suffer for me! O Emily – how sweet – how bitter are those words; what comfort, what anguish do they give! I ought not to doubt the steadiness of your affection, yet such is the inconsistency of real love, that it is always awake to suspicion, however unreasonable; always requiring new assurances from the object of its interest, and thus it is, that I always feel revived, as by a new conviction, when your words tell me I am dear to you; and, wanting these, I relapse into doubt, and too often into despondency.' Then seeming to recollect himself, he exclaimed, 'But what a wretch am I, thus to torture you, and in these moments, too! I, who ought to support and comfort you!'

This reflection overcame Valancourt with tenderness, but, relapsing into despondency, he again felt only for himself, and lamented again this cruel separation, in a voice and words so impassioned, that Emily could no longer struggle to repress her own grief, or to sooth his. Valancourt, between these emotions of love and pity, lost the power, and almost the wish, of repressing his agitation; and, in the intervals of convulsive sobs, he, at one moment, kissed away her tears, then told her cruelly, that possibly she might never again weep for him, and then tried to speak more calmly, but only exclaimed, 'O Emily – my heart will break! – I cannot – cannot leave you! Now – I gaze upon that countenance, now I hold you in my arms! a little while, and all this will appear a dream. I shall look, and cannot see you; shall try to recollect your features – and the impression will be fled from my imagination; – to hear the tones of your voice, and even memory will be silent! – I cannot, cannot leave you! Why should we confide the happiness of our whole lives to the will of people, who have no right to interrupt, and, except in giving you to me, have no power to promote it? O Emily! venture to trust your own heart, venture to be mine for ever!' His voice trembled, and he was silent; Emily continued to weep, and was silent also, when Valancourt proceeded to propose an immediate marriage, and that, at an early hour on the following morning, she should quit Madame Montoni's house, and be conducted by him to the church of the Augustines, where a friar should await to unite them.

The silence, with which she listened to a proposal, dictated by love and despair, and enforced at a moment, when it seemed scarcely possible for her to oppose it; – when her heart was softened by the sorrows of a separation, that might be eternal, and her reason obscured by the illusions of love and terror, encouraged him to hope, that it would not be rejected. 'Speak, my Emily!' said Valancourt eagerly, 'let me hear your voice, let me hear you confirm my fate.' She spoke not; her cheek was cold, and her senses seemed to fail her, but she did not faint. To Valancourt's terrified imagination she appeared to be dying; he called upon her name, rose to go to the chateau for assistance, and then, recollecting her situation, feared to go, or to leave her for a moment.

After a few minutes, she drew a deep sigh, and began to revive. The conflict she had suffered, between love and the duty she at present owed to her father's sister; her repugnance to a clandestine marriage, her fear of emerging on the world with embarrassments, such as might ultimately involve the object of her affection in misery and repentance; – all this various interest was too powerful for a mind, already enervated by sorrow, and her reason had suffered a transient suspension. But duty, and good sense, however hard the conflict, at length, triumphed over affection and mournful presentiment; above all, she dreaded to involve Valancourt in obscurity and vain regret, which she saw, or thought she saw, must be the too certain consequence of a marriage in their present circumstances; and she acted, perhaps, with somewhat more than female fortitude, when she resolved to endure a present, rather than provoke a distant misfortune.

With a candour, that proved how truly she esteemed and loved him, and which endeared her to him, if possible, more than ever, she told Valancourt all her reasons for rejecting his proposals. Those, which influenced her concerning his future welfare, he instantly refuted, or rather contradicted; but they awakened tender considerations for her, which the frenzy of passion and despair had concealed before, and love, which had but lately prompted him to propose a clandestine and immediate marriage, now induced him to renounce it. The triumph was almost too much for his heart; for Emily's sake, he endeavoured to stifle his grief, but the swelling anguish would not be restrained. 'O Emily!' said he, 'I must leave you – I *must* leave you, and I know it is for ever.'

Convulsive sobs again interrupted his words, and they wept together in silence, till Emily, recollecting the danger of being discovered, and the impropriety of prolonging an interview, which might subject her to censure, summoned all her fortitude to utter a last farewell.

'Stay!' said Valancourt, 'I conjure you stay, for I have much to tell you. The agitation of my mind has hitherto suffered me to speak only on the subject that occupied it; – I have forborne to mention a doubt of much importance, partly, lest it should appear as if I told it with an ungenerous view of alarming you into a compliance with my late proposal.'

Emily, much agitated, did not leave Valancourt, but she led him from the pavilion, and, as they walked upon the terrace, he proceeded as follows:

'This Montoni: I have heard some strange hints concerning him. Are you certain he is of Madame Quesnel's family, and that his fortune is what it appears to be?'

'I have no reason to doubt either,' replied Emily, in a voice of alarm. 'Of the first, indeed, I cannot doubt, but I have no certain means of judging of the latter, and I entreat you will tell me all you have heard.'

'That I certainly will, but it is very imperfect, and unsatisfactory information. I gathered it by accident from an Italian, who was speaking to another person of this Montoni. They were talking of his marriage; the Italian said, that if he was the person he meant, he was not likely to make Madame Cheron happy. He proceeded to speak of him in general terms of dislike, and then gave some particular hints, concerning his character, that excited my curiosity, and I ventured to ask him a few questions. He was reserved in his replies, but, after hesitating for some time, he owned, that he had understood abroad, that Montoni was a man of desperate fortune and character. He said something of a castle of Montoni's, situated among the Apennines, and of some strange circumstances, that might be mentioned, as to his former mode of life. I pressed him to inform me further, but I believe the strong interest I felt was visible in my manner, and alarmed him; for no entreaties could prevail with him to give any explanation of the circumstances he had alluded to, or to mention any thing further concerning Montoni. I observed to him, that, if Montoni was possessed of a castle in the Apennines, it appeared from such a circumstance, that he was of some family, and also seemed to contradict the report, that he was a man of entirely broken fortunes. He shook his head, and looked as if he could have said a great deal, but made no reply.

'A hope of learning something more satisfactory, or more positive, detained me in his company a considerable time, and I renewed the subject repeatedly, but the Italian wrapped himself up in reserve, said – that what he had mentioned he had caught only from a floating report, and that reports frequently arose from personal malice, and were very little to be depended upon. I forbore to press the subject farther, since it was obvious that he was alarmed for the consequence of what he had already said, and I was compelled to remain in uncertainty on a point where suspense is almost intolerable. Think, Emily, what I must suffer to see you depart for a foreign country, committed to the power of a man of such doubtful character as is this Montoni! But I will not alarm you unnecessarily; – it is possible, as the Italian said, at first, that this is not the Montoni he alluded to. Yet, Emily, consider well before you resolve to commit yourself to him. O! I must not trust myself to speak – or I shall renounce all the motives, which so lately influenced me to resign the hope of your becoming mine immediately.'

Valancourt walked upon the terrace with hurried steps, while Emily remained leaning on the balustrade in deep thought. The information she had just received excited, perhaps, more alarm than it could justify, and raised once more the conflict of contrasted interests. She had never liked Montoni. The fire and keenness of his eye, its proud exultation, its bold fierceness, its sullen watchfulness, as occasion, and even slight occasion, had called forth the latent soul, she had often observed with emotion; while from the usual expression of his countenance she had always shrunk. From such observations she was the more inclined to believe, that it was this Montoni, of whom the Italian had uttered his suspicious hints. The thought of being solely in his power, in a foreign land, was terrifying to her, but it was not by terror alone that she was urged to an immediate marriage with Valancourt. The tenderest love had already pleaded his cause, but had been unable to overcome her opinion, as to her duty, her disinterested considerations for Valancourt, and the delicacy, which made her revolt from a clandestine union. It was not to be expected, that a vague terror would be more powerful, than the united influence of love and grief. But it recalled all their energy, and rendered a second conquest necessary.

With Valancourt, whose imagination was now awake to the suggestion of every passion; whose apprehensions for Emily had acquired strength by the mere mention of them, and became every instant more powerful, as his mind brooded over them – with Valancourt no second conquest was attainable. He thought he saw in the clearest light, and love assisted the fear, that this journey to Italy would involve Emily in misery; he determined, therefore, to persevere in opposing it, and in conjuring her to bestow upon him the title of her lawful protector.

'Emily!' said he, with solemn earnestness, 'this is no time for scrupulous distinctions, for weighing the dubious and comparatively trifling circumstances, that may affect our future comfort. I now see, much more clearly than before, the train of serious dangers you are going to encounter with a man of Montoni's character. Those dark hints of the Italian spoke much, but not more than the idea I have of Montoni's disposition, as exhibited even in his countenance. I think I see at this moment all that could have been hinted, written there. He is the Italian, whom I fear, and I conjure you for your own sake, as well as for mine, to prevent the evils I shudder to foresee. O Emily! let my tenderness, my arms withhold you from them – give me the right to defend you!'

Emily only sighed, while Valancourt proceeded to remonstrate and to entreat with all the energy that love and apprehension could inspire. But, as his imagination magnified to her the possible evils she was going to meet, the mists of her own fancy began to dissipate, and allowed her to distinguish the exaggerated images, which imposed on his reason.

She considered, that there was no proof of Montoni being the person, whom the stranger had meant; that, even if he was so, the Italian had noticed his character and broken fortunes merely from report; and that, though the countenance of Montoni seemed to give probability to a part of the rumour, it was not by such circumstances that an implicit belief of it could be justified. These considerations would probably not have arisen so distinctly to her mind, at this time, had not the terrors of Valancourt presented to her such obvious exaggerations of her danger, as incited her to distrust the fallacies of passion. But, while she endeavoured in the gentlest manner to convince him of his error, she plunged him into a new one. His voice and countenance changed to an expression of dark despair. 'Emily!' said he, 'this, this moment is the bitterest that is yet come to me. You do not – cannot love me! – It would be impossible for you to reason thus coolly, thus deliberately, if you did. I, *I* am torn with anguish at the prospect of our separation, and of the evils that may await you in consequence of it; I would encounter any hazards to prevent it – to save you. No! Emily, no! – you cannot love me.'

'We have now little time to waste in exclamation, or assertion,' said Emily, endeavouring to conceal her emotion: 'if you are yet to learn how dear you are, and ever must be, to my heart, no assurances of mine can give you conviction.'

The last words faltered on her lips, and her tears flowed fast. Those words and tears brought, once more, and with instantaneous force, conviction of her love to Valancourt. He could only exclaim, 'Emily! Emily!' and weep over the hand he pressed to his lips; but she, after some moments, again roused herself from the indulgence of sorrow, and said, 'I must leave you; it is late, and my absence from the chateau may be discovered. Think of me – love me – when I am far away; the belief of this will be my comfort!'

'Think of you! – love you!' exclaimed Valancourt.

'Try to moderate these transports,' said Emily, 'for my sake, try.'

'For your sake!'

'Yes, for my sake,' replied Emily, in a tremulous voice, 'I cannot leave you thus!'

'Then do not leave me!' said Valancourt, with quickness, 'Why should we part, or part for longer than till to-morrow?'

'I am, indeed I am, unequal to these moments,' replied Emily, 'you tear my heart, but I never can consent to this hasty, imprudent proposal!'

'If we could command our time, my Emily, it should not be thus hasty; we must submit to circumstances.'

'We must, indeed! I have already told you all my heart – my spirits are gone. You allowed the force of my objections, till your tenderness called up vague terrors, which have given us both unnecessary anguish. Spare me! do not oblige me to repeat the reasons I have already urged.'

'Spare you!' cried Valancourt, 'I am a wretch – a very wretch, that have felt only for myself ! – I! who ought to have shewn the fortitude of man, who ought to have supported you, I! have increased your sufferings by the conduct of a child! Forgive me, Emily! think of the distraction of my mind now that I am about to part with all that is dear to me – and forgive me! When you are gone, I shall recollect with bitter remorse what I have made you suffer, and shall wish in vain that I could see you, if only for a moment, that I might sooth your grief.'

Tears again interrupted his voice, and Emily wept with him. 'I will shew myself more worthy of your love,' said Valancourt, at length; 'I will not prolong these moments. My Emily – my own Emily! never forget me! God knows when we shall meet again! I resign you to his care.—O God! – O God! – protect and bless her!'

He pressed her hand to his heart. Emily sunk almost lifeless on his bosom; and neither wept, nor spoke. Valancourt, now commanding his own distress, tried to comfort and re-assure her, but she appeared totally unaffected by what he said, and a sigh, which she uttered, now and then, was all that proved she had not fainted.

He supported her slowly towards the chateau, weeping and speaking to her; but she answered only in sighs, till, having reached the gate, that terminated the avenue, she seemed to have recovered her consciousness, and, looking round, perceived how near they were to the chateau. 'We must part here,' said she, stopping, 'Why prolong these moments? Teach me the fortitude I have forgot.'

Valancourt struggled to assume a composed air. 'Farewell, my love!' said he, in a voice of solemn tenderness – 'trust me we shall meet again – meet for each other – meet to part no more!' His voice faltered, but, recovering it, he proceeded in a firmer tone. 'You know not what I shall suffer, till I hear from you; I shall omit no opportunity of conveying to you my letters, yet I tremble to think how few may occur. And trust me, love, for your dear sake, I will try to bear this absence with fortitude. O how little I have shewn to-night!'

'Farewell!' said Emily faintly. 'When you are gone, I shall think of many things I would have said to you.' 'And I of many – many!' said Valancourt; 'I never left you yet, that I did not immediately remember some question, or some entreaty, or some circumstance, concerning my love, that I earnestly wished to mention, and feel wretched because I could not. O Emily! this countenance, on which I now gaze – will, in a moment, be gone from my eyes, and not all the efforts of fancy will be able to recall it with exactness. O! what an infinite difference between this moment and the next! *Now*, I am in your presence, can behold you! *then*, all will be a dreary blank – and I shall be a wanderer, exiled from my only home!'

Valancourt again pressed her to his heart, and held her there in silence, weeping. Tears once again calmed her oppressed mind. They again bade each other farewell, lingered a moment, and then parted. Valancourt seemed to force himself from the spot; he passed hastily up the avenue, and Emily, as she moved slowly towards the chateau, heard his distant steps. She listened to the sounds, as they sunk fainter and fainter, till the melancholy stillness of night alone remained; and then hurried to her chamber, to seek repose, which, alas! was fled from her wretchedness.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME

VOLUME II

CHAPTER I

> ‘Where’er I roam, whatever realms I see,
>
> My heart untravell’d still shall turn to thee.’
> GOLDSMITH [*The Traveller*][1]

The carriages were at the gates at an early hour; the bustle of the domestics, passing to and fro in the galleries, awakened Emily from harassing slumbers: her unquiet mind had, during the night, presented her with terrific images and obscure circumstances, concerning her affection and her future life. She now endeavoured to chase away the impressions they had left on her fancy; but from imaginary evils she awoke to the consciousness of real ones. Recollecting that she had parted with Valancourt, perhaps for ever, her heart sickened as memory revived. But she tried to dismiss the dismal forebodings that crowded on her mind, and to restrain the sorrow which she could not subdue; efforts which diffused over the settled melancholy of her countenance an expression of tempered resignation, as a thin veil, thrown over the features of beauty, renders them more interesting by a partial concealment. But Madame Montoni observed nothing in this countenance except its unusual paleness, which attracted her censure. She told her niece, that she had been indulging in fanciful sorrows, and begged she would have more regard for decorum, than to let the world see that she could not renounce an improper attachment; at which Emily’s pale cheek became flushed with crimson, but it was the blush of pride, and she made no answer. Soon after, Montoni entered the breakfast room, spoke little, and seemed impatient to be gone.

The windows of this room opened upon the garden. As Emily passed them, she saw the spot where she had parted with Valancourt on the preceding night: the remembrance pressed heavily on her heart, and she turned hastily away from the object that had awakened it.

The baggage being at length adjusted, the travellers entered their carriages, and Emily would have left the chateau without one sigh of regret, had it not been situated in the neighbourhood of Valancourt’s residence.

From a little eminence she looked back upon Tholouse, and the far-seen plains of Gascony, beyond which the broken summits of the Pyrenés appeared on the distant horizon, lighted up by a morning sun. ‘Dear pleasant mountains!’ said she to herself, ‘how long may it be ere I see ye again, and how much may happen to make me miserable in the interval! Oh, could I now be certain, that I should ever return to ye, and find that Valancourt still lived for me, I should go in peace! He will still gaze on ye, gaze when I am far away!’

The trees, that impended over the high banks of the road and formed a line of perspective with the distant country, now threatened to exclude the view of them; but the blueish mountains still appeared beyond the dark foliage, and Emily continued to lean from the coach window, till at length the closing branches shut them from her sight.

Another object soon caught her attention. She had scarcely looked at a person who walked along the bank, with his hat, in which was the military feather, drawn over his eyes, before, at the sound of wheels, he suddenly turned, and she perceived that it was Valancourt himself, who waved his hand, sprung into the road, and through the window of the carriage put a letter into her hand. He endeavoured to smile through the despair that overspread his countenance as she passed on. The remembrance of that smile seemed impressed on Emily’s mind for ever. She leaned from the window, and saw him on a knoll of the broken bank, leaning against the high trees that waved over him, and pursuing the carriage with his eyes. He waved his hand, and she continued to gaze till distance confused his figure, and at length another turn of the road entirely separated him from her sight.

Having stopped to take up Signor Cavigni at a chateau on the road, the travellers, of whom Emily was disrespectfully seated with Madame Montoni’s woman in a second carriage, pursued their way over the plains of Languedoc. The presence of this servant restrained Emily from reading Valancourt’s letter, for she did not choose to expose the emotions it might occasion to the observation of any person. Yet such was her wish to read this his last communication, that her trembling hand was every moment on the point of breaking the seal.

At length they reached the village, where they staid only to change horses, without alighting, and it was not till they stopped to dine, that Emily had an opportunity of reading the letter. Though she had never doubted the sincerity of Valancourt’s affection, the fresh assurances she now received of it revived her spirits; she wept over his letter in tenderness, laid it by to be referred to when they should be particularly depressed, and then thought of him with much less anguish than she had done since they parted. Among some other requests, which were interesting to her, because expressive of his tenderness, and because a compliance with them seemed to annihilate for a while the pain of absence, he entreated she would always think of him at sun-set. 'You will then meet me in thought,' said he; 'I shall constantly watch the sun-set, and I shall be happy in the belief, that your eyes are fixed upon the same object with mine, and that our minds are conversing. You know not, Emily, the comfort I promise myself from these moments; but I trust you will experience it.'

It is unnecessary to say with what emotion Emily, on this evening, watched the declining sun, over a long extent of plains, on which she saw it set without interruption, and sink towards the province which Valancourt inhabited. After this hour her mind became far more tranquil and resigned, than it had been since the marriage of Montoni and her aunt.

During several days the travellers journeyed over the plains of Languedoc; and then entering Dauphiny, and winding for some time among the mountains of that romantic province, they quitted their carriages and began to ascend the Alps. And here such scenes of sublimity opened upon them as no colours of language must dare to paint! Emily's mind was even so much engaged with new and wonderful images, that they sometimes banished the idea of Valancourt, though they more frequently revived it. These brought to her recollection the prospects among the Pyrenées, which they had admired together, and had believed nothing could excel in grandeur. How often did she wish to express to him the new emotions which this astonishing scenery awakened, and that he could partake of them! Sometimes too she endeavoured to anticipate his remarks, and almost imagined him present. She seemed to have arisen into another world, and to have left every trifling thought, every trifling sentiment, in that below; those only of grandeur and sublimity now dilated her mind, and elevated the affections of her heart.

With what emotions of sublimity, softened by tenderness, did she meet Valancourt in thought, at the customary hour of sun-set, when, wandering among the Alps, she watched the glorious orb sink amid their summits, his last tints die away on their snowy points, and a solemn obscurity steal over the scene! And when the last gleam had faded, she turned her eyes from the west with somewhat of the melancholy regret that is experienced after the departure of a beloved friend; while these lonely feelings were heightened by the spreading gloom, and by the low sounds, heard only when darkness confines attention, which make the general stillness more impressive – leaves shook by the air, the last sigh of the breeze that lingers after sun-set, or the murmur of distant streams.

During the first days of this journey among the Alps, the scenery exhibited a wonderful mixture of solitude and inhabitation, of cultivation and barrenness. On the edge of tremendous precipices, and within the hollow of the cliffs, below which the clouds often floated, were seen villages, spires, and convent towers; while green pastures and vineyards spread their hues at the feet of perpendicular rocks of marble, or of granite, whose points, tufted with alpine shrubs, or exhibiting only massy crags, rose above each other, till they terminated in the snow-topt mountain, whence the torrent fell, that thundered along the valley.

The snow was not yet melted on the summit of Mount Cenis,[2] over which the travellers passed; but Emily, as she looked upon its clear lake and extended plain, surrounded by broken cliffs, saw, in imagination, the verdant beauty it would exhibit when the snows should be gone, and the shepherds, leading up the midsummer flocks from Piedmont, to pasture on its flowery summit, should add Arcadian figures to Arcadian landscape.

As she descended on the Italian side, the precipices became still more tremendous, and the prospects still more wild and majestic, over which the shifting lights threw all the pomp of colouring. Emily delighted to observe the snowy tops of the mountains under the passing influence of the day, blushing with morning, glowing with the brightness of noon, or just tinted with the purple evening. The haunt of man could now only be discovered by the simple hut of the shepherd and the hunter, or by the rough pine bridge thrown across the torrent, to assist the latter in his chase of the chamois over crags where, but for this vestige of man, it would have been believed only the chamois or the wolf dared to venture. As Emily gazed upon one of these perilous bridges, with the cataract foaming beneath it, some images came to her mind, which she afterwards combined in the following

STORIED SONNET

The weary traveller, who, all night long,
Has climb'd among the Alps' tremendous steeps,
Skirting the pathless precipice, where throng
Wild forms of danger; as he onward creeps
If, chance, his anxious eye at distance sees
The mountain-shepherd's solitary home,
Peeping from forth the moon-illumin'd trees,
What sudden transports to his bosom come!
But, if between some hideous chasm yawn,
Where the cleft pine a doubtful bridge displays,
In dreadful silence, on the brink, forlorn
He stands, and views in the faint rays

Far, far below, the torrent's rising surge,
And listens to the wild impetuous roar;
Still eyes the depth, still shudders on the verge,
Fears to return, nor dares to venture o'er.
Desperate, at length the tottering plank he tries,
His weak steps slide, he shrieks, he sinks – he dies!

Emily, often as she travelled among the clouds, watched in silent awe their billowy surges rolling below; sometimes, wholly closing upon the scene, they appeared like a world of chaos, and, at others, spreading thinly, they opened and admitted partial catches of the landscape – the torrent, whose astounding roar had never failed, tumbling down the rocky chasm, huge cliffs white with snow, or the dark summits of the pine forests, that stretched mid-way down the mountains. But who may describe her rapture, when, having passed through a sea of vapour, she caught a first view of Italy; when, from the ridge of one of those tremendous precipices that hang upon Mount Cenis and guard the entrance of that enchanting country, she looked down through the lower clouds, and, as they floated away, saw the grassy vales of Piedmont at her feet, and, beyond, the plains of Lombardy extending to the farthest distance, at which appeared, on the faint horizon, the doubtful towers of Turin?

The solitary grandeur of the objects that immediately surrounded her, the mountain-region towering above, the deep precipices that fell beneath, the waving blackness of the forests of pine and oak, which skirted their feet, or hung within their recesses, the headlong torrents that, dashing among their cliffs, sometimes appeared like a cloud of mist, at others like a sheet of ice – these were features which received a higher character of sublimity from the reposing beauty of the Italian landscape below, stretching to the wide horizon, where the same melting blue tint seemed to unite earth and sky.

Madame Montoni only shuddered as she looked down precipices near whose edge the chairmen trotted lightly and swiftly, almost, as the chamois bounded, and from which Emily too recoiled; but with her fears were mingled such various emotions of delight, such admiration, astonishment, and awe, as she had never experienced before.

Meanwhile the carriers, having come to a landing-place, stopped to rest, and the travellers being seated on the point of a cliff, Montoni and Cavigni renewed a dispute concerning Hannibal's passage over the Alps, Montoni contending that he entered Italy by way of Mount Cenis, and Cavigni, that he passed over Mount St Bernard.[3] The subject brought to Emily's imagination the disasters he had suffered in this bold and perilous adventure. She saw his vast armies winding among the defiles, and over the tremendous cliffs of the mountains, which at night were lighted up by his fires, or by the torches which he caused to be carried when he pursued his indefatigable march. In the eye of fancy, she perceived the gleam of arms through the duskiness of night, the glitter of spears and helmets, and the banners floating dimly on the twilight; while now and then the blast of a distant trumpet echoed along the defile, and the signal was answered by a momentary clash of arms. She looked with horror upon the mountaineers, perched on the higher cliffs, assailing the troops below with broken fragments of the mountain; on soldiers and elephants tumbling headlong down the lower precipices; and, as she listened to the rebounding rocks, that followed their fall, the terrors of fancy yielded to those of reality, and she shuddered to behold herself on the dizzy height, whence she had pictured the descent of others.

Madame Montoni, meantime, as she looked upon Italy, was contemplating in imagination the splendour of palaces and the grandeur of castles, such as she believed she was going to be mistress of at Venice and in the Apennine, and she became, in idea, little less than a princess. Being no longer under the alarms which had deterred her from giving entertainments to the beauties of Tholouse, whom Montoni had mentioned with more *éclat* to his own vanity than credit to their discretion, or regard to truth, she determined to give concerts, though she had neither ear nor taste for music; *conversazioni*,[4] though she had no talents for conversation; and to outvie, if possible, in the gaieties of her parties and the magnificence of her liveries, all the noblesse of Venice. This blissful reverie was somewhat obscured, when she recollected the Signor, her husband, who, though he was not averse to the profit which sometimes results from such parties, had always shewn a contempt of the frivolous parade that sometimes attends them; till she considered that his pride might be gratified by displaying, among his own friends, in his native city, the wealth which he had neglected in France; and she courted again the splendid illusions that had charmed her before.

The travellers, as they descended, gradually, exchanged the region of winter for the genial warmth and beauty of spring. The sky began to assume that serene and beautiful tint peculiar to the climate of Italy; patches of young verdure, fragrant shrubs and flowers looked gaily among the rocks, often fringing their rugged brows, or hanging in tufts from their broken sides; and the buds of the oak and mountain ash were expanding into foliage. Descending lower, the orange and the myrtle, every now and then, appeared in some sunny nook, with their yellow blossoms peeping from among the dark green of their leaves, and mingling with the scarlet flowers of the pomegranate and the paler ones of the arbutus, that ran mantling to the crags above; while, lower still, spread the pastures of Piedmont, where early flocks were cropping the luxuriant herbage of spring.

The river Doria, which, rising on the summit of Mount Cenis, had dashed for many leagues over the precipices that bordered the road, now began to assume a less impetuous, though scarcely less romantic character, as it approached the green vallies of Piedmont, into which the travellers descended with the evening sun; and Emily found herself once more amid the tranquil beauty of pastoral scenery; among flocks and herds, and slopes tufted with woods of lively verdure and with beautiful shrubs, such as she had often seen waving luxuriantly over the alps above. The verdure of the pasturage, now varied with the hues of early flowers, among which were yellow ranunculuses and pansey violets of delicious fragrance, she had never seen excelled. – Emily almost wished to become a peasant of Piedmont, to inhabit one of the pleasant embowered cottages which she saw peeping beneath the cliffs, and to pass her careless hours among these romantic landscapes. To the hours, the months, she was to pass under the dominion of Montoni, she looked with apprehension; while those which were departed she remembered with regret and sorrow.

In the present scenes her fancy often gave her the figure of Valancourt, whom she saw on a point of the cliffs, gazing with awe and admiration on the imagery around him; or wandering pensively along the vale below, frequently pausing to look back upon the scenery, and then, his countenance glowing with the poet's fire, pursuing his way to some overhanging height. When she again considered the time and the distance that were to separate them, that every step she now took lengthened this distance, her heart sunk, and the surrounding landscape charmed her no more.

The travellers, passing Novalesa, reached, after the evening had closed, the small and antient town of Susa, which had formerly guarded this pass of the Alps into Piedmont. The heights which command it had, since the invention of artillery, rendered its fortifications useless; but these romantic heights, seen by moon-light, with the town below, surrounded by its walls and watch-towers, and partially illumined, exhibited an interesting picture to Emily. Here they rested for the night at an inn, which had little accommodation to boast of; but the travellers brought with them the hunger that gives delicious flavour to the coarsest viands, and the weariness that ensures repose; and here Emily first caught a strain of Italian music, on Italian ground. As she sat after supper at a little window, that opened upon the country, observing an effect of the moon-light on the broken surface of the mountains, and remembering that on such a night as this she once had sat with her father and Valancourt, resting upon a cliff of the Pyrenées, she heard from below the long-drawn notes of a violin, of such tone and delicacy of expression, as harmonized exactly with the tender emotions she was indulging, and both charmed and surprised her. Cavigni, who approached the window, smiled at her surprise. 'This is nothing extraordinary,' said he, 'you will hear the same, perhaps, at every inn on our way. It is one of our landlord's family who plays, I doubt not.' Emily, as she listened, thought he could be scarcely less than a professor of music whom she heard; and the sweet and plaintive strains soon lulled her into a reverie, from which she was very unwillingly roused by the raillery of Cavigni, and by the voice of Montoni, who gave orders to a servant to have the carriages ready at an early hour on the following morning; and added, that he meant to dine at Turin.

Madame Montoni was exceedingly rejoiced to be once more on level ground; and, after giving a long detail of the various terrors she had suffered, which she forgot that she was describing to the companions of her dangers, she added a hope, that she should soon be beyond the view of these horrid mountains, 'which all the world,' said she, 'should not tempt me to cross again.' Complaining of fatigue she soon retired to rest, and Emily withdrew to her own room, when she understood from Annette, her aunt's woman, that Cavigni was nearly right in his conjecture concerning the musician, who had awakened the violin with so much taste, for that he was the son of a peasant, inhabiting the neighbouring valley. 'He is going to the Carnival at Venice,'[5] added Annette, 'for they say he has a fine hand at playing, and will get a world of money; and the Carnival is just going to begin: but for my part, I should like to live among these pleasant woods and hills, better than in a town; and they say Ma'moiselle, we shall see no woods, or hills, or fields, at Venice, for that it is built in the very middle of the sea.'

Emily agreed with the talkative Annette, that this young man was making a change for the worse, and could not forbear silently lamenting, that he should be drawn from the innocence and beauty of these scenes, to the corrupt ones of that voluptuous city.

When she was alone, unable to sleep, the landscapes of her native home, with Valancourt, and the circumstances of her departure, haunted her fancy; she drew pictures of social happiness amidst the grand simplicity of nature, such as she feared she had bade farewel to for ever; and then, the idea of this young Piedmontese, thus ignorantly sporting with his happiness, returned to her thoughts, and, glad to escape awhile from the pressure of nearer interests, she indulged her fancy in composing the following lines.

THE PIEDMONTESE

Ah, merry swain, who laugh'd along the vales,
And with your gay pipe made the mountains ring,
Why leave your cot, your woods, and thymy gales,
And friends belov'd, for aught that wealth can bring?
He goes to wake o'er moon-light seas the string,
Venetian gold his untaught fancy hails!
Yet oft of home his simple carols sing,
And his steps pause, as the last Alp he scales.
Once more he turns to view his native scene –
Far, far below, as roll the clouds away,
He spies his cabin 'mid the pine-tops green,
The well-known woods, clear brook, and pastures gay;
And thinks of friends and parents left behind,
Of sylvan revels, dance, and festive song;

And hears the faint reed swelling in the wind;
And his sad sighs the distant notes prolong!
Thus went the swain, till mountain-shadows fell,
And dimm'd the landscape to his aching sight;
And must he leave the vales he loves so well?
Can foreign wealth, and shows, his heart delight?
No, happy vales! your wild rocks still shall hear
His pipe, light sounding on the morning breeze;
Still shall he lead the flocks to streamlet clear,
And watch at eve beneath the western trees.
Away, Venetian gold – your charm is o'er!
And now his swift step seeks the lowland bow'rs,
Where, through the leaves, his cottage light *once more*
Guides him to happy friends, and jocund hours.
Ah, merry swain! that laugh along the vales,
And with your gay pipe make the mountains ring,
Your cot, your woods, your thymy-scented gales –
And friends belov'd – more joy than wealth can bring!

CHAPTER II

TITANIA.

‘If you will patiently dance in our round,
And see our moon-light revels, go with us.’

[SHAKESPEARE] *Midsummer Night’s Dream*[1]

Early on the following morning, the travellers set out for Turin. The luxuriant plain, that extends from the feet of the Alps to that magnificent city, was not then, as now, shaded by an avenue of trees nine miles in length; but plantations of olives, mulberry and palms, festooned with vines, mingled with the pastoral scenery, through which the rapid Po, after its descent from the mountains, wandered to meet the humble Doria at Turin. As they advanced towards this city, the Alps, seen at some distance, began to appear in all their awful sublimity; chain rising over chain in long succession, their higher points darkened by the hovering clouds, sometimes hid, and at others seen shooting up far above them; while their lower steeps, broken into fantastic forms, were touched with blue and purplish tints, which, as they changed in light and shade, seemed to open new scenes to the eye. To the east stretched the plains of Lombardy, with the towers of Turin rising at a distance; and beyond, the Apennines, bounding the horizon.

The general magnificence of that city, with its vistas of churches and palaces, branching from the grand square, each opening to a landscape of the distant Alps or Apennines, was not only such as Emily had never seen in France, but such as she had never imagined.

Montoni, who had been often at Turin, and cared little about views of any kind, did not comply with his wife’s request, that they might survey some of the palaces; but staying only till the necessary refreshments could be obtained, they set forward for Venice with all possible rapidity. Montoni’s manner, during this journey, was grave, and even haughty; and towards Madame Montoni he was more especially reserved; but it was not the reserve of respect so much as of pride and discontent. Of Emily he took little notice. With Cavigni his conversations were commonly on political or military topics, such as the convulsed state of their country[2] rendered at this time particularly interesting. Emily observed, that, at the mention of any daring exploit, Montoni’s eyes lost their sullenness, and seemed instantaneously to gleam with fire; yet they still retained somewhat of a lurking cunning, and she sometimes thought that their fire partook more of the glare of malice than the brightness of valour, though the latter would well have harmonized with the high chivalric air of his figure, in which Cavigni, with all his gay and gallant manners, was his inferior.

On entering the Milanese, the gentlemen exchanged their French hats for the Italian cap of scarlet cloth, embroidered; and Emily was somewhat surprised to observe, that Montoni added to his the military plume, while Cavigni retained only the feather: which was usually worn with such caps: but she at length concluded, that Montoni assumed this ensign of a soldier for convenience, as a means of passing with more safety through a country over-run with parties of the military.

Over the beautiful plains of this country the devastations of war were frequently visible. Where the lands had not been suffered to lie uncultivated, they were often tracked with the steps of the spoiler; the vines were torn down from the branches that had supported them, the olives trampled upon the ground, and even the groves of mulberry trees had been hewn by the enemy to light fires that destroyed the hamlets and villages of their owners. Emily turned her eyes with a sigh from these painful vestiges of contention, to the Alps of the Grison, that overlooked them to the north, whose awful solitudes seemed to offer to persecuted man a secure asylum.

The travellers frequently distinguished troops of soldiers moving at a distance; and they experienced, at the little inns on the road, the scarcity of provision and other inconveniencies, which are a part of the consequence of intestine war; but they had never reason to be much alarmed for their immediate safety, and they passed on to Milan with little interruption of any kind, where they staid not to survey the grandeur of the city, or even to view its vast cathedral, which was then building.

Beyond Milan, the country wore the aspect of a ruder devastation; and though every thing seemed now quiet, the repose was like that of death, spread over features, which retain the impression of the last convulsions.

It was not till they had passed the eastern limits of the Milanese, that the travellers saw any troops since they had left Milan, when, as the evening was drawing to a close, they descried what appeared to be an army winding onward along the distant plains, whose spears and other arms caught the last rays of the sun. As the column advanced through a part of the road, contracted between two hillocks, some of the commanders, on horseback, were distinguished on a small eminence, pointing and making signals for the march; while several of the officers were riding along the line directing its progress, according to the signs communicated by those above; and others, separating from the vanguard, which had emerged from the pass, were riding carelessly along the plains, at some distance to the right of the army.

As they drew nearer, Montoni, distinguishing the feathers that waved in their caps, and the banners and liveries of the bands that followed them, thought he knew this to be the small army commanded by the famous captain Utaldo, with whom, as well as with some of the other chiefs, he was personally acquainted. He, therefore, gave orders that the carriages should draw up by the side of the road, to await their arrival, and give them the pass. A faint strain of martial music now stole by, and, gradually strengthening as the troops approached, Emily distinguished the drums and trumpets, with the clash of cymbals and of arms, that were struck by a small party, in time to the march.

Montoni being now certain that these were the bands of the victorious Utaldo, leaned from the carriage window, and hailed their general by waving his cap in the air; which compliment the chief returned by raising his spear, and then letting it down again suddenly, while some of his officers, who were riding at a distance from the troops, came up to the carriage, and saluted Montoni as an old acquaintance. The captain himself soon after arriving, his bands halted while he conversed with Montoni, whom he appeared much rejoiced to see; and from what he said, Emily understood that this was a victorious army, returning into their own principality; while the numerous waggons, that accompanied them, contained the rich spoils of the enemy, their own wounded soldiers, and the prisoners they had taken in battle, who were to be ransomed when the peace, then negociating between the neighbouring states, should be ratified. The chiefs on the following day were to separate, and each, taking his share of the spoil, was to return with his own band to his castle. This was therefore to be an evening of uncommon and general festivity, in commemoration of the victory they had accomplished together, and of the farewell which the commanders were about to take of each other.

Emily, as these officers conversed with Montoni, observed with admiration, tinctured with awe, their high martial air, mingled with the haughtiness of the noblesse of those days, and heightened by the gallantry of their dress, by the plumes towering on their caps, the armorial coat, Persian sash, and ancient Spanish cloak. Utaldo, telling Montoni that his army were going to encamp for the night near a village at only a few miles distance, invited him to turn back and partake of their festivity, assuring the ladies also, that they should be pleasantly accommodated; but Montoni excused himself, adding, that it was his design to reach Verona that evening; and, after some conversation concerning the state of the country towards that city, they parted.

The travellers proceeded without any interruption; but it was some hours after sun-set before they arrived at Verona, whose beautiful environs were therefore not seen by Emily till the following morning; when, leaving that pleasant town at an early hour, they set off for Padua, where they embarked on the Brenta[3] for Venice. Here the scene was entirely changed; no vestiges of war, such as had deformed the plains of the Milanese, appeared; on the contrary, all was peace and elegance. The verdant banks of the Brenta exhibited a continued landscape of beauty, gaiety, and splendour. Emily gazed with admiration on the villas of the Venetian noblesse, with their cool porticos and colonnades, overhung with poplars and cypresses of majestic height and lively verdure; on their rich orangeries, whose blossoms perfumed the air, and on the luxuriant willows, that dipped their light leaves in the wave, and sheltered from the sun the gay parties whose music came at intervals on the breeze. The Carnival did, indeed, appear to extend from Venice along the whole line of these enchanting shores; the river was gay with boats passing to that city, exhibiting the fantastic diversity of a masquerade in the dresses of the people within them; and, towards evening, groups of dancers frequently were seen beneath the trees.

Cavigni, meanwhile, informed her of the names of the noblemen to whom the several villas they passed belonged, adding light sketches of their characters, such as served to amuse rather than to inform, exhibiting his own wit instead of the delineation of truth. Emily was sometimes diverted by his conversation; but his gaiety did not entertain Madame Montoni, as it had formerly done; she was frequently grave, and Montoni retained his usual reserve.

Nothing could exceed Emily's admiration, on her first view of Venice, with its islets, palaces, and towers rising out of the sea, whose clear surface reflected the tremulous picture in all its colours. The sun, sinking in the west, tinted the waves and the lofty mountains of Friuli, which skirt the northern shores of the Adriatic, with a saffron glow, while on the marble porticos and colonnades of St Mark were thrown the rich lights and shades of evening. As they glided on, the grander features of this city appeared more distinctly: its terraces, crowned with airy yet majestic fabrics, touched, as they now were, with the splendour of the setting sun, appeared as if they had been called up from the ocean by the wand of an enchanter, rather than reared by mortal hands.

The sun, soon after, sinking to the lower world, the shadow of the earth stole gradually over the waves, and then up the towering sides of the mountains of Friuli, till it extinguished even the last upward beams that had lingered on their summits, and the melancholy purple of evening drew over them, like a thin veil. How deep, how beautiful was the tranquillity that wrapped the scene! All nature seemed to repose; the finest emotions of the soul were alone awake. Emily's eyes filled with tears of admiration and sublime devotion, as she raised them over the sleeping world to the vast heavens, and heard the notes of solemn music, that stole over the waters from a distance. She listened in still rapture, and no person of the party broke the charm by an enquiry. The sounds seemed to grow on the air; for so smoothly did the barge glide along, that its motion was not perceivable, and the fairy city appeared approaching to welcome the strangers. They now distinguished a female voice, accompanied by a few instruments, singing a soft and mournful air; and its fine expression, as sometimes it seemed pleading with the impassioned tenderness of love, and then languishing into the cadence of hopeless grief, declared, that it flowed from no feigned sensibility. Ah! thought Emily, as she sighed and remembered Valancourt, those strains come from the heart!

She looked round, with anxious enquiry; the deep twilight, that had fallen over the scene, admitted only imperfect images to the eye, but, at some distance on the sea, she thought she perceived a gondola: a chorus of voices and instruments now swelled on the air – so sweet, so solemn! it seemed like the hymn of angels descending through the silence of night! Now it died away, and fancy almost beheld the holy choir reascending towards heaven; then again it swelled with the breeze, trembled awhile, and again died into silence. It brought to Emily's recollection some lines of her late father, and she repeated in a low voice,

> ___Oft I hear,
>
> Upon the silence of the midnight air,
> Celestial voices swell in holy chorus
>
> That bears the soul to heaven!

The deep stillness, that succeeded, was as expressive as the strain that had just ceased. It was uninterrupted for several minutes, till a general sigh seemed to release the company from their enchantment. Emily, however, long indulged the pleasing sadness, that had stolen upon her spirits; but the gay and busy scene that appeared, as the barge approached St Mark's Place, at length roused her attention. The rising moon, which threw a shadowy light upon the terraces, and illumined the porticos and magnificent arcades that crowned them, discovered the various company, whose light steps, soft guitars, and softer voices, echoed through the colonnades.

The music they heard before now passed Montoni's barge, in one of the gondolas, of which several were seen skimming along the moon-light sea, full of gay parties, catching the cool breeze. Most of these had music, made sweeter by the waves over which it floated, and by the measured sound of oars, as they dashed the sparkling tide. Emily gazed, and listened, and thought herself in a fairy scene; even Madame Montoni was pleased; Montoni congratulated himself on his return to Venice, which he called the first city in the world, and Cavigni was more gay and animated than ever.

The barge passed on to the grand canal, where Montoni's mansion was situated. And here, other forms of beauty and of grandeur, such as her imagination had never painted, were unfolded to Emily in the palaces of Sansovino and Palladio,[4] as she glided along the waves. The air bore no sounds, but those of sweetness, echoing along each margin of the canal, and from gondolas on its surface, while groups of masks were seen dancing on the moonlight terraces, and seemed almost to realize the romance of fairy-land.

The barge stopped before the portico of a large house, from whence a servant of Montoni crossed the terrace, and immediately the party disembarked. From the portico they passed a noble hall to a stair-case of marble, which led to a saloon, fitted up in a style of magnificence that surprised Emily.

The walls and ceiling were adorned with historical and allegorical paintings, in *fresco*; silver tripods, depending from chains[5] of the same metal, illumined the apartment, the floor of which was covered with Indian mats painted in a variety of colours and devices; the couches and drapery of the lattices were of pale green silk, embroidered and fringed with green and gold. Balcony lattices opened upon the grand canal, whence rose a confusion of voices and of musical instruments, and the breeze that gave freshness to the apartment. Emily, considering the gloomy temper of Montoni, looked upon the splendid furniture of his house with surprise, and remembered the report of his being a man of broken fortune, with astonishment. 'Ah!' said she to herself, 'if Valancourt could but see this mansion, what peace would it give him! He would then be convinced that the report was groundless.'

Madame Montoni seemed to assume the airs of a princess; but Montoni was restless and discontented, and did not even observe the civility of bidding her welcome to her home.

Soon after his arrival, he ordered his gondola, and, with Cavigni, went out to mingle in the scenes of the evening. Madame then became serious and thoughtful. Emily, who was charmed with every thing she saw, endeavoured to enliven her; but reflection had not, with Madame Montoni, subdued caprice and ill-humour, and her answers discovered so much of both, that Emily gave up the attempt of diverting her, and withdrew to a lattice, to amuse herself with the scene without, so new and so enchanting.

The first object that attracted her notice was a group of dancers on the terrace below, led by a guitar, and some other instruments. The girl, who struck the guitar, and another, who flourished a tamborine, passed on in a dancing step, and with a light grace and gaiety of heart, that would have subdued the goddess of spleen[6] in her worst humour. After these came a group of fantastic figures, some dressed as gondolieri, others as minstrels, while others seemed to defy all description. They sung in parts, their voices accompanied by a few soft instruments. At a little distance from the portico they stopped, and Emily distinguished the verses of Ariosto.[7] They sung of the wars of the Moors against Charlemagne, and then of the woes of Orlando: afterwards the measure changed, and the melancholy sweetness of Petrarch succeeded. The magic of his grief was assisted by all that Italian music and Italian expression, heightened by the enchantments of Venetian moonlight, could give.

Emily, as she listened, caught the pensive enthusiasm; her tears flowed silently, while her fancy bore her far away to France and to Valancourt. Each succeeding sonnet, more full of charming sadness than the last, seemed to bind the spell of melancholy: with extreme regret she saw the musicians move on, and her attention followed the strain till the last faint warble died in air. She then remained sunk in that pensive tranquillity which soft music leaves on the mind – a state like that produced by the view of a beautiful landscape by moon-light, or by the recollection of scenes marked with the tenderness of friends lost for ever, and with sorrows, which time has mellowed into mild regret. Such scenes are indeed, to the mind, like 'those faint traces which the memory bears of music that is past.'[8]

Other sounds soon awakened her attention: it was the solemn harmony of horns, that swelled from a distance; and, observing the gondolas arrange themselves along the margin of the terraces, she threw on her veil, and, stepping into the balcony, discerned, in the distant perspective of the canal, something like a procession, floating on the light surface of the water: as it approached, the horns and other instruments mingled sweetly, and soon after the fabled deities of the city seemed to have arisen from the ocean; for Neptune, with Venice personified as his queen, came on the undulating waves, surrounded by tritons and sea-nymphs. The fantastic splendour of this spectacle, together with the grandeur of the surrounding palaces, appeared like the vision of a poet suddenly embodied, and the fanciful images, which it awakened in Emily's mind, lingered there long after the procession had passed away. She indulged herself in imagining what might be the manners and delights of a sea-nymph, till she almost wished to throw off the habit of mortality, and plunge into the green wave to participate them.

'How delightful,' said she, 'to live amidst the coral bowers and crystal caverns of the ocean, with my sister nymphs, and listen to the sounding waters above, and to the soft shells of the tritons! and then, after sun-set, to skim on the surface of the waves round wild rocks and along sequestered shores, where, perhaps, some pensive wanderer comes to weep! Then would I sooth his sorrows with my sweet music, and offer him from a shell some of the delicious fruit that hangs round Neptune's palace.'

She was recalled from her reverie to a mere mortal supper, and could not forbear smiling at the fancies she had been indulging, and at her conviction of the serious displeasure, which Madame Montoni would have expressed, could she have been made acquainted with them.

After supper, her aunt sat late, but Montoni did not return, and she at length retired to rest. If Emily had admired the magnificence of the saloon, she was not less surprised, on observing the half-furnished and forlorn appearance of the apartments she passed in the way to her chamber, whither she went through long suites of noble rooms, that seemed, from their desolate aspect, to have been unoccupied for many years. On the walls of some were the faded remains of tapestry; from others, painted in *fresco*, the damps had almost withdrawn both colours and design. At length she reached her own chamber, spacious, desolate, and lofty, like the rest, with high lattices that opened towards the Adriatic. It brought gloomy images to her mind, but the view of the Adriatic soon gave her others more airy, among which was that of the sea-nymph, whose delights she had before amused herself with picturing; and, anxious to escape from serious reflections, she now endeavoured to throw her fanciful ideas into a train, and concluded the hour with composing the following lines:

THE SEA-NYMPH

Down, down a thousand fathom deep,
Among the sounding seas I go;
Play round the foot of ev'ry steep
Whose cliffs above the ocean grow.

There, within their secret caves,
I hear the mighty rivers roar;
And guide their streams through Neptune's waves
To bless the green earth's inmost shore:

And bid the freshen'd waters glide,
For fern-crown'd nymphs of lake, or brook,
Through winding woods and pastures wide,
And many a wild, romantic nook.

For this the nymphs, at fall of eve,
Oft dance upon the flow'ry banks,
And sing my name, and garlands weave
To bear beneath the wave their thanks.

In coral bow'rs I love to lie,
And hear the surges roll above,
And through the waters view on high
The proud ships sail, and gay clouds move.

And oft at midnight's stillest hour,
When summer seas the vessel lave,
I love to prove my charmful pow'r
While floating on the moon-light wave.

And when deep sleep the crew has bound,
And the sad lover musing leans
O’er the ship’s side, I breathe around
Such strains as speak no mortal means!

O’er the dim waves his searching eye
Sees but the vessel’s lengthen’d shade;
Above – the moon and azure sky;
Entranc’d he hears, and half afraid!

Sometimes, a single note I swell,
That, softly sweet, at distance dies;
Then wake the magic of my shell,
And choral voices round me rise!

The trembling youth, charm’d by my strain,
Calls up the crew, who, silent, bend
O’er the high deck, but list in vain;
My song is hush’d, my wonders end!

Within the mountain’s woody bay,
Where the tall bark at anchor rides,
At twilight hour, with tritons gay,
I dance upon the lapsing tides:

And with my sister-nymphs I sport,
Till the broad sun looks o’er the floods;
Then, swift we seek our crystal court,
Deep in the wave, ’mid Neptune’s woods.

In cool arcades and glassy halls
We pass the sultry hours of noon,
Beyond wherever sun-beam falls,
Weaving sea-flowers in gay festoon.

The while we chant our ditties sweet
To some soft shell that warbles near;
Join’d by the murmuring currents, fleet,
That glide along our halls so clear.

There, the pale pearl and sapphire blue,
And ruby red, and em’rald green,
Dart from the domes a changing hue,
And sparry columns deck the scene.

When the dark storm scowls o’er the deep,
And long, long peals of thunder sound,
On some high cliff my watch I keep
O’er all the restless seas around:

Till on the ridgy wave afar
Comes the lone vessel, labouring slow,
Spreading the white foam in the air,
With sail and top-mast bending low.

Then, plunge I ’mid the ocean’s roar,

My way by quiv’ring lightnings shewn,
To guide the bark to peaceful shore,
And hush the sailor’s fearful groan.

And if too late I reach its side
To save it from the ’whelming surge,
I call my dolphins o’er the tide,
To bear the crew where isles emerge.

Their mournful spirits soon I cheer,
While round the desert coast I go,
With warbled songs they faintly hear,
Oft as the stormy gust sinks low.

My music leads to lofty groves,
That wild upon the sea-bank wave;
Where sweet fruits bloom, and fresh spring roves,
And closing boughs the tempest brave.

Then, from the air spirits obey
My potent voice they love so well,
And, on the clouds, paint visions gay,
While strains more sweet at distance swell.

And thus the lonely hours I cheat,
Soothing the ship-wreck’d sailor’s heart,
Till from the waves the storms retreat,
And o’er the east the day-beams dart.

Neptune for this oft binds me fast
To rocks below, with coral chain,
Till all the tempest’s over-past,
And drowning seamen cry in vain.

Whoe’er ye are that love my lay,
Come, when red sun-set tints the wave.
To the still sands, where fairies play;
There, in cool seas, I love to lave.

CHAPTER III

‘He is a great observer, and he looks
Quite through the deeds of men: he loves no plays,
—— —— —— —— he hears no music;
Seldom he smiles; and smiles in such a sort,
As if he mock’d himself, and scorn’d his spirit
That could be mov’d to smile at any thing.
Such men as he be never at heart’s ease,
While they behold a greater than themselves.’
[SHAKESPEARE] *Julius Caesar*[1]

Montoni and his companion did not return home, till many hours after the dawn had blushed upon the Adriatic. The airy groups, which had danced all night along the colonnade of St Mark, dispersed before the morning, like so many spirits. Montoni had been otherwise engaged; his soul was little susceptible of light pleasures. He delighted in the energies of the passions; the difficulties and tempests of life, which wreck the happiness of others, roused and strengthened all the powers of his mind, and afforded him the highest enjoyments, of which his nature was capable. Without some object of strong interest, life was to him little more than a sleep; and, when pursuits of real interest failed, he substituted artificial ones, till habit changed their nature, and they ceased to be unreal. Of this kind was the habit of gaming, which he had adopted, first, for the purpose of relieving him from the languor of inaction, but had since pursued with the ardour of passion. In this occupation he had passed the night with Cavigni and a party of young men, who had more money than rank, and more vice than either. Montoni despised the greater part of these for the inferiority of their talents, rather than for their vicious inclinations, and associated with them only to make them the instruments of his purposes. Among these, however, were some of superior abilities, and a few whom Montoni admitted to his intimacy, but even towards these he still preserved a decisive and haughty air, which, while it imposed submission on weak and timid minds, roused the fierce hatred of strong ones. He had, of course, many and bitter enemies; but the rancour of their hatred proved the degree of his power; and, as power was his chief aim, he gloried more in such hatred, than it was possible he could in being esteemed. A feeling so tempered as that of esteem, he despised, and would have despised himself also had he thought himself capable of being flattered by it.

Among the few whom he distinguished, were the Signors Bertolini, Orsino, and Verezzi. The first was a man of a gay temper, strong passions, dissipated, and of unbounded extravagance, but generous, brave, and unsuspicious. Orsino was reserved, and haughty; loving power more than ostentation; of a cruel and suspicious temper; quick to feel an injury, and relentless in avenging it; cunning and unsearchable in contrivance, patient and indefatigable in the execution of his schemes. He had a perfect command of feature and of his passions, of which he had scarcely any, but pride, revenge and avarice; and, in the gratification of these, few considerations had power to restrain him, few obstacles to withstand the depth of his stratagems. This man was the chief favourite of Montoni. Verezzi was a man of some talent, of fiery imagination, and the slave of alternate passions. He was gay, voluptuous, and daring; yet had neither perseverance or true courage, and was meanly selfish in all his aims. Quick to form schemes, and sanguine in his hope of success, he was the first to undertake, and to abandon, not only his own plans, but those adopted from other persons. Proud and impetuous, he revolted against all subordination; yet those who were acquainted with his character, and watched the turn of his passions, could lead him like a child.

Such were the friends whom Montoni introduced to his family and his table, on the day after his arrival at Venice. There were also of the party a Venetian nobleman, Count Morano, and a Signora Livona, whom Montoni had introduced to his wife, as a lady of distinguished merit, and who, having called in the morning to welcome her to Venice, had been requested to be of the dinner party.

Madame Montoni received, with a very ill grace, the compliments of the Signors. She disliked them, because they were the friends of her husband; hated them, because she believed they had contributed to detain him abroad till so late an hour of the preceding morning; and envied them, since, conscious of her own want of influence, she was convinced, that he preferred their society to her own. The rank of Count Morano procured him that distinction which she refused to the rest of the company. The haughty sullenness of her countenance and manner, and the ostentatious extravagance of her dress, for she had not yet adopted the Venetian habit, were strikingly contrasted by the beauty, modesty, sweetness and simplicity of Emily, who observed, with more attention than pleasure, the party around her. The beauty and fascinating manners of Signora Livona, however, won her involuntary regard; while the sweetness of her accents and her air of gentle kindness awakened with Emily those pleasing affections, which so long had slumbered.

In the cool of the evening the party embarked in Montoni's gondola, and rowed out upon the sea. The red glow of sunset still touched the waves, and lingered in the west, where the melancholy gleam seemed slowly expiring, while the dark blue of the upper æther began to twinkle with stars. Emily sat, given up to pensive and sweet emotions. The smoothness of the water, over which she glided, its reflected images – a new heaven and trembling stars below the waves, with shadowy outlines of towers and porticos, conspired with the stillness of the hour, interrupted only by the passing wave, or the notes of distant music, to raise those emotions to enthusiasm. As she listened to the measured sound of the oars, and to the remote warblings that came in the breeze, her softened mind returned to the memory of St Aubert and to Valancourt, and tears stole to her eyes. The rays of the moon, strengthening as the shadows deepened, soon after threw a silvery gleam upon her countenance, which was partly shaded by a thin black veil, and touched it with inimitable softness. Hers was the *contour* of a Madona, with the sensibility of a Magdalen; and the pensive uplifted eye, with the tear that glittered on her cheek, confirmed the expression of the character.

The last strain of distant music now died in air, for the gondola was far upon the waves, and the party determined to have music of their own. The Count Morano, who sat next to Emily, and who had been observing her for some time in silence, snatched up a lute, and struck the chords with the finger of harmony herself, while his voice, a fine tenor, accompanied them in a rondeau full of tender sadness. To him, indeed, might have been applied that beautiful exhortation of an English poet, had it then existed:

> ____'Strike up, my master,
>
> But touch the strings with a religious softness!
> Teach sounds to languish through the night's dull ear
> Till Melancholy starts from off her couch,
>
> And Carelessness grows concert to attention!'[2]

With such powers of expression the Count sung the following

RONDEAU

Soft as yon silver ray, that sleeps
Upon the ocean's trembling tide;
Soft as the air, that lightly sweeps
Yon sail, that swells in stately pride:

Soft as the surge's stealing note,
That dies along the distant shores,
Or warbled strain, that sinks remote—
So soft the sigh my bosom pours!

True as the wave to Cynthia's ray,[3]
True as the vessel to the breeze,
True as the soul to music's sway,
Or music to Venetian seas:

Soft as yon silver beams, that sleep
Upon the ocean's trembling breast;
So soft, so true, fond Love shall weep,
So soft, so true, with *thee* shall rest.

The cadence with which he returned from the last stanza to a repetition of the first; the fine modulation in which his voice stole upon the first line, and the pathetic energy with which it pronounced the last, were such as only exquisite taste could give. When he had concluded, he gave the lute with a sigh to Emily, who, to avoid any appearance of affectation, immediately began to play. She sung a melancholy little air, one of the popular songs of her native province, with a simplicity and pathos that made it enchanting. But its well-known melody brought so forcibly to her fancy the scenes and the persons, among which she had often heard it, that her spirits were overcome, her voice trembled and ceased – and the strings of the lute were struck with a disordered hand; till, ashamed of the emotion she had betrayed, she suddenly passed on to a song so gay and airy, that the steps of the dance seemed almost to echo to the notes. *Bravissimo!* burst instantly from the lips of her delighted auditors, and she was compelled to repeat the air. Among the compliments that followed, those of the Count were not the least audible, and they had not concluded, when Emily gave the instrument to Signora Livona, whose voice accompanied it with true Italian taste.

Afterwards the Count, Emily, Cavigni, and the Signora, sung *canzonettes*,[4] accompanied by a couple of lutes and a few other instruments. Sometimes the instruments suddenly ceased, and the voices dropped from the full swell of harmony into a low chant; then, after a deep pause, they rose by degrees, the instruments one by one striking up, till the loud and full chorus soared again to heaven!

Meanwhile, Montoni, who was weary of this harmony, was considering how he might disengage himself from his party, or withdraw with such of it as would be willing to play, to a Casino.[5] In a pause of the music, he proposed returning to shore, a proposal which Orsino eagerly seconded, but which the Count and the other gentlemen as warmly opposed.

Montoni still meditated how he might excuse himself from longer attendance upon the Count, for to him only he thought excuse necessary, and how he might get to land, till the gondolieri of an empty boat, returning to Venice, hailed his people. Without troubling himself longer about an excuse, he seized this opportunity of going thither, and, committing the ladies to the care of his friends, departed with Orsino, while Emily, for the first time, saw him go with regret; for she considered his presence a protection, though she knew not what she should fear. He landed at St Mark's, and, hurrying to a Casino, was soon lost amidst a crowd of gamesters.

Meanwhile, the Count having secretly dispatched a servant in Montoni's boat, for his own gondola and musicians, Emily heard, without knowing his project, the gay song of gondolieri approaching, as they sat on the stern of the boat, and saw the tremulous gleam of the moon-light wave, which their oars disturbed. Presently she heard the sound of instruments, and then a full symphony swelled on the air, and, the boats meeting, the gondolieri hailed each other. The Count then explaining himself, the party removed into his gondola, which was embellished with all that taste could bestow.

While they partook of a collation of fruits and ice, the whole band, following at a distance, in the other boat, played the most sweet and enchanting strains, and the Count, who had again seated himself by Emily, paid her unremitted attention, and sometimes, in a low but impassioned voice, uttered compliments which she could not misunderstand. To avoid them she conversed with Signora Livona, and her manner to the Count assumed a mild reserve, which, though dignified, was too gentle to repress his assiduities: he could see, hear, speak to no person, but Emily, while Cavigni observed him now and then, with a look of displeasure, and Emily, with one of uneasiness. She now wished for nothing so much as to return to Venice, but it was near midnight before the gondolas approached St Mark's Place, where the voice of gaiety and song was loud. The busy hum of mingling sounds was heard at a considerable distance on the water, and, had not a bright moon-light discovered the city, with its terraces and towers, a stranger would almost have credited the fabled wonders of Neptune's court, and believed, that the tumult arose from beneath the waves.

They landed at St Mark's, where the gaiety of the colonnades and the beauty of the night, made Madame Montoni willingly submit to the Count's solicitations to join the promenade, and afterwards to take a supper with the rest of the party, at his Casino. If any thing could have dissipated Emily's uneasiness, it would have been the grandeur, gaiety, and novelty of the surrounding scene, adorned with Palladio's palaces, and busy with parties of masqueraders.

At length they withdrew to the Casino, which was fitted up with infinite taste, and where a splendid banquet was prepared; but here Emily's reserve made the Count perceive, that it was necessary for his interest to win the favour of Madame Montoni, which, from the condescension she had already shewn to him, appeared to be an achievement of no great difficulty. He transferred, therefore, part of his attention from Emily to her aunt, who felt too much flattered by the distinction even to disguise her emotion; and, before the party broke up, he had entirely engaged the esteem of Madame Montoni. Whenever he addressed her, her ungracious countenance relaxed into smiles, and to whatever he proposed she assented. He invited her, with the rest of the party, to take coffee, in his box at the opera, on the following evening, and Emily heard the invitation accepted, with strong anxiety, concerning the means of excusing herself from attending Madame Montoni thither.

It was very late before their gondola was ordered, and Emily's surprise was extreme, when, on quitting the Casino, she beheld the broad sun rising out of the Adriatic, while St Mark's Place was yet crowded with company. Sleep had long weighed heavily on her eyes, but now the fresh sea-breeze revived her, and she would have quitted the scene with regret, had not the Count been present, performing the duty, which he had imposed upon himself, of escorting them home. There they heard that Montoni was not yet returned; and his wife, retiring in displeasure to her apartment, at length released Emily from the fatigue of further attendance.

Montoni came home late in the morning, in a very ill humour, having lost considerably at play, and, before he withdrew to rest, had a private conference with Cavigni, whose manner, on the following day, seemed to tell, that the subject of it had not been pleasing to him.

In the evening, Madame Montoni, who, during the day, had observed a sullen silence towards her husband, received visits from some Venetian ladies, with whose sweet manners Emily was particularly charmed. They had an air of ease and kindness towards the strangers, as if they had been their familiar friends for years; and their conversation was by turns tender, sentimental and gay. Madame, though she had no taste for such conversation, and whose coarseness and selfishness sometimes exhibited a ludicrous contrast to their excessive refinement, could not remain wholly insensible to the captivations of their manner.

In a pause of conversation, a lady who was called Signora Herminia took up a lute, and began to play and sing, with as much easy gaiety, as if she had been alone. Her voice was uncommonly rich in tone, and various in expression; yet she appeared to be entirely unconscious of its powers, and meant nothing less than to display them. She sung from the gaiety of her heart, as she sat with her veil half thrown back, holding gracefully the lute, under the spreading foliage and flowers of some plants, that rose from baskets, and interlaced one of the lattices of the saloon. Emily, retiring a little from the company, sketched her figure, with the miniature scenery around her, and drew a very interesting picture, which, though it would not, perhaps, have borne criticism, had spirit and taste enough to awaken both the fancy and the heart.

When she had finished it, she presented it to the beautiful original, who was delighted with the offering, as well as the sentiment it conveyed, and assured Emily, with a smile of captivating sweetness, that she should preserve it as a pledge of her friendship.

In the evening Cavigni joined the ladies, but Montoni had other engagements; and they embarked in the gondola for St Mark's, where the same gay company seemed to flutter as on the preceding night. The cool breeze, the glassy sea, the gentle sound of its waves, and the sweeter murmur of distant music; the lofty porticos and arcades, and the happy groups that sauntered beneath them; these, with every feature and circumstance of the scene, united to charm Emily, no longer teased by the officious attentions of Count Morano. But, as she looked upon the moon-light sea, undulating along the walls of St Mark, and, lingering for a moment over those walls, caught the sweet and melancholy song of some gondolier as he sat in his boat below, waiting for his master, her softened mind returned to the memory of her home, of her friends, and of all that was dear in her native country.

After walking some time, they sat down at the door of a Casino, and, while Cavigni was accommodating them with coffee and ice, were joined by Count Morano. He sought Emily with a look of impatient delight, who, remembering all the attention he had shewn her on the preceding evening, was compelled, as before, to shrink from his assiduities into a timid reserve, except when she conversed with Signora Herminia and the other ladies of her party.

It was near midnight before they withdrew to the opera, where Emily was not so charmed but that, when she remembered the scene she had just quitted, she felt how infinitely inferior all the splendour of art is to the sublimity of nature. Her heart was not now affected, tears of admiration did not start to her eyes, as when she viewed the vast expanse of ocean, the grandeur of the heavens, and listened to the rolling waters, and to the faint music that, at intervals, mingled with their roar. Remembering these, the scene before her faded into insignificance.

Of the evening, which passed on without any particular incident, she wished the conclusion, that she might escape from the attentions of the Count; and, as opposite qualities frequently attract each other in our thoughts, thus Emily, when she looked on Count Morano, remembered Valancourt, and a sigh sometimes followed the recollection.

Several weeks passed in the course of customary visits, during which nothing remarkable occurred. Emily was amused by the manners and scenes that surrounded her, so different from those of France, but where Count Morano, too frequently for her comfort, contrived to introduce himself. His manner, figure and accomplishments, which were generally admired, Emily would, perhaps, have admired also, had her heart been disengaged from Valancourt, and had the Count forborne to persecute her with officious attentions, during which she observed some traits in his character, that prejudiced her against whatever might otherwise be good in it.

Soon after his arrival at Venice, Montoni received a packet from M. Quesnel, in which the latter mentioned the death of his wife's uncle, at his villa on the Brenta; and that, in consequence of this event, he should hasten to take possession of that estate and of other effects bequeathed to him. This uncle was the brother of Madame Quesnel's late mother; Montoni was related to her by the father's side, and though he could have had neither claim nor expectation concerning these possessions, he could scarcely conceal the envy which M. Quesnel's letter excited.

Emily had observed with concern, that, since they left France, Montoni had not even affected kindness towards her aunt, and that, after treating her, at first, with neglect, he now met her with uniform ill-humour and reserve. She had never supposed, that her aunt's foibles could have escaped the discernment of Montoni, or that her mind or figure were of a kind to deserve his attention. Her surprise, therefore, at this match, had been extreme; but since he had made the choice, she did not suspect that he would so openly have discovered his contempt of it. But Montoni, who had been allured by the seeming wealth of Madame Cheron, was now severely disappointed by her comparative poverty, and highly exasperated by the deceit she had employed to conceal it, till concealment was no longer necessary. He had been deceived in an affair, wherein he meant to be the deceiver; out-witted by the superior cunning of a woman, whose understanding he despised, and to whom he had sacrificed his pride and his liberty, without saving himself from the ruin, which had impended over his head. Madame Montoni had contrived to have the greatest part of what she really did possess, settled upon herself: what remained, though it was totally inadequate both to her husband's expectations, and to his necessities, he had converted into money, and brought with him to Venice, that he might a little longer delude society, and make a last effort to regain the fortunes he had lost.

The hints which had been thrown out to Valancourt, concerning Montoni's character and condition, were too true; but it was now left to time and occasion, to unfold the circumstances, both of what had, and of what had not been hinted, and to time and occasion we commit them.

Madame Montoni was not of a nature to bear injuries with meekness, or to resent them with dignity: her exasperated pride displayed itself in all the violence and acrimony of a little, or at least of an ill-regulated mind. She would not acknowledge, even to herself, that she had in any degree provoked contempt by her duplicity, but weakly persisted in believing, that she alone was to be pitied, and Montoni alone to be censured; for, as her mind had naturally little perception of moral obligation, she seldom understood its force but when it happened to be violated towards herself: her vanity had already been severely shocked by a discovery of Montoni's contempt; it remained to be farther reproved by a discovery of his circumstances. His mansion at Venice, though its furniture discovered a part of the truth to unprejudiced persons, told nothing to those who were blinded by a resolution to believe whatever they wished. Madame Montoni still thought herself little less than a princess, possessing a palace at Venice, and a castle among the Apennines. To the castle di Udolpho, indeed, Montoni sometimes talked of going for a few weeks to examine into its condition, and to receive some rents; for it appeared that he had not been there for two years, and that, during this period, it had been inhabited only by an old servant, whom he called his steward.

Emily listened to the mention of this journey with pleasure, for she not only expected from it new ideas, but a release from the persevering assiduities of Count Morano. In the country, too, she would have leisure to think of Valancourt, and to indulge the melancholy, which his image, and a recollection of the scenes of La Vallé, always blessed with the memory of her parents, awakened. The ideal scenes were dearer, and more soothing to her heart, than all the splendour of gay assemblies; they were a kind of talisman that expelled the poison of temporary evils, and supported her hopes of happy days: they appeared like a beautiful landscape, lighted up by a gleam of sun-shine, and seen through a perspective of dark and rugged rocks.

But Count Morano did not long confine himself to silent assiduities; he declared his passion to Emily, and made proposals to Montoni, who encouraged, though Emily rejected, him: with Montoni for his friend, and an abundance of vanity to delude him, he did not despair of success. Emily was astonished and highly disgusted at his perseverance, after she had explained her sentiments with a frankness that would not allow him to misunderstand them.

He now passed the greater part of his time at Montoni's, dining there almost daily, and attending Madame and Emily wherever they went; and all this, notwithstanding the uniform reserve of Emily, whose aunt seemed as anxious as Montoni to promote this marriage; and would never dispense with her attendance at any assembly where the Count proposed to be present.

Montoni now said nothing of his intended journey, of which Emily waited impatiently to hear; and he was seldom at home but when the Count, or Signor Orsino, was there, for between himself and Cavigni a coolness seemed to subsist, though the latter remained in his house. With Orsino, Montoni was frequently closeted for hours together, and, whatever might be the business, upon which they consulted, it appeared to be of consequence, since Montoni often sacrificed to it his favourite passion for play, and remained at home the whole night. There was somewhat of privacy, too, in the manner of Orsino's visits, which had never before occurred, and which excited not only surprise, but some degree of alarm in Emily's mind, who had unwillingly discovered much of his character when he had most endeavoured to disguise it. After these visits, Montoni was often more thoughtful than usual; sometimes the deep workings of his mind entirely abstracted him from surrounding objects, and threw a gloom over his visage that rendered it terrible; at others, his eyes seemed almost to flash fire, and all the energies of his soul appeared to be roused for some great enterprise. Emily observed these written characters of his thoughts with deep interest, and not without some degree of awe, when she considered that she was entirely in his power; but forbore even to hint her fears, or her observations, to Madame Montoni, who discerned nothing in her husband, at these times, but his usual sternness.

A second letter from M. Quesnel announced the arrival of himself and his lady at the villa Miarenti; stated several circumstances of his good fortune, respecting the affair that had brought him into Italy; and concluded with an earnest request to see Montoni, his wife and niece, at his new estate.

Emily received, about the same period, a much more interesting letter, and which soothed for a while every anxiety of her heart. Valancourt, hoping she might be still at Venice, had trusted a letter to the ordinary post, that told her of his health, and of his unceasing and anxious affection. He had lingered at Tholouse for some time after her departure, that he might indulge the melancholy pleasure of wandering through the scenes where he had been accustomed to behold her, and had thence gone to his brother's chateau, which was in the neighbourhood of La Vallé. Having mentioned this, he added, 'If the duty of attending my regiment did not require my departure, I know not when I should have resolution enough to quit the neighbourhood of a place which is endeared by the remembrance of you. The vicinity to La Vallé has alone detained me thus long at Estuviere: I frequently ride thither early in the morning, that I may wander, at leisure, through the day, among scenes, which were once your home, where I have been accustomed to see you, and to hear you converse. I have renewed my acquaintance with the good old Theresa, who rejoiced to see me, that she might talk of you: I need not say how much this circumstance attached me to her, or how eagerly I listened to her upon her favourite subject. You will guess the motive that first induced me to make myself known to Theresa: it was, indeed, no other than that of gaining admittance into the chateau and gardens, which my Emily had so lately inhabited: here, then, I wander, and meet your image under every shade: but chiefly I love to sit beneath the spreading branches of your favourite plane, where once, Emily, we sat together; where I first ventured to tell you, that I loved. O Emily! the remembrance of those moments overcomes me – I sit lost in reverie – I endeavour to see you dimly through my tears, in all the heaven of peace and innocence, such as you then appeared to me; to hear again the accents of that voice, which then thrilled my heart with tenderness and hope. I lean on the wall of the terrace, where we together watched the rapid current of the Garonne below, while I described the wild scenery about its source, but thought only of you. O Emily! are these moments passed for ever – will they never more return?'

In another part of his letter he wrote thus. 'You see my letter is dated on many different days, and, if you look back to the first, you will perceive, that I began to write soon after your departure from France. To write was, indeed, the only employment that withdrew me from my own melancholy, and rendered your absence supportable, or rather, it seemed to destroy absence, for, when I was conversing with you on paper, and telling you every sentiment and affection of my heart, you almost appeared to be present. This employment has been from time to time my chief consolation, and I have deferred sending off my packet, merely for the comfort of prolonging it, though it was certain, that what I had written, was written to no purpose till you received it. Whenever my mind has been more than usually depressed I have come to pour forth its sorrows to you, and have always found consolation; and, when any little occurrence has interested my heart, and given a gleam of joy to my spirits, I have hastened to communicate it to you, and have received reflected satisfaction. Thus, my letter is a kind of picture of my life and of my thoughts for the last month, and thus, though it has been deeply interesting to me, while I wrote it, and I dare hope will, for the same reason, be not indifferent to you, yet to other readers it would seem to abound only in frivolities. Thus it is always, when we attempt to describe the finer movements of the heart, for they are too fine to be discerned, they can only be experienced, and are therefore passed over by the indifferent observer, while the interested one feels, that all description is imperfect and unnecessary, except as it may prove the sincerity of the writer, and sooth his own sufferings. You will pardon all this egotism – for I am a lover.

‘I have just heard of a circumstance, which entirely destroys all my fairy paradise of ideal delight, and which will reconcile me to the necessity of returning to my regiment, for I must no longer wander beneath the beloved shades, where I have been accustomed to meet you in thought. – La Vallé is let! I have reason to believe this is without your knowledge, from what Theresa told me this morning, and, therefore, I mention the circumstance. She shed tears, while she related, that she was going to leave the service of her dear mistress, and the chateau where she had lived so many happy years; and all this, added she, without even a letter from Mademoiselle to soften the news; but it is all Mons. Quesnel’s doings, and I dare say she does not even know what is going forward.

‘Theresa added, That she had received a letter from him, informing her the chateau was let, and that, as her services would no longer be required, she must quit the place, on that day week, when the new tenant would arrive.

‘Theresa had been surprised by a visit from M. Quesnel, some time before the receipt of this letter, who was accompanied by a stranger that viewed the premises with much curiosity.’

Towards the conclusion of his letter, which is dated a week after this sentence, Valancourt adds, ‘I have received a summons from my regiment, and I join it without regret, since I am shut out from the scenes that are so interesting to my heart. I rode to La Vallé this morning, and heard that the new tenant was arrived, and that Theresa was gone. I should not treat the subject thus familiarly if I did not believe you to be uninformed of this disposal of your house; for your satisfaction I have endeavoured to learn something of the character and fortune of your tenant; but without success. He is a gentleman, they say, and this is all I can hear. The place, as I wandered round the boundaries, appeared more melancholy to my imagination, than I had ever seen it. I wished earnestly to have got admittance, that I might have taken another leave of your favourite plane-tree, and thought of you once more beneath its shade: but I forbore to tempt the curiosity of strangers: the fishing-house in the woods, however, was still open to me; thither I went, and passed an hour, which I cannot even look back upon without emotion. O Emily! Surely we are not separated for ever – surely we shall live for each other!’

This letter brought many tears to Emily’s eyes; tears of tenderness and satisfaction on learning that Valancourt was well, and that time and absence had in no degree effaced her image from his heart. There were passages in this letter which particularly affected her, such as those describing his visits to La Vallé, and the sentiments of delicate affection that its scenes had awakened. It was a considerable time before her mind was sufficiently abstracted from Valancourt to feel the force of his intelligence concerning La Vallé. That Mons. Quesnel should let it, without even consulting her on the measure, both surprised and shocked her, particularly as it proved the absolute authority he thought himself entitled to exercise in her affairs. It is true, he had proposed, before she left France, that the chateau should be let, during her absence, and to the œconomical prudence of this she had nothing to object; but the committing what had been her father’s villa to the power and caprice of strangers, and the depriving herself of a sure home, should any unhappy circumstances make her look back to her home as an asylum, were considerations that made her, even then, strongly oppose the measure. Her father, too, in his last hour, had received from her a solemn promise never to dispose of La Vallé; and this she considered as in some degree violated if she suffered the place to be let. But it was now evident with how little respect M. Quesnel had regarded these objections, and how insignificant he considered every obstacle to pecuniary advantage. It appeared, also, that he had not even condescended to inform Montoni of the step he had taken, since no motive was evident for Montoni’s concealing the circumstance from her, if it had been made known to him: this both displeased and surprised her; but the chief subjects of her uneasiness were – the temporary disposal of La Vallé, and the dismission of her father’s old and faithful servant. – ‘Poor Theresa,’ said Emily, ‘thou hadst not saved much in thy servitude, for thou wast always tender towards the poor, and believed’st thou shouldst die in the family, where thy best years had been spent. Poor Theresa! – now thou art turned out in thy old age to seek thy bread!’

Emily wept bitterly as these thoughts passed over her mind, and she determined to consider what could be done for Theresa, and to talk very explicitly to M. Quesnel on the subject; but she much feared that his cold heart could feel only for itself. She determined also to enquire whether he had made any mention of her affairs, in his letters to Montoni, who soon gave her the opportunity she sought, by desiring that she would attend him in his study. She had little doubt, that the interview was intended for the purpose of communicating to her a part of M. Quesnel’s letter concerning the transactions at La Vallé, and she obeyed him immediately. Montoni was alone.

‘I have just been writing to Mons. Quesnel,’ said he when Emily appeared, ‘in reply to the letter I received from him a few days ago, and I wished to talk to you upon a subject that occupied part of it.’

‘I also wished to speak with you on this topic, sir,’ said Emily.

‘It is a subject of some interest to you, undoubtedly,’ rejoined Montoni, ‘and I think you must see it in the light that I do; indeed it will not bear any other. I trust you will agree with me, that any objection founded on sentiment, as they call it, ought to yield to circumstances of solid advantage.’

‘Granting this, sir,’ replied Emily, modestly, ‘those of humanity ought surely to be attended to. But I fear it is now too late to deliberate upon this plan, and I must regret, that it is no longer in my power to reject it.’

‘It is too late,’ said Montoni, ‘but since it is so, I am pleased to observe, that you submit to reason and necessity without indulging useless complaint. I applaud this conduct exceedingly, the more, perhaps, since it discovers a strength of mind seldom observable in your sex. When you are older you will look back with gratitude to the friends who assisted in rescuing you from the romantic illusions of sentiment, and will perceive, that they are only the snares of childhood, and should be vanquished the moment you escape from the nursery. I have not closed my letter, and you may add a few lines to inform your uncle of your acquiescence. You will soon see him, for it is my intention to take you, with Madame Montoni, in a few days to Miarenti, and you can then talk over the affair.'

Emily wrote on the opposite page of the paper as follows:

'It is now useless, sir, for me to remonstrate upon the circumstances of which Signor Montoni informs me that he has written. I could have wished, at least, that the affair had been concluded with less precipitation, that I might have taught myself to subdue some prejudices, as the Signor calls them, which still linger in my heart. As it is, I submit. In point of prudence nothing certainly can be objected; but, though I submit, I have yet much to say on some other points of the subject, when I shall have the honour of seeing you. In the meantime I entreat you will take care of Theresa, for the sake of,

Sir,
Your affectionate niece,
EMILY ST AUBERT.'

Montoni smiled satirically at what Emily had written, but did not object to it, and she withdrew to her own apartment, where she sat down to begin a letter to Valancourt, in which she related the particulars of her journey, and her arrival at Venice, described some of the most striking scenes in the passage over the Alps; her emotions on her first view of Italy; the manners and characters of the people around her, and some few circumstances of Montoni's conduct. But she avoided even naming Count Morano, much more the declaration he had made, since she well knew how tremblingly alive to fear is real love, how jealously watchful of every circumstance that may affect its interest; and she scrupulously avoided to give Valancourt even the slightest reason for believing he had a rival.

On the following day Count Morano dined again at Montoni's. He was in an uncommon flow of spirits, and Emily thought there was somewhat of exultation in his manner of addressing her, which she had never observed before. She endeavoured to repress this by more than her usual reserve, but the cold civility of her air now seemed rather to encourage than to depress him. He appeared watchful of an opportunity of speaking with her alone, and more than once solicited this; but Emily always replied, that she could hear nothing from him which he would be unwilling to repeat before the whole company.

In the evening, Madame Montoni and her party went out upon the sea, and as the Count led Emily to his *zendaletto*,[6] he carried her hand to his lips, and thanked her for the condescension she had shewn him. Emily, in extreme surprise and displeasure, hastily withdrew her hand, and concluded that he had spoken ironically; but, on reaching the steps of the terrace, and observing by the livery, that it was the Count's *zendaletto*, which waited below, while the rest of the party, having arranged themselves in the gondolas, were moving on, she determined not to permit a separate conversation, and, wishing him a good evening, returned to the portico. The Count followed to expostulate and entreat, and Montoni, who then came out, rendered solicitation unnecessary, for, without condescending to speak, he took her hand, and led her to the *zendaletto*. Emily was not silent; she entreated Montoni, in a low voice, to consider the impropriety of these circumstances, and that he would spare her the mortification of submitting to them; he, however, was inflexible.

'This caprice is intolerable,' said he, 'and shall not be indulged: here is no impropriety in the case.'

At this moment, Emily's dislike of Count Morano arose to abhorrence. That he should, with undaunted assurance, thus pursue her, notwithstanding all she had expressed on the subject of his addresses, and think, as it was evident he did, that her opinion of him was of no consequence, so long as his pretensions were sanctioned by Montoni, added indignation to the disgust which she had felt towards him. She was somewhat relieved by observing that Montoni was to be of the party, who seated himself on one side of her, while Morano placed himself on the other. There was a pause of some moments as the gondolieri prepared their oars, and Emily trembled from apprehension of the discourse that might follow this silence. At length she collected courage to break it herself, in the hope of preventing fine speeches from Morano, and reproof from Montoni. To some trivial remark which she made, the latter returned a short and disobliging reply; but Morano immediately followed with a general observation, which he contrived to end with a particular compliment, and, though Emily passed it without even the notice of a smile, he was not discouraged.

'I have been impatient,' said he, addressing Emily, 'to express my gratitude; to thank you for your goodness; but I must also thank Signor Montoni, who has allowed me this opportunity of doing so.'

Emily regarded the Count with a look of mingled astonishment and displeasure.

'Why,' continued he, 'should you wish to diminish the delight of this moment by that air of cruel reserve? – Why seek to throw me again into the perplexities of doubt, by teaching your eyes to contradict the kindness of your late declaration? You cannot doubt the sincerity, the ardour of my passion; it is therefore unnecessary, charming Emily! surely unnecessary, any longer to attempt a disguise of your sentiments.'

'If I ever had disguised them, sir,' said Emily, with recollected spirit, 'it would certainly be unnecessary any longer to do so. I had hoped, sir, that you would have spared me any farther necessity of alluding to them; but, since you do not grant this, hear me declare, and for the last time, that your perseverance has deprived you even of the esteem, which I was inclined to believe you merited.'

'Astonishing!' exclaimed Montoni: 'this is beyond even my expectation, though I have hitherto done justice to the caprice of the sex! But you will observe, Mademoiselle Emily, that I am no lover, though Count Morano is, and that I will not be made the amusement of your capricious moments. Here is the offer of an alliance, which would do honour to any family; yours, you will recollect, is not noble; you long resisted my remonstrances, but my honour is now engaged, and it shall not be trifled with. – You shall adhere to the declaration, which you have made me an agent to convey to the Count.'

'I must certainly mistake you, sir,' said Emily; 'my answers on the subject have been uniform; it is unworthy of you to accuse me of caprice. If you have condescended to be my agent, it is an honour I did not solicit. I myself have constantly assured Count Morano, and you also, sir, that I never can accept the honour he offers me, and I now repeat the declaration.'

The Count looked with an air of surprise and enquiry at Montoni, whose countenance also was marked with surprise, but it was surprise mingled with indignation.

'Here is confidence, as well as caprice!' said the latter. 'Will you deny your own words, Madam?'

'Such a question is unworthy of an answer, sir;' said Emily blushing; 'you will recollect yourself, and be sorry that you have asked it.'

'Speak to the point,' rejoined Montoni, in a voice of increasing vehemence. 'Will you deny your own words; will you deny, that you acknowledged, only a few hours ago, that it was too late to recede from your engagements, and that you accepted the Count's hand?'

'I will deny all this, for no words of mine ever imported it.'

'Astonishing! Will you deny what you wrote to Mons. Quesnel, your uncle? if you do, your own hand will bear testimony against you. What have you now to say?' continued Montoni, observing the silence and confusion of Emily.

'I now perceive, sir, that you are under a very great error, and that I have been equally mistaken.'

'No more duplicity, I entreat; be open and candid, if it be possible.'

'I have always been so, sir; and can claim no merit in such conduct, for I have had nothing to conceal.'

'How is this, Signor?' cried Morano, with trembling emotion.

'Suspend your judgment, Count,' replied Montoni, 'the wiles of a female heart are unsearchable. Now, Madam, your *explanation*.'

'Excuse me, sir, if I withhold my explanation till you appear willing to give me your confidence; assertion at present can only subject me to insult.'

'Your explanation, I entreat you!' said Morano.

'Well, well,' rejoined Montoni, 'I give you my confidence; let us hear this explanation.'

'Let me lead to it then, by asking a question.'

'As many as you please,' said Montoni, contemptuously.

'What, then, was the subject of your letter to Mons. Quesnel?'

'The same that was the subject of your note to him, certainly. You did well to stipulate for my confidence before you demanded that question.'

'I must beg you will be more explicit, sir; what was that subject?'

'What could it be, but the noble offer of Count Morano,' said Montoni.

'Then, sir, we entirely misunderstood each other,' replied Emily.

'We entirely misunderstood each other too, I suppose,' rejoined Montoni, 'in the conversation which preceded the writing of that note? I must do you the justice to own, that you are very ingenious at this same art of misunderstanding.'

Emily tried to restrain the tears that came to her eyes, and to answer with becoming firmness, 'Allow me, sir, to explain myself fully, or to be wholly silent.'

'The explanation may now be dispensed with; it is anticipated. If Count Morano still thinks one necessary, I will give him an honest one. – You have changed your intention since our last conversation; and, if he can have patience and humility enough to wait till to-morrow, he will probably find it changed again: but as I have neither the patience or the humility, which you expect from a lover, I warn you of the effect of my displeasure!'

'Montoni, you are too precipitate,' said the Count, who had listened to this conversation in extreme anxiety and impatience; – 'Signora, I entreat your own explanation of this affair!'

'Signor Montoni has said justly,' replied Emily, 'that all explanation may now be dispensed with; after what has passed I cannot suffer myself to give one. It is sufficient for me, and for you, sir, that I repeat my late declaration; let me hope this is the last time it will be necessary for me to repeat it – I never can accept the honour of your alliance.'

'Charming Emily!' exclaimed the Count in an impassioned tone, 'let not resentment make you unjust; let me not suffer for the offence of Montoni! – Revoke —'

'Offence!' interrupted Montoni—'Count, this language is ridiculous, this submission is childish! – speak as becomes a man, not as the slave of a pretty tyrant.' 'You distract me, Signor; suffer me to plead my own cause; you have already proved insufficient to it.'

'All conversation on this subject, sir,' said Emily, 'is worse than useless, since it can bring only pain to each of us: if you would oblige me, pursue it no farther.'

'It is impossible, Madam, that I can thus easily resign the object of a passion, which is the delight and torment of my life. – I must still love – still pursue you with unremitting ardour; – when you shall be convinced of the strength and constancy of my passion, your heart must soften into pity and repentance.'

'Is this generous, sir? is this manly? Can it either deserve or obtain the esteem you solicit, thus to continue a persecution from which I have no present means of escaping?'

A gleam of moonlight that fell upon Morano's countenance, revealed the strong emotions of his soul; and, glancing on Montoni discovered the dark resentment, which contrasted his features.

'By heaven this is too much!' suddenly exclaimed the Count; 'Signor Montoni, you treat me ill; it is from you that I shall look for explanation.'

'From me, sir! you shall have it;' muttered Montoni, 'if your discernment is indeed so far obscured by passion, as to make explanation necessary. And for you, Madam, you should learn, that a man of honour is not to be trifled with, though you may, perhaps, with impunity, treat a *boy* like a puppet.'

This sarcasm roused the pride of Morano, and the resentment which he had felt at the indifference of Emily, being lost in indignation of the insolence of Montoni, he determined to mortify him, by defending her.

'This also,' said he, replying to Montoni's last words, 'this also, shall not pass unnoticed. I bid you learn, sir, that you have a stronger enemy than a woman to contend with: I will protect Signora St Aubert from your threatened resentment. You have misled me, and would revenge your disappointed views upon the innocent.'

'Misled you!' retorted Montoni with quickness, 'is my conduct – my word' – then pausing, while he seemed endeavouring to restrain the resentment, that flashed in his eyes, in the next moment he added, in a subdued voice, 'Count Morano, this is a language, a sort of conduct to which I am not accustomed: it is the conduct of a passionate boy – as such, I pass it over in contempt.'

'In contempt, Signor?'

'The respect I owe myself,' rejoined Montoni, 'requires, that I should converse more largely with you upon some points of the subject in dispute. Return with me to Venice, and I will condescend to convince you of your error.'

'Condescend, sir! but I will not condescend to be so conversed with.'

Montoni smiled contemptuously; and Emily, now terrified for the consequences of what she saw and heard, could no longer be silent. She explained the whole subject upon which she had mistaken Montoni in the morning, declaring, that she understood him to have consulted her solely concerning the disposal of La Vallée, and concluding with entreating, that he would write immediately to M. Quesnel, and rectify the mistake.

But Montoni either was, or affected to be, still incredulous; and Count Morano was still entangled in perplexity. While she was speaking, however, the attention of her auditors had been diverted from the immediate occasion of their resentment, and their passion consequently became less. Montoni desired the Count would order his servants to row back to Venice, that he might have some private conversation with him; and Morano, somewhat soothed by his softened voice and manner, and eager to examine into the full extent of his difficulties, complied.

Emily, comforted by this prospect of release, employed the present moments in endeavouring, with conciliating care, to prevent any fatal mischief between the persons who so lately had persecuted and insulted her.

Her spirits revived, when she heard once more the voice of song and laughter, resounding from the grand canal, and at length entered again between its stately piazzas. The *zendaletto* stopped at Montoni's mansion and the Count hastily led her into the hall, where Montoni took his arm, and said something in a low voice, on which Morano kissed the hand he held, notwithstanding Emily's effort to disengage it, and, wishing her a good evening, with an accent and look she could not misunderstand, returned to his *zendaletto* with Montoni.

Emily, in her own apartment, considered with intense anxiety all the unjust and tyrannical conduct of Montoni, the dauntless perseverance of Morano, and her own desolate situation, removed from her friends and country. She looked in vain to Valancourt, confined by his profession to a distant kingdom, as her protector; but it gave her comfort to know, that there was, at least, one person in the world, who would empathize in her afflictions, and whose wishes would fly eagerly to release her. Yet she determined not to give him unavailing pain by relating the reasons she had to regret the having rejected his better judgment concerning Montoni; reasons, however, which could not induce her to lament the delicacy and disinterested affection that had made her reject his proposal for a clandestine marriage. The approaching interview with her uncle she regarded with some degree of hope, for she determined to represent to him the distresses of her situation, and to entreat that he would allow her to return to France with him and Madame Quesnel. Then, suddenly remembering that her beloved La Vallée, her only home, was no longer at her command, her tears flowed anew, and she feared that she had little pity to expect from a man who, like M. Quesnel, could dispose of it without deigning to consult with her, and could dismiss an aged and faithful servant, destitute of either support or asylum. But, though it was certain, that she had herself no longer a home in France, and few, very few friends there, she determined to return, if possible, that she might be released from the power of Montoni, whose particularly oppressive conduct towards herself, and general character as to others, were justly terrible to her imagination. She had no wish to reside with her uncle, M. Quesnel, since his behaviour to her late father and to herself, had been uniformly such as to convince her, that in flying to him she could only obtain an exchange of oppressors; neither had she the slightest intention of consenting to the proposal of Valancourt for an immediate marriage, though this would give her a lawful and a generous protector, for the chief reasons, which had formerly influenced her conduct, still existed against it, while others, which seemed to justify the step, would now be done away; and his interest, his fame were at all times too dear to her, to suffer her to consent to a union, which, at this early period of their lives, would probably defeat both. One sure, and proper asylum, however, would still be open to her in France. She knew that she could board in the convent, where she had formerly experienced so much kindness, and which had an affecting and solemn claim upon her heart, since it contained the remains of her late father. Here she could remain in safety and tranquillity, till the term, for which La Vallée might be let, should expire; or, till the arrangement of M. Motteville's affairs enabled her so far to estimate the remains of her fortune, as to judge whether it would be prudent for her to reside there.

Concerning Montoni's conduct with respect to his letters to M. Quesnel, she had many doubts; however he might be at first mistaken on the subject, she much suspected that he wilfully persevered in his error, as a means of intimidating her into a compliance with his wishes of uniting her to Count Morano. Whether this was or was not the fact, she was extremely anxious to explain the affair to M. Quesnel, and looked forward with a mixture of impatience, hope and fear, to her approaching visit.

On the following day, Madame Montoni, being alone with Emily, introduced the mention of Count Morano, by expressing her surprise, that she had not joined the party on the water the preceding evening, and at her abrupt departure to Venice. Emily then related what had passed, expressed her concern for the mutual mistake that had occurred between Montoni and herself, and solicited her aunt's kind offices in urging him to give a decisive denial to the Count's further addresses; but she soon perceived, that Madame Montoni had not been ignorant of the late conversation, when she introduced the present.

'You have no encouragement to expect from me,' said her aunt, 'in these notions. I have already given my opinion on the subject, and think Signor Montoni right in enforcing, by any means, your consent. If young persons will be blind to their interest, and obstinately oppose it, why, the greatest blessings they can have are friends, who will oppose their folly. Pray what pretensions of any kind do you think you have to such a match as is now offered you?'

'Not any whatever, Madam,' replied Emily, 'and, therefore, at least, suffer me to be happy in my humility.'

'Nay, niece, it cannot be denied, that you have pride enough; my poor brother, your father, had his share of pride too; though, let me add, his fortune did not justify it.'

Emily, somewhat embarrassed by the indignation, which this malevolent allusion to her father excited, and by the difficulty of rendering her answer as temperate as it should be reprehensive, hesitated for some moments, in a confusion, which highly gratified her aunt. At length she said, 'My father's pride, Madam, had a noble object – the happiness which he knew could be derived only from goodness, knowledge and charity. As it never consisted in his superiority, in point of fortune, to some persons, it was not humbled by his inferiority, in that respect, to others. He never disdained those, who were wretched by poverty and misfortune; he did sometimes despise persons, who, with many opportunities of happiness, rendered themselves miserable by vanity, ignorance and cruelty. I shall think it my highest glory to emulate such pride.'

'I do not pretend to understand any thing of these high-flown sentiments, niece; you have all that glory to yourself: I would teach you a little plain sense, and not have you so wise as to despise happiness.'

'That would indeed not be wisdom, but folly,' said Emily, 'for wisdom can boast no higher attainment than happiness; but you will allow, Madam, that our ideas of happiness may differ. I cannot doubt, that you wish me to be happy, but I must fear you are mistaken in the means of making me so.'

'I cannot boast of a learned education, niece, such as your father thought proper to give you, and, therefore, do not pretend to understand all these fine speeches about happiness. I must be contented to understand only common sense, and happy would it have been for you and your father, if that had been included in his education.'

Emily was too much shocked by these reflections on her father's memory, to despise this speech as it deserved.

Madame Montoni was about to speak, but Emily quitted the room, and retired to her own, where the little spirit she had lately exerted yielded to grief and vexation, and left her only to her tears. From every review of her situation she could derive, indeed, only new sorrow. To the discovery, which had just been forced upon her, of Montoni's unworthiness, she had now to add, that of the cruel vanity, for the gratification of which her aunt was about to sacrifice her; of the effrontery and cunning, with which, at the time that she meditated the sacrifice, she boasted of her tenderness, or included her victim; and of the venomous envy, which, as it did not scruple to attack her father's character, could scarcely be expected to withhold from her own.

During the few days, that intervened between this conversation and the departure for Miarenti, Montoni did not once address himself to Emily. His looks sufficiently declared his resentment; but that he should forbear to renew a mention of the subject of it, exceedingly surprised her, who was no less astonished, that, during three days, Count Morano neither visited Montoni, or was named by him. Several conjectures arose in her mind. Sometimes she feared that the dispute between them had been revived, and had ended fatally to the Count. Sometimes she was inclined to hope, that weariness, or disgust at her firm rejection of his suit had induced him to relinquish it; and, at others, she suspected that he had now recourse to stratagem, and forbore his visits, and prevailed with Montoni to forbear the repetition of his name, in the expectation that gratitude and generosity would prevail with her to give him the consent, which he could not hope from love.

Thus passed the time in vain conjecture, and alternate hopes and fears, till the day arrived when Montoni was to set out for the villa of Miarenti, which, like the preceding ones, neither brought the Count, or the mention of him.

Montoni having determined not to leave Venice, till towards evening, that he might avoid the heats, and catch the cool breezes of night, embarked about an hour before sun-set, with his family, in a barge, for the Brenta. Emily sat alone near the stern of the vessel, and, as it floated slowly on, watched the gay and lofty city lessening from her view, till its palaces seemed to sink in the distant waves, while its loftier towers and domes, illumined by the declining sun, appeared on the horizon, like those far-seen clouds which, in more northern climes, often linger on the western verge, and catch the last light of a summer's evening. Soon after, even these grew dim, and faded in distance from her sight; but she still sat gazing on the vast scene of cloudless sky, and mighty waters, and listening in pleasing awe to the deep-sounding waves, while, as her eyes glanced over the Adriatic, towards the opposite shores, which were, however, far beyond the reach of sight, she thought of Greece, and, a thousand classical remembrances stealing to her mind, she experienced that pensive luxury which is felt on viewing the scenes of ancient story, and on comparing their present state of silence and solitude with that of their former grandeur and animation. The scenes of the Illiad illapsed in glowing colours to her fancy[7] – scenes, once the haunt of heroes – now lonely, and in ruins; but which still shone, in the poet's strain, in all their youthful splendour.

As her imagination painted with melancholy touches, the deserted plains of Troy, such as they appeared in this after-day, she reanimated the landscape with the following little story.

STANZAS

O'er Ilion's plains,[8] where once the warrior bled,
And once the poet rais'd his deathless strain,
O'er Ilion's plains a weary driver led
His stately camels: For the ruin'd fane[9]

Wide round the lonely scene his glance he threw,
For now the red cloud faded in the west,
And twilight o'er the silent landscape drew
Her deep'ning veil; eastward his course he prest:

There, on the grey horizon's glimm'ring bound,
Rose the proud columns of deserted Troy,
And wandering shepherds now a shelter found
Within those walls, where princes wont to joy.

Beneath a lofty porch the driver pass'd,
Then, from his camels heav'd the heavy load;
Partook with them the simple, cool repast,
And in short vesper gave himself to God.

From distant lands with merchandise he came,
His all of wealth his patient servants bore;
Oft deep-drawn sighs his anxious wish proclaim
To reach, again, his happy cottage door;

For there, his wife, his little children, dwell;
Their smiles shall pay the toil of many an hour:
Ev'n now warm tears to expectation swell,
As fancy o'er his mind extends her pow'r.

A death-like stillness reign'd, where once the song,
The song of heroes, wak'd the midnight air,
Save, when a solemn murmur roll'd along,
That seem'd to say – 'For future worlds prepare.'

For Time's imperious voice was frequent heard
Shaking the marble temple to its fall,
(By hands he long had conquer'd, vainly rear'd)
And distant ruins answer'd to his call.

While Hamet slept, his camels round him lay,

Beneath him, all his store of wealth was piled;
And here, his cruise[10] and empty wallet lay,
And there, the flute that chear'd him in the wild.

The robber Tartar on his slumber stole,
For o'er the waste, at eve, he watch'd his train;
Ah! who his thirst of plunder shall control?
Who calls on him for mercy – calls in vain!

A poison'd poignard in his belt he wore,
A crescent sword depended at his side,
The deathful quiver at his back he bore,
And infants – at his very look had died!

The moon's cold beam athwart the temple fell,
And to his sleeping prey the Tartar led;
But soft! – a startled camel shook his bell,
Then stretch'd his limbs, and rear'd his drowsy head.

Hamet awoke! the poignard glitter'd high!
Swift from his couch he sprung, and 'scap'd the blow;
When from an unknown hand the arrows fly,
That lay the ruffian, in his vengeance, low.

He groan'd, he died! from forth a column'd gate
A fearful shepherd, pale and silent, crept,
Who, as he watch'd his folded flock star-late,
Had mark'd the robber steal where Hamet slept.

He fear'd his own, and sav'd a stranger's life!
Poor Hamet clasp'd him to his grateful heart;
Then, rous'd his camels for the dusty strife,
And, with the shepherd, hasten'd to depart.

And now, Aurora[11] breathes her fresh'ning gale,
And faintly trembles on the eastern cloud;
And now, the sun, from under twilight's veil,
Looks gaily forth, and melts her airy shroud.

Wide o'er the level plains, his slanting beams
Dart their long lines on Ilion's tower'd scite;[12]
The distant Hellespont with morning gleams,
And old Scamander[13] winds his waves in light.

All merry sound the camel bells, so gay,
And merry beats fond Hamet's heart, for he,
E'er the dim evening steals upon the day,
His children, wife and happy home shall see.

As Emily approached the shores of Italy she began to discriminate the rich features and varied colouring of the landscape – the purple hills, groves of orange, pine and cypress, shading magnificent villas, and towns rising among vineyards and plantations. The noble Brenta, pouring its broad waves into the sea, now appeared, and, when she reached its mouth, the barge stopped, that the horses might be fastened which were to tow it up the stream. This done, Emily gave a last look to the Adriatic, and to the dim sail,

____'That from the sky-mix'd wave

'Dawns on the sight,'[14]

and the barge slowly glided between the green and luxuriant slopes of the river. The grandeur of the Palladian villas, that adorn these shores, was considerably heightened by the setting rays, which threw strong contrasts of light and shade upon the porticos and long arcades, and beamed a mellow lustre upon the orangeries and the tall groves of pine and cypress, that overhung the buildings. The scent of oranges, of flowering myrtles, and other odoriferous plants was diffused upon the air, and often, from these embowered retreats, a strain of music stole on the calm, and 'softened into silence.'[15]

The sun now sunk below the horizon, twilight fell over the landscape, and Emily, wrapt in musing silence, continued to watch its features gradually vanishing into obscurity. She remembered her many happy evenings, when with St Aubert she had observed the shades of twilight steal over a scene as beautiful as this, from the gardens of La Vallée, and a tear fell to the memory of her father. Her spirits were softened into melancholy by the influence of the hour, by the low murmur of the wave passing under the vessel, and the stillness of the air, that trembled only at intervals with distant music: – why else should she, at these moments, have looked on her attachment to Valancourt with presages so very afflicting, since she had but lately received letters from him, that had soothed for a while all her anxieties? It now seemed to her oppressed mind, that she had taken leave of him for ever, and that the countries, which separated them, would never more be re-traced by her. She looked upon Count Morano with horror, as in some degree the cause of this; but apart from him, a conviction, if such that may be called, which arises from no proof, and which she knew not how to account for, seized her mind – that she should never see Valancourt again. Though she knew, that neither Morano's solicitations, nor Montoni's commands had lawful power to enforce her obedience, she regarded both with a superstitious dread, that they would finally prevail.

Lost in this melancholy reverie, and shedding frequent tears, Emily was at length roused by Montoni, and she followed him to the cabin, where refreshments were spread, and her aunt was seated alone. The countenance of Madame Montoni was inflamed with resentment, that appeared to be the consequence of some conversation she had held with her husband, who regarded her with a kind of sullen disdain, and both preserved, for some time, a haughty silence. Montoni then spoke to Emily of Mons. Quesnel: 'You will not, I hope, persist in disclaiming your knowledge of the subject of my letter to him?'

'I had hoped, Sir, that it was no longer necessary for me to disclaim it,' said Emily, 'I had hoped, from your silence, that you was convinced of your error.'

'You have hoped impossibilities then,' replied Montoni; 'I might as reasonably have expected to find sincerity and uniformity of conduct in one of your sex, as you to convict me of error in this affair.'

Emily blushed, and was silent; she now perceived too clearly, that she had hoped an impossibility, for, where no mistake had been committed no conviction could follow; and it was evident, that Montoni's conduct had not been the consequence of mistake, but of design.

Anxious to escape from conversation, which was both afflicting and humiliating to her, she soon returned to the deck, and resumed her station near the stern, without apprehension of cold, for no vapour rose from the water, and the air was dry and tranquil; here, at least, the benevolence of nature allowed her the quiet which Montoni had denied her elsewhere. It was now past midnight. The stars shed a kind of twilight, that served to shew the dark outline of the shores on either hand, and the grey surface of the river; till the moon rose from behind a high palm grove, and shed her mellow lustre over the scene. The vessel glided smoothly on: amid the stillness of the hour Emily heard, now and then, the solitary voice of the barge-men on the bank, as they spoke to their horses; while, from a remote part of the vessel, with melancholy song,

______'The sailor sooth'd,

Beneath the trembling moon, the midnight wave.'[16]

Emily, meanwhile, anticipated her reception by Mons. and Madame Quesnel; considered what she should say on the subject of La Vallée; and then, to with-hold her mind from more anxious topics, tried to amuse herself by discriminating the faint-drawn features of the landscape, reposing in the moon-light. While her fancy thus wandered, she saw, at a distance, a building peeping between the moon-light trees, and, as the barge approached, heard voices speaking, and soon distinguished the lofty portico of a villa, overshadowed by groves of pine and sycamore, which she recollected to be the same, that had formerly been pointed out to her, as belonging to Madame Quesnel's relative.

The barge stopped at a flight of marble steps, which led up the bank to a lawn. Lights appeared between some pillars beyond the portico, Montoni sent forward his servant, and then disembarked with his family. They found Mons. and Madame Quesnel, with a few friends, seated on sofas in the portico, enjoying the cool breeze of the night, and eating fruits and ices, while some of their servants at a little distance, on the river's bank, were performing a simple serenade. Emily was now accustomed to the way of living in this warm country, and was not surprised to find Mons. and Madame Quesnel in their portico, two hours after midnight.

The usual salutations being over, the company seated themselves in the portico, and refreshments were brought them from the adjoining hall, where a banquet was spread, and servants attended. When the bustle of this meeting had subsided, and Emily had recovered from the little flutter into which it had thrown her spirits, she was struck with the singular beauty of the hall, so perfectly accommodated to the luxuries of the season. It was of white marble, and the roof, rising into an open cupola, was supported by columns of the same material. Two opposite sides of the apartment, terminating in open porticos, admitted to the hall a full view of the gardens, and of the river scenery; in the centre a fountain continually refreshed the air, and seemed to heighten the fragrance, that breathed from the surrounding orangeries, while its dashing waters gave an agreeable and soothing sound. Etruscan lamps, suspended from the pillars, diffused a brilliant light over the interior part of the hall, leaving the remoter porticos to the softer lustre of the moon.

Mons. Quesnel talked apart to Montoni of his own affairs, in his usual strain of self-importance; boasted of his new acquisitions, and then affected to pity some disappointments, which Montoni had lately sustained. Meanwhile, the latter, whose pride at least enabled him to despise such vanity as this, and whose discernment at once detected under this assumed pity, the frivolous malignity of Quesnel’s mind, listened to him in contemptuous silence, till he named his niece, and then they left the portico, and walked away into the gardens.

Emily, however, still attended to Madame Quesnel, who spoke of France (for even the name of her native country was dear to her) and she found some pleasure in looking at a person, who had lately been in it. That country, too, was inhabited by Valancourt, and she listened to the mention of it, with a faint hope, that he also would be named. Madame Quesnel, who, when she was in France, had talked with rapture of Italy, now, that she was in Italy, talked with equal praise of France, and endeavoured to excite the wonder and the envy of her auditors by accounts of places, which they had not been happy enough to see. In these descriptions she not only imposed upon them, but upon herself, for she never thought a present pleasure equal to one, that was passed; and thus the delicious climate, the fragrant orangeries and all the luxuries, which surrounded her, slept unnoticed, while her fancy wandered over the distant scenes of a northern country.

Emily listened in vain for the name of Valancourt. Madame Montoni spoke in her turn of the delights of Venice, and of the pleasure she expected from visiting the fine castle of Montoni, on the Apennine; which latter mention, at least, was merely a retaliating boast, for Emily well knew, that her aunt had no taste for solitary grandeur, and, particularly, for such as the castle of Udolpho promised. Thus the party continued to converse, and, as far as civility would permit, to torture each other by mutual boasts, while they reclined on sofas in the portico, and were environed with delights both from nature and art, by which any honest minds would have been tempered to benevolence, and happy imaginations would have been soothed into enchantment.

The dawn, soon after, trembled in the eastern horizon, and the light tints of morning, gradually expanding, shewed the beautifully declining forms of the Italian mountains and the gleaming landscapes, stretched at their feet. Then the sun-beams, shooting up from behind the hills, spread over the scene that fine saffron tinge, which seems to impart repose to all it touches. The landscape no longer gleamed; all its glowing colours were revealed, except that its remoter features were still softened and united in the mist of distance, whose sweet effect was heightened to Emily by the dark verdure of the pines and cypresses, that over-arched the fore-ground of the river.

The market people, passing with their boats to Venice, now formed a moving picture on the Brenta. Most of these had little painted awnings, to shelter their owners from the sun-beams, which, together with the piles of fruit and flowers, displayed beneath, and the tasteful simplicity of the peasant girls, who watched the rural treasures, rendered them gay and striking objects. The swift movement of the boats down the current, the quick glance of oars in the water, and now and then the passing chorus of peasants, who reclined under the sail of their little bark, or the tones of some rustic instrument, played by a girl, as she sat near her sylvan cargo, heightened the animation and festivity of the scene.

When Montoni and M. Quesnel had joined the ladies, the party left the portico for the gardens, where the charming scenery soon withdrew Emily’s thoughts from painful subjects. The majestic forms and rich verdure of cypresses she had never seen so perfect before: groves of cedar, lemon, and orange, the spiry clusters of the pine and poplar, the luxuriant chesnut and oriental plane, threw all their pomp of shade over these gardens; while bowers of flowering myrtle and other spicy shrubs mingled their fragrance with that of flowers, whose vivid and various colouring glowed with increased effect beneath the contrasted umbrage of the groves. The air also was continually refreshed by rivulets, which, with more taste than fashion, had been suffered to wander among the green recesses.

Emily often lingered behind the party, to contemplate the distant landscape, that closed a vista, or that gleamed beneath the dark foliage of the foreground; – the spiral summits of the mountains, touched with a purple tint, broken and steep above, but shelving gradually to their base; the open valley, marked by no formal lines of art; and the tall groves of cypress, pine and poplar, sometimes embellished by a ruined villa, whose broken columns appeared between the branches of a pine, that seemed to droop over their fall.

From other parts of the gardens, the character of the view was entirely changed, and the fine solitary beauty of the landscape shifted for the crowded features and varied colouring of inhabitation.

The sun was now gaining fast upon the sky, and the party quitted the gardens, and retired to repose.

CHAPTER IV

> 'And poor Misfortune feels the lash of Vice.'
>
> THOMSON [*The Seasons*, 'Winter'][1]

Emily seized the first opportunity of conversing alone with Mons. Quesnel, concerning La Vallée. His answers to her enquiries were concise, and delivered with the air of a man, who is conscious of possessing absolute power and impatient of hearing it questioned. He declared, that the disposal of the place was a necessary measure; and that she might consider herself indebted to his prudence for even the small income that remained for her. 'But, however,' added he, 'when this Venetian Count (I have forgot his name) marries you, your present disagreeable state of dependence will cease. As a relation to you I rejoice in the circumstance, which is so fortunate for you, and, I may add, so unexpected by your friends.'

For some moments Emily was chilled into silence by this speech; and, when she attempted to undeceive him, concerning the purport of the note she had inclosed in Montoni's letter, he appeared to have some private reason for disbelieving her assertion, and, for a considerable time, persevered in accusing her of capricious conduct. Being, at length, however, convinced, that she really disliked Morano and had positively rejected his suit, his resentment was extravagant, and he expressed it in terms equally pointed and inhuman; for, secretly flattered by the prospect of a connection with a nobleman, whose title he had affected to forget, he was incapable of feeling pity for whatever sufferings of his niece might stand in the way of his ambition.

Emily saw at once in his manner all the difficulties, that awaited her, and, though no oppression could have power to make her renounce Valancourt for Morano, her fortitude now trembled at an encounter with the violent passions of her uncle.

She opposed his turbulence and indignation only by the mild dignity of a superior mind; but the gentle firmness of her conduct served to exasperate still more his resentment, since it compelled him to feel his own inferiority, and, when he left her, he declared, that, if she persisted in her folly, both himself and Montoni would abandon her to the contempt of the world.

The calmness she had assumed in his presence failed Emily, when alone, and she wept bitterly, and called frequently upon the name of her departed father, whose advice to her from his death-bed she then remembered. 'Alas!' said she, 'I do indeed perceive how much more valuable is the strength of fortitude than the grace of sensibility, and I will also endeavour to fulfil the promise I then made; I will not indulge in unavailing lamentation, but will try to endure, with firmness, the oppression I cannot elude.'

Somewhat soothed by the consciousness of performing a part of St Aubert's last request, and of endeavouring to pursue the conduct which he would have approved, she overcame her tears, and, when the company met at dinner, had recovered her usual serenity of countenance.

In the cool of the evening, the ladies took the *fresco*[2] along the bank of the Brenta in Madame Quesnel's carriage. The state of Emily's mind was in melancholy contrast with the gay groups assembled beneath the shades that overhung this enchanting stream. Some were dancing under the trees, and others reclining on the grass, taking ices and coffee and calmly enjoying the effect of a beautiful evening, on a luxuriant landscape. Emily, when she looked at the snow-capt Apennines, ascending in the distance, thought of Montoni's castle, and suffered some terror, lest he should convey her thither, for the purpose of enforcing her obedience; but the thought vanished, when she considered, that she was as much in his power at Venice as she could be elsewhere.

It was moonlight before the party returned to the villa, where supper was spread in the airy hall, which had so much enchanted Emily's fancy, on the preceding night. The ladies seated themselves in the portico, till Mons. Quesnel, Montoni and other gentlemen, should join them at table, and Emily endeavoured to resign herself to the tranquillity of the hour. Presently, a barge stopped at the steps that led into the gardens, and, soon after, she distinguished the voices of Montoni and Quesnel, and then that of Morano, who, in the next moment, appeared. His compliments she received in silence, and her cold air seemed at first to discompose him, but he soon recovered his usual gaiety of manner, though the officious kindness of M. and Madame Quesnel Emily perceived disgusted him. Such a degree of attention she had scarcely believed could be shewn by M. Quesnel, for she had never before seen him otherwise than in the presence of his inferiors or equals.

When she could retire to her own apartment, her mind almost involuntarily dwelt on the most probable means of prevailing with the Count to withdraw his suit, and to her liberal mind none appeared more probable, than that of acknowledging to him a prior attachment and throwing herself upon his generosity for a release. When, however, on the following day, he renewed his addresses, she shrunk from the adoption of the plan she had formed. There was something so repugnant to her just pride, in laying open the secret of her heart to such a man as Morano, and in suing to him for compassion, that she impatiently rejected this design and wondered, that she could have paused upon it for a moment. The rejection of his suit she repeated in the most decisive terms she could select, mingling with it a severe censure of his conduct; but, though the Count appeared mortified by this, he persevered in the most ardent professions of admiration, till he was interrupted and Emily released by the presence of Madame Quesnel.

During her stay at this pleasant villa, Emily was thus rendered miserable by the assiduities of Morano, together with the cruelly exerted authority of M. Quesnel and Montoni, who, with her aunt, seemed now more resolutely determined upon this marriage than they had even appeared to be at Venice. M. Quesnel, finding, that both argument and menace were ineffectual in enforcing an immediate conclusion to it, at length relinquished his endeavours, and trusted to the power of Montoni and to the course of events at Venice. Emily, indeed, looked to Venice with hope, for there she would be relieved in some measure from the persecution of Morano, who would no longer be an inhabitant of the same house with herself, and from that of Montoni, whose engagements would not permit him to be continually at home. But amidst the pressure of her own misfortunes, she did not forget those of poor Theresa, for whom she pleaded with courageous tenderness to Quesnel, who promised, in slight and general terms, that she should not be forgotten.

Montoni, in a long conversation with M. Quesnel, arranged the plan to be pursued respecting Emily, and M. Quesnel proposed to be at Venice, as soon as he should be informed, that the nuptials were concluded.

It was new to Emily to part with any person, with whom she was connected, without feelings of regret; the moment, however, in which she took leave of M. and Madame Quesnel, was, perhaps, the only satisfactory one she had known in their presence.

Morano returned in Montoni's barge, and Emily, as she watched her gradual approach to that magic city, saw at her side the only person, who occasioned her to view it with less than perfect delight. They arrived there about midnight, when Emily was released from the presence of the Count, who, with Montoni, went to a Casino, and she was suffered to retire to her own apartment.

On the following day, Montoni, in a short conversation, which he held with Emily, informed her, that he would no longer be *trifled* with, and that, since her marriage with the Count would be so highly advantageous to her, that folly only could object to it, and folly of such extent as was incapable of conviction, it should be celebrated without further delay, and, if that was necessary, without her consent.

Emily, who had hitherto tried remonstrance, had now recourse to supplication, for distress prevented her from foreseeing, that, with a man of Montoni's disposition, supplication would be equally useless. She afterwards enquired by what right he exerted this unlimited authority over her? a question, which her better judgment would have with-held her, in a calmer moment, from making, since it could avail her nothing, and would afford Montoni another opportunity of triumphing over her defenceless condition.

'By what right!' cried Montoni, with a malicious smile, 'by the right of my will; if you can elude that, I will not enquire by what right you do so. I now remind you, for the last time, that you are a stranger, in a foreign country, and that it is your interest to make me your friend; you know the means; if you compel me to become your enemy – I will venture to tell you, that the punishment shall exceed your expectation. You may know *I* am not to be trifled with.'

Emily continued, for some time after Montoni had left her, in a state of despair, or rather of stupefaction; a consciousness of misery was all that remained in her mind. In this situation Madame Montoni found her, at the sound of whose voice Emily looked up, and her aunt, somewhat softened by the expression of despair, that fixed her countenance, spoke in a manner more kind than she had ever yet done. Emily's heart was touched; she shed tears, and, after weeping for some time, recovered sufficient composure to speak on the subject of her distress, and to endeavour to interest Madame Montoni in her behalf. But, though the compassion of her aunt had been surprised, her ambition was not to be overcome, and her present object was to be the aunt of a Countess. Emily's efforts, therefore, were as unsuccessful as they had been with Montoni, and she withdrew to her apartment to think and weep alone. How often did she remember the parting scene with Valancourt, and wish, that the Italian had mentioned Montoni's character with less reserve! When her mind, however, had recovered from the first shock of this behaviour, she considered, that it would be impossible for him to compel her alliance with Morano, if she persisted in refusing to repeat any part of the marriage ceremony; and she persevered in her resolution to await Montoni's threatened vengeance rather than give herself for life to a man, whom she must have despised for his present conduct, had she never even loved Valancourt: yet she trembled at the revenge she thus resolved to brave.

An affair, however, soon after occurred, which somewhat called off Montoni's attention from Emily. The mysterious visits of Orsino were renewed with more frequency since the return of the former to Venice. There were others, also, besides Orsino, admitted to these midnight councils, and among them Cavigni and Verezzi. Montoni became more reserved and austere in his manner than ever; and Emily, if her own interest had not made her regardless of his, might have perceived, that something extraordinary was working in his mind.

One night, on which a council was not held, Orsino came in great agitation of spirits, and dispatched his confidential servant to Montoni, who was at a Casino, desiring that he would return home immediately; but charging the servant not to mention his name. Montoni obeyed the summons, and, on meeting Orsino, was informed of the circumstances, that occasioned his visit and his visible alarm, with a part of which he was already acquainted.

A Venetian nobleman, who had, on some late occasion, provoked the hatred of Orsino, had been way-laid and poniarded by hired assassins: and, as the murdered person was of the first connections, the Senate had taken up the affair. One of the assassins was now apprehended, who had confessed, that Orsino was his employer in the atrocious deed; and the latter, informed of his danger, had now come to Montoni to consult on the measures necessary to favour his escape. He knew, that, at this time, the officers of the police were upon the watch for him, all over the city; to leave it, at present, therefore, was impracticable, and Montoni consented to secrete him for a few days till the vigilance of justice should relax, and then to assist him in quitting Venice. He knew the danger he himself incurred by permitting Orsino to remain in his house, but such was the nature of his obligations to this man, that he did not think it prudent to refuse him an asylum.

Such was the person whom Montoni had admitted to his confidence, and for whom he felt as much friendship as was compatible with his character.

While Orsino remained concealed in his house, Montoni was unwilling to attract public observation by the nuptials of Count Morano; but this obstacle was, in a few days, overcome by the departure of his criminal visitor, and he then informed Emily, that her marriage was to be celebrated on the following morning. To her repeated assurances, that it should not take place, he replied only by a malignant smile, and, telling her, that the Count and a priest would be at his house, early in the morning, he advised her no further to dare his resentment, by opposition to his will and to her own interest. ‘I am now going out for the evening,’ said he, ‘remember, that I shall give your hand to Count Morano in the morning.’ Emily, having, ever since his late threats, expected, that her trials would at length arrive to this crisis, was less shocked by the declaration, than she otherwise would have been, and she endeavoured to support herself by the belief, that the marriage could not be valid, so long as she refused before the priest to repeat any part of the ceremony. Yet, as the moment of trial approached, her long-harassed spirits shrunk almost equally from the encounter of his vengeance, and from the hand of Count Morano. She was not even perfectly certain of the consequence of her steady refusal at the altar, and she trembled, more than ever, at the power of Montoni, which seemed unlimited as his will, for she saw, that he would not scruple to transgress any law, if, by so doing, he could accomplish his project.

While her mind was thus suffering and in a state little short of distraction, she was informed that Morano asked permission to see her, and the servant had scarcely departed with an excuse, before she repented that she had sent one. In the next moment, reverting to her former design, and determining to try, whether expostulation and entreaty would not succeed, where a refusal and a just disdain had failed, she recalled the servant, and, sending a different message, prepared to go down to the Count.

The dignity and assumed composure with which she met him, and the kind of pensive resignation, that softened her countenance, were circumstances not likely to induce him to relinquish her, serving, as they did, to heighten a passion, which had already intoxicated his judgment. He listened to all she said with an appearance of complacency and of a wish to oblige her; but his resolution remained invariably the same, and he endeavoured to win her admiration by every insinuating art he so well knew how to practise. Being, at length, assured, that she had nothing to hope from his justice, she repeated, in a solemn and impressive manner, her absolute rejection of his suit, and quitted him with an assurance, that her refusal would be effectually maintained against every circumstance, that could be imagined for subduing it. A just pride had restrained her tears in his presence, but now they flowed from the fulness of her heart. She often called upon the name of her late father, and often dwelt with unutterable anguish on the idea of Valancourt.

She did not go down to supper, but remained alone in her apartment, sometimes yielding to the influence of grief and terror, and, at others, endeavouring to fortify her mind against them, and to prepare herself to meet, with composed courage, the scene of the following morning, when all the stratagem of Morano and the violence of Montoni would be united against her.

The evening was far advanced, when Madame Montoni came to her chamber with some bridal ornaments, which the Count had sent to Emily. She had, this day, purposely avoided her niece; perhaps, because her usual insensibility failed her, and she feared to trust herself with a view of Emily’s distress; or possibly, though her conscience was seldom audible, it now reproached her with her conduct to her brother’s orphan child, whose happiness had been entrusted to her care by a dying father.

Emily could not look at these presents, and made a last, though almost hopeless, effort to interest the compassion of Madame Montoni, who, if she did feel any degree of pity, or remorse, successfully concealed it, and reproached her niece with folly in being miserable, concerning a marriage, which ought only to make her happy. ‘I am sure,’ said she, ‘if I was unmarried, and the Count had proposed to me, I should have been flattered by the distinction: and if I should have been so, I am sure, niece, you, who have no fortune, ought to feel yourself highly honoured, and shew a proper gratitude and humility towards the Count, for his condescension. I am often surprised, I must own, to observe how humbly he deports himself to you, notwithstanding the haughty airs you give yourself; I wonder he has patience to humour you so: if I was he, I know, I should often be ready to reprehend you, and make you know yourself a little better. I would not have flattered you, I can tell you, for it is this absurd flattery that makes you fancy yourself of so much consequence, that you think nobody can deserve you, and I often tell the Count so, for I have no patience to hear him pay you such extravagant compliments, which you believe every word of!’

‘Your patience, madam, cannot suffer more cruelly on such occasions, than my own,’ said Emily.

‘O! that is all mere affectation,’ rejoined her aunt. ‘I know that his flattery delights you, and makes you so vain, that you think you may have the whole world at your feet. But you are very much mistaken; I can assure you, niece, you will not meet with many such suitors as the Count: every other person would have turned upon his heel, and left you to repent at your leisure, long ago.’

‘O that the Count had resembled every other person, then!’ said Emily, with a heavy sigh.

‘It is happy for you, that he does not,’ rejoined Madame Montoni; ‘and what I am now saying is from pure kindness. I am endeavouring to convince you of your good fortune, and to persuade you to submit to necessity with a good grace. It is nothing to me, you know, whether you like this marriage or not, for it must be; what I say, therefore, is from pure kindness. I wish to see you happy, and it is your own fault if you are not so. I would ask you, now, seriously and calmly, what kind of a match you can expect, since a Count cannot content your ambition?'

'I have no ambition whatever, madam,' replied Emily, 'my only wish is to remain in my present station.'

'O! that is speaking quite from the purpose,' said her aunt, 'I see you are still thinking of Mons. Valancourt. Pray get rid of all those fantastic notions about love, and this ridiculous pride, and be something like a reasonable creature. But, however, this is nothing to the purpose – for your marriage with the Count takes place to-morrow, you know, whether you approve it or not. The Count will be trifled with no longer.'

Emily made no attempt to reply to this curious speech; she felt it would be mean,[3] and she knew it would be useless. Madame Montoni laid the Count's presents upon the table, on which Emily was leaning, and then, desiring she would be ready early in the morning, bade her good-night, 'Good-night, madam,' said Emily, with a deep sigh, as the door closed upon her aunt, and she was left once more to her own sad reflections. For some time she sat so lost in thought, as to be wholly unconscious where she was; at length, raising her head, and looking round the room, its gloom and profound stillness awed her. She fixed her eyes on the door, through which her aunt had disappeared, and listened anxiously for some sound, that might relieve the deep dejection of her spirits; but it was past midnight, and all the family, except the servant, who sat up for Montoni, had retired to bed. Her mind, long harassed by distress, now yielded to imaginary terrors; she trembled to look into the obscurity of her spacious chamber, and feared she knew not what; a state of mind, which continued so long, that she would have called up Annette, her aunt's woman, had her fears permitted her to rise from her chair, and to cross the apartment.

These melancholy illusions at length began to disperse, and she retired to her bed, not to sleep, for that was scarcely possible, but to try, at least, to quiet her disturbed fancy, and to collect strength of spirits sufficient to bear her through the scene of the approaching morning.

CHAPTER V

‘Dark power! with shudd’ring, meek submitted thought

Be mine to read the visions old
Which thy awak’ning bards have told,
And, lest they meet my blasted view,
Hold each strange tale devoutly true.’
COLLINS’ ‘Ode to Fear’[1]

Emily was recalled from a kind of slumber, into which she had, at length, sunk, by a quick knocking at her chamber door. She started up in terror, for Montoni and Count Morano instantly came to her mind; but, having listened in silence for some time, and recognising the voice of Annette, she rose and opened the door. ‘What brings you hither so early?’ said Emily, trembling excessively. She was unable to support herself, and sat down on the bed.

‘Dear ma’amselle!’ said Annette, ‘do not look so pale. I am quite frightened to see you. Here is a fine bustle below stairs, all the servants running to and fro, and none of them fast enough! Here is a bustle, indeed, all of a sudden, and nobody knows for what!’

‘Who is below besides them?’ said Emily, ‘Annette, do not trifle with me!’

‘Not for the world, ma’amselle, I would not trifle for the world; but one cannot help making one’s remarks, and there is the Signor in such a bustle, as I never saw him before; and he has sent me to tell you, ma’am, to get ready immediately.’

‘Good God support me!’ cried Emily, almost fainting, ‘Count Morano is below, then!’

‘No, ma’amselle, he is not below that I know of,’ replied Annette, ‘only his *Excellenza* sent me to desire you would get ready directly to leave Venice, for that the gondolas would be at the steps of the canal in a few minutes: but I must hurry back to my lady, who is just at her wits end, and knows not which way to turn for haste.’

‘Explain, Annette, explain the meaning of all this before you go,’ said Emily, so overcome with surprise and timid hope, that she had scarcely breath to speak.

‘Nay, ma’amselle, that is more than I can do. I only know that the Signor is just come home in a very ill humour, that he has had us all called out of our beds, and tells us we are all to leave Venice immediately.’

‘Is Count Morano to go with the Signor?’ said Emily, ‘and whither are we going?’

‘I know neither, ma’am, for certain; but I heard Ludovico say something about going, after we got to *Terra-firma*, to the Signor’s castle among some mountains, that he talked of.’

‘The Apennines!’ said Emily, eagerly, ‘Oh! then I have little to hope!’

‘That is the very place, ma’am. But cheer up, and do not take it so much to heart, and think what a little time you have to get ready in, and how impatient the Signor is. Holy St Mark! I hear the oars on the canal; and now they come nearer, and now they are dashing at the steps below; it is the gondola, sure enough.’

Annette hastened from the room; and Emily prepared for this unexpected flight as fast as her trembling hands would permit, not perceiving, that any change in her situation could possibly be for the worse. She had scarcely thrown her books and clothes into her travelling trunk, when, receiving a second summons, she went down to her aunt’s dressing-room, where she found Montoni impatiently reproving his wife for delay. He went out, soon after, to give some further orders to his people, and Emily then enquired the occasion of this hasty journey; but her aunt appeared to be as ignorant as herself, and to undertake the journey with more reluctance.

The family at length embarked, but neither Count Morano, or Cavigni, was of the party. Somewhat revived by observing this, Emily, when the gondolieri dashed their oars in the water, and put off from the steps of the portico, felt like a criminal, who receives a short reprieve. Her heart beat yet lighter, when they emerged from the canal into the ocean, and lighter still, when they skimmed past the walls of St Mark, without having stopped to take up Count Morano.

The dawn now began to tint the horizon, and to break upon the shores of the Adriatic. Emily did not venture to ask any questions of Montoni, who sat, for some time, in gloomy silence, and then rolled himself up in his cloak, as if to sleep, while Madame Montoni did the same; but Emily, who could not sleep, undrew one of the little curtains of the gondola, and looked out upon the sea. The rising dawn now enlightened the mountain-tops of Friuli, but their lower sides, and the distant waves, that rolled at their feet, were still in deep shadow. Emily, sunk in tranquil melancholy, watched the strengthening light spreading upon the ocean, shewing successively Venice and her islets, and the shores of Italy, along which boats, with their pointed latin sails,[2] began to move.

The gondolieri were frequently hailed, at this early hour, by the market-people, as they glided by towards Venice, and the *Lagune* soon displayed a gay scene of innumerable little barks, passing from *Terra-firma* with provisions. Emily gave a last look to that splendid city, but her mind was then occupied by considering the probable events, that awaited her, in the scenes, to which she was removing, and with conjectures, concerning the motive of this sudden journey. It appeared, upon calmer consideration, that Montoni was removing her to his secluded castle, because he could there, with more probability of success, attempt to terrify her into obedience; or, that, should its gloomy and sequestered scenes fail of this effect, her forced marriage with the Count could there be solemnized with the secrecy, which was necessary to the honour of Montoni. The little spirit, which this reprieve had recalled, now began to fail, and, when Emily reached the shore, her mind had sunk into all its former depression.

Montoni did not embark on the Brenta, but pursued his way in carriages across the country, towards the Apennine; during which journey, his manner to Emily was so particularly severe, that this alone would have confirmed her late conjecture, had any such confirmation been necessary. Her senses were now dead to the beautiful country, through which she travelled. Sometimes she was compelled to smile at the *naïveté* of Annette, in her remarks on what she saw, and sometimes to sigh, as a scene of peculiar beauty recalled Valancourt to her thoughts, who was indeed seldom absent from them, and of whom she could never hope to hear in the solitude, to which she was hastening.

At length, the travellers began to ascend among the Apennines. The immense pine-forests, which, at that period, overhung these mountains, and between which the road wound, excluded all view but of the cliffs aspiring above, except, that, now and then, an opening through the dark woods allowed the eye a momentary glimpse of the country below. The gloom of these shades, their solitary silence, except when the breeze swept over their summits, the tremendous precipices of the mountains, that came partially to the eye, each assisted to raise the solemnity of Emily's feelings into awe; she saw only images of gloomy grandeur, or of dreadful sublimity, around her; other images, equally gloomy and equally terrible, gleamed on her imagination. She was going she scarcely knew whither, under the dominion of a person, from whose arbitrary disposition she had already suffered so much, to marry, perhaps, a man who possessed neither her affection, or esteem; or to endure, beyond the hope of succour, whatever punishment revenge, and that Italian revenge,[3] might dictate. – The more she considered what might be the motive of the journey, the more she became convinced, that it was for the purpose of concluding her nuptials with Count Morano, with that secrecy which her resolute resistance had made necessary to the honour, if not to the safety, of Montoni. From the deep solitudes, into which she was immerging, and from the gloomy castle, of which she had heard some mysterious hints, her sick heart recoiled in despair, and she experienced, that, though her mind was already occupied by peculiar distress, it was still alive to the influence of new and local circumstance; why else did she shudder at the idea of this desolate castle?

As the travellers still ascended among the pine forests, steep rose over steep, the mountains seemed to multiply, as they went, and what was the summit of one eminence proved to be only the base of another. At length, they reached a little plain, where the drivers stopped to rest the mules, whence a scene of such extent and magnificence opened below, as drew even from Madame Montoni a note of admiration. Emily lost, for a moment, her sorrows, in the immensity of nature. Beyond the amphitheatre of mountains, that stretched below, whose tops appeared as numerous almost, as the waves of the sea, and whose feet were concealed by the forests – extended the *Campagna*[4] of Italy, where cities and rivers, and woods and all the glow of cultivation were mingled in gay confusion. The Adriatic bounded the horizon, into which the Po and the Brenta, after winding through the whole extent of the landscape, poured their fruitful waves. Emily gazed long on the splendours of the world she was quitting, of which the whole magnificence seemed thus given to her sight only to increase her regret on leaving it; for her, Valancourt alone was in that world; to him alone her heart turned, and for him alone fell her bitter tears.

From this sublime scene the travellers continued to ascend among the pines, till they entered a narrow pass of the mountains, which shut out every feature of the distant country, and, in its stead, exhibited only tremendous crags, impending over the road, where no vestige of humanity, or even of vegetation, appeared, except here and there the trunk and scathed branches of an oak, that hung nearly headlong from the rock, into which its strong roots had fastened. This pass, which led into the heart of the Apennine, at length opened to day, and a scene of mountains stretched in long perspective, as wild as any the travellers had yet passed. Still vast pine-forests hung upon their base, and crowned the ridgy precipice, that rose perpendicularly from the vale, while, above, the rolling mists caught the sun-beams, and touched their cliffs with all the magical colouring of light and shade. The scene seemed perpetually changing, and its features to assume new forms, as the winding road brought them to the eye in different attitudes; while the shifting vapours, now partially concealing their minuter beauties and now illuminating them with splendid tints, assisted the illusions of the sight.

Though the deep vallies between these mountains were, for the most part, clothed with pines, sometimes an abrupt opening presented a perspective of only barren rocks, with a cataract flashing from their summit among broken cliffs, till its waters, reaching the bottom, foamed along with unceasing fury; and sometimes pastoral scenes exhibited their 'green delights'[5] in the narrow vales, smiling amid surrounding horror. There herds and flocks of goats and sheep, browsing under the shade of hanging woods, and the shepherd's little cabin, reared on the margin of a clear stream, presented a sweet picture of repose.

Wild and romantic as were these scenes, their character had far less of the sublime, than had those of the Alps, which guard the entrance of Italy. Emily was often elevated, but seldom felt those emotions of indescribable awe, which she had so continually experienced, in her passage over the Alps.

Towards the close of day, the road wound into a deep valley. Mountains, whose shaggy steeps appeared to be inaccessible, almost surrounded it. To the east, a vista opened, that exhibited the Apennines in their darkest horrors; and the long perspective of retiring summits, rising over each other, their ridges clothed with pines, exhibited a stronger image of grandeur, than any that Emily had yet seen. The sun had just sunk below the top of the mountains she was descending, whose long shadow stretched athwart the valley, but his sloping rays, shooting through an opening of the cliffs, touched with a yellow gleam the summits of the forest, that hung upon the opposite steeps, and streamed in full splendour upon the towers and battlements of a castle, that spread its extensive ramparts along the brow of a precipice above. The splendour of these illumined objects was heightened by the contrasted shade, which involved the valley below.

'There,' said Montoni, speaking for the first time in several hours, 'is Udolpho.'

Emily gazed with melancholy awe upon the castle, which she understood to be Montoni's; for, though it was now lighted up by the setting sun, the gothic greatness of its features, and its mouldering walls of dark grey stone, rendered it a gloomy and sublime object. As she gazed, the light died away on its walls, leaving a melancholy purple tint, which spread deeper and deeper, as the thin vapour crept up the mountain, while the battlements above were still tipped with splendour. From those too, the rays soon faded, and the whole edifice was invested with the solemn duskiness of evening. Silent, lonely and sublime, it seemed to stand the sovereign of the scene, and to frown defiance on all, who dared to invade its solitary reign. As the twilight deepened, its features became more awful in obscurity, and Emily continued to gaze, till its clustering towers were alone seen, rising over the tops of the woods, beneath whose thick shade the carriages soon after began to ascend.

The extent and darkness of these tall woods awakened terrific images in her mind, and she almost expected to see banditti start up from under the trees. At length, the carriages emerged upon a heathy rock, and, soon after, reached the castle gates, where the deep tone of the portal bell, which was struck upon to give notice of their arrival, increased the fearful emotions, that had assailed Emily. While they waited till the servant within should come to open the gates, she anxiously surveyed the edifice: but the gloom, that overspread it, allowed her to distinguish little more than a part of its outline, with the massy walls of the ramparts, and to know, that it was vast, ancient and dreary. From the parts she saw, she judged of the heavy strength and extent of the whole. The gateway before her, leading into the courts, was of gigantic size, and was defended by two round towers, crowned by overhanging turrets, embattled, where, instead of banners, now waved long grass and wild plants, that had taken root among the mouldering stones, and which seemed to sigh, as the breeze rolled past, over the desolation around them. The towers were united by a curtain,[6] pierced and embattled also, below which appeared the pointed arch of an huge portcullis, surmounting the gates: from these, the walls of the ramparts extended to other towers, overlooking the precipice, whose shattered outline, appearing on a gleam, that lingered in the west, told of the ravages of war. – Beyond these all was lost in the obscurity of evening.

While Emily gazed with awe upon the scene, footsteps were heard within the gates, and the undrawing of bolts; after which an ancient servant of the castle appeared, forcing back the huge folds of the portal, to admit his lord. As the carriage-wheels rolled heavily under the portcullis, Emily's heart sunk, and she seemed, as if she was going into her prison; the gloomy court, into which she passed, served to confirm the idea, and her imagination, ever awake to circumstance, suggested even more terrors, than her reason could justify.

Another gate delivered them into the second court, grass-grown, and more wild than the first, where, as she surveyed through the twilight its desolation – its lofty walls, overtopt with briony,[7] moss and night-shade, and the embattled towers that rose above, – long-suffering and murder came to her thoughts. One of those instantaneous and unaccountable convictions, which sometimes conquer even strong minds, impressed her with its horror. The sentiment was not diminished, when she entered an extensive gothic hall, obscured by the gloom of evening, which a light, glimmering at a distance through a long perspective of arches, only rendered more striking. As a servant brought the lamp nearer, partial gleams fell upon the pillars and the pointed arches, forming a strong contrast with their shadows, that stretched along the pavement and the walls.

The sudden journey of Montoni had prevented his people from making any other preparations for his reception, than could be had in the short interval, since the arrival of the servant, who had been sent forward from Venice; and this, in some measure, may account for the air of extreme desolation, that every where appeared.

The servant, who came to light Montoni, bowed in silence, and the muscles of his countenance relaxed with no symptom of joy. – Montoni noticed the salutation by a slight motion of his hand, and passed on, while his lady, following, and looking round with a degree of surprise and discontent, which she seemed fearful of expressing, and Emily, surveying the extent and grandeur of the hall in timid wonder, approached a marble stair-case. The arches here opened to a lofty vault, from the centre of which hung a tripod lamp, which a servant was hastily lighting; and the rich fret-work of the roof, a corridor, leading into several upper apartments, and a painted window, stretching nearly from the pavement to the ceiling of the hall, became gradually visible.

Having crossed the foot of the stair-case, and passed through an anti-room, they entered a spacious apartment, whose walls, wainscoted with black larch-wood, the growth of the neighbouring mountains, were scarcely distinguishable from darkness itself. 'Bring more light,' said Montoni, as he entered. The servant, setting down his lamp, was withdrawing to obey him, when Madame Montoni observing, that the evening air of this mountainous region was cold, and that she should like a fire, Montoni ordered that wood might be brought.

While he paced the room with thoughtful steps, and Madame Montoni sat silently on a couch, at the upper end of it, waiting till the servant returned, Emily was observing the singular solemnity and desolation of the apartment, viewed, as it now was, by the glimmer of the single lamp, placed near a large Venetian mirror, that duskily reflected the scene, with the tall figure of Montoni passing slowly along, his arms folded, and his countenance shaded by the plume, that waved in his hat.

From the contemplation of this scene, Emily's mind proceeded to the apprehension of what she might suffer in it, till the remembrance of Valancourt, far, far distant! came to her heart, and softened it into sorrow. A heavy sigh escaped her: but, trying to conceal her tears, she walked away to one of the high windows, that opened upon the ramparts, below which, spread the woods she had passed in her approach to the castle. But the night-shade sat deeply on the mountains beyond, and their indented outline alone could be faintly traced on the horizon, where a red streak yet glimmered in the west. The valley between was sunk in darkness.

The scene within, upon which Emily turned on the opening of the door, was scarcely less gloomy. The old servant, who had received them at the gates, now entered, bending under a load of pine-branches, while two of Montoni's Venetian servants followed with lights.

'Your *Excellenza* is welcome to the castle,' said the old man, as he raised himself from the hearth, where he had laid the wood: 'it has been a lonely place a long while; but you will excuse it, Signor, knowing we had but short notice. It is near two years, come next feast of St Mark, since your *Excellenza* was within these walls.'

'You have a good memory, old Carlo,' said Montoni: 'it is thereabout; and how hast thou contrived to live so long?'

'A-well-a-day, sir, with much ado; the cold winds, that blow through the castle in winter, are almost too much for me; and I thought sometimes of asking your *Excellenza* to let me leave the mountains, and go down into the lowlands. But I don't know how it is – I am loth to quit these old walls I have lived in so long.'

'Well, how have you gone on in the castle, since I left it?' said Montoni.

'Why much as usual, Signor, only it wants a good deal of repairing. There is the north tower – some of the battlements have tumbled down, and had liked one day to have knocked my poor wife (God rest her soul!) on the head. Your *Excellenza* must know'—

'Well, but the repairs,' interrupted Montoni.

'Aye, the repairs,' said Carlo: 'a part of the roof of the great hall has fallen in, and all the winds from the mountains rushed through it last winter, and whistled through the whole castle so, that there was no keeping one's self warm, be where one would. There, my wife and I used to sit shivering over a great fire in one corner of the little hall, ready to die with cold, and'—

'But there are no more repairs wanted,' said Montoni, impatiently.

'O Lord! your *Excellenza*, yes – the wall of the rampart has tumbled down in three places; then, the stairs, that lead to the west gallery, have been a long time so bad, that it is dangerous to go up them; and the passage leading to the great oak chamber, that overhangs the north rampart – one night last winter I ventured to go there by myself, and your *Excellenza*'—

'Well, well, enough of this,' said Montoni, with quickness: 'I will talk more with thee to-morrow.'

The fire was now lighted; Carlo swept the hearth, placed chairs, wiped the dust from a large marble table that stood near it, and then left the room.

Montoni and his family drew round the fire. Madame Montoni made several attempts at conversation, but his sullen answers repulsed her, while Emily sat endeavouring to acquire courage enough to speak to him. At length, in a tremulous voice, she said, 'May I ask, sir, the motive of this sudden journey?' – After a long pause, she recovered sufficient courage to repeat the question.

'It does not suit me to answer enquiries,' said Montoni, 'nor does it become you to make them; time may unfold them all: but I desire I may be no further harassed, and I recommend it to you to retire to your chamber, and to endeavour to adopt a more rational conduct, than that of yielding to fancies, and to a sensibility, which to call it by the gentlest name, is only a weakness.'

Emily rose to withdraw. 'Good night, madam,' said she to her aunt, with an assumed composure, that could not disguise her emotion.

'Good night, my dear,' said Madame Montoni, in a tone of kindness, which her niece had never before heard from her, and the unexpected endearment brought tears to Emily's eyes. She curtsied to Montoni, and was retiring; 'But you do not know the way to your chamber,' said her aunt. Montoni called the servant, who waited in the anti-room, and bade him send Madame Montoni's woman, with whom, in a few minutes, Emily withdrew.

'Do you know which is my room?' said she to Annette, as they crossed the hall.

'Yes, I believe I do, ma'amselle; but this is such a strange rambling place! I have been lost in it already: they call it the double chamber, over the south rampart, and I went up this great stair-case to it. My lady's room is at the other end of the castle.'

Emily ascended the marble stair-case, and came to the corridor, as they passed through which, Annette resumed her chat – 'What a wild lonely place this is, ma'am! I shall be quite frightened to live in it. How often, and often I have wished myself in France again! I little thought, when I came with my lady to see the world, that I should ever be shut up in such a place as this; or I would never have left my own country! This way, ma'amselle, down this turning. I can almost believe in giants again, and such like, for this is just like one of their castles; and, some night or other, I suppose I shall see fairies too, hopping about in that great old hall, that looks more like a church, with its huge pillars, than any thing else.'

'Yes,' said Emily, smiling, and glad to escape from more serious thought, 'if we come to the corridor, about midnight, and look down into the hall, we shall certainly see it illuminated with a thousand lamps, and the fairies tripping in gay circles to the sound of delicious music; for it is in such places as this, you know, that they come to hold their revels. But I am afraid, Annette, you will not be able to pay the necessary penance for such a sight: and, if once they hear your voice, the whole scene will vanish in an instant.'

'O! if you will bear me company, ma'amselle, I will come to the corridor, this very night, and I promise you I will hold my tongue; it shall not be my fault if the show vanishes. – But do you think they will come?'

'I cannot promise that with certainty, but I will venture to say, it will not be your fault if the enchantment should vanish.'

'Well, ma'amselle, that is saying more than I expected of you: but I am not so much afraid of fairies, as of ghosts, and they say there are a plentiful many of them about the castle: now I should be frightened to death, if I should chance to see any of them. But hush! ma'amselle, walk softly! I have thought, several times, something passed by me.'

'Ridiculous!' said Emily, 'you must not indulge such fancies.'

'O ma'am! they are not fancies, for aught I know; Benedetto says these dismal galleries and halls are fit for nothing but ghosts to live in; and I verily believe, if I *live* long in them I shall turn to one myself!'

'I hope,' said Emily, 'you will not suffer Signor Montoni to hear of these weak fears; they would highly displease him.'

'What, you know then, ma'amselle, all about it!' rejoined Annette. 'No, no, I do know better than to do so; though, if the Signor can sleep sound, nobody else in the castle has any right to lie awake, I am sure.' Emily did not appear to notice this remark.

'Down this passage, ma'amselle; this leads to a back stair-case. O! if I see any thing, I shall be frightened out of my wits!'

'That will scarcely be possible,' said Emily, smiling, as she followed the winding of the passage, which opened into another gallery: and then Annette, perceiving that she had missed her way, while she had been so eloquently haranguing on ghosts and fairies, wandered about through other passages and galleries, till, at length, frightened by their intricacies and desolation, she called aloud for assistance: but they were beyond the hearing of the servants, who were on the other side of the castle, and Emily now opened the door of a chamber on the left.

'O! do not go in there, ma'amselle,' said Annette, 'you will only lose yourself further.'

'Bring the light forward,' said Emily, 'we may possibly find our way through these rooms.'

Annette stood at the door, in an attitude of hesitation, with the light held up to shew the chamber, but the feeble rays spread through not half of it. 'Why do you hesitate?' said Emily, 'let me see whither this room leads.'

Annette advanced reluctantly. It opened into a suite of spacious and ancient apartments, some of which were hung with tapestry, and others wainscoted with cedar and black larch-wood. What furniture there was, seemed to be almost as old as the rooms, and retained an appearance of grandeur, though covered with dust, and dropping to pieces with the damps, and with age.

'How cold these rooms are, ma'amselle!' said Annette: 'nobody has lived in them for many, many years, they say. Do let us go.'

'They may open upon the great stair-case, perhaps,' said Emily, passing on till she came to a chamber, hung with pictures, and took the light to examine that of a soldier on horseback in a field of battle. – He was darting his spear upon a man, who lay under the feet of the horse, and who held up one hand in a supplicating attitude. The soldier, whose beaver[8] was up, regarded him with a look of vengeance, and the countenance, with that expression, struck Emily as resembling Montoni. She shuddered, and turned from it. Passing the light hastily over several other pictures, she came to one concealed by a veil of black silk. The singularity of the circumstance struck her, and she stopped before it, wishing to remove the veil, and examine what could thus carefully be concealed, but somewhat wanting courage. 'Holy Virgin! what can this mean?' exclaimed Annette. 'This is surely the picture they told me of at Venice.'

'What picture?' said Emily. 'Why a picture – a picture,' replied Annette, hesitatingly – 'but I never could make out exactly what it was about, either.'

'Remove the veil, Annette.'

'What! I, ma'amselle! – I! not for the world!' Emily, turning round, saw Annette's countenance grow pale. 'And pray, what have you heard of this picture, to terrify you so, my good girl?' said she. 'Nothing, ma'amselle: I have heard nothing, only let us find our way out.'

'Certainly: but I wish first to examine the picture; take the light, Annette, while I lift the veil.' Annette took the light, and immediately walked away with it, disregarding Emily's calls to stay, who, not choosing to be left alone in the dark chamber, at length followed her. 'What is the reason of this, Annette?' said Emily, when she overtook her, 'what have you heard concerning that picture, which makes you so unwilling to stay when I bid you?'

'I don't know what is the reason, ma'amselle,' replied Annette, 'nor any thing about the picture, only I have heard there is something very dreadful belonging to it – and that it has been covered up in black *ever since* – and that nobody has looked at it for a great many years – and it somehow has to do with the owner of this castle before Signor Montoni came to the possession of it – and'—

‘Well, Annette,’ said Emily, smiling, ‘I perceive it is as you say – that you know nothing about the picture.’

‘No, nothing, indeed, ma’amselle, for they made me promise never to tell: but’—

‘Well,’ rejoined Emily, who observed that she was struggling between her inclination to reveal a secret, and her apprehension for the consequence, ‘I will enquire no further’—

‘No, pray, ma’am, do not.’

‘Lest you should tell all,’ interrupted Emily.

Annette blushed, and Emily smiled, and they passed on to the extremity of this suite of apartments, and found themselves, after some farther perplexity, once more at the top of the marble stair-case, where Annette left Emily, while she went to call one of the servants of the castle to shew them to the chamber, for which they had been seeking.

While she was absent, Emily’s thoughts returned to the picture; an unwillingness to tamper with the integrity of a servant, had checked her enquiries on this subject, as well as concerning some alarming hints, which Annette had dropped respecting Montoni; though her curiosity was entirely awakened, and she had perceived, that her questions might easily be answered. She was now, however, inclined to go back to the apartment and examine the picture; but the loneliness of the hour and of the place, with the melancholy silence that reigned around her, conspired with a certain degree of awe, excited by the mystery attending this picture, to prevent her. She determined, however, when day-light should have re-animated her spirits, to go thither and remove the veil. As she leaned from the corridor, over the stair-case, and her eyes wandered round, she again observed, with wonder, the vast strength of the walls, now somewhat decayed, and the pillars of solid marble, that rose from the hall, and supported the roof.

A servant now appeared with Annette, and conducted Emily to her chamber, which was in a remote part of the castle, and at the end of the very corridor, from whence the suite of apartments opened, through which they had been wandering. The lonely aspect of her room made Emily unwilling that Annette should leave her immediately, and the dampness of it chilled her with more than fear. She begged Caterina, the servant of the castle, to bring some wood and light a fire.

‘Aye, lady, it’s many a year since a fire was lighted here,’ said Caterina.

‘You need not tell us that, good woman,’ said Annette; ‘every room in the castle feels like a well. I wonder how you contrive to live here; for my part, I wish myself at Venice again.’ Emily waved her hand for Caterina to fetch the wood.

‘I wonder, ma’am, why they call this the double chamber?’ said Annette, while Emily surveyed it in silence and saw that it was lofty and spacious, like the others she had seen, and, like many of them, too, had its walls lined with dark larch-wood. The bed and other furniture was very ancient, and had an air of gloomy grandeur, like all that she had seen in the castle. One of the high casements, which she opened, overlooked a rampart, but the view beyond was hid in darkness.

In the presence of Annette, Emily tried to support her spirits, and to restrain the tears, which, every now and then, came to her eyes. She wished much to enquire when Count Morano was expected at the castle, but an unwillingness to ask unnecessary questions, and to mention family concerns to a servant, withheld her. Meanwhile, Annette’s thoughts were engaged upon another subject: she dearly loved the marvellous, and had heard of a circumstance, connected with the castle, that highly gratified this taste. Having been enjoined not to mention it, her inclination to tell it was so strong, that she was every instant on the point of speaking what she had heard. Such a strange circumstance, too, and to be obliged to conceal it, was a severe punishment; but she knew, that Montoni might impose one much severer, and she feared to incur it by offending him.

Caterina now brought the wood, and its bright blaze dispelled, for a while, the gloom of the chamber. She told Annette, that her lady had enquired for her, and Emily was once again left to her own sad reflections. Her heart was not yet hardened against the stern manners of Montoni, and she was nearly as much shocked now, as she had been when she first witnessed them. The tenderness and affection, to which she had been accustomed, till she lost her parents, had made her particularly sensible to any degree of unkindness, and such a reverse as this no apprehension had prepared her to support.

To call off her attention from subjects, that pressed heavily upon her spirits, she rose and again examined her room and its furniture. As she walked round it, she passed a door, that was not quite shut, and, perceiving, that it was not the one, through which she entered, she brought the light forward to discover whither it led. She opened it, and, going forward, had nearly fallen down a steep, narrow stair-case, that wound from it, between two stone walls. She wished to know to what it led, and was the more anxious, since it communicated so immediately with her apartment; but, in the present state of her spirits, she wanted courage to venture into the darkness alone. Closing the door, therefore, she endeavoured to fasten it, but, upon further examination, perceived, that it had no bolts on the chamber side, though it had two on the other. By placing a heavy chair against it, she in some measure remedied the defect; yet she was still alarmed at the thought of sleeping in this remote room alone, with a door opening she knew not whither, and which could not be perfectly fastened on the inside. Sometimes she wished to entreat of Madame Montoni, that Annette might have leave to remain with her all night, but was deterred by an apprehension of betraying what would be thought childish fears, and by an unwillingness to increase the apt terrors of Annette.

Her gloomy reflections were, soon after, interrupted by a footstep in the corridor, and she was glad to see Annette enter with some supper, sent by Madame Montoni. Having a table near the fire, she made the good girl sit down and sup with her; and, when their little repast was over, Annette, encouraged by her kindness and stirring the wood into a blaze, drew her chair upon the hearth, nearer to Emily, and said, – ‘Did you ever hear, ma’amselle, of the strange accident, that made the Signor lord of this castle?'

'What wonderful story have you now to tell?' said Emily, concealing the curiosity, occasioned by the mysterious hints she had formerly heard on that subject.

'I have heard all about it, ma'amselle,' said Annette, looking round the chamber and drawing closer to Emily; 'Benedetto told it me as we travelled together: says he, "Annette, you don't know about this castle here, that we are going to?" No, says I, Mr Benedetto, pray what do you know? But, ma'amselle, you can keep a secret, or I would not tell it you for the world; for I promised never to tell, and they say, that the Signor does not like to have it talked of.'

'If you promised to keep this secret,' said Emily, 'you do right not to mention it.'

Annette paused a moment, and then said, 'O, but to you, ma'amselle, to you I may tell it safely, I know.'

Emily smiled, 'I certainly shall keep it as faithfully as yourself, Annette.'

Annette replied very gravely, that would do, and proceeded – 'This castle, you must know, ma'amselle, is very old, and very strong, and has stood out many sieges, as they say. Now it was not Signor Montoni's always, nor his father's, no; but, by some law or other, it was to come to the Signor, if the lady died unmarried.'

'What lady?' said Emily.

'I am not come to that yet,' replied Annette, 'it is the lady I am going to tell you about, ma'amselle: but, as I was saying, this lady lived in the castle, and had every thing very grand about her, as you may suppose, ma'amselle. The Signor used often to come to see her, and was in love with her, and offered to marry her; for, though he was somehow related, that did not signify. But she was in love with somebody else, and would not have him, which made him very angry, as they say, and you know, ma'amselle, what an ill-looking gentleman he is, when he is angry. Perhaps she saw him in a passion, and therefore would not have him. But, as I was saying, she was very melancholy and unhappy, and all that, for a long while, and – Holy Virgin! what noise is that? did not you hear a sound, ma'amselle?'

'It was only the wind,' said Emily, 'but do come to the end of your story.'

'As I was saying – O, where was I? – as I was saying – she was very melancholy and unhappy a long while, and used to walk about upon the terrace, there, under the windows, by herself, and cry so! it would have done your heart good to hear her. That is – I don't mean good, but it would have made you cry too, as they tell me.'

'Well, but, Annette, do tell me the substance of your tale.'

'All in good time, ma'am; all this I heard before at Venice, but what is to come I never heard till to-day. This happened a great many years ago, when Signor Montoni was quite a young man. The lady – they called her Signora Laurentini, was very handsome, but she used to be in great passions, too, sometimes, as well as the Signor. Finding he could not make her listen to him

– what does he do, but leave the castle, and never comes near it for a long time! but it was all one to her; she was just as unhappy whether he was here or not, till one evening, Holy St Peter! ma'amselle,' cried Annette, 'look at that lamp, see how blue it burns!' She looked fearfully round the chamber. 'Ridiculous girl!' said Emily, 'why will you indulge those fancies? Pray let me hear the end of your story, I am weary.'

Annette still kept her eyes on the lamp, and proceeded in a lower voice. 'It was one evening, they say, at the latter end of the year, it might be about the middle of September, I suppose, or the beginning of October; nay, for that matter, it might be November, for that, too, is the latter end of the year, but that I cannot say for certain, because they did not tell me for certain themselves. However, it was at the latter end of the year, this grand lady walked out of the castle into the woods below, as she had often done before, all alone, only her maid was with her. The wind blew cold, and strewed the leaves about, and whistled dismally among those great old chesnut trees, that we passed, ma'amselle, as we came to the castle – for Benedetto shewed me the trees as he was talking – the wind blew cold, and her woman would have persuaded her to return: but all would not do, for she was fond of walking in the woods, at evening time, and, if the leaves were falling about her, so much the better.

'Well, they saw her go down among the woods, but night came, and she did not return; ten o'clock, eleven o'clock, twelve o'clock came, and no lady! Well, the servants thought to be sure, some accident had befallen her, and they went out to seek her. They searched all night long, but could not find her, or any trace of her; and, from that day to this, ma'amselle, she has never been heard of.'

'Is this true, Annette?' said Emily, in much surprise.

'True, ma'am!' said Annette, with a look of horror, 'yes, it is true, indeed. But they do say,' she added, lowering her voice, 'they do say, that the Signora has been seen, several times since, walking in the woods and about the castle in the night: several of the old servants, who remained here some time after, declare they saw her; and, since then, she has been seen by some of the vassals, who have happened to be in the castle, at night. Carlo, the old steward, could tell such things, they say, if he would.'

'How contradictory is this, Annette!' said Emily, 'you say nothing has been since known of her, and yet she has been seen!'

'But all this was told me for a great secret,' rejoined Annette, without noticing the remark, 'and I am sure, ma'am, you would not hurt either me or Benedetto, so much as to go and tell it again.' Emily remained silent, and Annette repeated her last sentence.

'You have nothing to fear from my indiscretion,' replied Emily, 'and let me advise you, my good Annette, be discreet yourself, and never mention what you have just told me to any other person. Signor Montoni, as you say, may be angry if he hears of it. But what enquiries were made concerning the lady?'

'O! a great deal, indeed, ma'amselle, for the Signor laid claim to the castle directly, as being the next heir, and they said, that is the judges, or the senators, or somebody of that sort, said, he could not take possession of it till so many years were gone by, and then, if, after all, the lady could not be found, why she would be as good as dead, and the castle would be his own; and so it is his own. But the story went round, and many strange reports were spread, so very strange, ma'amselle, that I shall not tell them.'

'That is stranger still, Annette,' said Emily, smiling, and rousing herself from her reverie. 'But, when Signora Laurentini was afterwards seen in the castle, did nobody speak to her?'

'Speak – speak to her!' cried Annette, with a look of terror; 'no, to be sure.'

'And why not?' rejoined Emily, willing to hear further.

'Holy Mother! speak to a spirit!'

'But what reason had they to conclude it was a spirit, unless they had approached, and spoken to it?'

'O ma'amselle, I cannot tell. How can you ask such shocking questions? But nobody ever saw it come in, or go out of the castle; and it was in one place now, and then the next minute in quite another part of the castle; and then it never spoke, and, if it was alive, what should it do in the castle if it never spoke? Several parts of the castle have never been gone into since, they say, for that very reason.'

'What, because it never spoke?' said Emily, trying to laugh away the fears, that began to steal upon her.—'No, ma'amselle, no;' replied Annette, rather angrily, 'but because something has been seen there. They say, too, there is an old chapel adjoining the west side of the castle, where, any time at midnight, you may hear such groans! – it makes one shudder to think of them! – and strange sights have been seen there —'

'Pr'ythee, Annette, no more of these silly tales,' said Emily.

'Silly tales, ma'amselle! O, but I will tell you one story about this, if you please, that Caterina told me. It was one cold winter's night that Caterina (she often came to the castle then, she says, to keep old Carlo and his wife company, and so he recommended her afterwards to the Signor, and she has lived here ever since) Caterina was sitting with them in the little hall. Says Carlo, "I wish we had some of those figs to roast, that lie in the store-closet, but it is a long way off, and I am loth to fetch them; do, Caterina," says he, "for you are young and nimble, do bring us some, the fire is in a nice trim for roasting them; they lie," says he, "in such a corner of the store-room, at the end of the north-gallery; here, take the lamp," says he, "and mind, as you go up the great stair-case, that the wind, through the roof, does not blow it out." So, with that, Caterina took the lamp – Hush! ma'amselle, I surely heard a noise!'

Emily, whom Annette had now infected with her own terrors, listened attentively; but every thing was still, and Annette proceeded:

'Caterina went to the north-gallery, that is the wide gallery we passed, ma'am, before we came to the corridor, here. As she went with the lamp in her hand, thinking of nothing at all — There, again!' cried Annette, suddenly – I heard it again! – it was not fancy, ma'amselle!'

'Hush!' said Emily, trembling. They listened, and, continuing to sit quite still, Emily heard a low knocking against the wall. It came repeatedly. Annette then screamed loudly, and the chamber door slowly opened. – It was Caterina, come to tell Annette, that her lady wanted her. Emily, though she now perceived who it was, could not immediately overcome her terror; while Annette, half laughing, half crying, scolded Caterina heartily for thus alarming them; and was also terrified lest what she had told had been overheard. – Emily, whose mind was deeply impressed by the chief circumstance of Annette's relation, was unwilling to be left alone, in the present state of her spirits; but, to avoid offending Madame Montoni, and betraying her own weakness, she struggled to overcome the illusions of fear, and dismissed Annette for the night.

When she was alone, her thoughts recurred to the strange history of Signora Laurentini and then to her own strange situation, in the wild and solitary mountains of a foreign country, in the castle, and the power of a man, to whom, only a few preceding months, she was an entire stranger; who had already exercised an usurped authority over her, and whose character she now regarded, with a degree of terror, apparently justified by the fears of others. She knew, that he had invention equal to the conception and talents to the execution of any project, and she greatly feared he had a heart too void of feeling to oppose the perpetration of whatever his interest might suggest. She had long observed the unhappiness of Madame Montoni, and had often been witness to the stern and contemptuous behaviour she received from her husband. To these circumstances, which conspired to give her just cause for alarm, were now added those thousand nameless terrors, which exist only in active imaginations, and which set reason and examination equally at defiance.

Emily remembered all that Valancourt had told her, on the eve of her departure from Languedoc, respecting Montoni, and all that he had said to dissuade her from venturing on the journey. His fears had often since appeared to her prophetic – now they seemed confirmed. Her heart, as it gave her back the image of Valancourt, mourned in vain regret, but reason soon came with a consolation, which, though feeble at first, acquired vigour from reflection. She considered, that, whatever might be her sufferings, she had withheld from involving him in misfortune, and that, whatever her future sorrows could be, she was, at least, free from self-reproach.

Her melancholy was assisted by the hollow sighings of the wind along the corridor and round the castle. The cheerful blaze of the wood had long been extinguished, and she sat with her eyes fixed on the dying embers, till a loud gust, that swept through the corridor, and shook the doors and casements, alarmed her, for its violence had moved the chair she had placed as a fastening, and the door, leading to the private stair-case, stood half open. Her curiosity and her fears were again awakened. She took the lamp to the top of the steps, and stood hesitating whether to go down; but again the profound stillness and the gloom of the place awed her, and, determining to enquire further, when day-light might assist the search, she closed the door, and placed against it a stronger guard.

She now retired to her bed, leaving the lamp burning on the table; but its gloomy light, instead of dispelling her fear, assisted it; for, by its uncertain rays, she almost fancied she saw shapes flit past her curtains and glide into the remote obscurity of her chamber. – The castle clock struck one before she closed her eyes to sleep.

CHAPTER VI

> ‘I think it is the weakness of mine eyes,
>
> That shapes this monstrous apparition.
> It comes upon me!’
> [SHAKESPEARE] *Julius Cæsar*[1]

Daylight dispelled from Emily’s mind the glooms of superstition, but not those of apprehension. The Count Morano was the first image, that occurred to her waking thoughts, and then came a train of anticipated evils, which she could neither conquer, or avoid. She rose, and, to relieve her mind from the busy ideas, that tormented it, compelled herself to notice external objects. From her casement she looked out upon the wild grandeur of the scene, closed nearly on all sides by alpine steeps, whose tops, peeping over each other, faded from the eye in misty hues, while the promontories below were dark with woods, that swept down to their base, and stretched along the narrow vallies. The rich pomp of these woods was particularly delightful to Emily; and she viewed with astonishment the fortifications of the castle spreading along a vast extent of rock, and now partly in decay, the grandeur of the ramparts below, and the towers and battlements and various features of the fabric above. From these her sight wandered over the cliffs and woods into the valley, along which foamed a broad and rapid stream, seen falling among the crags of an opposite mountain, now flashing in the sun-beams, and now shadowed by over-arching pines, till it was entirely concealed by their thick foliage. Again it burst from beneath this darkness in one broad sheet of foam, and fell thundering into the vale. Nearer, towards the west, opened the mountain-vista, which Emily had viewed with such sublime emotion, on her approach to the castle: a thin dusky vapour, that rose from the valley, overspread its features with a sweet obscurity. As this ascended and caught the sun-beams, it kindled into a crimson tint, and touched with exquisite beauty the woods and cliffs, over which it passed to the summit of the mountains; then, as the veil drew up, it was delightful to watch the gleaming objects, that progressively disclosed themselves in the valley – the green turf – dark woods – little rocky recesses – a few peasants’ huts – the foaming stream – a herd of cattle, and various images of pastoral beauty. Then, the pine-forests brightened, and then the broad breast of the mountains, till, at length, the mist settled round their summit, touching them with a ruddy glow. The features of the vista now appeared distinctly, and the broad deep shadows, that fell from the lower cliffs, gave strong effect to the streaming splendour above; while the mountains, gradually sinking in the perspective, appeared to shelve into the Adriatic sea, for such Emily imagined to be the gleam of blueish light, that terminated the view.

Thus she endeavoured to amuse her fancy, and was not unsuccessful. The breezy freshness of the morning, too, revived her. She raised her thoughts in prayer, which she felt always most disposed to do, when viewing the sublimity of nature, and her mind recovered its strength.

When she turned from the casement, her eyes glanced upon the door she had so carefully guarded, on the preceding night, and she now determined to examine whither it led; but, on advancing to remove the chairs, she perceived, that they were already moved a little way. Her surprise cannot easily be imagined, when, in the next minute, she perceived that the door was fastened. – She felt, as if she had seen an apparition. The door of the corridor was locked as she had left it, but this door, which could be secured only on the outside, must have been bolted, during the night. She became seriously uneasy at the thought of sleeping again in a chamber, thus liable to intrusion, so remote, too, as it was from the family, and she determined to mention the circumstance to Madame Montoni, and to request a change.

After some perplexity she found her way into the great hall, and to the room, which she had left, on the preceding night, where breakfast was spread, and her aunt was alone, for Montoni had been walking over the environs of the castle, examining the condition of its fortifications, and talking for some time with Carlo. Emily observed, that her aunt had been weeping, and her heart softened towards her, with an affection, that shewed itself in her manner, rather than in words, while she carefully avoided the appearance of having noticed, that she was unhappy. She seized the opportunity of Montoni’s absence to mention the circumstance of the door, to request that she might be allowed another apartment, and to enquire again, concerning the occasion of their sudden journey. On the first subject her aunt referred her to Montoni, positively refusing to interfere in the affair; on the last, she professed utter ignorance.

Emily, then, with a wish of making her aunt more reconciled to her situation, praised the grandeur of the castle and the surrounding scenery, and endeavoured to soften every unpleasing circumstance attending it. But, though misfortune had somewhat conquered the asperities of Madame Montoni’s temper, and, by increasing her cares for herself, had taught her to feel in some degree for others, the capricious love of rule, which nature had planted and habit had nourished in her heart, was not subdued. She could not now deny herself the gratification of tyrannizing over the innocent and helpless Emily, by attempting to ridicule the taste she could not feel.

Her satirical discourse was, however, interrupted by the entrance of Montoni, and her countenance immediately assumed a mingled expression of fear and resentment, while he seated himself at the breakfast-table, as if unconscious of there being any person but himself in the room.

Emily, as she observed him in silence, saw, that his countenance was darker and sterner than usual. ‘O could I know,’ said she to herself, ‘what passes in that mind, could I know the thoughts, that are known there, I should no longer be condemned to this torturing suspense!’ Their breakfast passed in silence, till Emily ventured to request, that another apartment might be allotted to her, and related the circumstance which made her wish it.

‘I have no time to attend to these idle whims,’ said Montoni, ‘that chamber was prepared for you, and you must rest contented with it. It is not probable, that any person would take the trouble of going to that remote stair-case, for the purpose of fastening a door. If it was not fastened, when you entered the chamber, the wind, perhaps, shook the door and made the bolts slide. But I know not why I should undertake to account for so trifling an occurrence.’

This explanation was by no means satisfactory to Emily, who had observed, that the bolts were rusted, and consequently could not be thus easily moved; but she forbore to say so, and repeated her request.

‘If you will not release yourself from the slavery of these fears,’ said Montoni, sternly, ‘at least forbear to torment others by the mention of them. Conquer such whims, and endeavour to strengthen your mind. No existence is more contemptible than that, which is embittered by fear.’ As he said this, his eye glanced upon Madame Montoni, who coloured highly, but was still silent. Emily, wounded and disappointed, thought her fears were, in this instance, too reasonable to deserve ridicule; but, perceiving, that, however they might oppress her, she must endure them, she tried to withdraw her attention from the subject.

Carlo soon after entered with some fruit: ‘Your *Excellenza* is tired after your long ramble,’ said he, as he set the fruit upon the table; ‘but you have more to see after breakfast. There is a place in the vaulted passage leading to’—

Montoni frowned upon him, and waved his hand for him to leave the room. Carlo stopped, looked down, and then added, as he advanced to the breakfast-table, and took up the basket of fruit, ‘I made bold, your *Excellenza*, to bring some cherries, here, for my honoured lady and my young mistress. Will your ladyship taste them, madam?’ said Carlo, presenting the basket, ‘they are very fine ones, though I gathered them myself, and from an old tree, that catches all the south sun; they are as big as plums, your ladyship.’

‘Very well, old Carlo,’ said Madame Montoni; ‘I am obliged to you.’

‘And the young Signora, too, she may like some of them,’ rejoined Carlo, turning with the basket to Emily, ‘it will do me good to see her eat some.’

‘Thank you, Carlo,’ said Emily, taking some cherries, and smiling kindly.

‘Come, come,’ said Montoni, impatiently, ‘enough of this. Leave the room, but be in waiting. I shall want you presently.’

Carlo obeyed, and Montoni, soon after, went out to examine further into the state of the castle; while Emily remained with her aunt, patiently enduring her ill humour, and endeavouring, with much sweetness, to sooth her affliction, instead of resenting its effect.

When Madame Montoni retired to her dressing-room, Emily endeavoured to amuse herself by a view of the castle. Through a folding door, she passed from the great hall to the ramparts, which extended along the brow of the precipice, round three sides of the edifice; the fourth was guarded by the high walls of the courts, and by the gateway, through which she had passed, on the preceding evening. The grandeur of the broad ramparts, and the changing scenery they overlooked, excited her high admiration; for the extent of the terraces allowed the features of the country to be seen in such various points of view, that they appeared to form new landscapes. She often paused to examine the gothic magnificence of Udolpho, its proud irregularity, its lofty towers and battlements, its high-arched casements, and its slender watch-towers, perched upon the corners of turrets. Then she would lean on the wall of the terrace, and, shuddering, measure with her eye the precipice below, till the dark summits of the woods arrested it. Wherever she turned, appeared mountain-tops, forests of pine and narrow glens, opening among the Apennines and retiring from the sight into inaccessible regions.

While she thus leaned, Montoni, followed by two men, appeared, ascending a winding path, cut in the rock below. He stopped upon a cliff, and, pointing to the ramparts, turned to his followers, and talked with much eagerness of gesticulation. – Emily perceived, that one of these men was Carlo; the other was in the dress of a peasant, and he alone seemed to be receiving the directions of Montoni.

She withdrew from the walls, and pursued her walk, till she heard at a distance the sound of carriage wheels, and then the loud bell of the portal, when it instantly occurred to her, that Count Morano was arrived. As she hastily passed the folding doors from the terrace, towards her own apartment, several persons entered the hall by an opposite door. She saw them at the extremity of the arcades, and immediately retreated; but the agitation of her spirits, and the extent and duskiness of the hall, had prevented her from distinguishing the persons of the strangers. Her fears, however, had but one object, and they had called up that object to her fancy; – she believed that she had seen Count Morano.

When she thought that they had passed the hall, she ventured again to the door, and proceeded, unobserved, to her room, where she remained, agitated with apprehensions, and listening to every distant sound. At length, hearing voices on the rampart, she hastened to her window, and observed Montoni, with Signor Cavigni, walking below, conversing earnestly, and often stopping and turning towards each other, at which times their discourse seemed to be uncommonly interesting.

Of the several persons who had appeared in the hall, here was Cavigni alone: but Emily’s alarm was soon after heightened by the steps of some one in the corridor, who, she apprehended, brought a message from the Count. In the next moment, Annette appeared.

'Ah! ma'amselle,' said she, 'here is the Signor Cavigni arrived! I am sure I rejoiced to see a christian person in this place; and then he is so good-natured too, he always takes so much notice of me! – And here is also Signor Verezzi, and who do you think besides, ma'amselle?'

'I cannot guess, Annette; tell me quickly.'

'Nay, ma'am, do guess once.'

'Well, then,' said Emily, with assumed composure, 'it is – Count Morano, I suppose.'

'Holy Virgin!' cried Annette, 'are you ill, ma'amselle? you are going to faint! let me get some water.'

Emily sunk into a chair; 'Stay, Annette,' said she, feebly, 'do not leave me – I shall soon be better; open the casement. – The Count, you say – he is come then?'

'Who, I! – the Count! No, ma'amselle, I did not say so.' 'He is *not* come

then?' said Emily, eagerly. 'No, ma'amselle.'

'You are sure of it?'

'Lord bless me!' said Annette, 'you recover very suddenly, ma'am! why, I thought you was dying, just now.'

'But the Count – you are sure, is not come?'

'O yes, quite sure of that, ma'amselle. Why, I was looking out through the grate in the north turret, when the carriages drove into the court-yard, and I never expected to see such a goodly sight in this dismal old castle! but here are masters and servants, too, enough to make the place ring again. O! I was ready to leap through the rusty old bars, for joy! – O! who would ever have thought of seeing a christian face in this huge dreary house? I could have kissed the very horses that brought them.'

'Well, Annette, well, I am better now.'

'Yes, ma'amselle, I see you are. O! all the servants will lead merry lives here, now; we shall have singing and dancing in the little hall, for the Signor cannot hear us there – and droll stories – Ludovico's come, ma'am; yes, there is Ludovico come with them! You remember Ludovico, ma'am – a tall, handsome, young man – Signor Cavigni's lacquey – who always wears his cloak with such a grace, thrown round his left arm, and his hat set on so smartly, all on one side, and —'

'No,' said Emily, who was wearied by her loquacity.

'What, ma'amselle! don't you remember Ludovico – who rowed the Cavaliero's gondola, at the last regatta,[2] and won the prize? And who used to sing such sweet verses about Orlandos and about the Black-a-moors, too; and Charly – Charly – magne,[3] yes, that was the name, all under my lattice, in the west portico, on the moon-light nights at Venice? O! I have listened to him!'—

'I fear, to thy peril, my good Annette,' said Emily; 'for it seems his verses have stolen thy heart. But let me advise you; if it is so, keep the secret; never let him know it.'

'Ah – ma'amselle! – how can one keep such a secret as that?'

'Well, Annette, I am now so much better, that you may leave me.'

'O, but, ma'amselle, I forgot to ask – how did you sleep in this dreary old chamber last night?' – 'As well as usual.' – 'Did you hear no noises?' – 'None.'

– 'Nor see any thing?' 'Nothing.' – 'Well, that is surprising!' 'Not in the least: and now tell me, why you ask these questions.'

'O, ma'amselle! I would not tell you for the world, nor all I have heard about this chamber, either; it would frighten you so.'

'If that is all, you have frightened me already, and may therefore tell me what you know, without hurting your conscience.'

'O Lord! they say the room is haunted, and has been so these many years.'

'It is by a ghost, then, who can draw bolts,' said Emily, endeavouring to laugh away her apprehensions; 'for I left that door open, last night, and found it fastened this morning.'

Annette turned pale, and said not a word.

'Do you know whether any of the servants fastened this door in the morning, before I rose?'

'No, ma'am, that I will be bound they did not; but I don't know: shall I go and ask, ma'amselle?' said Annette, moving hastily towards the corridor.

'Stay, Annette, I have other questions to ask; tell me what you have heard concerning this room, and whither that staircase leads.'

'I will go and ask it all directly, ma'am; besides, I am sure my lady wants me. I cannot stay now, indeed, ma'am.'

She hurried from the room, without waiting Emily's reply, whose heart, lightened by the certainty, that Morano was not arrived, allowed her to smile at the superstitious terror, which had seized on Annette; for, though she sometimes felt its influence herself, she could smile at it, when apparent in other persons.

Montoni having refused Emily another chamber, she determined to bear with patience the evil she could not remove, and, in order to make the room as comfortable as possible, unpacked her books, her sweet delight in happier days, and her soothing resource in the hours of moderate sorrow: but there were hours when even these failed of their effect; when the genius, the taste, the enthusiam of the sublimest writers were felt no longer.

Her little library being arranged on a high chest, part of the furniture of the room, she took out her drawing utensils, and was tranquil enough to be pleased with the thought of sketching the sublime scenes, beheld from her windows; but she suddenly checked this pleasure, remembering how often she had soothed herself by the intention of obtaining amusement of this kind, and had been prevented by some new circumstance of misfortune.

‘How can I suffer myself to be deluded by hope,’ said she, ‘and, because Count Morano is not yet arrived, feel a momentary happiness? Alas! what is it to me, whether he is here to-day, or to-morrow, if he comes at all? – and that he will come – it were weakness to doubt.’

To withdraw her thoughts, however, from the subject of her misfortunes, she attempted to read, but her attention wandered from the page, and, at length, she threw aside the book, and determined to explore the adjoining chambers of the castle. Her imagination was pleased with the view of ancient grandeur, and an emotion of melancholy awe awakened all its powers, as she walked through rooms, obscure and desolate, where no footsteps had passed probably for many years, and remembered the strange history of the former possessor of the edifice. This brought to her recollection the veiled picture, which had attracted her curiosity, on the preceding night, and she resolved to examine it. As she passed through the chambers, that led to this, she found herself somewhat agitated; its connection with the late lady of the castle, and the conversation of Annette, together with the circumstance of the veil, throwing a mystery over the subject, that excited a faint degree of terror. But a terror of this nature, as it occupies and expands the mind, and elevates it to high expectation, is purely sublime, and leads us, by a kind of fascination, to seek even the object, from which we appear to shrink.[4]

Emily passed on with faltering steps, and having paused a moment at the door, before she attempted to open it, she then hastily entered the chamber, and went towards the picture, which appeared to be enclosed in a frame of uncommon size, that hung in a dark part of the room. She paused again, and then, with a timid hand, lifted the veil; but instantly let it fall – perceiving that what it had concealed was no picture, and, before she could leave the chamber, she dropped senseless on the floor.

When she recovered her recollection, the remembrance of what she had seen had nearly deprived her of it a second time. She had scarcely strength to remove from the room, and regain her own; and, when arrived there, wanted courage to remain alone. Horror occupied her mind,[5] and excluded, for a time, all sense of past, and dread of future misfortune: she seated herself near the casement, because from thence she heard voices, though distant, on the terrace, and might see people pass, and these, trifling as they were, were reviving circumstances. When her spirits had recovered their tone, she considered, whether she should mention what she had seen to Madame Montoni, and various and important motives urged her to do so, among which the least was the hope of the relief, which an overburdened mind finds in speaking of the subject of its interest. But she was aware of the terrible consequences, which such a communication might lead to; and, dreading the indiscretion of her aunt, at length, endeavoured to arm herself with resolution to observe a profound silence, on the subject. Montoni and Verezzi soon after passed under the casement, speaking cheerfully, and their voices revived her. Presently the Signors Bertolini and Cavigni joined the party on the terrace, and Emily, supposing that Madame Montoni was then alone, went to seek her; for the solitude of her chamber, and its proximity to that where she had received so severe a shock, again affected her spirits.

She found her aunt in her dressing-room, preparing for dinner. Emily’s pale and affrighted countenance alarmed even Madame Montoni; but she had sufficient strength of mind to be silent on the subject, that still made her shudder, and which was ready to burst from her lips. In her aunt’s apartment she remained, till they both descended to dinner. There she met the gentlemen lately arrived, who had a kind of busy seriousness in their looks, which was somewhat unusual with them, while their thoughts seemed too much occupied by some deep interest, to suffer them to bestow much attention either on Emily, or Madame Montoni. They spoke little, and Montoni less. Emily, as she now looked on him, shuddered. The horror of the chamber rushed on her mind. Several times the colour faded from her cheeks, and she feared, that illness would betray her emotions, and compel her to leave the room; but the strength of her resolution remedied the weakness of her frame; she obliged herself to converse, and even tried to look cheerful.

Montoni evidently laboured under some vexation, such as would probably have agitated a weaker mind, or a more susceptible heart, but which appeared, from the sternness of his countenance, only to bend up his faculties to energy and fortitude.

It was a comfortless and silent meal. The gloom of the castle seemed to have spread its contagion even over the gay countenance of Cavigni, and with this gloom was mingled a fierceness, such as she had seldom seen him indicate. Count Morano was not named, and what conversation there was, turned chiefly upon the wars, which at that time agitated the Italian states, the strength of the Venetian armies, and the characters of their generals.

After dinner, when the servants had withdrawn, Emily learned, that the cavalier, who had drawn upon himself the vengeance of Orsino, had since died of his wounds, and that strict search was still making for his murderer. The intelligence seemed to disturb Montoni, who mused, and then enquired, where Orsino had concealed himself. His guests, who all, except Cavigni, were ignorant, that Montoni had himself assisted him to escape from Venice, replied, that he had fled in the night with such precipitation and secrecy, that his most intimate companions knew not whither. Montoni blamed himself for having asked the question, for a second thought convinced him, that a man of Orsino’s suspicious temper was not likely to trust any of the persons present with the knowledge of his asylum. He considered himself, however, as entitled to his utmost confidence, and did not doubt, that he should soon hear of him.

Emily retired with Madame Montoni, soon after the cloth was withdrawn, and left the cavaliers to their secret councils, but not before the significant frowns of Montoni had warned his wife to depart, who passed from the hall to the ramparts, and walked, for some time, in silence, which Emily did not interrupt, for her mind was also occupied by interests of its own. It required all her resolution, to forbear communicating to Madame Montoni the terrible subject, which still thrilled her every nerve with horror; and sometimes she was on the point of doing so, merely to obtain the relief of a moment; but she knew how wholly she was in the power of Montoni, and, considering, that the indiscretion of her aunt might prove fatal to them both, she compelled herself to endure a present and an inferior evil, rather than to tempt a future and a heavier one. A strange kind of presentiment frequently, on this day, occurred to her; – it seemed as if her fate rested here, and was by some invisible means connected with this castle.

'Let me not accelerate it,' said she to herself: 'for whatever I may be reserved, let me, at least, avoid self-reproach.'

As she looked on the massy walls of the edifice, her melancholy spirits represented it to be her prison; and she started as at a new suggestion, when she considered how far distant she was from her native country, from her little peaceful home, and from her only friend – how remote was her hope of happiness, how feeble the expectation of again seeing him! Yet the idea of Valancourt, and her confidence in his faithful love, had hitherto been her only solace, and she struggled hard to retain them. A few tears of agony started to her eyes, which she turned aside to conceal.

While she afterwards leaned on the wall of the rampart, some peasants, at a little distance, were seen examining a breach, before which lay a heap of stones, as if to repair it, and a rusty old cannon, that appeared to have fallen from its station above. Madame Montoni stopped to speak to the men, and enquired what they were going to do. 'To repair the fortifications, your ladyship,' said one of them; a labour which she was somewhat surprised, that Montoni should think necessary, particularly since he had never spoken of the castle, as of a place, at which he meant to reside for any considerable time; but she passed on towards a lofty arch, that led from the south to the east rampart, and which adjoined the castle, on one side, while, on the other, it supported a small watch-tower, that entirely commanded the deep valley below. As she approached this arch, she saw, beyond it, winding along the woody descent of a distant mountain, a long troop of horse and foot, whom she knew to be soldiers, only by the glitter of their pikes and other arms, for the distance did not allow her to discover the colour of their liveries. As she gazed, the vanguard issued from the woods into the valley, but the train still continued to pour over the remote summit of the mountain, in endless succession; while, in the front, the military uniform became distinguishable, and the commanders, riding first, and seeming, by their gestures, to direct the march of those that followed, at length, approached very near to the castle.

Such a spectacle, in these solitary regions, both surprised and alarmed Madame Montoni, and she hastened towards some peasants, who were employed in raising bastions before the south rampart, where the rock was less abrupt than elsewhere. These men could give no satisfactory answers to her enquiries, but, being roused by them, gazed in stupid astonishment upon the long cavalcade. Madame Montoni, then thinking it necessary to communicate farther the subject of her alarm, sent Emily to say, that she wished to speak to Montoni; an errand her niece did not approve, for she dreaded his frowns, which she knew this message would provoke; but she obeyed in silence.

As she drew near the apartment, in which he sat with his guests, she heard them in earnest and loud dispute, and she paused a moment, trembling at the displeasure, which her sudden interruption would occasion. In the next, their voices sunk all together; she then ventured to open the door, and, while Montoni turned hastily and looked at her, without speaking, she delivered her message.

'Tell Madam Montoni I am engaged,' said he.

Emily then thought it proper to mention the subject of her alarm. Montoni and his companions rose instantly and went to the windows, but, these not affording them a view of the troops, they at length proceeded to the ramparts, where Cavigni conjectured it to be a legion of *Condottieri*,[6] on their march towards Modena.

One part of the cavalcade now extended along the valley, and another wound among the mountains towards the north, while some troops still lingered on the woody precipices, where the first had appeared, so that the great length of the procession seemed to include an whole army. While Montoni and his family watched its progress, they heard the sound of trumpets and the clash of cymbals in the vale, and then others, answering from the heights. Emily listened with emotion to the shrill blast, that woke the echoes of the mountains, and Montoni explained the signals, with which he appeared to be well acquainted, and which meant nothing hostile. The uniforms of the troops, and the kind of arms they bore, confirmed to him the conjecture of Cavigni, and he had the satisfaction to see them pass by, without even stopping to gaze upon his castle. He did not, however, leave the rampart, till the bases of the mountains had shut them from his view, and the last murmur of the trumpet floated away on the wind. Cavigni and Verezzi were inspirited by this spectacle, which seemed to have roused all the fire of their temper; Montoni turned into the castle in thoughtful silence.

Emily's mind had not yet sufficiently recovered from its late shock, to endure the loneliness of her chamber, and she remained upon the ramparts; for Madame Montoni had not invited her to her dressing-room, whither she had gone evidently in low spirits, and Emily, from her late experience, had lost all wish to explore the gloomy and mysterious recesses of the castle. The ramparts, therefore, were almost her only retreat, and here she lingered, till the gray haze of evening was again spread over the scene.

The cavaliers supped by themselves, and Madame Montoni remained in her apartment, whither Emily went, before she retired to her own. She found her aunt weeping, and in much agitation. The tenderness of Emily was naturally so soothing, that it seldom failed to give comfort to the drooping heart: but Madame Montoni's was torn, and the softest accents of Emily's voice were lost upon it. With her usual delicacy, she did not appear to observe her aunt's distress, but it gave an involuntary gentleness to her manners, and an air of solicitude to her countenance, which Madame Montoni was vexed to perceive, who seemed to feel the pity of her niece to be an insult to her pride, and dismissed her as soon as she properly could. Emily did not venture to mention again the reluctance she felt to her gloomy chamber, but she requested that Annette might be permitted to remain with her till she retired to rest; and the request was somewhat reluctantly granted. Annette, however, was now with the servants, and Emily withdrew alone.

With light and hasty steps she passed through the long galleries, while the feeble glimmer of the lamp she carried only shewed the gloom around her, and the passing air threatened to extinguish it. The lonely silence, that reigned in this part of the castle, awed her; now and then, indeed, she heard a faint peal of laughter rise from a remote part of the edifice, where the servants were assembled, but it was soon lost, and a kind of breathless stillness remained. As she passed the suite of rooms which she had visited in the morning, her eyes glanced fearfully on the door, and she almost fancied she heard murmuring sounds within, but she paused not a moment to enquire.

Having reached her own apartment, where no blazing wood on the hearth dissipated the gloom, she sat down with a book, to enliven her attention, till Annette should come, and a fire could be kindled. She continued to read till her light was nearly expired, but Annette did not appear, and the solitude and obscurity of her chamber again affected her spirits, the more, because of its nearness to the scene of horror, that she had witnessed in the morning. Gloomy and fantastic images came to her mind. She looked fearfully towards the door of the stair-case, and then, examining whether it was still fastened, found that it was so. Unable to conquer the uneasiness she felt at the prospect of sleeping again in this remote and insecure apartment, which some person seemed to have entered during the preceding night, her impatience to see Annette, whom she had bidden to enquire concerning this circumstance, became extremely painful. She wished also to question her, as to the object, which had excited so much horror in her own mind, and which Annette on the preceding evening had appeared to be in part acquainted with, though her words were very remote from the truth, and it appeared plainly to Emily, that the girl had been purposely misled by a false report: above all she was surprised, that the door of the chamber, which contained it, should be left unguarded. Such an instance of negligence almost surpassed belief. But her light was now expiring; the faint flashes it threw upon the walls called up all the terrors of fancy, and she rose to find her way to the habitable part of the castle, before it was quite extinguished.

As she opened the chamber door, she heard remote voices, and soon after, saw a light issue upon the further end of the corridor, which Annette and another servant approached. 'I am glad you are come,' said Emily: 'what has detained you so long? Pray light me a fire immediately.'

'My lady wanted me, ma'amselle,' replied Annette in some confusion; 'I will go and get the wood.'

'No,' said Caterina, 'that is my business,' and left the room instantly, while Annette would have followed; but, being called back, she began to talk very loud, and laugh, and seemed afraid to trust a pause of silence.

Caterina soon returned with the wood, and then, when the cheerful blaze once more animated the room, and this servant had withdrawn, Emily asked Annette, whether she had made the enquiry she bade her. 'Yes, ma'amselle,' said Annette, 'but not a soul knows any thing about the matter: and old Carlo, – I watched him well, for they say he knows strange things – old Carlo looked so as I don't know how to tell, and he asked me again and again, if I was sure the door was ever unfastened. Lord, says I – am I sure I am alive? And as for me, ma'am, I am all astounded, as one may say, and would no more sleep in this chamber, than I would on the great cannon at the end of the east rampart.' 'And what objection have you to that cannon, more than to any of the rest?' said Emily smiling: 'the best would be rather a hard bed.'

'Yes, ma'amselle, any of them would be hard enough for that matter; but they do say, that something has been seen in the dead of night, standing beside the great cannon, as if to guard it.'

'Well! my good Annette, the people who tell such stories, are happy in having you for an auditor, for I perceive you believe them all.'

'Dear ma'amselle! I will shew you the very cannon; you can see it from these windows!'

'Well,' said Emily, 'but that does not prove, that an apparition guards it.'

'What! not if I shew you the very cannon! Dear ma'am, you will believe nothing.'

'Nothing probably upon this subject, but what I see,' said Emily.—'Well, ma'am, but you shall see it, if you will only step this way to the casement.' – Emily could not forbear laughing, and Annette looked surprised. Perceiving her extreme aptitude to credit the marvellous, Emily forbore to mention the subject she had intended, lest it should overcome her with ideal terrors,[7] and she began to speak on a lively topic – the regattas of Venice.

'Aye, ma'amselle, those rowing matches,' said Annette, 'and the fine moonlight nights, are all, that are worth seeing in Venice. To be sure that moon is brighter than any I ever saw; and then to hear such sweet music, too, as Ludovico has often and often sung under the lattice by the west portico! Ma'amselle, it was Ludovico, that told me about that picture, which you wanted so to look at last night, and –'

'What picture?' said Emily, wishing Annette to explain herself.

'O! that terrible picture with the black veil over it.'

'You never saw it, then?' said Emily.

'Who, I! – No, ma'amselle, I never did. But this morning,' continued Annette, lowering her voice, and looking round the room, ‘this morning, as it was broad daylight, do you know, ma’am, I took a strange fancy to see it, as I had heard such odd hints about it, and I got as far as the door, and should have opened it, if it had not been locked!’

Emily, endeavouring to conceal the emotion this circumstance occasioned, enquired at what hour she went to the chamber, and found, that it was soon after herself had been there. She also asked further questions, and the answers convinced her, that Annette, and probably her informer, were ignorant of the terrible truth, though in Annette’s account something very like the truth, now and then, mingled with the falsehood. Emily now began to fear, that her visit to the chamber had been observed, since the door had been closed, so immediately after her departure; and dreaded lest this should draw upon her the vengeance of Montoni. Her anxiety, also, was excited to know whence, and for what purpose, the delusive report, which had been imposed upon Annette, had originated, since Montoni could only have wished for silence and secrecy; but she felt, that the subject was too terrible for this lonely hour, and she compelled herself to leave it, to converse with Annette, whose chat, simple as it was, she preferred to the stillness of total solitude.

Thus they sat, till near midnight, but not without many hints from Annette, that she wished to go. The embers were now nearly burnt out; and Emily heard, at a distance, the thundering sound of the hall doors, as they were shut for the night. She, therefore, prepared for rest, but was still unwilling that Annette should leave her. At this instant, the great bell of the portal sounded. They listened in fearful expectation, when, after a long pause of silence, it sounded again. Soon after, they heard the noise of carriage wheels in the court-yard. Emily sunk almost lifeless in her chair; ‘It is the Count,’ said she.

‘What, at this time of night, ma’am!’ said Annette: ‘no, my dear lady. But, for that matter, it is a strange time of night for any body to come!’

‘Nay, pr’ythee, good Annette, stay not talking,’ said Emily in a voice of agony – ‘Go, pr’ythee, go, and see who it is.’

Annette left the room, and carried with her the light, leaving Emily in darkness, which a few moments before would have terrified her in this room, but was now scarcely observed by her. She listened and waited, in breathless expectation, and heard distant noises, but Annette did not return. Her patience, at length, exhausted, she tried to find her way to the corridor, but it was long before she could touch the door of the chamber, and, when she had opened it, the total darkness without made her fear to proceed. Voices were now heard, and Emily even thought she distinguished those of Count Morano, and Montoni. Soon after, she heard steps approaching, and then a ray of light streamed through the darkness, and Annette appeared, whom Emily went to meet.

‘Yes, ma’amselle,’ said she, ‘you was right, it is the Count sure enough.’

‘It is he!’ exclaimed Emily, lifting her eyes towards heaven and supporting herself by Annette’s arm.

‘Good Lord! my dear lady, don’t be in such a *fluster*, and look so pale, we shall soon hear more.’

‘We shall, indeed!’ said Emily, moving as fast as she was able towards her apartment. ‘I am not well; give me air.’ Annette opened a casement, and brought water. The faintness soon left Emily, but she desired Annette would not go till she heard from Montoni.

‘Dear ma’amselle! he surely will not disturb you at this time of night; why he must think you are asleep.’

‘Stay with me till I am so, then,’ said Emily, who felt temporary relief from this suggestion, which appeared probable enough, though her fears had prevented its occurring to her. Annette, with secret reluctance, consented to stay, and Emily was now composed enough to ask her some questions; among others, whether she had seen the Count.

‘Yes, ma’am, I saw him alight, for I went from hence to the grate in the north turret, that overlooks the inner court-yard, you know. There I saw the Count’s carriage, and the Count in it, waiting at the great door, – for the porter was just gone to bed – with several men on horseback all by the light of the torches they carried.’ – Emily was compelled to smile. ‘When the door was opened, the Count said something, that I could not make out, and then got out, and another gentleman with him. I thought, to be sure, the Signor was gone to bed, and I hastened away to my lady’s dressing-room, to see what I could hear. But in the way I met Ludovico, and he told me that the Signor was up, counselling with his master and the other Signors, in the room at the end of the north gallery; and Ludovico held up his finger, and laid it on his lips, as much as to say – There is more going on, than you think of, Annette, but you must hold your tongue. And so I did hold my tongue, ma’amselle, and came away to tell you directly.’

Emily enquired who the cavalier was, that accompanied the Count, and how Montoni received them; but Annette could not inform her.

‘Ludovico,’ she added, ‘had just been to call Signor Montoni’s valet, that he might tell him they were arrived, when I met him.’

Emily sat musing, for some time, and then her anxiety was so much increased, that she desired Annette would go to the servants’ hall, where it was possible she might hear something of the Count’s intention, respecting his stay at the castle.

‘Yes, ma’am,’ said Annette with readiness; ‘but how am I to find the way, if I leave the lamp with you?’

Emily said she would light her, and they immediately quitted the chamber. When they had reached the top of the great stair-case, Emily recollected, that she might be seen by the Count, and, to avoid the great hall, Annette conducted her through some private passages to a back stair-case, which led directly to that of the servants.

As she returned towards her chamber, Emily began to fear, that she might again lose herself in the intricacies of the castle, and again be shocked by some mysterious spectacle; and, though she was already perplexed by the numerous turnings, she feared to open one of the many doors, that offered. While she stepped thoughtfully along, she fancied, that she heard a low moaning at no great distance, and, having paused a moment, she heard it again and distinctly. Several doors appeared on the right hand of the passage. She advanced, and listened. When she came to the second, she heard a voice, apparently in complaint, within, to which she continued to listen, afraid to open the door, and unwilling to leave it. Convulsive sobs followed, and then the piercing accents of an agonizing spirit burst forth. Emily stood appalled, and looked through the gloom, that surrounded her, in fearful expectation. The lamentations continued. Pity now began to subdue terror; it was possible she might administer comfort to the sufferer, at least, by expressing sympathy, and she laid her hand on the door. While she hesitated she thought she knew this voice, disguised as it was by tones of grief. Having, therefore, set down the lamp in the passage, she gently opened the door, within which all was dark, except that from an inner apartment a partial light appeared; and she stepped softly on. Before she reached it, the appearance of Madame Montoni, leaning on her dressing-table, weeping, and with a handkerchief held to her eyes, struck her, and she paused.

Some person was seated in a chair by the fire, but who it was she could not distinguish. He spoke, now and then, in a low voice, that did not allow Emily to hear what was uttered, but she thought, that Madame Montoni, at those times, wept the more, who was too much occupied by her own distress, to observe Emily, while the latter, though anxious to know what occasioned this, and who was the person admitted at so late an hour to her aunt's dressing-room, forbore to add to her sufferings by surprising her, or to take advantage of her situation, by listening to a private discourse. She, therefore, stepped softly back, and, after some further difficulty, found the way to her own chamber, where nearer interests, at length, excluded the surprise and concern she had felt, respecting Madame Montoni.

Annette, however, returned without satisfactory intelligence, for the servants, among whom she had been, were either entirely ignorant, or affected to be so, concerning the Count's intended stay at the castle. They could talk only of the steep and broken road they had just passed, and of the numerous dangers they had escaped, and express wonder how their lord could choose to encounter all these, in the darkness of night; for they scarcely allowed, that the torches had served for any other purpose but that of shewing the dreariness of the mountains. Annette, finding she could gain no information, left them, making noisy petitions, for more wood on the fire and more supper on the table.

'And now, ma'amselle,' added she, 'I am so sleepy! – I am sure, if you was so sleepy, you would not desire me to sit up with you.'

Emily, indeed, began to think it was cruel to wish it; she had also waited so long, without receiving a summons from Montoni, that it appeared he did not mean to disturb her, at this late hour, and she determined to dismiss Annette. But, when she again looked round her gloomy chamber, and recollected certain circumstances, fear seized her spirits, and she hesitated.

'And yet it were cruel of me to ask you to stay, till I am asleep, Annette,' said she, 'for I fear it will be very long before I forget myself in sleep.'

'I dare say it will be very long, ma'amselle,' said Annette.

'But, before you go,' rejoined Emily, 'let me ask you – Had Signor Montoni left Count Morano, when you quitted the hall?'

'O no, ma'am, they were alone together.'

'Have you been in my aunt's dressing-room, since you left me?'

'No, ma'amselle, I called at the door as I passed, but it was fastened; so I thought my lady was gone to bed.'

'Who, then, was with your lady just now?' said Emily, forgetting, in surprise, her usual prudence.

'Nobody, I believe, ma'am,' replied Annette, 'nobody has been with her, I believe, since I left you.'

Emily took no further notice of the subject, and, after some struggle with imaginary fears, her good nature prevailed over them so far, that she dismissed Annette for the night. She then sat, musing upon her own circumstances and those of Madame Montoni, till her eye rested on the miniature picture, which she had found, after her father's death, among the papers he had enjoined her to destroy. It was open upon the table, before her, among some loose drawings, having, with them, been taken out of a little box by Emily, some hours before. The sight of it called up many interesting reflections, but the melancholy sweetness of the countenance soothed the emotions, which these had occasioned. It was the same style of countenance as that of her late father, and, while she gazed on it with fondness on this account, she even fancied a resemblance in the features. But this tranquillity was suddenly interrupted, when she recollected the words in the manuscript, that had been found with this picture, and which had formerly occasioned her so much doubt and horror. At length, she roused herself from the deep reverie, into which this remembrance had thrown her; but, when she rose to undress, the silence and solitude, to which she was left, at this midnight hour, for not even a distant sound was now heard, conspired with the impression the subject she had been considering had given to her mind, to appall her. Annette's hints, too, concerning this chamber, simple as they were, had not failed to affect her, since they followed a circumstance of peculiar horror, which she herself had witnessed, and since the scene of this was a chamber nearly adjoining her own.

The door of the stair-case was, perhaps, a subject of more reasonable alarm, and she now began to apprehend, such was the aptitude of her fears, that this stair-case had some private communication with the apartment, which she shuddered even to remember. Determined not to undress, she lay down to sleep in her clothes, with her late father's dog, the faithful *Manchon*, at the foot of the bed, whom she considered as a kind of guard.

Thus circumstanced, she tried to banish reflection, but her busy fancy would still hover over the subjects of her interest, and she heard the clock of the castle strike two, before she closed her eyes.

From the disturbed slumber, into which she then sunk, she was soon awakened by a noise, which seemed to arise within her chamber; but the silence, that prevailed, as she fearfully listened, inclined her to believe that she had been alarmed by such sounds as sometimes occur in dreams, and she laid her head again upon the pillow.

A return of the noise again disturbed her; it seemed to come from that part of the room, which communicated with the private stair-case, and she instantly remembered the odd circumstance of the door having been fastened, during the preceding night, by some unknown hand. Her late alarming suspicion, concerning its communication, also occurred to her. Her heart became faint with terror. Half raising herself from the bed, and gently drawing aside the curtain, she looked towards the door of the stair-case, but the lamp, that burnt on the hearth, spread so feeble a light through the apartment, that the remote parts of it were lost in shadow. The noise, however, which, she was convinced, came from the door, continued. It seemed like that made by the undrawing of rusty bolts, and often ceased, and was then renewed more gently, as if the hand, that occasioned it, was restrained by a fear of discovery. While Emily kept her eyes fixed on the spot, she saw the door move, and then slowly open, and perceived something enter the room, but the extreme duskiness prevented her distinguishing what it was. Almost fainting with terror, she had yet sufficient command over herself, to check the shriek, that was escaping from her lips, and, letting the curtain drop from her hand, continued to observe in silence the motions of the mysterious form she saw. It seemed to glide along the remote obscurity of the apartment, then paused, and, as it approached the hearth, she perceived, in the stronger light, what appeared to be a human figure. Certain remembrances now struck upon her heart, and almost subdued the feeble remains of her spirits; she continued, however, to watch the figure, which remained for some time motionless, but then, advancing slowly towards the bed, stood silently at the feet, where the curtains, being a little open, allowed her still to see it; terror, however, had now deprived her of the power of discrimination, as well as of that of utterance.

Having continued there a moment, the form retreated towards the hearth, when it took the lamp, held it up, surveyed the chamber, for a few moments, and then again advanced towards the bed. The light at that instant awakening the dog, that had slept at Emily's feet, he barked loudly, and, jumping to the floor, flew at the stranger, who struck the animal smartly with a sheathed sword, and, springing towards the bed, Emily discovered – Count Morano!

She gazed at him for a moment in speechless affright, while he, throwing himself on his knee at the bed-side, besought her to fear nothing, and, having thrown down his sword, would have taken her hand, when the faculties, that terror had suspended, suddenly returned, and she sprung from the bed, in the dress, which surely a kind of prophetic apprehension had prevented her, on this night, from throwing aside.

Morano rose, followed her to the door, through which he had entered, and caught her hand, as she reached the top of the stair-case, but not before she had discovered, by the gleam of a lamp, another man half-way down the steps. She now screamed in despair, and, believing herself given up by Montoni, saw, indeed, no possibility of escape.

The Count, who still held her hand, led her back into the chamber.

'Why all this terror?' said he, in a tremulous voice. 'Hear me, Emily: I come not to alarm you; no, by Heaven! I love you too well – too well for my own peace.'

Emily looked at him for a moment, in fearful doubt.

'Then leave me, sir,' said she, 'leave me instantly.'

'Hear me, Emily,' resumed Morano, 'hear me! I love, and am in despair – yes – in despair. How can I gaze upon you, and know, that it is, perhaps, for the last time, without suffering all the phrensy of despair? But it shall not be so; you shall be mine, in spite of Montoni and all his villany.'

'In spite of Montoni!' cried Emily eagerly: 'what is it I hear?'

'You hear, that Montoni is a villain,' exclaimed Morano with vehemence, – 'a villain who would have sold you to my love! – Who –'

'And is he less, who would have bought me?' said Emily, fixing on the Count an eye of calm contempt. 'Leave the room, sir, instantly,' she continued in a voice, trembling between joy and fear, 'or I will alarm the family, and you may receive that from Signor Montoni's vengeance, which I have vainly supplicated from his pity.' But Emily knew, that she was beyond the hearing of those, who might protect her.

'You can never hope any thing from his pity,' said Morano, 'he has used me infamously, and my vengeance shall pursue him. And for you, Emily, for you, he has new plans more profitable than the last, no doubt.' The gleam of hope, which the Count's former speech had revived, was now nearly extinguished by the latter; and, while Emily's countenance betrayed the emotions of her mind, he endeavoured to take advantage of the discovery.

'I lose time,' said he: 'I came not to exclaim against Montoni; I came to solicit, to plead – to Emily; to tell her all I suffer, to entreat her to save me from despair, and herself from destruction. Emily! the schemes of Montoni are insearchable, but, I warn you, they are terrible; he has no principle, when interest, or ambition leads. Can I love you, and abandon you to his power? Fly, then, fly from this gloomy prison, with a lover, who adores you! I have bribed a servant of the castle to open the gates, and, before to-morrow's dawn, you shall be far on the way to Venice.'

Emily, overcome by the sudden shock she had received, at the moment, too, when she had begun to hope for better days, now thought she saw destruction surround her on every side. Unable to reply, and almost to think, she threw herself into a chair, pale and breathless. That Montoni had formerly sold her to Morano, was very probable; that he had now withdrawn his consent to the marriage, was evident from the Count's present conduct; and it was nearly certain, that a scheme of stronger interest only could have induced the selfish Montoni to forego a plan, which he had hitherto so strenuously pursued. These reflections made her tremble at the hints, which Morano had just given, which she no longer hesitated to believe; and, while she shrunk from the new scenes of misery and oppression, that might await her in the castle of Udolpho, she was compelled to observe, that almost her only means of escaping them was by submitting herself to the protection of this man, with whom evils more certain and not less terrible appeared, – evils, upon which she could not endure to pause for an instant.

Her silence, though it was that of agony, encouraged the hopes of Morano, who watched her countenance with impatience, took again the resisting hand she had withdrawn, and, as he pressed it to his heart, again conjured her to determine immediately. 'Every moment we lose, will make our departure more dangerous,' said he: 'these few moments lost may enable Montoni to overtake us.'

'I beseech you, sir, be silent,' said Emily faintly: 'I am indeed very wretched, and wretched I must remain. Leave me – I command you, leave me to my fate.'

'Never!' cried the Count vehemently: 'let me perish first! But forgive my violence! the thought of losing you is madness. You cannot be ignorant of Montoni's character, you may be ignorant of his schemes – nay, you must be so, or you would not hesitate between my love and his power.'

'Nor do I hesitate,' said Emily.

'Let us go, then,' said Morano, eagerly kissing her hand, and rising, 'my carriage waits, below the castle walls.'

'You mistake me, sir,' said Emily. 'Allow me to thank you for the interest you express in my welfare, and to decide by my own choice. I shall remain under the protection of Signor Montoni.'

'Under his protection!' exclaimed Morano, proudly, 'his *protection*! Emily, why will you suffer yourself to be thus deluded? I have already told you what you have to expect from his *protection*.'

'And pardon me, sir, if, in this instance, I doubt mere assertion, and, to be convinced, require something approaching to proof.'

'I have now neither the time, or the means of adducing proof,' replied the Count.

'Nor have I, sir, the inclination to listen to it, if you had.'

'But you trifle with my patience and my distress,' continued Morano. 'Is a marriage with a man, who adores you, so very terrible in your eyes, that you would prefer to it all the misery, to which Montoni may condemn you in this remote prison? Some wretch must have stolen those affections, which ought to be mine, or you could not thus obstinately persist in refusing an offer, that would place you beyond the reach of oppression.' Morano walked about the room, with quick steps, and a disturbed air.

'This discourse, Count Morano, sufficiently proves, that my affections ought not to be yours,' said Emily, mildly, 'and this conduct, that I should not be placed beyond the reach of oppression, so long as I remained in your power. If you wish me to believe otherwise cease to oppress me any longer by your presence. If you refuse this, you will compel me to expose you to the resentment of Signor Montoni.'

'Yes, let him come,' cried Morano furiously, 'and brave *my* resentment! Let him dare to face once more the man he has so courageously injured; danger shall teach him morality, and vengeance justice – let him come, and receive my sword in his heart!'

The vehemence, with which this was uttered, gave Emily new cause of alarm, who arose from her chair, but her trembling frame refused to support her, and she resumed her seat; – the words died on her lips, and, when she looked wistfully towards the door of the corridor, which was locked, she considered it was impossible for her to leave the apartment, before Morano would be apprised of, and able to counteract, her intention.

Without observing her agitation, he continued to pace the room in the utmost perturbation of spirits. His darkened countenance expressed all the rage of jealousy and revenge; and a person, who had seen his features under the smile of ineffable tenderness, which he so lately assumed, would now scarcely have believed them to be the same.

'Count Morano,' said Emily, at length recovering her voice, 'calm, I entreat you, these transports, and listen to reason, if you will not to pity. You have equally misplaced your love, and your hatred. – I never could have returned the affection, with which you honour me, and certainly have never encouraged it; neither has Signor Montoni injured you, for you must have known, that he had no right to dispose of my hand, had he even possessed the power to do so. Leave, then, leave the castle, while you may with safety. Spare yourself the dreadful consequences of an unjust revenge, and the remorse of having prolonged to me these moments of suffering.'

'Is it for mine, or for Montoni's safety, that you are thus alarmed?' said Morano, coldly, and turning towards her with a look of acrimony.

'For both,' replied Emily, in a trembling voice.

'Unjust revenge!' cried the Count, resuming the abrupt tones of passion. 'Who, that looks upon that face, can imagine a punishment adequate to the injury he would have done me? Yes, I will leave the castle, but it shall not be alone. I have trifled too long. Since my prayers and my sufferings cannot prevail, force shall. I have people in waiting, who shall convey you to my carriage. Your voice will bring no succour; it cannot be heard from this remote part of the castle; submit, therefore, in silence to go with me.'

This was an unnecessary injunction, at present; for Emily was too certain, that her call would avail her nothing; and terror had so entirely disordered her thoughts, that she knew not how to plead to Morano, but sat, mute and trembling, in her chair, till he advanced to lift her from it, when she suddenly raised herself, and, with a repulsive gesture,[8] and a countenance of forced serenity, said, 'Count Morano! I am now in your power; but you will observe, that this is not the conduct which can win the esteem you appear so solicitous to obtain, and that you are preparing for yourself a load of remorse, in the miseries of a friendless orphan, which can never leave you. Do you believe your heart to be, indeed, so hardened, that you can look without emotion on the suffering, to which you would condemn me?' –

Emily was interrupted by the growling of the dog, who now came again from the bed, and Morano looked towards the door of the stair-case, where no person appearing, he called aloud, 'Cesario!'

'Emily,' said the Count, 'why will you reduce me to adopt this conduct? How much more willingly would I persuade, than compel you to become my wife! but, by Heaven! I will not leave you to be sold by Montoni. Yet a thought glances across my mind, that brings madness with it. I know not how to name it. It is preposterous – it cannot be. – Yet you tremble – you grow pale! It is! it is so; – you – you – love Montoni!' cried Morano, grasping Emily's wrist, and stamping his foot on the floor.

An involuntary air of surprise appeared on her countenance. 'If you have indeed believed so,' said she, 'believe so still.'

'That look, those words confirm it,' exclaimed Morano, furiously. 'No, no, no, Montoni had a richer prize in view, than gold. But he shall not live to triumph over me! – This very instant –'

He was interrupted by the loud barking of the dog.

'Stay, Count Morano,' said Emily, terrified by his words, and by the fury expressed in his eyes, 'I will save you from this error. – Of all men, Signor Montoni is not your rival; though, if I find all other means of saving myself vain, I will try whether my voice may not arouse his servants to my succour.'

'Assertion,' replied Morano, 'at such a moment, is not to be depended upon. How could I suffer myself to doubt, even for an instant, that he could see you, and not love? – But my first care shall be to convey you from the castle. Cesario! ho, – Cesario!'

A man now appeared at the door of the stair-case, and other steps were heard ascending. Emily uttered a loud shriek, as Morano hurried her across the chamber, and, at the same moment, she heard a noise at the door, that opened upon the corridor. The Count paused an instant, as if his mind was suspended between love and the desire of vengeance; and, in that instant, the door gave way, and Montoni, followed by the old steward and several other persons, burst into the room.

'Draw!' cried Montoni to the Count, who did not pause for a second bidding, but, giving Emily into the hands of the people, that appeared from the stair-case, turned fiercely round. 'This in thine heart, villain!' said he, as he made a thrust at Montoni with his sword, who parried the blow, and aimed another, while some of the persons, who had followed him into the room, endeavoured to part the combatants, and others rescued Emily from the hands of Morano's servants.

'Was it for this, Count Morano,' said Montoni, in a cool sarcastic tone of voice, 'that I received you under my roof, and permitted you, though my declared enemy, to remain under it for the night? Was it, that you might repay my hospitality with the treachery of a fiend, and rob me of my niece?'

'Who talks of treachery?' said Morano, in a tone of unrestrained vehemence. 'Let him that does, shew an unblushing face of innocence. Montoni, you are a villain! If there is treachery in this affair, look to yourself as the author of it. *If* – do I say? *I* – whom you have wronged with unexampled baseness, whom you have injured almost beyond redress! But why do I use words? – Come on, coward, and receive justice at my hands!'

'Coward!' cried Montoni, bursting from the people who held him, and rushing on the Count, when they both retreated into the corridor, where the fight continued so desperately, that none of the spectators dared approach them, Montoni swearing, that the first, who interfered, should fall by his sword.

Jealousy and revenge lent all their fury to Morano, while the superior skill and the temperance of Montoni enabled him to wound his adversary, whom his servants now attempted to seize, but he would not be restrained, and, regardless of his wound, continued to fight. He seemed to be insensible both of pain and loss of blood, and alive only to the energy of his passions. Montoni, on the contrary, persevered in the combat, with a fierce, yet wary, valour; he received the point of Morano's sword on his arm, but, almost in the same instant, severely wounded and disarmed him. The Count then fell back into the arms of his servant, while Montoni held his sword over him, and bade him ask his life. Morano, sinking under the anguish of his wound, had scarcely replied by a gesture, and by a few words, feebly articulated, that he would not – when he fainted; and Montoni was then going to have plunged the sword into his breast, as he lay senseless, but his arm was arrested by Cavigni. To the interruption he yielded without much difficulty, but his complexion changed, almost to blackness, as he looked upon his fallen adversary, and ordered, that he should be carried instantly from the castle.

In the mean time, Emily, who had been with-held from leaving the chamber during the affray, now came forward into the corridor, and pleaded a cause of common humanity, with the feelings of the warmest benevolence, when she entreated Montoni to allow Morano the assistance in the castle, which his situation required. But Montoni, who had seldom listened to pity, now seemed rapacious of vengeance, and, with a monster's cruelty, again ordered his defeated enemy to be taken from the castle, in his present state, though there were only the woods, or a solitary neighbouring cottage, to shelter him from the night.

The Count's servants having declared, that they would not move him till he revived, Montoni's stood inactive, Cavigni remonstrating, and Emily, superior to Montoni's menaces, giving water to Morano, and directing the attendants to bind up his wound. At length, Montoni had leisure to feel pain from his own hurt, and he withdrew to examine it.

The Count, meanwhile, having slowly recovered, the first object he saw, on raising his eyes, was Emily, bending over him with a countenance strongly expressive of solicitude. He surveyed her with a look of anguish.

'I have deserved this,' said he, 'but not from Montoni. It is from you, Emily, that I have deserved punishment, yet I receive only pity!' He paused, for he had spoken with difficulty. After a moment, he proceeded. 'I must resign you, but not to Montoni. Forgive me the sufferings I have already occasioned you! But for *that* villain – his infamy shall not go unpunished. Carry me from this place,' said he to his servants. 'I am in no condition to travel: you must, therefore, take me to the nearest cottage, for I will not pass the night under his roof, although I may expire on the way from it.'

Cesario proposed to go out, and enquire for a cottage, that might receive his master, before he attempted to remove him: but Morano was impatient to be gone; the anguish of his mind seemed to be even greater than that of his wound, and he rejected, with disdain, the offer of Cavigni to entreat Montoni, that he might be suffered to pass the night in the castle. Cesario was now going to call up the carriage to the great gate, but the Count forbade him. 'I cannot bear the motion of a carriage,' said he: 'call some others of my people, that they may assist in bearing me in their arms.'

At length, however, Morano submitted to reason, and consented, that Cesario should first prepare some cottage to receive him. Emily, now that he had recovered his senses, was about to withdraw from the corridor, when a message from Montoni commanded her to do so, and also that the Count, if he was not already gone, should quit the castle immediately. Indignation flashed from Morano's eyes, and flushed his cheeks.

'Tell Montoni,' said he, 'that I shall go when it suits my own convenience; that I quit the castle, he dares to call his, as I would the nest of a serpent, and that this is not the last he shall hear from me. Tell him, I will not leave *another* murder on his conscience, if I can help it.'

'Count Morano! do you know what you say?' said Cavigni.

'Yes, Signor, I know well what I say, and he will understand well what I mean. His conscience will assist his understanding, on this occasion.'

'Count Morano,' said Verezzi, who had hitherto silently observed him, 'dare again to insult my friend, and I will plunge this sword in your body.'

'It would be an action worthy the friend of a villain!' said Morano, as the strong impulse of his indignation enabled him to raise himself from the arms of his servants; but the energy was momentary, and he sunk back, exhausted by the effort. Montoni's people, meanwhile, held Verezzi, who seemed inclined, even in this instant, to execute his threat; and Cavigni, who was not so depraved as to abet the cowardly malignity of Verezzi, endeavoured to withdraw him from the corridor; and Emily, whom a compassionate interest had thus long detained, was now quitting it in new terror, when the supplicating voice of Morano arrested her, and, by a feeble gesture, he beckoned her to draw nearer. She advanced with timid steps, but the fainting languor of his countenance again awakened her pity, and overcame her terror.

'I am going from hence for ever' said he: 'perhaps, I shall never see you again. I would carry with me your forgiveness, Emily; nay more – I would also carry your good wishes.'

'You have my forgiveness, then,' said Emily, 'and my sincere wishes for your recovery.'

'And only for my recovery?' said Morano, with a sigh. 'For your general welfare,' added Emily.

'Perhaps I ought to be contented with this,' he resumed; 'I certainly have not deserved more; but I would ask you, Emily, sometimes to think of me, and, forgetting my offence, to remember only the passion which occasioned it. I would ask, alas! impossibilities: I would ask you to love me! At this moment, when I am about to part with you, and that, perhaps, for ever, I am scarcely myself. Emily – may you never know the torture of a passion like mine! What do I say? O, that, for me, you might be sensible of such a passion!'

Emily looked impatient to be gone. 'I entreat you, Count, to consult your own safety,' said she, 'and linger here no longer. I tremble for the consequences of Signor Verezzi's passion, and of Montoni's resentment, should he learn that you are still here.'

Morano's face was overspread with a momentary crimson, his eyes sparkled, but he seemed endeavouring to conquer his emotion, and replied in a calm voice, 'Since you are interested for my safety, I will regard it, and be gone. But, before I go, let me again hear you say, that you wish me well,' said he, fixing on her an earnest and mournful look.

Emily repeated her assurances. He took her hand, which she scarcely attempted to withdraw, and put it to his lips. 'Farewel, Count Morano!' said Emily; and she turned to go, when a second message arrived from Montoni, and she again conjured Morano, as he valued his life, to quit the castle immediately. He regarded her in silence, with a look of fixed despair. But she had no time to enforce her compassionate entreaties, and, not daring to disobey the second command of Montoni, she left the corridor, to attend him.

He was in the cedar parlour, that adjoined the great hall, laid upon a couch, and suffering a degree of anguish from his wound, which few persons could have disguised, as he did. His countenance, which was stern, but calm, expressed the dark passion of revenge, but no symptom of pain; bodily pain, indeed, he had always despised, and had yielded only to the strong and terrible energies of the soul. He was attended by old Carlo and by Signor Bertolini, but Madame Montoni was not with him.

Emily trembled, as she approached and received his severe rebuke, for not having obeyed his first summons; and perceived, also, that he attributed her stay in the corridor to a motive, that had not even occurred to her artless mind.

'This is an instance of female caprice,' said he, 'which I ought to have foreseen. Count Morano, whose suit you obstinately rejected, so long as it was countenanced by me, you favour, it seems, since you find I have dismissed him.'

Emily looked astonished. 'I do not comprehend you, sir,' said she: 'You certainly do not mean to imply, that the design of the Count to visit the double-chamber, was founded upon any approbation of mine.'

'To that I reply nothing,' said Montoni; 'but it must certainly be a more than common interest, that made you plead so warmly in his cause, and that could detain you thus long in his presence, contrary to my express order – in the presence of a man, whom you have hitherto, on all occasions, most scrupulously shunned!'

'I fear, sir, it was a more than common interest, that detained me,' said Emily calmly; 'for of late I have been inclined to think, that of compassion is an uncommon one. But how could I, could *you*, sir, witness Count Morano's deplorable condition, and not wish to relieve it?'

'You add hypocrisy to caprice,' said Montoni, frowning, 'and an attempt at satire, to both; but, before you undertake to regulate the morals of other persons, you should learn and practise the virtues, which are indispensable to a woman – sincerity, uniformity of conduct and obedience.'

Emily, who had always endeavoured to regulate her conduct by the nicest laws,[9] and whose mind was finely sensible, not only of what is just in morals, but of whatever is beautiful in the female character, was shocked by these words; yet, in the next moment, her heart swelled with the consciousness of having deserved praise, instead of censure, and she was proudly silent. Montoni, acquainted with the delicacy of her mind, knew how keenly she would feel his rebuke; but he was a stranger to the luxury of conscious worth, and, therefore, did not foresee the energy of that sentiment, which now repelled his satire. Turning to a servant who had lately entered the room, he asked whether Morano had quitted the castle. The man answered, that his servants were then removing him, on a couch, to a neighbouring cottage. Montoni seemed somewhat appeased, on hearing this; and, when Ludovico appeared, a few moments after, and said, that Morano was gone, he told Emily she might retire to her apartment.

She withdrew willingly from his presence; but the thought of passing the remainder of the night in a chamber, which the door from the stair-case made liable to the intrusion of any person, now alarmed her more than ever, and she determined to call at Madame Montoni's room, and request, that Annette might be permitted to be with her.

On reaching the great gallery, she heard voices seemingly in dispute, and, her spirits now apt to take alarm, she paused, but soon distinguished some words of Cavigni and Verezzi, and went towards them, in the hope of conciliating their difference. They were alone. Verezzi's face was still flushed with rage; and, as the first object of it was now removed from him, he appeared willing to transfer his resentment to Cavigni, who seemed to be expostulating, rather than disputing, with him.

Verezzi was protesting, that he would instantly inform Montoni of the insult, which Morano had thrown out against him, and above all, that, wherein he had accused him of murder.

'There is no answering,' said Cavigni, 'for the words of a man in a passion; little serious regard ought to be paid to them. If you persist in your resolution, the consequences may be fatal to both. We have now more serious interests to pursue, than those of a petty revenge.'

Emily joined her entreaties to Cavigni's arguments, and they, at length, prevailed so far, as that Verezzi consented to retire, without seeing Montoni.

On calling at her aunt's apartment, she found it fastened. In a few minutes, however, it was opened by Madame Montoni herself.

It may be remembered, that it was by a door leading into the bed-room from a back passage, that Emily had secretly entered a few hours preceding. She now conjectured, by the calmness of Madame Montoni's air, that she was not apprised of the accident, which had befallen her husband, and was beginning to inform her of it, in the tenderest manner she could, when her aunt interrupted her, by saying, she was acquainted with the whole affair.

Emily knew indeed, that she had little reason to love Montoni, but could scarcely have believed her capable of such perfect apathy, as she now discovered towards him; having obtained permission, however, for Annette to sleep in her chamber, she went thither immediately.

A track of blood appeared along the corridor, leading to it; and on the spot, where the Count and Montoni had fought, the whole floor was stained. Emily shuddered, and leaned on Annette, as she passed. When she reached her apartment, she instantly determined, since the door of the stair-case had been left open, and that Annette was now with her, to explore whither it led, – a circumstance now materially connected with her own safety. Annette accordingly, half curious and half afraid, proposed to descend the stairs; but, on approaching the door, they perceived, that it was already fastened without, and their care was then directed to the securing it on the inside also, by placing against it as much of the heavy furniture of the room, as they could lift. Emily then retired to bed, and Annette continued on a chair by the hearth, where some feeble embers remained.

CHAPTER VII

‘Of aery tongues, that syllable men’s names
On sands and shores and desert wildernesses.’

MILTON [*Comus*][1]

It is now necessary to mention some circumstances, which could not be related amidst the events of Emily’s hasty departure from Venice, or together with those, which so rapidly succeeded to her arrival in the castle.

On the morning of her journey, Count Morano had gone at the appointed hour to the mansion of Montoni, to demand his bride. When he reached it, he was somewhat surprised by the silence and solitary air of the portico, where Montoni’s lacqueys usually loitered; but surprise was soon changed to astonishment, and astonishment to the rage of disappointment, when the door was opened by an old woman, who told his servants, that her master and his family had left Venice, early in the morning, for *Terra-firma*. Scarcely believing what his servants told, he left his gondola, and rushed into the hall to enquire further. The old woman, who was the only person left in care of the mansion, persisted in her story, which the silent and deserted apartments soon convinced him was no fiction. He then seized her with a menacing air, as if he meant to wreak all his vengeance upon her, at the same time asking her twenty questions in a breath, and all these with a gesticulation so furious, that she was deprived of the power of answering them; then suddenly letting her go, he stamped about the hall, like a madman, cursing Montoni and his own folly.

When the good woman was at liberty, and had somewhat recovered from her fright, she told him all she knew of the affair, which was, indeed, very little, but enough to enable Morano to discover, that Montoni was gone to his castle on the Apennine. Thither he followed, as soon as his servants could complete the necessary preparation for the journey, accompanied by a friend, and attended by a number of his people, determined to obtain Emily, or a full revenge on Montoni. When his mind had recovered from the first effervescence of rage, and his thoughts became less obscured, his conscience hinted to him certain circumstances, which, in some measure, explained the conduct of Montoni: but how the latter could have been led to suspect an intention, which, he had believed, was known only to himself, he could not even guess. On this occasion, however, he had been partly betrayed by that sympathetic intelligence, which may be said to exist between bad minds, and which teaches one man to judge what another will do in the same circumstances. Thus it was with Montoni, who had now received indisputable proof of a truth, which he had some time suspected – that Morano’s circumstances, instead of being affluent, as he had been bidden to believe, were greatly involved. Montoni had been interested in his suit, by motives entirely selfish, those of avarice and pride; the last of which would have been gratified by an alliance with a Venetian nobleman, the former by Emily’s estate in Gascony, which he had stipulated, as the price of his favour, should be delivered up to him from the day of her marriage. In the mean time, he had been led to suspect the consequence of the Count’s boundless extravagance; but it was not till the evening, preceding the intended nuptials, that he obtained certain information of his distressed circumstances. He did not hesitate then to infer, that Morano designed to defraud him of Emily’s estate; and in this supposition he was confirmed, and with apparent reason, by the subsequent conduct of the Count, who, after having appointed to meet him on that night, for the purpose of signing the instrument, which was to secure to him his reward, failed in his engagement. Such a circumstance, indeed, in a man of Morano’s gay and thoughtless character, and at a time when his mind was engaged by the bustle of preparation for his nuptials, might have been attributed to a cause less decisive, than design; but Montoni did not hesitate an instant to interpret it his own way, and, after vainly waiting the Count’s arrival, for several hours, he gave orders for his people to be in readiness to set off at a moment’s notice. By hastening to Udolpho he intended to remove Emily from the reach of Morano, as well as to break off the affair, without submitting himself to useless altercation: and, if the Count meant what he called honourably, he would doubtless follow Emily, and sign the writings in question. If this was done, so little consideration had Montoni for her welfare, that he would not have scrupled to sacrifice her to a man of ruined fortune, since by that means he could enrich himself; and he forbore to mention to her the motive of his sudden journey, lest the hope it might revive should render her more intractable, when submission would be required.

With these considerations, he had left Venice; and, with others totally different, Morano had, soon after, pursued his steps across the rugged Apennines. When his arrival was announced at the castle, Montoni did not believe, that he would have presumed to shew himself, unless he had meant to fulfil his engagement, and he, therefore, readily admitted him; but the enraged countenance and expressions of Morano, as he entered the apartment, instantly undeceived him; and, when Montoni had explained, in part, the motives of his abrupt departure from Venice, the Count still persisted in demanding Emily, and reproaching Montoni, without even naming the former stipulation.

Montoni, at length, weary of the dispute, deferred the settling of it till the morrow, and Morano retired with some hope, suggested by Montoni’s apparent indecision. When, however, in the silence of his own apartment, he began to consider the past conversation, the character of Montoni, and some former instances of his duplicity, the hope, which he had admitted, vanished, and he determined not to neglect the present possibility of obtaining Emily by other means. To his confidential valet he told his design of carrying away Emily, and sent him back to Montoni's servants to find out one among them, who might enable him to execute it. The choice of this person he entrusted to the fellow's own discernment, and not imprudently; for he discovered a man, whom Montoni had, on some former occasion, treated harshly, and who was now ready to betray him. This man conducted Cesario round the castle, through a private passage, to the stair-case, that led to Emily's chamber; then shewed him a short way out of the building, and afterwards procured him the keys, that would secure his retreat. The man was well rewarded for his trouble; how the Count was rewarded for his treachery, has already appeared.

Meanwhile, old Carlo had overheard two of Morano's servants, who had been ordered to be in waiting with the carriage, beyond the castle walls, expressing their surprise at their master's sudden, and secret departure, for the valet had entrusted them with no more of Morano's designs, than it was necessary for them to execute. They, however, indulged themselves in surmises, and in expressing them to each other; and from these Carlo had drawn a just conclusion. But, before he ventured to disclose his apprehensions to Montoni, he endeavoured to obtain further confirmation of them, and, for this purpose, placed himself, with one of his fellow-servants, at the door of Emily's apartment, that opened upon the corridor. He did not watch long in vain, though the growling of the dog had once nearly betrayed him. When he was convinced, that Morano was in the room, and had listened long enough to his conversation, to understand his scheme, he immediately alarmed Montoni, and thus rescued Emily from the designs of the Count.

Montoni, on the following morning, appeared as usual, except that he wore his wounded arm in a sling; he went out upon the ramparts; overlooked the men employed in repairing them; gave orders for additional workmen, and then came into the castle to give audience to several persons, who were just arrived, and who were shewn into a private apartment, where he communicated with them, for near an hour. Carlo was then summoned, and ordered to conduct the strangers to a part of the castle, which, in former times, had been occupied by the upper servants of the family, and to provide them with every necessary refreshment. – When he had done this, he was bidden to return to his master.

Meanwhile, the Count remained in a cottage in the skirts of the woods below, suffering under bodily and mental pain, and meditating deep revenge against Montoni. His servant, whom he had dispatched for a surgeon to the nearest town, which was, however, at a considerable distance, did not return till the following day, when, his wounds being examined and dressed, the practitioner refused to deliver any positive opinion, concerning the degree of danger attending them; but, giving his patient a composing draught and ordering him to be kept quiet, remained at the cottage to watch the event.

Emily, for the remainder of the late eventful night, had been suffered to sleep, undisturbed; and, when her mind recovered from the confusion of slumber, and she remembered, that she was now released from the addresses of Count Morano, her spirits were suddenly relieved from a part of the terrible anxiety, that had long oppressed them; that which remained, arose chiefly from a recollection of Morano's assertions, concerning the schemes of Montoni. He had said, that plans of the latter, concerning Emily, were insearchable, yet that he knew them to be terrible. At the time he uttered this, she almost believed it to be designed for the purpose of prevailing with her to throw herself into his protection, and she still thought it might be chiefly so accounted for; but his assertions had left an impression on her mind, which a consideration of the character and former conduct of Montoni did not contribute to efface. She, however, checked her propensity to anticipate evil; and, determined to enjoy this respite from actual misfortune, tried to dismiss thought, took her instruments for drawing, and placed herself at a window, to select into a landscape some features of the scenery without.

As she was thus employed, she saw, walking on the rampart below, the men, who had so lately arrived at the castle. The sight of strangers surprised her, but still more, of strangers such as these. There was a singularity in their dress, and a certain fierceness in their air, that fixed all her attention. She withdrew from the casement, while they passed, but soon returned to observe them further. Their figures seemed so well suited to the wildness of the surrounding objects, that, as they stood surveying the castle, she sketched them for banditti, amid the mountain-view of her picture, when she had finished which, she was surprised to observe the spirit of her group. But she had copied from nature.

Carlo, when he had placed refreshment before these men in the apartment assigned to them, returned, as he was ordered, to Montoni, who was anxious to discover by what servant the keys of the castle had been delivered to Morano, on the preceding night. But this man, though he was too faithful to his master quietly to see him injured, would not betray a fellow-servant even to justice; he, therefore, pretended to be ignorant who it was, that had conspired with Count Morano, and related, as before, that he had only overheard some of the strangers describing the plot.

Montoni's suspicions naturally fell upon the porter, whom he ordered now to attend. Carlo hesitated, and then with slow steps went to seek him.

Barnardine, the porter, denied the accusation with a countenance so steady and undaunted, that Montoni could scarcely believe him guilty, though he knew not how to think him innocent. At length, the man was dismissed from his presence, and, though the real offender, escaped detection.

Montoni then went to his wife's apartment, whither Emily followed soon after, but, finding them in high dispute, was instantly leaving the room, when her aunt called her back, and desired her to stay. – 'You shall be a witness,' said she, 'of my opposition. Now, sir, repeat the command, I have so often refused to obey.'

Montoni turned, with a stern countenance, to Emily, and bade her quit the apartment, while his wife persisted in desiring, that she would stay. Emily was eager to escape from this scene of contention, and anxious, also, to serve her aunt; but she despaired of conciliating Montoni, in whose eyes the rising tempest of his soul, flashed terribly.

'Leave the room,' said he, in a voice of thunder. Emily obeyed, and, walking down to the rampart, which the strangers had now left, continued to meditate on the unhappy marriage of her father's sister, and on her own desolate situation, occasioned by the ridiculous imprudence of her, whom she had always wished to respect and love. Madame Montoni's conduct had, indeed, rendered it impossible for Emily to do either; but her gentle heart was touched by her distress, and, in the pity thus awakened, she forgot the injurious treatment she had received from her.

As she sauntered on the rampart, Annette appeared at the hall door, looked cautiously round, and then advanced to meet her.

'Dear ma'amselle, I have been looking for you all over the castle,' said she. 'If you will step this way, I will shew you a picture.'

'A picture!' exclaimed Emily, and shuddered.

'Yes, ma'am, a picture of the late lady of this place. Old Carlo just now told me it was her, and I thought you would be curious to see it. As to my lady, you know, ma'amselle, one cannot talk about such things to her.' –

'And so,' said Emily smilingly, 'as you must talk of them to somebody –'

'Why, yes, ma'amselle; what can one do in such a place as this, if one must not talk? If I was in a dungeon, if they would let me talk – it would be some comfort; nay, I would talk, if it was only to the walls. But come, ma'amselle, we lose time – let me shew you to the picture.'

'Is it veiled?' said Emily, pausing.

'Dear ma'amselle!' said Annette, fixing her eyes on Emily's face, 'what makes you look so pale? – are you ill?'

'No, Annette, I am well enough, but I have no desire to see this picture; return into the hall.'

'What! ma'am, not to see the lady of this castle?' said the girl – 'the lady, who disappeared so strangely? Well! now, I would have run to the furthest mountain we can see, yonder, to have got a sight of such a picture; and, to speak my mind, that strange story is all, that makes me care about this old castle, though it makes me thrill all over, as it were, whenever I think of it.'

'Yes, Annette, you love the wonderful; but do you know, that, unless you guard against this inclination, it will lead you into all the misery of superstition?'

Annette might have smiled in her turn, at this sage observation of Emily, who could tremble with ideal terrors, as much as herself, and listen almost as eagerly to the recital of a mysterious story. Annette urged her request.

'Are you sure it is a picture?' said Emily, 'Have you seen it? – Is it veiled?'

'Holy Maria! ma'amselle, yes, no, yes. I am sure it is a picture – I have seen it, and it is not veiled!'

The tone and look of surprise, with which this was uttered, recalled Emily's prudence; who concealed her emotion under a smile, and bade Annette lead her to the picture. It was in an obscure chamber, adjoining that part of the castle, allotted to the servants. Several other portraits hung on the walls, covered, like this, with dust and cobweb.

'That is it, ma'amselle,' said Annette, in a low voice, and pointing. Emily advanced, and surveyed the picture. It represented a lady in the flower of youth and beauty; her features were handsome and noble, full of strong expression, but had little of the captivating sweetness, that Emily had looked for, and still less of the pensive mildness she loved. It was a countenance, which spoke the language of passion, rather than that of sentiment; a haughty impatience of misfortune – not the placid melancholy of a spirit injured, yet resigned.

'How many years have passed, since this lady disappeared, Annette?' said Emily.

'Twenty years, ma'amselle, or thereabout, as they tell me; I know it is a long while ago.' Emily continued to gaze upon the portrait.

'I think,' resumed Annette, 'the Signor would do well to hang it in a better place, than this old chamber. Now, in my mind, he ought to place the picture of a lady, who gave him all these riches, in the handsomest room in the castle. But he may have good reasons for what he does: and some people do say, that he has lost his riches, as well as his gratitude. But hush, ma'am, not a word!'added Annette, laying her finger on her lips. Emily was too much absorbed in thought, to hear what she said.

' 'Tis a handsome lady, I am sure,' continued Annette: 'the Signor need not be ashamed to put her in the great apartment, where the veiled picture hangs.' Emily turned round. 'But for that matter, she would be as little seen there, as here, for the door is always locked, I find.'

'Let us leave this chamber,' said Emily: 'and let me caution you again, Annette; be guarded in your conversation, and never tell, that you know any thing of that picture.'

'Holy mother!' exclaimed Annette, 'it is no secret; why all the servants have seen it already!'

Emily started. 'How is this?' said she – 'Have seen it! When? – how?'

'Dear, ma'amselle, there is nothing surprising in that; we had all a little more *curiousness* than you had.'

'I thought you told me, the door was kept locked?' said Emily.

'If that was the case, ma'amselle,' replied Annette, looking about her, 'how could we get here?'

'O! you mean *this* picture,' said Emily, with returning calmness. 'Well, Annette, here is nothing more to engage my attention; we will go.'

Emily, as she passed to her own apartment, saw Montoni go down to the hall, and she turned into her aunt's dressing-room, whom she found weeping and alone, grief and resentment struggling on her countenance. Pride had hitherto restrained complaint. Judging of Emily's disposition from her own, and from a consciousness of what her treatment of her deserved, she had believed, that her griefs would be cause of triumph to her niece, rather than of sympathy; that she would despise, not pity her. But she knew not the tenderness and benevolence of Emily's heart, that had always taught her to forget her own injuries in the misfortunes of her enemy. The sufferings of others, whoever they might be, called forth her ready compassion, which dissipated at once every obscuring cloud to goodness, that passion or prejudice might have raised in her mind.

Madame Montoni's sufferings, at length, rose above her pride, and, when Emily had before entered the room, she would have told them all, had not her husband prevented her; now that she was no longer restrained by his presence, she poured forth all her complaints to her niece.

'O Emily!' she exclaimed, 'I am the most wretched of women – I am indeed cruelly treated! Who, with my prospects of happiness, could have foreseen such a wretched fate as this? – who could have thought, when I married such a man as the Signor, I should ever have to bewail my lot? But there is no judging what is for the best – there is no knowing what is for our good! The most flattering prospects often change – the best judgments may be deceived – who could have foreseen, when I married the Signor, that I should ever repent my *generosity*?'

Emily thought she might have foreseen it, but this was not a thought of triumph. She placed herself in a chair near her aunt, took her hand, and, with one of those looks of soft compassion, which might characterize the countenance of a guardian angel, spoke to her in the tenderest accents. But these did not sooth Madame Montoni, whom impatience to talk made unwilling to listen. She wanted to complain, not to be consoled; and it was by exclamations of complaint only, that Emily learned the particular circumstances of her affliction.

'Ungrateful man!' said Madame Montoni, 'he has deceived me in every respect; and now he has taken me from my country and friends, to shut me up in this old castle; and, here he thinks he can compel me to do whatever he designs! But he shall find himself mistaken, he shall find that no threats can alter—But who would have believed! who would have supposed, that a man of his family and apparent wealth had absolutely no fortune? – no, scarcely a sequin[2] of his own! I did all for the best; I thought he was a man of consequence, of great property, or I am sure I would never have married him, – ungrateful, artful man!' She paused to take breath.

'Dear Madam, be composed,' said Emily: 'the Signor may not be so rich as you had reason to expect, but surely he cannot be very poor, since this castle and the mansion at Venice are his. May I ask what are the circumstances, that particularly affect you?'

'What are the circumstances!' exclaimed Madame Montoni with resentment: 'why is it not sufficient, that he had long ago ruined his own fortune by play, and that he has since lost what I brought him – and that now he would compel me to sign away my settlement (it was well I had the chief of my property settled on myself!) that he may lose this also, or throw it away in wild schemes, which nobody can understand but himself? And, and—is not all this sufficient?'

'It is, indeed,' said Emily, 'but you must recollect, dear madam, that I knew nothing of all this.'

'Well, and is it not sufficient,' rejoined her aunt, 'that he is also absolutely ruined, that he is sunk deeply in debt, and that neither this castle, or the mansion at Venice, is his own, if all his debts, honourable and dishonourable, were paid!'

'I am shocked by what you tell me, madam,' said Emily.

'And is it not enough,' interrupted Madame Montoni, 'that he has treated me with neglect, with cruelty, because I refused to relinquish my settlements,and, instead of being frightened by his menaces, resolutely defied him, and upbraided him with his shameful conduct? But I bore all meekly, – you know, niece, I never uttered a word of complaint, till now; no! That such a disposition as mine should be so imposed upon! That I, whose only faults are too much kindness, too much generosity, should be chained for life to such a vile, deceitful, cruel monster!'

Want of breath compelled Madame Montoni to stop. If any thing could have made Emily smile in these moments, it would have been this speech of her aunt, delivered in a voice very little below a scream, and with a vehemence of gesticulation and of countenance, that turned the whole into burlesque. Emily saw, that her misfortunes did not admit of real consolation, and, contemning the common-place terms of superficial comfort, she was silent; while Madame Montoni, jealous of her own consequence, mistook this for the silence of indifference, or of contempt, and reproached her with want of duty and feeling.

'O! I suspected what all this boasted sensibility would prove to be!' rejoined she; 'I thought it would not teach you to feel either duty, or affection, for your relations, who have treated you like their own daughter!'

'Pardon me, madam,' said Emily, mildly, 'it is not natural to me to boast, and if it was, I am sure I would not boast of sensibility – a quality, perhaps, more to be feared, than desired.'

'Well, well, niece, I will not dispute with you. But, as I said, Montoni threatens me with violence, if I any longer refuse to sign away my settlements, and this was the subject of our contest, when you came into the room before. Now, I am determined no power on earth shall make me do this. Neither will I bear all this tamely. He shall hear his true character from me; I will tell him all he deserves, in spite of his threats and cruel treatment.'

Emily seized a pause of Madame Montoni's voice, to speak. 'Dear madam,' said she, 'but will not this serve to irritate the Signor unnecessarily? will it not provoke the harsh treatment you dread?'

'I do not care,' replied Madame Montoni, 'it does not signify: I will not submit to such usage. You would have me give up my settlements, too, I suppose!'

'No, madam, I do not exactly mean that.'

'What is it you do mean then?'

'You spoke of reproaching the Signor,' – said Emily, with hesitation. 'Why, does he not deserve reproaches?' said her aunt.

'Certainly he does; but will it be prudent in you, madam, to make them?'

'Prudent!' exclaimed Madame Montoni. 'Is this a time to talk of prudence, when one is threatened with all sorts of violence?'

'It is to avoid that violence, that prudence is necessary,' said Emily.

'Of prudence!' continued Madame Montoni, without attending to her, 'of prudence towards a man, who does not scruple to break all the common ties of humanity in his conduct to me! And is it for me to consider prudence in my behaviour towards him! I am not so mean.'

'It is for your own sake, not for the Signor's, madam,' said Emily modestly, 'that you should consult prudence. Your reproaches, however just, cannot punish him, but they may provoke him to further violence against you.'

'What! would you have me submit, then, to whatever he commands – would you have me kneel down at his feet, and thank him for his cruelties? Would you have me give up my settlements?'

'How much you mistake me, madam!' said Emily, 'I am unequal to advise you on a point so important as the last: but you will pardon me for saying, that, if you consult your own peace, you will try to conciliate Signor Montoni, rather than to irritate him by reproaches.'

'Conciliate indeed! I tell you, niece, it is utterly impossible; I disdain to attempt it.'

Emily was shocked to observe the perverted understanding and obstinate temper of Madame Montoni; but, not less grieved for her sufferings, she looked round for some alleviating circumstance to offer her. 'Your situation is, perhaps, not so desperate, dear madam,' said Emily, 'as you may imagine. The Signor may represent his affairs to be worse than they are, for the purpose of pleading a stronger necessity for his possession of your settlement. Besides, so long as you keep this, you may look forward to it as a resource, at least, that will afford you a competence, should the Signor's future conduct compel you to sue for separation.'

Madame Montoni impatiently interrupted her. 'Unfeeling, cruel girl!' said she, 'and so you would persuade me, that I have no reason to complain; that the Signor is in very flourishing circumstances, that my future prospects promise nothing but comfort, and that my griefs are as fanciful and romantic as your own! Is it the way to console me, to endeavour to persuade me out of my senses and my feelings, because you happen to have no feelings yourself ? I thought I was opening my heart to a person, who could sympathize in my distress, but I find, that your people of sensibility can feel for nobody but themselves! You may retire to your chamber.'

Emily, without replying, immediately left the room, with a mingled emotion of pity and contempt, and hastened to her own, where she yielded to the mournful reflections, which a knowledge of her aunt's situation had occasioned. The conversation of the Italian with Valancourt, in France, again occurred to her. His hints, respecting the broken fortunes of Montoni, were now completely justified; those, also, concerning his character, appeared not less so, though the particular circumstances, connected with his fame, to which the stranger had alluded, yet remained to be explained. Notwithstanding, that her own observations and the words of Count Morano had convinced her, that Montoni's situation was not what it formerly appeared to be, the intelligence she had just received from her aunt on this point, struck her with all the force of astonishment, which was not weakened, when she considered the present style of Montoni's living, the number of servants he maintained, and the new expences he was incurring, by repairing and fortifying his castle. Her anxiety for her aunt and for herself increased with reflection. Several assertions of Morano, which, on the preceding night, she had believed were prompted either by interest, or by resentment, now returned to her mind with the strength of truth. She could not doubt, that Montoni had formerly agreed to give her to the Count, for a pecuniary reward; – his character, and his distressed circumstances justified the belief; these, also, seemed to confirm Morano's assertion, that he now designed to dispose of her, more advantageously for himself, to a richer suitor.

Amidst the reproaches, which Morano had thrown out against Montoni, he had said – he would not quit the castle *he dared to call his*, nor willingly leave *another* murder on his conscience – hints, which might have no other origin than the passion of the moment: but Emily was now inclined to account for them more seriously, and she shuddered to think, that she was in the hands of a man, to whom it was even possible they could apply. At length, considering, that reflection could neither release her from her melancholy situation, or enable her to bear it with greater fortitude, she tried to divert her anxiety, and took down from her little library a volume of her favourite Ariosto; but his wild imagery and rich invention could not long enchant her attention; his spells did not reach her heart, and over her sleeping fancy they played, without awakening it.

She now put aside the book, and took her lute, for it was seldom that her sufferings refused to yield to the magic of sweet sounds; when they did so, she was oppressed by sorrow, that came from excess of tenderness and regret; and there were times, when music had increased such sorrow to a degree, that was scarcely endurable; when, if it had not suddenly ceased, she might have lost her reason. Such was the time, when she mourned for her father, and heard the midnight strains, that floated by her window near the convent in Languedoc, on the night that followed his death.

She continued to play, till Annette brought dinner into her chamber, at which Emily was surprised, and enquired whose order she obeyed. 'My lady's, ma'amselle,' replied Annette: 'the Signor ordered her dinner to be carried to her own apartment, and so she has sent you yours. There have been sad doings between them, worse than ever, I think.'

Emily, not appearing to notice what she said, sat down to the little table, that was spread for her. But Annette was not to be silenced thus easily. While she waited, she told of the arrival of the men, whom Emily had observed on the ramparts, and expressed much surprise at their strange appearance, as well as at the manner, in which they had been attended by Montoni's order. 'Do they dine with the Signor, then?' said Emily.

'No, ma'amselle, they dined long ago, in an apartment at the north end of the castle, but I know not when they are to go, for the Signor told old Carlo to see them provided with every thing necessary. They have been walking all about the castle, and asking questions of the workmen on the ramparts. I never saw such strange-looking men in my life; I am frightened whenever I see them.'

Emily enquired, if she had heard of Count Morano, and whether he was likely to recover: but Annette only knew, that he was lodged in a cottage in the wood below, and that every body said he must die. Emily's countenance discovered her emotion.

'Dear ma'amselle,' said Annette, 'to see how young ladies will disguise themselves, when they are in love! I thought you hated the Count, or I am sure I would not have told you; and I am sure you have cause enough to hate him.'

'I hope I hate nobody,' replied Emily, trying to smile; 'but certainly I do not love Count Morano. I should be shocked to hear of any person dying by violent means.'

'Yes, ma'amselle, but it is his own fault.'

Emily looked displeased; and Annette, mistaking the cause of her displeasure, immediately began to excuse the Count, in her way. 'To be sure, it was very ungenteel behaviour,' said she, 'to break into a lady's room, and then, when he found his discoursing was not agreeable to her, to refuse to go; and then, when the gentleman of the castle comes to desire him to walk about his business – to turn round, and draw his sword, and swear he'll run him through the body! – To be sure it was very ungenteel behaviour, but then he was disguised in love, and so did not know what he was about.'

'Enough of this,' said Emily, who now smiled without an effort; and Annette returned to a mention of the disagreement between Montoni, and her lady. 'It is nothing new,' said she: 'we saw and heard enough of this at Venice, though I never told you of it, ma'amselle.'

'Well, Annette, it was very prudent of you not to mention it then: be as prudent now; the subject is an unpleasant one.'

'Ah dear, ma'amselle! – to see now how considerate you can be about some folks, who care so little about you! I cannot bear to see you so deceived, and I must tell you. But it is all for your own good, and not to spite my lady, though, to speak truth, I have little reason to love her; but –'

'You are not speaking thus of my aunt, I hope, Annette?' said Emily, gravely.

'Yes, ma'amselle, but I am, though; and if you knew as much as I do, you would not look so angry. I have often, and often, heard the Signor and her talking over your marriage with the Count, and she always advised him never to give up to your foolish whims, as she was pleased to call them, but to be resolute, and compel you to be obedient, whether you would, or no. And I am sure, my heart has ached a thousand times, and I have thought, when she was so unhappy herself, she might have felt a little for other people, and –'

'I thank you for your pity, Annette,' said Emily, interrupting her: 'but my aunt was unhappy then, and that disturbed her temper perhaps, or I think – I am sure—You may take away, Annette, I have done.'

'Dear, ma'amselle, you have eat nothing at all! Do try, and take a little bit more. Disturbed her temper truly! why, her temper is always disturbed, I think. And at Tholouse too I have heard my lady talking of you and Mons. Valancourt to Madame Merveille and Madame Vaison, often and often, in a very ill-natured way, as I thought, telling them what a deal of trouble she had to keep you in order, and what a fatigue and distress it was to her, and that she believed you would run away with Mons. Valancourt, if she was not to watch you closely; and that you connived at his coming about the house at night, and –'

'Good God!' exclaimed Emily, blushing deeply, 'it is surely impossible my aunt could thus have represented me!'

'Indeed, ma'am, I say nothing more than the truth, and not all of that. But I thought, myself, she might have found something better to discourse about, than the faults of her own niece, even if you had been in fault, ma'amselle; but I did not believe a word of what she said. But my lady does not care what she says against any body, for that matter.'

'However that may be, Annette,' interrupted Emily, recovering her composure, 'it does not become you to speak of the faults of my aunt to me. I know you have meant well, but – say no more. – I have quite dined.'

Annette blushed, looked down, and then began slowly to clear the table.

'Is this, then, the reward of my ingenuousness?' said Emily, when she was alone; 'the treatment I am to receive from a relation – an aunt – who ought to have been the guardian, not the slanderer of my reputation, – who, as a woman, ought to have respected the delicacy of female honour, and, as a relation, should have protected mine! But, to utter falsehoods on so nice a subject – to repay the openness, and, I may say with honest pride, the propriety of my conduct, with slanders – required a depravity of heart, such as I could scarcely have believed existed, such as I weep to find in a relation. O! what a contrast does her character present to that of my beloved father; while envy and low cunning form the chief traits of hers, his was distinguished by benevolence and philosophic wisdom! But now, let me only remember, if possible, that she is unfortunate.'

Emily threw her veil over her, and went down to walk upon the ramparts, the only walk, indeed, which was open to her, though she often wished, that she might be permitted to ramble among the woods below, and still more, that she might sometimes explore the sublime scenes of the surrounding country. But, as Montoni would not suffer her to pass the gates of the castle, she tried to be contented with the romantic views she beheld from the walls. The peasants, who had been employed on the fortifications, had left their work, and the ramparts were silent and solitary. Their lonely appearance, together with the gloom of a lowering sky, assisted the musings of her mind, and threw over it a kind of melancholy tranquillity, such as she often loved to indulge. She turned to observe a fine effect of the sun, as his rays, suddenly streaming from behind a heavy cloud, lighted up the west towers of the castle, while the rest of the edifice was in deep shade, except, that, through a lofty gothic arch, adjoining the tower, which led to another terrace, the beams darted in full splendour, and shewed the three strangers she had observed in the morning. Perceiving them, she started, and a momentary fear came over her, as she looked up the long rampart, and saw no other persons. While she hesitated, they approached. The gate at the end of the terrace, whither they were advancing, she knew, was always locked, and she could not depart by the opposite extremity, without meeting them; but, before she passed them, she hastily drew a thin veil over her face, which did, indeed, but ill conceal her beauty. They looked earnestly at her, and spoke to each other in bad Italian, of which she caught only a few words; but the fierceness of their countenances, now that she was near enough to discriminate them, struck her yet more than the wild singularity of their air and dress had formerly done. It was the countenance and figure of him, who walked between the other two, that chiefly seized her attention, which expressed a sullen haughtiness and a kind of dark watchful villany, that gave a thrill of horror to her heart. All this was so legibly written on his features, as to be seen by a single glance, for she passed the group swiftly, and her timid eyes scarcely rested on them a moment. Having reached the terrace, she stopped, and perceived the strangers standing in the shadow of one of the turrets, gazing after her, and seemingly, by their action, in earnest conversation. She immediately left the rampart, and retired to her apartment.

In the evening, Montoni sat late, carousing with his guests in the cedar chamber. His recent triumph over Count Morano, or, perhaps, some other circumstance, contributed to elevate his spirits to an unusual height. He filled the goblet often, and gave a loose to merriment and talk. The gaiety of Cavigni, on the contrary, was somewhat clouded by anxiety. He kept a watchful eye upon Verezzi, whom, with the utmost difficulty, he had hitherto restrained from exasperating Montoni further against Morano, by a mention of his late taunting words.

One of the company exultingly recurred to the event of the preceding evening. Verezzi's eyes sparkled. The mention of Morano led to that of Emily, of whom they were all profuse in the praise, except Montoni, who sat silent, and then interrupted the subject.

When the servants had withdrawn, Montoni and his friends entered into close conversation, which was sometimes checked by the irascible temper of Verezzi, but in which Montoni displayed his conscious superiority, by that decisive look and manner, which always accompanied the vigour of his thought, and to which most of his companions submitted, as to a power, that they had no right to question, though of each other's self-importance they were jealously scrupulous. Amidst this conversation, one of them imprudently introduced again the name of Morano; and Verezzi, now more heated by wine, disregarded the expressive looks of Cavigni, and gave some dark hints of what had passed on the preceding night. These, however, Montoni did not appear to understand, for he continued silent in his chair, without discovering any emotion, while, the choler of Verezzi increasing with the apparent insensibility of Montoni, he at length told the suggestion of Morano, that this castle did not lawfully belong to him, and that he would not willingly leave another murder on his conscience.

'Am I to be insulted at my own table, and by my own friends?' said Montoni, with a countenance pale in anger. 'Why are the words of that madman repeated to me?' Verezzi, who had expected to hear Montoni's indignation poured forth against Morano, and answered by thanks to himself, looked with astonishment at Cavigni, who enjoyed his confusion. 'Can you be weak enough to credit the assertions of a madman?' rejoined Montoni, 'or, what is the same thing, a man possessed by the spirit of vengeance? But he has succeeded too well; you believe what he said.'

'Signor,' said Verezzi, 'we believe only what we know.' – 'How!' interrupted Montoni, sternly: 'produce your proof.'

'We believe only what we know,' repeated Verezzi, 'and we know nothing of what Morano asserts.' Montoni seemed to recover himself. 'I am hasty, my friends,' said he, 'with respect to my honour; no man shall question it with impunity – you did not mean to question it. These foolish words are not worth your remembrance, or my resentment. Verezzi, here is to your first exploit.'

'Success to your first exploit,' re-echoed the whole company.

'Noble Signor,' replied Verezzi, glad to find he had escaped Montoni's resentment, 'with my good will, you shall build your ramparts of gold.'

'Pass the goblet,' cried Montoni. 'We will drink to Signora St Aubert,' said Cavigni. 'By your leave, we will first drink to the lady of the castle,' said Bertolini. – Montoni was silent. 'To the lady of the castle,' said his guests. He bowed his head.

'It much surprises me, Signor,' said Bertolini, 'that you have so long neglected this castle; it is a noble edifice.'

'It suits our purpose,' replied Montoni, 'and *is* a noble edifice. You know not, it seems, by what mischance it came to me.'

'It was a lucky mischance, be it what it may, Signor,' replied Bertolini, smiling. 'I would, that one so lucky had befallen me.'

Montoni looked gravely at him. 'If you will attend to what I say,' he resumed, 'you shall hear the story.'

The countenances of Bertolini and Verezzi expressed something more than curiosity; Cavigni, who seemed to feel none, had probably heard the relation before.

'It is now near twenty years,' said Montoni, 'since this castle came into my possession. I inherit it by the female line.

The lady, my predecessor, was only distantly related to me; I am the last of her family. She was beautiful and rich; I wooed her; but her heart was fixed upon another, and she rejected me. It is probable, however, that she was herself rejected of the person, whoever he might be, on whom she bestowed her favour, for a deep and settled melancholy took possession of her; and I have reason to believe she put a period to her own life. I was not at the castle at the time; but, as there are some singular and mysterious circumstances attending that event, I shall repeat them.'

'Repeat them!' said a voice.

Montoni was silent; the guests looked at each other, to know who spoke; but they perceived, that each was making the same enquiry. Montoni, at length, recovering himself, 'We are overheard,' said he: 'we will finish this subject another time. Pass the goblet.'

The cavaliers looked round the wide chamber.

'Here is no person, but ourselves,' said Verezzi: 'pray, Signor, proceed.'

'Did you hear any thing?' said Montoni.

'We did,' said Bertolini.

'It could be only fancy,' said Verezzi, looking round again. 'We see no person besides ourselves; and the sound I thought I heard seemed within the room. Pray, Signor, go on.'

Montoni paused a moment, and then proceeded in a lowered voice, while the cavaliers drew nearer to attend.

'Ye are to know, Signors, that the Lady Laurentini had for some months shewn symptoms of a dejected mind, nay, of a disturbed imagination. Her mood was very unequal; sometimes she was sunk in calm melancholy, and, at others, as I have been told, she betrayed all the symptoms of frantic madness. It was one night in the month of October, after she had recovered from one of those fits of excess, and had sunk again into her usual melancholy, that she retired alone to her chamber, and forbade all interruption. It was the chamber at the end of the corridor, Signors, where we had the affray, last night. From that hour, she was seen no more.'

'How! seen no more!' said Bertolini, 'was not her body found in the chamber?'

'Were her remains never found?' cried the rest of the company all together.

'Never!' replied Montoni.

'What reasons were there to suppose she destroyed herself, then?' said Bertolini. – 'Aye, what reasons?' said Verezzi. – 'How happened it, that her remains were never found? Although she killed herself, she could not bury herself.' Montoni looked indignantly at Verezzi, who began to apologize. 'Your pardon, Signor,' said he: 'I did not consider, that the lady was your relative, when I spoke of her so lightly.'

Montoni accepted the apology.

'But the Signor will oblige us with the reasons, which urged him to believe, that the lady committed suicide.'

'Those I will explain hereafter,' said Montoni: 'at present let me relate a most extraordinary circumstance. This conversation goes no further, Signors. Listen, then, to what I am going to say.'

'Listen!' said a voice.

They were all again silent, and the countenance of Montoni changed. 'This is no illusion of the fancy,' said Cavigni, at length breaking the profound silence. – 'No,' said Bertolini; 'I heard it myself, now. Yet here is no person in the room but ourselves!'

'This is very extraordinary,' said Montoni, suddenly rising. 'This is not to be borne; here is some deception, some trick. I will know what it means.'

All the company rose from their chairs in confusion.

'It is very odd!' said Bertolini. 'Here is really no stranger in the room. If it is a trick, Signor, you will do well to punish the author of it severely.'

'A trick! what else can it be?' said Cavigni, affecting a laugh.

The servants were now summoned, and the chamber was searched, but no person was found. The surprise and consternation of the company increased. Montoni was discomposed. 'We will leave this room,' said he, 'and the subject of our conversation also, it is too solemn.' His guests were equally ready to quit the apartment; but the subject had roused their curiosity, and they entreated Montoni to withdraw to another chamber, and finish it; no entreaties could, however, prevail with him. Notwithstanding his efforts to appear at ease, he was visibly and greatly disordered.

'Why, Signor, you are not superstitious,' cried Verezzi, jeeringly; 'you, who have so often laughed at the credulity of others!'

'I am not superstitious,' replied Montoni, regarding him with stern displeasure, 'though I know how to despise the common-place sentences, which are frequently uttered against superstition. I will enquire further into this affair.' He then left the room; and his guests, separating for the night, retired to their respective apartments.

CHAPTER VIII

> ‘He wears the rose of youth upon his cheek.’
>
> SHAKESPEARE [*Antony and Cleopatra*][1]

We now return to Valancourt, who, it may be remembered, remained at Tholouse, some time after the departure of Emily, restless and miserable. Each morrow, that approached, he designed should carry him from thence; yet to-morrow and to-morrow came, and still saw him lingering in the scene of his former happiness. He could not immediately tear himself from the spot, where he had been accustomed to converse with Emily, or from the objects they had viewed together, which appeared to him memorials of her affection, as well as a kind of surety for its faithfulness, and, next to the pain of bidding her adieu, was that of leaving the scenes, which so powerfully awakened her image. Sometimes he had bribed a servant, who had been left in the care of Madame Montoni’s chateau, to permit him to visit the gardens, and there he would wander, for hours together, rapt in a melancholy, not unpleasing. The terrace, and the pavilion at the end of it, where he had taken leave of Emily, on the eve of her departure from Tholouse, were his most favourite haunts. There, as he walked, or leaned from the window of the building, he would endeavour to recollect all she had said, on that night; to catch the tones of her voice, as they faintly vibrated on his memory, and to remember the exact expression of her countenance, which sometimes came suddenly to his fancy, like a vision; that beautiful countenance, which awakened, as by instantaneous magic, all the tenderness of his heart, and seemed to tell with irresistible eloquence – that he had lost her forever! At these moments, his hurried steps would have discovered to a spectator the despair of his heart. The character of Montoni, such as he had received from hints, and such as his fears represented it, would rise to his view, together with all the dangers it seemed to threaten to Emily and to his love. He blamed himself, that he had not urged these more forcibly to her, while it might have been in his power to detain her, and that he had suffered an absurd and criminal delicacy, as he termed it, to conquer so soon the reasonable arguments he had opposed to this journey. Any evil, that might have attended their marriage, seemed so inferior to those, which now threatened their love, or even to the sufferings, that absence occasioned, that he wondered how he could have ceased to urge his suit, till he had convinced her of its propriety; and he would certainly now have followed her to Italy, if he could have been spared from his regiment for so long a journey. His regiment, indeed, soon reminded him, that he had other duties to attend, than those of love.

A short time after his arrival at his brother’s house, he was summoned to join his brother officers, and he accompanied a battalion to Paris; where a scene of novelty and gaiety opened upon him, such as, till then, he had only a faint idea of. But gaiety disgusted, and company fatigued, his sick mind; and he became an object of unceasing raillery to his companions, from whom, whenever he could steal an opportunity, he escaped, to think of Emily. The scenes around him, however, and the company with whom he was obliged to mingle, engaged his attention, though they failed to amuse his fancy, and thus gradually weakened the habit of yielding to lamentation, till it appeared less a duty to his love to indulge it. Among his brother-officers were many, who added to the ordinary character of a French soldier’s gaiety some of those fascinating qualities, which too frequently throw a veil over folly, and sometimes even soften the features of vice into smiles. To these men the reserved and thoughtful manners of Valancourt were a kind of tacit censure on their own, for which they rallied him when present, and plotted against him when absent; they gloried in the thought of reducing him to their own level, and, considering it to be a spirited frolic, determined to accomplish it.

Valancourt was a stranger to the gradual progress of scheme and intrigue, against which he could not be on his guard. He had not been accustomed to receive ridicule, and he could ill endure its sting; he resented it, and this only drew upon him a louderlaugh. To escape from such scenes, he fled into solitude, and there the image of Emily met him, and revived the pangs of love and despair. He then sought to renew those tasteful studies, which had been the delight of his early years; but his mind had lost the tranquillity, which is necessary for their enjoyment. To forget himself and the grief and anxiety, which the idea of her recalled, he would quit his solitude, and again mingle in the crowd – glad of a temporary relief, and rejoicing to snatch amusement for the moment.

Thus passed weeks after weeks, time gradually softening his sorrow, and habit strengthening his desire of amusement, till the scenes around him seemed to awaken into a new character, and Valancourt, to have fallen among them from the clouds.

His figure and address made him a welcome visitor, wherever he had been introduced, and he soon frequented the most gay and fashionable circles of Paris. Among these was the assembly of the Countess Lacleur, a woman of eminent beauty and captivating manners. She had passed the spring of youth, but her wit prolonged the triumph of its reign, and they mutually assisted the same of each other; for those, who were charmed by her loveliness, spoke with enthusiasm of her talents; and others, who admired her playful imagination, declared, that her personal graces were unrivalled. But her imagination was merely playful, and her wit, if such it could be called, was brilliant, rather than just; it dazzled, and its fallacy escaped the detection of the moment; for the accents, in which she pronounced it, and the smile, that accompanied them, were a spell upon the judgment of the auditors. Her *petits soupers*[2] were the most tasteful of any in Paris, and were frequented by many of the second class of literati. She was fond of music, was herself a scientific performer,[3] and had frequently concerts at her house. Valancourt, who passionately loved music, and who sometimes assisted at these concerts, admired her execution, but remembered with a sigh the eloquent simplicity of Emily's songs and the natural expression of her manner, which waited not to be approved by the judgment, but found their way at once to the heart.

Madame *La Comtesse* had often deep play at her house,[4] which she affected to restrain, but secretly encouraged; and it was well known among her friends, that the splendour of her establishment was chiefly supplied from the profits of her tables. But her *petits soupers* were the most charming imaginable! Here were all the delicacies of the four quarters of the world, all the wit and the lighter efforts of genius, all the graces of conversation – the smiles of beauty, and the charms of music; and Valancourt passed his pleasantest, as well as most dangerous hours in these parties.

His brother, who remained with his family in Gascony, had contented himself with giving him letters of introduction to such of his relations, residing at Paris, as the latter was not already known to. All these were persons of some distinction; and, as neither the person, mind, or manners of Valancourt the younger threatened to disgrace their alliance, they received him with as much kindness as their nature, hardened by uninterrupted prosperity, would admit of; but their attentions did not extend to acts of real friendship; for they were too much occupied by their own pursuits, to feel any interest in his; and thus he was set down in the midst of Paris, in the pride of youth, with an open, unsuspicious temper and ardent affections, without one friend, to warn him of the dangers, to which he was exposed. Emily, who, had she been present, would have saved him from these evils by awakening his heart, and engaging him in worthy pursuits, now only increased his danger; – it was to lose the grief, which the remembrance of her occasioned, that he first sought amusement; and for this end he pursued it, till habit made it an object of abstract interest.

There was also a Marchioness Champfort, a young widow, at whose assemblies he passed much of his time. She was handsome, still more artful, gay and fond of intrigue. The society, which she drew round her, was less elegant and more vicious, than that of the Countess Lacleur: but, as she had address enough to throw a veil, though but a slight one, over the worst parts of her character, she was still visited by many persons of what is called distinction. Valancourt was introduced to her parties by two of his brother officers, whose late ridicule he had now forgiven so far, that he could sometimes join in the laugh, which a mention of his former manners would renew.

The gaiety of the most splendid court in Europe, the magnificence of the palaces, entertainments, and equipages, that surrounded him – all conspired to dazzle his imagination, and re-animate his spirits, and the example and maxims of his military associates to delude his mind. Emily's image, indeed, still lived there; but it was no longer the friend, the monitor, that saved him from himself, and to which he retired to weep the sweet, yet melancholy, tears of tenderness. When he had recourse to it, it assumed a countenance of mild reproach, that wrung his soul, and called forth tears of unmixed misery; his only escape from which was to forget the object of it, and he endeavoured, therefore, to think of Emily as seldom as he could.

Thus dangerously circumstanced was Valancourt, at the time, when Emily was suffering at Venice, from the persecuting addresses of Count Morano, and the unjust authority of Montoni; at which period we leave him.

CHAPTER IX

'The image of a wicked, heinous fault
Lives in his eye; that close aspect of his
Does shew the mood of a much-troubled breast.'
[SHAKESPEARE] *King John*[1]

Leaving the gay scenes of Paris, we return to those of the gloomy Apennine, where Emily's thoughts were still faithful to Valancourt. Looking to him as to her only hope, she recollected, with jealous exactness, every assurance and every proof she had witnessed of his affection; read again and again the letters she had received from him; weighed, with intense anxiety, the force of every word, that spoke of his attachment; and dried her tears, as she trusted in his truth.

Montoni, meanwhile, had made strict enquiry, concerning the strange circumstance of his alarm, without obtaining information; and was, at length, obliged to account for it by the reasonable supposition, that it was a mischievous trick played off by one of his domestics. His disagreements with Madame Montoni, on the subject of her settlements, were now more frequent than ever; he even confined her entirely to her own apartment, and did not scruple to threaten her with much greater severity, should she persevere in a refusal.

Reason, had she consulted it, would now have perplexed her in the choice of a conduct to be adopted. It would have pointed out the danger of irritating by further opposition a man, such as Montoni had proved himself to be, and to whose power she had so entirely committed herself; and it would also have told her, of what extreme importance to her future comfort it was, to reserve for herself those possessions, which would enable her to live independently of Montoni, should she ever escape from his immediate controul. But she was directed by a more decisive guide than reason – the spirit of revenge, which urged her to oppose violence to violence, and obstinacy to obstinacy.

Wholly confined to the solitude of her apartment, she was now reduced to solicit the society she so lately rejected; for Emily was the only person, except Annette, with whom she was permitted to converse.

Generously anxious for her peace, Emily, therefore, tried to persuade, when she could not convince, and sought by every gentle means to induce her to forbear that asperity of reply, which so greatly irritated Montoni. The pride of her aunt did sometimes soften to the soothing voice of Emily, and there even were moments, when she regarded her affectionate attentions with goodwill.

The scenes of terrible contention, to which Emily was frequently compelled to be witness, exhausted her spirits more than any circumstances, that had occurred since her departure from Tholouse. The gentleness and goodness of her parents, together with the scenes of her early happiness, often stole on her mind, like the visions of a higher world; while the characters and circumstances, now passing beneath her eye, excited both terror and surprise. She could scarcely have imagined, that passions so fierce and so various, as those which Montoni exhibited, could have been concentrated in one individual; yet what more surprised her, was, that, on great occasions, he could bend these passions, wild as they were, to the cause of his interest, and generally could disguise in his countenance their operation on his mind; but she had seen him too often, when he had thought it unnecessary to conceal his nature, to be deceived on such occasions.

Her present life appeared like the dream of a distempered imagination, or like one of those frightful fictions, in which the wild genius of the poets sometimes delighted. Reflection brought only regret, and anticipation terror. How often did she wish to 'steal the lark's wing, and mount the swiftest gale,'[2] that Languedoc and repose might once more be hers!

Of Count Morano's health she made frequent enquiry; but Annette heard only vague reports of his danger, and that his surgeon had said he would never leave the cottage alive; while Emily could not but be shocked to think, that she, however innocently, might be the means of his death; and Annette, who did not fail to observe her emotion, interpreted it in her own way.

But a circumstance soon occurred, which entirely withdrew Annette's attention from this subject, and awakened the surprise and curiosity so natural to her. Coming one day to Emily's apartment, with a countenance full of importance, 'What can all this mean, ma'amselle?' said she. 'Would I was once safe in Languedoc again, they should never catch me going on my travels any more! I must think it a fine thing, truly, to come abroad, and see foreign parts! I little thought I was coming to be catched up in an old castle, among such dreary mountains, with the chance of being murdered, or, what is as good, having my throat cut!'

'What can all this mean, indeed, Annette?' said Emily, in astonishment.

'Aye, ma'amselle, you may look surprised; but you won't believe it, perhaps, till they have murdered you, too. You would not believe about the ghost I told you of, though I shewed you the very place, where it used to appear! – You will believe nothing, ma'amselle.'

‘Not till you speak more reasonably, Annette; for Heaven’s sake, explain your meaning. You spoke of murder!’

‘Aye, ma’amselle, they are coming to murder us all, perhaps; but what signifies explaining? – you will not believe.’

Emily again desired her to relate what she had seen, or heard.

‘O, I have seen enough, ma’am, and heard too much, as Ludovico can prove. Poor soul! they will murder him, too! I little thought, when he sung those sweet verses under my lattice, at Venice!’ – Emily looked impatient and displeased. ‘Well, ma’amselle, as I was saying, these preparations about the castle, and these strange-looking people, that are calling here every day, and the Signor’s cruel usage of my lady, and his odd goings on – all these, as I told Ludovico, can bode no good. And he bid me hold my tongue. So, says I, the Signor’s strangely altered, Ludovico, in this gloomy castle, to what he was in France; there, all so gay! Nobody so gallant to my lady, then; and he could smile, too, upon a poor servant, sometimes, and jeer her, too, good-naturedly enough. I remember once, when he said to me, as I was going out of my lady’s dressing-room – Annette, says he –’

‘Never mind what the Signor said,’ interrupted Emily; ‘but tell me, at once, the circumstance, which has thus alarmed you.’

‘Aye, ma’amselle,’ rejoined Annette, ‘that is just what Ludovico said: says he, Never mind what the Signor says to you. So I told him what I thought about the Signor. He is so strangely altered, said I: for now he is so haughty, and commanding, and so sharp with my lady; and, if he meets one, he’ll scarcely look at one, unless it be to frown. So much the better, says Ludovico, so much the better. And to tell you the truth, ma’amselle, I thought this was a very ill-natured speech of Ludovico: but I went on. And then, says I, he is always knitting his brows; and if one speaks to him, he does not hear; and then he sits up counselling so, of a night, with the other Signors – there they are, till long past midnight, discoursing together! Aye, but says Ludovico, you don’t know what they are counselling about. No, said I, but I can guess – it is about my young lady. Upon that, Ludovico burst out a-laughing, quite loud; so he put me in a huff, for I did not like that either I, or you, ma’amselle, should be laughed at; and I turned away quick, but he stopped me. “Don’t be affronted, Annette,” said he, “but I cannot help laughing;” and with that he laughed again. “What!” says he, “do you think the Signors sit up, night after night, only to counsel about thy young lady! No, no, there is something more in the wind than that. And these repairs about the castle, and these preparations about the ramparts – they are not making about young ladies.” Why surely, said I, the Signor, my master, is not going to make war? “Make war!” said Ludovico, “what, upon the mountains and the woods? for here is no living soul to make war upon, that I see.”

‘What are these preparations for, then? said I; why surely nobody is coming to take away my master’s castle! “Then there are so many ill-looking fellows coming to the castle every day,” says Ludovico, without answering my question, “and the Signor sees them all, and talks with them all, and they all stay in the neighbourhood! By holy St Marco! some of them are the most cut-throat-looking dogs I ever set my eyes upon.”

‘I asked Ludovico again, if he thought they were coming to take away my master’s castle; and he said. No, he did not think they were, but he did not know for certain. “Then, yesterday,” said he, but you must not tell this, ma’amselle, “yesterday, a party of these men came, and left all their horses in the castle stables, where, it seems, they are to stay, for the Signor ordered them all to be entertained with the best provender in the manger; but the men are, most of them, in the neighbouring cottages.”

‘So, ma’amselle, I came to tell you all this, for I never heard any thing so strange in my life. But what can these ill-looking men be come about, if it is not to murder us? And the Signor knows this, or why should he be so civil to them? And why should he fortify the castle, and counsel so much with the other Signors, and be so thoughtful?’

‘Is this all you have to tell, Annette?’ said Emily. ‘Have you heard nothing else, that alarms you?’

‘Nothing else, ma’amselle!’ said Annette; ‘why, is not this enough?’ ‘Quite enough for my patience, Annette, but not quite enough to convince me we are all to be murdered, though I acknowledge here is sufficient food for curiosity.’ She forbore to speak her apprehensions, because she would not encourage Annette’s wild terrors; but the present circumstances of the castle both surprised, and alarmed her. Annette, having told her tale, left the chamber, on the wing for new wonders.

In the evening, Emily had passed some melancholy hours with Madame Montoni, and was retiring to rest, when she was alarmed by a strange and loud knocking at her chamber door, and then a heavy weight fell against it, that almost burst it open. She called to know who was there, and receiving no answer, repeated the call; but a chilling silence followed. It occurred to her – for, at this moment, she could not reason on the probability of circumstances – that some one of the strangers, lately arrived at the castle, had discovered her apartment, and was come with such intent, as their looks rendered too possible – to rob, perhaps to murder, her. The moment she admitted this possibility, terror supplied the place of conviction, and a kind of instinctive remembrance of her remote situation from the family heightened it to a degree, that almost overcame her senses. She looked at the door, which led to the stair-case, expecting to see it open, and listening, in fearful silence, for a return of the noise, till she began to think it had proceeded from this door, and a wish of escaping through the opposite one rushed upon her mind. She went to the gallery door, and then, fearing to open it, lest some person might be silently lurking for her without, she stopped, but with her eyes fixed in expectation upon the opposite door of the stair-case. As thus she stood, she heard a faint breathing near her, and became convinced, that some person was on the other side of the door, which was already locked. She sought for other fastening, but there was none.

While she yet listened, the breathing was distinctly heard, and her terror was not soothed, when, looking round her wide and lonely chamber, she again considered her remote situation. As she stood hesitating whether to call for assistance, the continuance of the stillness surprised her; and her spirits would have revived, had she not continued to hear the faint breathing, that convinced her, the person, whoever it was, had not quitted the door.

At length, worn out with anxiety, she determined to call loudly for assistance from her casement, and was advancing to it, when, whether the terror of her mind gave her ideal sounds, or that real ones did come, she thought footsteps were ascending the private stair-case; and, expecting to see its door unclose, she forgot all other cause of alarm, and retreated towards the corridor. Here she endeavoured to make her escape, but, on opening the door, was very near falling over a person, who lay on the floor without. She screamed, and would have passed, but her trembling frame refused to support her; and the moment, in which she leaned against the wall of the gallery, allowed her leisure to observe the figure before her, and to recognize the features of Annette. Fear instantly yielded to surprise. She spoke in vain to the poor girl, who remained senseless on the floor, and then, losing all consciousness of her own weakness, hurried to her assistance.

When Annette recovered, she was helped by Emily into the chamber, but was still unable to speak, and looked round her, as if her eyes followed some person in the room. Emily tried to sooth her disturbed spirits, and forbore, at present, to ask her any questions; but the faculty of speech was never long with-held from Annette, and she explained, in broken sentences, and in her tedious way, the occasion of her disorder. She affirmed, and with a solemnity of conviction, that almost staggered the incredulity of Emily, that she had seen an apparition, as she was passing to her bed-room, through the corridor.

‘I had heard strange stories of that chamber before,’ said Annette: ‘but as it was so near yours, ma’amselle, I would not tell them to you, because they would frighten you. The servants had told me, often and often, that it was haunted, and that was the reason why it was shut up: nay, for that matter, why the whole string of these rooms, here, are shut up. I quaked whenever I went by, and I must say, I did sometimes think I heard odd noises within it. But, as I said, as I was passing along the corridor, and not thinking a word about the matter, or even of the strange voice that the Signors heard the other night, all of a sudden comes a great light, and, looking behind me, there was a tall figure, (I saw it as plainly, ma’amselle, as I see you at this moment) a tall figure gliding along (Oh! I cannot describe how!) into the room, that is always shut up, and nobody has the key of it but the Signor, and the door shut directly.’

‘Then it doubtless was the Signor,’ said Emily.

‘O no, ma’amselle, it could not be him, for I left him busy a-quarrelling in my lady’s dressing-room!’

‘You bring me strange tales, Annette,’ said Emily: ‘it was but this morning, that you would have terrified me with the apprehension of murder; and now you would persuade me, you have seen a ghost! These wonderful stories come too quickly.’

‘Nay, ma’amselle, I will say no more, only, if I had not been frightened, I should not have fainted dead away, so. I ran as fast as I could, to get to your door; but, what was worst of all, I could not call out; then I thought something must be strangely the matter with me, and directly I dropt down.’

‘Was it the chamber where the black veil hangs?’ said Emily. ‘O! no, ma’amselle, it was one nearer to this. What shall I do, to get to my room? I would not go out into the corridor again, for the whole world!’ Emily, whose spirits had been severely shocked, and who, therefore, did not like the thought of passing the night alone, told her she might sleep where she was. ‘O, no, ma’amselle,’ replied Annette, ‘I would not sleep in the room, now, for a thousand sequins!’

Wearied and disappointed, Emily first ridiculed, though she shared, her fears, and then tried to sooth them; but neither attempt succeeded, and the girl persisted in believing and affirming, that what she had seen was nothing human. It was not till some time after Emily had recovered her composure, that she recollected the steps she had heard on the stair-case – a remembrance, however, which made her insist that Annette should pass the night with her, and, with much difficulty, she, at length, prevailed, assisted by that part of the girl’s fear, which concerned the corridor.

Early on the following morning, as Emily crossed the hall to the ramparts, she heard a noisy bustle in the court-yard, and the clatter of horses’ hoofs. Such unusual sounds excited her curiosity; and, instead of going to the ramparts, she went to an upper casement, from whence she saw, in the court below, a large party of horsemen, dressed in a singular, but uniform, habit, and completely, though variously, armed. They wore a kind of short jacket, composed of black and scarlet, and several of them had a cloak, of plain black, which, covering the person entirely, hung down to the stirrups. As one of these cloaks glanced aside, she saw, beneath, daggers, apparently of different sizes, tucked into the horseman’s belt. She further observed, that these were carried, in the same manner, by many of the horsemen without cloaks, most of whom bore also pikes, or javelins. On their heads, were the small Italian caps, some of which were distinguished by black feathers. Whether these caps gave a fierce air to the countenance, or that the countenances they surmounted had naturally such an appearance, Emily thought she had never, till then, seen an assemblage of faces so savage and terrific. While she gazed, she almost fancied herself surrounded by banditti; and a vague thought glanced athwart her fancy – that Montoni was the captain of the group before her, and that this castle was to be the place of rendezvous. The strange and horrible supposition was but momentary, though her reason could supply none more probable, and though she discovered, among the band, the strangers she had formerly noticed with so much alarm, who were now distinguished by the black plume.

While she continued gazing, Cavigni, Verezzi, and Bertolini came forth from the hall, habited like the rest, except that they wore hats, with a mixed plume of black and scarlet, and that their arms differed from those of the rest of the party. As they mounted their horses, Emily was struck with the exulting joy, expressed on the visage of Verezzi, while Cavigni was gay, yet with a shade of thought on his countenance; and, as he managed his horse with dexterity, his graceful and commanding figure, which exhibited the majesty of a hero, had never appeared to more advantage. Emily, as she observed him, thought he somewhat resembled Valancourt, in the spirit and dignity of his person; but she looked in vain for the noble, benevolent countenance – the soul’s intelligence, which overspread the features of the latter.

As she was hoping, she scarcely knew why, that Montoni would accompany the party, he appeared at the hall-door, but unaccoutred. Having carefully observed the horsemen, conversed awhile with the cavaliers, and bidden them farewel, the band wheeled round the court, and, led by Verezzi, issued forth under the portcullis; Montoni following to the portal, and gazing after them for some time. Emily then retired from the casement, and, now certain of being unmolested, went to walk on the ramparts, from whence she soon after saw the party winding among the mountains to the west, appearing and disappearing between the woods, till distance confused their figures, consolidated their numbers, and only a dingy mass appeared moving along the heights.

Emily observed, that no workmen were on the ramparts, and that the repairs of the fortifications seemed to be completed. While she sauntered thoughtfully on, she heard distant footsteps, and, raising her eyes, saw several men lurking under the castle walls, who were evidently not workmen, but looked, as if they would have accorded well with the party, which was gone. Wondering where Annette had hid herself so long, who might have explained some of the late circumstances, and then considering that Madame Montoni was probably risen, she went to her dressing-room, where she mentioned what had occurred; but Madame Montoni either would not, or could not, give any explanation of the event. The Signor's reserve to his wife, on this subject, was probably nothing more than usual; yet, to Emily, it gave an air of mystery to the whole affair, that seemed to hint, there was danger, if not villany, in his schemes.

Annette presently came, and, as usual, was full of alarm; to her lady's eager enquiries of what she had heard among the servants, she replied:

'Ah, Madam! nobody knows what it is all about, but old Carlo; he knows well enough, I dare say, but he is as close as his master. Some say the Signor is going out to frighten the enemy, as they call it: but where is the enemy? Then others say, he is going to take away some body's castle: but I am sure he has room enough in his own, without taking other people's; and I am sure I should like it a great deal better, if there were more people to fill it.'

'Ah! you will soon have your wish, I fear,' replied Madame Montoni.

'No, madam, but such ill-looking fellows are not worth having. I mean such gallant, smart, merry fellows as Ludovico, who is always telling droll stories, to make one laugh. It was but yesterday, he told me such a *humoursome* tale! I can't help laughing at it now. – Says he –'

'Well, we can dispense with the story,' said her lady. 'Ah!' continued Annette, 'he sees a great way, a great way further than other people! Now he sees into all the Signor's meaning, without knowing a word about the matter!'

'How is that?' said Madame Montoni.

'Why he says – but he made me promise not to tell, and I would not disoblige him for the world.'

'What is it he made you promise not to tell?' said her lady, sternly. 'I insist upon knowing immediately – what is it he made you promise?'

'O Madam,' cried Annette, 'I would not tell for the universe!' 'I insist upon your telling this instant,' said Madame Montoni. 'O dear madam! I would not tell for an hundred sequins! You would not have me forswear myself, madam!' exclaimed Annette.

'I will not wait another moment,' said Madame Montoni. Annette was silent.

'The Signor shall be informed of this directly,' rejoined her mistress: 'he will make you discover all.'

'It is Ludovico, who has discovered,' said Annette: 'but for mercy's sake, madam, don't tell the Signor, and you shall know all directly.' Madame Montoni said, that she would not.

'Well then, madam, Ludovico says, that the Signor, my master, is – is – that is, he only thinks so, and any body, you know, madam, is free to think – that the Signor, my master, is – is –'

'Is what?' said her lady, impatiently.

'That the Signor, my master, is going to be – a great robber – that is – he is going to rob on his own account; – to be, (but I am sure I don't understand what he means) to be a – captain of – robbers.'

'Art thou in thy senses, Annette?' said Madame Montoni; 'or is this a trick to deceive me? Tell me, this instant, what Ludovico *did* say to thee; – no equivocation; – this instant.'

'Nay, madam,' cried Annette, 'if this is all I am to get for having told the secret' – Her mistress thus continued to insist, and Annette to protest, till Montoni, himself, appeared, who bade the latter leave the room, and she withdrew, trembling for the fate of her story. Emily also was retiring, but her aunt desired she would stay; and Montoni had so often made her a witness of their contention, that he no longer had scruples on that account.

'I insist upon knowing this instant, Signor, what all this means:' said his wife – 'what are all these armed men, whom they tell me of, gone out about?' Montoni answered her only with a look of scorn; and Emily whispered something to her. 'It does not signify,' said her aunt: 'I will know; and I will know, too, what the castle has been fortified for.'

'Come, come,' said Montoni, 'other business brought me here. I must be trifled with no longer. I have immediate occasion for what I demand – those estates must be given up, without further contention; or I may find a way —'

'They never shall be given up,' interrupted Madame Montoni: 'they never shall enable you to carry on your wild schemes; – but what are these? I will know. Do you expect the castle to be attacked? Do you expect enemies? Am I to be shut up here, to be killed in a siege?'

'Sign the writings,' said Montoni, 'and you shall know more.'

'What enemy can be coming?' continued his wife. 'Have you entered into the service of the state? Am I to be blocked up here to die?'

‘That may possibly happen,’ said Montoni, ‘unless you yield to my demand: for, come what may, you shall not quit the castle till then.’ Madame Montoni burst into loud lamentation, which she as suddenly checked, considering, that her husband’s assertions might be only artifices, employed to extort her consent. She hinted this suspicion, and, in the next moment, told him also, that his designs were not so honourable as to serve the state, and that she believed he had only commenced a captain of banditti, to join the enemies of Venice, in plundering and laying waste the surrounding country.

Montoni looked at her for a moment with a steady and stern countenance; while Emily trembled, and his wife, for once, thought she had said too much. ‘You shall be removed, this night,’ said he, ‘to the east turret: there, perhaps, you may understand the danger of offending a man, who has an unlimited power over you.’

Emily now fell at his feet, and, with tears of terror, supplicated for her aunt, who sat, trembling with fear, and indignation; now ready to pour forth execrations, and now to join the intercessions of Emily. Montoni, however, soon interrupted these entreaties with an horrible oath; and, as he burst from Emily, leaving his cloak in her hand, she fell to the floor, with a force, that occasioned her a severe blow on the forehead. But he quitted the room, without attempting to raise her, whose attention was called from herself, by a deep groan from Madame Montoni, who continued otherwise unmoved in her chair, and had not fainted. Emily, hastening to her assistance, saw her eyes rolling, and her features convulsed.

Having spoken to her, without receiving an answer, she brought water, and supported her head, while she held it to her lips; but the increasing convulsions soon compelled Emily to call for assistance. On her way through the hall, in search of Annette, she met Montoni, whom she told what had happened, and conjured to return and comfort her aunt; but he turned silently away, with a look of indifference, and went out upon the ramparts. At length she found old Carlo and Annette, and they hastened to the dressing-room, where Madame Montoni had fallen on the floor, and was lying in strong convulsions. Having lifted her into the adjoining room, and laid her on the bed, the force of her disorder still made all their strength necessary to hold her, while Annette trembled and sobbed, and old Carlo looked silently and piteously on, as his feeble hands grasped those of his mistress, till, turning his eyes upon Emily, he exclaimed, ‘Good God! Signora, what is the matter?’

Emily looked calmly at him, and saw his enquiring eyes fixed on her: and Annette, looking up, screamed loudly; for Emily’s face was stained with blood, which continued to fall slowly from her forehead: but her attention had been so entirely occupied by the scene before her, that she had felt no pain from the wound. She now held an handkerchief to her face, and, notwithstanding her faintness, continued to watch Madame Montoni, the violence of whose convulsions was abating, till at length they ceased, and left her in a kind of stupor.

‘My aunt must remain quiet,’ said Emily. ‘Go, good Carlo; if we should want your assistance, I will send for you. In the mean time, if you have an opportunity, speak kindly of your mistress to your master.’

‘Alas!’ said Carlo, ‘I have seen too much! I have little influence with the Signor. But do, dear young lady, take some care of yourself; that is an ugly wound, and you look sadly.’

‘Thank you, my friend, for your consideration,’ said Emily, smiling kindly: ‘the wound is trifling, it came by a fall.’

Carlo shook his head, and left the room; and Emily, with Annette, continued to watch by her aunt. ‘Did my lady tell the Signor what Ludovico said, ma’amselle?’ asked Annette in a whisper; but Emily quieted her fears on the subject.

‘I thought what this quarrelling would come to,’ continued Annette: ‘I suppose the Signor has been beating my lady.’

‘No, no, Annette, you are totally mistaken, nothing extraordinary has happened.’

‘Why, extraordinary things happen here so often, ma’amselle, that there is nothing in them. Here is another legion of those ill-looking fellows, come to the castle, this morning.’

‘Hush! Annette, you will disturb my aunt; we will talk of that by and bye.’

They continued watching silently, till Madame Montoni uttered a low sigh, when Emily took her hand, and spoke soothingly to her; but the former gazed with unconscious eyes, and it was long before she knew her niece. Her first words then enquired for Montoni; to which Emily replied by an entreaty, that she would compose her spirits, and consent to be kept quiet, adding, that, if she wished any message to be conveyed to him, she would herself deliver it. ‘No,’ said her aunt faintly, ‘no – I have nothing new to tell him. Does he persist in saying I shall be removed from my chamber?’

Emily replied, that he had not spoken, on the subject, since Madame Montoni heard him; and then she tried to divert her attention to some other topic; but her aunt seemed to be inattentive to what she said, and lost in secret thoughts. Emily, having brought her some refreshment, now left her to the care of Annette, and went in search of Montoni, whom she found on a remote part of the rampart, conversing among a group of the men described by Annette. They stood round him with fierce, yet subjugated, looks, while he, speaking earnestly, and pointing to the walls, did not perceive Emily, who remained at some distance, waiting till he should be at leisure, and observing involuntarily the appearance of one man, more savage than his fellows, who stood resting on his pike, and looking, over the shoulders of a comrade, at Montoni, to whom he listened with uncommon earnestness. This man was apparently of low condition; yet his looks appeared not to acknowledge the superiority of Montoni, as did those of his companions; and sometimes they even assumed an air of authority, which the decisive manner of the Signor could not repress. Some few words of Montoni then passed in the wind; and, as the men were separating, she heard him say, ‘This evening, then, begin the watch at sun-set.’

‘At sun-set, Signor,’ replied one or two of them, and walked away; while Emily approached Montoni, who appeared desirous of avoiding her: but, though she observed this, she had courage to proceed. She endeavoured to intercede once more for her aunt, represented to him her sufferings, and urged the danger of exposing her to a cold apartment in her present state. ‘She suffers by her own folly,’ said Montoni, ‘and is not to be pitied; – she knows how she may avoid these sufferings in future – if she is removed to the turret, it will be her own fault. Let her be obedient, and sign the writings you heard of, and I will think no more of it.'

When Emily ventured still to plead, he sternly silenced and rebuked her for interfering in his domestic affairs, but, at length, dismissed her with this concession – That he would not remove Madame Montoni, on the ensuing night, but allow her till the next to consider, whether she would resign her settlements, or be imprisoned in the east turret of the castle, 'where she shall find,' he added, 'a punishment she may not expect.'

Emily then hastened to inform her aunt of this short respite and of the alternative, that awaited her, to which the latter made no reply, but appeared thoughtful, while Emily, in consideration of her extreme languor, wished to sooth her mind by leading it to less interesting topics: and, though these efforts were unsuccessful, and Madame Montoni became peevish, her resolution, on the contended point, seemed somewhat to relax, and Emily recommended, as her only means of safety, that she should submit to Montoni's demand. 'You know not what you advise,' said her aunt. 'Do you understand, that these estates will descend to you at my death, if I persist in a refusal?'

'I was ignorant of that circumstance, madam,' replied Emily, 'but the knowledge of it cannot with-hold me from advising you to adopt the conduct, which not only your peace, but, I fear, your safety requires, and I entreat, that you will not suffer a consideration comparatively so trifling, to make you hesitate a moment in resigning them.'

'Are you sincere, niece?' 'Is it possible you can doubt it, madam?' Her aunt appeared to be affected. 'You are not unworthy of these estates, niece,' said she: 'I would wish to keep them for your sake – you shew a virtue I did not expect.'

'How have I deserved this reproof, madam?' said Emily sorrowfully.

'Reproof!' replied Madame Montoni: 'I meant to praise your virtue.'

'Alas! here is no exertion of virtue,' rejoined Emily, 'for here is no temptation to be overcome.'

'Yet Monsieur Valancourt'—said her aunt. 'O madam!' interrupted Emily, anticipating what she would have said, 'do not let me glance on that subject: do not let my mind be stained with a wish so shockingly self-interested.' She immediately changed the topic, and continued with Madame Montoni, till she withdrew to her apartment for the night.

At that hour, the castle was perfectly still, and every inhabitant of it, except herself, seemed to have retired to rest. As she passed along the wide and lonely galleries, dusky and silent, she felt forlorn and apprehensive of – she scarcely knew what; but when, entering the corridor, she recollected the incident of the preceding night, a dread seized her, lest a subject of alarm, similar to that, which had befallen Annette, should occur to her, and which, whether real, or ideal, would, she felt, have an almost equal effect upon her weakened spirits. The chamber, to which Annette had alluded, she did not exactly know, but understood it to be one of those she must pass in the way to her own; and, sending a fearful look forward into the gloom, she stepped lightly and cautiously along, till, coming to a door, from whence issued a low sound, she hesitated and paused; and, during the delay of that moment, her fears so much increased, that she had no power to move from the spot. Believing, that she heard a human voice within, she was somewhat revived; but, in the next moment, the door was opened, and a person, whom she conceived to be Montoni, appeared, who instantly started back, and closed it, though not before she had seen, by the light that burned in the chamber, another person, sitting in a melancholy attitude by the fire. Her terror vanished, but her astonishment only began, which was now roused by the mysterious secrecy of Montoni's manner, and by the discovery of a person, whom he thus visited at midnight, in an apartment, which had long been shut up, and of which such extraordinary reports were circulated.

While she thus continued hesitating, strongly prompted to watch Montoni's motions, yet fearing to irritate him by appearing to notice them, the door was again opened cautiously, and as instantly closed as before. She then stepped softly to her chamber, which was the next but one to this, but, having put down her lamp, returned to an obscure corner of the corridor, to observe the proceedings of this half-seen person, and to ascertain, whether it was indeed Montoni.

Having waited in silent expectation for a few minutes, with her eyes fixed on the door, it was again opened, and the same person appeared, whom she now knew to be Montoni. He looked cautiously round, without perceiving her, then, stepping forward, closed the door, and left the corridor. Soon after, Emily heard the door fastened on the inside, and she withdrew to her chamber, wondering at what she had witnessed.

It was now twelve o'clock. As she closed her casement, she heard footsteps on the terrace below, and saw imperfectly, through the gloom, several persons advancing, who passed under the casement. She then heard the clink of arms, and, in the next moment, the watch-word; when, recollecting the command she had overheard from Montoni, and the hour of the night, she understood, that these men were, for the first time, relieving guard in the castle. Having listened till all was again still, she retired to sleep.

CHAPTER X

‘And shall no lay of death
With pleasing murmur sooth
Her parted soul?
Shall no tear wet her grave?’

SAYERS [*Moina: A Tragedy*][1]

On the following morning, Emily went early to the apartment of Madame Montoni, who had slept well, and was much recovered. Her spirits also had returned with her health, and her resolution to oppose Montoni’s demands revived, though it yet struggled with her fears, which Emily, who trembled for the consequence of further opposition, endeavoured to confirm.

Her aunt, as has been already shewn, had a disposition, which delighted in contradiction, and which taught her, when unpleasant circumstances were offered to her understanding, not to enquire into their truth, but to seek for arguments, by which she might make them appear false. Long habit had so entirely confirmed this natural propensity, that she was not conscious of possessing it. Emily’s remonstrances and representations, therefore, roused her pride, instead of alarming, or convincing her judgment, and she still relied upon the discovery of some means, by which she might yet avoid submitting to the demand of her husband. Considering, that, if she could once escape from his castle, she might defy his power, and, obtaining a decisive separation, live in comfort on the estates, that yet remained for her, she mentioned this to her niece, who accorded with her in the wish, but differed from her, as to the probability of its completion. She represented the impossibility of passing the gates, secured and guarded as they were, and the extreme danger of committing her design to the discretion of a servant, who might either purposely betray, or accidentally disclose it. – Montoni’s vengeance would also disdain restraint, if her intention was detected: and, though Emily wished, as fervently as she could do, to regain her freedom, and return to France, she consulted only Madame Montoni’s safety, and persevered in advising her to relinquish her settlement, without braving further outrage.

The struggle of contrary emotions, however, continued to rage in her aunt’s bosom, and she still brooded over the chance of effecting an escape. While she thus sat, Montoni entered the room, and, without noticing his wife’s indisposition, said, that he came to remind her of the impolicy of trifling with him, and that he gave her only till the evening to determine, whether she would consent to his demand, or compel him, by a refusal, to remove her to the east turret. He added, that a party of cavaliers would dine with him, that day, and that he expected she would sit at the head of the table, where Emily, also, must be present. Madame Montoni was now on the point of uttering an absolute refusal, but, suddenly considering, that her liberty, during this entertainment, though circumscribed, might favour her further plans, she acquiesced, with seeming reluctance, and Montoni, soon after, left the apartment. His command struck Emily with surprise and apprehension, who shrunk from the thought of being exposed to the gaze of strangers, such as her fancy represented these to be, and the words of Count Morano, now again recollected, did not sooth her fears.

When she withdrew to prepare for dinner, she dressed herself with even more simplicity than usual, that she might escape observation – a policy, which did not avail her, for, as she re-passed to her aunt’s apartment, she was met by Montoni, who censured what he called her prudish appearance, and insisted, that she would wear the most splendid dress she had, even that, which had been prepared for her intended nuptials with Count Morano, and which, it now appeared, her aunt had carefully brought with her from Venice. This was made, not in the Venetian, but, in the Neapolitan fashion, so as to set off the shape and figure, to the utmost advantage. In it, her beautiful chesnut tresses were negligently bound up in pearls, and suffered to fall back again on her neck. The simplicity of a better taste, than Madame Montoni’s, was conspicuous in this dress, splendid as it was, and Emily’s unaffected beauty never had appeared more captivatingly. She had now only to hope, that Montoni’s order was prompted, not by any extraordinary design, but by an ostentation of displaying his family, richly attired, to the eyes of strangers; yet nothing less than his absolute command could have prevailed with her to wear a dress, that had been designed for such an offensive purpose, much less to have worn it on this occasion. As she descended to dinner, the emotion of her mind threw a faint blush over her countenance, and heightened its interesting expression; for timidity had made her linger in her apartment, till the utmost moment, and, when she entered the hall, in which a kind of state dinner was spread, Montoni and his guests were already seated at the table. She was then going to place herself by her aunt; but Montoni waved his hand, and two of the cavaliers rose, and seated her between them.

The eldest of these was a tall man, with strong Italian features, an aquiline nose, and dark penetrating eyes, that flashed with fire, when his mind was agitated, and, even in its state of rest, retained somewhat of the wildness of the passions. His visage was long and narrow, and his complexion of a sickly yellow.

The other, who appeared to be about forty, had features of a different cast, yet Italian, and his look was slow, subtle and penetrating; his eyes, of a dark grey, were small, and hollow; his complexion was a sun-burnt brown, and the contour of his face, though inclined to oval, was irregular and ill-formed.

Eight other guests sat round the table, who were all dressed in an uniform, and had all an expression, more or less, of wild fierceness, of subtle design, or of licentious passions. As Emily timidly surveyed them, she remembered the scene of the preceding morning, and again almost fancied herself surrounded by banditti; then, looking back to the tranquillity of her early life, she felt scarcely less astonishment, than grief, at her present situation. The scene, in which they sat, assisted the illusion; it was an antient hall, gloomy from the style of its architecture, from its great extent, and because almost the only light it received was from one large gothic window, and from a pair of folding doors, which, being open, admitted likewise a view of the west rampart, with the wild mountains of the Apennine beyond.

The middle compartment of this hall rose into a vaulted roof, enriched with fret-work, and supported, on three sides, by pillars of marble; beyond these, long colonades retired in gloomy grandeur, till their extent was lost in twilight. The lightest footsteps of the servants, as they advanced through these, were returned in whispering echoes, and their figures, seen at a distance imperfectly through the dusk, frequently awakened Emily's imagination. She looked alternately at Montoni, at his guests and on the surrounding scene; and then, remembering her dear native province, her pleasant home and the simplicity and goodness of the friends, whom she had lost, grief and surprise again occupied her mind.

When her thoughts could return from these considerations, she fancied she observed an air of authority towards his guests, such as she had never before seen him assume, though he had always been distinguished by an haughty carriage; there was something also in the manners of the strangers, that seemed perfectly, though not servilely, to acknowledge his superiority.

During dinner, the conversation was chiefly on war and politics. They talked with energy of the state of Venice, its dangers, the character of the reigning Doge[2] and of the chief senators; and then spoke of the state of Rome. When the repast was over, they rose, and, each filling his goblet with wine from the gilded ewer, that stood beside him, drank 'Success to our exploits!' Montoni was lifting his goblet to his lips to drink this toast, when suddenly the wine hissed, rose to the brim, and, as he held the glass from him, it burst into a thousand pieces.

To him, who constantly used that sort of Venice glass, which had the quality of breaking, upon receiving poisoned liquor,[3] a suspicion, that some of his guests had endeavoured to betray him, instantly occurred, and he ordered all the gates to be closed, drew his sword, and, looking round on them, who stood in silent amazement, exclaimed, 'Here is a traitor among us; let those, that are innocent, assist in discovering the guilty.'

Indignation flashed from the eyes of the cavaliers, who all drew their swords; and Madame Montoni, terrified at what might ensue, was hastening from the hall, when her husband commanded her to stay; but his further words could not now be distinguished, for the voice of every person rose together. His order, that all the servants should appear, was at length obeyed, and they declared their ignorance of any deceit – a protestation which could not be believed; for it was evident, that, as Montoni's liquor, and his only, had been poisoned, a deliberate design had been formed against his life, which could not have been carried so far towards its accomplishment, without the connivance of the servant, who had the care of the wine ewers.

This man, with another, whose face betrayed either the consciousness of guilt, or the fear of punishment, Montoni ordered to be chained instantly, and confined in a strong room, which had formerly been used as a prison. Thither, likewise, he would have sent all his guests, had he not foreseen the consequence of so bold and unjustifiable a proceeding. As to those, therefore, he contented himself with swearing, that no man should pass the gates, till this extraordinary affair had been investigated, and then sternly bade his wife retire to her apartment, whither he suffered Emily to attend her.

In about half an hour, he followed to the dressing-room; and Emily observed, with horror, his dark countenance and quivering lip, and heard him denounce vengeance on her aunt.

'It will avail you nothing,' said he to his wife, 'to deny the fact; I have proof of your guilt. Your only chance of mercy rests on a full confession; – there is nothing to hope from sullenness, or falsehood; your accomplice has confessed all.'

Emily's fainting spirits were roused by astonishment, as she heard her aunt accused of a crime so atrocious, and she could not, for a moment, admit the possibility of her guilt. Meanwhile Madame Montoni's agitation did not permit her to reply; alternately her complexion varied from livid paleness to a crimson flush; and she trembled, – but, whether with fear, or with indignation, it were difficult to decide.

'Spare your words,' said Montoni, seeing her about to speak, 'your countenance makes full confession of your crime. – You shall be instantly removed to the east turret.'

'This accusation,' said Madame Montoni, speaking with difficulty, 'is used only as an excuse for your cruelty; I disdain to reply to it. You do not believe me guilty.'

'Signor!' said Emily solemnly, 'this dreadful charge, I would answer with my life, is false. Nay, Signor,' she added, observing the severity of his countenance, 'this is no moment for restraint, on my part; I do not scruple to tell you, that you are deceived – most wickedly deceived, by the suggestion of some person, who aims at the ruin of my aunt: – it is impossible, that you could yourself have imagined a crime so hideous.'

Montoni, his lips trembling more than before, replied only, 'If you value your own safety,' addressing Emily, 'you will be silent. I shall know how to interpret your remonstrances, should you persevere in them.'

Emily raised her eyes calmly to heaven. 'Here is, indeed, then, nothing to hope!' said she.

'Peace!' cried Montoni, 'or you shall find there is something to fear.'

He turned to his wife, who had now recovered her spirits, and who vehemently and wildly remonstrated upon this mysterious suspicion: but Montoni's rage heightened with her indignation, and Emily, dreading the event of it, threw herself between them, and clasped his knees in silence, looking up in his face with an expression, that might have softened the heart of a fiend. Whether his was hardened by a conviction of Madame Montoni's guilt, or that a bare suspicion of it made him eager to exercise vengeance, he was totally and alike insensible to the distress of his wife, and to the pleading looks of Emily, whom he made no attempt to raise, but was vehemently menacing both, when he was called out of the room by some person at the door. As he shut the door, Emily heard him turn the lock and take out the key; so that Madame Montoni and herself were now prisoners; and she saw that his designs became more and more terrible. Her endeavours to explain his motives for this circumstance were almost as ineffectual as those to sooth the distress of her aunt, whose innocence she could not doubt; but she, at length, accounted for Montoni's readiness to suspect his wife by his own consciousness of cruelty towards her, and for the sudden violence of his present conduct against both, before even his suspicions could be completely formed, by his general eagerness to effect suddenly whatever he was led to desire and his carelessness of justice, or humanity, in accomplishing it.

Madame Montoni, after some time, again looked round, in search of a possibility of escape from the castle, and conversed with Emily on the subject, who was now willing to encounter any hazard, though she forbore to encourage a hope in her aunt, which she herself did not admit. How strongly the edifice was secured, and how vigilantly guarded, she knew too well; and trembled to commit their safety to the caprice of the servant, whose assistance they must solicit. Old Carlo was compassionate, but he seemed to be too much in his master's interest to be trusted by them; Annette could of herself do little, and Emily knew Ludovico only from her report. At present, however, these considerations were useless, Madame Montoni and her niece being shut up from all intercourse, even with the persons, whom there might be these reasons to reject.

In the hall, confusion and tumult still reigned. Emily, as she listened anxiously to the murmur, that sounded along the gallery, sometimes fancied she heard the clashing of swords, and, when she considered the nature of the provocation, given by Montoni, and his impetuosity, it appeared probable, that nothing less than arms would terminate the contention. Madame Montoni, having exhausted all her expressions of indignation, and Emily, hers of comfort, they remained silent, in that kind of breathless stillness, which, in nature, often succeeds to the uproar of conflicting elements; a stillness, like the morning, that dawns upon the ruins of an earthquake.

An uncertain kind of terror pervaded Emily's mind; the circumstances of the past hour still came dimly and confusedly to her memory; and her thoughts were various and rapid, though without tumult.

From this state of waking visions she was recalled by a knocking at the chamber-door, and, enquiring who was there, heard the whispering voice of Annette.

'Dear madam, let me come in, I have a great deal to say,' said the poor girl.

'The door is locked,' answered her lady.

'Yes, ma'am, but do pray open it.'

'The Signor has the key,' said Madame Montoni.

'O blessed Virgin! what will become of us?' exclaimed Annette.

'Assist us to escape,' said her mistress. 'Where is Ludovico?'

'Below in the hall, ma'am, amongst them all, fighting with the best of them!'

'Fighting! Who are fighting?' cried Madame Montoni.

'Why the Signor, ma'am, and all the Signors, and a great many more.'

'Is any person much hurt?' said Emily, in a tremulous voice. 'Hurt! Yes, ma'amselle, – there they lie bleeding, and the swords are clashing, and – O holy saints! Do let me in, ma'am, they are coming this way – I shall be murdered!'

'Fly!' cried Emily, 'fly! we cannot open the door.'

Annette repeated, that they were coming, and in the same moment fled.

'Be calm, madam,' said Emily, turning to her aunt, 'I entreat you be calm, I am not frightened – not frightened in the least, do not you be alarmed.'

'You can scarcely support yourself,' replied her aunt; 'Merciful God! what is it they mean to do with us?'

'They come, perhaps, to liberate us,' said Emily, 'Signor Montoni perhaps is – is conquered.'

The belief of his death gave her spirits a sudden shock, and she grew faint as she saw him in imagination, expiring at her feet.

'They are coming!' cried Madame Montoni – 'I hear their steps – they are at the door!'

Emily turned her languid eyes to the door, but terror deprived her of utterance. The key sounded in the lock; the door opened, and Montoni appeared, followed by three ruffian-like men. 'Execute your orders,' said he, turning to them, and pointing to his wife, who shrieked, but was immediately carried from the room; while Emily sunk, senseless, on a couch, by which she had endeavoured to support herself. When she recovered, she was alone, and recollected only, that Madame Montoni had been there, together with some unconnected particulars of the preceding transaction, which were, however, sufficient to renew all her terror. She looked wildly round the apartment, as if in search of some means of intelligence, concerning her aunt, while neither her own danger, or an idea of escaping from the room, immediately occurred.

When her recollection was more complete, she raised herself and went, but with only a faint hope, to examine whether the door was unfastened. It was so, and she then stepped timidly out into the gallery, but paused there, uncertain which way she should proceed. Her first wish was to gather some information, as to her aunt, and she, at length, turned her steps to go to the lesser hall, where Annette and the other servants usually waited.

Every where, as she passed, she heard, from a distance, the uproar of contention, and the figures and faces, which she met, hurrying along the passages, struck her mind with dismay. Emily might now have appeared, like an angel of light, encompassed by fiends. At length, she reached the lesser hall, which was silent and deserted, but, panting for breath, she sat down to recover herself. The total stillness of this place was as awful as the tumult, from which she had escaped: but she had now time to recall her scattered thoughts, to remember her personal danger, and to consider of some means of safety. She perceived, that it was useless to seek Madame Montoni, through the wide extent and intricacies of the castle, now, too, when every avenue seemed to be beset by ruffians; in this hall she could not resolve to stay, for she knew not how soon it might become their place of rendezvous; and, though she wished to go to her chamber, she dreaded again to encounter them on the way.

Thus she sat, trembling and hesitating, when a distant murmur broke on the silence, and grew louder and louder, till she distinguished voices and steps approaching. She then rose to go, but the sounds came along the only passage, by which she could depart, and she was compelled to await in the hall, the arrival of the persons, whose steps she heard. As these advanced, she distinguished groans, and then saw a man borne slowly along by four others. Her spirits faltered at the sight, and she leaned against the wall for support. The bearers, meanwhile, entered the hall, and, being too busily occupied to detain, or even notice Emily, she attempted to leave it, but her strength failed, and she again sat down on the bench. A damp chillness, came over her; her sight became confused; she knew not what had passed, or where she was, yet the groans of the wounded person still vibrated on her heart. In a few moments, the tide of life seemed again to flow; she began to breathe more freely, and her senses revived. She had not fainted, nor had ever totally lost her consciousness, but had contrived to support herself on the bench; still without courage to turn her eyes upon the unfortunate object, which remained near her, and about whom the men were yet too much engaged to attend to her.

When her strength returned, she rose, and was suffered to leave the hall, though her anxiety, having produced some vain enquiries, concerning Madame Montoni, had thus made a discovery of herself. Towards her chamber she now hastened, as fast as her steps would bear her, for she still perceived, upon her passage, the sounds of confusion at a distance, and she endeavoured, by taking her way through some obscure rooms, to avoid encountering the persons, whose looks had terrified her before, as well as those parts of the castle, where the tumult might still rage.

At length, she reached her chamber, and, having secured the door of the corridor, felt herself, for a moment, in safety. A profound stillness reigned in this remote apartment, which not even the faint murmur of the most distant sounds now reached. She sat down, near one of the casements, and, as she gazed on the mountain-view beyond, the deep repose of its beauty struck her with all the force of contrast, and she could scarcely believe herself so near a scene of savage discord. The contending elements seemed to have retired from their natural spheres, and to have collected themselves into the minds of men, for there alone the tempest now reigned.

Emily tried to tranquillize her spirits, but anxiety made her constantly listen for some sound, and often look out upon the ramparts, where all, however, was lonely and still. As a sense of her own immediate danger had decreased, her apprehension concerning Madame Montoni heightened, who, she remembered, had been fiercely threatened with confinement in the east turret, and it was possible, that her husband had satisfied his present vengeance with this punishment. She, therefore, determined, when night should return, and the inhabitants of the castle should be asleep, to explore the way to the turret, which, as the direction it stood in was mentioned, appeared not very difficult to be done. She knew, indeed, that although her aunt might be there, she could afford her no effectual assistance, but it might give her some comfort even to know, that she was discovered, and to hear the sound of her niece’s voice; for herself, any certainty, concerning Madame Montoni’s fate, appeared more tolerable, than this exhausting suspense.

Meanwhile, Annette did not appear, and Emily was surprised, and somewhat alarmed for her, whom, in the confusion of the late scene, various accidents might have befallen, and it was improbable, that she would have failed to come to her apartment, unless something unfortunate had happened.

Thus the hours passed in solitude, in silence, and in anxious conjecturing. Being not once disturbed by a message, or a sound, it appeared, that Montoni had wholly forgotten her, and it gave her some comfort to find, that she could be so unnoticed. She endeavoured to withdraw her thoughts from the anxiety, that preyed upon them, but they refused controul; she could neither read, or draw, and the tones of her lute were so utterly discordant with the present state of her feelings, that she could not endure them for a moment.

The sun, at length, set behind the western mountains; his fiery beams faded from the clouds, and then a dun melancholy purple drew over them, and gradually involved the features of the country below. Soon after, the sentinels passed on the rampart to commence the watch.

Twilight had now spread its gloom over every object; the dismal obscurity of her chamber recalled fearful thoughts, but she remembered, that to procure a light she must pass through a great extent of the castle, and, above all, through the halls, where she had already experienced so much horror. Darkness, indeed, in the present state of her spirits, made silence and solitude terrible to her; it would also prevent the possibility of her finding her way to the turret, and condemn her to remain in suspense, concerning the fate of her aunt; yet she dared not to venture forth for a lamp.

Continuing at the casement, that she might catch the last lingering gleam of evening, a thousand vague images of fear floated on her fancy. 'What if some of these ruffians,' said she, 'should find out the private stair-case, and in the darkness of night steal into my chamber!' Then, recollecting the mysterious inhabitant of the neighbouring apartment, her terror changed its object. 'He is not a prisoner,' said she, 'though he remains in one chamber, for Montoni did not fasten the door, when he left it; the unknown person himself did this; it is certain, therefore, he can come out when he pleases.'

She paused, for, notwithstanding the terrors of darkness, she considered it to be very improbable, whoever he was, that he could have any interest in intruding upon her retirement; and again the subject of her emotion changed, when, remembering her nearness to the chamber, where the veil had formerly disclosed a dreadful spectacle, she doubted whether some passage might not communicate between it and the insecure door of the stair-case.

It was now entirely dark, and she left the casement. As she sat with her eyes fixed on the hearth, she thought she perceived there a spark of light; it twinkled and disappeared, and then again was visible. At length, with much care, she fanned the embers of a wood fire, that had been lighted in the morning, into flame, and, having communicated it to a lamp, which always stood in her room, felt a satisfaction not to be conceived, without a review of her situation. Her first care was to guard the door of the stair-case, for which purpose she placed against it all the furniture she could move, and she was thus employed, for some time, at the end of which she had another instance how much more oppressive misfortune is to the idle, than to the busy; for, having then leisure to think over all the circumstances of her present afflictions, she imagined a thousand evils for futurity, and these real and ideal subjects of distress alike wounded her mind.

Thus heavily moved the hours till midnight, when she counted the sullen notes of the great clock, as they rolled along the rampart, unmingled with any sound, except the distant foot-fall of a sentinel, who came to relieve guard. She now thought she might venture towards the turret, and, having gently opened the chamber door to examine the corridor, and to listen if any person was stirring in the castle, found all around in perfect stillness. Yet no sooner had she left the room, than she perceived a light flash on the walls of the corridor, and, without waiting to see by whom it was carried, she shrunk back, and closed her door. No one approaching, she conjectured, that it was Montoni going to pay his midnight visit to her unknown neighbour, and she determined to wait, till he should have retired to his own apartment.

When the chimes had tolled another half hour, she once more opened the door, and, perceiving that no person was in the corridor, hastily crossed into a passage, that led along the south side of the castle towards the stair-case, whence she believed she could easily find her way to the turret. Often pausing on her way, listening apprehensively to the murmurs of the wind, and looking fearfully onward into the gloom of the long passages, she, at length, reached the stair-case; but there her perplexity began. Two passages appeared, of which she knew not how to prefer one, and was compelled, at last, to decide by chance, rather than by circumstances. That she entered, opened first into a wide gallery, along which she passed lightly and swiftly; for the lonely aspect of the place awed her, and she started at the echo of her own steps.

On a sudden, she thought she heard a voice, and, not distinguishing from whence it came, feared equally to proceed, or to return. For some moments, she stood in an attitude of listening expectation, shrinking almost from herself and scarcely daring to look round her. The voice came again, but, though it was now near her, terror did not allow her to judge exactly whence it proceeded. She thought, however, that it was the voice of complaint, and her belief was soon confirmed by a low moaning sound, that seemed to proceed from one of the chambers, opening into the gallery. It instantly occurred to her, that Madame Montoni might be there confined, and she advanced to the door to speak, but was checked by considering, that she was, perhaps, going to commit herself to a stranger, who might discover her to Montoni; for, though this person, whoever it was, seemed to be in affliction, it did not follow, that he was a prisoner.

While these thoughts passed over her mind, and left her still in hesitation, the voice spoke again, and, calling 'Ludovico,' she then perceived it to be that of Annette; on which, no longer hesitating, she went in joy to answer her.

'Ludovico!' cried Annette, sobbing – 'Ludovico!'

'It is I,' said Emily, trying to open the door. 'How came you here? Who shut you up?'

'Ludovico!' repeated Annette – 'O Ludovico!'

'It is not Ludovico, it is I – Mademoiselle Emily.'

Annette ceased sobbing, and was silent.

'If you can open the door, let me in,' said Emily, 'here is no person to hurt you.'

'Ludovico! – O, Ludovico!' cried Annette.

Emily now lost her patience, and, her fear of being overheard increasing, she was even nearly about to leave the door, when she considered, that Annette might, possibly, know something of the situation of Madame Montoni, or direct her to the turret. At length, she obtained a reply, though little satisfactory, to her questions, for Annette knew nothing of Madame Montoni, and only conjured Emily to tell her what was become of Ludovico. Of him she had no information to give, and she again asked who had shut Annette up.

'Ludovico,' said the poor girl, 'Ludovico shut me up. When I ran away from the dressing-room door to-day, I went I scarcely knew where, for safety; and, in this gallery, here, I met Ludovico, who hurried me into this chamber, and locked me up to keep me out of harm, as he said. But he was in such a hurry himself, he hardly spoke ten words, but he told me he would come, and let me out, when all was quiet, and he took away the key with him. Now all these hours are passed, and I have neither seen, or heard a word of him; they have murdered him – I know they have!'

Emily suddenly remembered the wounded person, whom she had seen borne into the servants' hall, and she scarcely doubted, that he was Ludovico, but she concealed the circumstance from Annette, and endeavoured to comfort her. Then, impatient to learn something of her aunt, she again enquired the way to the turret.

‘O! you are not going, ma’amselle,’ said Annette, ‘for Heaven’s sake, do not go, and leave me here by myself.’

‘Nay, Annette, you do not think I can wait in the gallery all night,’ replied Emily. ‘Direct me to the turret; in the morning I will endeavour to release you.’

‘O holy Mary!’ exclaimed Annette, ‘am I to stay here by myself all night! I shall be frightened out of my senses, and I shall die of hunger; I have had nothing to eat since dinner!’

Emily could scarcely forbear smiling at the heterogeneous distresses of Annette, though she sincerely pitied them, and said what she could to sooth her. At length, she obtained something like a direction to the east turret, and quitted the door, from whence, after many intricacies and perplexities, she reached the steep and winding stairs of the turret, at the foot of which she stopped to rest, and to re-animate her courage with a sense of her duty. As she surveyed this dismal place, she perceived a door on the opposite side of the stair-case, and, anxious to know whether it would lead her to Madame Montoni, she tried to undraw the bolts, which fastened it. A fresher air came to her face, as she unclosed the door, which opened upon the east rampart, and the sudden current had nearly extinguished her light, which she now removed to a distance; and again, looking out upon the obscure terrace, she perceived only the faint outline of the walls and of some towers, while, above, heavy clouds, borne along the wind, seemed to mingle with the stars, and wrap the night in thicker darkness. As she gazed, now willing to defer the moment of certainty, from which she expected only confirmation of evil, a distant footstep reminded her, that she might be observed by the men on watch, and, hastily closing the door, she took her lamp, and passed up the stair-case. Trembling came upon her, as she ascended through the gloom. To her melancholy fancy this seemed to be a place of death, and the chilling silence, that reigned, confirmed its character. Her spirits faltered. ‘Perhaps,’ said she, ‘I am come hither only to learn a dreadful truth, or to witness some horrible spectacle; I feel that my senses would not survive such an addition of horror.’

The image of her aunt murdered – murdered, perhaps, by the hand of Montoni, rose to her mind; she trembled, gasped for breath – repented that she had dared to venture hither, and checked her steps. But, after she had paused a few minutes, the consciousness of her duty returned, and she went on. Still all was silent. At length a track of blood, upon a stair, caught her eye; and instantly she perceived, that the wall and several other steps were stained. She paused, again struggled to support herself, and the lamp almost fell from her trembling hand. Still no sound was heard, no living being seemed to inhabit the turret; a thousand times she wished herself again in her chamber; dreaded to enquire farther – dreaded to encounter some horrible spectacle, and yet could not resolve, now that she was so near the termination of her efforts, to desist from them. Having again recollected courage to proceed, after ascending about half way up the turret, she came to another door, but here again she stopped in hesitation; listened for sounds within, and then, summoning all her resolution, unclosed it, and entered a chamber, which, as her lamp shot its feeble rays through the darkness, seemed to exhibit only dew-stained and deserted walls. As she stood examining it, in fearful expectation of discovering the remains of her unfortunate aunt, she perceived something lying in an obscure corner of the room, and, struck with an horrible conviction, she became, for an instant, motionless and nearly insensible. Then, with a kind of desperate resolution, she hurried towards the object that excited her terror, when, perceiving the clothes of some person, on the floor, she caught hold of them, and found in her grasp the old uniform of a soldier, beneath which appeared a heap of pikes and other arms. Scarcely daring to trust her sight, she continued, for some moments, to gaze on the object of her late alarm, and then left the chamber, so much comforted and occupied by the conviction, that her aunt was not there, that she was going to descend the turret, without enquiring farther; when, on turning to do so, she observed upon some steps on the second flight an appearance of blood, and remembering, that there was yet another chamber to be explored, she again followed the windings of the ascent. Still, as she ascended, the track of blood glared upon the stairs.

It led her to the door of a landing-place, that terminated them, but she was unable to follow it farther. Now that she was so near the sought-for certainty, she dreaded to know it, even more than before, and had not fortitude sufficient to speak, or to attempt opening the door.

Having listened, in vain, for some sound, that might confirm, or destroy her fears, she, at length, laid her hand on the lock, and, finding it fastened, called on Madame Montoni; but only a chilling silence ensued.

‘She is dead!’ she cried, – ‘murdered! – her blood is on the stairs!’

Emily grew very faint; could support herself no longer, and had scarcely presence of mind to set down the lamp, and place herself on a step.

When her recollection returned, she spoke again at the door, and again attempted to open it, and, having lingered for some time, without receiving any answer, or hearing a sound, she descended the turret, and, with all the swiftness her feebleness would permit, sought her own apartment.

As she turned into the corridor, the door of a chamber opened, from whence Montoni came forth; but Emily, more terrified than ever to behold him, shrunk back into the passage soon enough to escape being noticed, and heard him close the door, which she had perceived was the same she formerly observed. Having here listened to his departing steps, till their faint sound was lost in distance, she ventured to her apartment, and, securing it once again, retired to her bed, leaving the lamp burning on the hearth. But sleep was fled from her harassed mind, to which images of horror alone occurred. She endeavoured to think it possible, that Madame Montoni had not been taken to the turret; but, when she recollected the former menaces of her husband and the terrible spirit of vengeance, which he had displayed on a late occasion; when she remembered his general character, the looks of the men, who had forced Madame Montoni from her apartment, and the written traces on the stairs of the turret – she could not doubt, that her aunt had been carried thither, and could scarcely hope, that she had not been carried to be murdered.

The grey of morning had long dawned through her casements, before Emily closed her eyes in sleep; when wearied nature, at length, yielded her a respite from suffering.

CHAPTER XI

'Who rears the bloody hand?'

SAYERS [*Moina: A Tragedy*][1]

Emily remained in her chamber, on the following morning, without receiving any notice from Montoni, or seeing a human being, except the armed men, who sometimes passed on the terrace below. Having tasted no food since the dinner of the preceding day, extreme faintness made her feel the necessity of quitting the asylum of her apartment to obtain refreshment, and she was also very anxious to procure liberty for Annette. Willing, however, to defer venturing forth, as long as possible, and considering, whether she should apply to Montoni, or to the compassion of some other person, her excessive anxiety concerning her aunt, at length, overcame her abhorrence of his presence, and she determined to go to him, and to entreat, that he would suffer her to see Madame Montoni.

Meanwhile, it was too certain, from the absence of Annette, that some accident had befallen Ludovico, and that she was still in confinement; Emily, therefore, resolved also to visit the chamber, where she had spoken to her, on the preceding night, and, if the poor girl was yet there, to inform Montoni of her situation.

It was near noon, before she ventured from her apartment, and went first to the south gallery, whither she passed without meeting a single person, or hearing a sound, except, now and then, the echo of a distant footstep.

It was unnecessary to call Annette, whose lamentations were audible upon the first approach to the gallery, and who, bewailing her own and Ludovico's fate, told Emily, that she should certainly be starved to death, if she was not let out immediately. Emily replied, that she was going to beg her release of Montoni; but the terrors of hunger now yielded to those of the Signor, and, when Emily left her, she was loudly entreating, that her place of refuge might be concealed from him.

As Emily drew near the great hall, the sounds she heard and the people she met in the passages renewed her alarm. The latter, however, were peaceable, and did not interrupt her, though they looked earnestly at her, as she passed, and sometimes spoke. On crossing the hall towards the cedar room, where Montoni usually sat, she perceived, on the pavement, fragments of swords, some tattered garments stained with blood, and almost expected to have seen among them a dead body; but from such a spectacle she was, at present, spared. As she approached the room, the sound of several voices issued from within, and a dread of appearing before many strangers, as well as of irritating Montoni by such an intrusion, made her pause and falter from her purpose. She looked up through the long arcades of the hall, in search of a servant, who might bear a message, but no one appeared, and the urgency of what she had to request made her still linger near the door. The voices within were not in contention, though she distinguished those of several of the guests of the preceding day; but still her resolution failed, whenever she would have tapped at the door, and she had determined to walk in the hall, till some person should appear, who might call Montoni from the room, when, as she turned from the door, it was suddenly opened by himself. Emily trembled, and was confused, while he almost started with surprise, and all the terrors of his countenance unfolded themselves. She forgot all she would have said, and neither enquired for her aunt, or entreated for Annette, but stood silent and embarrassed.

After closing the door he reproved her for a meanness, of which she had not been guilty, and sternly questioned her what she had overheard; an accusation, which revived her recollection so far, that she assured him she had not come thither with an intention to listen to his conversation, but to entreat his compassion for her aunt, and for Annette. Montoni seemed to doubt this assertion, for he regarded her with a scrutinizing look; and the doubt evidently arose from no trifling interest. Emily then further explained herself, and concluded with entreating him to inform her, where her aunt was placed, and to permit, that she might visit her; but he looked upon her only with a malignant smile, which instantaneously confirmed her worst fears for her aunt, and, at that moment, she had not courage to renew her entreaties.

'For Annette,' said he, – 'if you go to Carlo, he will release the girl; the foolish fellow, who shut her up, died yesterday.' Emily shuddered.—'But my aunt, Signor' – said she, 'O tell me of my aunt!'

'She is taken care of,' replied Montoni hastily, 'I have no time to answer idle questions.'

He would have passed on, but Emily, in a voice of agony, that could not be wholly resisted, conjured him to tell her, where Madame Montoni was; while he paused, and she anxiously watched his countenance, a trumpet sounded, and, in the next moment, she heard the heavy gates of the portal open, and then the clattering of horses' hoofs in the court, with the confusion of many voices. She stood for a moment hesitating whether she should follow Montoni, who, at the sound of the trumpet, had passed through the hall, and, turning her eyes whence it came, she saw through the door, that opened beyond a long perspective of arches into the courts, a party of horsemen, whom she judged, as well as the distance and her embarrassment would allow, to be the same she had seen depart, a few days before. But she staid not to scrutinize, for, when the trumpet sounded again, the chevaliers rushed out of the cedar room, and men came running into the hall from every quarter of the castle. Emily once more hurried for shelter to her own apartment. Thither she was still pursued by images of horror. She re-considered Montoni's manner and words, when he had spoken of his wife, and they served only to confirm her most terrible suspicions. Tears refused any longer to relieve her distress, and she had sat for a considerable time absorbed in thought, when a knocking at the chamber door aroused her, on opening which she found old Carlo.

'Dear young lady,' said he; 'I have been so flurried, I never once thought of you till just now. I have brought you some fruit and wine, and I am sure you must stand in need of them by this time.'

'Thank you, Carlo,' said Emily, 'this is very good of you. Did the Signor remind you of me?'

'No, Signora,' replied Carlo, 'his *Excellenza* has business enough on his hands.' Emily then renewed her enquiries, concerning Madame Montoni, but Carlo had been employed at the other end of the castle, during the time, that she was removed, and he had heard nothing since, concerning her.

While he spoke, Emily looked steadily at him, for she scarcely knew whether he was really ignorant, or concealed his knowledge of the truth from a fear of offending his master. To several questions, concerning the contentions of yesterday, he gave very limited answers; but told, that the disputes were now amicably settled, and that the Signor believed himself to have been mistaken in his suspicions of his guests. 'The fighting was about that, Signora,' said Carlo; 'but I trust I shall never see such another day in this castle, though strange things are about to be done.'

On her enquiring his meaning, 'Ah, Signora!' added he, 'it is not for me to betray secrets, or tell all I think, but time will tell.'

She then desired him to release Annette, and, having described the chamber in which the poor girl was confined, he promised to obey her immediately, and was departing, when she remembered to ask who were the persons just arrived. Her late conjecture was right; it was Verezzi, with his party.

Her spirits were somewhat soothed by this short conversation with Carlo; for, in her present circumstances, it afforded some comfort to hear the accents of compassion, and to meet the look of sympathy.

An hour passed before Annette appeared, who then came weeping and sobbing. 'O Ludovico – Ludovico!' cried she.

'My poor Annette!' said Emily, and made her sit down.

'Who could have foreseen this, ma'amselle? O miserable, wretched, day – that ever I should live to see it!' and she continued to moan and lament, till Emily thought it necessary to check her excess of grief. 'We are continually losing dear friends by death,' said she, with a sigh, that came from her heart. 'We must submit to the will of Heaven – our tears, alas! cannot recall the dead!'

Annette took the handkerchief from her face.

'You will meet Ludovico in a better world, I hope,' added Emily.

'Yes – yes, – ma'amselle,' sobbed Annette, 'but I hope I shall meet him again in this – though he is so wounded!'

'Wounded!' exclaimed Emily, 'does he live?'

'Yes, ma'am, but – but he has a terrible wound, and could not come to let me out. They thought him dead, at first, and he has not been rightly himself, till within this hour.'

'Well, Annette, I rejoice to hear he lives.'

'Lives! Holy Saints! why he will not die, surely!'

Emily said she hoped not, but this expression of hope Annette thought implied fear, and her own increased in proportion, as Emily endeavoured to encourage her. To enquiries, concerning Madame Montoni, she could give no satisfactory answers.

'I quite forgot to ask among the servants, ma'amselle,' said she, 'for I could think of nobody but poor Ludovico.'

Annette's grief was now somewhat assuaged, and Emily sent her to make enquiries, concerning her lady, of whom, however, she could obtain no intelligence, some of the people she spoke with being really ignorant of her fate, and others having probably received orders to conceal it.

This day passed with Emily in continued grief and anxiety for her aunt; but she was unmolested by any notice from Montoni; and, now that Annette was liberated, she obtained food, without exposing herself to danger, or impertinence.

Two following days, passed in the same manner, unmarked by any occurrence, during which she obtained no information of Madame Montoni. On the evening of the second, having dismissed Annette, and retired to bed, her mind became haunted by the most dismal images, such as her long anxiety, concerning her aunt, suggested; and, unable to forget herself, for a moment, or to vanquish the phantoms, that tormented her, she rose from her bed, and went to one of the casements of her chamber, to breathe a freer air.

All without was silent and dark, unless that could be called light, which was only the faint glimmer of the stars, shewing imperfectly the outline of the mountains, the western towers of the castle and the ramparts below, where a solitary sentinel was pacing. What an image of repose did this scene present! The fierce and terrible passions, too, which so often agitated the inhabitants of this edifice, seemed now hushed in sleep; – those mysterious workings, that rouse the elements of man's nature into tempest – were calm. Emily's heart was not so; but her sufferings, though deep, partook of the gentle character of her mind. Hers was a silent anguish, weeping, yet enduring; not the wild energy of passion, inflaming imagination, bearing down the barriers of reason and living in a world of its own.

The air refreshed her, and she continued at the casement, looking on the shadowy scene, over which the planets burned with a clear light, amid the deep blue æther, as they silently moved in their destined course. She remembered how often she had gazed on them with her dear father, how often he had pointed out their way in the heavens, and explained their laws; and these reflections led to others, which, in an almost equal degree, awakened her grief and astonishment.

They brought a retrospect of all the strange and mournful events, which had occurred since she lived in peace with her parents. And to Emily, who had been so tenderly educated, so tenderly loved, who once knew only goodness and happiness – to her, the late events and her present situation – in a foreign land – in a remote castle – surrounded by vice and violence – seemed more like the visions of a distempered imagination, than the circumstances of truth. She wept to think of what her parents would have suffered, could they have foreseen the events of her future life.

While she raised her streaming eyes to heaven, she observed the same planet, which she had seen in Languedoc, on the night, preceding her father's death, rise above the eastern towers of the castle, while she remembered the conversation, which had passed, concerning the probable state of departed souls; remembered, also, the solemn music she had heard, and to which the tenderness of her spirits had, in spite of her reason, given a superstitious meaning. At these recollections she wept again, and continued musing, when suddenly the notes of sweet music passed on the air. A superstitious dread stole over her; she stood listening, for some moments, in trembling expectation, and then endeavoured to recollect her thoughts, and to reason herself into composure; but human reason cannot establish her laws on subjects, lost in the obscurity of imagination, any more than the eye can ascertain the form of objects, that only glimmer through the dimness of night.

Her surprise, on hearing such, soothing and delicious sounds, was, at least, justifiable; for it was long – very long, since she had listened to any thing like melody. The fierce trumpet and the shrill fife were the only instruments she had heard, since her arrival, at Udolpho.

When her mind was somewhat more composed, she tried to ascertain from what quarter the sounds proceeded, and thought they came from below; but whether from a room of the castle, or from the terrace, she could not with certainty judge. Fear and surprise now yielded to the enchantment of a strain, that floated on the silent night, with the most soft and melancholy sweetness. Suddenly, it seemed removed to a distance, trembled faintly, and then entirely ceased.

She continued to listen, sunk in that pleasing repose, which soft music leaves on the mind – but it came no more. Upon this strange circumstance her thoughts were long engaged, for strange it certainly was to hear music at midnight, when every inhabitant of the castle had long since retired to rest, and in a place, where nothing like harmony had been heard before, probably, for many years. Long-suffering had made her spirits peculiarly sensible to terror, and liable to be affected by the illusions of superstition. – It now seemed to her, as if her dead father had spoken to her in that strain, to inspire her with comfort and confidence, on the subject, which had then occupied her mind. Yet reason told her, that this was a wild conjecture, and she was inclined to dismiss it; but, with the inconsistency so natural, when imagination guides the thoughts, she then wavered towards a belief as wild. She remembered the singular event, connected with the castle, which had given it into the possession of its present owner; and, when she considered the mysterious manner, in which its late possessor had disappeared, and that she had never since been heard of, her mind was impressed with an high degree of solemn awe; so that, though there appeared no clue to connect that event with the late music, she was inclined fancifully to think they had some relation to each other. At this conjecture, a sudden chillness ran through her frame; she looked fearfully upon the duskiness of her chamber, and the dead silence, that prevailed there, heightened to her fancy its gloomy aspect.

At length, she left the casement, but her steps faltered, as she approached the bed, and she stopped and looked round. The single lamp, that burned in her spacious chamber, was expiring; for a moment, she shrunk from the darkness beyond; and then, ashamed of the weakness, which, however, she could not wholly conquer, went forward to the bed, where her mind did not soon know the soothings of sleep. She still mused on the late occurrence, and looked with anxiety to the next night, when, at the same hour, she determined to watch whether the music returned. 'If those sounds were human,' said she, 'I shall probably hear them again.'

CHAPTER XII

‘Then, oh, you blessed ministers above,

Keep me in patience; and, in ripen’d time,
Unfold the evil which is here wrapt up
In countenance.’

SHAKESPEARE[*Measure for Measure*][1]

Annette came almost breathless to Emily’s apartment in the morning. ‘O ma’amselle!’ said she, in broken sentences, ‘what news I have to tell! I have found out who the prisoner is – but he was no prisoner, neither; – he that was shut up in the chamber I told you of. I must think him a ghost, forsooth!’

‘Who was the prisoner?’ enquired Emily, while her thoughts glanced back to the circumstance of the preceding night.

‘You mistake, ma’am,’ said Annette; ‘he was not a prisoner, after all.’

‘Who is the person, then?’

‘Holy Saints!’ rejoined Annette; ‘How I was surprised! I met him just now, on the rampart below, there. I never was so surprised in my life! Ah! ma’amselle! this is a strange place! I should never have done wondering, if I was to live here an hundred years. But, as I was saying, I met him just now on the rampart, and I was thinking of nobody less than of him.’

‘This trifling is insupportable,’ said Emily; ‘prythee, Annette, do not torture my patience any longer.’

‘Nay, ma’amselle, guess – guess who it was; it was somebody you know very well.’

‘I cannot guess,’ said Emily impatiently.

‘Nay, ma’amselle, I’ll tell you something to guess by – A tall Signor, with a longish face, who walks so stately, and used to wear such a high feather in his hat; and used often to look down upon the ground, when people spoke to him; and to look at people from under his eyebrows, as it were, all so dark and frowning. You have seen him, often and often, at Venice, ma’am. Then he was so intimate with the Signor, too. And, now I think of it, I wonder what he could be afraid of in this lonely old castle, that he should shut himself up for. But he is come abroad now, for I met him on the rampart just this minute. I trembled when I saw him, for I always was afraid of him, somehow; but I determined I would not let him see it; so I went up to him, and made him a low curtesy, “You are welcome to the castle, Signor Orsino,” said I.’

‘O, it was Signor Orsino, then!’ said Emily.

‘Yes, ma’amselle, Signor Orsino, himself, who caused that Venetian gentleman to be killed, and has been popping about from place to place, ever since, as I hear.’

‘Good God!’ exclaimed Emily, recovering from the shock of this intelligence; ‘and is *he* come to Udolpho! He does well to endeavour to conceal himself.’

‘Yes, ma’amselle, but if that was all, this desolate place would conceal him, without his shutting himself up in one room. Who would think of coming to look for him here? I am sure I should as soon think of going to look for any body in the other world.’

‘There is some truth in that,’ said Emily, who would now have concluded it was Orsino’s music, which she had heard, on the preceding night, had she not known, that he had neither taste, or skill in the art. But, though she was unwilling to add to the number of Annette’s surprises, by mentioning the subject of her own, she enquired, whether any person in the castle played on a musical instrument?

‘O yes, ma’amselle! there is Benedetto plays the great drum to admiration; and then, there is Launcelot the trumpeter; nay, for that matter, Ludovico himself can play on the trumpet; – but he is ill now. I remember once’—

Emily interrupted her; ‘Have you heard no other music since you came to the castle – none last night?’

‘Why, did *you* hear any last night, ma’amselle?’

Emily evaded this question, by repeating her own.

‘Why, no, ma’am,’ replied Annette; ‘I never heard any music here, I must say, but the drums and the trumpet; and, as for last night, I did nothing but dream I saw my late lady’s ghost.’

‘Your *late* lady’s,’ said Emily in a tremulous voice; ‘you have heard more, then. Tell me – tell me all, Annette, I entreat; tell me the worst at once.’

‘Nay, ma’amselle, you know the worst already.’

‘I know nothing,’ said Emily.

‘Yes, you do, ma’amselle; you know, that nobody knows any thing about her; and it is plain, therefore, she is gone, the way of the first lady of the castle

– nobody ever knew any thing about her.'

Emily leaned her head upon her hand, and was, for some time, silent; then, telling Annette she wished to be alone, the latter left the room.

The remark of Annette had revived Emily's terrible suspicion, concerning the fate of Madame Montoni; and she resolved to make another effort to obtain certainty on this subject, by applying to Montoni once more.

When Annette returned, a few hours after, she told Emily, that the porter of the castle wished very much to speak with her, for that he had something of importance to say; her spirits had, however, of late been so subject to alarm, that any new circumstance excited it; and this message from the porter, when her first surprise was over, made her look round for some lurking danger, the more suspiciously, perhaps, because she had frequently remarked the unpleasant air and countenance of this man. She now hesitated, whether to speak with him, doubting even, that this request was only a pretext to draw her into some danger; but a little reflection shewed her the improbability of this, and she blushed at her weak fears.

'I will speak to him, Annette,' said she; 'desire him to come to the corridor immediately.'

Annette departed, and soon after returned.

'Barnardine, ma'amselle,' said she, 'dare not come to the corridor, lest he should be discovered, it is so far from his post; and he dare not even leave the gates for a moment now; but, if you will come to him at the portal, through some round-about passages he told me of, without crossing the courts, he has that to tell, which will surprise you. But you must not come through the courts, lest the Signor should see you.'

Emily, neither approving these 'round-about passages,' nor the other part of the request, now positively refused to go. 'Tell him,' said she, 'if he has any thing of consequence to impart, I will hear him in the corridor, whenever he has an opportunity of coming thither.'

Annette went to deliver this message, and was absent a considerable time. When she returned, 'It won't do, ma'amselle,' said she. 'Barnardine has been considering all this time what can be done, for it is as much as his place is worth to leave his post now. But, if you will come to the east rampart in the dusk of the evening, he can, perhaps, steal away, and tell you all he has to say.'

Emily was surprised and alarmed, at the secrecy which this man seemed to think so necessary, and hesitated whether to meet him, till, considering, that he might mean to warn her of some serious danger, she resolved to go.

'Soon after sun-set,' said she, 'I will be at the end of the east rampart. But then the watch will be set,' she added, recollecting herself, 'and how can Barnardine pass unobserved?'

'That is just what I said to him, ma'am, and he answered me, that he had the key of the gate, at the end of the rampart, that leads towards the courts, and could let himself through that way; and as for the sentinels, there were none at this end of the terrace, because the place is guarded enough by the high walls of the castle, and the east turret; and he said those at the other end were too far off to see him, if it was pretty duskyish.'

'Well,' said Emily, 'I must hear what he has to tell; and, therefore, desire you will go with me to the terrace, this evening.'

'He desired it might be pretty duskyish, ma'amselle,' repeated Annette, 'because of the watch.'

Emily paused, and then said she would be on the terrace, an hour after sun-set; – 'and tell Barnardine,' she added, 'to be punctual to the time; for that I, also, may be observed by Signor Montoni. Where is the Signor? I would speak with him.'

'He is in the cedar chamber, ma'am, counselling with the other Signors. He is going to give them a sort of a treat to-day, to make up for what passed at the last, I suppose; the people are all very busy in the kitchen.'

Emily now enquired, if Montoni expected any new guests? and Annette believed that he did not. 'Poor Ludovico!' added she, 'he would be as merry as the best of them, if he was well; but he may recover yet. Count Morano was wounded as bad, as he, and he is got well again, and is gone back to Venice.'

'Is he so?' said Emily, 'when did you hear this?'

'I heard it, last night, ma'amselle, but I forgot to tell it.'

Emily asked some further questions, and then, desiring Annette would observe and inform her, when Montoni was alone, the girl went to deliver her message to Barnardine.

Montoni was, however, so much engaged, during the whole day, that Emily had no opportunity of seeking a release from her terrible suspense, concerning her aunt. Annette was employed in watching his steps, and in attending upon Ludovico, whom she, assisted by Caterina, nursed with the utmost care; and Emily was, of course, left much alone. Her thoughts dwelt often on the message of the porter, and were employed in conjecturing the subject, that occasioned it, which she sometimes imagined concerned the fate of Madame Montoni; at others, that it related to some personal danger, which threatened herself. The cautious secrecy which Barnardine observed in his conduct, inclined her to believe the latter.

As the hour of appointment drew near, her impatience increased. At length, the sun set; she heard the passing steps of the sentinels going to their posts; and waited only for Annette to accompany her to the terrace, who, soon after, came, and they descended together. When Emily expressed apprehensions of meeting Montoni, or some of his guests, 'O, there is no fear of that, ma'amselle,' said Annette, 'they are all set in to feasting yet, and that Barnardine knows.'

They reached the first terrace, where the sentinels demanded who passed; and Emily, having answered, walked on to the east rampart, at the entrance of which they were again stopped; and, having again replied, were permitted to proceed. But Emily did not like to expose herself to the discretion of these men, at such an hour; and, impatient to withdraw from the situation, she stepped hastily on in search of Barnardine. He was not yet come. She leaned pensively on the wall of the rampart, and waited for him. The gloom of twilight sat deep on the surrounding objects, blending in soft confusion the valley, the mountains, and the woods, whose tall heads, stirred by the evening breeze, gave the only sounds, that stole on silence, except a faint, faint chorus of distant voices, that arose from within the castle.

'What voices are those?' said Emily, as she fearfully listened.

'It is only the Signor and his guests, carousing,' replied Annette.

'Good God!' thought Emily, 'can this man's heart be so gay, when he has made another being so wretched; if, indeed, my aunt is yet suffered to feel her wretchedness? O! whatever are my own sufferings, may my heart never, never be hardened against those of others!'

She looked up, with a sensation of horror, to the east turret, near which she then stood; a light glimmered through the grates of the lower chamber, but those of the upper one were dark. Presently, she perceived a person moving with a lamp across the lower room; but this circumstance revived no hope, concerning Madame Montoni, whom she had vainly sought in that apartment, which had appeared to contain only soldiers' accoutrements. Emily, however, determined to attempt the outer door of the turret, as soon as Barnardine should withdraw; and, if it was unfastened, to make another effort to discover her aunt.

The moments passed, but still Barnardine did not appear; and Emily, becoming uneasy, hesitated whether to wait any longer. She would have sent Annette to the portal to hasten him, but feared to be left alone, for it was now almost dark, and a melancholy streak of red, that still lingered in the west, was the only vestige of departed day. The strong interest, however, which Barnardine's message had awakened, overcame other apprehensions, and still detained her.

While she was conjecturing with Annette what could thus occasion his absence, they heard a key turn in the lock of the gate near them, and presently saw a man advancing. It was Barnardine, of whom Emily hastily enquired what he had to communicate, and desired, that he would tell her quickly, 'for I am chilled with this evening air,' said she.

'You must dismiss your maid, lady,' said the man in a voice, the deep tone of which shocked her, 'what I have to tell is to you only.'

Emily, after some hesitation, desired Annette to withdraw to a little distance. 'Now, my friend, what would you say?'

He was silent a moment, as if considering, and then said, —

'That which would cost me my place, at least, if it came to the Signor's ears. You must promise, lady, that nothing shall ever make you tell a syllable of the matter; I have been trusted in this affair, and, if it was known, that I betrayed my trust, my life, perhaps, might answer it. But I was concerned for you, lady, and I resolved to tell you.' He paused. —

Emily thanked him, assured him that he might repose on her discretion, and entreated him to dispatch.

'Annette told us in the hall how unhappy you was about Signora Montoni, and how much you wished to know what was become of her.'

'Most true,' said Emily eagerly, 'and you can inform me. I conjure you tell me the worst, without hesitation.' She rested her trembling arm upon the wall.

'I can tell you,' said Barnardine, and paused. –

Emily had no power to enforce her entreaties.

'I *can* tell you,' resumed Barnardine, – 'but'—

'But what?' exclaimed Emily, recovering her resolution.

'Here I am, ma'amselle,' said Annette, who, having heard the eager tone, in which Emily pronounced these words, came running towards her.

'Retire!' said Barnardine, sternly; 'you are not wanted;' and, as Emily said nothing, Annette obeyed.

'I *can* tell you,' repeated the porter, – 'but I know not how – you was afflicted before.' —

'I am prepared for the worst, my friend,' said Emily, in a firm and solemn voice. 'I can support any certainty better than this suspense.'

'Well, Signora, if that is the case, you shall hear. – You know, I suppose, that the Signor and his lady used sometimes to disagree. It is none of my concerns to enquire what it was about, but I believe you know it was so.'

'Well,' said Emily, 'proceed.'

'The Signor, it seems, had lately been very wrath against her. I saw all, and heard all, – a great deal more than people thought for; but it was none of my business, so I said nothing. A few days ago, the Signor sent for me. "Barnardine," says he, "you are – an honest man, I think I can trust you." I assured his *Excellenza* that he could. "Then," says he, as near as I can remember, "I have an affair in hand, which I want you to assist me in." – Then he told me what I was to do; but that I shall say nothing about – it concerned only the Signora.'

'O Heavens!' exclaimed Emily—'what have you done?'

Barnardine hesitated, and was silent.

'What fiend could tempt him, or you, to such an act!' cried Emily, chilled with horror, and scarcely able to support her fainting spirits.

'It was a fiend,' said Barnardine in a gloomy tone of voice. They were now both silent; – Emily had not courage to enquire further, and Barnardine seemed to shrink from telling more. At length he said, 'It is of no use to think of the past; the Signor was cruel enough, but he would be obeyed. What signified my refusing? He would have found others, who had no scruples.'

'You have murdered her, then!' said Emily, in a hollow and inward voice

– 'I am talking with a murderer!' Barnardine stood silent; while Emily turned from him, and attempted to leave the place.

'Stay, lady!' said he, 'You deserve to think so still – since you can believe me capable of such a deed.'

'If you are innocent, tell me quickly,' said Emily, in faint accents, 'for I feel I shall not be able to hear you long.'

'I will tell you no more,' said he, and walked away. Emily had just strength enough to bid him stay, and then to call Annette, on whose arm she leaned, and they walked slowly up the rampart, till they heard steps behind them. It was Barnardine again.

'Send away the girl,' said he, 'and I will tell you more.'

'She must not go,' said Emily; 'what you have to say, she may hear.'

'May she so, lady?' said he. 'You shall know no more, then;' and he was going, though slowly, when Emily's anxiety, overcoming the resentment and fear, which the man's behaviour had roused, she desired him to stay, and bade Annette retire.

'The Signora is alive,' said he, 'for me. She is my prisoner, though; his *Excellenza* has shut her up in the chamber over the great gates of the court, and I have the charge of her. I was going to have told you, you might see her

– but now —'

Emily, relieved from an unutterable load of anguish by this speech, had now only to ask Barnardine's forgiveness, and to conjure, that he would let her visit her aunt.

He complied with less reluctance, than she expected, and told her, that, if she would repair, on the following night, when the Signor was retired to rest, to the postern-gate of the castle, she should, perhaps, see Madame Montoni.

Amid all the thankfulness, which Emily felt for this concession, she thought she observed a malicious triumph in his manner, when he pronounced the last words; but, in the next moment, she dismissed the thought, and, having again thanked him, commended her aunt to his pity, and assured him, that she would herself reward him, and would be punctual to her appointment; she bade him good night, and retired, unobserved, to her chamber. It was a considerable time, before the tumult of joy, which Barnardine's unexpected intelligence had occasioned, allowed Emily to think with clearness, or to be conscious of the real dangers, that still surrounded Madame Montoni and herself. When this agitation subsided, she perceived, that her aunt was yet the prisoner of a man, to whose vengeance, or avarice, she might fall a sacrifice; and, when she further considered the savage aspect of the person, who was appointed to guard Madame Montoni, her doom appeared to be already sealed, for the countenance of Barnardine seemed to bear the stamp of a murderer; and, when she had looked upon it, she felt inclined to believe, that there was no deed, however black, which he might not be prevailed upon to execute. These reflections brought to her remembrance the tone of voice, in which he had promised to grant her request to see his prisoner; and she mused upon it long in uneasiness and doubt. Sometimes, she even hesitated, whether to trust herself with him at the lonely hour he had appointed; and once, and only once, it struck her, that Madame Montoni might be already murdered, and that this ruffian was appointed to decoy herself to some secret place, where her life also was to be sacrificed to the avarice of Montoni, who then would claim securely the contested estates in Languedoc. The consideration of the enormity of such guilt did, at length, relieve her from the belief of its probability, but not from all the doubts and fears, which a recollection of Barnardine's manner had occasioned. From these subjects, her thoughts, at length, passed to others; and, as the evening advanced, she remembered, with somewhat more than surprise, the music she had heard, on the preceding night, and now awaited its return, with more than curiosity.

She distinguished, till a late hour, the distant carousals of Montoni and his companions – the loud contest, the dissolute laugh and the choral song, that made the halls re-echo. At length, she heard the heavy gates of the castle shut for the night, and those sounds instantly sunk into a silence, which was disturbed only by the whispering steps of persons, passing through the galleries to their remote rooms. Emily now judging it to be about the time, when she had heard the music, on the preceding night, dismissed Annette, and gently opened the casement to watch for its return. The planet she had so particularly noticed, at the recurrence of the music, was not yet risen; but, with superstitious weakness, she kept her eyes fixed on that part of the hemisphere, where it would rise, almost expecting, that, when it appeared, the sounds would return. At length, it came, serenely bright, over the eastern towers of the castle. Her heart trembled, when she perceived it, and she had scarcely courage to remain at the casement, lest the returning music should confirm her terror, and subdue the little strength she yet retained. The clock soon after struck one, and, knowing this to be about the time, when the sounds had occurred, she sat down in a chair, near the casement, and endeavoured to compose her spirits; but the anxiety of expectation yet disturbed them. Every thing, however, remained still; she heard only the solitary step of a sentinel, and the lulling murmur of the woods below, and she again leaned from the casement, and again looked, as if for intelligence, to the planet, which was now risen high above the towers.

Emily continued to listen, but no music came. 'Those were surely no mortal sounds!' said she, recollecting their entrancing melody. 'No inhabitant of this castle could utter such; and, where is the feeling, that could modulate such exquisite expression? We all know, that it has been affirmed celestial sounds have sometimes been heard on earth. Father

Pierre and father Antoine declared, that they had sometimes heard them in the stillness of night, when they alone were waking to offer their orisons to heaven. Nay, my dear father himself, once said, that, soon after my mother's death, as he lay watchful in grief, sounds of uncommon sweetness called him from his bed; and, on opening his window, he heard lofty music pass along the midnight air. It soothed him, he said; he looked up with confidence to heaven, and resigned her to his God.'

Emily paused to weep at this recollection. 'Perhaps,' resumed she, 'perhaps, those strains I heard were sent to comfort, – to encourage me! Never shall I forget those I heard, at this hour, in Languedoc! Perhaps, my father watches over me, at this moment!' She wept again in tenderness. Thus passed the hour in watchfulness and solemn thought; but no sounds returned; and, after remaining at the casement, till the light tint of dawn began to edge the mountain-tops and steal upon the night-shade, she concluded, that they would not return, and retired reluctantly to repose.

END OF SECOND VOLUME

VOLUME III

CHAPTER I

> ‘I will advise you where to plant yourselves;
>
> Acquaint you with the perfect spy o’the time,
> The moment on’t; for’t must be done to-night.’
> [SHAKESPEARE] *Macbeth*[1]

Emily was somewhat surprised, on the following day, to find that Annette had heard of Madame Montoni’s confinement in the chamber over the portal, as well as of her purposed visit there, on the approaching night. That the circumstance, which Barnardine had so solemnly enjoined her to conceal, he had himself told to so indiscreet an hearer as Annette, appeared very improbable, though he had now charged her with a message, concerning the intended interview. He requested, that Emily would meet him, unattended, on the terrace, at a little after midnight, when he himself would lead her to the place he had promised; a proposal, from which she immediately shrunk, for a thousand vague fears darted athwart her mind, such as had tormented her on the preceding night, and which she neither knew how to trust, or to dismiss. It frequently occurred to her, that Barnardine might have deceived her, concerning Madame Montoni, whose murderer, perhaps, he really was; and that he had deceived her by order of Montoni, the more easily to draw her into some of the desperate designs of the latter. The terrible suspicion, that Madame Montoni no longer lived, thus came, accompanied by one not less dreadful for herself. Unless the crime, by which the aunt had suffered, was instigated merely by resentment, unconnected with profit, a motive, upon which Montoni did not appear very likely to act, its object must be unattained, till the niece was also dead, to whom Montoni knew that his wife’s estates must descend. Emily remembered the words, which had informed her, that the contested estates in France would devolve to her, if Madame Montoni died, without consigning them to her husband, and the former obstinate perseverance of her aunt made it too probable, that she had, to the last, withheld them. At this instant, recollecting Barnardine’s manner, on the preceding night, she now believed, what she had then fancied, that it expressed malignant triumph. She shuddered at the recollection, which confirmed her fears, and determined not to meet him on the terrace. Soon after, she was inclined to consider these suspicions as the extravagant exaggerations of a timid and harassed mind, and could not believe Montoni liable to such preposterous depravity as that of destroying, from one motive, his wife and her niece. She blamed herself for suffering her romantic imagination to carry her so far beyond the bounds of probability, and determined to endeavour to check its rapid flights, lest they should sometimes extend into madness. Still, however, she shrunk from the thought of meeting Barnardine, on the terrace, at midnight; and still the wish to be relieved from this terrible suspense, concerning her aunt, to see her, and to sooth her sufferings, made her hesitate what to do.

‘Yet how is it possible, Annette, I can pass to the terrace at that hour?’ said she, recollecting herself, ‘the sentinels will stop me, and Signor Montoni will hear of the affair.’

‘O ma’amselle! that is well thought of,’ replied Annette. ‘That is what Barnardine told me about. He gave me this key, and bade me say it unlocks the door at the end of the vaulted gallery, that opens near the end of the east rampart, so that you need not pass any of the men on watch. He bade me say, too, that his reason for requesting you to come to the terrace was, because he could take you to the place you want to go to, without opening the great doors of the hall, which grate so heavily.’

Emily’s spirits were somewhat calmed by this explanation, which seemed to be honestly given to Annette. ‘But why did he desire I would come alone, Annette?’ said she.

‘Why that was what I asked him myself, ma’amselle. Says I, Why is my young lady to come alone? – Surely I may come with her! – What harm can *I* do? But he said “No – no – I tell you not,” in his gruff way. Nay, says I, I have been trusted in as great affairs as this, I warrant, and it’s a hard matter if I can’t keep a secret now. Still he would say nothing but – “No – no – no.” Well, says I, if you will only trust me, I will tell you a great secret, that was told me a month ago, and I have never opened my lips about it yet – so you need not be afraid of telling me. But all would not do. Then, ma’amselle, I went so far as to offer him a beautiful new sequin, that Ludovico gave me for a keep sake, and I would not have parted with it for all St Marco’s Place; but even that would not do! Now what can be the reason of this? But I know, you know, ma’am, who you are going to see.’

‘Pray did Barnardine tell you this?’

‘He! No, ma’amselle, that he did not.’

Emily enquired who did, but Annette shewed, that she *could* keep a secret.

During the remainder of the day, Emily’s mind was agitated with doubts and fears and contrary determinations, on the subject of meeting this Barnardine on the rampart, and submitting herself to his guidance, she scarcely knew whither. Pity for her aunt and anxiety for herself alternately swayed her determination, and night came, before she had decided upon her conduct. She heard the castle clock strike eleven – twelve – and yet her mind wavered. The time, however, was now come, when she could hesitate no longer: and then the interest she felt for her aunt overcame other considerations, and, bidding Annette follow her to the outer door of the vaulted gallery, and there await her return, she descended from her chamber. The castle was perfectly still, and the great hall, where so lately she had witnessed a scene of dreadful contention, now returned only the whispering footsteps of the two solitary figures gliding fearfully between the pillars, and gleamed only to the feeble lamp they carried. Emily, deceived by the long shadows of the pillars and by the catching lights between, often stopped, imagining she saw some person, moving in the distant obscurity of the perspective; and, as she passed these pillars, she feared to turn her eyes toward them, almost expecting to see a figure start out from behind their broad shaft. She reached, however, the vaulted gallery, without interruption, but unclosed its outer door with a trembling hand, and, charging Annette not to quit it and to keep it a little open, that she might be heard if she called, she delivered to her the lamp, which she did not dare to take herself because of the men on watch, and, alone, stepped out upon the dark terrace. Every thing was so still, that she feared, lest her own light steps should be heard by the distant sentinels, and she walked cautiously towards the spot, where she had before met Barnardine, listening for a sound, and looking onward through the gloom in search of him. At length, she was startled by a deep voice, that spoke near her, and she paused, uncertain whether it was his, till it spoke again, and she then recognized the hollow tones of Barnardine, who had been punctual to the moment, and was at the appointed place, resting on the rampart wall. After chiding her for not coming sooner, and saying, that he had been waiting nearly half an hour, he desired Emily, who made no reply, to follow him to the door, through which he had entered the terrace.

While he unlocked it, she looked back to that she had left, and, observing the rays of the lamp stream through a small opening, was certain, that Annette was still there. But her remote situation could little befriend Emily, after she had quitted the terrace; and, when Barnardine unclosed the gate, the dismal aspect of the passage beyond, shewn by a torch burning on the pavement, made her shrink from following him alone, and she refused to go, unless Annette might accompany her. This, however, Barnardine absolutely refused to permit, mingling at the same time with his refusal such artful circumstances to heighten the pity and curiosity of Emily towards her aunt, that she, at length, consented to follow him alone to the portal.

He then took up the torch, and led her along the passage, at the extremity of which he unlocked another door, whence they descended, a few steps, into a chapel, which, as Barnardine held up the torch to light her, Emily observed to be in ruins, and she immediately recollected a former conversation of Annette, concerning it, with very unpleasant emotions. She looked fearfully on the almost roofless walls, green with damps, and on the gothic points of the windows, where the ivy and the briony had long supplied the place of glass, and ran mantling among the broken capitals of some columns, that had once supported the roof. Barnardine stumbled over the broken pavement, and his voice, as he uttered a sudden oath, was returned in hollow echoes, that made it more terrific. Emily’s heart sunk; but she still followed him, and he turned out of what had been the principal aisle of the chapel. ‘Down these steps, lady,’ said Barnardine, as he descended a flight, which appeared to lead into the vaults; but Emily paused on the top, and demanded, in a tremulous tone, whither he was conducting her.

‘To the portal,’ said Barnardine.

‘Cannot we go through the chapel to the portal?’ said Emily.

‘No, Signora, that leads to the inner court, which I don’t choose to unlock. This way, and we shall reach the outer court presently.’

Emily still hesitated; fearing not only to go on, but, since she had gone thus far, to irritate Barnardine by refusing to go further.

‘Come, lady,’ said the man, who had nearly reached the bottom of the flight, ‘make a little haste; I cannot wait here all night.’

‘Whither do these steps lead?’ said Emily, yet pausing.

‘To the portal,’ repeated Barnardine, in an angry tone, ‘I will wait no longer.’ As he said this, he moved on with the light, and Emily, fearing to provoke him by further delay, reluctantly followed. From the steps, they proceeded through a passage, adjoining the vaults, the walls of which were dropping with unwholesome dews, and the vapours, that crept along the ground, made the torch burn so dimly, that Emily expected every moment to see it extinguished, and Barnardine could scarcely find his way. As they advanced, these vapours thickened, and Barnardine, believing the torch was expiring, stopped for a moment to trim it. As he then rested against a pair of iron gates, that opened from the passage, Emily saw, by uncertain flashes of light, the vaults beyond, and, near her, heaps of earth, that seemed to surround an open grave. Such an object, in such a scene, would, at any time, have disturbed her; but now she was shocked by an instantaneous presentiment, that this was the grave of her unfortunate aunt, and that the treacherous Barnardine was leading herself to destruction. The obscure and terrible place, to which he had conducted her, seemed to justify the thought; it was a place suited for murder, a receptacle for the dead, where a deed of horror might be committed, and no vestige appear to proclaim it. Emily was so overwhelmed with terror, that, for a moment, she was unable to determine what conduct to pursue. She then considered, that it would be vain to attempt an escape from Barnardine, by flight, since the length and the intricacy of the way she had passed would soon enable him to overtake her, who was unacquainted with the turnings, and whose feebleness would not suffer her to run long with swiftness. She feared equally to irritate him by a disclosure of her suspicions, which a refusal to accompany him further certainly would do; and, since she was already as much in his power as it was possible she could be, if she proceeded, she, at length, determined to suppress, as far as she could, the appearance of apprehension, and to follow silently whither he designed to lead her. Pale with horror and anxiety, she now waited till Barnardine had trimmed the torch, and, as her sight glanced again upon the grave, she could not forbear enquiring, for whom it was prepared. He took his eyes from the torch, and fixed them upon her face without speaking. She faintly repeated the question, but the man, shaking the torch, passed on; and she followed, trembling, to a second flight of steps, having ascended which, a door delivered them into the first court of the castle. As they crossed it, the light shewed the high black walls around them, fringed with long grass and dank weeds, that found a scanty soil among the mouldering stones; the heavy buttresses, with, here and there, between them, a narrow grate, that admitted a freer circulation of air to the court, the massy iron gates, that led to the castle, whose clustering turrets appeared above, and, opposite, the huge towers and arch of the portal itself. In this scene the large, uncouth person of Barnardine, bearing the torch, formed a characteristic figure. This Barnardine was wrapt in a long dark cloak, which scarcely allowed the kind of half-boots, or sandals, that were laced upon his legs, to appear, and shewed only the point of a broad sword, which he usually wore, slung in a belt across his shoulders. On his head was a heavy flat velvet cap, somewhat resembling a turban, in which was a short feather; the visage beneath it shewed strong features, and a countenance furrowed with the lines of cunning and darkened by habitual discontent.

The view of the court, however, reanimated Emily, who, as she crossed silently towards the portal, began to hope, that her own fears, and not the treachery of Barnardine, had deceived her. She looked anxiously up at the first casement, that appeared above the lofty arch of the portcullis; but it was dark, and she enquired, whether it belonged to the chamber, where Madame Montoni was confined. Emily spoke low, and Barnardine, perhaps, did not hear her question, for he returned no answer; and they, soon after, entered the postern door of the gate-way, which brought them to the foot of a narrow staircase, that wound up one of the towers.

‘Up this stair-case the Signora lies,’ said Barnardine.

‘Lies!’ repeated Emily faintly, as she began to ascend.

‘She lies in the upper chamber,’ said Barnardine.

As they passed up, the wind, which poured through the narrow cavities in the wall, made the torch flare, and it threw a stronger gleam upon the grim and sallow countenance of Barnardine, and discovered more fully the desolation of the place – the rough stone walls, the spiral stairs, black with age, and a suit of antient armour, with an iron visor, that hung upon the walls, and appeared a trophy of some former victory.

Having reached a landing-place, ‘You may wait here, lady,’ said he, applying a key to the door of a chamber, ‘while I go up, and tell the Signora you are coming.’

‘That ceremony is unnecessary,’ replied Emily, ‘my aunt will rejoice to see me.’

‘I am not so sure of that,’ said Barnardine, pointing to the room he had opened: ‘Come in here, lady, while I step up.’

Emily, surprised and somewhat shocked, did not dare to oppose him further, but, as he was turning away with the torch, desired he would not leave her in darkness. He looked around, and, observing a tripod lamp, that stood on the stairs, lighted and gave it to Emily, who stepped forward into a large old chamber, and he closed the door. As she listened anxiously to his departing steps, she thought he descended, instead of ascending, the stairs; but the gusts of wind, that whistled round the portal, would not allow her to hear distinctly any other sound. Still, however, she listened, and, perceiving no step in the room above, where he had affirmed Madame Montoni to be, her anxiety increased, though she considered, that the thickness of the floor in this strong building might prevent any sound reaching her from the upper chamber. The next moment, in a pause of the wind, she distinguished Barnardine’s step descending to the court, and then thought she heard his voice; but, the rising gust again overcoming other sounds, Emily, to be certain on this point, moved softly to the door, which, on attempting to open it, she discovered was fastened. All the horrid apprehensions, that had lately assailed her, returned at this instant with redoubled force, and no longer appeared like the exaggerations of a timid spirit, but seemed to have been sent to warn her of her fate. She now did not doubt, that Madame Montoni had been murdered, perhaps in this very chamber; or that she herself was brought hither for the same purpose. The countenance, the manners and the recollected words of Barnardine, when he had spoken of her aunt, confirmed her worst fears. For some moments, she was incapable of considering of any means, by which she might attempt an escape. Still she listened, but heard footsteps neither on the stairs, or in the room above; she thought, however, that she again distinguished Barnardine’s voice below, and went to a grated window, that opened upon the court, to enquire further. Here, she plainly heard his hoarse accents, mingling with the blast, that swept by, but they were lost again so quickly, that their meaning could not be interpreted; and then the light of a torch, which seemed to issue from the portal below, flashed across the court, and the long shadow of a man, who was under the arch-way, appeared upon the pavement. Emily, from the hugeness of this sudden portrait, concluded it to be that of Barnardine; but other deep tones, which passed in the wind, soon convinced her he was not alone, and that his companion was not a person very liable to pity.

When her spirits had overcome the first shock of her situation, she held up the lamp to examine, if the chamber afforded a possibility of an escape. It was a spacious room, whose walls, wainscoted with rough oak, shewed no casement but the grated one, which Emily had left, and no other door than that, by which she had entered. The feeble rays of the lamp, however, did not allow her to see at once its full extent; she perceived no furniture, except, indeed, an iron chair, fastened in the centre of the chamber, immediately over which, depending on a chain from the cieling, hung an iron ring. Having gazed upon these, for some time, with wonder and horror, she next observed iron bars below, made for the purpose of confining the feet, and on the arms of the chair were rings of the same metal. As she continued to survey them, she concluded, that they were instruments of torture, and it struck her, that some poor wretch had once been fastened in this chair, and had there been starved to death. She was chilled by the thought; but, what was her agony, when, in the next moment, it occurred to her, that her aunt might have been one of these victims, and that she herself might be the next! An acute pain seized her head, she was scarcely able to hold the lamp, and, looking round for support, was seating herself, unconsciously, in the iron chair itself, but suddenly perceiving where she was, she started from it in horror, and sprung towards a remote end of the room. Here again she looked round for a seat to sustain her, and perceived only a dark curtain, which, descending from the cieling to the floor, was drawn along the whole side of the chamber. Ill as she was, the appearance of this curtain struck her, and she paused to gaze upon it, in wonder and apprehension.

It seemed to conceal a recess of the chamber; she wished, yet dreaded, to lift it, and to discover what it veiled: twice she was withheld by a recollection of the terrible spectacle her daring hand had formerly unveiled in an apartment of the castle, till, suddenly conjecturing, that it concealed the body of her murdered aunt, she seized it, in a fit of desperation, and drew it aside. Beyond, appeared a corpse, stretched on a kind of low couch, which was crimsoned with human blood, as was the floor beneath. The features, deformed by death, were ghastly and horrible, and more than one livid wound appeared in the face. Emily, bending over the body, gazed, for a moment, with an eager, frenzied eye; but, in the next, the lamp dropped from her hand, and she fell senseless at the foot of the couch.[2]

When her senses returned, she found herself surrounded by men, among whom was Barnardine, who were lifting her from the floor, and then bore her along the chamber. She was sensible of what passed, but the extreme languor of her spirits did not permit her to speak, or move, or even to feel any distinct fear. They carried her down the stair-case, by which she had ascended; when, having reached the arch-way, they stopped, and one of the men, taking the torch from Barnardine, opened a small door, that was cut in the great gate, and, as he stepped out upon the road, the light he bore shewed several men on horseback, in waiting. Whether it was the freshness of the air, that revived Emily, or that the objects she now saw roused the spirit of alarm, she suddenly spoke, and made an ineffectual effort to disengage herself from the grasp of the ruffians, who held her.

Barnardine, meanwhile, called loudly for the torch, while distant voices answered, and several persons approached, and, in the same instant, a light flashed upon the court of the castle. Again he vociferated for the torch, and the men hurried Emily through the gate. At a short distance, under the shelter of the castle walls, she perceived the fellow, who had taken the light from the porter, holding it to a man, busily employed in altering the saddle of a horse, round which were several horsemen, looking on, whose harsh features received the full glare of the torch; while the broken ground beneath them, the opposite walls, with the tufted shrubs, that overhung their summits, and an embattled watch-tower above, were reddened with the gleam, which, fading gradually away, left the remoter ramparts and the woods below to the obscurity of night.

‘What do you waste time for, there?’ said Barnardine with an oath, as he approached the horsemen. ‘Dispatch – dispatch.’

‘The saddle will be ready in a minute,’ replied the man who was buckling it, at whom Barnardine now swore again, for his negligence, and Emily, calling feebly for help, was hurried towards the horses, while the ruffians disputed on which to place her, the one designed for her not being ready. At this moment a cluster of lights issued from the great gates, and she immediately heard the shrill voice of Annette above those of several other persons, who advanced. In the same moment, she distinguished Montoni and Cavigni, followed by a number of ruffian-faced fellows, to whom she no longer looked with terror, but with hope, for, at this instant, she did not tremble at the thought of any dangers, that might await her within the castle, whence so lately, and so anxiously she had wished to escape. Those, which threatened her from without, had engrossed all her apprehensions.

A short contest ensued between the parties, in which that of Montoni, however, were presently victors, and the horsemen, perceiving that numbers were against them, and being, perhaps, not very warmly interested in the affair they had undertaken, galloped off, while Barnardine had run far enough to be lost in the darkness, and Emily was led back into the castle. As she re-passed the courts, the remembrance of what she had seen in the portal-chamber came, with all its horror, to her mind; and when, soon after, she heard the gate close, that shut her once more within the castle walls, she shuddered for herself, and, almost forgetting the danger she had escaped, could scarcely think, that any thing less precious than liberty and peace was to be found beyond them.

Montoni ordered Emily to await him in the cedar parlour, whither he soon followed, and then sternly questioned her on this mysterious affair. Though she now viewed him with horror, as the murderer of her aunt, and scarcely knew what she said in reply to his impatient enquiries, her answers and her manner convinced him, that she had not taken a voluntary part in the late scheme, and he dismissed her upon the appearance of his servants, whom he had ordered to attend, that he might enquire further into the affair, and discover those, who had been accomplices in it.

Emily had been some time in her apartment, before the tumult of her mind allowed her to remember several of the passed circumstances. Then, again, the dead form, which the curtain in the portal-chamber had disclosed, came to her fancy, and she uttered a groan, which terrified Annette the more, as Emily forbore to satisfy her curiosity, on the subject of it, for she feared to trust her with so fatal a secret, lest her indiscretion should call down the immediate vengeance of Montoni on herself.

Thus compelled to bear within her own mind the whole horror of the secret, that oppressed it, her reason seemed to totter under the intolerable weight. She often fixed a wild and vacant look on Annette, and, when she spoke, either did not hear her, or answered from the purpose. Long fits of abstraction succeeded; Annette spoke repeatedly, but her voice seemed not to make any impression on the sense of the long agitated Emily, who sat fixed and silent, except that, now and then, she heaved a heavy sigh, but without tears.

Terrified at her condition, Annette, at length, left the room, to inform Montoni of it, who had just dismissed his servants, without having made any discoveries on the subject of his enquiry. The wild description, which this girl now gave of Emily, induced him to follow her immediately to the chamber.

At the sound of his voice, Emily turned her eyes, and a gleam of recollection seemed to shoot athwart her mind, for she immediately rose from her seat, and moved slowly to a remote part of the room. He spoke to her in accents somewhat softened from their usual harshness, but she regarded him with a kind of half curious, half terrified look, and answered only 'yes,' to whatever he said. Her mind still seemed to retain no other impression, than that of fear.

Of this disorder Annette could give no explanation, and Montoni, having attempted, for some time, to persuade Emily to talk, retired, after ordering Annette to remain with her, during the night, and to inform him, in the morning, of her condition.

When he was gone, Emily again came forward, and asked who it was, that had been there to disturb her. Annette said it was the Signor – Signor Montoni. Emily repeated the name after her, several times, as if she did not recollect it, and then suddenly groaned, and relapsed into abstraction.

With some difficulty, Annette led her to the bed, which Emily examined with an eager, frenzied eye, before she lay down, and then, pointing, turned with shuddering emotion, to Annette, who, now more terrified, went towards the door, that she might bring one of the female servants to pass the night with them; but Emily, observing her going, called her by name, and then in the naturally soft and plaintive tone of her voice, begged, that she, too, would not forsake her. – 'For since my father died,' added she, sighing, 'every body forsakes me.'[3]

'Your father, ma'amselle!' said Annette, 'he was dead before you knew me.'

'He was, indeed!' rejoined Emily, and her tears began to flow. She now wept silently and long, after which, becoming quite calm, she at length sunk to sleep, Annette having had discretion enough not to interrupt her tears. This girl, as affectionate as she was simple, lost in these moments all her former fears of remaining in the chamber, and watched alone by Emily, during the whole night.

CHAPTER II

____________‘unfold

What worlds, or what vast regions, hold
Th’ immortal mind, that hath forsook
Her mansion in this fleshly nook!’
[MILTON] *Il Penseroso*[1]

Emily’s mind was refreshed by sleep. On waking in the morning, she looked with surprise on Annette, who sat sleeping in a chair beside the bed, and then endeavoured to recollect herself; but the circumstances of the preceding night were swept from her memory, which seemed to retain no trace of what had passed, and she was still gazing with surprise on Annette, when the latter awoke.

‘O dear ma’amselle! do you know me?’ cried she.

‘Know you! Certainly,’ replied Emily, ‘you are Annette; but why are you sitting by me thus?’

‘O you have been very ill, ma’amselle, – very ill indeed! and I am sure I thought –’

‘This is very strange!’ said Emily, still trying to recollect the past – ‘But I think I do remember, that my fancy has been haunted by frightful dreams. Good God!’ she added, suddenly starting – ‘surely it was nothing more than a dream!’

She fixed a terrified look upon Annette, who, intending to quiet her, said ‘Yes, ma’amselle, it was more than a dream, but it is all over now.’

‘She *is* murdered, then!’ said Emily in an inward voice, and shuddering instantaneously. Annette screamed; for, being ignorant of the circumstance to which Emily referred, she attributed her manner to a disordered fancy; but, when she had explained to what her own speech alluded, Emily, recollecting the attempt that had been made to carry her off, asked if the contriver of it had been discovered. Annette replied, that he had not, though he might easily be guessed at; and then told Emily she might thank her for her deliverance, who, endeavouring to command the emotion, which the remembrance of her aunt had occasioned, appeared calmly to listen to Annette, though, in truth, she heard scarcely a word that was said.

‘And so, ma’amselle,’ continued the latter, ‘I was determined to be even with Barnardine for refusing to tell me the secret, by finding it out myself; so I watched you, on the terrace, and, as soon as he had opened the door at the end, I stole out from the castle, to try to follow you; for, says I, I am sure no good can be planned, or why all this secrecy? So, sure enough, he had not bolted the door after him, and, when I opened it, I saw, by the glimmer of the torch, at the other end of the passage, which way you were going. I followed the light, at a distance, till you came to the vaults of the chapel, and there I was afraid to go further, for I had heard strange things about these vaults. But then, again, I was afraid to go back, all in darkness, by myself; so by the time Barnardine had trimmed the light, I had resolved to follow you, and I did so, till you came to the great court, and there I was afraid he would see me; so I stopped at the door again, and watched you across to the gates, and, when you was gone up the stairs, I whipt after. There, as I stood under the gate-way, I heard horses’ feet without, and several men talking; and I heard them swearing at Barnardine for not bringing you out, and just then, he had like to have caught me, for he came down the stairs again, and I had hardly time to get out of his way. But I had heard enough of his secret now, and I determined to be even with him, and to save you, too, ma’amselle, for I guessed it to be some new scheme of Count Morano, though he was gone away. I ran into the castle, but I had hard work to find my way through the passage under the chapel, and what is very strange, I quite forgot to look for the ghosts they had told me about, though I would not go into that place again by myself for all the world! Luckily the Signor and Signor Cavigni were up, so we had soon a train at our heels, sufficient to frighten that Barnardine and his rogues, all together.’

Annette ceased to speak, but Emily still appeared to listen. At length she said, suddenly, ‘I think I will go to him myself; – where is he?’

Annette asked who was meant.

‘Signor Montoni,’ replied Emily. ‘I would speak with him;’ and Annette, now remembering the order he had given, on the preceding night, respecting her young lady, rose, and said she would seek him herself.

This honest girl’s suspicions of Count Morano were perfectly just; Emily, too, when she thought on the scheme, had attributed it to him; and Montoni, who had not a doubt on this subject, also, began to believe, that it was by the direction of Morano, that poison had formerly been mingled with his wine.

The professions of repentance, which Morano had made to Emily, under the anguish of his wound, were sincere at the moment he offered them; but he had mistaken the subject of his sorrow, for, while he thought he was condemning the cruelty of his late design, he was lamenting only the state of suffering, to which it had reduced him. As these sufferings abated, his former views revived, till, his health being re-established, he again found himself ready for enterprise and difficulty. The porter of the castle, who had served him, on a former occasion, willingly accepted a second bribe; and, having concerted the means of drawing Emily to the gates, Morano publicly left the hamlet, whither he had been carried after the affray, and withdrew with his people to another at several miles distance. From thence, on a night agreed upon by Barnardine, who had discovered from the thoughtless prattle of Annette, the most probable means of decoying Emily, the Count sent back his servants to the castle, while he awaited her arrival at the hamlet, with an intention of carrying her immediately to Venice. How this, his second scheme, was frustrated, has already appeared; but the violent, and various passions with which this Italian lover was now agitated, on his return to that city, can only be imagined.

Annette having made her report to Montoni of Emily's health and of her request to see him, he replied, that she might attend him in the cedar room, in about an hour. It was on the subject, that pressed so heavily on her mind, that Emily wished to speak to him, yet she did not distinctly know what good purpose this could answer, and sometimes she even recoiled in horror from the expectation of his presence. She wished, also, to petition, though she scarcely dared to believe the request would be granted, that he would permit her, since her aunt was no more, to return to her native country.

As the moment of interview approached, her agitation increased so much, that she almost resolved to excuse herself under what could scarcely be called a pretence of illness; and, when she considered what could be said, either concerning herself, or the fate of her aunt, she was equally hopeless as to the event of her entreaty, and terrified as to its effect upon the vengeful spirit of Montoni. Yet, to pretend ignorance of her death, appeared, in some degree, to be sharing its criminality, and, indeed, this event was the only ground, on which Emily could rest her petition for leaving Udolpho.

While her thoughts thus wavered, a message was brought, importing, that Montoni could not see her, till the next day; and her spirits were then relieved, for a moment, from an almost intolerable weight of apprehension. Annette said, she fancied the Chevaliers were going out to the wars again, for the court-yard was filled with horses, and she heard, that the rest of the party, who went out before, were expected at the castle. 'And I heard one of the soldiers, too,' added she, 'say to his comrade, that he would warrant they'd bring home a rare deal of booty. – So, thinks I, if the Signor can, with a safe conscience, send his people out a-robbing – why it is no business of mine. I only wish I was once safe out of this castle; and, if it had not been for poor Ludovico's sake, I would have let Count Morano's people run away with us both, for it would have been serving you a good turn, ma'amselle, as well as myself.'

Annette might have continued thus talking for hours for any interruption she would have received from Emily, who was silent, inattentive, absorbed in thought, and passed the whole of this day in a kind of solemn tranquillity, such as is often the result of faculties overstrained by suffering.

When night returned, Emily recollected the mysterious strains of music, that she had lately heard, in which she still felt some degree of interest, and of which she hoped to hear again the soothing sweetness. The influence of superstition now gained on the weakness of her long-harassed mind; she looked, with enthusiastic expectation, to the guardian spirit of her father, and, having dismissed Annette for the night, determined to watch alone for their return. It was not yet, however, near the time when she had heard the music on a former night, and anxious to call off her thoughts from distressing subjects, she sat down with one of the few books, that she had brought from France; but her mind, refusing controul, became restless and agitated, and she went often to the casement to listen for a sound. Once, she thought she heard a voice, but then, every thing without the casement remaining still, she concluded, that her fancy had deceived her.

Thus passed the time, till twelve o'clock, soon after which the distant sounds, that murmured through the castle, ceased, and sleep seemed to reign over all. Emily then seated herself at the casement, where she was soon recalled from the reverie, into which she sunk, by very unusual sounds, not of music, but like the low mourning of some person in distress. As she listened, her heart faltered in terror, and she became convinced, that the former sound was more than imaginary. Still, at intervals, she heard a kind of feeble lamentation, and sought to discover whence it came. There were several rooms underneath, adjoining the rampart, which had been long shut up, and, as the sound probably rose from one of these, she leaned from the casement to observe, whether any light was visible there. The chambers, as far as she could perceive, were quite dark, but, at a little distance, on the rampart below, she thought she saw something moving.

The faint twilight, which the stars shed, did not enable her to distinguish what it was; but she judged it to be a sentinel, on watch, and she removed her light to a remote part of the chamber, that she might escape notice, during her further observation.

The same object still appeared. Presently, it advanced along the rampart, towards her window, and she then distinguished something like a human form, but the silence, with which it moved, convinced her it was no sentinel. As it drew near, she hesitated whether to retire; a thrilling curiosity inclined her to stay, but a dread of she scarcely knew what warned her to withdraw.

While she paused, the figure came opposite to her casement, and was stationary. Every thing remained quiet; she had not heard even a foot-fall; and the solemnity of this silence, with the mysterious form she saw, subdued her spirits, so that she was moving from the casement, when, on a sudden, she observed the figure start away, and glide down the rampart, after which it was soon lost in the obscurity of night. Emily continued to gaze, for some time, on the way it had passed, and then retired within her chamber, musing on this strange circumstance, and scarcely doubting, that she had witnessed a supernatural appearance.

When her spirits recovered composure, she looked round for some other explanation. Remembering what she had heard of the daring enterprises of Montoni, it occurred to her, that she had just seen some unhappy person, who, having been plundered by his banditti, was brought hither a captive; and that the music she had formerly heard, came from him.

Yet, if they had plundered him, it still appeared improbable, that they should have brought him to the castle, and it was also more consistent with the manners of banditti to murder those they rob, than to make them prisoners. But what, more than any other circumstance, contradicted the supposition, that it was a prisoner, was that it wandered on the terrace, without a guard: a consideration, which made her dismiss immediately her first surmise.

Afterwards, she was inclined to believe, that Count Morano had obtained admittance into the castle; but she soon recollected the difficulties and dangers, that must have opposed such an enterprise, and that, if he had so far succeeded, to come alone and in silence to her casement at midnight was not the conduct he would have adopted, particularly since the private stair-case, communicating with her apartment, was known to him; neither would he have uttered the dismal sounds she had heard.

Another suggestion represented, that this might be some person, who had designs upon the castle; but the mournful sounds destroyed, also, that probability. Thus, enquiry only perplexed her. Who, or what, it could be that haunted this lonely hour, complaining in such doleful accents and in such sweet music (for she was still inclined to believe, that the former strains and the late appearance were connected,) she had no means of ascertaining; and imagination again assumed her empire, and roused the mysteries of superstition.

She determined, however, to watch on the following night, when her doubts might, perhaps, be cleared up; and she almost resolved to address the figure, if it should appear again.

CHAPTER III

> ‘Such are those thick and gloomy shadows damp,
>
> Oft seen in charnel-vaults and sepulchres,
> Lingering, and sitting, by a new-made grave.’
> MILTON [*Comus*][1]

On the following day, Montoni sent a second excuse to Emily, who was surprised at the circumstance. ‘This is very strange!’ said she to herself. ‘His conscience tells him the purport of my visit, and he defers it, to avoid an explanation.’ She now almost resolved to throw herself in his way, but terror checked the intention, and this day passed, as the preceding one, with Emily, except that a degree of awful expectation, concerning the approaching night, now somewhat disturbed the dreadful calmness that had pervaded her mind.

Towards evening, the second part of the band, which had made the first excursion among the mountains, returned to the castle, where, as they entered the courts, Emily, in her remote chamber, heard their loud shouts and strains of exultation, like the orgies of furies over some horrid sacrifice. She even feared they were about to commit some barbarous deed; a conjecture from which, however, Annette soon relieved her, by telling, that the people were only exulting over the plunder they had brought with them. This circumstance still further confirmed her in the belief, that Montoni had really commenced to be a captain of banditti, and meant to retrieve his broken fortunes by the plunder of travellers! Indeed, when she considered all the circumstances of his situation – in an armed, and almost inaccessible castle, retired far among the recesses of wild and solitary mountains, along whose distant skirts were scattered towns, and cities, whither wealthy travellers were continually passing– this appeared to be the situation of all others most suited for the success of schemes of rapine, and she yielded to the strange thought, that Montoni was become a captain of robbers. His character also, unprincipled, dauntless, cruel and enterprising, seemed to fit him for the situation. Delighting in the tumult and in the struggles of life, he was equally a stranger to pity and to fear; his very courage was a sort of animal ferocity; not the noble impulse of a principle, such as inspirits the mind against the oppressor, in the cause of the oppressed; but a constitutional hardiness of nerve, that cannot feel, and that, therefore, cannot fear.

Emily’s supposition, however natural, was in part erroneous, for she was a stranger to the state of this country and to the circumstances, under which its frequent wars were partly conducted. The revenues of the many states of Italy being, at that time, insufficient to the support of standing armies, even during the short periods, which the turbulent habits both of the governments and the people permitted to pass in peace, an order of men arose not known in our age, and but faintly described in the history of their own. Of the soldiers, disbanded at the end of every war, few returned to the safe, but unprofitable occupations, then usual in peace. Sometimes they passed into other countries, and mingled with armies, which still kept the field. Sometimes they formed themselves into bands of robbers, and occupied remote fortresses, where their desperate character, the weakness of the governments which they offended, and the certainty, that they could be recalled to the armies, when their presence should be again wanted, prevented them from being much pursued by the civil power; and, sometimes, they attached themselves to the fortunes of a popular chief, by whom they were led into the service of any state, which could settle with him the price of their valour. From this latter practice arose their name – *Condottieri*; a term formidable all over Italy, for a period, which concluded in the earlier part of the seventeenth century, but of which it is not so easy to ascertain the commencement.

Contests between the smaller states were then, for the most part, affairs of enterprize alone, and the probabilities of success were estimated, not from the skill, but from the personal courage of the general, and the soldiers. The ability, which was necessary to the conduct of tedious operations, was little valued. It was enough to know how a party might be led towards their enemies, with the greatest secresy, or conducted from them in the compactest order. The officer was to precipitate himself into a situation, where, but for his example, the soldiers might not have ventured; and, as the opposed parties knew little of each other’s strength, the event of the day was frequently determined by the boldness of the first movements. In such services the *Condottieri* were eminent, and in these, where plunder always followed a success, their characters acquired a mixture of intrepidity and profligacy, which awed even those whom they served.

When they were not thus engaged, their chief had usually his own fortress, in which, or in its neighbourhood, they enjoyed an irksome rest; and, though their wants were, at one time, partly supplied from the property of the inhabitants, the lavish distribution of their plunder at others, prevented them from being obnoxious; and the peasants of such districts gradually shared the character of their warlike visitors. The neighbouring governments sometimes professed, but seldom endeavoured, to suppress these military communities; both because it was difficult to do so, and because a disguised protection of them ensured, for the service of their wars, a body of men, who could not otherwise be so cheaply maintained, or so perfectly qualified. The commanders sometimes even relied so far upon this policy of the several powers, as to frequent their capitals; and Montoni, having met them in the gaming parties of Venice and Padua, conceived a desire to emulate their characters, before his ruined fortunes tempted him to adopt their practices. It was for the arrangement of his present plan of life, that the midnight councils were held at his mansion in Venice, and at which Orsino and some other members of the present community then assisted with suggestions, which they had since executed with the wreck of their fortunes.

On the return of night, Emily resumed her station at the casement. There was now a moon; and, as it rose over the tufted woods, its yellow light served to shew the lonely terrace and the surrounding objects, more distinctly, than the twilight of the stars had done, and promised Emily to assist her observations, should the mysterious form return. On this subject, she again wavered in conjecture, and hesitated whether to speak to the figure, to which a strong and almost irresistible interest urged her; but terror, at intervals, made her reluctant to do so.

'If this is a person who has designs upon the castle,' said she, 'my curiosity may prove fatal to me; yet the mysterious music, and the lamentations I heard, must surely have proceeded from him: if so, he cannot be an enemy.'

She then thought of her unfortunate aunt, and, shuddering with grief and horror, the suggestions of imagination seized her mind with all the force of truth, and she believed, that the form she had seen was supernatural. She trembled, breathed with difficulty, an icy coldness touched her cheeks, and her fears for a while overcame her judgment. Her resolution now forsook her, and she determined, if the figure should appear, not to speak to it.

Thus the time passed, as she sat at her casement, awed by expectation, and by the gloom and stillness of midnight; for she saw obscurely in the moon-light only the mountains and woods, a cluster of towers, that formed the west angle of the castle, and the terrace below; and heard no sound, except, now and then, the lonely watch-word, passed by the centinels on duty, and afterwards the steps of the men who came to relieve guard, and whom she knew at a distance on the rampart by their pikes, that glittered in the moon-beam, and then, by the few short words, in which they hailed their fellows of the night. Emily retired within her chamber, while they passed the casement. When she returned to it, all was again quiet. It was now very late, she was wearied with watching, and began to doubt the reality of what she had seen on the preceding night; but she still lingered at the window, for her mind was too perturbed to admit of sleep. The moon shone with a clear lustre, that afforded her a complete view of the terrace; but she saw only a solitary centinel, pacing at one end of it; and, at length, tired with expectation, she withdrew to seek rest.

Such, however, was the impression, left on her mind by the music, and the complaining she had formerly heard, as well as by the figure, which she fancied she had seen, that she determined to repeat the watch, on the following night.

Montoni, on the next day, took no notice of Emily's appointed visit, but she, more anxious than before to see him, sent Annette to enquire, at what hour he would admit her. He mentioned eleven o'clock, and Emily was punctual to the moment; at which she called up all her fortitude to support the shock of his presence and the dreadful recollections it enforced. He was with several of his officers, in the cedar-room; on observing whom she paused; and her agitation increased, while he continued to converse with them, apparently not observing her, till some of his officers, turning round, saw Emily, and uttered an exclamation. She was hastily retiring, when Montoni's voice arrested her, and, in a faultering accent, she said, – 'I would speak with you, Signor Montoni, if you are at leisure.'

'These are my friends,' he replied, 'whatever you would say, they may hear.'

Emily, without replying, turned from the rude gaze of the chevaliers, and Montoni then followed her to the hall, whence he led her to a small room, of which he shut the door with violence. As she looked on his dark countenance, she again thought she saw the murderer of her aunt; and her mind was so convulsed with horror, that she had not power to recal thought enough to explain the purport of her visit; and to trust herself with the mention of Madame Montoni was more than she dared.

Montoni at length impatiently enquired what she had to say? 'I have no time for trifling,' he added, 'my moments are important.'

Emily then told him, that she wished to return to France, and came to beg, that he would permit her to do so. – But when he looked surprised, and enquired for the motive of the request, she hesitated, became paler than before, trembled, and had nearly sunk at his feet. He observed her emotion, with apparent indifference, and interrupted the silence by telling her, he must be gone. Emily, however, recalled her spirits sufficiently to enable her to repeat her request. And, when Montoni absolutely refused it, her slumbering mind was roused.

'I can no longer remain here with propriety, sir,' said she, 'and I may be allowed to ask, by what right you detain me.'

'It is my will that you remain here,' said Montoni, laying his hand on the door to go; 'let that suffice you.'

Emily, considering that she had no appeal from this will, forbore to dispute his right, and made a feeble effort to persuade him to be just. 'While my aunt lived, sir,' said she, in a tremulous voice, 'my residence here was not improper; but now, that she is no more, I may surely be permitted to depart. My stay cannot benefit you, sir, and will only distress me.'

'Who told you, that Madame Montoni was dead?' said Montoni, with an inquisitive eye. Emily hesitated, for nobody had told her so, and she did not dare to avow the having seen that spectacle in the portal-chamber, which had compelled her to the belief.

'Who told you so?' he repeated, more sternly.

'Alas! I know it too well,' replied Emily: 'Spare me on this terrible subject!'

She sat down on a bench to support herself.

'If you wish to see her,' said Montoni, 'you may; she lies in the east turret.'

He now left the room, without awaiting her reply, and returned to the cedar chamber, where such of the chevaliers as had not before seen Emily, began to rally him, on the discovery they had made; but Montoni did not appear disposed to bear this mirth, and they changed the subject.

Having talked with the subtle Orsino, on the plan of an excursion, which he meditated for a future day, his friend advised, that they should lie in wait for the enemy, which Verezzi impetuously opposed, reproached Orsino with want of spirit, and swore, that, if Montoni would let him lead on fifty men, he would conquer all that should oppose him.

Orsino smiled contemptuously; Montoni smiled too, but he also listened. Verezzi then proceeded with vehement declamation and assertion, till he was stopped by an argument of Orsino, which he knew not how to answer better than by invective. His fierce spirit detested the cunning caution of Orsino, whom he constantly opposed, and whose inveterate, though silent, hatred he had long ago incurred. And Montoni was a calm observer of both, whose different qualifications he knew, and how to bend their opposite character to the perfection of his own designs. But Verezzi, in the heat of opposition, now did not scruple to accuse Orsino of cowardice, at which the countenance of the latter, while he made no reply, was overspread with a livid paleness; and Montoni, who watched his lurking eye, saw him put his hand hastily into his bosom. But Verezzi, whose face, glowing with crimson, formed a striking contrast to the complexion of Orsino, remarked not the action, and continued boldly declaiming against cowards to Cavigni, who was slily laughing at his vehemence, and at the silent mortification of Orsino, when the latter, retiring a few steps behind, drew forth a stilletto to stab his adversary in the back. Montoni arrested his half-extended arm, and, with a significant look, made him return the poinard into his bosom, unseen by all except himself; for most of the party were disputing at a distant window, on the situation of a dell where they meant to form an ambuscade.

When Verezzi had turned round, the deadly hatred, expressed on the features of his opponent, raising, for the first time, a suspicion of his intention, he laid his hand on his sword, and then, seeming to recollect himself, strode up to Montoni.

‘Signor,’ said he, with a significant look at Orsino, ‘we are not a band of assassins; if you have business for brave men employ me on this expedition: you shall have the last drop of my blood; if you have only work for cowards – keep him,’ pointing to Orsino, ‘and let me quit Udolpho.’

Orsino, still more incensed, again drew forth his stilletto, and rushed towards Verezzi, who, at the same instant, advanced with his sword, when Montoni and the rest of the party interfered and separated them.

‘This is the conduct of a boy,’ said Montoni to Verezzi, ‘not of a man: be more moderate in your speech.’

‘Moderation is the virtue of cowards,’ retorted Verezzi; ‘they are moderate in every thing – but in fear.’

‘I accept your words,’ said Montoni, turning upon him with a fierce and haughty look, and drawing his sword out of the scabbard.

‘With all my heart,’ cried Verezzi, ‘though I did not mean them for you.’

He directed a pass at Montoni; and, while they fought, the villain Orsino made another attempt to stab Verezzi, and was again prevented.

The combatants were, at length, separated; and, after a very long and violent dispute, reconciled. Montoni then left the room with Orsino, whom he detained in private consultation for a considerable time.

Emily, meanwhile, stunned by the last words of Montoni, forgot, for the moment, his declaration, that she should continue in the castle, while she thought of her unfortunate aunt, who, he had said, was laid in the east turret. In suffering the remains of his wife to lie thus long unburied, there appeared a degree of brutality more shocking than she had suspected even Montoni could practise.

After a long struggle, she determined to accept his permission to visit the turret, and to take a last look of her ill-fated aunt: with which design she returned to her chamber, and, while she waited for Annette to accompany her, endeavoured to acquire fortitude sufficient to support her through the approaching scene; for, though she trembled to encounter it, she knew that to remember the performance of this last act of duty would hereafter afford her consoling satisfaction.

Annette came, and Emily mentioned her purpose, from which the former endeavoured to dissuade her, though without effect, and Annette was, with much difficulty, prevailed upon to accompany her to the turret; but no consideration could make her promise to enter the chamber of death.

They now left the corridor, and, having reached the foot of the stair-case, which Emily had formerly ascended, Annette declared she would go no further, and Emily proceeded alone. When she saw the track of blood, which she had before observed, her spirits fainted, and, being compelled to rest on the stairs, she almost determined to proceed no further. The pause of a few moments restored her resolution, and she went on.

As she drew near the landing-place, upon which the upper chamber opened, she remembered, that the door was formerly fastened, and apprehended, that it might still be so. In this expectation, however, she was mistaken; for the door opened at once, into a dusky and silent chamber, round which she fearfully looked, and then slowly advanced, when a hollow voice spoke. Emily, who was unable to speak, or to move from the spot, uttered no sound of terror. The voice spoke again; and, then, thinking that it resembled that of Madame Montoni, Emily’s spirits were instantly roused; she rushed towards a bed, that stood in a remote part of the room, and drew aside the curtains. Within, appeared a pale and emaciated face. She started back, then again advanced, shuddered as she took up the skeleton hand, that lay stretched upon the quilt; then let it drop, and then viewed the face with a long, unsettled gaze. It was that of Madame Montoni, though so changed by illness, that the resemblance of what it had been, could scarcely be traced in what it now appeared. She was still alive, and, raising her heavy eyes, she turned them on her niece.

‘Where have you been so long?’ said she, in the same hollow tone, ‘I thought you had forsaken me.’

‘Do you indeed live,’ said Emily, at length, ‘or is this but a terrible apparition?’ She received no answer, and again she snatched up the hand. ‘This is substance,’ she exclaimed, ‘but it is cold – cold as marble!’ She let it fall. ‘O, if you really live, speak!’ said Emily, in a voice of desperation, ‘that I may not lose my senses – say you know me!’

‘I do live,’ replied Madame Montoni, ‘but – I feel that I am about to die.’

Emily clasped the hand she held, more eagerly, and groaned. They were both silent for some moments. Then Emily endeavoured to soothe her, and enquired what had reduced her to this present deplorable state.

Montoni, when he removed her to the turret under the improbable suspicion of having attempted his life, had ordered the men employed on the occasion, to observe a strict secrecy concerning her. To this he was influenced by a double motive. He meant to debar her from the comfort of Emily’s visits, and to secure an opportunity of privately dispatching her, should any new circumstances occur to confirm the present suggestions of his suspecting mind.

His consciousness of the hatred he deserved it was natural enough should at first lead him to attribute to her the attempt that had been made upon his life; and, though there was no other reason to believe that she was concerned in that atrocious design, his suspicions remained; he continued to confine her in the turret, under a strict guard; and, without pity or remorse, had suffered her to lie, forlorn and neglected, under a raging fever, till it had reduced to the present state.

The track of blood, which Emily had seen on the stairs, had flowed from the unbound wound of one of the men employed to carry Madame Montoni, and which he had received in the late affray. At night these men, having contented themselves with securing the door of their prisoner’s room, had retired from guard; and then it was, that Emily, at the time of her first enquiry, had found the turret so silent and deserted.

When she had attempted to open the door of the chamber, her aunt was sleeping, and this occasioned the silence, which had contributed to delude her into a belief, that she was no more; yet had her terror permitted her to persevere longer in the call, she would probably have awakened Madame Montoni, and have been spared much suffering. The spectacle in the portal-chamber, which afterwards confirmed Emily’s horrible suspicion, was the corpse of a man, who had fallen in the affray, and the same which had been borne into the servants’ hall, where she took refuge from the tumult. This man had lingered under his wounds for some days; and, soon after his death, his body had been removed on the couch, on which he died, for interment in the vault beneath the chapel, through which Emily and Barnardine had passed to the chamber.

Emily, after asking Madame Montoni a thousand questions concerning herself, left her, and sought Montoni; for the more solemn interest she felt for her aunt, made her now regardless of the resentment her remonstrances might draw upon herself, and of the improbability of his granting what she meant to entreat.

‘Madame Montoni is now dying, sir,’ said Emily, as soon as she saw him – ‘Your resentment, surely will not pursue her to the last moment! Suffer her to be removed from that forlorn room to her own apartment, and to have necessary comforts administered.’

‘Of what service will that be, if she is dying?’ said Montoni, with apparent indifference.

‘The service, at least, of saving you, sir, from a few of those pangs of conscience you must suffer, when you shall be in the same situation,’ said Emily, with imprudent indignation, of which Montoni soon made her sensible, by commanding her to quit his presence. Then, forgetting her resentment, and impressed only by compassion for the piteous state of her aunt, dying without succour, she submitted to humble herself to Montoni, and to adopt every persuasive means, that might reduce him to relent towards his wife.

For a considerable time he was proof against all she said, and all she looked; but at length the divinity of pity, beaming in Emily’s eyes, seemed to touch his heart. He turned away, ashamed of his better feelings, half sullen and half relenting; but finally consented, that his wife should be removed to her own apartment, and that Emily should attend her. Dreading equally, that this relief might arrive too late, and that Montoni might retract his concession, Emily scarcely staid to thank him for it, but, assisted by Annette, she quickly prepared Madame Montoni’s bed, and they carried her a cordial, that might enable her feeble frame to sustain the fatigue of a removal.

Madame was scarcely arrived in her own apartment, when an order was given by her husband, that she should remain in the turret; but Emily, thankful that she had made such dispatch, hastened to inform him of it, as well as that a second removal would instantly prove fatal, and he suffered his wife to continue where she was.

During this day, Emily never left Madame Montoni, except to prepare such little nourishing things as she judged necessary to sustain her, and which Madame Montoni received with quiet acquiescence, though she seemed sensible that they could not save her from approaching dissolution, and scarcely appeared to wish for life. Emily meanwhile watched over her with the most tender solicitude, no longer seeing her imperious aunt in the poor object before her, but the sister of her late beloved father, in a situation that called for all her compassion and kindness. When night came, she determined to sit up with her aunt, but this the latter positively forbade, commanding her to retire to rest, and Annette alone to remain in her chamber. Rest was, indeed, necessary to Emily, whose spirits and frame were equally wearied by the occurrences and exertions of the day; but she would not leave Madame Montoni, till after the turn of midnight, a period then thought so critical by the physicians.

Soon after twelve, having enjoined Annette to be wakeful, and to call her, should any change appear for the worse, Emily sorrowfully bade Madame Montoni good night, and withdrew to her chamber. Her spirits were more than usually depressed by the piteous condition of her aunt, whose recovery she scarcely dared to expect. To her own misfortunes she saw no period, inclosed as she was, in a remote castle, beyond the reach of any friends, had she possessed such, and beyond the pity even of strangers; while she knew herself to be in the power of a man capable of any action, which his interest, or his ambition, might suggest.

Occupied by melancholy reflections and by anticipations as sad, she did not retire immediately to rest, but leaned thoughtfully on her open casement. The scene before her of woods and mountains, reposing in the moon-light, formed a regretted contrast with the state of her mind; but the lonely murmur of these woods, and the view of this sleeping landscape, gradually soothed her emotions and softened her to tears.

She continued to weep, for some time, lost to every thing, but to a gentle sense of her misfortunes. When she, at length, took the handkerchief from her eyes, she perceived, before her, on the terrace below, the figure she had formerly observed, which stood fixed and silent, immediately opposite to her casement. On perceiving it, she started back, and terror for some time overcame curiosity; – at length, she returned to the casement, and still the figure was before it, which she now compelled herself to observe, but was utterly unable to speak, as she had formerly intended. The moon shone with a clear light, and it was, perhaps, the agitation of her mind, that prevented her distinguishing, with any degree of accuracy, the form before her. It was still stationary, and she began to doubt, whether it was really animated.

Her scattered thoughts were now so far returned as to remind her, that her light exposed her to dangerous observation, and she was stepping back to remove it, when she perceived the figure move, and then wave what seemed to be its arm, as if to beckon her; and, while she gazed, fixed in fear, it repeated the action.[2] She now attempted to speak, but the words died on her lips, and she went from the casement to remove her light; as she was doing which, she heard, from without, a faint groan. Listening, but not daring to return, she presently heard it repeated.

‘Good God! – what can this mean!’ said she.

Again she listened, but the sound came no more; and, after a long interval of silence, she recovered courage enough to go to the casement, when she again saw the same appearance! It beckoned again, and again uttered a low sound.

‘That groan was surely human!’ said she. ‘I *will* speak.’ ‘Who is it,’ cried Emily in a faint voice, ‘that wanders at this late hour?’

The figure raised its head but suddenly started away, and glided down the terrace. She watched it, for a long while, passing swiftly in the moon-light, but heard no footstep, till a sentinel from the other extremity of the rampart walked slowly along. The man stopped under her window, and, looking up, called her by name. She was retiring precipitately, but, a second summons inducing her to reply, the soldier then respectfully asked if she had seen any thing pass. On her answering, that she had; he said no more, but walked away down the terrace, Emily following him with her eyes, till he was lost in the distance. But, as he was on guard, she knew he could not go beyond the rampart, and, therefore, resolved to await his return.

Soon after, his voice was heard, at a distance, calling loudly; and then a voice still more distant answered, and, in the next moment, the watch-word was given, and passed along the terrace. As the soldiers moved hastily under the casement, she called to enquire what had happened, but they passed without regarding her.

Emily’s thoughts returning to the figure she had seen, ‘It cannot be a person, who has designs upon the castle,’ said she; ‘such an one would conduct himself very differently. He would not venture where sentinels were on watch, nor fix himself opposite to a window, where he perceived he must be observed; much less would he beckon, or utter a sound of complaint. Yet it cannot be a prisoner, for how could he obtain the opportunity to wander thus?’

If she had been subject to vanity, she might have supposed this figure to be some inhabitant of the castle, who wandered under her casement in the hope of seeing her, and of being allowed to declare his admiration; but this opinion never occurred to Emily, and, if it had, she would have dismissed it as improbable, on considering, that, when the opportunity of speaking had occurred, it had been suffered to pass in silence; and that, even at the moment in which she had spoken, the form had abruptly quitted the place.

While she mused, two sentinels walked up the rampart in earnest conversation, of which she caught a few words, and learned from these, that one of their comrades had fallen down senseless. Soon after, three other soldiers appeared slowly advancing from the bottom of the terrace, but she heard only a low voice, that came at intervals. As they drew near, she perceived this to be the voice of him, who walked in the middle, apparently supported by his comrades; and she again called to them, enquiring what had happened. At the sound of her voice, they stopped, and looked up, while she repeated her question, and was told, that Roberto, their fellow of the watch, had been seized with a fit, and that his cry, as he fell, had caused a false alarm.

‘Is he subject to fits?’ said Emily.

‘Yes, Signora,’ replied Roberto; ‘but if I had not, what I saw was enough to have frightened the Pope himself.’

‘What was it?’ enquired Emily, trembling.

‘I cannot tell what it was, lady, or what I saw, or how it vanished,’ replied the soldier, who seemed to shudder at the recollection.

‘Was it the person, whom you followed down the rampart, that has occasioned you this alarm?’ said Emily, endeavouring to conceal her own.

‘Person!’ exclaimed the man, – ‘it was the devil, and this is not the first time I have seen him!’

‘Nor will it be the last,’ observed one of his comrades, laughing.

‘No, no, I warrant not,’ said another.

‘Well,’ rejoined Roberto, ‘you may be as merry now, as you please; you was none so jocose the other night, Sebastian, when you was on watch with Launcelot.’

‘Launcelot need not talk of that,’ replied Sebastian, ‘let him remember how he stood trembling, and unable to give the *word*, till the man was gone. If the man had not come so silently upon us, I would have seized him, and soon made him tell who he was.’

‘What man?’ enquired Emily.

‘It was no man, lady,’ said Launcelot, who stood by, ‘but the devil himself, as my comrade says. What man, who does not live in the castle, could get within the walls at midnight? Why, I might just as well pretend to march to Venice, and get among all the Senators, when they are counselling; and I warrant I should have more chance of getting out again alive, than any fellow, that we should catch within the gates after dark. So I think I have proved plainly enough, that this can be nobody that lives out of the castle; and now I will prove, that it can be no nobody that lives in the castle – for, if he did – why should he be afraid to be seen? So after this, I hope nobody will pretend to tell me it was anybody. No, I say again, by holy Pope! it was the devil, and Sebastian, there, knows this is not the first time we have seen him.’

‘When did you see the figure, then, before?’ said Emily half smiling, who, though she thought the conversation somewhat too much, felt an interest, which would not permit her to conclude it.

‘About a week ago, lady,’ said Sebastian, taking up the story.

‘And where?’

‘On the rampart, lady, higher up.’

‘Did you pursue it, that it fled?’

‘No, Signora. Launcelot and I were on watch together, and every thing was so still, you might have heard a mouse stir, when, suddenly, Launcelot says – Sebastian! do you see nothing? I turned my head a little to the left, as it might be – thus. No, says I. Hush! said Launcelot, – look yonder – just by the last cannon on the rampart! I looked, and then thought I did see something move; but there being no light, but what the stars gave, I could not be certain. We stood quite silent, to watch it, and presently saw something pass along the castle wall just opposite to us!’

‘Why did not you seize it, then?’ cried a soldier, who had scarcely spoken till now.

‘Aye, why did you not seize it?’ said Roberto.

‘You should have been there to have done that,’ replied Sebastian. ‘You would have been bold enough to have taken it by the throat, though it had been the devil himself; we could not take such a liberty, perhaps because we are not so well acquainted with him, as you are. But, as I was saying, it stole by us so quickly, that we had not time to get rid of our surprise, before it was gone. Then, we knew it was in vain to follow. We kept constant watch all that night, but we saw it no more. Next morning, we told some of our comrades, who were on duty on other parts of the ramparts, what we had seen; but they had seen nothing, and laughed at us, and it was not till to-night, that the same figure walked again.’

‘Where did you lose it, friend?’ said Emily to Roberto.

‘When I left you, lady,’ replied the man, ‘you might see me go down the rampart, but it was not till I reached the east terrace, that I saw any thing. Then, the moon shining bright, I saw something like a shadow flitting before me, as it were, at some distance. I stopped, when I turned the corner of the east tower, where I had seen this figure not a moment before, – but it was gone! As I stood, looking through the old arch, which leads to the east rampart, and where I am sure it had passed, I heard, all of a sudden, such a sound! – It was not like a groan, or a cry, or a shout, or any thing I ever heard in my life. I heard it only once, and that was enough for me; for I know nothing that happened after, till I found my comrades, here, about me.’

‘Come,’ said Sebastian, ‘let us go to our posts – the moon is setting. Good night, lady!’

‘Aye, let us go,’ rejoined Roberto. ‘Good night, lady.’

‘Good night; the holy mother guard you!’ said Emily, as she closed her casement and retired to reflect upon the strange circumstance that had just occurred, connecting which with what had happened on former nights, she endeavoured to derive from the whole something more positive, than conjecture. But her imagination was inflamed, while her judgment was not enlightened, and the terrors of superstition again pervaded her mind.

CHAPTER IV

__________‘There is one within,

Besides the things, that we have heard and seen,
Recounts most horrid sights, seen by the watch.’
[SHAKESPEARE] *Julius Cæsar*[1]

In the morning, Emily found Madame Montoni nearly in the same condition, as on the preceding night; she had slept little, and that little had not refreshed her; she smiled on her niece, and seemed cheered by her presence, but spoke only a few words, and never named Montoni, who, however, soon after, entered the room. His wife, when she understood that he was there, appeared much agitated, but was entirely silent, till Emily rose from a chair at the bed-side, when she begged, in a feeble voice, that she would not leave her.

The visit of Montoni was not to sooth his wife, whom he knew to be dying, or to console, or to ask her forgiveness, but to make a last effort to procure that signature, which would transfer her estates in Languedoc, after her death, to him rather than to Emily. This was a scene, that exhibited, on his part, his usual inhumanity, and, on that of Madame Montoni, a persevering spirit, contending with a feeble frame; while Emily repeatedly declared to him her willingness to resign all claim to those estates, rather than that the last hours of her aunt should be disturbed by contention. Montoni, however, did not leave the room, till his wife, exhausted by the obstinate dispute, had fainted, and she lay so long insensible, that Emily began to fear that the spark of life was extinguished. At length, she revived, and, looking feebly up at her niece, whose tears were falling over her, made an effort to speak, but her words were unintelligible, and Emily again apprehended she was dying. Afterwards, however, she recovered her speech, and, being somewhat restored by a cordial, conversed for a considerable time, on the subject of her estates in France, with clearness and precision. She directed her niece where to find some papers relative to them, which she had hitherto concealed from the search of Montoni, and earnestly charged her never to suffer these papers to escape her.

Soon after this conversation, Madame Montoni sunk into a dose, and continued slumbering, till evening, when she seemed better than she had been since her removal from the turret. Emily never left her, for a moment, till long after midnight, and even then would not have quitted the room, had not her aunt entreated, that she would retire to rest. She then obeyed, the more willingly, because her patient appeared somewhat recruited by sleep; and, giving Annette the same injunction, as on the preceding night, she withdrew to her own apartment. But her spirits were wakeful and agitated, and, finding it impossible to sleep, she determined to watch, once more, for the mysterious appearance, that had so much interested and alarmed her.

It was now the second watch of the night, and about the time when the figure had before appeared. Emily heard the passing steps of the sentinels, on the rampart, as they changed guard; and, when all was again silent, she took her station at the casement, leaving her lamp in a remote part of the chamber, that she might escape notice from without. The moon gave a faint and uncertain light, for heavy vapours surrounded it, and, often rolling over the disk, left the scene below in total darkness. It was in one of these moments of obscurity, that she observed a small and lambent flame, moving at some distance on the terrace. While she gazed, it disappeared, and, the moon again emerging from the lurid and heavy thunder clouds, she turned her attention to the heavens, where the vivid lightnings darted from cloud to cloud, and flashed silently on the woods below. She loved to catch, in the momentary gleam, the gloomy landscape. Sometimes, a cloud opened its light upon a distant mountain, and, while the sudden splendour illumined all its recesses of rock and wood, the rest of the scene remained in deep shadow; at others, partial features of the castle were revealed by the glimpse – the antient arch leading to the east rampart, the turret above, or the fortifications beyond; and then, perhaps, the whole edifice with all its towers, its dark massy walls and pointed casements would appear, and vanish in an instant.

Emily, looking again upon the rampart, perceived the flame she had seen before; it moved onward; and, soon after, she thought she heard a footstep. The light appeared and disappeared frequently, while, as she watched, it glided under her casements, and, at the same instant, she was certain, that a footstep passed, but the darkness did not permit her to distinguish any object except the flame. It moved away, and then, by a gleam of lightning, she perceived some person on the terrace. All the anxieties of the preceding night returned. This person advanced, and the playing flame alternately appeared and vanished. Emily wished to speak, to end her doubts, whether this figure were human or supernatural; but her courage failed as often as she attempted utterance, till the light moved again under the casement, and she faintly demanded, who passed.

‘A friend,’ replied a voice.

‘What friend?’ said Emily, somewhat encouraged, ‘who are you, and what is that light you carry?’

‘I am Anthonio, one of the Signor’s soldiers,’ replied the voice.

'And what is that tapering light you bear?' said Emily, 'See how it darts upwards, – and now it vanishes!'

'This light, lady,' said the soldier, 'has appeared to-night as you see it, on the point of my lance, ever since I have been on watch; but what it means I cannot tell.'

'This is very strange!' said Emily.

'My fellow-guard,' continued the man, 'has the same flame on his arms; he says he has sometimes seen it before. I never did; I am but lately come to the castle, for I have not been long a soldier.'

'How does your comrade account for it?' said Emily.

'He says it is an omen, lady, and bodes no good.'

'And what harm can it bode?' rejoined Emily.

'He knows not so much as that, lady.'

Whether Emily was alarmed by this omen, or not, she certainly was relieved from much terror by discovering this man to be only a soldier on duty, and it immediately occurred to her, that it might be he, who had occasioned so much alarm on the preceding night. There were, however, some circumstances, that still required explanation. As far as she could judge by the faint moon-light, that had assisted her observation, the figure she had seen did not resemble this man either in shape or size; besides, she was certain it had carried no arms. The silence of its steps, if steps it had, the moaning sounds, too, which it had uttered, and its strange disappearance, were circumstances of mysterious import, that did not apply, with probability, to a soldier engaged in the duty of his guard.

She now enquired of the sentinel, whether he had seen any person besides his fellow watch, walking on the terrace, about midnight; and then briefly related what she had herself observed.

'I was not on guard that night, lady,' replied the man, 'but I heard of what happened. There are amongst us, who believe strange things. Strange stories, too, have long been told of this castle, but it is no business of mine to repeat them; and, for my part, I have no reason to complain; our Chief does nobly by us.'

'I commend your prudence,' said Emily, 'Good night, and accept this from me,' she added, throwing him a small piece of coin, and then closing the casement to put an end to the discourse.

When he was gone, she opened it again, listened with a gloomy pleasure to the distant thunder, that began to murmur among the mountains, and watched the arrowy lightnings, which broke over the remoter scene. The pealing thunder rolled onward, and then, reverbed by the mountains, other thunder seemed to answer from the opposite horizon; while the accumulating clouds, entirely concealing the moon, assumed a red sulphureous tinge, that foretold a violent storm.

Emily remained at her casement, till the vivid lightning, that now, every instant, revealed the wide horizon and the landscape below, made it no longer safe to do so, and she went to her couch; but, unable to compose her mind to sleep, still listened in silent awe to the tremendous sounds, that seemed to shake the castle to its foundation.

She had continued thus for a considerable time, when, amidst the uproar of the storm, she thought she heard a voice, and, raising herself to listen, saw the chamber door open, and Annette enter with a countenance of wild affright.

'She is dying, ma'amselle, my lady is dying!' said she.

Emily started up, and ran to Madame Montoni's room. When she entered, her aunt appeared to have fainted, for she was quite still, and insensible; and Emily with a strength of mind, that refused to yield to grief, while any duty required her activity, applied every means that seemed likely to restore her. But the last struggle was over – she was gone for ever.

When Emily perceived, that all her efforts were ineffectual, she interrogated the terrified Annette, and learned, that Madame Montoni had fallen into a doze, soon after Emily's departure, in which she had continued, until a few minutes before her death.

'I wondered, ma'amselle,' said Annette, 'what was the reason my lady did not seem frightened at the thunder, when I was so terrified, and I went often to the bed to speak to her, but she appeared to be asleep; till presently I heard a strange noise, and, on going to her, saw she was dying.'

Emily, at this recital, shed tears. She had no doubt but that the violent change in the air, which the tempest produced, had effected this fatal one, on the exhausted frame of Madame Montoni.

After some deliberation, she determined that Montoni should not be informed of this event till the morning, for she considered, that he might, perhaps, utter some inhuman expressions, such as in the present temper of her spirits she could not bear. With Annette alone, therefore, whom she encouraged by her own example, she performed some of the last solemn offices for the dead, and compelled herself to watch during the night, by the body of her deceased aunt. During this solemn period, rendered more awful by the tremendous storm that shook the air, she frequently addressed herself to Heaven for support and protection, and her pious prayers, we may believe, were accepted of the God, that giveth comfort.

CHAPTER V

> ‘The midnight clock has toll’d; and hark, the bell
>
> Of Death beats slow! heard ye the note profound?
> It pauses now; and now, with rising knell,
> Flings to the hollow gale its sullen sound.’
> MASON [‘Elegy on the Death of a Lady’][1]

When Montoni was informed of the death of his wife, and considered that she had died without giving him the signature so necessary to the accomplishment of his wishes, no sense of decency restrained the expression of his resentment. Emily anxiously avoided his presence, and watched, during two days and two nights, with little intermission, by the corpse of her late aunt. Her mind deeply impressed with the unhappy fate of this object, she forgot all her faults, her unjust and imperious conduct to herself; and, remembering only her sufferings, thought of her only with tender compassion. Sometimes, however, she could not avoid musing upon the strange infatuation that had proved so fatal to her aunt, and had involved herself in a labyrinth of misfortune, from which she saw no means of escaping, – the marriage with Montoni. But, when she considered this circumstance, it was ‘more in sorrow than in anger,’ – more for the purpose of indulging lamentation, than reproach.

In her pious cares she was not disturbed by Montoni, who not only avoided the chamber, where the remains of his wife were laid, but that part of the castle adjoining to it, as if he had apprehended a contagion in death. He seemed to have given no orders respecting the funeral, and Emily began to fear he meant to offer a new insult to the memory of Madame Montoni; but from this apprehension she was relieved, when, on the evening of the second day, Annette informed her, that the interment was to take place that night. She knew, that Montoni would not attend; and it was so very grievous to her to think that the remains of her unfortunate aunt would pass to the grave without one relative, or friend to pay them the last decent rites, that she determined to be deterred by no considerations for herself, from observing this duty. She would otherwise have shrunk from the circumstance of following them to the cold vault, to which they were to be carried by men, whose air and countenances seemed to stamp them for murderers, at the midnight hour of silence and privacy, which Montoni had chosen for committing, if possible, to oblivion the reliques of a woman, whom his harsh conduct had, at least, contributed to destroy.

Emily, shuddering with emotions of horror and grief, assisted by Annette, prepared the corpse for interment; and, having wrapt it in cerements, and covered it with a winding-sheet, they watched beside it, till past midnight, when they heard the approaching footsteps of the men, who were to lay it in its earthy bed. It was with difficulty, that Emily overcame her emotion, when, the door of the chamber being thrown open, their gloomy countenances were seen by the glare of the torch they carried, and two of them, without speaking, lifted the body on their shoulders, while the third preceding them with the light, descended through the castle towards the grave, which was in the lower vault of the chapel within the castle walls.

They had to cross two courts, towards the east wing of the castle, which, adjoining the chapel, was, like it, in ruins: but the silence and gloom of these courts had now little power over Emily’s mind, occupied as it was, with more mournful ideas; and she scarcely heard the low and dismal hooting of the night-birds, that roosted among the ivyed battlements of the ruin, or perceived the still flittings of the bat, which frequently crossed her way. But, when, having entered the chapel, and passed between the mouldering pillars of the aisles, the bearers stopped at a flight of steps, that led down to a low arched door, and, their comrade having descended to unlock it, she saw imperfectly the gloomy abyss beyond; – saw the corpse of her aunt carried down these steps, and the ruffian-like figure, that stood with a torch at the bottom to receive it – all her fortitude was lost in emotions of inexpressible grief and terror. She turned to lean upon Annette, who was cold and trembling like herself, and she lingered so long on the summit of the flight, that the gleam of the torch began to die away on the pillars of the chapel, and the men were almost beyond her view. Then, the gloom around her awakening other fears, and a sense of what she considered to be her duty overcoming her reluctance, she descended to the vaults, following the echo of footsteps and the faint ray, that pierced the darkness, till the harsh grating of a distant door, that was opened to receive the corpse, again appalled her.

After the pause of a moment, she went on, and, as she entered the vaults, saw between the arches, at some distance, the men lay down the body near the edge of an open grave, where stood another of Montoni’s men and a priest, whom she did not observe, till he began the burial service; then, lifting her eyes from the ground, she saw the venerable figure of the friar, and heard him in a low voice, equally solemn and affecting, perform the service for the dead. At the moment, in which they let down the body into the earth, the scene was such as only the dark pencil of a Domenichino,[2] perhaps, could have done justice to. The fierce features and wild dress of the *condottieri*, bending with their torches over the grave, into which the corpse was descending, were contrasted by the venerable figure of the monk, wrapt in long black garments, his cowl thrown back from his pale face, on which the light gleaming strongly shewed the lines of affliction softened by piety, and the few grey locks, which time had spared on his temples: while, beside him, stood the softer form of Emily, who leaned for support upon Annette; her face half averted, and shaded by a thin veil, that fell over her figure; and her mild and beautiful countenance fixed in grief so solemn as admitted not of tears, while she thus saw committed untimely to the earth her last relative and friend. The gleams, thrown between the arches of the vaults, where, here and there, the broken ground marked the spots in which other bodies had been recently interred, and the general obscurity beyond were circumstances, that alone would have led on the imagination of a spectator to scenes more horrible, than even that, which was pictured at the grave of the misguided and unfortunate Madame Montoni.

When the service was over, the friar regarded Emily with attention and surprise, and looked as if he wished to speak to her, but was restrained by the presence of the condottieri, who, as they now led the way to the courts, amused themselves with jokes upon his holy order, which he endured in silence, demanding only to be conducted safely to his convent, and to which Emily listened with concern and even horror. When they reached the court, the monk gave her his blessing, and, after a lingering look of pity, turned away to the portal, whither one of the men carried a torch; while Annette, lighting another, preceded Emily to her apartment. The appearance of the friar and the expression of tender compassion, with which he had regarded her, had interested Emily, who, though it was at her earnest supplication, that Montoni had consented to allow a priest to perform the last rites for his deceased wife, knew nothing concerning this person, till Annette now informed her, that he belonged to a monastery, situated among the mountains at a few miles distance. The Superior, who regarded Montoni and his associates, not only with aversion, but with terror, had probably feared to offend him by refusing his request, and had, therefore, ordered a monk to officiate at the funeral, who, with the meek spirit of a christian, had overcome his reluctance to enter the walls of such a castle, by the wish of performing what he considered to be his duty, and, as the chapel was built on consecrated ground, had not objected to commit to it the remains of the late unhappy Madame Montoni.

Several days passed with Emily in total seclusion, and in a state of mind partaking both of terror for herself, and grief for the departed. She, at length, determined to make other efforts to persuade Montoni to permit her return to France. Why he should wish to detain her, she could scarcely dare to conjecture; but it was too certain that he did so, and the absolute refusal he had formerly given to her departure allowed her little hope, that he would now consent to it. But the horror, which his presence inspired, made her defer, from day to day, the mention of this subject; and at last she was awakened from her inactivity only by a message from him, desiring her attendance at a certain hour. She began to hope he meant to resign, now that her aunt was no more, the authority he had usurped over her; till she recollected, that the estates, which had occasioned so much contention, were now hers, and she then feared Montoni was about to employ some stratagem for obtaining them, and that he would detain her his prisoner, till he succeeded. This thought, instead of overcoming her with despondency, roused all the latent powers of her fortitude into action; and the property, which she would willingly have resigned to secure the peace of her aunt, she resolved, that no common sufferings of her own should ever compel her to give to Montoni. For Valancourt's sake also she determined to preserve these estates, since they would afford that competency, by which she hoped to secure the comfort of their future lives. As she thought of this, she indulged the tenderness of tears, and anticipated the delight of that moment, when, with affectionate generosity, she might tell him they were his own. She saw the smile, that lighted up his features – the affectionate regard, which spoke at once his joy and thanks; and, at this instant, she believed she could brave any suffering, which the evil spirit of Montoni might be preparing for her. Remembering then, for the first time since her aunt's death, the papers relative to the estates in question, she determined to search for them, as soon as her interview with Montoni was over.

With these resolutions she met him at the appointed time, and waited to hear his intention before she renewed her request. With him were Orsino and another officer, and both were standing near a table, covered with papers, which he appeared to be examining.

'I sent for you, Emily,' said Montoni, raising his head, 'that you might be a witness in some business, which I am transacting with my friend Orsino. All that is required of you will be to sign your name to this paper:' he then took one up, hurried unintelligibly over some lines, and, laying it before her on the table, offered her a pen. She took it, and was going to write – when the design of Montoni came upon her mind like a flash of lightning; she trembled, let the pen fall, and refused to sign what she had not read. Montoni affected to laugh at her scruples, and, taking up the paper, again pretended to read; but Emily, who still trembled on perceiving her danger, and was astonished, that her own credulity had so nearly betrayed her, positively refused to sign any paper whatever. Montoni, for some time, persevered in affecting to ridicule this refusal; but, when he perceived by her steady perseverance, that she understood his design, he changed his manner, and bade her follow him to another room. There he told her, that he had been willing to spare himself and her the trouble of useless contest, in an affair, where his will was justice, and where she should find it law; and had, therefore, endeavoured to persuade, rather than to compel, her to the practice of her duty.

'I, as the husband of the late Signora Montoni,' he added, 'am the heir of all she possessed; the estates, therefore, which she refused to me in her life-time, can no longer be withheld, and, for your own sake, I would undeceive you, respecting a foolish assertion she once made to you in my hearing – that these estates would be yours, if she died without resigning them to me. She knew at that moment, she had no power to withhold them from me, after her decease; and I think you have more sense, than to provoke my resentment by advancing an unjust claim. I am not in the habit of flattering, and you will, therefore, receive, as sincere, the praise I bestow, when I say, that you possess an understanding superior to that of your sex; and that you have none of those contemptible foibles, that frequently mark the female character – such as avarice and the love of power, which latter makes women delight to contradict and to tease, when they cannot conquer.

If I understand your disposition and your mind, you hold in sovereign contempt these common failings of your sex.'

Montoni paused; and Emily remained silent and expecting; for she knew him too well, to believe he would condescend to such flattery, unless he thought it would promote his own interest; and, though he had forborne to name vanity among the foibles of women, it was evident, that he considered it to be a predominant one, since he designed to sacrifice to hers the character and understanding of her whole sex.

'Judging as I do,' resumed Montoni, 'I cannot believe you will oppose, where you know you cannot conquer, or, indeed, that you would wish to conquer, or be avaricious of any property, when you have not justice on your side. I think it proper, however, to acquaint you with the alternative. If you have a just opinion of the subject in question, you shall be allowed a safe conveyance to France, within a short period; but, if you are so unhappy as to be misled by the late assertion of the Signora, you shall remain my prisoner, till you are convinced of your error.'

Emily calmly said,

'I am not so ignorant, Signor, of the laws on this subject, as to be misled by the assertion of any person. The law, in the present instance, gives me the estates in question, and my own hand shall never betray my right.'

'I have been mistaken in my opinion of you, it appears,' rejoined Montoni, sternly. 'You speak boldly, and presumptuously, upon a subject, which you do not understand. For once, I am willing to pardon the conceit of ignorance; the weakness of your sex, too, from which, it seems, you are not exempt, claims some allowance; but, if you persist in this strain – you have every thing to fear from my justice.'

'From your justice, Signor,' rejoined Emily, 'I have nothing to fear – I have only to hope.'

Montoni looked at her with vexation, and seemed considering what to say. 'I find that you are weak enough,' he resumed, 'to credit the idle assertion I alluded to! For your own sake I lament this; as to me, it is of little consequence. Your credulity can punish only yourself; and I must pity the weakness of mind, which leads you to so much suffering as you are compelling me to prepare for you.'

'You may find, perhaps, Signor,' said Emily, with mild dignity, 'that the strength of my mind is equal to the justice of my cause; and that I can endure with fortitude, when it is in resistance of oppression.'

'You speak like a heroine,' said Montoni, contemptuously; 'we shall see whether you can suffer like one.'

Emily was silent, and he left the room.

Recollecting, that it was for Valancourt's sake she had thus resisted, she now smiled complacently upon the threatened sufferings, and retired to the spot, which her aunt had pointed out as the repository of the papers, relative to the estates, where she found them as described; and, since she knew of no better place of concealment, than this, returned them, without examining their contents, being fearful of discovery, while she should attempt a perusal.

To her own solitary chamber she once more returned, and there thought again of the late conversation with Montoni, and of the evil she might expect from opposition to his will. But his power did not appear so terrible to her imagination, as it was wont to do: a sacred pride was in her heart, that taught it to swell against the pressure of injustice, and almost to glory in the quiet sufferance of ills, in a cause, which had also the interest of Valancourt for its object. For the first time, she felt the full extent of her own superiority to Montoni, and despised the authority, which, till now, she had only feared.

As she sat musing, a peal of laughter rose from the terrace, and, on going to the casement, she saw, with inexpressible surprise, three ladies, dressed in the gala habit of Venice, walking with several gentlemen below. She gazed in an astonishment that made her remain at the window, regardless of being observed, till the group passed under it; and, one of the strangers looking up, she perceived the features of Signora Livona, with whose manners she had been so much charmed, the day after her arrival at Venice, and who had been there introduced at the table of Montoni. This discovery occasioned her an emotion of doubtful joy; for it was matter of joy and comfort to know, that a person, of a mind so gentle, as that of Signora Livona seemed to be, was near her; yet there was something so extraordinary in her being at this castle, circumstanced as it now was, and evidently, by the gaiety of her air, with her own consent, that a very painful surmise arose, concerning her character. But the thought was so shocking to Emily, whose affection the fascinating manners of the Signora had won, and appeared so improbable, when she remembered these manners, that she dismissed it almost instantly.

On Annette's appearance, however, she enquired, concerning these strangers; and the former was as eager to tell, as Emily was to learn.

'They are just come, ma'amselle,' said Annette, 'with two Signors from Venice, and I was glad to see such Christian faces once again. – But what can they mean by coming here? They must surely be stark mad to come freely to such a place as this! Yet they do come freely, for they seem merry enough, I am sure.'

'They were taken prisoners, perhaps?' said Emily.

'Taken prisoners!' exclaimed Annette; 'no, indeed, ma'amselle, not they. I remember one of them very well at Venice: she came two or three times, to the Signor's, you know, ma'amselle, and it was said, but I did not believe a word of it – it was said, that the Signor liked her better than he should do. Then why, says I, bring her to my lady? Very true, said Ludovico; but he looked as if he knew more, too.'

Emily desired Annette would endeavour to learn who these ladies were, as well as all she could concerning them; and she then changed the subject, and spoke of distant France.

'Ah, ma'amselle! we shall never see it more!' said Annette, almost weeping. – 'I must come on my travels, forsooth!'

Emily tried to sooth and to cheer her, with a hope, in which she scarcely herself indulged.

'How – how, ma'amselle, could you leave France, and leave Mons. Valancourt, too?' said Annette, sobbing. 'I – I – am sure, if Ludovico had been in France, I would never have left it.'

'Why do you lament quitting France, then?' said Emily, trying to smile, 'since, if you had remained there, you would not have found Ludovico.'

'Ah, ma'amselle! I only wish I was out of this frightful castle, serving you in France, and I would care about nothing else!'

'Thank you, my good Annette, for your affectionate regard; the time will come, I hope, when you may remember the expression of that wish with pleasure.'

Annette departed on her business, and Emily sought to lose the sense of her own cares, in the visionary scenes of the poet; but she had again to lament the irresistible force of circumstances over the taste and powers of the mind; and that it requires a spirit at ease to be sensible even to the abstract pleasures of pure intellect. The enthusiasm of genius, with all its pictured scenes, now appeared cold, and dim. As she mused upon the book before her, she involuntarily exclaimed, 'Are these, indeed, the passages, that have so often given me exquisite delight? Where did the charm exist? – Was it in my mind, or in the imagination of the poet? It lived in each,' said she, pausing. 'But the fire of the poet is vain, if the mind of his reader is not tempered like his own, however it may be inferior to his in power.'

Emily would have pursued this train of thinking, because it relieved her from more painful reflection, but she found again, that thought cannot always be controlled by will; and hers returned to the consideration of her own situation.

In the evening, not choosing to venture down to the ramparts, where she would be exposed to the rude gaze of Montoni's associates, she walked for air in the gallery, adjoining her chamber; on reaching the further end of which she heard distant sounds of merriment and laughter. It was the wild uproar of riot, not the cheering gaiety of tempered mirth; and seemed to come from that part of the castle, where Montoni usually was. Such sounds, at this time, when her aunt had been so few days dead, particularly shocked her, consistent as they were with the late conduct of Montoni.

As she listened, she thought she distinguished female voices mingling with the laughter, and this confirmed her worst surmise, concerning the character of Signora Livona and her companions. It was evident, that they had not been brought hither by compulsion; and she beheld herself in the remote wilds of the Apennine, surrounded by men, whom she considered to be little less than ruffians, and their worst associates, amid scenes of vice, from which her soul recoiled in horror. It was at this moment, when the scenes of the present and the future opened to her imagination, that the image of Valancourt failed in its influence, and her resolution shook with dread. She thought she understood all the horrors, which Montoni was preparing for her, and shrunk from an encounter with such remorseless vengeance, as he could inflict. The disputed estates she now almost determined to yield at once, whenever he should again call upon her, that she might regain safety and freedom; but then, the remembrance of Valancourt would steal to her heart, and plunge her into the distractions of doubt.

She continued walking in the gallery, till evening threw its melancholy twilight through the painted casements, and deepened the gloom of the oak wainscoting around her; while the distant perspective of the corridor was so much obscured, as to be discernible only by the glimmering window, that terminated it.

Along the vaulted halls and passages below, peals of laughter echoed faintly, at intervals, to this remote part of the castle, and seemed to render the succeeding stillness more dreary. Emily, however, unwilling to return to her more forlorn chamber, whither Annette was not yet come, still paced the gallery. As she passed the door of the apartment, where she had once dared to lift the veil, which discovered to her a spectacle so horrible, that she had never after remembered it, but with emotions of indescribable awe, this remembrance suddenly recurred. It now brought with it reflections more terrible, than it had yet done, which the late conduct of Montoni occasioned; and, hastening to quit the gallery, while she had power to do so, she heard a sudden step behind her. – It might be that of Annette; but, turning fearfully to look, she saw, through the gloom, a tall figure following her, and all the horrors of that chamber rushed upon her mind. In the next moment, she found herself clasped in the arms of some person, and heard a deep voice murmur in her ear.

When she had power to speak, or to distinguish articulated sounds, she demanded who detained her.

'It is I,' replied the voice – 'Why are you thus alarmed?'

She looked on the face of the person who spoke, but the feeble light, that gleamed through the high casement at the end of the gallery, did not permit her to distinguish the features.

'Whoever you are,' said Emily, in a trembling voice, 'for heaven's sake let me go!'

'My charming Emily,' said the man, 'why will you shut yourself up in this obscure place, when there is so much gaiety below? Return with me to the cedar parlour, where you will be the fairest ornament of the party; – you shall not repent the exchange.'

Emily disdained to reply, and still endeavoured to liberate herself.

'Promise, that you will come,' he continued, 'and I will release you immediately; but first give me a reward for so doing.'

'Who are you?' demanded Emily, in a tone of mingled terror and indignation, while she still struggled for liberty – 'who are you, that have the cruelty thus to insult me?'

'Why call me cruel?' said the man, 'I would remove you from this dreary solitude to a merry party below. Do you not know me?’

Emily now faintly remembered, that he was one of the officers who were with Montoni when she attended him in the morning. ‘I thank you for the kindness of your intention,’ she replied, without appearing to understand him, ‘but I wish for nothing so much as that you would leave me.’

‘Charming Emily!’ said he, ‘give up this foolish whim for solitude, and come with me to the company, and eclipse the beauties, who make part of it; you, only, are worthy of my love.’ He attempted to kiss her hand, but the strong impulse of her indignation gave her power to liberate herself, and she fled towards the chamber. She closed the door, before he reached it, having secured which, she sunk in a chair, overcome by terror and by the exertion she had made, while she heard his voice, and his attempts to open the door, without having the power to raise herself. At length, she perceived him depart, and had remained, listening, for a considerable time, and was somewhat revived by not hearing any sound, when suddenly she remembered the door of the private stair-case, and that he might enter that way, since it was fastened only on the other side. She then employed herself in endeavouring to secure it, in the manner she had formerly done. It appeared to her, that Montoni had already commenced his scheme of vengeance, by withdrawing from her his protection, and she repented of the rashness, that had made her brave the power of such a man. To retain the estates seemed to be now utterly impossible, and to preserve her life, perhaps her honour, she resolved, if she should escape the horrors of this night, to give up all claims to the estates, on the morrow, provided Montoni would suffer her to depart from Udolpho.

When she had come to this decision, her mind became more composed, though she still anxiously listened, and often started at ideal sounds, that appeared to issue from the stair-case.

Having sat in darkness for some hours, during all which time Annette did not appear, she began to have serious apprehensions for her; but, not daring to venture down into the castle, was compelled to remain in uncertainty, as to the cause of this unusual absence.

Emily often stole to the stair-case door, to listen if any step approached, but still no sound alarmed her: determining, however, to watch, during the night, she once more rested on her dark and desolate couch, and bathed the pillow with innocent tears. She thought of her deceased parents and then of the absent Valancourt, and frequently called upon their names; for the profound stillness, that now reigned, was propitious to the musing sorrow of her mind.

While she thus remained, her ear suddenly caught the notes of distant music, to which she listened attentively, and, soon perceiving this to be the instrument she had formerly heard at midnight, she rose, and stepped softly to the casement, to which the sounds appeared to come from a lower room.

In a few moments, their soft melody was accompanied by a voice so full of pathos, that it evidently sang not of imaginary sorrows. Its sweet and peculiar tones she thought she had somewhere heard before; yet, if this was not fancy, it was, at most, a very faint recollection. It stole over her mind, amidst the anguish of her present suffering, like a celestial strain, soothing, and re-assuring her; – ‘Pleasant as the gale of spring, that sighs on the hunter’s ear, when he awakens from dreams of joy, and has heard the music of the spirits of the hill.’*

But her emotion can scarcely be imagined, when she heard sung, with the taste and simplicity of true feeling, one of the popular airs of her native province, to which she had so often listened with delight, when a child, and which she had so often heard her father repeat! To this well-known song, never, till now, heard but in her native country, her heart melted, while the memory of past times returned. The pleasant, peaceful scenes of Gascony, the tenderness and goodness of her parents, the taste and simplicity of her former life – all rose to her fancy, and formed a picture, so sweet and glowing, so strikingly contrasted with the scenes, the characters and the dangers, which now surrounded her – that her mind could not bear to pause upon the retrospect, and shrunk at the acuteness of its own sufferings.

Her sighs were deep and convulsed; she could no longer listen to the strain, that had so often charmed her to tranquillity, and she withdrew from the casement to a remote part of the chamber. But she was not yet beyond the reach of the music; she heard the measure change, and the succeeding air called her again to the window, for she immediately recollected it to be the same she had formerly heard in the fishing-house in Gascony. Assisted, perhaps, by the mystery, which had then accompanied this strain, it had made so deep an impression on her memory, that she had never since entirely forgotten it; and the manner, in which it was now sung, convinced her, however unaccountable the circumstance appeared, that this was the same voice she had then heard. Surprise soon yielded to other emotions; a thought darted, like lightning, upon her mind, which discovered a train of hopes, that revived all her spirits. Yet these hopes were so new, so unexpected, so astonishing, that she did not dare to trust, though she could not resolve to discourage them. She sat down by the casement, breathless, and overcome with the alternate emotions of hope and fear; then rose again, leaned from the window, that she might catch a nearer sound, listened, now doubting and then believing, softly exclaimed the name of Valancourt, and then sunk again into the chair. Yes, it was possible, that Valancourt was near her, and she recollected circumstances, which induced her to believe it was his voice she had just heard. She remembered he had more than once said that the fishing-house, where she had formerly listened to this voice and air, and where she had seen pencilled sonnets, addressed to herself, had been his favourite haunt, before he had been made known to her; there, too, she had herself unexpectedly met him. It appeared, from these circumstances, more than probable, that he was the musician, who had formerly charmed her attention, and the author of the lines, which had expressed such tender admiration; – who else, indeed, could it be? She was unable, at that time, to form a conjecture, as to the writer, but, since her acquaintance with Valancourt, whenever he had mentioned the fishing-house to have been known to him, she had not scrupled to believe that he was the author of the sonnets.

As these considerations passed over her mind, joy, fear and tenderness contended at her heart; she leaned again from the casement to catch the sounds, which might confirm, or destroy her hope, though she did not recollect to have ever heard him sing; but the voice, and the instrument, now ceased.

She considered for a moment whether she should venture to speak: then, not choosing, lest it should not be he, to mention his name, and yet too much interested to neglect the opportunity of enquiring, she called from the casement, ‘Is that song from Gascony?’ Her anxious attention was not cheered by any reply; every thing remained silent. Her impatience increasing with her fears, she repeated the question; but still no sound was heard, except the sighings of the wind among the battlements above; and she endeavoured to console herself with a belief, that the stranger, whoever he was, had retired, before she had spoken, beyond the reach of her voice, which, it appeared certain, had Valancourt heard and recognized, he would instantly have replied to. Presently, however, she considered, that a motive of prudence, and not an accidental removal, might occasion his silence; but the surmise, that led to this reflection, suddenly changed her hope and joy to terror and grief; for, if Valancourt were in the castle, it was too probable, that he was here a prisoner, taken with some of his countrymen, many of whom were at that time engaged in the wars of Italy, or intercepted in some attempt to reach her. Had he even recollected Emily’s voice, he would have feared, in these circumstances, to reply to it, in the presence of the men, who guarded his prison.

What so lately she had eagerly hoped she now believed she dreaded; – dreaded to know, that Valancourt was near her; and, while she was anxious to be relieved from her apprehension for his safety, she still was unconscious, that a hope of soon seeing him, struggled with the fear.

She remained listening at the casement, till the air began to freshen, and one high mountain in the east to glimmer with the morning; when, wearied with anxiety, she retired to her couch, where she found it utterly impossible to sleep, for joy, tenderness, doubt and apprehension, distracted her during the whole night. Now she rose from the couch, and opened the casement to listen; then she would pace the room with impatient steps, and, at length, return with despondence to her pillow. Never did hours appear to move so heavily, as those of this anxious night; after which she hoped that Annette might appear, and conclude her present state of torturing suspense.

CHAPTER VI

'_________ might we but hear
The folded flocks penn'd in their watled cotes,
Or sound of pastoral reed with oaten stops,
Or whistle from the lodge, or village cock
Count the night watches to his feathery dames,
'Twould be some solace yet, some little cheering
In this close dungeon of innumerous boughs.'
MILTON [*Comus*][1]

In the morning, Emily was relieved from her fears for Annette, who came at an early hour.

'Here were fine doings in the castle, last night, ma'amselle,' said she, as soon as she entered the room, – 'fine doings, indeed! Was you not frightened, ma'amselle, at not seeing me?'

'I was alarmed both on your account and on my own,' replied Emily – 'What detained you?'

'Aye, I said so, I told him so; but it would not do. It was not my fault, indeed, ma'amselle, for I could not get out. That rogue Ludovico locked me up again.'

'Locked you up!' said Emily, with displeasure, 'Why do you permit Ludovico to lock you up?'

'Holy Saints!' exclaimed Annette, 'how can I help it! If he will lock the door, ma'amselle, and take away the key, how am I to get out, unless I jump through the window? But that I should not mind so much, if the casements here were not all so high; one can hardly scramble up to them on the inside, and one should break one's neck, I suppose, going down on the outside. But you know, I dare say, ma'am, what a hurly-burly the castle was in, last night; you must have heard some of the uproar.'

'What, were they disputing, then?' said Emily.

'No, ma'amselle, not fighting, but almost as good, for I believe there was not one of the Signors sober; and what is more, not one of those fine ladies sober, either. I thought, when I saw them first, that all those fine silks and fine veils, – why, ma'amselle, their veils were worked with silver! and fine trimmings

– boded no good – I guessed what they were!'

'Good God!' exclaimed Emily, 'what will become of me!'

'Aye, ma'am, Ludovico said much the same thing of me. "Good God!"

said he, "Annette, what is to become of you, if you are to go running about the castle among all these drunken Signors?"

'"O!" says I, "for that matter, I only want to go to my young lady's chamber, and I have only to go, you know, along the vaulted passage and across the great hall and up the marble stair-case and along the north gallery and through the west wing of the castle, and I am in the corridor in a minute." "Are you so?" says he, "and what is to become of you, if you meet any of those noble cavaliers in the way?" "Well," says I, "if you think there is danger, then, go with me, and guard me; I am never afraid when you are by." "What!" says he, "when I am scarcely recovered of one wound, shall I put myself in the way of getting another? for if any of the cavaliers meet you, they will fall a-fighting with me directly. No, no," says he, "I will cut the way shorter, than through the vaulted passage and up the marble stair-case and along the north gallery and through the west wing of the castle, for you shall stay here, Annette; you shall not go out of this room, to-night." So, with that I says—'

'Well, well,' said Emily, impatiently, and anxious to enquire on another subject, – 'so he locked you up?'

'Yes, he did indeed, ma'amselle, notwithstanding all I could say to the contrary; and Catarina and I and he staid there all night. And in a few minutes after I was not so vexed, for there came Signor Verezzi roaring along the passage, like a mad bull, and he mistook Ludovico's hall, for old Carlo's; so he tried to burst open the door, and called out for more wine, for that he had drunk all the flasks dry, and was dying of thirst. So we were all as still as night, that he might suppose there was nobody in the room; but the Signor was as cunning as the best of us, and kept calling out at the door, "Come forth, my antient hero!" said he, "here is no enemy at the gate, that you need hide yourself: come forth, my valorous Signor Steward!" Just then old Carlo opened his door, and he came with a flask in his hand; for, as soon as the Signor saw him, he was as tame as could be, and followed him away as naturally as a dog does a butcher with a piece of meat in his basket. All this I saw through the key-hole. "Well, Annette," said Ludovico, jeeringly, "shall I let you out now?" "O no, says I, I would not" —'

‘I have some questions to ask you on another subject,’ interrupted Emily, quite wearied by this story. ‘Do you know whether there are any prisoners in the castle, and whether they are confined at this end of the edifice?’

‘I was not in the way, ma’amselle,’ replied Annette, ‘when the first party came in from the mountains, and the last party is not come back yet, so I don’t know, whether there are any prisoners; but it is expected back to-night, or to-morrow, and I shall know then, perhaps.’

Emily enquired if she had ever heard the servants talk of prisoners.

‘Ah ma’amselle!’ said Annette archly, ‘now I dare say you are thinking of Monsieur Valancourt, and that he may have come among the armies, which, they say, are come from our country, to fight against this state, and that he has met with some of *our* people, and is taken captive. O Lord! how glad I should be, if it was so!’

‘Would you, indeed, be glad?’ said Emily, in a tone of mournful reproach.

‘To be sure I should, ma’am,’ replied Annette, ‘and would not you be glad too, to see Signor Valancourt? I don’t know any chevalier I like better, I have a very great regard for the Signor, truly.’

‘Your regard for him cannot be doubted,’ said Emily, ‘since you wish to see him a prisoner.’

‘Why no, ma’amselle, not a prisoner either; but one must be glad to see him, you know. And it was only the other night I dreamt – I dreamt I saw him drive into the castle-yard all in a coach and six, and dressed out, with a laced coat and a sword, like a lord as he is.’

Emily could not forbear smiling at Annette’s ideas of Valancourt, and repeated her enquiry, whether she had heard the servants talk of prisoners.

‘No, ma’amselle,’ replied she, ‘never; and lately they have done nothing but talk of the apparition, that has been walking about of a night on the ramparts, and that frightened the sentinels into fits. It came among them like a flash of fire, they say, and they all fell down in a row, till they came to themselves again; and then it was gone, and nothing to be seen but the old castle walls; so they helped one another up again as fast as they could. You would not believe, ma’amselle, though I shewed you the very cannon, where it used to appear.’

‘And are you, indeed, so simple, Annette,’ said Emily, smiling at this curious exaggeration of the circumstance she had witnessed, ‘as to credit these stories?’

‘Credit them, ma’amselle! why all the world could not persuade me out of them. Roberto and Sebastian and half a dozen more of them went into fits! To be sure, there was no occasion for that; I said, myself, there was no need of that, for, says I, when the enemy comes, what a pretty figure they will cut, if they are to fall down in fits, all of a row! The enemy won’t be so civil, perhaps, as to walk off, like the ghost, and leave them to help one another up, but will fall to, cutting and slashing, till he makes them all rise up dead men. No, no, says I, there is reason in all things: though I might have fallen down in a fit, that was no rule for them, being, because it is no business of mine to look gruff, and fight battles.’

Emily endeavoured to correct the superstitious weakness of Annette, though she could not entirely subdue her own; to which the latter only replied, ‘Nay, ma’amselle, you will believe nothing; you are almost as bad as the Signor himself, who was in a great passion when they told him of what had happened, and swore that the first man, who repeated such nonsense, should be thrown into the dungeon under the east turret. This was a hard punishment too, for only talking nonsense, as he called it, but I dare say he had other reasons for calling it so, than you have, ma’am.’

Emily looked displeased, and made no reply. As she mused upon the recollected appearance, which had lately so much alarmed her, and considered the circumstances of the figure having stationed itself opposite to her casement, she was for a moment inclined to believe it was Valancourt, whom she had seen. Yet, if it was he, why did he not speak to her, when he had the opportunity of doing so – and, if he was a prisoner in the castle, and he could be here in no other character, how could he obtain the means of walking abroad on the rampart? Thus she was utterly unable to decide, whether the musician and the form she had observed, were the same, or, if they were, whether this was Valancourt. She, however, desired that Annette would endeavour to learn whether any prisoners were in the castle, and also their names.

‘O dear, ma’amselle!’ said Annette, ‘I forget to tell you what you bade me ask about, the ladies, as they call themselves, who are lately come to Udolpho. Why that Signora Livona, that the Signor brought to see my late lady at Venice, is his mistress now, and was little better then, I dare say. And Ludovico says (but pray be secret, ma’am) that his *Excellenza* introduced her only to impose upon the world, that had begun to make free with her character. So when people saw my lady notice her, they thought what they had heard must be scandal. The other two are the mistresses of Signor Verezzi and Signor Bertolini; and Signor Montoni invited them all to the castle; and so, yesterday, he gave a great entertainment; and there they were, all drinking Tuscany wine and all sorts, and laughing and singing, till they made the castle ring again. But I thought they were dismal sounds, so soon after my poor lady’s death too; and they brought to my mind what she would have thought, if she had heard them – but she cannot hear them now, poor soul! said I.’

Emily turned away to conceal her emotion, and then desired Annette to go, and make enquiry, concerning the prisoners, that might be in the castle, but conjured her to do it with caution, and on no account to mention her name, or that of Monsieur Valancourt.

‘Now I think of it, ma’amselle,’ said Annette, ‘I do believe there are prisoners, for I overheard one of the Signor’s men, yesterday, in the servants hall, talking something about ransoms, and saying what a fine thing it was for his *Excellenza* to catch up men, and they were as good booty as any other, because of the ransoms. And the other man was grumbling, and saying it was fine enough for the Signor, but none so fine for his soldiers, because, said he, we don’t go shares there.’

This information heightened Emily’s impatience to know more, and Annette immediately departed on her enquiry.

The late resolution of Emily to resign her estates to Montoni, now gave way to new considerations; the possibility, that Valancourt was near her, revived her fortitude, and she determined to brave the threatened vengeance, at least, till she could be assured whether he was really in the castle. She was in this temper of mind, when she received a message from Montoni, requiring her attendance in the cedar parlour, which she obeyed with trembling, and, on her way thither, endeavoured to animate her fortitude with the idea of Valancourt.

Montoni was alone. ‘I sent for you,’ said he, ‘to give you another opportunity of retracting your late mistaken assertions concerning the Languedoc estates. I will condescend to advise, where I may command. – If you are really deluded by an opinion, that you have any right to these estates, at least, do not persist in the error – an error, which you may perceive, too late, has been fatal to you. Dare my resentment no further, but sign the papers.’

‘If I have no right in these estates, sir,’ said Emily, ‘of what service can it be to you, that I should sign any papers, concerning them? If the lands are yours by law, you certainly may possess them, without my interference, or my consent.’

‘I will have no more argument,’ said Montoni, with a look that made her tremble. ‘What had I but trouble to expect, when I condescended to reason with a baby! But I will be trifled with no longer: let the recollection of your aunt’s sufferings, in consequence of her folly and obstinacy, teach you a lesson. – Sign the papers.’

Emily’s resolution was for a moment awed: – she shrunk at the recollections he revived, and from the vengeance he threatened; but then, the image of Valancourt, who so long had loved her, and who was now, perhaps, so near her, came to her heart, and, together with the strong feelings of indignation, with which she had always, from her infancy, regarded an act of injustice, inspired her with a noble, though imprudent, courage.

‘Sign the papers,’ said Montoni, more impatiently than before.

‘Never, sir,’ replied Emily; ‘that request would have proved to me the injustice of your claim, had I even been ignorant of my right.’

Montoni turned pale with anger, while his quivering lip and lurking eye made her almost repent the boldness of her speech.

‘Then all my vengeance falls upon you,’ he exclaimed, with an horrible oath. ‘And think not it shall be delayed. Neither the estates in Languedoc, or Gascony, shall be yours; you have dared to question my right, – now dare to question my power. I have a punishment which you think not of; it is terrible! This night – this very night’ —

‘This night!’ repeated another voice.

Montoni paused, and turned half round, but, seeming to recollect himself, he proceeded in a lower tone.

‘You have lately seen one terrible example of obstinacy and folly; yet this, it appears, has not been sufficient to deter you. – I could tell you of others – I could make you tremble at the bare recital.’

He was interrupted by a groan, which seemed to rise from underneath the chamber they were in; and, as he threw a glance round it, impatience and rage flashed from his eyes, yet something like a shade of fear passed over his countenance. Emily sat down in a chair, near the door, for the various emotions she had suffered, now almost overcame her; but Montoni paused scarcely an instant, and, commanding his features, resumed his discourse in a lower, yet sterner voice.

‘I say, I could give you other instances of my power and of my character, which it seems you do not understand, or you would not defy me. – I could tell you, that, when once my resolution is taken – but I am talking to a baby. Let me, however, repeat, that terrible as are the examples I could recite, the recital could not now benefit you; for, though your repentance would put an immediate end to opposition, it would not now appease my indignation. – I will have vengeance as well as justice.’

Another groan filled the pause which Montoni made.

‘Leave the room instantly!’ said he, seeming not to notice this strange occurrence. Without power to implore his pity, she rose to go, but found that she could not support herself; awe and terror overcame her, and she sunk again into the chair.

‘Quit my presence!’ cried Montoni. ‘This affectation of fear ill becomes the heroine who has just dared to brave my indignation.’

‘Did you hear nothing, Signor?’ said Emily, trembling, and still unable to leave the room.

‘I heard my own voice,’ rejoined Montoni, sternly.

‘And nothing else?’ said Emily, speaking with difficulty.—‘There again! Do you hear nothing now?’

‘Obey my order,’ repeated Montoni. ‘And for these fool’s tricks – I will soon discover by whom they are practised.’

Emily again rose, and exerted herself to the utmost to leave the room, while Montoni followed her; but, instead of calling aloud to his servants to search the chamber, as he had formerly done on a similar occurrence, passed to the ramparts.

As, in her way to the corridor, she rested for a moment at an open casement, Emily saw a party of Montoni’s troops winding down a distant mountain, whom she noticed no further, than as they brought to her mind the wretched prisoners they were, perhaps, bringing to the castle. At length, having reached her apartment, she threw herself upon the couch, overcome with the new horrors of her situation. Her thoughts lost in tumult and perplexity, she could neither repent of, or approve, her late conduct; she could only remember, that she was in the power of a man, who had no principle of action – but his will; and the astonishment and terrors of superstition, which had, for a moment, so strongly assailed her, now yielded to those of reason.

She was, at length, roused from the reverie, which engaged her, by a confusion of distant voices, and a clattering of hoofs, that seemed to come, on the wind, from the courts. A sudden hope, that some good was approaching, seized her mind, till she remembered the troops she had observed from the casement, and concluded this to be the party, which Annette had said were expected at Udolpho.

Soon after, she heard voices faintly from the halls, and the noise of horses' feet sunk away in the wind; silence ensued. Emily listened anxiously for Annette's step in the corridor, but a pause of total stillness continued, till again the castle seemed to be all tumult and confusion. She heard the echoes of many footsteps, passing to and fro in the halls and avenues below, and then busy tongues were loud on the rampart. Having hurried to her casement, she perceived Montoni, with some of his officers, leaning on the walls, and pointing from them; while several soldiers were employed at the further end of the rampart about some cannon; and she continued to observe them, careless of the passing time.

Annette at length appeared, but brought no intelligence of Valancourt, 'For, ma'amselle,' said she, 'all the people pretend to know nothing about any prisoners. But here is a fine piece of business! The rest of the party are just arrived, ma'am; they came scampering in, as if they would have broken their necks; one scarcely knew whether the man, or his horse would get within the gates first. And they have brought word – and such news! they have brought word, that a party of the enemy, as they call them, are coming towards the castle; so we shall have all the officers of justice, I suppose, besieging it! all those terrible-looking fellows one used to see at Venice.'

'Thank God!' exclaimed Emily, fervently, 'there is yet a hope left for me, then!'

'What mean you, ma'amselle? Do you wish to fall into the hands of those sad-looking men! Why I used to shudder as I passed them, and should have guessed what they were, if Ludovico had not told me.'

'We cannot be in worse hands than at present,' replied Emily, unguardedly; 'but what reason have you to suppose these are officers of justice?'

'Why *our* people, ma'am, are all in such a fright, and a fuss; and I don't know any thing but the fear of justice, that could make them so. I used to think nothing on earth could fluster them, unless, indeed, it was a ghost, or so; but now, some of them are for hiding down in the vaults under the castle; but you must not tell the Signor this, ma'amselle, and I overheard two of them talking—Holy Mother! what makes you look so sad, ma'amselle? You don't hear what I say!'

'Yes, I do, Annette; pray proceed.'

'Well, ma'amselle, all the castle is in such hurly-burly. Some of the men are loading the cannon, and some are examining the great gates, and the walls all round, and are hammering and patching up, just as if all those repairs had never been made, that were so long about. But what is to become of me and you, ma'amselle, and Ludovico? O! when I hear the sound of the cannon, I shall die with fright. If I could but catch the great gate open for one minute, I would be even with it for shutting me within these walls so long! – it should never see me again.'

Emily caught the latter words of Annette. 'O! if you could find it open, but for one moment!' she exclaimed, 'my peace might yet be saved!' The heavy groan she uttered, and the wildness of her look, terrified Annette, still more than her words; who entreated Emily to explain the meaning of them, to whom it suddenly occurred, that Ludovico might be of some service, if there should be a possibility of escape, and who repeated the substance of what had passed between Montoni and herself, but conjured her to mention this to no person except to Ludovico. 'It may, perhaps, be in his power,' she added, 'to effect our escape. Go to him, Annette, tell him what I have to apprehend, and what I have already suffered; but entreat him to be secret, and to lose no time in attempting to release us. If he is willing to undertake this he shall be amply rewarded. I cannot speak with him myself, for we might be observed, and then effectual care would be taken to prevent our flight. But be quick, Annette, and, above all, be discreet – I will await your return in this apartment.'

The girl, whose honest heart had been much affected by the recital, was now as eager to obey, as Emily was to employ her, and she immediately quitted the room.

Emily's surprise increased, as she reflected upon Annette's intelligence. 'Alas!' said she, 'what can the officers of justice do against an armed castle? these cannot be such.' Upon further consideration, however, she concluded, that, Montoni's bands having plundered the country round, the inhabitants had taken arms, and were coming with the officers of police and a party of soldiers, to force their way into the castle. 'But they know not,' thought she, 'its strength, or the armed numbers within it. Alas! except from flight, I have nothing to hope!'

Montoni, though not precisely what Emily apprehended him to be – a captain of banditti – had employed his troops in enterprises not less daring, or less atrocious, than such a character would have undertaken. They had not only pillaged, whenever opportunity offered, the helpless traveller, but had attacked, and plundered the villas of several persons, which, being situated among the solitary recesses of the mountains, were totally unprepared for resistance. In these expeditions the commanders of the party did not appear, and the men, partly disguised, had sometimes been mistaken for common robbers, and, at others, for bands of the foreign enemy, who, at that period, invaded the country. But, though they had already pillaged several mansions, and brought home considerable treasures, they had ventured to approach only one castle, in the attack of which they were assisted by other troops of their own order; from this, however, they were vigorously repulsed, and pursued by some of the foreign enemy, who were in league with the besieged. Montoni's troops fled precipitately towards Udolpho, but were so closely tracked over the mountains, that, when they reached one of the heights in the neighbourhood of the castle, and looked back upon the road, they perceived the enemy winding among the cliffs below, and at not more than a league distant. Upon this discovery, they hastened forward with increased speed, to prepare Montoni for the enemy; and it was their arrival, which had thrown the castle into such confusion and tumult.

As Emily awaited anxiously some information from below, she now saw from her casements a body of troops pour over the neighbouring heights; and, though Annette had been gone a very short time, and had a difficult and dangerous business to accomplish, her impatience for intelligence became painful: she listened; opened her door; and often went out upon the corridor to meet her.

At length, she heard a footstep approach her chamber; and, on opening the door, saw, not Annette, but old Carlo! New fears rushed upon her mind. He said he came from the Signor, who had ordered him to inform her, that she must be ready to depart from Udolpho immediately, for that the castle was about to be besieged; and that mules were preparing to convey her, with her guides, to a place of safety.

'Of safety!' exclaimed Emily, thoughtlessly; 'has, then, the Signor so much consideration for me?'

Carlo looked upon the ground, and made no reply. A thousand opposite emotions agitated Emily, successively, as she listened to old Carlo; those of joy, grief, distrust and apprehension, appeared, and vanished from her mind, with the quickness of lightning. One moment, it seemed impossible, that Montoni could take this measure merely for her preservation; and so very strange was his sending her from the castle at all, that she could attribute it only to the design of carrying into execution the new scheme of vengeance, with which he had menaced her. In the next instant, it appeared so desirable to quit the castle, under any circumstances, that she could not but rejoice in the prospect, believing that change must be for the better, till she remembered the probability of Valancourt being detained in it, when sorrow and regret usurped her mind, and she wished, much more fervently than she had yet done, that it might not be his voice which she had heard.

Carlo having reminded her, that she had no time to lose, for that the enemy were within sight of the castle, Emily entreated him to inform her whither she was to go; and, after some hesitation, he said he had received no orders to tell; but, on her repeating the question, replied, that he believed she was to be carried into Tuscany.

'To Tuscany!' exclaimed Emily – 'and why thither?'

Carlo answered, that he knew nothing further, than that she was to be lodged in a cottage on the borders of Tuscany, at the feet of the Apennines – 'Not a day's journey distant,' said he.

Emily now dismissed him; and, with trembling hands, prepared the small package, that she meant to take with her; while she was employed about which Annette returned.

'O ma'amselle!' said she, 'nothing can be done! Ludovico says the new porter is more watchful even than Barnardine was, and we might as well throw ourselves in the way of a dragon, as in his. Ludovico is almost as broken-hearted as you are, ma'am, on my account, he says, and I am sure I shall never live to hear the cannon fire twice!'

She now began to weep, but revived upon hearing of what had just occurred, and entreated Emily to take her with her.

'That I will do most willingly,' replied Emily, 'if Signor Montoni permits it;' to which Annette made no reply, but ran out of the room, and immediately sought Montoni, who was on the terrace, surrounded by his officers, where she began her petition. He sharply bade her go into the castle, and absolutely refused her request. Annette, however, not only pleaded for herself, but for Ludovico; and Montoni had ordered some of his men to take her from his presence, before she would retire.

In an agony of disappointment, she returned to Emily, who foreboded little good towards herself, from this refusal to Annette, and who, soon after, received a summons to repair to the great court, where the mules, with her guides, were in waiting. Emily here tried in vain to sooth the weeping Annette, who persisted in saying, that she should never see her dear young lady again; a fear, which her mistress secretly thought too well justified, but which she endeavoured to restrain, while, with apparent composure, she bade this affectionate servant farewell. Annette, however, followed to the courts, which were now thronged with people, busy in preparation for the enemy; and, having seen her mount her mule and depart, with her attendants, through the portal, turned into the castle and wept again.

Emily, meanwhile, looked back upon the gloomy courts of the castle, no longer silent as when she had first entered them, but resounding with the noise of preparation for their defence, as well as crowded with soldiers and workmen, hurrying to and fro; and, when she passed once more under the huge portcullis, which had formerly struck her with terror and dismay; and, looking round, saw no walls to confine her steps – felt, in spite of anticipation, the sudden joy of a prisoner, who unexpectedly finds himself at liberty. This emotion would not suffer her now to look impartially on the dangers that awaited her without; on mountains infested by hostile parties, who seized every opportunity for plunder; and on a journey commenced under the guidance of men, whose countenances certainly did not speak favourably of their dispositions. In the present moments, she could only rejoice, that she was liberated from those walls, which she had entered with such dismal forebodings; and, remembering the superstitious presentiment, which had then seized her, she could now smile at the impression it had made upon her mind.

As she gazed, with these emotions, upon the turrets of the castle, rising high over the woods, among which she wound, the stranger, whom she believed to be confined there, returned to her remembrance, and anxiety and apprehension, lest he should be Valancourt, again passed like a cloud upon her joy. She recollected every circumstance, concerning this unknown person, since the night, when she had first heard him play the song of her native province; – circumstances, which she had so often recollected, and compared before, without extracting from them any thing like conviction, and which still only prompted her to believe, that Valancourt was a prisoner at Udolpho. It was possible, however, that the men, who were her conductors, might afford her information, on this subject; but, fearing to question them immediately, lest they should be unwilling to discover any circumstance to her in the presence of each other, she watched for an opportunity of speaking with them separately.

Soon after, a trumpet echoed faintly from a distance; the guides stopped, and looked toward the quarter whence it came, but the thick woods, which surrounded them, excluding all view of the country beyond, one of the men rode on to the point of an eminence, that afforded a more extensive prospect, to observe how near the enemy, whose trumpet he guessed this to be, were advanced; the other, meanwhile, remained with Emily, and to him she put some questions, concerning the stranger at Udolpho. Ugo, for this was his name, said, that there were several prisoners in the castle, but he neither recollected their persons, or the precise time of their arrival, and could therefore give her no information. There was a surliness in his manner, as he spoke, that made it probable he would not have satisfied her enquiries, even if he could have done so.

Having asked him what prisoners had been taken, about the time, as nearly as she could remember, when she had first heard the music, 'All that week,' said Ugo, 'I was out with a party, upon the mountains, and knew nothing of what was doing at the castle. We had enough upon our hands, we had warm work of it.'

Bertrand, the other man, being now returned, Emily enquired no further, and, when he had related to his companion what he had seen, they travelled on in deep silence; while Emily often caught, between the opening woods, partial glimpses of the castle above – the west towers, whose battlements were now crowded with archers, and the ramparts below, where soldiers were seen hurrying along, or busy upon the walls, preparing the cannon.

Having emerged from the woods, they wound along the valley in an opposite direction to that, from whence the enemy were approaching. Emily had now a full view of Udolpho, with its gray walls, towers and terraces, high over-topping the precipices and the dark woods, and glittering partially with the arms of the *condottieri*, as the sun's rays, streaming through an autumnal cloud, glanced upon a part of the edifice, whose remaining features stood in darkened majesty. She continued to gaze, through her tears, upon walls that, perhaps, confined Valancourt, and which now, as the cloud floated away, were lighted up with sudden splendour, and then, as suddenly were shrouded in gloom; while the passing gleam fell on the wood-tops below, and heightened the first tints of autumn, that had begun to steal upon the foliage. The winding mountains, at length, shut Udolpho from her view, and she turned, with mournful reluctance, to other objects. The melancholy sighing of the wind among the pines, that waved high over the steeps, and the distant thunder of a torrent assisted her musings, and conspired with the wild scenery around, to diffuse over her mind emotions solemn, yet not unpleasing, but which were soon interrupted by the distant roar of cannon, echoing among the mountains. The sounds rolled along the wind, and were repeated in faint and fainter reverberation, till they sunk in sullen murmurs. This was a signal, that the enemy had reached the castle, and fear for Valancourt again tormented Emily. She turned her anxious eyes towards that part of the country, where the edifice stood, but the intervening heights concealed it from her view; still, however, she saw the tall head of a mountain, which immediately fronted her late chamber, and on this she fixed her gaze, as if it could have told her of all that was passing in the scene it overlooked. The guides twice reminded her, that she was losing time and that they had far to go, before she could turn from this interesting object, and, even when she again moved onward, she often sent a look back, till only its blue point, brightening in a gleam of sunshine, appeared peeping over other mountains.

The sound of the cannon affected Ugo, as the blast of the trumpet does the war-horse; it called forth all the fire of his nature; he was impatient to be in the midst of the fight, and uttered frequent execrations against Montoni for having sent him to a distance. The feelings of his comrade seemed to be very opposite, and adapted rather to the cruelties, than to the dangers of war.

Emily asked frequent questions, concerning the place of her destination, but could only learn, that she was going to a cottage in Tuscany; and, whenever she mentioned the subject, she fancied she perceived, in the countenances of these men, an expression of malice and cunning, that alarmed her.

It was afternoon, when they had left the castle. During several hours, they travelled through regions of profound solitude, where no bleat of sheep, or bark of watch-dog, broke on silence, and they were now too far off to hear even the faint thunder of the cannon. Towards evening, they wound down precipices, black with forests of cypress, pine and cedar, into a glen so savage and secluded, that, if Solitude ever had local habitation, this might have been 'her place of dearest residence.'[2] To Emily it appeared a spot exactly suited for the retreat of banditti, and, in her imagination, she already saw them lurking under the brow of some projecting rock, whence their shadows, lengthened by the setting sun, stretched across the road, and warned the traveller of his danger. She shuddered at the idea, and, looking at her conductors, to observe whether they were armed, thought she saw in them the banditti she dreaded!

It was in this glen, that they proposed to alight, 'For,' said Ugo, 'night will come on presently, and then the wolves will make it dangerous to stop.' This was a new subject of alarm to Emily, but inferior to what she suffered from the thought of being left in these wilds, at midnight, with two such men as her present conductors. Dark and dreadful hints of what might be Montoni's purpose in sending her hither, came to her mind. She endeavoured to dissuade the men from stopping, and enquired, with anxiety, how far they had yet to go.

'Many leagues yet,' replied Bertrand. 'As for you, Signora, you may do as you please about eating, but for us, we will make a hearty supper, while we can. We shall have need of it, I warrant, before we finish our journey. The sun's going down apace; let us alight under that rock, yonder.'

His comrade assented, and, turning the mules out of the road, they advanced towards a cliff, overhung with cedars, Emily following in trembling silence. They lifted her from her mule, and, having seated themselves on the grass, at the foot of the rocks, drew some homely fare from a wallet, of which Emily tried to eat a little, the better to disguise her apprehensions.

The sun was now sunk behind the high mountains in the west, upon which a purple haze began to spread, and the gloom of twilight to draw over the surrounding objects. To the low and sullen murmur of the breeze, passing among the woods, she no longer listened with any degree of pleasure, for it conspired with the wildness of the scene and the evening hour, to depress her spirits.

Suspense had so much increased her anxiety, as to the prisoner at Udolpho, that, finding it impracticable to speak alone with Bertrand, on that subject, she renewed her questions in the presence of Ugo; but he either was, or pretended to be entirely ignorant, concerning the stranger. When he had dismissed the question, he talked with Ugo on some subject, which led to the mention of Signor Orsino and of the affair that had banished him from Venice; respecting which Emily had ventured to ask a few questions. Ugo appeared to be well acquainted with the circumstances of that tragical event, and related some minute particulars, that both shocked and surprised her; for it appeared very extraordinary how such particulars could be known to any, but to persons, present when the assassination was committed.

'He was of rank,' said Bertrand, 'or the State would not have troubled itself to enquire after his assassins. The Signor has been lucky hitherto; this is not the first affair of the kind he has had upon his hands; and to be sure, when a gentleman has no other way of getting redress – why he must take this.'

'Aye,' said Ugo, 'and why is not this as good as another? This is the way to have justice done at once, without more ado. If you go to law, you must stay till the judges please, and may lose your cause, at last. Why the best way, then, is to make sure of your right, while you can, and execute justice yourself.'

'Yes, yes,' rejoined Bertrand, 'if you wait till justice is done you – you may stay long enough. Why if I want a friend of mine properly served, how am I to get my revenge? Ten to one they will tell me he is in the right, and I am in the wrong. Or, if a fellow has got possession of property, which I think ought to be mine, why I may wait, till I starve, perhaps, before the law will give it me, and then, after all, the judge may say – the estate is his. What is to be done then? – Why the case is plain enough, I must take it at last.'

Emily's horror at this conversation was heightened by a suspicion, that the latter part of it was pointed against herself, and that these men had been commissioned by Montoni to execute a similar kind of *justice*, in his cause.

'But I was speaking of Signor Orsino,' resumed Bertrand, 'he is one of those, who love to do justice at once. I remember, about ten years ago, the Signor had a quarrel with a cavaliero of Milan. The story was told me then, and it is still fresh in my head. They quarrelled about a lady, that the Signor liked, and she was perverse enough to prefer the gentleman of Milan, and even carried her whim so far as to marry him. This provoked the Signor, as well it might, for he had tried to talk reason to her a long while, and used to send people to serenade her, under her windows, of a night; and used to make verses about her, and would swear she was the handsomest lady in Milan – But all would not do – nothing would bring her to reason; and, as I said, she went so far at last, as to marry this other cavaliero. This made the Signor wrath, with a vengeance; he resolved to be even with her though, and he watched his opportunity, and did not wait long, for, soon after the marriage, they set out for Padua, nothing doubting, I warrant, of what was preparing for them. The cavaliero thought, to be sure, he was to be called to no account, but was to go off triumphant; but he was soon made to know another sort of story.'

'What then, the lady had promised to have Signor Orsino?' said Ugo.

'Promised! No,' replied Bertrand, 'she had not wit enough even to tell him she liked him, as I heard, but the contrary, for she used to say, from the first, she never meant to have him. And this was what provoked the Signor, so, and with good reason, for, who likes to be told that he is disagreeable? and this was saying as good. It was enough to tell him this; she need not have gone, and married another.'

'What, she married, then, on purpose to plague the Signor?' said Ugo.

'I don't know as for that,' replied Bertrand, 'they said, indeed, that she had had a regard for the other gentleman a great while; but that is nothing to the purpose, she should not have married him, and then the Signor would not have been so much provoked. She might have expected what was to follow; it was not to be supposed he would bear her ill usage tamely, and she might thank herself for what happened. But, as I said, they set out for Padua, she and her husband, and the road lay over some barren mountains like these. This suited the Signor's purpose well. He watched the time of their departure, and sent his men after them, with directions what to do. They kept their distance, till they saw their opportunity, and this did not happen, till the second day's journey, when, the gentleman having sent his servants forward to the next town, may be, to have horses in readiness, the Signor's men quickened their pace, and overtook the carriage, in a hollow, between two mountains, where the woods prevented the servants from seeing what passed, though they were then not far off. When we came up, we fired our tromboni, but missed.'

Emily turned pale, at these words, and then hoped she had mistaken them; while Bertrand proceeded:

'The gentleman fired again, but he was soon made to alight, and it was as he turned to call his people, that he was struck. It was the most dexterous feat you ever saw – he was struck in the back with three stillettos at once. He fell, and was dispatched in a minute; but the lady escaped, for the servants had heard the firing, and came up before she could be taken care of. "Bertrand," said the Signor, when his men returned'—

'Bertrand!' exclaimed Emily, pale with horror, on whom not a syllable of this narrative had been lost.

'Bertrand, did I say?' rejoined the man, with some confusion – 'No, Giovanni. But I have forgot where I was; – "Bertrand," said the Signor'—

'Bertrand, again!' said Emily, in a faltering voice, 'Why do you repeat that name?'

Bertrand swore. 'What signifies it,' he proceeded, 'what the man was called – Bertrand, or Giovanni – or Roberto? it's all one for that. You have put me out twice with that – question. "Bertrand," or Giovanni – or what you will – "Bertrand," said the Signor, “if your comrades had done their duty, as well as you, I should not have lost the lady. Go, my honest fellow, and be happy with this.” He gave him a purse of gold – and little enough too, considering the service he had done him.’

‘Aye, aye,’ said Ugo, ‘little enough – little enough.’

Emily now breathed with difficulty, and could scarcely support herself. When first she saw these men, their appearance and their connection with Montoni had been sufficient to impress her with distrust; but now, when one of them had betrayed himself to be a murderer, and she saw herself, at the approach of night, under his guidance, among wild and solitary mountains, and going she scarcely knew whither, the most agonizing terror seized her, which was the less supportable from the necessity she found herself under of concealing all symptoms of it from her companions. Reflecting on the character and the menaces of Montoni, it appeared not improbable, that he had delivered her to them, for the purpose of having her murdered, and of thus securing to himself, without further opposition, or delay, the estates, for which he had so long and so desperately contended. Yet, if this was his design, there appeared no necessity for sending her to such a distance from the castle; for, if any dread of discovery had made him unwilling to perpetrate the deed there, a much nearer place might have sufficed for the purpose of concealment. These considerations, however, did not immediately occur to Emily, with whom so many circumstances conspired to rouse terror, that she had no power to oppose it, or to enquire coolly into its grounds; and, if she had done so, still there were many appearances which would too well have justified her most terrible apprehensions. She did not now dare to speak to her conductors, at the sound of whose voices she trembled; and when, now and then, she stole a glance at them, their countenances, seen imperfectly through the gloom of evening, served to confirm her fears.

The sun had now been set some time; heavy clouds, whose lower skirts were tinged with sulphureous crimson, lingered in the west, and threw a reddish tint upon the pine forests, which sent forth a solemn sound, as the breeze rolled over them. The hollow moan struck upon Emily’s heart, and served to render more gloomy and terrific every object around her, – the mountains, shaded in twilight – the gleaming torrent, hoarsely roaring – the black forests, and the deep glen, broken into rocky recesses, high overshadowed by cypress and sycamore and winding into long obscurity. To this glen, Emily, as she sent forth her anxious eye, thought there was no end; no hamlet, or even cottage, was seen, and still no distant bark of watch-dog, or even faint, far-off halloo came on the wind. In a tremulous voice, she now ventured to remind the guides, that it was growing late, and to ask again how far they had to go: but they were too much occupied by their own discourse to attend to her question, which she forbore to repeat, lest it should provoke a surly answer. Having, however, soon after, finished their supper, the men collected the fragments into their wallet, and proceeded along this winding glen, in gloomy silence; while Emily again mused upon her own situation, and concerning the motives of Montoni for involving her in it. That it was for some evil purpose towards herself, she could not doubt; and it seemed, that, if he did not intend to destroy her, with a view of immediately seizing her estates, he meant to reserve her a while in concealment, for some more terrible design, for one that might equally gratify his avarice and still more his deep revenge. At this moment, remembering Signor Brochio and his behaviour in the corridor, a few preceding nights, the latter supposition, horrible as it was, strengthened in her belief. Yet, why remove her from the castle, where deeds of darkness had, she feared, been often executed with secrecy? – from chambers, perhaps

‘With many a foul, and midnight murder stain’d.’[3]

The dread of what she might be going to encounter was now so excessive, that it sometimes threatened her senses; and, often as she went, she thought of her late father and of all he would have suffered, could he have foreseen the strange and dreadful events of her future life; and how anxiously he would have avoided that fatal confidence, which committed his daughter to the care of a woman so weak as was Madame Montoni. So romantic and improbable, indeed, did her present situation appear to Emily herself, particularly when she compared it with the repose and beauty of her early days, that there were moments, when she could almost have believed herself the victim of frightful visions, glaring upon a disordered fancy.

Restrained by the presence of her guides from expressing her terrors, their acuteness was, at length, lost in gloomy despair. The dreadful view of what might await her hereafter rendered her almost indifferent to the surrounding dangers. She now looked, with little emotion, on the wild dingles, and the gloomy road and mountains, whose outlines only were distinguishable through the dusk; – objects, which but lately had affected her spirits so much, as to awaken horrid views of the future, and to tinge these with their own gloom.

It was now so nearly dark, that the travellers, who proceeded only by the slowest pace, could scarcely discern their way. The clouds, which seemed charged with thunder, passed slowly along the heavens, shewing, at intervals, the trembling stars; while the groves of cypress and sycamore, that overhung the rocks, waved high in the breeze, as it swept over the glen, and then rushed among the distant woods. Emily shivered as it passed.

‘Where is the torch?’ said Ugo, ‘It grows dark.’

‘Not so dark yet,’ replied Bertrand, ‘but we may find our way, and ’tis best not light the torch, before we can help, for it may betray us, if any struggling party of the enemy is abroad.’

Ugo muttered something, which Emily did not understand, and they proceeded in darkness, while she almost wished, that the enemy might discover them; for from change there was something to hope, since she could scarcely imagine any situation more dreadful than her present one.

As they moved slowly along, her attention was surprised by a thin tapering flame, that appeared, by fits, at the point of the pike, which Bertrand carried, resembling what she had observed on the lance of the sentinel, the night Madame

Montoni died, and which he had said was an omen. The event immediately following it appeared to justify the assertion, and a superstitious impression had remained on Emily's mind, which the present appearance confirmed. She thought it was an omen of her own fate, and watched it successively vanish, and return, in gloomy silence, which was at length interrupted by Bertrand.

'Let us light the torch,' said he, 'and get under shelter of the woods; – a storm is coming on – look at my lance.'

He held it forth, with the flame tapering at its point.[*]

'Aye,' said Ugo, 'you are not one of those, that believe in omens: we have left cowards at the castle, who would turn pale at such a sight. I have often seen it before a thunder storm, it is an omen of that, and one is coming now, sure enough. The clouds flash fast already.'

Emily was relieved by this conversation from some of the terrors of superstition, but those of reason increased, as, waiting while Ugo searched for a flint, to strike fire, she watched the pale lightning gleam over the woods they were about to enter, and illumine the harsh countenances of her companions. Ugo could not find a flint, and Bertrand became impatient, for the thunder sounded hollowly at a distance, and the lightning was more frequent. Sometimes, it revealed the nearer recesses of the woods, or, displaying some opening in their summits, illumined the ground beneath with partial splendour, the thick foliage of the trees preserving the surrounding scene in deep shadow.

At length, Ugo found a flint, and the torch was lighted. The men then dismounted, and, having assisted Emily, led the mules towards the woods, that skirted the glen, on the left, over broken ground, frequently interrupted with brush-wood and wild plants, which she was often obliged to make a circuit to avoid.

She could not approach these woods, without experiencing keener sense of her danger. Their deep silence, except when the wind swept among their branches, and impenetrable glooms shewn partially by the sudden flash, and then, by the red glare of the torch, which served only to make 'darkness visible,'[5] were circumstances, that contributed to renew all her most terrible apprehensions; she thought, too, that, at this moment, the countenances of her conductors displayed more than their usual fierceness, mingled with a kind of lurking exultation, which they seemed endeavouring to disguise. To her affrighted fancy it occurred, that they were leading her into these woods to complete the will of Montoni by her murder. The horrid suggestion called a groan from her heart, which surprised her companions, who turned round quickly towards her, and she demanded why they led her thither, beseeching them to continue their way along the open glen, which she represented to be less dangerous than the woods, in a thunder storm.

'No, no,' said Bertrand, 'we know best where the danger lies. See how the clouds open over our heads. Besides, we can glide under cover of the woods with less hazard of being seen, should any of the enemy be wandering this way. By holy St Peter and all the rest of them, I've as stout a heart as the best, as many a poor devil could tell, if he were alive again – but what can we do against numbers?'

'What are you whining about?' said Ugo, contemptuously, 'who fears numbers! Let them come, though they were as many, as the Signor's castle could hold; I would shew the knaves what fighting is. For you—I would lay you quietly in a dry ditch, where you might peep out, and see me put the rogues to flight. – Who talks of fear!'

Bertrand replied, with an horrible oath, that he did not like such jesting, and a violent altercation ensued, which was, at length, silenced by the thunder, whose deep volley was heard afar, rolling onward till it burst over their heads in sounds, that seemed to shake the earth to its centre. The ruffians paused, and looked upon each other. Between the boles of the trees, the blue lightning flashed and quivered along the ground, while, as Emily looked under the boughs, the mountains beyond frequently appeared to be clothed in livid flame. At this moment, perhaps, she felt less fear of the storm, than did either of her companions, for other terrors occupied her mind.

The men now rested under an enormous chesnut-tree, and fixed their pikes in the ground, at some distance, on the iron points of which Emily repeatedly observed the lightning play, and then glide down them into the earth.

'I would we were well in the Signor's castle!' said Bertrand, 'I know not why he should send us on this business. Hark! how it rattles above, there! I could almost find in my heart to turn priest, and pray. Ugo, hast got a rosary?'

'No,' replied Ugo, 'I leave it to cowards like thee, to carry rosaries – I, carry a sword.'

'And much good may it do thee in fighting against the storm!' said Bertrand.

Another peal, which was reverberated in tremendous echoes among the mountains, silenced them for a moment. As it rolled away, Ugo proposed going on. 'We are only losing time here,' said he, 'for the thick boughs of the woods will shelter us as well as this chesnut-tree.'

They again led the mules forward, between the boles of the trees, and over pathless grass, that concealed their high knotted roots. The rising wind was now heard contending with the thunder, as it rushed furiously among the branches above, and brightened the red flame of the torch, which threw a stronger light forward among the woods, and shewed their gloomy recesses to be suitable resorts for the wolves, of which Ugo had formerly spoken.

At length, the strength of the wind seemed to drive the storm before it, for the thunder rolled away into distance, and was only faintly heard. After travelling through the woods for nearly an hour, during which the elements seemed to have returned to repose, the travellers, gradually ascending from the glen, found themselves upon the open brow of a mountain, with a wide valley, extending in misty moon-light, at their feet, and above, the blue sky, trembling through the few thin clouds, that lingered after the storm, and were sinking slowly to the verge of the horizon.

Emily's spirits, now that she had quitted the woods, began to revive; for she considered, that, if these men had received an order to destroy her, they would probably have executed their barbarous purpose in the solitary wild, from whence they had just emerged, where the deed would have been shrouded from every human eye. Reassured by this reflection, and by the quiet demeanour of her guides, Emily, as they proceeded silently, in a kind of sheep track, that wound along the skirts of the woods, which ascended on the right, could not survey the sleeping beauty of the vale, to which they were declining, without a momentary sensation of pleasure. It seemed varied with woods, pastures, and sloping grounds, and was screened to the north and the east by an amphitheatre of the Apennines, whose outline on the horizon was here broken into varied and elegant forms; to the west and the south, the landscape extended indistinctly into the lowlands of Tuscany.

'There is the sea yonder,' said Bertrand, as if he had known that Emily was examining the twilight view, 'yonder in the west, though we cannot see it.'

Emily already perceived a change in the climate, from that of the wild and mountainous tract she had left; and, as she continued descending, the air became perfumed by the breath of a thousand nameless flowers among the grass, called forth by the late rain. So soothingly beautiful was the scene around her, and so strikingly contrasted to the gloomy grandeur of those, to which she had long been confined, and to the manners of the people, who moved among them, that she could almost have fancied herself again at La Vall´e, and, wondering why Montoni had sent her hither, could scarcely believe, that he had selected so enchanting a spot for any cruel design. It was, however, probably not the spot, but the persons, who happened to inhabit it, and to whose care he could safely commit the execution of his plans, whatever they might be, that had determined his choice.

She now ventured again to enquire, whether they were near the place of their destination, and was answered by Ugo, that they had not far to go. 'Only to the wood of chesnuts in the valley yonder,' said he, 'there, by the brook, that sparkles with the moon; I wish I was once at rest there, with a flask of good wine, and a slice of Tuscany bacon.'

Emily's spirits revived, when she heard, that the journey was so nearly concluded, and saw the wood of chesnuts in an open part of the vale, on the margin of the stream.

In a short time, they reached the entrance of the wood, and perceived, between the twinkling leaves, a light, streaming from a distant cottage window. They proceeded along the edge of the brook to where the trees, crowding over it, excluded the moon-beams, but a long line of light, from the cottage above, was seen on its dark tremulous surface. Bertrand now stepped on first, and Emily heard him knock, and call loudly at the door. As she reached it, the small upper casement, where the light appeared, was unclosed by a man, who, having enquired what they wanted, immediately descended, let them into a neat rustic cot, and called up his wife to set refreshments before the travellers. As this man conversed, rather apart, with Bertrand, Emily anxiously surveyed him. He was a tall, but not robust, peasant, of a sallow complexion, and had a shrewd and cunning eye; his countenance was not of a character to win the ready confidence of youth, and there was nothing in his manner, that might conciliate a stranger.

Ugo called impatiently for supper, and in a tone as if he knew his authority here to be unquestionable. 'I expected you an hour ago,' said the peasant, 'for I have had Signor Montoni's letter these three hours, and I and my wife had given you up, and gone to bed. How did you fare in the storm?'

'Ill enough,' replied Ugo, 'ill enough, and we are like to fare ill enough here, too, unless you will make more haste. Get us more wine, and let us see what you have to eat.'

The peasant placed before them all, that his cottage afforded – ham, wine, figs, and grapes of such size and flavour, as Emily had seldom tasted.

After taking refreshment, she was shewn by the peasant's wife to her little bed-chamber, where she asked some questions concerning Montoni, to which the woman, whose name was Dorina, gave reserved answers, pretending ignorance of his *Excellenza's* intention in sending Emily hither, but acknowledging that her husband had been apprized of the circumstance. Perceiving, that she could obtain no intelligence concerning her destination, Emily dismissed Dorina, and retired to repose; but all the busy scenes of the past and the anticipated ones of the future came to her anxious mind, and conspired with the sense of her new situation to banish sleep.

CHAPTER VII

'Was nought around but images of rest,
Sleep-soothing groves, and quiet lawns between,
And flowery beds that slumbrous influence kest,[1]
From poppies breath'd, and banks of pleasant green,
Where never yet was creeping creature seen.
Meantime unnumbered glittering streamlets play'd,
And hurled every where their water's sheen,
That, as they bicker'd through the sunny glade,
Though restless still themselves, a lulling murmur made.'
Thomson [*The Castle of Indolence*][2]

When Emily, in the morning, opened her casement, she was surprised to observe the beauties, that surrounded it. The cottage was nearly embowered in the woods, which were chiefly of chesnut, intermixed with some cypress, larch and sycamore. Beneath the dark and spreading branches, appeared, to the north, and to the east, the woody Apennines, rising in majestic amphitheatre, not black with pines, as she had been accustomed to see them, but their loftiest summits crowned with antient forests of chesnut, oak, and oriental plane, now animated with the rich tints of autumn, and which swept downward to the valley uninterruptedly, except where some bold rocky promontory looked out from among the foliage, and caught the passing gleam. Vineyards stretched along the feet of the mountains, where the elegant villas of the Tuscan nobility frequently adorned the scene, and overlooked slopes clothed with groves of olive, mulberry, orange and lemon. The plain, to which these declined, was coloured with the riches of cultivation, whose mingled hues were mellowed into harmony by an Italian sun. Vines, their purple clusters blushing between the russet foliage, hung in luxuriant festoons from the branches of standard fig and cherry trees, while pastures of verdure, such as Emily had seldom seen in Italy, enriched the banks of a stream that, after descending from the mountains, wound along the landscape, which it reflected, to a bay of the sea. There, far in the west, the waters, fading into the sky, assumed a tint of the faintest purple, and the line of separation between them was, now and then, discernible only by the progress of a sail, brightened with the sun-beam, along the horizon.

The cottage, which was shaded by the woods from the intenser rays of the sun, and was open only to his evening light, was covered entirely with vines, fig-trees and jessamine, whose flowers surpassed in size and fragrance any that Emily had seen. These and ripening clusters of grapes hung round her little casement. The turf, that grew under the woods, was inlaid with a variety of wild flowers and perfumed herbs, and, on the opposite margin of the stream, whose current diffused freshness beneath the shades, rose a grove of lemon and orange trees. This, though nearly opposite to Emily's window, did not interrupt her prospect, but rather heightened, by its dark verdure, the effect of the perspective; and to her this spot was a bower of sweets, whose charms communicated imperceptibly to her mind somewhat of their own serenity.

She was soon summoned to breakfast, by the peasant's daughter, a girl about seventeen, of a pleasant countenance, which, Emily was glad to observe, seemed animated with the pure affections of nature, though the others, that surrounded her, expressed, more or less, the worst qualities – cruelty, ferocity, cunning and duplicity; of the latter style of countenance, especially, were those of the peasant and his wife. Maddelina spoke little, but what she said was in a soft voice, and with an air of modesty and complacency, that interested Emily, who breakfasted at a separate table with Dorina, while Ugo and Bertrand were taking a repast of Tuscany bacon and wine with their host, near the cottage door; when they had finished which, Ugo, rising hastily, enquired for his mule, and Emily learned that he was to return to Udolpho, while Bertrand remained at the cottage; a circumstance, which, though it did not surprise, distressed her.

When Ugo was departed, Emily proposed to walk in the neighbouring woods; but, on being told, that she must not quit the cottage, without having Bertrand for her attendant, she withdrew to her own room. There, as her eyes settled on the towering Apennines, she recollected the terrific scenery they had exhibited and the horrors she had suffered, on the preceding night, particularly at the moment when Bertrand had betrayed himself to be an assassin; and these remembrances awakened a train of images, which, since they abstracted her from a consideration of her own situation, she pursued for some time, and then arranged in the following lines; pleased to have discovered any innocent means, by which she could beguile an hour of misfortune.

THE PILGRIM [*]

Slow o'er the Apennine, with bleeding feet,

A patient Pilgrim wound his lonely way,
To deck the Lady of Loretto's seat
With all the little wealth his zeal could pay.
From mountain-tops cold died the evening ray,
And, stretch'd in twilight, slept the vale below;
And now the last, last purple streaks of day
Along the melancholy West fade slow.
High o'er his head, the restless pines complain,
As on their summit rolls the breeze of night;
Beneath, the hoarse stream chides the rocks in vain:
The Pilgrim pauses on the dizzy height.
Then to the vale his cautious step he prest,
For there a hermit's cross was dimly seen,
Cresting the rock, and there his limbs might rest,
Cheer'd in the good man's cave, by faggot's sheen,
On leafy beds, nor guile his sleep molest.
Unhappy Luke! he trusts a treacherous clue!
Behind the cliff the lurking robber stood;
No friendly moon his giant shadow threw
Athwart the road, to save the Pilgrim's blood;
On as he went a vesper-hymn he sang,
The hymn, that nightly sooth'd him to repose.
Fierce on his harmless prey the ruffian sprang!
The Pilgrim bleeds to death, his eye-lids close,
Yet his meek spirit knew no vengeful care,

But, dying, for his murd'rer breath'd – a sainted pray'r!

Preferring the solitude of her room to the company of the persons below stairs, Emily dined above, and Maddelina was suffered to attend her, from whose simple conversation she learned, that the peasant and his wife were old inhabitants of this cottage, which had been purchased for them by Montoni, in reward of some service, rendered him, many years before, by Marco, to whom Carlo, the steward at the castle, was nearly related. 'So many years ago, Signora,' added Maddelina, 'that I know nothing about it; but my father did the Signor a great good, for my mother has often said to him, this cottage was the least he ought to have had.'

To the mention of this circumstance Emily listened with a painful interest, since it appeared to give a frightful colour to the character of Marco, whose service, thus rewarded by Montoni, she could scarcely doubt had been criminal; and, if so, had too much reason to believe, that she had been committed into his hands for some desperate purpose. 'Did you ever hear how many years it is,' said Emily, who was considering of Signora Laurentini's disappearance from Udolpho, 'since your father performed the services you spoke of?'

'It was a little before he came to live at the cottage, Signora,' replied Maddelina, 'and that is about eighteen years ago.'

This was near the period, when Signora Laurentini had been said to disappear, and it occurred to Emily, that Marco had assisted in that mysterious affair, and, perhaps, had been employed in a murder! This horrible suggestion fixed her in such profound reverie, that Maddelina quitted the room, unperceived by her, and she remained unconscious of all around her, for a considerable time. Tears, at length, came to her relief, after indulging which, her spirits becoming calmer, she ceased to tremble at a view of evils, that might never arrive; and had sufficient resolution to endeavour to withdraw her thoughts from the contemplation of her own interest. Remembering the few books, which even in the hurry of her departure from Udolpho she had put into her little package, she sat down with one of them at her pleasant casement, whence her eyes often wandered from the page to the landscape, whose beauty gradually soothed her mind into gentle melancholy.

Here, she remained alone, till evening, and saw the sun descend the western sky, throw all his pomp of light and shadow upon the mountains, and gleam upon the distant ocean and the stealing sails, as he sunk amidst the waves. Then, at the musing hour of twilight, her softened thoughts returned to Valancourt; she again recollected every circumstance, connected with the midnight music, and all that might assist her conjecture, concerning his imprisonment at the castle, and, becoming confirmed in the supposition, that it was his voice she had heard there, she looked back to that gloomy abode with emotions of grief and momentary regret.

Refreshed by the cool and fragrant air, and her spirits soothed to a state of gentle melancholy by the stilly murmur of the brook below and of the woods around, she lingered at her casement long after the sun had set, watching the valley sinking into obscurity, till only the grand outline of the surrounding mountains, shadowed upon the horizon, remained visible. But a clear moon-light, that succeeded, gave to the landscape, what time gives to the scenes of past life, when it softens all their harsher features, and throws over the whole the mellowing shade of distant contemplation. The scenes of La Vallée, in the early morn of her life, when she was protected and beloved by parents equally loved, appeared in Emily's memory tenderly beautiful, like the prospect before her, and awakened mournful comparisons. Unwilling to encounter the coarse behaviour of the peasant's wife, she remained supperless in her room, while she wept again over her forlorn and perilous situation, a review of which entirely overcame the small remains of her fortitude, and, reducing her to temporary despondence, she wished to be released from this heavy load of life, that had so long oppressed her, and prayed to Heaven to take her, in its mercy, to her parents.

Wearied with weeping, she, at length, lay down on her mattress, and sunk to sleep, but was soon awakened by a knocking at her chamber door, and, starting up in terror, she heard a voice calling her. The image of Bertrand, with a stilletto in his hand, appeared to her alarmed fancy, and she neither opened the door, or answered, but listened in profound silence, till, the voice repeating her name in the same low tone, she demanded who called. 'It is I, Signora,' replied the voice, which she now distinguished to be Maddelina's, 'pray open the door. Don't be frightened, it is I.'

'And what brings you here so late, Maddelina?' said Emily, as she let her in. 'Hush! Signora, for heaven's sake hush! – if we are overheard I shall never be forgiven. My father and mother and Bertrand are all gone to bed,' continued Maddelina, as she gently shut the door, and crept forward, 'and I have brought you some supper, for you had none, you know, Signora, below stairs. Here are some grapes and figs and half a cup of wine.' Emily thanked her, but expressed apprehension lest this kindness should draw upon her the resentment of Dorina, when she perceived the fruit was gone. 'Take it back, therefore, Maddelina,' added Emily, 'I shall suffer much less from the want of it, than I should do, if this act of good-nature was to subject you to your mother's displeasure.'

'O Signora! there is no danger of that,' replied Maddelina, 'my mother cannot miss the fruit, for I saved it from my own supper. You will make me very unhappy, if you refuse to take it, Signora.' Emily was so much affected by this instance of the good girl's generosity, that she remained for some time unable to reply, and Maddelina watched her in silence, till, mistaking the cause of her emotion, she said, 'Do not weep so, Signora! My mother, to be sure, is a little cross, sometimes, but then it is soon over, – so don't take it so much to heart. She often scolds me, too, but then I have learned to bear it, and, when she has done, if I can but steal out into the woods, and play upon my sticcado,[4] I forget it all directly.'

Emily, smiling through her tears, told Maddelina, that she was a good girl, and then accepted her offering. She wished anxiously to know, whether Bertrand and Dorina had spoken of Montoni, or of his designs, concerning herself, in the presence of Maddelina, but disdained to tempt the innocent girl to a conduct so mean, as that of betraying the private conversation of her parents. When she was departing, Emily requested, that she would come to her room as often as she dared, without offending her mother, and Maddelina, after promising, that she would do so, stole softly back again to her own chamber.

Thus several days passed, during which Emily remained in her own room, Maddelina attending her only at her repast, whose gentle countenance and manners soothed her more than any circumstance she had known for many months. Of her pleasant embowered chamber she now became fond, and began to experience in it those feelings of security, which we naturally attach to home. In this interval also, her mind, having been undisturbed by any new circumstance of disgust, or alarm, recovered its tone sufficiently to permit her the enjoyment of her books, among which she found some unfinished sketches of landscapes, several blank sheets of paper, with her drawing instruments, and she was thus enabled to amuse herself with selecting some of the lovely features of the prospect, that her window commanded, and combining them in scenes, to which her tasteful fancy gave a last grace. In these little sketches she generally placed interesting groups, characteristic of the scenery they animated, and often contrived to tell, with perspicuity, some simple and affecting story, when, as a tear fell over the pictured griefs, which her imagination drew, she would forget, for a moment, her real sufferings. Thus innocently she beguiled the heavy hours of misfortune, and, with meek patience, awaited the events of futurity.

A beautiful evening, that had succeeded to a sultry day, at length induced Emily to walk, though she knew that Bertrand must attend her, and, with Maddelina for her companion, she left the cottage, followed by Bertrand, who allowed her to choose her own way. The hour was cool and silent, and she could not look upon the country around her, without delight. How lovely, too, appeared the brilliant blue, that coloured all the upper region of the air, and, thence fading downward, was lost in the saffron glow of the horizon! Nor less so were the varied shades and warm colouring of the Apennines, as the evening sun threw his slanting rays athwart their broken surface. Emily followed the course of the stream, under the shades, that overhung its grassy margin. On the opposite banks, the pastures were animated with herds of cattle of a beautiful cream-colour; and, beyond, were groves of lemon and orange, with fruit glowing on the branches, frequent almost as the leaves, which partly concealed it. She pursued her way towards the sea, which reflected the warm glow of sun-set, while the cliffs, that rose over its edge, were tinted with the last rays. The valley was terminated on the right by a lofty promontory, whose summit, impending over the waves, was crowned with a ruined tower, now serving for the purpose of a beacon, whose shattered battlements and the extended wings of some sea-fowl, that circled near it, were still illumined by the upward beams of the sun, though his disk was now sunk beneath the horizon; while the lower part of the ruin, the cliff on which it stood and the waves at its foot, were shaded with the first tints of twilight.

Having reached this headland, Emily gazed with solemn pleasure on the cliffs, that extended on either hand along the sequestered shores, some crowned with groves of pine, and others exhibiting only barren precipices of a grayish marble, except where the crags were tufted with myrtle and other aromatic shrubs. The sea slept in a perfect calm; its waves, dying in murmurs on the shores, flowed with the gentlest undulation, while its clear surface reflected in softened beauty the vermeil[5] tints of the west. Emily, as she looked upon the ocean, thought of France and of past times, and she wished, Oh! how ardently, and vainly – wished! that its waves would bear her to her distant, native home!

'Ah! that vessel,' said she, 'that vessel, which glides along so stately, with its tall sails reflected in the water, is, perhaps, bound for France! Happy – happy bark!' She continued to gaze upon it, with warm emotion, till the gray of twilight obscured the distance, and veiled it from her view. The melancholy sound of the waves at her feet assisted the tenderness, that occasioned her tears, and this was the only sound, that broke upon the hour, till, having followed the windings of the beach, for some time, a chorus of voices passed her on the air. She paused a moment, wishing to hear more, yet fearing to be seen, and, for the first time, looked back to Bertrand, as her protector, who was following, at a short distance, in company with some other person. Reassured by this circumstance, she advanced towards the sounds, which seemed to arise from behind a high promontory, that projected athwart the beach. There was now a sudden pause in the music, and then one female voice was heard to sing in a kind of chant. Emily quickened her steps, and, winding round the rock, saw, within the sweeping bay, beyond, which was hung with woods from the borders of the beach to the very summit of the cliffs, two groups of peasants, one seated beneath the shades, and the other standing on the edge of the sea, round the girl, who was singing, and who held in her hand a chaplet of flowers, which she seemed about to drop into the waves.

Emily, listening with surprise and attention, distinguished the following invocation delivered in the pure and elegant tongue of Tuscany and accompanied by a few pastoral instruments.

TO A SEA-NYMPH

O nymph! who loves to float on the green wave,
When Neptune sleeps beneath the moon-light hour,
Lull'd by thy music's melancholy pow'r,
O nymph, arise from out thy pearly cave!

For Hesper[6] beams amid the twilight shade,
And soon shall Cynthia tremble o'er the tide,
Gleam on these cliffs, that bound the ocean's pride,
And lonely silence all the air pervade.

Then, let thy tender voice at distance swell,
And steal along this solitary shore,
Sink on the breeze, till dying – heard no more –
Thou wak'st the sudden magic of thy shell.

While the long coast in echo sweet replies,
Thy soothing strains the pensive heart beguile,
And bid the visions of the future smile,
O nymph! from out thy pearly cave – arise!
(Chorus) – *Arise!*
(Semi-chorus) – *Arise!*

The last words being repeated by the surrounding group, the garland of flowers was thrown into the waves, and the chorus, sinking gradually into a chant, died away in silence.

'What can this mean, Maddelina?' said Emily, awakening from the pleasing trance, into which the music had lulled her. 'This is the eve of a festival, Signora,' replied Maddelina; 'and the peasants then amuse themselves with all kinds of sports.'

'But they talked of a sea-nymph,' said Emily: 'how came these good people to think of a sea-nymph?'

'O, Signora,' rejoined Maddelina, mistaking the reason of Emily's surprise, 'nobody *believes* in such things, but our old songs tell of them, and, when we are at our sports, we sometimes sing to them, and throw garlands into the sea.'

Emily had been early taught to venerate Florence as the seat of literature and of the fine arts; but, that its taste for classic story should descend to the peasants of the country, occasioned her both surprise and admiration. The Arcadian air of the girls next attracted her attention. Their dress was a very short full petticoat of light green, with a boddice of white silk; the sleeves loose, and tied up at the shoulders with ribbons and bunches of flowers. Their hair, falling in ringlets on their necks, was also ornamented with flowers, and with a small straw hat, which, set rather backward and on one side of the head, gave an expression of gaiety and smartness to the whole figure. When the song had concluded, several of these girls approached Emily, and, inviting her to sit down among them, offered her, and Maddelina, whom they knew, grapes and figs.

Emily accepted their courtesy, much pleased with the gentleness and grace of their manners, which appeared to be perfectly natural to them: and when Bertrand, soon after, approached, and was hastily drawing her away, a peasant, holding up a flask, invited him to drink; a temptation, which Bertrand was seldom very valiant in resisting.

'Let the young lady join in the dance, my friend,' said the peasant, 'while we empty this flask. They are going to begin directly. Strike up! my lads, strike up your tambourines and merry flutes!'

They sounded gaily; and the younger peasants formed themselves into a circle, which Emily would readily have joined, had her spirits been in unison with their mirth. Maddelina, however, tripped it lightly, and Emily, as she looked on the happy group, lost the sense of her misfortunes in that of a benevolent pleasure. But the pensive melancholy of her mind returned, as she sat rather apart from the company, listening to the mellow music, which the breeze softened as it bore it away, and watching the moon, stealing its tremulous light over the waves and on the woody summits of the cliffs, that wound along these Tuscan shores.

Meanwhile, Bertrand was so well pleased with his first flask, that he very willingly commenced the attack of a second, and it was late before Emily, not without some apprehension, returned to the cottage.

After this evening, she frequently walked with Maddelina, but was never unattended by Bertrand; and her mind became by degrees as tranquil as the circumstances of her situation would permit. The quiet, in which she was suffered to live, encouraged her to hope, that she was not sent hither with an evil design; and, had it not appeared probable, that Valancourt was at this time an inhabitant of Udolpho, she would have wished to remain at the cottage, till an opportunity should offer of returning to her native country. But, concerning Montoni's motive for sending her into Tuscany, she was more than ever perplexed, nor could she believe that any consideration for her safety had influenced him on this occasion.

She had been some time at the cottage, before she recollected, that, in the hurry of leaving Udolpho, she had forgotten the papers committed to her by her late aunt, relative to the Languedoc estates; but, though this remembrance occasioned her much uneasiness, she had some hope, that, in the obscure place, where they were deposited, they would escape the detection of Montoni.

CHAPTER VIII

'My tongue hath but a heavier tale to say.

I play the torturer, by small and small,
To lengthen out the worst that must be spoken.'
[SHAKESPEARE] *Richard II.*[1]

We now return, for a moment, to Venice, where Count Morano was suffering under an accumulation of misfortunes. Soon after his arrival in that city, he had been arrested by order of the Senate; and, without knowing of what he was suspected, was conveyed to a place of confinement, whither the most strenuous enquiries of his friends had been unable to trace him. Who the enemy was, that had occasioned him this calamity, he had not been able to guess, unless, indeed, it was Montoni, on whom his suspicions rested, and not only with much apparent probability, but with justice.

In the affair of the poisoned cup, Montoni had suspected Morano; but, being unable to obtain the degree of proof, which was necessary to convict him of a guilty intention, he had recourse to means of other revenge, than he could hope to obtain by prosecution. He employed a person, in whom he believed he might confide, to drop a letter of accusation into the *Denunzie secrete,* or lions' mouths,[2] which are fixed in a gallery of the Doge's palace, as receptacles for anonymous information, concerning persons, who may be disaffected towards the state. As, on these occasions, the accuser is not confronted with the accused, a man may falsely impeach his enemy, and accomplish an unjust revenge, without fear of punishment, or detection. That Montoni should have recourse to these diabolical means of ruining a person, whom he suspected of having attempted his life, is not in the least surprising. In the letter, which he had employed as the instrument of his revenge, he accused Morano of designs against the state, which he attempted to prove, with all the plausible simplicity of which he was master; and the senate, with whom a suspicion was, at that time, almost equal to a proof, arrested the Count, in consequence of this accusation; and, without even hinting to him his crime, threw him into one of those secret prisons, which were the terror of the Venetians, and in which persons often languished, and sometimes died, without being discovered by their friends.

Morano had incurred the personal resentment of many members of the state; his habits of life had rendered him obnoxious to some; and his ambition, and the bold rivalship, which he discovered, on several public occasions, – to others; and it was not to be expected, that mercy would soften the rigour of a law, which was to be dispensed from the hands of his enemies.

Montoni, meantime, was beset by dangers of another kind. His castle was besieged by troops, who seemed willing to dare every thing, and to suffer patiently any hardships in pursuit of victory. The strength of the fortress, however, withstood their attack, and this, with the vigorous defence of the garrison and the scarcity of provision on these wild mountains, soon compelled the assailants to raise the siege.

When Udolpho was once more left to the quiet possession of Montoni, he dispatched Ugo into Tuscany for Emily, whom he had sent from considerations of her personal safety, to a place of greater security, than a castle, which was, at that time, liable to be overrun by his enemies. Tranquillity being once more restored to Udolpho, he was impatient to secure her again under his roof, and had commissioned Ugo to assist Bertrand in guarding her back to the castle. Thus compelled to return, Emily bade the kind Maddelina farewell, with regret, and, after about a fortnight's stay in Tuscany, where she had experienced an interval of quiet, which was absolutely necessary to sustain her long-harassed spirits, began once more to ascend the Apennines, from whose heights she gave a long and sorrowful look to the beautiful country, that extended at their feet, and to the distant Mediterranean, whose waves she had so often wished would bear her back to France. The distress she felt, on her return towards the place of her former sufferings, was, however, softened by a conjecture, that Valancourt was there, and she found some degree of comfort in the thought of being near him, notwithstanding the consideration, that he was probably a prisoner.

It was noon, when she had left the cottage, and the evening was closed, long before she came within the neighbourhood of Udolpho. There was a moon, but it shone only at intervals, for the night was cloudy, and, lighted by the torch, which Ugo carried, the travellers paced silently along, Emily musing on her situation, and Bertrand and Ugo anticipating the comforts of a flask of wine and a good fire, for they had perceived for some time the difference between the warm climate of the lowlands of Tuscany and the nipping air of these upper regions. Emily was, at length, roused from her reverie by the far-off sound of the castle clock, to which she listened not without some degree of awe, as it rolled away on the breeze. Another and another note succeeded, and died in sullen murmur among the mountains: – to her mournful imagination it seemed a knell measuring out some fateful period for her.

'Aye, there is the old clock,' said Bertrand, 'there he is still; the cannon have not silenced him!'

'No,' answered Ugo, 'he crowed as loud as the best of them in the midst of it all. There he was roaring out in the hottest fire I have seen this many a day! I said that some of them would have a hit at the old fellow, but he escaped, and the tower too.'

The road winding round the base of a mountain, they now came within view of the castle, which was shewn in the perspective of the valley by a gleam of moon-shine, and then vanished in shade; while even a transient view of it had awakened the poignancy of Emily's feelings. Its massy and gloomy walls gave her terrible ideas of imprisonment and suffering: yet, as she advanced, some degree of hope mingled with her terror; for, though this was certainly the residence of Montoni, it was possibly, also, that of Valancourt, and she could not approach a place, where he might be, without experiencing somewhat of the joy of hope.

They continued to wind along the valley, and, soon after, she saw again the old walls and moon-light towers, rising over the woods: the strong rays enabled her, also, to perceive the ravages, which the siege had made, – with the broken walls, and shattered battlements, for they were now at the foot of the steep, on which Udolpho stood. Massy fragments had rolled down among the woods, through which the travellers now began to ascend, and there mingled with the loose earth, and pieces of rock they had brought with them. The woods, too, had suffered much from the batteries above, for here the enemy had endeavoured to screen themselves from the fire of the ramparts. Many noble trees were levelled with the ground, and others, to a wide extent, were entirely stripped of their upper branches. 'We had better dismount,' said Ugo, 'and lead the mules up the hill, or we shall get into some of the holes, which the balls have left. Here are plenty of them. Give me the torch,' continued Ugo, after they had dismounted, 'and take care you don't stumble over any thing, that lies in your way, for the ground is not yet cleared of the enemy.'

'How!' exclaimed Emily, 'are any of the enemy here, then?'

'Nay, I don't know for that, now,' he replied, 'but when I came away I saw one or two of them lying under the trees.'

As they proceeded, the torch threw a gloomy light upon the ground, and far among the recesses of the woods, and Emily feared to look forward, lest some object of horror should meet her eye. The path was often strewn with broken heads of arrows, and with shattered remains of armour, such as at that period was mingled with the lighter dress of the soldiers. 'Bring the light hither,' said Bertrand, 'I have stumbled over something, that rattles loud enough.' Ugo holding up the torch, they perceived a steel breast-plate on the ground, which Bertrand raised, and they saw, that it was pierced through, and that the lining was entirely covered with blood; but upon Emily's earnest entreaties, that they would proceed, Bertrand, uttering some joke upon the unfortunate person, to whom it had belonged, threw it hard upon the ground, and they passed on.

At every step she took, Emily feared to see some vestige of death. Coming soon after to an opening in the woods, Bertrand stopped to survey the ground, which was encumbered with massy trunks and branches of the trees, that had so lately adorned it, and seemed to have been a spot particularly fatal to the besiegers; for it was evident from the destruction of the trees, that here the hottest fire of the garrison had been directed. As Ugo held again forth the torch, steel glittered between the fallen trees; the ground beneath was covered with broken arms, and with the torn vestments of soldiers, whose mangled forms Emily almost expected to see; and she again entreated her companions to proceed, who were, however, too intent in their examination, to regard her, and she turned her eyes from this desolated scene to the castle above, where she observed lights gliding along the ramparts. Presently, the castle clock struck twelve, and then a trumpet sounded, of which Emily enquired the occasion.

'O! they are only changing watch,' replied Ugo. 'I do not remember this trumpet,' said Emily, 'it is a new custom.' 'It is only an old one revived, lady; we always use it in time of war. We have sounded it, at midnight, ever since the place was besieged.'

'Hark!' said Emily, as the trumpet sounded again; and, in the next moment, she heard a faint clash of arms, and then the watch-word passed along the terrace above, and was answered from a distant part of the castle; after which all was again still. She complained of cold, and begged to go on. 'Presently, lady,' said Bertrand, turning over some broken arms with the pike he usually carried. 'What have we here?'

'Hark!' cried Emily, 'what noise was that?'

'What noise was it?' said Ugo, starting up and listening.

'Hush!' repeated Emily. 'It surely came from the ramparts above:' and, on looking up, they perceived a light moving along the walls, while, in the next instant, the breeze swelling, the voice sounded louder than before.

'Who goes yonder?' cried a sentinel of the castle. 'Speak, or it will be worse for you.' Bertrand uttered a shout of joy. 'Hah! my brave comrade, is it you?' said he, and he blew a shrill whistle, which signal was answered by another from the soldier on watch; and the party, then passing forward, soon after emerged from the woods upon the broken road, that led immediately to the castle gates, and Emily saw, with renewed terror, the whole of that stupendous structure. 'Alas!' said she to herself, 'I am going again into my prison!'

'Here has been warm work, by St Marco!' cried Bertrand, waving the torch over the ground; 'the balls have torn up the earth here, with a vengeance.'

'Aye,' replied Ugo, 'they were fired from that redoubt, yonder, and rare execution they did. The enemy made a furious attack upon the great gates; but they might have guessed they could never carry it there; for, besides the cannon from the walls, our archers, on the two round towers, showered down upon them at such a rate, that, by holy Peter! there was no standing it. I never saw a better sight in my life; I laughed, till my sides aked, to see how the knaves scampered. Bertrand, my good fellow, thou shouldst have been among them; I warrant thou wouldst have won the race!'

'Hah! you are at your old tricks again,' said Bertrand in a surly tone. 'It is well for thee thou art so near the castle; thou knowest I have killed my man before now.' Ugo replied only by a laugh, and then gave some further account of the siege, to which as Emily listened, she was struck by the strong contrast of the present scene with that which had so lately been acted here.

The mingled uproar of cannon, drums, and trumpets, the groans of the conquered, and the shouts of the conquerors were now sunk into a silence so profound, that it seemed as if death had triumphed alike over the vanquished and the victor. The shattered condition of one of the towers of the great gates by no means confirmed the *valiant* account just given by Ugo of the scampering party, who, it was evident, had not only made a stand, but had done much mischief before they took to flight; for this tower appeared, as far as Emily could judge by the dim moon-light that fell upon it, to be laid open, and the battlements were nearly demolished. While she gazed, a light glimmered through one of the lower loop-holes, and disappeared; but, in the next moment, she perceived through the broken wall, a soldier, with a lamp, ascending the narrow stair-case, that wound within the tower, and, remembering that it was the same she had passed up, on the night, when Barnardine had deluded her with a promise of seeing Madame Montoni, fancy gave her somewhat of the terror she had then suffered. She was now very near the gates, over which the soldier having opened the door of the portal-chamber, the lamp he carried gave her a dusky view of that terrible apartment, and she almost sunk under the recollected horrors of the moment, when she had drawn aside the curtain, and discovered the object it was meant to conceal.

'Perhaps,' said she to herself, 'it is now used for a similar purpose; perhaps, that soldier goes, at this dead hour, to watch over the corpse of his friend!' The little remains of her fortitude now gave way to the united force of remembered and anticipated horrors, for the melancholy fate of Madame Montoni appeared to foretell her own. She considered, that, though the Languedoc estates, if she relinquished them, would satisfy Montoni's avarice, they might not appease his vengeance, which was seldom pacified but by a terrible sacrifice; and she even thought, that, were she to resign them, the fear of justice might urge him either to detain her a prisoner, or to take away her life.

They were now arrived at the gates, where Bertrand, observing the light glimmer through a small casement of the portal-chamber, called aloud; and the soldier, looking out, demanded who was there. 'Here, I have brought you a prisoner,' said Ugo, 'open the gate, and let us in.'

'Tell me first who it is, that demands entrance,' replied the soldier. 'What! my old comrade,' cried Ugo, 'don't you know me? not know Ugo? I have brought home a prisoner here, bound hand and foot – a fellow, who has been drinking Tuscany wine, while we here have been fighting.'

'You will not rest till you meet with your match,' said Bertrand sullenly. 'Hah! My comrade, is it you?' said the soldier – 'I'll be with you directly.'

Emily presently heard his steps descending the stairs within, and then the heavy chain fall, and the bolts undraw of a small postern door, which he opened to admit the party. He held the lamp low, to shew the step of the gate, and she found herself once more beneath the gloomy arch, and heard the door close, that seemed to shut her from the world for ever. In the next moment, she was in the first court of the castle, where she surveyed the spacious and solitary area, with a kind of calm despair; while the dead hour of the night, the gothic gloom of the surrounding buildings, and the hollow and imperfect echoes, which they returned, as Ugo and the soldier conversed together, assisted to increase the melancholy forebodings of her heart. Passing on to the second court, a distant sound broke feebly on the silence, and gradually swelling louder, as they advanced, Emily distinguished voices of revelry and laughter, but they were to her far other than sounds of joy. 'Why, you have got some Tuscany wine among you, *here*,' said Bertrand, 'if one may judge by the uproar that is going forward. Ugo has taken a larger share of that than of fighting, I'll be sworn. Who is carousing at this late hour?'

'His *Excellenza* and the Signors,' replied the soldier: 'it is a sign you are a stranger at the castle, or you would not need to ask the question. They are brave spirits, that do without sleep – they generally pass the night in good cheer; would that we, who keep the watch, had a little of it! It is cold work, pacing the ramparts so many hours of the night, if one has no good liquor to warm one's heart.'

'Courage, my lad, courage ought to warm your heart,' said Ugo. 'Courage!' replied the soldier sharply, with a menacing air, which Ugo perceiving, prevented his saying more, by returning to the subject of the carousal. 'This is a new custom,' said he; 'when I left the castle, the Signors used to sit up counselling.'

'Aye, and for that matter, carousing too,' replied the soldier, 'but, since the siege, they have done nothing but make merry: and if I was they, I would settle accounts with myself, for all my hard fighting, the same way.'

They had now crossed the second court, and reached the hall door, when the soldier, bidding them good night, hastened back to his post; and, while they waited for admittance, Emily considered how she might avoid seeing Montoni, and retire unnoticed to her former apartment, for she shrunk from the thought of encountering either him, or any of his party, at this hour. The uproar within the castle was now so loud, that, though Ugo knocked repeatedly at the hall door, he was not heard by any of the servants, a circumstance, which increased Emily's alarm, while it allowed her time to deliberate on the means of retiring unobserved; for, though she might, perhaps, pass up the great stair-case unseen, it was impossible she could find the way to her chamber, without a light, the difficulty of procuring which, and the danger of wandering about the castle, without one, immediately struck her. Bertrand had only a torch, and she knew, that the servants never brought a taper to the door, for the hall was sufficiently lighted by the large tripod lamp, which hung in the vaulted roof; and, while she should wait till Annette could bring a taper, Montoni, or some of his companions, might discover her.

The door was now opened by Carlo; and Emily, having requested him to send Annette immediately with a light to the great gallery, where she determined to await her, passed on with hasty steps towards the stair-case; while Bertrand and Ugo, with the torch, followed old Carlo to the servants' hall, impatient for supper and the warm blaze of a wood fire. Emily, lighted only by the feeble rays, which the lamp above threw between the arches of this extensive hall, endeavoured to find her way to the stair-case, now hid in obscurity; while the shouts of merriment, that burst from a remote apartment, served, by heightening her terror, to increase her perplexity, and she expected, every instant, to see the door of that room open, and Montoni and his companions issue forth. Having, at length, reached the stair-case, and found her way to the top, she seated herself on the last stair, to await the arrival of Annette; for the profound darkness of the gallery deterred her from proceeding farther, and, while she listened for her footstep, she heard only distant sounds of revelry, which rose in sullen echoes from among the arcades below. Once she thought she heard a low sound from the dark gallery behind her; and, turning her eyes, fancied she saw something luminous move in it; and, since she could not, at this moment, subdue the weakness that caused her fears, she quitted her seat, and crept softly down a few stairs lower.

Annette not yet appearing, Emily now concluded, that she was gone to bed, and that nobody chose to call her up; and the prospect, that presented itself, of passing the night in darkness, in this place, or in some other equally forlorn (for she knew it would be impracticable to find her way through the intricacies of the galleries to her chamber), drew tears of mingled terror and despondency from her eyes.

While thus she sat, she fancied she heard again an odd sound from the gallery, and she listened, scarcely daring to breathe, but the increasing voices below overcame every other sound. Soon after, she heard Montoni and his companions burst into the hall, who spoke, as if they were much intoxicated, and seemed to be advancing towards the stair-case. She now remembered, that they must come this way to their chambers, and, forgetting all the terrors of the gallery, hurried towards it with an intention of secreting herself in some of the passages, that opened beyond, and of endeavouring, when the Signors were retired, to find her way to her own room, or to that of Annette, which was in a remote part of the castle.

With extended arms, she crept along the gallery, still hearing the voices of persons below, who seemed to stop in conversation at the foot of the stair-case, and then pausing for a moment to listen, half fearful of going further into the darkness of the gallery, where she still imagined, from the noise she had heard, that some person was lurking, 'They are already informed of my arrival,' said she, 'and Montoni is coming himself to seek me! In the present state of his mind, his purpose must be desperate.' Then, recollecting the scene, that had passed in the corridor, on the night preceding her departure from the castle, 'O Valancourt!' said she, 'I must then resign you for ever. To brave any longer the injustice of Montoni, would not be fortitude, but rashness.' Still the voices below did not draw nearer, but they became louder, and she distinguished those of Verezzi and Bertolini above the rest, while the few words she caught made her listen more anxiously for others. The conversation seemed to concern herself; and, having ventured to step a few paces nearer to the stair-case, she discovered, that they were disputing about her, each seeming to claim some former promise of Montoni, who appeared, at first, inclined to appease and to persuade them to return to their wine, but afterwards to be weary of the dispute, and, saying that he left them to settle it as they could, was returning with the rest of the party to the apartment he had just quitted. Verezzi then stopped him. 'Where is she? Signor,' said he, in a voice of impatience: 'tell us where she is.' 'I have already told you that I do not know,' replied Montoni, who seemed to be somewhat overcome with wine; 'but she is most probably gone to her apartment.' Verezzi and Bertolini now desisted from their enquiries, and sprang to the stair-case together, while Emily, who, during this discourse, had trembled so excessively, that she had with difficulty supported herself, seemed inspired with new strength, the moment she heard the bound of their steps, and ran along the gallery, dark as it was, with the fleetness of a fawn. But, long before she reached its extremity, the light, which Verezzi carried, flashed upon the walls; both appeared, and, instantly perceiving Emily, pursued her. At this moment, Bertolini, whose steps, though swift, were not steady, and whose impatience overcame what little caution he had hitherto used, stumbled, and fell at his length. The lamp fell with him, and was presently expiring on the floor; but Verezzi, regardless of saving it, seized the advantage this accident gave him over his rival, and followed Emily, to whom, however, the light had shown one of the passages that branched from the gallery, and she instantly turned into it. Verezzi could just discern the way she had taken, and this he pursued; but the sound of her steps soon sunk in distance, while he, less acquainted with the passage, was obliged to proceed through the dark, with caution, lest he should fall down a flight of steps, such as in this extensive old castle frequently terminated an avenue. This passage at length brought Emily to the corridor, into which her own chamber opened, and, not hearing any footstep, she paused to take breath, and consider what was the safest design to be adopted. She had followed this passage, merely because it was the first that appeared, and now that she had reached the end of it, was as perplexed as before. Whither to go, or how further to find her way in the dark, she knew not; she was aware only that she must not seek her apartment, for there she would certainly be sought, and her danger increased every instant, while she remained near it. Her spirits and her breath, however, were so much exhausted, that she was compelled to rest, for a few minutes, at the end of the passage, and still she heard no steps approaching. As thus she stood, light glimmered under an opposite door of the gallery, and, from its situation, she knew, that it was the door of that mysterious chamber, where she had made a discovery so shocking, that she never remembered it but with the utmost horror. That there should be light in this chamber, and at this hour, excited her strong surprise, and she felt a momentary terror concerning it, which did not permit her to look again, for her spirits were now in such a state of weakness, that she almost expected to see the door slowly open, and some horrible object appear at it. Still she listened for a step along the passage, and looked up it, where, not a ray of light appearing, she concluded, that Verezzi had gone back for the lamp; and, believing that he would shortly be there, she again considered which way she should go, or rather which way she could find in the dark.

A faint ray still glimmered under the opposite door, but so great, and, perhaps, so just was her horror of that chamber, that she would not again have tempted its secrets, though she had been certain of obtaining the light so important to her safety. She was still breathing with difficulty, and resting at the end of the passage, when she heard a rustling sound, and then a low voice, so very near her, that it seemed close to her ear; but she had presence of mind to check her emotions, and to remain quite still; in the next moment, she perceived it to be the voice of Verezzi, who did not appear to know, that she was there, but to have spoken to himself. 'The air is fresher here,' said he: 'this should be the corridor.' Perhaps, he was one of those heroes, whose courage can defy an enemy better than darkness, and he tried to rally his spirits with the sound of his own voice. However this might be, he turned to the right, and proceeded, with the same stealing steps, towards Emily's apartment, apparently forgetting, that, in darkness, she could easily elude his search, even in her chamber; and, like an intoxicated person, he followed pertinaciously the one idea, that had possessed his imagination.

The moment she heard his steps steal away, she left her station and moved softly to the other end of the corridor, determined to trust again to chance, and to quit it by the first avenue she could find; but, before she could effect this, light broke upon the walls of the gallery, and, looking back, she saw Verezzi crossing it towards her chamber. She now glided into a passage, that opened on the left, without, as she thought, being perceived; but, in the next instant, another light, glimmering at the further end of this passage, threw her into new terror. While she stopped and hesitated which way to go, the pause allowed her to perceive, that it was Annette, who advanced, and she hurried to meet her: but her imprudence again alarmed Emily, on perceiving whom, she burst into a scream of joy, and it was some minutes, before she could be prevailed with to be silent, or to release her mistress from the ardent clasp, in which she held her. When, at length, Emily made Annette comprehend her danger, they hurried towards Annette's room, which was in a distant part of the castle. No apprehensions, however, could yet silence the latter. 'Oh dear ma'amselle,' said she, as they passed along, 'what a terrified time have I had of it! Oh! I thought I should have died an hundred times! I never thought I should live to see you again! and I never was so glad to see any body in my whole life, as I am to see you now.' 'Hark!' cried Emily, 'we are pursued; that was the echo of steps!' 'No, ma'amselle,' said Annette, 'it was only the echo of a door shutting; sound runs along these vaulted passages so, that one is continually deceived by it; if one does but speak, or cough, it makes a noise as loud as a cannon.' 'Then there is the greater necessity for us to be silent,' said Emily: 'pr'ythee say no more, till we reach your chamber.' Here, at length, they arrived, without interruption, and, Annette having fastened the door, Emily sat down on her little bed, to recover breath and composure. To her enquiry, whether Valancourt was among the prisoners in the castle, Annette replied, that she had not been able to hear, but that she knew there were several persons confined. She then proceeded, in her tedious way, to give an account of the siege, or rather a detail of her terrors and various sufferings, during the attack. 'But,' added she, 'when I heard the shouts of victory from the ramparts, I thought we were all taken, and gave myself up for lost, instead of which, *we* had driven the enemy away. I went then to the north gallery, and saw a great many of them scampering away among the mountains; but the rampart walls were all in ruins, as one may say, and there was a dismal sight to see down among the woods below, where the poor fellows were lying in heaps, but were carried off presently by their comrades. While the siege was going on, the Signor was here, and there, and every where, at the same time, as Ludovico told me, for he would not let me see any thing hardly, and locked me up, as he has often done before, in a room in the middle of the castle, and used to bring me food, and come and talk with me as often as he could; and I must say, if it had not been for Ludovico, I should have died outright.'

'Well, Annette,' said Emily, 'and how have affairs gone on, since the siege?'

'O! sad hurly burly doings, ma'amselle,' replied Annette; 'the Signors have done nothing but sit and drink and game, ever since. They sit up, all night, and play among themselves, for all those riches and fine things, they brought in, some time since, when they used to go out a-robbing, or as good, for days together; and then they have dreadful quarrels about, who loses, and who wins. That fierce Signor Verezzi is always losing, as they tell me, and Signor Orsino wins from him, and this makes him very wroth, and they have had several hard set-to's about it. Then, all those fine ladies are at the castle still; and I declare I am frighted, whenever I meet any of them in the passages.' –

'Surely, Annette,' said Emily starting, 'I heard a noise: listen.' After a long pause, 'No, ma'amselle,' said Annette, 'it was only the wind in the gallery; I often hear it, when it shakes the old doors, at the other end. But won't you go to bed, ma'amselle? you surely will not sit up starving, all night.' Emily now laid herself down on the mattress, and desired Annette to leave the lamp burning on the hearth; having done which, the latter placed herself beside Emily, who, however, was not suffered to sleep, for she again thought she heard a noise from the passage; and Annette was again trying to convince her, that it was only the wind, when footsteps were distinctly heard near the door. Annette was now starting from the bed, but Emily prevailed with her to remain there, and listened with her in a state of terrible expectation. The steps still loitered at the door, when presently an attempt was made on the lock, and, in the next instant, a voice called. 'For heaven's sake, Annette, do not answer,' said Emily softly, 'remain quite still; but I fear we must extinguish the lamp, or its glare will betray us.' 'Holy Virgin!' exclaimed Annette, forgetting her discretion, 'I would not be in darkness now for the whole world.' While she spoke, the voice became louder than before, and repeated Annette's name; 'Blessed Virgin!' cried she suddenly, 'it is only Ludovico.' She rose to open the door, but Emily prevented her, till they should be more certain, that it was he alone; with whom Annette, at length, talked for some time, and learned, that he was come to enquire after herself, whom he had let out of her room to go to Emily, and that he was now returned to lock her in again. Emily, fearful of being overheard, if they conversed any longer through the door, consented that it should be opened, and a young man appeared, whose open countenance confirmed the favourable opinion of him, which his care of Annette had already prompted her to form. She entreated his protection, should Verezzi make this requisite; and Ludovico offered to pass the night in an old chamber, adjoining, that opened from the gallery, and, on the first alarm, to come to their defence.

Emily was much soothed by this proposal; and Ludovico, having lighted his lamp, went to his station, while she, once more, endeavoured to repose on her mattress. But a variety of interests pressed upon her attention, and prevented sleep.

She thought much on what Annette had told her of the dissolute manners of Montoni and his associates, and more of his present conduct towards herself, and of the danger, from which she had just escaped. From the view of her present situation she shrunk, as from a new picture of terror. She saw herself in a castle, inhabited by vice and violence, seated beyond the reach of law, or justice, and in the power of a man, whose perseverance was equal to every occasion, and in whom passions, of which revenge was not the weakest, entirely supplied the place of principles. She was compelled, once more, to acknowledge, that it would be folly, and not fortitude, any longer to dare his power; and, resigning all hopes of future happiness with Valancourt, she determined, that, on the following morning, she would compromise with Montoni, and give up her estates, on condition, that he would permit her immediate return to France. Such considerations kept her waking for many hours; but, the night passed, without further alarm from Verezzi.

On the next morning, Emily had a long conversation with Ludovico, in which she heard circumstances concerning the castle, and received hints of the designs of Montoni, that considerably increased her alarms. On expressing her surprise, that Ludovico, who seemed to be so sensible of the evils of his situation, should continue in it, he informed her, that it was not his intention to do so, and she then ventured to ask him, if he would assist her to escape from the castle. Ludovico assured her of his readiness to attempt this, but strongly represented the difficulty of the enterprise, and the certain destruction which must ensue, should Montoni overtake them, before they had passed the mountains; he, however, promised to be watchful of every circumstance, that might contribute to the success of the attempt, and to think upon some plan of departure.

Emily now confided to him the name of Valancourt, and begged he would enquire for such a person among the prisoners in the castle; for the faint hope, which this conversation awakened, made her now recede from her resolution of an immediate compromise with Montoni. She determined, if possible, to delay this, till she heard further from Ludovico, and, if his designs were found to be impracticable, to resign the estates at once. Her thoughts were on this subject, when Montoni, who was now recovered from the intoxication of the preceding night, sent for her, and she immediately obeyed the summons. He was alone. ‘I find,’ said he, ‘that you were not in your chamber, last night; where were you?’ Emily related to him some circumstances of her alarm, and entreated his protection from a repetition of them. ‘You know the terms of my protection,’ said he; ‘if you really value this, you will secure it.’ His open declaration, that he would only conditionally protect her, while she remained a prisoner in the castle, shewed Emily the necessity of an immediate compliance with his terms; but she first demanded, whether he would permit her immediately to depart, if she gave up her claim to the contested estates. In a very solemn manner he then assured her, that he would, and immediately laid before her a paper, which was to transfer the right of those estates to himself.

She was, for a considerable time, unable to sign it, and her heart was torn with contending interests, for she was about to resign the happiness of all her future years – the hope, which had sustained her in so many hours of adversity.

After hearing from Montoni a recapitulation of the conditions of her compliance, and a remonstrance, that his time was valuable, she put her hand to the paper; when she had done which, she fell back in her chair, but soon recovered, and desired, that he would give orders for her departure, and that he would allow Annette to accompany her. Montoni smiled. ‘It was necessary to deceive you,’ said he, – ‘there was no other way of making you act reasonably; you shall go, but it must not be at present. I must first secure these estates by possession: when that is done, you may return to France if you will.’

The deliberate villany, with which he violated the solemn engagement he had just entered into, shocked Emily as much, as the certainty, that she had made a fruitless sacrifice, and must still remain his prisoner. She had no words to express what she felt, and knew, that it would have been useless, if she had. As she looked piteously at Montoni, he turned away, and at the same time desired she would withdraw to her apartment; but, unable to leave the room, she sat down in a chair near the door, and sighed heavily. She had neither words nor tears.

‘Why will you indulge this childish grief ?’ said he. ‘Endeavour to strengthen your mind, to bear patiently what cannot now be avoided; you have no real evil to lament; be patient, and you will be sent back to France. At present retire to your apartment.’

‘I dare not go, sir,’ said she, ‘where I shall be liable to the intrusion of Signor Verezzi.’ ‘Have I not promised to protect you?’ said Montoni. ‘You have promised, sir,’—replied Emily, after some hesitation. ‘And is not my promise sufficient?’ added he sternly. ‘You will recollect your former promise, Signor,’ said Emily, trembling, ‘and may determine for me, whether I ought to rely upon this.’ ‘Will you provoke me to declare to you, that I will not protect you then?’ said Montoni, in a tone of haughty displeasure. ‘If that will satisfy you, I will do it immediately. Withdraw to your chamber, before I retract my promise; you have nothing to fear there.’ Emily left the room, and moved slowly into the hall, where the fear of meeting Verezzi, or Bertolini, made her quicken her steps, though she could scarcely support herself; and soon after she reached once more her own apartment. Having looked fearfully round her, to examine if any person was there, and having searched every part of it, she fastened the door, and sat down by one of the casements. Here, while she looked out for some hope to support her fainting spirits, which had been so long harassed and oppressed, that, if she had not now struggled much against misfortune, they would have left her, perhaps, for ever, she endeavoured to believe, that Montoni did really intend to permit her return to France as soon as he had secured her property, and that he would, in the mean time, protect her from insult; but her chief hope rested with Ludovico, who, she doubted not, would be zealous in her cause, though he seemed almost to despair of success in it. One circumstance, however, she had to rejoice in. Her prudence, or rather her fears, had saved her from mentioning the name of Valancourt to Montoni, which she was several times on the point of doing, before she signed the paper, and of stipulating for his release, if he should be really a prisoner in the castle. Had she done this, Montoni’s jealous fears would now probably have loaded Valancourt with new severities, and have suggested the advantage of holding him a captive for life.

Thus passed the melancholy day, as she had before passed many in this same chamber. When night drew on, she would have withdrawn herself to Annette's bed, had not a particular interest inclined her to remain in this chamber, in spite of her fears; for, when the castle should be still, and the customary hour arrived, she determined to watch for the music, which she had formerly heard. Though its sounds might not enable her positively to determine, whether Valancourt was there, they would perhaps strengthen her opinion that he was, and impart the comfort, so necessary to her present support. – But, on the other hand, if all should be silent – ! – She hardly dared to suffer her thoughts to glance that way, but waited, with impatient expectation, the approaching hour.

The night was stormy; the battlements of the castle appeared to rock in the wind, and, at intervals, long groans seemed to pass on the air, such as those, which often deceive the melancholy mind, in tempests, and amidst scenes of desolation. Emily heard, as formerly, the sentinels pass along the terrace to their posts, and, looking out from her casement, observed, that the watch was doubled; a precaution, which appeared necessary enough, when she threw her eyes on the walls, and saw their shattered condition. The well-known sounds of the soldiers' march, and of their distant voices, which passed her in the wind, and were lost again, recalled to her memory the melancholy sensations she had suffered, when she formerly heard the same sounds; and occasioned almost involuntary comparisons between her present, and her late situation. But this was no subject for congratulation, and she wisely checked the course of her thoughts, while, as the hour was not yet come, in which she had been accustomed to hear the music, she closed the casement, and endeavoured to await it in patience. The door of the stair-case she tried to secure, as usual, with some of the furniture of the room; but this expedient her fears now represented to her to be very inadequate to the power and perseverance of Verezzi; and she often looked at a large and heavy chest, that stood in the chamber, with wishes that she and Annette had strength enough to move it. While she blamed the long stay of this girl, who was still with Ludovico and some other of the servants, she trimmed her wood fire, to make the room appear less desolate, and sat down beside it with a book, which her eyes perused, while her thoughts wandered to Valancourt, and her own misfortunes. As she sat thus, she thought, in a pause of the wind, she distinguished music, and went to the casement to listen, but the loud swell of the gust overcame every other sound. When the wind sunk again, she heard distinctly, in the deep pause that succeeded, the sweet strings of a lute; but again the rising tempest bore away the notes, and again was succeeded by a solemn pause. Emily, trembling with hope and fear, opened her casement to listen, and to try whether her own voice could be heard by the musician; for to endure any longer this state of torturing suspense concerning Valancourt, seemed to be utterly impossible. There was a kind of breathless stillness in the chambers, that permitted her to distinguish from below the tender notes of the very lute she had formerly heard, and with it, a plaintive voice, made sweeter by the low rustling sound, that now began to creep along the wood-tops, till it was lost in the rising wind. Their tall heads then began to wave, while, through a forest of pine, on the left, the wind, groaning heavily, rolled onward over the woods below, bending them almost to their roots; and, as the long-resounding gale swept away, other woods, on the right, seemed to answer the 'loud lament;'[3] then, others, further still, softened it into a murmur, that died into silence. Emily listened, with mingled awe and expectation, hope and fear; and again the melting sweetness of the lute was heard, and the same solemn-breathing voice. Convinced that these came from an apartment underneath, she leaned far out of her window, that she might discover whether any light was there; but the casements below, as well as those above, were sunk so deep in the thick walls of the castle, that she could not see them, or even the faint ray, that probably glimmered through their bars. She then ventured to call; but the wind bore her voice to the other end of the terrace, and then the music was heard as before, in the pause of the gust. Suddenly she thought she heard a noise in her chamber, and she drew herself within the casement; but, in a moment after, distinguishing Annette's voice at the door, she concluded it was her she had heard before, and she let her in. 'Move softly, Annette, to the casement,' said she, 'and listen with me; the music is returned.' They were silent till, the measure changing, Annette exclaimed, 'Holy Virgin! I know that song well; it is a French song, one of the favourite songs of my dear country.' This was the ballad Emily had heard on a former night, though not the one she had first listened to from the fishing-house in Gascony. 'O! it is a Frenchman, that sings,' said Annette: 'it must be Monsieur Valancourt.' 'Hark! Annette, do not speak so loud,' said Emily, 'we may be overheard.' 'What! by the Chevalier?' said Annette. 'No,' replied Emily mournfully, 'but by somebody, who may report us to the Signor. What reason have you to think it is Monsieur Valancourt, who sings? But hark! now the voice swells louder! Do you recollect those tones? I fear to trust my own judgment.' 'I never happened to hear the Chevalier sing, Mademoiselle,' replied Annette, who, as Emily was disappointed to perceive, had no stronger reason for concluding this to be Valancourt, than that the musician must be a Frenchman. Soon after, she heard the song of the fishing-house, and distinguished her own name, which was repeated so distinctly, that Annette had heard it also. She trembled, sunk into a chair by the window, and Annette called aloud, 'Monsieur Valancourt! Monsieur Valancourt!' while Emily endeavoured to check her, but she repeated the call more loudly than before, and the lute and the voice suddenly stopped. Emily listened, for some time, in a state of intolerable suspense; but, no answer being returned, 'It does not signify, mademoiselle,' said Annette; 'it is the Chevalier, and I will speak to him.' 'No, Annette,' said Emily, 'I think I will speak myself; if it is he, he will know my voice, and speak again.' 'Who is it,' said she, 'that sings at this late hour?'

A long silence ensued, and, having repeated the question, she perceived some faint accents, mingling in the blast, that swept by; but the sounds were so distant, and passed so suddenly, that she could scarcely hear them, much less distinguish the words they uttered, or recognise the voice. After another pause, Emily called again; and again they heard a voice, but as faintly as before; and they perceived, that there were other circumstances, besides the strength, and direction of the wind, to contend with; for the great depth, at which the casements were fixed in the castle walls, contributed, still more than the distance, to prevent articulated sounds from being understood, though general ones were easily heard. Emily, however, ventured to believe, from the circumstance of her voice alone having been answered, that the stranger was Valancourt, as well as that he knew her, and she gave herself up to speechless joy. Annette, however, was not speechless. – She renewed her calls, but received no answer; and Emily, fearing, that a further attempt, which certainly was, at present, highly dangerous, might expose them to the guards of the castle, while it could not perhaps terminate her suspense, insisted on Annette's dropping the enquiry for this night; though she determined herself to question Ludovico, on the subject, in the morning, more urgently than she had yet done. She was now enabled to say, that the stranger, whom she had formerly heard, was still in the castle, and to direct Ludovico to that part of it, in which he was confined.

Emily, attended by Annette, continued at the casement, for some time, but all remained still; they heard neither lute or voice again, and Emily was now as much oppressed by anxious joy, as she lately was by a sense of her misfortunes. With hasty steps she paced the room, now half calling on Valancourt's name, then suddenly stopping, and now going to the casement and listening, where, however, she heard nothing but the solemn waving of the woods. Sometimes her impatience to speak to Ludovico prompted her to send Annette to call him; but a sense of the impropriety of this at midnight restrained her. Annette, meanwhile, as impatient as her mistress, went as often to the casement to listen, and returned almost as much disappointed. She, at length, mentioned Signor Verezzi, and her fear, lest he should enter the chamber by the staircase door. 'But the night is now almost past, mademoiselle,' said she, recollecting herself: 'there is the morning light, beginning to peep over those mountains yonder in the east.'

Emily had forgotten, till this moment, that such a person existed as Verezzi, and all the danger that had appeared to threaten her; but the mention of his name renewed her alarm, and she remembered the old chest, that she had wished to place against the door, which she now, with Annette, attempted to move, but it was so heavy, that they could not lift it from the floor. 'What is in this great old chest, mademoiselle,' said Annette, 'that makes it so weighty?' Emily having replied, 'that she found it in the chamber, when she first came to the castle, and had never examined it,' – 'Then I will, ma'amselle,' said Annette, and she tried to lift the lid; but this was held by a lock, for which she had no key, and which, indeed, appeared, from its peculiar construction, to open with a spring. The morning now glimmered through the casements, and the wind had sunk into a calm. Emily looked out upon the dusky woods, and on the twilight mountains, just stealing on the eye, and saw the whole scene, after the storm, lying in profound stillness, the woods motionless, and the clouds above, through which the dawn trembled, scarcely appearing to move along the heavens. One soldier was pacing the terrace beneath, with measured steps; and two, more distant, were sunk asleep on the walls, wearied with the night's watch. Having inhaled, for a while, the pure spirit of the air, and of vegetation, which the late rains had called forth; and having listened, once more, for a note of music, she now closed the casement, and retired to rest.

CHAPTER IX

‘Thus on the chill Lapponian’s[1] dreary land,
For many a long month lost in snow profound,
When Sol from Cancer[2] sends the seasons bland,
And in their northern cave the storms hath bound;
From silent mountains, straight, with startling sound,
Torrents are hurl’d, green hills emerge, and lo,
The trees with foliage, cliffs with flow’rs are crown’d;
Pure rills through vales of verdure warbling go;
And wonder, love, and joy, the peasant’s heart o’erflow.’
Beattie [*The Minstrel*][3]

Several of her succeeding days passed in suspense, for Ludovico could only learn from the soldiers, that there was a prisoner in the apartment, described to him by Emily, and that he was a Frenchman, whom they had taken in one of their skirmishes, with a party of his countrymen. During this interval, Emily escaped the persecutions of Bertolini, and Verezzi, by confining herself to her apartment; except that sometimes, in an evening, she ventured to walk in the adjoining corridor. Montoni appeared to respect his last promise, though he had prophaned his first; for to his protection only could she attribute her present repose; and in this she was now so secure, that she did not wish to leave the castle, till she could obtain some certainty concerning Valancourt; for which she waited, indeed, without any sacrifice of her own comfort, since no circumstance had occurred to make her escape probable.

On the fourth day, Ludovico informed her, that he had hopes of being admitted to the presence of the prisoner; it being the turn of a soldier, with whom he had been for some time familiar, to attend him on the following night. He was not deceived in his hope; for, under pretence of carrying in a pitcher of water, he entered the prison, though, his prudence having prevented him from telling the sentinel the real motive of his visit, he was obliged to make his conference with the prisoner a very short one.

Emily awaited the result in her own apartment, Ludovico having promised to accompany Annette to the corridor, in the evening; where, after several hours impatiently counted, he arrived. Emily, having then uttered the name of Valancourt, could articulate no more, but hesitated in trembling expectation. ‘The Chevalier would not entrust me with his name, Signora,’ replied Ludovico; ‘but, when I just mentioned yours, he seemed overwhelmed with joy, though he was not so much surprised as I expected.’ ‘Does he then remember me?’ she exclaimed.

‘O! it is Mons. Valancourt,’ said Annette, and looked impatiently at Ludovico, who understood her look, and replied to Emily: ‘Yes, lady, the Chevalier does, indeed, remember you, and, I am sure, has a very great regard for you, and I made bold to say you had for him. He then enquired how you came to know he was in the castle, and whether you ordered me to speak to him. The first question I could not answer, but the second I did; and then he went off into his ecstasies again. I was afraid his joy would have betrayed him to the sentinel at the door.’

‘But how does he look, Ludovico?’ interrupted Emily: ‘is he not melancholy and ill with this long confinement?’ – ‘Why, as to melancholy, I saw no symptom of that, lady, while I was with him, for he seemed in the finest spirits I ever saw any body in, in all my life. His countenance was all joy, and, if one may judge from that, he was very well; but I did not ask him.’ ‘Did he send me no message?’ said Emily. ‘O yes, Signora, and something besides,’ replied Ludovico, who searched his pockets. ‘Surely, I have not lost it,’ added he. ‘The Chevalier said, he would have written, madam, if he had had pen and ink, and was going to have sent a very long message, when the sentinel entered the room, but not before he had given me this.’ Ludovico then drew forth a miniature from his bosom, which Emily received with a trembling hand, and perceived to be a portrait of herself – the very picture, which her mother had lost so strangely in the fishing-house at La Vallée.

Tears of mingled joy and tenderness flowed to her eyes, while Ludovico proceeded—‘“Tell your lady,” said the Chevalier, as he gave me the picture, “that this has been my companion, and only solace in all my misfortunes. Tell her, that I have worn it next my heart, and that I send it her as the pledge of an affection, which can never die; that I would not part with it, but to her, for the wealth of worlds, and that I now part with it, only in the hope of soon receiving it from her hands. Tell her” – Just then, Signora, the sentinel came in, and the Chevalier said no more; but he had before asked me to contrive an interview for him with you; and when I told him, how little hope I had of prevailing with the guard to assist me, he said, that was not, perhaps, of so much consequence as I imagined, and bade me contrive to bring back your answer, and he would inform me of more than he chose to do then. So this, I think, lady, is the whole of what passed.'

'How, Ludovico, shall I reward you for your zeal?' said Emily: 'but, indeed, I do not now possess the means. When can you see the Chevalier again?' 'That is uncertain, Signora,' replied he. 'It depends upon who stands guard next: there are not more than one or two among them, from whom I would dare to ask admittance to the prison-chamber.'

'I need not bid you remember, Ludovico,' resumed Emily, 'how very much interested I am in your seeing the Chevalier soon; and, when you do so, tell him, that I have received the picture, and, with the sentiments he wished. Tell him I have suffered much, and still suffer – ' She paused. 'But shall I tell him you will see him, lady?' said Ludovico. 'Most certainly I will,' replied Emily. 'But when, Signora, and where?' 'That must depend upon circumstances,' returned Emily. 'The place, and the hour, must be regulated by his opportunities.'

'As to the place, mademoiselle,' said Annette, 'there is no other place in the castle, besides this corridor, where *we* can see him in safety, you know; and, as for the hour, – it must be when all the Signors are asleep, if that ever happens!' 'You may mention these circumstances to the Chevalier, Ludovico,' said she, checking the flippancy of Annette, 'and leave them to his judgment and opportunity. Tell him, my heart is unchanged. But, above all, let him see you again as soon as possible; and, Ludovico, I think it is needless to tell you I shall very anxiously look for you.' Having then wished her good night, Ludovico descended the staircase, and Emily retired to rest, but not to sleep, for joy now rendered her as wakeful, as she had ever been from grief. Montoni and his castle had all vanished from her mind, like the frightful vision of a necromancer, and she wandered, once more, in fairy scenes of unfading happiness:

___'As when, beneath the beam

Of summer moons, the distant woods among,
Or by some flood, all silver'd with the gleam,

The soft embodied Fays thro' airy portals stream.'[4]

A week elapsed, before Ludovico again visited the prison; for the sentinels, during that period, were men, in whom he could not confide, and he feared to awaken curiosity, by asking to see their prisoner. In this interval, he communicated to Emily terrific reports of what was passing in the castle; of riots, quarrels, and of carousals more alarming than either; while from some circumstances, which he mentioned, she not only doubted, whether Montoni meant ever to release her, but greatly feared, that he had designs, concerning her, – such as she had formerly dreaded. Her name was frequently mentioned in the conversations, which Bertolini and Verezzi held together, and, at those times, they were frequently in contention. Montoni had lost large sums to Verezzi, so that there was a dreadful possibility of his designing her to be a substitute for the debt; but, as she was ignorant, that he had formerly encouraged the hopes of Bertolini also, concerning herself, after the latter had done him some signal service, she knew not how to account for these contentions between Bertolini and Verezzi. The cause of them, however, appeared to be of little consequence, for she thought she saw destruction approaching in many forms, and her entreaties to Ludovico to contrive an escape and to see the prisoner again, were more urgent than ever.

At length, he informed her, that he had again visited the Chevalier, who had directed him to confide in the guard of the prison, from whom he had already received some instances of kindness, and who had promised to permit his going into the castle for half an hour, on the ensuing night, when Montoni and his companions should be engaged at their carousals. 'This was kind, to be sure,' added Ludovico: 'but Sebastian knows he runs no risque in letting the Chevalier out, for, if he can get beyond the bars and iron doors of the castle, he must be cunning indeed. But the Chevalier desired me, Signora, to go to you immediately, and to beg you would allow him to visit you, this night, if it was only for a moment, for that he could no longer live under the same roof, without seeing you; the hour, he said, he could not mention, for it must depend on circumstances (just as you said, Signora); and the place he desired you would appoint, as knowing which was best for your own safety.'

Emily was now so much agitated by the near prospect of meeting Valancourt, that it was some time, before she could give any answer to Ludovico, or consider of the place of meeting; when she did, she saw none, that promised so much security, as the corridor, near her own apartment, which she was checked from leaving, by the apprehension of meeting any of Montoni's guests, on their way to their rooms; and she dismissed the scruples, which delicacy opposed, now that a serious danger was to be avoided by encountering them. It was settled, therefore, that the Chevalier should meet her in the corridor, at that hour of the night, which Ludovico, who was to be upon the watch, should judge safest: and Emily, as may be imagined, passed this interval in a tumult of hope and joy, anxiety and impatience. Never, since her residence in the castle, had she watched, with so much pleasure, the sun set behind the mountains, and twilight shade, and darkness veil the scene, as on this evening. She counted the notes of the great clock, and listened to the steps of the sentinels, as they changed the watch, only to rejoice, that another hour was gone. 'O, Valancourt!' said she, 'after all I have suffered; after our long, long separation, when I thought I should never – never see you more – we are still to meet again! O! I have endured grief, and anxiety, and terror, and let me, then, not sink beneath this joy!' These were moments, when it was impossible for her to feel emotions of regret, or melancholy, for any ordinary interests; – even the reflection, that she had resigned the estates, which would have been a provision for herself and Valancourt for life, threw only a light and transient shade upon her spirits. The idea of Valancourt, and that she should see him so soon, alone occupied her heart.

At length the clock struck twelve; she opened the door to listen, if any noise was in the castle, and heard only distant shouts of riot and laughter, echoed feebly along the gallery. She guessed, that the Signor and his guests were at the banquet. 'They are now engaged for the night,' said she; 'and Valancourt will soon be here.' Having softly closed the door, she paced the room with impatient steps, and often went to the casement to listen for the lute; but all was silent, and, her agitation every moment increasing, she was at length unable to support herself, and sat down by the window. Annette, whom she detained, was, in the meantime, as loquacious as usual; but Emily heard scarcely any thing she said, and having at length risen to the casement, she distinguished the chords of the lute, struck with an expressive hand, and then the voice, she had formerly listened to, accompanied it.

‘Now rising love they fann’d, now pleasing dole

They breath’d in tender musings through the heart;
And now a graver, sacred strain they stole,
As when seraphic hands an hymn impart!’

Emily wept in doubtful joy and tenderness; and, when the strain ceased, she considered it as a signal, that Valancourt was about to leave the prison. Soon after, she heard steps in the corridor; – they were the light, quick steps of hope; she could scarcely support herself, as they approached, but opening the door of the apartment, she advanced to meet Valancourt, and, in the next moment, sunk in the arms of a stranger. His voice – his countenance instantly convinced her, and she fainted away.

On reviving, she found herself supported by the stranger, who was watching over her recovery, with a countenance of ineffable tenderness and anxiety. She had no spirits for reply, or enquiry; she asked no questions, but burst into tears, and disengaged herself from his arms; when the expression of his countenance changed to surprise and disappointment, and he turned to Ludovico, for an explanation; Annette soon gave the information, which Ludovico could not. ‘O, sir!’ said she, in a voice, interrupted with sobs; ‘O, sir! you are not the other Chevalier. We expected Monsieur Valancourt, but you are not he! O Ludovico! how could you deceive us so? my poor lady will never recover it – never!’ The stranger, who now appeared much agitated, attempted to speak, but his words faltered; and then striking his hand against his forehead, as if in sudden despair, he walked abruptly to the other end of the corridor.

Suddenly, Annette dried her tears, and spoke to Ludovico. ‘But, perhaps,’ said she, ‘after all, the other Chevalier is not this: perhaps the Chevalier Valancourt is still below.’ Emily raised her head. ‘No,’ replied Ludovico, ‘Monsieur Valancourt never was below, if this gentleman is not he.’ ‘If you, sir,’ said Ludovico, addressing the stranger, ‘would but have had the goodness to trust me with your name, this mistake had been avoided.’ ‘Most true,’ replied the stranger, speaking in broken Italian, ‘but it was of the utmost consequence to me, that my name should be concealed from Montoni. Madam,’ added he then, addressing Emily in French, ‘will you permit me to apologize for the pain I have occasioned you, and to explain to you alone my name, and the circumstance, which has led me into this error? I am of France; – I am your countryman; – we are met in a foreign land.’ Emily tried to compose her spirits; yet she hesitated to grant his request. At length, desiring, that Ludovico would wait on the stair-case, and detaining Annette, she told the stranger, that her woman understood very little Italian, and begged he would communicate what he wished to say, in that language. – Having withdrawn to a distant part of the corridor, he said, with a long-drawn sigh, ‘You, madam, are no stranger to me, though I am so unhappy as to be unknown to you. – My name is Du Pont; I am of France, of Gascony, your native province, and have long admired, – and, why should I affect to disguise it? – have long loved you.’ He paused, but, in the next moment, proceeded. ‘My family, madam, is probably not unknown to you, for we lived within a few miles of La Vallée, and I have, sometimes, had the happiness of meeting you, on visits in the neighbourhood. I will not offend you by repeating how much you interested me; how much I loved to wander in the scenes you frequented; how often I visited your favourite fishing-house, and lamented the circumstance, which, at that time, forbade me to reveal my passion. I will not explain how I surrendered to temptation, and became possessed of a treasure, which was to me inestimable; a treasure, which I committed to your messenger, a few days ago, with expectations very different from my present ones. I will say nothing of these circumstances, for I know they will avail me little; let me only supplicate from you forgiveness, and the picture, which I so unwarily returned. Your generosity will pardon the theft, and restore the prize. My crime has been my punishment; for the portrait I stole has contributed to nourish a passion, which must still be my torment.’

Emily now interrupted him. ‘I think, sir, I may leave it to your integrity to determine, whether, after what has just appeared, concerning Mons. Valancourt, I ought to return the picture. I think you will acknowledge, that this would not be generosity; and you will allow me to add, that it would be doing myself an injustice. I must consider myself honoured by your good opinion, but’ — and she hesitated, – ‘the mistake of this evening makes it unnecessary for me to say more.’

‘It does, madam, – alas! it does!’ said the stranger, who, after a long pause, proceeded. – ‘But you will allow me to shew my disinterestedness, though not my love, and will accept the services I offer. Yet, alas! what services can I offer? I am myself a prisoner, a sufferer, like you. But, dear as liberty is to me, I would not seek it through half the hazards I would encounter to deliver you from this recess of vice. Accept the offered services of a friend; do not refuse me the reward of having, at least, attempted to deserve your thanks.’

‘You deserve them already, sir,’ said Emily; ‘the wish deserves my warmest thanks. But you will excuse me for reminding you of the danger you incur by prolonging this interview. It will be a great consolation to me to remember, whether your friendly attempts to release me succeed or not, that I have a countryman, who would so generously protect me.’ – Monsieur Du Pont took her hand, which she but feebly attempted to withdraw, and pressed it respectfully to his lips. ‘Allow me to breathe another fervent sigh for your happiness,’ said he, ‘and to applaud myself for an affection, which I cannot conquer.’ As he said this, Emily heard a noise from her apartment, and, turning round, saw the door from the stair-case open, and a man rush into her chamber. ‘I will teach you to conquer it,’ cried he, as he advanced into the corridor, and drew a stiletto, which he aimed at Du Pont, who was unarmed, but who, stepping back, avoided the blow, and then sprung upon Verezzi, from whom he wrenched the stiletto. While they struggled in each other's grasp, Emily, followed by Annette, ran further into the corridor, calling on Ludovico, who was, however, gone from the stair-case, and, as she advanced, terrified and uncertain what to do, a distant noise, that seemed to arise from the hall, reminded her of the danger she was incurring; and, sending Annette forward in search of Ludovico, she returned to the spot where Du Pont and Verezzi were still struggling for victory. It was her own cause which was to be decided with that of the former, whose conduct, independently of this circumstance, would, however, have interested her in his success, even had she not disliked and dreaded Verezzi. She threw herself in a chair, and supplicated them to desist from further violence, till, at length, Du Pont forced Verezzi to the floor, where he lay stunned by the violence of his fall; and she then entreated Du Pont to escape from the room, before Montoni, or his party, should appear; but he still refused to leave her unprotected; and, while Emily, now more terrified for him, than for herself, enforced the entreaty, they heard steps ascending the private stair-case.

'O you are lost!' cried she, 'these are Montoni's people.' Du Pont made no reply, but supported Emily, while, with a steady, though eager, countenance, he awaited their appearance, and, in the next moment, Ludovico, alone, mounted the landing-place. Throwing an hasty glance round the chamber, 'Follow me,' said he, 'as you value your lives; we have not an instant to lose!'

Emily enquired what had occurred, and whither they were to go?

'I cannot stay to tell you now, Signora,' replied Ludovico: 'fly! fly!'

She immediately followed him, accompanied by Mons. Du Pont, down the stair-case, and along a vaulted passage, when suddenly she recollected Annette, and enquired for her. 'She awaits us further on, Signora,' said Ludovico, almost breathless with haste; 'the gates were open, a moment since, to a party just come in from the mountains: they will be shut, I fear, before we can reach them! Through this door, Signora,' added Ludovico, holding down the lamp, 'take care, here are two steps.'

Emily followed, trembling still more, than before she had understood, that her escape from the castle depended upon the present moment; while Du Pont supported her, and endeavoured, as they passed along, to cheer her spirits.

'Speak low, Signor,' said Ludovico, 'these passages send echoes all round the castle.'

'Take care of the light,' cried Emily, 'you go so fast, that the air will extinguish it.'

Ludovico now opened another door, where they found Annette, and the party then descended a short flight of steps into a passage, which, Ludovico said, led round the inner court of the castle, and opened into the outer one. As they advanced, confused and tumultuous sounds, that seemed to come from the inner court, alarmed Emily. 'Nay, Signora,' said Ludovico, 'our only hope is in that tumult; while the Signor's people are busied about the men, who are just arrived, we may, perhaps, pass unnoticed through the gates. But hush!' he added, as they approached the small door, that opened into the outer court, 'if you will remain here a moment, I will go to see whether the gates are open, and any body is in the way. Pray extinguish the light, Signor, if you hear me talking,' continued Ludovico, delivering the lamp to Du Pont, 'and remain quite still.'

Saying this, he stepped out upon the court, and they closed the door, listening anxiously to his departing steps. No voice, however, was heard in the court, which he was crossing, though a confusion of many voices yet issued from the inner one. 'We shall soon be beyond the walls,' said Du Pont softly to Emily, 'support yourself a little longer, Madam, and all will be well.'

But soon they heard Ludovico speaking loud, and the voice also of some other person, and Du Pont immediately extinguished the lamp. 'Ah! it is too late!' exclaimed Emily, 'what is to become of us?' They listened again, and then perceived, that Ludovico was talking with a sentinel, whose voices were heard also by Emily's favourite dog, that had followed her from the chamber, and now barked loudly. 'This dog will betray us!' said Du Pont, 'I will hold him.' 'I fear he has already betrayed us!' replied Emily. Du Pont, however, caught him up, and, again listening to what was going on without, they heard Ludovico say, 'I'll watch the gates the while.'

'Stay a minute,' replied the sentinel, 'and you need not have the trouble, for the horses will be sent round to the outer stables, then the gates will be shut, and I can leave my post.' 'I don't mind the trouble, comrade,' said Ludovico, 'you will do such another good turn for me, some time. Go – go, and fetch the wine; the rogues, that are just come in, will drink it all else.'

The soldier hesitated, and then called aloud to the people in the second court, to know why they did not send out the horses, that the gates might be shut; but they were too much engaged, to attend to him, even if they had heard his voice.

'Aye – aye,' said Ludovico, 'they know better than that; they are sharing it all among them; if you wait till the horses come out, you must wait till the wine is drunk. I have had my share already, but, since you do not care about yours, I see no reason why I should not have that too.'

'Hold, hold, not so fast,' cried the sentinel, 'do watch then, for a moment: I'll be with you presently.'

'Don't hurry yourself,' said Ludovico, coolly, 'I have kept guard before now. But you may leave me your [*]trombone, that, if the castle should be attacked, you know, I may be able to defend the pass, like a hero.'

'There, my good fellow,' returned the soldier, 'there, take it – it has seen service, though it could do little in defending the castle. I'll tell you a good story, though, about this same trombone.'

'You'll tell it better when you have had the wine,' said Ludovico. 'There! they are coming out from the court already.'

'I'll have the wine, though,' said the sentinel, running off. 'I won't keep you a minute.'

‘Take your time, I am in no haste,’ replied Ludovico, who was already hurrying across the court, when the soldier came back. ‘Whither so fast, friend – whither so fast?’ said the latter. ‘What! is this the way you keep watch? I must stand to my post myself, I see.’

‘Aye, well,’ replied Ludovico, ‘you have saved me the trouble of following you further, for I wanted to tell you, if you have a mind to drink the Tuscany wine, you must go to Sebastian, he is dealing it out; the other that Federico has, is not worth having. But you are not likely to have any, I see, for they are all coming out.’

‘By St Peter! so they are,’ said the soldier, and again ran off, while Ludovico, once more at liberty, hastened to the door of the passage, where Emily was sinking under the anxiety this long discourse had occasioned; but, on his telling them the court was clear, they followed him to the gates, without waiting another instant, yet not before he had seized two horses, that had strayed from the second court, and were picking a scanty meal among the grass, which grew between the pavement of the first.

They passed, without interruption, the dreadful gates, and took the road that led down among the woods, Emily, Monsieur Du Pont and Annette on foot, and Ludovico, who was mounted on one horse, leading the other. Having reached them, they stopped, while Emily and Annette were placed on horseback with their two protectors, when, Ludovico leading the way, they set off as fast as the broken road, and the feeble light, which a rising moon threw among the foliage, would permit.

Emily was so much astonished by this sudden departure, that she scarcely dared to believe herself awake; and she yet much doubted whether this adventure would terminate in escape, – a doubt, which had too much probability to justify it; for, before they quitted the woods, they heard shouts in the wind, and, on emerging from them, saw lights moving quickly near the castle above. Du Pont whipped his horse, and with some difficulty compelled him to go faster.

‘Ah! poor beast,’ said Ludovico, ‘he is weary enough; – he has been out all day; but, Signor, we must fly for it, now; for yonder are the lights coming this way.’

Having given his own horse a lash, they now both set off on a full gallop; and, when they again looked back, the lights were so distant as scarcely to be discerned, and the voices were sunk into silence. The travellers then abated their pace, and, consulting whither they should direct their course, it was determined they should descend into Tuscany, and endeavour to reach the Mediterranean, where they could readily embark for France. Thither Du Pont meant to attend Emily, if he should learn, that the regiment he had accompanied into Italy, was returned to his native country.

They were now in the road, which Emily had travelled with Ugo and Bertrand; but Ludovico, who was the only one of the party, acquainted with the passes of these mountains, said, that, a little further on, a bye-road, branching from this, would lead them down into Tuscany with very little difficulty; and that, at a few leagues distance, was a small town, where necessaries could be procured for their journey.

‘But, I hope,’ added he, ‘we shall meet with no straggling parties of banditti; some of them are abroad, I know. However, I have got a good trombone, which will be of some service, if we should encounter any of those brave spirits. You have no arms, Signor?’ ‘Yes,’ replied Du Pont, ‘I have the villain’s stiletto, who would have stabbed me – but let us rejoice in our escape from Udolpho, nor torment ourselves with looking out for dangers, that may never arrive.’

The moon was now risen high over the woods, that hung upon the sides of the narrow glen, through which they wandered, and afforded them light sufficient to distinguish their way, and to avoid the loose and broken stones, that frequently crossed it. They now travelled leisurely, and in profound silence; for they had scarcely yet recovered from the astonishment, into which this sudden escape had thrown them. – Emily’s mind, especially, was sunk, after the various emotions it had suffered, into a kind of musing stillness, which the reposing beauty of the surrounding scene and the creeping murmur of the night-breeze among the foliage above contributed to prolong. She thought of Valancourt and of France, with hope, and she would have thought of them with joy, had not the first events of this evening harassed her spirits too much, to permit her now to feel so lively a sensation. Meanwhile, Emily was alone the object of Du Pont’s melancholy consideration; yet, with the despondency he suffered, as he mused on his recent disappointment, was mingled a sweet pleasure, occasioned by her presence, though they did not now exchange a single word. Annette thought of this wonderful escape, of the bustle in which Montoni and his people must be, now that their flight was discovered; of her native country, whither she hoped she was returning, and of her marriage with Ludovico, to which there no longer appeared any impediment, for poverty she did not consider such. Ludovico, on his part, congratulated himself, on having rescued his Annette and *Signora* Emily from the danger, that had surrounded them; on his own liberation from people, whose manners he had long detested; on the freedom he had given to Monsieur Du Pont; on his prospect of happiness with the object of his affections, and not a little on the address, with which he had deceived the sentinel, and conducted the whole of this affair.

Thus variously engaged in thought, the travellers passed on silently, for above an hour, a question only being, now and then, asked by Du Pont, concerning the road, or a remark uttered by Annette, respecting objects, seen imperfectly in the twilight. At length, lights were perceived twinkling on the side of a mountain, and Ludovico had no doubt, that they proceeded from the town he had mentioned, while his companions, satisfied by this assurance, sunk again into silence. Annette was the first who interrupted this. ‘Holy Peter!’ said she, ‘What shall we do for money on our journey? for I know neither I, or my lady, have a single sequin; the Signor took care of that!’

This remark produced a serious enquiry, which ended in as serious an embarrassment, for Du Pont had been rifled of nearly all his money, when he was taken prisoner; the remainder he had given to the sentinel, who had enabled him occasionally to leave his prison-chamber; and Ludovico, who had for some time found a difficulty, in procuring any part of the wages due to him, had now scarcely cash sufficient to procure necessary refreshment at the first town, in which they should arrive.

Their poverty was the more distressing, since it would detain them among the mountains, where, even in a town, they could scarcely consider themselves safe from Montoni. The travellers, however, had only to proceed and dare the future; and they continued their way through lonely wilds and dusky vallies, where the overhanging foliage now admitted, and then excluded the moon-light; – wilds so desolate, that they appeared, on the first glance, as if no human being had ever trode them before. Even the road, in which the party were, did but slightly contradict this error, for the high grass and other luxuriant vegetation, with which it was overgrown, told how very seldom the foot of a traveller had passed it.

At length, from a distance, was heard the faint tinkling of a sheep-bell; and, soon after, the bleat of flocks, and the party then knew, that they were near some human habitation, for the light, which Ludovico had fancied to proceed from a town, had long been concealed by intervening mountains. Cheered by this hope, they quickened their pace along the narrow pass they were winding, and it opened upon one of those pastoral vallies of the Apennines, which might be painted for a scene of Arcadia,[5] and whose beauty and simplicity are finely contrasted by the grandeur of the snow-topt mountains above.

The morning light, now glimmering in the horizon, shewed faintly, at a little distance, upon the brow of a hill, which seemed to peep from 'under the opening eye-lids of the morn,'[6] the town they were in search of, and which they soon after reached. It was not without some difficulty, that they there found a house, which could afford shelter for themselves and their horses; and Emily desired they might not rest longer than was necessary for refreshment. Her appearance excited some surprise; for she was without a hat, having had time only to throw on her veil before she left the castle, a circumstance, that compelled her to regret again the want of money, without which it was impossible to procure this necessary article of dress.[7]

Ludovico, on examining his purse, found it even insufficient to supply present refreshment, and Du Pont, at length, ventured to inform the landlord, whose countenance was simple and honest, of their exact situation, and requested, that he would assist them to pursue their journey; a purpose, which he promised to comply with, as far as he was able, when he learned that they were prisoners escaping from Montoni, whom he had too much reason to hate. But, though he consented to lend them fresh horses to carry them to the next town, he was too poor himself to trust them with money, and they were again lamenting their poverty, when Ludovico, who had been with his tired horses to the hovel, which served for a stable, entered the room, half frantic with joy, in which his auditors soon participated. On removing the saddle from one of the horses, he had found beneath it a small bag, containing, no doubt, the booty of one of the *condottieri*, who had returned from a plundering excursion, just before Ludovico left the castle, and whose horse having strayed from the inner court, while his master was engaged in drinking, had brought away the treasure, which the ruffian had considered the reward of his exploit.

On counting over this, Du Pont found, that it would be more than sufficient to carry them all to France, where he now determined to accompany Emily, whether he should obtain intelligence of his regiment, or not; for, though he had as much confidence in the integrity of Ludovico, as his small knowledge of him allowed, he could not endure the thought of committing her to his care for the voyage; nor, perhaps, had he resolution enough to deny himself the dangerous pleasure, which he might derive from her presence.

He now consulted them, concerning the sea-port, to which they should direct their way, and Ludovico, better informed of the geography of the country, said, that Leghorn[8] was the nearest port of consequence, which Du Pont knew also to be the most likely of any in Italy to assist their plan, since from thence vessels of all nations were continually departing. Thither, therefore, it was determined, that they should proceed.

Emily, having purchased a little straw hat, such as was worn by the peasant girls of Tuscany, and some other little necessary equipments for the journey, and the travellers, having exchanged their tired horses for others better able to carry them, re-commenced their joyous way, as the sun was rising over the mountains, and, after travelling through this romantic country, for several hours, began to descend into the vale of Arno. And here Emily beheld all the charms of sylvan and pastoral landscape united, adorned with the elegant villas of the Florentine nobles, and diversified with the various riches of cultivation. How vivid the shrubs, that embowered the slopes, with the woods, that stretched amphitheatrically along the mountains! and, above all, how elegant the outline of these waving Apennines, now softening from the wildness, which their interior regions exhibited! At a distance, in the east, Emily discovered Florence, with its towers rising on the brilliant horizon, and its luxuriant plain, spreading to the feet of the Apennines, speckled with gardens and magnificent villas, or coloured with groves of orange and lemon, with vines, corn, and plantations of olives and mulberry; while, to the west, the vale opened to the waters of the Mediterranean, so distant, that they were known only by a blueish line, that appeared upon the horizon, and by the light marine vapour, which just stained the æther above.

With a full heart, Emily hailed the waves, that were to bear her back to her native country, the remembrance of which, however, brought with it a pang; for she had there no home to receive, no parents to welcome her, but was going, like a forlorn pilgrim, to weep over the sad spot, where he, who *was* her father, lay interred. Nor were her spirits cheered, when she considered how long it would probably be before she should see Valancourt, who might be stationed with his regiment in a distant part of France, and that, when they did meet, it would be only to lament the successful villany of Montoni; yet, still she would have felt inexpressible delight at the thought of being once more in the same country with Valancourt, had it even been certain, that she could not see him.

The intense heat, for it was now noon, obliged the travellers to look out for a shady recess, where they might rest, for a few hours, and the neighbouring thickets, abounding with wild grapes, raspberries, and figs, promised them grateful refreshment. Soon after, they turned from the road into a grove, whose thick foliage entirely excluded the sun-beams, and where a spring, gushing from the rock, gave coolness to the air; and, having alighted and turned the horses to graze, Annette and Ludovico ran to gather fruit from the surrounding thickets, of which they soon returned with an abundance. The travellers, seated under the shade of a pine and cypress grove and on turf, enriched with such a profusion of fragrant flowers, as Emily had scarcely ever seen, even among the Pyrenées, took their simple repast, and viewed, with new delight, beneath the dark umbrage of gigantic pines, the glowing landscape stretching to the sea.

Emily and Du Pont gradually became thoughtful and silent; but Annette was all joy and loquacity, and Ludovico was gay, without forgetting the respectful distance, which was due to his companions. The repast being over, Du Pont recommended Emily to endeavour to sleep, during these sultry hours, and, desiring the servants would do the same, said he would watch the while; but Ludovico wished to spare him this trouble; and Emily and Annette, wearied with travelling, tried to repose, while he stood guard with his trombone.

When Emily, refreshed by slumber, awoke, she found the sentinel asleep on his post and Du Pont awake, but lost in melancholy thought. As the sun was yet too high to allow them to continue their journey, and as it was necessary, that Ludovico, after the toils and trouble he had suffered, should finish his sleep, Emily took this opportunity of enquiring by what accident Du Pont became Montoni's prisoner, and he, pleased with the interest this enquiry expressed and with the excuse it gave him for talking to her of himself, immediately answered her curiosity.

'I came into Italy, madam,' said Du Pont, 'in the service of my country. In an adventure among the mountains our party, engaging with the bands of Montoni, was routed, and I, with a few of my comrades, was taken prisoner. When they told me, whose captive I was, the name of Montoni struck me, for I remembered, that Madame Cheron, your aunt, had married an Italian of that name, and that you had accompanied them into Italy. It was not, however, till some time after, that I became convinced this was the same Montoni, or learned that you, madam, was under the same roof with myself. I will not pain you by describing what were my emotions upon this discovery, which I owed to a sentinel, whom I had so far won to my interest, that he granted me many indulgences, one of which was very important to me, and somewhat dangerous to himself; but he persisted in refusing to convey any letter, or notice of my situation to you, for he justly dreaded a discovery and the consequent vengeance of Montoni. He however enabled me to see you more than once. You are surprised, madam, and I will explain myself. My health and spirits suffered extremely from want of air and exercise, and, at length, I gained so far upon the pity, or the avarice of the man, that he gave me the means of walking on the terrace.'

Emily now listened, with very anxious attention, to the narrative of Du Pont, who proceeded:

'In granting this indulgence, he knew, that he had nothing to apprehend from a chance of my escaping from a castle, which was vigilantly guarded, and the nearest terrace of which rose over a perpendicular rock; he shewed me also,' continued Du Pont, 'a door concealed in the cedar wainscot of the apartment where I was confined, which he instructed me how to open; and which, leading into a passage, formed within the thickness of the wall, that extended far along the castle, finally opened in an obscure corner of the eastern rampart. I have since been informed, that there are many passages of the same kind concealed within the prodigious walls of that edifice, and which were, undoubtedly, contrived for the purpose of facilitating escapes in time of war. Through this avenue, at the dead of night, I often stole to the terrace, where I walked with the utmost caution, lest my steps should betray me to the sentinels on duty in distant parts; for this end of it, being guarded by high buildings, was not watched by soldiers. In one of these midnight wanderings, I saw light in a casement that overlooked the rampart, and which, I observed, was immediately over my prison-chamber. It occurred to me, that you might be in that apartment, and, with the hope of seeing you, I placed myself opposite to the window.'

Emily, remembering the figure that had formerly appeared on the terrace, and which had occasioned her so much anxiety, exclaimed, 'It was you then, Monsieur Du Pont, who occasioned me much foolish terror; my spirits were, at that time, so much weakened by long suffering, that they took alarm at every hint.' Du Pont, after lamenting, that he had occasioned her any apprehension, added, 'As I rested on the wall, opposite to your casement, the consideration of your melancholy situation and of my own called from me involuntary sounds of lamentation, which drew you, I fancy, to the casement; I saw there a person, whom I believed to be you. O! I will say nothing of my emotion at that moment; I wished to speak, but prudence restrained me, till the distant foot-step of a sentinel compelled me suddenly to quit my station.

'It was some time, before I had another opportunity of walking, for I could only leave my prison, when it happened to be the turn of one man to guard me; meanwhile I became convinced from some circumstances related by him, that your apartment was over mine, and, when again I ventured forth, I returned to your casement, where again I saw you, but without daring to speak. I waved my hand, and you suddenly disappeared; then it was, that I forgot my prudence, and yielded to lamentation; again you appeared – you spoke – I heard the well-known accent of your voice! and, at that moment, my discretion would have forsaken me again, had I not heard also the approaching steps of a soldier, when I instantly quitted the place, though not before the man had seen me. He followed down the terrace and gained so fast upon me, that I was compelled to make use of a stratagem, ridiculous enough, to save myself. I had heard of the superstition of many of these men, and I uttered a strange noise, with a hope, that my pursuer would mistake it for something supernatural, and desist from pursuit. Luckily for myself I succeeded; the man, it seems, was subject to fits, and the terror he suffered threw him into one, by which accident I secured my retreat. A sense of the danger I had escaped, and the increased watchfulness, which my appearance had occasioned among the sentinels, deterred me ever after from walking on the terrace; but, in the stillness of night, I frequently beguiled myself with an old lute, procured for me by a soldier, which I sometimes accompanied with my voice, and sometimes, I will acknowledge, with a hope of making myself heard by you; but it was only a few evenings ago, that this hope was answered. I then thought I heard a voice in the wind, calling me; yet, even then I feared to reply, lest the sentinel at the prison door should hear me. Was I right, madam, in this conjecture – was it you who spoke?'

'Yes,' said Emily, with an involuntary sigh, 'you was right indeed.'

Du Pont, observing the painful emotions, which this question revived, now changed the subject. 'In one of my excursions through the passage, which I have mentioned, I overheard a singular conversation,' said he.

'In the passage!' said Emily, with surprise.

'I heard it in the passage,' said Du Pont, 'but it proceeded from an apartment, adjoining the wall, within which the passage wound, and the shell of the wall was there so thin, and was also somewhat decayed, that I could distinctly hear every word, spoken on the other side. It happened that Montoni and his companions were assembled in the room, and Montoni began to relate the extraordinary history of the lady, his predecessor, in the castle. He did, indeed, mention some very surprising circumstances, and whether they were strictly true, his conscience must decide; I fear it will determine against him. But you, madam, have doubtless heard the report, which he designs should circulate, on the subject of that lady's mysterious fate.'

'I have, sir,' replied Emily, 'and I perceive, that you doubt it.'

'I doubted it before the period I am speaking of,' rejoined Du Pont; – 'but some circumstances, mentioned by Montoni, greatly contributed to my suspicions. The account I then heard, almost convinced me, that he was a murderer. I trembled for you; – the more so that I had heard the guests mention your name in a manner, that threatened your repose; and, knowing, that the most impious men are often the most superstitious, I determined to try whether I could not awaken their consciences, and awe them from the commission of the crime I dreaded. I listened closely to Montoni, and, in the most striking passages of his story, I joined my voice, and repeated his last words, in a disguised and hollow tone.'

'But was you not afraid of being discovered?' said Emily.

'I was not,' replied Du Pont; 'for I knew, that, if Montoni had been acquainted with the secret of this passage, he would not have confined me in the apartment, to which it led. I knew also, from better authority, that he was ignorant of it. The party, for some time, appeared inattentive to my voice; but, at length, were so much alarmed, that they quitted the apartment; and, having heard Montoni order his servants to search it, I returned to my prison, which was very distant from this part of the passage.' 'I remember perfectly to have heard of the conversation you mention,' said Emily; 'it spread a general alarm among Montoni's people, and I will own I was weak enough to partake of it.'

Monsieur Du Pont and Emily thus continued to converse of Montoni, and then of France, and of the plan of their voyage; when Emily told him, that it was her intention to retire to a convent in Languedoc, where she had been formerly treated with much kindness, and from thence to write to her relation Monsieur Quesnel, and inform him of her conduct. There, she designed to wait, till La Vallée should again be her own, whither she hoped her income would some time permit her to return; for Du Pont now taught her to expect, that the estate, of which Montoni had attempted to defraud her, was not irrecoverably lost, and he again congratulated her on her escape from Montoni, who, he had not a doubt, meant to have detained her for life. The possibility of recovering her aunt's estates for Valancourt and herself lighted up a joy in Emily's heart, such as she had not known for many months; but she endeavoured to conceal this from Monsieur Du Pont, lest it should lead him to a painful remembrance of his rival.

They continued to converse, till the sun was declining in the west, when Du Pont awoke Ludovico, and they set forward on their journey. Gradually descending the lower slopes of the valley, they reached the Arno, and wound along its pastoral margin, for many miles, delighted with the scenery around them, and with the remembrances, which its classic waves revived. At a distance, they heard the gay song of the peasants among the vineyards, and observed the setting sun tint the waves with yellow lustre, and twilight draw a dusky purple over the mountains, which, at length, deepened into night. Then the *lucciola*, the fire-fly of Tuscany, was seen to flash its sudden sparks among the foliage, while the *cicala*,[9] with its shrill note, became more clamorous than even during the noon-day heat, loving best the hour when the English beetle, with less offensive sound,

> ————winds
> His small but sullen horn,
> As oft he rises 'midst the twilight path,
> Against the pilgrim borne in heedless hum.'[*]

The travellers crossed the Arno by moon-light, at a ferry, and, learning, that Pisa was distant only a few miles down the river, they wished to have proceeded thither in a boat, but, as none could be procured, they set out on their wearied horses for that city. As they approached it, the vale expanded into a plain, variegated with vineyards, corn, olives and mulberry groves; but it was late, before they reached its gates, where Emily was surprised to hear the busy sound of footsteps and the tones of musical instruments, as well as to see the lively groups, that filled the streets, and she almost fancied herself again at Venice; but here was no moon-light sea – no gay gondolas, dashing the waves, – no *Palladian* palaces, to throw enchantment over the fancy and lead it into the wilds of fairy story. The Arno rolled through the town, but no music trembled from balconies over its waters; it gave only the busy voices of sailors on board vessels just arrived from the Mediterranean; the melancholy heaving of the anchor, and the shrill boatswain's whistle; – sounds, which, since that period, have there sunk almost into silence. They then served to remind Du Pont, that it was probable he might hear of a vessel, sailing soon to France from this port, and thus be spared the trouble of going to Leghorn. As soon as Emily had reached the inn, he went therefore to the quay, to make his enquiries; but, after all the endeavours of himself and Ludovico, they could hear of no bark, destined immediately for France, and the travellers returned to their resting-place. Here also, Du Pont endeavoured to learn where his regiment then lay, but could acquire no information concerning it. The travellers retired early to rest, after the fatigues of this day; and, on the following, rose early, and, without pausing to view the celebrated antiquities of the place, or the wonders of its hanging tower, pursued their journey in the cooler hours, through a charming country, rich with wine, and corn and oil. The Apennines, no longer awful, or even grand, here softened into the beauty of sylvan and pastoral landscape; and Emily, as she descended them, looked down delighted on Leghorn, and its spacious bay, filled with vessels, and crowned with these beautiful hills.

She was no less surprised and amused, on entering this town, to find it crowded with persons in the dresses of all nations; a scene, which reminded her of a Venetian masquerade, such as she had witnessed at the time of the Carnival; but here, was bustle, without gaiety, and noise instead of music, while elegance was to be looked for only in the waving outlines of the surrounding hills.

Monsieur Du Pont, immediately on their arrival, went down to the quay, where he heard of several French vessels, and of one, that was to sail, in a few days, for Marseilles, from whence another vessel could be procured, without difficulty, to take them across the gulf of Lyons[11] towards Narbonne, on the coast not many leagues from which city he understood the convent was seated, to which Emily wished to retire. He, therefore, immediately engaged with the captain to take them to Marseilles, and Emily was delighted to hear, that her passage to France was secured. Her mind was now relieved from the terror of pursuit, and the pleasing hope of soon seeing her native country – that country which held Valancourt, restored to her spirits a degree of cheerfulness, such as she had scarcely known, since the death of her father. At Leghorn also, Du Pont heard of his regiment, and that it had embarked for France; a circumstance, which gave him great satisfaction, for he could now accompany Emily thither, without reproach to his conscience, or apprehension of displeasure from his commander. During these days, he scrupulously forbore to distress her by a mention of his passion, and she was compelled to esteem and pity, though she could not love, him. He endeavoured to amuse her by shewing the environs of the town, and they often walked together on the sea-shore, and on the busy quays, where Emily was frequently interested by the arrival and departure of vessels, participating in the joy of meeting friends, and, sometimes, shedding a sympathetic tear to the sorrow of those, that were separating. It was after having witnessed a scene of the latter kind, that she arranged the following stanzas:

THE MARINER

Soft came the breath of spring; smooth flow’d the tide;
And blue the heaven in its mirror smil’d;
The white sail trembled, swell’d, expanded wide,
The busy sailors at the anchor toil’d.

With anxious friends, that shed the parting tear,
The deck was throng’d – how swift the moments fly!
The vessel heaves, the farewel signs appear;
Mute is each tongue, and eloquent each eye!

The last dread moment comes! – The sailor-youth
Hides the big drop, and smiles amid his pain,
Sooths his sad bride, and vows eternal truth,
‘Farewel, my love – we shall – shall meet again!’

Long on the stern, with waving hand, he stood;
The crowded shore sinks, lessening, from his view,
As gradual glides the bark along the flood;
His bride is seen no more – ‘Adieu! – adieu!’

The breeze of Eve moans low, her smile is o’er,
Dim steals her twilight down the crimson’d west,
He climbs the top-most mast, to seek once more
The far-seen coast, where all his wishes rest.

He views its dark line on the distant sky,
And Fancy leads him to his little home,
He sees his weeping love, he hears her sigh,

He sooths her griefs, and tells of joys to come.

Eve yields to night, the breeze to wintry gales,
In one vast shade the seas and shores repose;
He turns his aching eyes, – his spirit fails,
The chill tear falls; – sad to the deck he goes!

The storm of midnight swells, the sails are furl’d,
Deep sounds the lead, but finds no friendly shore,
Fast o’er the waves the wretched bark is hurl’d,
‘O Ellen, Ellen! we must meet no more!’

Lightnings, that shew the vast and foamy deep,
The rending thunders, as they onward roll,
The loud, loud winds, that o’er the billows sweep –
Shake the firm nerve, appall the bravest soul!

Ah! what avails the seamen’s toiling care!
The straining cordage bursts, the mast is riv’n;
The sounds of terror groan along the air,
Then sink afar; – the bark on rocks is driv’n!

Fierce o’er the wreck the whelming waters pass’d,
The helpless crew sunk in the roaring main!
Henry’s faint accents trembled in the blast –
‘Farewel, my love! – we ne’er shall meet again!’

Oft, at the calm and silent evening hour,
When summer-breezes linger on the wave,
A melancholy voice is heard to pour
Its lonely sweetness o’er poor Henry’s grave!

And oft, at midnight, airy strains are heard
Around the grove, where Ellen’s form is laid;
Nor is the dirge by village-maidens fear’d,
For lovers’ spirits guard the holy shade!

CHAPTER X

> _______‘Oh! the joy
>
> Of young ideas, painted on the mind
> In the warm glowing colours fancy spreads
> On objects not yet known, when all is new,
> And all is lovely!’
>
> [More] *Sacred Dramas* [1]

We now return to Languedoc and to the mention of Count de Villefort, the nobleman, who succeeded to an estate of the Marquis de Villeroi, situated near the monastery of St Clair. It may be recollected, that this chateau was uninhabited, when St Aubert and his daughter were in the neighbourhood, and that the former was much affected on discovering himself to be so near Chateau-le-Blanc, a place, concerning which the good old La Voisin afterwards dropped some hints, that had alarmed Emily’s curiosity.

It was in the year 1584, the beginning of that, in which St Aubert died, that Francis Beauveau, Count de Villefort, came into possession of the mansion and extensive domain called Chateau-le-Blanc, situated in the province of Languedoc, on the shore of the Mediterranean. This estate, which, during some centuries, had belonged to his family, now descended to him, on the decease of his relative, the Marquis de Villeroi, who had been latterly a man of reserved manners and austere character; circumstances, which, together with the duties of his profession, that often called him into the field, had prevented any degree of intimacy with his cousin, the Count de Villefort. For many years, they had known little of each other, and the Count received the first intelligence of his death, which happened in a distant part of France, together with the instruments, that gave him possession of the domain Chateaule-Blanc; but it was not till the following year, that he determined to visit that estate, when he designed to pass the autumn there. The scenes of Chateau-le-Blanc often came to his remembrance, heightened by the touches, which a warm imagination gives to the recollection of early pleasures; for, many years before, in the life-time of the Marchioness, and at that age when the mind is particularly sensible to impressions of gaiety and delight, he had once visited this spot, and, though he had passed a long intervening period amidst the vexations and tumults of public affairs, which too frequently corrode the heart, and vitiate the taste, the shades of Languedoc and the grandeur of its distant scenery had never been remembered by him with indifference.

During many years, the chateau had been abandoned by the late Marquis, and, being inhabited only by an old steward and his wife, had been suffered to fall much into decay. To superintend the repairs, that would be requisite to make it a comfortable residence, had been a principal motive with the Count for passing the autumnal months in Languedoc; and neither the remonstrances, or the tears of the Countess, for, on urgent occasions, she could weep, were powerful enough to overcome his determination. She prepared, therefore, to obey the command, which she could not conquer, and to resign the gay assemblies of Paris, – where her beauty was generally unrivalled and won the applause, to which her wit had but feeble claim – for the twilight canopy of woods, the lonely grandeur of mountains and the solemnity of gothic halls and of long, long galleries, which echoed only the solitary step of a domestic, or the measured clink, that ascended from the great clock – the ancient monitor of the hall below. From these melancholy expectations she endeavoured to relieve her spirits by recollecting all that she had ever heard, concerning the joyous vintage of the plains of Languedoc; but there, alas! no airy forms would bound to the gay melody of Parisian dances, and a view of the rustic festivities of peasants could afford little pleasure to a heart, in which even the feelings of ordinary benevolence had long since decayed under the corruptions of luxury.

The Count had a son and a daughter, the children of a former marriage, who, he designed, should accompany him to the south of France; Henri, who was in his twentieth year, was in the French service; and Blanche, who was not yet eighteen, had been hitherto confined to the convent, where she had been placed immediately on her father’s second marriage. The present Countess, who had neither sufficient ability, or inclination, to superintend the education of her daughter-in-law,[2] had advised this step, and the dread of superior beauty had since urged her to employ every art, that might prevail on the Count to prolong the period of Blanche’s seclusion; it was, therefore, with extreme mortification, that she now understood he would no longer submit on this subject, yet it afforded her some consolation to consider, that, though the Lady Blanche would emerge from her convent, the shades of the country would, for some time, veil her beauty from the public eye.

On the morning, which commenced the journey, the postillions stopped at the convent, by the Count’s order, to take up Blanche, whose heart beat with delight, at the prospect of novelty and freedom now before her. As the time of her departure drew nigh, her impatience had increased, and the last night, during which she counted every note of every hour, had appeared the most tedious of any she had ever known. The morning light, at length, dawned; the matin-bell rang; she heard the nuns descending from their chambers, and she started from a sleepless pillow to welcome the day, which was to emancipate her from the severities of a cloister, and introduce her to a world, where pleasure was ever smiling, and goodness ever blessed – where, in short, nothing but pleasure and goodness reigned! When the bell of the great gate rang, and the sound was followed by that of carriage wheels, she ran, with a palpitating heart, to her lattice, and, perceiving her father's carriage in the court below, danced, with airy steps, along the gallery, where she was met by a nun with a summons from the abbess. In the next moment, she was in the parlour, and in the presence of the Countess, who now appeared to her as an angel, that was to lead her into happiness. But the emotions of the Countess, on beholding her, were not in unison with those of Blanche, who had never appeared so lovely as at this moment, when her countenance, animated by the lightning smile of joy, glowed with the beauty of happy innocence.

After conversing for a few minutes with the abbess, the Countess rose to go. This was the moment, which Blanche had anticipated with such eager expectation, the summit from which she looked down upon the fairy-land of happiness, and surveyed all its enchantment; was it a moment, then, for tears of regret? Yet it was so. She turned, with an altered and dejected countenance, to her young companions, who were come to bid her farewell, and wept! Even my lady abbess, so stately and so solemn, she saluted with a degree of sorrow, which, an hour before, she would have believed it impossible to feel, and which may be accounted for by considering how reluctantly we all part, even with unpleasing objects, when the separation is consciously for ever. Again, she kissed the poor nuns and then followed the Countess from that spot with tears, which she expected to leave only with smiles.

But the presence of her father and the variety of objects, on the road, soon engaged her attention, and dissipated the shade, which tender regret had thrown upon her spirits. Inattentive to a conversation, which was passing between the Countess and a Mademoiselle Bearn, her friend, Blanche sat, lost in pleasing reverie, as she watched the clouds floating silently along the blue expanse, now veiling the sun and stretching their shadows along the distant scene, and then disclosing all his brightness. The journey continued to give Blanche inexpressible delight, for new scenes of nature were every instant opening to her view, and her fancy became stored with gay and beautiful imagery.

It was on the evening of the seventh day, that the travellers came within view of Chateau-le-Blanc, the romantic beauty of whose situation strongly impressed the imagination of Blanche, who observed, with sublime astonishment, the Pyrenean mountains, which had been seen only at a distance during the day, now rising within a few leagues, with their wild cliffs and immense precipices, which the evening clouds, floating round them, now disclosed, and again veiled. The setting rays, that tinged their snowy summits with a roseate hue, touched their lower points with various colouring, while the blueish tint, that pervaded their shadowy recesses, gave the strength of contrast to the splendour of light. The plains of Languedoc, blushing with the purple vine and diversified with groves of mulberry, almond and olives, spread far to the north and the east; to the south, appeared the Mediterranean, clear as crystal, and blue as the heavens it reflected, bearing on its bosom vessels, whose white sails caught the sun-beams, and gave animation to the scene. On a high promontory, washed by the waters of the Mediterranean, stood her father's mansion, almost secluded from the eye by woods of intermingled pine, oak and chesnut, which crowned the eminence, and sloped towards the plains, on one side; while, on the other, they extended to a considerable distance along the sea-shores.

As Blanche drew nearer, the gothic features of this antient mansion successively appeared – first an embattled[3] turret, rising above the trees – then the broken arch of an immense gate-way, retiring beyond them; and she almost fancied herself approaching a castle, such as is often celebrated in early story, where the knights look out from the battlements on some champion below, who, clothed in black armour, comes, with his companions, to rescue the fair lady of his love from the oppression of his rival; a sort of legends, to which she had once or twice obtained access in the library of her convent, that, like many others, belonging to the monks, was stored with these reliques of romantic fiction.

The carriages stopped at a gate, which led into the domain of the chateau, but which was now fastened; and the great bell, that had formerly served to announce the arrival of strangers, having long since fallen from its station, a servant climbed over a ruined part of the adjoining wall, to give notice to those within of the arrival of their lord.

As Blanche leaned from the coach window, she resigned herself to the sweet and gentle emotions, which the hour and the scenery awakened. The sun had now left the earth, and twilight began to darken the mountains; while the distant waters, reflecting the blush that still glowed in the west, appeared like a line of light, skirting the horizon. The low murmur of waves, breaking on the shore, came in the breeze, and, now and then, the melancholy dashing of oars was feebly heard from a distance. She was suffered to indulge her pensive mood, for the thoughts of the rest of the party were silently engaged upon the subjects of their several interests. Meanwhile, the Countess, reflecting, with regret, upon the gay parties she had left at Paris, surveyed, with disgust, what she thought the gloomy woods and solitary wildness of the scene; and, shrinking from the prospect of being shut up in an old castle, was prepared to meet every object with displeasure. The feelings of Henri were somewhat similar to those of the Countess; he gave a mournful sigh to the delights of the capital, and to the remembrance of a lady, who, he believed, had engaged his affections, and who had certainly fascinated his imagination; but the surrounding country, and the mode of life, on which he was entering, had, for him, at least, the charm of novelty, and his regret was softened by the gay expectations of youth.

The gates being at length unbarred, the carriage moved slowly on, under spreading chesnuts, that almost excluded the remains of day, following what had been formerly a road, but which now, overgrown with luxuriant vegetation, could be traced only by the boundary, formed by trees, on either side, and which wound for near half a mile among the woods, before it reached the chateau. This was the very avenue that St Aubert and Emily had formerly entered, on their first arrival in the neighbourhood, with the hope of finding a house, that would receive them, for the night, and had so abruptly quitted, on perceiving the wildness of the place, and a figure, which the postillion had fancied was a robber.

'What a dismal place is this!' exclaimed the Countess, as the carriage penetrated the deeper recesses of the woods. 'Surely, my lord, you do not mean to pass all the autumn in this barbarous spot! One ought to bring hither a cup of the waters of Lethe,[4] that the remembrance of pleasanter scenes may not heighten, at least, the natural dreariness of these.'

'I shall be governed by circumstances, madam,' said the Count, 'this barbarous spot was inhabited by my ancestors.'

The carriage now stopped at the chateau, where, at the door of the great hall, appeared the old steward and the Parisian servants, who had been sent to prepare the chateau, waiting to receive their lord. Lady Blanche now perceived, that the edifice was not built entirely in the gothic style, but that it had additions of a more modern date; the large and gloomy hall, however, into which she now entered, was entirely gothic, and sumptuous tapestry, which it was now too dark to distinguish, hung upon the walls, and depictured scenes from some of the antient Provençal romances. A vast gothic window, embroidered with *clematis* and eglantine, that ascended to the south, led the eye, now that the casements were thrown open, through this verdant shade, over a sloping lawn, to the tops of dark woods, that hung upon the brow of the promontory. Beyond, appeared the waters of the Mediterranean, stretching far to the south, and to the east, where they were lost in the horizon; while, to the north-east, they were bounded by the luxuriant shores of Languedoc and Provence, enriched with wood, and gay with vines and sloping pastures; and, to the south-west, by the majestic Pyrenées, now fading from the eye, beneath the gradual gloom.

Blanche, as she crossed the hall, stopped a moment to observe this lovely prospect, which the evening twilight obscured, yet did not conceal. But she was quickly awakened from the complacent delight, which this scene had diffused upon her mind, by the Countess, who, discontented with every object around, and impatient for refreshment and repose, hastened forward to a large parlour, whose cedar wainscot, narrow, pointed casements, and dark ceiling of carved cypress wood, gave it an aspect of peculiar gloom, which the dingy green velvet of the chairs and couches, fringed with tarnished gold, had once been designed to enliven.

While the Countess enquired for refreshment, the Count, attended by his son, went to look over some part of the chateau, and Lady Blanche reluctantly remained to witness the discontent and ill-humour of her step-mother.

'How long have you lived in this desolate place?' said her ladyship, to the old house-keeper, who came to pay her duty. 'Above twenty years, your ladyship, on the next feast of St Jerome.'

'How happened it, that you have lived here so long, and almost alone, too? I understood, that the chateau had been shut up for some years?'

'Yes, madam, it was for many years after my late lord, the Marquis, went to the wars; but it is above twenty years, since I and my husband came into his service. The place is so large, and has of late been so lonely, that we were lost in it, and, after some time, we went to live in a cottage at the end of the woods, near some of the tenants, and came to look after the chateau, every now and then. When my lord returned to France from the wars, he took a dislike to the place, and never came to live here again, and so he was satisfied with our remaining at the cottage. Alas – alas! how the chateau is changed from what it once was! What delight my late lady used to take in it! I well remember when she came here a bride, and how fine it was. Now, it has been neglected so long, and is gone into such decay! I shall never see those days again!'

The Countess appearing to be somewhat offended by the thoughtless simplicity, with which the old woman regretted former times, Dorothée added – 'But the chateau will now be inhabited, and cheerful again; not all the world could tempt me to live in it alone.'

'Well, the experiment will not be made, I believe,' said the Countess, displeased that her own silence had been unable to awe the loquacity of this rustic old housekeeper, now spared from further attendance by the entrance of the Count, who said he had been viewing part of the chateau, and found, that it would require considerable repairs and some alterations, before it would be perfectly comfortable, as a place of residence. 'I am sorry to hear it, my lord,' replied the Countess. 'And why sorry, madam?' 'Because the place will ill repay your trouble; and were it even a paradise, it would be insufferable at such a distance from Paris.'

The Count made no reply, but walked abruptly to a window. 'There are windows, my lord, but they neither admit entertainment, or light; they shew only a scene of savage nature.'

'I am at a loss, madam,' said the Count, 'to conjecture what you mean by savage nature. Do those plains, or those woods, or that fine expanse of water, deserve the name?'

'Those mountains certainly do, my lord,' rejoined the Countess, pointing to the Pyrenées, 'and this chateau, though not a work of rude nature, is, to my taste, at least, one of savage art.' The Count coloured highly. 'This place, madam, was the work of my ancestors,' said he, 'and you must allow me to say, that your present conversation discovers neither good taste, or good manners.' Blanche, now shocked at an altercation, which appeared to be increasing to a serious disagreement, rose to leave the room, when her mother's woman entered it; and the Countess, immediately desiring to be shewn to her own apartment, withdrew, attended by Mademoiselle Bearn.

Lady Blanche, it being not yet dark, took this opportunity of exploring new scenes, and, leaving the parlour, she passed from the hall into a wide gallery, whose walls were decorated by marble pilasters, which supported an arched roof, composed of a rich mosaic work. Through a distant window, that seemed to terminate the gallery, were seen the purple clouds of evening and a landscape, whose features, thinly veiled in twilight, no longer appeared distinctly, but, blended into one grand mass, stretched to the horizon, coloured only with a tint of solemn grey.

The gallery terminated in a saloon, to which the window she had seen through an open door, belonged; but the increasing dusk permitted her only an imperfect view of this apartment, which seemed to be magnificent and of modern architecture; though it had been either suffered to fall into decay, or had never been properly finished. The windows, which were numerous and large, descended low, and afforded a very extensive, and what Blanche's fancy represented to be, a very lovely prospect; and she stood for some time, surveying the grey obscurity, and depicturing imaginary woods and mountains, vallies and rivers, on this scene of night; her solemn sensations rather assisted, than interrupted, by the distant bark of a watch-dog, and by the breeze, as it trembled upon the light foliage of the shrubs. Now and then, appeared for a moment, among the woods, a cottage light; and, at length, was heard, afar off, the evening bell of a convent, dying on the air. When she withdrew her thoughts from these subjects of fanciful delight, the gloom and silence of the saloon somewhat awed her; and, having sought the door of the gallery, and pursued, for a considerable time, a dark passage, she came to a hall, but one totally different from that she had formerly seen. By the twilight, admitted through an open portico, she could just distinguish this apartment to be of very light and airy architecture, and that it was paved with white marble, pillars of which supported the roof, that rose into arches built in the Moorish style. While Blanche stood on the steps of this portico, the moon rose over the sea, and gradually disclosed, in partial light, the beauties of the eminence, on which she stood, whence a lawn, now rude and overgrown with high grass, sloped to the woods, that, almost surrounding the chateau, extended in a grand sweep down the southern sides of the promontory to the very margin of the ocean. Beyond the woods, on the north-side, appeared a long tract of the plains of Languedoc; and, to the east, the landscape she had before dimly seen, with the towers of a monastery, illumined by the moon, rising over dark groves.

The soft and shadowy tint, that overspread the scene, the waves, undulating in the moon-light, and their low and measured murmurs on the beach, were circumstances, that united to elevate the unaccustomed mind of Blanche to enthusiasm.

'And have I lived in this glorious world so long,' said she, 'and never till now beheld such a prospect – never experienced these delights! Every peasant girl, on my father's domain, has viewed from her infancy the face of nature; has ranged, at liberty, her romantic wilds, while I have been shut in a cloister from the view of these beautiful appearances, which were designed to enchant all eyes, and awaken all hearts. How can the poor nuns and friars feel the full fervour of devotion, if they never see the sun rise, or set? Never, till this evening, did I know what true devotion is; for, never before did I see the sun sink below the vast earth! To-morrow, for the first time in my life, I will see it rise. O who would live in Paris, to look upon black walls and dirty streets, when, in the country, they might gaze on the blue heavens, and all the green earth!'

This enthusiastic soliloquy was interrupted by a rustling noise in the hall; and, while the loneliness of the place made her sensible to fear, she thought she perceived something moving between the pillars. For a moment, she continued silently observing it, till, ashamed of her ridiculous apprehensions, she recollected courage enough to demand who was there. 'O my young lady, is it you?' said the old housekeeper, who was come to shut the windows, 'I am glad it is you.' The manner, in which she spoke this, with a faint breath, rather surprised Blanche, who said, 'You seemed frightened, Dorothée, what is the matter?'

'No, not frightened, ma'amselle,' replied Dorothée, hesitating and trying to appear composed, 'but I am old, and – a little matter startles me.' The Lady Blanche smiled at the distinction. 'I am glad, that my lord the Count is come to live at the chateau, ma'amselle,' continued Dorothée, 'for it has been many a year deserted, and dreary enough; now, the place will look a little as it used to do, when my poor lady was alive.' Blanche enquired how long it was, since the Marchioness died? 'Alas! my lady,' replied Dorothée, 'so long – that I have ceased to count the years! The place, to my mind, has mourned ever since, and I am sure my lord's vassals have! But you have lost yourself, ma'amselle, – shall I shew you to the other side of the chateau?'

Blanche enquired how long this part of the edifice had been built. 'Soon after my lord's marriage, ma'am,' replied Dorothée. 'The place was large enough without this addition, for many rooms of the old building were even then never made use of, and my lord had a princely household too; but he thought the antient mansion gloomy, and gloomy enough it is!' Lady Blanche now desired to be shewn to the inhabited part of the chateau; and, as the passages were entirely dark, Dorothée conducted her along the edge of the lawn to the opposite side of the edifice, where, a door opening into the great hall, she was met by Mademoiselle Bearn. 'Where have you been so long?' said she, 'I had begun to think some wonderful adventure had befallen you, and that the giant of this enchanted castle, or the ghost, which, no doubt, haunts it, had conveyed you through a trap-door into some subterranean vault, whence you was never to return.'

'No,' replied Blanche, laughingly, 'you seem to love adventures so well, that I leave them for you to achieve.'

'Well, I am willing to achieve them, provided I am allowed to describe them.'

'My dear Mademoiselle Bearn,' said Henri, as he met her at the door of the parlour, 'no ghost of these days would be so savage as to impose silence on you. Our ghosts are more civilized than to condemn a lady to a purgatory severer even, than their own, be it what it may.'

Mademoiselle Bearn replied only by a laugh; and, the Count now entering the room, supper was served, during which he spoke little, frequently appeared to be abstracted from the company, and more than once remarked, that the place was greatly altered, since he had last seen it. 'Many years have intervened since that period,' said he; 'and, though the grand features of the scenery admit of no change, they impress me with sensations very different from those I formerly experienced.'

'Did these scenes, sir,' said Blanche, 'ever appear more lovely, than they do now? To me this seems hardly possible.' The Count, regarding her with a melancholy smile, said, 'They once were as delightful to me, as they are now to you; the landscape is not changed, but time has changed me; from my mind the illusion, which gave spirit to the colouring of nature, is fading fast! If you live, my dear Blanche, to re-visit this spot, at the distance of many years, you will, perhaps, remember and understand the feelings of your father.'

Lady Blanche, affected by these words, remained silent; she looked forward to the period, which the Count anticipated, and considering, that he, who now spoke, would then probably be no more, her eyes, bent to the ground, were filled with tears. She gave her hand to her father, who, smiling affectionately, rose from his chair, and went to a window to conceal his emotion.

The fatigues of the day made the party separate at an early hour, when Blanche retired through a long oak gallery to her chamber, whose spacious and lofty walls, high antiquated casements, and, what was the effect of these, its gloomy air, did not reconcile her to its remote situation, in this antient building. The furniture, also, was of antient date; the bed was of blue damask, trimmed with tarnished gold lace, and its lofty tester rose in the form of a canopy, whence the curtains descended, like those of such tents as are sometimes represented in old pictures, and, indeed, much resembling those, exhibited on the faded tapestry, with which the chamber was hung. To Blanche, every object here was matter of curiosity; and, taking the light from her woman to examine the tapestry, she perceived, that it represented scenes from the wars of Troy, though the almost colourless worsted now mocked the glowing actions they once had painted. She laughed at the ludicrous absurdity she observed, till, recollecting, that the hands, which had wove it, were, like the poet, whose thoughts of fire they had attempted to express, long since mouldered into dust, a train of melancholy ideas passed over her mind, and she almost wept.

Having given her woman a strict injunction to awaken her, before sun-rise, she dismissed her; and then, to dissipate the gloom, which reflection had cast upon her spirits, opened one of the high casements, and was again cheered by the face of living nature. The shadowy earth, the air, and ocean – all was still. Along the deep serene of the heavens, a few light clouds floated slowly, through whose skirts the stars now seemed to tremble, and now to emerge with purer splendour. Blanche's thoughts arose involuntarily to the Great Author of the sublime objects she contemplated, and she breathed a prayer of finer devotion, than any she had ever uttered beneath the vaulted roof of a cloister. At this casement, she remained till the glooms of midnight were stretched over the prospect. She then retired to her pillow, and, 'with gay visions of to-morrow,'[5] to those sweet slumbers, which health and happy innocence only know.

'To-morrow to fresh woods and pastures new.'[6]

CHAPTER XI

> ‘What transport to retrace our early plays,
>
> Our easy bliss, when each thing joy supplied,
> The woods, the mountains and the warbling maze
> Of the wild brooks!’
>
> Thomson [*The Castle of Indolence*][1]

Blanche’s slumbers continued, till long after the hour, which she had so impatiently anticipated, for her woman, fatigued with travelling, did not call her, till breakfast was nearly ready. Her disappointment, however, was instantly forgotten, when, on opening the casement, she saw, on one hand, the wide sea sparkling in the morning rays, with its stealing sails and glancing oars; and, on the other, the fresh woods, the plains far-stretching and the blue mountains, all glowing with the splendour of day.

As she inspired the pure breeze, health spread a deeper blush upon her countenance, and pleasure danced in her eyes.

‘Who could first invent convents!’ said she, ‘and who could first persuade people to go into them? and to make religion a pretence, too, where all that should inspire it, is so carefully shut out! God is best pleased with the homage of a grateful heart, and, when we view his glories, we feel most grateful. I never felt so much devotion, during the many dull years I was in the convent, as I have done in the few hours, that I have been here, where I need only look on all around me – to adore God in my inmost heart!’

Saying this, she left the window, bounded along the gallery, and, in the next moment, was in the breakfast room, where the Count was already seated. The cheerfulness of a bright sunshine had dispersed the melancholy glooms of his reflections, a pleasant smile was on his countenance, and he spoke in an enlivening voice to Blanche, whose heart echoed back the tones. Henri and, soon after, the Countess with Mademoiselle Bearn appeared, and the whole party seemed to acknowledge the influence of the scene; even the Countess was so much re-animated as to receive the civilities of her husband with complacency, and but once forgot her good-humour, which was when she asked whether they had any neighbours, who were likely to make *this barbarous spot* more tolerable, and whether the Count believed it possible for her to exist here, without some amusement?

Soon after breakfast the party dispersed; the Count, ordering his steward to attend him in the library, went to survey the condition of his premises, and to visit some of his tenants; Henri hastened with alacrity to the shore to examine a boat, that was to bear them on a little voyage in the evening and to superintend the adjustment of a silk awning; while the Countess, attended by Mademoiselle Bearn, retired to an apartment on the modern side of the chateau, which was fitted up with airy elegance; and, as the windows opened upon balconies, that fronted the sea, she was there saved from a view of the *horrid* Pyren…es. Here, while she reclined on a sofa, and, casting her languid eyes over the ocean, which appeared beyond the wood-tops, indulged in the luxuries of *ennui*, her companion read aloud a sentimental novel, on some fashionable system of philosophy, for the Countess was herself somewhat of a *philosopher*, especially as to *infidelity*, and among a certain circle her opinions were waited for with impatience, and received as doctrines.

The Lady Blanche, meanwhile, hastened to indulge, amidst the wild wood-walks around the chateau, her new enthusiasm, where, as she wandered under the shades, her gay spirits gradually yielded to pensive complacency. Now, she moved with solemn steps, beneath the gloom of thickly interwoven branches, where the fresh dew still hung upon every flower, that peeped from among the grass; and now tripped sportively along the path, on which the sun-beams darted and the checquered foliage trembled – where the tender greens of the beech, the acacia and the mountain-ash, mingling with the solemn tints of the cedar, the pine and cypress, exhibited as fine a contrast of colouring, as the majestic oak and oriental plane did of form, to the feathery lightness of the cork tree and the waving grace of the poplar.

Having reached a rustic seat, within a deep recess of the woods, she rested awhile, and, as her eyes caught, through a distant opening, a glimpse of the blue waters of the Mediterranean, with the white sail, gliding on its bosom, or of the broad mountain, glowing beneath the mid-day sun, her mind experienced somewhat of that exquisite delight, which awakens the fancy, and leads to poetry. The hum of bees alone broke the stillness around her, as, with other insects of various hues, they sported gaily in the shade, or sipped sweets from the fresh flowers; and, while Blanche watched a butter-fly, flitting from bud to bud, she indulged herself in imagining the pleasures of its short day, till she had composed the following stanzas.

THE BUTTER-FLY TO HIS LOVE

What bowery dell, with fragrant breath,

Courts thee to stay thy airy flight;
Nor seek again the purple heath,
So oft the scene of gay delight?

Long I’ve watch’d i’ the lily’s bell,
Whose whiteness stole the morning’s beam;
No fluttering sounds thy coming tell,
No waving wings, at distance, gleam.

But fountain fresh, nor breathing grove,
Nor sunny mead, nor blossom’d tree,
So sweet as lily’s cell shall prove,
– The bower of constant love and me.

When April buds begin to blow,
The prim-rose, and the hare-bell blue,
That on the verdant moss bank grow,
With violet cups, that weep in dew;

When wanton gales breathe through the shade,
And shake the blooms, and steal their sweets,
And swell the song of ev’ry glade,
I range the forest’s green retreats:

There, through the tangled wood-walks play,
Where no rude urchin paces near,
Where sparely peeps the sultry day,
And light dews freshen all the air.

High on a sun-beam oft I sport
O’er bower and fountain, vale and hill;
Oft ev’ry blushing flow’ret court,
That hangs its head o’er winding rill.

But these I’ll leave to be thy guide,
And shew thee, where the jasmine spreads
Her snowy leaf, where may-flow’rs hide
And rose-buds rear their peeping heads.

With me the mountain’s summit scale,
And taste the wild-thyme’s honied bloom,
Whose fragrance, floating on the gale,
Oft leads me to the cedar’s gloom.

Yet, yet, no sound comes in the breeze!
What shade thus dares to tempt thy stay?
Once, me alone thou wish’d to please,
And with me only thou wouldst stray.

But, while thy long delay I mourn,
And chide the sweet shades for their guile,
Thou may’st be true, and they forlorn,
And fairy favours court thy smile.

The tiny queen of fairy-land,
Who knows thy speed, hath sent thee far,

To bring, or ere the night-watch stand,
Rich essence for her shadowy car:

Perchance her acorn-cups to fill
With nectar from the Indian rose,
Or gather, near some haunted rill,
May-dews, that lull to sleep Love's woes:

Or, o'er the mountains, bade thee fly,
To tell her fairy love to speed,
When ev'ning steals upon the sky,
To dance along the twilight mead.

But now I see thee sailing low,
Gay as the brightest flow'rs of spring,
Thy coat of blue and jet I know,
And well thy gold and purple wing.

Borne on the gale, thou com'st to me;
O! welcome, welcome to my home!
In lily's cell we'll live in glee,
Together o'er the mountains roam!

When Lady Blanche returned to the chateau, instead of going to the apartment of the Countess, she amused herself with wandering over that part of the edifice, which she had not yet examined, of which the most antient first attracted her curiosity; for, though what she had seen of the modern was gay and elegant, there was something in the former more interesting to her imagination. Having passed up the great stair-case, and through the oak gallery, she entered upon a long suite of chambers, whose walls were either hung with tapestry, or wainscoted with cedar, the furniture of which looked almost as antient as the rooms themselves; the spacious fire-places, where no mark of social cheer remained, presented an image of cold desolation; and the whole suite had so much the air of neglect and desertion, that it seemed, as if the venerable persons, whose portraits hung upon the walls, had been the last to inhabit them.

On leaving these rooms, she found herself in another gallery, one end of which was terminated by a back stair-case, and the other by a door, that seemed to communicate with the north-side of the chateau, but which being fastened, she descended the stair-case, and, opening a door in the wall, a few steps down, found herself in a small square room, that formed part of the west turret of the castle. Three windows presented each a separate and beautiful prospect; that to the north, overlooking Languedoc; another to the west, the hills ascending towards the Pyren…es, whose awful summits crowned the landscape; and a third, fronting the south, gave the Mediterranean, and a part of the wild shores of Rousillon, to the eye.

Having left the turret, and descended the narrow stair-case, she found herself in a dusky passage, where she wandered, unable to find her way, till impatience yielded to apprehension, and she called for assistance. Presently steps approached, and light glimmered through a door at the other extremity of the passage, which was opened with caution by some person, who did not venture beyond it, and whom Blanche observed in silence, till the door was closing, when she called aloud, and, hastening towards it, perceived the old housekeeper.

'Dear ma'amselle! is it you?' said Dorothe´e, 'How could you find your way hither?' Had Blanche been less occupied by her own fears, she would probably have observed the strong expressions of terror and surprise on Dorothe´e's countenance, who now led her through a long succession of passages and rooms, that looked as if they had been uninhabited for a century, till they reached that appropriated to the housekeeper, where Dorothe´e entreated she would sit down and take refreshment. Blanche accepted the sweet meats, offered to her, mentioned her discovery of the pleasant turret, and her wish to appropriate it to her own use. Whether Dorothe´e's taste was not so sensible to the beauties of landscape as her young lady's, or that the constant view of lovely scenery had deadened it, she forbore to praise the subject of Blanche's enthusiasm, which, however, her silence did not repress. To Lady Blanche's enquiry, of whither the door she had found fastened at the end of the gallery led, she replied, that it opened to a suite of rooms, which had not been entered, during many years, 'For,' added she, 'my late lady died in one of them, and I could never find in my heart to go into them since.'

Blanche, though she wished to see these chambers, forbore, on observing that Dorothe´e's eyes were filled with tears, to ask her to unlock them, and, soon after, went to dress for dinner, at which the whole party met in good spirits and good humour, except the Countess, whose vacant mind, overcome by the languor of idleness, would neither suffer her to be happy herself, or to contribute to the happiness of others. Mademoiselle Bearn, attempting to be witty, directed her *badinage* against Henri, who answered, because he could not well avoid it, rather than from any inclination to notice her, whose liveliness sometimes amused, but whose conceit and insensibility often disgusted him.

The cheerfulness, with which Blanche rejoined the party, vanished, on her reaching the margin of the sea; she gazed with apprehension upon the immense expanse of waters, which, at a distance, she had beheld only with delight and astonishment, and it was by a strong effort, that she so far overcame her fears as to follow her father into the boat.

As she silently surveyed the vast horizon, bending round the distant verge of the ocean, an emotion of sublimest rapture struggled to overcome a sense of personal danger. A light breeze played on the water, and on the silk awning of the boat, and waved the foliage of the receding woods, that crowned the cliffs, for many miles, and which the Count surveyed with the pride of conscious property, as well as with the eye of taste.

At some distance, among these woods, stood a pavilion, which had once been the scene of social gaiety, and which its situation still made one of romantic beauty. Thither, the Count had ordered coffee and other refreshment to be carried, and thither the sailors now steered their course, following the windings of the shore round many a woody promontory and circling bay; while the pensive tones of horns and other wind instruments, played by the attendants in a distant boat, echoed among the rocks, and died along the waves. Blanche had now subdued her fears; a delightful tranquillity stole over her mind, and held her in silence; and she was too happy even to remember the convent, or her former sorrows, as subjects of comparison with her present felicity.

The Countess felt less unhappy than she had done, since the moment of her leaving Paris; for her mind was now under some degree of restraint; she feared to indulge its wayward humours, and even wished to recover the Count's good opinion. On his family, and on the surrounding scene, he looked with tempered pleasure and benevolent satisfaction, while his son exhibited the gay spirits of youth, anticipating new delights, and regretless of those, that were passed.

After near an hour's rowing, the party landed, and ascended a little path, overgrown with vegetation. At a little distance from the point of the eminence, within the shadowy recess of the woods, appeared the pavilion, which Blanche perceived, as she caught a glimpse of its portico between the trees, to be built of variegated marble. As she followed the Countess, she often turned her eyes with rapture towards the ocean, seen beneath the dark foliage, far below, and from thence upon the deep woods, whose silence and impenetrable gloom awakened emotions more solemn, but scarcely less delightful.

The pavilion had been prepared, as far as was possible, on a very short notice, for the reception of its visitors; but the faded colours of its painted walls and ceiling, and the decayed drapery of its once magnificent furniture, declared how long it had been neglected, and abandoned to the empire of the changing seasons. While the party partook of a collation of fruit and coffee, the horns, placed in a distant part of the woods, where an echo sweetened and prolonged their melancholy tones, broke softly on the stillness of the scene. This spot seemed to attract even the admiration of the Countess, or, perhaps, it was merely the pleasure of planning furniture and decorations, that made her dwell so long on the necessity of repairing and adorning it; while the Count, never happier than when he saw her mind engaged by natural and simple objects, acquiesced in all her designs, concerning the pavilion. The paintings on the walls and coved ceiling were to be renewed, the canopies and sofas were to be of light green damask; marble statues of wood-nymphs, bearing on their heads baskets of living flowers, were to adorn the recesses between the windows, which, descending to the ground, were to admit to every part of the room, and it was of octagonal form, the various landscape. One window opened upon a romantic glade, where the eye roved among woody recesses, and the scene was bounded only by a lengthened pomp of groves; from another, the woods receding disclosed the distant summits of the Pyren…es; a third fronted an avenue, beyond which the grey towers of Chateau-le-Blanc, and a picturesque part of its ruin were seen partially among the foliage; while a fourth gave, between the trees, a glimpse of the green pastures and villages, that diversify the banks of the Aude. The Mediterranean, with the bold cliffs, that overlooked its shores, were the grand objects of a fifth window, and the others gave, in different points of view, the wild scenery of the woods.

After wandering, for some time, in these, the party returned to the shore and embarked; and, the beauty of the evening tempting them to extend their excursion, they proceeded further up the bay. A dead calm had succeeded the light breeze, that wafted them hither, and the men took to their oars. Around, the waters were spread into one vast expanse of polished mirror, reflecting the grey cliffs and feathery woods, that over-hung its surface, the glow of the western horizon and the dark clouds, that came slowly from the east. Blanche loved to see the dipping oars imprint the water, and to watch the spreading circles they left, which gave a tremulous motion to the reflected landscape, without destroying the harmony of its features.

Above the darkness of the woods, her eye now caught a cluster of high towers, touched with the splendour of the setting rays; and, soon after, the horns being then silent, she heard the faint swell of choral voices from a distance.

'What voices are those, upon the air?' said the Count, looking round, and listening; but the strain had ceased. 'It seemed to be a vesper-hymn, which I have often heard in my convent,' said Blanche.

'We are near the monastery, then,' observed the Count; and, the boat soon after doubling a lofty head-land, the monastery of St Clair appeared, seated near the margin of the sea, where the cliffs, suddenly sinking, formed a low shore within a small bay, almost encircled with woods, among which partial features of the edifice were seen; – the great gate and gothic window of the hall, the cloisters and the side of a chapel more remote; while a venerable arch, which had once led to a part of the fabric, now demolished, stood a majestic ruin detached from the main building, beyond which appeared a grand perspective of the woods. On the grey walls, the moss had fastened, and, round the pointed windows of the chapel, the ivy and the briony hung in many a fantastic wreath.

All without was silent and forsaken; but, while Blanche gazed with admiration on this venerable pile, whose effect was heightened by the strong lights and shadows thrown athwart it by a cloudy sunset, a sound of many voices, slowly chanting, arose from within. The Count bade his men rest on their oars. The monks were singing the hymn of vespers, and some female voices mingled with the strain, which rose by soft degrees, till the high organ and the choral sounds swelled into full and solemn harmony. The strain, soon after, dropped into sudden silence, and was renewed in a low and still more solemn key, till, at length, the holy chorus died away, and was heard no more. – Blanche sighed, tears trembled in her eyes, and her thoughts seemed wafted with the sounds to heaven. While a rapt stillness prevailed in the boat, a train of friars, and then of nuns,[2] veiled in white, issued from the cloisters, and passed, under the shade of the woods, to the main body of the

edifice.

The Countess was the first of her party to awaken from this pause of silence.

‘These dismal hymns and friars make one quite melancholy,’ said she; ‘twilight is coming on; pray let us return, or it will be dark before we get home.’

The Count, looking up, now perceived, that the twilight of evening was anticipated by an approaching storm. In the east a tempest was collecting; a heavy gloom came on, opposing and contrasting the glowing splendour of the setting sun. The clamorous sea-fowl skimmed in fleet circles upon the surface of the sea, dipping their light pinions in the wave, as they fled away in search of shelter. The boatmen pulled hard at their oars; but the thunder, that now muttered at a distance, and the heavy drops, that began to dimple the water, made the Count determine to put back to the monastery for shelter, and the course of the boat was immediately changed. As the clouds approached the west, their lurid darkness changed to a deep ruddy glow, which, by reflection, seemed to fire the tops of the woods and the shattered towers of the monastery.

The appearance of the heavens alarmed the Countess and Mademoiselle Bearn, whose expressions of apprehension distressed the Count, and perplexed his men; while Blanche continued silent, now agitated with fear, and now with admiration, as she viewed the grandeur of the clouds, and their effect on the scenery, and listened to the long, long peals of thunder, that rolled through the air.

The boat having reached the lawn before the monastery, the Count sent a servant to announce his arrival, and to entreat shelter of the Superior, who, soon after, appeared at the great gate, attended by several monks, while the servant returned with a message, expressive at once of hospitality and pride, but of pride disguised in submission. The party immediately disembarked, and, having hastily crossed the lawn – for the shower was now heavy – were received at the gate by the Superior, who, as they entered, stretched forth his hands and gave his blessing; and they passed into the great hall, where the lady abbess waited, attended by several nuns, clothed, like herself, in black, and veiled in white. The veil of the abbess was, however, thrown half back, and discovered a countenance, whose chaste dignity was sweetened by the smile of welcome,[3] with which she addressed the Countess, whom she led, with Blanche and Mademoiselle Bearn, into the convent parlour, while the Count and Henri were conducted by the Superior to the refectory.

The Countess, fatigued and discontented, received the politeness of the abbess with careless haughtiness, and had followed her, with indolent steps, to the parlour, over which the painted casements and wainscot of larch-wood threw, at all times, a melancholy shade, and where the gloom of evening now loured almost to darkness.

While the lady abbess ordered refreshment, and conversed with the Countess, Blanche withdrew to a window, the lower panes of which, being without painting, allowed her to observe the progress of the storm over the Mediterranean, whose dark waves, that had so lately slept, now came boldly swelling, in long succession, to the shore, where they burst in white foam, and threw up a high spray over the rocks. A red sulphureous tint overspread the long line of clouds, that hung above the western horizon, beneath whose dark skirts the sun looking out, illumined the distant shores of Languedoc, as well as the tufted summits of the nearer woods, and shed a partial gleam on the western waves. The rest of the scene was in deep gloom, except where a sun-beam, darting between the clouds, glanced on the white wings of the sea-fowl, that circled high among them, or touched the swelling sail of a vessel, which was seen labouring in the storm. Blanche, for some time, anxiously watched the progress of the bark, as it threw the waves in foam around it, and, as the lightnings flashed, looked to the opening heavens, with many a sigh for the fate of the poor mariners.

The sun, at length, set, and the heavy clouds, which had long impended, dropped over the splendour of his course; the vessel, however, was yet dimly seen, and Blanche continued to observe it, till the quick succession of flashes, lighting up the gloom of the whole horizon, warned her to retire from the window, and she joined the Abbess, who, having exhausted all her topics of conversation with the Countess, had now leisure to notice her.

But their discourse was interrupted by tremendous peals of thunder; and the bell of the monastery soon after ringing out, summoned the inhabitants to prayer. As Blanche passed the windows, she gave another look to the ocean, where, by the momentary flash, that illumined the vast body of the waters, she distinguished the vessel she had observed before, amidst a sea of foam, breaking the billows, the mast now bowing to the waves, and then rising high in air.

She sighed fervently as she gazed, and then followed the Lady Abbess and the Countess to the chapel. Meanwhile, some of the Count’s servants, having gone by land to the chateau for carriages, returned soon after vespers had concluded, when, the storm being somewhat abated, the Count and his family returned home. Blanche was surprised to discover how much the windings of the shore had deceived her, concerning the distance of the chateau from the monastery, whose vesper bell she had heard, on the preceding evening, from the windows of the west saloon, and whose towers she would also have seen from thence, had not twilight veiled them.

On their arrival at the chateau, the Countess, affecting more fatigue, than she really felt, withdrew to her apartment, and the Count, with his daughter and Henri, went to the supper-room, where they had not been long, when they heard, in a pause of the gust, a firing of guns, which the Count understanding to be signals of distress from some vessel in the storm, went to a window, that opened towards the Mediterranean, to observe further; but the sea was now involved in utter darkness, and the loud howlings of the tempest had again overcome every other sound. Blanche, remembering the bark, which she had before seen, now joined her father, with trembling anxiety. In a few moments, the report of guns was again borne along the wind, and as suddenly wafted away; a tremendous burst of thunder followed, and, in the flash, that had preceded it, and which seemed to quiver over the whole surface of the waters, a vessel was discovered, tossing amidst the white foam of the waves at some distance from the shore. Impenetrable darkness again involved the scene, but soon a second flash shewed the bark, with one sail unfurled, driving towards the coast. Blanche hung upon her father's arm, with looks full of the agony of united terror and pity, which were unnecessary to awaken the heart of the Count, who gazed upon the sea with a piteous expression, and, perceiving, that no boat could live in the storm, forbore to send one; but he gave orders to his people to carry torches out upon the cliffs, hoping they might prove a kind of beacon to the vessel, or, at least, warn the crew of the rocks they were approaching. While Henri went out to direct on what part of the cliffs the lights should appear, Blanche remained, with her father, at the window, catching, every now and then, as the lightnings flashed, a glimpse of the vessel; and she soon saw, with reviving hope, the torches flaming on the blackness of night, and, as they waved over the cliffs, casting a red gleam on the gasping billows. When the firing of guns was repeated, the torches were tossed high in the air, as if answering the signal, and the firing was then redoubled; but, though the wind bore the sound away, she fancied, as the lightnings glanced, that the vessel was much nearer the shore.

The Count's servants were now seen, running to and fro, on the rocks; some venturing almost to the point of the crags, and bending over, held out their torches fastened to long poles; while others, whose steps could be traced only by the course of the lights, descended the steep and dangerous path, that wound to the margin of the sea, and, with loud halloos, hailed the mariners, whose shrill whistle, and then feeble voices, were heard, at intervals, mingling with the storm. Sudden shouts from the people on the rocks increased the anxiety of Blanche to an almost intolerable degree: but her suspense, concerning the fate of the mariners, was soon over, when Henri, running breathless into the room, told that the vessel was anchored in the bay below, but in so shattered a condition, that it was feared she would part before the crew could disembark. The Count immediately gave orders for his own boats to assist in bringing them to shore, and that such of these unfortunate strangers as could not be accommodated in the adjacent hamlet should be entertained at the chateau. Among the latter, were Emily St Aubert, Monsieur Du Pont, Ludovico and Annette, who, having embarked at Leghorn and reached Marseilles, were from thence crossing the Gulf of Lyons, when this storm overtook them. They were received by the Count with his usual benignity, who, though Emily wished to have proceeded immediately to the monastery of St Clair, would not allow her to leave the chateau, that night; and, indeed, the terror and fatigue she had suffered would scarcely have permitted her to go farther.

In Monsieur Du Pont the Count discovered an old acquaintance, and much joy and congratulation passed between them, after which Emily was introduced by name to the Count's family, whose hospitable benevolence dissipated the little embarrassment, which her situation had occasioned her, and the party were soon seated at the supper-table. The unaffected kindness of Blanche and the lively joy she expressed on the escape of the strangers, for whom her pity had been so much interested, gradually revived Emily's languid spirits; and Du Pont, relieved from his terrors for her and for himself, felt the full contrast, between his late situation on a dark and tremendous ocean, and his present one, in a cheerful mansion, where he was surrounded with plenty, elegance and smiles of welcome.

Annette, meanwhile, in the servants' hall, was telling of all the dangers she had encountered, and congratulating herself so heartily upon her own and Ludovico's escape, and on her present comforts, that she often made all that part of the chateau ring with merriment and laughter. Ludovico's spirits were as gay as her own, but he had discretion enough to restrain them, and tried to check hers, though in vain, till her laughter, at length, ascended to *my lady's* chamber, who sent to enquire what occasioned so much uproar in the chateau, and to command silence.

Emily withdrew early to seek the repose she so much required, but her pillow was long a sleepless one. On this her return to her native country, many interesting remembrances were awakened; all the events and sufferings she had experienced, since she quitted it, came in long succession to her fancy, and were chased only by the image of Valancourt, with whom to believe herself once more in the same land, after they had been so long, and so distantly separated, gave her emotions of indescribable joy, but which afterwards yielded to anxiety and apprehension, when she considered the long period, that had elapsed, since any letter had passed between them, and how much might have happened in this interval to affect her future peace. But the thought, that Valancourt might be now no more, or, if living, might have forgotten her, was so very terrible to her heart, that she would scarcely suffer herself to pause upon the possibility. She determined to inform him, on the following day, of her arrival in France, which it was scarcely possible he could know but by a letter from herself, and, after soothing her spirits with the hope of soon hearing, that he was well, and unchanged in his affections, she, at length, sunk to repose.

CHAPTER XII

> ‘Oft woo’d the gleam of Cynthia, silver-bright,
>
> In cloisters dim, far from the haunts of folly,
> With freedom by my side, and soft-ey’d melancholy.’
> Gray [‘Ode for Music’][1]

The Lady Blanche was so much interested for Emily, that, upon hearing she was going to reside in the neighbouring convent, she requested the Count would invite her to lengthen her stay at the chateau. ‘And you know, my dear sir,’ added Blanche, ‘how delighted I shall be with such a companion; for, at present, I have no friend to walk, or to read with, since Mademoiselle Bearn is my mamma’s friend only.’

The Count smiled at the youthful simplicity, with which his daughter yielded to first impressions; and, though he chose to warn her of their danger, he silently applauded the benevolence, that could thus readily expand in confidence to a stranger. He had observed Emily, with attention, on the preceding evening, and was as much pleased with her, as it was possible he could be with any person, on so short an acquaintance. The mention, made of her by Mons. Du Pont, had also given him a favourable impression of Emily; but, extremely cautious as to those, whom he introduced to the intimacy of his daughter, he determined, on hearing that the former was no stranger at the convent of St Clair, to visit the abbess, and, if her account corresponded with his wish, to invite Emily to pass some time at the chateau. On this subject, he was influenced by a consideration of the Lady Blanche’s welfare, still more than by either a wish to oblige her, or to befriend the orphan Emily, for whom, however, he felt considerably interested.

On the following morning, Emily was too much fatigued to appear; but Mons. Du Pont was at the breakfast-table, when the Count entered the room, who pressed him, as his former acquaintance, and the son of a very old friend, to prolong his stay at the chateau; an invitation, which Du Pont willingly accepted, since it would allow him to be near Emily; and, though he was not conscious of encouraging a hope, that she would ever return his affection, he had not fortitude enough to attempt, at present, to overcome it.

Emily, when she was somewhat recovered, wandered with her new friend over the grounds belonging to the chateau, as much delighted with the surrounding views, as Blanche, in the benevolence of her heart, had wished; from thence she perceived, beyond the woods, the towers of the monastery, and remarked, that it was to this convent she designed to go.

‘Ah!’ said Blanche with surprise, ‘I am but just released from a convent, and would you go into one? If you could know what pleasure I feel in wandering here, at liberty, – and in seeing the sky and the fields, and the woods all round me, I think you would not.’ Emily, smiling at the warmth, with which the Lady Blanche spoke, observed, that she did not mean to confine herself to a convent for life.

‘No, you may not intend it now,’ said Blanche; ‘but you do not know to what the nuns may persuade you to consent: I know how kind they will appear, and how happy, for I have seen too much of their art.’

When they returned to the chateau, Lady Blanche conducted Emily to her favourite turret, and from thence they rambled through the ancient chambers, which Blanche had visited before. Emily was amused by observing the structure of these apartments, and the fashion of their old but still magnificent furniture, and by comparing them with those of the castle of Udolpho, which were yet more antique and grotesque. She was also interested by Dorothée the house-keeper, who attended them, whose appearance was almost as antique as the objects around her, and who seemed no less interested by Emily, on whom she frequently gazed with so much deep attention, as scarcely to hear what was said to her.

While Emily looked from one of the casements, she perceived, with surprise, some objects, that were familiar to her memory; – the fields and woods, with the gleaming brook, which she had passed with La Voisin, one evening, soon after the death of Monsieur St Aubert, in her way from the monastery to her cottage; and she now knew this to be the chateau, which he had then avoided, and concerning which he had dropped some remarkable hints.

Shocked by this discovery, yet scarcely knowing why, she mused for some time in silence, and remembered the emotion, which her father had betrayed on finding himself so near this mansion, and some other circumstances of his conduct, that now greatly interested her. The music, too, which she had formerly heard, and, respecting which La Voisin had given such an odd account, occurred to her, and, desirous of knowing more concerning it, she asked Dorothée whether it returned at midnight, as usual, and whether the musician had yet been discovered.

‘Yes, ma’amselle,’ replied Dorothée, ‘that music is still heard, but the musician has never been found out, nor ever will, I believe; though there are some people, who can guess.’

‘Indeed!’ said Emily, ‘then why do they not pursue the enquiry?’

‘Ah, young lady! enquiry enough has been made – but who can pursue a spirit?’

Emily smiled, and, remembering how lately she had suffered herself to be led away by superstition, determined now to resist its contagion; yet, in spight of her efforts, she felt awe mingle with her curiosity, on this subject; and Blanche, who had hitherto listened in silence, now enquired what this music was, and how long it had been heard.

'Ever since the death of my lady, madam,' replied Dorothe´e.

'Why, the place is not haunted, surely?' said Blanche, between jesting and seriousness.

'I have heard that music almost ever since my dear lady died,' continued Dorothe´e, 'and never before then. But that is nothing to some things I could tell of.'

'Do, pray, tell them, then,' said Lady Blanche, now more in earnest than in jest. 'I am much interested, for I have heard sister Henriette, and sister Sophie, in the convent, tell of such strange appearances, which they themselves had witnessed!'

'You never heard, my lady, I suppose, what made us leave the chateau, and go and live in a cottage,' said Dorothe´e. 'Never!' replied Blanche with impatience.

'Nor the reason, that my lord, the Marquis' – Dorothe´e checked herself, hesitated, and then endeavoured to change the topic; but the curiosity of Blanche was too much awakened to suffer the subject thus easily to escape her, and she pressed the old house-keeper to proceed with her account, upon whom, however, no entreaties could prevail; and it was evident, that she was alarmed for the imprudence, into which she had already betrayed herself.

'I perceive,' said Emily, smiling, 'that all old mansions are haunted; I am lately come from a place of wonders; but unluckily, since I left it, I have heard almost all of them explained.'

Blanche was silent; Dorothe´e looked grave, and sighed; and Emily felt herself still inclined to believe more of the wonderful, than she chose to acknowledge. Just then, she remembered the spectacle she had witnessed in a chamber of Udolpho, and, by an odd kind of coincidence, the alarming words, that had accidentally met her eye in the MS. papers, which she had destroyed, in obedience to the command of her father; and she shuddered at the meaning they seemed to impart, almost as much as at the horrible appearance, disclosed by the black veil.

The Lady Blanche, meanwhile, unable to prevail with Dorothe´e to explain the subject of her late hints, had desired, on reaching the door, that terminated the gallery, and which she found fastened on the preceding day, to see the suite of rooms beyond. 'Dear young lady,' said the housekeeper, 'I have told you my reason for not opening them; I have never seen them, since my dear lady died; and it would go hard with me to see them now. Pray, madam, do not ask me again.'

'Certainly I will not,' replied Blanche, 'if that is really your objection.'

'Alas! it is,' said the old woman: 'we all loved her well, and I shall always grieve for her. Time runs round! it is now many years, since she died; but I remember every thing, that happened then, as if it was but yesterday. Many things, that have passed of late years, are gone quite from my memory, while those so long ago, I can see as if in a glass.' She paused, but afterwards, as they walked up the gallery, added of Emily, 'This young lady sometimes brings the late Marchioness to my mind; I can remember, when she looked just as blooming, and very like her, when she smiles. Poor lady! how gay she was, when she first came to the chateau!'

'And was she not gay, afterwards?' said Blanche.

Dorothe´e shook her head; and Emily observed her, with eyes strongly expressive of the interest she now felt. 'Let us sit down in this window,' said the Lady Blanche, on reaching the opposite end of the gallery: 'and pray, Dorothe´e, if it is not painful to you, tell us something more about the Marchioness. I should like to look into the glass you spoke of just now, and see a few of the circumstances, which you say often pass over it.'

'No, my lady,' replied Dorothe´e, 'if you knew as much as I do, you would not, for you would find there a dismal train of them; I often wish I could shut them out, but they will rise to my mind. I see my dear lady on her death-bed, – her very look, – and remember all she said – it was a terrible scene!'

'Why was it so terrible?' said Emily with emotion.

'Ah, dear young lady! is not death always terrible?' replied Dorothe´e.

To some further enquiries of Blanche Dorothe´e was silent; and Emily, observing the tears in her eyes, forbore to urge the subject, and endeavoured to withdraw the attention of her young friend to some object in the gardens, where the Count, with the Countess and Monsieur Du Pont, appearing, they went down to join them.

When he perceived Emily, he advanced to meet her, and presented her to the Countess, in a manner so benign, that it recalled most powerfully to her mind the idea of her late father, and she felt more gratitude to him, than embarrassment towards the Countess, who, however, received her with one of those fascinating smiles, which her caprice sometimes allowed her to assume, and which were now the result of a conversation the Count had held with her, concerning Emily. Whatever this might be, or whatever had passed in his conversation with the lady abbess, whom he had just visited, esteem and kindness were strongly apparent in his manner, when he addressed Emily, who experienced that sweet emotion, which arises from the consciousness of possessing the approbation of the good; for to the Count's worth she had been inclined to yield her confidence almost from the first moment, in which she had seen him.

Before she could finish her acknowledgments for the hospitality she had received, and mention her design of going immediately to the convent, she was interrupted by an invitation to lengthen her stay at the chateau, which was pressed by the Count and the Countess, with an appearance of such friendly sincerity, that, though she much wished to see her old friends at the monastery, and to sigh, once more, over her father's grave, she consented to remain a few days at the chateau.

To the abbess, however, she immediately wrote, mentioning her arrival in Languedoc and her wish to be received into the convent, as a boarder; she also sent letters to Monsieur Quesnel and to Valancourt, whom she merely informed of her arrival in France; and, as she knew not where the latter might be stationed, she directed her letter to his brother's seat in Gascony.

In the evening, Lady Blanche and Mons. Du Pont walked with Emily to the cottage of La Voisin, which she had now a melancholy pleasure in approaching, for time had softened her grief for the loss of St Aubert, though it could not annihilate it, and she felt a soothing sadness in indulging the recollections, which this scene recalled. La Voisin was still living, and seemed to enjoy, as much as formerly, the tranquil evening of a blameless life. He was sitting at the door of his cottage, watching some of his grand-children, playing on the grass before him, and, now and then, with a laugh, or a commendation, encouraging their sports. He immediately recollected Emily, whom he was much pleased to see, and she was as rejoiced to hear, that he had not lost one of his family, since her departure.

'Yes, ma'amselle,' said the old man, 'we all live merrily together still, thank God! and I believe there is not a happier family to be found in Languedoc, than ours.'

Emily did not trust herself in the chamber, where St Aubert died; and, after half an hour's conversation with La Voisin and his family, she left the cottage.

During these the first days of her stay at Chateau-le-Blanc, she was often affected, by observing the deep, but silent melancholy, which, at times, stole over Du Pont; and Emily, pitying the self-delusion, which disarmed him of the will to depart, determined to withdraw herself as soon as the respect she owed the Count and Countess de Villefort would permit. The dejection of his friend soon alarmed the anxiety of the Count, to whom Du Pont, at length, confided the secret of his hopeless affection, which, however, the former could only commiserate, though he secretly determined to befriend his suit, if an opportunity of doing so should ever occur. Considering the dangerous situation of Du Pont, he but feebly opposed his intention of leaving Chateau-le-Blanc, on the following day, but drew from him a promise of a longer visit, when he could return with safety to his peace. Emily herself, though she could not encourage his affection, esteemed him both for the many virtues he possessed, and for the services she had received from him; and it was not without tender emotions of gratitude and pity, that she now saw him depart for his family seat in Gascony; while he took leave of her with a countenance so expressive of love and grief, as to interest the Count more warmly in his cause than before.

In a few days, Emily also left the chateau, but not before the Count and Countess had received her promise to repeat her visit very soon; and she was welcomed by the abbess, with the same maternal kindness she had formerly experienced, and by the nuns, with much expression of regard. The well-known scenes of the convent occasioned her many melancholy recollections, but with these were mingled others, that inspired gratitude for having escaped the various dangers, that had pursued her, since she quitted it, and for the good, which she yet possessed; and, though she once more wept over her father's grave, with tears of tender affection, her grief was softened from its former acuteness.

Some time after her return to the monastery, she received a letter from her uncle, Mons. Quesnel, in answer to information that she had arrived in France, and to her enquiries, concerning such of her affairs as he had undertaken to conduct during her absence, especially as to the period for which La Vallée had been let, whither it was her wish to return, if it should appear, that her income would permit her to do so. The reply of Mons. Quesnel was cold and formal, as she expected, expressing neither concern for the evils she suffered, nor pleasure, that she was now removed from them; nor did he allow the opportunity to pass, of reproving her for her rejection of Count Morano, whom he affected still to believe a man of honour and fortune; nor of vehemently declaiming against Montoni, to whom he had always, till now, felt himself to be inferior. On Emily's pecuniary concerns, he was not very explicit; he informed her, however, that the term, for which La Valle´e had been engaged, was nearly expired; but, without inviting her to his own house, added, that her circumstances would by no means allow her to reside there, and earnestly advised her to remain, for the present, in the convent of St Clair.

To her enquiries, respecting poor old Theresa, her late father's servant, he gave no answer. In the postscript to his letter, Monsieur Quesnel mentioned

M. Motteville, in whose hands the late St Aubert had placed the chief of his personal property, as being likely to arrange his affairs nearly to the satisfaction of his creditors, and that Emily would recover much more of her fortune, than she had formerly reason to expect. The letter also inclosed to Emily an order upon a merchant at Narbonne, for a small sum of money.

The tranquillity of the monastery, and the liberty she was suffered to enjoy, in wandering among the woods and shores of this delightful province, gradually restored her spirits to their natural tone, except that anxiety would sometimes intrude, concerning Valancourt, as the time approached, when it was possible that she might receive an answer to her letter.

CHAPTER XIII

'As when a wave, that from a cloud impends,

And, swell'd with tempests, on the ship descends,
White are the decks with foam; the winds aloud
Howl o'er the masts, and sing through ev'ry shroud:
Pale, trembling, tir'd, the sailors freeze with fears,
And instant death on ev'ry wave appears.'
POPE'S HOMER[1]

The Lady Blanche, meanwhile, who was left much alone, became impatient for the company of her new friend, whom she wished to observe sharing in the delight she received from the beautiful scenery around. She had now no person, to whom she could express her admiration and communicate her pleasures, no eye, that sparkled to her smile, or countenance, that reflected her happiness; and she became spiritless and pensive. The Count, observing her dissatisfaction, readily yielded to her entreaties, and reminded Emily of her promised visit; but the silence of Valancourt, which was now prolonged far beyond the period, when a letter might have arrived from Estuviere, oppressed Emily with severe anxiety, and, rendering her averse to society, she would willingly have deferred her acceptance of this invitation, till her spirits should be relieved. The Count and his family, however, pressed to see her; and, as the circumstances, that prompted her wish for solitude, could not be explained, there was an appearance of caprice in her refusal, which she could not persevere in, without offending the friends, whose esteem she valued. At length, therefore, she returned upon a second visit to Chateau-le-Blanc. Here the friendly manner of Count de Villefort encouraged Emily to mention to him her situation, respecting the estates of her late aunt, and to consult him on the means of recovering them. He had little doubt, that the law would decide in her favour, and, advising her to apply to it, offered first to write to an advocate at Avignon, on whose opinion he thought he could rely. His kindness was gratefully accepted by Emily, who, soothed by the courtesy she daily experienced, would have been once more happy, could she have been assured of Valancourt's welfare and unaltered affection. She had now been above a week at the chateau, without receiving intelligence of him, and, though she knew, that, if he was absent from his brother's residence, it was scarcely probable her letter had yet reached him, she could not forbear to admit doubts and fears, that destroyed her peace. Again she would consider of all, that might have happened in the long period, since her first seclusion at Udolpho, and her mind was sometimes so overwhelmed with an apprehension, that Valancourt was no more, or that he lived no longer for her, that the company even of Blanche became intolerably oppressive, and she would sit alone in her apartment for hours together, when the engagements of the family allowed her to do so, without incivility.

In one of these solitary hours, she unlocked a little box, which contained some letters of Valancourt, with some drawings she had sketched, during her stay in Tuscany, the latter of which were no longer interesting to her; but, in the letters, she now, with melancholy indulgence, meant to retrace the tenderness, that had so often soothed her, and rendered her, for a moment, insensible of the distance, which separated her from the writer. But their effect was now changed; the affection they expressed appealed so forcibly to her heart, when she considered that it had, perhaps, yielded to the powers of time and absence, and even the view of the hand-writing recalled so many painful recollections, that she found herself unable to go through the first she had opened, and sat musing, with her cheek resting on her arm, and tears stealing from her eyes, when old Dorothe´e entered the room to inform her, that dinner would be ready, an hour before the usual time. Emily started on perceiving her, and hastily put up the papers, but not before Dorothe´e had observed both her agitation and her tears.

'Ah, ma'amselle!' said she, 'you, who are so young, – have you reason for sorrow?'

Emily tried to smile, but was unable to speak.

'Alas! dear young lady, when you come to my age, you will not weep at trifles; and surely you have nothing serious, to grieve you.'

'No, Dorothe´e, nothing of any consequence,' replied Emily. Dorothe´e, now stooping to pick up something, that had dropped from among the papers, suddenly exclaimed, 'Holy Mary! what is it I see?' and then, trembling, sat down in a chair, that stood by the table.

'What is it you do see?' said Emily, alarmed by her manner, and looking round the room.

'It is herself,' said Dorothe´e, 'her very self! just as she looked a little before she died!'

Emily, still more alarmed, began now to fear, that Dorothe´e was seized with sudden phrensy, but entreated her to explain herself.

‘That picture!’ said she, ‘where did you find it, lady? it is my blessed mistress herself !’

She laid on the table the miniature, which Emily had long ago found among the papers her father had enjoined her to destroy, and over which she had once seen him shed such tender and affecting tears; and, recollecting all the various circumstances of his conduct, that had long perplexed her, her emotions increased to an excess, which deprived her of all power to ask the questions she trembled to have answered, and she could only enquire, whether Dorothée was certain the picture resembled the late Marchioness.

‘O, ma’amselle!’ said she, ‘how came it to strike me so, the instant I saw it, if it was not my lady’s likeness? Ah!’ added she, taking up the miniature, ‘there are her own blue eyes – looking so sweet and so mild; and there is her very look, such as I have often seen it, when she had sat thinking for a long while, and then, the tears would often steal down her cheeks – but she never would complain! It was that look so meek, as it were, and resigned, that used to break my heart and make me love her so!’

‘Dorothée!’ said Emily solemnly, ‘I am interested in the cause of that grief, more so, perhaps, than you may imagine; and I entreat, that you will no longer refuse to indulge my curiosity; – it is not a common one.’

As Emily said this, she remembered the papers, with which the picture had been found, and had scarcely a doubt, that they had concerned the Marchioness de Villeroi; but with this supposition came a scruple, whether she ought to enquire further on a subject, which might prove to be the same, that her father had so carefully endeavoured to conceal. Her curiosity, concerning the Marchioness, powerful as it was, it is probable she would now have resisted, as she had formerly done, on unwarily observing the few terrible words in the papers, which had never since been erased from her memory, had she been certain that the history of that lady was the subject of those papers, or, that such simple particulars only as it was probable Dorothée could relate were included in her father’s command. What was known to her could be no secret to many other persons; and, since it appeared very unlikely, that St Aubert should attempt to conceal what Emily might learn by ordinary means, she at length concluded, that, if the papers had related to the story of the Marchioness, it was not those circumstances of it, which Dorothée could disclose, that he had thought sufficiently important to wish to have concealed. She, therefore, no longer hesitated to make the enquiries, that might lead to the gratification of her curiosity.

‘Ah, ma’amselle!’ said Dorothée, ‘it is a sad story, and cannot be told now: but what am I saying? I never will tell it. Many years have passed, since it happened; and I never loved to talk of the Marchioness to any body, but my husband. He lived in the family, at that time, as well as myself, and he knew many particulars from me, which nobody else did; for I was about the person of my lady in her last illness, and saw and heard as much, or more than my lord himself. Sweet saint! how patient she was! When she died, I thought I could have died with her!’

‘Dorothée,’ said Emily, interrupting her, ‘what you shall tell, you may depend upon it, shall never be disclosed by me. I have, I repeat it, particular reasons for wishing to be informed on this subject, and am willing to bind myself, in the most solemn manner, never to mention what you shall wish me to conceal.’

Dorothée seemed surprised at the earnestness of Emily’s manner, and, after regarding her for some moments, in silence, said, ‘Young lady! that look of yours pleads for you – it is so like my dear mistress’s, that I can almost fancy I see her before me; if you were her daughter, you could not remind me of her more. But dinner will be ready – had you not better go down?’

‘You will first promise to grant my request,’ said Emily.

‘And ought not you first to tell me, ma’amselle, how this picture fell into your hands, and the reasons you say you have for curiosity about my lady?’

‘Why, no, Dorothée,’ replied Emily, recollecting herself, ‘I have also particular reasons for observing silence, on these subjects, at least, till I know further; and, remember, I do not promise ever to speak upon them; therefore, do not let me induce you to satisfy my curiosity, from an expectation, that I shall gratify yours. What I may judge proper to conceal, does not concern myself alone, or I should have less scruple in revealing it: let a confidence in my honour alone persuade you to disclose what I request.’

‘Well, lady!’ replied Dorothée, after a long pause, during which her eyes were fixed upon Emily, ‘you seem so much interested, – and this picture and that face of yours make me think you have some reason to be so, – that I will trust you – and tell some things, that I never told before to any body, but my husband, though there are people, who have suspected as much. I will tell you the particulars of my lady’s death, too, and some of my own suspicions; but you must first promise me by all the saints’—

Emily, interrupting her, solemnly promised never to reveal what should be confided to her, without Dorothée’s consent.

‘But there is the horn, ma’amselle, sounding for dinner,’ said Dorothée; ‘I must be gone.’

‘When shall I see you again?’ enquired Emily.

Dorothée mused, and then replied, ‘Why, madam, it may make people curious, if it is known I am so much in your apartment, and that I should be sorry for; so I will come when I am least likely to be observed. I have little leisure in the day, and I shall have a good deal to say; so, if you please, ma’am, I will come, when the family are all in bed.’

‘That will suit me very well,’ replied Emily: ‘Remember, then, to-night’—

‘Aye, that is well remembered,’ said Dorothée, ‘I fear I cannot come to-night, madam, for there will be the dance of the vintage, and it will be late, before the servants go to rest; for, when they once set in to dance, they will keep it up, in the cool of the air, till morning; at least, it used to be so in my time.’

‘Ah! is it the dance of the vintage?’ said Emily, with a deep sigh, remembering, that it was on the evening of this festival, in the preceding year, that St Aubert and herself had arrived in the neighbourhood of Chateau-le-Blanc. She paused a moment, overcome by the sudden recollection, and then, recovering herself, added – ‘But this dance is in the open woods; you, therefore, will not be wanted, and can easily come to me.’

Dorothée replied, that she had been accustomed to be present at the dance of the vintage, and she did not wish to be absent now; ‘but if I can get away, madam, I will,’ said she.

Emily then hastened to the dining-room, where the Count conducted himself with the courtesy, which is inseparable from true dignity, and of which the Countess frequently practised little, though her manner to Emily was an exception to her usual habit. But, if she retained few of the ornamental virtues, she cherished other qualities, which she seemed to consider invaluable. She had dismissed the grace of modesty, but then she knew perfectly well how to manage the stare of assurance; her manners had little of the tempered sweetness, which is necessary to render the female character interesting, but she could occasionally throw into them an affectation of spirits, which seemed to triumph over every person, who approached her. In the country, however, she generally affected an elegant languor, that persuaded her almost to faint, when her favourite read to her a story of fictitious sorrow; but her countenance suffered no change, when living objects of distress solicited her charity, and her heart beat with no transport to the thought of giving them instant relief;– she was a stranger to the highest luxury, of which, perhaps, the human mind can be sensible, for her benevolence had never yet called smiles upon the face of misery.

In the evening, the Count, with all his family, except the Countess and Mademoiselle Bearn, went to the woods to witness the festivity of the peasants. The scene was in a glade, where the trees, opening, formed a circle round the turf they highly overshadowed; between their branches, vines, loaded with ripe clusters, were hung in gay festoons; and, beneath, were tables, with fruit, wine, cheese and other rural fare, – and seats for the Count and his family. At a little distance, were benches for the elder peasants, few of whom, however, could forbear to join the jocund dance, which began soon after sun-set, when several of sixty tripped it with almost as much glee and airy lightness, as those of sixteen.

The musicians, who sat carelessly on the grass, at the foot of a tree, seemed inspired by the sound of their own instruments, which were chiefly flutes and a kind of long guitar. Behind, stood a boy, flourishing a tamborine, and dancing a solo, except that, as he sometimes gaily tossed the instrument, he tripped among the other dancers, when his antic gestures called forth a broader laugh, and heightened the rustic spirit of the scene.

The Count was highly delighted with the happiness he witnessed, to which his bounty had largely contributed, and the Lady Blanche joined the dance with a young gentleman of her father’s party. Du Pont requested Emily’s hand, but her spirits were too much depressed, to permit her to engage in the present festivity, which called to her remembrance that of the preceding year, when St Aubert was living, and of the melancholy scenes, which had immediately followed it.

Overcome by these recollections, she, at length, left the spot, and walked slowly into the woods, where the softened music, floating at a distance, soothed her melancholy mind. The moon threw a mellow light among the foliage; the air was balmy and cool, and Emily, lost in thought, strolled on, without observing whither, till she perceived the sounds sinking afar off, and an awful stillness round her, except that, sometimes, the nightingale beguiled the silence with

‘Liquid notes, that close the eye of day.’[2]

At length, she found herself near the avenue, which, on the night of her father’s arrival, Michael had attempted to pass in search of a house, which was still nearly as wild and desolate as it had then appeared; for the Count had been so much engaged in directing other improvements, that he had neglected to give orders, concerning this extensive approach, and the road was yet broken, and the trees overloaded with their own luxuriance.

As she stood surveying it, and remembering the emotions, which she had formerly suffered there, she suddenly recollected the figure, that had been seen stealing among the trees, and which had returned no answer to Michael’s repeated calls; and she experienced somewhat of the fear, that had then assailed her, for it did not appear improbable, that these deep woods were occasionally the haunt of banditti. She, therefore, turned back, and was hastily pursuing her way to the dancers, when she heard steps approaching from the avenue; and, being still beyond the call of the peasants on the green, for she could neither hear their voices, or their music, she quickened her pace; but the persons following gained fast upon her, and, at length, distinguishing the voice of Henri, she walked leisurely, till he came up. He expressed some surprise at meeting her so far from the company; and, on her saying, that the pleasant moon-light had beguiled her to walk farther than she intended, an exclamation burst from the lips of his companion, and she thought she heard Valancourt speak! It was, indeed, he! and the meeting was such as may be imagined, between persons so affectionate, and so long separated as they had been.

In the joy of these moments, Emily forgot all her past sufferings, and Valancourt seemed to have forgotten, that any person but Emily existed; while Henri was a silent and astonished spectator of the scene.

Valancourt asked a thousand questions, concerning herself and Montoni, which there was now no time to answer; but she learned, that her letter had been forwarded to him, at Paris, which he had previously quitted, and was returning to Gascony, whither the letter also returned, which, at length, informed him of Emily’s arrival, and on the receipt of which he had immediately set out for Languedoc. On reaching the monastery, whence she had dated her letter, he found, to his extreme disappointment, that the gates were already closed for the night; and believing, that he should not see Emily, till the morrow, he was returning to his little inn, with the intention of writing to her, when he was overtaken by Henri, with whom he had been intimate at Paris, and was led to her, whom he was secretly lamenting that he should not see, till the following day.

Emily, with Valancourt and Henri, now returned to the green, where the latter presented Valancourt to the Count, who, she fancied, received him with less than his usual benignity, though it appeared, that they were not strangers to each other. He was invited, however, to partake of the diversions of the evening; and, when he had paid his respects to the Count, and while the dancers continued their festivity, he seated himself by Emily, and conversed, without constraint. The lights, which were hung among the trees, under which they sat, allowed her a more perfect view of the countenance she had so frequently in absence endeavoured to recollect, and she perceived, with some regret, that it was not the same as when last she saw it. There was all its wonted intelligence and fire; but it had lost much of the simplicity, and somewhat of the open benevolence, that used to characterise it. Still, however, it was an interesting countenance; but Emily thought she perceived, at intervals, anxiety contract, and melancholy fix the features of Valancourt; sometimes, too, he fell into a momentary musing, and then appeared anxious to dissipate thought; while, at others, as he fixed his eyes on Emily, a kind of sudden distraction seemed to cross his mind. In her he perceived the same goodness and beautiful simplicity, that had charmed him, on their first acquaintance. The bloom of her countenance was somewhat faded, but all its sweetness remained, and it was rendered more interesting, than ever, by the faint expression of melancholy, that sometimes mingled with her smile.

At his request, she related the most important circumstances, that had occurred to her, since she left France, and emotions of pity and indignation alternately prevailed in his mind, when he heard how much she had suffered from the villany of Montoni. More than once, when she was speaking of his conduct, of which the guilt was rather softened, than exaggerated, by her representation, he started from his seat, and walked away, apparently overcome as much by self accusation as by resentment. Her sufferings alone were mentioned in the few words, which he could address to her, and he listened not to the account, which she was careful to give as distinctly as possible, of the present loss of Madame Montoni's estates, and of the little reason there was to expect their restoration. At length, Valancourt remained lost in thought, and then some secret cause seemed to overcome him with anguish. Again he abruptly left her. When he returned, she perceived, that he had been weeping, and tenderly begged, that he would compose himself. 'My sufferings are all passed now,' said she, 'for I have escaped from the tyranny of Montoni, and I see you well – let me also see you happy.'

Valancourt was more agitated, than before. 'I am unworthy of you, Emily,' said he, 'I am unworthy of you;' – words, by his manner of uttering which Emily was then more shocked than by their import. She fixed on him a mournful and enquiring eye. 'Do not look thus on me,' said he, turning away and pressing her hand; 'I cannot bear those looks.'

'I would ask,' said Emily, in a gentle, but agitated voice, 'the meaning of your words; but I perceive, that the question would distress you now. Let us talk on other subjects. To-morrow, perhaps, you may be more composed. Observe those moon light woods, and the towers, which appear obscurely in the perspective. You used to be a great admirer of landscape, and I have heard you say, that the faculty of deriving consolation, under misfortune, from the sublime prospects, which neither oppression, or poverty with-hold from us, was the peculiar blessing of the innocent.' Valancourt was deeply affected. 'Yes,' replied he, 'I had once a taste for innocent and elegant delights – I had once an uncorrupted heart.' Then, checking himself, he added, 'Do you remember our journey together in the Pyren…es?'

'Can I forget it?' said Emily—'Would that I could!' he replied; – 'that was the happiest period of my life. I then loved, with enthusiasm, whatever was truly great, or good.' It was some time before Emily could repress her tears, and try to command her emotions. 'If you wish to forget that journey,' said she, 'it must certainly be my wish to forget it also.' She paused, and then added, 'You make me very uneasy; but this is not the time for further enquiry;– yet, how can I bear to believe, even for a moment, that you are less worthy of my esteem than formerly? I have still sufficient confidence in your candour, to believe, that, when I shall ask for an explanation, you will give it me.' – 'Yes,' said Valancourt, 'yes, Emily: I have not yet lost my candour: if I had, I could better have disguised my emotions, on learning what were your sufferings – your virtues, – while I – I – but I will say no more. I did not mean to have said even so much – I have been surprised into the self-accusation. Tell me, Emily, that you will not forget that journey – will not wish to forget it, and I will be calm. I would not lose the remembrance of it for the whole earth.'

'How contradictory is this!' said Emily; – 'but we may be over-heard. My recollection of it shall depend upon yours; I will endeavour to forget, or to recollect it, as you may do. Let us join the Count.' – 'Tell me, first,' said Valancourt, 'that you forgive the uneasiness I have occasioned you, this evening, and that you will still love me.' – 'I sincerely forgive you,' replied Emily. 'You best know whether I shall continue to love you, for you know whether you deserve my esteem. At present, I will believe that you do. It is unnecessary to say,' added she, observing his dejection, 'how much pain it would give me to believe otherwise. – The young lady, who approaches, is the Count's daughter.'

Valancourt and Emily now joined the Lady Blanche; and the party, soon after, sat down with the Count, his son, and the Chevalier Du Pont, at a banquet, spread under a gay awning, beneath the trees. At the table also were seated several of the most venerable of the Count's tenants, and it was a festive repast to all but Valancourt and Emily. When the Count retired to the chateau, he did not invite Valancourt to accompany him, who, therefore, took leave of Emily, and retired to his solitary inn for the night: meanwhile, she soon withdrew to her own apartment, where she mused, with deep anxiety and concern, on his behaviour, and on the Count's reception of him. Her attention was thus so wholly engaged, that she forgot Dorothe´e and her appointment, till morning was far advanced, when, knowing that the good old woman would not come, she retired, for a few hours, to repose.

On the following day, when the Count had accidentally joined Emily in one of the walks, they talked of the festival of the preceding evening, and this led him to a mention of Valancourt. 'That is a young man of talents,' said he; 'you were formerly acquainted with him, I perceive.' Emily said, that she was. 'He was introduced to me, at Paris,' said the Count, 'and I was much pleased with him, on our first acquaintance.' He paused, and Emily trembled, between the desire of hearing more and the fear of shewing the Count, that she felt an interest on the subject. 'May I ask,' said he, at length, 'how long you have known Monsieur Valancourt?' – 'Will you allow me to ask your reason for the question, sir?' said she; 'and I will answer it immediately.' – 'Certainly,' said the Count, 'that is but just. I will tell you my reason. I cannot but perceive, that Monsieur Valancourt admires you; in that, however, there is nothing extraordinary; every person, who sees you, must do the same. I am above using common-place compliments; I speak with sincerity. What I fear, is, that he is a favoured admirer.' – 'Why do you fear it, sir?' said Emily, endeavouring to conceal her emotion. – 'Because,' replied the Count, 'I think him not worthy of your favour.' Emily, greatly agitated, entreated further explanation. 'I will give it,' said he, 'if you will believe, that nothing but a strong interest in your welfare could induce me to hazard that assertion.' – 'I must believe so, sir,' replied Emily.

'But let us rest under these trees,' said the Count, observing the paleness of her countenance; 'here is a seat – you are fatigued.' They sat down, and the Count proceeded. 'Many young ladies, circumstanced as you are, would think my conduct, on this occasion, and on so short an acquaintance, impertinent, instead of friendly; from what I have observed of your temper and understanding, I do not fear such a return from you. Our acquaintance has been short, but long enough to make me esteem you, and feel a lively interest in your happiness. You deserve to be very happy, and I trust that you will be so.' Emily sighed softly, and bowed her thanks. The Count paused again. 'I am unpleasantly circumstanced,' said he; 'but an opportunity of rendering you important service shall overcome inferior considerations. Will you inform me of the manner of your first acquaintance with the Chevalier Valancourt, if the subject is not too painful?'

Emily briefly related the accident of their meeting in the presence of her father, and then so earnestly entreated the Count not to hesitate in declaring what he knew, that he perceived the violent emotion, against which she was contending, and, regarding her with a look of tender compassion, considered how he might communicate his information with least pain to his anxious auditor.

'The Chevalier and my son,' said he, 'were introduced to each other, at the table of a brother officer, at whose house I also met him, and invited him to my own, whenever he should be disengaged. I did not then know, that he had formed an acquaintance with a set of men, a disgrace to their species, who live by plunder and pass their lives in continual debauchery. I knew several of the Chevalier's family, resident at Paris, and considered them as sufficient pledges for his introduction to my own. But you are ill; I will leave the subject.' – 'No, sir,' said Emily, 'I beg you will proceed: I am only distressed.' – '*Only!*' said the Count, with emphasis; 'however, I will proceed. I soon learned, that these, his associates, had drawn him into a course of dissipation, from which he appeared to have neither the power, nor the inclination, to extricate himself. He lost large sums at the gaming table; he became infatuated with play; and was ruined. I spoke tenderly of this to his friends, who assured me, that they had remonstrated with him, till they were weary. I afterwards learned, that, in consideration of his talents for play, which were generally successful, when unopposed by the tricks of villany, – that in consideration of these, the party had initiated him into the secrets of their trade, and allotted him a share of their profits.' 'Impossible!' said Emily suddenly; 'but – pardon me, sir, I scarcely know what I say; allow for the distress of my mind. I must, indeed, I must believe, that you have not been truly informed. The Chevalier had, doubtless, enemies, who misrepresented him.' – 'I should be most happy to believe so,' replied the Count, 'but I cannot. Nothing short of conviction, and a regard for your happiness, could have urged me to repeat these unpleasant reports.'

Emily was silent. She recollected Valancourt's sayings, on the preceding evening, which discovered the pangs of self-reproach, and seemed to confirm all that the Count had related. Yet she had not fortitude enough to dare conviction. Her heart was overwhelmed with anguish at the mere suspicion of his guilt, and she could not endure a belief of it. After a long silence, the Count said, 'I perceive, and can allow for, your want of conviction. It is necessary I should give some proof of what I have asserted; but this I cannot do, without subjecting one, who is very dear to me, to danger.' – 'What is the danger you apprehend, sir?' said Emily; 'if I can prevent it, you may safely confide in my honour.' – 'On your honour I am certain I can rely,' said the Count; 'but can I trust your fortitude? Do you think you can resist the solicitation of a favoured admirer, when he pleads, in affliction, for the name of one, who has robbed him of a blessing?' – 'I shall not be exposed to such a temptation, sir,' said Emily, with modest pride, 'for I cannot favour one, whom I must no longer esteem. I, however, readily give my word.' Tears, in the mean time, contradicted her first assertion; and she felt, that time and effort only could eradicate an affection, which had been formed on virtuous esteem, and cherished by habit and difficulty.

'I will trust you then,' said the Count, 'for conviction is necessary to your peace, and cannot, I perceive, be obtained, without this confidence. My son has too often been an eye-witness of the Chevalier's ill conduct; he was very near being drawn in by it; he was, indeed, drawn in to the commission of many follies, but I rescued him from guilt and destruction. Judge then, Mademoiselle St Aubert, whether a father, who had nearly lost his only son by the example of the Chevalier, has not, from conviction, reason to warn those, whom he esteems, against trusting their happiness in such hands. I have myself seen the Chevalier engaged in deep play with men, whom I almost shuddered to look upon. If you still doubt, I will refer you to my son.'

'I must not doubt what you have yourself witnessed,' replied Emily, sinking with grief, 'or what you assert. But the Chevalier has, perhaps, been drawn only into a transient folly, which he may never repeat. If you had known the justness of his former principles, you would allow for my present incredulity.'

'Alas!' observed the Count, 'it is difficult to believe that, which will make us wretched. But I will not sooth you by flattering and false hopes. We all know how fascinating the vice of gaming is, and how difficult it is, also, to conquer habit; the Chevalier might, perhaps, reform for a while, but he would soon relapse into dissipation – for I fear, not only the bonds of habit would be powerful, but that his morals are corrupted. And – why should I conceal from you, that play is not his only vice? he appears to have a taste for every vicious pleasure.'

The Count hesitated and paused; while Emily endeavoured to support herself, as, with increasing perturbation, she expected what he might further say. A long pause of silence ensued, during which he was visibly agitated; at length, he said, 'It would be a cruel delicacy, that could prevail with me to be silent – and I will inform you, that the Chevalier's extravagance has brought him twice into the prisons of Paris, from whence he was last extricated, as I was told upon authority, which I cannot doubt, by a well-known Parisian Countess, with whom he continued to reside, when I left Paris.'

He paused again; and, looking at Emily, perceived her countenance change, and that she was falling from the seat; he caught her, but she had fainted, and he called loudly for assistance. They were, however, beyond the hearing of his servants at the chateau, and he feared to leave her while he went thither for assistance, yet knew not how otherwise to obtain it; till a fountain at no great distance caught his eye, and he endeavoured to support Emily against the tree, under which she had been sitting, while he went thither for water. But, again he was perplexed, for he had nothing near him, in which water could be brought; but while, with increased anxiety, he watched her, he thought he perceived in her countenance symptoms of returning life.

It was long, however, before she revived, and she then found herself supported – not by the Count, but by Valancourt, who was observing her with looks of earnest apprehension, and who now spoke to her in a tone, tremulous with his anxiety. At the sound of his well-known voice, she raised her eyes, but presently closed them, and a faintness again came over her.

The Count, with a look somewhat stern, waved him to withdraw; but he only sighed heavily, and called on the name of Emily, as he again held the water, that had been brought, to her lips. On the Count's repeating his action, and accompanying it with words, Valancourt answered him with a look of deep resentment, and refused to leave the place, till she should revive, or to resign her for a moment to the care of any person. In the next instant, his conscience seemed to inform him of what had been the subject of the Count's conversation with Emily, and indignation flashed in his eyes; but it was quickly repressed, and succeeded by an expression of serious anguish, that induced the Count to regard him with more pity than resentment, and the view of which so much affected Emily, when she again revived, that she yielded to the weakness of tears. But she soon restrained them, and, exerting her resolution to appear recovered, she rose, thanked the Count and Henri, with whom Valancourt had entered the garden, for their care, and moved towards the chateau, without noticing Valancourt, who, heart-struck by her manner, exclaimed in a low voice – 'Good God! how have I deserved this? – what has been said, to occasion this change?'

Emily, without replying, but with increased emotion, quickened her steps. 'What has thus disordered you, Emily?' said he, as he still walked by her side: 'give me a few moments' conversation, I entreat you; – I am very miserable!'

Though this was spoken in a low voice, it was overheard by the Count, who immediately replied, that Mademoiselle St Aubert was then too much indisposed, to attend to any conversation, but that he would venture to promise she would see Monsieur Valancourt on the morrow; if she was better.

Valancourt's cheek was crimsoned: he looked haughtily at the Count, and then at Emily, with successive expressions of surprise, grief and supplication, which she could neither misunderstand, or resist, and she said languidly – 'I shall be better tomorrow, and if you wish to accept the Count's permission, I will see you then.'

'See me!' exclaimed Valancourt, as he threw a glance of mingled pride and resentment upon the Count; and then, seeming to recollect himself, he added– 'But I will come, madam; I will accept the Count's *permission*.'

When they reached the door of the chateau, he lingered a moment, for his resentment was now fled; and then, with a look so expressive of tenderness and grief, that Emily's heart was not proof against it, he bade her good morning, and, bowing slightly to the Count, disappeared.

Emily withdrew to her own apartment, under such oppression of heart as she had seldom known, when she endeavoured to recollect all that the Count had told, to examine the probability of the circumstances he himself believed, and to consider of her future conduct towards Valancourt. But, when she attempted to think, her mind refused controul, and she could only feel that she was miserable. One moment, she sunk under the conviction, that Valancourt was no longer the same, whom she had so tenderly loved, the idea of whom had hitherto supported her under affliction, and cheered her with the hope of happier days, – but a fallen a worthless character, whom she must teach herself to despise – if she could not forget. Then, unable to endure this terrible supposition, she rejected it, and disdained to believe him capable of conduct, such as the Count had described, to whom she believed he had been misrepresented by some artful enemy; and there were moments, when she even ventured to doubt the integrity of the Count himself, and to suspect, that he was influenced by some selfish motive, to break her connection with Valancourt. But this was the error of an instant, only; the Count's character, which she had heard spoken of by Du Pont and many other persons, and had herself observed, enabled her to judge, and forbade the supposition; had her confidence, indeed, been less, there appeared to be no temptation to betray him into conduct so treacherous, and so cruel. Nor did reflection suffer her to preserve the hope, that Valancourt had been misrepresented to the Count, who had said, that he spoke chiefly from his own observation, and from his son's experience. She must part from Valancourt, therefore, for ever – for what of either happiness or tranquillity could she expect with a man, whose tastes were degenerated into low inclinations, and to whom vice was become habitual? whom she must no longer esteem, though the remembrance of what he once was, and the long habit of loving him, would render it very difficult for her to despise him.

'O Valancourt!' she would exclaim, 'having been separated so long – do we meet, only to be miserable – only to part for ever?’

Amidst all the tumult of her mind, she remembered pertinaciously the seeming candour and simplicity of his conduct, on the preceding night; and, had she dared to trust her own heart, it would have led her to hope much from this. Still she could not resolve to dismiss him for ever, without obtaining further proof of his ill conduct; yet she saw no probability of procuring it, if, indeed, proof more positive was possible. Something, however, it was necessary to decide upon, and she almost determined to be guided in her opinion solely by the manner, with which Valancourt should receive her hints concerning his late conduct.

Thus passed the hours till dinner-time, when Emily, struggling against the pressure of her grief, dried her tears, and joined the family at table, where the Count preserved towards her the most delicate attention; but the Countess and Mademoiselle Bearn, having looked, for a moment, with surprise, on her dejected countenance, began, as usual, to talk of trifles, while the eyes of Lady Blanche asked much of her friend, who could only reply by a mournful smile.

Emily withdrew as soon after dinner as possible, and was followed by the Lady Blanche, whose anxious enquiries, however, she found herself quite unequal to answer, and whom she entreated to spare her on the subject of her distress. To converse on any topic, was now, indeed, so extremely painful to her, that she soon gave up the attempt, and Blanche left her, with pity of the sorrow, which she perceived she had no power to assuage.

Emily secretly determined to go to her convent in a day or two; for company, especially that of the Countess and Mademoiselle Bearn, was intolerable to her, in the present state of her spirits; and, in the retirement of the convent, as well as the kindness of the abbess, she hoped to recover the command of her mind, and to teach it resignation to the event, which, she too plainly perceived, was approaching.

To have lost Valancourt by death, or to have seen him married to a rival, would, she thought, have given her less anguish, than a conviction of his unworthiness, which must terminate in misery to himself, and which robbed her even of the solitary image her heart so long had cherished. These painful reflections were interrupted, for a moment, by a note from Valancourt, written in evident distraction of mind, entreating, that she would permit him to see her on the approaching evening, instead of the following morning; a request, which occasioned her so much agitation, that she was unable to answer it. She wished to see him, and to terminate her present state of suspense, yet shrunk from the interview, and, incapable of deciding for herself, she, at length, sent to beg a few moments’ conversation with the Count in his library, where she delivered to him the note, and requested his advice. After reading it, he said, that, if she believed herself well enough to support the interview, his opinion was, that, for the relief of both parties, it ought to take place, that evening.

‘His affection for you is, undoubtedly, a very sincere one,’ added the Count; ‘and he appears so much distressed, and you, my amiable friend, are so ill at ease – that the sooner the affair is decided, the better.’

Emily replied, therefore, to Valancourt, that she would see him, and then exerted herself in endeavours to attain fortitude and composure, to bear her through the approaching scene – a scene so afflictingly the reverse of any, to which she had looked forward!

END OF THE THIRD VOLUME

VOLUME IV

CHAPTER I

> ‘Is all the council that we two have shared,
>
> ————the hours that we have spent,
> When we have chid the hasty-footed time
> For parting us—Oh! and is all forgot?
> . . . .
>
> And will you rent our ancient love asunder?’
>
> [SHAKESPEARE] *Midsummer Night’s Dream*[1]

In the evening, when Emily was at length informed, that Count de Villefort requested to see her, she guessed that Valancourt was below, and, endeavouring to assume composure and to recollect all her spirits, she rose and left the apartment; but on reaching the door of the library, where she imagined him to be, her emotion returned with such energy, that, fearing to trust herself in the room, she returned into the hall, where she continued for a considerable time, unable to command her agitated spirits.

When she could recall them, she found in the library Valancourt, seated with the Count, who both rose on her entrance; but she did not dare to look at Valancourt, and the Count, having led her to a chair, immediately withdrew.

Emily remained with her eyes fixed on the floor, under such oppression of heart, that she could not speak, and with difficulty breathed; while Valancourt threw himself into a chair beside her, and, sighing heavily, continued silent, when, had she raised her eyes, she would have perceived the violent emotions, with which he was agitated.

At length, in a tremulous voice, he said, ‘I have solicited to see you this evening, that I might, at least, be spared the further torture of suspense, which your altered manner had occasioned me, and which the hints I have just received from the Count have in part explained. I perceive I have enemies, Emily, who envied me my late happiness, and who have been busy in searching out the means to destroy it: I perceive, too, that time and absence have weakened the affection you once felt for me, and that you can now easily be taught to forget me.’

His last words faltered, and Emily, less able to speak than before, continued silent.

‘O what a meeting is this!’ exclaimed Valancourt, starting from his seat, and pacing the room with hurried steps, ‘what a meeting is this, after our long – long separation!’ Again he sat down, and, after the struggle of a moment, he added in a firm but despairing tone, ‘This is too much – I cannot bear it! Emily, will you not speak to me?’

He covered his face with his hand, as if to conceal his emotion, and took Emily’s, which she did not withdraw. Her tears could no longer be restrained; and, when he raised his eyes and perceived that she was weeping, all his tenderness returned, and a gleam of hope appeared to cross his mind, for he exclaimed, ‘O! you do pity me, then, you do love me! Yes, you are still my own Emily—let me believe those tears, that tell me so!’

Emily now made an effort to recover her firmness, and, hastily drying them, ‘Yes,’ said she, ‘I do pity you – I weep for you – but, ought I to think of you with affection? You may remember, that yester-evening I said, I had still sufficient confidence in your candour to believe, that, when I should request an explanation of your words, you would give it. This explanation is now unnecessary, I understand them too well; but prove, at least, that your candour is deserving of the confidence I give it, when I ask you, whether you are conscious of being the same estimable Valancourt – whom I once loved.’

‘Once loved!’ cried he, – ‘the same – the same!’ He paused in extreme emotion, and then added, in a voice at once solemn, and dejected, – ‘No – I am not the same! – I am lost – I am no longer worthy of you!’

He again concealed his face. Emily was too much affected by this honest confession to reply immediately, and, while she struggled to overcome the pleadings of her heart, and to act with the decisive firmness, which was necessary for her future peace, she perceived all the danger of trusting long to her resolution, in the presence of Valancourt, and was anxious to conclude an interview, that tortured them both; yet, when she considered, that this was probably their last meeting, her fortitude sunk at once, and she experienced only emotions of tenderness and of despondency.

Valancourt, meanwhile, lost in emotions of remorse and grief, which he had neither the power, or the will to express, sat insensible almost of the presence of Emily, his features still concealed, and his breast agitated by convulsive sighs.

'Spare me the necessity,' said Emily, recollecting her fortitude, 'spare me the necessity of mentioning those circumstances of your conduct, which oblige me to break our connection forever. – We must part, I now see you for the last time.'

'Impossible!' cried Valancourt, roused from his deep silence, 'You cannot mean what you say! – you cannot mean to throw me from you forever!'

'We must part,' repeated Emily, with emphasis, – 'and that forever! Your own conduct has made this necessary.'

'This is the Count's determination,' said he haughtily, 'not yours, and I shall enquire by what authority he interferes between us.' He now rose, and walked about the room in great emotion.

'Let me save you from this error,' said Emily, not less agitated – 'it is my determination, and, if you reflect a moment on your late conduct, you will perceive, that my future peace requires it.'

'Your future peace requires, that we should part – part forever!' said Valancourt, 'How little did I ever expect to hear you say so!'

'And how little did I expect, that it would be necessary for me to say so!' rejoined Emily, while her voice softened into tenderness, and her tears flowed again. – 'That you – you, Valancourt, would ever fall from my esteem!'

He was silent a moment, as if overwhelmed by the consciousness of no longer deserving this esteem, as well as the certainty of having lost it, and then, with impassioned grief, lamented the criminality of his late conduct and the misery to which it had reduced him, till, overcome by a recollection of the past and a conviction of the future, he burst into tears, and uttered only deep and broken sighs.

The remorse he had expressed, and the distress he suffered could not be witnessed by Emily with indifference, and, had she not called to her recollection all the circumstances, of which Count de Villefort had informed her, and all he had said of the danger of confiding in repentance, formed under the influence of passion, she might perhaps have trusted to the assurances of her heart, and have forgotten his misconduct in the tenderness, which that repentance excited.

Valancourt, returning to the chair beside her, at length, said, in a calm voice, ''Tis true, I am fallen – fallen from my own esteem! but could you, Emily, so soon, so suddenly resign, if you had not before ceased to love me, or, if your conduct was not governed by the designs, I will say, the selfish designs of another person! Would you not otherwise be willing to hope for my reformation – and could you bear, by estranging me from you, to abandon me to misery – to myself!' – Emily wept aloud. – 'No, Emily – no – you would not do this, if you still loved me. You would find your own happiness in saving mine.'

'There are too many probabilities against that hope,' said Emily, 'to justify me in trusting the comfort of my whole life to it. May I not also ask, whether you could wish me to do this, if you really loved me?'

'Really loved you!' exclaimed Valancourt – 'is it possible you can doubt my love! Yet it is reasonable, that you should do so, since you see, that I am less ready to suffer the horror of parting with you, than that of involving you in my ruin. Yes, Emily – I am ruined – irreparably ruined – I am involved in debts, which I can never discharge!' Valancourt's look, which was wild, as he spoke this, soon settled into an expression of gloomy despair; and Emily, while she was compelled to admire his sincerity, saw, with unutterable anguish, new reasons for fear in the suddenness of his feelings and the extent of the misery, in which they might involve him. After some minutes, she seemed to contend against her grief and to struggle for fortitude to conclude the interview. 'I will not prolong these moments,' said she, 'by a conversation, which can answer no good purpose. Valancourt, farewell!'

'You are not going?' said he, wildly interrupting her – 'You will not leave me thus – you will not abandon me even before my mind has suggested any possibility of compromise between the last indulgence of my despair and the endurance of my loss!' Emily was terrified by the sternness of his look, and said, in a soothing voice, 'You have yourself acknowledged, that it is necessary we should part; – if you wish, that I should believe you love me, you will repeat the acknowledgment.' – 'Never – never,' cried he – 'I was distracted when I made it. O! Emily – this is too much; – though you are not deceived as to my faults, you must be deluded into this exasperation against them. The Count is the barrier between us; but he shall not long remain so.'

'You are, indeed, distracted,' said Emily, 'the Count is not your enemy; on the contrary, he is my friend, and that might, in some degree, induce you to consider him as yours.' – 'Your friend!' said Valancourt, hastily, 'how long has he been your friend, that he can so easily make you forget your lover? Was it he, who recommended to your favour the Monsieur Du Pont, who, you say, accompanied you from Italy, and who, I say, has stolen your affections? But I have no right to question you; – you are your own mistress. Du Pont, perhaps, may not long triumph over my fallen fortunes!' Emily, more frightened than before by the frantic looks of Valancourt, said, in a tone scarcely audible, 'For heaven's sake be reasonable – be composed. Monsieur Du Pont is not your rival, nor is the Count his advocate. You have no rival; nor, except yourself, an enemy. My heart is wrung with anguish, which must increase while your frantic behaviour shews me, more than ever, that you are no longer the Valancourt I have been accustomed to love.'

He made no reply, but sat with his arms rested on the table and his face concealed by his hands; while Emily stood, silent and trembling, wretched for herself and dreading to leave him in this state of mind.

'O excess of misery!' he suddenly exclaimed, 'that I can never lament my sufferings, without accusing myself, nor remember you, without recollecting the folly and the vice, by which I have lost you! Why was I forced to Paris, and why did I yield to allurements, which were to make me despicable for ever! O! why cannot I look back, without interruption, to those days of innocence and peace, the days of our early love!' – The recollection seemed to melt his heart, and the frenzy of despair yielded to tears. After a long pause, turning towards her and taking her hand, he said in a softened voice, 'Emily, can you bear that we should part – can you resolve to give up an heart, that loves you like mine – an heart, which, though it has erred – widely erred, is not irretrievable from error, as you well know, it never can be retrievable from love?' Emily made no reply, but with her tears. 'Can you,' continued he, 'can you forget all our former days of happiness and confidence – when I had not a thought, that I might wish to conceal from you – when I had no taste – no pleasures, in which you did not participate?'

'O do not lead me to the remembrance of those days,' said Emily, 'unless you can teach me to forget the present; I do not mean to reproach you; if I did I should be spared these tears; but why will you render your present sufferings more conspicuous, by contrasting them with your former virtues?'

'Those virtues,' said Valancourt, 'might, perhaps, again be mine, if your affection, which nurtured them, was unchanged; – but I fear, indeed, I see, that you can no longer love me; else the happy hours, which we have passed together, would plead for me, and you could not look back upon them unmoved. Yet, why should I torture myself with the remembrance – why do I linger here? Am I not ruined – would it not be madness to involve you in my misfortunes, even if your heart was still my own? I will not distress you further. Yet, before I go,' added he, in a solemn voice, 'let me repeat, that, whatever may be my destiny – whatever I may be doomed to suffer, I must always love you – most fondly love you! I am going, Emily, I am going to leave you – to leave you, forever!' As he spoke the last words, his voice trembled, and he threw himself again into the chair, from which he had risen. Emily was utterly unable to leave the room, or to say farewell. All impression of his criminal conduct and almost of his follies was obliterated from her mind, and she was sensible only of pity and grief.

'My fortitude is gone,' said Valancourt at length; 'I can no longer even struggle to recall it. I cannot now leave you – I cannot bid you an eternal farewell; say, at least, that you will see me once again.' Emily's heart was somewhat relieved by the request, and she endeavoured to believe, that she ought not to refuse it. Yet she was embarrassed by recollecting, that she was a visitor in the house of the Count, who could not be pleased by the return of Valancourt. Other considerations, however, soon overcame this, and she granted his request, on the condition, that he would neither think of the Count, as his enemy, nor Du Pont as his rival. He then left her, with a heart, so much lightened by this short respite, that he almost lost every former sense of misfortune.

Emily withdrew to her own room, that she might compose her spirits and remove the traces of her tears, which would encourage the censorious remarks of the Countess and her favourite, as well as excite the curiosity of the rest of the family. She found it, however, impossible to tranquillize her mind, from which she could not expel the remembrance of the late scene with Valancourt, or the consciousness, that she was to see him again, on the morrow. This meeting now appeared more terrible to her than the last, for the ingenuous confession he had made of his ill conduct and his embarrassed circumstances, with the strength and tenderness of affection, which this confession discovered, had deeply impressed her, and, in spite of all she had heard and believed to his disadvantage, her esteem began to return. It frequently appeared to her impossible, that he could have been guilty of the depravities, reported of him, which, if not inconsistent with his warmth and impetuosity, were entirely so with his candour and sensibility. Whatever was the criminality, which had given rise to the reports, she could not now believe them to be wholly true, nor that his heart was finally closed against the charms of virtue. The deep consciousness, which he felt as well as expressed of his errors, seemed to justify the opinion; and, as she understood not the instability of youthful dispositions, when opposed by habit, and that professions frequently deceive those, who make, as well as those, who hear them, she might have yielded to the flattering persuasions of her own heart and the pleadings of Valancourt, had she not been guided by the superior prudence of the Count. He represented to her, in a clear light, the danger of her present situation, that of listening to promises of amendment, made under the influence of strong passion, and the slight hope, which could attach to a connection, whose chance of happiness rested upon the retrieval of ruined circumstances and the reform of corrupted habits. On these accounts, he lamented, that Emily had consented to a second interview, for he saw how much it would shake her resolution and increase the difficulty of her conquest.

Her mind was now so entirely occupied by nearer interests, that she forgot the old housekeeper and the promised history, which so lately had excited her curiosity, but which Dorothé was probably not very anxious to disclose, for night came; the hours passed; and she did not appear in Emily's chamber. With the latter it was a sleepless and dismal night; the more she suffered her memory to dwell on the late scenes with Valancourt, the more her resolution declined, and she was obliged to recollect all the arguments, which the Count had made use of to strengthen it, and all the precepts, which she had received from her deceased father, on the subject of self-command, to enable her to act, with prudence and dignity, on this the most severe occasion of her life. There were moments, when all her fortitude forsook her, and when, remembering the confidence of former times, she thought it impossible, that she could renounce Valancourt. His reformation then appeared certain; the arguments of Count de Villefort were forgotten; she readily believed all she wished, and was willing to encounter any evil, rather than that of an immediate separation.

Thus passed the night in ineffectual struggles between affection and reason, and she rose, in the morning, with a mind, weakened and irresolute, and a frame, trembling with illness.

CHAPTER II

> ‘Come, weep with me; – past hope, past cure, past help!’
> [SHAKESPEARE] *Romeo and Juliet*[1]

Valancourt, meanwhile, suffered the tortures of remorse and despair. The sight of Emily had renewed all the ardour, with which he first loved her, and which had suffered a temporary abatement from absence and the passing scenes of busy life. When, on the receipt of her letter, he set out for Languedoc, he then knew, that his own folly had involved him in ruin, and it was no part of his design to conceal this from her. But he lamented only the delay which his ill-conduct must give to their marriage, and did not foresee, that the information could induce her to break their connection forever. While the prospect of this separation overwhelmed his mind, before stung with self-reproach, he awaited their second interview, in a state little short of distraction, yet was still inclined to hope, that his pleadings might prevail upon her not to exact it. In the morning, he sent to know at what hour she would see him; and his note arrived, when she was with the Count, who had sought an opportunity of again conversing with her of Valancourt; for he perceived the extreme distress of her mind, and feared, more than ever, that her fortitude would desert her. Emily having dismissed the messenger, the Count returned to the subject of their late conversation, urging his fear of Valancourt’s entreaties, and again pointing out to her the lengthened misery, that must ensue, if she should refuse to encounter some present uneasiness. His repeated arguments could, indeed, alone have protected her from the affection she still felt for Valancourt, and she resolved to be governed by them.

The hour of interview, at length, arrived. Emily went to it, at least, with composure of manner, but Valancourt was so much agitated, that he could not speak, for several minutes, and his first words were alternately those of lamentation, entreaty and self-reproach. Afterward, he said, ‘Emily, I have loved you – I do love you, better than my life; but I am ruined by my own conduct. Yet I would seek to entangle you in a connection, that must be miserable for you, rather than subject myself to the punishment, which is my due, the loss of you. I am a wretch, but I will be a villain no longer. – I will not endeavour to shake your resolution by the pleadings of a selfish passion. I resign you, Emily, and will endeavour to find consolation in considering, that, though I am miserable, you, at least, may be happy. The merit of the sacrifice is, indeed, not my own, for I should never have attained strength of mind to surrender you, if your prudence had not demanded it.’

He paused a moment, while Emily attempted to conceal the tears, which came to her eyes. She would have said, ‘You speak now, as you were wont to do,’ but she checked herself. – ‘Forgive me, Emily,’ said he, ‘all the sufferings I have occasioned you, and, sometimes, when you think of the wretched Valancourt, remember, that his only consolation would be to believe, that you are no longer unhappy by his folly.’ The tears now fell fast upon her cheek, and he was relapsing into the phrensy of despair, when Emily endeavoured to recall her fortitude and to terminate an interview, which only seemed to increase the distress of both. Perceiving her tears and that she was rising to go, Valancourt struggled, once more, to overcome his own feelings and to sooth hers. ‘The remembrance of this sorrow,’ said he, ‘shall in future be my protection. O! never again will example, or temptation have power to seduce me to evil, exalted as I shall be by the recollection of your grief for me.’

Emily was somewhat comforted by this assurance. ‘We are now parting for ever,’ said she; ‘but, if my happiness is dear to you, you will always remember, that nothing can contribute to it more, than to believe, that you have recovered your own esteem.’ Valancourt took her hand; – his eyes were covered with tears, and the farewell he would have spoken was lost in sighs. After a few moments, Emily said, with difficulty and emotion, ‘Farewell, Valancourt, may you be happy!’ She repeated her ‘farewell,’ and attempted to withdraw her hand, but he still held it and bathed it with his tears. ‘Why prolong these moments?’ said Emily, in a voice scarcely audible, ‘they are too painful to us both.’ ‘This is too – too much,’ exclaimed Valancourt, resigning her hand and throwing himself into a chair, where he covered his face with his hands and was overcome, for some moments, by convulsive sighs. After a long pause, during which Emily wept in silence, and Valancourt seemed struggling with his grief, she again rose to take leave of him. Then, endeavouring to recover his composure, ‘I am again afflicting you,’ said he, ‘but let the anguish I suffer plead for me.’ He then added, in a solemn voice, which frequently trembled with the agitation of his heart, ‘Farewell, Emily, you will always be the only object of my tenderness. Sometimes you will think of the unhappy Valancourt, and it will be with pity, though it may not be with esteem. O! what is the whole world to me, without you – without your esteem!’ He checked himself – ‘I am falling again into the error I have just lamented. I must not intrude longer upon your patience, or I shall relapse into despair.’

He once more bade Emily adieu, pressed her hand to his lips, looked at her, for the last time, and hurried out of the room.

Emily remained in the chair, where he had left her, oppressed with a pain at her heart, which scarcely permitted her to breathe, and listening to his departing steps, sinking fainter and fainter, as he crossed the hall. She was, at length, roused by the voice of the Countess in the garden, and, her attention being then awakened, the first object, which struck her sight, was the vacant chair, where Valancourt had sat. The tears, which had been, for some time, repressed by the kind of astonishment, that followed his departure, now came to her relief, and she was, at length, sufficiently composed to return to her own room.

CHAPTER III

'This is no mortal business, nor no sound
That the earth owes!'___
SHAKESPEARE [*The Tempest*][1]

We now return to the mention of Montoni, whose rage and disappointment were soon lost in nearer interests, than any, which the unhappy Emily had awakened. His depredations having exceeded their usual limits, and reached an extent, at which neither the timidity of the then commercial senate of Venice, nor their hope of his occasional assistance would permit them to connive, the same effort, it was resolved, should complete the suppression of his power and the correction of his outrages. While a corps of considerable strength was upon the point of receiving orders to march for Udolpho, a young officer, prompted partly by resentment, for some injury, received from Montoni, and partly by the hope of distinction, solicited an interview with the Minister, who directed the enterprise. To him he represented, that the situation of Udolpho rendered it too strong to be taken by open force, except after some tedious operations; that Montoni had lately shewn how capable he was of adding to its strength all the advantages, which could be derived from the skill of a commander; that so considerable a body of troops, as that allotted to the expedition, could not approach Udolpho without his knowledge, and that it was not for the honour of the republic to have a large part of its regular force employed, for such a time as the siege of Udolpho would require, upon the attack of a handful of banditti. The object of the expedition, he thought, might be accomplished much more safely and speedily by mingling contrivance with force. It was possible to meet Montoni and his party, without their walls, and to attack them then; or, by approaching the fortress, with the secrecy, consistent with the march of smaller bodies of troops, to take advantage either of the treachery, or negligence of some of his party, and to rush unexpectedly upon the whole even in the castle of Udolpho.

This advice was seriously attended to, and the officer, who gave it, received the command of the troops, demanded for his purpose. His first efforts were accordingly those of contrivance alone. In the neighbourhood of Udolpho, he waited, till he had secured the assistance of several of the condottieri, of whom he found none, that he addressed, unwilling to punish their imperious master and to secure their own pardon from the senate. He learned also the number of Montoni's troops, and that it had been much increased, since his late successes. The conclusion of his plan was soon effected. Having returned with his party, who received the watch-word and other assistance from their friends within, Montoni and his officers were surprised by one division, who had been directed to their apartment, while the other maintained the slight combat, which preceded the surrender of the whole garrison. Among the persons, seized with Montoni, was Orsino, the assassin, who had joined him on his first arrival at Udolpho, and whose concealment had been made known to the senate by Count Morano, after the unsuccessful attempt of the latter to carry off Emily. It was, indeed, partly for the purpose of capturing this man, by whom one of the senate had been murdered, that the expedition was undertaken, and its success was so acceptable to them, that Morano was instantly released, notwithstanding the political suspicions, which Montoni, by his secret accusation, had excited against him. The celerity and ease, with which this whole transaction was completed, prevented it from attracting curiosity, or even from obtaining a place in any of the published records of that time; so that Emily, who remained in Languedoc, was ignorant of the defeat and signal humiliation of her late persecutor.

Her mind was now occupied with sufferings, which no effort of reason had yet been able to controul. Count de Villefort, who sincerely attempted whatever benevolence could suggest for softening them sometimes allowed her the solitude she wished for, sometimes led her into friendly parties, and constantly protected her, as much as possible, from the shrewd enquiries and critical conversation of the Countess. He often invited her to make excursions, with him and his daughter, during which he conversed entirely on questions, suitable to her taste, without appearing to consult it, and thus endeavoured gradually to withdraw her from the subject of her grief, and to awake other interests in her mind. Emily, to whom he appeared as the enlightened friend and protector of her youth, soon felt for him the tender affection of a daughter, and her heart expanded to her young friend Blanche, as to a sister, whose kindness and simplicity compensated for the want of more brilliant qualities. It was long before she could sufficiently abstract her mind from Valancourt to listen to the story, promised by old Dorothé, concerning which her curiosity had once been so deeply interested; but Dorothé, at length, reminded her of it, and Emily desired, that she would come, that night, to her chamber.

Still her thoughts were employed by considerations, which weakened her curiosity, and Dorothé's tap at the door, soon after twelve, surprised her almost as much as if it had not been appointed. 'I am come, at last, lady,' said she; 'I wonder what it is makes my old limbs shake so, to-night. I thought, once or twice, I should have dropped, as I was a coming.' Emily seated her in a chair, and desired, that she would compose her spirits, before she entered upon the subject, that had brought her thither. 'Alas,' said Dorothé, 'it is thinking of that, I believe, which has disturbed me so. In my way hither too, I passed the chamber, where my dear lady died, and every thing was so still and gloomy about me, that I almost fancied I saw her, as she appeared upon her death-bed.'

Emily now drew her chair near to Dorothé, who went on. 'It is about twenty years since my lady Marchioness came a bride to the chateau. O! I well remember how she looked, when she came into the great hall, where we servants were all assembled to welcome her, and how happy my lord the Marquis seemed. Ah! who would have thought then! – But, as I was saying, ma'amselle, I thought the Marchioness, with all her sweet looks, did not look happy at heart, and so I told my husband, and he said it was all fancy; so I said no more, but I made my remarks, for all that. My lady Marchioness was then about your age, and, as I have often thought, very like you. Well! my lord the Marquis kept open house, for a long time, and gave such entertainments and there were such gay doings as have never been in the chateau since. I was younger, ma'amselle, then, than I am now, and was as gay as the best of them. I remember I danced with Philip, the butler, in a pink gown, with yellow ribbons, and a coif, not such as they wear now, but plaited high, with ribbons all about it. It was very becoming truly; – my lord, the Marquis, noticed me. Ah! he was a good-natured gentleman then – who would have thought that he!' —

'But the Marchioness, Dorothé,' said Emily, 'you was telling me of her.'

'O yes, my lady Marchioness, I thought she did not seem happy at heart, and once, soon after the marriage, I caught her crying in her chamber; but, when she saw me, she dried her eyes, and pretended to smile. I did not dare then to ask what was the matter; but, the next time I saw her crying, I did, and she seemed displeased; – so I said no more. I found out, some time after, how it was. Her father, it seems, had commanded her to marry my lord, the Marquis, for his money, and there was another nobleman, or else a chevalier, that she liked better and that was very fond of her, and she fretted for the loss of him, I fancy, but she never told me so. My lady always tried to conceal her tears from the Marquis, for I have often seen her, after she has been so sorrowful, look so calm and sweet, when he came into the room! But my lord, all of a sudden, grew gloomy and fretful, and very unkind sometimes to my lady. This afflicted her very much, as I saw, for she never complained, and she used to try so sweetly to oblige him and to bring him into a good humour, that my heart has often ached to see it. But he used to be stubborn, and give her harsh answers, and then, when she found it all in vain, she would go to her own room, and cry so! I used to hear her in the anti-room, poor dear lady! but I seldom ventured to go to her. I used, sometimes, to think my lord was jealous. To be sure, my lady was greatly admired, but she was too good to deserve suspicion. Among the many chevaliers, that visited at the chateau, there was one, that I always thought seemed just suited for my lady; he was so courteous, yet so spirited, and there was such a grace, as it were, in all he did, or said. I always observed, that, whenever he had been there, the Marquis was more gloomy and my lady more thoughtful, and it came into my head, that this was the chevalier she ought to have married, but I never could learn for certain.'

'What was the chevalier's name, Dorothé?' said Emily.

'Why that I will not tell even to you, ma'amselle, for evil may come of it. I once heard from a person, who is since dead, that the Marchioness was not in law the wife of the Marquis, for that she had before been privately married to the gentleman she was so much attached to, and was afterwards afraid to own it to her father, who was a very stern man; but this seems very unlikely, and I never gave much faith to it. As I was saying, the Marquis was most out of humour, as I thought, when the chevalier I spoke of had been at the chateau, and, at last, his ill treatment of my lady made her quite miserable. He would see hardly any visitors at the castle, and made her live almost by herself. I was her constant attendant, and saw all she suffered, but still she never complained.

'After matters had gone on thus, for near a year, my lady was taken ill, and I thought her long fretting had made her so, – but, alas! I fear it was worse than that.'

'Worse! Dorothé,' said Emily, 'can that be possible?'

'I fear it was so, madam, there were strange appearances! But I will only tell what happened. My lord, the Marquis –'

'Hush, Dorothé, what sounds were those?' said Emily.

Dorothé changed countenance, and, while they both listened, they heard, on the stillness of the night, music of uncommon sweetness.

'I have surely heard that voice before!' said Emily, at length.

'I have often heard it, and at this same hour,' said Dorothé, solemnly, 'and, if spirits ever bring music – that is surely the music of one!'

Emily, as the sounds drew nearer, knew them to be the same she had formerly heard at the time of her father's death, and, whether it was the remembrance they now revived of that melancholy event, or that she was struck with superstitious awe, it is certain she was so much affected, that she had nearly fainted.

'I think I once told you, madam,' said Dorothé, 'that I first heard this music, soon after my lady's death! I well remember the night!'—

'Hark! it comes again!' said Emily, 'let us open the window, and listen.'

They did so; but, soon, the sounds floated gradually away into distance, and all was again still; they seemed to have sunk among the woods, whose tufted tops were visible upon the clear horizon, while every other feature of the scene was involved in the night-shade, which, however, allowed the eye an indistinct view of some objects in the garden below.

As Emily leaned on the window, gazing with a kind of thrilling awe upon the obscurity beneath, and then upon the cloudless arch above, enlightened only by the stars, Dorothé, in a low voice, resumed her narrative.

'I was saying, ma'amselle, that I well remember when first I heard that music. It was one night, soon after my lady's death, that I had sat up later than usual, and I don't know how it was, but I had been thinking a great deal about my poor mistress, and of the sad scene I had lately witnessed. The chateau was quite still, and I was in a chamber at a good distance from the rest of the servants, and this, with the mournful things I had been thinking of, I suppose, made me low spirited, for I felt very lonely and forlorn, as it were, and listened often, wishing to hear a sound in the chateau, for you know, ma'amselle, when one can hear people moving, one does not so much mind, about one's fears. But all the servants were gone to bed, and I sat, thinking and thinking, till I was almost afraid to look round the room, and my poor lady's countenance often came to my mind, such as I had seen her when she was dying, and, once or twice, I almost thought I saw her before me, – when suddenly I heard such sweet music! It seemed just at my window, and I shall never forget what I felt. I had not power to move from my chair, but then, when I thought it was my dear lady's voice, the tears came to my eyes. I had often heard her sing, in her life-time, and to be sure she had a very fine voice; it had made me cry to hear her, many a time, when she has sat in her oriel,[2] of an evening, playing upon her lute such sad songs, and singing so. O! it went to one's heart! I have listened in the anti-chambers, for the hour together, and she would sometimes sit playing, with the window open, when it was summer time, till it was quite dark, and when I have gone in, to shut it, she has hardly seemed to know what hour it was. But, as I said, madam,' continued Dorothé, 'when first I heard the music, that came just now, I thought it was my late lady's, and I have often thought so again, when I have heard it, as I have done at intervals, ever since. Sometimes, many months have gone by, but still it has returned.'

'It is extraordinary,' observed Emily, 'that no person has yet discovered the musician.'

'Aye, ma'amselle, if it had been anything earthly it would have been discovered long ago, but who, could have courage to follow a spirit, and if they had, what good could it do? – for spirits, *you know*, ma'am, can take any shape, or no shape, and they will be here, one minute, and, the next perhaps, in a quite different place!'

'Pray resume your story of the Marchioness,' said Emily, 'and acquaint me with the manner of her death.'

'I will, ma'am,' said Dorothé, 'but shall we leave the window?'

'This cool air refreshes me,' replied Emily, 'and I love to hear it creep along the woods, and to look upon this dusky landscape. You was speaking of my lord, the Marquis, when the music interrupted us.'

'Yes, madam, my lord, the Marquis, became more and more gloomy; and my lady grew worse and worse, till, one night, she was taken very ill, indeed. I was called up, and, when I came to her bed-side, I was shocked to see her countenance – it was so changed! She looked piteously up at me, and desired I would call the Marquis again, for he was not yet come, and tell him she had something particular to say to him. At last, he came, and he did, to be sure, seem very sorry to see her, but he said very little. My lady told him she felt herself to be dying, and wished to speak with him alone, and then I left the room, but I shall never forget his look as I went.

'When I returned, I ventured to remind my lord about sending for a doctor, for I supposed he had forgot to do so, in his grief; but my lady said it was then too late; but my lord, so far from thinking so, seemed to think lightly of her disorder – till she was seized with such terrible pains! O, I never shall forget her shriek! My lord then sent off a man and horse for the doctor, and walked about the room and all over the chateau, in the greatest distress; and I staid by my dear lady, and did what I could to ease her sufferings. She had intervals of ease, and in one of these she sent for my lord again; when he came, I was going, but she desired I would not leave her. O! I shall never forget what a scene passed – I can hardly bear to think of it now! My lord was almost distracted, for my lady behaved with so much goodness, and took such pains to comfort him, that, if he ever had suffered a suspicion to enter his head, he must now have been convinced he was wrong. And to be sure he did seem to be overwhelmed with the thought of his treatment of her, and this affected her so much, that she fainted away.

'We then got my lord out of the room; he went into his library, and threw himself on the floor, and there he staid, and would hear no reason, that was talked to him. When my lady recovered, she enquired for him, but, afterwards, said she could not bear to see his grief, and desired we would let her die quietly. She died in my arms, ma'amselle, and she went off as peacefully as a child, for all the violence of her disorder was passed.'

Dorothé paused, and wept, and Emily wept with her; for she was much affected by the goodness of the late Marchioness, and by the meek patience, with which she had suffered.

'When the doctor came,' resumed Dorothée, 'alas! he came too late; he appeared greatly shocked to see her, for soon after her death a frightful blackness spread all over her face. When he had sent the attendants out of the room, he asked me several odd questions about the Marchioness, particularly concerning the manner, in which she had been seized, and he often shook his head at my answers, and seemed to mean more, than he chose to say. But I understood him too well. However, I kept my remarks to myself, and only told them to my husband, who bade me hold my tongue. Some of the other servants, however, suspected what I did, and strange reports were whispered about the neighbourhood, but nobody dared to make any stir about them. When my lord heard that my lady was dead, he shut himself up, and would see nobody but the doctor, who used to be with him alone, sometimes for an hour together; and, after that, the doctor never talked with me again about my lady. When she was buried in the church of the convent, at a little distance yonder, if the moon was up you might see the towers here, ma'amselle, all my lord's vassals followed the funeral, and there was not a dry eye among them, for she had done a deal of good among the poor. My lord, the Marquis, I never saw any body so melancholy as he was afterwards, and sometimes he would be in such fits of violence, that we almost thought he had lost his senses.

He did not stay long at the chateau, but joined his regiment, and, soon after, all the servants, except my husband and I, received notice to go, for my lord went to the wars, I never saw him after, for he would not return to the chateau, though it is such a fine place, and never finished those fine rooms he was building on the west side of it, and it has, in a manner, been shut up ever since, till my lord the Count came here.'

'The death of the Marchioness appears extraordinary,' said Emily, who was anxious to know more than she dared to ask.

‘Yes, madam,’ replied Dorothé, ‘it was extraordinary; I have told you all I saw, and you may easily guess what I think. I cannot say more, because I would not spread reports, that might offend my lord the Count.’

‘You are very right,’ said Emily; – ‘where did the Marquis die?’ – ‘In the north of France, I believe, ma’amselle,’ replied Dorothée. ‘I was very glad, when I heard my lord the Count was coming, for this had been a sad desolate place, these many years, and we heard such strange noises, sometimes, after my lady’s death, that, as I told you before, my husband and I left it for a neighbouring cottage. And now, lady, I have told you all this sad history, and all my thoughts, and you have promised, you know, never to give the least hint about it.’ – ‘I have,’ said Emily, ‘and I will be faithful to my promise, Dorothée; – what you have told has interested me more than you can imagine. I only wish I could prevail upon you to tell the name of the chevalier, whom you thought so deserving of the Marchioness.’

Dorothé, however, steadily refused to do this, and then returned to the notice of Emily’s likeness to the late Marchioness. ‘There is another picture of her,’ added she, ‘hanging in a room of the suite, which was shut up. It was drawn, as I have heard, before she was married, and is much more like you than the miniature.’ When Emily expressed a strong desire to see this, Dorothé replied, that she did not like to open those rooms; but Emily reminded her, that the Count had talked the other day of ordering them to be opened; of which Dorothée seemed to consider much, and then she owned, that she should feel less, if she went into them with Emily first, than otherwise, and at length promised to shew the picture.

The night was too far advanced and Emily was too much affected by the narrative of the scenes, which had passed in those apartments, to wish to visit them at this hour, but she requested that Dorothé would return on the following night, when they were not likely to be observed, and conduct her thither. Besides her wish to examine the portrait, she felt a thrilling curiosity to see the chamber, in which the Marchioness had died, and which Dorothé had said remained, with the bed and furniture, just as when the corpse was removed for interment. The solemn emotions, which the expectation of viewing such a scene had awakened, were in unison with the present tone of her mind, depressed by severe disappointment. Cheerful objects rather added to, than removed this depression; but, perhaps, she yielded too much to her melancholy inclination, and imprudently lamented the misfortune, which no virtue of her own could have taught her to avoid, though no effort of reason could make her look unmoved upon the self-degradation of him, whom she had once esteemed and loved.

Dorothé promised to return, on the following night, with the keys of the chambers, and then wished Emily good repose, and departed. Emily, however, continued at the window, musing upon the melancholy fate of the Marchioness and listening, in awful expectation, for a return of the music. But the stillness of the night remained long unbroken, except by the murmuring sounds of the woods, as they waved in the breeze, and then by the distant bell of the convent, striking one. She now withdrew from the window, and, as she sat at her bed-side, indulging melancholy reveries, which the loneliness of the hour assisted, the stillness was suddenly interrupted not by music, but by very uncommon sounds, that seemed to come either from the room, adjoining her own, or from one below. The terrible catastrophe, that had been related to her, together with the mysterious circumstances, said to have since occurred in the chateau, had so much shocked her spirits, that she now sunk, for a moment, under the weakness of superstition. The sounds, however, did not return, and she retired, to forget in sleep the disastrous story she had heard.

CHAPTER IV

‘Now it is the time of night,

That, the graves all gaping wide,
Every one lets forth his sprite,
In the church-way path to glide.’
SHAKESPEARE [*Midsummer Night’s Dream*][1]

On the next night, about the same hour as before, Dorothé came to Emily’s chamber, with the keys of that suite of rooms, which had been particularly appropriated to the late Marchioness. These extended along the north side of the chateau, forming part of the old building; and, as Emily’s room was in the south, they had to pass over a great extent of the castle, and by the chambers of several of the family, whose observations Dorothé was anxious to avoid, since it might excite enquiry and raise reports, such as would displease the Count. She, therefore, requested, that Emily would wait half an hour, before they ventured forth, that they might be certain all the servants were gone to bed. It was nearly one, before the chateau was perfectly still, or Dorothé thought it prudent to leave the chamber. In this interval, her spirits seemed to be greatly affected by the remembrance of past events, and by the prospect of entering again upon places, where these had occurred, and in which she had not been for so many years. Emily too was affected, but her feelings had more of solemnity, and less of fear. From the silence, into which reflection and expectation had thrown them, they, at length, roused themselves, and left the chamber. Dorothé at first, carried the lamp, but her hand trembled so much with infirmity and alarm, that Emily took it from her, and offered her arm, to support her feeble steps.

They had to descend the great stair-case, and, after passing over a wide extent of the chateau, to ascend another, which led to the suite of rooms they were in quest of. They stepped cautiously along the open corridor, that ran round the great hall, and into which the chambers of the Count, Countess, and the Lady Blanche, opened, and, from thence, descending the chief stair-case, they crossed the hall itself. Proceeding through the servants hall, where the dying embers of a wood fire still glimmered on the hearth, and the supper table was surrounded by chairs, that obstructed their passage, they came to the foot of the back stair-case. Old Dorothé here paused, and looked around; ‘Let us listen,’ said she, ‘if any thing is stirring; Ma’amselle, do you hear any voice?’ ‘None,’ said Emily, ‘there certainly is no person up in the chateau, besides ourselves.’ – ‘No, ma’amselle,’ said Dorothé, ‘but I have never been here at this hour before, and, after what I know, my fears are not wonderful.’—‘What do you know?’ said Emily.—‘O ma’amselle, we have no time for talking now; let us go on. That door on the left is the one we must open.’

They proceeded, and, having reached the top of the stair-case, Dorothé applied the key to the lock. ‘Ah,’ said she, as she endeavoured to turn it, ‘so many years have passed since this was opened, that I fear it will not move.’ Emily was more successful, and they presently entered a spacious and ancient chamber.

‘Alas!’ exclaimed Dorothé, as she entered, ‘the last time I passed through this door – I followed my poor lady’s corpse!’

Emily, struck with the circumstance, and affected by the dusky and solemn air of the apartment, remained silent, and they passed on through a long suite of rooms, till they came to one more spacious than the rest, and rich in the remains of faded magnificence.

‘Let us rest here awhile, madam,’ said Dorothé faintly, ‘we are going into the chamber, where my lady died! that door opens into it. Ah, ma’amselle! why did you persuade me to come?’

Emily drew one of the massy arm-chairs, with which the apartment was furnished, and begged Dorothé would sit down, and try to compose her spirits.

‘How the sight of this place brings all that passed formerly to my mind!’ said Dorothé; ‘it seems as if it was but yesterday since all that sad affair happened!’

‘Hark! what noise is that?’ said Emily.

Dorothé, half starting from her chair, looked round the apartment, and they listened – but, every thing remaining still, the old woman spoke again upon the subject of her sorrow. ‘This saloon, ma’amselle, was in my lady’s time the finest apartment in the chateau, and it was fitted up according to her own taste. All this grand furniture, but you can now hardly see what it is for the dust, and our light is none of the best – ah! how I have seen this room lighted up in my lady’s time! – all this grand furniture came from Paris, and was made after the fashion of some in the Louvre there, except those large glasses, and they came from some outlandish place, and that rich tapestry. How the colours are faded already! – since I saw it last!’

‘I understood, that was twenty years ago,’ observed Emily.

‘Thereabout, madam,’ said Dorothé, ‘and well remembered, but all the time between then and now seems as nothing.

That tapestry used to be greatly admired at, it tells the stories out of some famous book, or other, but I have forgot the name.'

Emily now rose to examine the figures it exhibited, and discovered, by verses in the Provençal tongue, wrought underneath each scene, that it exhibited stories from some of the most celebrated ancient romances.

Dorothée's spirits being now more composed, she rose, and unlocked the door that led into the late Marchioness's apartment, and Emily passed into a lofty chamber, hung round with dark arras, and so spacious, that the lamp she held up did not shew its extent; while Dorothé, when she entered, had dropped into a chair, where, sighing deeply, she scarcely trusted herself with the view of a scene so affecting to her. It was some time before Emily perceived, through the dusk, the bed on which the Marchioness was said to have died; when, advancing to the upper end of the room, she discovered the high canopied tester of dark green damask, with the curtains descending to the floor in the fashion of a tent, half drawn, and remaining apparently, as they had been left twenty years before; and over the whole bedding was thrown a counterpane, or pall, of black velvet, that hung down to the floor. Emily shuddered, as she held the lamp over it, and looked within the dark curtains, where she almost expected to have seen a human face, and, suddenly remembering the horror she had suffered upon discovering the dying Madame Montoni in the turret-chamber of Udolpho, her spirits fainted, and she was turning from the bed, when Dorothé, who had now reached it, exclaimed, 'Holy Virgin! methinks I see my lady stretched upon that pall – as when last I saw her!'

Emily, shocked by this exclamation, looked involuntarily again within the curtains, but the blackness of the pall only appeared; while Dorothé was compelled to support herself upon the side of the bed, and presently tears brought her some relief.

'Ah!' said she, after she had wept awhile, 'it was here I sat on that terrible night, and held my lady's hand, and heard her last words, and saw all her sufferings – *here* she died in my arms!'

'Do not indulge these painful recollections,' said Emily, 'let us go. Shew me the picture you mentioned, if it will not too much affect you.'

'It hangs in the oriel,' said Dorothé rising, and going towards a small door near the bed's head, which she opened, and Emily followed with the light, into the closet of the late Marchioness.

'Alas! there she is, ma'amselle,' said Dorothé, pointing to a portrait of a lady, 'there is her very self ! just as she looked when she came first to the chateau. You see, madam, she was all blooming like you, then – and so soon to be cut off !'

While Dorothé spoke, Emily was attentively examining the picture, which bore a strong resemblance to the miniature, though the expression of the countenance in each was somewhat different; but still she thought she perceived something of that pensive melancholy in the portrait, which so strongly characterised the miniature.

'Pray, ma'amselle, stand beside the picture, that I may look at you together,' said Dorothé, who, when the request was complied with, exclaimed again at the resemblance. Emily also, as she gazed upon it, thought that she had somewhere seen a person very like it, though she could not now recollect who this was.

In this closet were many memorials of the departed Marchioness; a robe and several articles of her dress were scattered upon the chairs, as if they had just been thrown off. On the floor, were a pair of black sattin slippers, and, on the dressing-table, a pair of gloves and a long black veil, which, as Emily took it up to examine, she perceived was dropping to pieces with age.

'Ah!' said Dorothé, observing the veil, 'my lady's hand laid it there; it has never been moved since!'

Emily, shuddering, immediately laid it down again. 'I well remember seeing her take it off,' continued Dorothé, 'it was on the night before her death, when she had returned from a little walk I had persuaded her to take in the gardens, and she seemed refreshed by it. I told her how much better she looked, and I remember what a languid smile she gave me; but, alas! she little thought, or I either, that she was to die, that night.'

Dorothé wept again, and then, taking up the veil, threw it suddenly over Emily, who shuddered to find it wrapped round her, descending even to her feet, and, as she endeavoured to throw it off, Dorothé intreated that she would keep it on for one moment. 'I thought,' added she, 'how like you would look to my dear mistress in that veil; – may your life, ma'amselle, be a happier one than hers!'

Emily, having disengaged herself from the veil, laid it again on the dressing-table, and surveyed the closet, where every object, on which her eye fixed, seemed to speak of the Marchioness. In a large oriel window of painted glass, stood a table, with a silver crucifix, and a prayer-book open; and Emily remembered with emotion what Dorothé had mentioned concerning her custom of playing on her lute in this window, before she observed the lute itself, lying on a corner of the table, as if it had been carelessly placed there by the hand, that had so often awakened it.

'This is a sad forlorn place!' said Dorothé, 'for, when my dear lady died, I had no heart to put it to rights, or the chamber either; and my lord never came into the rooms after, so they remain just as they did when my lady was removed for interment.'

While Dorothé spoke, Emily was still looking on the lute, which was a Spanish one, and remarkably large; and then, with a hesitating hand, she took it up, and passed her fingers over the chords. They were out of tune, but uttered a deep and full sound. Dorothé started at their well-known tones, and, seeing the lute in Emily's hand, said, 'This is the lute my lady Marchioness loved so! I remember when last she played upon it – it was on the night that she died. I came as usual to undress her, and, as I entered the bed-chamber, I heard the sound of music from the oriel, and perceiving it was my lady's, who was sitting there, I stepped softly to the door, which stood a little open, to listen; for the music – though it was mournful – was so sweet! There I saw her, with the lute in her hand, looking upwards, and the tears fell upon her cheeks, while she sung a vesper hymn, so soft, and so solemn! and her voice trembled, as it were, and then she would stop for a moment, and wipe away her tears, and go on again, lower than before. O! I had often listened to my lady, but never heard any thing so sweet as this, it made me cry, almost, to hear it. She had been at prayers, I fancy, for there was the book open on the table beside her – aye, and there it lies open still! Pray, let us leave the oriel, ma'amselle,' added Dorothé, 'this is a heart-breaking place!'

Having returned into the chamber, she desired to look once more upon the bed, when, as they came opposite to the open door, leading into the saloon, Emily, in the partial gleam, which the lamp threw into it, thought she saw something glide along into the obscurer part of the room. Her spirits had been much affected by the surrounding scene, or it is probable this circumstance, whether real or imaginary, would not have affected her in the degree it did; but she endeavoured to conceal her emotion from Dorothé, who, however, observing her countenance change, enquired if she was ill.

'Let us go,' said Emily; faintly, 'the air of these rooms is unwholesome;' but, when she attempted to do so, considering that she must pass through the apartment where the phantom of her terror had appeared, this terror increased, and, too faint to support herself, she sat down on the side of the bed.

Dorothé, believing that she was only affected by a consideration of the melancholy catastrophe, which had happened on this spot, endeavoured to cheer her; and then, as they sat together on the bed, she began to relate other particulars concerning it, and this without reflecting, that it might increase Emily's emotion, but because they were particularly interesting to herself. 'A little before my lady's death,' said she, 'when the pains were gone off, she called me to her, and, stretching out her hand to me, I sat down just there – where the curtain falls upon the bed. How well I remember her look at the time – death was in it! – I can almost fancy I see her now. – There she lay, ma'amselle – her face was upon the pillow there! This black counterpane was not upon the bed then; it was laid on, after her death, and she was laid out upon it.'

Emily turned to look within the dusky curtains, as if she could have seen the countenance of which Dorothé spoke. The edge of the white pillow only appeared above the blackness of the pall, but, as her eyes wandered over the pall itself, she fancied she saw it move. Without speaking, she caught Dorothé's arm, who, surprised by the action, and by the look of terror that accompanied it, turned her eyes from Emily to the bed, where, in the next moment she, too, saw the pall slowly lifted, and fall again.

Emily attempted to go, but Dorothé stood fixed and gazing upon the bed; and, at length, said – 'It is only the wind, that waves it, ma'amselle; we have left all the doors open: see how the air waves the lamp, too. – It is only the wind.'

She had scarcely uttered these words, when the pall was more violently agitated than before; but Emily, somewhat ashamed of her terrors, stepped back to the bed, willing to be convinced that the wind only had occasioned her alarm; when, as she gazed within the curtains, the pall moved again, and, in the next moment, the apparition of a human countenance rose above it.

Screaming with terror, they both fled, and got out of the chamber as fast as their trembling limbs would bear them, leaving open the doors of all the rooms, through which they passed. When they reached the stair-case, Dorothé threw open a chamber door, where some of the female servants slept, and sunk breathless on the bed; while Emily, deprived of all presence of mind, made only a feeble attempt to conceal the occasion of her terror from the astonished servants; and, though Dorothé, when she could speak, endeavoured to laugh at her own fright, and was joined by Emily, no remonstrances could prevail with the servants, who had quickly taken the alarm, to pass even the remainder of the night in a room so near to these terrific chambers.

Dorothé having accompanied Emily to her own apartment, they then began to talk over, with some degree of coolness, the strange circumstance, that had just occurred; and Emily would almost have doubted her own perceptions, had not those of Dorothé attested their truth. Having now mentioned what she had observed in the outer chamber, she asked the housekeeper, whether she was certain no door had been left unfastened, by which a person might secretly have entered the apartments? Dorothé replied, that she had constantly kept the keys of the several doors in her own possession; that, when she had gone her rounds through the castle, as she frequently did, to examine if all was safe, she had tried these doors among the rest, and had always found them fastened. It was, therefore, impossible, she added, that any person could have got admittance into the apartments; and, if they could – it was very improbable they should have chose to sleep in a place so cold and forlorn.

Emily observed, that their visit to these chambers had, perhaps, been watched, and that some person, for a frolic, had followed them into the rooms, with a design to frighten them, and, while they were in the oriel, had taken the opportunity of concealing himself in the bed.

Dorothé allowed, that this was possible, till she recollected, that, on entering the apartments, she had turned the key of the outer door, and this, which had been done to prevent their visit being noticed by any of the family, who might happen to be up, must effectually have excluded every person, except themselves, from the chambers; and she now persisted in affirming, that the ghastly countenance she had seen was nothing human, but some dreadful apparition.

Emily was very solemnly affected. Of whatever nature might be the appearance she had witnessed, whether human or supernatural, the fate of the deceased Marchioness was a truth not to be doubted; and this unaccountable circumstance, occurring in the very scene of her sufferings, affected Emily's imagination with a superstitious awe, to which, after having detected the fallacies at Udolpho, she might not have yielded, had she been ignorant of the unhappy story, related by the housekeeper. Her she now solemnly conjured to conceal the occurrence of this night, and to make light of the terror she had already betrayed, that the Count might not be distressed by reports, which would certainly spread alarm and confusion among his family. ‘Time,’ she added ‘may explain this mysterious affair; meanwhile let us watch the event in silence.’

Dorothé readily acquiesced; but she now recollected that she had left all the doors of the north suite of rooms open, and, not having courage to return alone to lock even the outer one, Emily, after some effort, so far conquered her own fears, that she offered to accompany her to the foot of the back stair-case, and to wait there while Dorothé ascended, whose resolution being re-assured by this circumstance, she consented to go, and they left Emily’s apartment together.

No sound disturbed the stillness, as they passed along the halls and galleries; but, on reaching the foot of the back stair-case, Dorothé’s resolution failed again; having, however, paused a moment to listen, and no sound being heard above, she ascended, leaving Emily below, and, scarcely suffering her eye to glance within the first chamber, she fastened the door, which shut up the whole suite of apartments, and returned to Emily.

As they stepped along the passage, leading into the great hall, a sound of lamentation was heard, which seemed to come from the hall itself, and they stopped in new alarm to listen, when Emily presently distinguished the voice of Annette, whom she found crossing the hall, with another female servant, and so terrified by the report, which the other maids had spread, that, believing she could be safe only where her lady was, she was going for refuge to her apartment. Emily’s endeavours to laugh, or to argue her out of these terrors, were equally vain, and, in compassion to her distress, she consented that she should remain in her room during the night.

CHAPTER V

> ‘Hail, mildly-pleasing Solitude!
> Companion of the wise and good –
> . . . . .
>
> Thine is the balmy breath of morn,
> Just as the dew-bent rose is born.
> . . . . .
>
> But chief when evening scenes decay
> And the faint landscape swims away,
> Thine is the doubtful, soft decline,
> And that best hour of musing thine.’
> THOMSON [‘Hymn on Solitude’][1]

Emily’s injunctions to Annette to be silent on the subject of her terror were ineffectual, and the occurrence of the preceding night spread such alarm among the servants, who now all affirmed, that they had frequently heard unaccountable noises in the chateau, that a report soon reached the Count of the north side of the castle being haunted. He treated this, at first, with ridicule, but, perceiving, that it was productive of serious evil, in the confusion it occasioned among his household, he forbade any person to repeat it, on pain of punishment.

The arrival of a party of his friends soon withdrew his thoughts entirely from this subject, and his servants had now little leisure to brood over it, except, indeed, in the evenings after supper, when they all assembled in their hall, and related stories of ghosts, till they feared to look round the room; started, if the echo of a closing door murmured along the passage, and refused to go singly to any part of the castle.

On these occasions Annette made a distinguished figure. When she told not only of all the wonders she had witnessed, but of all that she had imagined, in the castle of Udolpho, with the story of the strange disappearance of Signora Laurentini, she made no trifling impression on the mind of her attentive auditors. Her suspicions, concerning Montoni, she would also have freely disclosed, had not Ludovico, who was now in the service of the Count, prudently checked her loquacity, whenever it pointed to that subject.

Among the visitors at the chateau was the Baron de Saint Foix, an old friend of the Count, and his son, the Chevalier St Foix, a sensible and amiable young man, who, having in the preceding year seen the Lady Blanche, at Paris, had become her declared admirer. The friendship, which the Count had long entertained for his father, and the equality of their circumstances made him secretly approve of the connection; but, thinking his daughter at this time too young to fix her choice for life, and wishing to prove the sincerity and strength of the Chevalier’s attachment, he then rejected his suit, though without forbidding his future hope. This young man now came, with the Baron, his father, to claim the reward of a steady affection, a claim, which the Count admitted and which Blanche did not reject.

While these visitors were at the chateau, it became a scene of gaiety and splendour. The pavilion in the woods was fitted up and frequented, in the fine evenings, as a supper-room, when the hour usually concluded with a concert, at which the Count and Countess, who were scientific performers, and the Chevaliers Henri and St Foix, with the Lady Blanche and Emily, whose voices and fine taste compensated for the want of more skilful execution, usually assisted. Several of the Count’s servants performed on horns and other instruments, some of which, placed at a little distance among the woods, spoke, in sweet response, to the harmony, that proceeded from the pavilion.

At any other period, these parties would have been delightful to Emily; but her spirits were now oppressed with a melancholy, which she perceived that no kind of what is called amusement had power to dissipate, and which the tender and, frequently, pathetic, melody of these concerts sometimes increased to a very painful degree.

She was particularly fond of walking in the woods, that hung on a promontory, overlooking the sea. Their luxuriant shade was soothing to her pensive mind, and, in the partial views, which they afforded of the Mediterranean, with its winding shores and passing sails, tranquil beauty was united with grandeur. The paths were rude and frequently overgrown with vegetation, but their tasteful owner would suffer little to be done to them, and scarcely a single branch to be lopped from the venerable trees. On an eminence, in one of the most sequestered parts of these woods, was a rustic seat, formed of the trunk of a decayed oak, which had once been a noble tree, and of which many lofty branches still flourishing united with beech and pines to over-canopy the spot. Beneath their deep umbrage, the eye passed over the tops of other woods, to the Mediterranean, and, to the left, through an opening, was seen a ruined watch-tower, standing on a point of rock, near the sea, and rising from among the tufted foliage.

Hither Emily often came alone in the silence of evening, and, soothed by the scenery and by the faint murmur, that rose from the waves, would sit, till darkness obliged her to return to the chateau. Frequently, also, she visited the watch-tower, which commanded the entire prospect, and, when she leaned against its broken walls, and thought of Valancourt, she not once imagined, what was so true, that this tower had been almost as frequently his resort, as her own, since his estrangement from the neighbouring chateau.

One evening, she lingered here to a late hour. She had sat on the steps of the building, watching, in tranquil melancholy, the gradual effect of evening over the extensive prospect, till the gray waters of the Mediterranean and the massy woods were almost the only features of the scene, that remained visible; when, as she gazed alternately on these, and on the mild blue of the heavens, where the first pale star of evening appeared, she personified the hour in the following lines:–

SONG OF THE EVENING HOUR

Last of the Hours, that track the fading Day,
I move along the realms of twilight air,
And hear, remote, the choral song decay
Of sister-nymphs, who dance around his car,

Then, as I follow through the azure void,
His partial splendour from my straining eye
Sinks in the depths of space; my only guide
His faint ray dawning on the farthest sky;

Save that sweet, lingering strain of gayer Hours!
Whose close my voice prolongs in dying notes,
While mortals on the green earth own its pow’rs,
As downward on the evening gale it floats.

When fades along the West the Sun’s last beam
As, weary, to the nether world he goes,
And mountain-summits catch the purple gleam,
And slumbering ocean faint and fainter glows,

Silent upon the globe’s broad shade I steal,
And o’er its dry turf shed the cooling dews,
And ev’ry fever’d herb and flow’ret heal,
And all their fragrance on the air diffuse.

Where’er I move, a tranquil pleasure reigns;
O’er all the scene the dusky tints I send,
That forests wild and mountains, stretching plains
And peopled towns, in soft confusion blend.

Wide o’er the world I waft the fresh’ning wind,
Low breathing through the woods and twilight vale,
In whispers soft, that woo the pensive mind
Of him, who loves my lonely steps to hail.

His tender oaten reed I watch to hear,
Stealing its sweetness o’er some plaining rill,
Or soothing ocean’s wave, when storms are near,
Or swelling in the breeze from distant hill!

I wake the fairy elves, who shun the light;
When, from their blossom’d beds, they slily peep,
And spy my pale star, leading on the night, –
Forth to their games and revelry they leap;

Send all the prison’d sweets abroad in air,

That with them slumber'd in the flow'ret's cell;
Then to the shores and moon-light brooks repair,
Till the high larks their matin-carol swell.

The wood-nymphs hail my airs and temper'd shade,
With ditties soft and lightly sportive dance,
On river margin of some bow'ry glade,
And strew their fresh buds as my steps advance:

But, swift I pass, and distant regions trace,
For moon-beams silver all the eastern cloud,
And Day's last crimson vestige fades apace;
Down the steep west I fly from Midnight's shroud.

The moon was now rising out of the sea. She watched its gradual progress, the extending line of radiance it threw upon the waters, the sparkling oars, the sail faintly silvered, and the wood-tops and the battlements of the watch–tower, at whose foot she was sitting, just tinted with the rays. Emily's spirits were in harmony with this scene. As she sat meditating, sounds stole by her on the air, which she immediately knew to be the music and the voice she had formerly heard at midnight, and the emotion of awe, which she felt, was not unmixed with terror, when she considered her remote and lonely situation. The sounds drew nearer. She would have risen to leave the place, but they seemed to come from the way she must have taken towards the chateau, and she awaited the event in trembling expectation. The sounds continued to approach, for some time, and then ceased. Emily sat listening, gazing and unable to move, when she saw a figure emerge from the shade of the woods and pass along the bank, at some little distance before her. It went swiftly, and her spirits were so overcome with awe, that, though she saw, she did not much observe it.

Having left the spot, with a resolution never again to visit it alone, at so late an hour, she began to approach the chateau, when she heard voices calling her from the part of the wood, which was nearest to it. They were the shouts of the Count's servants, who were sent to search for her; and when she entered the supper-room, where he sat with Henri and Blanche, he gently reproached her with a look, which she blushed to have deserved.

This little occurrence deeply impressed her mind, and, when she withdrew to her own room, it recalled so forcibly the circumstances she had witnessed, a few nights before, that she had scarcely courage to remain alone. She watched to a late hour, when, no sound having renewed her fears, she, at length, sunk to repose. But this was of short continuance, for she was disturbed by a loud and unusual noise, that seemed to come from the gallery, into which her chamber opened. Groans were distinctly heard, and, immediately after, a dead weight fell against her door, with a violence, that threatened to burst it open. She called loudly to know who was there, but received no answer, though, at intervals, she still thought she heard something like a low moaning. Fear deprived her of the power to move. Soon after, she heard footsteps in a remote part of the gallery, and, as they approached, she called more loudly than before, till the steps paused at her door. She then distinguished the voices of several of the servants, who seemed too much engaged by some circumstance without, to attend to her calls; but, Annette soon after entering the room for water, Emily understood, that one of the maids had fainted, whom she immediately desired them to bring into her room, where she assisted to restore her. When this girl had recovered her speech, she affirmed, that, as she was passing up the back stair-case, in the way to her chamber, she had seen an apparition on the second landing-place; she held the lamp low, she said, that she might pick her way, several of the stairs being infirm and even decayed, and it was upon raising her eyes, that she saw this appearance. It stood for a moment in the corner of the landing-place, which she was approaching, and then, gliding up the stairs, vanished at the door of the apartment, that had been lately opened. She heard afterwards a hollow sound.

'Then the devil has got a key to that apartment,' said Dorothé, 'for it could be nobody but he; I locked the door myself!'

The girl, springing down the stairs and passing up the great stair-case, had run, with a faint scream, till she reached the gallery, where she fell, groaning, at Emily's door.

Gently chiding her for the alarm she had occasioned, Emily tried to make her ashamed of her fears; but the girl persisted in saying, that she had seen an apparition, till she went to her own room, whither she was accompanied by all the servants present, except Dorothé, who, at Emily's request, remained with her during the night. Emily was perplexed, and Dorothé was terrified, and mentioned many occurrences of former times, which had long since confirmed her superstitions; among these, according to her belief, she had once witnessed an appearance, like that just described, and on the very same spot, and it was the remembrance of it, that had made her pause, when she was going to ascend the stairs with Emily, and which had increased her reluctance to open the north apartments. Whatever might be Emily's opinions, she did not disclose them, but listened attentively to all that Dorothé communicated, which occasioned her much thought and perplexity.

From this night the terror of the servants increased to such an excess, that several of them determined to leave the chateau, and requested their discharge of the Count, who, if he had any faith in the subject of their alarm, thought proper to dissemble it, and, anxious to avoid the inconvenience that threatened him, employed ridicule and then argument to convince them they had nothing to apprehend from supernatural agency. But fear had rendered their minds inaccessible to reason; and it was now, that Ludovico proved at once his courage and his gratitude for the kindness he had received from the Count, by offering to watch, during a night, in the suite of rooms, reputed to be haunted. He feared, he said, no spirits, and, if any thing of human form appeared – he would prove that he dreaded that as little.

The Count paused upon the offer, while the servants, who heard it, looked upon one another in doubt and amazement, and Annette, terrified for the safety of Ludovico, employed tears and entreaties to dissuade him from his purpose.

'You are a bold fellow,' said the Count, smiling, 'Think well of what you are going to encounter, before you finally determine upon it. However, if you persevere in your resolution, I will accept your offer, and your intrepidity shall not go unrewarded.'

'I desire no reward, your *Excellenza*,' replied Ludovico, 'but your approbation. Your *Excellenza* has been sufficiently good to me already; but I wish to have arms, that I may be equal to my enemy, if he should appear.'

'Your sword cannot defend you against a ghost,' replied the Count, throwing a glance of irony upon the other servants, 'neither can bars, or bolts; for a spirit, you know, can glide through a key-hole, as easily as through a door.'

'Give me a sword, my lord Count,' said Ludovico, 'and I will lay all the spirits, that shall attack me, in the red sea.'

'Well,' said the Count, 'you shall have a sword, and good cheer, too; and your brave comrades here will, perhaps, have courage enough to remain another night in the chateau, since your boldness will certainly, for this night, at least, confine all the malice of the spectre to yourself.'

Curiosity now struggled with fear in the minds of several of his fellow servants, and, at length, they resolved to await the event of Ludovico's rashness.

Emily was surprised and concerned, when she heard of his intention, and was frequently inclined to mention what she had witnessed in the north apartments to the Count, for she could not entirely divest herself of fears for Ludovico's safety, though her reason represented these to be absurd. The necessity, however, of concealing the secret, with which Dorothé had entrusted her, and which must have been mentioned, with the late occurrence, in excuse for her having so privately visited the north apartments, kept her entirely silent on the subject of her apprehension; and she tried only to sooth Annette, who held, that Ludovico was certainly to be destroyed; and who was much less affected by Emily's consolatory efforts, than by the manner of old Dorothé, who often, as she exclaimed Ludovico, sighed, and threw up her eyes to heaven.

CHAPTER VI

'Ye gods of quiet, and of sleep profound!

Whose soft dominion o'er this castle sways,
And all the widely-silent places round,
Forgive me, if my trembling pen displays
What never yet was sung in mortal lays.'
THOMSON [*The Castle of Indolence*][1]

The Count gave orders for the north apartments to be opened and prepared for the reception of Ludovico; but Dorothé, remembering what she had lately witnessed there, feared to obey, and, not one of the other servants daring to venture thither, the rooms remained shut up till the time when Ludovico was to retire thither for the night, an hour, for which the whole household waited with impatience.

After supper, Ludovico, by the order of the Count, attended him in his closet, where they remained alone for near half an hour, and, on leaving which, his Lord delivered to him a sword.

'It has seen service in mortal quarrels,' said the Count, jocosely, 'you will use it honourably, no doubt, in a spiritual one. To-morrow, let me hear that there is not one ghost remaining in the chateau.'

Ludovico received it with a respectful bow. 'You shall be obeyed, my Lord,' said he; 'I will engage, that no spectre shall disturb the peace of the chateau after this night.'

They now returned to the supper-room, where the Count's guests awaited to accompany him and Ludovico to the door of the north apartments, and Dorothé, being summoned for the keys, delivered them to Ludovico, who then led the way, followed by most of the inhabitants of the chateau. Having reached the back stair-case, several of the servants shrunk back, and refused to go further, but the rest followed him to the top of the stair-case, where a broad landing-place allowed them to flock round him, while he applied the key to the door, during which they watched him with as much eager curiosity as if he had been performing some magical rite.

Ludovico, unaccustomed to the lock, could not turn it, and Dorothé, who had lingered far behind, was called forward, under whose hand the door opened slowly, and, her eye glancing within the dusky chamber, she uttered a sudden shriek, and retreated. At this signal of alarm, the greater part of the crowd hurried down the stairs, and the Count, Henri and Ludovico were left alone to pursue the enquiry, who instantly rushed into the apartment, Ludovico with a drawn sword, which he had just time to draw from the scabbard, the Count with the lamp in his hand, and Henri carrying a basket, containing provision for the courageous adventurer.

Having looked hastily round the first room, where nothing appeared to justify alarm, they passed on to the second; and, here too all being quiet, they proceeded to a third in a more tempered step. The Count had now leisure to smile at the discomposure, into which he had been surprised, and to ask Ludovico in which room he designed to pass the night.

'There are several chambers beyond these, your *Excellenza*,' said Ludovico, pointing to a door, 'and in one of them is a bed, they say. I will pass the night there, and when I am weary of watching, I can lie down.'

'Good;' said the Count, 'let us go on. You see these rooms shew nothing, but damp walls and decaying furniture. I have been so much engaged since I came to the chateau, that I have not looked into them till now. Remember, Ludovico, to tell the housekeeper, to-morrow, to throw open these windows. The damask hangings are dropping to pieces, I will have them taken down, and this antique furniture removed.'

'Dear sir!' said Henri, 'here is an arm-chair so massy with gilding, that it resembles one of the state chairs at the Louvre, more than any thing else.'

'Yes,' said the Count, stopping a moment to survey it, 'there is a history belonging to that chair, but I have not time to tell it. – Let us pass on. This suite runs to a greater extent than I had imagined; it is many years since I was in them. But where is the bed-room you speak of, Ludovico? – these are only anti-chambers to the great drawing-room. I remember them in their splendour!'

'The bed, my Lord,' replied Ludovico, 'they told me, was in a room that opens beyond the saloon, and terminates the suite.'

'O, here is the saloon,' said the Count, as they entered the spacious apartment, in which Emily and Dorothée had rested. He here stood for a moment, surveying the reliques of faded grandeur, which it exhibited – the sumptuous tapestry – the long and low sophas of velvet, with frames heavily carved and gilded – the floor inlaid with small squares of fine marble, and covered in the centre with a piece of very rich tapestry-work – the casements of painted glass, and the large Venetian mirrors; of a size and quality, such as at that period France could not make, which reflected, on every side, the spacious apartment. These had formerly also reflected a gay and brilliant scene, for this had been the state-room of the chateau, and here the Marchioness had held the assemblies, that made part of the festivities of her nuptials. If the wand of a magician could have recalled the vanished groups, many of them vanished even from the earth! that once had passed over these polished mirrors, what a varied and contrasted picture would they have exhibited with the present! Now, instead of a blaze of lights, and a splendid and busy crowd, they reflected only the rays of the one glimmering lamp, which the Count held up, and which scarcely served to shew the three forlorn figures, that stood surveying the room, and the spacious and dusky walls around them.

'Ah!' said the Count to Henri, awaking from his deep reverie, 'how the scene is changed since last I saw it! I was a young man, then, and the Marchioness was alive and in her bloom; many other persons were here, too, who are now no more! There stood the orchestra; here we tripped in many a sprightly maze – the walls echoing to the dance! Now, they resound only one feeble voice – and even that will, ere long, be heard no more! My son, remember, that I was once as young as yourself, and that you must pass away like those, who have preceded you – like those, who, as they sung and danced in this once gay apartment, forgot, that years are made up of moments, and that every step they took carried them nearer to their graves. But such reflections are useless, I had almost said criminal, unless they teach us to prepare for eternity,[2] since, otherwise, they cloud our present happiness, without guiding us to a future one. But enough of this; let us go on.'

Ludovico now opened the door of the bed-room, and the Count, as he entered, was struck with the funereal appearance, which the dark arras gave to it. He approached the bed, with an emotion of solemnity, and, perceiving it to be covered with the pall of black velvet, paused; 'What can this mean?' said he, as he gazed upon it.

'I have heard, my Lord,' said Ludovico, as he stood at the feet, looking within the canopied curtains, 'that the Lady Marchioness de Villeroi died in this chamber, and remained here till she was removed to be buried; and this, perhaps, Signor, may account for the pall.'

The Count made no reply, but stood for a few moments engaged in thought, and evidently much affected. Then, turning to Ludovico, he asked him with a serious air, whether he thought his courage would support him through the night? 'If you doubt this,' added the Count, 'do not be ashamed to own it; I will release you from your engagement, without exposing you to the triumphs of your fellow-servants.'

Ludovico paused; pride, and something very like fear, seemed struggling in his breast; pride, however, was victorious; – he blushed, and his hesitation ceased.

'No, my Lord,' said he, 'I will go through with what I have begun; and I am grateful for your consideration. On that hearth I will make a fire, and, with the good cheer in this basket, I doubt not I shall do well.'

'Be it so,' said the Count; 'but how will you beguile the tediousness of the night, if you do not sleep?'

'When I am weary, my Lord,' replied Ludovico, 'I shall not fear to sleep; in the meanwhile I have a book, that will entertain me.'

'Well,' said the Count, 'I hope nothing will disturb you; but if you should be seriously alarmed in the night, come to my apartment. I have too much confidence in your good sense and courage, to believe you will be alarmed on slight grounds; or suffer the gloom of this chamber, or its remote situation, to overcome you with ideal terrors. To-morrow, I shall have to thank you for an important service; these rooms shall then be thrown open, and my people will be convinced of their error. Good night, Ludovico; let me see you early in the morning, and remember what I lately said to you.'

'I will, my Lord; good night to your *Excellenza*; let me attend you with the light.'

He lighted the Count and Henri through the chambers to the outer door; on the landing-place stood a lamp, which one of the affrighted servants had left, and Henri, as he took it up, again bade Ludovico good night, who, having respectfully returned the wish, closed the door upon them, and fastened it. Then, as he retired to the bed-chamber, he examined the rooms, through which he passed, with more minuteness than he had done before, for he apprehended, that some person might have concealed himself in them, for the purpose of frightening him. No one, however, but himself, was in these chambers, and, leaving open the doors, through which he passed, he came again to the great drawing-room, whose spaciousness and silent gloom somewhat awed him. For a moment he stood, looking back through the long suite of rooms he had quitted, and, as he turned, perceiving a light and his own figure, reflected in one of the large mirrors, he started. Other objects too were seen obscurely on its dark surface, but he paused not to examine them, and returned hastily into the bed-room, as he surveyed which, he observed the door of the oriel, and opened it. All within was still. On looking round, his eye was arrested by the portrait of the deceased Marchioness, upon which he gazed, for a considerable time, with great attention and some surprise; and then, having examined the closet, he returned into the bed-room, where he kindled a wood fire, the bright blaze of which revived his spirits, which had begun to yield to the gloom and silence of the place, for gusts of wind alone broke at intervals this silence. He now drew a small table and a chair near the fire, took a bottle of wine, and some cold provision out of his basket, and regaled himself. When he had finished his repast, he laid his sword upon the table, and, not feeling disposed to sleep, drew from his pocket the book he had spoken of. – It was a volume of old Provençal tales. Having stirred the fire into a brighter blaze, trimmed his lamp, and drawn his chair upon the hearth, he began to read, and his attention was soon wholly occupied by the scenes, which the page disclosed.

The Count, meanwhile, had returned to the supper-room, whither those of the party, who had attended him to the north apartment, had retreated, upon hearing Dorothé's scream, and who were now earnest in their enquiries concerning those chambers. The Count rallied his guests on their precipitate retreat, and on the superstitious inclination which had occasioned it, and this led to the question, Whether the spirit, after it has quitted the body, is ever permitted to revisit the earth; and if it is, whether it was possible for spirits to become visible to the sense.[3] The Baron was of opinion, that the first was probable, and the last was possible, and he endeavoured to justify this opinion by respectable authorities, both ancient and modern, which he quoted. The Count, however, was decidedly against him, and a long conversation ensued, in which the usual arguments on these subjects were on both sides brought forward with skill, and discussed with candour, but without converting either party to the opinion of his opponent. The effect of their conversation on their auditors was various. Though the Count had much the superiority of the Baron in point of argument, he had considerably fewer adherents; for that love, so natural to the human mind, of whatever is able to distend its faculties with wonder and astonishment, attached the majority of the company to the side of the Baron; and though many of the Count's propositions were unanswerable, his opponents were inclined to believe this the consequence of their own want of knowledge, on so abstracted a subject, rather than that arguments did not exist, which were forcible enough to conquer his.

Blanche was pale with attention, till the ridicule in her father's glance called a blush upon her countenance, and she then endeavoured to forget the superstitious tales she had been told in her convent. Meanwhile, Emily had been listening with deep attention to the discussion of what was to her a very interesting question, and, remembering the appearance she had witnessed in the apartment of the late Marchioness; she was frequently chilled with awe. Several times she was on the point of mentioning what she had seen, but the fear of giving pain to the Count, and the dread of his ridicule, restrained her; and, awaiting in anxious expectation the event of Ludovico's intrepidity, she determined that her future silence should depend upon it.

When the party had separated for the night, and the Count retired to his dressing-room, the remembrance of the desolate scenes he had lately witnessed in his own mansion deeply affected him, but at length he was aroused from his reverie and his silence. 'What music is that I hear?' – said he suddenly to his valet, 'Who plays at this late hour?'

The man made no reply, and the Count continued to listen, and then added, 'That is no common musician; he touches the instrument with a delicate hand; who is it, Pierre?'

'My Lord!' said the man, hesitatingly.

'Who plays that instrument?' repeated the Count.

'Does not your lordship know, then?' said the valet.

'What mean you?' said the Count, somewhat sternly.

'Nothing, my Lord, I meant nothing,' rejoined the man submissively – 'Only – that music – goes about the house at midnight often, and I thought your lordship might have heard it before.'

'Music goes about the house at midnight! Poor fellow! – does nobody dance to the music, too?'

'It is not in the chateau, I believe, my Lord; the sounds come from the woods, they say, though they seem so near; – but then a spirit can do any thing!'

'Ah, poor fellow!' said the Count, 'I perceive you are as silly as the rest of them; to-morrow, you will be convinced of your ridiculous error. But hark! – what voice is that?'

'O my Lord! that is the voice, we often hear with the music.'

'Often!' said the Count, 'How often, pray? It is a very fine one.'

'Why, my Lord, I myself have not heard it more than two or three times, but there are those who have lived here longer, that have heard it often enough.'

'What a swell was that!' exclaimed the Count, as he still listened, 'And now, what a dying cadence! This is surely something more than mortal!'

'That is what they say, my Lord,' said the valet; 'they say it is nothing mortal, that utters it; and if I might say my thoughts'—

'Peace!' said the Count, and he listened till the strain died away.

'This is strange!' said he, as he turned from the window, 'Close the casements, Pierre.'

Pierre obeyed, and the Count soon after dismissed him, but did not so soon lose the remembrance of the music, which long vibrated in his fancy in tones of melting sweetness, while surprise and perplexity engaged his thoughts.

Ludovico, meanwhile, in his remote chamber, heard, now and then, the faint echo of a closing door, as the family retired to rest, and then the hall clock, at a great distance, strike twelve. 'It is midnight,' said he, and he looked suspiciously round the spacious chamber. The fire on the hearth was now nearly expiring, for his attention having been engaged by the book before him, he had forgotten every thing besides; but he soon added fresh wood, not because he was cold, though the night was stormy, but because he was cheerless; and, having again trimmed his lamp, he poured out a glass of wine, drew his chair nearer to the crackling blaze, tried to be deaf to the wind, that howled mournfully at the casements, endeavoured to abstract his mind from the melancholy, that was stealing upon him, and again took up his book. It had been lent to him by Dorothé, who had formerly picked it up in an obscure corner of the Marquis's library, and who, having opened it and perceived some of the marvels it related, had carefully preserved it for her own entertainment, its condition giving her some excuse for detaining it from its proper station. The damp corner into which it had fallen, had caused the cover to be disfigured and mouldy, and the leaves to be so discoloured with spots, that it was not without difficulty the letters could be traced. The fictions of the Provençal writers,[4] whether drawn from the Arabian legends, brought by the Saracens into Spain, or recounting the chivalric exploits performed by the crusaders, whom the Troubadours accompanied to the east, were generally splendid and always marvellous, both in scenery and incident; and it is not wonderful, that Dorothé and Ludovico should be fascinated by inventions, which had captivated the careless imagination in every rank of society, in a former age. Some of the tales, however, in the book now before Ludovico, were of simple structure, and exhibited nothing of the magnificent machinery and heroic manners, which usually characterized the fables of the twelfth century, and of this description was the one he now happened to open, which, in its original style, was of great length, but which may be thus shortly related. The reader will perceive, that it is strongly tinctured with the superstition of the times.

THE PROVENÇALL TALE[5]

'There lived, in the province of Bretagne, a noble Baron, famous for his magnificence and courtly hospitalities. His castle was graced with ladies of exquisite beauty, and thronged with illustrious knights; for the honours he paid to feats of chivalry invited the brave of distant countries to enter his lists, and his court was more splendid than those of many princes. Eight minstrels were retained in his service, who used to sing to their harps romantic fictions, taken from the Arabians, or adventures of chivalry, that befel knights during the crusades, or the martial deeds of the Baron, their lord; – while he, surrounded by his knights and ladies, banqueted in the great hall of his castle, where the costly tapestry, that adorned the walls with pictured exploits of his ancestors, the casements of painted glass, enriched with armorial bearings, the gorgeous banners, that waved along the roof, the sumptuous canopies, the profusion of gold and silver, that glittered on the sideboards, the numerous dishes, that covered the tables, the number and gay liveries of the attendants, with the chivalric and splendid attire of the guests, united to form a scene of magnificence, such as we may not hope to see in these *degenerate days*.

'Of the Baron, the following adventure is related. One night, having retired late from the banquet to his chamber, and dismissed his attendants, he was surprised by the appearance of a stranger of a noble air, but of a sorrowful and dejected countenance. Believing, that this person had been secreted in the apartment, since it appeared impossible he could have lately passed the anti-room, unobserved by the pages in waiting, who would have prevented this intrusion on their lord, the Baron, calling loudly for his people, drew his sword, which he had not yet taken from his side, and stood upon his defence. The stranger slowly advancing, told him, that there was nothing to fear; that he came with no hostile design, but to communicate to him a terrible secret, which it was necessary for him to know.

'The Baron, appeased by the courteous manners of the stranger, after surveying him, for some time, in silence, returned his sword into the scabbard, and desired him to explain the means, by which he had obtained access to the chamber, and the purpose of this extraordinary visit.

'Without answering either of these enquiries, the stranger said, that he could not then explain himself, but that, if the Baron would follow him to the edge of the forest, at a short distance from the castle walls, he would there convince him, that he had something of importance to disclose.

'This proposal again alarmed the Baron, who could scarcely believe, that the stranger meant to draw him to so solitary a spot, at this hour of the night, without harbouring a design against his life, and he refused to go, observing, at the same time, that, if the strange's purpose was an honourable one, he would not persist in refusing to reveal the occasion of his visit, in the apartment where they were.

'While he spoke this, he viewed the stranger still more attentively than before, but observed no change in his countenance, or any symptom, that might intimate a consciousness of evil design. He was habited like a knight, was of a tall and majestic stature, and of dignified and courteous manners. Still, however, he refused to communicate the subject of his errand in any place, but that he had mentioned, and, at the same time, gave hints concerning the secret he would disclose, that awakened a degree of solemn curiosity in the Baron, which, at length, induced him to consent to follow the stranger, on certain conditions.

' "Sir knight," said he, "I will attend you to the forest, and will take with me only four of my people, who shall witness our conference."

'To this, however, the Knight objected.

' "What I would disclose," said he, with solemnity, "is to you alone. There are only three living persons, to whom the circumstance is known; it is of more consequence to you and your house, than I shall now explain. In future years, you will look back to this night with satisfaction or repentance, accordingly as you now determine. As you would hereafter prosper – follow me; I pledge you the honour of a knight, that no evil shall befall you; – if you are contented to dare futurity – remain in your chamber, and I will depart as I came."

' "Sir knight," replied the Baron, "how is it possible, that my future peace can depend upon my present determination?"

' "That is not now to be told," said the stranger, "I have explained myself to the utmost. It is late; if you follow me it must be quickly; – you will do well to consider the alternative."

'The Baron mused, and, as he looked upon the knight, he perceived his countenance assume a singular solemnity.'

(Here Ludovico thought he heard a noise, and he threw a glance round the chamber, and then held up the lamp to assist his observation; but, not perceiving any thing to confirm his alarm, he took up the book again and pursued the story.)

‘The Baron paced his apartment, for some time, in silence, impressed by the last words of the stranger, whose extraordinary request he feared to grant, and feared, also, to refuse. At length, he said, “Sir knight, you are utterly unknown to me; tell me yourself, – is it reasonable, that I should trust myself alone with a stranger, at this hour, in a solitary forest? Tell me, at least, who you are, and who assisted to secrete you in this chamber.”

‘The knight frowned at these latter words, and was a moment silent; then, with a countenance somewhat stern, he said,

‘ “I am an English knight; I am called Sir Bevys of Lancaster, – and my deeds are not unknown at the Holy City, whence I was returning to my native land, when I was benighted in the neighbouring forest.”

‘ “Your name is not unknown to fame,” said the Baron, “I have heard of it.” (The Knight looked haughtily.) “But why, since my castle is known to entertain all true knights, did not your herald announce you? Why did you not appear at the banquet, where your presence would have been welcomed, instead of hiding yourself in my castle and stealing to my chamber, at midnight?”

‘The stranger frowned, and turned away in silence; but the Baron repeated the questions.

‘ “I come not,” said the Knight, “to answer enquiries, but to reveal facts. If you would know more, follow me, and again I pledge the honour of a Knight, that you shall return in safety. – Be quick in your determination – I must be gone.”

‘After some further hesitation, the Baron determined to follow the stranger, and to see the result of his extraordinary request; he, therefore, again drew forth his sword, and, taking up a lamp, bade the Knight lead on. The latter obeyed, and, opening the door of the chamber, they passed into the anti-room, where the Baron, surprised to find all his pages asleep, stopped, and, with hasty violence, was going to reprimand them for their carelessness, when the Knight waved his hand, and looked so expressively upon the Baron, that the latter restrained his resentment, and passed on.

‘The Knight, having descended a stair-case, opened a secret door, which the Baron had believed was known only to himself, and, proceeding through several narrow and winding passages, came, at length, to a small gate, that opened beyond the walls of the castle. Meanwhile, the Baron followed in silence and amazement, on perceiving that these secret passages were so well known to a stranger, and felt inclined to return from an adventure, that appeared to partake of treachery, as well as danger. Then, considering that he was armed, and observing the courteous and noble air of his conductor, his courage returned, he blushed, that it had failed him for a moment, and he resolved to trace the mystery to its source.

‘He now found himself on the heathy platform, before the great gates of his castle, where, on looking up, he perceived lights glimmering in the different casements of the guests, who were retiring to sleep; and, while he shivered in the blast, and looked on the dark and desolate scene around him, he thought of the comforts of his warm chamber, rendered cheerful by the blaze of wood, and felt, for a moment, the full contrast of his present situation.’

(Here Ludovico paused a moment, and, looking at his own fire, gave it a brightening stir.)

‘The wind was strong, and the Baron watched his lamp with anxiety, expecting every moment to see it extinguished; but, though the flame wavered, it did not expire, and he still followed the stranger, who often sighed as he went, but did not speak.

‘When they reached the borders of the forest, the Knight turned, and raised his head, as if he meant to address the Baron, but then, closing his lips in silence, he walked on.

‘As they entered, beneath the dark and spreading boughs, the Baron, affected by the solemnity of the scene, hesitated whether to proceed, and demanded how much further they were to go. The Knight replied only by a gesture, and the Baron, with hesitating steps and a suspicious eye, followed through an obscure and intricate path, till, having proceeded a considerable way, he again demanded whither they were going, and refused to proceed unless he was informed.

‘As he said this, he looked at his own sword, and at the Knight alternately, who shook his head, and whose dejected countenance disarmed the Baron, for a moment, of suspicion.

‘ “A little further is the place, whither I would lead you,” said the stranger; “no evil shall befall you – I have sworn it on the honour of a knight.”

‘The Baron, re-assured, again followed in silence, and they soon arrived at a deep recess of the forest, where the dark and lofty chesnuts entirely excluded the sky, and which was so overgrown with underwood, that they proceeded with difficulty. The Knight sighed deeply as he passed, and sometimes paused; and having, at length, reached a spot, where the trees crowded into a knot, he turned, and, with a terrific look, pointing to the ground, the Baron saw there the body of a man, stretched at its length, and weltering in blood; a ghastly wound was on the forehead, and death appeared already to have contracted the features.

‘The Baron, on perceiving the spectacle, started in horror, looked at the Knight for explanation, and was then going to raise the body and examine if there were yet any remains of life; but the stranger, waving his hand, fixed upon him a look so earnest and mournful, as not only much surprised him, but made him desist.

‘But, what were the Baron’s emotions, when, on holding the lamp near the features of the corpse, he discovered the exact resemblance of the stranger his conductor, to whom he now looked up in astonishment and enquiry? As he gazed, he perceived the countenance of the Knight change, and begin to fade, till his whole form gradually vanished from his astonished sense! While the Baron stood, fixed to the spot, a voice was heard to utter these words: –’

(Ludovico started, and laid down the book, for he thought he heard a voice in the chamber, and he looked toward the bed, where, however, he saw only the dark curtains and the pall. He listened, scarcely daring to draw his breath, but heard only the distant roaring of the sea in the storm, and the blast, that rushed by the casements; when, concluding, that he had been deceived by its sighings, he took up his book to finish the story.)

'While the Baron stood, fixed to the spot, a voice was heard to utter these words: –

' "The body of Sir Bevys of Lancaster, a noble knight of England, lies before you. He was, this night, waylaid and murdered, as he journeyed from the Holy City towards his native land. Respect the honour of knighthood and the law of humanity; inter the body in christian ground, and cause his murderers to be punished. As ye observe, or neglect this, shall peace and happiness, or war and misery, light upon you and your house for ever!"

'The Baron, when he recovered from the awe and astonishment, into which this adventure had thrown him, returned to his castle, whither he caused the body of Sir Bevys to be removed; and, on the following day, it was interred, with the honours of knighthood, in the chapel of the castle, attended by all the noble knights and ladies, who graced the court of the Baron de Brunne.'

Ludovico, having finished this story, laid aside the book, for he felt drowsy, and, after putting more wood on the fire and taking another glass of wine, he reposed himself in the arm-chair on the hearth. In his dream he still beheld the chamber where he really was, and, once or twice, started from imperfect slumbers, imagining he saw a man's face, looking over the high back of his arm-chair. This idea had so strongly impressed him, that, when he raised his eyes, he almost expected to meet other eyes, fixed upon his own, and he quitted his seat and looked behind the chair, before he felt perfectly convinced, that no person was there.

Thus closed the hour.

CHAPTER VII

'Enjoy the honey-heavy dew of slumber;
Thou hast no figures, nor no fantasies,
Which busy care draws in the brains of men;
Therefore thou sleep'st so sound.'
SHAKESPEARE [*Julius Cesar*][1]

The Count, who had slept little during the night, rose early, and, anxious to speak with Ludovico, went to the north apartment; but, the outer door having been fastened, on the preceding night, he was obliged to knock loudly for admittance. Neither the knocking, or his voice was heard; but, considering the distance of this door from the bed-room, and that Ludovico, wearied with watching, had probably fallen into a deep sleep, the Count was not surprised on receiving no answer, and, leaving the door, he went down to walk in his grounds.

It was a gray autumnal morning. The sun, rising over Provence, gave only a feeble light, as his rays struggled through the vapours that ascended from the sea, and floated heavily over the wood-tops, which were now varied with many a mellow tint of autumn. The storm was passed, but the waves were yet violently agitated, and their course was traced by long lines of foam, while not a breeze fluttered in the sails of the vessels, near the shore, that were weighing anchor to depart. The still gloom of the hour was pleasing to the Count, and he pursued his way through the woods, sunk in deep thought.

Emily also rose at an early hour, and took her customary walk along the brow of the promontory, that overhung the Mediterranean. Her mind was now not occupied with the occurrences of the chateau, and Valancourt was the subject of her mournful thoughts; whom she had not yet taught herself to consider with indifference, though her judgment constantly reproached her for the affection, that lingered in her heart, after her esteem for him was departed. Remembrance frequently gave her his parting look and the tones of his voice, when he had bade her a last farewel; and, some accidental associations now recalling these circumstances to her fancy, with peculiar energy, she shed bitter tears to the recollection.

Having reached the watch-tower, she seated herself on the broken steps, and, in melancholy dejection, watched the waves, half hid in vapour, as they came rolling towards the shore, and threw up their light spray round the rocks below. Their hollow murmur and the obscuring mists, that came in wreaths up the cliffs, gave a solemnity to the scene, which was in harmony with the temper of her mind, and she sat, given up to the remembrance of past times, till this became too painful, and she abruptly quitted the place. On passing the little gate of the watch-tower, she observed letters, engraved on the stone postern, which she paused to examine, and, though they appeared to have been rudely cut with a pen-knife,[2] the characters were familiar to her; at length, recognizing the hand-writing of Valancourt, she read, with trembling anxiety, the following lines, entitled

SHIPWRECK

'Tis solemn midnight! On this lonely steep,
Beneath this watch-tow'r's desolated wall,
Where mystic shapes the wonderer appall,
I rest; and view below the desert deep,
As through tempestuous clouds the moon's cold light
Gleams on the wave. Viewless, the winds of night
With loud mysterious force the billows sweep,
And sullen roar the surges, far below.
In the still pauses of the gust I hear
The voice of spirits, rising sweet and slow,
And oft among the clouds their forms appear.
But hark! what shriek of death comes in the gale,
And in the distant ray what glimmering sail
Bends to the storm? – Now sinks the note of fear!
Ah! wretched mariners! – no more shall day

Unclose his cheering eye to light ye on your way!

From these lines it appeared, that Valancourt had visited the tower; that he had probably been here on the preceding night, for it was such an one as they described, and that he had left the building very lately, since it had not long been light, and without light it was impossible these letters could have been cut. It was thus even probable, that he might be yet in the gardens.

As these reflections passed rapidly over the mind of Emily, they called up a variety of contending emotions, that almost overcame her spirits; but her first impulse was to avoid him, and, immediately leaving the tower, she returned, with hasty steps, towards the chateau. As she passed along, she remembered the music she had lately heard near the tower, with the figure, which had appeared, and, in this moment of agitation, she was inclined to believe, that she had then heard and seen Valancourt; but other recollections soon convinced her of her error. On turning into a thicker part of the woods, she perceived a person, walking slowly in the gloom at some little distance, and, her mind engaged by the idea of him, she started and paused, imagining this to be Valancourt. The person advanced with quicker steps, and, before she could recover recollection enough to avoid him, he spoke, and she then knew the voice of the Count, who expressed some surprise, on finding her walking at so early an hour, and made a feeble effort to rally her on her love of solitude. But he soon perceived this to be more a subject of concern than of light laughter, and, changing his manner, affectionately expostulated with Emily, on thus indulging unavailing regret; who, though she acknowledged the justness of all he said, could not restrain her tears, while she did so, and he presently quitted the topic. Expressing surprise at not having yet heard from his friend, the Advocate at Avignon, in answer to the questions proposed to him, respecting the estates of the late Madame Montoni, he, with friendly zeal, endeavoured to cheer Emily with hopes of establishing her claim to them; while she felt, that the estates could now contribute little to the happiness of a life, in which Valancourt had no longer an interest.

When they returned to the chateau, Emily retired to her apartment, and Count de Villefort to the door of the north chambers. This was still fastened, but, being now determined to arouse Ludovico, he renewed his calls more loudly than before, after which a total silence ensued, and the Count, finding all his efforts to be heard ineffectual, at length began to fear, that some accident had befallen Ludovico, whom terror of an imaginary being might have deprived of his senses. He, therefore, left the door with an intention of summoning his servants to force it open, some of whom he now heard moving in the lower part of the chateau.

To the Count's enquiries, whether they had seen or heard Ludovico, they replied in affright, that not one of them had ventured on the north side of the chateau, since the preceding night.

'He sleeps soundly then,' said the Count, 'and is at such a distance from the outer door, which is fastened, that to gain admittance to the chambers it will be necessary to force it. Bring an instrument, and follow me.'

The servants stood mute and dejected, and it was not till nearly all the household were assembled, that the Count's orders were obeyed. In the mean time Dorothé was telling of a door, that opened from a gallery, leading from the great stair-case into the last anti-room of the saloon, and, this being much nearer to the bed-chamber, it appeared probable, that Ludovico might be easily awakened by an attempt to open it. Thither, therefore, the Count went, but his voice was as ineffectual at this door as it had proved at the remoter one; and now, seriously interested for Ludovico, he was himself going to strike upon the door with the instrument, when he observed its singular beauty, and with-held the blow. It appeared, on the first glance, to be of ebony, so dark and close was its grain and so high its polish, but it proved to be only of larch wood, of the growth of Provence, then famous for its forests of larch. The beauty of its polished hue and of its delicate carvings determined the Count to spare this door, and he returned to that leading from the back stair-case, which being, at length, forced, he entered the first anti-room, followed by Henri and a few of the most courageous of his servants, the rest awaiting the event of the enquiry on the stairs and landing-place.

All was silent in the chambers, through which the Count passed, and, having reached the saloon, he called loudly upon Ludovico; after which, still receiving no answer, he threw open the door of the bed-room, and entered.

The profound stillness within confirmed his apprehensions for Ludovico, for not even the breathings of a person in sleep were heard; and his uncertainty was not soon terminated, since, the shutters being all closed, the chamber was too dark for any object to be distinguished in it.

The Count bade a servant open them, who, as he crossed the room to do so, stumbled over something, and fell to the floor, when his cry occasioned such panic among the few of his fellows, who had ventured thus far, that they instantly fled, and the Count and Henri were left to finish the adventure.

Henri then sprung across the room, and, opening a window-shutter, they perceived, that the man had fallen over a chair near the hearth, in which Ludovico had been sitting; – for he sat there no longer, nor could any where be seen by the imperfect light, that was admitted into the apartment. The Count, seriously alarmed, now opened other shutters, that he might be enabled to examine further, and, Ludovico not yet appearing, he stood for a moment, suspended in astonishment and scarcely trusting his senses, till, his eyes glancing on the bed, he advanced to examine whether he was there asleep. No person, however, was in it, and he proceeded to the oriel, where every thing remained as on the preceding night, but Ludovico was no where to be found.

The Count now checked his amazement, considering, that Ludovico might have left the chambers, during the night, overcome by the terrors, which their lonely desolation and the recollected reports, concerning them, had inspired. Yet, if this had been the fact, the man would naturally have sought society, and his fellow servants had all declared they had not seen him; the door of the outer room also had been found fastened, with the key on the inside; it was impossible, therefore, for him to have passed through that, and all the outer doors of this suite were found, on examination, to be bolted and locked, with the keys also within them. The Count, being then compelled to believe, that the lad had escaped through the casements, next examined them, but such as opened wide enough to admit the body of a man were found to be carefully secured either by iron bars, or by shutters, and no vestige appeared of any person having attempted to pass them; neither was it probable, that Ludovico would have incurred the risque of breaking his neck, by leaping from a window, when he might have walked safely through a door.

The Count's amazement did not admit of words; but he returned once more to examine the bed-room, where was no appearance of disorder, except that occasioned by the late overthrow of the chair, near which had stood a small table, and on this Ludovico's sword, his lamp, the book he had been reading, and the remnant of his flask of wine still remained. At the foot of the table, too, was the basket with some fragments of provision and wood.

Henri and the Count now uttered their astonishment without reserve, and, though the Count said little, there was a seriousness in his manner, that expressed much. It appeared, that Ludovico must have quitted these rooms by some concealed passage, for the Count could not believe, that any supernatural means had occasioned this event, yet, if there was any such passage, it seemed inexplicable why he should retreat through it, and it was equally surprising, that not even the smallest vestige should appear, by which his progress could be traced. In the rooms every thing remained as much in order as if he had just walked out by the common way.

The Count himself assisted in lifting the arras, with which the bed-chamber, saloon and one of the anti-rooms were hung, that he might discover if any door had been concealed behind it; but, after a laborious search, none was found, and he, at length, quitted the apartments, having secured the door of the last anti-chamber, the key of which he took into his own possession. He then gave orders, that strict search should be made for Ludovico not only in the chateau, but in the neighbourhood, and, retiring with Henri to his closet, they remained there in conversation for a considerable time, and whatever was the subject of it, Henri from this hour lost much of his vivacity, and his manners were particularly grave and reserved, whenever the topic, which now agitated the Count's family with wonder and alarm, was introduced.

On the disappearing of Ludovico, Baron St Foix seemed strengthened in all his former opinions concerning the probability of apparitions, though it was difficult to discover what connection there could possibly be between the two subjects, or to account for this effect otherwise than by supposing, that the mystery attending Ludovico, by exciting awe and curiosity, reduced the mind to a state of sensibility, which rendered it more liable to the influence of superstition in general. It is, however, certain, that from this period the Baron and his adherents became more bigoted to their own systems than before, while the terrors of the Count's servants increased to an excess, that occasioned many of them to quit the mansion immediately, and the rest remained only till others could be procured to supply their places.

The most strenuous search after Ludovico proved unsuccessful, and, after several days of indefatigable enquiry, poor Annette gave herself up to despair, and the other inhabitants of the chateau to amazement.

Emily, whose mind had been deeply affected by the disastrous fate of the late Marchioness and with the mysterious connection, which she fancied had existed between her and St Aubert, was particularly impressed by the late extraordinary event, and much concerned for the loss of Ludovico, whose integrity and faithful services claimed both her esteem and gratitude. She was now very desirous to return to the quiet retirement of her convent, but every hint of this was received with real sorrow by the Lady Blanche, and affectionately set aside by the Count, for whom she felt much of the respectful love and admiration of a daughter, and to whom, by Dorothé's consent, she, at length, mentioned the appearance, which they had witnessed in the chamber of the deceased Marchioness. At any other period, he would have smiled at such a relation, and have believed, that its object had existed only in the distempered fancy of the relater; but he now attended to Emily with seriousness, and, when she concluded, requested of her a promise, that this occurrence should rest in silence. 'Whatever may be the cause and the import of these extraordinary occurrences,' added the Count, 'time only can explain them. I shall keep a wary eye upon all that passes in the chateau, and shall pursue every possible means of discovering the fate of Ludovico. Meanwhile, we must be prudent and be silent. I will myself watch in the north chambers, but of this we will say nothing, till the night arrives, when I purpose doing so.'

The Count then sent for Dorothé, and required of her also a promise of silence, concerning what she had already, or might in future witness of an extraordinary nature; and this ancient servant now related to him the particulars of the Marchioness de Villeroi's death, with some of which he appeared to be already acquainted, while by others he was evidently surprised and agitated. After listening to this narrative, the Count retired to his closet, where he remained alone for several hours; and, when he again appeared, the solemnity of his manner surprised and alarmed Emily, but she gave no utterance to her thoughts.

On the week following the disappearance of Ludovico, all the Count's guests took leave of him, except the Baron, his son Mons. St Foix, and Emily; the latter of whom was soon after embarrassed and distressed by the arrival of another visitor, Mons. Du Pont, which made her determine upon withdrawing to her convent immediately. The delight, that appeared in his countenance, when he met her, told that he brought back the same ardour of passion, which had formerly banished him from Chateau-le-Blanc. He was received with reserve by Emily, and with pleasure by the Count, who presented him to her with a smile, that seemed intended to plead his cause, and who did not hope the less for his friend, from the embarrassment she betrayed.

But M. Du Pont, with truer sympathy, seemed to understand her manner, and his countenance quickly lost its vivacity, and sunk into the languor of despondency.

On the following day, however, he sought an opportunity of declaring the purport of his visit, and renewed his suit; a declaration, which was received with real concern by Emily, who endeavoured to lessen the pain she might inflict by a second rejection, with assurances of esteem and friendship; yet she left him in a state of mind, that claimed and excited her tenderest compassion; and, being more sensible than ever of the impropriety of remaining longer at the chateau, she immediately sought the Count, and communicated to him her intention of returning to the convent.

'My dear Emily,' said he, 'I observe, with extreme concern, the illusion you are encouraging – an illusion common to young and sensible minds. Your heart has received a severe shock; you believe you can never entirely recover it, and you will encourage this belief, till the habit of indulging sorrow will subdue the strength of your mind, and discolour your future views with melancholy and regret. Let me dissipate this illusion, and awaken you to a sense of your danger.'

Emily smiled mournfully, 'I know what you would say, my dear sir,' said she, 'and am prepared to answer you. I feel, that my heart can never know a second affection; and that I must never hope even to recover its tranquillity – if I suffer myself to enter into a second engagement.'

'I know, that you feel all this,' replied the Count; 'and I know, also, that time will overcome these feelings, unless you cherish them in solitude, and, pardon me, with romantic tenderness. Then, indeed, time will only confirm habit. I am particularly empowered to speak on this subject, and to sympathize in your sufferings,' added the Count, with an air of solemnity, 'for I have known what it is to love, and to lament the object of my love. Yes,' continued he, while his eyes filled with tears, 'I have suffered! – but those times have passed away – long passed! and I can now look back upon them without emotion.'

'My dear sir,' said Emily, timidly, 'what mean those tears? – they speak, I fear, another language – they plead for me.'

'They are weak tears, for they are useless ones,' replied the Count, drying them, 'I would have you superior to such weakness. These, however, are only faint traces of a grief, which, if it had not been opposed by long continued effort, might have led me to the verge of madness! Judge, then, whether I have not cause to warn you of an indulgence, which may produce so terrible an effect, and which must certainly, if not opposed, overcloud the years, that otherwise might be happy. M. Du Pont is a sensible and amiable man, who has long been tenderly attached to you; his family and fortune are unexceptionable; – after what I have said, it is unnecessary to add, that I should rejoice in your felicity, and that I think M. Du Pont would promote it. Do not weep, Emily,' continued the Count, taking her hand, 'there *is* happiness reserved for you.'

He was silent a moment; and then added, in a firmer voice, 'I do not wish, that you should make a violent effort to overcome your feelings; all I, at present, ask, is, that you will check the thoughts, that would lead you to a remembrance of the past; that you will suffer your mind to be engaged by present objects; that you will allow yourself to believe it possible you may yet be happy; and that you will sometimes think with complacency of poor Du Pont, and not condemn him to the state of despondency, from which, my dear Emily, I am endeavouring to withdraw you.'

'Ah! my dear sir,' said Emily, while her tears still fell, 'do not suffer the benevolence of your wishes to mislead Mons. Du Pont with an expectation that I can ever accept his hand. If I understand my own heart, this never can be; your instruction I can obey in almost every other particular, than that of adopting a contrary belief.'

'Leave me to understand your heart,' replied the Count, with a faint smile. 'If you pay me the compliment to be guided by my advice in other instances, I will pardon your incredulity, respecting your future conduct towards Mons. Du Pont. I will not even press you to remain longer at the chateau than your own satisfaction will permit; but though I forbear to oppose your present retirement, I shall urge the claims of friendship for your future visits.'

Tears of gratitude mingled with those of tender regret, while Emily thanked the Count for the many instances of friendship she had received from him; promised to be directed by his advice upon every subject but one, and assured him of the pleasure, with which she should, at some future period, accept the invitation of the Countess and himself – if Mons. Du Pont was not at the chateau.

The Count smiled at this condition. 'Be it so,' said he, 'meanwhile the convent is so near the chateau, that my daughter and I shall often visit you; and if, sometimes, we should dare to bring you another visitor – will you forgive us?'

Emily looked distressed, and remained silent.

'Well,' rejoined the Count, 'I will pursue this subject no further, and must now entreat your forgiveness for having pressed it thus far. You will, however, do me the justice to believe, that I have been urged only by a sincere regard for your happiness, and that of my amiable friend Mons. Du Pont.'

Emily, when she left the Count, went to mention her intended departure to the Countess, who opposed it with polite expressions of regret; after which, she sent a note to acquaint the lady abbess, that she should return to the convent, and thither she withdrew on the evening of the following day. M. Du Pont, in extreme regret, saw her depart, while the Count endeavoured to cheer him with a hope, that Emily would sometimes regard him with a more favourable eye.

She was pleased to find herself once more in the tranquil retirement of the convent, where she experienced a renewal of all the maternal kindness of the abbess, and of the sisterly attentions of the nuns. A report of the late extraordinary occurrence at the chateau had already reached them, and, after supper, on the evening of her arrival, it was the subject of conversation in the convent parlour, where she was requested to mention some particulars of that unaccountable event. Emily was guarded in her conversation on this subject, and briefly related a few circumstances concerning Ludovico, whose disappearance, her auditors almost unanimously agreed, had been effected by supernatural means.

'A belief had so long prevailed,' said a nun, who was called sister Frances, 'that the chateau was haunted, that I was surprised, when I heard the Count had the temerity to inhabit it. Its former possessor, I fear, had some deed of conscience to atone for; let us hope, that the virtues of its present owner will preserve him from the punishment due to the errors of the last, if, indeed, he was criminal.'

‘Of what crime, then, was he suspected?’ said a Mademoiselle Feydeau, a boarder at the convent.

‘Let us pray for his soul!’ said a nun, who had till now sat in silent attention. ‘If he was criminal, his punishment in this world was sufficient.’

There was a mixture of wildness and solemnity in her manner of delivering this, which struck Emily exceedingly; but Mademoiselle repeated her question, without noticing the solemn eagerness of the nun.

‘I dare not presume to say what was his crime,’ replied sister Frances; ‘but I have heard many reports of an extraordinary nature, respecting the late Marquis de Villeroi, and among others, that, soon after the death of his lady, he quitted Chateau-le-Blanc, and never afterwards returned to it. I was not here at the time, so I can only mention it from report, and so many years have passed since the Marchioness died, that few of our sisterhood, I believe, can do more.’

‘But I can,’ said the nun, who had before spoke, and whom they called sister Agnes.

‘You then,’ said Mademoiselle Feydeau, ‘are possibly acquainted with circumstances, that enable you to judge, whether he was criminal or not, and what was the crime imputed to him.’

‘I am,’ replied the nun; ‘but who shall dare to scrutinize my thoughts – who shall dare to pluck out my opinion? God only is his judge, and to that judge he is gone!’

Emily looked with surprise at sister Frances, who returned her a significant glance.

‘I only requested your opinion,’ said Mademoiselle Feydeau, mildly; ‘if the subject is displeasing to you, I will drop it.’

‘Displeasing!’ – said the nun, with emphasis. – ‘We are idle talkers; we do not weigh the meaning of the words we use; *displeasing* is a poor word. I will go pray.’ As she said this she rose from her seat, and with a profound sigh quitted the room.

‘What can be the meaning of this?’ said Emily, when she was gone.

‘It is nothing extraordinary,’ replied sister Frances, ‘she is often thus; but she has no meaning in what she says. Her intellects are at times deranged. Did you never see her thus before?’

‘Never,’ said Emily. ‘I have, indeed, sometimes, thought, that there was the melancholy of madness in her look, but never before perceived it in her speech. Poor soul, I will pray for her!’

‘Your prayers then, my daughter, will unite with ours,’ observed the lady abbess, ‘she has need of them.’

‘Dear lady,’ said Mademoiselle Feydeau, addressing the abbess, ‘what is your opinion of the late Marquis? The strange circumstances, that have occurred at the chateau, have so much awakened my curiosity, that I shall be pardoned the question. What was his imputed crime, and what the punishment, to which sister Agnes alluded?’

‘We must be cautious of advancing our opinion,’ said the abbess, with an air of reserve, mingled with solemnity, ‘we must be cautious of advancing our opinion on so delicate a subject. I will not take upon me to pronounce, that the late Marquis was criminal, or to say what was the crime of which he was suspected; but, concerning the punishment our daughter Agnes hinted, I know of none he suffered. She probably alluded to the severe one, which an exasperated conscience can inflict. Beware, my children, of incurring so terrible a punishment – it is the purgatory of this life! The late Marchioness I knew well; she was a pattern to such as live in the world; nay, our sacred order need not have blushed to copy her virtues! Our holy convent received her mortal part; her heavenly spirit, I doubt not, ascended to its sanctuary!’

As the abbess spoke this, the last bell of vespers, struck up, and she rose. ‘Let us go, my children,’ said she, ‘and intercede for the wretched; let us go and confess our sins, and endeavour to purify our souls for the heaven, to which *she* is gone!’

Emily was affected by the solemnity of this exhortation, and, remembering her father, ‘The heaven, to which *he*, too, is gone!’ said she, faintly, as she suppressed her sighs, and followed the abbess and the nuns to the chapel.

CHAPTER VIII

‘Be thou a spirit of health, or goblin damn’d,

Bring with thee airs from heaven, or blasts from hell,
Be thy intents wicked, or charitable,
. . . .

——I will speak to thee.’————
[SHAKESPEARE *Hamlet*[1]

Count de Villefort, at length, received a letter from the advocate at Avignon, encouraging Emily to assert her claim to the estates of the late Madame Montoni; and, about the same time, a messenger arrived from Monsieur Quesnel with intelligence, that made an appeal to the law on this subject unnecessary, since it appeared, that the only person, who could have opposed her claim, was now no more. A friend of M. Quesnel, who resided at Venice, had sent him an account of the death of Montoni, who had been brought to trial with Orsino, as his supposed accomplice in the murder of the Venetian nobleman. Orsino was found guilty, condemned and executed upon the wheel,[2] but, nothing being discovered to criminate Montoni, and his colleagues, on this charge, they were all released, except Montoni, who, being considered by the senate as a very dangerous person, was, for other reasons, ordered again into confinement, where, it was said, he had died in a doubtful and mysterious manner, and not without suspicion of having been poisoned. The authority, from which M. Quesnel had received this information, would not allow him to doubt its truth, and he told Emily, that she had now only to lay claim to the estates of her late aunt, to secure them, and added, that he would himself assist in the necessary forms of this business. The term, for which La Vallée had been let being now also nearly expired, he acquainted her with the circumstance, and advised her to take the road thither, through Tholouse, where he promised to meet her, and where it would be proper for her to take possession of the estates of the late Madame Montoni; adding, that he would spare her any difficulties, that might occur on that occasion from the want of knowledge on the subject, and that he believed it would be necessary for her to be at Tholouse, in about three weeks from the present time.

An increase of fortune seemed to have awakened this sudden kindness in M. Quesnel towards his niece, and it appeared, that he entertained more respect for the rich heiress, than he had ever felt compassion for the poor and unfriended orphan.

The pleasure, with which she received this intelligence, was clouded when she considered, that he, for whose sake she had once regretted the want of fortune, was no longer worthy of sharing it with her; but, remembering the friendly admonition of the Count, she checked this melancholy reflection, and endeavoured to feel only gratitude for the unexpected good, that now attended her; while it formed no inconsiderable part of her satisfaction to know, that La Vallée, her native home, which was endeared to her by its having been the residence of her parents, would soon be restored to her possession. There she meant to fix her future residence, for, though it could not be compared with the chateau at Tholouse, either for extent, or magnificence, its pleasant scenes and the tender remembrances, that haunted them, had claims upon her heart, which she was not inclined to sacrifice to ostentation. She wrote immediately to thank M. Quesnel for the active interest he took in her concerns and to say, that she would meet him at Tholouse at the appointed time.

When Count de Villefort, with Blanche, came to the convent to give Emily the advice of the advocate, he was informed of the contents of M. Quesnel’s letter, and gave her his sincere congratulations, on the occasion; but she observed, that, when the first expression of satisfaction had faded from his countenance, an unusual gravity succeeded, and she scarcely hesitated to enquire its cause.

‘It has no new occasion,’ replied the Count; ‘I am harassed and perplexed by the confusion, into which my family is thrown by their foolish superstition. Idle reports are floating round me, which I can neither admit to be true, or prove to be false; and I am, also, very anxious about the poor fellow, Ludovico, concerning whom I have not been able to obtain information. Every part of the chateau and every part of the neighbourhood, too, has, I believe, been searched, and I know not what further can be done, since I have already offered large rewards for the discovery of him. The keys of the north apartment I have not suffered to be out of my possession, since he disappeared, and I mean to watch in those chambers, myself, this very night.’

Emily, seriously alarmed for the Count, united her entreaties with those of the Lady Blanche, to dissuade him from his purpose.

‘What should I fear?’ said he. ‘I have no faith in supernatural combats, and for human opposition I shall be prepared; nay, I will even promise not to watch alone.’

‘But who, dear sir, will have courage enough to watch with you?’ said Emily.

‘My son,’ replied the Count. ‘If I am not carried off in the night,’ added he, smiling, ‘you shall hear the result of my adventure, to-morrow.’

The Count and Lady Blanche, shortly afterwards, took leave of Emily, and returned to the chateau, where he informed Henri of his intention, who, not without some secret reluctance, consented to be the partner of his watch; and, when the design was mentioned after supper, the Countess was terrified, and the Baron, and M. Du Pont joined with her in entreating, that he would not tempt his fate, as Ludovico had done. ‘We know not,’ added the Baron, ‘the nature, or the power of an evil spirit; and that such a spirit haunts those chambers can now, I think, scarcely be doubted. Beware, my lord, how you provoke its vengeance, since it has already given us one terrible example of its malice. I allow it may be probable, that the spirits of the dead are permitted to return to the earth only on occasions of high import; but the present import may be your destruction.’

The Count could not forbear smiling; ‘Do you think then, Baron,’ said he, ‘that my destruction is of sufficient importance to draw back to earth the soul of the departed? Alas! my good friend, there is no occasion for such means to accomplish the destruction of any individual. Wherever the mystery rests, I trust I shall, this night, be able to detect it. You know I am not superstitious.’

‘I know that you are incredulous,’ interrupted the Baron.

‘Well, call it what you will, I meant to say, that, though you know I am free from superstition – if any thing supernatural has appeared, I doubt not it will appear to me, and if any strange event hangs over my house, or if any extraordinary transaction has formerly been connected with it, I shall probably be made acquainted with it. At all events I will invite discovery; and, that I may be equal to a mortal attack, which in good truth, my friend, is what I most expect, I shall take care to be well armed.’

The Count took leave of his family, for the night, with an assumed gaiety, which but ill concealed the anxiety, that depressed his spirits, and retired to the north apartments, accompanied by his son and followed by the Baron, M. Du Pont and some of the domestics, who all bade him good night at the outer door. In these chambers every thing appeared as when he had last been here; even in the bed-room no alteration was visible, where he lighted his own fire, for none of the domestics could be prevailed upon to venture thither. After carefully examining the chamber and the oriel, the Count and Henri drew their chairs upon the hearth, set a bottle of wine and a lamp before them, laid their swords upon the table, and, stirring the wood into a blaze, began to converse on indifferent topics. But Henri was often silent and abstracted, and sometimes threw a glance of mingled awe and curiosity round the gloomy apartment; while the Count gradually ceased to converse, and sat either lost in thought, or reading a volume of Tacitus,[3] which he had brought to beguile the tediousness of the night.

CHAPTER IX

> ‘Give thy thoughts no tongue.’
>
> SHAKESPEARE [*Hamlet*][1]

The Baron St Foix, whom anxiety for his friend had kept awake, rose early to enquire the event of the night, when, as he passed the Count’s closet, hearing steps within, he knocked at the door, and it was opened by his friend himself. Rejoicing to see him in safety, and curious to learn the occurrences of the night, he had not immediately leisure to observe the unusual gravity, that overspread the features of the Count, whose reserved answers first occasioned him to notice it. The Count, then smiling, endeavoured to treat the subject of his curiosity with levity; but the Baron was serious, and pursued his enquiries so closely, that the Count, at length, resuming his gravity, said, ‘Well, my friend, press the subject no further, I entreat you; and let me request also, that you will hereafter be silent upon any thing you may think extraordinary in my future conduct. I do not scruple to tell you, that I am unhappy, and that the watch of the last night has not assisted me to discover Ludovico; upon every occurrence of the night you must excuse my reserve.’

‘But where is Henri?’ said the Baron, with surprise and disappointment at this denial.

‘He is well in his own apartment,’ replied the Count. ‘You will not question him on this topic, my friend, since you know my wish.’

‘Certainly not,’ said the Baron, somewhat chagrined, ‘since it would be displeasing to you; but methinks, my friend, you might rely on my discretion, and drop this unusual reserve. However, you must allow me to suspect, that you have seen reason to become a convert to my system, and are no longer the incredulous knight you lately appeared to be.’

‘Let us talk no more upon this subject,’ said the Count; ‘you may be assured, that no ordinary circumstance has imposed this silence upon me towards a friend, whom I have called so for near thirty years; and my present reserve cannot make you question either my esteem, or the sincerity of my friendship.’

‘I will not doubt either,’ said the Baron, ‘though you must allow me to express my surprise, at this silence.’

‘To me I will allow it,’ replied the Count, ‘but I earnestly entreat that you will forbear to notice it to my family, as well as every thing remarkable you may observe in my conduct towards them.’

The Baron readily promised this, and, after conversing for some time on general topics, they descended to the breakfast-room, where the Count met his family with a cheerful countenance, and evaded their enquiries by employing light ridicule, and assuming an air of uncommon gaiety, while he assured them, that they need not apprehend any evil from the north chambers, since Henri and himself had been permitted to return from them in safety.

Henri, however, was less successful in disguising his feelings. From his countenance an expression of terror was not entirely faded; he was often silent and thoughtful, and, when he attempted to laugh at the eager enquiries of Mademoiselle Bearn, it was evidently only an attempt.

In the evening, the Count called, as he had promised, at the convent, and Emily was surprised to perceive a mixture of playful ridicule and of reserve in his mention of the north apartment. Of what had occurred there, however, he said nothing, and, when she ventured to remind him of his promise to tell her the result of his enquiries, and to ask if he had received any proof, that those chambers were haunted, his look became solemn, for a moment, then, seeming to recollect himself, he smiled, and said, ‘My dear Emily, do not suffer my lady abbess to infect your good understanding with these fancies; she will teach you to expect a ghost in every dark room. But believe me,’ added he, with a profound sigh, ‘the apparition of the dead comes not on light, or sportive errands, to terrify, or to surprise the timid.’ He paused, and fell into a momentary thoughtfulness, and then added, ‘We will say no more on this subject.’

Soon after, he took leave, and, when Emily joined some of the nuns, she was surprised to find them acquainted with a circumstance, which she had carefully avoided to mention, and expressing their admiration of his intrepidity in having dared to pass a night in the apartment, whence Ludovico had disappeared; for she had not considered with what rapidity a tale of wonder circulates. The nuns had acquired their information from peasants, who brought fruit to the monastery, and whose whole attention had been fixed, since the disappearance of Ludovico, on what was passing in the castle.

Emily listened in silence to the various opinions of the nuns, concerning the conduct of the Count, most of whom condemned it as rash and presumptuous, affirming, that it was provoking the vengeance of an evil spirit, thus to intrude upon its haunts.

Sister Frances contended, that the Count had acted with the bravery of a virtuous mind. He knew himself guiltless of aught, that should provoke a good spirit, and did not fear the spells of an evil one, since he could claim the protection of an higher Power, of Him, who can command the wicked, and will protect the innocent.

‘The guilty cannot claim that protection!’ said Sister Agnes, ‘let the Count look to his conduct, that he do not forfeit his claim! Yet who is he, that shall dare to call himself innocent! – all earthly innocence is but comparative. Yet still how wide asunder are the extremes of guilt, and to what an horrible depth may we fall! Oh!'—

The nun, as she concluded, uttered a shuddering sigh, that startled Emily, who, looking up, perceived the eyes of Agnes fixed on hers, after which the sister rose, took her hand, gazed earnestly upon her countenance, for some moments, in silence, and then said,

'You are young – you are innocent! I mean you are yet innocent of any great crime! – But you have passions in your heart, – scorpions; they sleep now – beware how you awaken them! – they will sting you, even unto death!'

Emily, affected by these words and by the solemnity, with which they were delivered, could not suppress her tears.

'Ah! is it so?' exclaimed Agnes, her countenance softening from its sternness – 'so young, and so unfortunate! We are sisters, then indeed. Yet, there is no bond of kindness among the guilty,' she added, while her eyes resumed their wild expression, 'no gentleness, – no peace, no hope! I, knew them all once – my eyes could weep – but now they burn, for now, my soul is fixed, and fearless! – I lament no more!'

'Rather let us repent, and pray,' said another nun. 'We are taught to hope, that prayer and penitence will work our salvation. There is hope for all who repent!'

'Who repent and turn to the true faith,' observed Sister Frances.

'For all but me!' replied Agnes solemnly, who paused, and then abruptly added, 'My head burns, I believe I am not well. O! could I strike from my memory all former scenes – the figures, that rise up, like furies, to torment me! – I see them, when I sleep, and, when I am awake, they are still before my eyes! I see them now – now!'

She stood in a fixed attitude of horror, her straining eyes moving slowly round the room, as if they followed something. One of the nuns gently took her hand, to lead her from the parlour. Agnes became calm, drew her other hand across her eyes, looked again, and, sighing deeply, said, 'They are gone – they are gone! I am feverish, I know not what I say. I am thus, sometimes, but it will go off again, I shall soon be better. Was not that the vesper-bell?'

'No,' replied Frances, 'the evening service is passed. Let Margaret lead you to your cell.'

'You are right,' replied Sister Agnes, 'I shall be better there. Good night, my sisters, remember me in your orisons!'

When they had withdrawn, Frances, observing Emily's emotion, said, 'Do not be alarmed, our sister is often thus deranged, though I have not lately seen her so frantic; her usual mood is melancholy. This fit has been coming on, for several days; seclusion and the customary treatment will restore her.'

'But how rationally she conversed, at first!' observed Emily, 'her ideas followed each other in perfect order.'

'Yes,' replied the nun, 'this is nothing new; nay, I have sometimes known her argue not only with method, but with acuteness, and then, in a moment, start off into madness.'

'Her conscience seems afflicted,' said Emily, 'did you ever hear what circumstance reduced her to this deplorable condition?'

'I have,' replied the nun, who said no more till Emily repeated the question, when she added in a low voice, and looking significantly towards the other boarders, 'I cannot tell you now, but, if you think it worth your while, come to my cell, to-night, when our sisterhood are at rest, and you shall hear more; but remember we rise to midnight prayers, and come either before, or after midnight.'

Emily promised to remember, and, the abbess soon after appearing, they spoke no more of the unhappy nun.

The Count, meanwhile, on his return home, had found M. Du Pont in one of those fits of despondency, which his attachment to Emily frequently occasioned him, an attachment, that had subsisted too long to be easily subdued, and which had already outlived the opposition of his friends. M. Du Pont had first seen Emily in Gascony, during the lifetime of his parent, who, on discovering his son's partiality for Mademoiselle St Aubert, his inferior in point of fortune, forbade him to declare it to her family, or to think of her more. During the life of his father, he had observed the first command, but had found it impracticable to obey the second, and had, sometimes, soothed his passion by visiting her favourite haunts, among which was the fishing-house, where, once or twice, he addressed her in verse, concealing his name, in obedience to the promise he had given his father. There too he played the pathetic air, to which she had listened with such surprise and admiration; and there he found the miniature, that had since cherished a passion fatal to his repose. During his expedition into Italy, his father died; but he received his liberty at a moment, when he was the least enabled to profit by it, since the object, that rendered it most valuable, was no longer within the reach of his vows. By what accident he discovered Emily, and assisted to release her from a terrible imprisonment, has already appeared, and also the unavailing hope, with which he then encouraged his love, and the fruitless efforts, that he had since made to overcome it.

The Count still endeavoured, with friendly zeal, to sooth him with a belief, that patience, perseverance and prudence would finally obtain for him happiness and Emily; 'Time,' said he, 'will wear away the melancholy impression, which disappointment has left on her mind, and she will be sensible of your merit. Your services have already awakened her gratitude, and your sufferings her pity; and trust me, my friend, in a heart so sensible as hers, gratitude and pity lead to love. When her imagination is rescued from its present delusion, she will readily accept the homage of a mind like yours.'

Du Pont sighed, while he listened to these words; and, endeavouring to hope what his friend believed, he willingly yielded to an invitation to prolong his visit at the chateau, which we now leave for the monastery of St Clair.

When the nuns had retired to rest, Emily stole to her appointment with Sister Frances, whom she found in her cell, engaged in prayer, before a little table, where appeared the image she was addressing, and, above, the dim lamp, that gave light to the place. Turning her eyes, as the door opened, she beckoned to Emily to come in, who, having done so, seated herself in silence beside the nun's little mattress of straw, till her orisons should conclude. The latter soon rose from her knees, and, taking down the lamp and placing it on the table, Emily perceived there a human scull and bones, lying beside an hour-glass; but the nun, without observing her emotion, sat down on the mattress by her, saying, 'Your curiosity, sister, has made you punctual, but you have nothing remarkable to hear in the history of poor Agnes, of whom I avoided to speak in the presence of my lay-sisters, only because I would not publish her crime to them.'

'I shall consider your confidence in me as a favour,' said Emily, 'and will not misuse it.'

'Sister Agnes,' resumed the nun, 'is of a noble family, as the dignity of her air must already have informed you, but I will not dishonour their name so much as to reveal it. Love was the occasion of her crime and of her madness. She was beloved by a gentleman of inferior fortune, and her father, as I have heard, bestowing her on a nobleman, whom she disliked, an ill-governed passion proved her destruction. – Every obligation of virtue and of duty was forgotten, and she prophaned her marriage vows; but her guilt was soon detected, and she would have fallen a sacrifice to the vengeance of her husband, had not her father contrived to convey her from his power. By what means he did this, I never could learn; but he secreted her in this convent, where he afterwards prevailed with her to take the veil, while a report was circulated in the world, that she was dead, and the father, to save his daughter, assisted the rumour, and employed such means as induced her husband to believe she had become a victim to his jealousy. You look surprised,' added the nun, observing Emily's countenance, 'I allow the story is uncommon, but not, I believe, without a parallel.'

'Pray proceed,' said Emily, 'I am interested.'

'The story is already told,' resumed the nun, 'I have only to mention, that the long struggle, which Agnes suffered, between love, remorse and a sense of the duties she had taken upon herself in becoming of our order, at length unsettled her reason. At first, she was frantic and melancholy by quick alternatives; then, she sunk into a deep and settled melancholy, which still, however, has, at times, been interrupted by fits of wildness, and, of late, these have again been frequent.'

Emily was affected by the history of the sister, some parts of whose story brought to her remembrance that of the Marchioness de Villeroi, who had also been compelled by her father to forsake the object of her affections, for a nobleman of his choice; but, from what Dorothé had related, there appeared no reason to suppose, that she had escaped the vengeance of a jealous husband, or to doubt for a moment the innocence of her conduct. But Emily, while she sighed over the misery of the nun, could not forbear shedding a few tears to the misfortunes of the Marchioness; and, when she returned to the mention of Sister Agnes, she asked Frances if she remembered her in her youth, and whether she was then beautiful.

'I was not here at the time, when she took the vows,' replied Frances, 'which is so long ago, that few of the present sisterhood, I believe, were witness of the ceremony; nay, even our lady mother did not then preside over the convent: but I can remember, when Sister Agnes was a very beautiful woman. She retains that air of high rank, which always distinguished her, but her beauty, you must perceive, is fled; I can scarcely discover even a vestige of the loveliness, that once animated her features.'

'It is strange,' said Emily, 'but there are moments, when her countenance has appeared familiar to my memory! You will think me fanciful, and I think myself so, for I certainly never saw Sister Agnes, before I came to this convent, and I must, therefore, have seen some person, whom she strongly resembles, though of this I have no recollection.'

'You have been interested by the deep melancholy of her countenance,' said Frances, 'and its impression has probably deluded your imagination; for I might as reasonably think I perceive a likeness between you and Agnes, as you, that you have seen her any where but in this convent, since this has been her place of refuge, for nearly as many years as make your age.'

'Indeed!' said Emily.

'Yes,' rejoined Frances, 'and why does that circumstance excite your surprise?'

Emily did not appear to notice this question, but remained thoughtful, for a few moments, and then said, 'It was about that same period that the Marchioness de Villeroi expired.'

'That is an odd remark,' said Frances.

Emily, recalled from her reverie, smiled, and gave the conversation another turn, but it soon came back to the subject of the unhappy nun, and Emily remained in the cell of Sister Frances, till the mid-night bell aroused her; when, apologizing for having interrupted the sister's repose, till this late hour, they quitted the cell together. Emily returned to her chamber, and the nun, bearing a glimmering taper, went to her devotion in the chapel.

Several days followed, during which Emily saw neither the Count, or any of his family; and, when, at length, he appeared, she remarked, with concern, that his air was unusually disturbed.

'My spirits are harassed,' said he, in answer to her anxious enquiries, 'and I mean to change my residence, for a little while, an experiment, which, I hope, will restore my mind to its usual tranquillity. My daughter and myself will accompany the Baron St Foix to his chateau. It lies in a valley of the Pyrenées, that opens towards Gascony, and I have been thinking. Emily, that, when you set out for La Vallée, we may go part of the way together; it would be a satisfaction to me to guard you towards your home.'

She thanked the Count for his friendly consideration, and lamented, that the necessity for her going first to Tholouse would render this plan impracticable, 'But, when you are at the Baron's residence,' she added, 'you will be only a short journey from La Vallée, and I think, sir, you will not leave the country without visiting me; it is unnecessary to say with what pleasure I should receive you and the Lady Blanche.'

‘I do not doubt it,’ replied the Count, ‘and I will not deny myself and Blanche the pleasure of visiting you, if your affairs should allow you to be at La Vallée, about the time when we can meet you there.’

When Emily said that she should hope to see the Countess also, she was not sorry to learn that this lady was going, accompanied by Mademoiselle Bearn, to pay a visit, for a few weeks, to a family in lower Languedoc.

The Count, after some further conversation on his intended journey and on the arrangement of Emily’s, took leave; and many days did not succeed this visit, before a second letter from M. Quesnel informed her, that he was then at Tholouse, that La Vallée was at liberty, and that he wished her to set off for the former place, where he awaited her arrival, with all possible dispatch, since his own affairs pressed him to return to Gascony. Emily did not hesitate to obey him, and, having taken an affecting leave of the Count’s family, in which M. Du Pont was still included, and of her friends at the convent, she set out for Tholouse, attended by the unhappy Annette, and guarded by a steady servant of the Count.

CHAPTER X

> ‘Lull’d in the countless chambers of the brain,
>
> Our thoughts are link’d by many a hidden chain:
> Awake but one, and lo! what myriads rise!
> Each stamps its image as the other flies!’
> [ROGERS] *Pleasures of Memory*[1]

Emily pursued her journey, without any accident, along the plains of Languedoc towards the north-west; and, on this her return to Tholouse, which she had last left with Madame Montoni, she thought much on the melancholy fate of her aunt, who, but for her own imprudence, might now have been living in happiness there! Montoni, too, often rose to her fancy, such as she had seen him in his days of triumph, bold, spirited and commanding; such also as she had since beheld him in his days of vengeance; and now, only a few short months had passed – and he had no longer the power, or the will to afflict; – he had become a clod of earth, and his life was vanished like a shadow! Emily could have wept at his fate, had she not remembered his crimes; for that of her unfortunate aunt she did weep, and all sense of her errors was overcome by the recollection of her misfortunes.

Other thoughts and other emotions succeeded, as Emily drew near the well-known scenes of her early love, and considered, that Valancourt was lost to her and to himself, for ever. At length, she came to the brow of the hill, whence, on her departure for Italy, she had given a farewell look to this beloved landscape, amongst whose woods and fields she had so often walked with Valancourt, and where he was then to inhabit, when she would be far, far away! She saw, once more, that chain of the Pyrenées, which overlooked La Vallée, rising, like faint clouds, on the horizon. ‘There, too, is Gascony, extended at their feet!’ said she, ‘O my father, – my mother! And there, too, is the Garonne!’ she added, drying the tears, that obscured her sight, – ‘and Tholouse, and my aunt’s mansion – and the groves in her garden! – O my friends! are ye all lost to me – must I never, never see ye more!’ Tears rushed again to her eyes, and she continued to weep, till an abrupt turn in the road had nearly occasioned the carriage to overset, when, looking up, she perceived another part of the well-known scene around Tholouse, and all the reflections and anticipations, which she had suffered, at the moment, when she bade it last adieu, came with recollected force to her heart. She remembered how anxiously she had looked forward to the futurity, which was to decide her happiness concerning Valancourt, and what depressing fears had assailed her; the very words she had uttered; as she withdrew her last look from the prospect, came to her memory. ‘Could I but be certain,’ she had then said, ‘that I should ever return, and that Valancourt would still live for me – I should go in peace!’

Now, that futurity, so anxiously anticipated, was arrived, she was returned – but what a dreary blank appeared! – Valancourt no longer lived for her! She had no longer even the melancholy satisfaction of contemplating his image in her heart, for he was no longer the same Valancourt she had cherished there – the solace of many a mournful hour, the animating friend, that had enabled her to bear up against the oppression of Montoni – the distant hope, that had beamed over her gloomy prospect! On perceiving this beloved idea to be an illusion of her own creation, Valancourt seemed to be annihilated, and her soul sickened at the blank, that remained. His marriage with a rival, even his death, she thought she could have endured with more fortitude, than this discovery; for then, amidst all her grief, she could have looked in secret upon the image of goodness, which her fancy had drawn of him, and comfort would have mingled with her suffering!

Drying her tears, she looked, once more, upon the landscape, which had excited them, and perceived, that she was passing the very bank, where she had taken leave of Valancourt, on the morning of her departure from Tholouse, and she now saw him, through her returning tears, such as he had appeared, when she looked from the carriage to give him a last adieu – saw him leaning mournfully against the high trees, and remembered the fixed look of mingled tenderness and anguish, with which he had then regarded her. This recollection was too much for her heart, and she sunk back in the carriage, nor once looked up, till it stopped at the gates of what was now her own mansion.

These being opened, and by the servant, to whose care the chateau had been entrusted, the carriage drove into the court, where, alighting, she hastily passed through the great hall, now silent and solitary, to a large oak parlour, the common sitting room of the late Madame Montoni, where, instead of being received by M. Quesnel, she found a letter from him, informing her, that business of consequence had obliged him to leave Tholouse two days before. Emily was, upon the whole, not sorry to be spared his presence, since his abrupt departure appeared to indicate the same indifference, with which he had formerly regarded her. This letter informed her, also, of the progress he had made in the settlement of her affairs, and concluded with directions, concerning the forms of some business, which remained for her to transact. But M. Quesnel’s unkindness did not long occupy her thoughts, which returned to the remembrance of the persons she had been accustomed to see in this mansion, and chiefly of the ill-guided and unfortunate Madame Montoni.

In the room, where she now sat, she had breakfasted with her on the morning of their departure for Italy; and the view of it brought most forcibly to her recollection all she had herself suffered, at that time, and the many gay expectations, which her aunt had formed, respecting the journey before her. While Emily's mind was thus engaged, her eyes wandered unconsciously to a large window, that looked upon the garden, and here new memorials of the past spoke to her heart, for she saw extended before her the very avenue, in which she had parted with Valancourt, on the eve of her journey; and all the anxiety, the tender interest he had shewn, concerning her future happiness, his earnest remonstrances against her committing herself to the power of Montoni, and the truth of his affection, came afresh to her memory. At this moment, it appeared almost impossible, that Valancourt could have become unworthy of her regard, and she doubted all that she had lately heard to his disadvantage, and even his own words, which had confirmed Count de Villefort's report of him. Overcome by the recollections, which the view of this avenue occasioned, she turned abruptly from the window, and sunk into a chair beside it, where she sat, given up to grief, till the entrance of Annette, with coffee, aroused her.

'Dear madam, how melancholy this place looks now,' said Annette, 'to what it used to do! It is dismal coming home, when there is nobody to welcome one!'

This was not the moment, in which Emily could bear the remark; her tears fell again, and, as soon as she had taken the coffee, she retired to her apartment, where she endeavoured to repose her fatigued spirits. But busy memory would still supply her with the visions of former times: she saw Valancourt interesting and benevolent, as he had been wont to appear in the days of their early love, and, amidst the scenes, where she had believed that they should sometimes pass their years together! – but, at length, sleep closed these afflicting scenes from her view.

On the following morning, serious occupation recovered her from such melancholy reflections; for, being desirous of quitting Tholouse, and of hastening on to La Vallée, she made some enquiries into the condition of the estate, and immediately dispatched a part of the necessary business concerning it, according to the directions of Mons. Quesnel. It required a strong effort to abstract her thoughts from other interests sufficiently to attend to this, but she was rewarded for her exertions by again experiencing, that employment is the surest antidote to sorrow.

This day was devoted entirely to business; and, among other concerns, she employed means to learn the situation of all her poor tenants, that she might relieve their wants, or confirm their comforts.

In the evening, her spirits were so much strengthened, that she thought she could bear to visit the gardens, where she had so often walked with Valancourt; and, knowing, that, if she delayed to do so, their scenes would only affect her the more, whenever they should be viewed, she took advantage of the present state of her mind, and entered them.

Passing hastily the gate leading from the court into the gardens, she hurried up the great avenue, scarcely permitting her memory to dwell for a moment on the circumstance of her having here parted with Valancourt, and soon quitted this for other walks less interesting to her heart. These brought her, at length, to the flight of steps, that led from the lower garden to the terrace, on seeing which, she became agitated, and hesitated whether to ascend, but, her resolution returning, she proceeded.

'Ah!' said Emily, as she ascended, 'these are the same high trees, that used to wave over the terrace, and these the same flowery thickets – the liburnum, the wild rose, and the cerinthe[2] – which were wont to grow beneath them! Ah! and there, too, on that bank, are the very plants, which Valancourt so carefully reared! – O when last I saw them!' – She checked the thought, but could not restrain her tears, and, after walking slowly on for a few moments, her agitation, upon the view of this well-known scene, increased so much, that she was obliged to stop, and lean upon the wall of the terrace. It was a mild, and beautiful evening. The sun was setting over the extensive landscape, to which his beams, sloping from beneath a dark cloud, that overhung the west, gave rich and partial colouring, and touched the tufted summits of the groves, that rose from the garden below, with a yellow gleam. Emily and Valancourt had often admired together this scene, at the same hour; and it was exactly on this spot, that, on the night preceding her departure for Italy, she had listened to his remonstrances against the journey, and to the pleadings of passionate affection. Some observations, which she made on the landscape, brought this to her remembrance, and with it all the minute particulars of that conversation; – the alarming doubts he had expressed concerning Montoni, doubts, which had since been fatally confirmed; the reasons and entreaties he had employed to prevail with her to consent to an immediate marriage; the tenderness of his love, the paroxysms of his grief, and the conviction he had repeatedly expressed, that they should never meet again in happiness! All these circumstances rose afresh to her mind, and awakened the various emotions she had then suffered. Her tenderness for Valancourt became as powerful as in the moments, when she thought, that she was parting with him and happiness together, and when the strength of her mind had enabled her to triumph over present suffering, rather than to deserve the reproach of her conscience by engaging in a clandestine marriage. – 'Alas!' said Emily, as these recollections came to her mind, 'and what have I gained by the fortitude I then practised? – am I happy now? – He said, we should meet no more in happiness; but, O! he little thought his own misconduct would separate us, and lead to the very evil he then dreaded!'

Her reflections increased her anguish, while she was compelled to acknowledge, that the fortitude she had formerly exerted, if it had not conducted her to happiness, had saved her from irretrievable misfortune – from Valancourt himself ! But in these moments she could not congratulate herself on the prudence, that had saved her; she could only lament, with bitterest anguish, the circumstances, which had conspired to betray Valancourt into a course of life so different from that, which the virtues, the taste, and the pursuits of his early years had promised; but she still loved him too well to believe, that his heart was even now depraved, though his conduct had been criminal. An observation, which had fallen from M. St Aubert more than once, now occurred to her. 'This young man,' said he, speaking of Valancourt, 'has never been at Paris;' a remark, that had surprised her at the time it was uttered, but which she now understood, and she exclaimed sorrowfully, ‘O Valancourt! if such a friend as my father had been with you at Paris – your noble, ingenuous nature would not have fallen!’

The sun was now set, and, recalling her thoughts from their melancholy subject, she continued her walk; for the pensive shade of twilight was pleasing to her, and the nightingales from the surrounding groves began to answer each other in the long-drawn, plaintive note, which always touched her heart; while all the fragrance of the flowery thickets, that bounded the terrace, was awakened by the cool evening air, which floated so lightly among their leaves, that they scarcely trembled as it passed.

Emily came, at length, to the steps of the pavilion, that terminated the terrace, and where her last interview with Valancourt, before her departure from Tholouse, had so unexpectedly taken place. The door was now shut, and she trembled, while she hesitated whether to open it; but her wish to see again a place, which had been the chief scene of her former happiness, at length overcoming her reluctance to encounter the painful regret it would renew, she entered. The room was obscured by a melancholy shade, but through the open lattices, darkened by the hanging foliage of the vines, appeared the dusky landscape, the Garonne reflecting the evening light, and the west still glowing. A chair was placed near one of the balconies, as if some person had been sitting there, but the other furniture of the pavilion remained exactly as usual, and Emily thought it looked as if it had not once been moved since she set out for Italy. The silent and deserted air of the place added solemnity to her emotions, for she heard only the low whisper of the breeze, as it shook the leaves of the vines, and the very faint murmur of the Garonne.

She seated herself in a chair, near the lattice, and yielded to the sadness of her heart, while she recollected the circumstances of her parting interview with Valancourt, on this spot. It was here too, that she had passed some of the happiest hours of her life with him, when her aunt favoured the connection, for here she had often sat and worked, while he conversed, or read; and she now well remembered with what discriminating judgment, with what tempered energy, he used to repeat some of the sublimest passages of their favourite authors; how often he would pause to admire with her their excellence, and with what tender delight he would listen to her remarks, and correct her taste.

‘And is it possible,’ said Emily, as these recollections returned – ‘is it possible, that a mind, so susceptible of whatever is grand and beautiful, could stoop to low pursuits, and be subdued by frivolous temptations?’

She remembered how often she had seen the sudden tear start in his eye, and had heard his voice tremble with emotion, while he related any great or benevolent action, or repeated a sentiment of the same character. ‘And such a mind,’ said she, ‘such a heart, were to be sacrificed to the habits of a great city!’

These recollections becoming too painful to be endured, she abruptly left the pavilion, and, anxious to escape from the memorials of her departed happiness, returned towards the chateau. As she passed along the terrace, she perceived a person, walking, with a slow step, and a dejected air, under the trees, at some distance. The twilight, which was now deep, would not allow her to distinguish who it was, and she imagined it to be one of the servants, till, the sound of her steps seeming to reach him, he turned half round, and she thought she saw Valancourt!

Whoever it was, he instantly struck among the thickets on the left, and disappeared, while Emily, her eyes fixed on the place, whence he had vanished, and her frame trembling so excessively, that she could scarcely support herself, remained, for some moments, unable to quit the spot, and scarcely conscious of existence. With her recollection, her strength returned, and she hurried toward the house, where she did not venture to enquire who had been in the gardens, lest she should betray her emotion; and she sat down alone, endeavouring to recollect the figure, air and features of the person she had just seen. Her view of him, however, had been so transient, and the gloom had rendered it so imperfect, that she could remember nothing with exactness; yet the general appearance of his figure, and his abrupt departure, made her still believe, that this person was Valancourt. Sometimes, indeed, she thought, that her fancy, which had been occupied by the idea of him, had suggested his image to her uncertain sight: but this conjecture was fleeting. If it was himself, whom she had seen, she wondered much, that he should be at Tholouse, and more, how he had gained admittance into the garden; but as often as her impatience prompted her to enquire whether any stranger had been admitted, she was restrained by an unwillingness to betray her doubts; and the evening was passed in anxious conjecture, and in efforts to dismiss the subject from her thoughts. But, these endeavours were ineffectual, and a thousand inconsistent emotions assailed her, whenever she fancied that Valancourt might be near her; now, she dreaded it to be true, and now she feared it to be false; and, while she constantly tried to persuade herself, that she wished the person, whom she had seen, might not be Valancourt, her heart as constantly contradicted her reason.

The following day was occupied by the visits of several neighbouring families, formerly intimate with Madame Montoni, who came to condole with Emily on her death, to congratulate her upon the acquisition of these estates, and to enquire about Montoni, and concerning the strange reports they had heard of her own situation; all which was done with the utmost decorum, and the visitors departed with as much composure as they had arrived.

Emily was wearied by these formalities, and disgusted by the subservient manners of many persons, who had thought her scarcely worthy of common attention, while she was believed to be a dependant on Madame Montoni.

‘Surely,’ said she, ‘there is some magic in wealth, which can thus make persons pay their court to it, when it does not even benefit themselves. How strange it is, that a fool or a knave, with riches, should be treated with more respect by the world, than a good man, or a wise man in poverty!’

It was evening, before she was left alone, and she then wished to have refreshed her spirits in the free air of her garden; but she feared to go thither, lest she should meet again the person, whom she had seen on the preceding night, and he should prove to be Valancourt. The suspense and anxiety she suffered, on this subject, she found all her efforts unable to controul, and her secret wish to see Valancourt once more, though unseen by him, powerfully prompted her to go, but prudence and a delicate pride restrained her, and she determined to avoid the possibility of throwing herself in his way, by forbearing to visit the gardens, for several days.

When, after near a week, she again ventured thither, she made Annette her companion, and confined her walk to the lower grounds, but often started as the leaves rustled in the breeze, imagining, that some person was among the thickets; and, at the turn of every alley, she looked forward with apprehensive expectation. She pursued her walk thoughtfully and silently, for her agitation would not suffer her to converse with Annette, to whom, however, thought and silence were so intolerable, that she did not scruple at length to talk to her mistress.

'Dear madam,' said she, 'why do you start so? one would think you knew what has happened.'

'What has happened?' said Emily, in a faltering voice, and trying to command her emotion.

'The night before last, you know, madam'—

'I know nothing, Annette,' replied her lady in a more hurried voice.

'The night before last, madam, there was a robber in the garden.'

'A robber!' said Emily, in an eager, yet doubting tone.

'I suppose he was a robber, madam. What else could he be?'

'Where did you see him, Annette?' rejoined Emily, looking round her, and turning back towards the chateau.

'It was not I that saw him, madam, it was Jean the gardener. It was twelve o'clock at night, and, as he was coming across the court to go the back way into the house, what should he see – but somebody walking in the avenue, that fronts the garden gate! So, with that, Jean guessed how it was, and he went into the house for his gun.'

'His gun!' exclaimed Emily.

'Yes, madam, his gun; and then he came out into the court to watch him. Presently, he sees him come slowly down the avenue, and lean over the garden gate, and look up at the house for a long time; and I warrant he examined it well, and settled what window he should break in at.'

'But the gun,' said Emily – 'the gun!'

'Yes, madam, all in good time. Presently, Jean says, the robber opened the gate, and was coming into the court, and then he thought proper to ask him his business: so he called out again, and bade him say who he was, and what he wanted. But the man would do neither; but turned upon his heel, and passed into the garden again. Jean knew then well enough how it was, and so he fired after him.'

'Fired!' exclaimed Emily.

'Yes, madam, fired off his gun; but, Holy Virgin! what makes you look so pale, madam? The man was not killed, – I dare say; but if he was, his comrades carried him off: for, when Jean went in the morning, to look for the body, it was gone, and nothing to be seen but a track of blood on the ground. Jean followed it, that he might find out where the man got into the garden, but it was lost in the grass, and'—

Annette was interrupted: for Emily's spirits died away, and she would have fallen to the ground, if the girl had not caught her, and supported her to a bench, close to them.

When, after a long absence, her senses returned, Emily desired to be led to her apartment; and, though she trembled with anxiety to enquire further on the subject of her alarm, she found herself too ill at present, to dare the intelligence which it was possible she might receive of Valancourt. Having dismissed Annette, that she might weep and think at liberty, she endeavoured to recollect the exact air of the person, whom she had seen on the terrace, and still her fancy gave her the figure of Valancourt. She had, indeed, scarcely a doubt, that it was he whom she had seen, and at whom the gardener had fired: for the manner of the latter person, as described by Annette, was not that of a robber; nor did it appear probable, that a robber would have come alone, to break into a house so spacious as this.

When Emily thought herself sufficiently recovered, to listen to what Jean might have to relate, she sent for him; but he could inform her of no circumstance, that might lead to a knowledge of the person, who had been shot, or of the consequence of the wound; and, after severely reprimanding him, for having fired with bullets, and ordering diligent enquiry to be made in the neighbourhood for the discovery of the wounded person, she dismissed him, and herself remained in the same state of terrible suspense. All the tenderness she had ever felt for Valancourt, was recalled by the sense of his danger; and the more she considered the subject, the more her conviction strengthened, that it was he, who had visited the gardens, for the purpose of soothing the misery of disappointed affection, amidst the scenes of his former happiness.

'Dear madam,' said Annette, when she returned, 'I never saw you so affected before! I dare say the man is not killed.'

Emily shuddered, and lamented bitterly the rashness of the gardener in having fired.

'I knew you would be angry enough about that, madam, or I should have told you before; and he knew so too; for, says he, "Annette, say nothing about this to my lady. She lies on the other side of the house, so did not hear the gun, perhaps; but she would be angry with me, if she knew, seeing there is blood. But then," says he, "how is one to keep the garden clear, if one is afraid to fire at a robber, when one sees him?"'

'No more of this,' said Emily, 'pray leave me.'

Annette obeyed, and Emily returned to the agonizing considerations, that had assailed her before, but which she, at length, endeavoured to sooth by a new remark. If the stranger was Valancourt, it was certain he had come alone, and it appeared, therefore, that he had been able to quit the gardens, without assistance; a circumstance which did not seem probable, had his wound been dangerous. With this consideration, she endeavoured to support herself, during the enquiries, that were making by her servants in the neighbourhood; but day after day came, and still closed in uncertainty, concerning this affair: and Emily, suffering in silence, at length, drooped, and sunk under the pressure of her anxiety. She was attacked by a slow fever, and when she yielded to the persuasion of Annette to send for medical advice, the physicians prescribed little beside air, gentle exercise and amusement: but how was this last to be obtained? She, however, endeavoured to abstract her thoughts from the subject of her anxiety; by employing them in promoting that happiness in others, which she had lost herself, and, when the evening was fine, she usually took an airing, including in her ride the cottages of some of her tenants, on whose condition she made such observations, as often enabled her, unasked, to fulfil their wishes.

Her indisposition, and the business she engaged in, relative to this estate, had already protracted her stay at Tholouse, beyond the period she had formerly fixed for her departure to La Vallée; and now she was unwilling to leave the only place, where it seemed possible, that certainty could be obtained on the subject of her distress. But the time was come, when her presence was necessary at La Vallée, a letter from the Lady Blanche now informing her, that the Count and herself, being then at the chateau of the Baron St Foix, purposed to visit her at La Vallée, on their way home, as soon as they should be informed of her arrival there. Blanche added, that they made this visit, with the hope of inducing her to return with them to Chateau-le-Blanc.

Emily, having replied to the letter of her friend, and said that she should be at La Vallée in a few days, made hasty preparations for the journey; and, in thus leaving Tholouse, endeavoured to support herself with a belief, that, if any fatal accident had happened to Valancourt, she must in this interval have heard of it.

On the evening before her departure, she went to take leave of the terrace and the pavilion. The day had been sultry, but a light shower, that fell just before sun-set, had cooled the air, and given that soft verdure to the woods and pastures, which is so refreshing to the eye; while the rain-drops, still trembling on the shrubs, glittered in the last yellow gleam, that lighted up the scene, and the air was filled with fragrance, exhaled by the late shower, from herbs and flowers and from the earth itself. But the lovely prospect, which Emily beheld from the terrace, was no longer viewed by her with delight; she sighed deeply as her eye wandered over it, and her spirits were in a state of such dejection, that she could not think of her approaching return to La Vallée, without tears, and seemed to mourn again the death of her father, as if it had been an event of yesterday. Having reached the pavilion, she seated herself at the open lattice, and, while her eyes settled on the distant mountains, that overlooked Gascony, still gleaming on the horizon, though the sun had now left the plains below, ‘Alas!’ said she, ‘I return to your long lost scenes, but shall meet no more the parents, that were wont to render them delightful – no more shall see the smile of welcome, or hear the well-known voice of fondness: – all will now be cold and silent in what was once my happy home.’

Tears stole down her cheek, as the remembrance of what that home had been, returned to her; but, after indulging her sorrow for some time, she checked it, accusing herself of ingratitude in forgetting the friends, that she possessed, while she lamented those that were departed; and she, at length, left the pavilion and the terrace, without having observed a shadow of Valancourt or of any other person.

CHAPTER XI

'Ah happy hills! ah pleasing shade!
Ah fields belov'd in vain!
Where once my careless childhood stray'd,
A stranger yet to pain!
I feel the gales, that from ye blow,
A momentary bliss bestow
As waving fresh their gladsome wing,
My weary soul they seem to sooth.'

GRAY ['Ode on a Distant Prospect of Eton College'][1]

On the following morning, Emily left Tholouse at an early hour, and reached La Vallée about sun-set. With the melancholy she experienced on the review of a place which had been the residence of her parents, and the scene of her earliest delight, was mingled, after the first shock had subsided, a tender and undescribable pleasure. For time had so far blunted the acuteness of her grief, that she now courted every scene, that awakened the memory of her friends; in every room, where she had been accustomed to see them, they almost seemed to live again; and she felt that La Vallée was still her happiest home. One of the first apartments she visited, was that, which had been her father's library, and here she seated herself in his arm-chair, and, while she contemplated, with tempered resignation, the picture of past times, which her memory gave, the tears she shed could scarcely be called those of grief.

Soon after her arrival, she was surprised by a visit from the venerable M. Barreaux, who came impatiently to welcome the daughter of his late respected neighbour, to her long-deserted home. Emily was comforted by the presence of an old friend, and they passed an interesting hour in conversing of former times, and in relating some of the circumstances that had occurred to each, since they parted.

The evening was so far advanced, when M. Barreaux left Emily, that she could not visit the garden that night; but, on the following morning, she traced its long-regretted scenes with fond impatience; and, as she walked beneath the groves, which her father had planted, and where she had so often sauntered in affectionate conversation with him, his countenance, his smile, even the accents of his voice, returned with exactness to her fancy, and her heart melted to the tender recollections.

This, too, was his favourite season of the year, at which they had often together admired the rich and variegated tints of these woods and the magical effect of autumnal lights upon the mountains; and now, the view of these circumstances made memory eloquent. As she wandered pensively on, she fancied the following address

TO AUTUMN

Sweet Autumn! how thy melancholy grace
Steals on my heart, as through these shades I wind!
Sooth'd by thy breathing sigh, I fondly trace
Each lonely image of the pensive mind!
Lov'd scenes, lov'd friends – long lost! around me rise,
And wake the melting thought, the tender tear!
That tear, that thought, which more than mirth I prize –
Sweet as the gradual tint, that paints thy year!
Thy farewel smile, with fond regret, I view,
Thy beaming lights, soft gliding o'er the woods;
Thy distant landscape, touch'd with yellow hue
While falls the lengthen'd gleam; thy winding floods,
Now veil'd in shade, save where the skiff's white sails
Swell to the breeze, and catch thy streaming ray.
But now, e'en now! – the partial vision fails,
And the wave smiles, as sweeps the cloud away!

Emblem of life! – Thus checquer'd is its plan,

Thus joy succeeds to grief – thus smiles the varied man!

One of Emily's earliest enquiries, after her arrival at La Vallée, was concerning Theresa, her father's old servant, whom it may be remembered that M. Quesnel had turned from the house when it was let, without any provision. Understanding that she lived in a cottage at no great distance, Emily walked thither, and, on approaching, was pleased to see, that her habitation was pleasantly situated on a green slope, sheltered by a tuft of oaks, and had an appearance of comfort and extreme neatness. She found the old woman within, picking vine-stalks, who, on perceiving her young mistress, was nearly overcome with joy.

'Ah! my dear young lady!' said she, 'I thought I should never see you again in this world, when I heard you was gone to that outlandish country. I have been hardly used, since you went; I little thought they would have turned me out of my old master's family in my old age!'

Emily lamented the circumstance, and then assured her, that she would make her latter days comfortable, and expressed satisfaction, on seeing her in so pleasant an habitation.

Theresa thanked her with tears, adding, 'Yes, mademoiselle, it is a very comfortable home, thanks to the kind friend, who took me out of my distress, when you was too far off to help me, and placed me here! I little thought! – but no more of that –'

'And who was this kind friend?' said Emily: 'whoever it was, I shall consider him as mine also.'

'Ah mademoiselle! that friend forbad me to blazon the good deed – I must not say, who it was. But how you are altered since I saw you last! You look so pale now, and so thin, too; but then, there is my old master's smile! Yes, that will never leave you, any more than the goodness, that used to make him smile. Alas-a-day! the poor lost a friend indeed, when he died!'

Emily was affected by this mention of her father, which Theresa observing, changed the subject. 'I heard, mademoiselle,' said she, 'that Madame Cheron married a foreign gentleman, after all, and took you abroad; how does she do?'

Emily now mentioned her death. 'Alas!' said Theresa, 'if she had not been my master's sister, I should never have loved her; she was always so cross. But how does that dear young gentleman do, M. Valancourt? he was an handsome youth, and a good one; is he well, mademoiselle?'

Emily was much agitated.

'A blessing on him!' continued Theresa. 'Ah, my dear young lady, you need not look so shy; I know all about it. Do you think I do not know, that he loves you? Why, when you was away, mademoiselle, he used to come to the chateau, and walk about it, so disconsolate! He would go into every room in the lower part of the house, and, sometimes, he would sit himself down in a chair, with his arms across, and his eyes on the floor, and there he would sit, and think, and think, for the hour together. He used to be very fond of the south parlour, because I told him it used to be yours; and there he would stay, looking at the pictures, which I said you drew, and playing upon your lute, that hung up by the window, and reading in your books till sun-set, and then he must go back to his brother's chateau. And then —'

'It is enough, Theresa,' said Emily. – 'How long have you lived in this cottage – and how can I serve you? will you remain here, or return and live with me?'

'Nay, mademoiselle!' said Theresa, 'do not be so shy to your poor old servant. I am sure it is no disgrace to like such a good young gentleman.'

A deep sigh escaped from Emily.

'Ah! how he did love to talk of you! I loved him for that. Nay, for that matter, he liked to hear me talk, for he did not say much himself. But I soon found out what he came to the chateau about. Then, he would go into the garden, and down to the terrace, and sit under that great tree there, for the day together, with one of your books in his hand; but he did not read much, I fancy; for one day I happened to go that way, and I heard somebody talking. Who can be here? says I: I am sure I let nobody into the garden, but the Chevalier! So I walked softly, to see who it could be; and behold! it was the Chevalier himself, talking to himself about you. And he repeated your name, and sighed so! and said he had lost you for ever, for that you would never return for him. I thought he was out in his reckoning there, but I said nothing, and stole away.'

'No more of this trifling,' said Emily, awakening from her reverie: 'it displeases me.'

'But, when M. Quesnel let the chateau, I thought it would have broke the Chevalier's heart.'

'Theresa,' said Emily seriously, 'you must name the Chevalier no more!'

'Not name him, mademoiselle!' cried Theresa: 'what times are come up now? Why, I love the Chevalier next to my old master and you, mademoiselle.'

'Perhaps your love was not well bestowed, then,' replied Emily, trying to conceal her tears; 'but, however that might be, we shall meet no more.'

'Meet no more! – not well bestowed!' exclaimed Theresa. 'What do I hear? No, mademoiselle, my love was well bestowed, for it was the Chevalier Valancourt, who gave me this cottage, and has supported me in my old age, ever since M. Quesnel turned me from my master's house.'

'The Chevalier Valancourt!' said Emily, trembling extremely.

‘Yes, mademoiselle, he himself, though he made me promise not to tell; but how could one help, when one heard him ill spoken of? Ah! dear young lady, you may well weep, if you have behaved unkindly to him, for a more tender heart than his never young gentleman had. He found me out in my distress, when you was too far off to help me; and M. Quesnel refused to do so, and bade me go to service again – Alas! I was too old for that! – The Chevalier found me, and bought me this cottage, and gave me money to furnish it, and bade me seek out another poor woman to live with me; and he ordered his brother’s steward to pay me, every quarter, that which has supported me in comfort. Think then, mademoiselle, whether I have not reason to speak well of the Chevalier. And there are others, who could have afforded it better than he: and I am afraid he has hurt himself by his generosity, for quarter day is gone by long since, and no money for me! But do not weep so, mademoiselle: you are not sorry surely to hear of the poor Chevalier’s goodness.’

‘Sorry!’ said Emily, and wept the more. ‘But how long is it since you have seen him?’

‘Not this many a day, mademoiselle.’

‘When did you hear of him?’ enquired Emily, with increased emotion.

‘Alas! never since he went away so suddenly into Languedoc; and he was but just come from Paris then, or I should have seen him, I am sure. Quarter day is gone by long since, and, as I said, no money for me; and I begin to fear some harm has happened to him: and if I was not so far from Estuviere, and so lame, I should have gone to enquire before this time; and I have nobody to send so far.’

Emily’s anxiety, as to the fate of Valancourt, was now scarcely endurable, and, since propriety would not suffer her to send to the chateau of his brother, she requested that Theresa would immediately hire some person to go to his steward from herself, and, when he asked for the quarterage due to her, to make enquiries concerning Valancourt. But she first made Theresa promise never to mention her name in this affair, or ever with that of the Chevalier Valancourt; and her former faithfulness to M. St Aubert induced Emily to confide in her assurances. Theresa now joyfully undertook to procure a person for this errand, and then Emily, after giving her a sum of money to supply her with present comforts, returned, with spirits heavily oppressed, to her home, lamenting, more than ever, that an heart, possessed of so much benevolence as Valancourt’s, should have been contaminated by the vices of the world, but affected by the delicate affection, which his kindness to her old servant expressed for herself.

CHAPTER XII

————‘Light thickens, and the crow
Makes wing to the rooky wood:
Good things of day begin to droop, and drowze;
While night’s black agents to their preys do rouze.’
[SHAKESPEARE] *Macbeth*[1]

Meanwhile Count de Villefort and Lady Blanche had passed a pleasant fortnight at the chateau de St Foix, with the Baron and Baroness, during which they made frequent excursions among the mountains, and were delighted with the romantic wildness of Pyrenéan scenery. It was with regret, that the Count bade adieu to his old friends, although with the hope of being soon united with them in one family; for it was settled, that M. St Foix, who now attended them into Gascony should receive the hand of the Lady Blanche, upon their arrival at Chateau-le-Blanc. As the road, from the Baron’s residence to La Vallée, was over some of the wildest tract of the Pyrenées, and where a carriage-wheel had never passed, the Count hired mules for himself and his family, as well as a couple of stout guides, who were well armed, informed of all the passes of the mountains, and who boasted, too, that they were acquainted with every brake and dingle in the way, could tell the names of all the highest points of this chain of Alps, knew every forest, that spread along their narrow vallies, the shallowest part of every torrent they must cross, and the exact distance of every goat-herd’s and hunter’s cabin they should have occasion to pass, – which last article of learning required no very capacious memory, for even such simple inhabitants were but thinly scattered over these wilds.

The Count left the chateau de St Foix, early in the morning, with an intention of passing the night at a little inn upon the mountains, about half way to La Vallée, of which his guides had informed him; and, though this was frequented chiefly by Spanish muleteers, on their route into France, and, of course, would afford only sorry accommodation, the Count had no alternative, for it was the only place like an inn, on the road.

After a day of admiration and fatigue, the travellers found themselves, about sun-set, in a woody valley, overlooked, on every side, by abrupt heights. They had proceeded for many leagues, without seeing a human habitation, and had only heard, now and then, at a distance, the melancholy tinkling of a sheep-bell; but now they caught the notes of merry music, and presently saw, within a little green recess among the rocks, a group of mountaineers, tripping through a dance. The Count, who could not look upon the happiness, any more than on the misery of others, with indifference, halted to enjoy this scene of simple pleasure. The group before him consisted of French and Spanish peasants, the inhabitants of a neighbouring hamlet, some of whom were performing a sprightly dance, the women with castanets in their hands, to the sounds of a lute and a tamborine, till, from the brisk melody of France, the music softened into a slow movement, to which two female peasants danced a Spanish Pavan.[2]

The Count, comparing this with the scenes of such gaiety as he had witnessed at Paris, where false taste painted the features, and, while it vainly tried to supply the glow of nature, concealed the charms of animation – where affectation so often distorted the air, and vice perverted the manners – sighed to think, that natural graces and innocent pleasures flourished in the wilds of solitude, while they drooped amidst the concourse of polished society. But the lengthening shadows reminded the travellers, that they had no time to lose; and, leaving this joyous group, they pursued their way towards the little inn, which was to shelter them from the night.

The rays of the setting sun now threw a yellow gleam upon the forests of pine and chesnut, that swept down the lower region of the mountains, and gave resplendent tints to the snowy points above. But soon, even this light faded fast, and the scenery assumed a more tremendous appearance, invested with the obscurity of twilight. Where the torrent had been seen, it was now only heard; where the wild cliffs had displayed every variety of form and attitude, a dark mass of mountains now alone appeared; and the vale, which far, far below had opened its dreadful chasm, the eye could no longer fathom. A melancholy gleam still lingered on the summits of the highest Alps, overlooking the deep repose of evening, and seeming to make the stillness of the hour more awful.

Blanche viewed the scene in silence, and listened with enthusiasm to the murmur of the pines, that extended in dark lines along the mountains, and to the faint voice of the izard, among the rocks, that came at intervals on the air. But her enthusiasm sunk into apprehension, when, as the shadows deepened, she looked upon the doubtful precipice, that bordered the road, as well as on the various fantastic forms of danger, that glimmered through the obscurity beyond it; and she asked her father, how far they were from the inn, and whether he did not consider the road to be dangerous at this late hour. The Count repeated the first question to the guides, who returned a doubtful answer, adding, that, when it was darker, it would be safest to rest, till the moon rose. ‘It is scarcely safe to proceed now,’ said the Count; but the guides, assuring him that there was no danger, went on. Blanche, revived by this assurance, again indulged a pensive pleasure, as she watched the progress of twilight gradually spreading its tints over the woods and mountains, and stealing from the eye every minuter feature of the scene, till the grand outlines of nature alone remained. Then fell the silent dews, and every wild flower, and aromatic plant, that bloomed among the cliffs, breathed forth its sweetness; then, too, when the mountain-bee had crept into its blossomed bed, and the hum of every little insect, that had floated gaily in the sun-beam, was hushed, the sound of many streams, not heard till now, murmured at a distance. – The bats alone, of all the animals inhabiting this region, seemed awake; and, while they flitted across the silent path, which Blanche was pursuing, she remembered the following lines, which Emily had given her:

TO THE BAT

From haunt of man, from day's obtrusive glare,

Thou shroud'st thee in the ruin's ivy'd tow'r,
Or in some shadowy glen's romantic bow'r,
Where wizard forms their mystic charms prepare,
Where Horror lurks, and ever-boding Care!
But, at the sweet and silent ev'ning hour,
When clos'd in sleep is ev'ry languid flow'r,
Thou lov'st to sport upon the twilight air,
Mocking the eye, that would thy course pursue,
In many a wanton-round, elastic, gay,
Thou flit'st athwart the pensive wand'rer's way,
As his lone footsteps print the mountain-dew.
From Indian isles thou com'st, with Summer's car,

Twilight thy love – thy guide her beaming star!

To a warm imagination, the dubious forms, that float, half veiled in darkness, afford a higher delight, than the most distinct scenery, that the sun can shew.[3] While the fancy thus wanders over landscapes partly of its own creation, a sweet complacency steals upon the mind, and

Refines it all to subtlest feeling,

Bids the tear of rapture roll.[4]

The distant note of a torrent, the weak trembling of the breeze among the woods, or the far-off sound of a human voice, now lost and heard again, are circumstances which wonderfully heighten the enthusiastic tone of the mind. The young St Foix, who saw the presentations of a fervid fancy, and felt whatever enthusiasm could suggest, sometimes interrupted the silence, which the rest of the party seemed by mutual consent to preserve, remarking and pointing out to Blanche the most striking effect of the hour upon the scenery; while Blanche, whose apprehensions were beguiled by the conversation of her lover, yielded to the taste so congenial to his, and they conversed in a low restrained voice, the effect of the pensive tranquillity, which twilight and the scene inspired, rather than of any fear, that they should be heard. But, while the heart was thus soothed to tenderness, St Foix gradually mingled, with his admiration of the country, a mention of his affection; and he continued to speak, and Blanche to listen, till the mountains, the woods, and the magical illusions of twilight were remembered no more.

The shadows of evening soon shifted to the gloom of night, which was somewhat anticipated by the vapours, that, gathering fast round the mountains, rolled in dark wreaths along their sides; and the guides proposed to rest, till the moon should rise, adding, that they thought a storm was coming on. As they looked round for a spot, that might afford some kind of shelter, an object was perceived obscurely through the dusk, on a point of rock, a little way down the mountain, which they imagined to be a hunter's or a shepherd's cabin, and the party, with cautious steps, proceeded towards it. Their labour, however, was not rewarded, or their apprehensions soothed; for, on reaching the object of their search, they discovered a monumental cross, which marked the spot to have been polluted by murder.

The darkness would not permit them to read the inscription; but the guides knew this to be a cross, raised to the memory of a Count de Beliard, who had been murdered here by a horde of banditti, that had infested this part of the Pyrenées, a few years before; and the uncommon size of the monument seemed to justify the supposition, that it was erected for a person of some distinction. Blanche shuddered, as she listened to some horrid particulars of the Count's fate, which one of the guides related in a low, restrained tone, as if the sound of his own voice frightened him; but, while they lingered at the cross, attending to his narrative, a flash of lightning glanced upon the rocks, thunder muttered at a distance, and the travellers, now alarmed, quitted this scene of solitary horror, in search of shelter.

Having regained their former track, the guides, as they passed on, endeavoured to interest the Count by various stories of robbery, and even of murder, which had been perpetrated in the very places they must unavoidably pass, with accounts of their own dauntless courage and wonderful escapes. The chief guide, or rather he, who was the most completely armed, drawing forth one of the four pistols, that were tucked into his belt, swore, that it had shot three robbers within the year. He then brandished a clasp-knife of enormous length, and was going to recount the wonderful execution it had done, when St Foix, perceiving, that Blanche was terrified, interrupted him. The Count, meanwhile, secretly laughing at the terrible histories and extravagant boastings of the man, resolved to humour him, and, telling Blanche in a whisper, his design, began to recount some exploits of his own, which infinitely exceeded any related by the guide.

To these surprising circumstances he so artfully gave the colouring of truth, that the courage of the guides was visibly affected by them, who continued silent, long after the Count had ceased to speak. The loquacity of the chief hero thus laid asleep, the vigilance of his eyes and ears seemed more thoroughly awakened, for he listened, with much appearance of anxiety, to the deep thunder, which murmured at intervals, and often paused, as the breeze, that was now rising, rushed among the pines. But, when he made a sudden halt before a tuft of cork trees, that projected over the road, and drew forth a pistol, before he would venture to brave the banditti which might lurk behind it, the Count could no longer refrain from laughter.

Having now, however, arrived at a level spot, somewhat sheltered from the air, by overhanging cliffs and by a wood of larch, that rose over a precipice on the left, and the guides being yet ignorant how far they were from the inn, the travellers determined to rest, till the moon should rise, or the storm disperse. Blanche, recalled to a sense of the present moment, looked on the surrounding gloom, with terror; but giving her hand to St Foix, she alighted, and the whole party entered a kind of cave, if such it could be called, which was only a shallow cavity, formed by the curve of impending rocks. A light being struck, a fire was kindled, whose blaze afforded some degree of cheerfulness and no small comfort, for, though the day had been hot, the night air of this mountainous region was chilling; a fire was partly necessary also to keep off the wolves, with which those wilds were infested.

Provisions being spread upon a projection of the rock, the Count and his family partook of a supper, which, in a scene less rude, would, certainly have been thought less excellent. When the repast was finished, St Foix, impatient for the moon, sauntered along the precipice, to a point, that fronted the east; but all was yet wrapt in gloom, and the silence of night was broken only by the murmuring of woods, that waved far below, or by distant thunder, and, now and then, by the faint voices of the party he had quitted. He viewed, with emotions of awful sublimity, the long volumes of sulphureous clouds, that floated, along the upper and middle regions of the air, and the lightnings that flashed from them, sometimes silently, and, at others, followed by sullen peals of thunder, which the mountains feebly prolonged, while the whole horizon, and the abyss, on which he stood, were discovered in the momentary light. Upon the succeeding darkness, the fire, which had been kindled in the cave, threw a partial gleam, illumining some points of the opposite rocks, and the summits of pine-woods, that hung beetling on the cliffs below, while their recesses seemed to frown in deeper shade.

St Foix stopped to observe the picture, which the party in the cave presented, where the elegant form of Blanche was finely contrasted by the majestic figure of the Count, who was seated by her on a rude stone, and each was rendered more impressive by the grotesque habits and strong features of the guides and other attendants, who were in the back ground of the piece. The effect of the light, too, was interesting; on the surrounding figures it threw a strong, though pale gleam, and glittered on their bright arms; while upon the foliage of a gigantic larch, that impended its shade over the cliff above, appeared a red, dusky tint, deepening almost imperceptibly into the blackness of night.

While St Foix contemplated the scene, the moon, broad and yellow, rose over the eastern summits, from among embattled clouds, and shewed dimly the grandeur of the heavens, the mass of vapours, that rolled half way down the precipice beneath, and the doubtful mountains.

> ‘What dreadful pleasure! there to stand sublime,
>
> Like shipwreck’d mariner on desert coast,
> And view th’ enormous waste of vapour, tost
>
> In billows length’ning to th’ horizon round!’[*]

From this romantic reverie he was awakened by the voices of the guides, repeating his name, which was reverbed from cliff to cliff, till an hundred tongues seemed to call him; when he soon quieted the fears of the Count and the Lady Blanche, by returning to the cave. As the storm, however, seemed approaching, they did not quit their place of shelter; and the Count, seated between his daughter and St Foix, endeavoured to divert the fears of the former, and conversed on subjects, relating to the natural history of the scene, among which they wandered. He spoke of the mineral and fossile substances, found in the depths of these mountains, – the veins of marble and granite, with which they abounded, the strata of shells, discovered near their summits, many thousand fathom above the level of the sea, and at a vast distance from its present shore; – of the tremendous chasms and caverns of the rocks, the grotesque form of the mountains, and the various phænomena, that seem to stamp upon the world the history of the deluge.[6] From the natural history he descended to the mention of events and circumstances, connected with the civil story of the Pyrenées; named some of the most remarkable fortresses, which France and Spain had erected in the passes of these mountains; and gave a brief account of some celebrated sieges and encounters in early times, when Ambition first frightened Solitude from these her deep recesses, made her mountains, which before had echoed only to the torrent’s roar, tremble with the clang of arms, and, when man’s first footsteps in her sacred haunts had left the print of blood!

As Blanche sat, attentive to the narrative, that rendered the scenes doubly interesting, and resigned to solemn emotion, while she considered, that she was on the very ground, once polluted by these events, her reverie was suddenly interrupted by a sound, that came in the wind. – It was the distant bark of a watch-dog. The travellers listened with eager hope, and, as the wind blew stronger, fancied, that the sound came from no great distance; and, the guides having little doubt, that it proceeded from the inn they were in search of, the Count determined to pursue his way. The moon now afforded a stronger, though still an uncertain light, as she moved among broken clouds; and the travellers, led by the sound, re-commenced their journey along the brow of the precipice, preceded by a single torch, that now contended with the moon-light; for the guides, believing they should reach this inn soon after sun-set, had neglected to provide more. In silent caution they followed the sound, which was heard but at intervals, and which, after some time entirely ceased. The guides endeavoured, however, to point their course to the quarter, whence it had issued, but the deep roaring of a torrent soon seized their attention, and presently they came to a tremendous chasm of the mountain, which seemed to forbid all further progress. Blanche alighted from her mule, as did the Count and St Foix, while the guides traversed the edge in search of a bridge, which, however rude, might convey them to the opposite side, and they, at length, confessed, what the Count had begun to suspect, that they had been, for some time, doubtful of their way, and were now certain only, that they had lost it.

At a little distance, was discovered a rude and dangerous passage, formed by an enormous pine, which, thrown across the chasm, united the opposite precipices, and which had been felled probably by the hunter, to facilitate his chace of the izard, or the wolf. The whole party, the guides excepted, shuddered at the prospect of crossing this alpine bridge, whose sides afforded no kind of defence, and from which to fall was to die. The guides, however, prepared to lead over the mules, while Blanche stood trembling on the brink, and listening to the roar of the waters, which were seen descending from rocks above, overhung with lofty pines, and thence precipitating themselves into the deep abyss, where their white surges gleamed faintly in the moon-light. The poor animals proceeded over this perilous bridge with instinctive caution, neither frightened by the noise of the cataract, or deceived by the gloom, which the impending foliage threw athwart their way. It was now, that the solitary torch, which had been hitherto of little service, was found to be an inestimable treasure; and Blanche, terrified, shrinking, but endeavouring to recollect all her firmness and presence of mind, preceded by her lover and supported by her father, followed the red gleam of the torch, in safety, to the opposite cliff.

As they went on, the heights contracted, and formed a narrow pass, at the bottom of which, the torrent they had just crossed, was heard to thunder. But they were again cheered by the bark of a dog, keeping watch, perhaps, over the flocks of the mountains, to protect them from the nightly descent of the wolves. The sound was much nearer than before, and, while they rejoiced in the hope of soon reaching a place of repose, a light was seen to glimmer at a distance. It appeared at a height considerably above the level of their path, and was lost and seen again, as if the waving branches of trees sometimes excluded and then admitted its rays. The guides hallooed with all their strength, but the sound of no human voice was heard in return, and, at length, as a more effectual means of making themselves known, they fired a pistol. But, while they listened in anxious expectation, the noise of the explosion was alone heard, echoing among the rocks, and it gradually sunk into a silence, which no friendly hint of man disturbed. The light, however, that had been seen before, now became plainer, and, soon after, voices were heard indistinctly on the wind; but, upon the guides repeating the call, the voices suddenly ceased, and the light disappeared.

The Lady Blanche was now almost sinking beneath the pressure of anxiety, fatigue and apprehension, and the united efforts of the Count and St Foix could scarcely support her spirits. As they continued to advance, an object was perceived on a point of rock above, which, the strong rays of the moon then falling on it, appeared to be a watch-tower. The Count, from its situation and some other circumstances, had little doubt, that it was such, and believing, that the light had proceeded from thence, he endeavoured to re-animate his daughter's spirits by the near prospect of shelter and repose, which, however rude the accommodation, a ruined watch-tower might afford.

'Numerous watch-towers have been erected among the Pyrenées,' said the Count, anxious only to call Blanche's attention from the subject of her fears; 'and the method, by which they give intelligence of the approach of the enemy, is, you know, by fires, kindled on the summits of these edifices. Signals have thus, sometimes, been communicated from post to post, along a frontier line of several hundred miles in length. Then, as occasion may require, the lurking armies emerge from their fortresses and the forests, and march forth, to defend, perhaps, the entrance of some grand pass, where, planting themselves on the heights, they assail their astonished enemies, who wind along the glen below, with fragments of the shattered cliff, and pour death and defeat upon them. The ancient forts, and watch-towers, overlooking the grand passes of the Pyrenées, are carefully preserved; but some of those in inferior stations have been suffered to fall into decay, and are now frequently converted into the more peaceful habitation of the hunter, or the shepherd, who, after a day of toil, retires hither, and, with his faithful dogs, forgets, near a cheerful blaze, the labour of the chace, or the anxiety of collecting his wandering flocks, while he is sheltered from the nightly storm.'

'But are they always thus peacefully inhabited?' said the Lady Blanche.

'No,' replied the Count, 'they are sometimes the asylum of French and Spanish smugglers, who cross the mountains with contraband goods from their respective countries, and the latter are particularly numerous, against whom strong parties of the king's troops are sometimes sent. But the desperate resolution of these adventurers, who, knowing, that, if they are taken, they must expiate the breach of the law by the most cruel death, travel in large parties, well armed, often daunts the courage of the soldiers. The smugglers, who seek only safety, never engage, when they can possibly avoid it; the military, also, who know, that in these encounters, danger is certain, and glory almost unattainable, are equally reluctant to fight; an engagement, therefore, very seldom happens, but, when it does, it never concludes till after the most desperate and bloody conflict. You are inattentive, Blanche,' added the Count: 'I have wearied you with a dull subject; but see, yonder, in the moon-light, is the edifice we have been in search of, and we are fortunate to be so near it, before the storm bursts.'

Blanche, looking up, perceived, that they were at the foot of the cliff, on whose summit the building stood, but no light now issued from it; the barking of the dog too had, for some time, ceased, and the guides began to doubt, whether this was really the object of their search. From the distance, at which they surveyed it, shewn imperfectly by a cloudy moon, it appeared to be of more extent than a single watch-tower; but the difficulty was how to ascend the height, whose abrupt declivities seemed to afford no kind of path-way.

While the guides carried forward the torch to examine the cliff, the Count, remaining with Blanche and St Foix at its foot, under the shadow of the woods, endeavoured again to beguile the time by conversation, but again anxiety abstracted the mind of Blanche; and he then consulted, apart with St Foix, whether it would be advisable, should a path be found, to venture to an edifice, which might possibly harbour banditti. They considered, that their own party was not small, and that several of them were well armed; and, after enumerating the dangers, to be incurred by passing the night in the open wild, exposed, perhaps, to the effects of a thunder-storm, there remained not a doubt, that they ought to endeavour to obtain admittance to the edifice above, at any hazard respecting the inhabitants it might harbour; but the darkness and the dead silence, that surrounded it, appeared to contradict the probability of its being inhabited at all.

A shout from the guides aroused their attention, after which, in a few minutes, one of the Count's servants returned with intelligence, that a path was found, and they immediately hastened to join the guides, when they all ascended a little winding way cut in the rock among thickets of dwarf wood, and, after much toil and some danger, reached the summit, where several ruined towers, surrounded by a massy wall, rose to their view, partially illumined by the moon-light. The space around the building was silent, and apparently forsaken, but the Count was cautious; 'Step softly,' said he, in a low voice, 'while we reconnoitre the edifice.'

Having proceeded silently along for some paces, they stopped at a gate, whose portals were terrible even in ruins, and, after a moment's hesitation, passed on to the court of entrance, but paused again at the head of a terrace, which, branching from it, ran along the brow of a precipice. Over this, rose the main body of the edifice, which was now seen to be, not a watch-tower, but one of those ancient fortresses, that, from age and neglect, had fallen to decay. Many parts of it, however, appeared to be still entire; it was built of grey stone, in the heavy Saxon-gothic style, with enormous round towers, buttresses of proportionable strength, and the arch of the large gate, which seemed to open into the hall of the fabric, was round, as was that of a window above. The air of solemnity, which must so strongly have characterized the pile even in the days of its early strength, was now considerably heightened by its shattered battlements and half-demolished walls, and by the huge masses of ruin, scattered in its wide area, now silent and grass grown. In this court of entrance stood the gigantic remains of an oak, that seemed to have flourished and decayed with the building, which it still appeared frowningly to protect by the few remaining branches, leafless and moss-grown, that crowned its trunk, and whose wide extent told how enormous the tree had been in a former age. This fortress was evidently once of great strength, and, from its situation on a point of rock, impending over a deep glen, had been of great power to annoy, as well as to resist; the Count, therefore, as he stood surveying it, was somewhat surprised, that it had been suffered, ancient as it was, to sink into ruins, and its present lonely and deserted air excited in his breast emotions of melancholy awe. While he indulged, for a moment, these emotions, he thought he heard a sound of remote voices steal upon the stillness, from within the building, the front of which he again surveyed with scrutinizing eyes, but yet no light was visible. He now determined to walk round the fort, to that remote part of it, whence he thought the voices had arisen, that he might examine whether any light could be discerned there, before he ventured to knock at the gate; for this purpose, he entered upon the terrace, where the remains of cannon were yet apparent in the thick walls, but he had not proceeded many paces, when his steps were suddenly arrested by the loud barking of a dog within, and which he fancied to be the same, whose voice had been the means of bringing the travellers thither. It now appeared certain, that the place was inhabited, and the Count returned to consult again with St Foix, whether he should try to obtain admittance, for its wild aspect had somewhat shaken his former resolution; but, after a second consultation, he submitted to the considerations, which before determined him, and which were strengthened by the discovery of the dog, that guarded the fort, as well as by the stillness that pervaded it. He, therefore, ordered one of his servants to knock at the gate, who was advancing to obey him, when a light appeared through the loop-hole of one of the towers, and the Count called loudly, but, receiving no answer, he went up to the gate himself, and struck upon it with an iron-pointed pole, which had assisted him to climb the steep. When the echoes had ceased, that this blow had awakened, the renewed barking, – and there were now more than one dog, – was the only sound, that was heard. The Count stepped back, a few paces, to observe whether the light was in the tower, and, perceiving, that it was gone, he returned to the portal, and had lifted the pole to strike again, when again he fancied he heard the murmur of voices within, and paused to listen. He was confirmed in the supposition, but they were too remote, to be heard otherwise than in a murmur, and the Count now let the pole fall heavily upon the gate; when almost immediately a profound silence followed. It was apparent, that the people within had heard the sound, and their caution in admitting strangers gave him a favourable opinion of them. 'They are either hunters or shepherds,' said he, 'who, like ourselves, have probably sought shelter from the night within these walls, and are fearful of admitting strangers, lest they should prove robbers. I will endeavour to remove their fears.' So saying, he called aloud, 'We are friends, who ask shelter from the night.' In a few moments, steps were heard within, which approached, and a voice then enquired – 'Who calls?' 'Friends,' repeated the Count; 'open the gates, and you shall know more.' – Strong bolts were now heard to be undrawn, and a man, armed with a hunting spear, appeared. 'What is it you want at this hour?' said he. The Count beckoned his attendants, and then answered, that he wished to enquire the way to the nearest cabin. 'Are you so little acquainted with these mountains,' said the man, 'as not to know, that there is none, within several leagues? I cannot shew you the way; you must seek it – there's a moon.' Saying this, he was closing the gate, and the Count was turning away, half disappointed and half afraid, when another voice was heard from above, and, on looking up, he saw a light, and a man's face, at the grate of the portal. 'Stay, friend, you have lost your way?' said the voice. 'You are hunters, I suppose, like ourselves: I will be with you presently.' The voice ceased, and the light disappeared. Blanche had been alarmed by the appearance of the man, who had opened the gate, and she now entreated her father to quit the place; but the Count had observed the hunter's spear, which he carried; and the words from the tower encouraged him to await the event. The gate was soon opened, and several men in hunters' habits, who had heard above what had passed below, appeared, and, having listened some time to the Count, told him he was welcome to rest there for the night. They then pressed him, with much courtesy, to enter, and to partake of such fare as they were about to sit down to. The Count, who had observed them attentively while they spoke, was cautious, and somewhat suspicious, but he was also weary, fearful of the approaching storm, and of encountering alpine heights in the obscurity of night; being likewise somewhat confident in the strength and number of his attendants, he, after some further consideration, determined to accept the invitation. With this resolution he called his servants, who, advancing round the tower, behind which some of them had silently listened to this conference, followed their Lord, the Lady Blanche, and St Foix into the fortress. The strangers led them on to a large and rude hall, partially seen by a fire, that blazed at its extremity, round which four men, in the hunter's dress, were seated, and on the hearth were several dogs stretched in sleep. In the middle of the hall stood a large table, and over the fire some part of an animal was boiling. As the Count approached, the men arose and the dogs, half raising themselves, looked fiercely at the strangers, but, on hearing their masters' voices, kept their postures on the hearth.

Blanche looked round this gloomy and spacious hall, then at the men and to her father, who, smiling cheerfully at her, addressed himself to the hunters. 'This is an hospitable hearth,' said he, 'the blaze of a fire is reviving after having wandered so long in these dreary wilds. Your dogs are tired; what success have you had?' 'Such as we usually have,' replied one of the men, who had been seated in the hall, 'we kill our game with tolerable certainty.' 'These are fellow hunters,' said one of the men who had brought the Count hither, 'that have lost their way, and I have told them there is room enough in the fort for us all.' 'Very true, very true,' replied his companion, 'What luck have you had in the chace, brothers? We have killed two izards, and that, you will say, is pretty well.' 'You mistake, friend,' said the Count, 'we are not hunters, but travellers; but, if you will admit us to hunters' fare, we shall be well contented, and will repay your kindness.' 'Sit down then, brother,' said one of the men: 'Jacques, lay more fuel on the fire, the kid will soon be ready; bring a seat for the lady too. Ma'amselle, will you taste our brandy ? it is true Barcelona, and as bright as ever flowed from a keg.' Blanche timidly smiled, and was going to refuse, when her father prevented her, by taking, with a good humoured air, the glass offered to his daughter; and Mon. St Foix, who was seated next her, pressed her hand, and gave her an encouraging look, but her attention was engaged by a man, who sat silently by the fire, observing St Foix, with a steady and earnest eye.

'You lead a jolly life here,' said the Count. 'The life of a hunter is a pleasant and a healthy one; and the repose is sweet, which succeeds to your labour.'

'Yes,' replied one of his hosts, 'our life is pleasant enough. We live here only during the summer, and autumnal months; in winter, the place is dreary, and the swoln torrents, that descend from the heights, put a stop to the chace.'

' 'Tis a life of liberty and enjoyment,' said the Count: 'I should like to pass a month in your way very well.'

'We find employment for our guns too,' said a man who stood behind the Count: 'here are plenty of birds, of delicious flavour, that feed upon the wild thyme and herbs, that grow in the vallies. Now I think of it, there is a brace of birds hung up in the stone gallery; go fetch them, Jacques, we will have them dressed.'

The Count now made enquiry, concerning the method of pursuing the chace among the rocks and precipices of these romantic regions, and was listening to a curious detail, when a horn was sounded at the gate. Blanche looked timidly at her father, who continued to converse on the subject of the chace, but whose countenance was somewhat expressive of anxiety, and who often turned his eyes towards that part of the hall nearest the gate. The horn sounded again, and a loud halloo succeeded. 'These are some of our companions, returned from their day's labour,' said a man, going lazily from his seat towards the gate; and in a few minutes, two men appeared, each with a gun over his shoulder, and pistols in his belt. 'What cheer, my lads? what cheer?' said they, as they approached. 'What luck?' returned their companions: 'have you brought home your supper? You shall have none else.'

'Hah! who the devil have you brought home?' said they in bad Spanish, on perceiving the Count's party, 'are they from France, or Spain? – where did you meet with them?'

'They met with us, and a merry meeting too,' replied his companion aloud in good French. 'This chevalier, and his party, had lost their way, and asked a night's lodging in the fort.' The others, made no reply, but threw down a kind of knapsack, and drew forth several brace of birds. The bag sounded heavily as it fell to the ground, and the glitter of some bright metal within glanced on the eye of the Count, who now surveyed, with a more enquiring look, the man, that held the knapsack. He was a tall robust figure, of a hard countenance, and had short black hair, curling in his neck. Instead of the hunter's dress, he wore a faded military uniform; sandals were laced on his broad legs, and a kind of short trowsers hung from his waist. On his head he wore a leathern cap, somewhat resembling in shape an ancient Roman helmet; but the brows that scowled beneath it, would have characterized those of the barbarians, who conquered Rome, rather than those of a Roman soldier. The Count, at length, turned away his eyes, and remained silent and thoughtful, till, again raising them, he perceived a figure standing in an obscure part of the hall, fixed in attentive gaze on St Foix, who was conversing with Blanche, and did not observe this; but the Count, soon after, saw the same man looking over the shoulder of the soldier as attentively at himself. He withdrew his eye, when that of the Count met it, who felt mistrust gathering fast upon his mind, but feared to betray it in his countenance, and, forcing his features to assume a smile, addressed Blanche on some indifferent subject. When he again looked round, he perceived, that the soldier and his companion were gone.

The man, who was called Jacques, now returned from the stone gallery. 'A fire is lighted there,' said he, 'and the birds are dressing; the table too is spread there, for that place is warmer than this.'

His companions approved of the removal, and invited their guests to follow to the gallery, of whom Blanche appeared distressed, and remained seated, and St Foix looked at the Count, who said, he preferred the comfortable blaze of the fire he was then near. The hunters, however, commended the warmth of the other apartment, and pressed his removal with such seeming courtesy, that the Count, half doubting, and half fearful of betraying his doubts, consented to go. The long and ruinous passages, through which they went, somewhat daunted him, but the thunder, which now burst in loud peals above, made it dangerous to quit this place of shelter, and he forbore to provoke his conductors by shewing that he distrusted them. The hunters led the way, with a lamp; the Count and St Foix, who wished to please their hosts by some instances of familiarity, carried each a seat, and Blanche followed, with faltering steps. As she passed on, part of her dress caught on a nail in the wall, and, while she stopped, somewhat too scrupulously, to disengage it, the Count, who was talking to St Foix, and neither of whom observed the circumstance, followed their conductor round an abrupt angle of the passage, and Blanche was left behind in darkness. The thunder prevented them from hearing her call, but, having disengaged her dress, she quickly followed, as she thought, the way they had taken. A light, that glimmered at a distance, confirmed this belief, and she proceeded towards an open door, whence it issued, conjecturing the room beyond to be the stone gallery the men had spoken of. Hearing voices as she advanced, she paused within a few paces of the chamber, that she might be certain whether she was right, and from thence, by the light of a lamp, that hung from the ceiling, observed four men, seated round a table, over which they leaned in apparent consultation. In one of them she distinguished the features of him, whom she had observed, gazing at St Foix, with such deep attention; and who was now speaking in an earnest, though restrained voice, till, one of his companions seeming to oppose him, they spoke together in a loud and harsher tone. Blanche, alarmed by perceiving, that neither her father, or St Foix were there, and terrified at the fierce countenances and manners of these men, was turning hastily from the chamber, to pursue her search of the gallery, when she heard one of the men say:

'Let all dispute end here. Who talks of danger? Follow my advice, and there will be none – secure *them*, and the rest are an easy prey.' Blanche, struck with these words, paused a moment, to hear more. 'There is nothing to be got by the rest,' said one of his companions, 'I am never for blood when I can help it – dispatch the two others, and our business is done; the rest may go.'

'May they so?' exclaimed the first ruffian, with a tremendous oath – 'What! to tell how we have disposed of their masters, and to send the king's troops to drag us to the wheel! You was always a choice adviser – I warrant we have not yet forgot St Thomas's eve last year.'

Blanche's heart now sunk with horror. Her first impulse was to retreat from the door, but, when she would have gone, her trembling frame refused to support her, and, having tottered a few paces, to a more obscure part of the passage, she was compelled to listen to the dreadful councils of those, who, she was no longer suffered to doubt, were banditti. In the next moment, she heard the following words, 'Why you would not murder the whole *gang*?'

'I warrant our lives are as good as theirs,' replied his comrade. 'If we don't kill them, they will hang us: better they should die than we be hanged.'

'Better, better,' cried his comrades.

'To commit murder, is a hopeful way of escaping the gallows!' said the first ruffian – 'many an honest fellow has run head into the noose that way, though.' There was a pause of some moments, during which they appeared to be considering.

'Confound those fellows,' exclaimed one of the robbers impatiently, 'they ought to have been here by this time; they will come back presently with the old story, and no booty: if they were here, our business would be plain and easy. I see we shall not be able to do the business to-night, for our numbers are not equal to the enemy, and in the morning they will be for marching off, and how can we detain them without force?'

'I have been thinking of a scheme, that will do,' said one of his comrades: 'if we can dispatch the two chevaliers silently, it will be easy to master the rest.'

'That's a plausible scheme, in good faith,' said another with a smile of scorn – 'If I can eat my way through the prison wall, I shall be at liberty! – How can we dispatch them *silently*?'

'By poison,' replied his companions.

'Well said! that will do,' said the second ruffian, 'that will give a lingering death too, and satisfy my revenge. These barons shall take care how they again tempt our vengeance.'

'I knew the son, the moment I saw him,' said the man, whom Blanche had observed gazing on St Foix, 'though he does not know me; the father I had almost forgotten.'

'Well, you may say what you will,' said the third ruffian, 'but I don't believe he is the Baron, and I am as likely to know as any of you, for I was one of them, that attacked him, with our brave lads, that suffered.'

'And was not I another?' said the first ruffian, 'I tell you he is the Baron; but what does it signify whether he is or not? – Shall we let all this booty go out of our hands? It is not often we have such luck as this. While we run the chance of the wheel for smuggling a few pounds of tobacco, to cheat the king's manufactory, and of breaking our necks down the precipices in the chace of our food; and, now and then, rob a brother smuggler, or a straggling pilgrim, of what scarcely repays us the powder we fire at them, shall we let such a prize as this go? Why they have enough about them to keep us for —'

'I am not for that, I am not for that,' replied the third robber, 'let us make the most of them: only, if this is the Baron, I should like to have a slash the more at him, for the sake of our brave comrades, that he brought to the gallows.'

'Aye, aye, slash as much as you will,' rejoined the first man, 'but I tell you the Baron is a taller man.'

'Confound your quibbling,' said the second ruffian, 'shall we let them go or not? If we stay here much longer, they will take the hint, and march off without our leave. Let them be who they will, they are rich, or why all those servants? Did you see the ring, he, you call the Baron, had on his finger? – it was diamond; but he has not got it on now: he saw me looking at it, I warrant, and took it off.'

'Aye, and then there is the picture; did you see that? She has not taken that off,' observed the first ruffian, 'it hangs at her neck; if it had not sparkled so, I should not have found it out, for it was almost hid by her dress; those are diamonds too, and a rare many of them there must be, to go round such a large picture.'

'But how are we to manage this business?' said the second ruffian: 'let us talk of that, there is no fear of there being booty enough, but how are we to secure it?'

'Aye, aye,' said his comrades, 'let us talk of that, and remember no time is to be lost.'

'I am still for poison,' observed the third, 'but consider their number; why there are nine or ten of them, and armed too; when I saw so many at the gate, I was not for letting them in, you know, nor you either.'

'I thought they might be some of our enemies,' replied the second, 'I did not so much mind numbers.'

'But you must mind them now,' rejoined his comrade, 'or it will be worse for you. We are not more than six, and how can we master ten by open force? I tell you we must give some of them a dose, and the rest may then be managed.'

'I'll tell you a better way,' rejoined the other impatiently, 'draw closer.'

Blanche, who had listened to this conversation, in an agony, which it would be impossible to describe, could no longer distinguish what was said, for the ruffians now spoke in lowered voices; but the hope, that she might save her friends from the plot, if she could find her way quickly to them, suddenly re-animated her spirits, and lent her strength enough to turn her steps in search of the gallery. Terror, however, and darkness conspired against her, and, having moved a few yards, the feeble light, that issued from the chamber, no longer even contended with the gloom, and, her foot stumbling over a step that crossed the passage, she fell to the ground.

The noise startled the banditti, who became suddenly silent, and then all rushed to the passage, to examine whether any person was there, who might have overheard their councils. Blanche saw them approaching, and perceived their fierce and eager looks: but, before she could raise herself, they discovered and seized her, and, as they dragged her towards the chamber they had quitted, her screams drew from them horrible threatenings.

Having reached the room, they began to consult what they should do with her. 'Let us first know what she has heard,' said the chief robber. 'How long have you been in the passage, lady, and what brought you there?'

'Let us first secure that picture,' said one of his comrades, approaching the trembling Blanche. 'Fair lady, by your leave that picture is mine; come, surrender it, or I shall seize it.'

Blanche, entreating their mercy, immediately gave up the miniature, while another of the ruffians fiercely interrogated her, concerning what she had overheard of their conversation, when, her confusion and terror too plainly telling what her tongue feared to confess, the ruffians looked expressively upon one another, and two of them withdrew to a remote part of the room, as if to consult further.

'These are diamonds, by St Peter!' exclaimed the fellow, who had been examining the miniature, 'and here is a very pretty picture too, 'faith; as handsome a young chevalier, as you would wish to see by a summer's sun. Lady, this is your spouse, I warrant, for it is the spark, that was in your company just now.'

Blanche, sinking with terror, conjured him to have pity on her, and, delivering him her purse, promised to say nothing of what had passed, if he would suffer her to return to her friends.

He smiled ironically, and was going to reply, when his attention was called off by a distant noise; and, while he listened, he grasped the arm of Blanche more firmly, as if he feared she would escape from him, and she again shrieked for help.

The approaching sounds called the ruffians from the other part of the chamber. 'We are betrayed,' said they; 'but let us listen a moment, perhaps it is only our comrades come in from the mountains, and if so, our work is sure; listen!'

A distant discharge of shot confirmed this supposition for a moment, but, in the next, the former sounds drawing nearer, the clashing of swords, mingled with the voices of loud contention and with heavy groans, were distinguished in the avenue leading to the chamber. While the ruffians prepared their arms, they heard themselves called by some of their comrades afar off, and then a shrill horn was sounded without the fortress, a signal, it appeared, they too well understood, for three of them, leaving the Lady Blanche to the care of the fourth, instantly rushed from the chamber.

While Blanche, trembling, and nearly fainting, was supplicating for release, she heard amid the tumult, that approached, the voice of St Foix, and she had scarcely renewed her shriek, when the door of the room was thrown open, and he appeared, much disfigured with blood, and pursued by several ruffians. Blanche neither saw, or heard any more; her head swam, her sight failed, and she became senseless in the arms of the robber, who had detained her.

When she recovered, she perceived, by the gloomy light, that trembled round her, that she was in the same chamber, but neither the Count, St Foix, or any other person appeared, and she continued, for some time, entirely still, and nearly in a state of stupefaction. But, the dreadful images of the past returning, she endeavoured to raise herself, that she might seek her friends, when a sullen groan, at a little distance, reminded her of St Foix, and of the condition, in which she had seen him enter this room; then, starting from the floor, by a sudden effort of horror, she advanced to the place whence the sound had proceeded, where a body was lying stretched upon the pavement, and where, by the glimmering light of a lamp, she discovered the pale and disfigured countenance of St Foix. Her horrors, at that moment, may be easily imagined. He was speechless; his eyes were half closed, and, on the hand, which she grasped in the agony of despair, cold damps had settled. While she vainly repeated his name, and called for assistance, steps approached, and a person entered the chamber, who, she soon perceived, was not the Count, her father; but, what was her astonishment, when, supplicating him to give his assistance to St Foix, she discovered Ludovico! He scarcely paused to recognise her, but immediately bound up the wounds of the Chevalier, and, perceiving, that he had fainted probably from loss of blood, ran for water; but he had been absent only a few moments, when Blanche heard other steps approaching, and, while she was almost frantic with apprehension of the ruffians, the light of a torch flashed upon the walls, and then Count de Villefort appeared, with an affrighted countenance, and breathless with impatience, calling upon his daughter. At the sound of his voice, she rose, and ran to his arms, while he, letting fall the bloody sword he held, pressed her to his bosom in a transport of gratitude and joy, and then hastily enquired for St Foix, who now gave some signs of life. Ludovico soon after returning with water and brandy, the former was applied to his lips, and the latter to his temples and hands, and Blanche, at length, saw him unclose his eyes, and then heard him enquire for her; but the joy she felt, on this occasion, was interrupted by new alarms, when Ludovico said it would be necessary to remove Mons. St Foix immediately, and added, ‘The banditti, that are out, my Lord, were expected home, an hour ago, and they will certainly find us, if we delay. That shrill horn, they know, is never sounded by their comrades but on most desperate occasions, and it echoes among the mountains for many leagues round. I have known them brought home by its sound even from the Pied de Melicant. Is any body standing watch at the great gate, my Lord?’

‘Nobody,’ replied the Count; ‘the rest of my people are now scattered about, I scarcely know where. Go, Ludovico, collect them together, and look out yourself, and listen if you hear the feet of mules.’

Ludovico then hurried away, and the Count consulted as to the means of removing St Foix, who could not have borne the motion of a mule, even if his strength would have supported him in the saddle.

While the Count was telling, that the banditti, whom they had found in the fort, were secured in the dungeon, Blanche observed that he was himself wounded, and that his left arm was entirely useless; but he smiled at her anxiety, assuring her the wound was trifling.

The Count’s servants, except two who kept watch at the gate, now appeared, and, soon after, Ludovico. ‘I think I hear mules coming along the glen, my Lord,’ said he, ‘but the roaring of the torrent below will not let me be certain; however, I have brought what will serve the Chevalier,’ he added, shewing a bear’s skin, fastened to a couple of long poles, which had been adapted for the purpose of bringing home such of the banditti as happened to be wounded in their encounters. Ludovico spread it on the ground, and, placing the skins of several goats upon it, made a kind of bed, into which the Chevalier, who was however now much revived, was gently lifted; and, the poles being raised upon the shoulders of the guides, whose footing among these steeps could best be depended upon, he was borne along with an easy motion. Some of the Count’s servants were also wounded – but not materially, and, their wounds being bound up, they now followed to the great gate. As they passed along the hall, a loud tumult was heard at some distance, and Blanche was terrified. ‘It is only those villains in the dungeon, my Lady,’ said Ludovico. ‘They seem to be bursting it open,’ said the Count. ‘No, my Lord,’ replied Ludovico, ‘it has an iron door; we have nothing to fear from them; but let me go first, and look out from the rampart.’

They quickly followed him, and found their mules browsing before the gates, where the party listened anxiously, but heard no sound, except that of the torrent below and of the early breeze, sighing among the branches of the old oak, that grew in the court, and they were now glad to perceive the first tints of dawn over the mountain-tops. When they had mounted their mules, Ludovico, undertaking to be their guide, led them by an easier path, than that by which they had formerly ascended, into the glen. ‘We must avoid that valley to the east, my Lord,’ said he, ‘or we may meet the banditti; they went out that way in the morning.’

The travellers, soon after, quitted this glen, and found themselves in a narrow valley that stretched towards the north-west. The morning light upon the mountains now strengthened fast, and gradually discovered the green hillocks, that skirted the winding feet of the cliffs, tufted with cork tree, and ever-green oak. The thunder-clouds being dispersed, had left the sky perfectly serene, and Blanche was revived by the fresh breeze, and by the view of verdure, which the late rain had brightened. Soon after, the sun arose, when the dripping rocks, with the shrubs that fringed their summits, and many a turfy slope below, sparkled in his rays. A wreath of mist was seen, floating along the extremity of the valley, but the gale bore it before the travellers, and the sun-beams gradually drew it up towards the summit of the mountains. They had proceeded about a league, when, St Foix having complained of extreme faintness, they stopped to give him refreshment, and, that the men, who bore him, might rest. Ludovico had brought from the fort some flasks of rich Spanish wine, which now proved a reviving cordial not only to St Foix but to the whole party, though to him it gave only temporary relief, for it fed the fever, that burned in his veins, and he could neither disguise in his countenance the anguish he suffered, or suppress the wish, that he was arrived at the inn, where they had designed to pass the preceding night.

While they thus reposed themselves under the shade of the dark green pines, the Count desired Ludovico to explain shortly, by what means he had disappeared from the north apartment, how he came into the hands of the banditti, and how he had contributed so essentially to serve him and his family, for to him he justly attributed their present deliverance. Ludovico was going to obey him, when suddenly they heard the echo of a pistol-shot, from the way they had passed, and they rose in alarm, hastily to pursue their route.

CHAPTER XIII

‘Ah why did Fate his steps decoy

In stormy paths to roam,
Remote from all congenial joy!’
BEATTIE [Retirement][1]

Emily, mean while, was still suffering anxiety as to the fate of Valancourt; but Theresa, having, at length, found a person, whom she could entrust on her errand to the steward, informed her, that the messenger would return on the following day; and Emily promised to be at the cottage, Theresa being too lame to attend her.

In the evening, therefore, Emily set out alone for the cottage, with a melancholy foreboding, concerning Valancourt, while, perhaps, the gloom of the hour might contribute to depress her spirits. It was a grey autumnal evening towards the close of the season; heavy mists partially obscured the mountains, and a chilling breeze, that sighed among the beech woods, strewed her path with some of their last yellow leaves. These, circling in the blast and foretelling the death of the year, gave an image of desolation to her mind, and, in her fancy, seemed to announce the death of Valancourt. Of this she had, indeed, more than once so strong a presentiment, that she was on the point of returning home, feeling herself unequal to an encounter with the certainty she anticipated, but, contending with her emotions, she so far commanded them, as to be able to proceed.

While she walked mournfully on, gazing on the long volumes of vapour, that poured upon the sky, and watching the swallows, tossed along the wind, now disappearing among tempestuous clouds, and then emerging, for a moment, in circles upon the calmer air, the afflictions and vicissitudes of her late life seemed pourtrayed in these fleeting images; – thus had she been tossed upon the stormy sea of misfortune for the last year, with but short intervals of peace, if peace that could be called, which was only the delay of evils. And now, when she had escaped from so many dangers, was become independent of the will of those, who had oppressed her, and found herself mistress of a large fortune, now, when she might reasonably have expected happiness, she perceived that she was as distant from it as ever. She would have accused herself of weakness and ingratitude in thus suffering a sense of the various blessings she possessed to be overcome by that of a single misfortune, had this misfortune affected herself alone; but, when she had wept for Valancourt even as living, tears of compassion had mingled with those of regret, and while she lamented a human being degraded to vice, and consequently to misery, reason and humanity claimed these tears, and fortitude had not yet taught her to separate them from those of love; in the present moments, however, it was not the certainty of his guilt, but the apprehension of his death (of a death also, to which she herself, however innocently, appeared to have been in some degree instrumental) that oppressed her. This fear increased, as the means of certainty concerning it approached; and, when she came within view of Theresa’s cottage, she was so much disordered, and her resolution failed her so entirely, that, unable to proceed, she rested on a bank, beside her path; where, as she sat, the wind that groaned sullenly among the lofty branches above, seemed to her melancholy imagination to bear the sounds of distant lamentation, and, in the pauses of the gust, she still fancied she heard the feeble and far-off notes of distress. Attention convinced her, that this was no more than fancy; but the increasing gloom, which seemed the sudden close of day, soon warned her to depart, and, with faltering steps, she again moved toward the cottage. Through the casement appeared the cheerful blaze of a wood fire, and Theresa, who had observed Emily approaching, was already at the door to receive her.

‘It is a cold evening, madam,’ said she, ‘storms are coming on, and I thought you would like a fire. Do take this chair by the hearth.’

Emily, thanking her for this consideration, sat down, and then, looking in her face, on which the wood fire threw a gleam, she was struck with its expression, and, unable to speak, sunk back in her chair with a countenance so full of woe, that Theresa instantly comprehended the occasion of it, but she remained silent. ‘Ah!’ said Emily, at length, ‘it is unnecessary for me to ask the result of your enquiry, your silence, and that look, sufficiently explain it; – he is dead!’

‘Alas! my dear young lady,’ replied Theresa, while tears filled her eyes, ‘this world is made up of trouble! the rich have their share as well as the poor! But we must all endeavour to bear what Heaven pleases.’

‘He is dead then!’ – interrupted Emily – ‘Valancourt is dead!’

‘A-well-a-day! I fear he is,’ replied Theresa.

‘You fear!’ said Emily, ‘do you only fear?’

‘Alas! yes, Madam, I fear he is! neither the steward, or any of the Epourville family, have heard of him since he left Languedoc, and the Count is in great affliction about him, for he says he was always punctual in writing, but that now he has not received a line from him, since he left Languedoc; he appointed to be at home, three weeks ago, but he has neither come, or written, and they fear some accident has befallen him. Alas! that ever I should live to cry for his death! I am old, and might have died without being missed, but he'—Emily was faint, and asked for some water, and Theresa, alarmed by the voice, in which she spoke, hastened to her assistance, and, while she held the water to Emily's lips, continued, 'My dear young mistress, do not take it so to heart; the Chevalier may be alive and well, for all this; let us hope the best!'

'O no! I cannot hope,' said Emily, 'I am acquainted with circumstances, that will not suffer me to hope. I am somewhat better now, and can hear what you have to say. Tell me, I entreat, the particulars of what you know.'

'Stay till you are a little better, mademoiselle, you look sadly!'

'O no, Theresa, tell me all, while I have the power to hear it,' said Emily, 'tell me all, I conjure you!'

'Well, madam, I will then; but the steward did not say much, for Richard says he seemed shy of talking about Mons. Valancourt, and what he gathered was from Gabriel, one of the servants, who said he had heard it from my lord's gentleman.'

'What did he hear?' said Emily.

'Why, madam, Richard has but a bad memory, and could not remember half of it, and, if I had not asked him a great many questions, I should have heard little indeed. But he says that Gabriel said, that he and all the other servants were in great trouble about M. Valancourt, for that he was such a kind young gentleman, they all loved him, as well as if he had been their own brother – and now, to think what was become of him! For he used to be so courteous to them all, and, if any of them had been in fault, M. Valancourt was the first to persuade my lord to forgive them. And then, if any poor family was in distress, M. Valancourt was the first, too, to relieve them, though some folks, not a great way off, could have afforded that much better than he. And then, said Gabriel, he was so gentle to every body, and, for all he had such a noble look with him, he never would command, and call about him, as some of your quality people do, and we never minded him the less for that. Nay, says Gabriel, for that matter, we minded him the more, and would all have run to obey him at a word, sooner than if some folks had told us what to do at full length; aye, and were more afraid of displeasing him, too, than of them, that used rough words to us.'

Emily, who no longer considered it to be dangerous to listen to praise, bestowed on Valancourt, did not attempt to interrupt Theresa, but sat, attentive to her words, though almost overwhelmed with grief. 'My Lord,' continued Theresa, 'frets about M. Valancourt sadly, and the more, because, they say, he had been rather harsh against him lately. Gabriel says he had it from my Lord's valet, that M. Valancourt had *comported* himself wildly at Paris, and had spent a great deal of money, more a great deal than my Lord liked, for he loves money better than M. Valancourt, who had been led astray sadly. Nay, for that matter, M. Valancourt had been put into prison at Paris, and my Lord, says Gabriel, refused to take him out, and said he deserved to suffer; and, when old Gregoire, the butler, heard of this, he actually bought a walking-stick to take with him to Paris, to visit his young master; but the next thing we hear is, that M. Valancourt is coming home. O, it was a joyful day when he came; but he was sadly altered, and my Lord looked very cool upon him, and he was very sad, indeed. And, soon after, he went away again into Languedoc, and, since that time, we have never seen him.'

Theresa paused, and Emily, sighing deeply, remained with her eyes fixed upon the floor, without speaking. After a long pause, she enquired what further Theresa had heard. 'Yet why should I ask?' she added; 'what you have already told is too much. O Valancourt! thou art gone – forever gone! and I – I have murdered thee!' These words, and the countenance of despair which accompanied them, alarmed Theresa, who began to fear, that the shock of the intelligence Emily had just received, had affected her senses. 'My dear young lady, be composed,' said she, 'and do not say such frightful words. You murder M. Valancourt, – dear heart!' Emily replied only by a heavy sigh.

'Dear lady, it breaks my heart to see you look so,' said Theresa, 'do not sit with your eyes upon the ground, and all so pale and melancholy; it frightens me to see you.' Emily was still silent, and did not appear to hear any thing that was said to her. 'Besides, mademoiselle,' continued Theresa, 'M. Valancourt may be alive and merry yet, for what we know.'

At the mention of his name, Emily raised her eyes, and fixed them, in a wild gaze, upon Theresa, as if she was endeavouring to understand what had been said. 'Aye, my dear lady,' said Theresa, mistaking the meaning of this considerate air, 'M. Valancourt may be alive and merry yet.'

On the repetition of these words, Emily comprehended their import, but, instead of producing the effect intended, they seemed only to heighten her distress. She rose hastily from her chair, paced the little room, with quick steps, and, often sighing deeply, clasped her hands, and shuddered.

Meanwhile, Theresa, with simple, but honest affection, endeavoured to comfort her; put more wood on the fire, stirred it up into a brighter blaze, swept the hearth, set the chair, which Emily had left, in a warmer situation, and then drew forth from a cupboard a flask of wine. 'It is a stormy night, madam,' said she, 'and blows cold – do come nearer the fire, and take a glass of this wine; it will comfort you, as it has done me, often and often, for it is not such wine as one gets every day; it is rich Languedoc, and the last of six flasks that M. Valancourt sent me, the night before he left Gascony for Paris.

They have served me, ever since, as cordials, and I never drink it, but I think of him, and what kind words he said to me when he gave them. Theresa, says he, you are not young now, and should have a glass of good wine, now and then. I will send you a few flasks, and, when you taste them, you will sometimes remember me your friend. Yes – those were his very words – me your friend!' Emily still paced the room, without seeming to hear what Theresa said, who continued speaking. 'And I have remembered him, often enough, poor young gentleman! – for he gave me this roof for a shelter, and that, which has supported me. Ah! he is in heaven, with my blessed master, if ever saint was!'

Theresa's voice faltered; she wept, and set down the flask, unable to pour out the wine. Her grief seemed to recall Emily from her own, who went towards her, but then stopped, and, having gazed on her, for a moment, turned suddenly away, as if overwhelmed by the reflection, that it was Valancourt, whom Theresa lamented.

While she yet paced the room, the still, soft note of an oboe, or flute, was heard mingling with the blast, the sweetness of which affected Emily's spirits; she paused a moment in attention; the tender tones, as they swelled along the wind, till they were lost again in the ruder gust, came with a plaintiveness, that touched her heart, and she melted into tears.

'Aye,' said Theresa, drying her eyes, 'there is Richard, our neighbour's son, playing on the oboe; it is sad enough, to hear such sweet music now.' Emily continued to weep, without replying. 'He often plays of an evening,' added Theresa, 'and, sometimes, the young folks dance to the sound of his oboe. But, dear young lady! do not cry so; and pray take a glass of this wine,' continued she, pouring some into a glass, and handing it to Emily, who reluctantly took it.

'Taste it for M. Valancourt's sake,' said Theresa, as Emily lifted the glass to her lips, 'for he gave it me, you know, madam.' Emily's hand trembled, and she spilt the wine as she withdrew it from her lips. 'For whose sake! – who gave the wine?' said she in a faltering voice. 'M. Valancourt, dear lady. I knew you would be pleased with it. It is the last flask I have left.'

Emily set the wine upon the table, and burst into tears, while Theresa, disappointed and alarmed, tried to comfort her; but she only waved her hand, entreated she might be left alone, and wept the more.

A knock at the cottage door prevented Theresa from immediately obeying her mistress, and she was going to open it, when Emily, checking her, requested she would not admit any person; but, afterwards, recollecting, that she had ordered her servant to attend her home, she said it was only Philippe, and endeavoured to restrain her tears, while Theresa opened the door.

A voice, that spoke without, drew Emily's attention. She listened, turned her eyes to the door, when a person now appeared, and immediately a bright gleam, that flashed from the fire, discovered – Valancourt!

Emily, on perceiving him, started from her chair, trembled, and, sinking into it again, became insensible to all around her.

A scream from Theresa now told, that she knew Valancourt, whom her imperfect sight, and the duskiness of the place had prevented her from immediately recollecting; but his attention was immediately called from her to the person, whom he saw, falling from a chair near the fire; and, hastening to her assistance, – he perceived, that he was supporting Emily! The various emotions, that seized him upon thus unexpectedly meeting with her, from whom he had believed he had parted for ever, and on beholding her pale and lifeless in his arms – may, perhaps, be imagined, though they could neither be then expressed, or now described, any more than Emily's sensations, when, at length, she unclosed her eyes, and, looking up, again saw Valancourt. The intense anxiety, with which he regarded her, was instantly changed to an expression of mingled joy and tenderness, as his eye met hers, and he perceived, that she was reviving. But he could only exclaim, 'Emily!' as he silently watched her recovery, while she averted her eye, and feebly attempted to withdraw her hand; but, in these the first moments, which succeeded to the pangs his supposed death had occasioned her, she forgot every fault, which had formerly claimed indignation, and beholding Valancourt such as he appeared, when he won her early affection, she experienced emotions of only tenderness and joy. This, alas! was but the sunshine of a few short moments; recollections rose, like clouds, upon her mind, and, darkening the illusive image, that possessed it, she again beheld Valancourt, degraded – Valancourt unworthy of the esteem and tenderness she had once bestowed upon him; her spirits faltered, and, withdrawing her hand, she turned from him to conceal her grief, while he, yet more embarrassed and agitated, remained silent.

A sense of what she owed to herself restrained her tears, and taught her soon to overcome, in some degree, the emotions of mingled joy and sorrow, that contended at her heart, as she rose, and, having thanked him for the assistance he had given her, bade Theresa good evening. As she was leaving the cottage, Valancourt, who seemed suddenly awakened as from a dream, entreated, in a voice, that pleaded powerfully for compassion, a few moments attention. Emily's heart, perhaps, pleaded as powerfully, but she had resolution enough to resist both, together with the clamorous entreaties of Theresa, that she would not venture home alone in the dark, and had already opened the cottage door, when the pelting storm compelled her to obey their requests.

Silent and embarrassed, she returned to the fire, while Valancourt, with increasing agitation, paced the room, as if he wished, yet feared, to speak, and Theresa expressed without restraint her joy and wonder upon seeing him.

'Dear heart! sir,' said she, 'I never was so surprised and overjoyed in my life. We were in great tribulation before you came, for we thought you was dead, and were talking, and lamenting about you, just when you knocked at the door. My young mistress there was crying, fit to break her heart —'

Emily looked with much displeasure at Theresa, but, before she could speak, Valancourt, unable to repress the emotion, which Theresa's imprudent discovery occasioned, exclaimed, 'O my Emily! am I then still dear to you! Did you, indeed, honour me with a thought – a tear? O heavens! you weep – you weep now!'

'Theresa, sir,' said Emily, with a reserved air, and trying to conquer her tears, 'has reason to remember you with gratitude, and she was concerned, because she had not lately heard of you. Allow me to thank you for the kindness you have shewn her, and to say, that, since I am now upon the spot, she must not be further indebted to you.'

'Emily!' said Valancourt, no longer master of his emotions, 'is it thus you meet him, whom once you meant to honour with your hand – thus you meet him, who has loved you – suffered for you? – Yet what do I say? Pardon me, pardon me, mademoiselle St Aubert, I know not what I utter. I have no longer any claim upon your remembrance – I have forfeited every pretension to your esteem, your love. Yes! let me not forget, that I once possessed your affections, though to know that I have lost them, is my severest affliction. Affliction – do I call it! – that is a term of mildness.'

'Dear heart!' said Theresa, preventing Emily from replying, 'talk of once having her affections! Why, my dear young lady loves you now, better than she does any body in the whole world, though she pretends to deny it.'

'This is insupportable!' said Emily; 'Theresa, you know not what you say. Sir, if you respect my tranquillity, you will spare me from the continuance of this distress.'

'I do respect your tranquillity too much, voluntarily to interrupt it,' replied Valancourt, in whose bosom pride now contended with tenderness; 'and will not be a voluntary intruder. I would have entreated a few moments attention – yet I know not for what purpose. You have ceased to esteem me, and to recount to you my sufferings will degrade me more, without exciting even your pity. Yet I have been, O Emily! I am indeed very wretched!' added Valancourt, in a voice, that softened from solemnity into grief.

'What! is my dear young master going out in all this rain!' said Theresa. 'No, he shall not stir a step. Dear! dear! to see how gentlefolks can afford to throw away their happiness! Now, if you were poor people, there would be none of this. To talk of unworthiness, and not caring about one another, when I know there are not such a kind-hearted lady and gentleman in the whole province, nor any that love one another half so well, if the truth was spoken!'

Emily, in extreme vexation, now rose from her chair, 'I must be gone,' said she, 'the storm is over.'

'Stay, Emily, stay, Mademoiselle St Aubert!' said Valancourt, summoning all his resolution, 'I will no longer distress you by my presence. Forgive me, that I did not sooner obey you, and, if you can, sometimes, pity one, who, in losing you – has lost all hope of peace! May you be happy, Emily, however wretched I remain, happy as my fondest wish would have you!'

His voice faltered with the last words, and his countenance changed, while, with a look of ineffable tenderness and grief, he gazed upon her for an instant, and then quitted the cottage.

'Dear heart! dear heart!' cried Theresa, following him to the door, 'why, Monsieur Valancourt! how it rains! What a night is this to turn him out in! Why it will give him his death; and it was but now you was crying, mademoiselle, because he was dead. Well! young ladies do change their mind in a minute, as one may say!'

Emily made no reply, for she heard not what was said, while, lost in sorrow and thought, she remained in her chair by the fire, with her eyes fixed, and the image of Valancourt still before them.

'M. Valancourt is sadly altered! madam,' said Theresa; 'he looks so thin to what he used to do, and so melancholy, and then he wears his arm in a sling.'

Emily raised her eyes at these words, for she had not observed this last circumstance, and she now did not doubt, that Valancourt had received the shot of her gardener at Tholouse; with this conviction her pity for him returning, she blamed herself for having occasioned him to leave the cottage, during the storm.

Soon after her servants arrived with the carriage, and Emily, having censured Theresa for her thoughtless conversation to Valancourt, and strictly charging her never to repeat any hints of the same kind to him, withdrew to her home, thoughtful and disconsolate.

Meanwhile, Valancourt had returned to a little inn of the village, whither he had arrived only a few moments before his visit to Theresa's cottage, on the way from Tholouse to the chateau of the Count de Duvarney, where he had not been since he bade adieu to Emily at Chateau-le-Blanc, in the neighbourhood of which he had lingered for a considerable time, unable to summon resolution enough to quit a place, that contained the object most dear to his heart. There were times, indeed, when grief and despair urged him to appear again before Emily, and, regardless of his ruined circumstances, to renew his suit. Pride, however, and the tenderness of his affection, which could not long endure the thought of involving her in his misfortunes, at length, so far triumphed over passion, that he relinquished this desperate design, and quitted Chateau-le-Blanc. But still his fancy wandered among the scenes, which had witnessed his early love, and, on his way to Gascony, he stopped at Tholouse, where he remained when Emily arrived, concealing, yet indulging his melancholy in the gardens, where he had formerly passed with her so many happy hours; often recurring, with vain regret, to the evening before her departure for Italy, when she had so unexpectedly met him on the terrace, and endeavouring to recall to his memory every word and look, which had then charmed him, the arguments he had employed to dissuade her from the journey, and the tenderness of their last farewel. In such melancholy recollections he had been indulging, when Emily unexpectedly appeared to him on this very terrace, the evening after her arrival at Tholouse. His emotions, on thus seeing her, can scarcely be imagined; but he so far overcame the first promptings of love, that he forbore to discover himself, and abruptly quitted the gardens. Still, however, the vision he had seen haunted his mind; he became more wretched than before, and the only solace of his sorrow was to return in the silence of the night; to follow the paths which he believed her steps had pressed, during the day; and, to watch round the habitation where she reposed. It was in one of these mournful wanderings, that he had received by the fire of the gardener, who mistook him for a robber, a wound in his arm, which had detained him at Tholouse till very lately, under the hands of a surgeon. There, regardless of himself and careless of his friends, whose late unkindness had urged him to believe, that they were indifferent as to his fate, he remained, without informing them of his situation; and now, being sufficiently recovered to bear travelling, he had taken La Vallée in his way to Estuviere, the Count's residence, partly for the purpose of hearing of Emily, and of being again near her, and partly for that of enquiring into the situation of poor old Theresa, who, he had reason to suppose, had been deprived of her stipend, small as it was, and which enquiry had brought him to her cottage, when Emily happened to be there.

This unexpected interview, which had at once shewn him the tenderness of her love and the strength of her resolution, renewed all the acuteness of the despair, that had attended their former separation, and which no effort of reason could teach him, in these moments, to subdue. Her image, her look, the tones of her voice, all dwelt on his fancy, as powerfully as they had lately appeared to his senses, and banished from his heart every emotion, except those of love and despair.

Before the evening concluded, he returned to Theresa's cottage, that he might hear her talk of Emily, and be in the place, where she had so lately been. The joy, felt and expressed by that faithful servant, was quickly changed to sorrow, when she observed, at one moment, his wild and phrensied look, and, at another, the dark melancholy, that overhung him.

After he had listened, and for a considerable time, to all she had to relate, concerning Emily, he gave Theresa nearly all the money he had about him, though she repeatedly refused it, declaring, that her mistress had amply supplied her wants; and then, drawing a ring of value from his finger, he delivered it her with a solemn charge to present it to Emily, of whom he entreated, as a last favour, that she would preserve it for his sake, and sometimes, when she looked upon it, remember the unhappy giver.

Theresa wept, as she received the ring, but it was more from sympathy, than from any presentiment of evil; and before she could reply, Valancourt abruptly left the cottage. She followed him to the door, calling upon his name and entreating him to return; but she received no answer, and saw him no more.

CHAPTER XIV

'Call up him, that left half told
The story of Cambuscan bold.'[1]
MILTON [*Il Penseroso*][2]

On the following morning, as Emily sat in the parlour adjoining the library, reflecting on the scene of the preceding night, Annette rushed wildly into the room, and, without speaking, sunk breathless into a chair. It was some time before she could answer the anxious enquiries of Emily, as to the occasion of her emotion, but, at length, she exclaimed, 'I have seen his ghost, madam, I have seen his ghost!'

'Who do you mean?' said Emily, with extreme impatience.

'It came in from the hall, madam,' continued Annette, 'as I was crossing to the parlour.'

'Who are you speaking of ?' repeated Emily, 'Who came in from the hall?'

'It was dressed just as I have seen him, often and often,' added Annette. 'Ah! who could have thought —'

Emily's patience was now exhausted, and she was reprimanding her for such idle fancies, when a servant entered the room, and informed her, that a stranger without begged leave to speak with her.

It immediately occurred to Emily, that this stranger was Valancourt, and she told the servant to inform him, that she was engaged, and could not see any person.

The servant, having delivered his message, returned with one from the stranger, urging the first request, and saying, that he had something of consequence to communicate; while Annette, who had hitherto sat silent and amazed, now started up, and crying, 'It is Ludovico! – it is Ludovico!' ran out of the room. Emily bade the servant follow her, and, if it really was Ludovico, to shew him into the parlour.

In a few minutes, Ludovico appeared, accompanied by Annette, who, as joy rendered her forgetful of all rules of decorum towards her mistress, would not suffer any person to be heard, for some time, but herself. Emily expressed surprise and satisfaction, on seeing Ludovico in safety, and the first emotions increased, when he delivered letters from Count de Villefort and the Lady Blanche, informing her of their late adventure, and of their present situation at an inn among the Pyrenées, where they had been detained by the illness of Mons. St Foix, and the indisposition of Blanche, who added, that the Baron St Foix was just arrived to attend his son to his chateau, where he would remain till the perfect recovery of his wounds, and then return to Languedoc, but that her father and herself purposed to be at La Vallée, on the following day. She added, that Emily's presence would be expected at the approaching nuptials, and begged she would be prepared to proceed, in a few days, to Chateau-le-Blanc. For an account of Ludovico's adventure, she referred her to himself; and Emily, though much interested, concerning the means, by which he had disappeared from the north apartments, had the forbearance to suspend the gratification of her curiosity, till he had taken some refreshment, and had conversed with Annette, whose joy, on seeing him in safety, could not have been more extravagant, had he arisen from the grave.

Meanwhile, Emily perused again the letters of her friends, whose expressions of esteem and kindness were very necessary consolations to her heart, awakened as it was by the late interview to emotions of keener sorrow and regret.

The invitation to Chateau-le-Blanc was pressed with so much kindness by the Count and his daughter, who strengthened it by a message from the Countess, and the occasion of it was so important to her friend, that Emily could not refuse to accept it, nor, though she wished to remain in the quiet shades of her native home, could she avoid perceiving the impropriety of remaining there alone, since Valancourt was again in the neighbourhood. Sometimes, too, she thought, that change of scenery and the society of her friends might contribute, more than retirement, to restore her to tranquillity.

When Ludovico again appeared, she desired him to give a detail of his adventure in the north apartments, and to tell by what means he became a companion of the banditti, with whom the Count had found him.

He immediately obeyed, while Annette, who had not yet had leisure to ask him many questions, on the subject, prepared to listen, with a countenance of extreme curiosity, venturing to remind her lady of her incredulity, concerning spirits, in the castle of Udolpho, and of her own sagacity in believing in them; while Emily, blushing at the consciousness of her late credulity, observed, that, if Ludovico's adventure could justify Annette's superstition, he had probably not been here to relate it.

Ludovico smiled at Annette, and bowed to Emily, and then began as follows:

'You may remember, madam, that, on the night, when I sat up in the north chamber, my lord, the Count, and Mons. Henri accompanied me thither, and that, while they remained there, nothing happened to excite any alarm. When they were gone I made a fire in the bed-room, and, not being inclined to sleep, I sat down on the hearth with a book I had brought with me to divert my mind. I confess I did sometimes look round the chamber, with something like apprehension —'

'O very like it, I dare say,' interrupted Annette, 'and I dare say too, if the truth was known, you shook from head to foot.'

'Not quite so bad as that,' replied Ludovico, smiling, 'but several times, as the wind whistled round the castle, and shook the old casements, I did fancy I heard odd noises, and, once or twice, I got up and looked about me; but nothing was to be seen, except the grim figures in the tapestry, which seemed to frown upon me, as I looked at them. I had sat thus for above an hour,' continued Ludovico, 'when again I thought I heard a noise, and glanced my eyes round the room, to discover what it came from, but, not perceiving any thing, I began to read again, and, when I had finished the story I was upon, I felt drowsy, and dropped asleep. But presently I was awakened by the noise I had heard before, and it seemed to come from that part of the chamber, where the bed stood; and then, whether it was the story I had been reading that affected my spirits, or the strange reports, that had been spread of these apartments, I don't know, but, when I looked towards the bed again, I fancied I saw a man's face within the dusky curtains.'

At the mention of this, Emily trembled, and looked anxiously, remembering the spectacle she had herself witnessed there with Dorothé.

'I confess, madam, my heart did fail me, at that instant,' continued Ludovico, 'but a return of the noise drew my attention from the bed, and I then distinctly heard a sound, like that of a key, turning in a lock, but what surprised me more was, that I saw no door where the sound seemed to come from. In the next moment, however, the arras near the bed was slowly lifted, and a person appeared behind it, entering from a small door in the wall. He stood for a moment as if half retreating, with his head bending under the arras which concealed the upper part of his face except his eyes scowling beneath the tapestry as he held it; and then, while he raised it higher, I saw the face of another man behind, looking over his shoulder. I know not how it was, but, though my sword was upon the table before me, I had not the power just then to seize it, but sat quite still, watching them, with my eyes half shut as if I was asleep. I suppose they thought me so, and were debating what they should do, for I heard them whisper, and they stood in the same posture for the value of a minute, and then, I thought I perceived other faces in the duskiness beyond the door, and heard louder whispers.'

'This door surprises me,' said Emily, 'because I understood, that the Count had caused the arras to be lifted, and the walls examined, suspecting, that they might have concealed a passage through which you had departed.'

'It does not appear so extraordinary to me, madam,' replied Ludovico, 'that this door should escape notice, because it was formed in a narrow compartment, which appeared to be part of the outward wall, and, if the Count had not passed over it, he might have thought it was useless to search for a door where it seemed as if no passage could communicate with one; but the truth was, that the passage was formed within the wall itself. – But, to return to the men, whom I saw obscurely beyond the door, and who did not suffer me to remain long in suspense, concerning their design. They all rushed into the room, and surrounded me, though not before I had snatched up my sword to defend myself. But what could one man do against four? They soon disarmed me, and, having fastened my arms, and gagged my mouth, forced me through the private door, leaving my sword upon the table, to assist, as they said, those who should come in the morning to look for me, in fighting against the ghosts. They then led me through many narrow passages, cut, as I fancied, in the walls, for I had never seen them before, and down several flights of steps, till we came to the vaults underneath the castle; and then opening a stone door, which I should have taken for the wall itself, we went through a long passage, and down other steps cut in the solid rock, when another door delivered us into a cave. After turning and twining about, for some time, we reached the mouth of it, and I found myself on the sea-beach at the foot of the cliffs, with the chateau above. A boat was in waiting, into which the ruffians got, forcing me along with them, and we soon reached a small vessel, that was at anchor, where other men appeared, when setting me aboard, two of the fellows who had seized me, followed, and the other two rowed back to the shore, while we set sail. I soon found out what all this meant, and what was the business of these men at the chateau. We landed in Rousillon, and, after lingering several days about the shore, some of their comrades came down from the mountains, and carried me with them to the fort, where I remained till my Lord so unexpectedly arrived, for they had taken good care to prevent my running away, having blindfolded me, during the journey, and, if they had not done this, I think I never could have found my road to any town, through the wild country we traversed. After I reached the fort I was watched like a prisoner, and never suffered to go out, without two or three companions, and I became so weary of life, that I often wished to get rid of it.'

'Well, but they let you talk,' said Annette, 'they did not gagg you after they got you away from the chateau, so I don't see what reason there was to be so very weary of living; to say nothing about the chance you had of seeing me again.'

Ludovico smiled, and Emily also, who enquired what was the motive of these men for carrying him off.

'I soon found out, madam,' resumed Ludovico, 'that they were pirates, who had, during many years, secreted their spoil in the vaults of the castle, which, being so near the sea, suited their purpose well. To prevent detection they had tried to have it believed, that the chateau was haunted, and, having discovered the private way to the north apartments, which had been shut up ever since the death of the lady marchioness, they easily succeeded. The housekeeper and her husband, who were the only persons, that had inhabited the castle, for some years, were so terrified by the strange noises they heard in the nights, that they would live there no longer; a report soon went abroad, that it was haunted, and the whole country believed this the more readily, I suppose, because it had been said, that the lady marchioness had died in a strange way, and because my lord never would return to the place afterwards.'

'But why,' said Emily, 'were not these pirates contented with the cave – why did they think it necessary to deposit their spoil in the castle?'

'The cave, madam,' replied Ludovico, 'was open to any body, and their treasures would not long have remained undiscovered there, but in the vaults they were secure so long as the report prevailed of their being haunted. Thus then, it appears, that they brought at midnight, the spoil they took on the seas, and kept it till they had opportunities of disposing of it to advantage. The pirates were connected with Spanish smugglers and banditti, who live among the wilds of the Pyrenées, and carry on various kinds of traffic, such as nobody would think of; and with this desperate horde of banditti I remained, till my lord arrived. I shall never forget what I felt, when I first discovered him – I almost gave him up for lost! but I knew, that, if I shewed myself, the banditti would discover who he was, and probably murder us all, to prevent their secret in the chateau being detected. I, therefore, kept out of my lord's sight, but had a strict watch upon the ruffians, and determined, if they offered him or his family violence, to discover myself, and fight for our lives. Soon after, I overheard some of them laying a most diabolical plan for the murder and plunder of the whole party, when I contrived to speak to some of my lord's attendants, telling them what was going forward, and we consulted what was best to be done; meanwhile my lord, alarmed at the absence of the Lady Blanche, demanded her, and the ruffians having given some unsatisfactory answer, my lord and Mons. St Foix became furious, so then we thought it a good time to discover the plot, and rushing into the chamber, I called out 'Treachery! my lord count, defend yourself !' His lordship and the chevalier drew their swords directly, and a hard battle we had, but we conquered at last, as, madam, you are already informed of by my Lord Count.'

'This is an extraordinary adventure,' said Emily, 'and much praise is due, Ludovico, to your prudence and intrepidity. There are some circumstances, however, concerning the north apartments, which still perplex me; but, perhaps, you may be able to explain them. Did you ever hear the banditti relate any thing extraordinary of these rooms.'

'No, madam,' replied Ludovico, 'I never heard them speak about the rooms, except to laugh at the credulity of the old housekeeper, who once was very near catching one of the pirates; it was since the Count arrived at the chateau, he said, and he laughed heartily as he related the trick he had played off.'

A blush overspread Emily's cheek, and she impatiently desired Ludovico to explain himself.

'Why, my lady,' said he, 'as this fellow was, one night in the bed-room, he heard somebody approaching through the next apartment, and not having time to lift up the arras, and unfasten the door, he hid himself in the bed just by. There he lay for some time in as great a fright, I suppose —'

'As you was in,' interrupted Annette, 'when you sat up so boldly to watch by yourself.'

'Aye,' said Ludovico, 'in as great a fright as he ever made any body else suffer; and presently the housekeeper and some other person came up to the bed, when he, thinking they were going to examine it, bethought him, that his only chance of escaping detection, was by terrifying them; so he lifted up the counterpane, but that did not do, till he raised his face above it, and then they both set off, he said, as if they had seen the devil, and he got out of the rooms undiscovered.'

Emily could not forbear smiling at this explanation of the deception, which had given her so much superstitious terror, and was surprised, that she could have suffered herself to be thus alarmed, till she considered, that, when the mind has once begun to yield to the weakness of superstition, trifles impress it with the force of conviction. Still, however, she remembered with awe the mysterious music, which had been heard, at midnight, near Chateau-le-Blanc, and she asked Ludovico if he could give any explanation of it; but he could not.

'I only know, madam,' he added, 'that it did not belong to the pirates, for I have heard them laugh about it, and say, they believed the devil was in league with them there.'

'Yes, I will answer for it he was,' said Annette, her countenance brightening, 'I was sure all along, that he or his spirits had something to do with the north apartments, and now you see, madam, I am right at last.'

'It cannot be denied, that his spirits were very busy in that part of the chateau,' replied Emily, smiling. 'But I am surprised, Ludovico, that these pirates should persevere in their schemes, after the arrival of the Count; what could they expect but certain detection?'

'I have reason to believe, madam,' replied Ludovico, 'that it was their intention to persevere no longer than was necessary for the removal of the stores, which were deposited in the vaults; and it appeared, that they had been employed in doing so from within a short period after the Count's arrival; but, as they had only a few hours in the night for this business, and were carrying on other schemes at the same time, the vaults were not above half emptied, when they took me away. They gloried exceedingly in this opportunity of confirming the superstitious reports, that had been spread of the north chambers, were careful to leave every thing there as they had found it, the better to promote the deception, and frequently, in their jocose moods, would laugh at the consternation, which they believed the inhabitants of the castle, had suffered upon my disappearing, and it was to prevent the possibility of my betraying their secret, that they had removed me to such a distance. From that period they considered the chateau as nearly their own; but I found from the discourse of their comrades, that, though they were cautious, at first, in shewing their power there, they had once very nearly betrayed themselves. Going, one night, as was their custom, to the north chambers to repeat the noises, that had occasioned such alarm among the servants, they heard, as they were about to unfasten the secret door, voices in the bed-room. My lord has since told me, that himself and M. Henri were then in the apartment, and they heard very extraordinary sounds of lamentation, which it seems were made by these fellows, with their usual design of spreading terror; and my lord has owned, he then felt somewhat more, than surprise; but, as it was necessary to the peace of his family, that no notice should be taken, he was silent on the subject, and enjoined silence to his son.'

Emily, recollecting the change, that had appeared in the spirits of the Count, after the night, when he had watched in the north room, now perceived the cause of it; and, having made some further enquiries upon this strange affair, she dismissed Ludovico, and went to give orders for the accommodation of her friends, on the following day.

In the evening, Theresa, lame as she was, came to deliver the ring, with which Valancourt had entrusted her, and, when she presented it, Emily was much affected, for she remembered to have seen him wear it often in happier days. She was, however, much displeased, that Theresa had received it, and positively refused to accept it herself, though to have done so would have afforded her a melancholy pleasure. Theresa entreated, expostulated, and then described the distress of Valancourt, when he had given the ring, and repeated the message, with which he had commissioned her to deliver it; and Emily could not conceal the extreme sorrow this recital occasioned her, but wept, and remained lost in thought.

‘Alas! my dear young lady!’ said Theresa, ‘why should all this be? I have known you from your infancy, and it may well be supposed I love you, as if you was my own, and wish as much to see you happy. M. Valancourt, to be sure, I have not known so long, but then I have reason to love him, as though he was my own son. I know how well you love one another, or why all this weeping and wailing?’ Emily waved her hand for Theresa to be silent, who, disregarding the signal, continued, ‘And how much you are alike in your tempers and ways, and, that, if you were married, you would be the happiest couple in the whole province – then what is there to prevent your marrying? Dear dear! to see how some people fling away their happiness, and then cry and lament about it, just as if it was not their own doing, and as if there was more pleasure in wailing and weeping, than in being at peace. Learning, to be sure, is a fine thing, but, if it teaches folks no better than that; why I had rather be without it; if it would teach them to be happier, I would say something to it, then it would be learning and wisdom too.’

Age and long services had given Theresa a privilege to talk, but Emily now endeavoured to check her loquacity, and, though she felt the justness of some of her remarks, did not choose to explain the circumstances, that had determined her conduct towards Valancourt. She, therefore, only told Theresa, that it would much displease her to hear the subject renewed; that she had reasons for her conduct, which she did not think it proper to mention, and that the ring must be returned, with an assurance, that she could not accept it with propriety; and, at the same time, she forbade Theresa to repeat any future message from Valancourt, as she valued her esteem and kindness. Theresa was afflicted, and made another attempt, though feeble, to interest her for Valancourt, but the unusual displeasure, expressed in Emily’s countenance, soon obliged her to desist, and she departed in wonder and lamentation.

To relieve her mind, in some degree, from the painful recollections, that intruded upon it, Emily busied herself in preparations for the journey into Languedoc, and, while Annette, who assisted her, spoke with joy and affection of the safe return of Ludovico, she was considering how she might best promote their happiness, and determined, if it appeared, that his affection was as unchanged as that of the simple and honest Annette, to give her a marriage portion, and settle them on some part of her estate. These considerations led her to the remembrance of her father’s paternal domain, which his affairs had formerly compelled him to dispose of to M. Quesnel, and which she frequently wished to regain, because St Aubert had lamented, that the chief lands of his ancestors had passed into another family, and because they had been his birth-place and the haunt of his early years. To the estate at Tholouse she had no peculiar attachment, and it was her wish to dispose of this, that she might purchase her paternal domains, if M. Quesnel could be prevailed on to part with them, which, as he talked much of living in Italy, did not appear very improbable.

CHAPTER XV

'Sweet is the breath of vernal shower,

The bees' collected treasures sweet,
Sweet music's melting fall, but sweeter yet
The still, small voice of gratitude.'
GRAY ['Ode for Music'][1]

On the following day, the arrival of her friend revived the drooping Emily, and La Valleée became once more the scene of social kindness and of elegant hospitality. Illness and the terror she had suffered had stolen from Blanche much of her sprightliness, but all her affectionate simplicity remained, and, though she appeared less blooming, she was not less engaging than before. The unfortunate adventure on the Pyrenées had made the Count very anxious to reach home, and, after little more than a week's stay at La Vallée, Emily prepared to set out with her friends for Languedoc, assigning the care of her house, during her absence, to Theresa. On the evening, preceding her departure, this old servant brought again the ring of Valancourt, and, with tears, entreated her mistress to receive it, for that she had neither seen, or heard of M. Valancourt, since the night when he delivered it to her. As she said this, her countenance expressed more alarm, than she dared to utter; but Emily, checking her own propensity to fear, considered, that he had probably returned to the residence of his brother, and, again refusing to accept the ring, bade Theresa preserve it, till she saw him, which, with extreme reluctance, she promised to do.

On the following day, Count de Villefort, with Emily and the Lady Blanche, left La Vallée, and, on the ensuing evening, arrived at the Chateau-le-Blanc, where the Countress, Henri, and M. Du Pont, whom Emily was surprised to find there, received them with much joy and congratulation. She was concerned to observe, that the Count still encouraged the hopes of his friend, whose countenance declared, that his affection had suffered no abatement from absence; and was much distressed, when, on the second evening after her arrival, the Count, having withdrawn her from the Lady Blanche, with whom she was walking, renewed the subject of M. Du Pont's hopes. The mildness, with which she listened to his intercessions at first, deceiving him, as to her sentiments, he began to believe, that, her affection for Valancourt being overcome, she was, at length, disposed to think favourably of M. Du Pont; and, when she afterwards convinced him of his mistake, he ventured, in the earnestness of his wish to promote what he considered to be the happiness of two persons, whom he so much esteemed, gently to remonstrate with her, on thus suffering an ill-placed affection to poison the happiness of her most valuable years.

Observing her silence and the deep dejection of her countenance, he concluded with saying, 'I will not say more now, but I will still believe, my dear Mademoiselle St Aubert, that you will not always reject a person, so truly estimable as my friend Du Pont.'

He spared her the pain of replying, by leaving her; and she strolled on, somewhat displeased with the Count for having persevered to plead for a suit, which she had repeatedly rejected, and lost amidst the melancholy recollections, which this topic had revived, till she had insensibly reached the borders of the woods, that screened the monastery of St Clair, when, perceiving how far she had wandered, she determined to extend her walk a little farther, and to enquire after the abbess and some of her friends among the nuns.

Though the evening was now drawing to a close, she accepted the invitation of the friar, who opened the gate, and, anxious to meet some of her old acquaintance, proceeded towards the convent parlour. As she crossed the lawn, that sloped from the front of the monastery towards the sea, she was struck with the picture of repose, exhibited by some monks, sitting in the cloisters, which extended under the brow of the woods, that crowned this eminence; where, as they meditated, at this twilight hour, holy subjects, they sometimes suffered their attention to be relieved by the scene before them, nor thought it profane to look at nature, now that it had exchanged the brilliant colours of day for the sober hue of evening. Before the cloisters, however, spread an ancient chesnut, whose ample branches were designed to screen the full magnificence of a scene, that might tempt the wish to worldly pleasures; but still, beneath the dark and spreading foliage, gleamed a wide extent of ocean, and many a passing sail; while, to the right and left, thick woods were seen stretching along the winding shores. So much as this had been admitted, perhaps, to give to the secluded votary an image of the dangers and vicissitudes of life, and to console him, now that he had renounced its pleasures, by the certainty of having escaped its evils. As Emily walked pensively along, considering how much suffering she might have escaped, had she become a votaress of the order, and remained in this retirement from the time of her father's death, the vesper-bell struck up, and the monks retired slowly toward the chapel, while she, pursuing her way, entered the great hall, where an unusual silence seemed to reign. The parlour too, which opened from it, she found vacant, but, as the evening bell was sounding, she believed the nuns had withdrawn into the chapel, and sat down to rest, for a moment, before she returned to the chateau, where, however, the increasing gloom made her now anxious to be.

Not many minutes had elapsed, before a nun, entering in haste, enquired for the abbess, and was retiring, without recollecting Emily, when she made herself known, and then learned, that a mass was going to be performed for the soul of Sister Agnes, who had been declining, for some time, and who was now believed to be dying.

Of her sufferings the sister gave a melancholy account, and of the horrors, into which she had frequently started, but which had now yielded to a dejection so gloomy, that neither the prayers, in which she was joined by the sisterhood, or the assurances of her confessor, had power to recall her from it, or to cheer her mind even with a momentary gleam of comfort.

To this relation Emily listened with extreme concern, and, recollecting the frenzied manners and the expressions of horror, which she had herself witnessed of Agnes, together with the history, that Sister Frances had communicated, her compassion was heightened to a very painful degree. As the evening was already far advanced, Emily did not now desire to see her, or to join in the mass, and, after leaving many kind remembrances with the nun, for her old friends, she quitted the monastery, and returned over the cliffs toward the chateau, meditating upon what she had just heard, till, at length she forced her mind upon less interesting subjects.

The wind was high, and as she drew near the chateau, she often paused to listen to its awful sound, as it swept over the billows, that beat below, or groaned along the surrounding woods; and, while she rested on a cliff at a short distance from the chateau, and looked upon the wide waters, seen dimly beneath the last shade of twilight, she thought of the following address

TO THE WINDS

Viewless, through heaven's vast vault your course ye steer,
Unknown from whence ye come, or whither go!
Mysterious pow'rs! I hear ye murmur low,
Till swells your loud gust on my startled ear,
And, awful! seems to say – some God is near!
I love to list your midnight voices float
In the dread storm, that o'er the ocean rolls,
And, while their charm the angry wave controuls,
Mix with its sullen roar, and sink remote.
Then, rising in the pause, a sweeter note,
The dirge of spirits, who your deeds bewail,
A sweeter note oft swells while sleeps the gale!
But soon, ye sightless pow'rs! your rest is o'er,
Solemn and slow, ye rise upon the air,
Speak in the shrouds, and bid the sea-boy fear,
And the faint-warbled dirge – is heard no more!
Oh! then I deprecate your awful reign!
The loud lament yet bear not on your breath!
Bear not the crash of bark far on the main,
Bear not the cry of men, who cry in vain,
The crew's dread chorus sinking into death!
Oh! give not these, ye pow'rs! I ask alone,
As rapt I climb these dark romantic steeps,
The elemental war, the billow's moan;
I ask the still, sweet tear, that listening Fancy weeps!

CHAPTER XVI

____'Unnatural deeds

Do breed unnatural troubles: infected minds
To their deaf pillows will discharge their secrets.
More needs she the divine, than the physician.'
[SHAKESPEARE]*Macbeth*[1]

On the following evening, the view of the convent towers, rising among the shadowy woods, reminded Emily of the nun, whose condition had so much affected her; and, anxious to know how she was, as well as to see some of her former friends, she and the Lady Blanche extended their walk to the monastery. At the gate stood a carriage, which, from the heat of the horses, appeared to have just arrived; but a more than common stillness pervaded the court and the cloisters, through which Emily and Blanche passed in their way to the great hall, where a nun, who was crossing to the stair-case, replied to the enquiries of the former, that sister Agnes was still living, and sensible, but that it was thought she could not survive the night. In the parlour, they found several of the boarders, who rejoiced to see Emily, and told her many little circumstances that had happened in the convent since her departure, and which were interesting to her only because they related to persons, whom she had regarded with affection. While they thus conversed, the abbess entered the room, and expressed much satisfaction at seeing Emily, but her manner was unusually solemn, and her countenance dejected. 'Our house,' said she, after the first salutations were over, 'is truly a house of mourning – a daughter is now paying the debt of nature. – You have heard, perhaps, that our daughter Agnes is dying?'

Emily expressed her sincere concern.

'Her death presents to us a great and awful lesson,' continued the abbess; 'let us read it, and profit by it; let it teach us to prepare ourselves for the change, that awaits us all! You are young, and have it yet in your power to secure "the peace that passeth all understanding"[2] – the peace of conscience. Preserve it in your youth, that it may comfort you in age; for vain, alas! and imperfect are the good deeds of our latter years, if those of our early life have been evil!'

Emily would have said, that good deeds, she hoped, were never vain; but she considered that it was the abbess who spoke, and she remained silent.

'The latter days of Agnes,' resumed the abbess, 'have been exemplary; would they might atone for the errors of her former ones! Her sufferings now, alas! are great; let us believe, that they will make her peace hereafter! I have left her with her confessor, and a gentleman, whom she has long been anxious to see, and who is just arrived from Paris. They, I hope, will be able to administer the repose, which her mind has hitherto wanted.'

Emily fervently joined in the wish.

'During her illness, she has sometimes named you,' resumed the abbess; 'perhaps, it would comfort her to see you; when her present visitors have left her, we will go to her chamber, if the scene will not be too melancholy for your spirits. But, indeed, to such scenes, however painful, we ought to accustom ourselves, for they are salutary to the soul, and prepare us for what we are ourselves to suffer.'

Emily became grave and thoughtful; for this conversation brought to her recollection the dying moments of her beloved father, and she wished once more to weep over the spot, where his remains were buried. During the silence, which followed the abbess's speech, many minute circumstances attending his last hours occurred to her – his emotion on perceiving himself to be in the neighbourhood of Chateau-le-Blanc – his request to be interred in a particular spot in the church of this monastery – and the solemn charge he had delivered her to destroy certain papers, without examining them. – She recollected also the mysterious and horrible words in those manuscripts, upon which her eye had involuntarily glanced; and, though they now, and, indeed, whenever she remembered them, revived an excess of painful curiosity, concerning their full import, and the motives for her father's command, it was ever her chief consolation, that she had strictly obeyed him in this particular.

Little more was said by the abbess, who appeared too much affected by the subject she had lately left, to be willing to converse, and her companions had been for some time silent from the same cause, when this general reverie was interrupted by the entrance of a stranger, Monsieur Bonnac, who had just quitted the chamber of Sister Agnes. He appeared much disturbed, but Emily fancied, that his countenance had more the expression of horror, than of grief. Having drawn the abbess to a distant part of the room, he conversed with her for some time, during which she seemed to listen with earnest attention, and he to speak with caution, and a more than common degree of interest. When he had concluded, he bowed silently to the rest of the company, and quitted the room. The abbess, soon after, proposed going to the chamber of sister Agnes, to which Emily consented, though not without some reluctance, and Lady Blanche remained with the boarders below.

At the door of the chamber they met the confessor, whom, as he lifted up his head on their approach, Emily observed to be the same that had attended her dying father; but he passed on, without noticing her, and they entered the apartment, where, on a mattress, was laid Sister Agnes, with one nun watching in the chair beside her. Her countenance was so much changed, that Emily would scarcely have recollected her, had she not been prepared to do so: it was ghastly, and overspread with gloomy horror; her dim and hollow eyes were fixed on a crucifix, which she held upon her bosom; and she was so much engaged in thought, as not to perceive the abbess and Emily, till they stood at the bed-side. Then, turning her heavy eyes, she fixed them, in wild horror, upon Emily; and, screaming, exclaimed, 'Ah! that vision comes upon me in my dying hours!'

Emily started back in terror, and looked for explanation to the abbess, who made her a signal not to be alarmed, and calmly said to Agnes, 'Daughter, I have brought Mademoiselle St Aubert to visit you: I thought you would be glad to see her.'

Agnes made no reply; but, still gazing wildly upon Emily, exclaimed, 'It is her very self! Oh! there is all that fascination in her look, which proved my destruction! What would you have – what is it you come to demand – Retribution?—It will soon be yours – it is yours already. How many years have passed, since last I saw you! My crime is but as yesterday. – Yet I am grown old beneath it; while you are still young and blooming – blooming as when you forced me to commit that most abhorred deed! O! could I once forget it! – yet what would that avail? – the deed is done!'

Emily, extremely shocked, would now have left the room; but the abbess, taking her hand, tried to support her spirits, and begged she would stay a few moments, when Agnes would probably be calm, whom now she tried to sooth. But the latter seemed to disregard her, while she still fixed her eyes on Emily, and added, 'What are years of prayers and repentance? they cannot wash out the foulness of murder! – Yes, murder! Where is he – where is he? – Look there – look there! – see where he stalks along the room! Why do you come to torment me now?' continued Agnes, while her straining eyes were bent on air, 'why was not I punished before? – O! do not frown so sternly! Hah! there again! 'tis she herself! Why do you look so piteously upon me – and smile, too? smile on me! What groan was that?'

Agnes sunk down, apparently lifeless, and Emily, unable to support herself, leaned against the bed, while the abbess and the attendant nun were applying the usual remedies to Agnes. 'Peace,' said the abbess, when Emily was going to speak, 'the delirium is going off, she will soon revive. When was she thus before, daughter?'

'Not of many weeks, madam,' replied the nun, 'but her spirits have been much agitated by the arrival of the gentleman she wished so much to see.'

'Yes,' observed the abbess, 'that has undoubtedly occasioned this paroxysm of frenzy. When she is better, we will leave her to repose.'

Emily very readily consented, but, though she could now give little assistance, she was unwilling to quit the chamber, while any might be necessary.

When Agnes recovered her senses, she again fixed her eyes on Emily, but their wild expression was gone, and a gloomy melancholy had succeeded. It was some moments before she recovered sufficient spirits to speak; she then said feebly – 'The likeness is wonderful! – surely it must be something more than fancy. Tell me, I conjure you,' she added, addressing Emily, 'though your name is St Aubert, are you not the daughter of the Marchioness?' 'What Marchioness?' said Emily, in extreme surprise, for she had imagined, from the calmness of Agnes's manner, that her intellects were restored. The abbess gave her a significant glance, but she repeated the question.

'What Marchioness?' exclaimed Agnes, 'I know but of one – the Marchioness de Villeroi.'

Emily, remembering the emotion of her late father, upon the unexpected mention of this lady, and his request to be laid near the tomb of the Villerois, now felt greatly interested, and she entreated Agnes to explain the reason of her question. The abbess would now have withdrawn Emily from the room, who being, however, detained by a strong interest, repeated her entreaties.

'Bring me that casket, sister,' said Agnes; 'I will shew her to you, yet you need only look in that mirror, and you will behold her; you surely are her daughter: such striking resemblance is never found but among near relations.'

The nun brought the casket, and Agnes, having directed her how to unlock it, she took thence a miniature, in which Emily perceived the exact resemblance of the picture, which she had found among her late father's papers. Agnes held out her hand to receive it; gazed upon it earnestly for some moments in silence; and then, with a countenance of deep despair, threw up her eyes to Heaven, and prayed inwardly. When she had finished, she returned the miniature to Emily. 'Keep it,' said she, 'I bequeath it to you, for I must believe it is your right. I have frequently observed the resemblance between you; but never, till this day, did it strike upon my conscience so powerfully! Stay, sister, do not remove the casket – there is another picture I would shew.'

Emily trembled with expectation, and the abbess again would have withdrawn her. 'Agnes is still disordered,' said she, 'you observe how she wanders. In these moods she says any thing, and does not scruple, as you have witnessed, to accuse herself of the most horrible crimes.'

Emily, however, thought she perceived something more than madness in the inconsistencies of Agnes, whose mention of the Marchioness, and production of her picture, had interested her so much, that she determined to obtain further information, if possible, respecting the subject of it.

The nun returned with the casket, and, Agnes pointing out to her a secret drawer, she took from it another miniature. 'Here,' said Agnes, as she offered it to Emily, 'learn a lesson for your vanity, at least; look well at this picture, and see if you can discover any resemblance between what I was, and what I am.'

Emily impatiently received the miniature, which her eyes had scarcely glanced upon, before her trembling hands had nearly suffered it to fall – it was the resemblance of the portrait of Signora Laurentini, which she had formerly seen in the castle of Udolpho – the lady, who had disappeared in so mysterious a manner, and whom Montoni had been suspected of having caused to be murdered.

In silent astonishment, Emily continued to gaze alternately upon the picture and the dying nun, endeavouring to trace a resemblance between them, which no longer existed.

'Why do you look so sternly on me?' said Agnes, mistaking the nature of Emily's emotion.

'I have seen this face before,' said Emily, at length; 'was it really your resemblance?'

'You may well ask that question,' replied the nun, – 'but it was once esteemed a striking likeness of me. Look at me well, and see what guilt has made me. I then was innocent; the evil passions of my nature slept. Sister!' added she solemnly, and stretching forth her cold, damp hand to Emily, who shuddered at its touch – 'Sister! beware of the first indulgence of the passions; beware of the first! Their course, if not checked then, is rapid – their force is uncontroulable – they lead us we know not whither – they lead us perhaps to the commission of crimes, for which whole years of prayer and penitence cannot atone! – Such may be the force of even a single passion, that it overcomes every other, and sears up every other approach to the heart. Possessing us like a fiend, it leads us on to the acts of a fiend, making us insensible to pity and to conscience. And, when its purpose is accomplished, like a fiend, it leaves us to the torture of those feelings, which its power had suspended – not annihilated, – to the tortures of compassion, remorse, and conscience. Then, we awaken as from a dream, and perceive a new world around us – we gaze in astonishment, and horror – but the deed is committed; not all the powers of heaven and earth united can undo it – and the spectres of conscience will not fly! What are riches – grandeur – health itself, to the luxury of a pure conscience, the health of the soul; – and what the sufferings of poverty, disappointment, despair – to the anguish of an afflicted one! O! how long is it since I knew that luxury! I believed, that I had suffered the most agonizing pangs of human nature, in love, jealousy and despair – but these pangs were ease, compared with the stings of conscience, which I have since endured. I tasted too what was called the sweet of revenge – but it was transient, it expired even with the object, that provoked it. Remember, sister, that the passions are the seeds of vices as well as of virtues, from which either may spring, accordingly as they are nurtured. Unhappy they who have never been taught the art to govern them!'

'Alas! unhappy!' said the abbess, 'and ill-informed of our holy religion!' Emily listened to Agnes, in silent awe, while she still examined the miniature, and became confirmed in her opinion of its strong resemblance to the portrait at Udolpho. 'This face is familiar to me,' said she, wishing to lead the nun to an explanation, yet fearing to discover too abruptly her knowledge of Udolpho.

'You are mistaken,' replied Agnes, 'you certainly never saw that picture before.'

'No,' replied Emily, 'but I have seen one extremely like it.' 'Impossible,' said Agnes, who may now be called the Lady Laurentini.

'It was in the castle of Udolpho,' continued Emily, looking stedfastly at her.

'Of Udolpho!' exclaimed Laurentini, 'of Udolpho in Italy!' 'The same,' replied Emily.

'You know me then,' said Laurentini, 'and you are the daughter of the Marchioness.' Emily was somewhat surprised at this abrupt assertion. 'I am the daughter of the late Mon. St Aubert,' said she; 'and the lady you name is an utter stranger to me.'

'At least you believe so,' rejoined Laurentini.

Emily asked what reasons there could be to believe otherwise.

'The family likeness, that you bear her,' said the nun. 'The Marchioness, it is known, was attached to a gentleman of Gascony, at the time when she accepted the hand of the Marquis, by the command of her father. Ill-fated, unhappy woman!'

Emily, remembering the extreme emotion which St Aubert had betrayed on the mention of the Marchioness, would now have suffered something more than surprise, had her confidence in his integrity been less; as it was, she could not, for a moment, believe what the words of Laurentini insinuated; yet she still felt strongly interested, concerning them, and begged, that she would explain them further.

'Do not urge me on that subject,' said the nun, 'it is to me a terrible one! Would that I could blot it from my memory!' She sighed deeply, and, after the pause of a moment, asked Emily, by what means she had discovered her name?

'By your portrait in the castle of Udolpho, to which this miniature bears a striking resemblance,' replied Emily.

'You have been at Udolpho then!' said the nun, with great emotion. 'Alas! what scenes does the mention of it revive in my fancy – scenes of happiness – of suffering – and of horror!'

At this moment, the terrible spectacle, which Emily had witnessed in a chamber of that castle, occurred to her, and she shuddered, while she looked upon the nun – and recollected her late words – that 'years of prayer and penitence could not wash out the foulness of murder.' She was now compelled to attribute these to another cause, than that of delirium. With a degree of horror, that almost deprived her of sense, she now believed she looked upon a murderer; all the recollected behaviour of Laurentini seemed to confirm the supposition, yet Emily was still lost in a labyrinth of perplexities, and, not knowing how to ask the questions, which might lead to truth, she could only hint them in broken sentences.

'Your sudden departure from Udolpho' – said she.

Laurentini groaned.

'The reports that followed it,' continued Emily – 'The west chamber – the mourning veil – the object it conceals! – when murders are committed –'

The nun shrieked, 'What! there again!' said she, endeavouring to raise herself, while her starting eyes seemed to follow some object round the room – 'Come from the grave! What! Blood – blood too! – There was no blood – thou canst not say it! – Nay, do not smile, – do not smile so piteously!'

Laurentini fell into convulsions, as she uttered the last words; and Emily, unable any longer to endure the horror of the scene, hurried from the room, and sent some nuns to the assistance of the abbess.

The Lady Blanche, and the boarders, who were in the parlour, now assembled round Emily, and, alarmed by her manner and affrighted countenance, asked a hundred questions, which she avoided answering further, than by saying, that she believed Sister Agnes was dying. They received this as a sufficient explanation of her terror, and had then leisure to offer restoratives, which, at length, somewhat revived Emily, whose mind was, however, so much shocked with terrible surmises, and perplexed with doubts by some words from the nun, that she was unable to converse, and would have left the convent immediately, had she not wished to know whether Laurentini would survive the late attack. After waiting some time, she was informed, that, the convulsions having ceased, Laurentini seemed to be reviving, and Emily and Blanche were departing, when the abbess appeared, who, drawing the former aside, said she had something of consequence to say to her, but, as it was late, she would not detain her then, and requested to see her on the following day.

Emily promised to visit her, and, having taken leave, returned with the Lady Blanche towards the chateau, on the way to which the deep gloom of the woods made Blanche lament, that the evening was so far advanced; for the surrounding stillness and obscurity rendered her sensible of fear, though there was a servant to protect her; while Emily was too much engaged by the horrors of the scene she had just witnessed, to be affected by the solemnity of the shades, otherwise than as they served to promote her gloomy reverie, from which, however, she was at length recalled by the Lady Blanche, who pointed out, at some distance, in the dusky path they were winding, two persons slowly advancing. It was impossible to avoid them without striking into a still more secluded part of the wood, whither the strangers might easily follow; but all apprehension vanished, when Emily distinguished the voice of Mon. Du Pont, and perceived, that his companion was the gentleman, whom she had seen at the monastery, and who was now conversing with so much earnestness as not immediately to perceive their approach. When Du Pont joined the ladies, the stranger took leave, and they proceeded to the chateau, where the Count, when he heard of Mon. Bonnac, claimed him for an acquaintance, and, on learning the melancholy occasion of his visit to Languedoc, and that he was lodged at a small inn in the village, begged the favour of Mons. Du Pont to invite him to the chateau.

The latter was happy to do so, and the scruples of reserve, which made M. Bonnac hesitate to accept the invitation, being at length overcome, they went to the chateau, where the kindness of the Count and the sprightliness of his son were exerted to dissipate the gloom, that overhung the spirits of the stranger. M. Bonnac was an officer in the French service, and appeared to be about fifty; his figure was tall and commanding, his manners had received the last polish, and there was something in his countenance uncommonly interesting; for over features, which, in youth, must have been remarkably handsome, was spread a melancholy, that seemed the effect of long misfortune, rather than of constitution, or temper.

The conversation he held, during supper, was evidently an effort of politeness, and there were intervals in which, unable to struggle against the feelings, that depressed him, he relapsed into silence and abstraction, from which, however, the Count, sometimes, withdrew him in a manner so delicate and benevolent, that Emily, while she observed him, almost fancied she beheld her late father.

The party separated, at an early hour, and then, in the solitude of her apartment, the scenes, which Emily had lately witnessed, returned to her fancy, with dreadful energy. That in the dying nun she should have discovered Signora Laurentini, who, instead of having been murdered by Montoni, was, as it now seemed, herself guilty of some dreadful crime, excited both horror and surprise in a high degree; nor did the hints, which she had dropped, respecting the marriage of the Marchioness de Villeroi, and the enquiries she had made concerning Emily's birth, occasion her a less degree of interest, though it was of a different nature.

The history, which Sister Frances had formerly related, and had said to be that of Agnes, it now appeared, was erroneous; but for what purpose it had been fabricated, unless the more effectually to conceal the true story, Emily could not even guess. Above all, her interest was excited as to the relation, which the story of the late Marchioness de Villeroi bore to that of her father; for, that some kind of relation existed between them, the grief of St Aubert, upon hearing her named, his request to be buried near her, and her picture, which had been found among his papers, certainly proved. Sometimes it occurred to Emily, that he might have been the lover, to whom it was said the Marchioness was attached, when she was compelled to marry the Marquis de Villeroi; but that he had afterwards cherished a passion for her, she could not suffer herself to believe, for a moment. The papers, which he had so solemnly enjoined her to destroy, she now fancied had related to this connection, and she wished more earnestly than before to know the reasons, that made him consider the injunction necessary, which, had her faith in his principles been less, would have led to believe, that there was a mystery in her birth dishonourable to her parents, which those manuscripts might have revealed.

Reflections, similar to these, engaged her mind, during the greater part of the night, and when, at length, she fell into a slumber, it was only to behold a vision of the dying nun, and to awaken in horrors, like those she had witnessed.

On the following morning, she was too much indisposed to attend her appointment with the abbess, and, before the day concluded, she heard, that Sister Agnes was no more. Mons. Bonnac received this intelligence, with concern; but Emily observed, that he did not appear so much affected now, as on the preceding evening, immediately after quitting the apartment of the nun, whose death was probably less terrible to him, than the confession he had been then called upon to witness. However this might be, he was perhaps consoled, in some degree, by a knowledge of the legacy bequeathed him, since his family was large, and the extravagance of some part of it had lately been the means of involving him in great distress, and even in the horrors of a prison; and it was the grief he had suffered from the wild career of a favourite son, with the pecuniary anxieties and misfortunes consequent upon it, that had given to his countenance the air of dejection, which had so much interested Emily.

To his friend Mons. Du Pont he recited some particulars of his late sufferings, when it appeared, that he had been confined for several months in one of the prisons of Paris, with little hope of release, and without the comfort of seeing his wife, who had been absent in the country, endeavouring, though in vain, to procure assistance from his friends. When, at length, she had obtained an order for admittance, she was so much shocked at the change, which long confinement and sorrow had made in his appearance, that she was seized with fits, which, by their long continuance, threatened her life.

'Our situation affected those, who happened to witness it,' continued Mons. Bonnac, 'and one generous friend, who was in confinement at the same time, afterwards employed the first moments of his liberty in efforts to obtain mine. He succeeded; the heavy debt, that oppressed me, was discharged; and, when I would have expressed my sense of the obligation I had received, my benefactor was fled from my search. I have reason to believe he was the victim of his own generosity, and that he returned to the state of confinement, from which he had released me; but every enquiry after him was unsuccessful. Amiable and unfortunate Valancourt!'

'Valancourt!' exclaimed Mons. Du Pont. 'Of what family?'

'The Valancourts, Counts Duvarney,' replied Mons. Bonnac.

The emotion of Mons. Du Pont, when he discovered the generous benefactor of his friend to be the rival of his love, can only be imagined; but, having overcome his first surprise, he dissipated the apprehensions of Mons. Bonnac by acquainting him, that Valancourt was at liberty, and had lately been in Languedoc; after which his affection for Emily prompted him to make some enquiries, respecting the conduct of his rival, during his stay at Paris, of which M. Bonnac appeared to be well informed. The answers he received were such as convinced him, that Valancourt had been much misrepresented, and, painful as was the sacrifice, he formed the just design of relinquishing his pursuit of Emily to a lover, who, it now appeared, was not unworthy of the regard, with which she honoured him.

The conversation of Mons. Bonnac discovered, that Valancourt, some time after his arrival at Paris, had been drawn into the snares, which determined vice had spread for him, and that his hours had been chiefly divided between the parties of the captivating Marchioness and those gaming assemblies, to which the envy, or the avarice, of his brother officers had spared no art to seduce him. In these parties he had lost large sums, in efforts to recover small ones, and to such losses the Count de Villefort and Mons. Henri had been frequent witnesses. His resources were, at length, exhausted; and the Count, his brother, exasperated by his conduct, refused to continue the supplies necessary to his present mode of life, when Valancourt, in consequence of accumulated debts, was thrown into confinement, where his brother suffered him to remain, in the hope, that punishment might effect a reform of conduct, which had not yet been confirmed by long habit.

In the solitude of his prison, Valancourt had leisure for reflection, and cause for repentance; here, too, the image of Emily, which, amidst the dissipation of the city had been obscured, but never obliterated from his heart, revived with all the charms of innocence and beauty, to reproach him for having sacrificed his happiness and debased his talents by pursuits, which his nobler faculties would formerly have taught him to consider were as tasteless as they were degrading. But, though his passions had been seduced, his heart was not depraved, nor had habit riveted the chains, that hung heavily on his conscience; and, as he retained that energy of will, which was necessary to burst them, he, at length, emancipated himself from the bondage of vice, but not till after much effort and severe suffering.

Being released by his brother from the prison, where he had witnessed the affecting meeting between Mons. Bonnac and his wife, with whom he had been for some time acquainted, the first use of his liberty formed a striking instance of his humanity and his rashness; for with nearly all the money, just received from his brother, he went to a gaming-house, and gave it as a last stake for the chance of restoring his friend to freedom, and to his afflicted family. The event was fortunate, and, while he had awaited the issue of this momentous stake, he made a solemn vow never again to yield to the destructive and fascinating vice of gaming.

Having restored the venerable Mons. Bonnac to his rejoicing family, he hurried from Paris to Estuviere; and, in the delight of having made the wretched happy, forgot, for a while, his own misfortunes. Soon, however, he remembered, that he had thrown away the fortune, without which he could never hope to marry Emily; and life, unless passed with her, now scarcely appeared supportable; for her goodness, refinement, and simplicity of heart, rendered her beauty more enchanting, if possible, to his fancy, than it had ever yet appeared. Experience had taught him to understand the full value of the qualities, which he had before admired, but which the contrasted characters he had seen in the world made him now adore; and these reflections, increasing the pangs of remorse and regret, occasioned the deep dejection, that had accompanied him even into the presence of Emily, of whom he considered himself no longer worthy. To the ignominy of having received pecuniary obligations from the Marchioness Chamfort, or any other lady of intrigue, as the Count de Villefort had been informed, or of having been engaged in the depredating schemes of gamesters, Valancourt had never submitted; and these were some of such scandals as often mingle with truth, against the unfortunate. Count de Villefort had received them from authority, which he had no reason to doubt, and which the imprudent conduct he had himself witnessed in Valancourt, had certainly induced him the more readily to believe. Being such as Emily could not name to the Chevalier, he had no opportunity of refuting them; and, when he confessed himself to be unworthy of her esteem, he little suspected, that he was confirming to her the most dreadful calumnies. Thus the mistake had been mutual, and had remained so, when Mons. Bonnac explained the conduct of his generous, but imprudent young friend to Du Pont, who, with severe justice, determined not only to undeceive the Count on this subject, but to resign all hope of Emily. Such a sacrifice as his love rendered this, was deserving of a noble reward, and Mons. Bonnac, if it had been possible for him to forget the benevolent Valancourt, would have wished that Emily might accept the just Du Pont.

When the Count was informed of the error he had committed, he was extremely shocked at the consequence of his credulity, and the account which Mons. Bonnac gave of his friend's situation, while at Paris, convinced him, that Valancourt had been entrapped by the schemes of a set of dissipated young men, with whom his profession had partly obliged him to associate, rather than by an inclination to vice; and, charmed by the humanity, and noble, though rash generosity, which his conduct towards Mons. Bonnac exhibited, he forgave him the transient errors, that had stained his youth, and restored him to the high degree of esteem, with which he had regarded him, during their early acquaintance. But, as the least reparation he could now make Valancourt was to afford him an opportunity of explaining to Emily his former conduct, he immediately wrote, to request his forgiveness of the unintentional injury he had done him, and to invite him to Chateau-le-Blanc. Motives of delicacy with-held the Count from informing Emily of this letter, and of kindness from acquainting her with the discovery respecting Valancourt, till his arrival should save her from the possibility of anxiety, as to its event; and this precaution spared her even severer inquietude, than the Count had foreseen, since he was ignorant of the symptoms of despair, which Valancourt's late conduct had betrayed.

CHAPTER XVII

——'But in these cases,
We still have judgment here; that we but teach
Bloody instructions, which, being taught, return
To plague the inventor: thus even-handed justice
Commends the ingredients of our poison'd chalice
To our own lips.'
[SHAKESPEARE]*Macbeth*[1]

Some circumstances of an extraordinary nature now withdrew Emily from her own sorrows, and excited emotions, which partook of both surprise and horror.

A few days following that, on which Signora Laurentini died, her will was opened at the monastery, in the presence of the superiors and Mons. Bonnac, when it was found, that one third of her personal property was bequeathed to the nearest surviving relative of the late Marchioness de Villeroi, and that Emily was the person.

With the secret of Emily's family the abbess had long been acquainted, and it was in observance of the earnest request of St Aubert, who was known to the friar, that attended him on his death-bed, that his daughter had remained in ignorance of her relationship to the Marchioness. But some hints, which had fallen from Signora Laurentini, during her last interview with Emily, and a confession of a very extraordinary nature, given in her dying hours, had made the abbess think it necessary to converse with her young friend, on the topic she had not before ventured to introduce; and it was for this purpose, that she had requested to see her on the morning that followed her interview with the nun. Emily's indisposition had then prevented the intended conversation; but now, after the will had been examined, she received a summons, which she immediately obeyed, and became informed of circumstances, that powerfully affected her. As the narrative of the abbess was, however, deficient in many particulars, of which the reader may wish to be informed, and the history of the nun is materially connected with the fate of the Marchioness de Villeroi, we shall omit the conversation, that passed in the parlour of the convent, and mingle with our relation a brief history of

LAURENTINI DI UDOLPHO,

Who was the only child of her parents, and heiress of the ancient house of Udolpho, in the territory of Venice. It was the first misfortune of her life, and that which led to all her succeeding misery, that the friends, who ought to have restrained her strong passions, and mildly instructed her in the art of governing them, nurtured them by early indulgence. But they cherished their own failings in her; for their conduct was not the result of rational kindness, and, when they either indulged, or opposed the passions of their child, they gratified their own. Thus they indulged her with weakness, and reprehended her with violence; her spirit was exasperated by their vehemence, instead of being corrected by their wisdom; and their oppositions became contests for victory, in which the due tenderness of the parents, and the affectionate duties of the child, were equally forgotten; but, as returning fondness disarmed the parents' resentment soonest, Laurentini was suffered to believe that she had conquered, and her passions became stronger by every effort, that had been employed to subdue them.

The death of her father and mother in the same year left her to her own discretion, under the dangerous circumstances attendant on youth and beauty. She was fond of company, delighted with admiration, yet disdainful of the opinion of the world, when it happened to contradict her inclinations; had a gay and brilliant wit, and was mistress of all the arts of fascination. Her conduct was such as might have been expected, from the weakness of her principles and the strength of her passions.

Among her numerous admirers was the late Marquis de Villeroi, who, on his tour through Italy, saw Laurentini at Venice, where she usually resided, and became her passionate adorer. Equally captivated by the figure and accomplishments of the Marquis, who was at that period one of the most distinguished noblemen of the French court, she had the art so effectually to conceal from him the dangerous traits of her character and the blemishes of her late conduct, that he solicited her hand in marriage.

Before the nuptials were concluded, she retired to the castle of Udolpho, whither the Marquis followed, and, where her conduct, relaxing from the propriety, which she had lately assumed, discovered to him the precipice, on which he stood. A minuter enquiry than he had before thought it necessary to make, convinced him, that he had been deceived in her character, and she, whom he had designed for his wife, afterwards became his mistress.

Having passed some weeks at Udolpho, he was called abruptly to France, whither he returned with extreme reluctance, for his heart was still fascinated by the arts of Laurentini, with whom, however, he had on various pretences delayed his marriage; but, to reconcile her to this separation, he now gave repeated promises of returning to conclude the nuptials, as soon as the affair, which thus suddenly called him to France, should permit.

Soothed, in some degree, by these assurances, she suffered him to depart; and, soon after, her relative, Montoni, arriving at Udolpho, renewed the addresses, which she had before refused, and which she now again rejected. Meanwhile, her thoughts were constantly with the Marquis de Villeroi, for whom she suffered all the delirium of Italian love, cherished by the solitude, to which she confined herself; for she had now lost all taste for the pleasures of society and the gaiety of amusement. Her only indulgences were to sigh and weep over a miniature of the Marquis; to visit the scenes, that had witnessed their happiness, to pour forth her heart to him in writing, and to count the weeks, the days, which must intervene before the period that he had mentioned as probable for his return. But this period passed without bringing him; and week after week followed in heavy and almost intolerable expectation. During this interval, Laurentini's fancy, occupied incessantly by one idea, became disordered; and, her whole heart being devoted to one object, life became hateful to her, when she believed that object lost.

Several months passed, during which she heard nothing from the Marquis de Villeroi, and her days were marked, at intervals, with the phrensy of passion and the sullenness of despair. She secluded herself from all visitors, and, sometimes, remained in her apartment, for weeks together, refusing to speak to every person, except her favourite female attendant, writing scraps of letters, reading, again and again, those she had received from the Marquis, weeping over his picture, and speaking to it, for many hours, upbraiding, reproaching and caressing it alternately.

At length, a report reached her, that the Marquis had married in France, and, after suffering all the extremes of love, jealousy and indignation, she formed the desperate resolution of going secretly to that country, and, if the report proved true, of attempting a deep revenge. To her favourite woman only she confided the plan of her journey, and she engaged her to partake of it. Having collected her jewels, which, descending to her from many branches of her family, were of immense value, and all her cash, to a very large amount, they were packed in a trunk, which was privately conveyed to a neighbouring town, whither Laurentini, with this only servant, followed, and thence proceeded secretly to Leghorn, where they embarked for France.

When, on her arrival in Languedoc, she found, that the Marquis de Villeroi had been married, for some months, her despair almost deprived her of reason, and she alternately projected and abandoned the horrible design of murdering the Marquis, his wife and herself. At length she contrived to throw herself in his way, with an intention of reproaching him, for his conduct, and of stabbing herself in his presence; but, when she again saw him, who so long had been the constant object of her thoughts and affections, resentment yielded to love; her resolution failed; she trembled with the conflict of emotions, that assailed her heart, and fainted away.

The Marquis was not proof against her beauty and sensibility; all the energy, with which he had first loved, returned, for his passion had been resisted by prudence, rather than overcome by indifference; and, since the honour of his family would not permit him to marry her, he had endeavoured to subdue his love, and had so far succeeded, as to select the then Marchioness for his wife, whom he loved at first with a tempered and rational affection. But the mild virtues of that amiable lady did not recompense him for her indifference, which appeared, notwithstanding her efforts to conceal it; and he had, for some time, suspected that her affections were engaged by another person, when Laurentini arrived in Languedoc. This artful Italian soon perceived, that she had regained her influence over him, and, soothed by the discovery, she determined to live, and to employ all her enchantments to win his consent to the diabolical deed, which she believed was necessary to the security of her happiness. She conducted her scheme with deep dissimulation and patient perseverance, and, having completely estranged the affections of the Marquis from his wife, whose gentle goodness and unimpassioned manners had ceased to please, when contrasted with the captivations of the Italian, she proceeded to awaken in his mind the jealousy of pride, for it was no longer that of love, and even pointed out to him the person, to whom she affirmed the Marchioness had sacrificed her honour; but Laurentini had first extorted from him a solemn promise to forbear avenging himself upon his rival. This was an important part of her plan, for she knew, that, if his desire of vengeance was restrained towards one party, it would burn more fiercely towards the other, and he might then, perhaps, be prevailed on to assist in the horrible act, which would release him from the only barrier, that with-held him from making her his wife.

The innocent Marchioness, meanwhile, observed, with extreme grief, the alteration in her husband's manners. He became reserved and thoughtful in her presence; his conduct was austere, and sometimes even rude; and he left her, for many hours together, to weep for his unkindness, and to form plans for the recovery of his affection. His conduct afflicted her the more, because, in obedience to the command of her father, she had accepted his hand, though her affections were engaged to another, whose amiable disposition, she had reason to believe, would have ensured her happiness. This circumstance Laurentini had discovered, soon after her arrival in France, and had made ample use of it in assisting her designs upon the Marquis, to whom she adduced such seeming proof of his wife's infidelity, that, in the frantic rage of wounded honour, he consented to destroy his wife. A slow poison was administered, and she fell a victim to the jealousy and subtlety of Laurentini and to the guilty weakness of her husband.

But the moment of Laurentini's triumph, the moment, to which she had looked forward for the completion of all her wishes, proved only the commencement of a suffering, that never left her to her dying hour.

The passion of revenge, which had in part stimulated her to the commission of this atrocious deed, died, even at the moment when it was gratified, and left her to the horrors of unavailing pity and remorse, which would probably have empoisoned all the years she had promised herself with the Marquis de Villeroi, had her expectations of an alliance with him been realized. But he, too, had found the moment of his revenge to be that of remorse, as to himself, and detestation, as to the partner of his crime; the feeling, which he had mistaken for conviction, was no more; and he stood astonished, and aghast, that no proof remained of his wife's infidelity, now that she had suffered the punishment of guilt. Even when he was informed, that she was dying, he had felt suddenly and unaccountably reassured of her innocence, nor was the solemn assurance she made him in her last hour, capable of affording him a stronger conviction of her blameless conduct.

In the first horrors of remorse and despair, he felt inclined to deliver up himself and the woman, who had plunged him into this abyss of guilt, into the hands of justice; but, when the paroxysm of his suffering was over, his intention changed. Laurentini, however, he saw only once afterwards, and that was, to curse her as the instigator of his crime, and to say, that he spared her life only on condition, that she passed the rest of her days in prayer and penance. Overwhelmed with disappointment, on receiving contempt and abhorrence from the man, for whose sake she had not scrupled to stain her conscience with human blood, and, touched with horror of the unavailing crime she had committed, she renounced the world, and retired to the monastery of St Clair, a dreadful victim to unresisted passion.

The Marquis, immediately after the death of his wife, quitted Chateau-le-Blanc, to which he never returned, and endeavoured to lose the sense of his crime amidst the tumult of war, or the dissipations of a capital; but his efforts were vain; a deep dejection hung over him ever after, for which his most intimate friends could not account, and he, at length, died, with a degree of horror nearly equal to that, which Laurentini had suffered. The physician, who had observed the singular appearance of the unfortunate Marchioness, after death, had been bribed to silence; and, as the surmises of a few of the servants had proceeded no further than a whisper, the affair had never been investigated. Whether this whisper ever reached the father of the Marchioness, and, if it did, whether the difficulty of obtaining proof deterred him from prosecuting the Marquis de Villeroi, is uncertain; but her death was deeply lamented by some part of her family, and particularly by her brother, M. St Aubert; for that was the degree of relationship, which had existed between Emily's father and the Marchioness; and there is no doubt, that he suspected the manner of her death. Many letters passed between the Marquis and him, soon after the decease of this beloved sister, the subject of which was not known, but there is reason to believe, that they related to the cause of her death; and these were the papers, together with some letters of the Marchioness, who had confided to her brother the occasion of her unhappiness, which St Aubert had so solemnly enjoined his daughter to destroy: and anxiety for her peace had probably made him forbid her to enquire into the melancholy story, to which they alluded. Such, indeed, had been his affliction, on the premature death of this his favourite sister, whose unhappy marriage had from the first excited his tenderest pity, that he never could hear her named, or mention her himself after her death, except to Madame St Aubert. From Emily, whose sensibility he feared to awaken, he had so carefully concealed her history and name, that she was ignorant, till now, that she ever had such a relative as the Marchioness de Villeroi; and from this motive he had enjoined silence to his only surviving sister, Madame Cheron, who had scrupulously observed his request.

It was over some of the last pathetic letters of the Marchioness, that St Aubert was weeping, when he was observed by Emily, on the eve of her departure from La Vallée, and it was her picture, which he had so tenderly caressed. Her disastrous death may account for the emotion he had betrayed, on hearing her named by La Voisin, and for his request to be interred near the monument of the Villerois, where her remains were deposited, but not those of her husband, who was buried, where he died, in the north of France.

The confessor, who attended St Aubert in his last moments, recollected him to be the brother of the late Marchioness, when St Aubert, from tenderness to Emily, had conjured him to conceal the circumstance, and to request that the abbess, to whose care he particularly recommended her, would do the same; a request, which had been exactly observed.

Laurentini, on her arrival in France, had carefully concealed her name and family, and, the better to disguise her real history, had, on entering the convent, caused the story to be circulated, which had imposed on sister Frances, and it is probable, that the abbess, who did not preside in the convent, at the time of her noviciation,[2] was also entirely ignorant of the truth. The deep remorse, that seized on the mind of Laurentini, together with the sufferings of disappointed passion, for she still loved the Marquis, again unsettled her intellects, and, after the first paroxysms of despair were passed, a heavy and silent melancholy had settled upon her spirits, which suffered few interruptions from fits of phrensy, till the time of her death. During many years, it had been her only amusement to walk in the woods near the monastery, in the solitary hours of night, and to play upon a favourite instrument, to which she sometimes joined the delightful melody of her voice, in the most solemn and melancholy airs of her native country, modulated by all the energetic feeling, that dwelt in her heart. The physician, who had attended her, recommended it to the superior to indulge her in this whim, as the only means of soothing her distempered fancy; and she was suffered to walk in the lonely hours of night, attended by the servant, who had accompanied her from Italy; but, as the indulgence transgressed against the rules of the convent, it was kept as secret as possible; and thus the mysterious music of Laurentini had combined with other circumstances, to produce a report, that not only the chateau, but its neighbourhood, was haunted.

Soon after her entrance into this holy community, and before she had shewn any symptoms of insanity there, she made a will, in which, after bequeathing a considerable legacy to the convent, she divided the remainder of her personal property, which her jewels made very valuable, between the wife of Mons. Bonnac, who was an Italian lady and her relation, and the nearest surviving relative of the late Marchioness de Villeroi. As Emily St Aubert was not only the nearest, but the sole relative, this legacy descended to her, and thus explained to her the whole mystery of her father's conduct.

The resemblance between Emily and her unfortunate aunt had frequently been observed by Laurentini, and had occasioned the singular behaviour, which had formerly alarmed her; but it was in the nun's dying hour, when her conscience gave her perpetually the idea of the Marchioness, that she became more sensible, than ever, of this likeness, and, in her phrensy, deemed it no resemblance of the person she had injured, but the original herself. The bold assertion, that had followed, on the recovery of her senses, that Emily was the daughter of the Marchioness de Villeroi, arose from a suspicion that she was so; for, knowing that her rival, when she married the Marquis, was attached to another lover, she had scarcely scrupled to believe, that her honour had been sacrificed, like her own, to an unresisted passion.

Of a crime, however, to which Emily had suspected, from her phrensied confession of murder, that she had been instrumental in the castle of Udolpho, Laurentini was innocent; and she had herself been deceived, concerning the spectacle, that formerly occasioned her so much terror, and had since compelled her, for a while, to attribute the horrors of the nun to a consciousness of a murder, committed in that castle.

It may be remembered, that, in a chamber of Udolpho, hung a black veil, whose singular situation had excited Emily's curiosity, and which afterwards disclosed an object, that had overwhelmed her with horror; for, on lifting it, there appeared, instead of the picture she had expected, within a recess of the wall, a human figure of ghastly paleness, stretched at its length, and dressed in the habiliments of the grave. What added to the horror of the spectacle, was, that the face appeared partly decayed and disfigured by worms, which were visible on the features and hands. On such an object, it will be readily believed, that no person could endure to look twice. Emily, it may be recollected, had, after the first glance, let the veil drop, and her terror had prevented her from ever after provoking a renewal of such suffering, as she had then experienced. Had she dared to look again, her delusion and her fears would have vanished together, and she would have perceived, that the figure before her was not human, but formed of wax.[3] The history of it is somewhat extraordinary, though not without example in the records of that fierce severity, which monkish superstition has sometimes inflicted on mankind. A member of the house of Udolpho, having committed some offence against the prerogative of the church, had been condemned to the penance of contemplating, during certain hours of the day, a waxen image, made to resemble a human body in the state, to which it is reduced after death. This penance, serving as a memento of the condition at which he must himself arrive, had been designed to reprove the pride of the Marquis of Udolpho, which had formerly so much exasperated that of the Romish church; and he had not only superstitiously observed this penance himself, which, he had believed, was to obtain a pardon for all his sins, but had made it a condition in his will, that his descendants should preserve the image, on pain of forfeiting to the church a certain part of his domain, that they also might profit by the humiliating moral it conveyed. The figure, therefore, had been suffered to retain its station in the wall of the chamber, but his descendants excused themselves from observing the penance, to which he had been enjoined.

This image was so horribly natural, that it is not surprising Emily should have mistaken it for the object it resembled, nor since she had heard such an extraordinary account, concerning the disappearing of the late lady of the castle, and had such experience of the character of Montoni, that she should have believed this to be the murdered body of the lady Laurentini, and that he had been the contriver of her death.

The situation, in which she had discovered it, occasioned her, at first, much surprise and perplexity; but the vigilance, with which the doors of the chamber, where it was deposited, were afterwards secured, had compelled her to believe, that Montoni, not daring to confide the secret of her death to any person, had suffered her remains to decay in this obscure chamber. The ceremony of the veil, however, and the circumstance of the doors having been left open, even for a moment, had occasioned her much wonder and some doubts; but these were not sufficient to overcome her suspicion of Montoni; and it was the dread of his terrible vengeance, that had sealed her lips in silence, concerning what she had seen in the west chamber.

Emily, in discovering the Marchioness de Villeroi to have been the sister of Mons. St Aubert, was variously affected; but, amidst the sorrow, which she suffered for her untimely death, she was released from an anxious and painful conjecture, occasioned by the rash assertion of Signora Laurentini, concerning her birth and the honour of her parents. Her faith in St Aubert's principles would scarcely allow her to suspect that he had acted dishonourably; and she felt such reluctance to believe herself the daughter of any other, than her, whom she had always considered and loved as a mother, that she would hardly admit such a circumstance to be possible; yet the likeness, which it had frequently been affirmed she bore to the late Marchioness, the former behaviour of Dorothé the old housekeeper, the assertion of Laurentini, and the mysterious attachment, which St Aubert had discovered, awakened doubts, as to his connection with the Marchioness, which her reason could neither vanquish, or confirm. From these, however, she was now relieved, and all the circumstances of her father's conduct were fully explained; but her heart was oppressed by the melancholy catastrophe of her amiable relative, and by the awful lesson, which the history of the nun exhibited, the indulgence of whose passions had been the means of leading her gradually to the commission of a crime, from the prophecy of which in her early years she would have recoiled in horror, and exclaimed – that it could not be! – a crime, which whole years of repentance and of the severest penance had not been able to obliterate from her conscience.

CHAPTER XVIII

—— —— —— ‘Then, fresh tears

Stood on her cheek, as doth the honey-dew
Upon a gather’d lily almost wither’d.’
SHAKESPEARE [*Titus Andronicus*.][1]

After the late discoveries, Emily was distinguished at the chateau by the Count and his family, as a relative of the house of Villeroi, and received, if possible, more friendly attention, than had yet been shewn her.

Count de Villefort’s surprise at the delay of an answer to his letter, which had been directed to Valancourt, at Estuviere, was mingled with satisfaction for the prudence, which had saved Emily from a share of the anxiety he now suffered; though, when he saw her still drooping under the effect of his former error, all his resolution was necessary to restrain him from relating the truth, that would afford her a momentary relief. The approaching nuptials of the Lady Blanche now divided his attention with this subject of his anxiety, for the inhabitants of the chateau were already busied in preparations for that event, and the arrival of Mons. St Foix was daily expected. In the gaiety, which surrounded her, Emily vainly tried to participate, her spirits being depressed by the late discoveries, and by the anxiety concerning the fate of Valancourt, that had been occasioned by the description of his manner, when he had delivered the ring. She seemed to perceive in it the gloomy wildness of despair; and, when she considered to what that despair might have urged him, her heart sunk with terror and grief. The state of suspense, as to his safety, to which she believed herself condemned, till she should return to La Vallée, appeared insupportable, and, in such moments, she could not even struggle to assume the composure, that had left her mind, but would often abruptly quit the company she was with, and endeavour to sooth her spirits in the deep solitudes of the woods, that overbrowed the shore. Here, the faint roar of foaming waves, that beat below, and the sullen murmur of the wind among the branches around, were circumstances in unison with the temper of her mind; and she would sit on a cliff, or on the broken steps of her favourite watch-tower, observing the changing colours of the evening clouds, and the gloom of twilight draw over the sea, till the white tops of billows, riding towards the shore, could scarcely be discerned amidst the darkened waters. The lines, engraved by Valancourt on this tower, she frequently repeated with melancholy enthusiasm, and then would endeavour to check the recollections and the grief they occasioned, and to turn her thoughts to indifferent subjects.

One evening, having wandered with her lute to this her favourite spot, she entered the ruined tower, and ascended a winding stair-case, that led to a small chamber, which was less decayed than the rest of the building, and whence she had often gazed, with admiration, on the wide prospect of sea and land, that extended below. The sun was now setting on that tract of the Pyrenées, which divides Languedoc from Rousillon, and, placing herself opposite to a small grated window, which, like the wood-tops beneath, and the waves lower still, gleamed with the red glow of the west, she touched the chords of her lute in solemn symphony, and then accompanied it with her voice, in one of the simple and affecting airs, to which, in happier days, Valancourt had often listened in rapture, and which she now adapted to the following lines.

TO MELANHOLY

Spirit of love and sorrow – hail!
Thy solemn voice from far I hear,
Mingling with ev’ning’s dying gale:
Hail, with this sadly-pleasing tear!

O! at this still, this lonely hour,
Thine own sweet hour of closing day,
Awake thy lute, whose charmful pow’r
Shall call up Fancy to obey:

To paint the wild romantic dream,
That meets the poet’s musing eye,
As, on the bank of shadowy stream,
He breathes to her the fervid sigh.

O lonely spirit! let thy song
Lead me through all thy sacred haunt;
The minster's moon-light aisles along,
Where spectres raise the midnight chaunt.

I hear their dirges faintly swell!
Then, sink at once in silence drear,
While, from the pillar'd cloister's cell,
Dimly their gliding forms appear!

Lead where the pine-woods wave on high,
Whose pathless sod is darkly seen,
As the cold moon, with trembling eye,
Darts her long beams the leaves between.

Lead to the mountain's dusky head,
Where, far below, in shade profound,
Wide forests, plains and hamlets spread,
And sad the chimes of vesper sound.

Or guide me, where the dashing oar
Just breaks the stillness of the vale,
As slow it tracks the winding shore,
To meet the ocean's distant sail:

To pebbly banks, that Neptune laves,
With measur'd surges, loud and deep,
Where the dark cliff bends o'er the waves,
And wild the winds of autumn sweep.

There pause at midnight's spectred hour,
And list the long-resounding gale;
And catch the fleeting moon-light's pow'r,
O'er foaming seas and distant sail.

The soft tranquillity of the scene below, where the evening breeze scarcely curled the water, or swelled the passing sail, that caught the last gleam of the sun, and where, now and then, a dipping oar was all that disturbed the trembling radiance, conspired with the tender melody of her lute to lull her mind into a state of gentle sadness, and she sung the mournful songs of past times, till the remembrances they awakened were too powerful for her heart, her tears fell upon the lute, over which she drooped, and her voice trembled, and was unable to proceed.

Though the sun had now sunk behind the mountains, and even his reflected light was fading from their highest points, Emily did not leave the watch-tower, but continued to indulge her melancholy reverie, till a footstep, at a little distance, startled her, and, on looking through the grate, she observed a person walking below, whom, however, soon perceiving to be Mons. Bonnac, she returned to the quiet thoughtfulness his step had interrupted. After some time, she again struck her lute, and sung her favourite air; but again a step disturbed her, and, as she paused to listen, she heard it ascending the stair-case of the tower. The gloom of the hour, perhaps, made her sensible to some degree of fear, which she might not otherwise have felt; for, only a few minutes before, she had seen Mons. Bonnac pass. The steps were quick and bounding, and, in the next moment, the door of the chamber opened, and a person entered, whose features were veiled in the obscurity of twilight; but his voice could not be concealed, for it was the voice of Valancourt! At the sound, never heard by Emily, without emotion, she started, in terror, astonishment and doubtful pleasure, and had scarcely beheld him at her feet, when she sunk into a seat, overcome by the various emotions, that contended at her heart, and almost insensible to that voice, whose earnest and trembling calls seemed as if endeavouring to save her. Valancourt, as he hung over Emily, deplored his own rash impatience, in having thus surprised her: for when he had arrived at the chateau, too anxious to await the return of the Count, who, he understood, was in the grounds, he went himself to seek him, when, as he passed the tower, he was struck by the sound of Emily's voice, and immediately ascended.

It was a considerable time before she revived, but, when her recollection returned, she repulsed his attentions, with an air of reserve, and enquired, with as much displeasure as it was possible she could feel in these first moments of his appearance, the occasion of his visit.

'Ah Emily!' said Valancourt, 'that air, those words – alas! I have, then, little to hope – when you ceased to esteem me, you ceased also to love me!'

'Most true, sir,' replied Emily, endeavouring to command her trembling voice; 'and if you had valued my esteem, you would not have given me this new occasion for uneasiness.'

Valancourt's countenance changed suddenly from the anxieties of doubt to an expression of surprise and dismay: he was silent a moment, and then said, 'I had been taught to hope for a very different reception! Is it, then, true, Emily, that I have lost your regard, forever? am I to believe, that, though your esteem for me may return – your affection never can? Can the Count have meditated the cruelty, which now tortures me with a second death?'

The voice, in which he spoke this, alarmed Emily as much as his words surprised her, and, with trembling impatience, she begged that he would explain them.

'Can any explanation be necessary?' said Valancourt, 'do you not know how cruelly my conduct has been misrepresented? that the actions of which you once believed me guilty (and, O Emily! how could you so degrade me in your opinion, even for a moment!) those actions – I hold in as much contempt and abhorrence as yourself ? Are you, indeed, ignorant, that Count de Villefort has detected the slanders, that have robbed me of all I hold dear on earth, and has invited me hither to justify to you my former conduct? It is surely impossible you can be uninformed of these circumstances, and I am again torturing myself with a false hope!'

The silence of Emily confirmed this supposition; for the deep twilight would not allow Valancourt to distinguish the astonishment and doubting joy, that fixed her features. For a moment, she continued unable to speak; then a profound sigh seemed to give some relief to her spirits, and she said,

'Valancourt! I was, till this moment, ignorant of all the circumstances you have mentioned; the emotion I now suffer may assure you of the truth of this, and, that, though I had ceased to esteem, I had not taught myself entirely to forget you.'

'This moment,' said Valancourt, in a low voice, and leaning for support against the window – 'this moment brings with it a conviction that overpowers me! – I am dear to you then – still dear to you, my Emily!'

'Is it necessary that I should tell you so?' she replied, 'is it necessary, that I should say – these are the first moments of joy I have known, since your departure, and that they repay me for all those of pain I have suffered in the interval?'

Valancourt sighed deeply, and was unable to reply; but, as he pressed her hand to his lips, the tears, that fell over it, spoke a language, which could not be mistaken, and to which words were inadequate.

Emily, somewhat tranquillized, proposed returning to the chateau, and then, for the first time, recollected that the Count had invited Valancourt thither to explain his conduct, and that no explanation had yet been given. But, while she acknowledged this, her heart would not allow her to dwell, for a moment, on the possibility of his unworthiness; his look, his voice, his manner, all spoke the noble sincerity, which had formerly distinguished him; and she again permitted herself to indulge the emotions of a joy, more surprising and powerful, than she had ever before experienced.

Neither Emily, or Valancourt, were conscious how they reached the chateau, whither they might have been transferred by the spell of a fairy, for anything they could remember; and it was not, till they had reached the great hall, that either of them recollected there were other persons in the world besides themselves. The Count then came forth with surprise, and with the joyfulness of pure benevolence, to welcome Valancourt, and to entreat his forgivenness of the injustice he had done him; soon after which, Mons. Bonnac joined this happy group, in which he and Valancourt were mutually rejoiced to meet.

When the first congratulations were over, and the general joy became somewhat more tranquil, the Count withdrew with Valancourt to the library, where a long conversation passed between them, in which the latter so clearly justified himself of the criminal parts of the conduct, imputed to him, and so candidly confessed and so feelingly lamented the follies, which he had committed, that the Count was confirmed in the belief of all he had hoped; and, while he perceived so many noble virtues in Valancourt, and that experience had taught him to detest the follies, which before he had only not admired, he did not scruple to believe, that he would pass through life with the dignity of a wise and good man, or to entrust to his care the future happiness of Emily St Aubert, for whom he felt the solicitude of a parent. Of this he soon informed her, in a short conversation, when Valancourt had left him. While Emily listened to a relation of the services, that Valancourt had rendered Mons. Bonnac, her eyes overflowed with tears of pleasure, and the further conversation of Count de Villefort perfectly dissipated every doubt, as to the past and future conduct of him, to whom she now restored, without fear, the esteem and affection, with which she had formerly received him.

When they returned to the supper-room, the Countess and Lady Blanche met Valancourt with sincere congratulations; and Blanche, indeed, was so much rejoiced to see Emily returned to happiness, as to forget, for a while, that Mons. St Foix was not yet arrived at the chateau, though he had been expected for some hours; but her generous sympathy was, soon after, rewarded by his appearance. He was now perfectly recovered from the wounds received, during his perilous adventure among the Pyrenées, the mention of which served to heighten to the parties, who had been involved in it, the sense of their present happiness. New congratulations passed between them, and round the supper-table appeared a group of faces, smiling with felicity, but with a felicity, which had in each a different character. The smile of Blanche was frank and gay, that of Emily tender and pensive; Valancourt's was rapturous, tender and gay alternately; Mons. St Foix's was joyous, and that of the Count, as he looked on the surrounding party, expressed the tempered complacency of benevolence; while the features of the Countess, Henri, and Mons. Bonnac, discovered fainter traces of animation. Poor Mons. Du Pont did not, by his presence, throw a shade of regret over the company; for, when he had discovered, that Valancourt was not unworthy of the esteem of Emily, he determined seriously to endeavour at the conquest of his own hopeless affection, and had immediately withdrawn from Chateau-le-Blanc – a conduct, which Emily now understood, and rewarded with her admiration and pity.

The Count and his guests, continued together till a late hour, yielding to the delights of social gaiety, and to the sweets of friendship. When Annette heard of the arrival of Valancourt, Ludovico had some difficulty to prevent her going into the supper-room, to express her joy, for she declared, that she had never been so rejoiced at any *accident* as this, since she had found Ludovico himself.

CHAPTER XIX

> ‘Now my task is smoothly done,
>
> I can fly, or I can run
> Quickly to the green earth’s end,
> Where the bow’d welkin low doth bend,
> And, from thence, can soar as soon
> To the corners of the moon.’
> Milton [*Comus*][1]

The marriages of the Lady Blanche and Emily St Aubert were celebrated, on the same day, and with the ancient baronial magnificence, at Chateau-le-Blanc. The feasts were held in the great hall of the castle, which, on this occasion, was hung with superb new tapestry, representing the exploits of Charlemagne and his twelve peers;[2] here, were seen the Saracens, with their horrible visors, advancing to battle; and there, were displayed the wild solemnities of incantation, and the necromantic feats, exhibited by the magician *farl* before the Emperor.[3] The sumptuous banners of the family of Villeroi, which had long slept in dust, were once more unfurled, to wave over the gothic points of painted casements; and music echoed, in many a lingering close, through every winding gallery and colonnade of that vast edifice.

As Annette looked down from the corridor upon the hall, whose arches and windows were illuminated with brilliant festoons of lamps, and gazed on the splendid dresses of the dancers, the costly liveries of the attendants, the canopies of purple velvet and gold, and listened to the gay strains that floated along the vaulted roof, she almost fancied herself in an enchanted palace, and declared, that she had not met with any place, which charmed her so much, since she read the fairy tales; nay, that the fairies themselves, at their nightly revels in this old hall, could display nothing finer; while old Dorothé, as she surveyed the scene, sighed, and said, the castle looked as it was wont to do in the time of her youth.

After gracing the festivities of Chateau-le-Blanc, for some days, Valancourt and Emily took leave of their kind friends, and returned to La Vallée, where the faithful Theresa received them with unfeigned joy, and the pleasant shades welcomed them with a thousand tender and affecting remembrances; and, while they wandered together over the scenes, so long inhabited by the late Mons. and Madame St Aubert, and Emily pointed out, with pensive affection, their favourite haunts, her present happiness was heightened, by considering, that it would have been worthy of their approbation, could they have witnessed it.

Valancourt led her to the plane-tree on the terrace, where he had first ventured to declare his love, and where now the remembrance of the anxiety he had then suffered, and the retrospect of all the dangers and misfortunes they had each encountered, since last they sat together beneath its broad branches, exalted the sense of their present felicity, which, on this spot, sacred to the memory of St Aubert, they solemnly vowed to deserve, as far as possible, by endeavouring to imitate his benevolence, – by remembering, that superior attainments of every sort bring with them duties of superior exertion, – and by affording to their fellow-beings, together with that portion of ordinary comforts, which prosperity always owes to misfortune, the example of lives passed in happy thankfulness to GOD, and, therefore, in careful tenderness to his creatures.

Soon after their return to La Vallée, the brother of Valancourt came to congratulate him on his marriage, and to pay his respects to Emily, with whom he was so much pleased, as well as with the prospect of rational happiness, which these nuptials offered to Valancourt, that he immediately resigned to him a part of the rich domain, the whole of which, as he had no family, would of course descend to his brother, on his decease.

The estates, at Tholouse, were disposed of, and Emily purchased of Mons. Quesnel the ancient domain of her late father, where, having given Annette a marriage-portion, she settled her as the housekeeper, and Ludovico as the steward; but, since both Valancourt and herself preferred the pleasant and long-loved shades of La Vallée to the magnificence of Epourville, they continued to reside there, passing, however, a few months in the year at the birth-place of St Aubert, in tender respect to his memory.

The legacy, which had been bequeathed to Emily by Signora Laurentini, she begged Valancourt would allow her to resign to Mons. Bonnac; and Valancourt, when she made the request, felt all the value of the compliment it conveyed. The castle of Udolpho, also, descended to the wife of Mons. Bonnac, who was the nearest surviving relation of the house of that name, and thus affluence restored his long-oppressed spirits to peace, and his family to comfort.

O! how joyful it is to tell of happiness such as that of Valancourt and Emily; to relate, that, after suffering under the oppression of the vicious and the disdain of the weak, they were, at length, restored to each other – to the beloved landscapes of their native country, – to the securest felicity of this life, that of aspiring to moral and labouring for intellectual improvement – to the pleasures of enlightened society, and to the exercise of the benevolence, which had always animated their hearts; while the bowers of La Vallée became, once more, the retreat of goodness, wisdom and domestic blessedness!

O! useful may it be to have shewn, that, though the vicious can sometimes pour affliction upon the good, their power is transient and their punishment certain; and that innocence, though oppressed by injustice, shall, supported by patience, finally triumph over misfortune!

And, if the weak hand, that has recorded this tale, has, by its scenes, beguiled the mourner of one hour of sorrow, or, by its moral, taught him to sustain it – the effort, however humble, has not been vain, nor is the writer unrewarded.

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THE
COMPLETE WORKS OF
EMILY BRONTË

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. II.

PROSE

This edition is limited to 1000 *copies in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, its Colonies and Dependencies, and the United States of America*

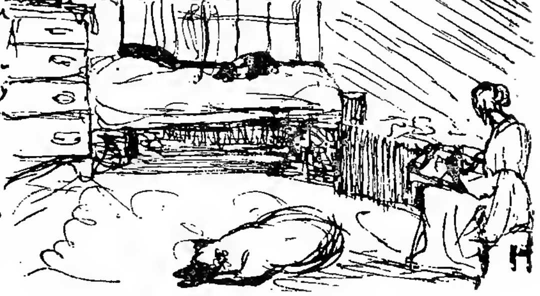
still flourish bright as ever I am at present writing a work on the First Wars — Anne has been writing some articles on this and a book by Henry Sophona — We intend sticking firm by the rascals as long as they delight us which I am glad to say they do at present — I should have mentioned that last summer the School scheme was revived in full vigor — we had prospectuses printed despatched letters to all aquaintances imparting our plans and did our little all — but it was found no go — now I dont desire a school at all and none of us have any great longing for it — we have cash enough for our present wants with a prospect of accumolation — we are all in decent health — only that papa has a complaint in his eyes and with the exception of B who I hope will be better and do better, hereafter, I am quite contented for myself — not as idle as formerly, altogether as hearty and having learnt to make the most of the present and hope for the future with less fidgetiness that I cannot do all I wish — seldom or ever troubled with nothing to do idle and merely desiring that every body could be as comfortable as myself and as undesponding and then we should have a very tolerable world of it —

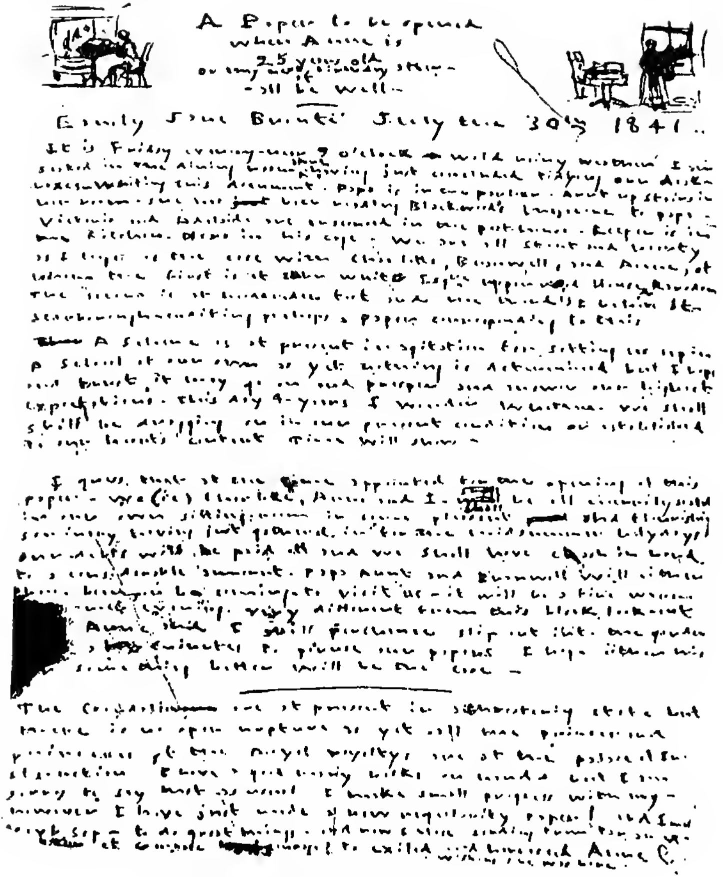
By mistake I find we have opened the paper on the 31st instead of the 30th Yesterday was much such a day as this but the morning was divine —

Tabby who was gone in our last paper is come back and has lived with us — two years and a half and is in good health — Martha who also departed is here too. We have got Flossy, got and lost Tiger — lost the Hawk. Hero which with the geese was given away and is doubtless dead for when I came back from Brussels I enquired on all hands and could hear nothing of him — Tiger died early last year — Keeper and Flossy are well also the canary acquired 4 years since

We are now all at home and likely to be there some time — Branwell went to Liverpool on ~~monday~~ Tuesday to stay a week. Tabby has just been teasing me to turn as formerly to — "pilloputate" — Anne and I should have picked the black currants if it had been fine and sunshiny. I must hurry off now to my turning and ironing I have plenty of work on hands and writing and am altogether full of business with best wishes for the whole House till 1848 July 30th and as much longer as may be I conclude

E J Brontë





A Paper to be opened
when Anne is
25 years old
or my next birthday after
if
all be well—

Emily Jane Brontë July the 30th 1841.

It is Friday evening—near 9 o'clock—wild rainy weather I am seated in the dining room after having just concluded tidying our desk boxes—writing this document. Papa is in the parlour. Aunt upstairs in her room—she has ~~just~~ been reading Blackwood's Magazine to papa—Victoria and Adelaide are ensconced in the peat-house—Keeper is in the kitchen—Hero in his cage—We are all stout and hearty as I hope is the case with Charlotte, Branwell, and Anne, of whom the first is at John White Esqre Upperwood House Rawdon the second is at Luddenden foot and the third is I believe at Scarborough—editing perhaps a paper corresponding to this.

~~Then~~ A scheme is at present in agitation for setting us up in a school of our own as yet nothing is determined but I hope and trust it may go on and prosper and answer our highest expectations. This day 4-years I wonder whether we shall still be dragging on in our present condition or established to our hearts' content Time will show—

I guess that at the time appointed for the opening of this paper—we (i.e.) Charlotte, Anne and I—shall be all merrily seated in our own sitting-room in some pleasant ~~and~~ and flourishing seminary having just gathered in for the midsummer holyday our debts will be paid off and we shall have cash in hand to a considerable amount. Papa Aunt and Branwell will either have been or be coming to visit us—it will be a fine warm summer evening very different from this bleak look-out [illegible] Anne and I will perchance slip out into the garden [illegible] a ~~few~~ minutes to peruse our papers I hope either this or something better will be the case—

The Gondalians are at present in a threatening state but there is no open rupture as yet all the princes and princesses of the Royalty are at the palace of instruction I have a good many books on hand but I am sorry to say that as usual I make small progress with any—however I have just made a new regularity paper! and I mean verb sap—to do great things—and now I close sending from far an exhortation of courage ~~boys~~ courage! to exiled and harassed Anne wishing she was here.

FACSIMILE OF PAGE OF EMILY BRONTË'S DIARY

WUTHERING HEIGHTS

BY

EMILY BRONTË

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY

CLEMENT K. SHORTER

AND MANY FACSIMILES OF
EMILY BRONTË'S HANDWRITING

LONDON
HODDER AND STOUGHTON
1911

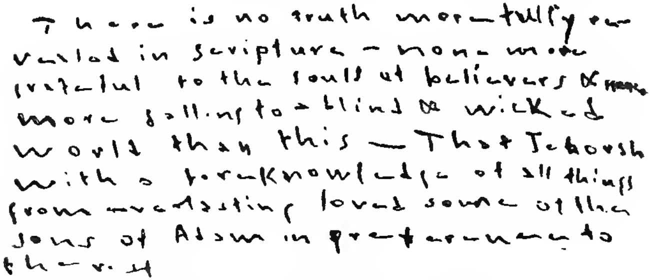
EMILY BRONTË AND 'WUTHERING HEIGHTS'

By Clement K. Shorter

I

When Mrs. Gaskell wrote her *Life of Charlotte Brontë* the world of readers which looked forward to the book and appreciated its great merit when it appeared, had no interest in Emily Brontë. The story of the three sisters attracted abundant attention, but Charlotte Brontë, whose books had been so great a success, was very naturally the centre of the picture. Charlotte as we see in the two Introductions from her pen that are here reprinted, used her great popularity to bring her sister Emily to the front, but Emily, in spite of the poetic appreciation of Matthew Arnold and the prose appreciation of Algernon Swinburne, had, it is clear, but few admirers. Certainly the oft-quoted review by Sydney Dobell attracted little attention. Until our own day Emily's work seemed to live by the reflected glory of the sister who survived her and had presented some kind of a portrait of her in the popular story *Shirley*. All this is now changed. Both Charlotte and Emily have their separate bands of admirers.

There is a countless host that appreciates both writers equally, but a considerable number glory in their preference for one or the other. It was once my good fortune to listen while two eminent politicians, both now Ministers of State, were discussing the Brontës. One of them gave all his devotion to Emily Brontë, the other all to Charlotte. One of them, a great lover of literature, was an ardent admirer of Charlotte Brontë's novels and Mrs. Gaskell's *Life*—it is interesting to recall that both the Front Benches in the House of Commons boast three or four men who are that—but I verily believe that Emily Brontë's work left him cold. The other statesman, whose literary work has been of the philosophical order, was apparently indifferent to Charlotte Brontë's writings, but grew enthusiastic in conversation over Emily's poems and novel. It is well that Emily Brontë should have her partisans, and it is time also that she should have a separate presentation of her published work. It has long been my ambition to offer this to that select public which to-day con-


There is no truth more fully revealed in scripture — none more grateful to the souls of believers & more galling to a blind & wicked world than this — That Jehovah with a foreknowledge of all things from everlasting loved some of the sons of Adam in preference to the rest

A FRAGMENT OF EMILY BRONTË'S HANDWRITING stitutes itself a Brontë cult, and now a kind firm of publishers has permitted me to gratify this ambition.

II

The Collected Works of Emily Brontë are here presented in two volumes, the first being devoted to her poetry.[1] That volume had the advantage of an Introduction from the pen of Sir William Robertson Nicoll, but the present writer was alone responsible for the text of the poems. Concerning that 'text' criticism has had something to say that calls for comment here. It has been hinted more than once that there are errors of transcription—that lines do not run as the poet must have written them. Now the first volume of this edition of Emily Brontë's Works adds one hundred and twenty-eight new and hitherto unpublished poems to the verse of Emily Brontë, whose known achievement in poetry up to this time consisted of twenty-two poems published in *Poems of Currer, Ellis, and Acton Bell,* and seventeen poems added by Charlotte in the volume for which she wrote the introduction now attached to this volume. Seventy-one new poems are taken from original manuscripts that have passed through my hands, and sixty-seven other poems from a volume privately printed in New York from a manuscript in the collection of a bookman in the United States. Now the new poems from manuscripts have been carefully collated by me, and these are unquestionably Emily's work as she left it in the rough manuscript. Doubtless she would have amended it had she lived to publish all her verses, in the improbable contingency that she would have wished to publish it all. But the sixty-seven poems from an already printed volume[1] offer ground for criticism from the textual experts. Here there may be many errors of transcription, but for these I am in no sense responsible. I was not able to see the original manuscript book from which these sixty-seven poems were taken, and I presented the poems exactly as they stood in the printed volume. It is easy to ask why I did not carefully correct these poems, making guesses it may be, or using such critical faculty as I possessed. But as a matter of fact the critics have answered themselves. Some of the alternative renderings of certain lines are obviously correct. But other critics offer quite different readings. In looking back, therefore, I have no regrets over the defective text.[2] I have provided a limited edition of Emily Brontë's poems for the expert and the enthusiast, not for the general public. It is open to the

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[1] Writing fifteen years ago in *Charlotte Brontë and her Circle*, I said: 'There are a few fragments, all written in that tiny handwriting which the girls affected, and bearing various dates from 1833 to 1840. A new edition of Emily's poems will, by virtue of these verses, have a singular interest for her admirers.' It cannot be said that I have unduly hurried their publication.

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[1] *The Poems of Charlotte, Emily, and Anne Brontë.* Privately printed by Dodd, Mead and Co., New York. One hundred and ten copies only.

[2] We have noted some very doubtful readings, such as 'deceiving' for 'declining' (?), p. 110; 'flowless' for 'flowerless' (?), p. 134; 'idol' for 'idle,' p. 184—and a few misprints—'way' for 'away,' p. 73; 1832 for 1842 (?), p. 288.—*The Athenæum*, February 11, 1911.

For giving us a book of very uncommon charm the editors are to be thanked, but their text is often inaccurate. In many places an expert and the enthusiast to make their own corrections of the text as they think the author meant it to have been, and whether the lines that they reconstruct are anywhere nearer those that Emily Brontë actually wrote will probably never be known. Meanwhile the attitude of the expert and the enthusiast should be one of gratitude, the more particularly as certain of those who have indulged in criticism have declared themselves more pleased with the new poems than I had ventured to anticipate would be the case. Knowing the objection that is frequently raised to the resurrection or to the preservation of the fugitive fragments of famous writers, I had only ventured to claim for these many hitherto unpublished poems that no one to-day will deny to them a certain bibliographical interest, and I am still only inclined to claim for this edition as a whole a bibliographical value. However, certain critics have found much more than this in the poems. 'An intense personality' is discovered by one, and another with

error with an obvious correction has been left untouched and without comment, as, for example, in

'The wide cathedral *Isles* are lone . . .'

and

''Tis wintry light o'er *flowless* moors . . .'

and

'Better that I my own fate mourning,
Should pine alone in this prison gloom;
Then waken free on the summer morning
And feel they were suffering this awful doom.'

In this last case the semicolon may have been inserted in order to justify the absurd 'then.' In other cases the correction is not obvious, but the fault is; nor is any notice taken of these.

The Morning Post, January 23, 1911.

less discretion is good enough to declare that the publication of the complete edition of Emily Brontë's poems must be regarded as 'the leading literary event of 1910,'[1] but qualifies the praise with the warning that 'the text of the volume is everywhere uncertain. The editor's impression seems to have been that the interest of the poems was "bibliographical," and that accuracy in printing them, therefore, was of no consequence.' Of greater sanity was the comment of the *Spectator* that Charlotte by her selection had 'proved herself an excellent literary critic.' I admit the power of certain isolated poems, among the newly printed verses, but I contend, although in doing so I minimise my own good fortune in being the first to give them to the world, that Emily Brontë's fame is not enhanced by their publication, and that this publication can only be justified on the ground that her fame is so firmly established alike as a poet and as a novelist, that the appearance of quite minor efforts can no more affect it than the fame of Shelley is affected by the publication of his earlier and cruder work.[2]

III

In any case, we are, it may be hoped, on quite non-controversial ground so far as concerns the text of the present volume. I have reprinted the book from the text of the first edition, and incidentally it may be mentioned that this volume has been set up in type from Emily Brontë's own copy of *Wuthering Heights*, which was carried by Mr. Arthur Bell Nicholls from Haworth to his later home in Banagher in Ireland, where it rested on his shelves for more than forty years. To that transcription I trust I have given a certain added value, philological in a way, by adding as footnotes the text of Joseph's dialect as Charlotte Brontë amended it. The amended form has been given in all subsequent editions of the book, and rightly so, but it is hoped that the attempt to present the book here as it left its author's hands will not be deemed unwise. It is hoped, also, that an additional value will be given to this book by the presentation of facsimiles of such few scraps of Emily Brontë's handwriting as have been preserved. It is clear that when Emily died her surviving sister destroyed all her letters and manuscripts. And this makes the fragments that remain of exceptional interest. The fragments from Emily Brontë's diary will be found fully explained in my *Charlotte Brontë and her Circle.*

---

[1] *The English Review* for February 1911.

[2] I have discovered since the appearance of the first volume of the edition that the poems therein contained, numbered XIV., XV., and XVI., on pages 248-251, are by Anne Brontë, and not by Emily.

IV

Attempts have been made to rob Emily Brontë of her claim to be the author of *Wuthering Heights*. The whole story of the preposterous suggestion that Branwell Brontë wrote the story, has been dealt with at length by me in an earlier work on the Brontës.[1]

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[1] *The Brontës: Life and Letters*, 2 vols. Hodder and Stoughton.

The further suggestion that *Wuthering Heights* was really written by Charlotte is not worth a moment's consideration by the light of her preface to the book that is reproduced here. More credence has been given to an extraordinary work that attracted much attention upon its publication: *The Brontës in Ireland.* The author, Dr. Wright of the Bible Society, attempted to demonstrate that Emily Brontë's story was the reflection of some of her father's experiences during early days in Ireland. The book did more credit to Dr. Wright's imagination than to his good faith. Patrick Brontë was born in County Down, Ireland, being one of the ten children of a farmer named Brunty. There can be no doubt whatever but that the name had evolved from O'Prunty. Patrick Brontë on his arrival in England, possibly with a new-fledged zeal for the Greek language, but more probably in imitation of the assumption of Nelson of the title of Duke of Bronte, adopted the name of Bronte, Bronté, Brontĕ, and finally Brontë. We have no record of his signature as Brontë until he arrived at Haworth ; we have no record of any of his family in Ireland adopting the name of Brontë until long afterwards. In all the entries in Drumgooland Parish Register the name is given as Brunty. When, therefore, Dr. Wright declared that he remembered the name 'Brontë' on the carts employed by the Brontës on the roads of County Down, he was clearly romancing, and his whole story of the Brontës in Ireland, rich in episodes akin to those related in *Wuthering Heights*, may be assumed to have been a romance also. We are asked to believe that a foundling named Welsh obtruded himself into the home of Patrick Brontë's grandfather who lived in a farm on the banks of the Boyne, somewhere above Drogheda, and acted towards the Brontës much as Heathcliff acted towards the Earnshaws. Dr. Wright also introduces us to one Gallagher, a 'sanctimonious individual,' who was the steward of Welsh's house, as the prototype of Joseph. Nothing in Dr. Wright's book is supported by evidence, and indeed it is probable that Dr. Wright had built up his theory from *Wuthering Heights*, and not independently of it. I discussed Dr. Wright's book with Mr. Arthur Bell Nicholls, Charlotte Brontë's husband, who had lived many years with Mr. Brontë in the days before the incumbent of Haworth died, and he assured me that he had never heard one of the 'fairy-tales,' as he considered them, that had given Dr. Wright material for a somewhat crude, but on the whole, picturesque narrative.

V

As a matter of fact the great contrast of the genius of Charlotte and of Emily Brontë is to be found in the fact that the one worked continually from models, the other not at all. Charlotte Brontë's characters have a counterpart at every turn. In so many particulars she is herself Jane Eyre and Lucy Snowe, and certainly Constantin Hegèr was Paul Emanuel. It would be possible to continue the parallel through all the books. Emily, on the other hand, had no originals, there were no prototypes of her characters. All were sheer masterly invention. In the 'Editor's Preface' printed here, we find Charlotte recording her impression of her sister's inevitability—'having formed those beings she did not know what she had done'—and telling us, with regard to Emily's mind, that 'to the influence of other intellects, it was not amenable.' The critic who seeks for origins in real life for Emily Brontë's creations is as entirely lacking in literary perception as is the critic who can find in the essays of Francis Bacon indications that he could have written the plays of Shakspere. Emily's genius was entirely introspective. She brooded over the abnormal. Beloved by her sisters, but quite unable like them to come into the glare even of the little world of Haworth, she lived in a world of phantasy all her own. Mr. Swinburne has happily compared her in this respect to William Blake.

VI

Only very imperfectly can I supplement in these fragmentary jottings the valuable criticism of Sir William Robertson Nicoll upon *Wuthering Heights* in its relation to its author. When I published my book, *Charlotte Brontë and her Circle,* more than fifteen years ago, I had a word to say about Miss Mary F. Robinson's biography of Emily Brontë. I wrote with too youthful an impatience of a book that was lacking in documents, and ignored its intrinsic value. I complained of Miss Robinson's book (she has since made two other literary reputations successively as Madame Darmesteter and Madame Duclaux) as having devoted inordinate space to the shortcomings of Branwell Brontë. In a letter that I received at the time from Mr. Swinburne, the poet wrote :—

> 'While I by no means disagree on the whole with what you say about Madame Darmesteter's book, I think you have forgotten that the one new thing she had to tell us—how Emily saved her wretched brother from being burnt in his bed—is the most important thing we know about that wonderful poetess and heroine. Of course there is far too much in the book about him, but that one anecdote atones for all.'

I have taken much pains since then to obtain some verification of the story of Emily Brontë saving her brother in this manner, but I can find none. It is clearly a piece of Haworth gossip that sprung up in the years that followed the literary fame and the tragic end of the three sisters, and I am quite satisfied that it merely grew out of the story of Jane Eyre saving Rochester, as related in *Jane Eyre.* Miss Robinson also drew an entirely fancy picture of Emily's devotion to Branwell :—

> 'There was one woman's heart, strong enough in its compassion to bear the daily disgusts, weaknesses, sins, of Branwell's life, and yet persist in aid and affection.'

Miss Robinson quotes a letter out of Mrs. Gaskell's *Life,* addressed by Charlotte to her friend, Ellen Nussey, after she had returned to Haworth from a visit to that friend ; Charlotte is referring to Branwell :—

> 'I hear that he got a sovereign while I have been away, under pretence of paying a debt ; he went immediately and changed it at a public-house, and has employed it as was to be expected'

—and concluded her account by saying that he was 'a hopeless being.'

Now I have had the advantage over Miss Robinson (Madame Duclaux) of having seen the original letter to Miss Nussey, where the word 'Emily' stands for the —— of Mrs. Gaskell's narrative. Thus the whole theory of Madame Duclaux falls to the ground, and one is glad that it does so. Branwell Brontë grew into a brainless sot, and Emily would have been inhuman had she possessed the misplaced toleration that has been accredited to her. She thought him 'a hopeless being' and said so.

Here there seems little more to add. Charlotte Brontë's letters are the only real biography of her sister. There is one dated 25th December 1848, Emily having died on the 19th :—

> 'Emily is nowhere here now, her wasted mortal remains are taken out of the house. We have laid her cherished head under the church aisle beside my mother's, my two sisters'—dead long ago—and my poor, hapless brother's. But a small remnant of the race is left—so my poor father thinks.
>
> 'Well, the loss is ours, not hers, and some sad comfort I take, as I hear the wind blow and feel the cutting keenness of the frost, in knowing that the elements bring her no more suffering ; their severity cannot reach her grave ; her fever is quieted, her restlessness soothed, her deep, hollow cough is hushed for ever ; we do not hear it in the night nor listen for it in the morning ; we have not the conflict of the strangely strong spirit and the fragile frame before us—relentless conflict—once seen, never to be forgotten. A dreary calm reigns round us in the midst of which we seek resignation.
>
> 'I will not now ask why Emily was torn from us in the fullness of our attachment, rooted up in the prime of her own days, in the promise of her powers ; why her existence now lies like a field of green corn trodden down, like a tree in full bearing struck at the root. I will only say, sweet is rest after

labour and calm after tempest, and repeat again and again that Emily knows that now.'[1]

To add anything to these words of Charlotte Brontë's would be little less than sacrilege. Emily left behind her certain imperishable poems and an imperishable novel. Of *Wuthering Heights* Mr. Swinburne has written; and the words are the classic of criticism on the subject:—

> 'It may be true that not many will ever take it to their hearts; it is certain that those who do like it will like nothing very much better in the whole world of poetry or prose.'

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[1] Letter to Mr. W. S. Williams in *Charlotte Brontë and her Circle.*

ELLIS AND ACTON BELL

BY

CHARLOTTE BRONTË[1]

It has been thought that all the works published under the names of Currer, Ellis, and Acton Bell, were, in reality, the production of one person. This mistake I endeavoured to rectify by a few words of disclaimer prefixed to the third edition of *Jane Eyre*. These, too, it appears, failed to gain general credence, and now, on the occasion of a reprint of *Wuthering Heights* and *Agnes Grey*, I am advised distinctly to state how the case really stands.

Indeed, I feel myself that it is time the obscurity attending those two names—Ellis and Acton—was done away. The little mystery, which formerly yielded some harmless pleasure, has lost its interest; circumstances are changed. It becomes, then, my duty to explain briefly the origin and authorship of the books written by Currer, Ellis, and Acton Bell.

About five years ago, my two sisters and myself, after a somewhat prolonged period of separation, found ourselves reunited and at home. Resident in a remote district, where education had made little progress, and where, consequently, there was no inducement to seek social intercourse beyond our own domestic circle, we were wholly dependent on ourselves and each other, on books and study, for the enjoyments and occupations of life. The highest stimulus, as well as the liveliest pleasure we had known from childhood upwards, lay in attempts at literary composition; formerly we used to show each other what we wrote, but of late years this habit of communication and consultation had been discontinued; hence it ensued, that we were mutually ignorant of the progress we might respectively have made.

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[1] These essays were contributed by Charlotte Brontë to a new edition of *Wuthering Heights*, published by Smith, Elder and Co. in 1849.

One day, in the autumn of 1845, I accidentally lighted on a MS. volume of verse in my sister Emily's handwriting. Of course, I was not surprised, knowing that she could and did write verse: I looked it over, and something more than surprise seized me,—a deep conviction that these were not common effusions, nor at all like the poetry women generally write. I thought them condensed and terse, vigorous and genuine. To my ear, they had also a peculiar music—wild, melancholy, and elevating.

My sister Emily was not a person of demonstrative character, nor one on the recesses of whose mind and feelings, even those nearest and dearest to her could, with impunity, intrude unlicensed; it took hours to reconcile her to the discovery I had made, and days to persuade her that such poems merited publication. I knew, however, that a mind like hers could not be without some latent spark of honourable ambition, and refused to be discouraged in my attempts to fan that spark to flame.

Meantime, my younger sister quietly produced some of her own compositions, intimating that, since Emily's had given me pleasure, I might like to look at hers. I could not but be a partial judge, yet I thought that these verses, too, had a sweet sincere pathos of their own.

We had very early cherished the dream of one day becoming authors. This dream, never relinquished even when distance divided and absorbing tasks occupied us, now suddenly acquired strength and consistency: it took the character of a resolve. We agreed to arrange a small selection of our poems, and, if possible, get them printed. Averse to personal publicity, we veiled our own names under those of Currer, Ellis, and Acton Bell; the ambiguous choice being dictated by a sort of conscientious scruple at assuming Christian names positively masculine, while we did not like to declare ourselves women, because—without at that time suspecting that our mode of writing and thinking was not what is called 'feminine'—we had a vague impression that authoresses are liable to be looked on with prejudice; we had noticed how critics sometimes use for their chastisement the weapon of personality, and for their reward, a flattery, which is not true praise.

The bringing out of our little book was hard work. As was to be expected, neither we nor our poems were at all wanted; but for this we had been prepared at the outset; though inexperienced ourselves, we had read the experience of others. The great puzzle lay in the difficulty of getting answers of any kind from the publishers to whom we applied. Being greatly harassed by this obstacle, I ventured to apply to the Messrs. Chambers, of Edinburgh, for a word of advice; *they* may have forgotten the circumstance, but *I* have not, for from them I received a brief and business-like, but civil and sensible reply, on which we acted, and at last made a way.

The book was printed: it is scarcely known, and all of it that merits to be known are the poems of Ellis Bell. The fixed conviction I held, and hold, of the worth of these poems has not indeed received the confirmation of much favourable criticism; but I must retain it notwithstanding.

Ill-success failed to crush us: the mere effort to succeed had given a wonderful zest to existence; it must be pursued. We each set to work on a prose tale: Ellis Bell produced *Wuthering Heights,* Acton Bell, *Agnes Grey,* and Currer Bell also wrote a narrative in one volume. These MSS. were perseveringly obtruded upon various publishers for the space of a year and a half; usually, their fate was an ignominious and abrupt dismissal.

At last *Wuthering Heights* and *Agnes Grey* were accepted on terms somewhat impoverishing to the two authors; Currer Bell's book found acceptance nowhere, nor any acknowledgment of merit, so that something like the chill of despair began to invade his heart. As a forlorn hope, he tried one publishing house more—Messrs. Smith, Elder and Co. Ere long, in a much shorter space than that on which experience had taught him to calculate, there came a letter, which he opened in the dreary expectation of finding two hard, hopeless lnes, intimating that Messrs. Smith, Elder and Co. 'were not disposed to publish the MS.,' and, instead, he took out of the envelope a letter of two pages. He read it trembling. It declined, indeed, to publish that tale, for business reasons, but it discussed its merits and demerits so courteously, so considerately, in a spirit so rational, with a discrimination so enlightened, that this very refusal cheered the author better than a vulgarly-expressed acceptance would have done. It was added, that a work in three volumes would meet with careful attention.

I was then just completing *Jane Eyre,* at which I had been working while the one-volume tale was plodding its weary round in London: in three weeks I sent it off; friendly and skilful hands took it in. This was in the commencement of September 1847; it came out before the close of October following, while *Wuthering Heights* and *Agnes Grey,* my sisters' works, which had already been in the press for months, still lingered under a different management.

They appeared at last. Critics failed to do them justice. The immature but very real powers revealed in *Wuthering Heights* were scarcely recognised; its import and nature were misunderstood; the identity of its author was misrepresented; it was said that this was an earlier and ruder attempt of the same pen which had produced *Jane Eyre.* Unjust and grievous error! We laughed at it at first, but I deeply lament it now. Hence, I fear, arose a prejudice against the book. That writer who could attempt to palm off an inferior and immature production under cover of one successful effort, must indeed be unduly eager after the secondary and sordid result of authorship, and pitiably indifferent to its true and honourable meed. If reviewers and the public truly believed this, no wonder that they looked darkly on the cheat.

Yet I must not be understood to make these things subject for reproach or complaint; I dare not do so; respect for my sister's memory forbids me. By her any such querulous manifestation would have been regarded as an unworthy and offensive weakness.

It is my duty, as well as my pleasure, to acknowledge one exception to the general rule of criticism. One writer,[1] endowed with the keen vision and fine sympathies of genius, has discerned the real nature of

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[1] See the *Palladium* for September 1850.

Wuthering Heights, and has, with equal accuracy, noted its beauties and touched on its faults. Too often do reviewers remind us of the mob of Astrologers, Chaldeans, and Soothsayers gathered before the 'writing on the wall,' and unable to read the characters or make known the interpretation. We have a right to rejoice when a true seer comes at last, some man in whom is an excellent spirit, to whom have been given light, wisdom, and understanding; who can accurately read the 'Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin' of an original mind (however unripe, however inefficiently cultured and partially expanded that mind may be); and who can say with confidence, 'This is the interpretation thereof.'

Yet even the writer to whom I allude shares the mistake about the authorship, and does me the injustice to suppose that there was equivoque in my former rejection of this honour (as an honour, I regard it). May I assure him that I would scorn in this and in every other case to deal in equivoque; I believe language to have been given us to make our meaning clear, and not to wrap it in dishonest doubt.

The Tenant of Wildfell Hall, by Acton Bell, had likewise an unfavourable reception. At this I cannot wonder. The choice of subject was an entire mistake. Nothing less congruous with the writer's nature could be conceived. The motives which dictated this choice were pure, but, I think, slightly morbid. She had, in the course of her life, been called on to contemplate, near at hand, and for a long time, the terrible effects of talents misused and faculties abused; hers was naturally a sensitive, reserved, and dejected nature; what she saw sank very deeply into her mind; it did her harm. She brooded over it till she believed it to be a duty to reproduce every detail (of course with fictitious characters, incidents, and situations) as a warning to others. She hated her work, but would pursue it. When reasoned with on the subject, she regarded such reasonings as a temptation to self-indulgence. She must be honest; she must not varnish, soften, or conceal. This well-meant resolution brought on her misconstruction, and some abuse, which she bore, as it was her custom to bear whatever was unpleasant, with mild, steady patience. She was a very sincere and practical Christian, but the tinge of religious melancholy communicated a sad shade to her brief, blameless life.

Neither Ellis nor Acton allowed herself for one moment to sink under want of encouragement; energy nerved the one, and endurance upheld the other. They were both prepared to try again; I would fain think that hope and the sense of power was yet strong within them. But a great change approached: affliction came in that shape which to anticipate is dread; to look back on, grief. In the very heat and burden of the day, the labourers failed over their work.

My sister Emily first declined. The details of her illness are deep-branded in my memory, but to dwell on them, either in thought or narrative, is not in my power. Never in all her life had she lingered over any task that lay before her, and she did not linger now. She sank rapidly. She made haste to leave us. Yet, while physically she perished, mentally she grew stronger than we had yet known her. Day by day, when I saw with what a front she met suffering, I looked on her with an anguish of wonder and love. I have seen nothing like it; but, indeed, I have never seen her parallel in anything. Stronger than a man, simpler than a child, her nature stood alone. The awful point was, that while full of ruth for others, on herself she had no pity; the spirit was inexorable to the flesh; from the trembling hand, the unnerved limbs, the faded eyes, the same service was exacted as they had rendered in health. To stand by and witness this, and not dare to remonstrate, was a pain no words can render.

Two cruel months of hope and fear passed painfully by, and the day came at last when the terrors and pains of death were to be undergone by this treasure, which had grown dearer and dearer to our hearts as it wasted before our eyes. Towards the decline of that day, we had nothing of Emily but her mortal remains as consumption left them. She died December 19, 1848.

We thought this enough: but we were utterly and presumptuously wrong. She was not buried ere Anne fell ill. She had not been committed to the grave a fortnight, before we received distinct intimation that it was necessary to prepare our minds to see the younger sister go after the elder. Accordingly, she followed in the same path with slower step, and with a patience that equalled the other's fortitude. I have said that she was religious, and it was by leaning on these Christian doctrines in which she firmly believed, that she found support through her most painful journey. I witnessed their efficacy in her latest hour and greatest trial, and must bear my testimony to the calm triumph with which they brought her through. She died May 28, 1849.

What more shall I say about them? I cannot and need not say much more. In externals, they were two unobtrusive women; a perfectly secluded life gave them retiring manners and habits. In Emily's nature the extremes of vigour and simplicity seemed to meet. Under an unsophisticated culture, inartificial tastes, and an unpretending outside, lay a secret power and fire that might have informed the brain and kindled the veins of a hero; but she had no worldly wisdom; her powers were unadapted to the practical business of life; she would fail to defend her most manifest rights, to consult her most legitimate advantage. An interpreter ought always to have stood between her and the world. Her will was not very flexible, and it generally opposed her interest. Her temper was magnanimous, but warm and sudden; her spirit altogether unbending.

Anne's character was milder and more subdued; she wanted the power, the fire, the originality of her sister, but was well endowed with quiet virtues of her own. Long-suffering, self-denying, reflective, and intelligent, a constitutional reserve and taciturnity placed and kept her in the shade, and covered her mind, and especially her feelings, with a sort of nun-like veil, which was rarely lifted. Neither Emily nor Anne was learned; they had no thought of filling their pitchers at the well-spring of other minds; they always wrote from the impulse of nature, the dictates of intuition, and from such stores of observation as their limited experience had enabled them to amass. I may sum up all by saying, that for strangers they were nothing, for superficial observers less than nothing; but for those who had known them all their lives in the intimacy of close relationship, they were genuinely good and truly great.

This notice has been written, because I felt it a sacred duty to wipe the dust off their gravestones, and leave their dear names free from soil.

CURRER BELL.

September 19, 1850.

EDITOR'S PREFACE

TO THE NEW EDITION OF

WUTHERING HEIGHTS

I HAVE just read over *Wuthering Heights*, and, for the first time, have obtained a clear glimpse of what are termed (and, perhaps, really are) its faults; have gained a definite notion of how it appears to other people—to strangers who knew nothing of the author; who are unacquainted with the locality where the scenes of the story are laid; to whom the inhabitants, the customs, the natural characteristics of the outlying hills and hamlets in the West-Riding of Yorkshire are things alien and unfamiliar.

To all such *Wuthering Heights* must appear a rude and strange production. The wild moors of the north of England can for them have no interest; the language, the manners, the very dwellings and household customs of the scattered inhabitants of those districts, must be to such readers in a great measure unintelligible, and—where intelligible—repulsive. Men and women who, perhaps, naturally very calm, and with feelings moderate in degree, and little marked in kind, have been trained from their cradle to observe the utmost evenness of manner and guardedness of language, will hardly know what to make of the rough, strong utterance, the harshly manifested passions, the unbridled aversions, and headlong partialities of unlettered moorland hinds and rugged moorland squires, who have grown up untaught and unchecked, except by mentors as harsh as themselves. A large class of readers, likewise, will suffer greatly from the introduction into the pages of this work of words printed with all their letters, which it has become the custom to represent by the initial and final letter only—a blank line filling the interval. I may as well say at once that, for this circumstance, it is out of my power to apologise, deeming it, myself, a rational plan to write words at full length. The practice of hinting by single letters those expletives with which profane and violent persons are wont to garnish their discourse, strikes me as a proceeding which, however well meant, is weak and futile. I cannot tell what good it does—what feeling it spares—what horror it conceals.

With regard to the rusticity of *Wuthering Heights*, I admit the charge, for I feel the quality. It is rustic all through. It is moorish, and wild, and knotty as a root of heath. Nor was it natural that it should be otherwise; the author being herself a native and nursling of the moors. Doubtless, had her lot been cast in a town, her writings, if she had written at all, would have possessed another character. Even had chance or taste led her to choose a similar subject, she would have treated it otherwise. Had Ellis Bell been a lady or a gentleman accustomed to what is called 'the world,' her view of a remote and unreclaimed region, as well as of the dwellers therein, would have differed greatly from that actually taken by the home-bred country girl. Doubtless it would have been wider—more comprehensive: whether it would have been more original or more truthful is not so certain. As far as the scenery and locality are concerned, it could scarcely have been so sympathetic: Ellis Bell did not describe as one whose eye and taste alone found pleasure in the prospect; her native hills were far more to her than a spectacle; they were what she lived in, and by, as much as the wild birds, their tenants, or as the heather, their produce. Her descriptions, then, of natural scenery, are what they should be, and all they should be.

Where delineation of human character is concerned, the case is different. I am bound to avow that she had scarcely more practical knowledge of the peasantry amongst whom she lived, than a nun has of the country people who sometimes pass her convent gates. My sister's disposition was not naturally gregarious; circumstances favoured and fostered her tendency to seclusion; except to go to church or take a walk on the hills, she rarely crossed the threshold of home. Though her feeling for the people round was benevolent, intercourse with them she never sought; nor, with very few exceptions, ever experienced. And yet she knew them: knew their ways, their language, their family histories; she could hear of them with interest, and talk of them with detail, minute, graphic, and accurate; but *with* them she rarely exchanged a word. Hence it ensued that what her mind had gathered of the real concerning them, was too exclusively confined to those tragic and terrible traits of which, in listening to the secret annals of every rude vicinage, the memory is sometimes compelled to receive the impress. Her imagination, which was a spirit more sombre than sunny, more powerful than sportive, found in such traits material whence it wrought creations like Heathcliff, like Earnshaw, like Catherine. Having formed these beings, she did not know what she had done. If the auditor of her work, when read in manuscript, shuddered under the grinding influence of natures so relentless and implacable, of spirits so lost and fallen; if it was complained that the mere hearing of certain vivid and fearful scenes banished sleep by night, and disturbed mental peace by day, Ellis Bell would wonder what was meant, and suspect the complainant of affectation. Had she but lived, her mind would of itself have grown like a strong tree, loftier, straighter, wider-spreading, and its matured fruits would have attained a mellower ripeness and sunnier bloom: but on that mind time and experience alone could work: to the influence of other intellects, it was not amenable.

Having avowed that over much of *Wuthering Heights* there broods 'a horror of great darkness'; that, in its storm-heated and electrical atmosphere, we seem at times to breathe lightning, let me point to those spots where clouded daylight and the eclipsed sun still attest their existence. For a specimen of true benevolence and homely fidelity, look at the character of Nelly Dean; for an example of constancy and tenderness, remark that of Edgar Linton. (Some people will think these qualities do not shine so well incarnate in a man as they would do in a woman, but Ellis Bell could never be brought to comprehend this notion: nothing moved her more than any insinuation that the faithfulness and clemency, the long-suffering and loving-kindness, which are esteemed virtues in the daughters of Eve, become foibles in the sons of Adam. She held that mercy and forgiveness are the divinest attributes of the Great Being who made both man and woman, and that what clothes the Godhead in glory, can disgrace no form of feeble humanity.) There is a dry saturnine humour in the delineation of old Joseph, and some glimpses of grace and gaiety animate the younger Catherine. Nor is even the first heroine of the name destitute of a certain strange beauty in her fierceness, or of honesty in the midst of perverted passion and passionate perversity.

Heathcliff, indeed, stands unredeemed; never once swerving in his arrow-straight course to perdition, from the time when 'the little black-haired swarthy thing, as dark as if it came from the Devil,' was first unrolled out of the bundle and set on its feet in the farmhouse kitchen, to the hour when Nelly Dean found the grim, stalwart corpse laid on its back in the panel-enclosed bed, with wide-gazing eyes that seemed 'to sneer at her attempt to close them, and parted lips and sharp white teeth that sneered too.'

Heathcliff betrays one solitary human feeling, and that is *not* his love for Catherine; which is a sentiment fierce and inhuman; a passion such as might boil and glow in the bad essence of some evil genius; a fire that might form the tormented centre—the ever-suffering soul of a magnate of the infernal world: and by its quenchless and ceaseless ravage effect the execution of the decree which dooms him to carry Hell with him wherever he wanders. No; the single link that connects Heathcliff with humanity is his rudely-confessed regard for Hareton Earnshaw—the young man whom he has ruined; and then his half-implied esteem for Nelly Dean. These solitary traits omitted, we should say he was child neither of Lascar nor gipsy, but a man's shape animated by demon life—a Ghoul—an Afreet.

Whether it is right or advisable to create beings like Heathcliff, I do not know: I scarcely think it is. But this I know; the writer who possesses the creative gift owns something of which he is not always master—something that, at times, strangely wills and works for itself. He may lay down rules and devise principles, and to rules and principles it will perhaps for years lie in subjection; and then, haply without any warning of revolt, there comes a time when it will no longer consent to 'harrow the volleys, or be bound with a band in the furrow'—when it 'laughs at the multitude of the city, and regards not the crying of the driver'—when, refusing absolutely to make ropes out of sea-sand any longer, it sets to work on statue-hewing, and you have a Pluto or a Jove, a Tisiphone or a Psyche, a Mermaid or a Madonna, as Fate or Inspiration direct. Be the work grim or glorious, dread or divine, you have little choice left but quiescent adoption. As for you—the nominal artist—your share in it has been to work passively under dictates you neither delivered nor could question—that would not be uttered at your prayer, nor suppressed nor changed at your caprice. If the result be attractive, the World will praise you, who little deserve praise; if it be repulsive, the same World will blame you, who almost as little deserve blame.

Wuthering Heights was hewn in a wild workshop, with simple tools, out of homely materials. The statuary found a granite block on a solitary moor; gazing thereon, he saw how from the crag might be elicited a head, savage, swart, sinister; a form moulded with at least one element of grandeur—power. He wrought with a rude chisel, and from no model but the vision of his meditations. With time and labour, the crag took human shape; and there it stands colossal, dark, and frowning, half statue, half rock: in the former sense, terrible and goblin-like; in the latter, almost beautiful, for its colouring is of mellow grey, and moorland moss clothes it; and heath, with its blooming bells and balmy fragrance, grows faithfully close to the giant's foot.

CURRER BELL.

WUTHERING HEIGHTS

CHAPTER I

1801.——I have just returned from a visit to my landlord—the solitary neighbour that I shall be troubled with. This is certainly a beautiful country! In all England, I do not believe that I could have fixed on a situation so completely removed from the stir of society. A perfect misanthropist's heaven: and Mr. Heathcliff and I are such a suitable pair to divide the desolation between us. A capital fellow! He little imagined how my heart warmed towards him when I beheld his black eyes withdraw so suspiciously under their brows, as I rode up, and when his fingers sheltered themselves, with a jealous resolution, still further in his waistcoat, as I announced my name.

'Mr. Heathcliff?' I said.

A nod was the answer.

'Mr. Lockwood, your new tenant, sir—I do myself the honour of calling as soon as possible after my arrival, to express the hope that I have not inconvenienced you by my perseverance in soliciting the occupation of Thrushcross Grange: I heard yesterday you had had some thoughts——'

'Thrushcross Grange is my own, sir,' he interrupted, wincing. 'I should not allow any one to inconvenience me, if I could hinder it—walk in!'

The 'walk in' was uttered with closed teeth, and expressed the sentiment, 'Go to the Deuce': even the gate over which he leant manifested no sympathising movement to the words; and I think that circumstance determined me to accept the invitation: I felt interested in a man who seemed more exaggeratedly reserved than myself.

When he saw my horse's breast fairly pushing the barrier, he did pull out his hand to unchain it, and then sullenly preceded me up the causeway, calling, as we entered the court: 'Joseph, take Mr. Lockwood's horse; and bring up some wine.'

'Here we have the whole establishment of domestics, I suppose,' was the reflection suggested by this compound order. 'No wonder the grass grows up between the flags, and cattle are the only hedge-cutters.'

Joseph was an elderly, nay, an old man; very old, perhaps, though hale and sinewy.

'The Lord help us!' he soliloquised in an undertone of peevish displeasure, while relieving me of my horse: looking, meantime, in my face so sourly that I charitably conjectured he must have need of divine aid to digest his dinner, and his pious ejaculation had no reference to my unexpected advent.

Wuthering Heights is the name of Mr. Heathcliff's dwelling. 'Wuthering' being a significant provincial adjective, descriptive of the atmospheric tumult to which its station is exposed in stormy weather. Pure, bracing ventilation they must have up there at all times: indeed, one may guess the power of the north wind blowing over the edge, by the excessive slant of a few stunted firs at the end of the house, and by a range of gaunt thorns, all stretching their limbs one way, as if craving alms of the sun. Happily, the architect had foresight to build it strong: the narrow windows are deeply set in the wall, and the corners defended with large jutting stones.

Before passing the threshold, I paused to admire a quantity of grotesque carving lavished over the front, and especially about the principal door ; above which, among a wilderness of crumbling griffins and shameless little boys, I detected the date '1500,' and the name 'Hareton Earnshaw.' I would have made a few comments, and requested a short history of the place from the surly owner ; but his attitude at the door appeared to demand my speedy entrance, or complete departure, and I had no desire to aggravate his impatience previous to inspecting the penetralium.

One step brought us into the family sitting-room, without any introductory lobby or passage : they call it here 'the house' pre-eminently. It includes kitchen and parlour, generally ; but I believe at Wuthering Heights the kitchen is forced to retreat altogether into another quarter : at least I distinguished a chatter of tongues, and a clatter of culinary utensils, deep within ; and I observed no signs of roasting, boiling, or baking, about the huge fireplace ; nor any glitter of copper saucepans and tin cullenders on the walls. One end, indeed, reflected splendidly both light and heat from ranks of immense pewter dishes, interspersed with silver jugs and tankards, towering row after row, on a vast oak dresser, to the very roof. The latter had never been underdrawn : its entire anatomy lay bare to an inquiring eye, except where a frame of wood laden with oatcakes and clusters of legs of beef, mutton, and ham, concealed it. Above the chimney were sundry villainous old guns, and a couple of horse-pistols : and, by way of ornament, three gaudily-painted canisters disposed along its ledge. The floor was of smooth, white stone ; the chairs, high-backed, primitive structures, painted green : one or two heavy black ones lurking in the shade. In an arch under the dresser, reposed a huge, liver-coloured bitch pointer, surrounded by a swarm of squealing puppies; and other dogs haunted other recesses.

The apartment and furniture would have been nothing extraordinary as belonging to a homely, northern farmer, with a stubborn countenance, and stalwart limbs set out to advantage in knee-breeches and gaiters. Such an individual seated in his arm-chair, his mug of ale frothing on the round table before him, is to be seen in any circuit of five or six miles among these hills, if you go at the right time after dinner. But Mr. Heathcliff forms a singular contrast to his abode and style of living. He is a dark-skinned gypsy in aspect, in dress and manners a gentleman: that is, as much a gentleman as many a country squire: rather slovenly, perhaps, yet not looking amiss with his negligence, because he has an erect and handsome figure; and rather morose. Possibly, some people might suspect him of a degree of underbred pride; I have a sympathetic chord within that tells me it is nothing of the sort: I know, by instinct, his reserve springs from an aversion to showy displays of feeling—to manifestations of mutual kindliness. He'll love and hate equally under cover, and esteem it a species of impertinence to be loved or hated again. No, I'm running on too fast: I bestow my own attributes over liberally on him. Mr. Heathcliff may have entirely dissimilar reasons for keeping his hand out of the way when he meets a would-be acquaintance, to those which actuate me. Let me hope my constitution is almost peculiar: my dear mother used to say I should never have a comfortable home; and only last summer I proved myself perfectly unworthy of one.

While enjoying a month of fine weather at the sea-coast, I was thrown into the company of a most fascinating creature: a real goddess in my eyes, as long as she took no notice of me. I 'never told my love' vocally; still, if looks have language, the merest idiot might have guessed I was over head and ears: she understood me at last, and looked a return—the sweetest of all imaginable looks. And what did I do? I confess it with shame—shrunk icily into myself, like a snail; at every glance, retired colder and farther; till finally the poor innocent was led to doubt her own senses, and, overwhelmed with confusion at her supposed mistake, persuaded her mamma to decamp.

By this curious turn of disposition I have gained the reputation of deliberate heartlessness; how undeserved, I alone can appreciate.

I took a seat at the end of the hearthstone opposite that towards which my landlord advanced, and filled up an interval of silence by attempting to caress the canine mother, who had left her nursery, and was sneaking wolfishly to the back of my legs, her lip curled up, and her white teeth watering for a snatch.

My caress provoked a long, guttural gnarl.

'You'd better let the dog alone,' growled Mr. Heathcliff in unison, checking fiercer demonstrations with a punch of his foot. 'She's not accustomed to be spoiled—not kept for a pet.'

Then, striding to a side door, he shouted again.

'Joseph!'

Joseph mumbled indistinctly in the depths of the cellar, but gave no intimation of ascending; so his master dived down to him, leaving me *vis-à-vis* the ruffianly bitch and a pair of grim shaggy sheep-dogs, who shared with her a jealous guardianship over all my movements.

Not anxious to come in contact with their fangs, I sat still; but, imagining they would scarcely understand tacit insults, I unfortunately indulged in winking and making faces at the trio, and some turn of my physiognomy so irritated madam, that she suddenly broke into a fury and leapt on my knees. I flung her back, and hastened to interpose the table between us. This proceeding roused the whole hive: half a dozen four-footed fiends, of various sizes and ages, issued from hidden dens to the common centre. I felt my heels and coat-laps peculiar subjects of assault; and, parrying off the larger combatants as effectually as I could with the poker, I was constrained to demand, aloud, assistance from some of the household in re-establishing peace.

Mr. Heathcliff and his man climbed the cellar steps with vexatious phlegm: I don't think they moved one second faster than usual, though the hearth was an absolute tempest of worrying and yelping.

Happily, an inhabitant of the kitchen made more dispatch: a lusty dame, with tucked-up gown, bare arms, and fire-flushed cheeks, rushed into the midst of us flourishing a frying-pan: and used that weapon, and her tongue, to such purpose, that the storm subsided magically, and she only remained, heaving like a sea after a high wind, when her master entered on the scene.

'What the devil is the matter?' he asked, eyeing me in a manner that I could ill endure after this inhospitable treatment.

'What the devil, indeed!' I muttered. 'The herd of possessed swine could have had no worse spirits in them than those animals of yours, sir. You might as well leave a stranger with a brood of tigers!'

'They won't meddle with persons who touch nothing,' he remarked, putting the bottle before me, and restoring the displaced table. 'The dogs do right to be vigilant. Take a glass of wine?'

'No, thank you.'

'Not bitten, are you?'

'If I had been, I would have set my signet on the biter.'

Heathcliff's countenance relaxed into a grin.

'Come, come,' he said, 'you are flurried, Mr. Lockwood. Here, take a little wine. Guests are so exceedingly rare in this house that I and my dogs, I am willing to own, hardly know how to receive them. Your health, sir!'

I bowed and returned the pledge; beginning to perceive that it would be foolish to sit sulking for the misbehaviour of a pack of curs: besides, I felt loath to yield the fellow further amusement at my expense; since his humour took that turn.

He—probably swayed by prudential consideration of the folly of offending a good tenant—relaxed a little in the laconic style of chipping off his pronouns and auxiliary verbs, and introduced what he supposed would be a subject of interest to me,—a discourse on the advantages and disadvantages of my present place of retirement.

I found him very intelligent on the topics we touched; and before I went home, I was encouraged so far as to volunteer another visit to-morrow.

He evidently wished no repetition of my intrusion. I shall go, notwithstanding. It is astonishing how sociable I feel myself compared with him.

CHAPTER II

YESTERDAY afternoon set in misty and cold. I had half a mind to spend it by my study fire, instead of wading through heath and mud to Wuthering Heights.

On coming up from dinner, however (*N.B.*—I dine between twelve and one o'clock; the housekeeper, a matronly lady, taken as a fixture along with the house, could not, or would not, comprehend my request that I might be served at five), on mounting the stairs with this lazy intention, and stepping into the room, I saw a servant-girl on her knees, surrounded by brushes and coal-scuttles, and raising an infernal dust as she extinguished the flames with heaps of cinders. This spectacle drove me back immediately; I took my hat, and, after a four miles' walk, arrived at Heathcliff's garden gate just in time to escape the first feathery flakes of a snow-shower.

On that bleak hill-top the earth was hard with a black frost, and the air made me shiver through every limb. Being unable to remove the chain, I jumped over, and, running up the flagged causeway, bordered with straggling gooseberry bushes, knocked vainly for admittance, till my knuckles tingled and the dogs howled.

'Wretched inmates!' I ejaculated mentally, 'you deserve perpetual isolation from your species for your churlish inhospitality. At least, I would not keep my doors barred in the day-time. I don't care—I will get in!'

So resolved, I grasped the latch and shook it vehemently. Vinegar-faced Joseph projected his head from a round window of the barn.

'Whet are ye for?' he shouted. 'T' maister's dahn i' t' fowld. Goa rahnd by th' end ut' laith, if yah went tuh spake tull him.'

'Is there nobody inside to open the door?' I hallooed responsively.

'They 's nobbut t' missis; and shoo'll nut oppen 't an ye mak yer flaysome dins till neeght.'

'Why? Cannot you tell her who I am, eh, Joseph?'

'Nor-ne me! Aw 'll hae noa hend wi't,' muttered the head, vanishing.[1]

The snow began to drive thickly. I seized the handle to essay another trial; when a young man without coat, and shouldering a pitchfork, appeared in the yard behind. He hailed me to follow him, and, after marching through a wash-house, and a paved area containing a coal-shed, pump, and pigeon-cot, we at length arrived in the large, warm, cheerful apartment, where I was formerly received.

It glowed delightfully in the radiance of an immense fire, compounded of coal, peat, and wood; and near the table, laid for a plentiful evening meal, I was pleased to observe the 'missis,' an individual whose existence I had never previously suspected.

I bowed and waited, thinking she would bid me take a seat. She looked at me, leaning back in her chair, and remained motionless and mute.

'Rough weather!' I remarked. 'I 'm afraid, Mrs. Heathcliff, the door must bear the consequence of your servants' leisure attendance: I had hard work to make them hear me.'

She never opened her mouth. I stared—she stared also: at any rate, she kept her eyes on me in a cool, regardless manner, exceedingly embarrassing and disagreeable.

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[1] The above dialogue runs as follows in Charlotte Brontë's revision of Emily's novel:—

'What are ye for?' he shouted. 'T' maister 's down i' t' fowld. Go round by th' end ot' laith, if ye went to spake to him.'

'Is there nobody inside to open the door?' I hallooed responsively.

'There's nobbut t' missis; and shoo 'll not oppen 't an ye mak yer flaysome dins till neeght.'

'Why? Cannot you tell her who I am, eh, Joseph?'

'Nor-ne me! I'll hae no hend wi't,' muttered the head, vanishing.

'Sit down,' said the young man gruffly. 'He 'll be in soon.'

I obeyed; and hemmed, and called the villain Juno, who deigned, at this second interview, to move the extreme tip of her tail, in token of owning my acquaintance.

'A beautiful animal!' I commenced again. 'Do you intend parting with the little ones, madam?'

'They are not mine,' said the amiable hostess, more repellingly than Heathcliff himself could have replied.

'Ah, your favourites are among these?' I continued, turning to an obscure cushion full of something like cats.

'A strange choice of favourites!' she observed scornfully.

Unluckily, it was a heap of dead rabbits. I hemmed once more, and drew closer to the hearth, repeating my comment on the wildness of the evening.

'You should not have come out,' she said, rising and reaching from the chimney-piece two of the painted canisters.

Her position before was sheltered from the light; now, I had a distinct view of her whole figure and countenance. She was slender, and apparently scarcely past girlhood; an admirable form, and the most exquisite little face that I have ever had the pleasure of beholding; small features, very fair; flaxen ringlets, or rather golden, hanging loose on her delicate neck; and eyes, had they been agreeable in expression, that would have been irresistible: fortunately for my susceptible heart, the only sentiment they evinced hovered between scorn and a kind of desperation, singularly unnatural to be detected there.

The canisters were almost out of her reach; I made a motion to aid her ; she turned upon me as a miser might turn if any one attempted to assist him in counting his gold.

'I don't want your help,' she snapped ; 'I can get them for myself.'

'I beg your pardon !' I hastened to reply.

'Were you asked to tea ?' she demanded, tying an apron over her neat black frock, and standing with a spoonful of the leaf poised over the pot.

'I shall be glad to have a cup,' I answered.

'Were you asked ?' she repeated.

'No,' I said, half smiling. 'You are the proper person to ask me.'

She flung the tea back, spoon and all, and resumed her chair in a pet, her forehead corrugated, and her red under-lip pushed out, like a child's ready to cry.

Meanwhile, the young man had slung on to his person a decidedly shabby upper garment, and, erecting himself before the blaze, looked down on me from the corner of his eyes, for all the world as if there were some mortal feud unavenged between us. I began to doubt whether he were a servant or not : his dress and speech were both rude, entirely devoid of the superiority observable in Mr. and Mrs. Heathcliff ; his thick, brown curls were rough and uncultivated, his whiskers encroached bearishly over his cheeks, and his hands were embrowned like those of a common labourer : still his bearing was free, almost haughty, and he showed none of a domestic's assiduity in attending on the lady of the house.

In the absence of clear proofs of his condition, I deemed it best to abstain from noticing his curious conduct ; and, five minutes afterwards, the entrance of Heathcliff relieved me, in some measure, from my uncomfortable state.

'You see, sir, I am come, according to promise!' I exclaimed, assuming the cheerful; 'and I fear I shall be weather-bound for half an hour, if you can afford me shelter during that space.'

'Half an hour?' he said, shaking the white flakes from his clothes; 'I wonder you should select the thick of a snow-storm to ramble about in. Do you know that you run a risk of being lost in the marshes? People familiar with these moors often miss their road on such evenings; and I can tell you there is no chance of a change at present.'

'Perhaps I can get a guide among your lads, and he might stay at the Grange till morning—could you spare me one?'

'No, I could not.'

'Oh, indeed! Well, then, I must trust to my own sagacity.'

'Umph!'

'Are you going to mak' th' tea?' demanded he of the shabby coat, shifting his ferocious gaze from me to the young lady.

'Is *he* to have any?' she asked, appealing to Heathcliff.

'Get it ready, will you?' was the answer, uttered so savagely that I started. The tone in which the words were said revealed a genuine bad nature. I no longer felt inclined to call Heathcliff a capital fellow.

When the preparations were finished, he invited me with—

'Now, sir, bring forward your chair.' And we all, including the rustic youth, drew round the table: an austere silence prevailing while we discussed our meal.

I thought, if I had caused the cloud, it was my duty to make an effort to dispel it. They could not every day sit so grim and taciturn; and it was impossible, however ill-tempered they might be, that the universal scowl they wore was their everyday countenance.

‘ It is strange,’ I began, in the interval of swallowing one cup of tea and receiving another—‘ it is strange how custom can mould our tastes and ideas : many could not imagine the existence of happiness in a life of such complete exile from the world as you spend, Mr. Heathcliff ; yet, I ’ll venture to say, that, surrounded by your family, and with your amiable lady as the presiding genius over your home and heart——’

‘ My amiable lady ! ’ he interrupted, with an almost diabolical sneer on his face. ‘ Where is she—my amiable lady ? ’

‘ Mrs. Heathcliff, your wife, I mean.’

‘ Well, yes—Oh, you would intimate that her spirit has taken the post of ministering angel, and guards the fortunes of Wuthering Heights even when her body is gone. Is that it ? ’

Perceiving myself in a blunder, I attempted to correct it. I might have seen there was too great a disparity between the ages of the parties to make it likely that they were man and wife. One was about forty ; a period of mental vigour at which men seldom cherish the delusion of being married for love by girls : that dream is reserved for the solace of our declining years. The other did not look seventeen.

Then it flashed upon me—‘ The clown at my elbow, who is drinking his tea out of a basin and eating his bread with unwashed hands, may be her husband : Heathcliff junior, of course. Here is the consequence of being buried alive : she has thrown herself away upon that boor from sheer ignorance that better individuals existed ! A sad pity—I must beware how I cause her to regret her choice.’

The last reflection may seem conceited ; it was not. My neighbour struck me as bordering on the repulsive; I knew, through experience, that I was tolerably attractive.

'Mrs. Heathcliff is my daughter-in-law,' said Heathcliff, corroborating my surmise. He turned, as he spoke, a peculiar look in her direction: a look of hatred; unless he has a most perverse set of facial muscles that will not, like those of other people, interpret the language of his soul.

'Ah, certainly—I see now: you are the favoured possessor of the beneficent fairy,' I remarked, turning to my neighbour.

This was worse than before: the youth grew crimson, and clenched his fist, with every appearance of a meditated assault. But he seemed to recollect himself presently, and smothered the storm in a brutal curse, muttered on my behalf: which, however, I took care not to notice.

'Unhappy in your conjectures, sir,' observed my host; 'we neither of us have the privilege of owning your good fairy; her mate is dead. I said she was my daughter-in-law, therefore she must have married my son.'

'And this young man is——'

'Not my son, assuredly.'

Heathcliff smiled again, as if it were rather too bold a jest to attribute the paternity of that bear to him.

'My name is Hareton Earnshaw,' growled the other; 'and I'd counsel you to respect it!'

'I've shown no disrespect,' was my reply, laughing internally at the dignity with which he announced himself.

He fixed his eye on me longer than I cared to return the stare, for fear I might be tempted either to box his ears or render my hilarity audible. I began to feel unmistakably out of place in that pleasant family circle. The dismal spiritual atmosphere overcame, and more than neutralised, the glowing physical comforts round me; and I resolved to be cautious how I ventured under those rafters a third time.

The business of eating being concluded, and no one uttering a word of sociable conversation, I approached a window to examine the weather.

A sorrowful sight I saw: dark night coming down prematurely, and sky and hills mingled in one bitter whirl of wind and suffocating snow.

'I don't think it possible for me to get home now without a guide,' I could not help exclaiming. 'The roads will be buried already; and, if they were bare, I could scarcely distinguish a foot in advance.'

'Hareton, drive those dozen sheep into the barn porch. They 'll be covered if left in the fold all night: and put a plank before them,' said Heathcliff.

'How must I do?' I continued, with rising irritation.

There was no reply to my question; and on looking round I saw only Joseph bringing in a pail of porridge for the dogs, and Mrs. Heathcliff leaning over the fire, diverting herself with burning a bundle of matches which had fallen from the chimney-piece as she restored the tea-canister to its place.

The former, when he had deposited his burden, took a critical survey of the room, and in cracked tones grated out—

'Aw woonder hagh yah can fashion tuh stand thear i' idleness un' war, when all on 'em 's goan aght! Bud yah 're a nowt, and it 's noa use talking—yah 'll niver mend uh yer ill ways; bud, goa raight tuh t' divil, like yer mother afore ye!' [1]

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[1] 'Aw wonder how yah can faishion to stand thear i' idleness un war, when all on 'em 's goan out! Bud yah 're a nowt, and it 's no use talking—yah 'll niver mend o' yer ill ways, but goa raight to t' divil, like yer mother afore ye!'—C. B.'s Revision.

I imagined, for a moment, that this piece of eloquence was addressed to me; and, sufficiently enraged, stepped towards the aged rascal with an intention of kicking him out of the door.

Mrs. Heathcliff, however, checked me by her answer.

'You scandalous old hypocrite!' she replied. 'Are you not afraid of being carried away bodily, whenever you mention the devil's name? I warn you to refrain from provoking me, or I 'll ask your abduction as a special favour. Stop! look here, Joseph,' she continued, taking a long, dark book from a shelf; 'I 'll show you how far I 've progressed in the Black Art: I shall soon be competent to make a clear house of it. The red cow didn't die by chance; and your rheumatism can hardly be reckoned among providential visitations!'

'Oh, wicked, wicked!' gasped the elder; 'may the Lord deliver us from evil!'

'No, reprobate! you are a castaway—be off, or I 'll hurt you seriously! I 'll have you all modelled in wax and clay; and the first who passes the limits I fix, shall—I 'll not say what he shall be done to—but, you 'll see! Go, I 'm looking at you!'

The little witch put a mock malignity into her beautiful eyes, and Joseph, trembling with sincere horror, hurried out praying and ejaculating 'wicked' as he went.

I thought her conduct must be prompted by a species of dreary fun; and, now that we were alone, I endeavoured to interest her in my distress.

'Mrs. Heathcliff,' I said earnestly, 'you must excuse me for troubling you. I presume, because, with that face, I 'm sure you cannot help being good-hearted. Do point out some landmarks by which I may know my way home: I have no more idea how to get there than you would have how to get to London!'

'Take the road you came,' she answered, ensconcing herself in a chair, with a candle, and the long book open before her. 'It is brief advice, but as sound as I can give.'

'Then, if you hear of me being discovered dead in a bog or a pit full of snow, your conscience won't whisper that it is partly your fault?'

'How so? I cannot escort you. They wouldn't let me go to the end of the garden-wall.'

'*You!* I should be sorry to ask you to cross the threshold, for my convenience, on such a night,' I cried. 'I want you to *tell* me my way, not to *show* it; or else to persuade Mr. Heathcliff to give me a guide.'

'Who? There is himself, Earnshaw, Zillah, Joseph, and I. Which would you have?'

'Are there no boys at the farm?'

'No; those are all.'

'Then, it follows that I am compelled to stay.'

'That you may settle with your host. I have nothing to do with it.'

'I hope it will be a lesson to you to make no more rash journeys on these hills,' cried Heathcliff's stern voice from the kitchen entrance. 'As to staying here, I don't keep accommodations for visitors: you must share a bed with Hareton or Joseph, if you do.'

'I can sleep on a chair in this room,' I replied.

'No, no! A stranger is a stranger, be he rich or poor: it will not suit me to permit any one the range of the place while I am off guard!' said the unmannerly wretch.

With this insult, my patience was at an end. I uttered an expression of disgust, and pushed past him into the yard, running against Earnshaw in my haste. It was so dark that I could not see the means of exit;

and, as I wandered round, I heard another specimen of their civil behaviour amongst each other.

At first the young man appeared about to befriend me.

‘ I ’ll go with him as far as the park,’ he said.

‘ You ’ll go with him to hell ! ’ exclaimed his master, or whatever relation he bore. ‘ And who is to look after the horses, eh ? ’

‘ A man’s life is of more consequence than one evening’s neglect of the horses : somebody must go,’ murmured Mrs. Heathcliff, more kindly than I expected.

‘ Not at your command ! ’ retorted Hareton. ‘ If you set store on him, you ’d better be quiet.’

‘ Then I hope his ghost will haunt you ; and I hope Mr. Heathcliff will never get another tenant till the Grange is a ruin ! ’ she answered sharply.

‘ Hearken, hearken, shoo ’s cursing on ’em ! ’ muttered Joseph, towards whom I had been steering.

He sat within earshot, milking the cows by the aid of a lantern, which I seized unceremoniously, and, calling out that I would send it back on the morrow, rushed to the nearest postern.

‘ Maister, maister, he ’s staling t’ lanthern ! ’ shouted the ancient, pursuing my retreat. ‘ Hey, Gnasher ! Hey, dog ! Hey, Wolf, holld him, holld him ! ’

On opening the little door, two hairy monsters flew at my throat, bearing me down and extinguishing the light ; while a mingled guffaw from Heathcliff and Hareton put the copestone on my rage and humiliation.

Fortunately, the beasts seemed more bent on stretching their paws and yawning, and flourishing their tails, than devouring me alive ; but they would suffer no resurrection, and I was forced to lie till their malignant masters pleased to deliver me : then, hatless, and trembling with wrath, I ordered the miscreants to let me out—on their peril to keep me one minute longer—

with several incoherent threats of retaliation that, in their indefinite depth of virulency, smacked of King Lear.

The vehemence of my agitation brought on a copious bleeding at the nose, and still Heathcliff laughed, and still I scolded. I don't know what would have concluded the scene, had there not been one person at hand rather more rational than myself, and more benevolent than my entertainer. This was Zillah, the stout housewife ; who at length issued forth to inquire into the nature of the uproar. She thought that some of them had been laying violent hands on me ; and, not daring to attack her master, she turned her vocal artillery against the younger scoundrel.

'Well, Mr. Earnshaw,' she cried, 'I wonder what you 'll have agait next ! Are we going to murder folk on our very door-stones ? I see this house will never do for me—look at t' poor lad, he 's fair choking ! Wisht, wisht ! you mun'n't go on so. Come in, and I 'll cure that : there now, hold ye still.'

With these words she suddenly splashed a pint of icy water down my neck, and pulled me into the kitchen. Mr. Heathcliff followed, his accidental merriment expiring quickly in his habitual moroseness.

I was sick exceedingly, and dizzy and faint ; and thus compelled perforce to accept lodgings under his roof. He told Zillah to give me a glass of brandy, and then passed on to the inner room ; while she condoled with me on my sorry predicament, and having obeyed his orders, whereby I was somewhat revived, ushered me to bed.

CHAPTER III

WHILE leading the way upstairs, she recommended that I should hide the candle, and not make a noise; for her master had an odd notion about the chamber she would put me in, and never let anybody lodge there willingly.

I asked the reason.

She did not know, she answered: she had only lived there a year or two; and they had so many queer goings on, she could not begin to be curious.

Too stupefied to be curious myself, I fastened my door and glanced round for the bed. The whole furniture consisted of a chair, a clothes-press, and a large oak case, with squares cut out near the top resembling coach windows.

Having approached this structure, I looked inside, and perceived it to be a singular sort of old-fashioned couch, very conveniently designed to obviate the necessity for every member of the family having a room to himself. In fact, it formed a little closet, and the ledge of a window, which it enclosed, served as a table.

I slid back the panelled sides, got in with my light, pulled them together again, and felt secure against the vigilance of Heathcliff, and every one else.

The ledge, where I placed my candle, had a few mildewed books piled up in one corner; and it was covered with writing scratched on the paint. This writing, however, was nothing but a name repeated in all kinds of characters, large and small—*Catherine Earnshaw*, here and there varied to *Catherine Heathcliff*, and then again to *Catherine Linton*.

In vapid listlessness I leant my head against the window, and continued spelling over Catherine Earnshaw—Heathcliff—Linton, till my eyes closed; but they had not rested five minutes when a glare of white letters started from the dark, as vivid as spectres—the air swarmed with Catherines; and rousing myself to dispel the obtrusive name, I discovered my candle-wick reclining on one of the antique volumes, and perfuming the place with an odour of roasted calf-skin.

I snuffed it off, and, very ill at ease under the influence of cold and lingering nausea, sat up and spread open the injured tome on my knee. It was a Testament, in lean type, and smelling dreadfully musty: a fly-leaf bore the inscription—'Catherine Earnshaw, her book,' and a date some quarter of a century back.

I shut it, and took up another, and another, till I had examined all. Catherine's library was select, and its state of dilapidation proved it to have been well used; though not altogether for a legitimate purpose: scarcely one chapter had escaped a pen-and-ink commentary—at least, the appearance of one—covering every morsel of blank that the printer had left.

Some were detached sentences; other parts took the form of a regular diary, scrawled in an unformed, childish hand. At the top of an extra page (quite a treasure, probably, when first lighted on) I was greatly amused to behold an excellent caricature of my friend Joseph,—rudely yet powerfully sketched.

An immediate interest kindled within me for the unknown Catherine, and I began forthwith to decipher her faded hieroglyphics.

'An awful Sunday!' commenced the paragraph beneath. 'I wish my father were back again. Hindley is a detestable substitute—his conduct to Heathcliff is atrocious—H. and I are going to rebel—we took our initiatory step this evening.

‘All day had been flooding with rain; we could not go to church, so Joseph must needs get up a congregation in the garret; and, while Hindley and his wife basked downstairs before a comfortable fire—doing anything but reading their Bibles, I ’ll answer for it—Heathcliff, myself, and the unhappy ploughboy were commanded to take our Prayer-books, and mount: we were ranged in a row, on a sack of corn, groaning and shivering, and hoping that Joseph would shiver too, so that he might give us a short homily for his own sake. A vain idea! The service lasted precisely three hours; and yet my brother had the face to exclaim, when he saw us descending:

‘“What, done already?”

‘On Sunday evenings we used to be permitted to play, if we did not make much noise; now a mere titter is sufficient to send us into corners!

‘“You forget you have a master here,” says the tyrant. “I ’ll demolish the first who puts me out of temper! I insist on perfect sobriety and silence. Oh, boy! was that you? Frances, darling, pull his hair as you go by: I heard him snap his fingers.”

‘Frances pulled his hair heartily, and then went and seated herself on her husband’s knee; and there they were, like two babies, kissing and talking nonsense by the hour—foolish palaver that we should be ashamed of.

‘We made ourselves as snug as our means allowed in the arch of the dresser. I had just fastened our pinafores together, and hung them up for a curtain, when in comes Joseph, on an errand from the stables. He tears down my handiwork, boxes my ears, and croaks—

‘“T’ maister nobbut just buried, and Sabbath nut oe’red, and t’ sahnd uh t’ gospel still i’ yer lugs, and yah darr be laiking! shame on ye! sit ye dahn, ill childer! they 's good books eneugh if ye 'll read 'em: sit ye dahn, and think uh yer sowls!"[1]

'Saying this, he compelled us so to square our positions that we might receive from the far-off fire a dull ray to show us the text of the lumber he thrust upon us.

'I could not bear the employment. I took my dingy volume by the scroop, and hurled it into the dog-kennel, vowing I hated a good book.

'Heathcliff kicked his to the same place.

'Then there was a hubbub!

'"Maister Hindley!" shouted our chaplain. "Maister, coom hither! Miss Cathy 's riven th' back off *Th' Helmet uh Salvation*, un' Heathcliff 's pawsed his fit intuh t' first part uh *T' Brooad Way to Destruction*! It 's fair flaysome ut yah let 'em goa on this gait. Ech! th' owd man ud uh laced 'em properly—bud he 's goan!"[2]

'Hindley hurried up from his paradise on the hearth, and seizing one of us by the collar, and the other by the arm, hurled both into the back-kitchen; where, Joseph asseverated, "owd Nick" would fetch us as sure as we were living: and, so comforted, we each sought a separate nook to await his advent.

'I reached this book, and a pot of ink from a shelf, and pushed the house-door ajar to give me light, and I have got the time on with writing for twenty minutes; but my companion is impatient, and proposes that we should appropriate the dairywoman's cloak, and have a scamper on the moors, under its shelter. A pleasant suggestion—and then, if the surly old man come in, he may believe his prophecy verified—we cannot be damper, or colder, in the rain than we are here.'

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[1] '"T' maister nobbut just buried, and Sabbath not oe'red, und t' sound o' t' gospel still i' yer lugs, and ye darr be laiking! shame on ye! sit ye down, ill childer! there 's good books eneugh if ye 'll read 'em: sit ye down, and think o' yer sowls!"—C. B.'s Revision.

[2] '"It 's fair flaysome that ye let 'em go on this gait. Ech! th' owd man wad ha' laced 'em properly—but he 's goan!"—C. B.'s Revision.

. . . .

I suppose Catherine fulfilled her project, for the next sentence took up another subject: she waxed lachrymose.

'How little did I dream that Hindley would ever make me cry so!' she wrote. 'My head aches, till I cannot keep it on the pillow; and still I can't give over. Poor Heathcliff! Hindley calls him a vagabond, and won't let him sit with us, nor eat with us any more; and, he says, he and I must not play together, and threatens to turn him out of the house if we break his orders.

He has been blaming our father (how dared he?) for treating H. too liberally; and swears he will reduce him to his right place——'

. . . .

I began to nod drowsily over the dim page: my eye wandered from manuscript to print. I saw a red ornamented title—'Seventy Times Seven, and the First of the Seventy-First. A Pious Discourse delivered by the Reverend Jabes Branderham, in the Chapel of Gimmerden Sough.' And while I was, half consciously, worrying my brain to guess what Jabes Branderham would make of his subject, I sank back in bed, and fell asleep.

Alas, for the effects of bad tea and bad temper! what else could it be that made me pass such a terrible night? I don't remember another that I can at all compare with it since I was capable of suffering.

I began to dream, almost before I ceased to be sensible of my locality. I thought it was morning; and I had set out on my way home, with Joseph for a guide. The snow lay yards deep in our road; and, as we floundered on, my companion wearied me with constant reproaches that I had not brought a pilgrim's staff: telling me that I could never get into the house without one, and boastfully flourishing a heavy-headed cudgel, which I understood to be so denominated.

For a moment I considered it absurd that I should need such a weapon to gain admittance into my own residence. Then a new idea flashed across me. I was not going there: we were journeying to hear the famous Jabes Branderham preach from the text—'Seventy Times Seven'; and either Joseph, the preacher, or I had committed the 'First of the Seventy-First,' and were to be publicly exposed and excommunicated.

We came to the chapel. I have passed it really in my walks, twice or thrice; it lies in a hollow, between two hills: an elevated hollow, near a swamp, whose peaty moisture is said to answer all the purposes of embalming on the few corpses deposited there. The roof has been kept whole hitherto; but as the clergyman's stipend is only twenty pounds per annum, and a house with two rooms, threatening speedily to determine into one, no clergyman will undertake the duties of pastor: especially as it is currently reported that his flock would rather let him starve than increase the living by one penny from their own pockets. However, in my dream, Jabes had a full and attentive congregation; and he preached—good God! what a sermon: divided into *four hundred and ninety* parts, each fully equal to an ordinary address from the pulpit, and each discussing a separate sin! Where he searched for them, I cannot tell. He had his private manner of interpreting the phrase, and it seemed necessary the brother should sin different sins on every occasion.

They were of the most curious character: odd transgressions that I never imagined previously.

Oh, how weary I grew. How I writhed, and yawned, and nodded, and revived! How I pinched and pricked myself, and rubbed my eyes, and stood up, and sat down again, and nudged Joseph to inform me if he would *ever* have done.

I was condemned to hear all out: finally, he reached the '*First of the Seventy-First.*' At that crisis, a sudden inspiration descended on me; I was moved to rise and denounce Jabes Branderham as the sinner of the sin that no Christian need pardon.

'Sir,' I exclaimed, 'sitting here within these four walls, at one stretch, I have endured and forgiven the four hundred and ninety heads of your discourse. Seventy times seven times have I plucked up my hat and been about to depart—Seventy times seven times have you preposterously forced me to resume my seat. The four hundred and ninety-first is too much. Fellow-martyrs, have at him! Drag him down, and crush him to atoms, that the place which knows him may know him no more!'

'*Thou art the Man!*' cried Jabes, after a solemn pause, leaning over his cushion. 'Seventy times seven times didst thou gapingly contort thy visage—seventy times seven did I take counsel with my soul—Lo, this is human weakness: this also may be absolved! The First of the Seventy-First is come. Brethren, execute upon him the judgment written. Such honour have all His saints!'

With that concluding word, the whole assembly, exalting their pilgrim's staves, rushed round me in a body; and I, having no weapon to raise in self-defence, commenced grappling with Joseph, my nearest and most ferocious assailant, for his. In the confluence of the multitude, several clubs crossed; blows, aimed at me, fell on other sconces. Presently the whole chapel resounded with rappings and counter rappings: every man's hand was against his neighbour; and Branderham, unwilling to remain idle, poured forth his zeal in a shower of loud taps on the boards of the pulpit, which responded so smartly that, at last, to my unspeakable relief, they woke me.

And what was it that had suggested the tremendous tumult? What had played Jabes's part in the row? Merely the branch of a fir-tree that touched my lattice, as the blast wailed by, and rattled its dry cones against the panes!

I listened doubtingly an instant; detected the disturber, then turned and dozed, and dreamt again: if possible, still more disagreeably than before.

This time, I remembered I was lying in the oak closet, and I heard distinctly the gusty wind, and the driving of the snow; I heard, also, the fir-bough repeat its teasing sound, and ascribed it to the right cause: but it annoyed me so much, that I resolved to silence it, if possible; and, I thought, I rose and endeavoured to unhasp the casement. The hook was soldered into the staple: a circumstance observed by me when awake, but forgotten.

'I must stop it, nevertheless!' I muttered, knocking my knuckles through the glass, and stretching an arm out to seize the importunate branch; instead of which, my fingers closed on the fingers of a little ice-cold hand!

The intense horror of nightmare came over me: I tried to draw back my arm, but the hand clung to it, and a most melancholy voice sobbed—

‘Let me in—let me in!’

‘Who are you?’ I asked, struggling, meanwhile, to disengage myself.

‘Catherine Linton,’ it replied shiveringly (why did I think of *Linton*? I had read *Earnshaw* twenty times for Linton). ‘I’m come home: I’d lost my way on the moor!’

As it spoke, I discerned, obscurely, a child’s face looking through the window. Terror made me cruel; and, finding it useless to attempt shaking the creature off, I pulled its wrist on to the broken pane, and rubbed it to and fro till the blood ran down and soaked the bedclothes: still it wailed, ‘Let me in!’ and maintained its tenacious gripe, almost maddening me with fear.

‘How can I!’ I said at length. ‘Let *me* go, if you want me to let you in!’

The fingers relaxed, I snatched mine through the hole, hurriedly piled the books up in a pyramid against it, and stopped my ears to exclude the lamentable prayer.

I seemed to keep them closed above a quarter of an hour; yet, the instant I listened again, there was the doleful cry moaning on!

‘Begone!’ I shouted, ‘I’ll never let you in, not if you beg for twenty years.’

‘It’s twenty years,’ mourned the voice: ‘twenty years. I’ve been a waif for twenty years!’

Thereat began a feeble scratching outside, and the pile of books moved as if thrust forward.

I tried to jump up, but could not stir a limb; and so yelled aloud, in a frenzy of fright.

To my confusion, I discovered the yell was not ideal: hasty footsteps approached my chamber door; somebody pushed it open, with a vigorous hand, and a light glimmered through the squares at the top of the bed. I sat shuddering yet, and wiping the perspiration from my forehead: the intruder appeared to hesitate, and muttered to himself.

At last, he said in a half-whisper, plainly not expecting an answer,

'Is any one here?' I considered it best to confess my presence; for I knew Heathcliff's accents, and feared he might search further, if I kept quiet.

With this intention, I turned and opened the panels. I shall not soon forget the effect my action produced.

Heathcliff stood near the entrance, in his shirt and trousers; with a candle dripping over his fingers, and his face as white as the wall behind him. The first creak of the oak startled him like an electric shock: the light leaped from his hold to a distance of some feet, and his agitation was so extreme, that he could hardly pick it up.

'It is only your guest, sir,' I called out, desirous to spare him the humiliation of exposing his cowardice further. 'I had the misfortune to scream in my sleep, owing to a frightful nightmare. I'm sorry I disturbed you.'

'Oh, God confound you, Mr. Lockwood! I wish you were at the——' commenced my host, setting the candle on a chair, because he found it impossible to hold it steady.

'And who showed you up into this room?' he continued, crushing his nails into his palms, and grinding his teeth to subdue the maxillary convulsions. 'Who was it? I've a good mind to turn them out of the house this moment!'

'It was your servant, Zillah,' I replied, flinging myself on to the floor, and rapidly resuming my garments. 'I should not care if you did, Mr. Heathcliff;

she richly deserves it. I suppose that she wanted to get another proof that the place was haunted, at my expense. Well, it is—swarming with ghosts and goblins! You have reason in shutting it up, I assure you. No one will thank you for a doze in such a den!'

'What do you mean?' asked Heathcliff, 'and what are you doing? Lie down and finish out the night, since you *are* here; but, for Heaven's sake! don't repeat that horrid noise: nothing could excuse it, unless you were having your throat cut!'

'If the little fiend had got in at the window, she probably would have strangled me!' I returned. 'I 'm not going to endure the persecutions of your hospitable ancestors again. Was not the Reverend Jabes Branderham akin to you on the mother's side? And that minx, Catherine Linton, or Earnshaw, or however she was called—she must have been a changeling—wicked little soul! She told me she had been walking the earth these twenty years: a just punishment for her mortal transgressions, I 've no doubt!'

Scarcely were these words uttered, when I recollected the association of Heathcliff's with Catherine's name in the book, which had completely slipped from my memory, till thus awakened. I blushed at my inconsideration; but, without showing further consciousness of the offence, I hastened to add—

'The truth is, sir, I passed the first part of the night in'—here I stopped afresh—I was about to say 'perusing those old volumes,' then it would have revealed my knowledge of their written, as well as their printed, contents; so, correcting myself, I went on—

'In spelling over the name scratched on that window-ledge. A monotonous occupation, calculated to set me asleep, like counting, or——'

'What *can* you mean by talking in this way to *me*?'

thundered Heathcliff with savage vehemence. ‘How—how *dare* you, under my roof?—God! he ’s mad to speak so!’ And he struck his forehead with rage.

I did not know whether to resent this language or pursue my explanation; but he seemed so powerfully affected that I took pity and proceeded with my dreams; affirming I had never heard the appellation of ‘Catherine Linton’ before, but reading it often over produced an impression which personified itself when I had no longer my imagination under control.

Heathcliff gradually fell back into the shelter of the bed, as I spoke; finally sitting down almost concealed behind it. I guessed, however, by his irregular and intercepted breathing, that he struggled to vanquish an excess of violent emotion.

Not liking to show him that I heard the conflict, I continued my toilet rather noisily, looked at my watch, and soliloquised on the length of the night:

‘Not three o’clock yet! I could have taken oath it had been six. Time stagnates here: we must surely have retired to rest at eight!’

‘Always at nine in winter, and always rise at four,’ said my host, suppressing a groan: and, as I fancied, by the motion of his arm’s shadow, dashing a tear from his eyes.

‘Mr. Lockwood,’ he added, ‘you may go into my room: you ’ll only be in the way, coming downstairs so early; and your childish outcry has sent sleep to the devil for me.’

‘And for me, too,’ I replied. ‘I ’ll walk in the yard till daylight, and then I ’ll be off; and you need not dread a repetition of my intrusion. I ’m now quite cured of seeking pleasure in society, be it country or town. A sensible man ought to find sufficient company in himself.’

‘ Delightful company ! ’ muttered Heathcliff. ‘ Take the candle, and go where you please. I shall join you directly. Keep out of the yard though, the dogs are unchained ; and the house—Juno mounts sentinel there, and—nay, you can only ramble about the steps and passages. But, away with you ! I ’ll come in two minutes ! ’

I obeyed, so far as to quit the chamber ; when, ignorant where the narrow lobbies led, I stood still, and was witness, involuntarily, to a piece of superstition on the part of my landlord, which belied, oddly, his apparent sense.

He got on to the bed, and wrenched open the lattice, bursting, as he pulled at it, into an uncontrollable passion of tears.

‘ Come in ! come in ! ’ he sobbed. ‘ Cathy, do come. Oh do—*once* more ! Oh ! my heart’s darling ! hear me *this* time, Catherine, at last ! ’

The spectre showed a spectre’s ordinary caprice : it gave no sign of being ; but the snow and wind whirled wildly through, even reaching my station, and blowing out the light.

There was such anguish in the gush of grief that accompanied this raving, that my compassion made me overlook its folly, and I drew off, half angry to have listened at all, and vexed at having related my ridiculous nightmare, since it produced that agony ; though *why*, was beyond my comprehension.

I descended cautiously to the lower regions, and landed in the back-kitchen, where a gleam of fire, raked compactly together, enabled me to rekindle my candle.

Nothing was stirring except a brindled, grey cat, which crept from the ashes, and saluted me with a querulous mew.

Two benches, shaped in sections of a circle, nearly enclosed the hearth; on one of these I stretched myself, and Grimalkin mounted the other. We were both of us nodding, ere any one invaded our retreat, and then it was Joseph, shuffling down a wooden ladder that vanished in the roof, through a trap: the ascent to his garret, I suppose.

He cast a sinister look at the little flame which I had enticed to play between the ribs, swept the cat from its elevation, and bestowing himself in the vacancy, commenced the operation of stuffing a three-inch pipe with tobacco. My presence in his sanctum was evidently esteemed a piece of impudence too shameful for remark: he silently applied the tube to his lips, folded his arms, and puffed away.

I let him enjoy the luxury unannoyed; and after sucking out his last wreath, and heaving a profound sigh, he got up, and departed as solemnly as he came.

A more elastic footstep entered next; and now I opened my mouth for a 'good morning,' but closed it again, the salutation unachieved; for Hareton Earnshaw was performing his orisons *sotto voce,* in a series of curses directed against every object he touched, while he rummaged a corner for a spade or shovel to dig through the drifts. He glanced over the back of the bench, dilating his nostrils, and thought as little of exchanging civilities with me as with my companion the cat.

I guessed, by his preparations, that egress was allowed, and, leaving my hard couch, made a movement to follow him. He noticed this, and thrust at an inner door with the end of his spade, intimating by an inarticulate sound that there was the place where I must go, if I changed my locality.

It opened into the house, where the females were already astir. Zillah urging flakes of flame up the chimney with a colossal bellows; and Mrs. Heathcliff, kneeling on the hearth, reading a book by the aid of the blaze.

She held her hand interposed between the furnace-heat and her eyes, and seemed absorbed in her occupation; desisting from it only to chide the servant for covering her with sparks, or to push away a dog, now and then, that snoozled its nose over-forwardly into her face.

I was surprised to see Heathcliff there also. He stood by the fire, his back towards me, just finishing a stormy scene to poor Zillah; who ever and anon interrupted her labour to pluck up the corner of her apron, and heave an indignant groan.

'And you, you worthless ——' he broke out as I entered, turning to his daughter-in-law, and employing an epithet as harmless as duck, or sheep, but generally represented by a dash.

'There you are, at your idle tricks again? The rest of them do earn their bread—you live on my charity! Put your trash away, and find something to do. You shall pay me for the plague of having you eternally in my sight—do you hear, damnable jade?'

'I 'll put my trash away, because you can make me, if I refuse,' answered the young lady, closing her book, and throwing it on a chair. 'But I 'll not do anything, though you should swear your tongue out, except what I please!'

Heathcliff lifted his hand, and the speaker sprang to a safer distance, obviously acquainted with its weight.

Having no desire to be entertained by a cat-and-dog combat, I stepped forward briskly, as if eager to partake the warmth of the hearth, and innocent of any knowledge of the interrupted dispute. Each had enough decorum to suspend further hostilities: Heathcliff placed his fists, out of temptation, in his pockets; Mrs. Heathcliff curled her lip, and walked to a seat far off, where she kept her word by playing the part of a statue during the remainder of my stay.

That was not long. I declined joining their breakfast, and, at the first gleam of dawn, took an opportunity of escaping into the free air, now clear, and still, and cold as impalpable ice.

My landlord hallooed for me to stop, ere I reached the bottom of the garden, and offered to accompany me across the moor. It was well he did, for the whole hill-back was one billowy, white ocean; the swells and falls not indicating corresponding rises and depressions in the ground: many pits, at least, were filled to a level; and entire ranges of mounds, the refuse of the quarries, blotted from the chart which my yesterday's walk left pictured in my mind.

I had remarked on one side of the road, at intervals of six or seven yards, a line of upright stones, continued through the whole length of the barren: these were erected, and daubed with lime on purpose to serve as guides in the dark; and also when a fall, like the present, confounded the deep swamps on either hand with the firmer path: but, excepting a dirty dot pointing up here and there, all traces of their existence had vanished: and my companion found it necessary to warn me frequently to steer to the right or left, when I imagined I was following, correctly, the windings of the road.

We exchanged little conversation, and he halted at the entrance of Thrushcross-park, saying, I could make no error there. Our adieux were limited to a hasty bow, and then I pushed forward, trusting to my own resources; for the porter's lodge is untenanted as yet.

The distance from the gate to the Grange is two miles: I believe I managed to make it four; what with losing myself among the trees, and sinking up to the neck in snow: a predicament which only those who have experienced it can appreciate. At any rate, whatever were my wanderings, the clock chimed twelve as I entered the house; and that gave exactly an hour for every mile of the usual way from Wuthering Heights.

My human fixture and her satellites rushed to welcome me; exclaiming, tumultuously, they had completely given me up: everybody conjectured that I perished last night; and they were wondering how they must set about the search for my remains.

I bid them be quiet, now that they saw me returned, and, benumbed to my very heart, I dragged upstairs; whence, after putting on dry clothes, and pacing to and fro thirty or forty minutes, to restore the animal heat, I am adjourned to my study, feeble as a kitten: almost too much so to enjoy the cheerful fire and smoking coffee which the servant has prepared for my refreshment.

CHAPTER IV

WHAT vain weather-cocks we are! I, who had determined to hold myself independent of all social intercourse, and thanked my stars that, at length, I had lighted on a spot where it was next to impracticable—I, weak wretch, after maintaining till dusk a struggle with low spirits and solitude, was finally compelled to strike my colours; and, under pretence of gaining information concerning the necessities of my establishment, I desired Mrs. Dean, when she brought in supper, to sit down while I ate it; hoping sincerely she would prove a regular gossip, and either rouse me to animation or lull me to sleep by her talk.

'You have lived here a considerable time,' I commenced; 'did you not say sixteen years?'

'Eighteen, sir: I came, when the mistress was married, to wait on her; after she died, the master retained me for his housekeeper.'

'Indeed.'

There ensued a pause. She was not a gossip, I feared; unless about her own affairs, and those could hardly interest me.

However, having studied for an interval, with a fist on either knee, and a cloud of meditation over her ruddy countenance, she ejaculated—

'Ah, times are greatly changed since then!'

'Yes,' I remarked, 'you 've seen a good many alterations, I suppose?'

'I have: and troubles too,' she said.

'Oh, I 'll turn the talk on my landlord's family!' I thought to myself. 'A good subject to start! And that pretty girl-widow, I should like to know her history: whether she be a native of the country, or, as is more probable, an exotic that the surly *indigenæ* will not recognise for kin.'

With this intention I asked Mrs. Dean why Heathcliff let Thrushcross Grange, and preferred living in a situation and residence so much inferior.

'Is he not rich enough to keep the estate in good order?' I inquired.

'Rich, sir!' she returned. 'He has, nobody knows what money, and every year it increases. Yes, yes, he 's rich enough to live in a finer house than this:

but he 's very near—close-handed; and, if he had meant to flit to Thrushcross Grange, as soon as he heard of a good tenant he could not have borne to miss the chance of getting a few hundreds more. It is strange people should be so greedy, when they are alone in the world!'

'He had a son, it seems?'

'Yes, he had one—he is dead.'

'And that young lady, Mrs. Heathcliff, is his widow?'

'Yes.'

'Where did she come from originally?'

'Why, sir, she is my late master's daughter: Catherine Linton was her maiden name. I nursed her, poor thing! I did wish Mr. Heathcliff would remove here, and then we might have been together again.'

'What! Catherine Linton?' I exclaimed, astonished. But a minute's reflection convinced me it was not my ghostly Catherine. 'Then,' I continued, 'my predecessor's name was Linton?'

'It was.'

'And who is that Earnshaw: Hareton Earnshaw, who lives with Mr. Heathcliff? are they relations?'

'No; he is the late Mrs. Linton's nephew.'

'The young lady's cousin, then?'

'Yes; and her husband was her cousin also: one on the mother's, the other on the father's side: Heathcliff married Mr. Linton's sister.'

'I see the house at Wuthering Heights has "Earnshaw" carved over the front door. Are they an old family?'

'Very old, sir; and Hareton is the last of them, as our Miss Cathy is of us—I mean, of the Lintons. Have you been to Wuthering Heights? I beg pardon for asking; but I should like to hear how she is.'

'Mrs. Heathcliff? she looked very well, and very handsome; yet, I think, not very happy.'

'Oh dear, I don't wonder! And how did you like the master?'

'A rough fellow, rather, Mrs. Dean. Is not that his character?'

'Rough as a saw-edge, and hard as whinstone! The less you meddle with him the better.'

'He must have had some ups and downs in life to make him such a churl. Do you know anything of his history?'

'It 's a cuckoo's, sir—I know all about it: except where he was born, and who were his parents, and how he got his money, at first. And Hareton has been cast out like an unfledged dunnock! The unfortunate lad is the only one in all this parish that does not guess how he has been cheated.'

'Well, Mrs. Dean, it will be a charitable deed to tell me something of my neighbours: I feel I shall not rest, if I go to bed; so be good enough to sit and chat an hour.'

'Oh, certainly, sir! I 'll just fetch a little sewing, and then I 'll sit as long as you please. But you 've caught cold: I saw you shivering, and you must have some gruel to drive it out.'

The worthy woman bustled off, and I crouched nearer the fire; my head felt hot, and the rest of me chill: moreover, I was excited, almost to a pitch of foolishness, through my nerves and brain. This caused me to feel, not uncomfortable, but rather fearful (as I am still) of serious effects from the incidents of to-day and yesterday.

She returned presently, bringing a smoking basin and a basket of work; and, having placed the former on the hob, drew in her seat, evidently pleased to find me so companionable.

Before I came to live here, she commenced—waiting no farther invitation to her story—I was almost always at Wuthering Heights; because my mother had nursed Mr. Hindley Earnshaw, that was Hareton's father, and I got used to playing with the children: I ran errands too, and helped to make hay, and hung about the farm ready for anything that anybody would set me to.

One fine summer morning—it was the beginning of harvest, I remember—Mr. Earnshaw, the old master, came downstairs, dressed for a journey; and after he had told Joseph what was to be done during the day, he turned to Hindley, and Cathy, and me—for I sat eating my porridge with them—and he said, speaking to his son:

'Now, my bonny man, I'm going to Liverpool to-day, what shall I bring you? You may choose what you like: only let it be little, for I shall walk there and back: sixty miles each way, that is a long spell!'

Hindley named a fiddle, and then he asked Miss Cathy; she was hardly six years old, but she could ride any horse in the stable, and she chose a whip.

He did not forget me; for he had a kind heart, though he was rather severe sometimes. He promised to bring me a pocketful of apples and pears, and then he kissed his children, said good-bye, and set off.

It seemed a long while to us all—the three days of his absence—and often did little Cathy ask when he would be home. Mrs. Earnshaw expected him by supper-time, on the third evening, and she put the meal off hour after hour; there were no signs of his coming, however, and at last the children got tired of running down to the gate to look. Then it grew dark; she would have had them to bed, but they begged sadly to be allowed to stay up; and, just about eleven o'clock, the door-latch was raised quietly, and in stepped the master. He threw himself into a chair, laughing and groaning, and bid them all stand off, for he was nearly killed—he would not have such another walk for the three kingdoms.

'And at the end of it, to be flighted to death!' he said, opening his greatcoat, which he held bundled up in his arms. 'See here, wife! I was never so beaten with anything in my life: but you must e'en take it as a gift of God; though it 's as dark almost as if it came from the devil.'

We crowded round, and over Miss Cathy's head I had a peep at a dirty, ragged, black-haired child; big enough both to walk and talk: indeed, its face looked older than Catherine's; yet, when it was set on its feet, it only stared round, and repeated over and over again some gibberish, that nobody could understand. I was frightened, and Mrs. Earnshaw was ready to fling it out of doors: she did fly up, asking how he could fashion to bring that gypsy brat into the house, when they had their own bairns to feed and fend for? What he meant to do with it, and whether he were mad?

The master tried to explain the matter; but he was really half dead with fatigue, and all that I could make out, amongst her scolding, was a tale of his seeing it starving, and houseless, and as good as dumb, in the streets of Liverpool; where he picked it up and inquired for its owner. Not a soul knew to whom it belonged, he said; and his money and time being both limited, he thought it better to take it home with him at once, than run into vain expenses there: because he was determined he would not leave it as he found it.

Well, the conclusion was that my mistress grumbled herself calm; and Mr. Earnshaw told me to wash it, and give it clean things, and let it sleep with the children.

Hindley and Cathy contented themselves with looking and listening till peace was restored: then, both began searching their father's pockets for the presents he had promised them. The former was a boy of fourteen, but when he drew out what had been a fiddle, crushed to morsels in the greatcoat, he blubbered aloud; and Cathy, when she learned the master had lost her whip in attending on the stranger, showed her humour by grinning and spitting at the stupid little thing; earning for her pains a sound blow from her father to teach her cleaner manners.

They entirely refused to have it in bed with them, or even in their room; and I had no more sense, so I put it on the landing of the stairs, hoping it might be gone on the morrow. By chance, or else attracted by hearing his voice, it crept to Mr. Earnshaw's door, and there he found it on quitting his chamber. Inquiries were made as to how it got there; I was obliged to confess, and in recompense for my cowardice and inhumanity was sent out of the house.

This was Heathcliff's first introduction to the family. On coming back a few days afterwards (for I did not consider my banishment perpetual) I found they had christened him 'Heathcliff'; it was the name of a son who died in childhood, and it has served him ever since, both for Christian and surname.

Miss Cathy and he were now very thick; but Hindley hated him: and to say the truth I did the same; and we plagued and went on with him shamefully: for I wasn't reasonable enough to feel my injustice, and the mistress never put in a word on his behalf when she saw him wronged.

He seemed a sullen, patient child; hardened, perhaps, to ill-treatment: he would stand Hindley's blows without winking or shedding a tear, and my pinches moved him only to draw in a breath and open his eyes, as if he had hurt himself by accident and nobody was to blame.

This endurance made old Earnshaw furious, when he discovered his son persecuting the poor, fatherless child, as he called him. He took to Heathcliff strangely, believing all he said (for that matter, he said precious little, and generally the truth), and petting him up far above Cathy, who was too mischievous and wayward for a favourite.

So, from the very beginning, he bred bad feeling in the house; and at Mrs. Earnshaw's death, which happened in less than two years after, the young master had learned to regard his father as an oppressor rather than a friend, and Heathcliff as a usurper of his parent's affections and his privileges; and he grew bitter with brooding over these injuries.

I sympathised a while; but when the children fell ill of the measles, and I had to tend them, and take on me the cares of a woman at once, I changed my ideas. Heathcliff was dangerously sick; and while he lay at the worst he would have me constantly by his pillow: I suppose he felt I did a good deal for him, and he hadn't wit to guess that I was compelled to do it. However, I will say this, he was the quietest child that ever nurse watched over. The difference between him and the others forced me to be less partial. Cathy and her brother harassed me terribly; *he* was as uncomplaining as a lamb; though hardness, not gentleness, made him give little trouble.

He got through, and the doctor affirmed it was in a great measure owing to me, and praised me for my care. I was vain of his commendations, and softened towards the being by whose means I earned them, and thus Hindley lost his last ally: still I couldn't dote on Heathcliff, and I wondered often what my master saw to admire so much in the sullen boy, who never, to my recollection, repaid his indulgence by any sign of gratitude. He was not insolent to his benefactor, he was simply insensible; though knowing perfectly the hold he had on his heart, and conscious he had only to speak and all the house would be obliged to bend to his wishes.

As an instance, I remember Mr. Earnshaw once bought a couple of colts at the parish fair, and gave the lads each one. Heathcliff took the handsomest, but it soon fell lame, and when he discovered it, he said to Hindley—

'You must exchange horses with me: I don't like mine; and if you won't I shall tell your father of the three thrashings you 've given me this week, and show him my arm, which is black to the shoulder.'

Hindley put out his tongue, and cuffed him over the ears.

'You 'd better do it at once,' he persisted, escaping to the porch (they were in the stable): 'you will have to: and if I speak of these blows, you 'll get them again with interest.'

'Off, dog!' cried Hindley, threatening him with an iron weight used for weighing potatoes and hay.

'Throw it,' he replied, standing still, 'and then I 'll tell how you boasted that you would turn me out of doors as soon as he died, and see whether he will not turn you out directly.'

Hindley threw it, hitting him on the breast, and down he fell, but staggered up immediately, breathless and white; and, had not I prevented it, he would have gone just so to the master, and got full revenge by letting his condition plead for him, intimating who had caused it.

'Take my colt, gypsy, then!' said young Earnshaw. 'And I pray that he may break your neck: take him, and be damned, you beggarly interloper! and wheedle my father out of all he has: only afterwards show him what you are, imp of Satan.—And take that, I hope he 'll kick out your brains!'

Heathcliff had gone to loose the beast, and shift it to his own stall; he was passing behind it, when Hindley finished his speech by knocking him under its feet, and without stopping to examine whether his hopes were fulfilled, ran away as fast as he could.

I was surprised to witness how coolly the child gathered himself up, and went on with his intention; exchanging saddles and all, and then sitting down on a bundle of hay to overcome the qualm which the violent blow occasioned, before he entered the house.

I persuaded him easily to let me lay the blame of his bruises on the horse: he minded little what tale was told since he had what he wanted. He complained so seldom, indeed, of such stirs as these, that I really thought him not vindictive: I was deceived completely, as you will hear.

CHAPTER V

In the course of time, Mr. Earnshaw began to fail. He had been active and healthy, yet his strength left him suddenly; and when he was confined to the chimney-corner he grew grievously irritable. A nothing vexed him; and suspected slights of his authority nearly threw him into fits.

This was especially to be remarked if any one attempted to impose upon, or domineer over, his favourite: he was painfully jealous lest a word should be spoken amiss to him; seeming to have got into his head the notion that, because he liked Heathcliff, all hated, and longed to do him an ill-turn.

It was a disadvantage to the lad; for the kinder among us did not wish to fret the master, so we humoured his partiality; and that humouring was rich nourishment to the child's pride and black tempers. Still it became in a manner necessary; twice, or thrice, Hindley's manifestation of scorn, while his father was near, roused the old man to a fury: he seized his stick to strike him, and shook with rage that he could not do it.

At last, our curate (we had a curate then who made the living answer by teaching the little Lintons and Earnshaws, and farming his bit of land himself) advised that the young man should be sent to college; and Mr. Earnshaw agreed, though with a heavy spirit, for he said—

'Hindley was nought, and would never thrive as where he wandered.'

I hoped heartily we should have peace now. It hurt me to think the master should be made uncomfortable by his own good deed. I fancied the discontent of age and disease arose from his family disagreements; as he would have it that it did: really, you know, sir, it was in his sinking frame.

We might have got on tolerably, notwithstanding, but for two people, Miss Cathy and Joseph, the servant: you saw him, I dare say, up yonder. He was, and is yet most likely, the wearisomest, self-righteous pharisee that ever ransacked a Bible to rake the promises to himself and fling the curses on his neighbours. By his knack of sermonising and pious discoursing, he contrived to make a great impression on Mr. Earnshaw; and the more feeble the master became, the more influence he gained.

He was relentless in worrying him about his soul's concerns, and about ruling his children rigidly. He encouraged him to regard Hindley as a reprobate; and, night after night, he regularly grumbled out a long string of tales against Heathcliff and Catherine: always minding to flatter Earnshaw's weakness by heaping the heaviest blame on the last.

Certainly, she had ways with her such as I never saw a child take up before; and she put all of us past our patience fifty times and oftener in a day: from the hour she came downstairs till the hour she went to bed, we had not a minute's security that she wouldn't be in mischief. Her spirits were always at high-water mark, her tongue always going—singing, laughing, and plaguing everybody who would not do the same. A wild, wicked slip she was—but she had the bonniest eye, the sweetest smile, and lightest foot in the parish: and, after all, I believe she meant no harm; for when once she made you cry in good earnest, it seldom happened that she would not keep you company, and oblige you to be quiet that you might comfort her.

She was much too fond of Heathcliff. The greatest punishment we could invent for her was to keep her separate from him; yet she got chided more than any of us on his account.

In play, she liked exceedingly to act the little mistress; using her hands freely, and commanding her companions: she did so to me, but I would not bear shopping and ordering; and so I let her know.

Now, Mr. Earnshaw did not understand jokes from his children; he had always been strict and grave with them; and Catherine, on her part, had no idea why her father should be crosser and less patient in his ailing condition, than he was in his prime.

His peevish reproofs wakened in her a naughty delight to provoke him: she was never so happy as when we were all scolding her at once, and she defying us with her bold, saucy look, and her ready words; turning Joseph's religious curses into ridicule, baiting me, and doing just what her father hated most—showing how her pretended insolence, which he thought real, had more power over Heathcliff than his kindness: how the boy would do *her* bidding in anything, and *his* only when it suited his own inclination.

After behaving as badly as possible all day, she sometimes came fondling to make it up at night.

'Nay, Cathy,' the old man would say, 'I cannot love thee; thou 'rt worse than thy brother. Go, say thy prayers, child, and ask God's pardon. I doubt thy mother and I must rue that we ever reared thee!'

That made her cry, at first; and then being repulsed continually hardened her, and she laughed if I told her to say she was sorry for her faults, and beg to be forgiven.

But the hour came, at last, that ended Mr. Earnshaw's troubles on earth. He died quietly in his chair one October evening, seated by the fireside.

A high wind blustered round the house, and roared in the chimney: it sounded wild and stormy, yet it was not cold, and we were all together—I, a little removed from the hearth, busy at my knitting, and Joseph reading his Bible near the table (for the servants generally sat in the house then, after their work was done). Miss Cathy had been sick, and that made her still; she leant against her father's knee, and Heathcliff was lying on the floor with his head in her lap.

I remember the master, before he fell into a doze, stroking her bonny hair—it pleased him rarely to see her gentle—and saying—

'Why canst thou not always be a good lass, Cathy?'

And she turned her face up to his, and laughed, and answered:

'Why cannot you always be a good man, father?'

But as soon as she saw him vexed again, she kissed his hand, and said she would sing him to sleep. She began singing very low, till his fingers dropped from hers, and his head sank on his breast. Then I told her to hush, and not stir, for fear she should wake him. We all kept as mute as mice a full half-hour, and should have done so longer, only Joseph, having finished his chapter, got up and said that he must rouse the master for prayers and bed. He stepped forward, and called him by name, and touched his shoulder; but he would not move, so he took the candle and looked at him. I thought there was something wrong as he set down the light; and seizing the children each by an arm, whispered them to 'frame upstairs, and make little din—they might pray alone that evening—he had summut to do.'

'I shall bid father good-night first,' said Catherine, putting her arms round his neck, before we could hinder her.

The poor thing discovered her loss directly—she screamed out—

'Oh, he's dead, Heathcliff! he's dead!'

And they both set up a heart-breaking cry.

I joined my wail to theirs, loud and bitter; but Joseph asked what we could be thinking of to roar in that way over a saint in Heaven.

He told me to put on my cloak and run to Gimmerton for the doctor and the parson. I could not guess the use that either would be of, then. However, I went, through wind and rain, and brought one, the doctor, back with me; the other said he would come in the morning.

Leaving Joseph to explain matters, I ran to the children's room: their door was ajar, I saw they had never laid down, though it was past midnight; but they were calmer, and did not need me to console them. The little souls were comforting each other with better thoughts than I could have hit on: no parson in the world ever pictured heaven so beautifully as they did, in their innocent talk; and, while I sobbed and listened, I could not help wishing we were all there safe together.

CHAPTER VI

Mr. Hindley came home to the funeral; and—a thing that amazed us, and set the neighbours gossiping right and left—he brought a wife with him.

What she was, and where she was born, he never informed us: probably, she had neither money nor name to recommend her, or he would scarcely have kept the union from his father.

She was not one that would have disturbed the house much on her own account. Every object she saw, the moment she crossed the threshold, appeared to delight her; and every circumstance that took place about her: except the preparing for the burial, and the presence of the mourners.

I thought she was half silly, from her behaviour while that went on: she ran into her chamber, and made me come with her, though I should have been dressing the children; and there she sat shivering and clasping her hands, and asking repeatedly—

'Are they gone yet?'

Then she began describing with hysterical emotion the effect it produced on her to see black; and started, and trembled, and, at last, fell a-weeping—and when I asked what was the matter? answered, she didn't know; but she felt so afraid of dying!

I imagined her as little likely to die as myself. She was rather thin, but young, and fresh complexioned, and her eyes sparkled as bright as diamonds. I did remark, to be sure, that mounting the stairs made her breathe very quick; that the least sudden noise set her all in a quiver, and that she coughed troublesomely sometimes: but I knew nothing of what these symptoms portended, and had no impulse to sympathise with her. We don't in general take to foreigners here, Mr. Lockwood, unless they take to us first.

Young Earnshaw was altered considerably in the three years of his absence. He had grown sparer, and lost his colour, and spoke and dressed quite differently; and, on the very day of his return, he told Joseph and me we must thenceforth quarter ourselves in the back-kitchen, and leave the house for him. Indeed, he would have carpeted and papered a small spare room for a parlour; but his wife expressed such pleasure at the white floor and huge glowing fireplace, at the pewter dishes and delf-case, and dog-kennel, and the wide space there was to move about in where they usually sat, that he thought it unnecessary to her comfort, and so dropped the intention.

She expressed pleasure, too, at finding a sister among her new acquaintance; and she prattled to Catherine, and kissed her, and ran about with her, and gave her quantities of presents, at the beginning. Her affection tired very soon, however, and when she grew peevish, Hindley became tyrannical. A few words from her, evincing a dislike to Heathcliff, were enough to rouse in him all his old hatred of the boy. He drove him from their company to the servants, deprived him of the instructions of the curate, and insisted that he should labour out of doors instead; compelling him to do so as hard as any other lad on the farm.

He bore his degradation pretty well at first, because Cathy taught him what she learnt, and worked or played with him in the fields. They both promised fair to grow up as rude as savages; the young master being entirely negligent how they behaved, and what they did, so they kept clear of him. He would not even have seen after their going to church on Sundays, only Joseph and the curate reprimanded his carelessness when they absented themselves; and that reminded him to order Heathcliff a flogging, and Catherine a fast from dinner or supper.

But it was one of their chief amusements to run away to the moors in the morning and remain there all day, and the after punishment grew a mere thing to laugh at. The curate might set as many chapters as he pleased for Catherine to get by heart, and Joseph might thrash Heathcliff till his arm ached; they forgot everything the minute they were together again: at least the minute they had contrived some naughty plan of revenge; and many a time I've cried to myself to watch them growing more reckless daily, and I not daring to speak a syllable, for fear of losing the small power I still retained over the unfriended creatures.

One Sunday evening, it chanced that they were banished from the sitting-room, for making a noise, or a light offence of the kind; and when I went to call them to supper, I could discover them nowhere.

We searched the house, above and below, and the yard and stables; they were invisible: and, at last, Hindley in a passion told us to bolt the doors, and swore nobody should let them in that night.

The household went to bed; and I, too anxious to lie down, opened my lattice and put my head out to hearken, though it rained: determined to admit them in spite of the prohibition, should they return.

In a while, I distinguished steps coming up the road, and the light of a lantern glimmered through the gate.

I threw a shawl over my head and ran to prevent them from waking Mr. Earnshaw by knocking. There was Heathcliff, by himself: it gave me a start to see him alone.

'Where is Miss Catherine?' I cried hurriedly. 'No accident, I hope?'

'At Thrushcross Grange,' he answered; 'and I would have been there too, but they had not the manners to ask me to stay.'

'Well, you will catch it!' I said: 'you 'll never be content till you 're sent about your business. What in the world led you wandering to Thrushcross Grange?'

'Let me get off my wet clothes, and I 'll tell you all about it, Nelly,' he replied.

I bid him beware of rousing the master, and while he undressed and I waited to put out the candle, he continued—

'Cathy and I escaped from the wash-house to have a ramble at liberty, and getting a glimpse of the Grange lights, we thought we would just go and see whether the Lintons passed their Sunday evenings standing shivering in corners, while their father and mother sat eating and drinking, and singing and laughing, and burning their eyes out before the fire. Do you think they do? Or reading sermons, and being catechised by their man-servant, and set to learn a column of Scripture names, if they don't answer properly?'

'Probably not,' I responded. 'They are good children, no doubt, and don't deserve the treatment you receive, for your bad conduct.'

'Don't you cant, Nelly,' he said: 'nonsense! We ran from the top of the Heights to the park, without stopping—Catherine completely beaten in the race, because she was barefoot. You 'll have to seek for her shoes in the bog to-morrow. We crept through a broken hedge, groped our way up the path, and planted ourselves on a flower-plot under the drawing-room window. The light came from thence; they had not put up the shutters, and the curtains were only half closed. Both of us were able to look in by standing on the basement, and clinging to the ledge, and we saw—ah! it was beautiful—a splendid place carpeted with crimson, and crimson-covered chairs and tables, and a pure white ceiling bordered by gold, a shower of glass-drops hanging in silver chains from the centre, and shimmering with little soft tapers. Old Mr. and Mrs. Linton were not there; Edgar and his sister had it entirely to themselves. Shouldn't they have been happy? We should have thought ourselves in heaven! And now, guess what your good children were doing? Isabella—I believe she is eleven, a year younger than Cathy—lay screaming at the farther end of the room, shrieking as if witches were running red-hot needles into her. Edgar stood on the hearth weeping silently, and in the middle of the table sat a little dog, shaking its paw and yelping; which, from their mutual accusations, we understood they had nearly pulled in two between them. The idiots! That was their pleasure!

to quarrel who should hold a heap of warm hair, and each begin to cry because both, after struggling to get it, refused to take it. We laughed outright at the petted things; we did despise them! When would you catch me wishing to have what Catherine wanted? or find us by ourselves, seeking entertainment in yelling, and sobbing, and rolling on the ground, divided by the whole room? I 'd not exchange, for a thousand lives, my condition here, for Edgar Linton's at Thrushcross Grange—not if I might have the privilege of flinging Joseph off the highest gable, and painting the house-front with Hindley's blood!'

'Hush, hush!' I interrupted. 'Still you have not told me, Heathcliff, how Catherine is left behind?'

'I told you we laughed,' he answered. 'The Lintons heard us, and with one accord, they shot like arrows to the door; there was silence, and then a cry, "Oh, mamma, mamma! Oh, papa! Oh, mamma, come here. Oh, papa, oh!" They really did howl out something in that way. We made frightful noises to terrify them still more, and then we dropped off the ledge, because somebody was drawing the bars, and we felt we had better flee. I had Cathy by the hand, and was urging her on, when all at once she fell down.

'"Run, Heathcliff, run!" she whispered. "They have let the bull-dog loose, and he holds me!"

'The devil had seized her ankle, Nelly: I heard his abominable snorting. She did not yell out—no! she would have scorned to do it, if she had been spitted on the horns of a mad cow. I did, though: I vociferated curses enough to annihilate any fiend in Christendom; and I got a stone and thrust it between his jaws, and tried with all my might to cram it down his throat. A beast of a servant came up with a lantern, at last, shouting—

'"Keep fast, Skulker, keep fast!"

'He changed his note, however, when he saw Skulker's game. The dog was throttled off; his huge, purple tongue hanging half a foot out of his mouth, and his pendent lips streaming with bloody slaver.

'The man took Cathy up; she was sick: not from fear, I 'm certain, but from pain. He carried her in; I followed, grumbling execrations and vengeance.

'"What prey, Robert?" hallooed Linton from the entrance.

'"Skulker has caught a little girl, sir," he replied; "and there 's a lad here," he added, making a clutch at me, "who looks an out-and-outer! Very like, the robbers were for putting them through the window to open the doors to the gang after all were asleep, that they might murder us at their ease. Hold your tongue, you foul-mouthed thief, you! you shall go to the gallows for this. Mr. Linton, sir, don't lay by your gun."

'"No, no, Robert," said the old fool. "The rascals knew that yesterday was my rent-day: they thought to have me cleverly. Come in; I 'll furnish them a reception. There, John, fasten the chain. Give Skulker some water, Jenny. To beard a magistrate in his stronghold, and on the Sabbath, too! Where will their insolence stop? Oh, my dear Mary, look here! Don't be afraid, it is but a boy—yet the villain scowls so plainly in his face; would it not be a kindness to the country to hang him at once, before he shows his nature in acts as well as features?"

'He pulled me under the chandelier, and Mrs. Linton placed her spectacles on her nose and raised her hands in horror. The cowardly children crept nearer, also, Isabella lisping—

'"Frightful thing! Put him in the cellar, papa.

He 's exactly like the son of the fortune-teller, that stole my tame pheasant. Isn't he, Edgar ? "

' While they examined me, Cathy came round ; she heard the last speech, and laughed. Edgar Linton, after an inquisitive stare, collected sufficient wit to recognise her. They see us at church, you know, though we seldom meet them elsewhere.

' " That 's Miss Earnshaw ! " he whispered to his mother, " and look how Skulker has bitten her—how her foot bleeds ! "

' " Miss Earnshaw ? Nonsense ! " cried the dame ; " Miss Earnshaw scouring the country with a gypsy ! And yet, my dear, the child is in mourning—surely it is—and she may be lamed for life ! "

' " What culpable carelessness in her brother ! " exclaimed Mr. Linton, turning from me to Catherine. " I 've understood from Shielders " ' (that was the curate, sir) ' " that he lets her grow up in absolute heathenism. But who is this ? Where did she pick up this companion ? Oho ! I declare he is that strange acquisition my late neighbour made, in his journey to Liverpool—a little Lascar, or an American or Spanish castaway."

' " A wicked boy, at all events," remarked the old lady, " and quite unfit for a decent house ! Did you notice his language, Linton ? I 'm shocked that my children should have heard it."

' I recommenced cursing—don't be angry, Nelly—and so Robert was ordered to take me off. I refused to go without Cathy ; he dragged me into the garden, pushed the lantern into my hand, assured me that Mr. Earnshaw should be informed of my behaviour, and, bidding me march directly, secured the door again.

' The curtains were still looped up at one corner, and

I resumed my station as spy ; because, if Catherine had wished to return, I intended shattering their great glass panes to a million of fragments, unless they let her out.

'She sat on the sofa quietly. Mrs. Linton took off the grey cloak of the dairy-maid which we had borrowed for our excursion, shaking her head and expostulating with her, I suppose : she was a young lady, and they made a distinction between her treatment and mine. Then the woman-servant brought a basin of warm water, and washed her feet ; and Mr. Linton mixed a tumbler of negus, and Isabella emptied a plateful of cakes into her lap, and Edgar stood gaping at a distance. Afterwards, they dried and combed her beautiful hair, and gave her a pair of enormous slippers, and wheeled her to the fire ; and I left her, as merry as she could be, dividing her food between the little dog and Skulker, whose nose she pinched as he ate ; and kindling a spark of spirit in the vacant blue eyes of the Lintons—a dim reflection from her own enchanting face. I saw they were full of stupid admiration ; she is so immeasurably superior to them—to everybody on earth, is she not, Nelly ? '

'There will more come of this business than you reckon on,' I answered, covering him up and extinguishing the light. 'You are incurable, Heathcliff ; and Mr. Hindley will have to proceed to extremities, see if he won't.'

My words came truer than I desired. The luckless adventure made Earnshaw furious. And then Mr. Linton, to mend matters, paid us a visit himself on the morrow ; and read the young master such a lecture on the road he guided his family, that he was stirred to look about him, in earnest.

Heathcliff received no flogging, but he was told that the first word he spoke to Miss Catherine should ensure a dismissal; and Mrs. Earnshaw undertook to keep her sister-in-law in due restraint when she returned home; employing art, not force: with force she would have found it impossible.

CHAPTER VII

Cathy stayed at Thrushcross Grange five weeks: till Christmas. By that time her ankle was thoroughly cured, and her manners much improved. The mistress visited her often in the interval, and commenced her plan of reform by trying to raise her self-respect with fine clothes and flattery, which she took readily; so that, instead of a wild, hatless little savage jumping into the house, and rushing to squeeze us all breathless, there 'lighted from a handsome black pony a very dignified person, with brown ringlets falling from the cover of a feathered beaver, and a long cloth habit, which she was obliged to hold up with both hands that she might sail in.

Hindley lifted her from her horse, exclaiming delightedly:

'Why, Cathy, you are quite a beauty! I should scarcely have known you: you look like a lady now. Isabella Linton is not to be compared with her, is she, Frances?'

'Isabella has not her natural advantages,' replied his wife: 'but she must mind and not grow wild again here. Ellen, help Miss Catherine off with her things—Stay, dear, you will disarrange your curls—let me untie your hat.'

I removed the habit, and there shone forth beneath, a grand plaid silk frock, white trousers, and burnished shoes; and, while her eyes sparkled joyfully when the dogs came bounding up to welcome her, she dare hardly touch them lest they should fawn upon her splendid garments.

She kissed me gently: I was all flour making the Christmas cake, and it would not have done to give me a hug; and, then, she looked round for Heathcliff. Mr. and Mrs. Earnshaw watched anxiously their meeting; thinking it would enable them to judge, in some measure, what grounds they had for hoping to succeed in separating the two friends.

Heathcliff was hard to discover, at first. If he were careless, and uncared for, before Catherine's absence, he had been ten times more so since.

Nobody but I even did him the kindness to call him a dirty boy, and bid him wash himself, once a week; and children of his age seldom have a natural pleasure in soap and water. Therefore, not to mention his clothes, which had seen three months' service in mire and dust, and his thick uncombed hair, the surface of his face and hands was dismally beclouded. He might well skulk behind the settle, on beholding such a bright, graceful damsel enter the house, instead of a rough-headed counterpart of himself, as he expected.

'Is Heathcliff not here?' she demanded, pulling off her gloves, and displaying fingers wonderfully whitened with doing nothing and staying in-doors.

'Heathcliff, you may come forward,' cried Mr. Hindley, enjoying his discomfiture, and gratified to see what a forbidding young blackguard he would be compelled to present himself. 'You may come and wish Miss Catherine welcome, like the other servants.'

Cathy, catching a glimpse of her friend in his concealment, flew to embrace him; she bestowed seven or eight kisses on his cheek within the second, and then stopped, and drawing back, burst into a laugh, exclaiming:

'Why, how very black and cross you look! and how—how funny and grim! But that 's because I 'm used to Edgar and Isabella Linton. Well, Heathcliff, have you forgotten me?'

She had some reason to put the question, for shame and pride threw double gloom over his countenance, and kept him immovable.

'Shake hands, Heathcliff,' said Mr. Earnshaw condescendingly; 'once in a way, that is permitted.'

'I shall not,' replied the boy, finding his tongue at last; 'I shall not stand to be laughed at. I shall not bear it!'

And he would have broken from the circle, but Miss Cathy seized him again.

'I did not mean to laugh at you,' she said; 'I could not hinder myself: Heathcliff, shake hands at least! What are you sulky for? It was only that you looked odd. If you wash your face, and brush your hair, it will be all right: but you are so dirty!'

She gazed concernedly at the dusky fingers she held in her own, and also at her dress; which she feared had gained no embellishment from its contact with his.

'You needn't have touched me!' he answered, following her eye and snatching away his hand. 'I shall be as dirty as I please: and I like to be dirty, and I will be dirty.'

With that he dashed head foremost out of the room, amid the merriment of the master and mistress, and to the serious disturbance of Catherine; who could not comprehend how her remarks should have produced such an exhibition of bad temper.

After playing lady's maid to the new comer, and putting my cakes in the oven, and making the house and kitchen cheerful with great fires, befitting Christmas eve, I prepared to sit down and amuse myself by singing carols, all alone; regardless of Joseph's affirmations that he considered the merry tunes I chose as next door to songs.

He had retired to private prayer in his chamber, and Mr. and Mrs. Earnshaw were engaging Missy's attention by sundry gay trifles bought for her to present to the little Lintons, as an acknowledgment of their kindness. They had invited them to spend the morrow at Wuthering Heights, and the invitation had been accepted, on one condition: Mrs. Linton begged that her darlings might be kept carefully apart from that 'naughty swearing boy.'

Under these circumstances I remained solitary. I smelt the rich scent of the heating spices; and admired the shining kitchen utensils, the polished clock, decked in holly, the silver mugs ranged on a tray ready to be filled with mulled ale for supper; and above all, the speckless purity of my particular care—the scoured and well-swept floor.

I gave due inward applause to every object, and then I remembered how old Earnshaw used to come in when all was tidied, and call me a cant lass, and slip a shilling into my hand as a Christmas-box; and from that I went on to think of his fondness for Heathcliff, and his dread lest he should suffer neglect after death had removed him; and that naturally led me to consider the poor lad's situation now, and from singing I changed my mind to crying. It struck me soon, however, there would be more sense in endeavouring to repair some of his wrongs than shedding tears over them: I got up and walked into the court to seek him.

He was not far; I found him smoothing the glossy coat of the new pony in the stable, and feeding the other beasts, according to custom.

'Make haste, Heathcliff!' I said, 'the kitchen is so comfortable; and Joseph is upstairs: make haste, and let me dress you smart before Miss Cathy comes out, and then you can sit together, with the whole hearth to yourselves, and have a long chatter till bed-time.'

He proceeded with his task and never turned his head towards me.

'Come—are you coming?' I continued. 'There's a little cake for each of you, nearly enough; and you'll need half-an-hour's donning.'

I waited five minutes, but getting no answer left him. Catherine supped with her brother and sister-in-law: Joseph and I joined at an unsociable meal, seasoned with reproofs on one side and sauciness on the other. His cake and cheese remained on the table all night for the fairies. He managed to continue work till nine o'clock, and then marched dumb and dour to his chamber.

Cathy sat up late, having a world of things to order for the reception of her new friends: she came into the kitchen once to speak to her old one; but he was gone, and she only stayed to ask what was the matter with him, and then went back.

In the morning he rose early; and as it was a holiday, carried his ill-humour on to the moors; not re-appearing till the family were departed for church. Fasting and reflection seemed to have brought him to a better spirit. He hung about me for a while, and having screwed up his courage, exclaimed abruptly—

'Nelly, make me decent, I'm going to be good.'

'High time, Heathcliff,' I said; 'you *have* grieved Catherine: she's sorry she ever came home, I dare say! It looks as if you envied her, because she is more thought of than you.'

The notion of *envying* Catherine was incomprehensible to him, but the notion of grieving her he understood clearly enough.

'Did she say she was grieved?' he inquired, looking very serious.

'She cried when I told her you were off again this morning.'

'Well, *I* cried last night,' he returned, 'and I had more reason to cry than she.'

'Yes; you had the reason of going to bed with a proud heart and an empty stomach,' said I. 'Proud people breed sad sorrows for themselves. But, if you be ashamed of your touchiness, you must ask pardon, mind, when she comes in. You must go up and offer to kiss her, and say—you know best what to say; only do it heartily, and not as if you thought her converted into a stranger by her grand dress. And now, though I have dinner to get ready, I'll steal time to arrange you so that Edgar Linton shall look quite a doll beside you: and that he does. You are younger, and yet, I'll be bound, you are taller and twice as broad across the shoulders: you could knock him down in a twinkling? don't you feel that you could?'

Heathcliff's face brightened a moment; then it was overcast afresh, and he sighed.

'But, Nelly, if I knocked him down twenty times, that wouldn't make him less handsome or me more so. I wish I had light hair and a fair skin, and was dressed and behaved as well, and had a chance of being as rich as he will be!'

'And cried for mamma at every turn,' I added, 'and trembled if a country lad heaved his fist against you, and sat at home all day for a shower of rain. Oh, Heathcliff, you are showing a poor spirit! Come to the glass, and I 'll let you see what you should wish. Do you mark those two lines between your eyes; and those thick brows, that instead of rising arched, sink in the middle; and that couple of black fiends, so deeply buried, who never open their windows boldly, but lurk glinting under them, like devil's spies? Wish and learn to smooth away the surly wrinkles, to raise your lids frankly, and change the fiends to confident, innocent angels, suspecting and doubting nothing, and always seeing friends where they are not sure of foes. Don't get the expression of a vicious cur that appears to know the kicks it gets are its desert, and yet hates all the world, as well as the kicker, for what it suffers.'

'In other words, I must wish for Edgar Linton's great blue eyes and even forehead,' he replied. 'I do—and that won't help me to them.'

'A good heart will help you to a bonny face, my lad,' I continued, 'if you were a regular black; and a bad one will turn the bonniest into something worse than ugly. And now that we 've done washing, and combing, and sulking—tell me whether you don't think yourself rather handsome? I 'll tell you, I do. You 're fit for a prince in disguise. Who knows but your father was Emperor of China, and your mother an Indian queen, each of them able to buy up, with one week's income, Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange together? And you were kidnapped by wicked sailors and brought to England. Were I in your place, I would frame high notions of my birth; and the thoughts of what I was should give me courage and dignity to support the oppressions of a little farmer!'

So I chattered on; and Heathcliff gradually lost his frown and began to look quite pleasant, when all at once our conversation was interrupted by a rumbling sound moving up the road and entering the court. He ran to the window and I to the door, just in time to behold the two Lintons descend from the family carriage, smothered in cloaks and furs, and the Earnshaws dismount from their horses: they often rode to church in winter. Catherine took a hand of each of the children, and brought them into the house and set them before the fire, which quickly put colour into their white faces.

I urged my companion to hasten now and show his amiable humour, and he willingly obeyed; but ill luck would have it that, as he opened the door leading from the kitchen on one side, Hindley opened it on the other. They met, and the master, irritated at seeing him clean and cheerful; or, perhaps, eager to keep his promise to Mrs. Linton, shoved him back with a sudden thrust, and angrily bade Joseph 'keep the fellow out of the room—send him into the garret till dinner is over. He 'll be cramming his fingers in the tarts and stealing the fruit, if left alone with them a minute.'

'Nay, sir,' I could not avoid answering, 'he 'll touch nothing, not he; and I suppose he must have his share of the dainties as well as we.'

'He shall have his share of my hand, if I catch him downstairs again till dark,' cried Hindley. 'Begone, you vagabond! What! you are attempting the coxcomb, are you? Wait till I get hold of those elegant locks—see if I won't pull them a bit longer!'

'They are long enough already,' observed Master Linton, peeping from the doorway; 'I wonder they don't make his head ache. It 's like a colt's mane over his eyes!'

He ventured this remark without any intention to insult; but Heathcliff's violent nature was not prepared to endure the appearance of impertinence from one whom he seemed to hate, even then, as a rival. He seized a tureen of hot apple sauce (the first thing that came under his gripe) and dashed it full against the speaker's face and neck; who instantly commenced a lament that brought Isabella and Catherine hurrying to the place.

Mr. Earnshaw snatched up the culprit directly and conveyed him to his chamber; where, doubtless, he administered a rough remedy to cool the fit of passion, for he re-appeared red and breathless. I got the dish-cloth, and rather spitefully scrubbed Edgar's nose and mouth, affirming it served him right for meddling. His sister began weeping to go home, and Cathy stood by confounded, blushing for all.

'You should not have spoken to him!' she expostulated with Master Linton. 'He was in a bad temper, and now you 've spoilt your visit; and he 'll be flogged: I hate him to be flogged! I can't eat my dinner. Why did you speak to him, Edgar?'

'I didn't,' sobbed the youth, escaping from my hands, and finishing the remainder of the purification with his cambric pocket-handkerchief. 'I promised mamma that I wouldn't say one word to him, and I didn't.'

'Well, don't cry,' replied Catherine contemptuously; 'you 're not killed. Don't make more mischief; my brother is coming; be quiet! Give over, Isabella! Has anybody hurt *you*?'

'There, there, children—to your seats!' cried Hindley, bustling in. 'That brute of a lad has warmed me nicely. Next time, Master Edgar, take the law into your own fists—it will give you an appetite!'

The little party recovered its equanimity at sight of the fragrant feast. They were hungry after their ride, and easily consoled, since no real harm had befallen them.

Mr. Earnshaw carved bountiful platefuls, and the mistress made them merry with lively talk. I waited behind her chair, and was pained to behold Catherine, with dry eyes and an indifferent air, commence cutting up the wing of a goose before her.

'An unfeeling child,' I thought to myself; 'how lightly she dismisses her old playmate's troubles. I could not have imagined her to be so selfish.'

She lifted a mouthful to her lips; then she set it down again: her cheeks flushed, and the tears gushed over them. She slipped her fork to the floor, and hastily dived under the cloth to conceal her emotion. I did not call her unfeeling long; for I perceived she was in purgatory throughout the day, and wearying to find an opportunity of getting by herself, or paying a visit to Heathcliff, who had been locked up by the master; as I discovered, on endeavouring to introduce to him a private mess of victuals.

In the evening we had a dance. Cathy begged that he might be liberated then, as Isabella Linton had no partner; her entreaties were vain, and I was appointed to supply the deficiency.

We got rid of all gloom in the excitement of the exercise, and our pleasure was increased by the arrival of the Gimmerton band, mustering fifteen strong: a trumpet, a trombone, clarionets, bassoons, French horns, and a bass viol, besides singers. They go the rounds of all the respectable houses, and receive contributions every Christmas, and we esteemed it a first-rate treat to hear them.

After the usual carols had been sung, we set them to songs and glees. Mrs. Earnshaw loved the music, and so they gave us plenty.

Catherine loved it too; but she said it sounded sweetest at the top of the steps, and she went up in the dark: I followed. They shut the house door below, never noting our absence, the place was so full of people. She made no stay at the stairs' head, but mounted farther, to the garret where Heathcliff was confined, and called him. He stubbornly declined answering for a while; she persevered, and finally persuaded him to hold communion with her through the boards.

I let the poor things converse unmolested, till I supposed the songs were going to cease, and the singers to get some refreshment; then, I clambered up the ladder to warn her.

Instead of finding her outside, I heard her voice within. The little monkey had crept by the skylight of one garret, along the roof, into the skylight of the other, and it was with the utmost difficulty I could coax her out again.

When she did come, Heathcliff came with her, and she insisted that I should take him into the kitchen, as my fellow-servant had gone to a neighbour's to be removed from the sound of our 'devil's psalmody,' as it pleased him to call it.

I told them I intended by no means to encourage their tricks; but as the prisoner had never broken his fast since yesterday's dinner, I would wink at his cheating Mr. Hindley that once.

He went down; I set him a stool by the fire, and offered him a quantity of good things; but he was sick and could eat little, and my attempts to entertain him were thrown away. He leant his two elbows on his knees, and his chin on his hands, and remained wrapt in dumb meditation. On my inquiring the subject of his thoughts, he answered gravely—

‘ I ’m trying to settle how I shall pay Hindley back. I don’t care how long I wait, if I can only do it at last. I hope he will not die before I do ! ’

‘ For shame, Heathcliff ! ’ said I. ‘ It is for God to punish wicked people ; we should learn to forgive.’

‘ No, God won’t have the satisfaction that I shall,’ he returned. ‘ I only wish I knew the best way ! Let me alone, and I ’ll plan it out : while I ’m thinking of that I don’t feel pain.’

‘ But, Mr. Lockwood, I forget these tales cannot divert you. I ’m annoyed how I should dream of chattering on at such a rate ; and your gruel cold, and you nodding for bed ! I could have told Heathcliff’s history, all that you need hear, in half a dozen words.’

Thus interrupting herself, the housekeeper rose, and proceeded to lay aside her sewing ; but I felt incapable of moving from the hearth, and I was very far from nodding.

‘ Sit still, Mrs. Dean,’ I cried, ‘ do sit still, another half hour ! You ’ve done just right to tell the story leisurely. That is the method I like ; and you must finish in the same style. I am interested in every character you have mentioned, more or less.’

‘ The clock is on the stroke of eleven, sir.’

‘ No matter—I ’m not accustomed to go to bed in the long hours. One or two is early enough for a person who lies till ten.’

‘ You shouldn’t lie till ten. There ’s the very prime of the morning gone long before that time. A person who has not done one half his day’s work by ten o’clock, runs a chance of leaving the other half undone.’

‘ Nevertheless, Mrs. Dean, resume your chair ;

because to-morrow I intend lengthening the night till afternoon. I prognosticate for myself an obstinate cold, at least.'

'I hope not, sir. Well, you must allow me to leap over some three years; during that space Mrs. Earnshaw——'

'No, no, I 'll allow nothing of the sort! Are you acquainted with the mood of mind in which, if you were seated alone, and the cat licking its kitten on the rug before you, you would watch the operation so intently that puss's neglect of one ear would put you seriously out of temper?'

'A terribly lazy mood, I should say.'

'On the contrary, a tiresomely active one. It is mine, at present; and, therefore, continue minutely. I perceive that people in these regions acquire over people in towns the value that a spider in a dungeon does over a spider in a cottage, to their various occupants; and yet the deepened attraction is not entirely owing to the situation of the looker-on. They *do* live more in earnest, more in themselves, and less in surface, change, and frivolous external things. I could fancy a love for life here almost possible; and I was a fixed unbeliever in any love of a year's standing. One state resembles setting a hungry man down to a single dish, on which he may concentrate his entire appetite and do it justice; the other, introducing him to a table laid out by French cooks: he can perhaps extract as much enjoyment from the whole; but each part is a mere atom in his regard and remembrance.'

'Oh! here we are the same as anywhere else, when you get to know us,' observed Mrs. Dean, somewhat puzzled at my speech.

'Excuse me,' I responded; 'you, my good friend, are a striking evidence against that assertion. Excepting a few provincialisms of slight consequence, you have no marks of the manners that I am habituated to consider as peculiar to your class. I am sure you have thought a great deal more than the generality of servants think. You have been compelled to cultivate your reflective faculties for want of occasions for frittering your life away in silly trifles.'

Mrs. Dean laughed.

'I certainly esteem myself a steady, reasonable kind of body,' she said; 'not exactly from living among the hills and seeing one set of faces, and one series of actions, from year's end to year's end; but I have undergone sharp discipline, which has taught me wisdom; and then, I have read more than you would fancy, Mr. Lockwood. You could not open a book in this library that I have not looked into, and got something out of also; unless it be that range of Greek and Latin, and that of French; and those I know one from another: it is as much as you can expect of a poor man's daughter.'

'However, if I am to follow my story in true gossip's fashion, I had better go on; and instead of leaping three years, I will be content to pass to the next summer—the summer of 1778, that is nearly twenty-three years ago.'

CHAPTER VIII

On the morning of a fine June day, my first bonny little nursling, and the last of the ancient Earnshaw stock, was born.

We were busy with the hay in a far-away field, when the girl that usually brought our breakfasts came running an hour too soon, across the meadow and up the lane, calling me as she ran.

'Oh, such a grand bairn!' she panted out. 'The finest lad that ever breathed! But the doctor says missis must go: he says she 's been in a consumption these many months. I heard him tell Mr. Hindley: and now she has nothing to keep her, and she 'll be dead before winter. You must come home directly. You 're to nurse it, Nelly: to feed it with sugar and milk, and take care of it day and night. I wish I were you, because it will be all yours when there is no missis!'

'But is she very ill?' I asked, flinging down my rake, and tying my bonnet.

'I guess she is; yet she looks bravely,' replied the girl, 'and she talks as if she thought of living to see it grow a man. She 's out of her head for joy, it 's such a beauty! If I were her, I 'm certain I should not die: I should get better at the bare sight of it, in spite of Kenneth. I was fairly mad at him. Dame Archer brought the cherub down to master, in the house, and his face just began to light up, when the old croaker steps forward, and says he—"Earnshaw, it 's a blessing your wife has been spared to leave you this son. When she came, I felt convinced we shouldn't keep her long; and now, I must tell you, the winter will probably finish her. Don't take on, and fret about it too much: it can't be helped. And besides, you should have known better than to choose such a rush of a lass!"'

'And what did the master answer?' I inquired.

'I think he swore: but I didn't mind him, I was straining to see the bairn,' and she began again to describe it rapturously. I, as zealous as herself, hurried eagerly home to admire, on my part; though

I was very sad for Hindley's sake. He had room in his heart only for two idols—his wife and himself: he doted on both, and adored one, and I couldn't conceive how he would bear the loss.

When we got to Wuthering Heights, there he stood at the front door; and, as I passed in, I asked, 'how was the baby?'

'Nearly ready to run about, Nell!' he replied, putting on a cheerful smile.

'And the mistress?' I ventured to inquire; 'the doctor says she 's——'

'Damn the doctor!' he interrupted, reddening. 'Frances is quite right: she 'll be perfectly well by this time next week. Are you going upstairs? will you tell her that I 'll come, if she 'll promise not to talk. I left her because she would not hold her tongue; and she must—tell her Mr. Kenneth says she must be quiet.'

I delivered this message to Mrs. Earnshaw; she seemed in flighty spirits, and replied merrily—

'I hardly spoke a word, Ellen, and there he has gone out twice, crying. Well, say I promise I won't speak: but that does not bind me not to laugh at him!'

Poor soul! Till within a week of her death that gay heart never failed her; and her husband persisted doggedly, nay, furiously, in affirming her health improved every day. When Kenneth warned him that his medicines were useless at that stage of the malady, and he needn't put him to further expense by attending her, he retorted—

'I know you need not—she 's well—she does not want any more attendance from you! She never was in a consumption. It was a fever; and it is gone: her pulse is as slow as mine now, and her cheek as cool.'

He told his wife the same story, and she seemed to believe him; but one night, while leaning on his shoulder, in the act of saying she thought she should be able to get up to-morrow, a fit of coughing took her—a very slight one—he raised her in his arms; she put her two hands about his neck, her face changed, and she was dead.

As the girl had anticipated, the child Hareton fell wholly into my hands. Mr. Earnshaw, provided he saw him healthy and never heard him cry, was contented, as far as regarded him. For himself, he grew desperate: his sorrow was of that kind that will not lament. He neither wept nor prayed; he cursed and defied: execrated God and man, and gave himself up to reckless dissipation.

The servants could not bear his tyrannical and evil conduct long: Joseph and I were the only two that would stay. I had not the heart to leave my charge; and besides, you know, I had been his foster-sister, and excused his behaviour more readily than a stranger would.

Joseph remained to hector over tenants and labourers; and because it was his vocation to be where there was plenty of wickedness to reprove.

The master's bad ways and bad companions formed a pretty example for Catherine and Heathcliff. His treatment of the latter was enough to make a fiend of a saint. And, truly, it appeared as if the lad *were* possessed of something diabolical at that period. He delighted to witness Hindley degrading himself past redemption; and became daily more notable for savage sullenness and ferocity.

I could not half tell what an infernal house we had. The curate dropped calling, and nobody decent came near us, at last; unless Edgar Linton's visits to Miss Cathy might be an exception. At fifteen she was the queen of the country-side; she had no peer; and she did turn out a haughty, headstrong creature! I own I did not like her, after her infancy was past; and I vexed her frequently by trying to bring down her arrogance: she never took an aversion to me, though. She had a wondrous constancy to old attachments: even Heathcliff kept his hold on her affections unalterably; and young Linton, with all his superiority, found it difficult to make an equally deep impression.

He was my late master: that is his portrait over the fireplace. It used to hang on one side, and his wife's on the other; but hers has been removed, or else you might see something of what she was. Can you make that out?

Mrs. Dean raised the candle and I discerned a soft-featured face, exceedingly resembling the young lady at the Heights, but more pensive and amiable in expression. It formed a sweet picture. The long light hair curled slightly on the temples; the eyes were large and serious; the figure almost too graceful. I did not marvel how Catherine Earnshaw could forget her first friend for such an individual. I marvelled much how he, with a mind to correspond with his person, could fancy my idea of Catherine Earnshaw.

'A very agreeable portrait,' I observed to the housekeeper. 'Is it like?'

'Yes,' she answered; 'but he looked better when he was animated; that is his everyday countenance: he wanted spirit in general.'

Catherine had kept up her acquaintance with the Lintons since her five weeks' residence among them; and as she had no temptation to show her rough side in their company, and had the sense to be ashamed of being rude where she experienced such invariable courtesy, she imposed unwittingly on the old lady and gentleman, by her ingenious cordiality; gained the admiration of Isabella, and the heart and soul of her brother: acquisitions that flattered her from the first, for she was full of ambition, and led her to adopt a double character without exactly intending to deceive any one.

In the place where she heard Heathcliff termed a 'vulgar young ruffian,' and 'worse than a brute,' she took care not to act like him; but at home she had small inclination to practise politeness that would only be laughed at, and restrain an unruly nature when it would bring her neither credit nor praise.

Mr. Edgar seldom mustered courage to visit Wuthering Heights openly. He had a terror of Earnshaw's reputation, and shrunk from encountering him; and yet he was always received with our best attempts at civility: the master himself avoided offending him, knowing why he came; and if he could not be gracious, kept out of the way. I rather think his appearance there was distasteful to Catherine: she was not artful, never played the coquette, and had evidently an objection to her two friends meeting at all; for when Heathcliff expressed contempt of Linton in his presence, she could not half coincide, as she did in his absence; and when Linton evinced disgust and antipathy to Heathcliff, she dare not treat his sentiments with indifference, as if depreciation of her playmate were of scarcely any consequence to her.

I 've had many a laugh at her perplexities and untold troubles, which she vainly strove to hide from my mockery. That sounds ill-natured: but she was so proud, it became really impossible to pity her distresses, till she should be chastened into more humility.

She did bring herself, finally, to confess, and confide in me: there was not a soul else that she might fashion into an adviser.

Mr. Hindley had gone from home one afternoon, and Heathcliff presumed to give himself a holiday on the strength of it. He had reached the age of sixteen then, I think, and without having bad features, or being deficient in intellect, he contrived to convey an impression of inward and outward repulsiveness that his present aspect retains no traces of.

In the first place, he had by that time lost the benefit of his early education; continual hard work, begun soon and concluded late, had extinguished any curiosity he once possessed in pursuit of knowledge, and any love for books or learning. His childhood's sense of superiority, instilled into him by the favours of old Mr. Earnshaw, was faded away. He struggled long to keep up an equality with Catherine in her studies, and yielded with poignant though silent regret: but he yielded completely; and there was no prevailing on him to take a step in the way of moving upward, when he found he must, necessarily, sink beneath his former level. Then personal appearance sympathised with mental deterioration: he acquired a slouching gait, and an ignoble look; his naturally reserved disposition was exaggerated into an almost idiotic excess of unsociable moroseness; and he took a grim pleasure, apparently, in exciting the aversion rather than the esteem of his few acquaintance.

Catherine and he were constant companions still at his seasons of respite from labour; but he had ceased to express his fondness for her in words, and recoiled with angry suspicion from her girlish caresses, as if conscious there could be no gratification in lavishing such marks of affection on him. On the before-named occasion he came into the house to announce his intention of doing nothing, while I was assisting Miss Cathy to arrange her dress: she had not reckoned on his taking it into his head to be idle; and imagining she would have the whole place to herself, she managed, by some means, to inform Mr. Edgar of her brother's absence, and was then preparing to receive him.

'Cathy, are you busy this afternoon?' asked Heathcliff. 'Are you going anywhere?'

'No, it is raining,' she answered.

'Why have you that silk frock on, then?' he said. 'Nobody coming here, I hope?'

'Not that I know of,' stammered Miss: 'but you should be in the field now, Heathcliff. It is an hour past dinner-time: I thought you were gone.'

'Hindley does not often free us from his accursed presence,' observed the boy. 'I'll not work any more to-day: I'll stay with you.'

'Oh, but Joseph will tell,' she suggested; 'you'd better go!'

'Joseph is loading lime on the farther side of Pennistow Crag; it will take him till dark, and he'll never know.'

So saying, he lounged to the fire, and sat down. Catherine reflected an instant, with knitted brows—she found it needful to smooth the way for an intrusion.

'Isabella and Edgar Linton talked of calling this afternoon,' she said, at the conclusion of a minute's silence. 'As it rains, I hardly expect them; but they may come, and if they do, you run the risk of being scolded for no good.'

'Order Ellen to say you are engaged, Cathy,' he persisted; 'don't turn me out for those pitiful, silly friends of yours! I'm on the point, sometimes, of complaining that they—but I'll not——'

‘That they what?’ cried Catherine, gazing at him with a troubled countenance. ‘Oh, Nelly!’ she added petulantly, jerking her head away from my hands, ‘you ’ve combed my hair quite out of curl! That ’s enough; let me alone. What are you on the point of complaining about, Heathcliff?’

‘Nothing—only look at the almanack on that wall’; he pointed to a framed sheet hanging near the window, and continued—

‘The crosses are for the evenings you have spent with the Lintons, the dots for those spent with me. Do you see? I ’ve marked every day.’

‘Yes—very foolish: as if I took notice!’ replied Catherine in a peevish tone. ‘And where is the sense of that?’

‘To show that I *do* take notice,’ said Heathcliff.

‘And should I always be sitting with you?’ she demanded, growing more irritated. ‘What good do I get? What do you talk about? You might be dumb, or a baby, for anything you say to amuse me, or for anything you do, either!’

‘You never told me before that I talked too little, or that you disliked my company, Cathy!’ exclaimed Heathcliff, in much agitation.

‘It is no company at all, when people know nothing and say nothing,’ she muttered.

Her companion rose up, but he hadn’t time to express his feelings further, for a horse’s feet were heard on the flags, and having knocked gently, young Linton entered, his face brilliant with delight at the unexpected summons he had received.

Doubtless Catherine marked the difference between her friends, as one came in and the other went out. The contrast resembled what you see in exchanging a bleak, hilly, coal country for a beautiful fertile valley;

and his voice and greeting were as opposite as his aspect. He had a sweet, low manner of speaking, and pronounced his words as you do: that 's less gruff than we talk here, and softer.

'I 'm not come too soon, am I?' he said, casting a look at me: I had begun to wipe the plate, and tidy some drawers at the far end in the dresser.

'No,' answered Catherine. 'What are you doing there, Nelly?'

'My work, Miss,' I replied. (Mr. Hindley had given me directions to make a third party in any private visits Linton chose to pay.)

She stepped behind me and whispered crossly, 'Take yourself and your dusters off; when company are in the house, servants don't commence scouring and cleaning in the room where they are!'

'It 's a good opportunity, now that master is away,' I answered aloud: 'he hates me to be fidgeting over these things in his presence. I 'm sure Mr. Edgar will excuse me.'

'I hate you to be fidgeting in *my* presence,' exclaimed the young lady imperiously, not allowing her guest time to speak: she had failed to recover her equanimity since the little dispute with Heathcliff.

'I 'm sorry for it, Miss Catherine,' was my response; and I proceeded assiduously with my occupation.

She, supposing Edgar could not see her, snatched the cloth from my hand, and pinched me, with a prolonged wrench, very spitefully on the arm.

I 've said I did not love her, and rather relished mortifying her vanity now and then: besides, she hurt me extremely; so I started up from my knees, and screamed out.

'Oh, Miss, that 's a nasty trick! You have no right to nip me, and I 'm not going to bear it.'

'I didn't touch you, you lying creature!' cried she, her fingers tingling to repeat the act, and her ears red with rage. She never had power to conceal her passion, it always set her whole complexion in a blaze.

'What 's that, then?' I retorted, showing a decided purple witness to refute her.

She stamped her foot, wavered a moment, and then, irresistibly impelled by the naughty spirit within her, slapped me on the cheek: a stinging blow that filled both eyes with water.

'Catherine, love! Catherine!' interposed Linton, greatly shocked at the double fault of falsehood and violence which his idol had committed.

'Leave the room, Ellen!' she repeated, trembling all over.

Little Hareton, who followed me everywhere, and was sitting near me on the floor, at seeing my tears commenced crying himself, and sobbed out complaints against 'wicked aunt Cathy,' which drew her fury on his unlucky head: she seized his shoulders, and shook him till the poor child waxed livid, and Edgar thoughtlessly laid hold of her hands to deliver him. In an instant one was wrung free, and the astonished young man felt it applied over his own ear in a way that could not be mistaken for jest.

He drew back in consternation. I lifted Hareton in my arms, and walked off to the kitchen with him, leaving the door of communication open, for I was curious to watch how they would settle their disagreement.

The insulted visitor moved to the spot where he had laid his hat, pale and with a quivering lip.

'That 's right!' I said to myself. 'Take warning and begone! It 's a kindness to let you have a glimpse of her genuine disposition.'

'Where are you going?' demanded Catherine, advancing to the door.

He swerved aside, and attempted to pass.

'You must not go!' she exclaimed energetically.

'I must and shall!' he replied in a subdued voice.

'No,' she persisted, grasping the handle; 'not yet, Edgar Linton: sit down; you shall not leave me in that temper. I should be miserable all night, and I won't be miserable for you!'

'Can I stay after you have struck me?' asked Linton.

Catherine was mute.

'You 've made me afraid and ashamed of you,' he continued; 'I 'll not come here again!'

Her eyes began to glisten, and her lids to twinkle.

'And you told a deliberate untruth!' he said.

'I didn't!' she cried, recovering her speech; 'I did nothing deliberately. Well, go, if you please—get away! And now I 'll cry—I 'll cry myself sick!'

She dropped down on her knees by a chair, and set to weeping in serious earnest.

Edgar persevered in his resolution as far as the court; there, he lingered. I resolved to encourage him.

'Miss is dreadfully wayward, sir,' I called out. 'As bad as any marred child: you 'd better be riding home, or else she will be sick, only to grieve us.'

The soft thing looked askance through the window: he possessed the power to depart, as much as a cat possesses the power to leave a mouse half killed, or a bird half eaten.

Ah, I thought, there will be no saving him: he 's doomed, and flies to his fate!

And so it was: he turned abruptly, hastened into the house again, shut the door behind him; and when I went in a while after to inform them that Earnshaw had come home rabid drunk, ready to pull the old place about our ears (his ordinary frame of mind in that condition), I saw the quarrel had merely effected a closer intimacy—had broken the outworks of youthful timidity, and enabled them to forsake the disguise of friendship, and confess themselves lovers.

Intelligence of Mr. Hindley's arrival drove Linton speedily to his horse, and Catherine to her chamber. I went to hide little Hareton, and to take the shot out of the master's fowling-piece, which he was fond of playing with in his insane excitement, to the hazard of the lives of any who provoked, or even attracted his notice too much; and I had hit upon the plan of removing it, that he might do less mischief if he did go the length of firing the gun.

CHAPTER IX

He entered, vociferating oaths dreadful to hear; and caught me in the act of stowing his son away in the kitchen cupboard. Hareton was impressed with a wholesome terror of encountering either his wild beast's fondness or his madman's rage; for in one he run a chance of being squeezed and kissed to death, and in the other of being flung into the fire, or dashed against the wall; and the poor thing remained perfectly quiet wherever I chose to put him.

'There, I 've found it out at last!' cried Hindley, pulling me back by the skin of my neck, like a dog. 'By heaven and hell, you 've sworn between you to murder that child! I know how it is, now, that he is always out of my way. But, with the help of Satan, I shall make you swallow the carving-knife, Nelly! You needn't laugh ; for I 've just crammed Kenneth, head-downmost, in the Blackhorse marsh ; and two is the same as one—and I want to kill some of you : I shall have no rest till I do ! '

' But I don't like the carving-knife, Mr. Hindley,' I answered ; ' it has been cutting red herrings. I 'd rather be shot, if you please.'

' You 'd rather be damned ! ' he said ; ' and so you shall. No law in England can hinder a man from keeping his house decent, and mine 's abominable ! open your mouth.'

He held the knife in his hand, and pushed its point between my teeth : but, for my part, I was never much afraid of his vagaries. I spat out, and affirmed it tasted detestably—I would not take it on any account.

' Oh ! ' said he, releasing me, ' I see that hideous little villain is not Hareton : I beg your pardon, Nell. If it be, he deserves flaying alive for not running to welcome me, and for screaming as if I were a goblin. Unnatural cub, come hither ! I 'll teach thee to impose on a good-hearted, deluded father. Now, don't you think the lad would be handsomer cropped ? It makes a dog fiercer, and I love something fierce—get me a scissors—something fierce and trim ! Besides, it 's infernal affectation—devilish conceit it is, to cherish our ears—we 're asses enough without them. Hush, child, hush ! Well then, it is my darling ! wisht, dry thy eyes—there 's a joy ; kiss me. What ! it won't ? Kiss me, Hareton ! Damn thee, kiss me ! By God, as if I would rear such a monster ! As sure as I 'm living, I 'll break the brat's neck.'

Poor Hareton was squalling and kicking in his father's arms with all his might, and redoubled his yells when he carried him upstairs and lifted him over the banister. I cried out that he would frighten the child into fits, and ran to rescue him. As I reached them, Hindley leant forward on the rails to listen to a noise below; almost forgetting what he had in his hands. 'Who is that?' he asked, hearing some one approaching the stair's foot. I leant forward also, for the purpose of signing to Heathcliff, whose step I recognised, not to come farther; and, at the instant when my eye quitted Hareton, he gave a sudden spring, delivered himself from the careless grasp that held him, and fell.

There was scarcely time to experience a thrill of horror before we saw that the little wretch was safe. Heathcliff arrived underneath just at the critical moment; by a natural impulse, he arrested his descent, and setting him on his feet, looked up to discover the author of the accident. A miser who has parted with a lucky lottery ticket for five shillings, and finds next day he has lost in the bargain five thousand pounds, could not show a blanker countenance than he did on beholding the figure of Mr. Earnshaw above. It expressed, plainer than words could do, the intensest anguish at having made himself the instrument of thwarting his own revenge. Had it been dark, I dare say, he would have tried to remedy the mistake by smashing Hareton's skull on the steps; but, we witnessed his salvation; and I was presently below with my precious charge pressed to my heart. Hindley descended more leisurely, sobered and abashed.

'It is your fault, Ellen,' he said; 'you should have kept him out of sight: you should have taken him from me! Is he injured anywhere?'

'Injured!' I cried angrily; 'if he's not killed, he'll be an idiot! Oh! I wonder his mother does not rise from her grave to see how you use him. You're worse than a heathen—treating your own flesh and blood in that manner!'

He attempted to touch the child, who, on finding himself with me, sobbed off his terror directly. At the first finger his father laid on him, however, he shrieked again louder than before, and struggled as if he would go into convulsions.

'You shall not meddle with him!' I continued. 'He hates you—they all hate you—that 's the truth! A happy family you have; and a pretty state you 're come to!'

'I shall come to a prettier yet, Nelly,' laughed the misguided man, recovering his hardness. 'At present, convey yourself and him away. And, hark you, Heathcliff! clear you too, quite from my reach and hearing. I wouldn't murder you to-night; unless, perhaps, I set the house on fire: but that 's as my fancy goes.'

While saying this he took a pint bottle of brandy from the dresser, and poured some into a tumbler.

'Nay, don't!' I entreated. 'Mr. Hindley, do take warning. Have mercy on this unfortunate boy, if you care nothing for yourself!'

'Any one will do better for him than I shall,' he answered.

'Have mercy on your own soul!' I said, endeavouring to snatch the glass from his hand.

'Not I! On the contrary, I shall have great pleasure in sending it to perdition to punish its Maker,' exclaimed the blasphemer. 'Here 's to its hearty damnation!'

He drank the spirits and impatiently bade us go; terminating his command with a sequel of horrid imprecations, too bad to repeat or remember.

'It 's a pity he cannot kill himself with drink,' observed Heathcliff, muttering an echo of curses back when the door was shut. 'He 's doing his very utmost; but his constitution defies him. Mr. Kenneth says he would wager his mare, that he 'll outlive any man on this side Gimmerton, and go to the grave a hoary sinner; unless some happy chance out of the common course befall him.'

I went into the kitchen, and sat down to lull my little lamb to sleep. Heathcliff, as I thought, walked through to the barn. It turned out afterwards that he only got as far as the other side the settle, when he flung himself on a bench by the wall, removed from the fire, and remained silent.

I was rocking Hareton on my knee, and humming a song that began—

> 'It was far in the night, and the bairnies grat,
> The mither beneath the mools heard that,'

when Miss Cathy, who had listened to the hubbub from her room, put her head in, and whispered—

'Are you alone, Nelly?'

'Yes, Miss,' I replied.

She entered and approached the hearth. I, supposing she was going to say something, looked up. The expression of her face seemed disturbed and anxious. Her lips were half asunder, as if she meant to speak, and she drew a breath; but it escaped in a sigh instead of a sentence.

I resumed my song; not having forgotten her recent behaviour.

'Where 's Heathcliff?' she said, interrupting me.

'About his work in the stable,' was my answer.

He did not contradict me; perhaps he had fallen into a doze.

There followed another long pause, during which I perceived a drop or two trickle from Catherine's cheek to the flags.

Is she sorry for her shameful conduct? I asked myself. That will be a novelty: but she may come to the point as she will—I shan't help her!

No, she felt small trouble regarding any subject, save her own concerns.

'Oh, dear!' she cried at last. 'I 'm very unhappy!'

'A pity,' observed I. 'You 're hard to please: so many friends and so few cares, and can't make yourself content!'

'Nelly, will you keep a secret for me?' she pursued, kneeling down by me, and lifting her winsome eyes to my face with that sort of look which turns off bad temper, even when one has all the right in the world to indulge it.

'Is it worth keeping?' I inquired, less sulkily.

'Yes, and it worries me, and I must let it out! I want to know what I should do. To-day, Edgar Linton has asked me to marry him, and I 've given him an answer. Now, before I tell you whether it was a consent or denial, you tell me which it ought to have been.'

'Really, Miss Catherine, how can I know?' I replied. 'To be sure, considering the exhibition you performed in his presence this afternoon, I might say it would be wise to refuse him: since he asked you after that, he must either be hopelessly stupid or a venturesome fool.'

'If you talk so, I won't tell you any more,' she returned peevishly, rising to her feet. 'I accepted him, Nelly. Be quick, and say whether I was wrong!'

'You accepted him! then what good is it discussing the matter? You have pledged your word, and cannot retract.'

'But, say whether I should have done so—do!' she exclaimed in an irritated tone; chafing her hands together, and frowning.

'There are many things to be considered before that question can be answered properly,' I said sententiously. 'First and foremost, do you love Mr. Edgar?'

'Who can help it? Of course I do,' she answered.

Then I put her through the following catechism; for a girl of twenty-two, it was not injudicious.

'Why do you love him, Miss Cathy?'

'Nonsense, I do—that 's sufficient.'

'By no means; you must say why?'

'Well, because he is handsome, and pleasant to be with.'

'Bad!' was my commentary.

'And because he is young and cheerful.'

'Bad, still.'

'And because he loves me.'

'Indifferent, coming there.'

'And he will be rich, and I shall like to be the greatest woman of the neighbourhood, and I shall be proud of having such a husband.'

'Worst of all. And now, say how you love him?'

'As everybody loves—You 're silly, Nelly.'

'Not at all—Answer.'

'I love the ground under his feet, and the air over his head, and everything he touches, and every word he says. I love all his looks, and all his actions, and him entirely and altogether. There now!'

'And why?'

'Nay; you are making a jest of it: it is exceedingly ill-natured! It 's no jest to me!' said the young lady, scowling, and turning her face to the fire.

'I 'm very far from jesting, Miss Catherine,' I replied. 'You love Mr. Edgar because he is handsome, and young, and cheerful, and rich, and loves you. The last, however, goes for nothing: you would love him without that, probably; and with it you wouldn't, unless he possessed the four former attractions.'

'No, to be sure not: I should only pity him—hate him, perhaps, if he were ugly, and a clown.'

'But there are several other handsome, rich young men in the world: handsomer, possibly, and richer than he is. What should hinder you from loving them?'

'If there be any, they are out of my way: I've seen none like Edgar.'

'You may see some; and he won't always be handsome, and young, and may not always be rich.'

'He is now; and I have only to do with the present. I wish you would speak rationally.'

'Well, that settles it: if you have only to do with the present, marry Mr. Linton.'

'I don't want your permission for that—I *shall* marry him: and yet you have not told me whether I'm right.'

'Perfectly right; if people be right to marry only for the present. And now, let us hear what you are unhappy about. Your brother will be pleased; the old lady and gentleman will not object, I think; you will escape from a disorderly, comfortless home into a wealthy, respectable one; and you love Edgar, and Edgar loves you. All seems smooth and easy: where is the obstacle?'

'*Here!* and *here!*' replied Catherine, striking one hand on her forehead, and the other on her breast: 'in whichever place the soul lives. In my soul and in my heart, I'm convinced I'm wrong!'

'That's very strange! I cannot make it out.'

'It's my secret. But if you will not mock at me, I'll explain it: I can't do it distinctly; but I'll give you a feeling of how I feel.'

She seated herself by me again: her countenance grew sadder and graver, and her clasped hands trembled.

'Nelly, do you never dream queer dreams?' she said suddenly, after some minutes' reflection.

'Yes, now and then,' I answered.

'And so do I. I've dreamt in my life dreams that have stayed with me ever after, and changed my ideas: they've gone through and through me, like wine through water, and altered the colour of my mind. And this is one: I'm going to tell it—but take care not to smile at any part of it.'

'Oh! don't, Miss Catherine!' I cried. 'We're dismal enough without conjuring up ghosts and visions to perplex us. Come, come, be merry and like yourself! Look at little Hareton! *he's* dreaming nothing dreary. How sweetly he smiles in his sleep!'

'Yes; and how sweetly his father curses in his solitude! You remember him, I dare say, when he was just such another as that chubby thing: nearly as young and innocent. However, Nelly, I shall oblige you to listen: it's not long; and I've no power to be merry to-night.'

'I won't hear it, I won't hear it!' I repeated hastily.

I was superstitious about dreams then, and am still; and Catherine had an unusual gloom in her aspect that made me dread something from which I might shape a prophecy, and foresee a fearful catastrophe.

She was vexed, but she did not proceed. Apparently taking up another subject, she recommenced in a short time.

'If I were in heaven, Nelly, I should be extremely miserable.'

'Because you are not fit to go there,' I answered. 'All sinners would be miserable in heaven.'

'But it is not for that. I dreamt once that I was there.'

'I tell you I won't hearken to your dreams, Miss Catherine! I 'll go to bed,' I interrupted again.

She laughed, and held me down; for I made a motion to leave my chair.

'This is nothing,' cried she: 'I was only going to say that heaven did not seem to be my home; and I broke my heart with weeping to come back to earth; and the angels were so angry that they flung me out into the middle of the heath on the top of Wuthering Heights; where I woke sobbing for joy. That will do to explain my secret, as well as the other. I 've no more business to marry Edgar Linton than I have to be in heaven; and if the wicked man in there had not brought Heathcliff so low, I shouldn't have thought of it. It would degrade me to marry Heathcliff now; so he shall never know how I love him: and that, not because he 's handsome, Nelly, but because he 's more myself than I am. Whatever our souls are made of, his and mine are the same; and Linton's is as different as a moonbeam from lightning, or frost from fire.'

Ere this speech ended, I became sensible of Heathcliff's presence. Having noticed a slight movement, I turned my head, and saw him rise from the bench, and steal out noiselessly. He had listened till he heard Catherine say it would degrade her to marry him, and then he stayed to hear no further.

My companion, sitting on the ground, was prevented by the back of the settle from remarking his presence or departure; but I started, and bade her hush!

'Why?' she asked, gazing nervously round.

'Joseph is here,' I answered, catching opportunely the roll of his cartwheels up the road; 'and Heathcliff will come in with him. I 'm not sure whether he were not at the door this moment.'

'Oh, he couldn't overhear me at the door!' said she. ‘Give me Hareton, while you get the supper, and when it is ready ask me to sup with you. I want to cheat my uncomfortable conscience, and be convinced that Heathcliff has no notion of these things. He has not, has he? He does not know what being in love is?’

‘I see no reason that he should not know, as well as you,’ I returned; ‘and if *you* are his choice, he ’ll be the most unfortunate creature that ever was born! As soon as you become Mrs. Linton, he loses friend, and love, and all! Have you considered how you ’ll bear the separation, and how he ’ll bear to be quite deserted in the world? Because, Miss Catherine——’

‘He quite deserted! we separated!’ she exclaimed, with an accent of indignation. ‘Who is to separate us, pray? They ’ll meet the fate of Milo! Not as long as I live, Ellen: for no mortal creature. Every Linton on the face of the earth might melt into nothing, before I could consent to forsake Heathcliff. Oh, that ’s not what I intend—that ’s not what I mean! I shouldn’t be Mrs. Linton were such a price demanded! He ’ll be as much to me as he has been all his lifetime. Edgar must shake off his antipathy, and tolerate him, at least. He will, when he learns my true feelings towards him. Nelly, I see now, you think me a selfish wretch; but did it never strike you that if Heathcliff and I married, we should be beggars? whereas, if I marry Linton, I can aid Heathcliff to rise, and place him out of my brother’s power.’

‘With your husband’s money, Miss Catherine?’ I asked. ‘You ’ll find him not so pliable as you calculate upon: and, though I ’m hardly a judge, I think that ’s the worst motive you ’ve given yet for being the wife of young Linton.’

'It is not,' retorted she; 'it is the best! The others were the satisfaction of my whims: and for Edgar's sake, too, to satisfy him. This is for the sake of one who comprehends in his person my feelings to Edgar and myself. I cannot express it; but surely you and everybody have a notion that there is or should be an existence of yours beyond you. What were the use of my creation, if I were entirely contained here? My great miseries in this world have been Heathcliff's miseries, and I watched and felt each from the beginning: my great thought in living is himself. If all else perished, and *he* remained, I should still continue to be; and if all else remained, and he were annihilated, the universe would turn to a mighty stranger: I should not seem a part of it. My love for Linton is like the foliage in the woods: time will change it, I 'm well aware, as winter changes the trees. My love for Heathcliff resembles the eternal rocks beneath: a source of little visible delight, but necessary. Nelly, I *am* Heathcliff! He 's always, always in my mind: not as a pleasure, any more than I am always a pleasure to myself, but as my own being. So don't talk of our separation again: it is impracticable; and——'

She paused, and hid her face in the folds of my gown; but I jerked it forcibly away. I was out of patience with her folly!

'If I can make any sense of your nonsense, Miss,' I said, 'it only goes to convince me that you are ignorant of the duties you undertake in marrying; or else that you are a wicked, unprincipled girl. But trouble me with no more secrets: I 'll not promise to keep them.'

'You 'll keep that?' she asked eagerly.

'No, I 'll not promise,' I repeated.

She was about to insist, when the entrance of Joseph finished our conversation ; and Catherine removed her seat to a corner, and nursed Hareton, while I made the supper.

After it was cooked, my fellow-servant and I began to quarrel who should carry some to Mr. Hindley; and we didn't settle it till all was nearly cold. Then we came to the agreement that we would let him ask, if he wanted any ; for we feared particularly to go into his presence when he had been some time alone.

'Und hah isn't that nowt comed in frough th' field, be this time ? What is he abaht ? girt eedle seeght ! ' demanded the old man, looking round for Heathcliff.[1]

'I 'll call him,' I replied. 'He 's in the barn, I 've no doubt.'

I went and called, but got no answer. On returning, I whispered to Catherine that he had heard a good part of what she said, I was sure ; and told how I saw him quit the kitchen just as she complained of her brother's conduct regarding him.

She jumped up in a fine fright, flung Hareton on the settle, and ran to seek for her friend herself ; not taking leisure to consider why she was so flurried, or how her talk would have affected him.

She was absent such a while that Joseph proposed we should wait no longer. He cunningly conjectured they were staying away in order to avoid hearing his protracted blessing. They were 'ill eneugh for ony fahl manners,' he affirmed. And on their behalf he added that night a special prayer to the usual quarter of an hour's supplication before meat, and would have tacked another to the end of the grace, had not his young mistress broken in upon him with a hurried command that he must run down the road, and, wherever Heathcliff had rambled, find and make him re-enter directly.

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[1] 'And how isn't that nowt comed in fro' th' field, be this time What is he about ? girt idle seeght !' demanded the old man, looking round for Heathcliff.—C. B.'s Revision.

'I want to speak to him, and I *must*, before I go upstairs,' she said. 'And the gate is open: he is somewhere out of hearing; for he would not reply, though I shouted at the top of the fold as loud as I could.'

Joseph objected at first; she was too much in earnest, however, to suffer contradiction; and at last he placed his hat on his head, and walked grumbling forth.

Meantime, Catherine paced up and down the floor, exclaiming—

'I wonder where he is—I wonder where he *can* be! What did I say, Nelly? I've forgotten. Was he vexed at my bad humour this afternoon? Dear! tell me what I've said to grieve him? I do wish he'd come. I do wish he would!'

'What a noise for nothing!' I cried, though rather uneasy myself. 'What a trifle scares you! It's surely no great cause of alarm that Heathcliff should take a moonlight saunter on the moors, or even lie too sulky to speak to us in the hay-loft. I'll engage he's lurking there. See if I don't ferret him out!'

I departed to renew my search; its result was disappointment, and Joseph's quest ended in the same.

'Yon lad gets war un' war!' observed he on re-entering. 'He's left th' yate ut t' full swing, and Miss's pony has trodden dahn two rigs uh corn, un plottered through, raight o'er intuh t' meadow! Hahsomdiver, t' maister 'ull play t' divil to-morn, and he'll do weel. He's patience itsseln wi' sich careless, offald craters—patience itsseln he is! Bud he 'll not be soa allus—yah 's see, all on ye! Yah munn't drive him aht uf his heead fur nowt!'

'Have you found Heathcliff, you ass?' interrupted Catherine. 'Have you been looking for him, as I ordered?'

'Aw sud more likker look for th' horse,' he replied. 'It 'ud be tuh more sense. Bud, Aw can look for norther horse nur man uf a neeght loike this—as black as t' chimbley! und Hathecliff 's noan t' chap tuh coom ut *maw* whistle—happen he 'll be less hard uh hearing wi' *ye*!'[1]

It *was* a very dark evening for summer: the clouds appeared inclined to thunder, and I said we had better all sit down; the approaching rain would be certain to bring him home without further trouble.

However, Catherine would not be persuaded into tranquillity. She kept wandering to and fro, from the gate to the door, in a state of agitation which permitted no repose; and at length took up a permanent situation on one side of the wall, near the road: where, heedless of my expostulations and the growling thunder, and the great drops that began to plash around her, she remained, calling at intervals, and then listening, and then crying outright. She beat Hareton, or any child, at a good passionate fit of crying.

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[1] 'Yon lad gets war un' war!' observed he on re-entering. 'He 's left th' yate at t' full swing, and Miss's pony has trodden dabn two rigs o' corn, and plottered through, raight o'er into t' meadow! Hahsomdiver, t' maister 'ull play t' devil to-morn, and he 'll do weel. He 's patience itsseln wi' sich careless, offald craters—patience itsseln he is! Bud he 'll not be soa allus—yah 's see, all on ye! Yah mun'n't drive him out of his heead for nowt!'

'Have you tound Heathcliff, you ass?' interrupted Catherine. Have you been looking for him, as I ordered?'

'I sud more likker look for th' horse,' he replied. 'It 'ud be to more sense. Bud, I can look for norther horse nur man of a neeght loike this—as black as 'tchimbley! und Heathcliff's noan t' chap to coom at *my* whistle—happen he'll be less hard o' hearing wi *ye*!'—C. B.'s Revision.

About midnight, while we still sat up, the storm came rattling over the Heights in full fury. There was a violent wind, as well as thunder, and either one or the other split a tree off at the corner of the building : a huge bough fell across the roof, and knocked down a portion of the east chimney-stack, sending a clatter of stones and soot into the kitchen fire.

We thought a bolt had fallen in the middle of us; and Joseph swung on to his knees, beseeching the Lord to remember the patriarchs Noah and Lot, and, as in former times, spare the righteous, though he smote the ungodly. I felt some sentiment that it must be a judgment on us also. The Jonah, in my mind, was Mr. Earnshaw; and I shook the handle of his den that I might ascertain if he were yet living. He replied audibly enough, in a fashion which made my companion vociferate, more clamorously than before, that a wide distinction might be drawn between saints like himself and sinners like his master. But the uproar passed away in twenty minutes, leaving us all unharmed; excepting Cathy, who got thoroughly drenched for her obstinacy in refusing to take shelter, and standing bonnetless and shawlless to catch as much water as she could with her hair and clothes.

She came in and lay down on the settle, all soaked as she was, turning her face to the back, and putting her hands before it.

'Well, Miss!' I exclaimed, touching her shoulder; 'you are not bent on getting your death, are you? Do you know what o'clock it is? Half-past twelve. Come, come to bed! there's no use waiting longer on that foolish boy: he 'll be gone to Gimmerton, and he 'll stay there now. He guesses we shouldn't wake for him till this late hour: at least, he guesses that only Mr. Hindley would be up; and he 'd rather avoid having the door opened by the master.'

'Nay, nay, he 's noan at Gimmerton,' said Joseph. 'Aw's niver wonder bud he 's at t' bothom uf a bog-hoile. This visitation worn't for nowt, and Aw wod hev ye tuh look aht, Miss—yah muh be t' next. Thank Hivin for all! All warks togither for gooid tuh them as is chozzen, and piked aht froo' th' rubbidge! Yah knaw whet t' Scripture ses.'[1]

And he began quoting several texts, referring us to the chapters and verses where we might find them.

I, having vainly begged the wilful girl to rise and remove her wet things, left him preaching and her shivering, and betook myself to bed with little Hareton, who slept as fast as if every one had been sleeping round him.

I heard Joseph read on a while afterwards; then I distinguished his slow step on the ladder, and then I dropped asleep.

Coming down somewhat later than usual, I saw, by the sunbeams piercing the chinks of the shutters, Miss Catherine still seated near the fireplace. The house door was ajar, too; light too entered from the unclosed windows; Hindley had come out, and stood on the kitchen hearth, haggard and drowsy.

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[1] 'Nay, nay, he 's noan at Gimmerton,' said Joseph. 'I 's niver wonder but he 's at t' bothom of a bog-hoile. This visitation worn't for nowt, and I wod hev ye to look out, Miss—yah muh be t' next. Thank Hivin for all! All warks togither for gooid to them as is chozzen, and piked out fro' th' rubbidge! Yah knaw whet t' Scripture ses.' And he began quoting several texts, referring us to chapters and verses where we might find them.—C. B.'s Revision.

'What ails you, Cathy?' he was saying when I entered: 'you look as dismal as a drowned whelp. Why are you so damp and pale, child?'

'I 've been wet,' she answered reluctantly, 'and I 'm cold, that 's all.'

'Oh, she is naughty!' I cried, perceiving the master to be tolerably sober. 'She got steeped in the shower of yesterday evening, and there she has sat the night through, and I couldn't prevail on her to stir.'

Mr. Earnshaw stared at us in surprise. 'The night through,' he repeated. 'What kept her up? not fear of the thunder, surely? That was over hours since.'

Neither of us wished to mention Heathcliff's absence, as long as we could conceal it; so I replied, I didn't know how she took it into her head to sit up; and she said nothing.

The morning was fresh and cool; I threw back the lattice, and presently the room was filled with sweet scents from the garden; but Catherine called peevishly to me.

'Ellen, shut the window. I 'm starving!' And her teeth chattered as she shrunk closer to the almost extinguished embers.

'She 's ill,' said Hindley, taking her wrist; 'I suppose that 's the reason she would not go to bed. Damn it! I don't want to be troubled with more sickness here. What took you into the rain?'

'Running after t' lads, as usuald!' croaked Joseph, catching an opportunity, from our hesitation, to thrust in his evil tongue.

'If Aw wur yah, maister, Aw 'd just slam t' boards i' their faces all on 'em, gentle and simple! Never a day ut yah 're off, but yon cat Linton comes sneaking hither; and Miss Nelly, shoo 's a fine lass! shoo sits watching for ye i' t' kitchen; and as yah 're in at one door, he 's aht at t'other; and, then, wer grand lady goes a-coorting uf hor side! It 's bonny behaviour, lurking amang t' fields, after twelve ut' night, wi' that fahl, flaysome divil uf a gypsy, Heathcliff! They think *Aw'm* blind; but Aw 'm noan: now't ut t' soart!—Aw seed young Linton boath coming and going, and Aw seen *yah*' (directing his discourse to me), 'yah gooid fur nowt, slattenly witch! nip up und bolt intuh th' house, t' minute yah heard t' maister's horse fit clatter up t' road.' [1]

'Silence, eavesdropper!' cried Catherine; 'none of your insolence before me! Edgar Linton came yesterday by chance, Hindley; and it was *I* who told him to be off; because I knew you would not like to have met him as you were.'

'You lie, Cathy, no doubt,' answered her brother, 'and you are a confounded simpleton! But never mind Linton at present: tell me, were you not with Heathcliff last night? Speak the truth, now. You need not be afraid of harming him: though I hate him as much as ever, he did me a good turn a short time since, that will make my conscience tender of breaking his neck. To prevent it, I shall send him about his business, this very morning; and after he 's gone, I 'd advise you all to look sharp: I shall only have the more humour for you.'

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'I never saw Heathcliff last night,' answered Catherine, beginning to sob bitterly: 'and if you do turn him out of doors, I 'll go with him. But, perhaps, you 'll never have an opportunity: perhaps he 's gone.' Here she burst into uncontrollable grief, and the remainder of her words were inarticulate.

Hindley lavished on her a torrent of scornful abuse, and bid her get to her room immediately, or she shouldn't cry for nothing! I obliged her to obey; and I shall never forget what a scene she acted when we reached her chamber: it terrified me. I thought she was going mad, and I begged Joseph to run for the doctor.

It proved the commencement of delirium: Mr. Kenneth, as soon as he saw her, pronounced her dangerously ill; she had a fever.

He bled her, and he told me to let her live on whey-and-water gruel, and take care she did not throw herself downstairs or out of the window; and then he left: for he had enough to do in the parish, where two or three miles was the ordinary distance between cottage and cottage.

Though I cannot say I made a gentle nurse, and Joseph and the master were no better; and though our patient was as wearisome and headstrong as a patient could be, she weathered it through.

Old Mrs. Linton paid us several visits, to be sure, and set things to rights, and scolded and ordered us all; and when Catherine was convalescent, she insisted on conveying her to Thrushcross Grange: for which deliverance we were very grateful. But the poor dame had reason to repent of her kindness; she and her husband both took the fever, and died within a few days of each other.

Our young lady returned to us, saucier and more passionate, and haughtier than ever. Heathcliff had never been heard of since the evening of the thunderstorm; and, one day, I had the misfortune, when she had provoked me exceedingly, to lay the blame of his disappearance on her (where indeed it belonged, as she well knew). From that period, for several months, she ceased to hold any communication with me, save in the relation of a mere servant. Joseph fell under a ban also: he *would* speak his mind, and lecture her all the same as if she were a little girl; and she esteemed herself a woman, and our mistress, and thought that her recent illness gave her a claim to be treated with consideration. Then the doctor had said that she would not bear crossing much; she ought to have her own way; and it was nothing less than murder in her eyes for any one to presume to stand up and contradict her.

From Mr. Earnshaw and his companions she kept aloof; and tutored by Kenneth, and serious threats of a fit that often attended her rages, her brother allowed her whatever she pleased to demand, and generally avoided aggravating her fiery temper. He was rather *too* indulgent in humouring her caprices; not from affection, but from pride: he wished earnestly to see her bring honour to the family by an alliance with the Lintons, and as long as she let him alone she might trample us like slaves, for aught he cared!

Edgar Linton, as multitudes have been before and will be after him, was infatuated; and believed himself the happiest man alive on the day he led her to Gimmerton Chapel, three years subsequent to his father's death.

Much against my inclination, I was persuaded to leave Wuthering Heights and accompany her here. Little Hareton was nearly five years old, and I had just begun to teach him his letters. We made a sad parting; but Catherine's tears were more powerful than ours. When I refused to go, and when she found her entreaties did not move me, she went lamenting to her husband and brother. The former offered me munificent wages; the latter ordered me to pack up: he wanted no women in the house, he said, now that there was no mistress; and as to Hareton, the curate should take him in hand, by-and-by. And so I had but one choice left: to do as I was ordered. I told the master he got rid of all decent people only to run to ruin a little faster; I kissed Hareton good-bye; and since then he has been a stranger: and it 's very queer to think it, but I 've no doubt he has completely forgotten all about Ellen Dean, and that he was ever more than all the world to her, and she to him!

At this point of the housekeeper's story, she chanced to glance towards the timepiece over the chimney; and was in amazement on seeing the minute-hand measure half-past one. She would not hear of staying a second longer: in truth, I felt rather disposed to defer the sequel of her narrative myself. And now that she is vanished to her rest, and I have meditated for another hour or two, I shall summon courage to go, also, in spite of aching laziness of head and limbs.

CHAPTER X

A CHARMING introduction to a hermit's life! Four weeks' torture, tossing, and sickness! Oh, these bleak winds and bitter northern skies, and impassable roads, and dilatory country surgeons! And, oh, this dearth of the human physiognomy! and, worse than all, the terrible intimation of Kenneth that I need not expect to be out of doors till spring!

Mr. Heathcliff has just honoured me with a call. About seven days ago he sent me a brace of grouse—the last of the season. Scoundrel! He is not altogether guiltless in this illness of mine; and that I had a great mind to tell him. But, alas! how could I offend a man who was charitable enough to sit at my bedside a good hour, and talk on some other subject than pills and draughts, blisters and leeches?

This is quite an easy interval. I am too weak to read; yet I feel as if I could enjoy something interesting. Why not have up Mrs. Dean to finish her tale? I can recollect its chief incidents, as far as she had gone. Yes: I remember her hero had run off, and never been heard of for three years; and the heroine was married. I 'll ring: she 'll be delighted to find me capable of talking cheerfully.

Mrs. Dean came.

'It wants twenty minutes, sir, to taking the medicine,' she commenced.

'Away, away with it!' I replied; 'I desire to have——'

'The doctor says you must drop the powders.'

'With all my heart! Don't interrupt me. Come and take your seat here. Keep your fingers from that bitter phalanx of vials. Draw your knitting out of your pocket—that will do—now continue the history of Mr. Heathcliff, from where you left off, to the present day. Did he finish his education on the Continent, and come back a gentleman? or did he get a sizar's place at college, or escape to America, and earn honours by drawing blood from his foster-country? or make a fortune more promptly on the English highways?'

'He may have done a little in all these vocations, Mr. Lockwood; but I couldn't give my word for any. I stated before that I didn't know how he gained his money; neither am I aware of the means he took to raise his mind from the savage ignorance into which it was sunk: but, with your leave, I'll proceed in my own fashion, if you think it will amuse and not weary you. Are you feeling better this morning?'

'Much.'

'That's good news.'

I got Miss Catherine and myself to Thrushcross Grange; and, to my agreeable disappointment, she behaved infinitely better than I dared to expect. She seemed almost over fond of Mr. Linton; and even to his sister, she showed plenty of affection. They were both very attentive to her comfort, certainly. It was not the thorn bending to the honeysuckles, but the honeysuckles embracing the thorn. There were no mutual concessions: one stood erect, and the others yielded: and who *can* be ill natured and bad-tempered when they encounter neither opposition nor indifference?

I observed that Mr. Edgar had a deep-rooted fear of ruffling her humour. He concealed it from her; but if ever he heard me answer sharply, or saw any other servant grow cloudy at some imperious order of hers, he would show his trouble by a frown of displeasure that never darkened on his own account. He many a time spoke sternly to me about my pertness; and averred that the stab of a knife could not inflict a worse pang than he suffered at seeing his lady vexed.

Not to grieve a kind master, I learned to be less touchy; and, for the space of half a year, the gunpowder lay as harmless as sand, because no fire came near to explode it. Catherine had seasons of gloom and silence now and then: they were respected with sympathising silence by her husband, who ascribed them to an alteration in her constitution, produced by her perilous illness; as she was never subject to depression of spirits before. The return of sunshine was welcomed by answering sunshine from him. I believe I may assert that they were really in possession of deep and growing happiness.

It ended. Well, we *must* be for ourselves in the long-run; the mild and generous are only more justly selfish than the domineering; and it ended when circumstances caused each to feel that the one's interest was not the chief consideration in the other's thoughts.

On a mellow evening in September, I was coming from the garden with a heavy basket of apples which I had been gathering. It was dusk, and the moon looked over the high wall of the court, causing undefined shadows to lurk in the corners of the numerous projecting portions of the building. I set my burden on the house steps by the kitchen door, and lingered to rest, and draw in a few more breaths of the soft sweet air; my eyes were on the moon, and my back to the entrance, when I heard a voice behind me say—

'Nelly, is that you?'

It was a deep voice, and foreign in tone; yet there was something in the manner of pronouncing my name which made it sound familiar. I turned about to discover who spoke, fearfully; for the doors were shut, and I had seen nobody on approaching the steps.

Something stirred in the porch; and, moving nearer, I distinguished a tall man dressed in dark clothes, with dark face and hair. He leant against the side, and held his fingers on the latch as if intending to open for himself.

'Who can it be?' I thought. 'Mr. Earnshaw? Oh, no! The voice has no resemblance to his.'

'I have waited here an hour,' he resumed, while I continued staring; 'and the whole of that time all round has been as still as death. I dared not enter. You do not know me? Look, I 'm not a stranger!'

A ray fell on his features; the cheeks were sallow, and half covered with black whiskers; the brows lowering, the eyes deep set and singular. I remembered the eyes.

'What!' I cried, uncertain whether to regard him as a worldly visitor, and I raised my hands in amazement. 'What! you come back? Is it really you? Is it?'

'Yes, Heathcliff,' he replied, glancing from me up to the windows, which reflected a score of glittering moons, but showed no lights from within. 'Are they at home? where is she? Nelly, you are not glad! you needn't be so disturbed. Is she here? Speak! I want to have one word with her—your mistress. Go, and say some person from Gimmerton desires to see her.'

'How will she take it?' I exclaimed. 'What will she do? The surprise bewilders me—it will put her out of her head! And you *are* Heathcliff! But altered! Nay, there 's no comprehending it. Have you been for a soldier?'

'Go and carry my message,' he interrupted impatiently. 'I 'm in hell till you do!'

He lifted the latch, and I entered; but when I got to the parlour where Mr. and Mrs. Linton were, I could not persuade myself to proceed.

At length, I resolved on making an excuse to ask if they would have the candles lighted, and I opened the door.

They sat together in a window whose lattice lay back against the wall, and displayed, beyond the garden trees and the wild green park, the valley of Gimmerton, with a long line of mist winding nearly to its top (for very soon after you pass the chapel, as you may have noticed, the sough that runs from the marshes joins a beck which follows the bend of the glen). Wuthering Heights rose above this silvery vapour; but our old house was invisible; it rather dips down on the other side.

Both the room and its occupants, and the scene they gazed on, looked wondrously peaceful. I shrank reluctantly from performing my errand; and was actually going away leaving it unsaid, after having put my question about the candles, when a sense of my folly compelled me to return, and mutter:

'A person from Gimmerton wishes to see you, ma'am.'

'What does he want?' asked Mrs. Linton.

'I did not question him,' I answered.

'Well, close the curtains, Nelly,' she said; 'and bring up tea. I'll be back again directly.'

She quitted the apartment; Mr. Edgar inquired, carelessly, who it was.

'Some one the mistress does not expect,' I replied. 'That Heathcliff—you recollect him, sir—who used to live at Mr. Earnshaw's.'

'What! the gypsy—the ploughboy?' he cried. 'Why did you not say so to Catherine?'

'Hush! you must not call him by those names, master,' I said. 'She'd be sadly grieved to hear you. She was nearly heartbroken when he ran off. I guess his return will make a jubilee to her.'

Mr. Linton walked to a window on the other side of the room that overlooked the court. He unfastened it, and leant out. I suppose they were below, for he exclaimed quickly:

'Don't stand there, love! Bring the person in, if it be any one particular.'

Ere long, I heard the click of the latch, and Catherine flew upstairs, breathless and wild; too excited to show gladness: indeed, by her face, you would rather have surmised an awful calamity.

'Oh, Edgar, Edgar!' she panted, flinging her arms round his neck. 'Oh, Edgar, darling! Heathcliff's come back—he is!' And she tightened her embrace to a squeeze.

'Well, well,' cried her husband crossly, 'don't strangle me for that! He never struck me as such a marvellous treasure. There is no need to be frantic!'

'I know you didn't like him,' she answered, repressing a little the intensity of her delight. 'Yet, for my sake, you must be friends now. Shall I tell him to come up?'

'Here?' he said, 'into the parlour?'

'Where else?' she asked.

He looked vexed, and suggested the kitchen as a more suitable place for him.

Mrs. Linton eyed him with a droll expression—half angry, half laughing at his fastidiousness.

'No,' she added, after a while; 'I cannot sit in the kitchen. Set two tables here, Ellen: one for your master and Miss Isabella, being gentry; the other for Heathcliff and myself, being of the lower orders. Will that please you, dear? Or must I have a fire lighted elsewhere? If so, give directions. I'll run down and secure my guest. I'm afraid the joy is too great to be real!'

She was about to dart off again; but Edgar arrested her.

'*You* bid him step up,' he said, addressing me;

'and, Catherine, try to be glad, without being absurd! The whole household need not witness the sight of your welcoming a runaway servant as a brother.'

I descended, and found Heathcliff waiting under the porch, evidently anticipating an invitation to enter. He followed my guidance without waste of words, and I ushered him into the presence of the master and mistress, whose flushed cheeks betrayed signs of warm talking. But the lady's glowed with another feeling when her friend appeared at the door: she sprang forward, took both his hands, and led him to Linton; and then she seized Linton's reluctant fingers and crushed them into his.

Now fully revealed by the fire and candlelight, I was amazed, more than ever, to behold the transformation of Heathcliff. He had grown a tall, athletic, well-formed man; beside whom my master seemed quite slender and youth-like. His upright carriage suggested the idea of his having been in the army. His countenance was much older in expression and decision of feature than Mr. Linton's; it looked intelligent, and retained no marks of former degradation. A half-civilised ferocity lurked yet in the depressed brows and eyes full of black fire, but it was subdued; and his manner was even dignified: quite divested of roughness, though too stern for grace.

My master's surprise equalled or exceeded mine: he remained for a minute at a loss how to address the ploughboy, as he had called him. Heathcliff dropped his slight hand, and stood looking at him coolly till he chose to speak.

'Sit down, sir,' he said, at length. 'Mrs. Linton, recalling old times, would have me give you a cordial reception; and, of course, I am gratified when anything occurs to please her.'

'And I also,' answered Heathcliff, 'especially if it be anything in which I have a part. I shall stay an hour or two willingly.'

He took a seat opposite Catherine, who kept her gaze fixed on him as if she feared he would vanish were she to remove it. He did not raise his to her often: a quick glance now and then sufficed; but it flashed back, each time more confidently, the undisguised delight he drank from hers.

They were too much absorbed in their mutual joy to suffer embarrassment. Not so Mr. Edgar: he grew pale with pure annoyance: a feeling that reached its climax when his lady rose, and stepping across the rug, seized Heathcliff's hands again, and laughed like one beside herself.

'I shall think it a dream to-morrow!' she cried. 'I shall not be able to believe that I have seen, and touched, and spoken to you once more. And yet, cruel Heathcliff! you don't deserve this welcome. To be absent and silent for three years, and never to think of me!'

'A little more than you have thought of me,' he murmured. 'I heard of your marriage, Cathy, not long since; and, while waiting in the yard below, I meditated this plan:—just to have one glimpse of your face, a stare of surprise, perhaps, and pretended pleasure; afterwards settle my score with Hindley; and then prevent the law by doing execution on myself. Your welcome has put these ideas out of my mind; but beware of meeting me with another aspect next time! Nay, you'll not drive me off again. You were really sorry for me, were you? Well, there was cause. I've fought through a bitter life since I last heard your voice: and you must forgive me, for I struggled only for you!'

'Catherine, unless we are to have cold tea, please to come to the table,' interrupted Linton, striving to preserve his ordinary tone, and a due measure of politeness. 'Mr. Heathcliff will have a long walk, wherever he may lodge to-night; and I 'm thirsty.'

She took her post before the urn; and Miss Isabella came, summoned by the bell; then, having handed their chairs forward, I left the room.

The meal hardly endured ten minutes. Catherine's cup was never filled: she could neither eat nor drink. Edgar had made a slop in his saucer, and scarcely swallowed a mouthful.

Their guest did not protract his stay that evening above an hour longer. I asked, as he departed, if he went to Gimmerton?

'No, to Wuthering Heights,' he answered: 'Mr. Earnshaw invited me, when I called this morning.'

Mr. Earnshaw invited *him*! and *he* called on Mr. Earnshaw! I pondered this sentence painfully, after he was gone. Is he turning out a bit of a hypocrite, and coming into the country to work mischief under a cloak? I mused: I had a presentiment in the bottom of my heart that he had better have remained away.

About the middle of the night, I was wakened from my first nap by Mrs. Linton gliding into my chamber, taking a seat on my bedside, and pulling me by the hair to rouse me.

'I cannot rest, Ellen,' she said, by way of apology. 'And I want some living creature to keep me company in my happiness! Edgar is sulky, because I 'm glad of a thing that does not interest him: he refuses to open his mouth, except to utter pettish, silly speeches; and he affirmed I was cruel and selfish for wishing to talk when he was so sick and sleepy. He always contrives to be sick at the least cross! I gave a few sentences of commendation to Heathcliff, and he, either for a headache or a pang of envy, began to cry: so I got up and left him.'

'What use is it praising Heathcliff to him?' I answered. 'As lads they had an aversion to each other, and Heathcliff would hate just as much to hear him praised: it 's human nature. Let Mr. Linton alone about him, unless you would like an open quarrel between them.'

'But does it not show great weakness?' pursued she. 'I 'm not envious: I never feel hurt at the brightness of Isabella's yellow hair and the whiteness of her skin, at her dainty elegance, and the fondness all the family exhibit for her. Even you, Nelly, if we have a dispute sometimes, you back Isabella at once; and I yield like a foolish mother: I call her a darling, and flatter her into a good temper. It pleases her brother to see us cordial, and that pleases me. But they are very much alike: they are spoiled children, and fancy the world was made for their accommodation; and though I humour both, I think a smart chastisement might improve them, all the same.'

'You 're mistaken, Mrs. Linton,' said I. 'They humour you: I know what there would be to do if they did not. You can well afford to indulge their passing whims as long as their business is to anticipate all your desires. You may, however, fall out, at last, over something of equal consequence to both sides; and then those you term weak are very capable of being as obstinate as you.'

'And then we shall fight to the death, shan't we, Nelly?' she returned, laughing. 'No! I tell you, I have such faith in Linton's love, that I believe I might kill him, and he wouldn't wish to retaliate.'

I advised her to value him the more for his affection.

'I do,' she answered, 'but he needn't resort to whining for trifles. It is childish; and, instead of melting into tears because I said that Heathcliff was now worthy of any one's regard, and it would honour the first gentleman in the country to be his friend, he ought to have said it for me, and been delighted from sympathy. He must get accustomed to him, and he may as well like him: considering how Heathcliff has reason to object to him, I'm sure he behaved excellently!'

'What do you think of his going to Wuthering Heights?' I inquired. 'He is reformed in every respect, apparently: quite a Christian: offering the right hand of fellowship to his enemies all round!'

'He explained it,' she replied. 'I wonder as much as you. He said he called to gather information concerning me from you, supposing you resided there still; and Joseph told Hindley, who came out and fell to questioning him of what he had been doing, and how he had been living; and finally, desired him to walk in. There were some persons sitting at cards; Heathcliff joined them; my brother lost some money to him, and, finding him plentifully supplied, he requested that he would come again in the evening: to which he consented. Hindley is too reckless to select his acquaintance prudently: he doesn't trouble himself to reflect on the causes he might have for mistrusting one whom he has basely injured. But Heathcliff affirms his principal reason for resuming a connection with his ancient persecutor is a wish to install himself in quarters at walking distance from the Grange, and an attachment to the house where we lived together; and likewise a hope that I shall have more opportunities of seeing him there than I could have if he settled in Gimmerton. He means to offer liberal payment for permission to lodge at the Heights; and doubtless my brother's covetousness will prompt him to accept the terms: he was always greedy; though what he grasps with one hand he flings away with the other.'

'It 's a nice place for a young man to fix his dwelling in!' said I. 'Have you no fear of the consequences, Mrs. Linton?'

'None for my friend,' she replied: 'his strong head will keep him from danger; a little for Hindley: but he can't be made morally worse than he is; and I stand between him and bodily harm. The event of this evening has reconciled me to God and humanity! I had risen in angry rebellion against Providence. Oh, I 've endured very, very bitter misery, Nelly! If that creature knew how bitter, he 'd be ashamed to cloud its removal with idle petulance. It was kindness for him which induced me to bear it alone: had I expressed the agony I frequently felt, he would have been taught to long for its alleviation as ardently as I. However, it 's over, and I 'll take no revenge on his folly; I can afford to suffer anything hereafter! Should the meanest thing alive slap me on the cheek, I 'd not only turn the other, but I 'd ask pardon for provoking it; and, as a proof, I 'll go make my peace with Edgar instantly. Good-night! I 'm an angel!'

In this self-complacent conviction she departed; and the success of her fulfilled resolution was obvious on the morrow: Mr. Linton had not only abjured his peevishness (though his spirits seemed still subdued by Catherine's exuberance of vivacity), but he ventured no objection to her taking Isabella with her to Wuthering Heights in the afternoon; and she rewarded him with such a summer of sweetness and affection in return, as made the house a paradise for several days; both master and servants profiting from the perpetual sunshine.

Heathcliff—Mr. Heathcliff I should say in future—used the liberty of visiting at Thrushcross Grange cautiously, at first: he seemed estimating how far its owner would bear his intrusion. Catherine, also, deemed it judicious to moderate her expressions of pleasure in receiving him; and he gradually established his right to be expected.

He retained a great deal of the reserve for which his boyhood was remarkable; and that served to repress all startling demonstrations of feeling.. My master's uneasiness experienced a lull, and further circumstances diverted it into another channel for a space.

His new source of trouble sprang from the not-anticipated misfortune of Isabella Linton evincing a sudden and irresistible attraction towards the tolerated guest. She was at that time a charming young lady of eighteen; infantile in manners, though possessed of keen wit, keen feelings, and a keen temper, too, if irritated. Her brother, who loved her tenderly, was appalled at this fantastic preference. Leaving aside the degradation of an alliance with a nameless man, and the possible fact that his property, in default of heirs male, might pass into such a one's power, he had sense to comprehend Heathcliff's disposition: to know that, though his exterior was altered, his mind was unchangeable and unchanged. And he dreaded that mind: it revolted him: he shrank forebodingly from the idea of committing Isabella to its keeping.

He would have recoiled still more had he been aware that her attachment rose unsolicited, and was bestowed where it awakened no reciprocation of sentiment; for the minute he discovered its existence, he laid the blame on Heathcliff's deliberate designing.

We had all remarked, during some time, that Miss Linton fretted and pined over something. She grew cross and wearisome; snapping at and teasing Catherine continually, at the imminent risk of exhausting her limited patience. We excused her, to a certain extent, on the plea of ill-health: she was dwindling and fading before our eyes. But one day, when she had been peculiarly wayward, rejecting her breakfast, complaining that the servants did not do what she told them; that the mistress would allow her to be nothing in the house, and Edgar neglected her; that she had caught a cold with the doors being left open, and we let the parlour fire go out on purpose to vex her, with a hundred yet more frivolous accusations, Mrs. Linton peremptorily insisted that she should get to bed; and, having scolded her heartily, threatened to send for the doctor.

Mention of Kenneth caused her to exclaim, instantly, that her health was perfect, and it was only Catherine's harshness which made her unhappy.

'How can you say I am harsh, you naughty fondling?' cried the mistress, amazed at the unreasonable assertion. 'You are surely losing your reason. When have I been harsh, tell me?'

'Yesterday,' sobbed Isabella, 'and now!'

'Yesterday!' said her sister-in-law. 'On what occasion!'

'In our walk along the moor: you told me to ramble where I pleased, while you sauntered on with Mr. Heathcliff!'

'And that's your notion of harshness?' said Catherine, laughing. 'It was no hint that your company was superfluous: we didn't care whether you kept with us or not; I merely thought Heathcliff's talk would have nothing entertaining for your ears.'

'Oh, no,' wept the young lady; 'you wished me away, because you knew I liked to be there!'

'Is she sane?' asked Mrs. Linton, appealing to me. 'I 'll repeat our conversation, word for word, Isabella; and you point out any charm it could have had for you.'

'I don't mind the conversation,' she answered. 'I wanted to be with——'

'Well!' said Catherine, perceiving her hesitate to complete the sentence.

'With him: and I won't be always sent off!' she continued, kindling up. 'You are a dog in the manger, Cathy, and desire no one to be loved but yourself!'

'You are an impertinent little monkey!' exclaimed Mrs. Linton, in surprise. 'But I 'll not believe this idiocy! It is impossible that you can covet the admiration of Heathcliff—that you can consider him an agreeable person! I hope I have misunderstood you, Isabella?'

'No, you have not,' said the infatuated girl. 'I love him more than ever you loved Edgar; and he might love me, if you would let him!'

'I wouldn't be you for a kingdom, then!' Catherine declared emphatically: and she seemed to speak sincerely. 'Nelly, help me to convince her of her madness. Tell her what Heathcliff is: an unreclaimed creature, without refinement, without cultivation: an arid wilderness of furze and whinstone. I 'd as soon put that little canary into the park on a winter's day, as recommend you to bestow your heart on him! It is deplorable ignorance of his character, child, and nothing else, which makes that dream enter your head. Pray, don't imagine that he conceals depths of benevolence and affection beneath a stern exterior! He 's not a rough diamond—a pearl-containing oyster of a rustic: he 's a fierce, pitiless, wolfish man. I never say to him, "Let this or that enemy alone, because it would be ungenerous or cruel to harm them"; I say, "Let them alone, because *I* should hate them to be wronged": and he 'd crush you like a sparrow's egg, Isabella, if he found you a troublesome charge. I know he couldn't love a Linton; and yet he 'd be quite capable of marrying your fortune and expectations: avarice is growing with him a besetting sin. There 's my picture: and I 'm his friend—so much so, that had he thought seriously to catch you, I should, perhaps, have held my tongue, and let you fall into his trap.'

Miss Linton regarded her sister-in-law with indignation.

'For shame! for shame!' she repeated angrily. 'You are worse than twenty foes, you poisonous friend!'

'Ah! you won't believe me, then?' said Catherine. 'You think I speak from wicked selfishness?'

'I 'm certain you do,' retorted Isabella; 'and I shudder at you!'

'Good!' cried the other. 'Try for yourself, if that be your spirit: I have done, and yield the argument to your saucy insolence.'

'And I must suffer for her egotism!' she sobbed, as Mrs. Linton left the room. 'All, all is against me: she has blighted my single consolation. But she uttered falsehoods, didn't she? Mr. Heathcliff is not a fiend: he has an honourable soul, and a true one, or how could he remember her?'

'Banish him from your thoughts, Miss,' I said. 'He 's a bird of bad omen: no mate for you. Mrs. Linton spoke strongly, and yet I can't contradict her. She is better acquainted with his heart than I, or any one besides; and she never would represent him as worse than he is. Honest people don't hide their deeds. How has he been living? how has he got rich? why is he staying at Wuthering Heights, the house of a man whom he abhors? They say Mr. Earnshaw is worse and worse since he came. They sit up all night together continually, and Hindley has been borrowing money on his land, and does nothing but play and drink: I heard only a week ago—it was Joseph who told me—I met him at Gimmerton.

'"Nelly," he said, "we's hae a Crahnr's 'quest enah, at ahr folks. One on 'em 's a'most getten his finger cut off wi' hauding t' other froo' stickin' hisseln loike a cawlf. That 's maister, yah knaw, ut 's soa up uh going tuh t' grand 'sizes. He 's noan feared uh t' Bench uh judges, norther Paul, nur Peter, nur John, nor Matthew, nor noan on 'em, nut he! He fair likes—he langs tuh set his brazened face agean 'em! And yon bonny lad Heathcliff, yah mind, he 's a rare un! He can girn a laugh as well 's onybody at a raight divil's jest. Does he never say nowt of his fine living amang us, when he goas tuh t' Grange? This is t' way on't:—up at sun-dahn: dice, brandy, cloised shutters, und can'lelught till next day at nooin: then, t' fooil gangs banning un raving tuh his cham'er, makking dacent fowks dig thur fingers i' thur ears fur varry shaume; un' the knave, wah he carn cahnt his brass, un' ate, un' sleep, un' off tuh his neighbour's tuh gossip wi' t' wife. I' course, he tells Dame Catherine hah hor father's goold runs intuh his pocket, and her fathur's son gallops dahn t' Broad road, while he flees afore tuh oppen t' pikes?"[1] Now, Miss Linton, Joseph is an old rascal, but no liar; and, if his account of Heathcliff's conduct be true, you would never think of desiring such a husband, would you?'

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[1] 'Nelly,' he said, 'we 's hae a crowner's 'quest enow, at ahr folks. One on 'em 's a'most getting his finger cut off wi' hauding t' other fro' stickin' hisseln loike a cawlf. That 's maister, yah knaw, 'at 's soa up

'You are leagued with the rest, Ellen!' she replied. 'I'll not listen to your slanders. What malevolence you must have to wish to convince me that there is no happiness in the world!'

Whether she would have got over this fancy if left to herself, or persevered in nursing it perpetually, I cannot say: she had little time to reflect. The day after, there was a justice-meeting at the next town; my master was obliged to attend; and Mr. Heathcliff, aware of his absence, called rather earlier than usual.

Catherine and Isabella were sitting in the library, on hostile terms, but silent. The latter alarmed at her recent indiscretion, and the disclosure she had made of her secret feelings in a transient fit of passion; the former, on mature consideration, really offended with her companion; and, if she laughed again at her pertness, inclined to make it no laughing matter to *her*.

She did laugh as she saw Heathcliff pass the window. I was sweeping the hearth, and I noticed a mischievous

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o' going tuh t' grand 'sizes. He's noan feared o' t' bench o' judges, norther Paul, nur Peter, nur John, nur Matthew, nor noan on 'em, not he! He fair likes—he langs to set his brazen face agean 'em! And yon bonny lad Heathcliff, yah mind, he's a rare un? He can girn a laugh as well's onybody at a raight divil's jest. Does he niver say nowt of his fine living amang us, when he goes to t' Grange? This is t' way on't:—up at sun-down: dice, brandy, cloised shutters, und can'lelight till next day at noon: then, t' fooil gangs banning un raving to his cham'er, makking dacent fowks dig thur fingers i' thur lugs fur varry shame; un' the knave, why he can caint his brass, un' ate, un' sleep, un' off to his neighbour's to gossip wi' t' wife. I' course, he tells Dame Catherine how her fathur's goold runs into his pocket, and her fathur's son gallops down t' broad road, while he flees afore to oppen t' pikes?'—C. B.'s Revision.

smile on her lips. Isabella, absorbed in her meditations, or a book, remained till the door opened; and it was too late to attempt an escape, which she would gladly have done had it been practicable.

'Come in, that's right!' exclaimed the mistress gaily, pulling a chair to the fire. 'Here are two people sadly in need of a third to thaw the ice between them; and you are the very one we should both of us choose. Heathcliff, I'm proud to show you, at last, somebody that dotes on you more than myself. I expect you to feel flattered. Nay, it's not Nelly; don't look at her! My poor little sister-in-law is breaking her heart by mere contemplation of your physical and moral beauty. It lies in your own power to be Edgar's brother! No, no, Isabella, you shan't run off,' she continued, arresting, with feigned playfulness, the confounded girl, who had risen indignantly. 'We were quarrelling like cats about you, Heathcliff; and I was fairly beaten in protestations of devotion and admiration: and, moreover, I was informed that if I would but have the manners to stand aside, my rival, as she will have herself to be, would shoot a shaft into your soul that would fix you for ever, and send my image into eternal oblivion!'

'Catherine!' said Isabella, calling up her dignity, and disdaining to struggle from the tight grasp that held her. 'I'd thank you to adhere to the truth and not slander me, even in joke! Mr. Heathcliff, be kind enough to bid this friend of yours release me: she forgets that you and I are not intimate acquaintances; and what amuses her is painful to me beyond expression.'

As the guest answered nothing, but took his seat, and looked thoroughly indifferent what sentiments she cherished concerning him, she turned and whispered an earnest appeal for liberty to her tormentor.

'By no means!' cried Mrs. Linton in answer. 'I won't be named a dog in the manger again. You *shall* stay: now then! Heathcliff, why don't you evince satisfaction at my pleasant news? Isabella swears that the love Edgar has for me is nothing to that she entertains for you. I 'm sure she made some speech of the kind; did she not, Ellen? And she has fasted ever since the day before yesterday's walk, from sorrow and rage that I despatched her out of your society under the idea of its being unacceptable.'

'I think you belie her,' said Heathcliff, twisting his chair to face them. 'She wishes to be out of my society now, at any rate!'

And he stared hard at the object of discourse, as one might do at a strange repulsive animal: a centipede from the Indies, for instance, which curiosity leads one to examine in spite of the aversion it raises.

The poor thing couldn't bear that: she grew white and red in rapid succession, and, while tears beaded her lashes, bent the strength of her small fingers to loosen the firm clutch of Catherine; and perceiving that as fast as she raised one finger off her arm another closed down, and she could not remove the whole together, she began to make use of her nails; and their sharpness presently ornamented the detainer's with crescents of red.

'There 's a tigress!' exclaimed Mrs. Linton, setting her free, and shaking her hand with pain. 'Begone, for God's sake, and hide your vixen face! How foolish to reveal those talons to *him*. Can't you fancy the conclusions he 'll draw? Look, Heathcliff! they are instruments that will do execution—you must beware of your eyes.'

'I 'd wrench them off her fingers, if they ever menaced me,' he answered brutally, when the door had closed after her. 'But what did you mean by teasing the creature in that manner, Cathy? You were not speaking the truth, were you?'

'I assure you I was,' she returned. 'She has been pining for your sake several weeks; and raving about you this morning, and pouring forth a deluge of abuse, because I represented your failings in a plain light, for the purpose of mitigating her adoration. But don't notice it further: I wished to punish her sauciness, that 's all. I like her too well, my dear Heathcliff, to let you absolutely seize and devour her up.'

'And I like her too ill to attempt it,' said he, 'except in a very ghoulish fashion. You 'd hear of odd things if I lived alone with that mawkish, waxen face: the most ordinary would be painting on its white the colours of the rainbow, and turning the blue eyes black, every day or two: they detestably resemble Linton's.'

'Delectably!' observed Catherine. 'They are dove's eyes—angels!'

'She 's her brother's heir, is she not?' he asked, after a brief silence.

'I should be sorry to think so,' returned his companion. 'Half a dozen nephews shall erase her title, please Heaven. Abstract your mind from the subject at present: you are too prone to covet your neighbour's goods; remember *this* neighbour's goods are mine.'

'If they were *mine*, they would be none the less that,' said Heathcliff; 'but though Isabella Linton may be silly, she is scarcely mad; and, in short, we 'll dismiss the matter, as you advise.'

From their tongues, they did dismiss it; and Catherine, probably, from her thoughts. The other, I felt certain, recalled it often in the course of the evening. I saw him smile to himself—grin rather—

and lapse into ominous musing whenever Mrs. Linton had occasion to be absent from the apartment.

I determined to watch his movements. My heart invariably cleaved to the master's, in preference to Catherine's side: with reason I imagined, for he was kind, and trustful, and honourable; and she—she could not be called the *opposite*, yet she seemed to allow herself such wide latitude, that I had little faith in her principles, and still less sympathy for her feelings. I wanted something to happen which might have the effect of freeing both Wuthering Heights and the Grange of Mr. Heathcliff, quietly; leaving us as we had been prior to his advent. His visits were a continual nightmare to me; and, I suspected, to my master also. His abode at the Heights was an oppression past explaining. I felt that God had forsaken the stray sheep there to its own wicked wanderings, and an evil beast prowled between it and the fold, waiting his time to spring and destroy.

CHAPTER XI

SOMETIMES, while meditating on these things in solitude, I 've got up in a sudden terror, and put on my bonnet to go see how all was at the farm. I 've persuaded my conscience that it was a duty to warn him how people talked regarding his ways; and then I 've recollected his confirmed bad habits, and, hopeless of benefiting him, have flinched from re-entering the dismal house, doubting if I could bear to be taken at my word.

One time I passed the old gate, going out of my way, on a journey to Gimmerton. It was about the period that my narrative has reached: a bright frosty afternoon; the ground bare, and the road hard and dry.

I came to a stone where the highway branches off on to the moor at your left hand; a rough sand-pillar, with the letters W. H. cut on its north side, on the east, G., and on the south-west, T. G. It serves as guide-post to the Grange, the Heights, and village.

The sun shone yellow on its grey head, reminding me of summer; and I cannot say why, but all at once, a gush of child's sensations flowed into my heart. Hindley and I held it a favourite spot twenty years before.

I gazed long at the weather-worn block; and, stooping down, perceived a hole near the bottom still full of snail-shells and pebbles, which we were fond of storing there with more perishable things; and, as fresh as reality, it appeared that I beheld my early playmate seated on the withered turf: his dark, square head bent forward, and his little hand scooping out the earth with a piece of slate.

'Poor Hindley!' I exclaimed involuntarily.

I started: my bodily eye was cheated into a momentary belief that the child lifted its face and stared straight into mine! It vanished in a twinkling; but immediately I felt an irresistible yearning to be at the Heights. Superstition urged me to comply with this impulse: supposing he should be dead! I thought —or should die soon!—supposing it were a sign of death!

The nearer I got to the house the more agitated I grew; and on catching sight of it I trembled in every limb. The apparition had outstripped me: it stood looking through the gate. That was my first idea on observing an elf-locked, brown-eyed boy setting his ruddy countenance against the bars. Further reflection suggested this must be Hareton, *my* Hareton, not altered greatly since I left him, ten months since.

'God bless thee, darling!' I cried, forgetting instantaneously my foolish fears. 'Hareton, it 's Nelly! Nelly, thy nurse.'

He retreated out of arm's length, and picked up a large flint.

'I am come to see thy father, Hareton,' I added, guessing from the action that Nelly, if she lived in his memory at all, was not recognised as one with me.

He raised his missile to hurl it; I commenced a soothing speech, but could not stay his hand: the stone struck my bonnet; and then ensued, from the stammering lips of the little fellow, a string of curses, which, whether he comprehended them or not, were delivered with practised emphasis, and distorted his baby features into a shocking expression of malignity.

You may be certain this grieved more than angered me. Fit to cry, I took an orange from my pocket, and offered it to propitiate him.

He hesitated, and then snatched it from my hold; as if he fancied I only intended to tempt and disappoint him.

I showed another, keeping it out of his reach.

'Who has taught you those fine words, my bairn?' I inquired. 'The curate?'

'Damn the curate, and thee! Gie me that,' he replied.

'Tell us where you got your lessons, and you shall have it,' said I. 'Who 's your master?'

'Devil daddy,' was his answer.

'And what do you learn from daddy?' I continued.

He jumped at the fruit; I raised it higher. 'What does he teach you?' I asked.

'Naught,' said he, 'but to keep out of his gait. Daddy cannot bide me, because I swear at him.'

'Ah! and the devil teaches you to swear at daddy?' I observed.

'Aye—nay,' he drawled.

'Who, then?'

'Heathcliff.'

'I asked if he liked Mr. Heathcliff.'

'Aye!' he answered again.

Desiring to have his reasons for liking him, I could only gather the sentences—'I known't: he pays dad back what he gies to me—he curses daddy for cursing me. He says I mun do as I will.'

'And the curate does not teach you to read and write, then?' I pursued.

'No, I was told the curate should have his —— teeth dashed down his —— throat, if he stepped over the threshold—Heathcliff had promised that!'

I put the orange in his hand, and bade him tell his father that a woman called Nelly Dean was waiting to speak with him, by the garden gate.

He went up the walk, and entered the house; but, instead of Hindley, Heathcliff appeared on the door stones; and I turned directly and ran down the road as hard as ever I could race, making no halt till I gained the guide-post, and feeling as scared as if I had raised a goblin.

This is not much connected with Miss Isabella's affair: except that it urged me to resolve further on mounting vigilant guard, and doing my utmost to check the spread of such bad influence at the Grange: even though I should wake a domestic storm, by thwarting Mrs. Linton's pleasure.

The next time Heathcliff came, my young lady chanced to be feeding some pigeons in the court. She had never spoken a word to her sister-in-law for three days; but she had likewise dropped her fretful complaining, and we found it a great comfort.

Heathcliff had not the habit of bestowing a single unnecessary civility on Miss Linton, I knew. Now, as soon as he beheld her, his first precaution was to take a sweeping survey of the house-front. I was standing by the kitchen window, but I drew out of sight. He then stepped across the pavement to her, and said something: she seemed embarrassed, and desirous of getting away; to prevent it, he laid his hand on her arm. She averted her face: he apparently put some question which she had no mind to answer. There was another rapid glance at the house, and supposing himself unseen, the scoundrel had the impudence to embrace her.

'Judas! Traitor!' I ejaculated. 'You are a hypocrite, too, are you? A deliberate deceiver.'

'Who is, Nelly?' said Catherine's voice at my elbow: I had been over intent on watching the pair outside to mark her entrance.

'Your worthless friend!' I answered warmly: 'the sneaking rascal yonder. Ah, he has caught a glimpse of us—he is coming in! I wonder will he have the heart to find a plausible excuse for making love to Miss, when he told you he hated her?'

Mrs. Linton saw Isabella tear herself free, and run into the garden; and a minute after, Heathcliff opened the door.

I couldn't withhold giving some loose to my indignation; but Catherine angrily insisted on silence, and threatened to order me out of the kitchen, if I dared be so presumptuous as to put in my insolent tongue.

'To hear you, people might think *you* were the mistress!' she cried. 'You want setting down in your right place! Heathcliff, what are you about, raising this stir? I said you must let Isabella alone!—I beg you will, unless you are tired of being received here, and wish Linton to draw the bolts against you!'

'God forbid that he should try!' answered the black villain. I detested him just then. 'God keep him meek and patient! Every day I grow madder after sending him to heaven!'

'Hush!' said Catherine, shutting the inner door. 'Don't vex me. Why have you disregarded my request? Did she come across you on purpose?'

'What is it to you?' he growled. 'I have a right to kiss her, if she chooses; and you have no right to object. I am not *your* husband: *you* needn't be jealous of me!'

'I 'm not jealous *of* you,' replied the mistress; 'I 'm jealous *for* you. Clear your face: you shan't scowl at me! If you like Isabella, you shall marry her. But do you like her? Tell the truth, Heathcliff! There, you won't answer. I 'm certain you don't!'

'And would Mr. Linton approve of his sister marrying that man?' I inquired.

'Mr. Linton should approve,' returned my lady decisively.

'He might spare himself the trouble,' said Heathcliff: 'I could do as well without his approbation. And as to you, Catherine, I have a mind to speak a few words now, while we are at it. I want you to be aware that I *know* you have treated me infernally—infernally! Do you hear? And if you flatter yourself that I don't perceive it, you are a fool; and if you think I can be consoled by sweet words, you are an idiot; and if you fancy I 'll suffer unrevenged, I 'll convince you of the contrary, in a very little while! Meantime, thank you for telling me your sister-in-law's secret: I swear I 'll make the most of it. And stand you aside!'

'What new phase of his character is this?' exclaimed Mrs. Linton, in amazement. 'I 've treated you infernally—and you 'll take revenge! How will you take it, ungrateful brute? How have I treated you infernally?'

'I seek no revenge on you,' replied Heathcliff less vehemently. 'That 's not the plan. The tyrant grinds down his slaves and they don't turn against him; they crush those beneath them. You are welcome to torture me to death for your amusement, only allow me to amuse myself a little in the same style, and refrain from insult as much as you are able. Having levelled my palace, don't erect a hovel and complacently admire your own charity in giving me that for a home. If I imagined you really wished me to marry Isabella, I 'd cut my throat!'

'Oh, the evil is that I am *not* jealous, is it?' cried Catherine. 'Well, I won't repeat my offer of a wife: it is as bad as offering Satan a lost soul. Your bliss lies, like his, in inflicting misery. You prove it. Edgar is restored from the ill-temper he gave way to at your coming; I begin to be secure and tranquil; and you, restless to know us at peace, appear resolved on exciting a quarrel. Quarrel with Edgar, if you please, Heathcliff, and deceive his sister: you 'll hit on exactly the most efficient method of revenging yourself on me.'

The conversation ceased. Mrs. Linton sat down by the fire, flushed and gloomy. The spirit which served her was growing intractable: she could neither lay nor control it. He stood on the hearth with folded arms, brooding on his evil thoughts; and in this position I left them to seek the master, who was wondering what kept Catherine below so long.

'Ellen,' said he, when I entered, 'have you seen your mistress?'

'Yes; she 's in the kitchen, sir,' I answered. 'She 's sadly put out by Mr. Heathcliff's behaviour: and, indeed, I do think it 's time to arrange his visits on another footing. There 's harm in being too soft, and now it 's come to this——' And I related the scene in the court, and, as near as I dared, the whole subsequent dispute. I fancied it could not be very prejudicial to Mrs. Linton; unless she made it so afterwards, by assuming the defensive for her guest.

Edgar Linton had difficulty in hearing me to the close. His first words revealed that he did not clear his wife of blame.

'This is insufferable!' he exclaimed. 'It is disgraceful that she should own him for a friend, and force his company on me! Call me two men out of the hall, Ellen. Catherine shall linger no longer to argue with the low ruffian—I have humoured her enough.'

He descended, and bidding the servants wait in the passage, went, followed by me, to the kitchen. Its occupants had recommenced their angry discussion: Mrs. Linton, at least, was scolding with renewed vigour: Heathcliff had moved to the window, and hung his head, somewhat cowed by her violent rating apparently.

He saw the master first, and made a hasty motion that she should be silent; which she obeyed, abruptly, on discovering the reason of his intimation.

'How is this?' said Linton, addressing her; 'what notion of propriety must you have to remain here, after the language which has been held to you by that blackguard? I suppose, because it is his ordinary talk, you think nothing of it: you are habituated to his baseness, and, perhaps, imagine I can get used to it too!'

'Have you been listening at the door, Edgar?' asked the mistress, in a tone particularly calculated to provoke her husband, implying both carelessness and contempt of his irritation.

Heathcliff, who had raised his eyes at the former speech, gave a sneering laugh at the latter; on purpose, it seemed, to draw Mr. Linton's attention to him.

He succeeded; but Edgar did not mean to entertain him with any high flights of passion.

'I have been so far forbearing with you, sir,' he said quietly; 'not that I was ignorant of your miserable, degraded character, but I felt you were only partly responsible for that; and Catherine wishing to keep up your acquaintance, I acquiesced—foolishly. Your presence is a moral poison that would contaminate the most virtuous: for that cause, and to prevent worse consequences, I shall deny you hereafter admission into this house, and give notice now that I require your instant departure. Three minutes' delay will render it involuntary and ignominious.'

Heathcliff measured the height and breadth of the speaker with an eye full of derision.

'Cathy, this lamb of yours threatens like a bull!' he said. 'It is in danger of splitting its skull against my knuckles. By God! Mr. Linton, I'm mortally sorry that you are not worth knocking down!'

My master glanced towards the passage, and signed me to fetch the men: he had no intention of hazarding a personal encounter.

I obeyed the hint; but Mrs. Linton, suspecting something, followed ; and when I attempted to call them, she pulled me back, slammed the door to, and locked it.

'Fair means !' she said, in answer to her husband's look of angry surprise. 'If you have not the courage to attack him, make an apology, or allow yourself to be beaten. It will correct you of feigning more valour than you possess. No, I 'll swallow the key before you shall get it ! I 'm delightfully rewarded for my kindness to each ! After constant indulgence of one's weak nature, and the other's bad one, I earn for thanks two samples of blind ingratitude, stupid to absurdity ! Edgar, I was defending you and yours ; and I wish Heathcliff may flog you sick, for daring to think an evil thought of me !'

It did not need the medium of a flogging to produce that effect on the master. He tried to wrest the key from Catherine's grasp, and for safety she flung it into the hottest part of the fire ; whereupon Mr. Edgar was taken with a nervous trembling, and his countenance grew deadly pale. For his life he could not avert that access of emotion : mingled anguish and humiliation overcame him completely. He leant on the back of a chair, and covered his face.

'Oh, heavens ! In old days this would win you knighthood !' exclaimed Mrs. Linton. 'We are vanquished ! we are vanquished ! Heathcliff would as soon lift a finger at you as the king would march his army against a colony of mice. Cheer up ! you shan't be hurt ! Your type is not a lamb, it 's a sucking leveret.'

'I wish you joy of the milk-blooded coward, Cathy !' said her friend. 'I compliment you on your taste. And that is the slavering, shivering thing you preferred to me ! I would not strike him with my fist, but I 'd kick him with my foot, and experience considerable satisfaction. Is he weeping, or is he going to faint for fear?'

The fellow approached and gave the chair on which Linton rested a push. He'd better have kept his distance: my master quickly sprang erect, and struck him full on the throat a blow that would have levelled a slighter man.

It took his breath for a minute; and while he choked, Mr. Linton walked out by the back door into the yard, and from thence to the front entrance.

'There! you've done with coming here,' cried Catherine. 'Get away, now; he'll return with a brace of pistols, and half a dozen assistants. If he did overhear us, of course he'd never forgive you. You've played me an ill turn, Heathcliff! But go—make haste! I'd rather see Edgar at bay than you.'

'Do you suppose I'm going with that blow burning in my gullet?' he thundered. 'By hell, no! I'll crush his ribs in like a rotten hazel-nut before I cross the threshold! If I don't floor him now, I shall murder him some time; so, as you value his existence, let me get at him!'

'He is not coming,' I interposed, framing a bit of a lie. 'There's the coachman and the two gardeners; you'll surely not wait to be thrust into the road by them! Each has a bludgeon; and master will, very likely, be watching from the parlour windows, to see that they fulfil his orders.'

The gardeners and coachman *were* there; but Linton was with them. They had already entered the court. Heathcliff, on second thoughts, resolved to avoid a struggle against three underlings: he seized the poker, smashed the lock from the inner door, and made his escape as they tramped in.

Mrs. Linton, who was very much excited, bade me accompany her upstairs. She did not know my share in contributing to the disturbance, and I was anxious to keep her in ignorance.

'I 'm nearly distracted, Nelly!' she exclaimed, throwing herself on the sofa. 'A thousand smiths' hammers are beating in my head! Tell Isabella to shun me; this uproar is owing to her; and should she or any one else aggravate my anger at present, I shall get wild. And, Nelly, say to Edgar, if you see him again to-night, that I 'm in danger of being seriously ill. I wish it may prove true. He has startled and distressed me shockingly! I want to frighten him. Besides, he might come and begin a string of abuse or complainings; I 'm certain I should recriminate, and God knows where we should end! Will you do so, my good Nelly? You are aware that I am no way blamable in this matter. What possessed him to turn listener? Heathcliff's talk was outrageous, after you left us; but I could soon have diverted him from Isabella, and the rest meant nothing. Now all is dashed wrong; by the fool's craving to hear evil of self, that haunts some people like a demon! Had Edgar never gathered our conversation, he would never have been the worse for it. Really, when he opened on me in that unreasonable tone of displeasure after I had scolded Heathcliff till I was hoarse for *him*, I did not care hardly what they did to each other; especially as I felt that, however the scene closed, we should all be driven asunder for nobody knows how long! Well, if I cannot keep Heathcliff for my friend—if Edgar will be mean and jealous, I 'll try to break their hearts by breaking my own. That will be a prompt way of finishing all, when I am pushed to extremity! But it 's a deed to be reserved for a forlorn hope; I 'd not take Linton by surprise with it. To this point he has been discreet in dreading to provoke me; you must represent the peril of quitting that policy, and remind him of my passionate temper, verging, when kindled, on frenzy. I wish you could dismiss that apathy out of your countenance, and look rather more anxious about me.'

The stolidity with which I received these instructions was, no doubt, rather exasperating: for they were delivered in perfect sincerity; but I believed a person who could plan the turning of her fits of passion to account, beforehand, might by exerting her will, manage to control herself tolerably, even while under their influence; and I did not wish to 'frighten' her husband, as she said, and multiply his annoyances for the purpose of serving her selfishness.

Therefore I said nothing when I met the master coming towards the parlour; but I took the liberty of turning back to listen whether they would resume their quarrel together.

He began to speak first.

'Remain where you are, Catherine,' he said, without any anger in his voice, but with much sorrowful despondency. 'I shall not stay. I am neither come to wrangle nor be reconciled; but I wish just to learn whether, after this evening's events, you intend to continue your intimacy with——'

'Oh, for mercy's sake,' interrupted the mistress, stamping her foot, 'for mercy's sake, let us hear no more of it now! Your cold blood cannot be worked into a fever: your veins are full of ice-water; but mine are boiling, and the sight of such chillness makes them dance.'

'To get rid of me, answer my question,' persevered Mr. Linton. 'You *must* answer it; and that violence does not alarm me. I have found that you can be as stoical as any one, when you please. Will you give up Heathcliff hereafter, or will you give up me. It is impossible for you to be *my* friend and *his* at the same time; and I absolutely *require* to know which you choose.'

'I require to be let alone!' exclaimed Catherine furiously. 'I demand it! Don't you see I can scarcely stand? Edgar, you— leave me!'

She rang the bell till it broke with a twang; I entered leisurely. It was enough to try the temper of a saint, such senseless, wicked rages! There she lay dashing her head against the arm of the sofa, and grinding her teeth, so that you might fancy she would crash them to splinters!

Mr. Linton stood looking at her in sudden compunction and fear. He told me to fetch some water. She had no breath for speaking.

I brought a glass full; and as she would not drink, I sprinkled it on her face. In a few seconds she stretched herself out stiff, and turned up her eyes, while her cheeks, at once blanched and livid, assumed the aspect of death.

Linton looked terrified.

'There is nothing in the world the matter,' I whispered. I did not want him to yield, though I could not help being afraid in my heart.

'She has blood on her lips!' he said, shuddering.

'Never mind!' I answered tartly. And I told him how she had resolved, previous to his coming, on exhibiting a fit of frenzy.

I incautiously gave the account aloud, and she heard me; for she started up—her hair flying over her shoulders, her eyes flashing, the muscles of her neck and arms standing out preternaturally. I made up my mind for broken bones, at least; but she only glared about her for an instant, and then rushed from the room.

The master directed me to follow; I did, to her chamber door: she hindered me from going further by securing it against me.

As she never offered to descend to breakfast next morning, I went to ask whether she would have some carried up.

'No!' she replied peremptorily.

The same question was repeated at dinner and tea; and again on the morrow after, and received the same answer.

Mr. Linton, on his part, spent his time in the library, and did not inquire concerning his wife's occupations. Isabella and he had had an hour's interview, during which he tried to elicit from her some sentiment of proper horror for Heathcliff's advances: but he could make nothing of her evasive replies, and was obliged to close the examination unsatisfactorily; adding, however, a solemn warning, that if she were so insane as to encourage that worthless suitor, it would dissolve all bonds of relationship between herself and him.

CHAPTER XII

WHILE Miss Linton moped about the park and garden, always silent, and almost always in tears; and her brother shut himself up among books that he never opened—wearying, I guessed, with a continual vague expectation that Catherine, repenting her conduct, would come of her own accord to ask pardon, and seek a reconciliation—and while *she* fasted pertinaciously, under the idea, probably, that at every meal Edgar was ready to choke for her absence, and pride alone held him from running to cast himself at her feet; I went about my household duties, convinced that the Grange had but one sensible soul in its walls, and that lodged in my body.

I wasted no condolences on Miss, nor any expostulations on my mistress; nor did I pay attention to the sighs of my master, who yearned to hear his lady's name, since he might not hear her voice.

I determined they should come about as they pleased for me; and though it was a tiresomely slow process, I began to rejoice at length in a faint dawn of its progress: as I thought at first.

Mrs. Linton, on the third day, unbarred her door, and having finished the water in her pitcher and decanter, desired a renewed supply, and a basin of gruel, for she believed she was dying. That I set down as a speech meant for Edgar's ears; I believed no such thing, so I kept it to myself and brought her some tea and dry toast.

She ate and drank eagerly; and sank back on her pillow again, clenching her hands and groaning.

'Oh, I will die,' she exclaimed, 'since no one cares anything about me. I wish I had not taken that.'

Then a good while after I heard her murmur:

'No, I 'll not die—he 'd be glad—he does not love me at all—he would never miss me!'

'Did you want anything, ma'am?' I inquired, still preserving my external composure in spite of her ghastly countenance and strange exaggerated manner.

'What is that apathetic being doing?' she demanded, pushing the thick entangled locks from her wasted face. 'Has he fallen into a lethargy, or is he dead?'

'Neither,' replied I; 'if you mean Mr. Linton. He 's tolerably well, I think, though his studies occupy him rather more than they ought: he is continually among his books, since he has no other society.'

I should not have spoken so, if I had known her true condition, but I could not get rid of the notion that she acted a part of her disorder.

'Among his books!' she cried, confounded. 'And I dying! I on the brink of the grave! My God! does he know how I 'm altered?' continued she, staring at her reflection in a mirror hanging against the opposite wall. 'Is that Catherine Linton? He imagines me in a pet—in play, perhaps. Cannot you inform him that it is frightful earnest? Nelly, if it be not too late, as soon as I learn how he feels, I 'll choose between these two: either to starve at once—that would be no punishment unless he had a heart—or to recover, and leave the country. Are you speaking the truth about him now? Take care. Is he actually so utterly indifferent for my life?'

'Why, ma'am,' I answered, 'the master has no idea of your being deranged; and of course he does not fear that you will let yourself die of hunger.'

'You think not? Cannot you tell him I will?' she returned. 'Persuade him! speak of your own mind: say you are certain I will!'

'No, you forget, Mrs. Linton,' I suggested, 'that you have eaten some food with a relish this evening, and to-morrow you will perceive its good effects.'

'If I were only sure it would kill him,' she interrupted, 'I 'd kill myself directly! These three awful nights, I 've never closed my lids—and oh, I 've been tormented! I 've been haunted, Nelly! But I begin to fancy you don't like me. How strange! I thought, though everybody hated and despised each other, they could not avoid loving me. And they have all turned to enemies in a few hours: *they* have, I 'm positive; the people *here*. How dreary to meet death, surrounded by their cold faces! Isabella, terrified and repelled, afraid to enter the room, it would be so dreadful to watch Catherine go. And Edgar standing solemnly by to see it over; then offering prayers of thanks to God for restoring peace to his house, and going back to his *books*! What in the name of all that feels has he to do with *books*, when I am dying?'

She could not bear the notion which I had put into her head of Mr. Linton's philosophical resignation. Tossing about, she increased her feverish bewilderment to madness, and tore the pillow with her teeth; then raising herself up all burning, desired that I would open the window. We were in the middle of winter, the wind blew strong from the north-east, and I objected.

Both the expressions flitting over her face, and the changes of her moods, began to alarm me terribly; and brought to my recollection her former illness, and the doctor's injunction that she should not be crossed.

A minute previously she was violent; now, supported on one arm, and not noticing my refusal to obey her, she seemed to find childish diversion in pulling the feathers from the rents she had just made, and ranging them on the sheet according to their different species: her mind had strayed to other associations.

'That 's a turkey's,' she murmured to herself; 'and this is a wild duck's; and this is a pigeon's. Ah, they put pigeons' feathers in the pillows—no wonder I couldn't die! Let me take care to throw it on the floor when I lie down. And here is a moor-cock's; and this—I should know it among a thousand—it 's a lapwing's. Bonny bird; wheeling over our heads in the middle of the moor. It wanted to get to its nest, for the clouds touched the swells, and it felt rain coming. This feather was picked up from the heath, the bird was not shot: we saw its nest in the winter, full of little skeletons. Heathcliff set a trap over it, and the old ones dare not come. I made him promise he 'd never shoot a lapwing after that, and he didn't. Yes, here are more! Did he shoot my lapwings, Nelly? Are they red, any of them? Let me look.'

'Give over with that baby-work!' I interrupted, dragging the pillow away, and turning the holes towards the mattress, for she was removing its contents by handfuls. 'Lie down and shut your eyes: you 're wandering. There 's a mess! The down is flying about like snow.'

I went here and there collecting it.

'I see in you, Nelly,' she continued dreamily, 'an aged woman: you have grey hair and bent shoulders. This bed is the fairy cave under Peniston Crag, and you are gathering elf-bolts to hurt our heifers; pretending, while I am near, that they are only locks of wool. That 's what you 'll come to fifty years hence: I know you are not so now. I 'm not wandering: you 're mistaken, or else I should believe you really *were* that withered hag, and I should think I *was* under Peniston Crag; and I 'm conscious it 's night, and there are two candles on the table making the black press shine like jet.'

'The black press? where is that?' I asked. 'You are talking in your sleep!'

'It 's against the wall, as it always is,' she replied. 'It *does* appear odd—I see a face in it!'

'There is no press in the room, and never was,' said I, resuming my seat, and looping up the curtain that I might watch her.

'Don't *you* see that face?' she inquired, gazing earnestly at the mirror.

And say what I could, I was incapable of making her comprehend it to be her own; so I rose and covered it with a shawl.

'It 's behind there still!' she pursued anxiously. 'And it stirred. Who is it? I hope it will not come out when you are gone! Oh! Nelly, the room is haunted! I 'm afraid of being alone!'

I took her hand in mine, and bid her be composed; for a succession of shudders convulsed her frame, and she *would* keep straining her gaze towards the glass.

'There 's nobody here!' I insisted. 'It was *yourself*, Mrs. Linton: you knew it a while since.'

'Myself!' she gasped, 'and the clock is striking twelve! It 's true, then! that 's dreadful!'

Her fingers clutched the clothes, and gathered them over her eyes. I attempted to steal to the door with an intention of calling her husband; but I was summoned back by a piercing shriek—the shawl had dropped from the frame.

'Why, what *is* the matter?' cried I. 'Who is coward now? Wake up! That is the glass—the mirror, Mrs. Linton; and you see yourself in it, and there am I too, by your side.'

Trembling and bewildered, she held me fast, but the horror gradually passed from her countenance; its paleness gave place to a glow of shame.

'Oh, dear! I thought I was at home,' she sighed. 'I thought I was lying in my chamber at Wuthering Heights. Because I 'm weak, my brain got confused, and I screamed unconsciously. Don't say anything; but stay with me. I dread sleeping: my dreams appal me.'

'A sound sleep would do you good, ma'am,' I answered; 'and I hope this suffering will prevent your trying starving again.'

'Oh, if I were but in my own bed in the old house!' she went on bitterly, wringing her hands. 'And that wind sounding in the firs by the lattice. Do let me feel it—it comes straight down the moor—do let me have one breath!'

To pacify her, I held the casement ajar a few seconds. A cold blast rushed through; I closed it, and returned to my post.

She lay still now, her face bathed in tears. Exhaustion of body had entirely subdued her spirit: our fiery Catherine was no better than a wailing child.

'How long is it since I shut myself in here?' she asked, suddenly reviving.

'It was Monday evening,' I replied, 'and this is Thursday night, or rather Friday morning, at present.'

'What! of the same week?' she exclaimed. 'Only that brief time?'

'Long enough to live on nothing but cold water and ill-temper,' observed I.

'Well, it seems a weary number of hours,' she muttered doubtfully: 'it must be more. I remember being in the parlour after they had quarrelled, and Edgar being cruelly provoking, and me running into this room desperate. As soon as ever I had barred the door, utter blackness overwhelmed me, and I fell on the floor. I couldn't explain to Edgar how certain I felt of having a fit, or going raging mad, if he persisted in teasing me! I had no command of tongue, or brain, and he did not guess my agony, perhaps: it barely left me sense to try to escape from him and his voice. Before I recovered sufficiently to see and hear, it began to be dawn, and, Nelly, I'll tell you what I thought, and what has kept recurring and recurring till I feared for my reason. I thought as I lay there, with my head against that table leg, and my eyes dimly discerning the grey square of the window, that I was enclosed in the oak-panelled bed at home; and my heart ached with some great grief which, just waking, I could not recollect. I pondered, and worried myself to discover what it could be, and, most strangely, the whole last seven years of my life grew a blank! I did not recall that they had been at all. I was a child; my father was just buried, and my misery arose from the separation that Hindley had ordered between me and Heathcliff. I was laid alone, for the first time; and, rousing from a dismal doze after a night of weeping, I lifted my hand to push the panels aside: it struck the table-top! I swept it along the carpet, and then memory burst in: my late anguish was swallowed in a paroxysm of despair. I cannot say why I felt so wildly wretched: it must have been temporary derangement; for there is scarcely cause. But, supposing at twelve years old I had been wrenched from the Heights, and every early association, and my all in all, as Heathcliff was at that time, and been converted at a stroke into Mrs. Linton, the lady of Thrushcross Grange, and the wife of a stranger: an exile, and outcast, thenceforth, from what had been my world. You may fancy a glimpse of the abyss where I grovelled! Shake your head as you will, Nelly, *you* have helped to unsettle me! You should have spoken to Edgar, indeed you should, and compelled him to leave me quiet! Oh, I 'm burning! I wish I were out of doors! I wish I were a girl again, half savage and hardy, and free; and laughing at injuries, not maddening under them! Why am I so changed? why does my blood rush into a hell of tumult at a few words? I 'm sure I should be myself were I once among the heather on those hills. Open the window again wide: fasten it open! Quick, why don't you move?'

'Because I won't give you your death of cold,' I answered.

'You won't give me a chance of life, you mean,' she said sullenly. 'However, I 'm not helpless yet; I 'll open it myself.'

And sliding from the bed before I could hinder her, she crossed the room, walking very uncertainly, threw it back, and bent out, careless of the frosty air that cut about her shoulders as keen as a knife.

I entreated, and finally attempted to force her to retire. But I soon found her delirious strength much surpassed mine (she *was* delirious, I became convinced by her subsequent actions and ravings).

There was no moon, and everything beneath lay in misty darkness: not a light gleamed from any house, far or near—all had been extinguished long ago; and those at Wuthering Heights were never visible—still she asserted she caught their shining.

'Look!' she cried eagerly, 'that 's my room with the candle in it, and the trees swaying before it; and the other candle is in Joseph's garret. Joseph sits up late, doesn't he? He 's waiting till I come home that he may lock the gate. Well, he 'll wait a while yet. It 's a rough journey, and a sad heart to travel it; and we must pass by Gimmerton Kirk, to go that journey! We 've braved its ghosts often together, and dared each other to stand among the graves and ask them to come. But, Heathcliff, if I dare you now, will you venture? If you do, I 'll keep you. I 'll not lie there by myself: they may bury me twelve feet deep, and throw the church down over me, but I won't rest till you are with me. I never will!'

She paused, and resumed with a strange smile. 'He 's considering—he 'd rather I 'd come to him!

Find a way, then! not through that kirkyard. You are slow! Be content, you always followed me!'

Perceiving it vain to argue against her insanity, I was planning how I could reach something to wrap about her, without quitting my hold of herself (for I could not trust her alone by the gaping lattice), when, to my consternation, I heard the rattle of the door-handle, and Mr. Linton entered. He had only then come from the library; and, in passing through the lobby, had noticed our talking and been attracted by curiosity, or fear, to examine what it signified, at that late hour.

'Oh, sir!' I cried, checking the exclamation risen to his lips at the sight which met him, and the bleak atmosphere of the chamber.

'My poor mistress is ill, and she quite masters me: I cannot manage her at all; pray, come and persuade her to go to bed. Forget your anger, for she 's hard to guide any way but her own.'

'Catherine ill?' he said, hastening to us. 'Shut the window, Ellen! Catherine! why——'

He was silent. The haggardness of Mrs. Linton's appearance smote him speechless, and he could only glance from her to me in horrified astonishment.

'She 's been fretting here,' I continued, 'and eating scarcely anything, and never complaining: she would admit none of us till this evening, and so we couldn't inform you of her state as we were not aware of it ourselves: but it is nothing.'

I felt I uttered my explanations awkwardly; the master frowned. 'It is nothing, is it, Ellen Dean?' he said sternly. 'You shall account more clearly for keeping me ignorant of this!' And he took his wife in his arms, and looked at her with anguish.

At first she gave him no glance of recognition: he was invisible to her abstracted gaze. The delirium was not fixed, however; having weaned her eyes from contemplating the outer darkness, by degrees she centred her attention on him, and discovered who it was that held her.

'Ah! you are come, are you, Edgar Linton?' she said, with angry animation. 'You are one of those things that are ever found when least wanted, and when you are wanted, never! I suppose we shall have plenty of lamentations now—I see we shall—but they can't keep me from my narrow home out yonder: my resting-place, where I'm bound before spring is over! There it is: not among the Lintons, mind, under the chapel-roof, but in the open air, with a head-stone; and you may please yourself, whether you go to them or come to me!'

'Catherine, what have you done?' commenced the master. 'Am I nothing to you any more? Do you love that wretch, Heath——'

'Hush!' cried Mrs. Linton. 'Hush, this moment! You mention that name and I end the matter instantly, by a spring from the window! What you touch at present you may have; but my soul will be on that hill-top before you lay hands on me again. I don't want you, Edgar: I'm past wanting you. Return to your books. I'm glad you possess a consolation, for all you had in me is gone.'

'Her mind wanders, sir,' I interposed. 'She has been talking nonsense the whole evening; but let her have quiet, and proper attendance, and she'll rally. Hereafter, we must be cautious how we vex her.'

'I desire no further advice from you,' answered Mr. Linton. 'You knew your mistress's nature, and you encouraged me to harass her. And not to give me one hint of how she has been these three days!

It was heartless! Months of sickness could not cause such a change!'

I began to defend myself, thinking it too bad to be blamed for another's wicked waywardness.

'I knew Mrs. Linton's nature to be headstrong and domineering,' cried I; 'but I didn't know that you wished to foster her fierce temper! I didn't know that, to humour her, I should wink at Mr. Heathcliff. I performed the duty of a faithful servant in telling you, and I have got a faithful servant's wages! Well, it will teach me to be careful next time. Next time you may gather intelligence for yourself!'

'The next time you bring a tale to me, you shall quit my service, Ellen Dean,' he replied.

'You 'd rather hear nothing about it, I suppose, then, Mr. Linton?' said I. 'Heathcliff has your permission to come a-courting to Miss, and to drop in at every opportunity your absence offers, on purpose to poison the mistress against you?'

Confused as Catherine was, her wits were alert at applying our conversation.

'Ah! Nelly has played traitor,' she exclaimed passionately. 'Nelly is my hidden enemy. You witch! So you do seek elf-bolts to hurt us! Let me go, and I 'll make her rue! I 'll make her howl a recantation!'

A maniac's fury kindled under her brows; she struggled desperately to disengage herself from Linton's arms. I felt no inclination to tarry the event; and, resolving to seek medical aid on my own responsibility, I quitted the chamber.

In passing the garden to reach the road, at a place where a bridle hook is driven into the wall, I saw something white moved irregularly, evidently by another agent than the wind. Notwithstanding my hurry, I stayed to examine it, lest ever after I should have the conviction impressed on my imagination that it was a creature of the other world.

My surprise and perplexity were great to discover, by touch more than vision, Miss Isabella's springer, Fanny, suspended by a handkerchief, and nearly at its last gasp.

I quickly released the animal, and lifted it into the garden. I had seen it follow its mistress upstairs when she went to bed; and wondered much how it could have got out there, and what mischievous person had treated it so.

While untying the knot round the hook, it seemed to me that I repeatedly caught the beat of horses' feet galloping at some distance; but there were such a number of things to occupy my reflections that I hardly gave the circumstance a thought: though it was a strange sound, in that place, at two o'clock in the morning.

Mr. Kenneth was fortunately just issuing from his house to see a patient in the village as I came up the street; and my account of Catherine Linton's malady induced him to accompany me back immediately.

He was a plain rough man; and he made no scruple to speak his doubts of her surviving this second attack; unless she were more submissive to his directions than she had shown herself before.

'Nelly Dean,' said he, 'I can't help fancying there 's an extra cause for this. What has there been to do at the Grange? We 've odd reports up here. A stout, hearty lass like Catherine does not fall ill for a trifle; and that sort of people should not either. It 's hard work bringing them through fevers, and such things. How did it begin?'

'The master will inform you,' I answered; 'but you are acquainted with the Earnshaws' violent dispositions, and Mrs. Linton caps them all. I may say this; it commenced in a quarrel. She was struck during a tempest of passion with a kind of fit. That 's her account, at least; for she flew off in the height of it, and locked herself up. Afterwards, she refused to eat, and now she alternately raves and remains in a half-dream; knowing those about her, but having her mind filled with all sorts of strange ideas and illusions.'

'Mr. Linton will be sorry?' observed Kenneth interrogatively.

'Sorry? he 'll break his heart should anything happen!' I replied. 'Don't alarm him more than necessary.'

'Well, I told him to beware,' said my companion; 'and he must bide the consequences of neglecting my warning! Hasn't he been friendly with Mr. Heathcliff lately?'

'Heathcliff frequently visits at the Grange,' answered I, 'though more on the strength of the mistress having known him when a boy, than because the master likes his company. At present, he 's discharged from the trouble of calling; owing to some presumptuous aspirations after Miss Linton which he manifested. I hardly think he 'll be taken in again.'

'And does Miss Linton turn a cold shoulder on him?' was the doctor's next question.

'I 'm not in her confidence,' returned I, reluctant to continue the subject.

'No, she 's a sly one,' he remarked, shaking his head. 'She keeps her own counsel! But she 's a real little fool. I have it from good authority, that, last night (and a pretty night it was!) she and Heathcliff were walking in the plantation at the back of your house, above two hours; and he pressed her not to go in again, but just mount his horse and away with him! My informant said she could only put him off by pledging her word of honour to be prepared on their first meeting after that: when it was to be, he didn't hear; but you urge Mr. Linton to look sharp!'

This news filled me with fresh fears; I outstripped Kenneth, and ran most of the way back. The little dog was yelping in the garden yet. I spared a minute to open the gate for it, but instead of going to the house door, it coursed up and down snuffing the grass, and would have escaped to the road, had I not seized and conveyed it in with me.

On ascending to Isabella's room, my suspicions were confirmed: it was empty. Had I been a few hours sooner, Mrs. Linton's illness might have arrested her rash step. But what could be done now? There was a bare possibility of overtaking them if pursued instantly. *I* could not pursue them, however; and I dare not rouse the family, and fill the place with confusion; still less unfold the business to my master, absorbed as he was in his present calamity, and having no heart to spare for a second grief!

I saw nothing for it but to hold my tongue, and suffer matters to take their course; and Kenneth being arrived, I went with a badly composed countenance to announce him.

Catherine lay in a troubled sleep: her husband had succeeded in soothing the access of frenzy; he now hung over her pillow, watching every shade, and every change of her painfully expressive features.

The doctor, on examining the case for himself, spoke hopefully to him of its having a favourable termination, if we could only preserve around her perfect and constant tranquillity. To me, he signified the threatening danger was not so much death, as permanent alienation of intellect.

I did not close my eyes that night, nor did Mr. Linton: indeed, we never went to bed; and the servants were all up long before the usual hour, moving through the house with stealthy tread, and exchanging whispers as they encountered each other in their vocations. Every one was active, but Miss Isabella; and they began to remark how sound she slept: her brother, too, asked if she had risen, and seemed impatient for her presence, and hurt that she showed so little anxiety for her sister-in-law.

I trembled lest he should send me to call her; but I was spared the pain of being the first proclaimant of her flight. One of the maids, a thoughtless girl, who had been on an early errand to Gimmerton, came panting upstairs, open-mouthed, and dashed into the chamber, crying—

'Oh, dear, dear! What mun we have next? Master, master, our young lady——'

'Hold your noise!' cried I hastily, enraged at her clamorous manner.

'Speak lower, Mary—What is the matter?' said Mr. Linton. 'What ails your young lady?'

'She 's gone, she 's gone! Yon' Heathcliff 's run off wi' her!' gasped the girl.

'That is not true!' exclaimed Linton, rising in agitation. 'It cannot be: how has the idea entered your head? Ellen Dean, go and seek her. It is incredible: it cannot be.'

As he spoke he took the servant to the door, and then repeated his demand to know her reasons for such an assertion.

'Why, I met on the road a lad that fetches milk here,' she stammered, 'and he asked whether we wern't in trouble at the Grange. I thought he meant for Missis's sickness, so I answered, Yes. Then says he, "They 's somebody gone after 'em, I guess?" I stared. He saw I knew nought about it, and he told how a gentleman and lady had stopped to have a horse's shoe fastened at a blacksmith's shop, two miles out of Gimmerton, not very long after midnight! and how the blacksmith's lass had got up to spy who they were: she knew them both directly. And she noticed the man—Heathcliff it was, she felt certain: nob'dy could mistake him—put a sovereign in her father's hand for payment. The lady had a cloak about her face; but having desired a sup of water, while she drank, it fell back, and she saw her very plain. Heathcliff held both bridles as they rode on, and they set their faces from the village, and went as fast as the rough roads would let them. The lass said nothing to her father, but she told it all over Gimmerton this morning.'

I ran and peeped, for form's sake, into Isabella's room; confirming, when I returned, the servant's statement. Mr. Linton had resumed his seat by the bed; on my re-entrance, he raised his eyes, read the meaning of my blank aspect, and dropped them without giving an order, or uttering a word.

'Are we to try any measures for overtaking and bringing her back,' I inquired. 'How should we do?'

'She went of her own accord,' answered the master; 'she had a right to go if she pleased. Trouble me no more about her. Hereafter she is only my sister in name: not because I disown her, but because she has disowned me.'

And that was all he said on the subject: he did not make a single inquiry further, or mention her in any way, except directing me to send what property she had in the house to her fresh home, wherever it was, when I knew it.

CHAPTER XIII

For two months the fugitives remained absent; in these two months, Mrs. Linton encountered and conquered the worst shock of what was denominated a brain fever. No mother could have nursed an only child more devotedly than Edgar tended her. Day and night he was watching, and patiently enduring all the annoyances that irritable nerves and a shaken reason could inflict; and, though Kenneth remarked that what he saved from the grave would only recompense his care by forming the source of constant future anxiety—in fact, that his health and strength were being sacrificed to preserve a mere ruin of humanity—he knew no limits in gratitude and joy when Catherine's life was declared out of danger; and hour after hour he would sit beside her, tracing the gradual return to bodily health, and flattering his too sanguine hopes with the illusion that her mind would settle back to its right balance also, and she would soon be entirely her former self.

The first time she left her chamber was at the commencement of the following March. Mr. Linton had put on her pillow, in the morning, a handful of golden crocuses; her eye, long stranger to any gleam of pleasure, caught them in waking, and shone delighted as she gathered them eagerly together.

'These are the earliest flowers at the Heights,' she exclaimed. 'They remind me of soft thaw winds, and warm sunshine, and nearly melted snow. Edgar, is there not a south wind, and is not the snow almost gone?'

'The snow is quite gone down here, darling,' replied her husband; 'and I only see two white spots on the whole range of moors: the sky is blue, and the larks are singing, and the becks and brooks are all brim full. Catherine, last spring at this time, I was longing to have you under this roof; now, I wish you were a mile or two up those hills: the air blows so sweetly, I feel that it would cure you.'

'I shall never be there but once more,' said the invalid; 'and then you 'll leave me, and I shall remain for ever. Next spring you 'll long again to have me under this roof, and you 'll look back and think you were happy to-day.'

Linton lavished on her the kindest caresses, and tried to cheer her by the fondest words; but, vaguely regarding the flowers, she let the tears collect on her lashes and stream down her cheeks unheeding.

We knew she was really better, and, therefore, decided that long confinement to a single place produced much of this despondency, and it might be partially removed by a change of scene.

The master told me to light a fire in the many-weeks' deserted parlour, and to set an easy-chair in the sunshine by the window; and then he brought her down, and she sat a long while enjoying the genial heat, and, as we expected, revived by the objects round her: which, though familiar, were free from the dreary associations investing her hated sick chamber. By evening, she seemed greatly exhausted; yet no arguments could persuade her to return to that apartment, and I had to arrange the parlour sofa for her bed, till another room could be prepared.

To obviate the fatigue of mounting and descending the stairs, we fitted up this, where you lie at present: on the same floor with the parlour; and she was soon strong enough to move from one to the other, leaning on Edgar's arm.

Ah, I thought myself, she might recover, so waited on as she was. And there was double cause to desire it, for on her existence depended that of another: we cherished the hope that in a little while, Mr. Linton's heart would be gladdened, and his lands secured from a stranger's gripe, by the birth of an heir.

I should mention that Isabella sent to her brother, some six weeks from her departure, a short note, announcing her marriage with Heathcliff. It appeared dry and cold; but at the bottom was dotted in with pencil an obscure apology, and an entreaty for kind remembrance and reconciliation, if her proceeding had offended him: asserting that she could not help it then, and being done, she had now no power to repeal it.

Linton did not reply to this, I believe; and, in a fortnight more, I got a long letter which I considered odd, coming from the pen of a bride just out of the honeymoon. I 'll read it: for I keep it yet. Any relic of the dead is precious, if they were valued living.

DEAR ELLEN, it begins.

I came last night to Wuthering Heights, and heard, for the first time, that Catherine has been, and is yet, very ill. I must not write to her, I suppose, and my brother is either too angry or too distressed to answer what I sent him. Still, I must write to somebody, and the only choice left me is you.

Inform Edgar that I 'd give the world to see his face again—that my heart returned to Thrushcross Grange in twenty-four hours after I left it, and is there at this moment, full of warm feelings for him, and Catherine! *I can't follow it, though*—(those words are underlined) they need not expect me, and they may draw what conclusions they please; taking care, however, to lay nothing at the door of my weak will or deficient affection.

The remainder of the letter is for yourself alone. I want to ask you two questions: the first is—

How did you contrive to preserve the common sympathies of human nature when you resided here? I cannot recognise any sentiment which those around share with me.

The second question, I have great interest in; it is this—

Is Mr. Heathcliff a man? If so, is he mad? And if not, is he a devil? I shan't tell my reasons for making this inquiry; but I beseech you to explain, if you can, what I have married: that is, when you call to see me; and you must call, Ellen, very soon. Don't write, but come, and bring me something from Edgar.

Now, you shall hear how I have been received in my new home, as I am led to imagine the Heights will be. It is to amuse myself that I dwell on such subjects as the lack of external comforts: they never occupy my thoughts, except at the moment when I miss them. I should laugh and dance for joy, if I found their absence was the total of my miseries, and the rest was an unnatural dream!

The sun set behind the Grange, as we turned on to the moors; by that, I judged it to be six o'clock; and my companion halted half an hour, to inspect the park, and the gardens, and, probably, the place itself, as well as he could; so it was dark when we dismounted in the paved yard of the farmhouse, and your old fellow-servant, Joseph, issued out to receive us by the light of a dip candle. He did it with a courtesy that redounded to his credit. His first act was to elevate his torch to a level with my face, squint malignantly, project his under lip, and turn away.

Then he took the two horses, and led them into the stables; reappearing for the purpose of locking the outer gate, as if we lived in an ancient castle.

Heathcliff stayed to speak to him, and I entered the kitchen—a dingy, untidy hole; I dare say you would not know it, it is so changed since it was in your charge.

By the fire stood a ruffianly child, strong in limb and dirty in garb, with a look of Catherine in his eyes and about his mouth.

'This is Edgar's legal nephew,' I reflected—'mine in a manner; I must shake hands, and—yes—I must kiss him. It is right to establish a good understanding at the beginning.'

I approached, and, attempting to take his chubby fist, said—

'How do you do, my dear?'

He replied in a jargon I did not comprehend.

'Shall you and I be friends, Hareton?' was my next essay at conversation.

An oath, and a threat to set Throttler on me if I did not 'frame off' rewarded my perseverance.

'Hey, Throttler, lad!' whispered the little wretch, rousing a half-bred bull-dog from its lair in a corner. 'Now, wilt tuh be ganging?' he asked authoritatively.

Love for my life urged a compliance; I stepped over the threshold to wait till the others should enter. Mr. Heathcliff was nowhere visible; and Joseph, whom I followed to the stables, and requested to accompany me in, after staring and muttering to himself, screwed up his nose and replied—

'Mim! mim! mim! Did iver Christian body hear owt like it? Minching un' munching! Hah can Aw tell whet ye say?'[1]

'I say, I wish you to come with me into the house!' I cried, thinking him deaf, yet highly disgusted at his rudeness.

'Nor nuh me! Aw getten summat else to do,' he answered, and continued his work; moving his lantern jaws meanwhile, and surveying my dress and countenance (the former a great deal too fine, but the latter, I 'm sure, as sad as he could desire) with sovereign contempt.

I walked round the yard, and through a wicket, to another door, at which I took the liberty of knocking, in hopes some more civil servant might show himself.

After a short suspense, it was opened by a tall, gaunt man, without neckerchief, and otherwise extremely slovenly; his features were lost in masses of shaggy hair that hung on his shoulders; and *his* eyes, too, were like a ghostly Catherine's with all their beauty annihilated.

'What 's your business here?' he demanded grimly. 'Who are you?'

'My name *was* Isabella Linton,' I replied. 'You 've seen me before, sir. I 'm lately married to Mr. Heathcliff, and he has brought me here—I suppose by your permission.'

'Is he come back, then?' asked the hermit, glaring like a hungry wolf.

'Yes—we came just now,' I said; 'but he left me by the kitchen door; and when I would have gone in, your little boy played sentinel over the place, and frightened me off by the help of a bull-dog.'

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[1] 'Mim! mim! mim! Did iver Christian body hear aught like it? Minching un' munching! How can I tell whet ye say?'—
C. B.'s Revision.

'It 's well the hellish villain has kept his word!' growled my future host, searching the darkness beyond me in expectation of discovering Heathcliff; and then he indulged in a soliloquy of execrations, and threats of what he would have done had the 'fiend' deceived him.

I repented having tried this second entrance, and was almost inclined to slip away before he finished cursing, but ere I could execute that intention, he ordered me in, and shut and re-fastened the door.

There was a great fire, and that was all the light in the huge apartment, whose floor had grown a uniform grey; and the once brilliant pewter dishes, which used to attract my gaze when I was a girl, partook of a similar obscurity, created by tarnish and dust.

I inquired whether I might call the maid, and be conducted to a bedroom? Mr. Earnshaw vouchsafed no answer. He walked up and down, with his hands in his pockets, apparently quite forgetting my presence; and his abstraction was evidently so deep, and his whole aspect so misanthropical, that I shrank from disturbing him again.

You 'll not be surprised, Ellen, at my feeling particularly cheerless, seated in worse than solitude on that inhospitable hearth, and remembering that four miles distant lay my delightful home, containing the only people I loved on earth; and there might as well be the Atlantic to part us, instead of those four miles: I could not overpass them!

I questioned with myself—where must I turn for comfort? and—mind you don't tell Edgar, or Catherine—above every sorrow beside, this rose pre-eminent: despair at finding nobody who could or would be my ally against Heathcliff!

I had sought shelter at Wuthering Heights almost gladly, because I was secured by that arrangement from living alone with him; but he knew the people we were coming amongst, and he did not fear their intermeddling.

I sat and thought a doleful time: the clock struck eight, and nine, and still my companion paced to and fro, his head bent on his breast, and perfectly silent, unless a groan or a bitter ejaculation forced itself out at intervals.

I listened to detect a woman's voice in the house, and filled the interim with wild regrets and dismal anticipations, which, at last, spoke audibly in irrepressible sighing and weeping.

I was not aware how openly I grieved, till Earnshaw halted opposite, in his measured walk, and gave me a stare of newly-awakened surprise. Taking advantage of his recovered attention, I exclaimed—

'I 'm tired with my journey, and I want to go to bed! Where is the maid-servant? Direct me to her, as she won't come to me!'

'We have none,' he answered; 'you must wait on yourself!'

'Where must I sleep, then?' I sobbed; I was beyond regarding self-respect, weighed down by fatigue and wretchedness.

'Joseph will show you Heathcliff's chamber,' said he; 'open that door—he 's in there.'

I was going to obey, but he suddenly arrested me, and added in the strangest tone—

'Be so good as to turn your lock, and draw your bolt—don't omit it!'

'Well!' I said. 'But why, Mr. Earnshaw?' I did not relish the notion of deliberately fastening myself in with Heathcliff.

'Look here!' he replied, pulling from his waistcoat a curiously constructed pistol, having a double-edged spring knife attached to the barrel. 'That 's a great tempter to a desperate man, is it not? I cannot resist going up with this every night, and trying his door. If once I find it open, he 's done for! I do it invariably, even though the minute before I have been recalling a hundred reasons that should make me refrain: it is some devil that urges me to thwart my own schemes by killing him. You fight against that devil for love as long as you may; when the time comes, not all the angels in heaven shall save him!'

I surveyed the weapon inquisitively. A hideous notion struck me: how powerful I should be possessing such an instrument! I took it from his hand, and touched the blade. He looked astonished at the expression my face assumed during a brief second: it was not horror, it was covetousness. He snatched the pistol back, jealously; shut the knife, and returned it to its concealment.

'I don't care if you tell him,' said he. 'Put him on his guard, and watch for him. You know the terms we are on, I see: his danger does not shock you.'

'What has Heathcliff done to you?' I asked. 'In what has he wronged you, to warrant this appalling hatred? Wouldn't it be wiser to bid him quit the house?'

'No!' thundered Earnshaw; 'should he offer to leave me, he 's a dead man: persuade him to attempt it, and you are a murderess! Am I to lose *all*, without a chance of retrieval? Is Hareton to be a beggar? Oh, damnation! I *will* have it back: and I 'll have *his* gold too; and then his blood; and hell shall have his soul! It will be ten times blacker with that guest than ever it was before!'

You 've acquainted me, Ellen, with your old master's habits. He is clearly on the verge of madness: he was so last night at least. I shuddered to be near him, and thought on the servant's ill-bred moroseness as comparatively agreeable.

He now recommenced his moody walk, and I raised the latch, and escaped into the kitchen.

Joseph was bending over the fire, peering into a large pan that swung above it; and a wooden bowl of oatmeal stood on the settle close by. The contents of the pan began to boil, and he turned to plunge his hand into the bowl; I conjectured that this preparation was probably for our supper, and, being hungry, I resolved it should be eatable; so, crying out sharply, '*I 'll* make the porridge!' I removed the vessel out of his reach, and proceeded to take off my hat and riding habit. 'Mr. Earnshaw,' I continued, 'directs me to wait on myself: I will. I 'm not going to act the lady among you, for fear I should starve.'

'Gooid Lord!' he muttered, sitting down, and stroking his ribbed stockings from the knee to the ankle. 'If they 's tuh be fresh ortherings—just when Aw getten used tuh two maisters, if Aw mun hev a *mistress* set o'er my heead, it 's loike time tuh be flitting. Aw niver *did* think tuh say t' day ut Aw mud lave th' owld place—but Aw daht it 's nigh at hend!' [1]

This lamentation drew no notice from me: I went briskly to work, sighing to remember a period when it would have been all merry fun; but compelled speedily to drive off the remembrance. It racked me to recall past happiness and the greater peril there was of conjuring up its apparition, the quicker the thible ran round, and the faster the handfuls of meal fell into the water.

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[1] 'Gooid Lord!' he muttered, sitting down, and stroking his ribbed stockings from the knee to the ankle. 'If there 's to be fresh ortherings—just when I getten used to two maisters, if I mun hev a *mistress* set o'er my heead, it 's like time to be flitting. I niver *did* think to see t' day that I mud lave th' owld place—but I doubt it 's nigh at hand!'
C. B.'s Revision.

Joseph beheld my style of cookery with growing indignation.

'Thear!' he ejaculated. 'Hareton, thah willut sup thy porridge tuh neeght; they'll be nowt bud lumps as big as maw nave. Thear, agean! Aw'd fling in bowl un' all, if Aw wer' yah! Thear, pale t' guilp off, un' then yah'll hae done wi't. Bang, bang. It's a marcy t' bothom isn't deaved aht!'[1]

It *was* rather a rough mess, I own, when poured into the basins; four had been provided, and a gallon pitcher of new milk was brought from the dairy, which Hareton seized and commenced drinking and spilling from the expansive lip.

I expostulated, and desired that he should have his in a mug; affirming that I could not taste the liquid treated so dirtily. The old cynic chose to be vastly offended at this nicety; assuring me, repeatedly, that 'the barn was every bit as gooid' as I, 'and every bit as wollsome,' and wondering how I could fashion to be so conceited. Meanwhile, the infant ruffian continued sucking; and glowered up at me defyingly, as he slavered into the jug.

'I shall have my supper in another room,' I said. 'Have you no place you call a parlour?'

'*Parlour!*' he echoed sneeringly, '*parlour!* Nay, we've noa *parlours*. If yah dunnut loike wer company, they 's maister's; un' if yah dunnut loike maister, they 's us.'

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[1] 'Thear!' he ejaculated. 'Hareton, thou willn't sup thy porridge to-neeght; they'll be naught but lumps as big as my neive. Thear, agean! I'd fling in bowl un' all, if I wer' ye! There, pale t' guilp off, un' then ye'll hae done wi't. Bang, bang. It's a mercy t' bothom isn't deaved out!'—C. B.'s Revision.

'Then I shall go upstairs,' I answered; 'show me a chamber.'

I put my basin on a tray, and went myself to fetch some more milk.

With great grumblings, the fellow rose, and preceded me in my ascent: we mounted to the garrets; he opened a door, now and then, to look into the apartments we passed.

'Here 's a rahm,' he said, at last, flinging back a cranky board on hinges. 'It 's weel eneugh tuh ate a few porridge in. They 's a pack o' corn i' t' corner, thear, meeterly clane; if yah 're feared uh muckying yer grand silk cloes, spread yer handkerchir ut t' top on 't.' [1]

The 'rahm' was a kind of lumber-hole smelling strong of malt and grain; various sacks of which articles were piled around, leaving a wide, bare space in the middle.

'Why, man!' I exclaimed, facing him angrily, 'this is not a place to sleep in. I wish to see my bedroom.'

'*Bedrume!*' he repeated, in a tone of mockery. 'Yah 's see all t' *bedrumes* thear is—yon 's mine.'

He pointed into the second garret, only differing from the first in being more naked about the walls, and having a large, low, curtainless bed, with an indigo-coloured quilt, at one end.

'What do I want with yours?' I retorted. 'I suppose Mr. Heathcliff does not lodge at the top of the house, does he ? '

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[1] 'Here 's a rahm,' he said, at last, flinging back a cranky board on hinges. 'It 's weel enough to ate a few porridge in. There 's a pack o' corn i' t' corner, thear, meeterly clane; if ye 're feared o' muckying yer grand silk cloes, spread yer hankerchir o' t' top on 't.'

C. B.'s Revision.

'Oh ! it 's Maister *Hathecliff's* yah 're wenting ?' cried he, as if making a new discovery. 'Couldn't ye uh said soa, at onst ? un' then, Aw mud uh telled ye, baht all this wark, ut that 's just one yah cannut see—he allas keeps it locked, un' nob'dy iver mells on 't but hisseln.' [1]

'You 've a nice house, Joseph,' I could not refrain from observing, 'and pleasant inmates ; and I think the concentrated essence of all the madness in the world took up its abode in my brain the day I linked my fate with theirs ! However, that is not to the present purpose—there are other rooms. For Heaven's sake be quick, and let me settle somewhere ! '

He made no reply to this adjuration ; only plodding doggedly down the wooden steps, and halting before an apartment which, from that halt and the superior quality of its furniture, I conjectured to be the best one.

There was a carpet : a good one, but the pattern was obliterated by dust ; a fireplace hung with cut paper, dropping to pieces ; a handsome oak-bedstead with ample crimson curtains of rather expensive material and modern make ; but they had evidently experienced rough usage : the valances hung in festoons, wrenched from their rings, and the iron rod supporting them was bent in an arc on one side, causing the drapery to trail upon the floor. The chairs were also damaged, many of them severely ; and deep indentations deformed the panels of the walls.

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[1] 'Oh ! it 's Maister *Hathecliff's* ye 're wanting ?' cried he, as if making a new discovery. 'Couldn't ye ha' said soa, at onst ? un' then, I mud ha' telled ye, baht all this wark, that that 's just one ye cannut see—he allas keeps it locked, un' nob'dy iver mells on 't but hisseln.'—C. B.'s Revision.

I was endeavouring to gather resolution for entering and taking possession, when my fool of a guide announced—

'This here is t' maister's.'

My supper by this time was cold, my appetite gone, and my patience exhausted. I insisted on being provided instantly with a place of refuge, and means of repose.

'Whear the divil?' began the religious elder. 'The Lord bless us! The Lord forgie us! Whear the *hell* wold ye gang? ye marred, wearisome nowt! Ye 've seen all bud Hareton's bit uf a cham'er. They 's nut another hoile tuh lig dahn in i' th' hahse!'[1]

I was so vexed, I flung my tray and its contents on the ground; and then seated myself at the stairs' head, hid my face in my hands, and cried.

'Ech! ech!' exclaimed Joseph. 'Weel done, Miss Cathy! weel done, Miss Cathy! Hahsiver, t' maister sall just tum'le o'er them brocken pots; un' then we 's hear summut; we 's hear hah it 's tuh be. Gooid-fur-nowt madling! yah desarve pining froo this to Churstmas, flinging t' precious gifts uh God under fooit i' yer flaysome rages! Bud, Aw 'm mista'en if yah shew yer sperrit lang. Will Hathecliff bide sich bonny ways, think ye? Aw nobbut wish he muh cotch ye i' that plisky. Aw nobbut wish he may.'[2]

And so he went scolding to his den beneath, taking the candle with him; and I remained in the dark.

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[1] 'Whear the divil?' began the religious elder. 'The Lord bless us! The Lord forgie us! Whear the *hell* wold ye gang? ye marred, wearisome nowt! Ye 've seen all but Hareton's bit of a cham'er. There 's not another hoile to lig down in i' th' hahse!'—

C. B.'s Revision.

[2] 'Ech! ech!' exclaimed Joseph. 'Weel done, Miss Cathy! weel done, Miss Cathy! Howsiver, t' maister sall just tum'le o'er them brocken pots; un' then we 's hear summut; we 's hear how it 's to be. Gooid-for-naught madling! ye desarve pining fro' this to Churstmas,

The period of reflection succeeding this silly action compelled me to admit the necessity of smothering my pride and choking my wrath, and bestirring myself to remove its effects.

An unexpected aid presently appeared in the shape of Throttler, whom I now recognised as a son of our old Skulker: it had spent its whelphood at the Grange, and was given by my father to Mr. Hindley. I fancy it knew me: it pushed its nose against mine by way of salute, and then hastened to devour the porridge; while I groped from step to step, collecting the shattered earthenware, and drying the spatters of milk from the banister with my pocket-handkerchief.

Our labours were scarcely over when I heard Earnshaw's tread in the passage; my assistant tucked in his tail, and pressed to the wall; I stole into the nearest doorway. The dog's endeavour to avoid him was unsuccessful; as I guessed by a scutter downstairs, and a prolonged, piteous yelping. I had better luck: he passed on, entered his chamber, and shut the door.

Directly after Joseph came up with Hareton, to put him to bed. I had found shelter in Hareton's room, and the old man, on seeing me, said—

'They 's rahm fur boath yah un' yer pride nah, Aw sud think, i' the hahse. It 's empty; yah muh hev it all tuh yerseln, un' Him as allas maks a third, i' sich ill company!'

Gladly did I take advantage of this intimation; and the minute I flung myself into a chair, by the fire, I nodded, and slept.

flinging t' precious gifts o' God under fooit i' yer flaysome rages! But, I 'm mista'en if ye shew yer sperrit lang. Will Hathecliffe bide sich bonny ways, think ye? I nobbut wish he may catch ye i' that plisky. I nobbut wish he may.'—C. B.'s Revision.

My slumber was deep and sweet, though over far too soon. Mr. Heathcliff awoke me; he had just come in, and demanded, in his loving manner, what I was doing there?

I told him the cause of my staying up so late—that he had the key of our room in his pocket.

The adjective *our* gave mortal offence. He swore it was not, nor ever should be, mine; and he 'd—but I 'll not repeat his language, nor describe his habitual conduct: he is ingenious and unresting in seeking to gain my abhorrence! I sometimes wonder at him with an intensity that deadens my fear: yet, I assure you, a tiger or a venomous serpent could not rouse terror in me equal to that which he wakens. He told me of Catherine's illness, and accused my brother of causing it; promising that I should be Edgar's proxy in suffering, till he could get a hold of him.

I do hate him—I am wretched—I have been a fool! Beware of uttering one breath of this to any one at the Grange. I shall expect you every day—don't disappoint me! ISABELLA.

CHAPTER XIV

As soon as I had perused this epistle, I went to the master, and informed him that his sister had arrived at the Heights, and sent me a letter expressing her sorrow for Mrs. Linton's situation, and her ardent desire to see him; with a wish that he would transmit to her, as early as possible, some token of forgiveness by me.

'Forgiveness!' said Linton. 'I have nothing to forgive her, Ellen. You may call at Wuthering Heights this afternoon, if you like, and say that I am not *angry*, but I 'm *sorry* to have lost her; especially as I can never think she 'll be happy. It is out of the question my going to see her, however: we are eternally divided; and should she really wish to oblige me, let her persuade the villain she has married to leave the country.'

'And you won't write her a little note, sir?' I asked imploringly.

'No,' he answered. 'It is needless. My communication with Heathcliff's family shall be as sparing as his with mine. It shall not exist!'

Mr. Edgar's coldness depressed me exceedingly; and all the way from the Grange I puzzled my brains how to put more heart into what he said, when I repeated it; and how to soften his refusal of even a few lines to console Isabella.

I dare say she had been on the watch for me since morning: I saw her looking through the lattice, as I came up the garden causeway, and I nodded to her; but she drew back, as if afraid of being observed.

I entered without knocking. There never was such a dreary, dismal scene as the formerly cheerful house presented! I must confess, that if I had been in the young lady's place, I would, at least, have swept the hearth, and wiped the tables with a duster. But she already partook of the pervading spirit of neglect which encompassed her. Her pretty face was wan and listless; her hair uncurled: some locks hanging lankly down, and some carelessly twisted round her head. Probably she had not touched her dress since yester evening.

Hindley was not here. Mr. Heathcliff sat at a table, turning over some papers in his pocket-book; but he rose when I appeared, asked me how I did, quite friendly, and offered me a chair.

He was the only thing there that seemed decent ; and I thought he never looked better. So much had circumstances altered their positions, that he would certainly have struck a stranger as a born and bred gentleman, and his wife as a thorough little slattern !

She came forward eagerly to greet me ; and held out one hand to take the expected letter.

I shook my head. She wouldn't understand the hint, but followed me to a sideboard, where I went to lay my bonnet, and importuned me in a whisper to give her directly what I had brought.

Heathcliff guessed the meaning of her manœuvres, and said—

'If you have got anything for Isabella (as no doubt you have, Nelly), give it to her. You needn't make a secret of it : we have no secrets between us.'

'Oh, I have nothing,' I replied, thinking it best to speak the truth at once. 'My master bid me tell his sister that she must not expect either a letter or a visit from him at present. He sends his love, ma'am, and his wishes for your happiness, and his pardon for the grief you have occasioned ; but he thinks that after this time, his household and the household here should drop intercommunication, as nothing good could come of keeping it up.'

Mrs. Heathcliff's lip quivered slightly, and she returned to her seat in the window. Her husband took his stand on the hearthstone, near me, and began to put questions concerning Catherine.

I told him as much as I thought proper of her illness, and he extorted from me, by cross-examination, most of the facts connected with its origin.

I blamed her, as she deserved, for bringing it all on herself; and ended by hoping that he would follow Mr. Linton's example and avoid future interference with his family, for good or evil.

'Mrs. Linton is now just recovering,' I said; 'she 'll never be like she was, but her life is spared; and if you really have a regard for her, you 'll shun crossing her way again: nay, you 'll move out of this country entirely; and that you may not regret it, I 'll inform you Catherine Linton is as different now from your old friend Catherine Earnshaw, as that young lady is different from me. Her appearance is changed greatly, her character much more so; and the person who is compelled, of necessity, to be her companion, will only sustain his affection hereafter by the remembrance of what she once was, by common humanity, and a sense of duty!'

'That is quite possible,' remarked Heathcliff, forcing himself to seem calm: 'quite possible that your master should have nothing but common humanity and a sense of duty to fall back upon. But do you imagine that I shall leave Catherine to his *duty* and *humanity*? and can you compare my feelings respecting Catherine to his? Before you leave this house, I must exact a promise from you, that you 'll get me an interview with her: consent, or refuse, I *will* see her! What do you say?'

'I say, Mr. Heathcliff,' I replied, 'you must not: you never shall, through my means. Another encounter between you and the master would kill her altogether.'

'With your aid, that may be avoided,' he continued; 'and should there be danger of such an event—should he be the cause of adding a single trouble more to her existence—why, I think I shall be justified in going to extremes! I wish you had sincerity enough to tell me whether Catherine would suffer greatly from his loss: the fear that she would restrains me. And there you see the distinction between our feelings: had he been in my place and I in his, though I hated him with a hatred that turned my life to gall, I never would have raised a hand against him. You may look incredulous, if you please! I never would have banished him from her society as long as she desired his. The moment her regard ceased, I would have torn his heart out, and drunk his blood! But, till then—if you don't believe me, you don't know me—till then, I would have died by inches before I touched a single hair of his head!'

'And yet,' I interrupted, 'you have no scruples in completely ruining all hopes of her perfect restoration, by thrusting yourself into her remembrance now, when she has nearly forgotten you, and involving her in a new tumult of discord and distress.'

'You suppose she has nearly forgotten me?' he said. 'Oh, Nelly! you know she has not! You know as well as I do, that for every thought she spends on Linton, she spends a thousand on me! At a most miserable period of my life, I had a notion of the kind: it haunted me on my return to the neighbourhood last summer; but only her own assurance could make me admit the horrible idea again. And then, Linton would be nothing, nor Hindley, nor all the dreams that ever I dreamt. Two words would comprehend my future—*death* and *hell*: existence, after losing her, would be hell.

'Yet I was a fool to fancy for a moment that she valued Edgar Linton's attachment more than mine. If he loved with all the powers of his puny being, he couldn't love as much in eighty years as I could in a day. And Catherine has a heart as deep as I have: the sea could be as readily contained in that horse-trough, as her whole affection be monopolised by him. Tush! He is scarcely a degree dearer to her than her dog, or her horse. It is not in him to be loved like me: how can she love in him what he has not?'

'Catherine and Edgar are as fond of each other as any two people can be,' cried Isabella, with sudden vivacity. 'No one has a right to talk in that manner, and I won't hear my brother depreciated in silence!'

'Your brother is wondrous fond of you too, isn't he?' observed Heathcliff scornfully. 'He turns you adrift on the world with surprising alacrity.'

'He is not aware of what I suffer,' she replied. 'I didn't tell him that.'

'You have been telling him something, then: you have written, have you?'

'To say that I was married, I did write—you saw the note.'

'And nothing since?'

'No.'

'My young lady is looking sadly the worse for her change of condition,' I remarked. 'Somebody's love comes short in her case, obviously: whose, I may guess; but, perhaps, I shouldn't say.'

'I should guess it was her own,' said Heathcliff. 'She degenerates into a mere slut! She is tired of trying to please me uncommonly early. You'd hardly credit it, but the very morrow of our wedding, she was weeping to go home. However, she'll suit this house so much the better for not being over nice, and I'll take care she does not disgrace me by rambling abroad.'

'Well, sir,' returned I, 'I hope you'll consider that Mrs. Heathcliff is accustomed to be looked after and waited on; and that she has been brought up like an only daughter, whom every one was ready to serve. You must let her have a maid to keep things tidy about her, and you must treat her kindly. Whatever be your notion of Mr. Edgar, you cannot doubt that she has a capacity for strong attachments, or she wouldn't have abandoned the elegancies, and comforts, and friends of her former home, to fix contentedly, in such a wilderness as this, with you.'

'She abandoned them under a delusion,' he answered; 'picturing in me a hero of romance, and expecting unlimited indulgences, from my chivalrous devotion. I can hardly regard her in the light of a rational creature, so obstinately has she persisted in forming a fabulous notion of my character and acting on the false impressions she cherished. But, at last, I think she begins to know me; I don't perceive the silly smiles and grimaces that provoked me at first; and the senseless incapability of discerning that I was in earnest when I gave her my opinion of her infatuation and herself. It was a marvellous effort of perspicacity to discover that I did not love her. I believed, at one time, no lessons could teach her that! And yet it is poorly learnt; for this morning she announced, as a piece of appalling intelligence, that I had actually succeeded in making her hate me! A positive labour of Hercules, I assure you! If it be achieved, I have cause to return thanks. Can I trust your assertion, Isabella? Are you sure you hate me? If I let you alone for half a day, won't you come sighing and wheedling to me again? I dare say she would rather I had seemed all tenderness before you: it wounds her vanity to have the truth exposed. But I don't care who knows that the passion was wholly on one side; and I never told her a lie about it. She cannot accuse me of showing a bit of deceitful softness.

The first thing she saw me do, on coming out of the Grange, was to hang up her little dog; and when she pleaded for it, the first words I uttered were a wish that I had the hanging of every being belonging to her, except one: possibly she took that exception for herself. But no brutality disgusted her: I suppose she has an innate admiration of it, if only her precious person were secure from injury! Now, was it not the depth of absurdity—of genuine idiocy, for that pitiful, slavish, mean-minded brach to dream that I could love her? Tell your master, Nelly, that I never, in all my life, met with such an abject thing as she is. She even disgraces the name of Linton; and I 've sometimes relented, from pure lack of invention, in my experiments on what she could endure, and still creep shamefully cringing back! But tell him, also, to set his fraternal and magisterial heart at ease: that I keep strictly within the limits of the law. I have avoided, up to this period, giving her the slightest right to claim a separation; and, what 's more, she 'd thank nobody for dividing us. If she desired to go, she might: the nuisance of her presence outweighs the gratification to be derived from tormenting her!'

'Mr. Heathcliff,' said I, 'this is the talk of a madman, and your wife, most likely, is convinced you are mad; and, for that reason, she has borne with you hitherto: but now that you say she may go, she 'll doubtless avail herself of the permission. You are not so bewitched, ma'am, are you, as to remain with him of your own accord?'

'Take care, Ellen!' answered Isabella, her eyes sparkling irefully; there was no misdoubting by their expression the full success of her partner's endeavours to make himself detested. 'Don't put faith in a single word he speaks. He 's a lying fiend! a monster, and not a human being! I 've been told I might leave him before; and I 've made the attempt, but I dare not repeat it! Only, Ellen, promise you 'll not mention a syllable of his infamous conversation to my brother or Catherine. Whatever he may pretend, he wishes to provoke Edgar to desperation: he says he has married me on purpose to obtain power over him and he shan't obtain it—I 'll die first! I just hope, I pray, that he may forget his diabolical prudence and kill me! The single pleasure I can imagine is to die, or to see him dead!'

'There—that will do for the present!' said Heathcliff. 'If you are called upon in a court of law, you 'll remember her language, Nelly! And take a good look at that countenance; she 's near the point which would suit me. No; you 're not fit to be your own guardian, Isabella, now; and I, being your legal protector, must retain you in my custody, however distasteful the obligation may be. Go upstairs; I have something to say to Ellen Dean in private. That 's not the way: upstairs, I tell you! Why, this is the road upstairs, child!'

He seized, and thrust her from the room; and returned muttering—

'I have no pity! I have no pity! The more the worms writhe, the more I yearn to crush out their entrails! It is a moral teething; and I grind with greater energy, in proportion to the increase of pain.'

'Do you understand what the word pity means?' I said, hastening to resume my bonnet. 'Did you ever feel a touch of it in your life?'

'Put that down!' he interrupted, perceiving my intention to depart. 'You are not going yet. Come here now, Nelly: I must either persuade or compel you to aid me in fulfilling my determination to see

Catherine, and that without delay. I swear that I meditate no harm: I don't desire to cause any disturbance, or to exasperate or insult Mr. Linton; I only wish to hear from herself how she is, and why she has been ill; and to ask if anything that I could do would be of use to her. Last night, I was in the Grange garden six hours, and I 'll return there to-night; and every night I 'll haunt the place, and every day, till I find an opportunity of entering. If Edgar Linton meets me, I shall not hesitate to knock him down, and give him enough to insure his quiescence while I stay. If his servants oppose me, I shall threaten them off with these pistols. But wouldn't it be better to prevent my coming in contact with them, or their master? And you could do it so easily. I 'd warn you when I came, and then you might let me in unobserved, as soon as she was alone, and watch till I departed, your conscience quite calm: you would be hindering mischief.'

I protested against playing that treacherous part in my employer's house: and, besides, I urged the cruelty and selfishness of his destroying Mrs. Linton's tranquillity for his satisfaction.

'The commonest occurrence startles her painfully,' I said. 'She 's all nerves, and she couldn't bear the surprise, I 'm positive. Don't persist, sir! or else I shall be obliged to inform my master of your designs; and he 'll take measures to secure his house and its inmates from any such unwarrantable intrusions!'

'In that case, I 'll take measures to secure you, woman!' exclaimed Heathcliff; 'you shall not leave Wuthering Heights till to-morrow morning. It is a foolish story to assert that Catherine could not bear to see me; and as to surprising her, I don't desire it: you must prepare her—ask her if I may come. You say she never mentions my name, and that I am never mentioned to her. To whom should she mention me if I am a forbidden topic in the house? She thinks you are all spies for her husband. Oh, I 've no doubt she 's in hell among you! I guess by her silence, as much as anything, what she feels. You say she is often restless, and anxious-looking: is that a proof of tranquillity? You talk of her mind being unsettled. How the devil could it be otherwise in her frightful isolation? And that insipid, paltry creature attending her from *duty* and *humanity*! From *pity* and *charity*! He might as well plant an oak in a flower-pot, and expect it to thrive, as imagine he can restore her to vigour in the soil of his shallow cares! Let us settle it at once: will you stay here, and am I to fight my way to Catherine over Linton and his footman? Or will you be my friend, as you have been hitherto, and do what I request? Decide! because there is no reason for my lingering another minute, if you persist in your stubborn ill-nature!'

Well, Mr. Lockwood, I argued and complained, and flatly refused him fifty times; but in the long-run he forced me to an agreement. I engaged to carry a letter from him to my mistress; and should she consent, I promised to let him have intelligence of Linton's next absence from home, when he might come, and get in as he was able: I wouldn't be there, and my fellow-servants should be equally out of the way.

Was it right or wrong? I fear it was wrong, though expedient. I thought I prevented another explosion by my compliance; and I thought, too, it might create a favourable crisis in Catherine's mental illness: and then I remembered Mr. Edgar's stern rebuke of my carrying tales; and I tried to smooth away all disquietude on the subject, by affirming, with frequent iteration, that that betrayal of trust, if it merited so harsh an appellation, should be the last.

Notwithstanding, my journey homeward was sadder than my journey thither; and many misgivings I had, ere I could prevail on myself to put the missive into Mrs. Linton's hand.

But here is Kenneth; I 'll go down, and tell him how much better you are. My history is *dree*, as we say, and will serve to while away another morning.

Dree, and dreary! I reflected as the good woman descended to receive the doctor; and not exactly of the kind which I should have chosen to amuse me. But never mind! I 'll extract wholesome medicines from Mrs. Dean's bitter herbs; and firstly, let me beware the fascination that lurks in Catherine Heathcliff's brilliant eyes. I should be in a curious taking if I surrendered my heart to that young person, and the daughter turned out a second edition of the mother!

CHAPTER XV

ANOTHER week over—and I am so many days nearer health, and spring! I have now heard all my neighbour's history, at different sittings, as the housekeeper could spare time from more important occupations. I 'll continue it in her own words, only a little condensed. She is, on the whole, a very fair narrator, and I don't think I could improve her style.

In the evening, she said, the evening of my visit to the Heights, I knew, as well as if I saw him, that Mr. Heathcliff was about the place; and I shunned going out, because I still carried his letter in my pocket, and didn't want to be threatened or teased any more.

I had made up my mind not to give it till my master went somewhere, as I could not guess how its receipt would affect Catherine. The consequence was, that it did not reach her before the lapse of three days. The fourth was Sunday, and I brought it into her room after the family were gone to church.

There was a man-servant left to keep the house with me, and we generally made a practice of locking the doors during the hours of service; but on that occasion the weather was so warm and pleasant that I set them wide open, and, to fulfil my engagement, as I knew who would be coming, I told my companion that the mistress wished very much for some oranges, and he must run over to the village and get a few, to be paid for on the morrow. He departed, and I went upstairs.

Mrs. Linton sat in a loose white dress, with a light shawl over her shoulders, in the recess of the open window, as usual. Her thick, long hair had been partly removed at the beginning of her illness, and now she wore it simply combed in its natural tresses over her temples and neck. Her appearance was altered, as I had told Heathcliff; but when she was calm, there seemed unearthly beauty in the change.

The flash of her eyes had been succeeded by a dreamy and melancholy softness; they no longer gave the impression of looking at the objects around her: they appeared always to gaze beyond, and far beyond—you would have said out of this world. Then, the paleness of her face—its haggard aspect having vanished as she recovered flesh—and the peculiar expression arising from her mental state, though painfully suggestive of their causes, added to the touching interest which she awakened; and—invariably to me, I know, and to any person who saw her, I should think—refuted more tangible proofs of convalescence, and stamped her as one doomed to decay.

A book lay spread on the sill before her, and the scarcely perceptible wind fluttered its leaves at intervals. I believe Linton had laid it there: for she never endeavoured to divert herself with reading, or occupation of any kind, and he would spend many an hour in trying to entice her attention to some subject which had formerly been her amusement.

She was conscious of his aim, and in her better moods endured his efforts placidly, only showing their uselessness by now and then suppressing a wearied sigh, and checking him at last with the saddest of smiles and kisses. At other times, she would turn petulantly away, and hide her face in her hands, or even push him off angrily; and then he took care to let her alone, for he was certain of doing no good.

Gimmerton chapel bells were still ringing; and the full, mellow flow of the beck in the valley came soothingly on the ear. It was a sweet substitute for the yet absent murmur of the summer foliage, which drowned that music about the Grange when the trees were in leaf. At Wuthering Heights it always sounded on quiet days following a great thaw or a season of steady rain. And of Wuthering Heights Catherine was thinking as she listened: that is, if she thought or listened at all; but she had the vague, distant look I mentioned before, which expressed no recognition of material things either by ear or eye.

'There 's a letter for you, Mrs. Linton,' I said, gently inserting it in one hand that rested on her knee. 'You must read it immediately, because it wants an answer. Shall I break the seal?'

'Yes,' she answered, without altering the direction of her eyes.

I opened it—it was very short.

'Now,' I continued, 'read it.'

She drew away her hand, and let it fall. I replaced it in her lap, and stood waiting till it should please her to glance down; but that movement was so long delayed that at last I resumed—

'Must I read it, ma'am? It is from Mr. Heathcliff.'

There was a start and a troubled gleam of recollection, and a struggle to arrange her ideas. She lifted the letter, and seemed to peruse it; and when she came to the signature she sighed: yet still I found she had not gathered its import, for, upon my desiring to hear her reply, she merely pointed to the name, and gazed at me with mournful and questioning eagerness.

'Well, he wishes to see you,' said I, guessing her need of an interpreter. 'He 's in the garden by this time, and impatient to know what answer I shall bring.'

As I spoke, I observed a large dog lying on the sunny grass beneath raise its ears as if about to bark, and then smoothing them back, announce, by a wag of the tail, that some one approached whom it did not consider a stranger.

Mrs. Linton bent forward, and listened breathlessly. The minute after a step traversed the hall; the open house was too tempting for Heathcliff to resist walking in: most likely he supposed that I was inclined to shirk my promise, and so resolved to trust to his own audacity.

With straining eagerness Catherine gazed towards the entrance of her chamber. He did not hit the right room directly; she motioned me to admit him, but he found it out ere I could reach the door, and in a stride or two was at her side, and had her grasped in his arms.

He neither spoke nor loosed his hold for some five minutes, during which period he bestowed more kisses than ever he gave in his life before, I dare say: but then my mistress had kissed him first, and I plainly saw that he could hardly bear, for downright agony, to look into her face! The same conviction had stricken him as me, from the instant he beheld her, that there was no prospect of ultimate recovery there—she was fated, sure to die.

'Oh, Cathy! Oh, my life! how can I bear it?' was the first sentence he uttered, in a tone that did not seek to disguise his despair.

And now he stared at her so earnestly that I thought the very intensity of his gaze would bring tears into his eyes; but they burned with anguish: they did not melt.

'What now?' said Catherine, leaning back, and returning his look with a suddenly clouded brow: her humour was a mere vane for constantly varying caprices. 'You and Edgar have broken my heart, Heathcliff! And you both come to bewail the deed to me, as if you were the people to be pitied! I shall not pity you, not I. You have killed me—and thriven on it, I think. How strong you are! How many years do you mean to live after I am gone?'

Heathcliff had knelt on one knee to embrace her; he attempted to rise, but she seized his hair, and kept him down.

'I wish I could hold you,' she continued bitterly, 'till we were both dead! I shouldn't care what you suffered. I care nothing for your sufferings. Why shouldn't you suffer? I do! Will you forget me? Will you be happy when I am in the earth? Will you say twenty years hence, "That 's the grave of Catherine Earnshaw. I loved her long ago, and was wretched to lose her; but it is past. I 've loved many others since: my children are dearer to me than she was; and, at death, I shall not rejoice that I am going to her: I shall be sorry that I must leave them!" Will you say so, Heathcliff?'

'Don't torture me till I 'm as mad as yourself,' cried he, wrenching his head free, and grinding his teeth.

The two, to a cool spectator, made a strange and fearful picture. Well might Catherine deem that heaven would be a land of exile to her, unless with her mortal body she cast away her moral character also. Her present countenance had a wild vindictiveness in its white cheek, and a bloodless lip and scintillating eye; and she retained in her closed fingers a portion of the locks she had been grasping. As to her companion, while raising himself with one hand, he had taken her arm with the other; and so inadequate was his stock of gentleness to the requirements of her condition, that on his letting go I saw four distinct impressions left blue in the colourless skin.

'Are you possessed with a devil,' he pursued savagely, 'to talk in that manner to me when you are dying? Do you reflect that all those words will be branded in my memory, and eating deeper eternally after you have left me? You know you lie to say I have killed you: and, Catherine, you know that I could as soon forget you as my existence! Is it not sufficient for your infernal selfishness, that while you are at peace I shall writhe in the torments of hell?'

'I shall not be at peace,' moaned Catherine, recalled to a sense of physical weakness by the violent, unequal throbbing of her heart, which beat visibly and audibly under this excess of agitation.

She said nothing further till the paroxysm was over: then she continued, more kindly—

'I 'm not wishing you greater torment than I have, Heathcliff. I only wish us never to be parted: and should a word of mine distress you hereafter, think I feel the same distress underground, and for my own sake, forgive me! Come here and kneel down again! You never harmed me in your life. Nay, if you nurse anger, that will be worse to remember than my harsh words! Won't you come here again? Do!'

Heathcliff went to the back of her chair, and leant over, but not so far as to let her see his face, which was livid with emotion. She bent round to look at him; he would not permit it: turning abruptly, he walked to the fireplace, where he stood, silent, with his back towards us.

Mrs. Linton's glance followed him suspiciously: every movement woke a new sentiment in her. After a pause and a prolonged gaze, she resumed; addressing me in accents of indignant disappointment—

'Oh, you see, Nelly, he would not relent a moment to keep me out of the grave. *That* is how I 'm loved! Well, never mind. That is not *my* Heathcliff. I shall love mine yet; and take him with me: he 's in my soul. And,' added she musingly, 'the thing that irks me most is this shattered prison, after all. I 'm tired of being enclosed here. I 'm wearying to escape into that glorious world, and to be always there: not seeing it dimly through tears, and yearning for it through the walls of an aching heart; but really with it, and in it. Nelly, you think you are better and more fortunate than I; in full health and strength: you are sorry for me—very soon that will be altered.

I shall be sorry for *you*. I shall be incomparably beyond and above you all. I *wonder* he won't be near me!' She went on to herself. 'I thought he wished it. Heathcliff, dear! you should not be sullen now. Do come to me, Heathcliff.'

In her eagerness she rose and supported herself on the arm of the chair. At that earnest appeal he turned to her, looking absolutely desperate. His eyes, wide and wet, at last flashed fiercely on her; his breast heaved convulsively. An instant they held asunder, and then how they met I hardly saw, but Catherine made a spring, and he caught her, and they were locked in an embrace from which I thought my mistress would never be released alive: in fact, to my eyes, she seemed directly insensible. He flung himself into the nearest seat, and on my approaching hurriedly to ascertain if she had fainted, he gnashed at me, and foamed like a mad dog, and gathered her to him with greedy jealousy. I did not feel as if I were in the company of a creature of my own species: it appeared that he would not understand, though I spoke to him; so I stood off, and held my tongue, in great perplexity.

A movement of Catherine's relieved me a little presently: she put up her hand to clasp his neck, and bring her cheek to his as he held her; while he, in return, covering her with frantic caresses, said wildly—

'You teach me now how cruel you've been—cruel and false. *Why* did you despise me? *Why* did you betray your own heart, Cathy? I have not one word of comfort. You deserve this. You have killed yourself. Yes, you may kiss me, and cry; and wring out my kisses and tears: they'll blight you—they'll damn you. You loved me—then what *right* had you to leave me? What right—answer me—for the poor fancy you felt for Linton? Because misery and degradation, and death, and nothing that God or Satan could inflict would have parted us, *you*, of your own will, did it. I have not broken your heart—*you* have broken it; and in breaking it, you have broken mine. So much the worse for me, that I am strong. Do I want to live? What kind of living will it be when you—oh, God! would *you* like to live with your soul in the grave?'

'Let me alone. Let me alone,' sobbed Catherine. 'If I've done wrong, I'm dying for it. It is enough! You left me too: but I won't upbraid you! I forgive you. Forgive me!'

'It is hard to forgive, and to look at those eyes, and feel those wasted hands,' he answered. 'Kiss me again; and don't let me see your eyes! I forgive what you have done to me. I love *my* murderer—but *yours*! How can I?'

They were silent—their faces hid against each other, and washed by each other's tears. At least, I suppose the weeping was on both sides; as it seemed Heathcliff *could* weep on a great occasion like this.

I grew very uncomfortable, meanwhile; for the afternoon wore fast away, the man whom I had sent off returned from his errand, and I could distinguish, by the shine of the western sun up the valley, a concourse thickening outside Gimmerton chapel porch.

'Service is over,' I announced. 'My master will be here in half an hour.'

Heathcliff groaned a curse, and strained Catherine closer: she never moved.

Ere long I perceived a group of the servants passing up the road towards the kitchen wing. Mr. Linton was not far behind; he opened the gate himself and sauntered slowly up, probably enjoying the lovely afternoon that breathed as soft as summer.

'Now he is here,' I exclaimed. 'For Heaven's sake, hurry down! You 'll not meet any one in the front stairs. Do be quick; and stay among the trees till he is fairly in.'

'I must go, Cathy,' said Heathcliff, seeking to extricate himself from his companion's arms. 'But if I live, I 'll see you again before you are asleep. I won't stray five yards from your window.'

'You must not go!' she answered, holding him as firmly as her strength allowed. 'You shall not, I tell you.'

'For one hour,' he pleaded earnestly.

'Not for one minute,' she replied.

'I *must*—Linton will be up immediately,' persisted the alarmed intruder.

He would have risen, and unfixed her fingers by the act—she clung fast, gasping: there was mad resolution in her face.

'No!' she shrieked. 'Oh, don't, don't go. It is the last time! Edgar will not hurt us. Heathcliff, I shall die! I shall die!'

'Damn the fool! There he is,' cried Heathcliff, sinking back into his seat. 'Hush, my darling! Hush, hush, Catherine! I 'll stay. If he shot me so, I 'd expire with a blessing on my lips.'

And there they were fast again. I heard my master mounting the stairs—the cold sweat ran from my forehead: I was horrified.

'Are you going to listen to her ravings?' I said passionately. 'She does not know what she says. Will you ruin her, because she has not wit to help herself? Get up! You could be free instantly. That is the most diabolical deed that ever you did. We are all done for—master, mistress, and servant.'

I wrung my hands, and cried out; and Mr. Linton hastened his step at the noise. In the midst of my agitation, I was sincerely glad to observe that Catherine's arms had fallen relaxed, and her head hung down.

'She's fainted, or dead,' I thought: 'so much the better. Far better that she should be dead, than lingering a burden and a misery-maker to all about her.'

Edgar sprang to his unbidden guest, blanched with astonishment and rage. What he meant to do, I cannot tell; however, the other stopped all demonstrations, at once, by placing the lifeless-looking form in his arms.

'Look there!' he said. 'Unless you be a fiend, help her first—then you shall speak to me!'

He walked into the parlour, and sat down. Mr. Linton summoned me, and with great difficulty, and after resorting to many means, we managed to restore her to sensation; but she was all bewildered; she sighed, and moaned, and knew nobody. Edgar, in his anxiety for her, forgot her hated friend. I did not. I went, at the earliest opportunity, and besought him to depart; affirming that Catherine was better, and he should hear from me in the morning how she passed the night.

'I shall not refuse to go out of doors,' he answered; 'but I shall stay in the garden: and, Nelly, mind you keep your word to-morrow. I shall be under those larch-trees. Mind! or I pay another visit, whether Linton be in or not.'

He sent a rapid glance through the half-open door of the chamber, and, ascertaining that what I stated was apparently true, delivered the house of his luckless presence.

CHAPTER XVI

About twelve o'clock that night was born the Catherine you saw at Wuthering Heights: a puny, seven months' child; and two hours after the mother died, having never recovered sufficient consciousness to miss Heathcliff, or know Edgar.

The latter's distraction at his bereavement is a subject too painful to be dwelt on; its after-effects showed how deep the sorrow sunk. A great addition, in my eyes, was his being left without an heir. I bemoaned that, as I gazed on the feeble orphan; and I mentally abused old Linton for (what was only natural partiality) the securing his estate to his own daughter, instead of his son's.

An unwelcomed infant it was, poor thing! It might have wailed out of life, and nobody cared a morsel, during those first hours of existence. We redeemed the neglect afterwards; but its beginning was as friendless as its end is likely to be.

Next morning—bright and cheerful out of doors—stole softened in through the blinds of the silent room, and suffused the couch and its occupant with a mellow, tender glow.

Edgar Linton had his head laid on the pillow, and his eyes shut. His young and fair features were almost as deathlike as those of the form beside him, and almost as fixed: but *his* was the hush of exhausted anguish, and *hers* of perfect peace. Her brow smooth, her lids closed, her lips wearing the expression of a smile; no angel in heaven could be more beautiful than she appeared. And I partook of the infinite calm in which she lay: my mind was never in a holier frame than while I gazed on that untroubled image of Divine rest. I instinctively echoed the words she had uttered a few hours before: 'Incomparably beyond and above us all! Whether still on earth or now in heaven, her spirit is at home with God!'

I don't know if it be a peculiarity in me, but I am seldom otherwise than happy while watching in the chamber of death, should no frenzied or despairing mourner share the duty with me. I see a repose that neither earth nor hell can break, and I feel an assurance of the endless and shadowless hereafter—the Eternity they have entered—where life is boundless in its duration, and love in its sympathy, and joy in its fulness. I noticed on that occasion how much selfishness there is even in a love like Mr. Linton's, when he so regretted Catherine's blessed release!

To be sure, one might have doubted, after the wayward and impatient existence she had led, whether she merited a haven of peace at last. One might doubt in seasons of cold reflection; but not then, in the presence of her corpse. It asserted its own tranquillity, which seemed a pledge of equal quiet to its former inhabitant.

'Do you believe such people *are* happy in the other world, sir? I 'd give a great deal to know.'

I declined answering Mrs. Dean's question, which struck me as something heterodox. She proceeded:

'Retracing the course of Catherine Linton, I fear we have no right to think she is; but we 'll leave her with her Maker.'

The master looked asleep, and I ventured soon after sunrise to quit the room and steal out to the pure refreshing air. The servants thought me gone to shake off the drowsiness of my protracted watch; in reality, my chief motive was seeing Mr. Heathcliff.

If he had remained among the larches all night, he would have heard nothing of the stir at the Grange; unless, perhaps, he might catch the gallop of the messenger going to Gimmerton. If he had come nearer, he would probably be aware, from the lights flitting to and fro, and the opening and shutting of the outer doors, that all was not right within.

I wished, yet feared, to find him. I felt the terrible news must be told, and I longed to get it over; but *how* to do it, I did not know.

He was there—at least a few yards farther in the park; leant against an old ash-tree, his hat off, and his hair soaked with the dew that had gathered on the budded branches, and fell pattering round him. He had been standing a long time in that position, for I saw a pair of ousels passing and repassing scarcely three feet from him, busy in building their nest, and regarding his proximity no more than that of a piece of timber. They flew off at my approach, and he raised his eyes and spoke—

'She 's dead!' he said; 'I 've not waited for you to learn that. Put your handkerchief away—don't snivel before me. Damn you all! she wants none of *your* tears!'

I was weeping as much for him as her: we do sometimes pity creatures that have none of the feeling either for themselves or others; and when I first looked into his face, I perceived that he had got intelligence of the catastrophe; and a foolish notion struck me that his heart was quelled and he prayed, because his lips moved and his gaze was bent on the ground.

'Yes, she 's dead!' I answered, checking my sobs and drying my cheeks. 'Gone to heaven, I hope; where we may, every one, join her, if we take due warning and leave our evil ways to follow good!'

'Did *she* take due warning, then?' asked Heathcliff, attempting a sneer. 'Did she die like a saint? Come, give me a true history of the event. How did——'

He endeavoured to pronounce the name, but could not manage it; and compressing his mouth he held a silent combat with his inward agony, defying, meanwhile, my sympathy with an unflinching, ferocious stare.

'How did she die?' he resumed, at last—fain, notwithstanding his hardihood, to have a support behind him; for, after the struggle, he trembled, in spite of himself, to his very finger-ends.

'Poor wretch!' I thought; 'you have a heart and nerves the same as your brother men! Why should you be anxious to conceal them? Your pride cannot blind God! You tempt Him to wring them, till he forces a cry of humiliation.'

'Quietly as a lamb!' I answered, aloud. 'She drew a sigh, and stretched herself, like a child reviving, and sinking again to sleep; and five minutes after I felt one little pulse at her heart, and nothing more!'

'And—did she ever mention me?' he asked, hesitating, as if he dreaded the answer to his question would introduce details that he could not bear to hear.

'Her senses never returned: she recognised nobody from the time you left her,' I said. 'She lies with a sweet smile on her face; and her latest ideas wandered back to pleasant early days. Her life closed in a gentle dream—may she wake as kindly in the other world!'

'May she wake in torment!' he cried, with frightful vehemence, stamping his foot, and groaning in a sudden paroxysm of ungovernable passion. 'Why, she's a liar to the end! Where is she? Not *there*—not in heaven—not perished—where? Oh! you said you cared nothing for my sufferings! And I pray one prayer—I repeat it till my tongue stiffens—Catherine Earnshaw, may you not rest as long as I am living! You said I killed you—haunt me, then! The murdered *do* haunt their murderers, I believe. I know that ghosts *have* wandered on earth. Be with me always—take any form—drive me mad! only *do* not leave me in this abyss, where I cannot find you! Oh, God! it is unutterable! I *cannot* live without my life! I *cannot* live without my soul!'

He dashed his head against the knotted trunk; and, lifting up his eyes, howled, not like a man, but like a savage beast getting[1] goaded to death with knives and spears.

I observed several splashes of blood about the bark of the tree, and his hand and forehead were both stained; probably the scene I witnessed was a repetition of others acted during the night. It hardly moved my compassion—it appalled me: still, I felt reluctant to quit him so. But the moment he recollected himself enough to notice me watching, he thundered a command for me to go, and I obeyed. He was beyond my skill to quiet or console!

Mrs. Linton's funeral was appointed to take place on the Friday following her decease; and till then her coffin remained uncovered, and strewn with flowers and scented leaves, in the great drawing-room. Linton spent his days and nights there, a sleepless guardian; and—a circumstance concealed from all but me—Heathcliff spent his nights, at least, outside, equally a stranger to repose.

I held no communication with him: still, I was conscious of his design to enter, if he could; and on the Tuesday, a little after dark, when my master, from sheer fatigue, had been compelled to retire a couple of hours, I went and opened one of the windows; moved by his perseverance, to give him a chance of bestowing on the fading image of his idol one final adieu.

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[1] Corrected to 'being' by C. B.

He did not omit to avail himself of the opportunity, cautiously and briefly; too cautiously to betray his presence by the slightest noise. Indeed, I shouldn't have discovered that he had been there, except for the disarrangement of the drapery about the corpse's face, and for observing on the floor a curl of light hair, fastened with a silver thread: which, on examination, I ascertained to have been taken from a locket hung round Catherine's neck. Heathcliff had opened the trinket and cast out its contents, replacing them by a black lock of his own. I twisted the two, and enclosed them together.

Mr. Earnshaw was, of course, invited to attend the remains of his sister to the grave; and[1] he sent no excuse, but he never came; so that, besides her husband, the mourners were wholly composed of tenants and servants. Isabella was not asked.

The place of Catherine's interment, to the surprise of the villagers, was neither in the chapel under the carved monument of the Lintons, nor yet by the tombs of her own relations, outside. It was dug on a green slope in a corner of the kirkyard, where the wall is so low that heath and bilberry plants have climbed over it from the moor; and peat mould almost buries it. Her husband lies in the same spot now; and they have each a simple headstone above, and a plain grey block at their feet, to mark the graves.

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[1] The 'and' deleted in subsequent edition.

CHAPTER XVII

THAT Friday made the last of our fine days for a month. In the evening, the weather broke; the wind shifted from south to north-east, and brought rain first, and then sleet and snow.

On the morrow one could hardly imagine that there had been three weeks of summer: the primroses and crocuses were hidden under wintry drifts; the larks were silent, the young leaves of the early trees smitten and blackened. And dreary, and chill, and dismal, that morrow did creep over! My master kept his room; I took possession of the lonely parlour, converting it into a nursery: and there I was, sitting with the moaning doll of a child laid on my knee; rocking it to and fro, and watching, meanwhile, the still driving flakes build up the uncurtained window, when the door opened, and some person entered, out of breath and laughing!

My anger was greater than my astonishment for a minute. I supposed it one of the maids, and I cried—

'Have done! How dare you show your giddiness here? What would Mr. Linton say if he heard you?'

'Excuse me!' answered a familiar voice; 'but I know Edgar is in bed, and I cannot stop myself.'

With that the speaker came forward to the fire, panting and holding her hand to her side.

'I have run the whole way from Wuthering Heights!' she continued, after a pause; 'except where I've flown. I couldn't count the number of falls I've had. Oh, I'm aching all over! Don't be alarmed! There shall be an explanation as soon as I can give it; only just have the goodness to step out and order the carriage to take me on to Gimmerton, and tell a servant to seek up a few clothes in my wardrobe.'

The intruder was Mrs. Heathcliff. She certainly seemed in no laughing predicament: her hair streamed on her shoulders, dripping with snow and water; she was dressed in the girlish dress she commonly wore, befitting her age more than her position: a low frock with short sleeves, and nothing on either head or neck. The frock was of light silk, and clung to her with wet, and her feet were protected merely by thin slippers; add to this a deep cut under one ear, which only the cold prevented from bleeding profusely, a white face scratched and bruised, and a frame hardly able to support itself, through fatigue; and you may fancy my first fright was not much allayed when I had leisure to examine her.

'My dear young lady,' I exclaimed, 'I 'll stir nowhere, and hear nothing, till you have removed every article of your clothes, and put on dry things; and certainly you shall not go to Gimmerton to-night, so it is needless to order the carriage.'

'Certainly I shall,' she said; 'walking or riding: yet I 've no objection to dress myself decently. And—ah, see how it flows down my neck now! The fire does make it smart.'

She insisted on my fulfilling her directions, before she would let me touch her; and not till after the coachman had been instructed to get ready, and a maid set to pack up some necessary attire, did I obtain her consent for binding the wound and helping to change her garments.

'Now, Ellen,' she said, when my task was finished and she was seated in an easy-chair on the hearth, with a cup of tea before her, 'you sit down opposite me, and put poor Catherine's baby away: I don't like to see it! You mustn't think I care little for Catherine, because I behaved so foolishly on entering: I 've cried, too, bitterly—yes, more than any one else has reason to cry. We parted unreconciled, you remember, and I shan't forgive myself. But, for all that, I was not going to sympathise with him—the brute beast! Oh, give me the poker! This is the last thing of his I have about me': she slipped the gold ring from her third finger, and threw it on the floor. 'I 'll smash it!' she continued, striking it with childish spite, 'and then I 'll burn it!' and she took and dropped the misused article among the coals. 'There! he shall buy another, if he gets me back again. He 'd be capable of coming to seek me, to tease Edgar. I dare not stay, lest that notion should possess his wicked head! And besides, Edgar has not been kind, has he? And I won't come suing for his assistance; nor will I bring him into more trouble. Necessity compelled me to seek shelter here; though, if I had not learned he was out of the way, I 'd have halted at the kitchen, washed my face, warmed myself, got you to bring what I wanted, and departed again to anywhere out of the reach of my accursed—of that incarnate goblin! Ah, he was in such a fury! If he had caught me! It 's a pity Earnshaw is not his match in strength: I wouldn't have run till I 'd seen him all but demolished, had Hindley been able to do it!'

'Well, don't talk so fast, Miss!' I interrupted, 'you 'll disorder the handkerchief I have tied round your face, and make the cut bleed again. Drink your tea, and take breath, and give over laughing: laughter is sadly out of place under this roof, and in your condition!'

'An undeniable truth,' she replied. 'Listen to that child! It maintains a constant wail—send it out of my hearing for an hour; I shan't stay any longer.'

I rang the bell, and committed it to a servant's care; and then I inquired what had urged her to escape from Wuthering Heights in such an unlikely plight, and where she meant to go, as she refused remaining with us.

'I ought, and I wish to remain,' answered she, 'to cheer Edgar and take care of the baby, for two things, and because the Grange is my right home. But I tell you he wouldn't let me! Do you think he could bear to see me grow fat and merry; and could bear to think that we were tranquil, and not resolve on poisoning our comfort? Now, I have the satisfaction of being sure that he detests me, to the point of its annoying him seriously to have me within earshot or eyesight: I notice, when I enter his presence, the muscles of his countenance are involuntarily distorted into an expression of hatred; partly arising from his knowledge of the good causes I have to feel that sentiment for him, and partly from original aversion. It is strong enough to make me feel pretty certain that he would not chase me over England, supposing I contrived a clear escape; and therefore I must get quite away. I 've recovered from my first desire to be killed by him: I 'd rather he 'd kill himself! He has extinguished my love effectually, and so I 'm at my ease. I can recollect yet how I loved him; and can dimly imagine that I could still be loving him, if—no, no! Even if he had doted on me, the devilish nature would have revealed its existence somehow. Catherine had an awfully perverted taste to esteem him so dearly, knowing him so well. Monster! would that he could be blotted out of creation, and out of my memory!'

'Hush, hush! He 's a human being,' I said. 'Be more charitable: there are worse men than he is yet!'

'He 's not a human being,' she retorted; 'and he has no claim on my charity. I gave him my heart, and he took and pinched it to death and flung it back to me. People feel with their hearts, Ellen: and since he has destroyed mine, I have not power to feel for him: and I would not, though he groaned from this to his dying day, and wept tears of blood for Catherine! No, indeed, indeed, I wouldn't!' And here Isabella began to cry; but, immediately dashing the water from her lashes, she recommenced.

'You asked, what has driven me to flight at last? I was compelled to attempt it, because I had succeeded in rousing his rage a pitch above his malignity. Pulling out the nerves with red hot pincers requires more coolness than knocking on the head. He was worked up to forget the fiendish prudence he boasted of, and proceeded to murderous violence. I experienced pleasure in being able to exasperate him: the sense of pleasure woke my instinct of self-preservation, so I fairly broke free; and if ever I come into his hands again he is welcome to a signal revenge.

'Yesterday, you know, Mr. Earnshaw should have been at the funeral. He kept himself sober for the purpose—tolerably sober: not going to bed mad at six o'clock and getting up drunk at twelve. Consequently, he rose, in suicidal low spirits, as fit for the church as for a dance; and instead, he sat down by the fire and swallowed gin or brandy by tumblerfuls.

'Heathcliff—I shudder to name him! has been a stranger in the house from last Sunday till to-day. Whether the angels have fed him, or his kin beneath, I cannot tell; but he has not eaten a meal with us for nearly a week. He has just come home at dawn, and gone upstairs to his chamber; locking himself in—as if anybody dreamt of coveting his company! There he has continued, praying like a Methodist: only the deity he implored is senseless dust and ashes; and God, when addressed, was curiously confounded with his own black father! After concluding these precious orisons—and they lasted generally till he grew hoarse and his voice was strangled in his throat—he would be off again; always straight down to the Grange! I wonder Edgar did not send for a constable, and give him into custody! For me, grieved as I was about Catherine, it was impossible to avoid regarding this season of deliverance from degrading oppression as a holiday.

'I recovered spirits sufficient to hear Joseph's eternal lectures without weeping, and to move up and down the house less with the foot of a frightened thief than formerly. You wouldn't think that I should cry at anything Joseph could say; but he and Hareton are detestable companions. I 'd rather sit with Hindley, and hear his awful talk, than with "t' little maister," and his staunch supporter, that odious old man!

'When Heathcliff is in, I 'm often obliged to seek the kitchen and their society, or starve among the damp uninhabited chambers; when he is not, as was the case this week, I establish a table and chair at one corner of the house fire, and never mind how Mr. Earnshaw may occupy himself; and he does not interfere with my arrangements. He is quieter now than he used to be, if no one provokes him: more sullen and depressed, and less furious. Joseph affirms he 's sure he 's an altered man: that the Lord has touched his heart, and he is saved "so as by fire." I 'm puzzled to detect signs of the favourable change: but it is not my business.

'Yester-evening I sat in my nook reading some old books till late on towards twelve. It seemed so dismal to go upstairs, with the wild snow blowing outside, and my thoughts continually reverting to the kirkyard and the new-made grave! I dared hardly lift my eyes from the page before me, that melancholy scene so instantly usurped its place.

'Hindley sat opposite, his head leant on his hand; perhaps meditating on the same subject. He had ceased drinking at a point below irrationality, and had neither stirred nor spoken during two or three hours. There was no sound through the house but the moaning wind, which shook the windows every now and then, the faint crackling of the coals, and the click of my snuffers as I removed at intervals the long wick of the candle. Hareton and Joseph were probably fast asleep in bed. It was very, very sad: and while I read I sighed, for it seemed as if all joy had vanished from the world, never to be restored.

'The doleful silence was broken at length by the sound of the kitchen latch: Heathcliff had returned from his watch earlier than usual; owing, I suppose, to the sudden storm.

'That entrance was fastened, and we heard him coming round to get in by the other. I rose with an irrepressible expression of what I felt on my lips, which induced my companion, who had been staring towards the door, to turn and look at me.

'"I 'll keep him out five minutes," he exclaimed. "You won't object?"

'"No, you may keep him out the whole night for me," I answered. "Do! put the key in the lock, and draw the bolts."

'Earnshaw accomplished this ere his guest reached the front; he then came and brought his chair to the other side of my table, leaning over it, and searching in my eyes for a sympathy with the burning hate that gleamed from his: as he both looked and felt like an assassin, he couldn't exactly find that; but he discovered enough to encourage him to speak.

'"You, and I," he said, "have each a great debt to settle with the man out yonder! If we were neither of us cowards, we might combine to discharge it. Are you as soft as your brother? Are you willing to endure to the last, and not once attempt a repayment?"

'"I'm weary of enduring now," I replied; "and I'd be glad of a retaliation that wouldn't recoil on myself; but treachery and violence are spears pointed at both ends: they wound those who resort to them worse than their enemies."

'"Treachery and violence are a just return for treachery and violence!" cried Hindley. "Mrs. Heathcliff, I'll ask you to do nothing; but sit still and be dumb. Tell me now, can you? I'm sure you would have as much pleasure as I in witnessing the conclusion of the fiend's existence; he'll be *your* death unless you overreach him; and he'll be *my* ruin. Damn the hellish villain! He knocks at the door as if he were master here already! Promise to hold your tongue, and before that clock strikes—it wants three minutes of one—you're a free woman!"

'He took the implements which I described to you in my letter from his breast, and would have turned down the candle. I snatched it away, however, and seized his arm.

'"I'll not hold my tongue!" I said; "you mustn't touch him. Let the door remain shut, and be quiet!"

'"No! I've formed my resolution, and by God I'll execute it!" cried the desperate being. "I'll do you a kindness in spite of yourself, and Hareton justice! And you needn't trouble your head to screen me; Catherine is gone. Nobody alive would regret me, or be ashamed, though I cut my throat this minute—and it 's time to make an end!"

'I might as well have struggled with a bear, or reasoned with a lunatic. The only resource left me was to run to a lattice and warn his intended victim of the fate which awaited him.

'"You 'd better seek shelter somewhere else to-night!" I exclaimed in a rather triumphant tone. "Mr. Earnshaw has a mind to shoot you, if you persist in endeavouring to enter."

'"You 'd better open the door, you ——," he answered, addressing me by some elegant term that I don't care to repeat.

'"I shall not meddle in the matter," I retorted again. "Come in and get shot, if you please! I 've done my duty."

'With that I shut the window and returned to my place by the fire; having too small a stock of hypocrisy at my command to pretend any anxiety for the danger that menaced him.

'Earnshaw swore passionately at me: affirming that I loved the villain yet; and calling me all sorts of names for the base spirit I evinced. And I, in my secret heart (and conscience never reproached me), thought what a blessing it would be for *him* should Heathcliff put him out of misery; and what a blessing for *me* should he send Heathcliff to his right abode! As I sat nursing these reflections, the casement behind me was banged on to the floor by a blow from the latter individual, and his black countenance looked blightingly through. The stanchions stood too close to suffer his shoulders to follow, and I smiled, exulting in my fancied security.

His hair and clothes were whitened with snow, and his sharp cannibal teeth, revealed by cold and wrath, gleamed through the dark.

'"Isabella, let me in, or I 'll make you repent!" he "girned," as Joseph calls it.

'"I cannot commit murder," I replied. "Mr. Hindley stands sentinel with a knife and loaded pistol."

'"Let me in by the kitchen door," he said.

'"Hindley will be there before me," I answered: "and that 's a poor love of yours that cannot bear a shower of snow! We were left at peace in our beds as long as the summer moon shone, but the moment a blast of winter returns, you must run for shelter! Heathcliff, if I were you, I 'd go stretch myself over her grave and die like a faithful dog. The world is surely not worth living in now, is it? You had distinctly impressed on me the idea that Catherine was the whole joy of your life: I can't imagine how you think of surviving her loss."

'"He 's there, is he?" exclaimed my companion, rushing to the gap. "If I can get my arm out I can hit him!"

'I 'm afraid, Ellen, you 'll set me down as really wicked; but you don't know all, so don't judge. I wouldn't have aided or abetted an attempt on even *his* life for anything. Wish that he were dead, I must; and therefore I was fearfully disappointed, and unnerved by terror for the consequences of my taunting speech, when he flung himself on Earnshaw's weapon and wrenched it from his grasp.

'The charge exploded, and the knife, in springing back, closed into its owner's wrist. Heathcliff pulled it away by main force, slitting up the flesh as it passed on, and thrust it dripping into his pocket. He then took a stone, struck down the division between two windows, and sprang in. His adversary had fallen senseless with excessive pain and the flow of blood, that gushed from an artery or a large vein.

'The ruffian kicked and trampled on him, and dashed his head repeatedly against the flags, holding me with one hand, meantime, to prevent me summoning Joseph.

'He exerted preterhuman self-denial in abstaining from finishing him completely; but getting out of breath he finally desisted, and dragged the apparently inanimate body on to the settle.

'There he tore off the sleeve of Earnshaw's coat, and bound up the wound with brutal roughness; spitting and cursing during the operation as energetically as he had kicked before.

'Being at liberty, I lost no time in seeking the old servant; who, having gathered by degrees the purport of my hasty tale, hurried below, gasping, as he descended the steps two at once.

'"Whet is thur' tuh do, nah? whet is thur' tuh do, nah?"[1]

'"There 's this to do," thundered Heathcliff, "that your master's mad; and should he last another month, I 'll have him to an asylum. And how the devil did you come to fasten me out, you toothless hound? Don't stand muttering and mumbling there. Come, I 'm not going to nurse him. Wash that stuff away; and mind the sparks of your candle—it is more than half brandy!"

'"Und soa, yah been murthering on him?" exclaimed Joseph, lifting his hands and eyes in horror. "If iver Aw seed a seeght loike this![2] May the Lord——"

'Heathcliff gave him a push on to his knees in the middle of the blood, and flung a towel to him; but instead of proceeding to dry it up, he joined his hands and began a prayer, which excited my laughter from its odd phraseology. I was in the condition of mind to be shocked at nothing: in fact, I was as reckless as some malefactors show themselves at the foot of the gallows.

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[1] '"What is ther' to do, now? what is ther' to do, now?"—C. B.'s Revision.

[2] '"If iver I seed a seeght loike this!"—C. B.'s Revision.

'"Oh, I forgot you," said the tyrant. "You shall do that. Down with you. And you conspire with him against me, do you, viper? There, that is work fit for you!"

'He shook me till my teeth rattled, and pitched me beside Joseph, who steadily concluded his supplications and then rose, vowing he would set off for the Grange directly. Mr. Linton was a magistrate, and though he had fifty wives dead, he should inquire into this.

'He was so obstinate in his resolution, that Heathcliff deemed it expedient to compel from my lips a recapitulation of what had taken place; standing over me, heaving with malevolence, as I reluctantly delivered the account in answer to his questions.

'It required a great deal of labour to satisfy the old man that Heathcliff was not the aggressor; especially with my hardly-wrung replies. However, Mr. Earnshaw soon convinced him that he was alive still; he[1] hastened to administer a dose of spirits, and by their succour his master presently regained motion and consciousness.

'Heathcliff, aware that he was ignorant of the treatment received while insensible, called him deliriously intoxicated; and said he should not notice his atrocious conduct further, but advised him to get to bed. To my joy, he left us, after giving this judicious counsel, and Hindley stretched himself on the hearthstone. I departed to my own room, marvelling that I had escaped so easily.

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[1] 'Joseph' in subsequent editions.

'This morning, when I came down, about half an hour before noon, Mr. Earnshaw was sitting by the fire, deadly sick; his evil genius, almost as gaunt and ghastly, leant against the chimney. Neither appeared inclined to dine, and, having waited till all was cold on the table, I commenced alone.

'Nothing hindered me from eating heartily, and I experienced a certain sense of satisfaction and superiority, as, at intervals, I cast a look towards my silent companions, and felt the comfort of a quiet conscience within me.

'After I had done, I ventured on the unusual liberty of drawing near the fire, going round Earnshaw's seat, and kneeling in the corner beside him.

'Heathcliff did not glance my way, and I gazed up, and contemplated his features almost as confidently as if they had been turned to stone. His forehead, that I once thought so manly, and that I now think so diabolical, was shaded with a heavy cloud; his basilisk eyes were nearly quenched by sleeplessness, and weeping, perhaps, for the lashes were wet then; his lips devoid of their ferocious sneer, and sealed in an expression of unspeakable sadness. Had it been another, I would have covered my face in the presence of such grief. In *his* case, I was gratified; and, ignoble as it seems to insult a fallen enemy, I couldn't miss this chance of sticking in a dart: his weakness was the only time when I could taste the delight of paying wrong for wrong.'

'Fie, fie, Miss!' I interrupted. 'One might suppose you had never opened a Bible in your life. If God afflict your enemies, surely that ought to suffice you. It is both mean and presumptuous to add your torture to His!'

'In general I'll allow that it would be, Ellen,' she continued; 'but what misery laid on Heathcliff could content me, unless I have a hand in it? I'd rather he suffered *less*, if I might cause his sufferings and he might *know* that I was the cause. Oh, I owe him so much. On only one condition can I hope to forgive him. It is, if I may take an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth; for every wrench of agony return a wrench: reduce him to my level. As he was the first to injure, make him the first to implore pardon; and then—why then, Ellen, I might show you some generosity. But it is utterly impossible I can ever be revenged, and therefore I cannot forgive him. Hindley wanted some water, and I handed him a glass, and asked him how he was.

'"Not as ill as I wish," he replied. "But leaving out my arm, every inch of me is as sore as if I had been fighting with a legion of imps!"

'"Yes, no wonder," was my next remark. "Catherine used to boast that she stood between you and bodily harm: she meant that certain persons would not hurt you for fear of offending her. It's well people don't *really* rise from their grave, or, last night, she might have witnessed a repulsive scene! Are not you bruised, and cut over your chest and shoulders?"

'"I can't say," he answered: "but what do you mean? Did he dare to strike me when I was down?"

'"He trampled on and kicked you, and dashed you on the ground," I whispered. "And his mouth watered to tear you with his teeth; because he's only half a man—not so much."

'Mr. Earnshaw looked up, like me, to the countenance of our mutual foe; who, absorbed in his anguish, seemed insensible to anything around him: the longer he stood, the plainer his reflections revealed their blackness through his features.

'"Oh, if God would but give me strength to strangle him in my last agony, I 'd go to hell with joy," groaned the impatient man, writhing to rise, and sinking back in despair, convinced of his inadequacy for the struggle.

'"Nay, it 's enough that he has murdered one of you," I observed aloud. "At the Grange, every one knows your sister would have been living now, had it not been for Mr. Heathcliff. After all, it is preferable to be hated than loved by him. When I recollect how happy we were—how happy Catherine was before he came—I 'm fit to curse the day."

'Most likely, Heathcliff noticed more the truth of what was said, than the spirit of the person who said it. His attention was roused, I saw, for his eyes rained down tears among the ashes, and he drew his breath in suffocating sighs.

'I stared full at him, and laughed scornfully. The clouded windows of hell flashed a moment towards me; the fiend which usually looked out, however, was so dimmed and drowned that I did not fear to hazard another sound of derision.

'"Get up, and begone out of my sight," said the mourner.

'I guessed he uttered those words, at least, though his voice was hardly intelligible.

'"I beg your pardon," I replied. "But I loved Catherine too; and her brother requires attendance, which, for her sake, I shall supply. Now that she 's dead, I see her in Hindley: Hindley has exactly her eyes, if you had not tried to gouge them out, and made them black and red; and her——"

'"Get up, wretched idiot, before I stamp you to death!" he cried, making a movement that caused me to make one also.

'"But then," I continued, holding myself ready to flee; "if poor Catherine had trusted you, and assumed the ridiculous, contemptible, degrading title of Mrs. Heathcliff, she would soon have presented a similar picture! *She* wouldn't have borne your abominable behaviour quietly: her detestation and disgust must have found voice."

'The back of the settle and Earnshaw's person interposed between me and him; so instead of endeavouring to reach me, he snatched a dinner knife from the table and flung it at my head. It struck beneath my ear, and stopped the sentence I was uttering; but, pulling it out, I sprang to the door and delivered another; which I hope went a little deeper than his missile.

'The last glimpse I caught of him was a furious rush on his part, checked by the embrace of his host; and both fell locked together on the hearth.

'In my flight through the kitchen I bid Joseph speed to his master; I knocked over Hareton, who was hanging a litter of puppies from a chair-back in the doorway; and, blest as a soul escaped from purgatory, I bounded, leaped, and flew down the steep road; then, quitting its windings, shot direct across the moor, rolling over banks, and wading through marshes: precipitating myself, in fact, towards the beacon light of the Grange. And far rather would I be condemned to a perpetual dwelling in the infernal regions, than, even for one night, abide beneath the roof of Wuthering Heights again.'

Isabella ceased speaking, and took a drink of tea; then she rose, and bidding me put on her bonnet, and a great shawl I had brought, and turning a deaf ear to my entreaties for her to remain another hour, she stepped on to a chair, kissed Edgar's and Catherine's portraits, bestowed a similar salute on me, and descended to the carriage, accompanied by Fanny, who yelped wild with joy at recovering her mistress. She was driven away, never to revisit this neighbourhood: but a regular correspondence was established between her and my master when things were more settled.

I believe her new abode was in the south, near London; there she had a son born, a few months subsequent to her escape. He was christened Linton, and, from the first, she reported him to be an ailing, peevish creature.

Mr. Heathcliff, meeting me one day in the village, inquired where she lived. I refused to tell. He remarked that it was not of any moment, only she must beware of coming to her brother: she should not be with him, if he had to keep her himself.

Though I would give no information, he discovered, through some of the other servants, both her place of residence and the existence of the child. Still he didn't molest her: for which forbearance she might thank his aversion, I suppose.

He often asked about the infant, when he saw me; and on hearing its name, smiled grimly, and observed—

'They wish me to hate it too, do they?'

'I don't think they wish you to know anything about it,' I answered.

'But I'll have it,' he said, 'when I want it. They may reckon on that!'

Fortunately, its mother died before the time arrived; some thirteen years after the decease of Catherine, when Linton was twelve, or a little more.

On the day succeeding Isabella's unexpected visit, I had no opportunity of speaking to my master: he shunned conversation, and was fit for discussing nothing. When I could get him to listen, I saw it pleased him that his sister had left her husband; whom he abhorred with an intensity which the mildness of his nature would scarcely seem to allow. So deep and sensitive was his aversion, that he refrained from going anywhere where he was likely to see or hear of Heathcliff. Grief, and that together, transformed him into a complete hermit: he threw up his office of magistrate, ceased even to attend church, avoided the village on all occasions, and spent a life of entire seclusion within the limits of his park and grounds; only varied by solitary rambles on the moors, and visits to the grave of his wife, mostly at evening, or early morning before other wanderers were abroad.

But he was too good to be thoroughly unhappy long. *He* didn't pray for Catherine's soul to haunt him. Time brought resignation, and a melancholy sweeter than common joy. He recalled her memory with ardent, tender love, and hopeful aspiring to the better world; where he doubted not she was gone.

And he had earthly consolation and affections also. For a few days, I said, he seemed regardless of the puny successor to the departed: that coldness melted as fast as snow in April, and ere the tiny thing could stammer a word or totter a step, it wielded a despot's sceptre in his heart.

It was named Catherine; but he never called it the name in full, as he had never called the first Catherine short: probably because Heathcliff had a habit of doing so. The little one was always Cathy: it formed to him a distinction from the mother, and yet a connection with her; and his attachment sprang from its relation to her, far more than from its being his own.

I used to draw a comparison between him and Hindley Earnshaw, and perplex myself to explain satisfactorily why their conduct was so opposite in similar circumstances. They had both been fond husbands, and were both attached to their children; and I could not see how they shouldn't both have taken the same road, for good or evil. But, I thought in my mind, Hindley, with apparently the stronger head, has shown himself sadly the worse and the weaker man. When his ship struck, the captain abandoned his post; and the crew, instead of trying to save her, rushed into riot and confusion, leaving no hope for their luckless vessel. Linton, on the contrary, displayed the true courage of a loyal and faithful soul: he trusted God; and God comforted him. One hoped, and the other despaired: they chose their own lots, and were righteously doomed to endure them.

But you 'll not want to hear my moralising, Mr. Lockwood; you 'll judge as well as I can, all these things: at least, you 'll think you will, and that 's the same.

The end of Earnshaw was what might have been expected; it followed fast on his sister's: there were scarcely six months between them. We, at the Grange, never got a very succinct account of his state preceding it; all that I did learn was on occasion of going to aid in the preparations for the funeral. Mr. Kenneth came to announce the event to my master.

'Well, Nelly,' said he, riding into the yard one morning, too early not to alarm me with an instant presentiment of bad news, 'it 's yours and my turn to go into mourning at present. Who 's given us the slip now, do you think?'

'Who?' I asked in a flurry.

'Why, guess!' he returned, dismounting and slinging his bridle on a hook by the door. 'And nip up the corner of your apron: I 'm certain you 'll need it.'

'Not Mr. Heathcliff, surely?' I exclaimed.

'What! would you have tears for him?' said the doctor. 'No, Heathcliff 's a tough young fellow: he looks blooming to-day. I 've just seen him. He 's rapidly regaining flesh since he lost his better half.'

'Who is it, then, Mr. Kenneth?' I repeated impatiently.

'Hindley Earnshaw! Your old friend Hindley,' he replied, 'and my wicked gossip: though he 's been too wild for me this long while. There! I said we should draw water. But cheer up! He died true to his character: drunk as a lord. Poor lad; I 'm sorry, too. One can't help missing an old companion: though he had the worst tricks with him that ever man imagined, and has done me many a rascally turn. He 's barely twenty-seven, it seems; that 's your own age: who would have thought you were born in one year?'

I confess this blow was greater to me than the shock of Mrs. Linton's death: ancient associations lingered round my heart; I sat down in the porch and wept as for a blood relation, desiring Kenneth to get another servant to introduce him to the master.

I could not hinder myself from pondering on the question—'Had he had fair play?' Whatever I did, that idea would bother me: it was so tiresomely pertinacious that I resolved on requesting leave to go to Wuthering Heights, and assist in the last duties to the dead. Mr. Linton was extremely reluctant to consent, but I pleaded eloquently for the friendless condition in which he lay; and I said my old master and foster-brother had a claim on my services as strong as his own. Besides, I reminded him that the child Hareton was his wife's nephew, and, in the absence of nearer kin, he ought to act as its guardian; and he ought to and must inquire how the property was left, and look over the concerns of his brother-in-law.

He was unfit for attending to such matters then, but he bid me speak to his lawyer; and at length permitted me to go. His lawyer had been Earnshaw's also: I called at the village, and asked him to accompany me. He shook his head, and advised that Heathcliff should be let alone; affirming, if the truth were known, Hareton would be found little else than a beggar.

'His father died in debt,' he said; 'the whole property is mortgaged, and the sole chance for the natural heir is to allow him an opportunity of creating some interest in the creditor's heart, that he may be inclined to deal leniently towards him.'

When I reached the Heights, I explained that I had come to see everything carried on decently; and Joseph, who appeared in sufficient distress, expressed satisfaction at my presence. Mr. Heathcliff said he did not perceive that I was wanted; but I might stay and order the arrangements for the funeral, if I chose.

'Correctly,' he remarked, 'that fool's body should be buried at the cross-roads, without ceremony of any kind. I happened to leave him ten minutes yesterday afternoon, and in that interval he fastened the two doors of the house against me, and he has spent the night in drinking himself to death deliberately! We broke in this morning, for we heard him snorting like a horse; and there he was, laid over the settle: flaying and scalping would not have wakened him. I sent for Kenneth, and he came; but not till the beast had changed into carrion: he was both dead and cold, and stark; and so you 'll allow it was useless making more stir about him!'

The old servant confirmed this statement, but muttered—

'Aw 'd rayther he 'd goan hisseln fur t' doctor! Aw sud uh taen tent uh t' maister better nur him—un he warn't deead when Aw left, nowt uh t' soart!'[1]

I insisted on the funeral being respectable. Mr. Heathcliff said I might have my own way there too: only, he desired me to remember that the money for the whole affair came out of his pocket.

He maintained a hard, careless deportment, indicative of neither joy nor sorrow: if anything, it expressed a flinty gratification at a piece of difficult work successfully executed. I observed once, indeed, something like exultation in his aspect: it was just when the people were bearing the coffin from the house. He had the hypocrisy to represent a mourner: and previous to following with Hareton, he lifted the unfortunate child on to the table and muttered, with peculiar gusto:

'Now, my bonny lad, you are *mine*! And we 'll see if one tree won't grow as crooked as another, with the same wind to twist it!'

The unsuspecting thing was pleased at this speech: he played with Heathcliff's whiskers, and stroked his cheek; but I divined its meaning, and observed tartly:

'That boy must go back with me to Thrushcross Grange, sir. There is nothing in the world less yours than he is!'

'Does Linton say so?' he demanded.

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[1] 'I'd rayther he 'd goan hisseln for t' doctor! I sud ha' taen tent o' t' maister better nor him—and he warn't deead when I left, naught o' t' soart!'—C. B.'s Revision.

'Of course—he has ordered me to take him,' I replied.

'Well,' said the scoundrel, 'we 'll not argue the subject now: but I have a fancy to try my hand at rearing a young one; so intimate to your master that I must supply the place of this with my own, if he attempt to remove it. I don't engage to let Hareton go undisputed; but I 'll be pretty sure to make the other come! Remember to tell him.'

This hint was enough to bind our hands. I repeated its substance on my return; and Edgar Linton, little interested at the commencement, spoke no more of interfering. I 'm not aware that he could have done it to any purpose, had he been ever so willing.

The guest was now the master of Wuthering Heights: he held firm possession, and proved to the attorney—who, in his turn, proved it to Mr. Linton—that Earnshaw had mortgaged every yard of land he owned, for cash to supply his mania for gaming; and he, Heathcliff, was the mortgagee.

In that manner Hareton, who should now be the first gentleman in the neighbourhood, was reduced to a state of complete dependence on his father's inveterate enemy; and lives in his own house as a servant, deprived of the advantage of wages: quite unable to right himself, because of his friendlessness, and his ignorance that he has been wronged.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE twelve years, continued Mrs. Dean, following that dismal period, were the happiest of my life: my greatest troubles in their passage rose from our little lady's trifling illnesses, which she had to experience in common with all children, rich and poor.

For the rest, after the first six months, she grew like a larch, and could walk and talk too, in her own way, before the heath blossomed a second time over Mrs. Linton's dust.

She was the most winning thing that ever brought sunshine into a desolate house: a real beauty in face, with the Earnshaws' handsome dark eyes, but the Lintons' fair skin and small features, and yellow curling hair. Her spirit was high, though not rough, and qualified by a heart sensitive and lively to excess in its affections. That capacity for intense attachments reminded me of her mother: still she did not resemble her; for she could be soft and mild as a dove, and she had a gentle voice and pensive expression: her anger was never furious; her love never fierce: it was deep and tender.

However, it must be acknowledged, she had faults to foil her gifts. A propensity to be saucy was one; and a perverse will, that indulged children invariably acquire, whether they be good-tempered or cross. If a servant chanced to vex her, it was always—'I shall tell papa!' And if he reproved her, even by a look, you would have thought it a heart-breaking business: I don't believe he ever did speak a harsh word to her.

He took her education entirely on himself, and made it an amusement. Fortunately, curiosity and a quick intellect made her an apt scholar: she learned rapidly and eagerly, and did honour to his teaching.

Till she reached the age of thirteen, she had not once been beyond the range of the park by herself. Mr. Linton would take her with him a mile or so outside, on rare occasions; but he trusted her to no one else. Gimmerton was an unsubstantial name in her ears; the chapel, the only building she had approached or entered, except her own home. Wuthering Heights and Mr. Heathcliff did not exist for her: she was a perfect recluse; and, apparently, perfectly contented. Sometimes, indeed, while surveying the country from her nursery window, she would observe—

'Ellen, how long will it be before I can walk to the top of those hills? I wonder what lies on the other side—is it the sea?'

'No, Miss Cathy,' I would answer; 'it is hills again, just like these.'

'And what are those golden rocks like when you stand under them?' she once asked.

The abrupt descent of Penistone Crags particularly attracted her notice; especially when the setting sun shone on it and the topmost heights, and the whole extent of landscape besides lay in shadow.

I explained that they were bare masses of stone, with hardly enough earth in their clefts to nourish a stunted tree.

'And why are they bright so long after it is evening here?' she pursued.

'Because they are a great deal higher up than we are,' replied I; 'you could not climb them, they are too high and steep. In winter the frost is always there before it comes to us; and deep into summer I have found snow under that black hollow on the north-east side!'

'Oh, you have been on them!' she cried gleefully. 'Then I can go, too, when I am a woman. Has papa been, Ellen?'

'Papa would tell you, Miss,' I answered hastily, 'that they are not worth the trouble of visiting. The moors, where you ramble with him, are much nicer; and Thrushcross park is the finest place in the world.'

'But I know the park, and I don't know those,' she murmured to herself. 'And I should delight to look round me from the brow of that tallest point: my little pony Minny shall take me some time.'

One of the maids mentioning the Fairy Cave, quite turned her head with a desire to fulfil this project: she teased Mr. Linton about it; and he promised she should have the journey when she got older. But Miss Catherine measured her age by months, and—

'Now, am I old enough to go to Penistone Crags?' was the constant question in her mouth.

The road thither wound close by Wuthering Heights. Edgar had not the heart to pass it; so she received as constantly the answer—

'Not yet, love: not yet.'

I said Mrs. Heathcliff lived above a dozen years after quitting her husband. Her family were of a delicate constitution: she and Edgar both lacked the ruddy health that you will generally meet in these parts. What her last illness was, I am not certain: I conjecture, they died of the same thing, a kind of fever, slow at its commencement, but incurable, and rapidly consuming life towards the close.

She wrote to inform her brother of the probable conclusion of a four months' indisposition under which she had suffered, and entreated him to come to her, if possible; for she had much to settle, and she wished to bid him adieu, and deliver Linton safely into his hands. Her hope was, that Linton might be left with him, as he had been with her: his father, she would fain convince herself, had no desire to assume the burden of his maintenance or education.

My master hesitated not a moment in complying with her request: reluctant as he was to leave home at ordinary calls, he flew to answer this; commending

Catherine to my peculiar vigilance, in his absence, with reiterated orders that she must not wander out of the park, even under my escort: he did not calculate on her going unaccompanied.

He was away three weeks. The first day or two my charge sat in a corner of the library, too sad for either reading or playing: in that quiet state she caused me little trouble; but it was succeeded by an interval of impatient, fretful weariness; and being too busy, and too old then, to run up and down amusing her, I hit on a method by which she might entertain herself.

I used to send her on her travels round the grounds—now on foot, and now on a pony; indulging her with a patient audience of all her real and imaginary adventures, when she returned.

The summer shone in full prime; and she took such a taste for this solitary rambling that she often contrived to remain out from breakfast till tea; and then the evenings were spent in recounting her fanciful tales. I did not fear her breaking bounds; because the gates were generally locked, and I thought she would scarcely venture forth alone, if they had stood wide open.

Unluckily, my confidence proved misplaced. Catherine came to me, one morning, at eight o'clock, and said she was that day an Arabian merchant, going to cross the Desert with his caravan; and I must give her plenty of provision for herself and beasts: a horse, and three camels, personated by a large hound and a couple of pointers.

I got together good store of dainties, and slung them in a basket on one side of the saddle; and she sprang up as gay as a fairy, sheltered by her wide-brimmed hat and gauze veil from the July sun, and trotted off with a merry laugh, mocking my cautious counsel to avoid galloping, and come back early.

The naughty thing never made her appearance at tea. One traveller, the hound, being an old dog and fond of its ease, returned; but neither Cathy, nor the pony, nor the two pointers were visible in any direction; and I dispatched emissaries down this path, and that path, and at last went wandering in search of her myself.

There was a labourer working at a fence round a plantation, on the borders of the grounds. I inquired of him if he had seen our young lady.

'I saw her at morn,' he replied; 'she would have me to cut her a hazel switch, and then she leapt her Galloway over the hedge yonder, where it is lowest, and galloped out of sight.'

You may guess how I felt at hearing this news. It struck me directly she must have started for Penistone Crags.

'What will become of her?' I ejaculated, pushing through a gap which the man was repairing, and making straight to the high-road.

I walked as if for a wager, mile after mile, till a turn brought me in view of the Heights; but no Catherine could I detect, far or near.

The Crags lie about a mile and a half beyond Mr. Heathcliff's place, and that is four from the Grange, so I began to fear night would fall ere I could reach them.

'And what if she should have slipped in clambering among them,' I reflected, 'and been killed, or broken some of her bones?'

My suspense was truly painful; and, at first, it gave me delightful relief to observe, in hurrying by the farmhouse, Charlie, the fiercest of the pointers, lying under a window, with swelled head and bleeding ear.

I opened the wicket and ran to the door, knocking vehemently for admittance. A woman whom I knew, and who formerly lived at Gimmerton, answered: she had been servant there since the death of Mr. Earnshaw.

'Ah,' said she, 'you are come a-seeking your little mistress! don't be frightened. She 's here safe: but I 'm glad it isn't the master.'

'He is not at home, then, is he?' I panted, quite breathless with quick walking and alarm.

'No, no,' she replied: 'both he and Joseph are off, and I think they won't return this hour or more. Step in and rest you a bit.'

I entered, and beheld my stray lamb seated on the hearth, rocking herself in a little chair that had been her mother's when a child. Her hat was hung against the wall, and she seemed perfectly at home, laughing and chattering in the best spirits imaginable, to Hareton—now a great, strong lad of eighteen—who stared at her with considerable curiosity and astonishment: comprehending precious little of the fluent succession of remarks and questions which her tongue never ceased pouring forth.

'Very well, Miss!' I exclaimed, concealing my joy under an angry countenance. 'This is your last ride, till papa comes back. I 'll not trust you over the threshold again, you naughty, naughty girl!'

'Aha, Ellen!' she cried gaily, jumping up and running to my side. 'I shall have a pretty story to tell to-night: and so you 've found me out. Have you ever been here in your life before?'

'Put that hat on, and home at once,' said I. 'I 'm dreadfully grieved at you, Miss Cathy: you 've done extremely wrong! It 's no use pouting and crying: that won't repay the trouble I 've had, scouring the country after you. To think how Mr. Linton charged me to keep you in ; and you stealing off so ! it shows you are a cunning little fox, and nobody will put faith in you any more.'

'What have I done ? ' sobbed she, instantly checked. 'Papa charged me nothing : he 'll not scold me, Ellen —he 's never cross, like you ! '

'Come, come ! ' I repeated. 'I 'll tie the riband. Now, let us have no petulance. Oh, for shame ! You thirteen years old, and such a baby ! '

This exclamation was caused by her pushing the hat from her head, and retreating to the chimney out of my reach.

'Nay,' said the servant, 'don't be hard on the bonny lass, Mrs. Dean. We made her stop : she 'd fain have ridden forwards, afeard you should be uneasy. Hareton offered to go with her, and I thought he should : it 's a wild road over the hills.'

Hareton, during the discussion, stood with his hands in his pockets, too awkward to speak ; though he looked as if he did not relish my intrusion.

'How long am I to wait ? ' I continued, disregarding the woman's interference. 'It will be dark in ten minutes. Where is the pony, Miss Cathy ? And where is Phœnix ? I shall leave you, unless you be quick ; so please yourself.'

'The pony is in the yard,' she replied, 'and Phœnix is shut in there. He 's bitten—and so is Charlie. I was going to tell you all about it ; but you are in a bad temper, and don't deserve to hear.'

I picked up her hat, and approached to reinstate it ; but perceiving that the people of the house took her part, she commenced capering round the room ; and on my giving chase, ran like a mouse over and under and behind the furniture, rendering it ridiculous for me to pursue.

Hareton and the woman laughed, and she joined them, and waxed more impertinent still ; till I cried, in great irritation—

'Well, Miss Cathy, if you were aware whose house this is, you 'd be glad enough to get out.'

'It 's *your* father's, isn't it ? ' said she, turning to Hareton.

'Nay,' he replied, looking down, and blushing bashfully.

He could not stand a steady gaze from her eyes, though they were just his own.

'Whose, then—your master's ? ' she asked.

He coloured deeper, with a different feeling, muttered an oath, and turned away.

'Who is his master ? ' continued the tiresome girl, appealing to me. 'He talked about "our house," and "our folk." I thought he had been the owner's son. And he never said, Miss : he should have done, shouldn't he, if he 's a servant ? '

Hareton grew black as a thunder-cloud at this childish speech. I silently shook my questioner, and at last succeeded in equipping her for departure.

'Now, get my horse,' she said, addressing her unknown kinsman as she would one of the stable-boys at the Grange. 'And you may come with me. I want to see where the goblin-hunter rises in the marsh, and to hear about the *fairishes*, as you call them : but make haste ! What 's the matter ? Get my horse, I say.'

'I 'll see thee damned before I be *thy* servant ! ' growled the lad.

'You 'll see me *what* ? ' asked Catherine in surprise.

'Damned—thou saucy witch ! ' he replied.

'There, Miss Cathy ! you see you have got into pretty company,' I interposed. 'Nice words to be used to a young lady! Pray don't begin to dispute with him. Come, let us seek for Minny ourselves, and begone.'

'But Ellen,' cried she, staring, fixed in astonishment, 'how dare he speak so to me? Mustn't he be made to do as I ask him? You wicked creature, I shall tell papa what you said.—Now, then!'

Hareton did not appear to feel this threat; so the tears sprang into her eyes with indignation. 'You bring the pony,' she exclaimed, turning to the woman, 'and let my dog free this moment!'

'Softly, Miss,' answered the addressed: 'you 'll lose nothing by being civil. Though Mr. Hareton, there, be not the master's son, he 's your cousin; and I was never hired to serve you.'

'*He* my cousin!' cried Cathy, with a scornful laugh.

'Yes, indeed,' responded her reprover.

'Oh, Ellen! don't let them say such things,' she pursued in great trouble. 'Papa is gone to fetch my cousin from London: my cousin is a gentleman's son. That my——' she stopped, and wept outright; upset at the bare notion of relationship with such a clown.

'Hush, hush!' I whispered, 'people can have many cousins and of all sorts, Miss Cathy, without being any the worse for it; only they needn't keep their company, if they be disagreeable and bad.'

'He 's not—he 's not my cousin, Ellen!' she went on, gathering fresh grief from reflection, and flinging herself into my arms for refuge from the idea.

I was much vexed at her and the servant for their mutual revelations; having no doubt of Linton's approaching arrival, communicated by the former, being reported to Mr. Heathcliff; and feeling as confident that Catherine's first thought on her father's return would be to seek an explanation of the latter's assertion concerning her rude-bred kindred.

Hareton, recovering from his disgust at being taken for a servant, seemed moved by her distress; and, having fetched the pony round to the door, he took, to propitiate her, a fine crooked-legged terrier whelp from the kennel, and putting it into her hand bid her whist! for he meant nought.

Pausing in her lamentations, she surveyed him with a glance of awe and horror, then burst forth anew.

I could scarcely refrain from smiling at this antipathy to the poor fellow; who was a well-made, athletic youth, good-looking in features, and stout and healthy, but attired in garments befitting his daily occupations of working on the farm, and lounging among the moors after rabbits and game. Still, I thought I could detect in his physiognomy a mind owning better qualities than his father ever possessed. Good things lost amid a wilderness of weeds, to be sure, whose rankness far over-topped their neglected growth; yet, notwithstanding, evidence of a wealthy soil, that might yield luxuriant crops under other and favourable circumstances. Mr. Heathcliff, I believe, had not treated him physically ill; thanks to his fearless nature, which offered no temptation to that course of oppression: he had none of the timid susceptibility that would have given zest to ill-treatment, in Heathcliff's judgment. He appeared to have bent his malevolence on making him a brute: he was never taught to read or write; never rebuked for any bad habit which did not annoy his keeper; never led a single step towards virtue, or guarded by a single precept against vice. And from what I heard, Joseph contributed much to his deterioration, by a narrow-minded partiality which prompted him to flatter and pet him, as a boy, because he was the head of the old family. And as he had been in the habit of accusing Catherine Earnshaw and Heathcliff, when children, of putting the master past his patience, and compelling him to seek solace in drink by what he termed their 'offalld[1] ways,' so at present he laid the whole burden of Hareton's faults on the shoulders of the usurper of his property.

If the lad swore, he wouldn't correct him: nor however culpably he behaved. It gave Joseph satisfaction, apparently, to watch him go the worst lengths: he allowed that he[2] was ruined: that his soul was abandoned to perdition; but then, he reflected that Heathcliff must answer for it. Hareton's blood would be required at his hands; and there lay immense consolation in that thought.

Joseph had instilled into him a pride of name, and of his lineage; he would, had he dared, have fostered hate between him and the present owner of the Heights; but his dread of that owner amounted to superstition; and he confined his feelings regarding him to muttered innuendoes and private comminations.

I don't pretend to be intimately acquainted with the mode of living customary in those days at Wuthering Heights: I only speak from hearsay; for I saw little. The villagers affirmed Mr. Heathcliff was *near,* and a cruel hard landlord to his tenants; but the house, inside, had regained its ancient aspect of comfort under female management, and the scenes of riot common in Hindley's time were not now enacted within its walls. The master was too gloomy to seek companionship with any people, good or bad; and he is yet.

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[1] 'Offald' in subsequent editions.

[2] 'The lad' in subsequent editions.

This, however, is not making progress with my story. Miss Cathy rejected the peace-offering of the terrier, and demanded her own dogs, Charlie and Phœnix. They came limping, and hanging their heads; and we set out for home, sadly out of sorts, every one of us.

I could not wring from my little lady how she had spent the day; except that, as I supposed, the goal of her pilgrimage was Penistone Crags; and she arrived without adventure to the gate of the farmhouse, when Hareton happened to issue forth, attended by some canine followers, who attacked her train.

They had a smart battle, before their owners could separate them: that formed an introduction. Catherine told Hareton who she was, and where she was going; and asked him to show her the way: finally, beguiling him to accompany her.

He opened the mysteries of the Fairy Cave, and twenty other queer places. But, being in disgrace, I was not favoured with a description of the interesting objects she saw.

I could gather, however, that her guide had been a favourite till she hurt his feelings by addressing him as a servant; and Heathcliff's housekeeper hurt hers by calling him her cousin.

Then the language he had held to her rankled in her heart; she who was always 'love,' and 'darling,' and 'queen,' and 'angel,' with everybody at the Grange, to be insulted so shockingly by a stranger! She did not comprehend it; and hard work I had to obtain a promise that she would not lay the grievance before her father.

I explained how he objected to the whole household at the Heights, and how sorry he would be to find she had been there; but I insisted most on the fact, that if she revealed my negligence of his orders, he would perhaps be so angry, that I should have to leave; and Cathy couldn't bear that prospect: she pledged her word, and kept it, for my sake. After all, she was a sweet little girl.

CHAPTER XIX

A LETTER, edged with black, announced the day of my master's return. Isabella was dead; and he wrote to bid me get mourning for his daughter, and arrange a room, and other accommodations, for his youthful nephew.

Catherine ran wild with joy at the idea of welcoming her father back; and indulged most sanguine anticipations of the innumerable excellences of her 'real' cousin.

The evening of their expected arrival came. Since early morning, she had been busy ordering her own small affairs; and now, attired in her new black frock—poor thing! her aunt's death impressed her with no definite sorrow—she obliged me, by constant worrying, to walk with her down through the grounds to meet them.

'Linton is just six months younger than I am,' she chattered, as we strolled leisurely over the swells and hollows of mossy turf, under shadow of the trees. 'How delightful it will be to have him for a playfellow! Aunt Isabella sent papa a beautiful lock of his hair; it was lighter than mine—more flaxen, and quite as fine. I have it carefully preserved in a little glass box; and I 've often thought what pleasure it would be to see its owner. Oh! I am happy—and papa, dear, dear papa! Come, Ellen, let us run! come, run.'

She ran, and returned and ran again, many times before my sober footsteps reached the gate, and then she seated herself on the grassy bank beside the path, and tried to wait patiently; but that was impossible: she couldn't be still a minute.

'How long they are!' she exclaimed. 'Ah, I see some dust on the road—they are coming! No! When will they be here? May we not go a little way—half a mile, Ellen: only just half a mile? Do say Yes: to that clump of birches at the turn!'

I refused staunchly, and at length her suspense was ended: the travelling carriage rolled in sight.

Miss Cathy shrieked and stretched out her arms, as soon as she caught her father's face looking from the window. He descended, nearly as eager as herself; and a considerable interval elapsed ere they had a thought to spare for any but themselves.

While they exchanged caresses, I took a peep in to see after Linton. He was asleep in a corner, wrapped in a warm, fur-lined cloak, as if it had been winter. A pale, delicate, effeminate boy, who might have been taken for my master's younger brother, so strong was the resemblance: but there was a sickly peevishness in his aspect that Edgar Linton never had.

The latter saw me looking; and having shaken hands, advised me to close the door, and leave him undisturbed; for the journey had fatigued him.

Cathy would fain have taken one glance, but her father told her to come, and they walked together up the park, while I hastened before to prepare the servants.

'Now, darling,' said Mr. Linton, addressing his daughter, as they halted at the bottom of the front steps: 'your cousin is not so strong or so merry as you are, and he has lost his mother, remember, a very short time since; therefore, don't expect him to play and run about with you directly. And don't harass him much by talking: let him be quiet this evening, at least, will you? '

'Yes, yes, papa,' answered Catherine: 'but I do want to see him; and he hasn't once looked out.'

The carriage stopped; and the sleeper being roused, was lifted to the ground by his uncle.

'This is your cousin Cathy, Linton,' he said, putting their little hands together. 'She 's fond of you already; and mind you don't grieve her by crying to-night. Try to be cheerful now; the travelling is at an end, and you have nothing to do but rest and amuse yourself as you please.'

'Let me go to bed, then,' answered the boy, shrinking from Catherine's salute; and he put his fingers to his eyes to remove incipient tears.

'Come, come, there 's a good child,' I whispered, leading him in. 'You 'll make her weep too—see how sorry she is for you!'

I do not know whether it was sorrow for him, but his cousin put on as sad a countenance as himself, and returned to her father. All three entered, and mounted to the library, where tea was laid ready.

I proceeded to remove Linton's cap and mantle, and placed him on a chair by the table; but he was no sooner seated than he began to cry afresh. My master inquired what was the matter.

'I can't sit on a chair,' sobbed the boy.

'Go to the sofa, then, and Ellen shall bring you some tea,' answered his uncle patiently.

He had been greatly tried, during the journey, I felt convinced, by his fretful ailing charge.

Linton slowly trailed himself off, and lay down. Cathy carried a footstool and her cup to his side.

At first she sat silent; but that could not last: she had resolved to make a pet of her little cousin, as she would have him to be ; and she commenced stroking his curls, and kissing his cheek, and offering him tea in her saucer, like a baby. This pleased him, for he was not much better : he dried his eyes, and lightened into a faint smile.

'Oh, he'll do very well,' said the master to me, after watching them a minute. 'Very well, if we can keep him, Ellen. The company of a child of his own age will instil new spirit into him soon, and by wishing for strength he'll gain it.'

'Ay, if we can keep him !' I mused to myself ; and sore misgivings came over me that there was slight hope of that. And then, I thought, however will that weakling live at Wuthering Heights ? Between his father and Hareton, what playmates and instructors they'll be.

Our doubts were presently decided—even earlier than I expected. I had just taken the children upstairs, after tea was finished, and seen Linton asleep—he would not suffer me to leave him till that was the case—I had come down, and was standing by the table in the hall, lighting a bedroom candle for Mr. Edgar, when a maid stepped out of the kitchen and informed me that Mr. Heathcliff's servant Joseph was at the door, and wished to speak with the master.

'I shall ask him what he wants first,' I said, in considerable trepidation. 'A very unlikely hour to be troubling people, and the instant they have returned from a long journey. I don't think the master can see him.'

Joseph had advanced through the kitchen as I uttered these words, and now presented himself in the hall. He was donned in his Sunday garments, with his most sanctimonious and sourest face, and, holding his hat in one hand and his stick in the other, he proceeded to clean his shoes on the mat.

'Good evening, Joseph,' I said coldly. 'What business brings you here to-night?'

'It 's Maister Linton Aw mun spake tull,' he answered, waving me disdainfully aside.

'Mr. Linton is going to bed; unless you have something particular to say, I 'm sure he won't hear it now,' I continued. 'You had better sit down in there, and entrust your message to me.'

'Which is his rahm?' pursued the fellow, surveying the range of closed doors.

I perceived he was bent on refusing my mediation, so very reluctantly I went up to the library, and announced the unseasonable visitor, advising that he should be dismissed till next day.

Mr. Linton had no time to empower me to do so, for he[1] mounted close at my heels, and, pushing into the apartment, planted himself at the far side of the table, with his two fists clapped on the head of his stick, and began in an elevated tone, as if anticipating opposition—

'Hathecliff has send me for his lad, un Aw munn't goa back 'baht him.'

Edgar Linton was silent a minute; an expression of exceeding sorrow overcast his features: he would have pitied the child on his own account; but, recalling Isabella's hopes and fears, and anxious wishes for her son, and her commendations of him to his care, he grieved bitterly at the prospect of yielding him up, and searched in his heart how it might be avoided. No plan offered itself: the very exhibition of any desire to keep him would have rendered the claimant more peremptory; there was nothing left but to resign him. However, he was not going to rouse him from his sleep.

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[1] 'Joseph' in subsequent editions.

'Tell Mr. Heathcliff,' he answered calmly, 'that his son shall come to Wuthering Heights to-morrow. He is in bed, and too tired to go the distance now. You may also tell him that the mother of Linton desired him to remain under my guardianship; and, at present, his health is very precarious.'

'Noa!' said Joseph, giving a thud with his prop on the floor, and assuming an authoritative air: 'Noa! that manes nowt. Hathecliff maks noa 'cahnt uh t' mother, nur yah norther; bud he 'll hev his lad; und Aw mun tak him—soa nah yah knaw!'

'You shall not to-night!' answered Linton decisively. 'Walk downstairs at once, and repeat to your master what I have said. Ellen, show him down. Go——'

And, aiding the indignant elder with a lift by the arm, he rid the room of him, and closed the door.

'Verrah weell!' shouted Joseph, as he slowly drew off. 'Tuh morn, he 's come hisseln, un' thrust *him* aht, if yah darr!'

CHAPTER XX

To obviate the danger of this threat being fulfilled, Mr. Linton commissioned me to take the boy home early, on Catherine's pony; and, said he—

'As we shall now have no influence over his destiny, good or bad, you must say nothing of where he is gone to my daughter: she cannot associate with him hereafter, and it is better for her to remain in ignorance of his proximity; lest she should be restless, and anxious to visit the Heights. Merely tell her his father sent for him suddenly, and he has been obliged to leave us.'

Linton was very reluctant to be roused from his bed at five o'clock, and astonished to be informed that he must prepare for further travelling; but I softened off the matter by stating that he was going to spend some time with his father, Mr. Heathcliff, who wished to see him so much, he did not like to defer the pleasure till he should recover from his late journey.

'My father!' he cried, in strange perplexity. 'Mamma never told me I had a father. Where does he live? I 'd rather stay with uncle.'

'He lives a little distance from the Grange,' I replied; 'just beyond those hills: not so far, but you may walk over here when you get hearty. And you should be glad to go home, and to see him. You must try to love him, as you did your mother, and then he will love you.'

'But why have I not heard of him before?' asked Linton. 'Why didn't mamma and he live together, as other people do?'

'He had business to keep him in the north,' I answered, 'and your mother's health required her to reside in the south.'

'And why didn't mamma speak to me about him?' persevered the child. 'She often talked of uncle, and I learnt to love him long ago. How am I to love papa? I don't know him.'

'Oh, all children love their parents,' I said. 'Your mother, perhaps, thought you would want to be with him if she mentioned him often to you. Let us make haste. An early ride on such a beautiful morning is much preferable to an hour's more sleep.'

'Is *she* to go with us,' he demanded: 'the little girl I saw yesterday?'

'Not now,' replied I.

'Is uncle?' he continued.

'No, I shall be your companion there,' I said.

Linton sank back on his pillow and fell into a brown study.

'I won't go without uncle,' he cried at length: 'I can't tell where you mean to take me.'

I attempted to persuade him of the naughtiness of showing reluctance to meet his father; still he obstinately resisted any progress towards dressing, and I had to call for my master's assistance in coaxing him out of bed.

The poor thing was finally got off, with several delusive assurances that his absence should be short; that Mr. Edgar and Cathy would visit him, and other promises, equally ill-founded, which I invented and reiterated at intervals throughout the way.

The pure heather-scented air, and the bright sunshine, and the gentle canter of Minny, relieved his despondency after a while. He began to put questions concerning his new home, and its inhabitants, with greater interest and liveliness.

'Is Wuthering Heights as pleasant a place as Thrushcross Grange?' he inquired, turning to take a last glance into the valley, whence a light mist mounted and formed a fleecy cloud on the skirts of the blue.

'It is not so buried in trees,' I replied, 'and it is not quite so large, but you can see the country beautifully all round; and the air is healthier for you—fresher and drier. You will, perhaps, think the building old and dark at first; though it is a respectable house; the next best in the neighbourhood. And you will have such nice rambles on the moors. Hareton Earnshaw—that is Miss Cathy's other cousin, and so yours in a manner—will show you all the sweetest spots; and you can bring a book in fine weather, and make a green hollow your study; and, now and then, your uncle may join you in a walk: he does, frequently, walk out on the hills.'

'And what is my father like?' he asked. 'Is he as young and handsome as uncle?'

'He's as young,' said I; 'but he has black hair and eyes, and looks sterner; and he is taller and bigger altogether. He'll not seem to you so gentle and kind at first, perhaps, because it is not his way: still, mind you, be frank and cordial with him; and naturally he'll be fonder of you than any uncle, for you are his own.'

'Black hair and eyes!' mused Linton. 'I can't fancy him. Then I am not like him, am I?'

'Not much,' I answered: not a morsel, I thought, surveying with regret the white complexion and slim frame of my companion, and his large languid eyes—his mother's eyes, save that, unless a morbid touchiness kindled them a moment, they had not a vestige of her sparkling spirit.

'How strange that he should never come to see mamma and me!' he murmured. 'Has he ever seen me? If he has, I must have been a baby. I remember not a single thing about him!'

'Why, Master Linton,' said I, 'three hundred miles is a great distance; and ten years seem very different in length to a grown-up person compared with what they do to you. It is probable Mr. Heathcliff proposed going from summer to summer, but never found a convenient opportunity; and now it is too late. Don't trouble him with questions on the subject: it will disturb him, for no good.'

The boy was fully occupied with his own cogitations for the remainder of the ride, till we halted before the farmhouse garden gate. I watched to catch his impressions in his countenance. He surveyed the carved front and low-browed lattices, the straggling gooseberry bushes and crooked firs, with solemn intentness, and then shook his head: his private feelings entirely disapproved of the exterior of his new abode. But he had sense to postpone complaining: there might be compensation within.

Before he dismounted, I went and opened the door. It was half-past six; the family had just finished breakfast: the servant was clearing and wiping down the table. Joseph stood by his master's chair telling some tale concerning a lame horse; and Hareton was preparing for the hay-field.

'Hullo, Nelly!' cried Mr. Heathcliff, when he saw me. 'I feared I should have to come down and fetch my property myself. You 've brought it, have you? Let us see what we can make of it.'

He got up and strode to the door: Hareton and Joseph followed in gaping curiosity. Poor Linton ran a frightened eye over the faces of the three.

'Sure-ly,' said Joseph after a grave inspection, 'he 's swopped wi' ye, maister, an' yon 's his lass!'

Heathcliff, having stared his son into an ague of confusion, uttered a scornful laugh.

'God! what a beauty! what a lovely, charming thing!' he exclaimed. 'Hav'n't they reared it on snails and sour milk, Nelly? Oh, damn my soul! but that 's worse than I expected—and the devil knows I was not sanguine!'

I bid the trembling and bewildered child get down, and enter. He did not thoroughly comprehend the meaning of his father's speech, or whether it were intended for him: indeed, he was not yet certain that the grim, sneering stranger was his father. But he clung to me with growing trepidation; and on Mr.

Heathcliff's taking a seat and bidding him 'come hither,' he hid his face on my shoulder and wept.

'Tut, tut!' said Heathcliff, stretching out a hand and dragging him roughly between his knees, and then holding up his head by the chin. 'None of that nonsense! We 're not going to hurt thee, Linton—isn't that thy name? Thou art thy mother's child, entirely! Where is *my* share in thee, puling chicken?'

He took off the boy's cap and pushed back his thick flaxen curls, felt his slender arms and his small fingers; during which examination Linton ceased crying, and lifted his great blue eyes to inspect the inspector.

'Do you know me?' asked Heathcliff, having satisfied himself that the limbs were all equally frail and feeble.

'No,' said Linton, with a gaze of vacant fear.

'You 've heard of me, I dare say?'

'No,' he replied again.

'No! What a shame of your mother, never to waken your filial regard for me! You are my son, then, I 'll tell you; and your mother was a wicked slut to leave you in ignorance of the sort of father you possessed. Now, don't wince, and colour up! Though it *is* something to see you have not white blood. Be a good lad; and I 'll do for you. Nelly, if you be tired you may sit down; if not, get home again. I guess you 'll report what you hear and see to the cipher at the Grange; and this thing won't be settled while you linger about it.'

'Well,' replied I, 'I hope you 'll be kind to the boy, Mr. Heathcliff, or you 'll not keep him long; and he 's all you have akin in the wide world, that you will ever know—remember.'

'I 'll be *very* kind to him, you needn't fear,' he said, laughing. 'Only nobody else must be kind to him: I 'm jealous of monopolising his affection. And, to begin my kindness, Joseph, bring the lad some breakfast. Hareton, you infernal calf, begone to your work. 'Yes, Nell,' he added, when they were[1] departed, 'my son is prospective owner of your place, and I should not wish him to die till I was certain of being his successor. Besides, he 's *mine*, and I want the triumph of seeing *my* descendant fairly lord of their estates: my child hiring their children to till their fathers' lands for wages. That is the sole consideration which can make me endure the whelp: I despise him for himself, and hate him for the memories he revives! But that consideration is sufficient: he 's as safe with me, and shall be tended as carefully as your master tends his own. I have a room upstairs, furnished for him in handsome style; I 've engaged a tutor, also, to come three times a week, from twenty miles distance, to teach him what he pleases to learn. I 've ordered Hareton to obey him: and in fact I 've arranged everything with a view to preserve the superior and the gentleman in him, above his associates. I do regret, however, that he so little deserves the trouble; if I wished any blessing in the world, it was to find him a worthy object of pride; and I 'm bitterly disappointed with the whey-faced whining wretch!'

While he was speaking, Joseph returned bearing a basin of milk-porridge, and placed it before Linton. He stirred round the homely mess with a look of aversion, and affirmed he could not eat it.

I saw the old man-servant shared largely in his master's scorn of the child; though he was compelled to retain the sentiment in his heart, because Heathcliff plainly meant his underlings to hold him in honour.

'Cannot ate it?' repeated he, peering in Linton's face, and subduing his voice to a whisper, for fear of being overheard. 'But Maister Hareton nivir ate nowt else, when he wer a little un; und what wer gooid eneugh for him 's gooid eneugh fur yah, Aw 's rayther think!'

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[1] 'Had' in subsequent editions.

'I *shan't* eat it!' answered Linton snappishly. 'Take it away.'

Joseph snatched up the food indignantly, and brought it to us.

'Is there owt ails th' victuals?' he asked, thrusting the tray under Heathcliff's nose.

'What should ail them?' he said.

'Wah!' answered Joseph, 'yon dainty chap says he cannut ate 'em. Bud Aw guess it 's raight! His mother wer' just soa—we wer' a'most too mucky to sow t' corn for makking her breead.' [1]

'Don't mention his mother to me,' said the master angrily. 'Get him something that he can eat, that 's all. What is his usual food, Nelly?'

I suggested boiled milk or tea; and the housekeeper received instructions to prepare some.

Come, I reflected, his father's selfishness may contribute to his comfort. He perceives his delicate constitution, and the necessity of treating him tolerably. I 'll console Mr. Edgar by acquainting him with the turn Heathcliff's humour has taken.

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[1] 'Cannot ate it?' repeated he, peering in Linton's face, and subduing his voice to a whisper, for fear of being overheard. 'But Maister Hareton nivir ate naught else, when he wer' a little 'un; and what wer' gooid eneugh for him's gooid eneugh for ye, I's rayther think!'

'I *shan't* eat it!' answered Linton snappishly. 'Take it away.'

Joseph snatched up the food indignantly, and brought it to us.

'Is there aught ails th' victuals?' he asked, thrusting the tray under Heathcliff's nose.

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'Wah!' answered Joseph, 'yon dainty chap says he cannut ate 'em. But I guess it's raight! His mother wer' just soa—we wer' a'most too mucky to sow t' corn for makking her breead.'—C. B.'s Revision.

Having no excuse for lingering longer, I slipped out, while Linton was engaged in timidly rebuffing the advances of a friendly sheep-dog. But he was too much on the alert to be cheated: as I closed the door, I heard a cry, and a frantic repetition of the words—

'Don't leave me! I 'll not stay here! I 'll not stay here!'

Then the latch was raised and fell: they did not suffer him to come forth. I mounted Minny, and urged her to a trot; and so my brief guardianship ended.

CHAPTER XXI

We had sad work with little Cathy that day: she rose in high glee, eager to join her cousin, and such passionate tears and lamentations followed the news of his departure, that Edgar himself was obliged to soothe her, by affirming he should come back soon: he added, however, 'if I can get him'; and there were no hopes of that.

This promise poorly pacified her; but time was more potent; and though still at intervals she inquired of her father when Linton would return, before she did see him again his features had waxed so dim in her memory that she did not recognise him.

When I chanced to encounter the housekeeper of Wuthering Heights, in paying business-visits to Gimmerton, I used to ask how the young master got on;

for he lived almost as secluded as Catherine herself, and was never to be seen. I could gather from her that he continued in weak health, and was a tiresome inmate. She said Mr. Heathcliff seemed to dislike him ever longer and worse, though he took some trouble to conceal it: he had an antipathy to the sound of his voice, and could not do at all with his sitting in the same room with him many minutes together.

There seldom passed much talk between them: Linton learnt his lessons and spent his evenings in a small apartment they called the parlour: or else lay in bed all day: for he was constantly getting coughs, and colds, and aches, and pains of some sort.

'And I never knew such a faint-hearted creature,' added the woman; 'nor one so careful of hisseln. He *will* go on, if I leave the window open a bit late in the evening. Oh! it 's killing, a breath of night air! And he must have a fire in the middle of summer; and Joseph's 'bacca pipe is poison; and he must always have sweets and dainties, and always milk, milk for ever—heeding naught how the rest of us are pinched in winter; and there he 'll sit, wrapped in his furred cloak in his chair by the fire, and some toast and water or other slop on the hob to sip at; and if Hareton, for pity, comes to amuse him—Hareton is not bad-natured, though he 's rough—they 're sure to part, one swearing and the other crying. I believe the master would relish Earnshaw's thrashing him to a mummy, if he were not his son; and I 'm certain he would be fit to turn him out of doors, if he knew half the nursing he gives hisseln. But then, he won't go into danger of temptation; he never enters the parlour, and should Linton show those ways in the house where he is, he sends him upstairs directly.'

I divined, from this account, that utter lack of sympathy had rendered young Heathcliff selfish and disagreeable, if he were not so originally; and my interest in him, consequently, decayed: though still I was moved with a sense of grief at his lot, and a wish that he had been left with us.

Mr. Edgar encouraged me to gain information: he thought a great deal about him, I fancy, and would have run some risk to see him; and he told me once to ask the housekeeper whether he ever came into the village?

She said he had only been twice, on horseback, accompanying his father; and both times he pretended to be quite knocked up for three or four days afterwards.

That housekeeper left, if I recollect rightly, two years after he came; and another, whom I did not know, was her successor: she lives there still.

Time wore on at the Grange in its former pleasant way, till Miss Cathy reached sixteen. On the anniversary of her birth we never manifested any signs of rejoicing, because it was also the anniversary of my late mistress's death. Her father invariably spent that day alone in the library; and walked, at dusk, as far as Gimmerton kirkyard, where he would frequently prolong his stay beyond midnight. Therefore Catherine was thrown on her own resources for amusement.

This twentieth of March was a beautiful spring day, and when her father had retired, my young lady came down dressed for going out, and said she had asked to have a ramble on the edge of the moor with me: and Mr. Linton had given her leave, if we went only a short distance and were back within the hour.

'So make haste, Ellen!' she cried. 'I know where I wish to go; where a colony of moor-game are settled: I want to see whether they have made their nests yet.'

'That must be a good distance up,' I answered; 'they don't breed on the edge of the moor.'

'No, it 's not,' she said. 'I 've gone very near with papa.'

I put on my bonnet and sallied out, thinking nothing more of the matter. She bounded before me, and returned to my side, and was off again like a young greyhound; and, at first, I found plenty of entertainment in listening to the larks singing far and near, and enjoying the sweet, warm sunshine; and watching her, my pet, and my delight, with her golden ringlets flying loose behind, and her bright cheek, as soft and pure in its bloom as a wild rose, and her eyes radiant with cloudless pleasure. She was a happy creature, and an angel, in those days. It 's a pity she could not be content.

'Well,' said I, 'where are your moor-game, Miss Cathy? We should be at them: the Grange park-fence is a great way off now.'

'Oh, a little farther—only a little farther, Ellen,' was her answer continually. 'Climb to that hillock, pass that bank, and by the time you reach the other side I shall have raised the birds.'

But there were so many hillocks and banks to climb and pass, that, at length, I began to be weary, and told her we must halt, and retrace our steps.

I shouted to her, as she had outstripped me a long way; she either did not hear or did not regard, for she still sprang on, and I was compelled to follow. Finally, she dived into a hollow; and before I came in sight of her again, she was two miles nearer Wuthering Heights than her own home; and I beheld a couple of persons arrest her, one of whom I felt convinced was Mr. Heathcliff himself.

Cathy had been caught in the act of plundering, or, at least, hunting out the nests of the grouse.

The Heights were Heathcliff's land, and he was reproving the poacher.

'I 've neither taken any nor found any,' she said, as I toiled to them, expanding her hands in corroboration of the statement. 'I didn't mean to take them; but papa told me there were quantities up here, and I wished to see the eggs.'

Heathcliff glanced at me with an ill-meaning smile, expressing his acquaintance with the party, and, consequently, his malevolence towards it, and demanded who 'papa' was?

'Mr. Linton of Thrushcross Grange,' she replied. 'I thought you did not know me, or you wouldn't have spoken in that way.'

'You suppose papa is highly esteemed and respected, then?' he said sarcastically.

'And what are you?' inquired Catherine, gazing curiously on the speaker. 'That man I 've seen before. Is he your son?'

She pointed to Hareton, the other individual, who had gained nothing but increased bulk and strength by the addition of two years to his age: he seemed as awkward and rough as ever.

'Miss Cathy,' I interrupted, 'it will be three hours instead of one that we are out, presently. We really must go back.'

'No, that man is not my son,' answered Heathcliff, pushing me aside. 'But I have one, and you have seen him before, too; and, though your nurse is in a hurry, I think both you and she would be the better for a little rest. Will you just turn this nab of heath, and walk into my house? You 'll get home earlier for the ease; and you shall receive a kind welcome.'

I whispered Catherine that she mustn't, on any account, accede to the proposal: it was entirely out of the question.

'Why?' she asked, aloud. 'I'm tired of running, and the ground is dewy: I can't sit here. Let us go, Ellen. Besides, he says I have seen his son. He's mistaken, I think; but I guess where he lives: at the farmhouse I visited in coming from Penistone Crags. Don't you?'

'I do. Come, Nelly, hold your tongue—it will be a treat for her to look in on us. Hareton, get forwards with the lass. You shall walk with me, Nelly.'

'No, she's not going to any such place,' I cried, struggling to release my arm, which he had seized: but she was almost at the door-stones already, scampering round the brow at full speed. Her appointed companion did not pretend to escort her: he shied off by the roadside, and vanished.

'Mr. Heathcliff, it's very wrong,' I continued: 'you know you mean no good. And there she'll see Linton, and all will be told as soon as ever we return; and I shall have the blame.'

'I want her to see Linton,' he answered; 'he's looking better these few days: it's not often he's fit to be seen. And we'll soon persuade her to keep the visit secret: where is the harm of it?'

'The harm of it is, that her father would hate me if he found I suffered her to enter your house; and I am convinced you have a bad design in encouraging her to do so,' I replied.

'My design is as honest as possible. I'll inform you of its whole scope,' he said. 'That the two cousins may fall in love, and get married. I'm acting generously to your master: his young chit has no expectations, and should she second my wishes, she'll be provided for at once as joint successor with Linton.'

'If Linton died,' I answered, 'and his life is quite uncertain, Catherine would be the heir.'

'No, she would not,' he said. 'There is no clause in the will to secure it so: his property would go to me; but, to prevent disputes, I desire their union, and am resolved to bring it about.'

'And I 'm resolved she shall never approach your house with me again,' I returned, as we reached the gate, where Miss Cathy waited our coming.

Heathcliff bid me be quiet; and, preceding us up the path, hastened to open the door. My young lady gave him several looks, as if she could not exactly make up her mind what to think of him; but now he smiled when he met her eye, and softened his voice in addressing her; and I was foolish enough to imagine the memory of her mother might disarm him from desiring her injury.

Linton stood on the hearth. He had been out walking in the fields, for his cap was on, and he was calling to Joseph to bring him dry shoes.

He had grown tall of his age, still wanting some months of sixteen. His features were pretty yet, and his eye and complexion brighter than I remembered them, though with merely temporary lustre borrowed from the salubrious air and genial sun.

'Now, who is that?' asked Mr. Heathcliff, turning to Cathy. 'Can you tell?'

'Your son?' she said, having doubtfully surveyed, first one and then the other.

'Yes, yes,' answered he: 'but is this the only time you have beheld him? Think! Ah! you have a short memory. Linton, don't you recall your cousin, that you used to tease us so with wishing to see?'

'What, Linton!' cried Cathy, kindling into joyful surprise at the name. 'Is that little Linton? He's taller than I am! Are you Linton?'

The youth stepped forward, and acknowledged himself: she kissed him fervently, and they gazed with wonder at the change time had wrought in the appearance of each.

Catherine had reached her full height; her figure was both plump and slender, elastic as steel, and her whole aspect sparkling with health and spirits. Linton's looks and movements were very languid, and his form extremely slight; but there was a grace in his manner that mitigated these defects, and rendered him not unpleasing.

After exchanging numerous marks of fondness with him, his cousin went to Mr. Heathcliff, who lingered by the door, dividing his attention between the objects inside and those that lay without: pretending, that is, to observe the latter, and really noting the former alone.

'And you are my uncle, then!' she cried, reaching up to salute him. 'I thought I liked you, though you were cross at first. Why don't you visit at the Grange with Linton? To live all these years such close neighbours, and never see us, is odd: what have you done so for?'

'I visited it once or twice too often before you were born,' he answered. 'There—damn it! If you have any kisses to spare, give them to Linton: they are thrown away on me.'

'Naughty Ellen!' exclaimed Catherine, flying to attack me next with her lavish caresses. 'Wicked Ellen! to try to hinder me from entering. But I'll take this walk every morning in future: may I, uncle? and sometimes bring papa. Won't you be glad to see us?'

'Of course!' replied the uncle, with a hardly suppressed grimace, resulting from his deep aversion to both the proposed visitors. 'But stay,' he continued, turning towards the young lady. 'Now I think of it, I 'd better tell you. Mr. Linton has a prejudice against me: we quarrelled at one time of our lives, with unchristian ferocity; and, if you mention coming here to him, he 'll put a veto on your visits altogether. Therefore, you must not mention it, unless you be careless of seeing your cousin hereafter: you may come, if you will, but you must not mention it.'

'Why did you quarrel?' asked Catherine, considerably crestfallen.

'He thought me too poor to wed his sister,' answered Heathcliff, 'and was grieved that I got her: his pride was hurt, and he 'll never forgive it.'

'That 's wrong!' said the young lady: 'some time, I 'll tell him so. But Linton and I have no share in your quarrel. I 'll not come here, then; he shall come to the Grange.'

'It will be too far for me,' murmured her cousin: 'to walk four miles would kill me. No, come here, Miss Catherine, now and then: not every morning, but once or twice a week.'

The father launched towards his son a glance of bitter contempt.

'I am afraid, Nelly, I shall lose my labour,' he muttered to me. 'Miss Catherine, as the ninny calls her, will discover his value, and send him to the devil. Now, if it had been Hareton!—Do you know that, twenty times a day, I covet Hareton, with all his degradation? I 'd have loved the lad had he been some one else. But I think he 's safe from *her* love. I 'll pit him against that paltry creature, unless it bestir itself briskly. We calculate it will scarcely last till it is eighteen. Oh, confound the vapid thing! He 's absorbed in drying his feet, and never looks at her.—Linton!'

'Yes, father,' answered the boy.

'Have you nothing to show your cousin anywhere about? not even a rabbit or a weasel's nest? Take her into the garden, before you change your shoes; and into the stable to see your horse.'

'Wouldn't you rather sit here?' asked Linton, addressing Cathy in a tone which expressed reluctance to move again.

'I don't know,' she replied, casting a longing look to the door, and evidently eager to be active.

He kept his seat, and shrank closer to the fire.

Heathcliff rose, and went into the kitchen, and from thence to the yard, calling out for Hareton.

Hareton responded, and presently the two re-entered. The young man had been washing himself, as was visible by the glow on his cheeks and his wetted hair.

'Oh, I 'll ask *you*, uncle,' cried Miss Cathy, recollecting the housekeeper's assertion. 'That 's not my cousin, is he?'

'Yes,' he replied, 'your mother's nephew. Don't you like him?'

Catherine looked queer.

'Is he not a handsome lad?' he continued.

The uncivil little thing stood on tiptoe, and whispered a sentence in Heathcliff's ear.

He laughed; Hareton darkened: I perceived he was very sensitive to suspected slights, and had obviously a dim notion of his inferiority. But his master or guardian chased the frown by exclaiming—

'You 'll be the favourite among us, Hareton! She says you are a—what was it? Well, something very flattering. Here! you go with her round the farm.

And behave like a gentleman, mind! Don't use any bad words; and don't stare when the young lady is not looking at you and be ready to hide your face when she is; and, when you speak, say your words slowly, and keep your hands out of your pockets. Be off, and entertain her as nicely as you can.'

He watched the couple walking past the window. Earnshaw had his countenance completely averted from his companion. He seemed studying the familiar landscape with a stranger's and an artist's interest.

Catherine took a sly look at him, expressing small admiration. She then turned her attention to seeking out objects of amusement for herself, and tripped merrily on, lilting a tune to supply the lack of conversation.

'I 've tied his tongue,' observed Heathcliff. 'He 'll not venture a single syllable, all the time! Nelly, you recollect me at his age—nay, some years younger. Did I ever look so stupid: so "gaumless," as Joseph calls it?'

'Worse,' I replied, 'because more sullen with it.'

'I 've a pleasure in him,' he continued, reflecting aloud. 'He has satisfied my expectations. If he were a born fool I should not enjoy it half so much. But he 's no fool; and I can sympathise with all his feelings, having felt them myself. I know what he suffers now, for instance, exactly: it is merely a beginning of what he shall suffer, though. And he 'll never be able to emerge from his bathos of coarseness and ignorance. I 've got him faster than his scoundrel of a father secured me, and lower; for he takes a pride in his brutishness. I 've taught him to scorn everything extra-animal as silly and weak. Don't you think Hindley would be proud of his son, if he could see him?

almost as proud as I am of mine. But there 's this difference ; one is gold put to the use of paving-stones, and the other is tin polished to ape a service of silver. *Mine* has nothing valuable about it ; yet I shall have the merit of making it go as far as such poor stuff can go. *His* had first-rate qualities, and they are lost : rendered worse than unavailing. I have nothing to regret ; he would have more than any but I are aware of. And the best of it is, Hareton is damnably fond of me ! You 'll own that I 've out-matched Hindley there. If the dead villain could rise from his grave to abuse me for his offspring's wrongs, I should have the fun of seeing the said offspring fight him back again, indignant that he should dare to rail at the one friend he has in the world ! '

Heathcliff chuckled a fiendish laugh at the idea. I made no reply, because I saw that he expected none.

Meantime, our young companion, who sat too far removed from us to hear what was said, began to evince symptoms of uneasiness, probably repenting that he had denied himself the treat of Catherine's society for fear of a little fatigue.

His father remarked the restless glances wandering to the window, and the hand irresolutely extended towards his cap.

' Get up, you idle boy ! ' he exclaimed, with assumed heartiness. ' Away after them ! they are just at the corner, by the stand of hives.'

Linton gathered his energies, and left the hearth. The lattice was open, and, as he stepped out, I heard Cathy inquiring of her unsociable attendant, what was that inscription over the door ?

Hareton stared up, and scratched his head like a true clown.

'It 's some damnable writing,' he answered. 'I cannot read it.'

'Can't read it?' cried Catherine; 'I can read it: it 's English. But I want to know why it is there.'

Linton giggled: the first appearance of mirth he had exhibited.

'He does not know his letters,' he said to his cousin. 'Could you believe in the existence of such a colossal dunce?'

'Is he all as he should be?' asked Miss Cathy seriously; 'or is he simple: not right? I 've questioned him twice now, and each time he looked so stupid I think he does not understand me. I can hardly understand *him*, I 'm sure!'

Linton repeated his laugh, and glanced at Hareton tauntingly; who certainly did not seem quite clear of comprehension at that moment.

'There 's nothing the matter but laziness; is there, Earnshaw?' he said. 'My cousin fancies you are an idiot. There you experience the consequence of scorning "book-larning," as you would say. Have you noticed, Catherine, his frightful Yorkshire pronunciation?'

'Why, where the devil is the use on 't?' growled Hareton, more ready in answering his daily companion. He was about to enlarge further, but the two youngsters broke into a noisy fit of merriment; my giddy Miss being delighted to discover that she might turn his strange talk to matter of amusement.

'Where is the use of the devil in that sentence?' tittered Linton. 'Papa told you not to say any bad words, and you can't open your mouth without one. Do try to behave like a gentleman, now do!'

'If thou wer'n't more a lass than a lad, I 'd fell thee this minute, I would; pitiful lath of a crater!'

retorted the angry boor, retreating, while his face burnt with mingled rage and mortification; for he was conscious of being insulted, and embarrassed how to resent it.

Mr. Heathcliff having overheard the conversation, as well as I, smiled when he saw him go; but immediately afterwards cast a look of singular aversion on the flippant pair, who remained chattering in the doorway: the boy finding animation enough while discussing Hareton's faults and deficiencies, and relating anecdotes of his goings on; and the girl relishing his pert and spiteful sayings, without considering the ill-nature they evinced; but I began to dislike, more than to compassionate Linton, and to excuse his father in some measure for holding him cheap.

We stayed till afternoon: I could not tear Miss Cathy away before; but happily my master had not quitted his apartment, and remained ignorant of our prolonged absence.

As we walked home, I would fain have enlightened my charge on the characters of the people we had quitted; but she got it into her head that I was prejudiced against them.

'Aha!' she cried, 'you take papa's side, Ellen: you are partial, I know; or else you wouldn't have cheated me so many years into the notion that Linton lived a long way from here. I'm really extremely angry; only I'm so pleased I can't show it! But you must hold your tongue about my uncle: he's *my* uncle, remember; and I'll scold papa for quarrelling with him.'

And so she ran on, till I dropped endeavouring to convince her of her mistake.

She did not mention the visit that night, because she did not see Mr. Linton. Next day it all came out, sadly to my chagrin; and still I was not altogether sorry: I thought the burden of directing and warning would be more efficiently borne by him than me. But he was too timid in giving satisfactory reasons for his wish that she would shun connection with the household of the Heights, and Catherine liked good reasons for every restraint that harassed her petted will.

'Papa!' she exclaimed, after the morning's salutations, 'guess whom I saw yesterday, in my walk on the moors. Ah, papa, you started! you 've not done right, have you, now? I saw—but listen, and you shall hear how I found you out; and Ellen, who is in league with you, and yet pretended to pity me so, when I kept hoping, and was always disappointed about Linton's coming back!'

She gave a faithful account of her excursion and its consequences; and my master, though he cast more than one reproachful look at me, said nothing till she had concluded. Then he drew her to him, and asked if she knew why he had concealed Linton's near neighbourhood from her? Could she think it was to deny her a pleasure that she might harmlessly enjoy?

'It was because you disliked Mr. Heathcliff,' she answered.

'Then you believe I care more for my own feelings than yours, Cathy?' he said. 'No, it was not because I disliked Mr. Heathcliff, but because Mr. Heathcliff dislikes me; and is a most diabolical man, delighting to wrong and ruin those he hates, if they give him the slightest opportunity. I knew that you could not keep up an acquaintance with your cousin, without being brought into contact with him; and I knew he would detest you on my account; so for your own good, and nothing else, I took precautions that you should not see Linton again. I meant to explain this some time as you grew older, and I 'm sorry I delayed it.'

'But Mr. Heathcliff was quite cordial, papa,' observed Catherine, not at all convinced; 'and *he* didn't object to our seeing each other: he said I might come to his house when I pleased; only I must not tell you, because you had quarrelled with him, and would not forgive him for marrying Aunt Isabella. And you won't. *You* are the one to be blamed: he is willing to let *us* be friends, at least; Linton and I; and you are not.'

My master, perceiving that she would not take his word for her uncle-in-law's evil disposition, gave a hasty sketch of his conduct to Isabella, and the manner in which Wuthering Heights became his property. He could not bear to discourse long upon the topic; for though he spoke little of it, he still felt the same horror and detestation of his ancient enemy that had occupied his heart ever since Mrs. Linton's death. 'She might have been living yet, if it had not been for him!' was his constant bitter reflection; and, in his eyes, Heathcliff seemed a murderer.

Miss Cathy—conversant with no bad deeds except her own slight acts of disobedience, injustice, and passion, arising from hot temper and thoughtlessness, and repented of on the day they were committed—was amazed at the blackness of spirit that could brood on and cover revenge for years, and deliberately prosecute its plans without a visitation of remorse. She appeared so deeply impressed and shocked at this new view of human nature—excluded from all her studies and all her ideas till now—that Mr. Edgar deemed it unnecessary to pursue the subject. He merely added—

'You will know hereafter, darling, why I wish you to avoid his house and family; now return to your old employments and amusements, and think no more about them.'

Catherine kissed her father, and sat down quietly to her lessons for a couple of hours, according to custom; then she accompanied him into the grounds, and the whole day passed as usual: but in the evening, when she had retired to her room, and I went to help her to undress, I found her crying, on her knees by the bedside.

'Oh, fie, silly child!' I exclaimed. 'If you had any real griefs, you'd be ashamed to waste a tear on this little contrariety. You never had one shadow of substantial sorrow, Miss Catherine. Suppose, for a minute, that master and I were dead, and you were by yourself in the world: how would you feel then? Compare the present occasion with such an affliction as that, and be thankful for the friends you have, instead of coveting more.'

'I'm not crying for myself, Ellen,' she answered, 'it's for him. He expected to see me again to-morrow, and there he'll be so disappointed: and he'll wait for me, and I shan't come!'

'Nonsense!' said I, 'do you imagine he has thought as much of you as you have of him? Hasn't he Hareton for a companion? Not one in a hundred would weep at losing a relation they had just seen twice, for two afternoons. Linton will conjecture how it is, and trouble himself no further about you.'

'But may I not write a note to tell him why I cannot come?' she asked, rising to her feet. 'And just send those books I promised to lend him? His books are not as nice as mine, and he wanted to have them extremely, when I told him how interesting they were. May I not, Ellen?'

'No, indeed! no, indeed!' replied I with decision. 'Then he would write to you, and there 'd never be an end of it. No, Miss Catherine, the acquaintance must be dropped entirely: so papa expects, and I shall see that it is done.'

'But how can one little note——' she recommenced, putting on an imploring countenance.

'Silence!' I interrupted. 'We 'll not begin with your little notes. Get into bed.'

She threw at me a very naughty look, so naughty that I would not kiss her good-night at first: I covered her up, and shut her door, in great displeasure; but, repenting half-way, I returned softly, and lo! there was Miss, standing at the table with a bit of blank paper before her and a pencil in her hand, which she guiltily slipped out of sight, on my entrance.

'You 'll get nobody to take that, Catherine,' I said, 'if you write it; and at present I shall put out your candle.'

I set the extinguisher on the flame, receiving as I did so a slap on my hand, and a petulant 'cross thing!' I then quitted her again, and she drew the bolt in one of her worst, most peevish humours.

The letter was finished and forwarded to its destination by a milk-fetcher who came from the village: but that I didn't learn till some time afterwards. Weeks passed on, and Cathy recovered her temper; though she grew wondrous fond of stealing off to corners by herself; and often, if I came near her suddenly while reading, she would start and bend over the book, evidently desirous to hide it; and I detected edges of loose paper sticking out beyond the leaves.

She also got a trick of coming down early in the morning and lingering about the kitchen, as if she were expecting the arrival of something: and she had a small drawer in a cabinet in the library, which she would trifle over for hours, and whose key she took special care to remove when she left it.

One day, as she inspected this drawer, I observed that the playthings and trinkets, which recently formed its contents, were transmuted into bits of folded paper.

My curiosity and suspicions were roused; I determined to take a peep at her mysterious treasures; so, at night, as soon as she and my master were safe upstairs, I searched and readily found among my house keys one that would fit the lock. Having opened, I emptied the whole contents into my apron, and took them with me, to examine at leisure in my own chamber.

Though I could not but suspect, I was still surprised to discover that they were a mass of correspondence—daily, almost, it must have been—from Linton Heathcliff: answers to documents forwarded by her. The earlier dated were embarrassed and short; gradually, however, they expanded into copious love-letters, foolish, as the age of the writer rendered natural, yet with touches here and there which I thought were borrowed from a more experienced source.

Some of them struck me as singularly odd compounds of ardour and flatness; commencing in strong feeling, and concluding in the affected, wordy way that a schoolboy might use to a fancied, incorporeal sweetheart.

Whether they satisfied Cathy, I don't know; but they appeared very worthless trash to me.

After turning over as many as I thought proper, I tied them in a handkerchief and set them aside, relocking the vacant drawer.

Following her habit, my young lady descended early, and visited the kitchen: I watched her go to the door, on the arrival of a certain little boy; and, while the dairymaid filled his can, she tucked something into his jacket pocket, and plucked something out.

I went round by the garden, and laid wait for the messenger; who fought valorously to defend his trust, and we spilt the milk between us; but I succeeded in abstracting the epistle; and, threatening serious consequences if he did not look sharp home, I remained under the wall and perused Miss Cathy's affectionate composition. It was more simple and more eloquent than her cousin's: very pretty and very silly. I shook my head, and went meditating into the house.

The day being wet, she could not divert herself with rambling about the park; so, at the conclusion of her morning studies, she resorted to the solace of the drawer. Her father sat reading at the table; and I, on purpose, had sought a bit of work in some unripped fringes of the window curtain, keeping my eye steadily fixed on her proceedings.

Never did any bird flying back to a plundered nest which it had left brimful of chirping young ones, express more complete despair in its anguished cries and flutterings, that she by her single 'Oh!' and the change that transfigured her late happy countenance. Mr. Linton looked up.

'What is the matter, love? Have you hurt yourself?' he said.

His tone and look assured her *he* had not been the discoverer of the hoard.

'No, papa!' she gasped. 'Ellen! Ellen! come upstairs—I'm sick!'

I obeyed her summons, and accompanied her out.

'Oh, Ellen! you have got them,' she commenced immediately, dropping on her knees, when we were enclosed alone. 'Oh, give them to me, and I 'll never, never do so again! Don't tell papa. You have not told papa, Ellen? say you have not! I 've been exceedingly naughty, but I won't do it any more!'

With a grave severity in my manner, I bid her stand up.

'So,' I exclaimed, 'Miss Catherine, you are tolerably far on, it seems: you may well be ashamed of them! A fine bundle of trash you study in your leisure hours, to be sure: why, it 's good enough to be printed! And what do you suppose the master will think, when I display it before him? I hav'n't shown it yet, but you needn't imagine I shall keep your ridiculous secrets. For shame! and you must have led the way in writing such absurdities: he would not have thought of beginning, I 'm certain.'

'I didn't! I didn't!' sobbed Cathy, fit to break her heart. 'I didn't once think of loving him till——'

'*Loving!*' cried I, as scornfully as I could utter the word. '*Loving!* Did anybody ever hear the like! I might just as well talk of loving the miller who comes once a year to buy our corn. Pretty loving, indeed! and both times together you have seen Linton hardly four hours in your life! Now here is the babyish trash. I 'm going with it to the library; and we 'll see what your father says to such *loving*.'

She sprang at her precious epistles, but I held them above my head; and then she poured out further frantic entreaties that I would burn them—do anything rather than show them. And being really fully as much inclined to laugh as scold—for I esteemed it all girlish vanity—I at length relented in a measure, and asked—

'If I consent to burn them, will you promise faithfully, neither to send nor receive a letter again, nor a book (for I perceive you have sent him books), nor locks of hair, nor rings, nor playthings ? '

'We don't send playthings ! ' cried Catherine, her pride overcoming her shame.

'Nor anything at all, then, my lady,' I said. 'Unless you will, here I go.'

'I promise, Ellen ! she cried, catching my dress. 'Oh, put them in the fire, do, do ! '

But when I proceeded to open a place with the poker, the sacrifice was too painful to be borne. She earnestly supplicated that I would spare her one or two.

'One or two, Ellen, to keep for Linton's sake ! '

I unknotted the handkerchief, and commenced dropping them in from an angle, and the flame curled up the chimney.

'I will have one, you cruel wretch ! ' she screamed, darting her hand into the fire, and drawing forth some half-consumed fragments, at the expense of her fingers.

'Very well—and I will have some to exhibit to papa ! ' I answered, shaking back the rest into the bundle, and turning anew to the door.

She emptied her blackened pieces into the flames, and motioned me to finish the immolation. It was done ; I stirred up the ashes, and interred them under a shovelful of coals ; and she mutely, and with a sense of intense injury, retired to her private apartment. I descended to tell my master that the young lady's qualm of sickness was almost gone, but I judged it best for her to lie down a while.

She wouldn't dine ; but she reappeared at tea, pale, and red about the eyes, and marvellously subdued in outward aspect.

Next morning, I answered the letter by a slip of paper, inscribed, 'Master Heathcliff is requested to send no more notes to Miss Linton, as she will not receive them.' And, thenceforth, the little boy came with vacant pockets.

CHAPTER XXII

SUMMER drew to an end, and early autumn: it was past Michaelmas, but the harvest was late that year, and a few of our fields were still uncleared.

Mr. Linton and his daughter would frequently walk out among the reapers; at the carrying of the last sheaves, they stayed till dusk, and the evening happening to be chill and damp, my master caught a bad cold, that settled obstinately on his lungs, and confined him indoors throughout the whole of the winter, nearly without intermission.

Poor Cathy, frightened from her little romance, had been considerably sadder and duller since its abandonment; and her father insisted on her reading less, and taking more exercise. She had his companionship no longer; I esteemed it a duty to supply its lack, as much as possible, with mine: an inefficient substitute; for I could only spare two or three hours, from my numerous diurnal occupations, to follow her footsteps, and then my society was obviously less desirable than his.

On an afternoon in October, or the beginning of November—a fresh watery afternoon, when the turf and paths were rustling with moist, withered leaves, and the cold, blue sky was half hidden by clouds—dark grey streamers, rapidly mounting from the west, and boding abundant rain—I requested my young lady to forego her ramble, because I was certain of showers. She refused; and I unwillingly donned a cloak, and took my umbrella to accompany her on a stroll to the bottom of the park: a formal walk which she generally affected if low-spirited—and that she invariably was when Mr. Edgar had been worse than ordinary, a thing never known from his confession; but guessed both by her and me, from his increased silence and the melancholy of his countenance.

She went sadly on: there was no running or bounding now, though the chill wind might well have tempted her to race. And often, from the side of my eye, I could detect her raising a hand, and brushing something off her cheek.

I gazed round for a means of diverting her thoughts. On one side of the road rose a high, rough bank, where hazels and stunted oaks, with their roots half exposed, held uncertain tenure: the soil was too loose for the latter; and strong winds had blown some nearly horizontal. In summer, Miss Catherine delighted to climb along these trunks, and sit in the branches, swinging twenty feet above the ground; and I, pleased with her agility and her light, childish heart, still considered it proper to scold every time I caught her at such an elevation, but so that she knew there was no necessity for descending. From dinner to tea she would lie on her breeze-rocked cradle, doing nothing except singing old songs—my nursery lore—to herself, or watching the birds, joint tenants, feed and entice their young ones to fly: or nestling with closed lids, half thinking, half dreaming, happier than words can express.

'Look, Miss!' I exclaimed, pointing to a nook under the roots of one twisted tree. 'Winter is not here yet. There's a little flower up yonder, the last bud from the multitude of blue-bells that clouded those turf steps in July with a lilac mist. Will you clamber up, and pluck it to show to papa?'

Cathy stared a long time at the lonely blossom trembling in its earthy shelter, and replied at length—

'No, I 'll not touch it: but it looks melancholy, does it not, Ellen?'

'Yes,' I observed, 'about as starved and sackless as you: your cheeks are bloodless; let us take hold of hands and run. You 're so low, I dare say I shall keep up with you.'

'No,' she repeated, and continued sauntering on, pausing, at intervals, to muse over a bit of moss, or a tuft of blanched grass, or a fungus spreading its bright orange among the heaps of brown foliage; and, ever and anon, her hand was lifted to her averted face.

'Catherine, why are you crying, love?' I asked, approaching and putting my arm over her shoulder. 'You mustn't cry, because papa has a cold; be thankful it is nothing worse.'

She now put no further restraint on her tears; her breath was stifled by sobs.

'Oh, it *will* be something worse,' she said. 'And what shall I do when papa and you leave me, and I am by myself? I can't forget your words, Ellen: they are always in my ear. How life will be changed, how dreary the world will be, when papa and you are dead.'

'None can tell, whether you won't die before us,' I replied. 'It 's wrong to anticipate evil. We 'll hope there are years and years to come before any of us go: master is young, and I am strong, and hardly forty-five. My mother lived till eighty, a canty dame to the last. And suppose Mr. Linton were spared till he saw sixty, that would be more years than you have counted, Miss. And would it not be foolish to mourn a calamity above twenty years beforehand?'

'But Aunt Isabella was younger than papa,' she remarked, gazing up with timid hope to seek further consolation.

'Aunt Isabella had not you and me to nurse her,' I replied. 'She wasn't as happy as master: she hadn't as much to live for. All you need do, is to wait well on your father, and cheer him by letting him see you cheerful; and avoid giving him anxiety on any subject: mind that, Cathy! I 'll not disguise but you might kill him, if you were wild and reckless, and cherished a foolish, fanciful affection for the son of a person who would be glad to have him in his grave; and allowed him to discover that you fretted over the separation he has judged it expedient to make.'

'I fret about nothing on earth except papa's illness,' answered my companion. 'I care for nothing in comparison with papa. And I 'll never—never—oh, never, while I have my senses, do an act or say a word to vex him I love him better than myself, Ellen; and I know it by this: I pray every night that I may live after him; because I would rather be miserable than that he should be: that proves I love him better than myself.'

'Good words,' I replied. 'But deeds must prove it also; and after he is well, remember you don't forget resolutions formed in the hour of fear.'

As we talked, we neared a door that opened on the road; and my young lady, lightening into sunshine again, climbed up and seated herself on the top of the wall, reaching over to gather some hips that bloomed scarlet on the summit branches of the wild-rose trees, shadowing the highway side: the lower fruit had disappeared, but only birds could touch the upper, except from Cathy's present station.

In stretching to pull them, her hat fell off; and as the door was locked, she proposed scrambling down to recover it. I bid her be cautious lest she got a fall, and she nimbly disappeared.

But the return was no such easy matter: the stones were smooth and neatly cemented, and the rosebushes and blackberry stragglers could yield no assistance in reascending. I, like a fool, didn't recollect that, till I heard her laughing and exclaiming—

'Ellen! you'll have to fetch the key, or else I must run round to the porter's lodge. I can't scale the ramparts on this side!'

'Stay where you are,' I answered; 'I have my bundle of keys in my pocket: perhaps I may manage to open it; if not, I'll go.'

Catherine amused herself with dancing to and fro before the door, while I tried all the large keys in succession. I had applied the last, and found that none would do; so, repeating my desire that she would remain there, I was about to hurry home as fast as I could, when an approaching sound arrested me. It was the trot of a horse; Cathy's dance stopped, and in a minute the horse stopped also.

'Who is that?' I whispered.

'Ellen, I wish you could open the door,' whispered back my companion anxiously.

'Ho, Miss Linton!' cried a deep voice (the rider's), 'I'm glad to meet you. Don't be in haste to enter, for I have an explanation to ask and obtain.'

'I shan't speak to you, Mr. Heathcliff,' answered Catherine. 'Papa says you are a wicked man, and you hate both him and me; and Ellen says the same.'

'That is nothing to the purpose,' said Heathcliff. (He it was.) 'I don't hate my son, I suppose; and it is concerning him that I demand your attention. Yes; you have cause to blush. Two or three months since, were you not in the habit of writing to Linton ? making love in play, eh ? You deserved, both of you, flogging for that ! You especially, the elder ; and less sensitive, as it turns out. I 've got your letters, and if you give me any pertness I 'll send them to your father. I presume you grew weary of the amusement and dropped it, didn't you ? Well, you dropped Linton with it into a Slough of Despond. He was in earnest : in love, really. As true as I live, he 's dying for you ; breaking his heart at your fickleness : not figuratively, but actually. Though Hareton has made him a standing jest for six weeks, and I have used more serious measures, and attempted to frighten him out of his idiocy, he gets worse daily ; and he 'll be under the sod before summer, unless you restore him ! '

' How can you lie so glaringly to the poor child ? ' I called from the inside. ' Pray ride on ! How can you deliberately get up such paltry falsehoods ? Miss Cathy, I 'll knock the lock off with a stone : you won't believe that vile nonsense. You can feel in yourself, it is impossible that a person should die for love of a stranger.'

' I was not aware there were eavesdroppers,' muttered the detected villain. ' Worthy Mrs. Dean, I like you, but I don't like your double-dealing,' he added aloud. ' How could *you* lie so glaringly, as to affirm I hated the " poor child ? " and invent bugbear stories to terrify her from my door-stones ? Catherine Linton (the very name warms me), my bonny lass, I shall be from home all this week ; go and see if I have not spoken truth : do, there 's a darling ! Just imagine your father in my place, and Linton in yours ; then think how you would value your careless lover if he refused to stir a step to comfort you, when your father himself entreated him ; and don't, from pure stupidity, fall into the same error. I swear, on my salvation, he 's going to his grave, and none but you can save him ! '

The lock gave way and I issued out.

' I swear Linton is dying,' repeated Heathcliff, looking hard at me. ' And grief and disappointment are hastening his death. Nelly, if you won't let her go, you can walk over yourself. But I shall not return till this time next week ; and I think your master himself would scarcely object to her visiting her cousin ! '

' Come in,' said I, taking Cathy by the arm and half forcing her to re-enter ; for she lingered, viewing with troubled eyes the features of the speaker, too stern to express his inward deceit.

He pushed his horse close, and, bending down, observed—

' Miss Catherine, I 'll own to you that I have little patience with Linton ; and Hareton and Joseph have less. I 'll own that he 's with a harsh set. He pines for kindness, as well as love ; and a kind word from you would be his best medicine. Don't mind Mrs. Dean's cruel cautions ; but be generous, and contrive to see him. He dreams of you day and night, and cannot be persuaded that you don't hate him, since you neither write nor call.'

I closed the door and rolled a stone to assist the loosened lock in holding it ; and spreading my umbrella, I drew my charge underneath : for the rain began to drive through the moaning branches of the trees, and warned us to avoid delay.

Our hurry prevented any comment on the encounter with Heathcliff, as we stretched towards home ; but I divined instinctively that Catherine's heart was clouded now in double darkness. Her features were so sad, they did not seem hers: she evidently regarded what she had heard as every syllable true.

The master had retired to rest before we came in. Cathy stole to his room to inquire how he was; he had fallen asleep. She returned, and asked me to sit with her in the library. We took our tea together; and afterwards she lay down on the rug, and told me not to talk, for she was weary.

I got a book, and pretended to read. As soon as she supposed me absorbed in my occupation, she recommenced her silent weeping: it appeared, at present, her favourite diversion. I suffered her to enjoy it a while; then I expostulated: deriding and ridiculing all Mr. Heathcliff's assertions about his son, as if I were certain she would coincide. Alas! I hadn't skill to counteract the effect his account had produced: it was just what he intended.

'You may be right, Ellen,' she answered; 'but I shall never feel at ease till I know. And I must tell Linton it is not my fault that I don't write, and convince him that I shall not change.'

What use were anger and protestations against her silly credulity? We parted that night—hostile; but next day beheld me on the road to Wuthering Heights, by the side of my wilful young mistress's pony. I couldn't bear to witness her sorrow: to see her pale, dejected countenance, and heavy eyes; and I yielded, in the faint hope that Linton himself might prove, by his reception of us, how little of the tale was founded on fact.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE rainy night had ushered in a misty morning—half-frost, half-drizzle—and temporary brooks crossed our path—gurgling from the uplands. My feet were thoroughly wetted; I was cross and low; exactly the humour suited for making the most of these disagreeable things.

We entered the farmhouse by the kitchen way, to ascertain whether Mr. Heathcliff were really absent: because I put slight faith in his own affirmation.

Joseph seemed sitting in a sort of elysium alone, beside a roaring fire; a quart of ale on the table near him, bristling with large pieces of toasted oat-cake; and his black, short pipe in his mouth.

Catherine ran to the hearth to warm herself. I asked if the master was in?

My question remained so long unanswered, that I thought the old man had grown deaf, and repeated it louder.

'Na—ay!' he snarled, or rather screamed through his nose. 'Na—ay! yah muh goa back whear yah coom frough.'[1]

'Joseph!' cried a peevish voice, simultaneously with me, from the inner room. 'How often am I to call you? There are only a few red ashes now. Joseph! come this moment.'

Vigorous puffs, and a resolute stare into the grate, declared he had no ear for this appeal. The housekeeper and Hareton were invisible; one gone on an errand, and the other at his work, probably. We knew Linton's tones, and entered.

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[1] No attempt was made to modify this. It is so printed in all the editions.

'Oh, I hope you 'll die in a garret! starved to death,' said the boy, mistaking our approach for that of his negligent attendant.

He stopped, on observing his error; his cousin flew to him.

'Is that you, Miss Linton?' he said, raising his head from the arm of the great chair, in which he reclined. 'No—don't kiss me: it takes my breath. Dear me! Papa said you would call,' continued he, after recovering a little from Catherine's embrace; while she stood by looking very contrite. 'Will you shut the door, if you please? you left it open; and those—those *detestable* creatures won't bring coals to the fire. It 's so cold!'

I stirred up the cinders, and fetched a scuttleful myself. The invalid complained of being covered with ashes; but he had a tiresome cough, and looked feverish and ill, so I did not rebuke his temper.

'Well, Linton,' murmured Catherine, when his corrugated brow relaxed, 'are you glad to see me? Can I do you any good?'

'Why didn't you come before?' he said. 'You should have come, instead of writing. It tired me dreadfully, writing those long letters. I 'd far rather have talked to you. Now, I can neither bear to talk, nor anything else. I wonder where Zillah is! Will you (looking at me) step into the kitchen and see?'

I had received no thanks for my other service; and being unwilling to run to and fro at his behest, I replied—

'Nobody is out there but Joseph.'

'I want to drink,' he exclaimed fretfully, turning away. 'Zillah is constantly gadding off to Gimmerton since papa went: it 's miserable! And I 'm obliged to come down here—they resolved never to hear me upstairs.'

'Is your father attentive to you, Master Heathcliff?' I asked, perceiving Catherine to be checked in her friendly advances.

'Attentive? He makes *them* a little more attentive at least,' he cried. 'The wretches! Do you know, Miss Linton, that brute Hareton laughs at me! I hate him! indeed, I hate them all: they are odious beings.'

Cathy began searching for some water; she lighted on a pitcher in the dresser, filled a tumbler, and brought it. He bid her add a spoonful of wine from a bottle on the table; and having swallowed a small portion, appeared more tranquil, and said she was very kind.

'And are you glad to see me?' asked she, reiterating her former question, and pleased to detect the faint dawn of a smile.

'Yes, I am. It 's something new to hear a voice like yours!' he replied. 'But I *have* been vexed, because you wouldn't come. And papa swore it was owing to me: he called me a pitiful, shuffling, worthless thing; and said you despised me; and if he had been in my place, he would be more the master of the Grange than your father, by this time. But you don't despise me, do you, Miss——?'

'I wish you would say Catherine, or Cathy,' interrupted my young lady. 'Despise you? No! Next to papa and Ellen, I love you better than anybody living. I don't love Mr. Heathcliff, though; and I dare not come when he returns: will he stay away many days?'

'Not many,' answered Linton; 'but he goes on to the moors frequently, since the shooting season commenced; and you might spend an hour or two with me in his absence. Do say you will. I think I should not be peevish with you: you 'd not provoke me, and you 'd always be ready to help me, wouldn't you?'

'Yes,' said Catherine, stroking his long soft hair; 'if I could only get papa's consent, I 'd spend half my time with you. Pretty Linton! I wish you were my brother.'

'And then you would like me as well as your father?' observed he, more cheerfully. 'But papa says you would love me better than him and all the world, if you were my wife; so I 'd rather you were that.'

'No, I should never love anybody better than papa,' she returned gravely. 'And people hate their wives, sometimes; but not their sisters and brothers: and if you were the latter, you would live with us, and papa would be as fond of you as he is of me.'

Linton denied that people ever hated their wives; but Cathy affirmed they did, and, in her wisdom, instanced his own father's aversion to her aunt.

I endeavoured to stop her thoughtless tongue. I couldn't succeed till everything she knew was out. Master Heathcliff, much irritated, asserted her relation was false.

'Papa told me; and papa does not tell falsehoods,' she answered pertly.

'*My* papa scorns yours!' cried Linton. 'He calls him a sneaking fool.'

'Yours is a wicked man,' retorted Catherine; 'and you are very naughty to dare to repeat what he says. He must be wicked to have made Aunt Isabella leave him as she did.'

'She didn't leave him,' said the boy: 'you shan't contradict me.'

'She did,' cried my young lady.

'Well, I'll tell *you* something!' said Linton. 'Your mother hated your father: now then.'

'Oh!' exclaimed Catherine, too enraged to continue.

'And she loved mine,' added he.

'You little liar! I hate you now!' She panted, and her face grew red with passion.

'She did! she did!' sang Linton, sinking into the recess of his chair, and leaning back his head to enjoy the agitation of the other disputant, who stood behind.

'Hush, Master Heathcliff!' I said; 'that's your father's tale, too, I suppose.'

'It isn't: you hold your tongue!' he answered. 'She did, she did, Catherine! she did, she did!'

Cathy, beside herself, gave the chair a violent push, and caused him to fall against one arm. He was immediately seized by a suffocating cough that soon ended his triumph.

It lasted so long that it frightened even me. As to his cousin, she wept with all her might; aghast at the mischief she had done: though she said nothing.

I held him till the fit exhausted itself. Then he thrust me away, and leant his head down silently. Catherine quelled her lamentations also, took a seat opposite, and looked solemnly into the fire.

'How do you feel now, Master Heathcliff?' I inquired, after waiting ten minutes.

'I wish *she* felt as I do,' he replied: 'spiteful, cruel thing! Hareton never touches me: he never struck me in his life. And I was better to-day: and there——' his voice died in a whimper.

'*I* didn't strike you!' muttered Cathy, chewing her lip to prevent another burst of emotion.

He sighed and moaned like one under great suffering, and kept it up for a quarter of an hour ; on purpose to distress his cousin apparently, for whenever he caught a stifled sob from her he put renewed pain and pathos into the inflexions of his voice.

'I 'm sorry I hurt you, Linton,' she said at length, racked beyond endurance. 'But *I* couldn't have been hurt by that little push, and I had no idea that you could, either: you 're not much, are you, Linton? Don't let me go home thinking I 've done you harm. Answer! speak to me.'

'I can't speak to you,' he murmured; 'you 've hurt me so, that I shall lie awake all night choking with this cough. If you had it you 'd know what it was: but *you 'll* be comfortably asleep while I 'm in agony, and nobody near me. I wonder how you would like to pass those fearful nights!' And he began to wail aloud, for very pity of himself.

'Since you are in the habit of passing dreadful nights,' I said, 'it won't be Miss who spoils your ease: you 'd be the same had she never come. However, she shall not disturb you again ; and perhaps you 'll get quieter when we leave you.'

'Must I go?' asked Catherine dolefully, bending over him. 'Do you want me to go, Linton?'

'You can't alter what you 've done,' he replied pettishly, shrinking from her, 'unless you alter it for the worse by teasing me into a fever.'

'Well, then, I must go?' she repeated.

'Let me alone, at least,' said he; 'I can't bear your talking.'

She lingered, and resisted my persuasions to departure a tiresome while ; but as he neither looked up nor spoke, she finally made a movement to the door and I followed.

We were recalled by a scream. Linton had slid from his seat on to the hearth-stone, and lay writhing in the mere perverseness of an indulged plague of a child, determined to be as grievous and harassing as it can.

I thoroughly gauged his disposition from his behaviour, and saw at once it would be folly to attempt humouring him. Not so my companion: she ran back in terror, knelt down, and cried, and soothed, and entreated, till he grew quiet from lack of breath: by no means from compunction at distressing her.

'I shall lift him on to the settle,' I said, 'and he may roll about as he pleases: we can't stop to watch him. I hope you are satisfied, Miss Cathy, that *you* are not the person to benefit him; and that his condition of health is not occasioned by attachment to you. Now, then, there he is! Come away: as soon as he knows there is nobody by to care for his nonsense, he 'll be glad to lie still.'

She placed a cushion under his head, and offered him some water; he rejected the latter, and tossed uneasily on the former, as if it were a stone or a block of wood.

She tried to put it more comfortably.

'I can't do with that,' he said; 'it 's not high enough.'

Catherine brought another to lay above it.

'That 's *too* high,' murmured the provoking thing.

'How must I arrange it, then?' she asked despairingly.

He twined himself up to her, as she half knelt by the settle, and converted her shoulder into a support.

'No, that won't do,' I said. 'You 'll be content with the cushion, Master Heathcliff. Miss has wasted too much time on you already: we cannot remain five minutes longer.'

'Yes, yes, we can!' replied Cathy. 'He 's good and patient now. He 's beginning to think I shall have far greater misery than he will to-night, if I believe he is the worse for my visit; and then I dare not come again. Tell the truth about it, Linton; for I mustn't come, if I have hurt you.'

'You must come, to cure me,' he answered. 'You ought to come, because you have hurt me: you know you have extremely! I was not as ill when you entered as I am at present—was I?'

'But you 've made yourself ill by crying and being in a passion.'

'I didn't do it all,' said his cousin. 'However, we 'll be friends now. And you want me: you would wish to see me sometimes, really?'

'I told you I did,' he replied impatiently. 'Sit on the settle and let me lean on your knee. That 's as mamma used to do, whole afternoons together. Sit quite still and don't talk: but you may sing a song, if you can sing; or you may say a nice long interesting ballad—one of those you promised to teach me; or a story. I 'd rather have a ballad, though: begin.'

Catherine repeated the longest she could remember. The employment pleased both mightily. Linton would have another, and after that another, notwithstanding my strenuous objections; and so they went on until the clock struck twelve, and we heard Hareton in the court, returning for his dinner.

'And to-morrow, Catherine, will you be here to-morrow?' asked young Heathcliff, holding her frock as she rose reluctantly.

'No,' I answered, 'nor next day neither.' She, however, gave a different response evidently, for his forehead cleared as she stooped and whispered in his ear.

'You won't go to-morrow, recollect, Miss!' I commenced, when we were out of the house. 'You are not dreaming of it, are you?'

She smiled.

'Oh, I 'll take good care,' I continued: 'I 'll have that lock mended, and you can escape by no way else.'

'I can get over the wall,' she said, laughing. 'The Grange is not a prison, Ellen, and you are not my gaoler. And besides, I 'm almost seventeen: I 'm a woman. And I 'm certain Linton would recover quickly if he had me to look after him. I 'm older than he is, you know, and wiser: less childish, am I not? And he 'll soon do as I direct him, with some slight coaxing. He 's a pretty little darling when he 's good. I 'd make such a pet of him, if he were mine. We should never quarrel, should we, after we were used to each other? Don't you like him, Ellen?'

'Like him!' I exclaimed. 'The worst-tempered bit of a sickly slip that ever struggled into its teens. Happily, as Mr. Heathcliff conjectured, he 'll not win twenty. I doubt whether he 'll see spring, indeed. And small loss to his family whenever he drops off. And lucky it is for us that his father took him: the kinder he was treated, the more tedious and selfish he 'd be. I 'm glad you have no chance of having him for a husband, Miss Catherine.'

My companion waxed serious at hearing this speech. To speak of his death so regardlessly wounded her feelings.

'He 's younger than I,' she answered, after a protracted pause of meditation, 'and he ought to live the longest: he will—he must live as long as I do. He 's as strong now as when he first came into the north; I 'm positive of that. It 's only a cold that ails him, the same as papa has. You say papa will get better, and why shouldn't he ? '

' Well, well,' I cried, ' after all, we needn't trouble ourselves ; for listen, Miss—and mind, I 'll keep my word—if you attempt going to Wuthering Heights again, with or without me, I shall inform Mr. Linton, and, unless he allow it, the intimacy with your cousin must not be revived.'

' It has been revived,' muttered Cathy sulkily.

' Must not be continued, then,' I said.

' We 'll see,' was her reply, and she set off at a gallop, leaving me to toil in the rear.

We both reached home before our dinner-time ; my master supposed we had been wandering through the park, and therefore he demanded no explanation of our absence. As soon as I entered, I hastened to change my soaked shoes and stockings ; but sitting such a while at the Heights had done the mischief. On the succeeding morning I was laid up, and during three weeks I remained incapacitated for attending to my duties ; a calamity never experienced prior to that period, and never, I am thankful to say, since.

My little mistress behaved like an angel, in coming to wait on me, and cheer my solitude : the confinement brought me exceedingly low. It is wearisome to a stirring active body : but few have slighter reasons for complaint than I had. The moment Catherine left Mr. Linton's room, she appeared at my bedside. Her day was divided between us ; no amusement usurped a minute : she neglected her meals, her studies, and her play ; and she was the fondest nurse that ever watched. She must have had a warm heart, when she loved her father so, to give so much to me.

I said her days were divided between us ; but the master retired early, and I generally needed nothing after six o'clock, thus the evening was her own.

Poor thing! I never considered what she did with herself after tea. And though frequently, when she looked in to bid me good night, I remarked a fresh colour in her cheeks and a pinkness over her slender fingers; instead of fancying the hue borrowed from a cold ride across the moors, I laid it to the charge of a hot fire in the library.

CHAPTER XXIV

At the close of three weeks, I was able to quit my chamber, and move about the house. And on the first occasion of my sitting up in the evening, I asked Catherine to read to me, because my eyes were weak. We were in the library, the master having gone to bed: she consented, rather unwillingly, I fancied; and imagining my sort of books did not suit her, I bid her please herself in the choice of what she perused.

She selected one of her own favourites, and got forward steadily about an hour; then came frequent questions.

'Ellen, are not you tired? Hadn't you better lie down now? You 'll be sick, keeping up so long, Ellen.'

'No, no, dear, I 'm not tired,' I returned continually.

Perceiving me immovable, she essayed another method of showing her disrelish for her occupation. It changed to yawning, and stretching, and—

'Ellen, I 'm tired.'

'Give over, then, and talk,' I answered.

That was worse: she fretted and sighed, and looked at her watch till eight, and finally went to her room, completely overdone with sleep ; judging by her peevish, heavy look, and the constant rubbing she inflicted on her eyes.

The following night she seemed more impatient still ; and on the third from recovering my company, she complained of a headache, and left me.

I thought her conduct odd ; and having remained alone a long while, I resolved on going and inquiring whether she were better, and asking her to come and lie on the sofa, instead of upstairs in the dark.

No Catherine could I discover upstairs, and none below. The servants affirmed they had not seen her. I listened at Mr. Edgar's door ; all was silence. I returned to her apartment, extinguished my candle, and seated myself in the window.

The moon shone bright ; a sprinkling of snow covered the ground, and I reflected that she might, possibly, have taken it into her head to walk about the garden, for refreshment. I did detect a figure creeping along the inner fence of the park ; but it was not my young mistress : on its merging into the light, I recognised one of the grooms.

He stood a considerable period, viewing the carriage-road through the grounds ; then started off at a brisk pace, as if he had detected something, and reappeared presently, leading Miss's pony ; and there she was, just dismounted, and walking by its side.

The man took his charge stealthily across the grass towards the stable. Cathy entered by the casement-window of the drawing-room, and glided noiselessly up to where I awaited her.

She put the door gently too, slipped off her snowy shoes, untied her hat, and was proceeding, unconscious of my espionage, to lay aside her mantle, when I suddenly rose and revealed myself. The surprise petrified her an instant: she uttered an inarticulate exclamation, and stood fixed.

'My dear Miss Catherine,' I began, too vividly impressed by her recent kindness to break into a scold, 'where have you been riding out at this hour? And why should you try to deceive me, by telling a tale? Where have you been? Speak.'

'To the bottom of the park,' she stammered. 'I didn't tell a tale.'

'And nowhere else?' I demanded.

'No,' was the muttered reply.

'Oh, Catherine!' I cried sorrowfully. 'You know you have been doing wrong, or you wouldn't be driven to uttering an untruth to me. That does grieve me. I'd rather be three months ill, than hear you frame a deliberate lie.'

She sprang forward, and bursting into tears, threw her arms round my neck.

'Well, Ellen, I'm so afraid of you being angry,' she said. 'Promise not to be angry, and you shall know the very truth: I hate to hide it.'

We sat down in the window-seat; I assured her I would not scold, whatever her secret might be, and I guessed it, of course; so she commenced—

'I've been to Wuthering Heights, Ellen, and I've never missed going a day since you fell ill; except thrice before, and twice after you left your room. I gave Michael books and pictures to prepare Minny every evening, and to put her back in the stable: you mustn't scold *him* either, mind. I was at the Heights by half-past six, and generally stayed till half-past eight, and then galloped home. It was not to amuse myself that I went: I was often wretched all the time. Now and then I was happy: once in a week perhaps.

At first, I expected there would be sad work persuading you to let me keep my word to Linton: for I had engaged to call again next day, when we quitted him; but, as you stayed upstairs on the morrow, I escaped that trouble; and while Michael was refastening the lock of the park door in the afternoon, I got possession of the key, and told him how my cousin wished me to visit him, because he was sick, and couldn't come to the Grange; and how papa would object to my going: and then I negotiated with him about the pony. He is fond of reading, and he thinks of leaving soon to get married; so he offered, if I would lend him books out of the library, to do what I wished: but I preferred giving him my own, and that satisfied him better.

'On my second visit, Linton seemed in lively spirits; and Zillah (that is their housekeeper) made us a clean room and a good fire, and told us that, as Joseph was out at a prayer-meeting and Hareton Earnshaw was off with his dogs—robbing our woods of pheasants, as I heard afterwards—we might do what we liked.

'She brought me some warm wine and gingerbread, and appeared exceedingly good-natured; and Linton sat in the arm-chair, and I in the little rocking-chair on the hearth-stone, and we laughed and talked so merrily, and found so much to say: we planned where we would go, and what we would do in summer. I needn't repeat that, because you would call it silly.

'One time, however, we were near quarrelling. He said the pleasantest manner of spending a hot July day was lying from morning till evening on a bank of heath in the middle of the moors, with the bees humming dreamily about among the bloom, and the larks singing high up overhead, and the blue sky and bright sun shining steadily and cloudlessly. That was his most perfect idea of heaven's happiness: mine was rocking in a rustling green tree, with a west wind blowing, and bright white clouds flitting rapidly above; and not only larks, but throstles, and blackbirds, and linnets, and cuckoos pouring out music on every side, and the moors seen at a distance, broken into cool dusky dells; but close by great swells of long grass undulating in waves to the breeze; and woods and sounding water, and the whole world awake and wild with joy. He wanted all to lie in an ecstasy of peace; I wanted to sparkle and dance in a glorious jubilee.

'I said his heaven would be only half alive; and he said mine would be drunk: I said I should fall asleep in his; and he said he could not breathe in mine, and began to grow very snappish. At last, we agreed to try both, as soon as the right weather came; and then we kissed each other and were friends. After sitting still an hour, I looked at the great room with its smooth uncarpeted floor, and thought how nice it would be to play in, if we removed the table; and I asked Linton to call Zillah in to help us, and we'd have a game at blind man's buff; she should try to catch us: you used to, you know, Ellen. He wouldn't: there was no pleasure in it, he said; but he consented to play at ball with me. We found two in a cupboard, among a heap of old toys, tops, and hoops, and battledoors, and shuttlecocks. One was marked C., and the other H.; I wished to have the C., because that stood for Catherine, and the H. might be for Heathcliff, his name; but the bran came out of H., and Linton didn't like it.

'I beat him constantly: and he got cross again, and coughed, and returned to his chair. That night, though, he easily recovered his good humour: he was charmed with two or three pretty songs—*your* songs, Ellen; and when I was obliged to go, he begged and entreated me to come the following evening; and I promised.

'Minny and I went flying home as light as air; and I dreamt of Wuthering Heights and my sweet, darling cousin, till morning.

'On the morrow I was sad; partly because you were poorly, and partly that I wished my father knew, and approved of my excursions: but it was beautiful moonlight after tea; and, as I rode on, the gloom cleared.

'I shall have another happy evening, I thought to myself; and what delights me more, my pretty Linton will.

'I trotted up their garden, and was turning round to the back, when that fellow Earnshaw met me, took my bridle, and bid me go in by the front entrance. He patted Minny's neck, and said she was a bonny beast, and appeared as if he wanted me to speak to him. I only told him to leave my horse alone, or else it would kick him.

'He answered in his vulgar accent, "It wouldn't do mitch hurt if it did"; and surveyed its legs with a smile.

'I was half inclined to make it try; however, he moved off to open the door, and, as he raised the latch, he looked up to the inscription above, and said, with a stupid mixture of awkwardness and elation—

'"Miss Catherine! I can read yon, nah."

'"Wonderful," I exclaimed. "Pray let us hear you—you *are* grown clever!"

'He spelt, and drawled over by syllables, the name —"Hareton Earnshaw."

'"And the figures?" I cried encouragingly, perceiving that he came to a dead halt.

'"I cannot tell them yet," he answered.

'"Oh, you dunce!" I said, laughing heartily at his failure.

'The fool stared, with a grin hovering about his lips, and a scowl gathering over his eyes, as if uncertain whether he might not join in my mirth: whether it were not pleasant familiarity, or what it really was, contempt.

'I settled his doubts, by suddenly retrieving my gravity and desiring him to walk away, for I came to see Linton, not him.

'He reddened—I saw that by the moonlight—dropped his hand from the latch, and skulked off, a picture of mortified vanity. He imagined himself to be as accomplished as Linton, I suppose, because he could spell his own name; and was marvellously discomfited that I didn't think the same.'

'Stop, Miss Catherine, dear!' I interrupted. 'I shall not scold, but I don't like your conduct there. If you had remembered that Hareton was your cousin as much as Master Heathcliff, you would have felt how improper it was to behave in that way. At least, it was praiseworthy ambition for him to desire to be as accomplished as Linton; and probably he did not learn merely to show off: you had made him ashamed of his ignorance before, I have no doubt; and he wished to remedy it and please you. To sneer at his imperfect attempt was very bad breeding. Had *you* been brought up in his circumstances, would you be less rude? He was as quick and as intelligent a child as ever you were; and I'm hurt that he should be despised now, because that base Heathcliff has treated him so unjustly.'

'Well, Ellen, you won't cry about it, will you?' she exclaimed, surprised at my earnestness. 'But wait, and you shall hear if he conned his A B C to please me; and if it were worth while being civil to the brute. I entered: Linton was lying on the settle, and half got up to welcome me.

'"I 'm ill to-night, Catherine, love," he said; "and you must have all the talk, and let me listen. Come, and sit by me. I was sure you wouldn't break your word, and I 'll make you promise again, before you go."

'I knew now that I mustn't tease him, as he was ill; and I spoke softly and put no questions, and avoided irritating him in any way. I had brought some of my nicest books for him; he asked me to read a little of one, and I was about to comply, when Earnshaw burst the door open: having gathered venom with reflection. He advanced direct to us, seized Linton by the arm, and swung him off the seat.

'"Get to thy own room!" he said, in a voice almost inarticulate with passion; and his face looked swelled and furious. "Take her there if she comes to see thee: thou shalln't keep me out of this. Begone wi' ye both!"

'He swore at us, and left Linton no time to answer, nearly throwing him into the kitchen; and he clenched his fist as I followed, seemingly longing to knock me down. I was afraid for a moment, and I let one volume fall; he kicked it after me, and shut us out.

'I heard a malignant, crackly laugh by the fire, and turning, beheld that odious Joseph standing rubbing his bony hands, and quivering.

'"Aw wer sure he 'd sarve ye eht! He 's a grand lad! He 's getten t' raight sperrit in him! *He* knaws—aye, he knaws, as weel as Aw do, who sud be t' maister yonder—Ech, ech, ech! He mad ye skift properly! Ech, ech, ech!"[1]

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[1] '"I wer' sure he'd sarve ye out! He's a grand lad! He's getten t' raight sperrit in him! *He* knaws—ay, he knaws, as well as I do, who sud be t' maister yonder—Ech, ech, ech! He made ye skift properly! Ech, ech, ech!"—C. B.'s Revision.

'"Where must we go?" I said to my cousin, disregarding the old wretch's mockery.

'Linton was white and trembling. He was not pretty then, Ellen: oh no! he looked frightful; for his thin face and large eyes were wrought into an expression of frantic, powerless fury. He grasped the handle of the door, and shook it: it was fastened inside.

'"If you don't let me in, I'll kill you!—if you don't let me in, I'll kill you!" he rather shrieked than said. "Devil! devil!—I'll kill you—I'll kill you!"

'Joseph uttered his croaking laugh again.

'"Thear, that's t' father!" he cried. "That's father! We've allas summut uh orther[1] side in us. Niver heed, Hareton, lad—dunnut be 'feard—he cannot get at thee!"

'I took hold of Linton's hands, and tried to pull him away; but he shrieked so shockingly that I dared not proceed. As last his cries were choked by a dreadful fit of coughing; blood gushed from his mouth, and he fell on the ground.

'I ran into the yard, sick with terror; and called for Zillah, as loud as I could. She soon heard me: she was milking the cows in a shed behind the barn, and hurrying from her work, she inquired what there was to do?

'I hadn't breath to explain; dragging her in, I looked about for Linton. Earnshaw had come out to examine the mischief he had caused, and he was then conveying the poor thing upstairs. Zillah and I ascended after him; but he stopped me at the top of the steps, and said I shouldn't go in: I must go home.

'I exclaimed that he had killed Linton, and I *would* enter.

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[1] For 'uh orther' we read 'o' either' in revised editions.

'Joseph locked the door, and declared I should do "no sich stuff," and asked me whether I were "bahn to be as mad as him."

'I stood crying, till the housekeeper reappeared. She affirmed he would be better in a bit, but he couldn't do with that shrieking and din; and she took me, and nearly carried me into the house.

'Ellen, I was ready to tear my hair off my head! I sobbed and wept so that my eyes were almost blind; and the ruffian you have such sympathy with stood opposite: presuming every now and then to bid me "wisht," and denying that it was his fault; and, finally, frightened by my assertions that I would tell papa, and that he should be put in prison and hanged, he commenced blubbering himself, and hurried out to hide his cowardly agitation.

'Still, I was not rid of him: when at length they compelled me to depart, and I had got some hundred yards off the premises, he suddenly issued from the shadow of the roadside, and checked Minny and took hold of me.

'"Miss Catherine, I 'm ill grieved," he began, "but it 's rayther too bad——"

'I gave him a cut with my whip, thinking perhaps he would murder me. He let go, thundering one of his horrid curses, and I galloped home more than half out of my senses.

'I didn't bid you good night that evening, and I didn't go to Wuthering Heights the next: I wished to, exceedingly; but I was strangely excited, and dreaded to hear that Linton was dead, sometimes; and sometimes shuddered at the thought of encountering Hareton.

'On the third day I took courage: at least, I couldn't bear longer suspense, and stole off once more. I went at five o'clock, and walked; fancying I might manage to creep into the house, and up to Linton's room, unobserved. However, the dogs gave notice of my approach. Zillah received me, and saying "the lad was mending nicely," showed me into a small, tidy, carpeted apartment, where, to my inexpressible joy, I beheld Linton laid on a little sofa, reading one of my books. But he would neither speak to me nor look at me, through a whole hour, Ellen: he has such an unhappy temper. And what quite confounded me, when he did open his mouth, it was to utter the falsehood that I had occasioned the uproar, and Hareton was not to blame!

'Unable to reply, except passionately, I got up and walked from the room. He sent after me a faint "Catherine!" He did not reckon on being answered so: but I wouldn't turn back; and the morrow was the second day on which I stayed at home, nearly determined to visit him no more.

'But it was so miserable going to bed and getting up, and never hearing anything about him, that my resolution melted into air before it was properly formed. It *had* appeared wrong to take the journey once; now it seemed wrong to refrain. Michael came to ask if he must saddle Minny; I said "Yes," and considered myself doing a duty as she bore me over the hills.

'I was forced to pass the front windows to get to the court; it was no use trying to conceal my presence.

'"Young master is in the house," said Zillah, as she saw me making for the parlour.

'I went in; Earnshaw was there also, but he quitted the room directly. Linton sat in the great arm-chair half asleep; walking up to the fire, I began in a serious tone, partly meaning it to be true—

'"As you don't like me, Linton, and as you think

I come on purpose to hurt you, and pretend that I do so every time, this is our last meeting: let us say good-bye; and tell Mr. Heathcliff that you have no wish to see me, and that he mustn't invent any more falsehoods on the subject."

'"Sit down and take your hat off, Catherine," he answered. "You are so much happier than I am, you ought to be better. Papa talks enough of my defects, and shows enough scorn of me, to make it natural I should doubt myself. I doubt whether I am not altogether as worthless as he calls me, frequently; and then I feel so cross and bitter, I hate everybody! I *am* worthless, and bad in temper, and bad in spirit, almost always; and, if you choose, you *may* say good-bye: you 'll get rid of an annoyance. Only, Catherine, do me this justice: believe that if I might be as sweet, and as kind, and as good as you are, I would be; as willingly, and more so, than as happy and as healthy. And believe that your kindness has made me love you deeper than if I deserved your love: and though I couldn't, and cannot help showing my nature to you, I regret it and repent it; and shall regret and repent it till I die!"

'I felt he spoke the truth; and I felt I must forgive him: and, though he should quarrel the next moment, I must forgive him again. We were reconciled; but we cried, both of us, the whole time I stayed: not entirely for sorrow; yet I *was* sorry Linton had that distorted nature. He 'll never let his friends be at ease, and he 'll never be at ease himself!

'I have always gone to his little parlour, since that night; because his father returned the day after. About three times, I think, we have been merry and hopeful, as we were the first evening; the rest of my visits were dreary and troubled: now with his selfishness and spite, and now with his sufferings: but I 've learned to endure the former with nearly as little resentment as the latter.

'Mr. Heathcliff purposely avoids me: I have hardly seen him at all. Last Sunday, indeed, coming earlier than usual, I heard him abusing poor Linton, cruelly, for his conduct of the night before. I can't tell how he knew of it, unless he listened. Linton had certainly behaved provokingly: however, it was the business of nobody but me, and I interrupted Mr. Heathcliff's lecture by entering and telling him so. He burst into a laugh, and went away, saying he was glad I took that view of the matter. Since then, I 've told Linton he must whisper his bitter things.

'Now, Ellen, you have heard all, and I can't be prevented from going to Wuthering Heights, except by inflicting misery on two people; whereas, if you 'll only not tell papa, my going need disturb the tranquillity of none. You 'll not tell, will you? It will be very heartless, if you do.'

'I 'll make up my mind on that point by to-morrow, Miss Catherine,' I replied. 'It requires some study; and so I 'll leave you to your rest, and go think it over.'

I thought it over aloud, in my master's presence; walking straight from her room to his, and relating the whole story: with the exception of her conversations with her cousin, and any mention of Hareton.

Mr. Linton was alarmed and distressed, more than he would acknowledge to me. In the morning, Catherine learnt my betrayal of her confidence, and she learnt also that her secret visits were to end.

In vain she wept and writhed against the interdict, and implored her father to have pity on Linton: all she got to comfort her was a promise that he would write and give him leave to come to the Grange when he pleased; but explaining that he must no longer expect to see Catherine at Wuthering Heights. Perhaps, had he been aware of his nephew's disposition and state of health, he would have seen fit to withhold even that slight consolation.

CHAPTER XXV

'THESE things happened last winter, sir,' said Mrs. Dean; 'hardly more than a year ago. Last winter, I did not think, at another twelve months' end, I should be amusing a stranger to the family with relating them! Yet, who knows how long you 'll be a stranger? You 're too young to rest always contented, living by yourself; and I some way fancy no one could see Catherine Linton and not love her. You smile; but why do you look so lively and interested, when I talk about her? and why have you asked me to hang her picture over your fireplace? and why——'

'Stop, my good friend!' I cried. 'It may be very possible that *I* should love her; but would she love me? I doubt it too much to venture my tranquillity by running into temptation: and then my home is not here. I 'm of the busy world, and to its arms I must return. Go on. Was Catherine obedient to her father's commands?'

'She was,' continued the housekeeper. 'Her affection for him was still the chief sentiment in her heart; and he spoke without anger: he spoke in the deep tenderness of one about to leave his treasure amid perils and foes, where his remembered words would be the only aid that he could bequeath to guide her.

'He said to me, a few days afterwards:

'"I wish my nephew would write, Ellen, or call. Tell me, sincerely, what you think of him: is he changed for the better, or is there a prospect of improvement, as he grows a man?"

'"He 's very delicate, sir," I replied; "and scarcely likely to reach manhood: but this I can say, he does not resemble his father; and if Miss Catherine had the misfortune to marry him, he would not be beyond her control: unless she were extremely and foolishly indulgent. However, master, you 'll have plenty of time to get acquainted with him, and see whether he would suit her: it wants four years and more to his being of age."'

Edgar sighed; and, walking to the window, looked out towards Gimmerton Kirk. It was a misty afternoon, but the February sun shone dimly, and we could just distinguish the two fir-trees in the yard, and the sparely-scattered gravestones.

'I 've prayed often,' he half soliloquised, 'for the approach of what is coming; and now I begin to shrink, and fear it. I thought the memory of the hour I came down that glen a bridegroom would be less sweet than the anticipation that I was soon, in a few months, or, possibly, weeks, to be carried up, and laid in its lonely hollow! Ellen, I 've been very happy with my little Cathy: through winter nights and summer days she was a living hope at my side. But I 've been as happy musing by myself among those stones, under that old church: lying, through the long June evenings, on the green mound of her mother's grave, and wishing—yearning for the time when I might lie beneath it. What can I do for Cathy? How must I quit her? I 'd not care one moment for Linton being Heathcliff's son; nor for his taking her from me, if he could console her for my loss. I 'd not care that Heathcliff gained his ends, and triumphed in robbing me of my last blessing! But should Linton be unworthy—only a feeble tool to his father—I cannot abandon her to him! And, hard though it be to crush her buoyant spirit, I must persevere in making her sad while I live, and leaving her solitary when I die. Darling! I 'd rather resign her to God, and lay her in the earth before me.'

'Resign her to God as it is, sir,' I answered, 'and if we should lose you—which may He forbid—under His providence, I 'll stand her friend and counsellor to the last. Miss Catherine is a good girl: I don't fear that she will go wilfully wrong; and people who do their duty are always finally rewarded.'

Spring advanced; yet my master gathered no real strength, though he resumed his walks in the grounds with his daughter. To her inexperienced notions, this itself was a sign of convalescence; and then his cheek was often flushed, and his eyes were bright: she felt sure of his recovering.

On her seventeenth birthday, he did not visit the churchyard: it was raining, and I observed—

'You 'll surely not go out to-night, sir?'

He answered—

'No, I 'll defer it this year a little longer.'

He wrote again to Linton, expressing his great desire to see him; and, had the invalid been presentable, I 've no doubt his father would have permitted him to come. As it was, being instructed, he returned an answer, intimating that Mr. Heathcliff objected to his calling at the Grange; but his uncle's kind remembrance delighted him, and he hoped to meet him, sometimes, in his rambles, and personally to petition that his cousin and he might not remain long so utterly divided.

That part of his letter was simple, and probably his own. Heathcliff knew he could plead eloquently enough for Catherine's company then.

'I do not ask,' he said, 'that she may visit here; but, am I never to see her, because my father forbids me to go to her home, and you forbid her to come to mine? Do, now and then, ride with her towards the Heights; and let us exchange a few words, in your presence! We have done nothing to deserve this separation; and you are not angry with me: you have no reason to dislike me, you allow, yourself. Dear uncle! send me a kind note to-morrow, and leave to join you anywhere you please, except at Thrushcross Grange. I believe an interview would convince you that my father's character is not mine: he affirms I am more your nephew than his son; and though I have faults which render me unworthy of Catherine, she has excused them, and for her sake, you should also. You inquire after my health—it is better; but while I remain cut off from all hope, and doomed to solitude, or the society of those who never did and never will like me, how can I be cheerful and well?'

Edgar, though he felt for the boy, could not consent to grant his request; because he could not accompany Catherine.

He said, in summer, perhaps, they might meet: meantime, he wished him to continue writing at intervals, and engaged to give him what advice and comfort he was able by letter; being well aware of his hard position in his family.

Linton complied; and had he been unrestrained, would probably have spoiled all by filling his epistles with complaints and lamentations: but his father kept a sharp watch over him; and, of course, insisted on every line that my master sent being shown; so, instead of penning his peculiar personal sufferings and distresses, the themes constantly uppermost in his thoughts, he harped on the cruel obligation of being held asunder from his friend and love; and gently intimated that Mr. Linton must allow an interview soon, or he should fear he was purposely deceiving him with empty promises.

Cathy was a powerful ally at home; and, between them, they at length persuaded my master to acquiesce in their having a ride or a walk together about once a week, under my guardianship, and on the moors nearest the Grange: for June found him still declining; and though he had set aside yearly a portion of his income for my young lady's fortune, he had a natural desire that she might retain—or at least return in a short time to—the house of her ancestors; and he considered her only prospect of doing that was by a union with his heir; he had no idea that the latter was failing almost as fast as himself; nor had any one, I believe: no doctor visited the Heights, and no one saw Master Heathcliff to make report of his condition among us.

I, for my part, began to fancy my forebodings were false, and that he must be actually rallying, when he mentioned riding and walking on the moors, and seemed so earnest in pursuing his object.

I could not picture a father treating a dying child as tyrannically and wickedly as I afterwards learned Heathcliff had treated him, to compel this apparent eagerness: his efforts redoubling the more imminently his avaricious and unfeeling plans were threatened with defeat by death.

CHAPTER XXVI

SUMMER was already past its prime, when Edgar reluctantly yielded his assent to their entreaties, and Catherine and I set out on our first ride to join her cousin.

It was a close, sultry day: devoid of sunshine, but with a sky too dappled and hazy to threaten rain; and our place of meeting had been fixed at the guide-stone, by the cross-roads. On arriving there, however, a little herd boy, despatched as a messenger, told us that—

'Maister Linton wer just ut[1] this side th' Heights: and he 'd be mitch obleeged to us to gang on a bit further.'

'Then Master Linton has forgot the first injunction of his uncle,' I observed: 'he bid us keep on the Grange land, and here we are off at once.'

'Well, we 'll turn our horses' heads round, when we reach him,' answered my companion, 'our excursion shall lie towards home.'

But when we reached him, and that was scarcely a quarter of a mile from his own door, we found he had no horse; and we were forced to dismount, and leave ours to graze.

He lay on the heath, awaiting our approach, and did not rise till we came within a few yards. Then he walked so feebly, and looked so pale, that I immediately exclaimed—

'Why, Master Heathcliff, you are not fit for enjoying a ramble, this morning. How ill you do look!'

Catherine surveyed him with grief and astonishment: she changed the ejaculation of joy on her lips to one of alarm; and the congratulation on their long-postponed meeting to an anxious inquiry, whether he were worse than usual?

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[1] 'O's' in later editions.

'No—better—better!' he panted, trembling and retaining her hand as if he needed its support, while his large blue eyes wandered timidly over her; the hollowness round them transforming to haggard wildness the languid expression they once possessed.

'But you have been worse,' persisted his cousin; 'worse than when I saw you last; you are thinner, and——'

'I 'm tired,' he interrupted hurriedly. 'It is too hot for walking, let us rest here. And, in the morning, I often feel sick—papa says I grow so fast.'

Badly satisfied, Cathy sat down, and he reclined beside her.

'This is something like your paradise,' said she, making an effort at cheerfulness. 'You recollect the two days we agreed to spend in the place and way each thought pleasantest? This is nearly yours, only there are clouds; but then they are so soft and mellow: it is nicer than sunshine. Next week, if you can, we 'll ride down to the Grange Park, and try mine.'

Linton did not appear to remember what she talked of; and he had evidently great difficulty in sustaining any kind of conversation. His lack of interest in the subjects she started, and his equal incapacity to contribute to her entertainment, were so obvious that she could not conceal her disappointment. An indefinite alteration had come over his whole person and manner. The pettishness that might be caressed into fondness, had yielded to a listless apathy; there was less of the peevish temper of a child which frets and teases on purpose to be soothed, and more of the self-absorbed moroseness of a confirmed invalid, repelling consolation, and ready to regard the good-humoured mirth of others as an insult.

Catherine perceived, as well as I did, that he held it rather a punishment, than a gratification, to endure our company; and she made no scruple of proposing, presently, to depart.

That proposal, unexpectedly, roused Linton from his lethargy, and threw him into a strange state of agitation. He glanced fearfully towards the Heights, begging she would remain another half-hour, at least.

'But I think,' said Cathy, 'you 'd be more comfortable at home than sitting here; and I cannot amuse you to-day, I see, by my tales, and songs, and chatter: you have grown wiser than I, in these six months; you have little taste for my diversions now: or else, if I could amuse you, I 'd willingly stay.'

'Stay to rest yourself,' he replied. 'And Catherine, don't think, or say that I 'm *very* unwell: it is the heavy weather and heat that make me dull; and I walked about, before you came, a great deal for me. Tell uncle, I 'm in tolerable health, will you?'

'I 'll tell him that *you* say so, Linton. I couldn't affirm that you are,' observed my young lady, wondering at his pertinacious assertion of what was evidently an untruth.

'And be here again next Thursday,' continued he, shunning her puzzled gaze. 'And give him my thanks for permitting you to come—my best thanks, Catherine. And—and, if you *did* meet my father, and he asked you about me, don't lead him to suppose that I 've been extremely silent and stupid: don't look sad and downcast, as you *are* doing—he 'll be angry.'

'I care nothing for his anger,' exclaimed Cathy, imagining she would be its object.

'But I do,' said her cousin, shuddering. '*Don't* provoke him against me, Catherine, for he is very hard.'

'Is he severe to you, Master Heathcliff?' I inquired. 'Has he grown weary of indulgence, and passed from passive to active hatred?'

Linton looked at me, but did not answer; and, after keeping her seat by his side another ten minutes, during which his head fell drowsily on his breast, and he uttered nothing except suppressed moans of exhaustion or pain, Cathy began to seek solace in looking for bilberries, and sharing the produce of her researches with me: she did not offer them to him, for she saw further notice would only weary and annoy.

'Is it half an hour now, Ellen?' she whispered in my ear, at last. 'I can't tell why we should stay. He 's asleep, and papa will be wanting us back.'

'Well, we must not leave him asleep,' I answered; 'wait till he wakes, and be patient. You were mighty eager to set off, but your longing to see poor Linton has soon evaporated!'

'Why did *he* wish to see me?' returned Catherine. 'In his crossest humours, formerly, I liked him better than I do in his present curious mood. It 's just as if it were a task he was compelled to perform—this interview—for fear his father should scold him. But I 'm hardly going to come to give Mr. Heathcliff pleasure; whatever reason he may have for ordering Linton to undergo this penance. And, though I 'm glad he 's better in health, I 'm sorry he 's so much less pleasant, and so much less affectionate to me.'

'You think *he is* better in health, then?' I said.

'Yes,' she answered; 'because he always made such a great deal of his sufferings, you know. He is not tolerably well, as he told me to tell papa; but he 's better, very likely.'

'There you differ with me, Miss Cathy,' I remarked; 'I should conjecture him to be far worse.'

Linton here started from his slumber in bewildered terror, and asked if any one had called his name.

'No,' said Catherine; 'unless in dreams. I cannot conceive how you manage to doze out of doors, in the morning.'

'I thought I heard my father,' he gasped, glancing up to the frowning nab above us. 'You are sure nobody spoke?'

'Quite sure,' replied his cousin. 'Only Ellen and I were disputing concerning your health. Are you truly stronger, Linton, than when we separated in winter? If you be, I'm certain one thing is not stronger—your regard for me: speak—are you?'

The tears gushed from Linton's eyes as he answered—

'Yes, yes, I am!'

And, still under the spell of the imaginary voice, his gaze wandered up and down to detect its owner.

Cathy rose.

'For to-day we must part,' she said. 'And I won't conceal that I have been sadly disappointed with our meeting; though I'll mention it to nobody but you: not that I stand in awe of Mr. Heathcliff.'

'Hush,' murmured Linton; 'for God's sake, hush! He's coming.' And he clung to Catherine's arm, striving to detain her; but at that announcement she hastily disengaged herself, and whistled to Minny, who obeyed her like a dog.

'I'll be here next Thursday,' she cried, springing to the saddle. 'Good-bye. Quick, Ellen!'

And so we left him, scarcely conscious of our departure, so absorbed was he in anticipating his father's approach.

Before we reached home, Catherine's displeasure softened into a perplexed sensation of pity and regret, largely blended with vague, uneasy doubts about Linton's actual circumstances, physical and social: in which I partook, though I counselled her not to say much; for a second journey would make us better judges.

My master requested an account of our ongoings. His nephew's offering of thanks was duly delivered, Miss Cathy gently touching on the rest: I also threw little light on his inquiries, for I hardly knew what to hide, and what to reveal.

CHAPTER XXVII

Seven days glided away, every one marking its course by the henceforth rapid alteration of Edgar Linton's state. The havoc that months had previously wrought was now emulated by the inroads of hours.

Catherine, we would fain have deluded yet; but her own quick spirit refused to delude her: it divined in secret, and brooded on the dreadful probability, gradually ripening into certainty.

She had not the heart to mention her ride, when Thursday came round; I mentioned it for her, and obtained permission to order her out of doors: for the library, where her father stopped a short time daily—the brief period he could bear to sit up—and his chamber, had become her whole world. She grudged each moment that did not find her bending over his pillow, or seated by his side. Her countenance grew wan with watching and sorrow, and my master gladly dismissed her to what he flattered himself would be a happy change of scene and society; drawing comfort from the hope that she would not now be left entirely alone after his death.

He had a fixed idea, I guessed by several observations he let fall, that, as his nephew resembled him in person, he would resemble him in mind; for Linton's letters bore few or no indications of his defective character. And I, through pardonable weakness, refrained from correcting the error; asking myself what good there would be in disturbing his last moments with information that he had neither power nor opportunity to turn to account.

We deferred our excursion till the afternoon; a golden afternoon of August: every breath from the hills so full of life, that it seemed whoever respired it, though dying, might revive.

Catherine's face was just like the landscape—shadows and sunshine flitting over it in rapid succession; but the shadows rested longer, and the sunshine was more transient; and her poor little heart reproached itself for even that passing forgetfulness of its cares.

We discerned Linton watching at the same spot he had selected before. My young mistress alighted, and told me that, as she was resolved to stay a very little while, I had better hold the pony and remain on horseback; but I dissented: I wouldn't risk losing sight of the charge committed to me a minute; so we climbed the slope of heath together.

Master Heathcliff received us with greater animation on this occasion; not the animation of high spirits though, nor yet of joy; it looked more like fear.

'It is late!' he said, speaking short and with difficulty. 'Is not your father very ill? I thought you wouldn't come.'

'*Why* won't you be candid?' cried Catherine, swallowing her greeting. 'Why cannot you say at once you don't want me? It is strange, Linton, that for the second time you have brought me here on purpose, apparently, to distress us both, and for no reason besides!'

Linton shivered, and glanced at her, half supplicating, half ashamed; but his cousin's patience was not sufficient to endure this enigmatical behaviour.

'My father *is* very ill,' she said; 'and why am I called from his bedside? Why didn't you send to absolve me from my promise, when you wished I wouldn't keep it? Come! I desire an explanation: playing and trifling are completely banished out of my mind; and I can't dance attendance on your affectations now!'

'My affectations!' he murmured; 'what are they? For Heaven's sake, Catherine, don't look so angry! Despise me as much as you please; I am a worthless, cowardly wretch: I can't be scorned enough; but I 'm too mean for your anger. Hate my father, and spare me for contempt.'

'Nonsense!' cried Catherine, in a passion. 'Foolish, silly boy! And there! he trembles, as if I were really going to touch him! You needn't bespeak contempt, Linton: anybody will have it spontaneously at your service. Get off! I shall return home: it is folly dragging you from the hearth-stone, and pretending—what do we pretend? Let go my frock! If I pitied you for crying and looking so very frightened, you should spurn such pity. Ellen, tell him how disgraceful this conduct is. Rise, and don't degrade yourself into an abject reptile—*don't*!'

With streaming face and an expression of agony, Linton had thrown his nerveless frame along the ground: he seemed convulsed with exquisite terror.

'Oh!' he sobbed, 'I cannot bear it! Catherine,

Catherine, I 'm a traitor, too, and I dare not tell you! But leave me, and I shall be killed! *Dear* Catherine, my life is in your hands: and you have said you loved me, and if you did, it wouldn't harm you. You 'll not go, then? kind, sweet, good Catherine! And perhaps you *will* consent—and he 'll let me die with you!'

My young lady, on witnessing his intense anguish, stooped to raise him. The old feeling of indulgent tenderness overcame her vexation, and she grew thoroughly moved and alarmed.

'Consent to what?' she asked. 'To stay! Tell me the meaning of this strange talk, and I will. You contradict your own words, and distract me! Be calm and frank, and confess at once all that weighs on your heart. You wouldn't injure me, Linton, would you? You wouldn't let any enemy hurt me, if you could prevent it? I 'll believe you are a coward for yourself, but not a cowardly betrayer of your best friend.'

'But my father threatened me,' gasped the boy, clasping his attenuated fingers, 'and I dread him—I dread him! I *dare* not tell!'

'Oh, well!' said Catherine, with scornful compassion, 'keep your secret: *I 'm* no coward. Save yourself: I 'm not afraid!'

Her magnanimity provoked his tears: he wept wildly, kissing her supporting hands, and yet could not summon courage to speak out.

I was cogitating what the mystery might be, and determined Catherine should never suffer, to benefit him or any one else, by my good will; when hearing a rustle among the ling, I looked up and saw Mr. Heathcliff almost close upon us, descending the Heights. He didn't cast a glance towards my companions, though they were sufficiently near for Linton's sobs to be audible; but hailing me in the almost hearty tone he assumed to none besides, and the sincerity of which I couldn't avoid doubting, he said—

'It is something to see you so near to my house, Nelly. How are you at the Grange? Let us hear. The rumour goes,' he added in a lower tone, 'that Edgar Linton is on his deathbed: perhaps they exaggerate his illness?'

'No; my master is dying,' I replied: 'it is true enough. A sad thing it will be for us all, but a blessing for him!'

'How long will he last, do you think?' he asked.

'I don't know,' I said.

'Because,' he continued, looking at the two young people, who were fixed under his eye—Linton appeared as if he could not venture to stir or raise his head, and Catherine could not move, on his account—'because that lad yonder seems determined to beat me; and I'd thank his uncle to be quick, and go before him. Hallo! has the whelp been playing that game long? I *did* give him some lessons about snivelling. Is he pretty lively with Miss Linton generally?'

'Lively? no—he has shown the greatest distress,' I answered. 'To see him, I should say, that instead of rambling with his sweetheart on the hills, he ought to be in bed, under the hands of a doctor.'

'He shall be, in a day or two,' muttered Heathcliff. 'But first—get up, Linton! Get up!' he shouted. 'Don't grovel on the ground there: up, this moment!'

Linton had sunk prostrate again in another paroxysm of helpless fear, caused by his father's glance towards him, I suppose: there was nothing else to produce such humiliation. He made several efforts to obey, but his little strength was annihilated for the time, and he fell back again with a moan.

Mr. Heathcliff advanced, and lifted him to lean against a ridge of turf.

'Now,' said he, with curbed ferocity, 'I 'm getting angry; and if you don't command that paltry spirit of yours—*damn* you! get up directly!'

'I will, father,' he panted. 'Only, let me alone, or I shall faint. I 've done as you wished, I 'm sure. Catherine will tell you that I—that I—have been cheerful. Ah! keep by me, Catherine; give me your hand.'

'Take mine,' said his father; 'stand on your feet. There now—she 'll lend you her arm; that 's right, look at *her*. You would imagine I was the devil himself, Miss Linton, to excite such horror. Be so kind as to walk home with him, will you? He shudders if I touch him.'

'Linton, dear!' whispered Catherine, 'I can't go to Wuthering Heights: papa has forbidden me. He 'll not harm you: why are you so afraid?'

'I can never re-enter that house,' he answered. 'I 'm *not* to re-enter it without you!'

'Stop!' cried his father. 'We 'll respect Catherine's filial scruples. Nelly, take him in, and I 'll follow your advice concerning the doctor, without delay.'

'You 'll do well,' replied I. 'But I must remain with my mistress: to mind your son is not my business.'

'You are very stiff,' said Heathcliff, 'I know that: but you 'll force me to pinch the baby and make it scream before it moves your charity. Come, then, my hero. Are you willing to return, escorted by me?'

He approached once more, and made as if he would seize the fragile being; but, shrinking back, Linton clung to his cousin, and implored her to accompany him, with a frantic importunity that admitted no denial.

However I disapproved, I couldn't hinder her: indeed, how could she have refused him herself? What was filling him with dread we had no means of discerning; but there he was, powerless under its gripe, and any addition seemed capable of shocking him into idiocy.

We reached the threshold; Catherine walked in, and I stood waiting till she had conducted the invalid to a chair, expecting her out immediately; when Mr. Heathcliff, pushing me forward, exclaimed—

'My house is not stricken with the plague, Nelly; and I have a mind to be hospitable to-day: sit down, and allow me to shut the door.'

He shut and locked it also. I started.

'You shall have tea before you go home,' he added. 'I am by myself. Hareton is gone with some cattle to the Lees, and Zillah and Joseph are off on a journey of pleasure; and, though I 'm used to being alone, I 'd rather have some interesting company, if I can get it. Miss Linton, take your seat by *him*. I give you what I have: the present is hardly worth accepting; but I have nothing else to offer. It is Linton, I mean. How she does stare! It 's odd what a savage feeling I have to anything that seems afraid of me! Had I been born where laws are less strict and tastes less dainty, I should treat myself to a slow vivisection of those two, as an evening's amusement.'

He drew in his breath, struck the table, and swore to himself—

'By hell! I hate them.'

'I 'm not afraid of you!' exclaimed Catherine, who could not hear the latter part of his speech.

She stepped close up; her black eyes flashing with passion and resolution.

'Give me that key: I will have it!' she said. 'I wouldn't eat or drink here, if I were starving.'

Heathcliff had the key in his hand that remained on the table. He looked up, seized with a sort of surprise at her boldness; or, possibly, reminded by her voice and glance of the person from whom she inherited it.

She snatched at the instrument, and half succeeded in getting it out of his loosened fingers; but her action recalled him to the present; he recovered it speedily.

'Now, Catherine Linton,' he said, 'stand off, or I shall knock you down; and that will make Mrs. Dean mad.'

Regardless of this warning, she captured his closed hand and its contents again.

'We *will* go!' she repeated, exerting her utmost efforts to cause the iron muscles to relax; and finding that her nails made no impression, she applied her teeth pretty sharply.

Heathcliff glanced at me a glance that kept me from interfering a moment. Catherine was too intent on his fingers to notice his face. He opened them suddenly, and resigned the object of dispute; but, ere she had well secured it, he seized her with the liberated hand, and, pulling her on his knee, administered with the other a shower of terrific slaps on both sides of the head, each sufficient to have fulfilled his threat, had she been able to fall.

At this diabolical violence I rushed on him furiously.

'You villain!' I began to cry, 'you villain!'

A touch on the chest silenced me: I am stout, and soon put out of breath; and, what with that and the rage, I staggered dizzily back, and felt ready to suffocate, or to burst a blood-vessel.

The scene was over in two minutes; Catherine, released, put her two hands to her temples, and looked just as if she were not sure whether her ears were off or on. She trembled like a reed, poor thing, and leant against the table perfectly bewildered.

'I know how to chastise children, you see,' said the scoundrel grimly, as he stooped to repossess himself of the key, which had dropped to the floor. 'Go to Linton now, as I told you; and cry at your ease! I shall be your father, to-morrow—all the father you 'll have in a few days—and you shall have plenty of that. You can bear plenty; you 're no weakling: you shall have a daily taste, if I catch such a devil of a temper in your eyes again!'

Cathy ran to me instead of Linton, and knelt down and put her burning cheek on my lap, weeping aloud. Her cousin had shrunk into a corner of the settle, as quiet as a mouse, congratulating himself, I dare say, that the correction had lighted on another than him.

Mr. Heathcliff, perceiving us all confounded, rose, and expeditiously made the tea himself. The cups and saucers were laid ready. He poured it out, and handed me a cup.

'Wash away your spleen,' he said. 'And help your own naughty pet and mine. It is not poisoned, though I prepared it. I 'm going out to seek your horses.'

Our first thought, on his departure, was to force an exit somewhere. We tried the kitchen door, but that was fastened outside: we looked at the windows—they were too narrow for even Cathy's little figure.

'Master Linton,' I cried, seeing we were regularly imprisoned; 'you know what your diabolical father is after, and you shall tell us, or I 'll box your ears, as he has done your cousin's.'

'Yes, Linton, you must tell,' said Catherine. 'It was for your sake I came; and it will be wickedly ungrateful if you refuse.'

'Give me some tea, I 'm thirsty, and then I 'll tell you,' he answered. 'Mrs. Dean, go away. I don't like you standing over me. Now, Catherine, you are letting your tears fall into my cup. I won't drink that. Give me another.'

Catherine pushed another to him, and wiped her face. I felt disgusted at the little wretch's composure, since he was no longer in terror for himself. The anguish he had exhibited on the moor subsided as soon as ever he entered Wuthering Heights; so I guessed he had been menaced with an awful visitation of wrath if he failed in decoying us there; and, that accomplished, he had no further immediate fears.

'Papa wants us to be married,' he continued, after sipping some of the liquid. 'And he knows your papa wouldn't let us marry now; and he 's afraid of my dying, if we wait; so we are to be married in the morning, and you are to stay here all night; and, if you do as he wishes, you shall return home next day, and take me with you.'

'Take you with her, pitiful changeling?' I exclaimed. '*You* marry? Why, the man is mad! or he thinks us fools, every one. And do you imagine that beautiful young lady, that healthy, hearty girl, will tie herself to a little perishing monkey like you? Are you cherishing the notion that *anybody*, let alone Miss Catherine Linton, would have you for a husband? You want whipping for bringing us in here at all, with your dastardly puling tricks; and—don't look so silly, now! I 've a very good mind to shake you severely, for your contemptible treachery, and your imbecile conceit.'

I did give him a slight shaking; but it brought on the cough, and he took to his ordinary resource of moaning and weeping, and Catherine rebuked me.

'Stay all night? No,' she said, looking slowly round. 'Ellen, I'll burn that door down, but I'll get out.'

And she would have commenced the execution of her threat directly, but Linton was up in alarm for his dear self again. He clasped her in his two feeble arms, sobbing—

'Won't you have me, and save me? not let me come to the Grange? Oh! darling Catherine! you mustn't go and leave, after all. You *must* obey my father—you *must*!'

'I must obey my own,' she replied, 'and relieve him from this cruel suspense. The whole night! What would he think? he'll be distressed already. I'll either break or burn a way out of the house. Be quiet! You're in no danger; but if you hinder me—Linton, I love papa better than you!'

The mortal terror he felt of Mr. Heathcliff's anger, restored to the boy his coward's eloquence. Catherine was near distraught: still, she persisted that she must go home, and tried entreaty in her turn, persuading him to subdue his selfish agony.

While they were thus occupied, our gaoler re-entered.

'Your beasts have trotted off,' he said, 'and—now Linton! snivelling again? What has she been doing to you? Come, come—have done, and get to bed. In a month or two, my lad, you'll be able to pay her back her present tyrannies with a vigorous hand. You're pining for pure love, are you not? nothing else in the world: and she shall have you! There, to bed! Zillah won't be here to-night; you must undress yourself. Hush! hold your noise! Once in your own room, I'll not come near you: you needn't fear. By chance, you 've managed tolerably. I 'll look to the rest.'

He spoke these words, holding the door open for his son to pass; and the latter achieved his exit exactly as a spaniel might, which suspected the person who attended on it of designing a spiteful squeeze.

The lock was re-secured. Heathcliff approached the fire, where my mistress and I stood silent. Catherine looked up, and instinctively raised her hand to her cheek: his neighbourhood revived a painful sensation. Anybody else would have been incapable of regarding the childish act with sternness, but he scowled on her, and muttered—

'Oh! you are not afraid of me? Your courage is well disguised: you *seem* damnably afraid!'

'I *am* afraid now,' she replied, 'because, if I stay, papa will be miserable; and how can I endure making him miserable—when he—when he—Mr. Heathcliff, *let* me go home! I promise to marry Linton: papa would like me to: and I love him, and why should you wish to force me to do what I 'll willingly do of myself?'

'Let him dare to force you!' I cried. 'There 's law in the land; thank God! there is; though we be in an out-of-the-way place. I 'd inform if he were my own son: and it 's felony without benefit of clergy!'

'Silence!' said the ruffian. 'To the devil with your clamour! I don't want *you* to speak. Miss Linton, I shall enjoy myself remarkably in thinking your father will be miserable: I shall not sleep for satisfaction. You could have hit on no surer way of fixing your residence under my roof for the next twenty-four hours, than informing me that such an event would follow. As to your promise to marry Linton, I 'll take care you shall keep it; for you shall not quit the place till it is fulfilled.'

'Send Ellen, then, to let papa know I 'm safe!' exclaimed Catherine, weeping bitterly. 'Or marry me now. Poor papa! Ellen, he 'll think we 're lost. What shall we do?'

'Not he! He 'll think you are tired of waiting on him, and run off for a little amusement,' answered Heathcliff. 'You cannot deny that you entered my house of your own accord, in contempt of his injunctions to the contrary. And it is quite natural that you should desire amusement at your age; and that you should weary of nursing a sick man, and that man *only* your father. Catherine, his happiest days were over when your days began. He cursed you, I dare say, for coming into the world (I did, at least); and it would just do if he cursed you as *he* went out of it. I 'd join him. I don't love you! How should I? Weep away. As far as I can see, it will be your chief diversion hereafter; unless Linton make amends for other losses; and your provident parent appears to fancy he may. His letters of advice and consolation entertained me vastly. In his last he recommended my jewel to be careful of his; and kind to her when he got her. Careful and kind—that 's paternal. But Linton requires his whole stock of care and kindness for himself. Linton can play the little tyrant well. He 'll undertake to torture any number of cats, if their teeth be drawn and their claws pared. You 'll be able to tell his uncle fine tales of his *kindness*, when you get home again, I assure you.'

'You 're right there!' I said; 'explain your son's character. Show his resemblance to yourself; and then, I hope, Miss Cathy will think twice before she takes the cockatrice!'

'I don't much mind speaking of his amiable qualities now,' he answered; 'because she must either accept him or remain a prisoner, and you along with her, till your master dies. I can detain you both, quite concealed, here. If you doubt, encourage her to retract her word, and you 'll have an opportunity of judging!'

'I 'll not retract my word,' said Catherine. 'I 'll marry him within this hour, if I may go to Thrushcross Grange afterwards. Mr. Heathcliff, you 're a cruel man, but you 're not a fiend; and you won't, from *mere* malice, destroy irrevocably all my happiness. If papa thought I had left him on purpose, and if he died before I returned, could I bear to live? I 've given over crying: but I 'm going to kneel here, at your knee; and I 'll not get up, and I 'll not take my eyes from your face till you look back at me! No, don't turn away! *do* look! You 'll see nothing to provoke you. I don't hate you. I 'm not angry that you struck me. Have you never loved *anybody* in all your life, uncle? *never*? Ah! you must look once. I 'm so wretched, you can't help being sorry and pitying me.'

'Keep your eft's fingers off; and move, or I 'll kick you!' cried Heathcliff, brutally repulsing her. 'I 'd rather be hugged by a snake. How the devil can you dream of fawning on me? I *detest* you!'

He shrugged his shoulders: shook himself, indeed, as if his flesh crept with aversion; and thrust back his chair; while I got up, and opened my mouth, to commence a downright torrent of abuse. But I was rendered dumb in the middle of the first sentence, by a threat that I should be shown into a room by myself the very next syllable I uttered.

It was growing dark—we heard a sound of voices at the garden gate. Our host hurried out instantly: *he* had his wits about him; *we* had not. There was a talk of two or three minutes and he returned alone.

'I thought it had been your cousin Hareton,' I observed to Catherine. 'I wish he would arrive! Who knows but he might take our part?'

'It was three servants sent to seek you from the Grange,' said Heathcliff, overhearing me. 'You should have opened a lattice and called out: but I could swear that chit is glad you didn't. She 's glad to be obliged to stay, I 'm certain.'

At learning the chance we had missed, we both gave vent to our grief without control; and he allowed us to wail on till nine o'clock. Then he bid us go upstairs, through the kitchen, to Zillah's chamber; and I whispered my companion to obey: perhaps we might contrive to get through the window there, or into a garret, and out by its skylight.

The window, however, was narrow, like those below, and the garret trap was safe from our attempts; for we were fastened in as before.

We neither of us lay down: Catherine took her station by the lattice, and watched anxiously for morning; a deep sigh being the only answer I could obtain to my frequent entreaties that she would try to rest.

I seated myself in a chair, and rocked to and fro, passing harsh judgment on my many derelictions of duty; from which, it struck me then, all the misfortunes of all my employers sprang. It was not the case, in reality, I am aware; but it was, in my imagination, that dismal night; and I thought Heathcliff himself less guilty than I.

At seven o'clock he came and inquired if Miss Linton had risen.

She ran to the door immediately, and answered—

'Yes.'

'Here, then,' he said, opening it, and pulling her out.

I rose to follow, but he turned the lock again. I demanded my release.

'Be patient,' he replied; 'I 'll send up your breakfast in a while.'

I thumped on the panels, and rattled the latch angrily; and Catherine asked why I was still shut up? He answered, I must try to endure it another hour, and they went away.

I endured it two or three hours; at length, I heard a footstep: not Heathcliff's.

'I 've brought you something to eat,' said a voice; 'oppen t' door!'

Complying eagerly, I beheld Hareton, laden with food enough to last me all day.

'Tak' it,' he added, thrusting the tray into my hand.

'Stay one minute,' I began.

'Nay,' cried he, and retired, regardless of any prayers I could pour forth to detain him.

And there I remained enclosed the whole day, and the whole of the next night; and another, and another. Five nights and four days I remained, altogether, seeing nobody but Hareton, once every morning; and he was a model of a gaoler: surly, and dumb, and deaf to every attempt at moving his sense of justice or compassion.

CHAPTER XXVIII

On the fifth morning, or rather afternoon, a different step approached—lighter and shorter; and, this time, the person entered the room. It was Zillah; donned in her scarlet shawl, with a black silk bonnet on her head, and a willow basket swung to her arm.

'Eh, dear! Mrs. Dean!' she exclaimed. 'Well! there is a talk about you at Gimmerton. I never thought but you were sunk in the Blackhorse marsh, and Missy with you, till master told me you 'd been found, and he 'd lodged you here! What! and you must have got on an island, sure? And how long were you in the hole? Did master save you, Mrs. Dean? But you 're not so thin—you 've not been so poorly, have you?'

'Your master is a true scoundrel!' I replied. 'But he shall answer for it. He needn't have raised that tale: it shall all be laid bare!'

'What do you mean?' asked Zillah. 'It 's not his tale: they tell that in the village—about your being lost in the marsh; and I calls to Earnshaw, when I come in—

'"Eh, they 's queer things, Mr. Hareton, happened since I went off. It 's a sad pity of that likely young lass, and cant Nelly Dean."

'He stared. I thought he had not heard aught, so I told him the rumour.

'The master listened, and he just smiled to himself, and said—

'"If they have been in the marsh, they are out now, Zillah. Nelly Dean is lodged, at this minute, in your room. You can tell her to flit, when you go up; here is the key. The bog-water got into her head, and she would have run home quite flighty; but I fixed her till she came round to her senses. You can bid her go to the Grange at once, if she be able, and carry a message from me, that her young lady will follow in time to attend the squire's funeral."'

'Mr. Edgar is not dead?' I gasped. 'Oh! Zillah, Zillah!'

'No, no; sit you down, my good mistress,' she replied; 'you 're right sickly yet. He 's not dead; Doctor Kenneth thinks he may last another day. I met him on the road and asked.'

Instead of sitting down, I snatched my outdoor things, and hastened below, for the way was free.

On entering the house, I looked about for some one to give information of Catherine.

The place was filled with sunshine, and the door stood wide open; but nobody seemed at hand.

As I hesitated whether to go off at once, or return and seek my mistress, a slight cough drew my attention to the hearth.

Linton lay on the settle, sole tenant, sucking a stick of sugar-candy, and pursuing my movements with apathetic eyes.

'Where is Miss Catherine?' I demanded sternly, supposing I could frighten him into giving intelligence, by catching him thus, alone.

He sucked on like an innocent.

'Is she gone?' I said.

'No,' he replied; 'she 's upstairs: she 's not to go; we won't let her.'

'You won't let her, little idiot!' I exclaimed. 'Direct me to her room immediately, or I 'll make you sing out sharply.'

'Papa would make you sing out, if you attempted to get there,' he answered. 'He says I 'm not to be soft with Catherine: she 's my wife, and it 's shameful that she should wish to leave me. He says, she hates me and wants me to die, that she may have my money; but she shan't have it: and she shan't go home! She never shall!—she may cry, and be sick as much as she pleases!'

He resumed his former occupation, closing his lids, as if he meant to drop asleep.

'Master Heathcliff,' I resumed, 'have you forgotten all Catherine's kindness to you last winter, when you affirmed you loved her, and when she brought you books and sung you songs, and came many a time through wind and snow to see you? She wept to miss one evening, because you would be disappointed; and you felt then that she was a hundred times too good to you: and now you believe the lies your father tells, though you know he detests you both. And you join him against her. That 's fine gratitude, is it not?'

The corner of Linton's mouth fell, and he took the sugar-candy from his lips.

'Did she come to Wuthering Heights, because she hated you?' I continued. 'Think for yourself! As to your money, she does not even know that you will have any. And you say she 's sick; and yet, you leave her alone, up there in a strange house! *You* who have felt what it is to be so neglected! You could pity your own sufferings; and she pitied them, too; but you won't pity hers! I shed tears, Master Heathcliff, you see—an elderly woman, and a servant merely—and you, after pretending such affection, and having reason to worship her almost, store every tear you have for yourself, and lie there quite at ease. Ah! you 're a heartless, selfish boy!'

'I can't stay with her,' he answered crossly. 'I 'll not stay by myself. She cries so, I can't bear it. And she won't give over, though I say I 'll call my father. I did call him once, and he threatened to strangle her, if she was not quiet; but she began again the instant he left the room, moaning and grieving all night long, though I screamed for vexation that I couldn't sleep.'

'Is Mr. Heathcliff out?' I inquired, perceiving that the wretched creature had no power to sympathise with his cousin's mental tortures.

'He 's in the court,' he replied, 'talking to Doctor Kenneth, who says uncle is dying, truly, at last. I 'm glad, for I shall be master of the Grange after him, and Catherine always spoke of it as *her* house. It isn't hers! It 's mine: papa says everything she has is mine. All her nice books are mine; she offered to give me them, and her pretty birds, and her pony Minny, if I would get the key of our room, and let her out; but I told her she had nothing to give, they were all, all mine. And then she cried, and took a little picture from her neck, and said I should have that; two pictures in a gold case, on one side her mother, and on the other, uncle, when they were young. That was yesterday—I said *they* were mine, too; and tried to get them from her. The spiteful thing wouldn't let me: she pushed me off, and hurt me. I shrieked out—that frightens her—she heard papa coming, and she broke the hinges and divided the case, and gave me her mother's protrait; the other she attempted to hide: but papa asked what was the matter, and I explained it. He took the one I had away, and ordered her to resign hers to me; she refused, and he—he struck her down, and wrenched it off the chain, and crushed it with his foot.'

'And were you pleased to see her struck?' I asked: having my designs in encouraging his talk.

'I winked,' he answered: 'I wink to see my father strike a dog or a horse, he does it so hard. Yet I was glad at first—she deserved punishing for pushing me: but when papa was gone, she made me come to the window and showed me her cheek cut on the inside, against her teeth and her mouth filling with blood; and then she gathered up the bits of the picture, and went and sat down with her face to the wall, and she has never spoken to me since: and I sometimes think she can't speak for pain. I don't like to think so; but she 's a naughty thing for crying continually; and she looks so pale and wild, I 'm afraid of her.'

'And you can get the key if you choose?' I said.

'Yes, when I am upstairs,' he answered; 'but I can't walk upstairs now.'

'In what apartment is it?' I asked.

'Oh,' he cried, 'I shan't tell *you* where it is! It is our secret. Nobody, neither Hareton nor Zillah, is to know. There! you 've tired me—go away, go away!' And he turned his face on to his arm, and shut his eyes again.

I considered it best to depart without seeing Mr. Heathcliff, and bring a rescue for my young lady from the Grange.

On reaching it, the astonishment of my fellow-servants to see me, and their joy also, was intense; and when they heard that their little mistress was safe, two or three were about to hurry up and shout the news at Mr. Edgar's door: but I bespoke the announcement of it, myself.

How changed I found him, even in those few days! He lay, an image of sadness and resignation, waiting his death. Very young he looked: though his actual age was thirty-nine, one would have called him ten years younger, at least. He thought of Catherine: for he murmured her name. I touched his hand, and spoke.

'Catherine is coming, dear master!' I whispered; 'she is alive and well; and will be here, I hope, to-night.'

I trembled at the first effects of this intelligence: he half rose up, looked eagerly round the apartment, and then sunk back in a swoon.

As soon as he recovered, I related our compulsory visit, and detention at the Heights. I said Heathcliff forced me to go in; which was not quite true. I uttered as little as possible against Linton; nor did I describe all his father's brutal conduct—my intentions being to add no bitterness, if I could help it, to his already overflowing cup.

He divined that one of his enemy's purposes was to secure the personal property, as well as the estate, to his son: or rather himself; yet why he did not wait till his decease was a puzzle to my master, because ignorant how nearly he and his nephew would quit the world together.

However, he felt his will had better be altered: instead of leaving Catherine's fortune at her own disposal, he determined to put it in the hands of trustees for her use during life, and for her children, if she had any, after her. By that means, it could not fall to Mr. Heathcliff should Linton die.

Having received his orders, I despatched a man to fetch the attorney, and four more, provided with serviceable weapons, to demand my young lady of her gaoler. Both parties were delayed very late. The single servant returned first.

He said Mr. Green, the lawyer, was out when he arrived at his house, and he had to wait two hours for his re-entrance; and then Mr. Green told him he had a little business in the village that must be done; but he would be at Thrushcross Grange before morning.

The four men came back unaccompanied also. They brought word that Catherine was ill: too ill to quit her room; and Heathcliff would not suffer them to see her.

I scolded the stupid fellows well for listening to that tale, which I would not carry to my master; resolving to take a whole bevy up to the Heights, at daylight, and storm it literally, unless the prisoner were quietly surrendered to us.

Her father *shall* see her, I vowed, and vowed again, if that devil be killed on his own door-stones in trying to prevent it!

Happily, I was spared the journey and the trouble.

I had gone downstairs at three o'clock to fetch a jug of water; and was passing through the hall with it in my hand, when a sharp knock at the front door made me jump.

'Oh! it is Green,' I said, recollecting myself—'only Green,' and I went on, intending to send somebody else to open it; but the knock was repeated: not loud, and still importunately.

I put the jug on the banister, and hastened to admit him myself.

The harvest moon shone clear outside. It was not the attorney. My own sweet little mistress sprang on my neck, sobbing—

'Ellen! Ellen! Is papa alive?'

'Yes,' I cried: 'yes, my angel, he is. God be thanked, you are safe with us again!'

She wanted to run, breathless as she was, upstairs to Mr. Linton's room; but I compelled her to sit down on a chair, and made her drink, and washed her pale face, chafing it into a faint colour with my apron. Then I said I must go first, and tell of her arrival; imploring her to say, she should be happy with young Heathcliff. She stared, but soon comprehending why I counselled her to utter the falsehood, she assured me she would not complain.

I couldn't abide to be present at their meeting. I stood outside the chamber-door a quarter of an hour, and hardly ventured near the bed, then.

All was composed, however: Catherine's despair was as silent as her father's joy. She supported him calmly, in appearance; and he fixed on her features his raised eyes, that seemed dilating with ecstasy.

He died blissfully, Mr. Lockwood: he died so. Kissing her cheek, he murmured—

'I am going to her; and you, darling child, shall come to us!' and never stirred or spoke again; but continued that rapt, radiant gaze, till his pulse imperceptibly stopped and his soul departed. None could have noticed the exact minute of his death, it was so entirely without a struggle.

Whether Catherine had spent her tears, or whether the grief were too weighty to let them flow, she sat there dry-eyed till the sun rose: she sat till noon, and would still have remained brooding over that death-bed, but I insisted on her coming away and taking some repose.

It was well I succeeded in removing her; for at dinner-time appeared the lawyer, having called at Wuthering Heights to get his instructions how to behave. He had sold himself to Mr. Heathcliff, and that was the cause of his delay in obeying my master's summons. Fortunately, no thought of worldly affairs crossed the latter's mind, to disturb him, after his daughter's arrival.

Mr. Green took upon himself to order everything and everybody about the place. He gave all the servants, but me, notice to quit. He would have carried his delegated authority to the point of insisting that Edgar Linton should not be buried beside his wife, but in the chapel, with his family. There was the will, however, to hinder that, and my loud protestations against any infringement of its directions.

The funeral was hurried over; Catherine, Mrs. Linton Heathcliff now, was suffered to stay at the Grange till her father's corpse had quitted it.

She told me that her anguish had at last spurred Linton to incur the risk of liberating her. She heard the men I sent disputing at the door, and she gathered the sense of Heathcliff's answer. It drove her desperate. Linton, who had been conveyed up to the little parlour soon after I left, was terrified into fetching the key before his father re-ascended.

He had the cunning to unlock and re-lock the door, without shutting it; and when he should have gone to bed, he begged to sleep with Hareton, and his petition was granted for once.

Catherine stole out before break of day. She dare not try the doors, lest the dogs should raise an alarm; she visited the empty chambers and examined their windows; and, luckily, lighting on her mother's, she got easily out of its lattice, and on to the ground, by means of the fir-tree close by. Her accomplice suffered for his share in the escape, notwithstanding his timid contrivances.

CHAPTER XXIX

THE evening after the funeral, my young lady and I were seated in the library; now musing mournfully—one of us despairingly—on our loss, now venturing conjectures as to the gloomy future.

We had just agreed the best destiny which could await Catherine, would be a permission to continue resident at the Grange; at least during Linton's life: he being allowed to join her there, and I to remain as housekeeper. That seemed rather too favourable an arrangement to be hoped for; and yet I did hope, and began to cheer up under the prospect of retaining my home and my employment, and, above all, my beloved young mistress; when a servant—one of the discarded ones, not yet departed—rushed hastily in, and said, 'that devil Heathcliff' was coming through the court: should he fasten the door in his face?

If we had been mad enough to order that proceeding, we had not time. He made no ceremony of knocking or announcing his name: he was master, and availed himself of the master's privilege to walk straight in, without saying a word.

The sound of our informant's voice directed him to the library; he entered, and motioning him out, shut the door.

It was the same room into which he had been ushered, as a guest, eighteen years before: the same moon shone through the window; and the same autumn landscape lay outside. We had not yet lighted a candle, but all the apartment was visible, even to the portraits on the wall: the splendid head of Mrs. Linton, and the graceful one of her husband.

Heathcliff advanced to the hearth. Time had little altered his person either. There was the same man: his dark face rather sallower and more composed, his frame a stone or two heavier, perhaps, and no other difference.

Catherine had risen, with an impulse to dash out, when she saw him.

'Stop!' he said, arresting her by the arm. 'No more runnings away! Where would you go? I'm come to fetch you home; and I hope you'll be a dutiful daughter, and not encourage my son to further disobedience. I was embarrassed how to punish him when I discovered his part in the business: he's such a cobweb, a pinch would annihilate him; but you'll see by his look that he has received his due! I brought him down one evening, the day before yesterday, and just set him in a chair, and never touched him afterwards. I sent Hareton out, and we had the room to ourselves. In two hours, I called Joseph to carry him up again; and since then my presence is as potent on his nerves as a ghost; and I fancy he sees me often, though I am not near. Hareton says he wakes and shrieks in the night by the hour together, and calls you to protect him from me; and, whether you like your precious mate or not, you must come: he 's your concern now; I yield all my interest in him to you.'

'Why not let Catherine continue here?' I pleaded, 'and send Master Linton to her. As you hate them both, you 'd not miss them: they *can* only be a daily plague to your unnatural heart.'

'I 'm seeking a tenant for the Grange,' he answered; 'and I want my children about me, to be sure. Besides, that lass owes me her services for her bread. I 'm not going to nurture her in luxury and idleness after Linton is gone. Make haste and get ready, now; and don't oblige me to compel you.'

'I shall,' said Catherine. 'Linton is all I have to love in the world, and though you have done what you could to make him hateful to me, and me to him, you *cannot* make us hate each other. And I defy you to hurt him when I am by, and I defy you to frighten me!'

'You are a boastful champion,' replied Heathcliff; 'but I don't like you well enough to hurt him: you shall get the full benefit of the torment, as long as it lasts. It is not I who will make him hateful to you—it is his own sweet spirit. He 's as bitter as gall at your desertion and its consequences: don't expect thanks for this noble devotion. I heard him draw a pleasant picture to Zillah of what he would do if he were as strong as I: the inclination is there, and his very weakness will sharpen his wits to find a substitute for strength.'

'I know he has a bad nature,' said Catherine: 'he 's your son. But I 'm glad I 've a better, to forgive it; and I know he loves me, and for that reason I love him. Mr. Heathcliff, *you* have *nobody* to love you; and, however miserable you make us, we shall still have the revenge of thinking that your cruelty rises from your greater misery. You *are* miserable, are you not? Lonely, like the devil, and envious like him? *Nobody* loves you—*nobody* will cry for you when you die! I wouldn't be you!'

Catherine spoke with a kind of dreary triumph: she seemed to have made up her mind to enter into the spirit of her future family, and draw pleasure from the griefs of her enemies.

'You shall be sorry to be yourself presently,' said her father-in-law, 'if you stand there another minute. Begone, witch, and get your things!'

She scornfully withdrew.

In her absence, I began to beg for Zillah's place at the Heights, offering to resign her mine; but he would suffer it on no account. He bid me be silent; and then, for the first time, allowed himself a glance round the room and a look at the pictures. Having studied Mrs. Linton, he said—

'I shall have that at home. Not because I need it, but——'

He turned abruptly to the fire, and continued, with what, for lack of a better word, I must call a smile—

'I 'll tell you what I did yesterday! I got the sexton, who was digging Linton's grave, to remove the earth off her coffin-lid, and I opened it. I thought, once, I would have stayed there: when I saw her face again—it is hers yet!—he had hard work to stir me; but he said it would change if the air blew on it, and so I struck one side of the coffin loose, and covered it up: not Linton's side, damn him! I wish he 'd been soldered in lead. And I bribed the sexton to pull it away when I 'm laid there, and slide mine out too; I 'll have it made so: and then by the time Linton gets to us he 'll not know which is which!'

'You were very wicked, Mr. Heathcliff!' I exclaimed; 'were you not ashamed to disturb the dead?'

'I disturbed nobody, Nelly,' he replied; 'and I gave some ease to myself. I shall be a great deal more comfortable now; and you 'll have a better chance of keeping me underground, when I get there. Disturbed her? No! she has disturbed me, night and day, through eighteen years—incessantly—remorselessly—till yesternight; and yesternight I was tranquil. I dreamt I was sleeping the last sleep by that sleeper, with my heart stopped and my cheek frozen against hers.'

'And if she had been dissolved into earth, or worse, what would you have dreamt of then?' I said.

'Of dissolving with her, and being more happy still!' he answered. 'Do you suppose I dread any change of that sort? I expected such a transformation on raising the lid: but I 'm better pleased that it should not commence till I share it. Besides, unless I had received a distinct impression of her passionless features, that strange feeling would hardly have been removed. It began oddly. You know I was wild after she died; and eternally, from dawn to dawn, praying her to return to me her spirit! I have a strong faith in ghosts: I have a conviction that they can, and do, exist among us!

'The day she was buried, there came a fall of snow.

In the evening I went to the churchyard. It blew bleak as winter—all round was solitary. I didn't fear that her fool of a husband would wander up the den so late; and no one else had business to bring them there. Being alone, and conscious two yards of loose earth was the sole barrier between us, I said to myself—

'"I 'll have her in my arms again! If she be cold, I 'll think it is this north wind that chills *me*; and if she be motionless, it is sleep."

'I got a spade from the tool-house, and began to delve with all my might—it scraped the coffin; I fell to work with my hands; the wood commenced cracking about the screws; I was on the point of attaining my object, when it seemed that I heard a sigh from some one above, close at the edge of the grave, and bending down. "If I can only get this off," I muttered, "I wish they may shovel in the earth over us both!" and I wrenched at it more desperately still. There was another sigh, close at my ear. I appeared to feel the warm breath of it displacing the sleet-laden wind. I knew no living thing in flesh and blood was by; but, as certainly as you perceive the approach to some substantial body in the dark, though it cannot be discerned, so certainly I felt that Cathy was there: not under me, but on the earth.

'A sudden sense of relief flowed from my heart through every limb. I relinquished my labour of agony, and turned consoled at once: unspeakably consoled. Her presence was with me: it remained while I re-filled the grave, and led me home. You may laugh, if you will; but I was sure I should see her there. I was sure she was with me, and I could not help talking to her.

'Having reached the Heights, I rushed eagerly to the door. It was fastened; and, I remember, that accursed Earnshaw and my wife opposed my entrance. I remember stopping to kick the breath out of him, and then hurrying upstairs, to my room and hers. I looked round impatiently—I felt her by me—I could *almost* see her, and yet I *could not*! I ought to have sweat blood then, from the anguish of my yearning—from the fervour of my supplications to have but one glimpse! I had not one. She showed herself, as she often was in life, a devil to me! And, since then, sometimes more and sometimes less, I 've been the sport of that intolerable torture! Infernal! keeping my nerves at such a stretch, that, if they had not resembled catgut, they would long ago have relaxed to the feebleness of Linton's.

'When I sat in the house with Hareton, it seemed that on going out I should meet her; when I walked on the moors I should meet her coming in. When I went from home, I hastened to return: she *must* be somewhere at the Heights, I was certain! And when I slept in her chamber—I was beaten out of that. I couldn't lie there; for the moment I closed my eyes, she was either outside the window, or sliding back the panels, or entering the room, or even resting her darling head on the same pillow as she did when a child; and I must open my lids to see. And so I opened and closed them a hundred times a night—to be always disappointed! It racked me! I 've often groaned aloud, till that old rascal Joseph no doubt believed that my conscience was playing the fiend inside of me.

'Now, since I 've seen her, I 'm pacified—a little. It was a strange way of killing: not by inches, but by fractions of hairbreadths, to beguile me with the spectre of a hope, through eighteen years!'

Mr. Heathcliff paused and wiped his forehead; his hair clung to it, wet with perspiration; his eyes were fixed on the red embers of the fire, the brows not contracted, but raised next the temples; diminishing the grim aspect of his countenance, but imparting a peculiar look of trouble, and a painful appearance of mental tension towards one absorbing subject. He only half addressed me, and I maintained silence. I didn't like to hear him talk!

After a short period he resumed his meditation on the picture, took it down and leant it against the sofa to contemplate it at better advantage; and while so occupied Catherine entered, announcing that she was ready, when her pony should be saddled.

'Send that over to-morrow,' said Heathcliff to me; then turning to her, he added, 'You may do without your pony: it is a fine evening, and you 'll need no ponies at Wuthering Heights; for what journeys you take, your own feet will serve you. Come along.'

'Good-bye, Ellen!' whispered my dear little mistress. As she kissed me, her lips felt like ice. 'Come and see me, Ellen; don't forget.'

'Take care you do no such thing, Mrs. Dean!' said her new father. 'When I wish to speak to you I 'll come here. I want none of your prying at my house!'

He signed her to precede him; and casting back a look that cut my heart, she obeyed.

I watched them, from the window, walk down the garden. Heathcliff fixed Catherine's arm under his: though she disputed the act at first evidently; and with rapid strides he hurried her into the alley, whose trees concealed them.

CHAPTER XXX

I HAVE paid a visit to the Heights, but I have not seen her since she left: Joseph held the door in his hand when I called to ask after her, and wouldn't let me pass. He said Mrs. Linton was 'thrang,' and the master was not in. Zillah has told me something of the way they go on, otherwise I should hardly know who was dead and who living.

She thinks Catherine haughty, and does not like her, I can guess by her talk. My young lady asked some aid of her when she first came; but Mr. Heathcliff told her to follow her own business, and let his daughter-in-law look after herself; and Zillah willingly acquiesced, being a narrow-minded selfish woman. Catherine evinced a child's annoyance at this neglect; repaid it with contempt, and thus enlisted my informant among her enemies, as securely as if she had done her some great wrong.

I had a long talk with Zillah about six weeks ago, a little before you came, one day when we forgathered on the moor; and this is what she told me.

'The first thing Mrs. Linton did,' she said, 'on her arrival at the Heights, was to run upstairs, without even wishing good-evening to me and Joseph; she shut herself into Linton's room, and remained till morning. Then, while the master and Earnshaw were at breakfast, she entered the house, and asked all in a quiver if the doctor might be sent for? her cousin was very ill.

'"We know that!" answered Heathcliff; "but his life is not worth a farthing, and I won't spend a farthing on him."

'"But I cannot tell how to do," she said; "and if nobody will help me, he 'll die!"

'"Walk out of the room," cried the master, "and let me never hear a word more about him! None here care what becomes of him; if you do, act the nurse; if you do not, lock him up and leave him."

'Then she began to bother me, and I said I 'd had enough plague with the tiresome thing; we each had our tasks, and hers was to wait on Linton: Mr. Heathcliff bid me leave that labour to her.

'How they managed together, I can't tell. I fancy he fretted a great deal, and moaned hisseln night and day; and she had precious little rest: one could guess by her white face and heavy eyes. She sometimes came into the kitchen all wildered like, and looked as if she would fain beg assistance; but I was not going to disobey the master: I never dare disobey him, Mrs. Dean; and, though I thought it wrong that Kenneth should not be sent for, it was no concern of mine either to advise or complain, and I always refused to meddle.

'Once or twice, after we had gone to bed, I 've happened to open my door again and seen her sitting crying on the stairs' top; and then I 've shut myself in quick, for fear of being moved to interfere. I did pity her then, I 'm sure: still I didn't wish to lose my place, you know.

'At last, one night she came boldly into my chamber, and frightened me out of my wits, by saying—

'"Tell Mr. Heathcliff that his son is dying—I 'm sure he is, this time. Get up, instantly, and tell him."

'Having uttered this speech, she vanished again. I lay a quarter of an hour listening and trembling. Nothing stirred—the house was quiet.

'"She 's mistaken," I said to myself. "He 's got over it. I needn't disturb them" ; and I began to doze. But my sleep was marred a second time by a sharp ringing of the bell—the only bell we have, put up on purpose for Linton ; and the master called to me to see what was the matter, and inform them that he wouldn't have that noise repeated.

'I delivered Catherine's message. He cursed to himself, and in a few minutes came out with a lighted candle, and proceeded to their room. I followed. Mrs. Heathcliff was seated by the bedside, with her hands folded on her knees. Her father-in-law went up, held the light to Linton's face, looked at him, and touched him ; afterwards he turned to her.

'"Now—Catherine," he said, "how do you feel ?"

'She was dumb.

'"How do you feel, Catherine ?" he repeated.

'"He 's safe, and I 'm free," she answered: "I should feel well—but," she continued, with a bitterness she couldn't conceal, "you have left me so long to struggle against death alone, that I feel and see only death ! I feel like death !"

'And she looked like it, too ! I gave her a little wine. Hareton and Joseph, who had been wakened by the ringing and the sound of feet, and heard our talk from outside, now entered. Joseph was fain, I believe, of the lad's removal ; Hareton seemed a thought bothered : though he was more taken up with staring at Catherine than thinking of Linton. But the master bid him get off to bed again : we didn't want his help. He afterwards made Joseph remove the body to his chamber, and told me to return to mine, and Mrs. Heathcliff remained by herself.

'In the morning, he sent me to tell her she must come down to breakfast : she had undressed, and appeared going to sleep, and said she was ill ; at which

I hardly wondered. I informed Mr. Heathcliff, and he replied—

'"Well, let her be till after the funeral; and go up now and then to get her what is needful; and, as soon as she seems better, tell me."'

Cathy stayed upstairs a fortnight, according to Zillah; who visited her twice a day, and would have been rather more friendly, but her attempts at increasing kindness were proudly and promptly repelled.

Heathcliff went up once, to show her Linton's will. He had bequeathed the whole of his, and what had been her, movable property to his father: the poor creature was threatened, or coaxed, into that act during her week's absence, when his uncle died. The lands, being a minor, he could not meddle with. However, Mr. Heathcliff has claimed and kept them in his wife's right and his also: I suppose legally: at any rate, Catherine, destitute of cash and friends, cannot disturb his possession.

'Nobody,' said Zillah, 'ever approached her door, except that once, but I; and nobody asked anything about her. The first occasion of her coming down into the house was on a Sunday afternoon.

'She had cried out, when I carried up her dinner, that she couldn't bear any longer being in the cold; and I told her the master was going to Thrushcross Grange, and Earnshaw and I needn't hinder her from descending; so, as soon as she heard Heathcliff's horse trot off, she made her appearance, donned in black, and her yellow curls combed back behind her ears as plain as a Quaker: she couldn't comb them out.

'Joseph and I generally go to chapel on Sundays': the kirk, you know, has no minister now, explained Mrs. Dean; and they call the Methodists' or Baptists' place (I can't say which it is), at Gimmerton, a chapel.

'Joseph had gone,' she continued, 'but I thought proper to bide at home. Young folks are always the better for an elder's over-looking; and Hareton, with all his bashfulness, isn't a model of nice behaviour. I let him know that his cousin would very likely sit with us, and she had been always used to see the Sabbath respected; so he had as good leave his guns and bits of indoor work alone, while she stayed.

'He coloured up at the news, and cast his eyes over his hands and clothes. The train-oil and gunpowder were shoved out of sight in a minute. I saw he meant to give her his company; and I guessed, by his way, he wanted to be presentable; so, laughing, as I durst not laugh when the master is by, I offered to help him, if he would, and joked at his confusion. He grew sullen, and began to swear.

'Now, Mrs. Dean,' she went on, seeing me not pleased by her manner, 'you happen think your young lady too fine for Mr. Hareton; and happen you 're right: but I own I should love well to bring her pride a peg lower. And what will all her learning and her daintiness do for her, now? She 's as poor as you or I: poorer, I 'll be bound: you 're saving, and I 'm doing my little all that road.'

Hareton allowed Zillah to give him her aid; and she flattered him into a good-humour; so, when Catherine came, half forgetting her former insults, he tried to make himself agreeable, by the housekeeper's account.

'Missis walked in,' she said, 'as chill as an icicle, and as high as a princess. I got up and offered her my seat in the arm-chair. No, she turned up her nose at my civility. Earnshaw rose, too, and bid her come to the settle, and sit close by the fire: he was sure she was starved.

'"I 've been starved a month and more," she answered, resting on the word as scornful as she could.

'And she got a chair for herself, and placed it at a distance from both of us.

'Having sat till she was warm, she began to look round, and discovered a number of books in the dresser; she was instantly upon her feet again, stretching to reach them: but they were too high up.

'Her cousin, after watching her endeavours a while, at last summoned courage to help her; she held her frock, and he filled it with the first that came to hand.

'That was a great advance for the lad. She didn't thank him; still, he felt gratified that she had accepted his assistance, and ventured to stand behind as she examined them, and even to stoop and point out what struck his fancy in certain old pictures which they contained; nor was he daunted by the saucy style in which she jerked the page from his finger: he contented himself with going a bit farther back, and looking at her instead of the book.

'She continued reading, or seeking for something to read. His attention became, by degrees, quite centred in the study of her thick, silky curls: her face he couldn't see, and she couldn't see him. And, perhaps, not quite awake to what he did, but attracted like a child to a candle, at last he proceeded from staring to touching; he put out his hand and stroked one curl, as gently as if it were a bird. He might have stuck a knife into her neck, she started round in such a taking.

'"Get away, this moment! How dare you touch me? Why are you stopping there?" she cried, in a tone of disgust. "I can't endure you! I 'll go upstairs again, if you come near me."

'Mr. Hareton recoiled, looking as foolish as he could do: he sat down in the settle very quiet, and she continued turning over her volumes another half-hour; finally, Earnshaw crossed over, and whispered to me—

'"Will you ask her to read to us, Zillah? I'm stalled of doing naught; and I do like—I could like to hear her! Dunnot say I wanted it, but ask of yourseln."

'"Mr. Hareton wishes you would read to us, ma'am," I said immediately. "He'd take it very kind—he'd be much obliged."

'She frowned; and looking up, answered—

'"Mr. Hareton, and the whole set of you, will be good enough to understand that I reject any pretence at kindness you have the hypocrisy to offer! I despise you, and will have nothing to say to any of you! When I would have given my life for one kind word, even to see one of your faces, you all kept off. But I won't complain to you! I'm driven down here by the cold; not either to amuse you or enjoy your society."

'"What could I ha' done?" began Earnshaw. "How was I to blame?"

'"Oh! you are an exception," answered Mrs. Heathcliff. "I never missed such a concern as you."

'"But I offered more than once, and asked," he said, kindling up at her pertness, "I asked Mr. Heathcliff to let me wake for you——"

'"Be silent! I'll go out of doors, or anywhere, rather than have your disagreeable voice in my ear!" said my lady.

'Hareton muttered she might go to hell, for him! and unslinging his gun, restrained himself from his Sunday occupations no longer.

'He talked now, freely enough; and she presently saw fit to retreat to her solitude: but the frost had set in, and, in spite of her pride, she was forced to condescend to our company, more and more. However, I took care there should be no further scorning at my good nature: ever since, I 've been as stiff as herself; and she has no lover or liker among us: and she does not deserve one; for, let them say the least word to her, and she 'll curl back without respect of any one! She 'll snap at the master himself, and as good as dares him to thrash her; and the more hurt she gets, the more venomous she grows.'

At first, on hearing this account from Zillah, I determined to leave my situation, take a cottage, and get Catherine to come and live with me: but Mr. Heathcliff would as soon permit that as he would set up Hareton in an independent house; and I can see no remedy, at present, unless she could marry again: and that scheme it does not come within my province to arrange.

Thus ended Mrs. Dean's story. Notwithstanding the doctor's prophecy, I am rapidly recovering strength; and though it be only the second week in January, I propose getting out on horseback in a day or two, and riding over to Wuthering Heights, to inform my landlord that I shall spend the next six months in London; and, if he likes, he may look out for another tenant to take the place after October. I would not pass another winter here for much.

CHAPTER XXXI

YESTERDAY was bright, calm, and frosty. I went to the Heights as I proposed: my housekeeper entreated me to bear a little note from her to her young lady, and I did not refuse, for the worthy woman was not conscious of anything odd in her request.

The front door stood open, but the jealous gate was fastened, as at my last visit; I knocked, and invoked Earnshaw from among the garden beds; he unchained it, and I entered. The fellow is as handsome a rustic as need be seen. I took particular notice of him this time; but then he does his best, apparently, to make the least of his advantages.

I asked if Mr. Heathcliff were at home? He answered, No; but he would be in at dinner-time. It was eleven o'clock, and I announced my intention of going in and waiting for him, at which he immediately flung down his tools and accompanied me, in the office of watchdog, not as a substitute for the host.

We entered together; Catherine was there, making herself useful in preparing some vegetables for the approaching meal; she looked more sulky and less spirited than when I had seen her first. She hardly raised her eyes to notice me, and continued her employment with the same disregard to common forms of politeness as before; never returning my bow and good-morning by the slightest acknowledgment.

'She does not seem so amiable,' I thought, 'as Mrs. Dean would persuade me to believe. She 's a beauty, it is true, but not an angel.'

Earnshaw surlily bid her remove her things to the kitchen.

'Remove them yourself,' she said, pushing them from her as soon as she had done; and retiring to a stool by the window, where she began to carve figures of birds and beasts out of the turnip parings in her lap.

I approached her, pretending to desire a view of the garden; and, as I fancied, adroitly dropped Mrs. Dean's note on to her knee, unnoticed by Hareton—but she asked aloud—

'What is that?' and chucked it off.

'A letter from your old acquaintance, the housekeeper at the Grange,' I answered; annoyed at her exposing my kind deed, and fearful lest it should be imagined a missive of my own.

She would gladly have gathered it up at this information, but Hareton beat her; he seized and put it in his waistcoat, saying Mr. Heathcliff should look at it first.

Thereat, Catherine silently turned her face from us, and, very stealthily, drew out her pocket-handkerchief and applied it to her eyes; and her cousin, after struggling a while to keep down his softer feelings, pulled out the letter and flung it on the floor beside her, as ungraciously as he could.

Catherine caught and perused it eagerly; then she put a few questions to me concerning the inmates, rational and irrational, of her former home; and gazing towards the hills, murmured in soliloquy—

'I should like to be riding Minny down there! I should like to be climbing up there! Oh! I 'm tired—I 'm *stalled*, Hareton!'

And she leant her pretty head back against the sill, with half a yawn and half a sigh, and lapsed into an aspect of abstracted sadness: neither caring nor knowing whether we remarked her.

'Mrs. Heathcliff,' I said, after sitting some time mute, 'you are not aware that I am an acquaintance of yours? so intimate that I think it strange you won't come and speak to me. My housekeeper never wearies of talking about and praising you; and she 'll be greatly disappointed if I return with no news of or from you, except that you received her letter and said nothing!'

She appeared to wonder at this speech, and asked—

'Does Ellen like you?'

'Yes, very well,' I replied unhesitatingly.

'You must tell her,' she continued, 'that I would answer her letter, but I have no materials for writing: not even a book from which I might tear a leaf.'

'No books!' I exclaimed. 'How do you contrive to live here without them? if I may take the liberty to inquire. Though provided with a large library, I'm frequently very dull at the Grange; take my books away, and I should be desperate!'

'I was always reading, when I had them,' said Catherine; 'and Mr. Heathcliff never reads; so he took it into his head to destroy my books. I have not had a glimpse of one for weeks. Only once, I searched through Joseph's store of theology, to his great irritation; and once, Hareton, I came upon a secret stock in your room—some Latin and Greek, and some tales and poetry: all old friends. I brought the last here—and you gathered them, as a magpie gathers silver spoons, for the mere love of stealing! They are of no use to you; or else you concealed them in the bad spirit that as you cannot enjoy them, nobody else shall. Perhaps *your* envy counselled Mr. Heathcliff to rob me of my treasures? But I've most of them written on my brain and printed in my heart, and you cannot deprive me of those!'

Earnshaw blushed crimson when his cousin made this revelation of his private literary accumulations, and stammered an indignant denial of her accusations.

'Mr. Hareton is desirous of increasing his amount of knowledge,' I said, coming to his rescue. 'He is not *envious* but *emulous* of your attainments. He'll be a clever scholar in a few years.'

'And he wants *me* to sink into a dunce, meantime,' answered Catherine. 'Yes, I hear him trying to spell and read to himself, and pretty blunders he makes! I wish you would repeat *Chevy Chase* as you did yesterday: it was extremely funny. I heard you; and I heard you turning over the dictionary to seek out the hard words, and then cursing because you couldn't read their explanations!'

The young man evidently thought it too bad that he should be laughed at for his ignorance, and then laughed at for trying to remove it. I had a similar notion; and, remembering Mrs. Dean's anecdote of his first attempt at enlightening the darkness in which he had been reared, I observed—

'But, Mrs. Heathcliff, we have each had a commencement, and each stumbled and tottered on the threshold; had our teachers scorned instead of aiding us, we should stumble and totter yet.'

'Oh!' she replied, 'I don't wish to limit his acquirements: still, he has no right to appropriate what is mine, and make it ridiculous to me with his vile mistakes and mispronunciations! Those books, both prose and verse, were consecrated to me by other associations; and I hate to have them debased and profaned in his mouth! Besides, of all, he has selected my favourite pieces that I love the most to repeat, as if out of deliberate malice.'

Hareton's chest heaved in silence a minute: he laboured under a severe sense of mortification and wrath, which it was no easy task to suppress.

I rose, and, from a gentlemanly idea of relieving his embarrassment, took up my station in the doorway, surveying the external prospect as I stood.

He followed my example, and left the room; but presently reappeared, bearing half a dozen volumes in his hands, which he threw into Catherine's lap, exclaiming—

'Take them! I never want to hear, or read, or think of them again!'

'I won't have them now,' she answered. 'I shall connect them with you, and hate them.'

She opened one that had obviously been often turned over, and read a portion in the drawling tone of a beginner; then laughed, and threw it from her.

'And listen,' she continued provokingly, commencing a verse of an old ballad in the same fashion.

But his self-love would endure no further torment: I heard, and not altogether disapprovingly, a manual check given to her saucy tongue. The little wretch had done her utmost to hurt her cousin's sensitive though uncultivated feelings, and a physical argument was the only mode he had of balancing the account, and repaying its effects on the inflicter.

He afterwards gathered the books and hurled them on the fire. I read in his countenance what anguish it was to offer that sacrifice to spleen. I fancied that as they consumed, he recalled the pleasure they had already imparted, and the triumph and ever-increasing pleasure he had anticipated from them; and I fancied I guessed the incitement to his secret studies also. He had been content with daily labour and rough animal enjoyments, till Catherine crossed his path. Shame at her scorn, and hope of her approval, were his first prompters to higher pursuits; and, instead of guarding him from one and winning him the other, his endeavours to raise himself had produced just the contrary result.

'Yes; that 's all the good that such a brute as you can get from them!' cried Catherine, sucking her damaged lip, and watching the conflagration with indignant eyes.

'You 'd *better* hold your tongue, now,' he answered fiercely.

And his agitation precluded further speech; he advanced hastily to the entrance, where I made way for him to pass. But ere he had crossed the door-stones, Mr. Heathcliff, coming up the causeway, encountered him, and laying hold of his shoulder asked—

'What 's to do now, my lad?'

'Naught, naught,' he said, and broke away to enjoy his grief and anger in solitude.

Heathcliff gazed after him, and sighed.

'It will be odd if I thwart myself,' he muttered, unconscious that I was behind him. 'But when I look for his father in his face, I find *her* every day more! How the devil is he so like? I can hardly bear to see him.'

He bent his eyes to the ground, and walked moodily in. There was a restless, anxious expression in his countenance I had never remarked there before; and he looked sparer in person.

His daughter-in-law, on perceiving him through the window, immediately escaped to the kitchen, so that I remained alone.

'I 'm glad to see you out of doors again, Mr. Lockwood,' he said, in reply to my greeting; 'from selfish motives partly: I don't think I could readily supply your loss in this desolation. I 've wondered more than once what brought you here.'

'An idle whim, I fear, sir,' was my answer; 'or else an idle whim is going to spirit me away. I shall set out for London, next week; and I must give you warning that I feel no disposition to retain Thrushcross Grange beyond the twelve months I agreed to rent it. I believe I shall not live there any more.'

'Oh, indeed; you 're tired of being banished from the world, are you?' he said. 'But if you be coming to plead off paying for a place you won't occupy, your journey is useless: I never relent in exacting my due from any one.'

'I 'm coming to plead off nothing about it,' I exclaimed, considerably irritated. 'Should you wish it, I 'll settle with you now,' and I drew my note-book from my pocket.

'No, no,' he replied coolly; 'you 'll leave sufficient behind to cover your debts, if you fail to return: I 'm not in such a hurry. Sit down and take your dinner with us; a guest that is safe from repeating his visit can generally be made welcome. Catherine, bring the things in: where are you?'

Catherine reappeared, bearing a tray of knives and forks.

'You may get your dinner with Joseph,' muttered Heathcliff aside, 'and remain in the kitchen till he is gone.'

She obeyed his directions very punctually: perhaps she had no temptation to transgress. Living among clowns and misanthropists, she probably cannot appreciate a better class of people when she meets them.

With Mr. Heathcliff, grim and saturnine, on the one hand, and Hareton, absolutely dumb, on the other, I made a somewhat cheerless meal, and bade adieu early. I would have departed by the back way, to get a last glimpse of Catherine and annoy old Joseph; but Hareton received orders to lead up my horse, and my host himself escorted me to the door, so I could not fulfil my wish.

'How dreary life gets over in that house!' I reflected, while riding down the road. 'What a realisation of something more romantic than a fairy tale it would have been for Mrs. Linton Heathcliff, had she and I struck up an attachment, as her good nurse desired, and migrated together into the stirring atmosphere of the town!'

CHAPTER XXXII

1802.—This September I was invited to devastate the moors of a friend in the north, and on my journey to his abode, I unexpectedly came within fifteen miles of Gimmerton. The ostler at a roadside public-house was holding a pail of water to refresh my horses, when a cart of very green oats, newly reaped, passed by, and he remarked—

'Yon 's frough Gimmerton, nah! They 're allas three wick' after other folk wi' ther harvest.'

'Gimmerton?' I repeated—my residence in that locality had already grown dim and dreamy. 'Ah! I know. How far is it from this?'

'Happen fourteen mile' o'er th' hills; and a rough road,' he answered.

A sudden impulse seized me to visit Thrushcross Grange. It was scarcely noon, and I conceived that I might as well pass the night under my own roof as in an inn. Besides, I could spare a day easily to arrange matters with my landlord, and thus save myself the trouble of invading the neighbourhood again. Having rested a while, I directed my servant to inquire the way to the village; and, with great fatigue to our beasts, we managed the distance in some three hours.

I left him there, and proceeded down the valley alone. The grey church looked greyer, and the lonely churchyard lonelier. I distinguished a moor sheep cropping the short turf on the graves. It was sweet, warm weather—too warm for travelling; but the heat did not hinder me from enjoying the delightful scenery above and below: had I seen it nearer August, I 'm sure it would have tempted me to waste a month among its solitudes. In winter nothing more dreary, in summer nothing more divine, than those glens shut in by hills, and those bluff, bold swells of heath.

I reached the Grange before sunset, and knocked for admittance; but the family had retreated into the back premises, I judged, by one thin, blue wreath curling from the kitchen chimney, and they did not hear.

I rode into the court. Under the porch, a girl of nine or ten sat knitting, and an old woman reclined on the horse-steps, smoking a meditative pipe.

'Is Mrs. Dean within?' I demanded of the dame.

'Mistress Dean? Nay!' she answered, 'shoo doesn't bide here: shoo 's up at th' Heights.'

'Are you the housekeeper, then?' I continued.

'Eea, Aw keep th' hause,' she replied.

'Well, I 'm Mr. Lockwood, the master. Are there any rooms to lodge me in, I wonder? I wish to stay here all night.'

'T' maister!' she cried in astonishment. 'Whet, whoiver knew yah wur coming? Yah sud ha' send word. They 's nowt norther dry nor mensful abaht t' place: nowt there isn't!'

She threw down her pipe and bustled in, the girl followed, and I entered too; soon perceiving that her report was true, and, moreover, that I had almost upset her wits by my unwelcome apparition.

I bid her be composed. I would go out for a walk; and, meantime, she must try to prepare a corner of a sitting-room for me to sup in, and a bedroom to sleep in. No sweeping and dusting, only good fires and dry sheets were necessary.

She seemed willing to do her best; though she thrust the hearth-brush into the grates in mistake for the poker, and mal-appropriated several other articles of her craft: but I retired, confiding in her energy for a resting-place against my return.

Wuthering Heights was the goal of my proposed excursion. An after-thought brought me back, when I had quitted the court.

'All well at the Heights?' I inquired of the woman.

'Eea, f'r owt ee knaw!' she answered, skurrying away with a pan of hot cinders.

I would have asked why Mrs. Dean had deserted the Grange, but it was impossible to delay her at such a crisis, so I turned away and made my exit, rambling leisurely along, with the glow of a sinking sun behind, and the mild glory of a rising moon in front—one fading, and the other brightening—as I quitted the park, and climbed the stony by-road branching off to Mr. Heathcliff's dwelling.

Before I arrived in sight of it, all that remained of day was a beamless amber light along the west: but I could see every pebble on the path, and every blade of grass, by that splendid moon.

I had neither to climb the gate nor to knock—it yielded to my hand.

That is an improvement, I thought. And I noticed another, by the aid of my nostrils; a fragrance of stocks and wallflowers wafted on the air from amongst the homely fruit-trees.

Both doors and lattices were open; and yet, as is usually the case in a coal district, a fine red fire illumined the chimney: the comfort which the eye derives from it renders the extra heat endurable. But the house of Wuthering Heights is so large, that the inmates have plenty of space for withdrawing out of its influence; and accordingly, what inmates there were had stationed themselves not far from one of the windows. I could both see them and hear them talk before I entered, and looked and listened in consequence; being moved thereto by a mingled sense of curiosity and envy, that grew as I lingered.

'Con-*trary*!' said a voice as sweet as a silver bell—'That for the third time, you dunce! I 'm not going to tell you again. Recollect, or I 'll pull your hair!'

'Contrary, then,' answered another, in deep but softened tones. 'And now, kiss me, for minding so well.'

'No, read it over first correctly, without a single mistake.'

The male speaker began to read: he was a young man, respectably dressed and seated at a table, having a book before him. His handsome features glowed with pleasure, and his eyes kept impatiently wandering from the page to a small white hand over his shoulder, which recalled him by a smart slap on the cheek, whenever its owner detected such signs of inattention.

Its owner stood behind; her light, shining ringlets blending, at intervals, with his brown locks, as she bent to superintend his studies; and her face—it was lucky he could not see her face, or he would never have been so steady. I could; and I bit my lip in spite, at having thrown away the chance I might have had of doing something besides staring at its smiting beauty.

The task was done, not free from further blunders; but the pupil claimed a reward, and received at least five kisses: which, however, he generously returned. Then they came to the door, and from their conversation I judged they were about to issue out and have a walk on the moors. I supposed I should be condemned in Hareton Earnshaw's heart, if not by his mouth, to the lowest pit in the infernal regions, if I showed my unfortunate person in his neighbourhood then; and feeling very mean and malignant, I skulked round to seek refuge in the kitchen.

There was unobstructed admittance on that side also; and at the door sat my old friend Nelly Dean, sewing and singing a song; which was often interrupted from within by harsh words of scorn and intolerance, uttered in far from musical accents.

'Aw 'd rayther, by th' haulf, hev 'em swearing i' my lugs frough morn to neeght, nur hearken yah, hahsiver!' said the tenant of the kitchen, in answer to an unheard speech of Nelly's. 'It 's a blazing shaime, ut Aw cannut oppen t' Blessed Book, bud yah set up them glories tuh Sattan, un' all t' flaysome wickednesses ut iver wer born intuh t' warld! Oh! yah 're a raight nowt; un' shoo 's another; un' that poor lad 'll be lost atween ye. Poor lad!' he added, with a groan; 'he 's witched: Aw 'm sartin on 't! O Lord, judge 'em, fur they 's norther law nur justice amang wer rullers!'[1]

'No! or we should be sitting in flaming fagots, I suppose,' retorted the singer. 'But wisht, old man, and read your Bible like a Christian, and never mind me. This is "Fairy Annie's Wedding"—a bonny tune—it goes to a dance.'

Mrs. Dean was about to recommence, when I advanced; and recognising me directly, she jumped to her feet, crying—

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[1] I 'd rayther, by th' haulf, hev 'em swearing i' my lugs fro'h morn to neeght, nor hearken ye, hahsiver!' said the tenant of the kitchen, in answer to an unheard speech of Nelly's. 'It 's a blazing shame, that I cannot oppen t' blessed Book, but yah set up them glories to Sattan, and all t' flaysome wickednesses that iver were born into th' warld! Oh! ye 're a raight nowt; and shoo 's another; and that poor lad 'll be lost atween ye. Poor lad!' he added, with a groan; 'he 's witched: I 'm sartin on 't! O Lord, judge 'em, for there 's norther law nor justice among wer rullers!'—C. B.'s Revision.

'Why, bless you, Mr. Lockwood! How could you think of returning in this way? All 's shut up at Thrushcross Grange. You should have given us notice!'

'I 've arranged to be accommodated there, for as long as I shall stay,' I answered. 'I depart again to-morrow. And how are you transplanted here, Mrs. Dean? tell me that.'

'Zillah left, and Mr. Heathcliff wished me to come, soon after you went to London, and stay till you returned. But, step in, pray! Have you walked from Gimmerton this evening?'

'From the Grange,' I replied; 'and while they make me lodging room there, I want to finish my business with your master; because I don't think of having another opportunity in a hurry.'

'What business, sir?' said Nelly, conducting me into the house. 'He 's gone out at present, and won't return soon.'

'About the rent,' I answered.

'Oh! then it is with Mrs. Heathcliff you must settle,' she observed; 'or rather with me. She has not learnt to manage her affairs yet, and I act for her: there 's nobody else.'

I looked surprised.

'Ah! you have not heard of Heathcliff's death, I see,' she continued.

'Heathcliff dead!' I exclaimed, astonished. 'How long ago?'

'Three months since: but sit down, and let me take your hat, and I 'll tell you all about it. Stop, you have had nothing to eat, have you?'

'I want nothing: I have ordered supper at home.

You sit down too. I never dreamt of his dying! Let me hear how it came to pass. You say you don't expect them back for some time—the young people?'

'No—I have to scold them every evening for their late rambles: but they don't care for me. At least, have a drink of our old ale; it will do you good: you seem weary.'

She hastened to fetch it before I could refuse, and I heard Joseph asking whether 'it warn't a crying scandal that she should have fellies at her time of life? And then, to get them jocks out uh t' maister's cellar! He fair shaamed to 'bide still and see it.'

She did not stay to retaliate, but re-entered in a minute, bearing a reaming silver pint, whose contents I lauded with becoming earnestness. And afterwards she furnished me with the sequel of Heathcliff's history. He had a 'queer' end, as she expressed it.

I was summoned to Wuthering Heights, within a fortnight of your leaving us, she said; and I obeyed joyfully, for Catherine's sake.

My first interview with her grieved and shocked me: she had altered so much since our separation. Mr. Heathcliff did not explain his reasons for taking a new mind about my coming here; he only told me he wanted me, and he was tired of seeing Catherine: I must make the little parlour my sitting-room, and keep her with me. It was enough if he were obliged to see her once or twice a day.

She seemed pleased at this arrangement; and, by degrees, I smuggled over a great number of books, and other articles, that had formed her amusement at the Grange; and flattered myself we should get on in tolerable comfort.

The delusion did not last long. Catherine, contented at first, in a brief space grew irritable and restless. For one thing, she was forbidden to move out of the garden, and it fretted her sadly to be confined to its narrow bounds as spring drew on; for another, in following the house, I was forced to quit her frequently, and she complained of loneliness: she preferred quarrelling with Joseph in the kitchen to sitting at peace in her solitude.

I did not mind their skirmishes: but Hareton was often obliged to seek the kitchen also, when the master wanted to have the house to himself; and though in the beginning she either left it at his approach, or quietly joined in my occupations, and shunned remarking or addressing him—and though he was always as sullen and silent as possible—after a while, she changed her behaviour, and became incapable of letting him alone: talking at him; commenting on his stupidity and idleness; expressing her wonder how he could endure the life he lived—how he could sit a whole evening staring into the fire, and dozing.

'He 's just like a dog, is he not, Ellen?' she once observed, 'or a cart-horse? He does his work, eats his food, and sleeps eternally! What a blank, dreary mind he must have! Do you ever dream, Hareton? And, if you do, what is it about? But you can't speak to me!'

Then she looked at him; but he would neither open his mouth nor look again.

'He 's perhaps dreaming now,' she continued. 'He twitched his shoulder as Juno twitches hers. Ask him, Ellen.'

'Mr. Hareton will ask the master to send you upstairs, if you don't behave!' I said. He had not only twitched his shoulder but clenched his fist, as if tempted to use it.

'I know why Hareton never speaks, when I am in the kitchen,' she exclaimed, on another occasion. 'He is afraid I shall laugh at him. Ellen, what do you think? He began to teach himself to read once; and, because I laughed, he burned his books, and dropped it: was he not a fool?'

'Were not you naughty?' I said; 'answer me that.'

'Perhaps I was,' she went on; 'but I did not expect him to be so silly. Hareton, if I gave you a book, would you take it now? I 'll try!'

She placed one she had been perusing on his hand; he flung it off, and muttered, if she did not give over, he would break her neck.

'Well, I shall put it here,' she said, 'in the table drawer; and I 'm going to bed.'

Then she whispered me to watch whether he touched it, and departed. But he would not come near it; and so I informed her in the morning, to her great disappointment. I saw she was sorry for his persevering sulkiness and indolence: her conscience reproved her for frightening him off improving himself: she had done it effectually.

But her ingenuity was at work to remedy the injury: while I ironed, or pursued other stationary employments I could not well do in the parlour, she would bring some pleasant volume and read it aloud to me. When Hareton was there, she generally paused in an interesting part, and left the book lying about: that she did repeatedly; but he was as obstinate as a mule, and, instead of snatching at her bait, in wet weather he took to smoking with Joseph; and they sat like automatons, one on each side of the fire, the elder happily too deaf to understand her wicked nonsense, as he would have called it, the younger doing his best to seem to disregard it. On fine evenings the latter followed his shooting expeditions, and Catherine yawned and sighed, and teased me to talk to her, and ran off into the court or garden, the moment I began ; and, as a last resource, cried, and said she was tired of living : her life was useless.

Mr. Heathcliff, who grew more and more disinclined to society, had almost banished Earnshaw out of his apartment. Owing to an accident at the commencement of March, he became for some days a fixture in the kitchen. His gun burst while out on the hills by himself ; a splinter cut his arm, and he lost a good deal of blood before he could reach home. The consequence was that, perforce, he was condemned to the fireside and tranquillity, till he made it up again.

It suited Catherine to have him there : at any rate, it made her hate her room upstairs more than ever : and she would compel me to find out business below, that she might accompany me.

On Easter Monday, Joseph went to Gimmerton fair with some cattle ; and, in the afternoon, I was busy getting up linen in the kitchen. Earnshaw sat, morose as usual, at the chimney corner, and my little mistress was beguiling an idle hour with drawing pictures on the window panes ; varying her amusement by smothered bursts of songs, and whispered ejaculations, and quick glances of annoyance and impatience in the direction of her cousin, who steadfastly smoked, and looked into the grate.

At a notice that I could do with her no longer intercepting my light, she removed to the hearth-stone. I bestowed little attention on her proceedings, but, presently, I heard her begin—

'I 've found out, Hareton, that I want—that I 'm glad—that I should like you to be my cousin now, if you had not grown so cross to me, and so rough.'

Hareton returned no answer.

'Hareton, Hareton, Hareton! do you hear?' she continued.

'Get off wi' ye!' he growled, with uncompromising gruffness.

'Let me take that pipe,' she said, cautiously advancing her hand and abstracting it from his mouth.

Before he could attempt to recover it, it was broken, and behind the fire. He swore at her and seized another.

'Stop,' she cried, 'you must listen to me first; and I can't speak while those clouds are floating in my face.'

'Will you go to the devil!' he exclaimed ferociously, 'and let me be!'

'No,' she persisted, 'I won't: I can't tell what to do to make you talk to me; and you are determined not to understand. When I call you stupid, I don't mean anything: I don't mean that I despise you. Come, you shall take notice of me, Hareton: you are my cousin, and you shall own me.'

'I shall have naught to do wi' you and your mucky pride, and your damned mocking tricks!' he answered. 'I 'll go to hell, body and soul, before I look sideways after you again. Side out of t' gait, now; this minute!'

Catherine frowned, and retreated to the window-seat chewing her lip, and endeavouring, by humming an eccentric tune, to conceal a growing tendency to sob.

'You should be friends with your cousin, Mr. Hareton,' I interrupted, 'since she repents of her sauciness. It would do you a great deal of good: it would make you another man, to have her for a companion.'

'A companion!' he cried; 'when she hates me, and does not think me fit to wipe her shoon! Nay, if it made me a king, I 'd not be scorned for seeking her good-will any more.'

' It is not I who hate you, it is you who hate me!' wept Cathy, no longer disguising her trouble. ' You hate me as much as Mr. Heathcliff does, and more.'

' You 're a damned liar,' began Earnshaw: ' why have I made him angry, by taking your part, then, a hundred times? and that when you sneered at and despised me, and—Go on plaguing me, and I 'll step in yonder, and say you worried me out of the kitchen!'

' I didn't know you took my part,' she answered, drying her eyes; ' and I was miserable and bitter at everybody; but now I thank you, and beg you to forgive me: what can I do besides?'

She returned to the hearth, and frankly extended her hand.

He blackened and scowled like a thunder-cloud, and kept his fists resolutely clenched, and his gaze fixed on the ground.

Catherine, by instinct, must have divined it was obdurate perversity, and not dislike, that prompted this dogged conduct; for, after remaining an instant undecided, she stooped and impressed on his cheek a gentle kiss.

The little rogue thought I had not seen her, and, drawing back, she took her former station by the window, quite demurely.

I shook my head reprovingly, and then she blushed and whispered—

' Well! what should I have done, Ellen? He wouldn't shake hands, and he wouldn't look: I must show him some way that I like him—that I want to be friends.'

Whether the kiss convinced Hareton, I cannot tell:

he was very careful, for some minutes, that his face should not be seen, and when he did raise it, he was sadly puzzled where to turn his eyes.

Catherine employed herself in wrapping a handsome book neatly in white paper, and having tied it with a bit of ribbon, and addressed it to 'Mr. Hareton Earnshaw,' she desired me to be her ambassadress, and convey the present to its destined recipient.

'And tell him, if he 'll take it, I 'll come and teach him to read it right,' she said; 'and, if he refuse it, I 'll go upstairs, and never tease him again.'

I carried it, and repeated the message; anxiously watched by my employer. Hareton would not open his fingers, so I laid it on his knee. He did not strike it off, either. I returned to my work. Catherine leaned her head and arms on the table, till she heard the slight rustle of the covering being removed; then she stole away, and quietly seated herself beside her cousin. He trembled, and his face glowed: all his rudeness and all his surly harshness had deserted him: he could not summon courage, at first, to utter a syllable in reply to her questioning look, and her murmured petition.

'Say you forgive me, Hareton, do. You can make me so happy by speaking that little word.'

He muttered something inaudible.

'And you 'll be my friend?' added Catherine interrogatively.

'Nay, you 'll be ashamed of me every day of your life,' he answered; 'and the more, the more you know me; and I cannot bide it.'

'So you won't be my friend?' she said, smiling as sweet as honey, and creeping close up.

I overheard no further distinguishable talk, but, on looking round again, I perceived two such radiant countenances bent over the page of the accepted book, that I did not doubt the treaty had been ratified on both sides; and the enemies were, thenceforth, sworn allies.

The work they studied was full of costly pictures; and those and their position had charm enough to keep them unmoved till Joseph came home. He, poor man, was perfectly aghast at the spectacle of Catherine seated on the same bench with Hareton Earnshaw, leaning her hand on his shoulder; and confounded at his favourite's endurance of her proximity: it affected him too deeply to allow an observation on the subject that night. His emotion was only revealed by the immense sighs he drew, as he solemnly spread his large Bible on the table, and overlaid it with dirty bank-notes from his pocket-book, the produce of the day's transactions. At length, he summoned Hareton from his seat.

'Tak' these in tuh t' maister, lad,' he said, 'un' bide theare. Aw 's gang up tuh my awn rahm. This hoile 's neither mensful nor seemly fur us: we mun side aht and seearch another.'

'Come, Catherine,' I said, 'we must "side out" too: I 've done my ironing, are you ready to go?'

'It is not eight o'clock!' she answered, rising unwillingly. 'Hareton, I 'll leave this book upon the chimney-piece, and I 'll bring some more to-morrow.'

'Ony books ut yah leave, Aw suall tak' intuh th' hahse,' said Joseph, 'un' it 'ull be mitch if yah find 'em agean; soa, yah may plase yourseln!'

Cathy threatened that his library should pay for hers; and, smiling as she passed Hareton, went singing upstairs: lighter of heart, I venture to say, than ever she had been under that roof before; except, perhaps, during her earliest visits to Linton.

The intimacy thus commenced, grew rapidly;

though it encountered temporary interruptions. Earnshaw was not to be civilised with a wish, and my young lady was no philosopher, and no paragon of patience; but both their minds tending to the same point—one loving and desiring to esteem, and the other loving and desiring to be esteemed—they contrived in the end to reach it.

You see, Mr. Lockwood, it was easy enough to win Mrs. Heathcliff's heart. But now, I 'm glad you did not try. The crown of all my wishes will be the union of those two. I shall envy no one on their wedding-day: there won't he a happier woman than myself in England!

CHAPTER XXXIII

On the morrow of that Monday, Earnshaw being still unable to follow his ordinary employments, and therefore remaining about the house, I speedily found it would be impracticable to retain my charge beside me, as heretofore.

She got downstairs before me, and out into the garden, where she had seen her cousin performing some easy work; and when I went to bid them come to breakfast, I saw she had persuaded him to clear a large space of ground from currant and gooseberry bushes, and they were busy planning together an importation of plants from the Grange.

I was terrified at the devastation which had been accomplished in a brief half-hour; the black-currant trees were the apple of Joseph's eye, and she had just fixed her choice of a flower-bed in the midst of them.

'There! That will be all shown to the master,' I exclaimed, ‘ the minute it is discovered. And what excuse have you to offer for taking such liberties with the garden ? We shall have a fine explosion on the head of it : see if we don’t ! Mr. Hareton, I wonder you should have no more wit, than to go and make that mess at her bidding ! ’

‘ I ’d forgotten they were Joseph’s,’ answered Earnshaw, rather puzzled ; ‘ but I ’ll tell him I did it.’

We always ate our meals with Mr. Heathcliff. I held the mistress’s post in making tea and carving ; so I was indispensable at table. Catherine usually sat by me, but to-day she stole nearer to Hareton ; and I presently saw she would have no more discretion in her friendship than she had in her hostility.

‘ Now mind you don’t talk with and notice your cousin too much,’ were my whispered instructions as we entered the room. ‘ It will certainly annoy Mr. Heathcliff, and he ’ll be mad at you both.’

‘ I ’m not going to,’ she answered.

The minute after, she had sidled to him, and was sticking primroses in his plate of porridge.

He dared not speak to her there : he dared hardly look ; and yet she went on teasing, till he was twice on the point of being provoked to laugh. I frowned, and then she glanced toward the master : whose mind was occupied on other subjects than his company, as his countenance evinced ; and she grew serious for an instant, scrutinising him with deep gravity. Afterwards she turned, and recommenced her nonsense ; at last, Hareton uttered a smothered laugh.

Mr. Heathcliff started ; his eye rapidly serveyed our faces. Catherine met it with her accustomed look of nervousness and yet defiance, which he abhorred.

‘ It is well you are out of my reach,’ he exclaimed. ‘ What fiend possesses you to stare back at me, continually, with those infernal eyes? Down with them! and don't remind me of your existence again. I thought I had cured you of laughing.'

'It was me,' muttered Hareton.

'What do you say?' demanded the master.

Hareton looked at his plate, and did not repeat the confession.

Mr. Heathcliff looked at him a bit, and then silently resumed his breakfast and his interrupted musing.

We had nearly finished, and the two young people prudently shifted wider asunder, so I anticipated no further disturbance during that sitting: when Joseph appeared at the door, revealing by his quivering lip and furious eyes, that the outrage committed on his precious shrubs was detected.

He must have seen Cathy and her cousin about the spot before he examined it, for while his jaws worked like those of a cow chewing its cud, and rendered his speech difficult to understand, he began—

'Aw mun hev my wage, and Aw mun goa! Aw *hed* aimed tuh dee, wheare Aw'd sarved fur sixty year; un' Aw thowt Aw 'd lug my books up intuh t' garret, un' all my bits uh stuff, un' they sud hev t' kitchen tuh theirseln; fur t' sake uh quietness. It wur hard tuh gie up my awn hearth-stun, bud Aw thowt Aw *could* do that! Bud, nah, shoo 's taan my garden frough me, un' by th' heart! Maister, Aw cannot stand it! Yah muh bend tuh th' yoak, an ye will—*Aw* noan used to 't, and an ow'd man doesn't sooin get used tuh new barthens. Aw 'd rayther arn my bite an' my sup wi' a hammer in th' road!'[1]

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[1] 'I mun hev my wage, and I mun goa! I *hed* aimed to dee, wheare I'd sarved fur sixty year; and I thowt I'd lug my books up into t' garret, and all my bits o' stuff, and they sud hev t' kitchen to theirseln; for t' sake o' quietness. It wur hard to gie up my awn hearthstun, but I thowt I *could* do that! But, nah, shoo 's taan

'Now, now, idiot!' interrupted Heathcliff, 'cut it short! What 's your grievance? I 'll interfere in no quarrels between you and Nelly. She may thrust you into the coal-hole for anything I care.'

'It 's noan Nelly!' answered Joseph. 'Aw sudn't shift fur Nelly—nasty, ill nowt as shoo is. Thank God! *shoo* cannot stale t' sowl uh nob'dy! Shoo wer niver soa handsome, bud whet a body mud look at her 'baht winking. It 's yon flaysome, graceless quean, ut 's witched ahr lad, wi' her bold een, un' her forrard ways—till—Nay! it fair brusts my heart! He 's forgotten all E done for him, un' made on him, un' goan un' riven up a whole row ut t' grandest currant trees i' t' garden!'[1] and here he lamented outright; unmanned by a sense of his bitter injuries, and Earnshaw's ingratitude and dangerous condition.

'Is the fool drunk?' asked Mr. Heathcliff. 'Hareton, is it you he 's finding fault with?'

'I 've pulled up two or three bushes,' replied the young man; 'but I 'm going to set 'em again.'

'And why have you pulled them up?' said the master.

Catherine wisely put in her tongue.

'We wanted to plant some flowers there,' she cried.

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my garden fro' me, and by th' heart, maister, I cannot stand it! Yah may bend to th' yoak an ye will—I noan used to 't, and an old man doesn't sooin get used to new barthens. I 'd rayther arn my bite an' my sup wi' a hammer in th' road!'—C. B.'s Revision.

[1] 'It 's noan Nelly!' answered Joseph. 'I sudn't shift for Nelly—nasty ill nowt as shoo is. Thank God! *shoo* cannot stale t' sowl o' nob'dy! Shoo wer' niver soa handsome, but what a body mud look at her 'bout winking. It 's yon flaysome, graceless quean, that 's witched our lad, wi' her bold een and her forrard ways—till—Nay! it fair brusts my heart! He 's forgotten all I 've done for him, and made on him, and goan and riven up a whole row o' t' grandest currant trees i' t' garden!'—C. B.'s Revision.

'I 'm the only person to blame, for I wished him to do it.'

'And who the devil gave *you* leave to touch a stick about the place?' demanded her father-in-law, much surprised. 'And who ordered *you* to obey her!' he added, turning to Hareton.

The latter was speechless; his cousin replied—

'You shouldn't grudge a few yards of earth for me to ornament, when you have taken all my land!'

'Your land, insolent slut! You never had any,' said Heathcliff.

'And my money,' she continued; returning his angry glare, and meantime biting a piece of crust, the remnant of her breakfast.

'Silence!' he exclaimed. 'Get done, and begone!'

'And Hareton's land, and his money,' pursued the reckless thing. 'Hareton and I are friends now; and I shall tell him all about you!'

The master seemed confounded a moment: he grew pale, and rose up, eyeing her all the while, with an expression of mortal hate.

'If you strike me, Hareton will strike you,' she said; 'so you may as well sit down.'

'If Hareton does not turn you out of the room, I 'll strike him to hell,' thundered Heathcliff. 'Damnable witch! dare you pretend to rouse him against me? Off with her! Do you hear? Fling her into the kitchen! I 'll kill her, Ellen Dean, if you let her come into my sight again!'

Hareton tried, under his breath, to persuade her to go.

'Drag her away!' he cried savagely. 'Are you staying to talk?' And he approached to execute his own command.

'He 'll not obey you, wicked man, any more,' said

Catherine; 'and he'll soon detest you as much as I do.'

'Wisht! wisht!' muttered the young man reproachfully. 'I will not hear you speak so to him. Have done.'

'But you won't let him strike me?' she cried.

'Come, then,' he whispered earnestly.

It was too late: Heathcliff had caught hold of her.

'Now, *you* go!' he said to Earnshaw. 'Accursed witch! this time she has provoked me when I could not bear it; and I'll make her repent it for ever!'

He had his hand in her hair; Hareton attempted to release her locks, entreating him not to hurt her that once. His[1] black eyes flashed; he seemed ready to tear Catherine in pieces, and I was just worked up to risk coming to the rescue, when of a sudden his fingers relaxed; he shifted his grasp from her head to her arm, and gazed intently in her face. Then he drew his hand over her eyes, stood a moment to collect himself apparently, and turning anew to Catherine, said, with assumed calmness—

'You must learn to avoid putting me in a passion, or I shall really murder you some time! Go with Mrs. Dean, and keep with her; and confine your insolence to her ears. As to Hareton Earnshaw, if I see him listen to you, I'll send him seeking his bread where he can get it! Your love will make him an outcast and a beggar. Nelly, take her; and leave me, all of you! Leave me!'

I led my young lady out: she was too glad of her escape to resist; the other followed, and Mr. Heathcliff had the room to himself till dinner.

I had counselled Catherine to get hers upstairs; but, as soon as he perceived her vacant seat, he sent me to call her. He spoke to none of us, ate very little, and went out directly afterwards, intimating that he should not return before evening.

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[1] 'Heathcliff's' in subsequent editions.

The two new friends established themselves in the house during his absence; where I heard Hareton sternly check his cousin, on her offering a revelation of her father-in-law's conduct to his father.

He said he wouldn't suffer a word to be uttered to him in his disparagement: if he were the devil, it didn't signify; he would stand by him; and he 'd rather she would abuse himself, as she used to, than begin on Mr. Heathcliff.

Catherine was waxing cross at this; but he found means to make her hold her tongue, by asking how she would like *him* to speak ill of her father? and then she comprehended that Earnshaw took the master's reputation home to himself; and was attached by ties stronger than reason could break—chains, forged by habit, which it would be cruel to attempt to loosen.

She showed a good heart, thenceforth, in avoiding both complaints and expressions of antipathy concerning Heathcliff; and confessed to me her sorrow that she had endeavoured to raise a bad spirit between him and Hareton: indeed, I don't believe she has ever breathed a syllable, in the latter's hearing, against her oppressor since.

When this slight disagreement was over, they were thick again, and as busy as possible in their several occupations of pupil and teacher. I came in to sit with them, after I had done my work; and I felt so soothed and comforted to watch them, that I did not notice how time got on. You know, they both appeared in a measure my children: I had long been proud of one; and now, I was sure, the other would be a source of equal satisfaction. His honest, warm, and intelligent nature shook off rapidly the clouds of ignorance and degradation in which it had been bred; and Catherine's sincere commendations acted as a spur to his industry. His brightening mind brightened his features, and added spirit and nobility to their aspect: I could hardly fancy it the same individual I had beheld on the day I discovered my little lady at Wuthering Heights, after her expedition to the Crags.

While I admired and they laboured, dusk drew on, and with it returned the master. He came upon us quite unexpectedly, entering by the front way, and had a full view of the whole three, ere we could raise our heads to glance at him.

Well, I reflected, there was never a pleasanter, or more harmless sight; and it will be a burning shame to scold them. The red firelight glowed on their two bonny heads, and revealed their faces animated with the eager interest of children; for, though he was twenty-three and she eighteen, each had so much of novelty to feel and learn, that neither experienced nor evinced the sentiments of sober disenchanted maturity.

They lifted their eyes together, to encounter Mr. Heathcliff: perhaps you have never remarked that their eyes are precisely similar, and they are those of Catherine Earnshaw. The present Catherine has no other likeness to her, except a breadth of forehead, and a certain arch of the nostril that makes her appear rather haughty, whether she will or not. With Hareton the resemblance is carried further: it is singular at all times, then it was particularly striking; because his senses were alert, and his mental faculties wakened to unwonted activity.

I suppose this resemblance disarmed Mr. Heathcliff: he walked to the hearth in evident agitation; but it quickly subsided as he looked at the young man: or, I should say, altered its character; for it was there yet.

He took the book from his hand, and glanced at the open page, then returned it without any observation; merely signing Catherine away: her companion lingered very little behind her, and I was about to depart also, but he bid me sit still.

'It is a poor conclusion, is it not?' he observed, having brooded a while on the scene he had just witnessed: 'an absurd termination to my violent exertions? I get levers and mattocks to demolish the two houses, and train myself to be capable of working like Hercules, and when everything is ready and in my power, I find the will to lift a slate off either roof has vanished! My old enemies have not beaten me; now would be the precise time to revenge myself on their representatives: I could do it; and none could hinder me. But where is the use? I don't care for striking: I can't take the trouble to raise my hand! That sounds as if I had been labouring the whole time only to exhibit a fine trait of magnanimity. It is far from being the case: I have lost the faculty of enjoying their destruction, and I am too idle to destroy for nothing.

'Nelly, there is a strange change approaching: I'm in its shadow at present. I take so little interest in my daily life, that I hardly remember to eat and drink. Those two who have left the room are the only objects which retain a distinct material appearance to me; and that appearance causes me pain, amounting to agony. About *her* I won't speak; and I don't desire to think; but I earnestly wish she were invisible: her presence invokes only maddening sensations. *He* moves me differently: and yet if I could do it without seeming insane, I 'd never see him again! You 'll perhaps think me rather inclined to become so,' he added, making an effort to smile, 'if I try to describe the thousand forms of past associations and ideas he awakens or embodies. But you 'll not talk of what I tell you; and my mind is so eternally secluded in itself, it is tempting at last to turn it out to another.

'Five minutes ago, Hareton seemed a personification of my youth, not a human being: I felt to him in such a variety of ways, that it would have been impossible to have accosted him rationally.

'In the first place, his startling likeness to Catherine connected him fearfully with her. That, however, which you may suppose the most potent to arrest my imagination, is actually the least: for what is not connected with her to me? and what does not recall her? I cannot look down to this floor, but her features are shaped on the flags! In every cloud, in every tree—filling the air at night, and caught by glimpses in every object by day—I am surrounded with her image! The most ordinary faces of men and women—my own features—mock me with a resemblance. The entire world is a dreadful collection of memoranda that she did exist, and that I have lost her!

'Well, Hareton's aspect was the ghost of my immortal love; of my wild endeavours to hold my right; my degradation, my pride, my happiness, and my anguish—

'But it is frenzy to repeat these thoughts to you: only it will let you know why, with a reluctance to be always alone, his society is no benefit; rather an aggravation of the constant torment I suffer: and it partly contributes to render me regardless how he and his cousin go on together. I can give them no attention, any more.'

'But what do you mean by a *change,* Mr. Heathcliff?' I said, alarmed at his manner: though he was neither in danger of losing his senses, nor dying, according to my judgment: he was quite strong and healthy; and, as to his reason, from childhood he had a delight in dwelling on dark things, and entertaining odd fancies. He might have had a monomania on the subject of his departed idol; but on every other point his wits were as sound as mine.

'I shall not know that till it comes,' he said; 'I'm only half conscious of it now.'

'You have no feeling of illness, have you?' I asked.

'No, Nelly, I have not,' he answered.

'Then you are not afraid of death?' I pursued.

'Afraid? No!' he replied. 'I have neither a fear, nor a presentiment, nor a hope of death. Why should I? With my hard constitution and temperate mode of living, and unperilous occupations, I ought to, and probably *shall*, remain above ground till there is scarcely a black hair on my head. And yet I cannot continue in this condition! I have to remind myself to breathe—almost to remind my heart to beat! And it is like bending back a stiff spring: it is by compulsion that I do the slightest act not prompted by one thought; and by compulsion that I notice anything alive or dead, which is not associated with one universal idea. I have a single wish, and my whole being and faculties are yearning to attain it. They have yearned towards it so long, and so unwaveringly, that I'm convinced it *will* be reached—and *soon*—because it has devoured my existence: I am swallowed in the anticipation of its fulfilment.

'My confessions have not relieved me; but they may account for some otherwise unaccountable phases of humour which I show. O God! It is a long fight, I wish it were over!'

He began to pace the room, muttering terrible things to himself, till I was inclined to believe, as he said Joseph did, that conscience had turned his heart to an earthly hell. I wondered greatly how it would end.

Though he seldom before had revealed this state of mind, even by looks, it was his habitual mood, I had no doubt: he asserted it himself; but not a soul, from his general bearing, would have conjectured the fact. You did not when you saw him, Mr. Lockwood: and at the period of which I speak, he was just the same as then; only fonder of continued solitude, and perhaps still more laconic in company.

CHAPTER XXXIV

For some days after that evening, Mr. Heathcliff shunned meeting us at meals; yet he would not consent formally to exclude Hareton and Cathy. He had an aversion to yielding so completely to his feelings, choosing rather to absent himself; and eating once in twenty-four hours seemed sufficient sustenance for him.

One night, after the family were in bed, I heard him go downstairs, and out at the front door. I did not hear him re-enter, and in the morning I found he was still away.

We were in April then: the weather was sweet and warm, the grass as green as showers and sun could make it, and the two dwarf apple-trees near the southern wall in full bloom.

After breakfast, Catherine insisted on my bringing a chair and sitting with my work under the fir-trees at the end of the house; and she beguiled Hareton, who had perfectly recovered from his accident, to dig and arrange her little garden, which was shifted to that corner by the influence of Joseph's complaints.

I was comfortably revelling in the spring fragrance around, and the beautiful soft blue overhead, when my young lady, who had run down near the gate to procure some primrose roots for a border, returned only half laden, and informed us that Mr. Heathcliff was coming in.

'And he spoke to me,' she added, with a perplexed countenance.

'What did he say?' asked Hareton.

'He told me to begone as fast as I could,' she answered. 'But he looked so different from his usual look that I stopped a moment to stare at him.'

'How?' he inquired.

'Why, almost bright and cheerful. No, almost nothing—*very much* excited, and wild, and glad!' she replied.

'Night-walking amuses him, then,' I remarked, affecting a careless manner: in reality as surprised as she was, and anxious to ascertain the truth of her statement; for to see the master looking glad would not be an everyday spectacle. I framed an excuse to go in.

Heathcliff stood at the open door; he was pale, and he trembled: yet, certainly, he had a strange joyful glitter in his eyes, that altered the aspect of his whole face.

'Will you have some breakfast?' I said. 'You must be hungry, rambling about all night!'

I wanted to discover where he had been, but I did not like to ask directly.

'No, I'm not hungry,' he answered, averting his head, and speaking rather contemptuously, as if he guessed I was trying to divine the occasion of his good humour.

I felt perplexed: I didn't know whether it were not a proper opportunity to offer a bit of admonition.

'I don't think it right to wander out of doors,' I observed, 'instead of being in bed: it is not wise, at any rate, this moist season. I dare say you 'll catch a bad cold, or a fever: you have something the matter with you now!'

'Nothing but what I can bear,' he replied; 'and with the greatest pleasure, provided you 'll leave me alone: get in, and don't annoy me.'

I obeyed: and, in passing, I noticed he breathed as fast as a cat.

'Yes!' I reflected to myself, 'we shall have a fit of illness. I cannot conceive what he has been doing.'

That noon he sat down to dinner with us, and received a heaped-up plate from my hands, as if he intended to make amends for previous fasting.

'I 've neither cold nor fever, Nelly,' he remarked, in allusion to my morning's speech; 'and I 'm ready to do justice to the food you give me.'

He took his knife and fork, and was going to commence eating, when the inclination appeared to become suddenly extinct. He laid them on the table, looked eagerly towards the window, then rose and went out.

We saw him walking to and fro in the garden while we concluded our meal, and Earnshaw said he 'd go and ask why he would not dine: he thought we had grieved him some way.

'Well, is he coming?' cried Catherine, when her cousin returned.

'Nay,' he answered; 'but he 's not angry: he seemed rarely pleased indeed; only I made him impatient by speaking to him twice; and then he bid me be off to you: he wondered how I could want the company of anybody else.'

I set his plate to keep warm on the fender; and after an hour or two he re-entered, when the room was clear, in no degree calmer: the same unnatural—it was unnatural—appearance of joy under his black brows; the same bloodless hue, and his teeth visible, now and then, in a kind of smile; his frame shivering, not as one shivers with chill or weakness, but as a tight-stretched cord vibrates—a strong thrilling, rather than trembling.

I will ask what is the matter, I thought; or who should? And I exclaimed—

'Have you heard any good news, Mr. Heathcliff? You look uncommonly animated.'

'Where should good news come from to me?' he said. 'I 'm animated with hunger; and, seemingly, I must not eat.'

'Your dinner is here,' I returned; 'why won't you get it?'

'I don't want it now,' he muttered hastily: 'I 'll wait till supper. And, Nelly, once for all, let me beg you to warn Hareton and the other away from me. I wish to be troubled by nobody: I wish to have this place to myself.'

'Is there some new reason for this banishment?' I inquired. 'Tell me why you are so queer, Mr. Heathcliff? Where were you last night? I 'm not putting the question through idle curiosity, but——'

'You are putting the question through very idle curiosity,' he interrupted, with a laugh. 'Yet I 'll answer it. Last night I was on the threshold of hell. To-day, I am within sight of my heaven. I have my eyes on it: hardly three feet to sever me! And now you 'd better go! You 'll neither see nor hear anything to frighten you, if you refrain from prying.'

Having swept the hearth and wiped the table, I departed; more perplexed than ever.

He did not quit the house again that afternoon, and no one intruded on his solitude; till, at eight o'clock, I deemed it proper, though unsummoned, to carry a candle and his supper to him.

He was leaning against the ledge of an open lattice, but not looking out: his face was turned to the interior gloom. The fire had smouldered to ashes; the room was filled with the damp mild air of the cloudy evening; and so still, that not only the murmur of the beck down Gimmerton was distinguishable, but its ripples and its gurgling over the pebbles, or through the large stones which it could not cover.

I uttered an ejaculation of discontent at seeing the dismal grate, and commenced shutting the casements, one after another, till I came to his.

'Must I close this?' I asked, in order to rouse him; for he would not stir.

The light flashed on his features as I spoke. Oh, Mr. Lockwood, I cannot express what a terrible start I got by the momentary view! Those deep black eyes! That smile, and ghastly paleness! It appeared to me, not Mr. Heathcliff, but a goblin; and, in my terror, I let the candle bend towards the wall, and it left me in darkness.

'Yes, close it,' he replied, in his familiar voice. 'There, that is pure awkwardness! Why did you hold the candle horizontally? Be quick, and bring another.'

I hurried out in a foolish state of dread, and said to Joseph—

'The master wishes you to take him a light and rekindle the fire.' For I dared not go in myself again just then.

Joseph rattled some fire into the shovel, and went: but he brought it back immediately, with the supper-tray in his other hand, explaining that Mr. Heathcliff was going to bed, and he wanted nothing to eat till morning.

We heard him mount the stairs directly; he did not proceed to his ordinary chamber, but turned into that with the panelled bed: its window, as I mentioned before, is wide enough for anybody to get through; and it struck me that he plotted another midnight excursion, which he had rather we had no suspicion of.

'Is he a ghoul or a vampire?' I mused. I had read of such hideous incarnate demons. And then I set myself to reflect how I had tended him in infancy, and watched him grow to youth, and followed him almost through his whole course; and what absurd nonsense it was to yield to that sense of horror.

'But where did he come from, the little dark thing, harboured by a good man to his bane?' muttered Superstition, as I dozed into unconsciousness. And I began, half dreaming, to weary myself with imagining some fit parentage for him; and, repeating my waking meditations, I tracked his existence over again, with grim variations; at last, picturing his death and funeral: of which, all I can remember is, being exceedingly vexed at having the task of dictating an inscription for his monument, and consulting the sexton about it; and, as he had no surname, and we could not tell his age, we were obliged to content ourselves with the single word, 'Heathcliff.' That came true: we were. If you enter the kirkyard, you 'll read, on his headstone, only that, and the date of his death.

Dawn restored me to common-sense. I rose, and went into the garden, as soon as I could see, to ascertain if there were any footmarks under his window. There were none.

'He has stayed at home,' I thought, 'and he 'll be all right to-day.'

I prepared breakfast for the household, as was my usual custom, but told Hareton and Catherine to get theirs ere the master came down, for he lay late. They preferred taking it out of doors, under the trees, and I set a little table to accommodate them.

On my re-entrance, I found Mr. Heathcliff below. He and Joseph were conversing about some farming business; he gave clear, minute directions concerning the matter discussed, but he spoke rapidly, and turned his head continually aside, and had the same excited expression, even more exaggerated.

When Joseph quitted the room he took his seat in the place he generally chose, and I put a basin of coffee before him. He drew it nearer, and then rested his arms on the table, and looked at the opposite wall, as I supposed, surveying one particular portion, up and down, with glittering, restless eyes, and with such eager interest that he stopped breathing during half a minute together.

'Come, now,' I exclaimed, pushing some bread against his hand, 'eat and drink that, while it is hot: it has been waiting near an hour.'

He didn't notice me, and yet he smiled. I 'd rather have seen him gnash his teeth than smile so.

'Mr. Heathcliff! master!' I cried, 'don't, for God's sake, stare as if you saw an unearthly vision.'

'Don't, for God's sake, shout so loud,' he replied. 'Turn round, and tell me, are we by ourselves?'

'Of course,' was my answer; 'of course we are.'

Still, I involuntarily obeyed him, as if I was not quite sure.

With a sweep of his hand he cleared a vacant space in front among the breakfast things, and leant forward to gaze more at his ease.

Now, I perceived he was not looking at the wall; for when I regarded him alone, it seemed exactly that he gazed at something within two yards' distance. And whatever it was, it communicated, apparently, both pleasure and pain in exquisite extremes: at least the anguished, yet raptured, expression of his countenance suggested that idea.

The fancied object was not fixed: either his eyes pursued it with unwearied vigilance, and, even in speaking to me, were never weaned away.

I vainly reminded him of his protracted abstinence from food: if he stirred to touch anything in compliance with my entreaties, if he stretched his hand out to get a piece of bread, his fingers clenched before they reached it, and remained on the table, forgetful of their aim.

I sat, a model of patience, trying to attract his absorbed attention from its engrossing speculation; till he grew irritable, and got up, asking why I would not allow him to have his own time in taking his meals? and saying that on the next occasion, I needn't wait: I might set the things down and go.

Having uttered these words he left the house, slowly sauntered down the garden path, and disappeared through the gate.

The hours crept anxiously by: another evening came. I did not retire to rest till late, and when I did, I could not sleep. He returned after midnight, and, instead of going to bed, shut himself into the room beneath. I listened, and tossed about, and, finally, dressed and descended. It was too irksome to lie there, harassing my brain with a hundred idle misgivings.

I distinguished Mr. Heathcliff's step, restlessly measuring the floor, and he frequently broke the silence by a deep inspiration, resembling a groan. He muttered detached words also ; the only one I could catch was the name of Catherine, coupled with some wild term of endearment or suffering ; and spoken as one would speak to a person present : low and earnest, and wrung from the depth of his soul.

I had not courage to walk straight into the apartment ; but I desired to divert him from his reverie, and therefore fell foul of the kitchen fire, stirred it, and began to scrape the cinders. It drew him forth sooner than I expected. He opened the door immediately, and said—

'Nelly, come here—is it morning ? Come in with your light.'

'It is striking four,' I answered. 'You want a candle to take upstairs : you might have lit one at this fire.'

'No, I don't wish to go upstairs,' he said. 'Come in, and kindle *me* a fire, and do anything there is to do about the room.'

'I must blow the coals red first, before I can carry any,' I replied, getting a chair and the bellows.

He roamed to and fro, meantime, in a state approaching distraction ; his heavy sighs succeeding each other so thick as to leave no space for common breathing between.

'When day breaks I'll send for Green,' he said : 'I wish to make some legal inquiries of him while I can bestow a thought on those matters, and while I can act calmly. I have not written my will yet ;

and how to leave my property I cannot determine. I wish I could annihilate it from the face of the earth.'

'I would not talk so, Mr. Heathcliff,' I interposed. 'Let your will be a while: you 'll be spared to repent of your many injustices yet! I never expected that your nerves would be disordered: they are, at present, marvellously so, however; and almost entirely through your own fault. The way you 've passed those three last days might knock up a Titan. Do take some food, and some repose. You need only look at yourself in a glass to see how you require both. Your cheeks are hollow, and your eyes bloodshot, like a person starving with hunger and going blind with loss of sleep.'

'It is not my fault that I cannot eat or rest,' he replied. 'I assure you it is through no settled designs. I 'll do both, as soon as I possibly can. But you might as well bid a man struggling in the water rest within arm's length of the shore! I must reach it first, and then I 'll rest. Well, never mind Mr. Green: as to repenting of my injustices, I 've done no injustice, and I repent of nothing. I 'm too happy; and yet I 'm not happy enough. My soul's bliss kills my body, but does not satisfy itself.'

'Happy, master?' I cried. 'Strange happiness! If you would hear me without being angry, I might offer some advice that would make you happier.'

'What is that?' he asked. 'Give it.'

'You are aware, Mr. Heathcliff,' I said, 'that from the time you were thirteen years old, you have lived a selfish, unchristian life; and probably hardly had a Bible in your hands during all that period. You must have forgotten the contents of the book, and you may not have space to search it now. Could it be hurtful to send for some one—some minister of any denomination, it does not matter which—to explain it, and show you how very far you have erred from its precepts; and how unfit you will be for its heaven, unless a change takes place before you die?'

'I'm rather obliged than angry, Nelly,' he said, 'for you remind me of the manner that I desire to be buried in. It is to be carried to the churchyard in the evening. You and Hareton may, if you please, accompany me: and mind, particularly, to notice that the sexton obeys my directions concerning the two coffins! No minister need come; nor need anything he said over me.—I tell you I have nearly attained *my* heaven; and that of others is altogether unvalued and uncoveted by me.'

'And supposing you persevered in your obstinate fast, and died by that means, and they refused to bury you in the precincts of the kirk?' I said, shocked at his godless indifference. 'How would you like it?'

'They won't do that,' he replied: 'if they did, you must have me removed secretly; and if you neglect it, you shall prove, practically, that the dead are not annihilated!'

As soon as he heard the other members of the family stirring he retired to his den, and I breathed freer. But in the afternoon, while Joseph and Hareton were at their work, he came into the kitchen again, and, with a wild look, bid me come and sit in the house: he wanted somebody with him.

I declined; telling him plainly that his strange talk and manner frightened me, and I had neither the nerve nor the will to be his companion alone.

'I believe you think me a fiend,' he said, with his dismal laugh: 'something too horrible to live under a decent roof.'

Then turning to Catherine, who was there, and who drew behind me at his approach, he added, half sneeringly—

'Will *you* come, chuck? I 'll not hurt you. No! to you I 've made myself worse than the devil. Well, there is *one* who won't shrink from my company! By God! she 's relentless. Oh, damn it! It 's unutterably too much for flesh and blood to bear—even mine.'

He solicited the society of no one more. At dusk, he went into his chamber. Through the whole night, and far into the morning, we heard him groaning and murmuring to himself. Hareton was anxious to enter; but I bid him fetch Mr. Kenneth, and he should go in and see him.

When he came, and I requested admittance and tried to open the door, I found it locked; and Heathcliff bid us be damned. He was better, and would be left alone; so the doctor went away.

The following evening was very wet: indeed it poured down till day-dawn; and, as I took my morning walk round the house, I observed the master's window swing open, and the rain driving straight in.

He cannot be in bed, I thought: those showers would drench him through. He must either be up or out. But I 'll make no more ado, I 'll go boldly and look.'

Having succeeded in obtaining entrance with another key, I ran to unclose the panels, for the chamber was vacant; quickly pushing them aside, I peeped in. Mr. Heathcliff was there—laid on his back. His eyes met mine so keen and fierce, I started; and then he seemed to smile.

I could not think him dead: but his face and throat were washed with rain; the bed-clothes dripped, and he was perfectly still. The lattice, flapping to and fro, had grazed one hand that rested on the sill; no blood trickled from the broken skin, and when I put my fingers to it, I could doubt no more: he was dead and stark!

I hasped the window; I combed his black, long hair from his forehead; I tried to close his eyes: to extinguish, if possible, that frightful, lifelike gaze of exultation before any one else beheld it. They would not shut: they seemed to sneer at my attempts; and his parted lips and sharp white teeth sneered too! Taken with another fit of cowardice, I cried out for Joseph. Joseph shuffled up and made a noise, but resolutely refused to meddle with him.

'Th' divil 's harried off his soul,' he cried, 'and he muh hev his carcass intuh t' bargin, for ow't Aw care! Ech! what a wicked 'un he looks girnning at death!' and the old sinner grinned in mockery.

I thought he intended to cut a caper round the bed; but suddenly composing himself, he fell on his knees, and raised his hands, and returned thanks that the lawful master and the ancient stock were restored to their rights.

I felt stunned by the awful event; and my memory unavoidably recurred to former times with a sort of oppressive sadness. But poor Hareton, the most wronged, was the only one who really suffered much. He sat by the corpse all night, weeping in bitter earnest. He pressed its hand, and kissed the sarcastic, savage face that every one else shrank from contemplating; and bemoaned him with that strong grief which springs naturally from a generous heart, though it be tough as tempered steel.

Kenneth was perplexed to pronounce of what disorder the master died. I concealed the fact of his having swallowed nothing for four days, fearing it might lead to trouble, and then, I am persuaded, he did not abstain on purpose: it was the consequence of his strange illness, not the cause.

We buried him, to the scandal of the whole neighbourhood, as he had wished. Earnshaw and I, the sexton, and six men to carry the coffin, comprehended the whole attendance.

The six men departed when they had let it down into the grave: we stayed to see it covered. Hareton, with a streaming face, dug green sods, and laid them over the brown mould himself: at present it is as smooth and verdant as its companion mounds—and I hope its tenant sleeps as soundly. But the country folks, if you ask them, would swear on their Bible that he *walks*: there are those who speak to having met him near the church, and on the moor, and even within this house. Idle tales, you 'll say, and so say I. Yet that old man by the kitchen fire affirms he has seen two on 'em, looking out of his chamber window, on every rainy night since his death:—and an odd thing happened to me about a month ago.

I was going to the Grange one evening—a dark evening, threatening thunder—and, just at the turn of the Heights, I encountered a little boy with a sheep and two lambs before him; he was crying terribly; and I supposed the lambs were skittish, and would not be guided.

'What is the matter, my little man?' I asked.

'They 's Heathcliff, and a woman, yonder, under t' Nab,' he blubbered, 'un' Aw darnut pass 'em.'

I saw nothing; but neither the sheep nor he would go on; so I bid him take the road lower down.

He probably raised the phantoms from thinking, as he traversed the moors alone, on the nonsense he had heard his parents and companions repeat. Yet, still, I don't like being out in the dark now; and I don't like being left by myself in this grim house: I cannot help it; I shall be glad when they leave it, and shift to the Grange.

'They are going to the Grange, then?' I said.

'Yes,' answered Mrs. Dean, 'as soon as they are married, and that will be on New Year's Day.'

'And who will live here then?'

'Why, Joseph will take care of the house, and, perhaps, a lad to keep him company. They will live in the kitchen, and the rest will be shut up.'

'For the use of such ghosts as choose to inhabit it,' I observed.

'No, Mr. Lockwood,' said Nelly, shaking her head. 'I believe the dead are at peace: but it is not right to speak of them with levity.'

At that moment the garden gate swung to; the ramblers were returning.

'*They* are afraid of nothing,' I grumbled, watching their approach through the window. 'Together, they would brave Satan and all his legions.'

As they stepped on to the door-stones, and halted to take a last look at the moon—or, more correctly, at each other by her light—I felt irresistibly impelled to escape them again; and, pressing a remembrance into the hand of Mrs. Dean, and disregarding her expostulations at my rudeness, I vanished through the kitchen as they opened the house-door: and so should have confirmed Joseph in his opinion of his fellow-servant's gay indiscretions, had he not fortunately recognised me for a respectable character by the sweet ring of a sovereign at his feet.

My walk home was lengthened by a diversion in the direction of the kirk. When beneath its walls, I perceived decay had made progress, even in seven months: many a window showed black gaps deprived of glass; and slates jutted off, here and there, beyond the right line of the roof, to be gradually worked off in coming autumn storms.

I sought, and soon discovered, the three headstones on the slope next the moor: the middle one grey, and half buried in heath; Edgar Linton's only harmonised by the turf and moss creeping up its foot; Heathcliff's still bare.

I lingered round them, under that benign sky; watched the moths fluttering among the heath and hare-bells, listened to the soft wind breathing through the grass, and wondered how any one could ever imagine unquiet slumbers for the sleepers in that quiet earth.

THE END

SOME FACSIMILES

OF

THE HANDWRITING

OF

EMILY JANE BRONTË

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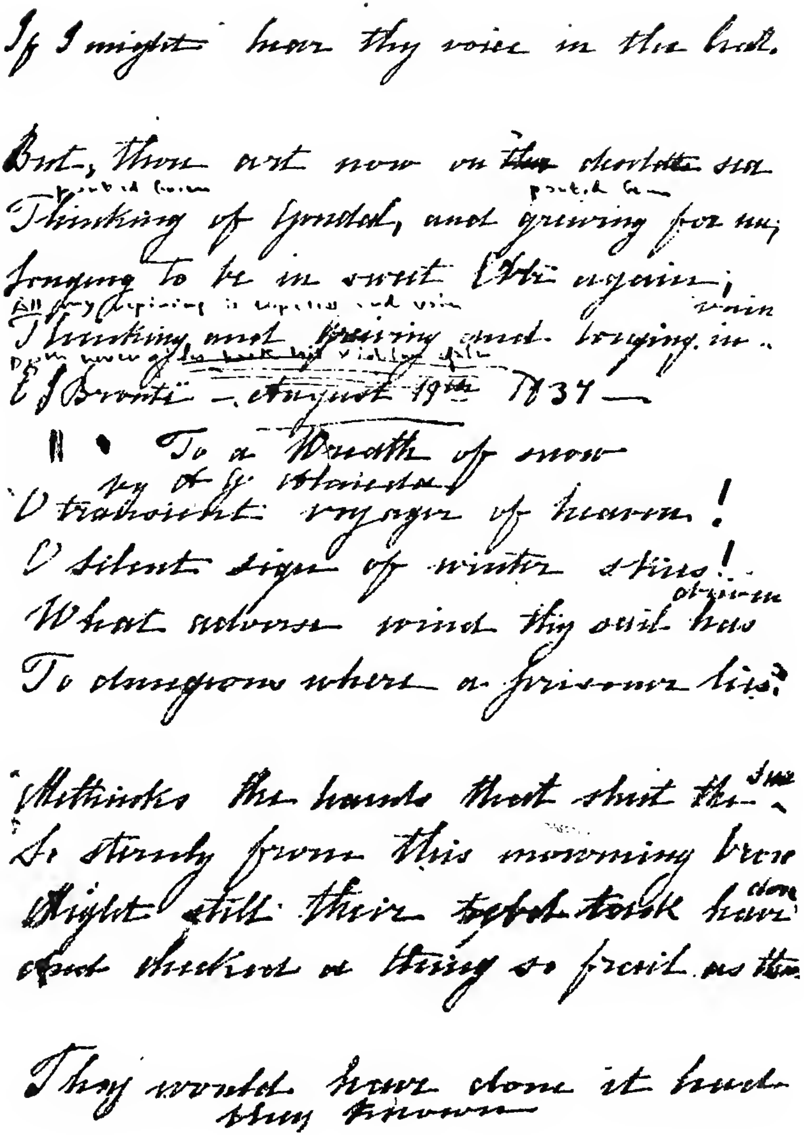
Mr. THOMAS J. WISE *and* Mr. WALTER SLATER



If I might hear thy voice in the bird.

But, thou art now on the desolate sea
parted from
Thinking of Gondal, and grieving for me
parted from
Longing to be in sweet Elbë again;
All my repining is hopeless and vain
Thinking and grieving and longing in vain
[illegible]
E J Brontë — August 19th 1837 —

To a Wreath of Snow
by A. G. Almeda
O transient voyager of heaven!
O silent sign of winter skies!
What adverse wind thy sail has driven
To dungeons where a prisoner lies?

Methinks the hands that shut the sun
So sternly from this morning brow
Might still their rebel task have done
And checked a thing so frail as thou.

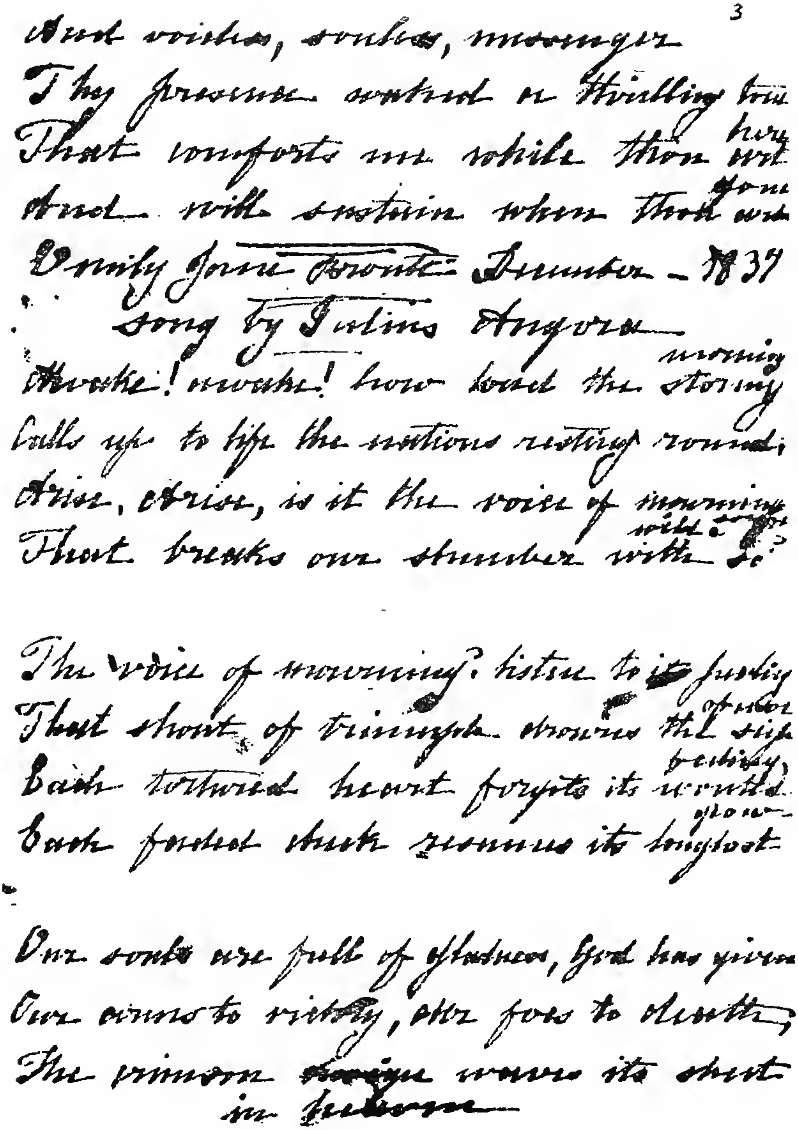
They would have done it had they known

2 The talisman that dwelt in thee,
For all the suns that ever shone
Have never been so kind to me!

For many a week, and many a day
gloom
My heart was weighed with sinking
When morning rose, in mourning gray
And faintly lit my prison room,

But angel-like, when I awoke,
Thy silvery form so soft and fair
Shining through darkness, sweetly spoke
Of cloudy skies and mountains bare

The dearest to a mountaineer,
snow
Who, all life long has loved the
drear,
That crowned her native summits.
Better, than greenest plains below.



3

And visitor, soother, messenger
Thy presence waked a thrilling tone
That comforts me while thou art here
And will sustain when thou art gone

Emily Jane Bronte December 1837

Song by Julius Angora

Awake! awake! how loud the stormy morning
Calls up to life the nations resting round;
Arise, arise, is it the voice of mourning
That breaks our slumber with wild a so:

The voice of mourning? listen to its pealing
That shout of triumph drowns the sigh of woe
Each tortured heart forgets its wonted feeling
Each faded cheek resumes its longlost glow

Our souls are full of gladness, God has given
Our arms to victory, our foes to death;
The crimson ~~ensign~~ waves its sheet
in heaven

4 The sea-green Standard lies in dust

Patriots, no stain is on your country's glory
Soldiers, preserve that glory bright and free
Let Almedore in peace, and battle gory,
Be still a nobler name for victory!

Song April 20th 1839

King Julius left the south country
His banners all bravely flying.
His followers went out with Jubilee
But they shall return with sighing

Loud arose the Triumphal hymn
The drums were loudly rolling
Yet you might have heard in dista dim
How a passing-bell was tolling

The sword so bright from battles won
With unseen rust is fretting

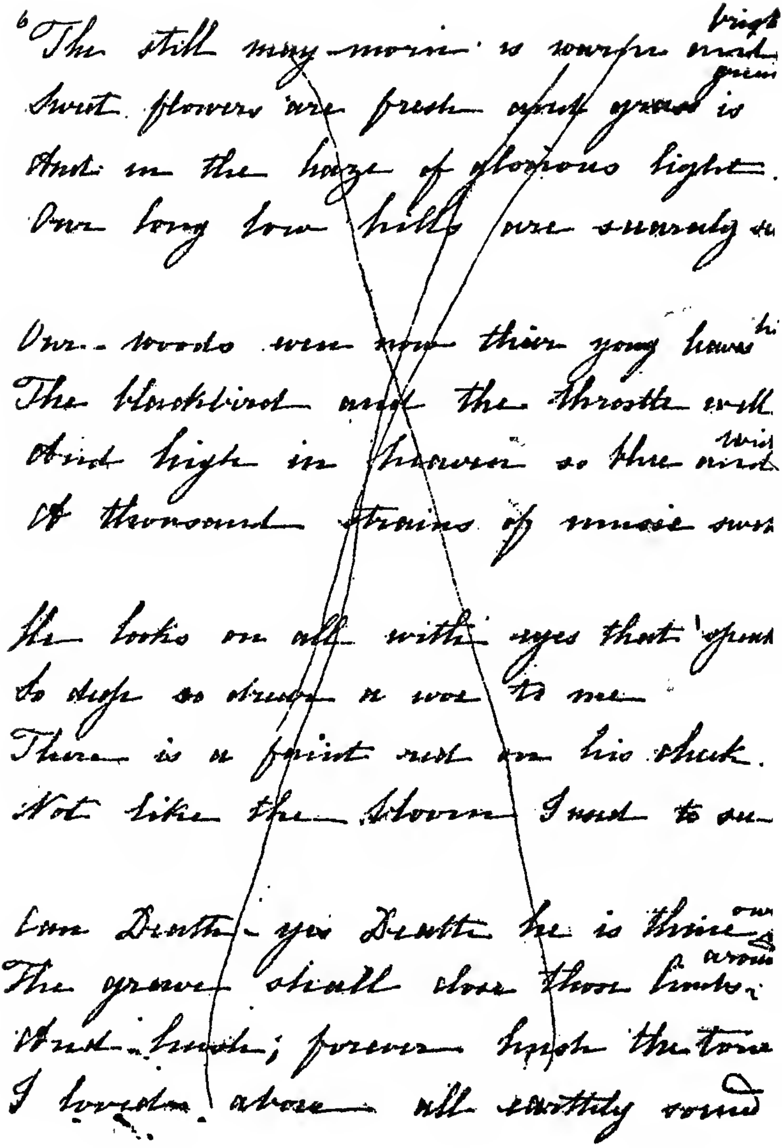
The evening comes before the noon[5]
The scarce risen sun is setting

While princes hung upon his breath
And nations round are fearing
Close by his side a daggered Death
With sheathless point stands sneering

That death he took a certain aim
For Death is stoney-hearted
And in the zenith of his fame
Both power and life departed.

Lines by H. G. H. to H. J. May 21st 1838

O wander not so far away
O love forgive this selfish tear
It may be sad for thee to stay
But how can I live lonely here



6 The still may-morn is warm and bright
Sweet flowers are fresh and grass is green
And in the haze of glorious light
Our long low hills are scarcely s

Our woods wear now their young leaves hi
The blackbird and the throstle well
And high in heaven so blue and wi
A thousand strains of music swe

He looks on all with eyes that speak
So deep so drear a woe to me
There is a faint red on his cheek
Not like the bloom I used to see

Can Death—yes Death he is thine own
The grave shall close those limbs around
And hush, forever hush the tone
I loved above all earthly sound

7

Will pass away with the other flower
Too dark for them, too dark for thee
Are the hours to come the joyless hours
That time is treasuring up for me

If thou hast sinned in this world of care
'Twas but the dust of thy drear abode
Thy soul was pure when it entered here
And pure it will go again to God

---

11 : Song to A A May 1838
This shall be thy lullaby
Rocking on the stormy sea
Though it roar in thunder wild
Sleep stilly sleep my dark haired child

When our shuddering boat was crossing
Elderno lake so rudely tossing
Then 'twas first my nursling smiled

8 Sleep softly sleep my fair-browed child

Waves above thy cradle break
Foamy tears are on thy cheek
Yet the Oceans self grows mild
When it bears my slumbering child.

To a Blue bell May 9th 1839
by A G A

Sacred watcher wave thy bells.
Fair hill flower and woodland child
Dear to me in deep green dells;
Dearest on the mountains wild

Blue-bell even as all divine
I have seen my darling shine
Bluebell even as fair and frail
I have seen my darling fail
Lift thy head and speak to me
Soothing thoughts are breathed by thee

9

~~Thus they whisper "Summer's sun~~
~~Lights my course commenced and done~~
~~Would I rather choose to die~~
~~Under Winter's chill sky~~

~~Glad I bloom and calm I fade~~
~~Dews of heaven are round me still,~~
~~Mourner Mourner dry thy tears:~~
~~Sorrow comes with lengthened years~~

Lines. December 1837

11

I die but when the grave shall press
The heart so long endeared to thee
When earthly cares no more distress
And earthly joys are nought to me

Weep not but think that I have past
Before thee o'er a sea of gloom
Have anchored safe and rest at last

10 Where tears and mourning cannot com

'Tis I should weep to leave thee h
On that dark ocean sailing drea
With storms ~~behind~~ around and fears b
And no kind light to point the sh

But long or short though life may be
'Tis nothing to eternity
We part below to meet on high
Where blissful ages never die

Song October 15th 1839

O between distress and pleasure
Fond affection cannot be
Wretched hearts in vain would treasu
Friendship's joys ~~while~~ when others flee

Well I know thine eye would neve

Smile while mine grieved willingly
Yet I know thine eye forever
Could not weep in sympathy

Let us part the time is over
When I thought and felt like thee
I will be an Ocean rover
I will sail the desert sea

Isles there are beyond its billow
Lands where woe may wander free
And beloved thy midnight pillow
Will be oft unwatched by ~~thee~~ me

Not on each returning morrow
When thy heart bounds ardently
Wouldst thou then dissemble sorrow
Marking my disappointed eye

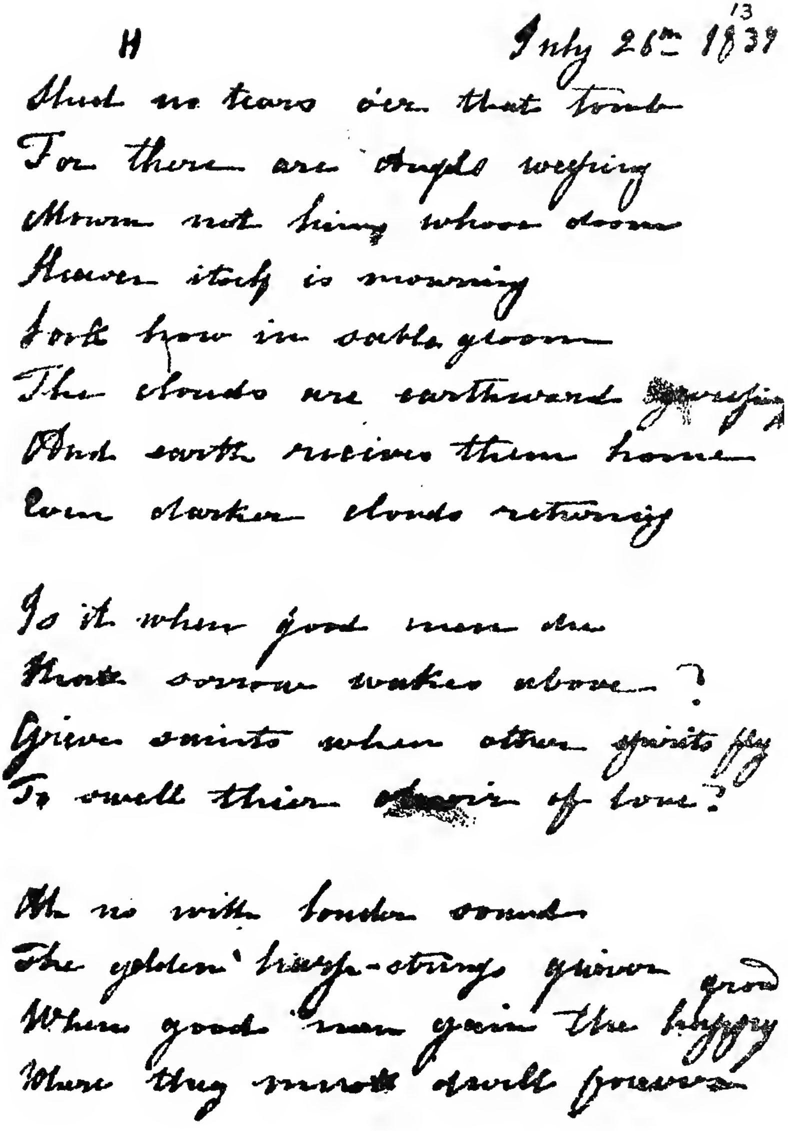
[12] Day by day some dreary token
Will forsake thy memory
Till at last all old links broken
I shall be a dream to thee

November 5th 1838

O Dream where art thou now ?
~~Long years have past away~~
~~Since last from off thy angel brow~~
~~I saw the light decay~~

~~Alas alas for me~~
~~Thou wert so bright and fair~~
~~I could not think thy memory~~
~~would yeild me nought but care~~

~~The sunbeam and the storm~~
~~The summer-eve divine~~
~~The silent night of solemn calm~~
The full moons cloudless shine.



13

H July 26th 1839

Shed no tears o'er that tomb
For there are Angels weeping
Mourn not him whose doom
Heaven itself is mourning
Look how in sable gloom
The clouds are earthward sweeping
And earth receives them home
Even darker clouds returning

Is it when good men die
That sorrow wakes above?
Grieve saints when other spirits fly
To swell their choir of love?

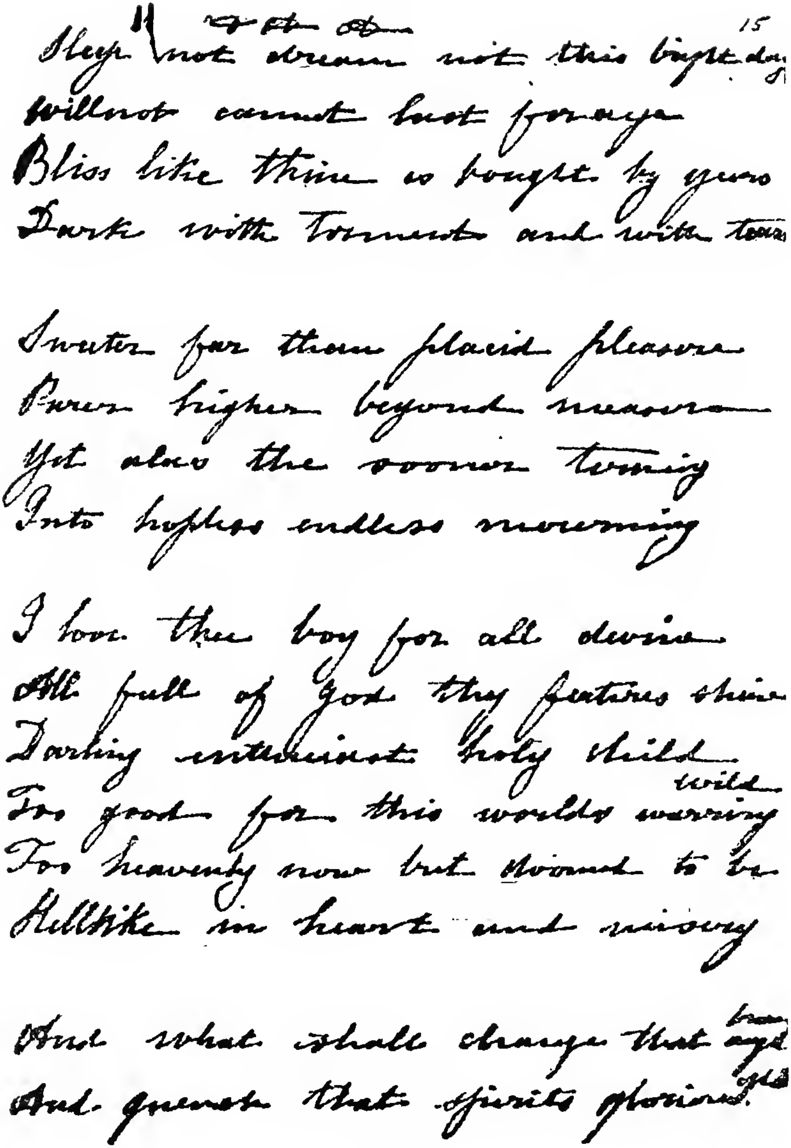
Ah no with louder sound
The golden harp-strings quiver
When good men gain the happy ground
Where they must dwell forever

14 "But he who slumbers there!"
will
His bark shall strive no more
Across the waters of despair
To reach that glorious shore

The time of grace is past
And mercy scorned and tried
Forsakes to utter wrath at last
The soul so steeled by pride

That wrath will never spare
Will never pity know
Will mock its victims maddened prayer
Will triumph in his woe

Shut from his Maker's smile
The accursed man shall be
For mercy
Compassion reigns a little while
But Hope
Revenge eternally —



15

Sleep not dream not this bright da
Willnot cannot last for aye
Bliss like thine is bought by years
Dark with Torment and with tear

Sweeter far than placid pleasure
Purer higher beyond measure
Yet alas the sooner turning
Into hopeless endless mourning

I love thee boy for all divine
All full of God thy features shine
Darling enthusiast holy child
Too good for this worlds warring wild
Too heavenly now but doomed to be
Hellike in heart and misery

And what shall change that bro eye
And quench that spirits glorious glo

16 Relentless laws that disallow
True virtue and true joy below

And blame me not if when aught
Of suffering doubt thy youthful heart
If when by ~~sin~~ crimes and sorrow too
Thy wandering bark is wrecked or lost

I too depart I too despise
And make thy path no longer mine
'Tis thus that human minds will turn
All doomed alike to sin and mourn
Yet all with long gaze fixed afar
Adoring Virtue's distant star

Lines by R J April 17th 1839

From our evening fireside now
Merry laugh and cheerful tone,
Smiling eye and cloudless brow

Though I called with wistle shri
Tray and Carlo lagged behind
Looking backward over the hill

Sorrow was not vocal there
Mute their woe and my dispair
But the joy of life was flown
He was ~~don~~ gone and we were lon

So it is by morn and eve
So it is in feild and ~~hall~~ hall
For the absent one we greive
One been absent saddens all.

Lines by Claudia — May 28th 1839

I did not sleep 'twas noon of day
I saw the burning sunshine fall
The long grass bending where I lay
The blue sky brooding over all

B I heard the mellow hum of bees
And singing birds and sighing trees
And far away in woody dell
The Music of the sabbath bell

I did not dream remembrance still
Clasped round my heart its fetters chill
But I am sure the soul is free
To leave its clay a little while
Or how in exile misery
Could I have seen my country smile

In English fields my limbs were laid
With English turf beneath my head
My spirit wandered o'er that shore
Where nought but it may wander more

Yet if the soul can thus return
I need not and I will not mourn

And vainly did ye drive me far
With leagues of ocean stretched between
My mortal flesh you might debar
But not the eternal fire within

My Monarch died to rule forever
A heart that can forget him near
And dear to me aye doubly dear
Thought shut within the silent tomb
His name shall be for whom I bear
This longenstained and hopeless doom

And brighter in the hour of woe
Than in the blaze of victory pride
That glory shedding star shall glow
For which we fought and ble
bled and died

10

Lines

October 1837

Far away is the land of rest
Thousand miles are stretched betwe
Many a mountains stormy crest
Many a desert void of green

Wasted worn is the traveller
Dark his heart and dim his eye
Without hope or comforter
faultering faint and ready to die

Often he looks to the ruthless sky
Often he looks o'er his dreary road
Often he wishes down to lie
And render up lifes tiresome load

But yet faint not mournful man
Leagues on leagues are left behin
Since your sunless course began

Then go on to toil resigned"

If you still despair control
Hush its whispers in your breast
You shall reach the final goal
You shall win the land of rest

Finis April 28th 1839

The soft unclouded blue of air
The earth as golden-green and fair
And bright as Eden's used to be
me
That air and earth have rested

Laid on the grass I lapsed away
Sank back again to childhood's day
mild
All harsh thoughts perished memory
wildly
Subdued both grief and passion

But did the sunshine even now

22

brow
That bathed his stern and swarth
Oh did it wake I long to know
One vision one sweet dream in hi
One lingering joy that years ago
Had faded - lost in distance dr
me
That iron man was born like
And he was once an ardent boy
He must have felt in infancy
The glory of a summer sky

have tossd
Though storms untold his mind
He cannot utterly have lost
~~[illegible]~~ of his early home
come
So lost that not a gleam may

No vision of his mother's face
fondly free
When she so ~~[illegible]~~ would set
Her darling child from her embrace
To roam till eve at liberty

Nor of his haunts nor of the flowers
His tiny hand would grateful bear
Returning from the darkening bowers
To weave into her glossy hair

I saw the light breeze kiss his cheek
His fingers mid the roses twined
I watched to mark one transient streak
Of pensive softness shade his mind

The open window showed around
A glowing park and glorious sky
And thick woods swelling with the sound
Of Natures mighty harmony

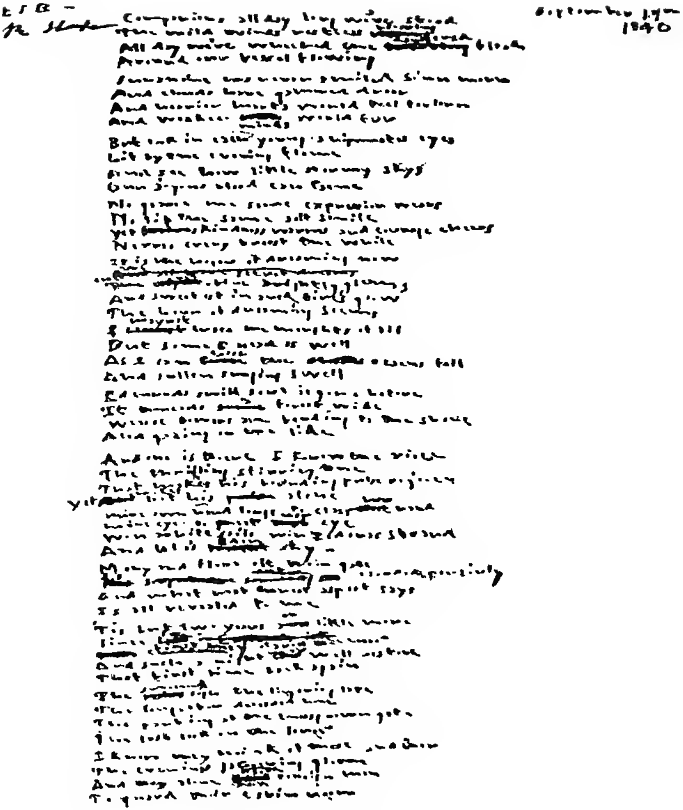
Silent he sat. That stormy breast
At length, I said, has deigned to rest
At length above that spirit flows
The waveless ocean of repose

Let me draw near 'twill soothe to view
His dark eyes dimmed with pity's dew
Remorse even now may wake within
And half unchain his soul from sin

Perhaps this is the destined hour
When Hell shall lose its fatal power
And heaven itself shall bend above
To hail the soul redeemed by love

Unmarked I gazed my idle thought
Passed with the ray whose shine it caught
One glance revealed how little care
He felt for all the beauty there

Oh crime can make the heart grow old
Sooner than years of wearing woe
Can turn the warmest bosom cold
As winter wind or polar snow



1940

[illegible]ed as such a [illegible] was like to do !"

"Hallowes Hall Master ! 'tis 14 mile off."

It doesn't matter for heavens sake help me into the [illegible] road !"

One of the fellows muttered to the other "He's one of a' ~~Ellen~~ The Hallowes D—ls ' !" and then said

'Them as goes to Hallowes Hall is like to know [illegible] road about axing !—"

Both then seemed much inclined to ~~[illegible]~~ make themselves scarce but I called out with multitudinous oaths

"Show me my way or I'll be the death of you" and then they reluctantly pointed me a path which they said led into the road to Morton. which was in my route and 20 miles from Alnwick ~~[illegible]~~ & so I. Slinging off the sheet and wrapping a Handkerchief round my hollow head. Trailed my weary length for a few miles until I reached an Inn at the Entrance of the expected Town. The Waiter was [illegible] shy of me for I looked a frightful figure the marks of the late contest still on my face with super added scratches of last night and Military half dressed [illegible]ed. and saturated with Water. but ~~[illegible]~~ he rallied a little when I gave him a guinea to buy me a hat and as I asked him who The Ellen was he shook his head and replied:

"They say she be's som to the old one but further than nobody know that can tell !" then with another mysterious shake he left me — returning in a while with the coffee. which I downed - had my clothes set to rights took some refreshment and ordering a Horse post sallied forth for Alnwick. Sad with the effects of ~~[illegible]~~ Intoxication and sullen with the prospects of disgrace to come

Oh all the cares that Noontide stirs
Might seem to drive away
So glad and bright each sight appears
Each sound so soft and gay
And through the shade of yonder glade
Where thick the leaves are dancing
With jewels rare and flowerets fair
A hundred plumes are glancing
For there the palace portals rise
Beyond its myrtle grove
Catching the whitest brightest dies
From the deep blue dome above
But here this little lonely spot
Thrives among its trees
By all unknown and noticed not
Save sunshine and the breeze

Now — But a moment, let me stay!
One moment, ere I go
To join the ranks where Bugles play
westwards [illegible]
On ~~[illegible]~~ ~~[illegible]~~ brow

One pause upon the brink of life
Before it breaks in headlong strife
[illegible] ~~[illegible]~~ ~~shadow~~ its [illegible] down ~~[illegible]~~ word ~~way~~ road

One insight through the waters clear
Before their pictures disappear
~~[illegible]~~
In the Graves foaming flood
(~~In the [illegible] [illegible] of blood~~)

Here I am standing — underneath
The shade of quiet trees
Whose leaves can hardly catch the breath
Of this sweet evening breeze

The heart which cannot know another
Which will not learn to sympathise
In whom the voice of friend or brother
Unheard unheeded sleeps or dies
Between whom and the world around
Can stretch no life uniting ties

A Breeze embued with rich perfumes
Is waving yonder sea of plumes

Hours and days my Heart has lain
Through a [illegible] changeless pain
As it never would wake again
Sad and still and silently

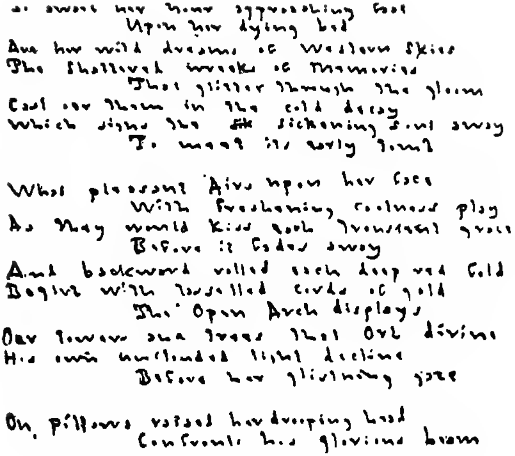
Time has flown but all unknown
Nothing could arouse tone
Not a single string would moan
In replying sympathy

Memory Memory comes at last
Memory of feelings past
And with an Eolian blast
Strikes the strings resistlessly

I am more terrific-ally and infernally and Idiotically and Brutally STUPID than ever I was in the whole course of my incarnate existence The above precious lines are the fruits of one hour's most agonizing labour between ½ past 6 and ½ past 7 in the evening of Wednesday. July 1826

There is something in this glorious hour
That fills the soul with heavenly power
And dims our eyes with sudden tears
That center all the joys of years
For we feel at once that there lingers still
~~A Glory on the scenes of life~~
Like evening sunshine around ~~on~~ the hill
~~[illegible] the plains of darkness and valleys of [illegible]~~
A Glory round its pinnacle
And we know though we be yet below
That we may not always linger so
~~Hope~~ For still ~~[illegible]~~ Ambition ~~pointing~~ beckons on
To this ~~[illegible]~~ a ~~[illegible]~~ height that may be won
And Hope still whispering in our ear
Others have been — thou mayst be there

"Land of the West! Thy glorious skies
Their dreamy depths of azure blue
Their sunset isles of paradise
That float in golden glory through
Those depths of azure on my sight
This musing moment seem to expand
Revealing all their red and rose bright
In cloud and gorgeous band!
Land of the West – Thine Evening Sun
Brings thousand useless thoughts to mind
Of what I've said and seen and done
In years by time long left behind
And forms and faces lost for ever
Seem arising round me now
As if to bid farewell for ever
Before my spirit go
Oh! How they gush upon my heart
And overflow my eyes
I must not keep I cannot part
With such wild sympathies
I know it's called a sin and shame
To murmur at what I mourn



as sweet her hour approaching fast
Upon her dying bed
Are her wild dreams of Western Skies
The shattered wrecks of memories
That glitter through the gloom
Cast o'er them in the cold decay
Which sighs the sickening soul away
To meet its early tomb

What pleasant Airs upon her face
With freshening coolness play
As they would kiss each transient grace
Before it fades away
And backward rolled each deep red fold
Begirt with tasselled cords of gold
The' Open Arch displays
O'er towers and trees that Orb divine
His own unclouded light decline
Before her glistening gaze

On pillows raised her drooping head
Confronts his glorious beam

Jan 13. 1837

Sleep Mourner sleep! — I cannot sleep
  My weary mind still wanders on
Then silent weep — I cannot weep
  For eyes and tears seem turned to stone

Oh might my footsteps find a rest!
  Oh might my eyes with tears run oer!
Oh could the World but leave my breast
  To lapse in days that are no more!

And if I could in silence mourn
  Apart from lying sympathy
And those remarks or sighs to scorn
  I should be where I wish to be

For nothing nearer Paradise
  Ought for a moment to be mine
I've far outlived such vast joys
  I could not bear so bright a shine

For I've been consecrate to grief
  I should not be if that were gone
And all my prospects of it robbed
  On earth, would be — To Exist Alone!

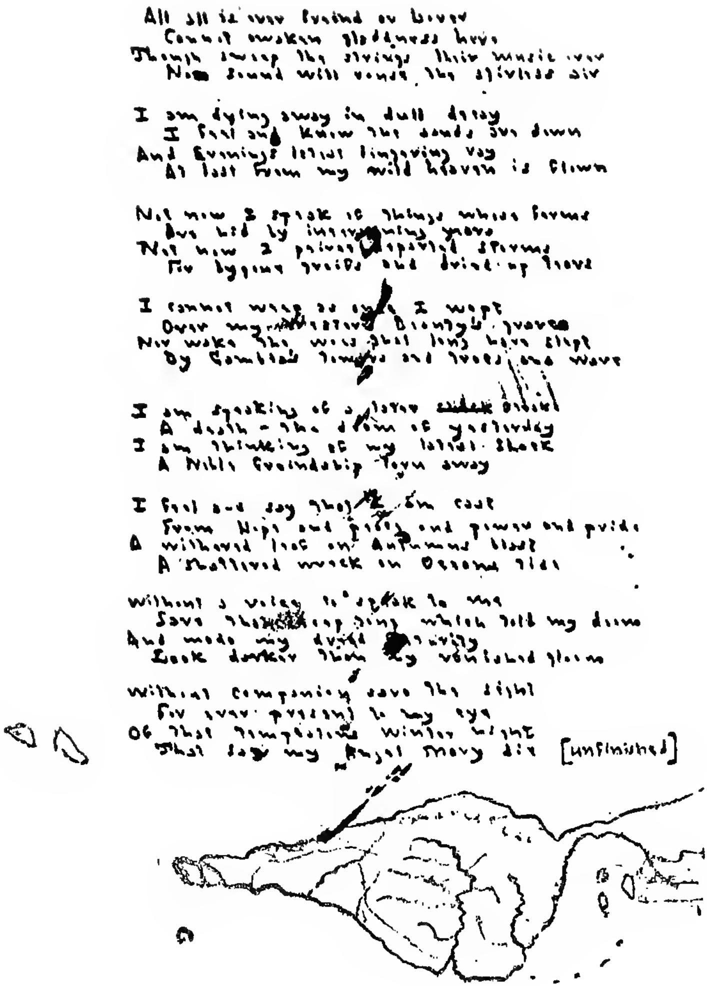
To live in sunshine would be now
  To live in Lethe every thought
Of what I have seen and been below
  Must float in utterly forgot'

And I can not forget the years
  Gone by as if they'd never been
Yet if I will remember these
  Must always dim the dreary scene

So there's no choice — However bright
  May beam the blaze of July's sun
'Twill only yield another sight
  Of scenes and times forever gone

However young and lovely round
  Fair forms may meet my careless eye
They'll only hover oer the ground
  Where fairer forms in darkness lye

And voices tuned to Music's thrill
  And laughter light as Fancy's strain
Will only wake a deadly chill
  As if the buried spoke again



All all is over friend or lover
  Cannot awaken gladness here
Though sweep the strings their music ever
  No sound will rouse the slumbering air

I am dying away in dull decay
  I feel and know the sands run down
And Evening's latest lingering ray
  At last from my wild heaven is flown

Not now I speak of things whose forms
  Are hid by intervening years
Not now I picture departed storms
  For bygone griefs and dried up tears

I cannot weep as once I wept
  Over my relatives' Bronty's graves
Nor wake the woes that long have slept
  By Gambia's temples and trees and wave

I am speaking of a later ~~sadder~~ ordeal
  A death — the dream of yesterday
I am thinking of my latest shock
  A noble friendship torn away

I feel and say that I am cast
  From hope and pity and power and pride
A withered leaf on Autumn's blast
  A shattered wreck on Ocean's tide

Without a voice to speak to me
  Save [illegible] which tell my doom
And made my dread eternity
  Look darker than my [illegible] gloom

Without companion save the sight
  For ever present to my eye
Of that tempestuous winter night
  That saw my Angel Mary die [unfinished]

The Heart which cannot know another
Which owns no lover friend or brother
In whom those names without reply
Unechoed and unheeded die

May 17 1836.

The sunshine of a summer sun
On the proud domes of Elrington
Glows with a beam divinely bright
In one unquenched unvaried light
And with its arched windows vast
As if to invite the smiling skies
And proud its mighty columns show
Between them ranked in haughty row.
And sweet ~~[illegible]~~ soft the solemn shade
By the overarching portals made
  The stately halls of Elrington
May fitly meet that glorious sun
For fetes and feasts are given to day
To Noble lords and ladies gay
And that vast City of the sea
Which round us lies so endlessly
Has hither poured its proudest train
To worship mirth and fly from pain
  The sunshine of a summer sun
Glows o'er the groves of Elrington
Where City ~~[illegible]~~ spreading wide around
The flower and foliage laden ground
All round the hot and glowing sky
Bespeaks a mighty city nigh
And through each opening in the shade
Palace and Temple crown the glade
So here as an oasis stands
Mid the wide waste of Egypts sands
This glorious vision of a grove
With flowers beneath and fruits above
Lies in that Citys ~~[illegible]~~ human sea
~~Of~~ Whose streets stretch round so endlessly
  Oh who could pass unnoticed by
This scene of Natures royalty
Instead of Birds to warble there
Ethereal ~~Breathings~~ music fills the air
Breathed from those Halls thrown open wide
To admit the ever changing tide
Of Earths and Heavens hope and pride,

July
1836

My Ancient Ship upon my Ancient Sea
Begins another voyage — My [illegible] gone
But without trembling? who is gone with thee?
Since parted from thee I am left alone
Unknowing what my Rivers fate may be
Into the hollow world of tempests thrown
Lost like a speck from my ~~[illegible]~~ straining eye
Which wilder unfamiliar visions must survey

Lost and unnoticed — for away the roar
Of Southern Waters breaking to the wind
With restless thunder rolling still before
As the wild gale sweeps wilder on behind
~~And [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] out of mind~~
And every vision of old Afric's shore
As much forgot and vanished out of mind
As the wild Rock that marked so long ago
~~Hath vanished~~ from these stormy waves which surge below

Gone — tis a word which through ~~[illegible]~~ lives troubled ~~[illegible]~~ woes
Seems always coming and the only one
Which can be called the PRESENT. Hope is past
And Hate and Strife and love and peace are gone
Before we think them for their rapid [illegible]
Scarce gives us time for one short ~~[illegible]~~ or groan
Ere that thought dies and new ones come between
~~[illegible]~~ It and our heart with some as fleeting shown

And yet there is or ~~[illegible]~~ seems at least to be
A general tinge of thought that colours all
So though each come by different all agree
In one same melancholy like a pall
Even as the shadows ~~[illegible]~~ ~~[illegible]~~ ~~[illegible]~~ [illegible]
~~[illegible]~~ I know from many a varying wall
In this vast city — ~~[illegible]~~ and ~~[illegible]~~ showing
In the same light and the same darkness waving

Not that I deem all life a course of shade
Nor all the world a waste of dreary like these
From youth to age a mighty change is made
As from this City to the Southern Seas
For years through ~~[illegible]~~ ~~[illegible]~~ mirthful life our course is laid
For years in strife [illegible] without a [illegible]
For years amid the ~~[illegible]~~ stir of civil jar
For years within some silent sleepless cave

Changing and still the same yet swiftly passing
[illegible] beyond the there 'Tis nowhere oh my soul
[illegible] no rest from such a bewildering chasing
Of [illegible] wild dreams that ever round the roll
Each as it comes the parting thought effacing
Yet all still hurrying to the following goal

Soon can I catch them in their path along
Stretching star toward one far ever gone!

What have I written — nothing for the ~~[illegible]~~ ever
And seems as nothing for the single ~~[illegible] [illegible]~~ cloud
That shadows it and ~~to~~ long has dimmed its Hour
Over all the crossing thoughts that ever flowed
~~This~~ ~~[illegible]~~ ~~[illegible]~~ In this wrecked spirit of my being
small ways [illegible] pledge the day of [illegible] proud countless
Through ... beyond the meeting, the of ~~[illegible]~~ dreams
The Summit. the Confluence of a thousand streams

I do not see myself again
~~[illegible]~~ wandering over the Atlantic waves
I do not backward ~~[illegible]~~ my eye
Toward ~~[illegible]~~ sleeping sea and starry sky
Oh my most Contented visions vast
In the woodlands of the west
And there let Hesperus shine
To watch my judgment where it lies
The present scenes the present ~~[illegible]~~ climes
Forbid me ~~[illegible]~~ Dreams of olden time
The present thoughts the present hour
Are rife with ~~[illegible]~~ of sterner power
And who shall be my leading star
Amid the howling storm of war.
~~Hark~~ ! ~~[illegible]~~ —

28
28
56
14
70
25
95

Hark Listen to the Distant Gun
From the Battle field of Edwardstown
It breaks upon the ~~[illegible]~~ sweet air
Which stuns my love around
And in those shouts of victory
Strikes with a hollow sound
~~[illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]~~
My struggles all are crowned with ~~[illegible]~~
And fortune gives a glorious [illegible]
Men who hate me kneel before me
Men who knelt me Cursed to slew me
My Name is on a million tongues
The Million battles of my wrongs
And ~~[illegible]~~ of years of Tyrant pride
Which strove this Modern God to hide
At last have vanished in the rays
Of his unquenched unclouded blaze
Oh is not Jesus come again
Over his thousand souls to reign
To free the world from [illegible] chains
While Sin and Satan [illegible]
Their ~~[illegible]~~ venomed fan [illegible]
Where they ~~[illegible]~~ lie ~~[illegible]~~ [illegible]
Till ~~[illegible]~~ [illegible]
Their reign is past [illegible]
For Gollum is Mighty [illegible]

Through the hoarse howling of the storm
I saw but did I truly see
One glimpse of that unearthly form
Whose very name is, VICTORY

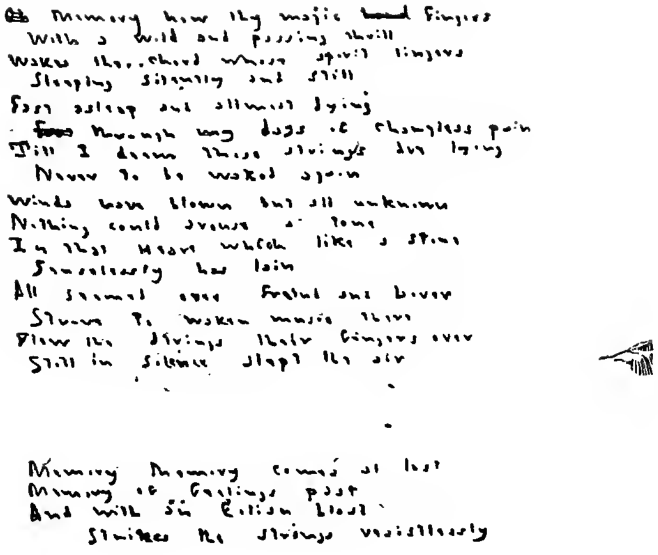
Twas but a glance and all seems past
For cares like clouds again return
And I'll forget him till the blast
For ever from my soul has born
This vision of a mighty man
Crushed into Dust ! —

⋮

Forget him ! — Lo the Cannon's smoke
How dense in thickness till on high
By the wild storm blasts roughly broke
It parts in volumns through the sky
That heavily are drifting by
Till the dread ~~[illegible]~~ burst ~~loud~~ forth once more
With ~~within~~ whitening clouds which seem to fly
Affrighted from that ~~[illegible]~~ ceaseless roar
And there it lightens ! dashed with gore
The thick of battle rends in twain
~~As~~ While there ~~[illegible]~~ ranks of bristling steel
Floundering afar whirl the Armed men
In mighty masses ~~charge~~ light and reel
Like the wild Waters of the main
Dashed into foam — when there again
Behold him !

Yet o'er his face a solemn light
Comes smiling from the sky
And shows to sight the lustre bright
Of his uplifted eye

The aimless ~~hap~~ heedless ~~[illegible]~~ carelessness
Of happy Infancy
~~[illegible]~~ yet such a solemn fearfulness
~~To [illegible]~~ commingling ~~the~~ with ~~child~~ his ~~time~~ glee
The parted lips the golden hair
Cast backward from his brow
Without a single shade of care
~~Dim~~ All bathed amid that moonlight air
Oh who so blest as thou !



Oh Memory how thy magic ~~hand~~ fingers
With a wild and passing thrill
Wake the..chord whose spirit lingers
Sleeping silently and still
Fast asleep and allmost dying
~~fo~~ through long days of changeless pain
Till I deem these strings are lying
Never to be waked again

Winds have blown but all unknown
Nothing could arouse a tone
In that heart which like a stone
Senselessly has lain
All seemed over friends and lover
Strove to waken music there
Flew the strings their fingers over
Still in silence slept the air

Memory Memory comes at last
Memory of feelings past
And with an Eolian blast
Strikes the strings resistlessly

Printed by T. and A. Constable, Printers to His Majesty
at the Edinburgh University Press

A Sicilian Romance

Ann Ward Radcliffe

On the northern shore of Sicily are still to be seen the magnificent remains of a castle, which formerly belonged to the noble house of Mazzini. It stands in the centre of a small bay, and upon a gentle acclivity, which, on one side, slopes towards the sea, and on the other rises into an eminence crowned by dark woods. The situation is admirably beautiful and picturesque, and the ruins have an air of ancient grandeur, which, contrasted with the present solitude of the scene, impresses the traveller with awe and curiosity. During my travels abroad I visited this spot. As I walked over the loose fragments of stone, which lay scattered through the immense area of the fabrick, and surveyed the sublimity and grandeur of the ruins, I recurred, by a natural association of ideas, to the times when these walls stood proudly in their original splendour, when the halls were the scenes of hospitality and festive magnificence, and when they resounded with the voices of those whom death had long since swept from the earth. 'Thus,' said I, 'shall the present generation—he who now sinks in misery—and he who now swims in pleasure, alike pass away and be forgotten.' My heart swelled with the reflection; and, as I turned from the scene with a sigh, I fixed my eyes upon a friar, whose venerable figure, gently bending towards the earth, formed no uninteresting object in the picture. He observed my emotion; and, as my eye met his, shook his head and pointed to the ruin. 'These walls,' said he, 'were once the seat of luxury and vice. They exhibited a singular instance of the retribution of Heaven, and were from that period forsaken, and abandoned to decay.' His words excited my curiosity, and I enquired further concerning their meaning.

'A solemn history belongs to this castle, said he, 'which is too long and intricate for me to relate. It is, however, contained in a manuscript in our library, of which I could, perhaps, procure you a sight. A brother of our order, a descendant of the noble house of Mazzini, collected and recorded the most striking incidents relating to his family, and the history thus formed, he left as a legacy to our convent. If you please, we will walk thither.'

I accompanied him to the convent, and the friar introduced me to his superior, a man of an intelligent mind and benevolent heart, with whom I passed some hours in interesting conversation. I believe my sentiments pleased him; for, by his indulgence, I was permitted to take abstracts of the history before me, which, with some further particulars obtained in conversation with the abate, I have arranged in the following pages.

CHAPTER I

Towards the close of the sixteenth century, this castle was in the possession of Ferdinand, fifth marquis of Mazzini, and was for some years the principal residence of his family. He was a man of a voluptuous and imperious character. To his first wife, he married Louisa Bernini, second daughter of the Count della Salario, a lady yet more distinguished for the sweetness of her manners and the gentleness of her disposition, than for her beauty. She brought the marquis one son and two daughters, who lost their amiable mother in early childhood. The arrogant and impetuous character of the marquis operated powerfully upon the mild and susceptible nature of his lady: and it was by many persons believed, that his unkindness and neglect put a period to her life. However this might be, he soon afterwards married Maria de Vellorno, a young lady eminently beautiful, but of a character very opposite to that of her predecessor. She was a woman of infinite art, devoted to pleasure, and of an unconquerable spirit. The marquis, whose heart was dead to paternal tenderness, and whose present lady was too volatile to attend to domestic concerns, committed the education of his daughters to the care of a lady, completely qualified for the undertaking, and who was distantly related to the late marchioness.

He quitted Mazzini soon after his second marriage, for the gaieties and splendour of Naples, whither his son accompanied him. Though naturally of a haughty and overbearing disposition, he was governed by his wife. His passions were vehement, and she had the address to bend them to her own purpose; and so well to conceal her influence, that he thought himself most independent when he was most enslaved. He paid an annual visit to the castle of Mazzini; but the marchioness seldom attended him, and he staid only to give such general directions concerning the education of his daughters, as his pride, rather than his affection, seemed to dictate.

Emilia, the elder, inherited much of her mother's disposition. She had a mild and sweet temper, united with a clear and comprehensive mind. Her younger sister, Julia, was of a more lively cast. An extreme sensibility subjected her to frequent uneasiness; her temper was warm, but generous; she was quickly irritated, and quickly appeased; and to a reproof, however gentle, she would often weep, but was never sullen. Her imagination was ardent, and her mind early exhibited symptoms of genius. It was the particular care of Madame de Menon to counteract those traits in the disposition of her young pupils, which appeared inimical to their future happiness; and for this task she had abilities which entitled her to hope for success. A series of early misfortunes had entendered her heart, without weakening the powers of her understanding. In retirement she had acquired tranquillity, and had almost lost the consciousness of those sorrows which yet threw a soft and not unpleasing shade over her character. She loved her young charge with maternal fondness, and their gradual improvement and respectful tenderness repaid all her anxiety. Madame excelled in music and drawing. She had often forgot her sorrows in these amusements, when her mind was too much occupied to derive consolation from books, and she was assiduous to impart to Emilia and Julia a power so valuable as that of beguiling the sense of affliction. Emilia's taste led her to drawing, and she soon made rapid advances in that art. Julia was uncommonly susceptible of the charms of harmony. She had feelings which trembled in unison to all its various and enchanting powers.

The instructions of madame she caught with astonishing quickness, and in a short time attained to a degree of excellence in her favorite study, which few persons have ever exceeded. Her manner was entirely her own. It was not in the rapid intricacies of execution, that she excelled so much in as in that delicacy of taste, and in those enchanting powers of expression, which seem to breathe a soul through the sound, and which take captive the heart of the hearer. The lute was her favorite instrument, and its tender notes accorded well with the sweet and melting tones of her voice.

The castle of Mazzini was a large irregular fabrick, and seemed suited to receive a numerous train of followers, such as, in those days, served the nobility, either in the splendour of peace, or the turbulence of war. Its present family inhabited only a small part of it; and even this part appeared forlorn and almost desolate from the spaciousness of the apartments, and the length of the galleries which led to them. A melancholy stillness reigned through the halls, and the silence of the courts, which were shaded by high turrets, was for many hours together undisturbed by the sound of any foot-step. Julia, who discovered an early taste for books, loved to retire in an evening to a small closet in which she had collected her favorite authors. This room formed the western angle of the castle: one of its windows looked upon the sea, beyond which was faintly seen, skirting the horizon, the dark rocky coast of Calabria; the other opened towards a part of the castle, and afforded a prospect of the neighbouring woods. Her musical instruments were here deposited, with whatever assisted her favorite amusements. This spot, which was at once elegant, pleasant, and retired, was embellished with many little ornaments of her own invention, and with some drawings executed by her sister. The cioset was adjoining her chamber, and was separated from the apartments of madame only by a short gallery. This gallery opened into another, long and winding, which led to the grand staircase, terminating in the north hall, with which the chief apartments of the north side of the edifice communicated.

Madame de Menon's apartment opened into both galleries. It was in one of these rooms that she usually spent the mornings, occupied in the improvement of her young charge. The windows looked towards the sea, and the room was light and pleasant. It was their custom to dine in one of the lower apartments, and at table they were always joined by a dependant of the marquis's, who had resided many years in the castle, and who instructed the young ladies in the Latin tongue, and in geography. During the fine evenings of summer, this little party frequently supped in a pavilion, which was built on an eminence in the woods belonging to the castle. From this spot the eye had an almost boundless range of sea and land. It commanded the straits of Messina, with the opposite shores of

Calabria, and a great extent of the wild and picturesque scenery of Sicily. Mount Etna, crowned with eternal snows, and shooting from among the clouds, formed a grand and sublime picture in the background of the scene. The city of Palermo was also distinguishable; and Julia, as she gazed on its glittering spires; would endeavour in imagination to depicture its beauties, while she secretly sighed for a view of that world, from which she had hitherto been secluded by the mean jealousy of the marchioness, upon whose mind the dread of rival beauty operated strongly to the prejudice of Emilia and Julia. She employed all her influence over the marquis to detain them in retirement; and, though Emilia was now twenty, and her sister eighteen, they had never passed the boundaries of their father's domains.

Vanity often produces unreasonable alarm; but the marchioness had in this instance just grounds for apprehension; the beauty of her lord's daughters has seldom been exceeded. The person of Emilia was finely proportioned. Her complexion was fair, her hair flaxen, and her dark blue eyes were full of sweet expression. Her manners were dignified and elegant, and in her air was a feminine softness, a tender timidity which irresistibly attracted the heart of the beholder. The figure of Julia was light and graceful—her step was airy—her mien animated, and her smile enchanting. Her eyes were dark, and full of fire, but tempered with modest sweetness. Her features were finely turned—every laughing grace played round her mouth, and her countenance quickly discovered all the various emotions of her soul. The dark auburn hair, which curled in beautiful profusion in her neck, gave a finishing charm to her appearance.

Thus lovely, and thus veiled in obscurity, were the daughters of the noble Mazzini. But they were happy, for they knew not enough of the world seriously to regret the want of its enjoyments, though Julia would sometimes sigh for the airy image which her fancies painted, and a painful curiosity would arise concerning the busy scenes from which she was excluded. A return to her customary amusements, however, would chase the ideal image from her mind, and restore her usual happy complacency. Books, music, and painting, divided the hours of her leisure, and many beautiful summer-evenings were spent in the pavilion, where the refined conversation of madame, the poetry of Tasso, the lute of Julia, and the friendship of Emilia, combined to form a species of happiness, such as elevated and highly susceptible minds are alone capable of receiving or communicating. Madame understood and practised all the graces of conversation, and her young pupils perceived its value, and caught the spirit of its character.

Conversation may be divided into two classes—the familiar and the sentimental. It is the province of the familiar, to diffuse cheerfulness and ease—to open the heart of man to man, and to beam a temperate sunshine upon the mind.—Nature and art must conspire to render us susceptible of the charms, and to qualify us for the practice of the second class of conversation, here termed sentimental, and in which Madame de Menon particularly excelled. To good sense, lively feeling, and natural delicacy of taste, must be united an expansion of mind, and a refinement of thought, which is the result of high cultivation. To render this sort of conversation irresistibly attractive, a knowledge of the world is requisite, and that enchanting case, that elegance of manner, which is to be acquired only by frequenting the higher circles of polished life. In sentimental conversation, subjects interesting to the heart, and to the imagination, are brought forward; they are discussed in a kind of sportive way, with animation and refinement, and are never continued longer than politeness allows. Here fancy flourishes,—the sensibilities expand—and wit, guided by delicacy and embellished by taste—points to the heart.

Such was the conversation of Madame de Menon; and the pleasant gaiety of the pavilion seemed peculiarly to adapt it for the scene of social delights. On the evening of a very sultry day, having supped in their favorite spot, the coolness of the hour, and the beauty of the night, tempted this happy party to remain there later than usual. Returning home, they were surprised by the appearance of a light through the broken window-shutters of an apartment, belonging to a division of the castle which had for many years been shut up. They stopped to observe it, when it suddenly disappeared, and was seen no more. Madame de Menon, disturbed at this phaenomenon, hastened into the castle, with a view of enquiring into the cause of it, when she was met in the north hall by Vincent. She related to him what she had seen, and ordered an immediate search to be made for the keys of those apartments. She apprehended that some person had penetrated that part of the edifice with an intention of plunder; and, disdaining a paltry fear where her duty was concerned, she summoned the servants of the castle, with an intention of accompanying them thither. Vincent smiled at her apprehensions, and imputed what she had seen to an illusion, which the solemnity of the hour had impressed upon her fancy. Madame, however, persevered in her purpose; and, after along and repeated search, a massey key, covered with rust, was produced. She then proceeded to the southern side of the edifice, accompanied by Vincent, and followed by the servants, who were agitated with impatient wonder. The key was applied to an iron gate, which opened into a court that separated this division from the other parts of the castle. They entered this court, which was overgrown with grass and weeds, and ascended some steps that led to a large door, which they vainly endeavoured to open. All the different keys of the castle were applied to the lock, without effect, and they were at length compelled to quit the place, without having either satisfied their curiosity, or quieted their fears. Everything, however, was still, and the light did not reappear. Madame concealed her apprehensions, and the family retired to rest.

This circumstance dwelt on the mind of Madame de Menon, and it was some time before she ventured again to spend an evening in the pavilion. After several months passed, without further disturbance or discovery, another occurrence renewed the alarm. Julia had one night remained in her closet later than usual. A favorite book had engaged her attention beyond the hour of customary repose, and every inhabitant of the castle, except herself, had long been lost in sleep. She was roused from her forgetfulness, by the sound of the castle clock, which struck one. Surprised at the lateness of the hour, she rose in haste, and was moving to her chamber, when the beauty of the night attracted her to the window. She opened it; and observing a fine effect of moonlight upon the dark woods, leaned forwards. In that situation she had not long remained, when she perceived a light faintly flash through a casement in the uninhabited part of the castle. A sudden tremor seized her, and she with difficulty supported herself. In a few moments it disappeared, and soon after a figure, bearing a lamp, proceeded from an obscure door belonging to the south tower; and stealing along the outside of the castle walls, turned round the southern angle, by which it was afterwards hid from the view. Astonished and terrified at what she had seen, she hurried to the apartment of Madame de Menon, and related the circumstance. The servants were immediately roused, and the alarm became general. Madame arose and descended into the north hall, where the domestics were already assembled. No one could be found of courage sufficient to enter into the courts; and the orders of madame were disregarded, when opposed to the effects of superstitious terror. She perceived that Vincent was absent, but as she was ordering him to be called, he entered the hall. Surprised to find the family thus assembled, he was told the occasion. He immediately ordered a party of the servants to attend him round the castle walls; and with some reluctance, and more fear, they obeyed him. They all returned to the hall, without having witnessed any extraordinary appearance; but though their fears were not confirmed, they were by no means dissipated. The appearance of a light in a part of the castle which had for several years been shut up, and to which time and circumstance had given an air of singular desolation, might reasonably be supposed to excite a strong degree of surprise and terror. In the minds of the vulgar, any species of the wonderful is received with avidity; and the servants did not hesitate in believing the southern division of the castle to be inhabited by a supernatural power. Too much agitated to sleep, they agreed to watch for the remainder of the night. For this purpose they arranged themselves in the east gallery, where they had a view of the south tower from which the light had issued. The night, however, passed without any further disturbance; and the morning dawn, which they beheld with inexpressible pleasure, dissipated for a while the glooms of apprehension. But the return of evening renewed the general fear, and for several successive nights the domestics watched the southern tower. Although nothing remarkable was seen, a report was soon raised, and believed, that the southern side of the castle was haunted. Madame de Menon, whose mind was superior to the effects of superstition, was yet disturbed and perplexed, and she determined, if the light reappeared, to inform the marquis of the circumstance, and request the keys of those apartments.

The marquis, immersed in the dissipations of Naples, seldom remembered the castle, or its inhabitants. His son, who had been educated under his immediate care, was the sole object of his pride, as the marchioness was that of his affection. He loved her with romantic fondness, which she repaid with seeming tenderness, and secret perfidy. She allowed herself a free indulgence in the most licentious pleasures, yet conducted herself with an art so exquisite as to elude discovery, and even suspicion. In her amours she was equally inconstant as ardent, till the young Count Hippolitus de Vereza attracted her attention. The natural fickleness of her disposition seemed then to cease, and upon him she centered all her desires.

The count Vereza lost his father in early childhood. He was now of age, and had just entered upon the possession of his estates. His person was graceful, yet manly; his mind accomplished, and his manners elegant; his countenance expressed a happy union of spirit, dignity, and benevolence, which formed the principal traits of his character. He had a sublimity of thought, which taught him to despise the voluptuous vices of the Neapolitans, and led him to higher pursuits. He was the chosen and early friend of young Ferdinand, the son of the marquis, and was a frequent visitor in the family. When the marchioness first saw him, she treated him with great distinction, and at length made such advances, as neither the honor nor the inclinations of the count permitted him to notice. He conducted himself toward her with frigid indifference, which served only to inflame the passion it was meant to chill. The favors of the marchioness had hitherto been sought with avidity, and accepted with rapture; and the repulsive insensibility which she now experienced, roused all her pride, and called into action every refinement of coquetry.

It was about this period that Vincent was seized with a disorder which increased so rapidly, as in a short time to assume the most alarming appearance. Despairing of life, he desired that a messenger might be dispatched to inform the marquis of his situation, and to signify his earnest wish to see him before he died. The progress of his disorder defied every art of medicine, and his visible distress of mind seemed to accelerate his fate. Perceiving his last hour approaching, he requested to have a confessor. The confessor was shut up with him a considerable time, and he had already received extreme unction, when Madame de Menon was summoned to his bedside. The hand of death was now upon him, cold damps hung upon his brows, and he, with difficulty, raised his heavy eyes to madame as she entered the apartment. He beckoned her towards him, and desiring that no person might be permitted to enter the room, was for a few moments silent. His mind appeared to labour under oppressive remembrances; he made several attempts to speak, but either resolution or strength failed him. At length, giving madame a look of unutterable anguish, 'Alas, madam,' said he, 'Heaven grants not the prayer of such a wretch as I am. I must expire long before the marquis can arrive. Since I shall see him no more, I would impart to you a secret which lies heavy at my heart, and which makes my last moments dreadful, as they are without hope.' 'Be comforted,' said madame, who was affected by the energy of his manner, 'we are taught to believe that forgiveness is never denied to sincere repentance.' 'You, madam, are ignorant of the enormity of my crime, and of the secret—the horrid secret which labours at my breast. My guilt is beyond remedy in this world, and I fear will be without pardon in the next; I therefore hope little from confession even to a priest. Yet some good it is still in my power to do; let me disclose to you that secret which is so mysteriously connected with the southern apartments of this castle.'—'What of them!' exclaimed madame, with impatience. Vincent returned no answer; exhausted by the effort of speaking, he had fainted. Madame rung for assistance, and by proper applications, his senses were recalled. He was, however, entirely speechless, and in this state he remained till he expired, which was about an hour after he had conversed with madame.

The perplexity and astonishment of madame, were by the late scene heightened to a very painful degree. She recollected the various particulars relative to the southern division of the castle, the many years it had stood uninhabited—the silence which had been observed concerning it—the appearance of the light and the figure—the fruitless search for the keys, and the reports so generally believed; and thus remembrance presented her with a combination of circumstances, which served only to increase her wonder, and heighten her curiosity. A veil of mystery enveloped that part of the castle, which it now seemed impossible should ever be penetrated, since the only person who could have removed it, was no more.

The marquis arrived on the day after that on which Vincent had expired. He came attended by servants only, and alighted at the gates of the castle with an air of impatience, and a countenance expressive of strong emotion. Madame, with the young ladies, received him in the hall. He hastily saluted his daughters, and passed on to the oak parlour, desiring madame to follow him. She obeyed, and the marquis enquired with great agitation after Vincent. When told of his death, he paced the room with hurried steps, and was for some time silent. At length seating himself, and surveying madame with a scrutinizing eye, he asked some questions concerning the particulars of Vincent's death. She mentioned his earnest desire to see the marquis, and repeated his last words. The marquis remained silent, and madame proceeded to mention those circumstances relative to the southern division of the castle, which she thought it of so much importance to discover. He treated the affair very lightly, laughed at her conjectures, represented the appearances she described as the illusions of a weak and timid mind, and broke up the conversation, by going to visit the chamber of Vincent, in which he remained a considerable time.

On the following day Emilia and Julia dined with the marquis. He was gloomy and silent; their efforts to amuse him seemed to excite displeasure rather than kindness; and when the repast was concluded, he withdrew to his own apartment, leaving his daughters in a state of sorrow and surprise.

Vincent was to be interred, according to his own desire, in the church belonging to the convent of St Nicholas. One of the servants, after receiving some necessary orders concerning the funeral, ventured to inform the marquis of the appearance of the lights in the south tower. He mentioned the superstitious reports that prevailed amongst the household, and complained that the servants would not cross the courts after it was dark. 'And who is he that has commissioned you with this story?' said the marquis, in a tone of displeasure; 'are the weak and ridiculous fancies of women and servants to be obtruded upon my notice? Away—appear no more before me, till you have learned to speak what it is proper for me to hear.' Robert withdrew abashed, and it was some time before any person ventured to renew the subject with the marquis.

The majority of young Ferdinand now drew near, and the marquis determined to celebrate the occasion with festive magnificence at the castle of Mazzini. He, therefore, summoned the marchioness and his son from Naples, and very splendid preparations were ordered to be made. Emilia and Julia dreaded the arrival of the marchioness, whose influence they had long been sensible of, and from whose presence they anticipated a painful restraint. Beneath the gentle guidance of Madame de Menon, their hours had passed in happy tranquillity, for they were ignorant alike of the sorrows and the pleasures of the world. Those did not oppress, and these did not inflame them. Engaged in the pursuits of knowledge, and in the attainment of elegant accomplishments, their moments flew lightly away, and the flight of time was marked only by improvement. In madame was united the tenderness of the mother, with the sympathy of a friend; and they loved her with a warm and inviolable affection.

The purposed visit of their brother, whom they had not seen for several years, gave them great pleasure. Although their minds retained no very distinct remembrance of him, they looked forward with eager and delightful expectation to his virtues and his talents; and hoped to find in his company, a consolation for the uneasiness which the presence of the marchioness would excite. Neither did Julia contemplate with indifference the approaching festival. A new scene was now opening to her, which her young imagination painted in the warm and glowing colours of delight. The near approach of pleasure frequently awakens the heart to emotions, which would fail to be excited by a more remote and abstracted observance. Julia, who, in the distance, had considered the splendid gaieties of life with tranquillity, now lingered with impatient hope through the moments which withheld her from their enjoyments. Emilia, whose feelings were less lively, and whose imagination was less powerful, beheld the approaching festival with calm consideration, and almost regretted the interruption of those tranquil pleasures, which she knew to be more congenial with her powers and disposition.

In a few days the marchioness arrived at the castle. She was followed by a numerous retinue, and accompanied by Ferdinand, and several of the Italian noblesse, whom pleasure attracted to her train. Her entrance was proclaimed by the sound of music, and those gates which had long rusted on their hinges, were thrown open to receive her. The courts and halls, whose aspect so lately expressed only gloom and desolation, now shone with sudden splendour, and echoed the sounds of gaiety and gladness. Julia surveyed the scene from an obscure window; and as the triumphal strains filled the air, her breast throbbed; her heart beat quick with joy, and she lost her apprehensions from the marchioness in a sort of wild delight hitherto unknown to her. The arrival of the marchioness seemed indeed the signal of universal and unlimited pleasure. When the marquis came out to receive her, the gloom that lately clouded his countenance, broke away in smiles of welcome, which the whole company appeared to consider as invitations to joy.

The tranquil heart of Emilia was not proof against a scene so alluring, and she sighed at the prospect, yet scarcely knew why. Julia pointed out to her sister, the graceful figure of a young man who followed the marchioness, and she expressed her wishes that he might be her brother. From the contemplation of the scene before them, they were summoned to meet the marchioness. Julia trembled with apprehension, and for a few moments wished the castle was in its former state. As they advanced through the saloon, in which they were presented, Julia was covered with blushes; but Emilia, tho' equally timid, preserved her graceful dignity. The marchioness received them with a mingled smile of condescension and politeness, and immediately the whole attention of the company was attracted by their elegance and beauty. The eager eyes of Julia sought in vain to discover her brother, of whose features she had no recollection in those of any of the persons then present. At length her father presented him, and she perceived, with a sigh of regret, that he was not the youth she had observed from the window. He advanced with a very engaging air, and she met him with an unfeigned welcome. His figure was tall and majestic; he had a very noble and spirited carriage; and his countenance expressed at once sweetness and dignity. Supper was served in the east hall, and the tables were spread with a profusion of delicacies. A band of music played during the repast, and the evening concluded with a concert in the saloon.

CHAPTER II

The day of the festival, so long and so impatiently looked for by Julia, was now arrived. All the neighbouring nobility were invited, and the gates of the castle were thrown open for a general rejoicing. A magnificent entertainment, consisting of the most luxurious and expensive dishes, was served in the halls. Soft music floated along the vaulted roofs, the walls were hung with decorations, and it seemed as if the hand of a magician had suddenly metamorphosed this once gloomy fabric into the palace of a fairy. The marquis, notwithstanding the gaiety of the scene, frequently appeared abstracted from its enjoyments, and in spite of all his efforts at cheerfulness, the melancholy of his heart was visible in his countenance.

In the evening there was a grand ball: the marchioness, who was still distinguished for her beauty, and for the winning elegance of her manners, appeared in the most splendid attire. Her hair was ornamented with a profusion of jewels, but was so disposed as to give an air rather of voluptuousness than of grace, to her figure. Although conscious of her charms, she beheld the beauty of Emilia and Julia with a jealous eye, and was compelled secretly to acknowledge, that the simple elegance with which they were adorned, was more enchanting than all the studied artifice of splendid decoration. They were dressed alike in light Sicilian habits, and the beautiful luxuriance of their flowing hair was restrained only by bandellets of pearl. The ball was opened by Ferdinand and the lady Matilda Constanza. Emilia danced with the young Marquis della Fazelli, and acquitted herself with the ease and dignity so natural to her. Julia experienced a various emotion of pleasure and fear when the Count de Vereza, in whom she recollected the cavalier she had observed from the window, led her forth. The grace of her step, and the elegant symmetry of her figure, raised in the assembly a gentle murmur of applause, and the soft blush which now stole over her cheek, gave an additional charm to her appearance. But when the music changed, and she danced to the soft Sicilian measure, the airy grace of her movement, and the unaffected tenderness of her air, sunk attention into silence, which continued for some time after the dance had ceased. The marchioness observed the general admiration with seeming pleasure, and secret uneasiness. She had suffered a very painful solicitude, when the Count de Vereza selected her for his partner in the dance, and she pursued him through the evening with an eye of jealous scrutiny. Her bosom, which before glowed only with love, was now torn by the agitation of other passions more violent and destructive. Her thoughts were restless, her mind wandered from the scene before her, and it required all her address to preserve an apparent ease. She saw, or fancied she saw, an impassioned air in the count, when he addressed himself to Julia, that corroded her heart with jealous fury.

At twelve the gates of the castle were thrown open, and the company quitted it for the woods, which were splendidly illuminated. Arcades of light lined the long vistas, which were terminated by pyramids of lamps that presented to the eye one bright column of flame. At irregular distances buildings were erected, hung with variegated lamps, disposed in the gayest and most fantastic forms. Collations were spread under the trees; and music, touched by unseen hands, breathed around. The musicians were placed in the most obscure and embowered spots, so as to elude the eye and strike the imagination. The scene appeared enchanting. Nothing met the eye but beauty and romantic splendour; the ear received no sounds but those of mirth and melody. The younger part of the company formed themselves into groups, which at intervals glanced through the woods, and were again unseen. Julia seemed the magic queen of the place. Her heart dilated with pleasure, and diffused over her features an expression of pure and complacent delight. A generous, frank, and exalted sentiment sparkled in her eyes, and animated her manner. Her bosom glowed with benevolent affections; and she seemed anxious to impart to all around her, a happiness as unmixed as that she experienced. Wherever she moved, admiration followed her steps. Ferdinand was as gay as the scene around him. Emilia was pleased; and the marquis seemed to have left his melancholy in the castle. The marchioness alone was wretched. She supped with a select party, in a pavilion on the sea-shore, which was fitted up with peculiar elegance. It was hung with white silk, drawn up in festoons, and richly fringed with gold. The sofas were of the same materials, and alternate wreaths of lamps and of roses entwined the columns. A row of small lamps placed about the cornice, formed an edge of light round the roof which, with the other numerous lights, was reflected in a blaze of splendour from the large mirrors that adorned the room. The Count Muriani was of the party;—he complimented the marchioness on the beauty of her daughters; and after lamenting with gaiety the captives which their charms would enthral, he mentioned the Count de Vereza. 'He is certainly of all others the man most deserving the lady Julia. As they danced, I thought they exhibited a perfect model of the beauty of either sex; and if I mistake not, they are inspired with a mutual admiration.' The marchioness, endeavouring to conceal her uneasiness, said, 'Yes, my lord, I allow the count all the merit you adjudge him, but from the little I have seen of his disposition, he is too volatile for a serious attachment.' At that instant the count entered the pavilion: 'Ah,' said Muriani, laughingly, 'you was the subject of our conversation, and seem to be come in good time to receive the honors allotted you. I was interceding with the marchioness for her interest in your favor, with the lady Julia; but she absolutely refuses it; and though she allows you merit, alleges, that you are by nature fickle and inconstant. What say you—would not the beauty of lady Julia bind your unsteady heart?'.

'I know not how I have deserved that character of the marchioness,' said the count with a smile, 'but that heart must be either fickle or insensible in an uncommon degree, which can boast of freedom in the presence of lady Julia.' The marchioness, mortified by the whole conversation, now felt the full force of Vereza's reply, which she imagined he pointed with particular emphasis.

The entertainment concluded with a grand firework, which was exhibited on the margin of the sea, and the company did not part till the dawn of morning. Julia retired from the scene with regret. She was enchanted with the new world that was now exhibited to her, and she was not cool enough to distinguish the vivid glow of imagination from the colours of real bliss. The pleasure she now felt she believed would always be renewed, and in an equal degree, by the objects which first excited it. The weakness of humanity is never willingly perceived by young minds. It is painful to know, that we are operated upon by objects whose impressions are variable as they are indefinable—and that what yesterday affected us strongly, is to-day but imperfectly felt, and to-morrow perhaps shall be disregarded. When at length this unwelcome truth is received into the mind, we at first reject, with disgust, every appearance of good, we disdain to partake of a happiness which we cannot always command, and we not unfrequently sink into a temporary despair. Wisdom or accident, at length, recal us from our error, and offers to us some object capable of producing a pleasing, yet lasting effect, which effect, therefore, we call happiness. Happiness has this essential difference from what is commonly called pleasure, that virtue forms its basis, and virtue being the offspring of reason, may be expected to produce uniformity of effect.

The passions which had hitherto lain concealed in Julia's heart, touched by circumstance, dilated to its power, and afforded her a slight experience of the pain and delight which flow from their influence. The beauty and accomplishments of Vereza raised in her a new and various emotion, which reflection made her fear to encourage, but which was too pleasing to be wholly resisted. Tremblingly alive to a sense of delight, and unchilled by disappointment, the young heart welcomes every feeling, not simply painful, with a romantic expectation that it will expand into bliss.

Julia sought with eager anxiety to discover the sentiments of Vereza towards her; she revolved each circumstance of the day, but they afforded her little satisfaction; they reflected only a glimmering and uncertain light, which instead of guiding, served only to perplex her. Now she remembered some instance of particular attention, and then some mark of apparent indifference. She compared his conduct with that of the other young noblesse; and thought each appeared equally desirous of the favor of every lady present. All the ladies, however, appeared to her to court the admiration of Vereza, and she trembled lest he should be too sensible of the distinction. She drew from these reflections no positive inference; and though distrust rendered pain the predominate sensation, it was so exquisitely interwoven with delight, that she could not wish it exchanged for her former ease. Thoughtful and restless, sleep fled from her eyes, and she longed with impatience for the morning, which should again present Vereza, and enable her to pursue the enquiry. She rose early, and adorned herself with unusual care. In her favorite closet she awaited the hour of breakfast, and endeavoured to read, but her thoughts wandered from the subject. Her lute and favorite airs lost half their power to please; the day seemed to stand still—she became melancholy, and thought the breakfast-hour would never arrive. At length the clock struck the signal, the sound vibrated on every nerve, and trembling she quitted the closet for her sister's apartment. Love taught her disguise. Till then Emilia had shared all her thoughts; they now descended to the breakfast-room in silence, and Julia almost feared to meet her eye. In the breakfast-room they were alone. Julia found it impossible to support a conversation with Emilia, whose observations interrupting the course of her thoughts, became uninteresting and tiresome. She was therefore about to retire to her closet, when the marquis entered. His air was haughty, and his look severe. He coldly saluted his daughters, and they had scarcely time to reply to his general enquiries, when the marchioness entered, and the company soon after assembled. Julia, who had awaited with so painful an impatience for the moment which should present Vereza to her sight, now sighed that it was arrived. She scarcely dared to lift her timid eyes from the ground, and when by accident they met his, a soft tremour seized her; and apprehension lest he should discover her sentiments, served only to render her confusion conspicuous. At length, a glance from the marchioness recalled her bewildered thoughts; and other fears superseding those of love, her mind, by degrees, recovered its dignity. She could distinguish in the behaviour of Vereza no symptoms of particular admiration, and she resolved to conduct herself towards him with the most scrupulous care.

This day, like the preceding one, was devoted to joy. In the evening there was a concert, which was chiefly performed by the nobility. Ferdinand played the violoncello, Vereza the German flute, and Julia the piana-forte, which she touched with a delicacy and execution that engaged every auditor. The confusion of Julia may be easily imagined, when Ferdinand, selecting a beautiful duet, desired Vereza would accompany his sister. The pride of conscious excellence, however, quickly overcame her timidity, and enabled her to exert all her powers. The air was simple and pathetic, and she gave it those charms of expression so peculiarly her own. She struck the chords of her piana-forte in beautiful accompaniment, and towards the close of the second stanza, her voice resting on one note, swelled into a tone so exquisite, and from thence descended to a few simple notes, which she touched with such impassioned tenderness that every eye wept to the sounds. The breath of the flute trembled, and Hippolitus entranced, forgot to play. A pause of silence ensued at the conclusion of the piece, and continued till a general sigh seemed to awaken the audience from their enchantment. Amid the general applause, Hippolitus was silent. Julia observed his behaviour, and gently raising her eyes to his, there read the sentiments which she had inspired. An exquisite emotion thrilled her heart, and she experienced one of those rare moments which illuminate life with a ray of bliss, by which the darkness of its general shade is contrasted. Care, doubt, every disagreeable sensation vanished, and for the remainder of the evening she was conscious only of delight. A timid respect marked the manner of Hippolitus, more flattering to Julia than the most ardent professions. The evening concluded with a ball, and Julia was again the partner of the count.

When the ball broke up, she retired to her apartment, but not to sleep. Joy is as restless as anxiety or sorrow. She seemed to have entered upon a new state of existence;—those fine springs of affection which had hitherto lain concealed, were now touched, and yielded to her a happiness more exalted than any her imagination had ever painted. She reflected on the tranquillity of her past life, and comparing it with the emotions of the present hour, exulted in the difference. All her former pleasures now appeared insipid; she wondered that they ever had power to affect her, and that she had endured with content the dull uniformity to which she had been condemned. It was now only that she appeared to live. Absorbed in the single idea of being beloved, her imagination soared into the regions of romantic bliss, and bore her high above the possibility of evil. Since she was beloved by Hippolitus, she could only be happy.

From this state of entranced delight, she was awakened by the sound of music immediately under her window. It was a lute touched by a masterly hand. After a wild and melancholy symphony, a voice of more than magic expression swelled into an air so pathetic and tender, that it seemed to breathe the very soul of love. The chords of the lute were struck in low and sweet accompaniment. Julia listened, and distinguished the following words;

SONNET

Still is the night-breeze!—not a lonely sound
   Steals through the silence of this dreary hour;

O'er these high battlements Sleep reigns profound,
    And sheds on all, his sweet oblivious power.
On all but me—I vainly ask his dews
    To steep in short forgetfulness my cares.
Th' affrighted god still flies when Love pursues,
    Still—still denies the wretched lover's prayers.

An interval of silence followed, and the air was repeated; after which the music was heard no more. If before Julia believed that she was loved by Hippolitus, she was now confirmed in the sweet reality. But sleep at length fell upon her senses, and the airy forms of ideal bliss no longer fleeted before her imagination. Morning came, and she arose light and refreshed. How different were her present sensations from those of the preceding day. Her anxiety had now evaporated in joy, and she experienced that airy dance of spirits which accumulates delight from every object; and with a power like the touch of enchantment, can transform a gloomy desert into a smiling Eden. She flew to the breakfast-room, scarcely conscious of motion; but, as she entered it, a soft confusion overcame her; she blushed, and almost feared to meet the eyes of Vereza. She was presently relieved, however, for the Count was not there. The company assembled—Julia watched the entrance of every person with painful anxiety, but he for whom she looked did not appear. Surprised and uneasy, she fixed her eyes on the door, and whenever it opened, her heart beat with an expectation which was as often checked by disappointment. In spite of all her efforts, her vivacity sunk into languor, and she then perceived that love may produce other sensations than those of delight. She found it possible to be unhappy, though loved by Hippolitus; and acknowledged with a sigh of regret, which was yet new to her, how tremblingly her peace depended upon him. He neither appeared nor was mentioned at breakfast; but though delicacy prevented her enquiring after him, conversation soon became irksome to her, and she retired to the apartment of Madame de Menon. There she employed herself in painting, and endeavoured to beguile the time till the hour of dinner, when she hoped to see Hippolitus. Madame was, as usual, friendly and cheerful, but she perceived a reserve in the conduct of Julia, and penetrated without difficulty into its cause. She was, however, ignorant of the object of her pupil's admiration. The hour so eagerly desired by Julia at length arrived, and with a palpitating heart she entered the hall. The Count was not there, and in the course of conversation, she learned that he had that morning sailed for Naples. The scene which so lately appeared enchanting to her eyes, now changed its hue; and in the midst of society, and surrounded by gaiety, she was solitary and dejected. She accused herself of having suffered her wishes to mislead her judgment; and the present conduct of Hippolitus convinced her, that she had mistaken admiration for a sentiment more tender. She believed, too, that the musician who had addressed her in his sonnet, was not the Count; and thus at once was dissolved all the ideal fabric of her happiness. How short a period often reverses the character of our sentiments, rendering that which yesterday we despised, to-day desirable. The tranquil state which she had so lately delighted to quit, she now reflected upon with regret. She had, however, the consolation of believing that her sentiments towards the Count were unknown, and the sweet consciousness that her conduct had been governed by a nice sense of propriety.

The public rejoicings at the castle closed with the week; but the gay spirit of the marchioness forbade a return to tranquillity; and she substituted diversions more private, but in splendour scarcely inferior to the preceding ones. She had observed the behaviour of Hippolitus on the night of the concert with chagrin, and his departure with sorrow; yet, disdaining to perpetuate misfortune by reflection, she sought to lose the sense of disappointment in the hurry of dissipation. But her efforts to erase him from her remembrance were ineffectual. Unaccustomed to oppose the bent of her inclinations, they now maintained unbounded sway; and she found too late, that in order to have a due command of our passions, it is necessary to subject them to early obedience. Passion, in its undue influence, produces weakness as well as injustice. The pain which now recoiled upon her heart from disappointment, she had not strength of mind to endure, and she sought relief from its pressure in afflicting the innocent. Julia, whose beauty she imagined had captivated the count, and confirmed him in indifference towards herself, she incessantly tormented by the exercise of those various and splenetic little arts which elude the eye of the common observer, and are only to be known by those who have felt them. Arts, which individually are inconsiderable, but in the aggregate amount to a cruel and decisive effect.

From Julia's mind the idea of happiness was now faded. Pleasure had withdrawn her beam from the prospect, and the objects no longer illumined by her ray, became dark and colourless. As often as her situation would permit, she withdrew from society, and sought the freedom of solitude, where she could indulge in melancholy thoughts, and give a loose to that despair which is so apt to follow the disappointment of our first hopes.

Week after week elapsed, yet no mention was made of returning to Naples. The marquis at length declared it his intention to spend the remainder of the summer in the castle. To this determination the marchioness submitted with decent resignation, for she was here surrounded by a croud of flatterers, and her invention supplied her with continual diversions: that gaiety which rendered Naples so dear to her, glittered in the woods of Mazzini, and resounded through the castle.

The apartments of Madame de Menon were spacious and noble. The windows opened upon the sea, and commanded a view of the straits of Messina, bounded on one side by the beautiful shores of the isle of Sicily, and on the other by the high mountains of Calabria. The straits, filled with vessels whose gay streamers glittered to the sun-beam, presented to the eye an ever-moving scene. The principal room opened upon a gallery that overhung the grand terrace of the castle, and it commanded a prospect which for beauty and extent has seldom been equalled. These were formerly considered the chief apartments of the castle; and when the Marquis quitted them for Naples, were allotted for the residence of Madame de Menon, and her young charge. The marchioness, struck with the prospect which the windows afforded, and with the pleasantness of the gallery, determined to restore the rooms to their former splendour. She signified this intention to madame, for whom other apartments were provided. The chambers of Emilia and Julia forming part of the suite, they were also claimed by the marchioness, who left Julia only her favorite closet. The rooms to which they removed were spacious, but gloomy; they had been for some years uninhabited; and though preparations had been made for the reception of their new inhabitants, an air of desolation reigned within them that inspired melancholy sensations. Julia observed that her chamber, which opened beyond madame's, formed a part of the southern building, with which, however, there appeared no means of communication. The late mysterious circumstances relating to this part of the fabric, now arose to her imagination, and conjured up a terror which reason could not subdue. She told her emotions to madame, who, with more prudence than sincerity, laughed at her fears. The behaviour of the marquis, the dying words of Vincent, together with the preceding circumstances of alarm, had sunk deep in the mind of madame, but she saw the necessity of confining to her own breast doubts which time only could resolve.

Julia endeavoured to reconcile herself to the change, and a circumstance soon occurred which obliterated her present sensations, and excited others far more interesting. One day that she was arranging some papers in the small drawers of a cabinet that stood in her apartment, she found a picture which fixed all her attention. It was a miniature of a lady, whose countenance was touched with sorrow, and expressed an air of dignified resignation. The mournful sweetness of her eyes, raised towards Heaven with a look of supplication, and the melancholy languor that shaded her features, so deeply affected Julia, that her eyes were filled with involuntary tears. She sighed and wept, still gazing on the picture, which seemed to engage her by a kind of fascination. She almost fancied that the portrait breathed, and that the eyes were fixed on hers with a look of penetrating softness. Full of the emotions which the miniature had excited, she presented it to madame, whose mingled sorrow and surprise increased her curiosity. But what were the various sensations which pressed upon her heart, on learning that she had wept over the resemblance of her mother! Deprived of a mother's tenderness before she was sensible of its value, it was now only that she mourned the event which lamentation could not recall. Emilia, with an emotion as exquisite, mingled her tears with those of her sister. With eager impatience they pressed madame to disclose the cause of that sorrow which so emphatically marked the features of their mother.

'Alas! my dear children,' said madame, deeply sighing, 'you engage me in a task too severe, not only for your peace, but for mine; since in giving you the information you require, I must retrace scenes of my own life, which I wish for ever obliterated. It would, however, be both cruel and unjust to withhold an explanation so nearly interesting to you, and I will sacrifice my own ease to your wishes.

'Louisa de Bernini, your mother, was, as you well know, the only daughter of the Count de Bernini. Of the misfortunes of your family, I believe you are yet ignorant. The chief estates of the count were situated in the *Val di Demona*, a valley deriving its name from its vicinity to Mount AEtna, which vulgar tradition has peopled with devils. In one of those dreadful eruptions of AEtna, which deluged this valley with a flood of fire, a great part of your grandfather's domains in that quarter were laid waste. The count was at that time with a part of his family at Messina, but the countess and her son, who were in the country, were destroyed. The remaining property of the count was proportionably inconsiderable, and the loss of his wife and son deeply affected him. He retired with Louisa, his only surviving child, who was then near fifteen, to a small estate near Cattania. There was some degree of relationship between your grandfather and myself; and your mother was attached to me by the ties of sentiment, which, as we grew up, united us still more strongly than those of blood. Our pleasures and our tastes were the same; and a similarity of misfortunes might, perhaps, contribute to cement our early friendship. I, like herself, had lost a parent in the eruption of AEtna. My mother had died before I understood her value; but my father, whom I revered and tenderly loved, was destroyed by one of those terrible events; his lands were buried beneath the lava, and he left an only son and myself to mourn his fate, and encounter the evils of poverty. The count, who was our nearest surviving relation, generously took us home to his house, and declared that he considered us as his children. To amuse his leisure hours, he undertook to finish the education of my brother, who was then about seventeen, and whose rising genius promised to reward the labours of the count. Louisa and myself often shared the instruction of her father, and at those hours Orlando was generally of the party. The tranquil retirement of the count's situation, the rational employment of his time between his own studies, the education of those whom he called his children, and the conversation of a few select friends, anticipated the effect of time, and softened the asperities of his distress into a tender complacent melancholy. As for Louisa and myself, who were yet new in life, and whose spirits possessed the happy elasticity of youth, our minds gradually shifted from suffering to tranquillity, and from tranquillity to happiness. I have sometimes thought that when my brother has been reading to her a delightful passage, the countenance of Louisa discovered a tender interest, which seemed to be excited rather by the reader than by the author. These days, which were surely the most enviable of our lives, now passed in serene enjoyments, and in continual gradations of improvement.

'The count designed my brother for the army, and the time now drew nigh when he was to join the Sicilian regiment, in which he had a commission. The absent thoughts, and dejected spirits of my cousin, now discovered to me the secret which had long been concealed even from herself; for it was not till Orlando was about to depart, that she perceived how dear he was to her peace. On the eve of his departure, the count lamented, with fatherly yet manly tenderness, the distance which was soon to separate us. "But we shall meet again," said he, "when the honors of war shall have rewarded the bravery of my son." Louisa grew pale, a half suppressed sigh escaped her, and, to conceal her emotion, she turned to her harpsichord.

'My brother had a favorite dog, which, before he set off, he presented to Louisa, and committing it to her care, begged she would be kind to it, and sometimes remember its master. He checked his rising emotion, but as he turned from her, I perceived the tear that wetted his cheek. He departed, and with him the spirit of our happiness seemed to evaporate. The scenes which his presence had formerly enlivened, were now forlorn and melancholy, yet we loved to wander in what were once his favorite haunts. Louisa forbore to mention my brother even to me, but frequently, when she thought herself unobserved, she would steal to her harpsichord, and repeat the strain which she had played on the evening before his departure.

'We had the pleasure to hear from time to time that he was well: and though his own modesty threw a veil over his conduct, we could collect from other accounts that he had behaved with great bravery. At length the time of his return approached, and the enlivened spirits of Louisa declared the influence he retained in her heart. He returned, bearing public testimony of his valour in the honors which had been conferred upon him. He was received with universal joy; the count welcomed him with the pride and fondness of a father, and the villa became again the seat of happiness. His person and manners were much improved; the elegant beauty of the youth was now exchanged for the graceful dignity of manhood, and some knowledge of the world was added to that of the sciences. The joy which illumined his countenance when he met Louisa, spoke at once his admiration and his love; and the blush which her observation of it brought upon her cheek, would have discovered, even to an uninterested spectator, that this joy was mutual.

'Orlando brought with him a young Frenchman, a brother officer, who had rescued him from imminent danger in battle, and whom he introduced to the count as his preserver. The count received him with gratitude and distinction, and he was for a considerable time an inmate at the villa. His manners were singularly pleasing, and his understanding was cultivated and refined. He soon discovered a partiality for me, and he was indeed too pleasing to be seen with indifference. Gratitude for the valuable life he had preserved, was perhaps the groundwork of an esteem which soon increased into the most affectionate love. Our attachment grew stronger as our acquaintance increased; and at length the chevalier de Menon asked me of the count, who consulted my heart, and finding it favorable to the connection, proceeded to make the necessary enquiries concerning the family of the stranger. He obtained a satisfactory and pleasing account of it. The chevalier was the second son of a French gentleman of large estates in France, who had been some years deceased. He had left several sons; the family-estate, of course, devolved to the eldest, but to the two younger he had bequeathed considerable property. Our marriage was solemnized in a private manner at the villa, in the presence of the count, Louisa, and my brother. Soon after the nuptials, my husband and Orlando were remanded to their regiments. My brother's affections were now unalterably fixed upon Louisa, but a sentiment of delicacy and generosity still kept him silent. He thought, poor as he was, to solicit the hand of Louisa, would be to repay the kindness of the count with ingratitude. I have seen the inward struggles of his heart, and mine has bled for him. The count and Louisa so earnestly solicited me to remain at the villa during the campaign, that at length my husband consented. We parted—O! let me forget that period!—Had I accompanied him, all might have been well; and the long, long years of affliction which followed had been spared me.'

The horn now sounded the signal for dinner, and interrupted the narrative of Madame. Her beauteous auditors wiped the tears from their eyes, and with extreme reluctance descended to the hall. The day was occupied with company and diversions, and it was not till late in the evening that they were suffered to retire. They hastened to madame immediately upon their being released; and too much interested for sleep, and too importunate to be repulsed, solicited the sequel of her story. She objected the lateness of the hour, but at length yielded to their entreaties. They drew their chairs close to hers; and every sense being absorbed in the single one of hearing, followed her through the course of her narrative.

'My brother again departed without disclosing his sentiments; the effort it cost him was evident, but his sense of honor surmounted every opposing consideration. Louisa again drooped, and pined in silent sorrow. I lamented equally for my friend and my brother; and have a thousand times accused that delicacy as false, which withheld them from the happiness they might so easily and so innocently have obtained. The behaviour of the count, at least to my eye, seemed to indicate the satisfaction which this union would have given him. It was about this period that the marquis Mazzini first saw and became enamoured of Louisa. His proposals were very flattering, but the count forbore to exert the undue authority of a father; and he ceased to press the connection, when he perceived that Louisa was really averse to it. Louisa was sensible of the generosity of his conduct, and she could scarcely reject the alliance without a sigh, which her gratitude paid to the kindness of her father.

'But an event now happened which dissolved at once our happiness, and all our air-drawn schemes for futurity. A dispute, which it seems originated in a trifle, but soon increased to a serious degree, arose between the *Chevalier de Menon* and my brother. It was decided by the sword, and my dear brother fell by the hand of my husband. I shall pass over this period of my life. It is too painful for recollection. The effect of this event upon Louisa was such as may be imagined. The world was now become indifferent to her, and as she had no prospect of happiness for herself, she was unwilling to withhold it from the father who had deserved so much of her. After some time, when the marquis renewed his addresses, she gave him her hand. The characters of the marquis and his lady were in their nature too opposite to form a happy union. Of this Louisa was very soon sensible; and though the mildness of her disposition made her tamely submit to the unfeeling authority of her husband, his behaviour sunk deep in her heart, and she pined in secret. It was impossible for her to avoid opposing the character of the marquis to that of him upon whom her affections had been so fondly and so justly fixed. The comparison increased her sufferings, which soon preyed upon her constitution, and very visibly affected her health. Her situation deeply afflicted the count, and united with the infirmities of age to shorten his life.

'Upon his death, I bade adieu to my cousin, and quitted Sicily for Italy, where the Chevalier de Menon had for some time expected me. Our meeting was very affecting. My resentment towards him was done away, when I observed his pale and altered countenance, and perceived the melancholy which preyed upon his heart. All the airy vivacity of his former manner was fled, and he was devoured by unavailing grief and remorse. He deplored with unceasing sorrow the friend he had murdered, and my presence seemed to open afresh the wounds which time had begun to close. His affliction, united with my own, was almost more than I could support, but I was doomed to suffer, and endure yet more. In a subsequent engagement my husband, weary of existence, rushed into the heat of battle, and there obtained an honorable death. In a paper which he left behind him, he said it was his intention to die in that battle; that he had long wished for death, and waited for an opportunity of obtaining it without staining his own character by the cowardice of suicide, or distressing me by an act of butchery. This event gave the finishing stroke to my afflictions;—yet let me retract;—another misfortune awaited me when I least expected one. The *Chevalier de Menon* died without a will, and his brothers refused to give up his estate, unless I could produce a witness of my marriage. I returned to Sicily, and, to my inexpressible sorrow, found that your mother had died during my stay abroad, a prey, I fear, to grief. The priest who performed the ceremony of my marriage, having been threatened with punishment for some ecclesiastical offences, had secretly left the country; and thus was I deprived of those proofs which were necessary to authenticate my claims to the estates of my husband. His brothers, to whom I was an utter stranger, were either too prejudiced to believe, or believing, were too dishonorable to acknowledge the justice of my claims. I was therefore at once abandoned to sorrow and to poverty; a small legacy from the count de Bernini being all that now remained to me.

'When the marquis married Maria de Vellorno, which was about this period, he designed to quit Mazzini for Naples. His son was to accompany him, but it was his intention to leave you, who were both very young, to the care of some person qualified to superintend your education. My circumstances rendered the office acceptable, and my former friendship for your mother made the duty pleasing to me. The marquis was, I believe, glad to be spared the trouble of searching further for what he had hitherto found it difficult to obtain—a person whom inclination as well as duty would bind to his interest.'

Madame ceased to speak, and Emilia and Julia wept to the memory of the mother, whose misfortunes this story recorded. The sufferings of madame, together with her former friendship for the late marchioness, endeared her to her pupils, who from this period endeavoured by every kind and delicate attention to obliterate the traces of her sorrows. Madame was sensible of this tenderness, and it was productive in some degree of the effect desired. But a subject soon after occurred, which drew off their minds from the consideration of their mother's fate to a subject more wonderful and equally interesting.

One night that Emilia and Julia had been detained by company, in ceremonial restraint, later than usual, they were induced, by the easy conversation of madame, and by the pleasure which a return to liberty naturally produces, to defer the hour of repose till the night was far advanced. They were engaged in interesting discourse, when madame, who was then speaking, was interrupted by a low hollow sound, which arose from beneath the apartment, and seemed like the closing of a door. Chilled into a silence, they listened and distinctly heard it repeated. Deadly ideas crowded upon their imaginations, and inspired a terror which scarcely allowed them to breathe. The noise lasted only for a moment, and a profound silence soon ensued. Their feelings at length relaxed, and suffered them to move to Emilia's apartment, when again they heard the same sounds. Almost distracted with fear, they rushed into madame's apartment, where Emilia sunk upon the bed and fainted. It was a considerable time ere the efforts of madame recalled her to sensation. When they were again tranquil, she employed all her endeavours to compose the spirits of the young ladies, and dissuade them from alarming the castle. Involved in dark and fearful doubts, she yet commanded her feelings, and endeavoured to assume an appearance of composure. The late behaviour of the marquis had convinced her that he was nearly connected with the mystery which hung over this part of the edifice; and she dreaded to excite his resentment by a further mention of alarms, which were perhaps only ideal, and whose reality she had certainly no means of proving.

Influenced by these considerations, she endeavoured to prevail on Emilia and Julia to await in silence some confirmation of their surmises; but their terror made this a very difficult task. They acquiesced, however, so far with her wishes, as to agree to conceal the preceding circumstances from every person but their brother, without whose protecting presence they declared it utterly impossible to pass another night in the apartments. For the remainder of this night they resolved to watch. To beguile the tediousness of the time they endeavoured to converse, but the minds of Emilia and Julia were too much affected by the late occurrence to wander from the subject. They compared this with the foregoing circumstance of the figure and the light which had appeared; their imaginations kindled wild conjectures, and they submitted their opinions to madame, entreating her to inform them sincerely, whether she believed that disembodied spirits were ever permitted to visit this earth.

'My children,' said she, 'I will not attempt to persuade you that the existence of such spirits is impossible. Who shall say that any thing is impossible to God? We know that he has made us, who are embodied spirits; he, therefore, can make unembodied spirits. If we cannot understand how such spirits exist, we should consider the limited powers of our minds, and that we cannot understand many things which are indisputably true. No one yet knows why the magnetic needle points to the north; yet you, who have never seen a magnet, do not hesitate to believe that it has this tendency, because you have been well assured of it, both from books and in conversation. Since, therefore, we are sure that nothing is impossible to God, and that such beings *may* exist, though we cannot tell how, we ought to consider by what evidence their existence is supported. I do not say that spirits *have* appeared; but if several discreet unprejudiced persons were to assure me that they had seen one, I should not be proud or bold enough to reply—'it is impossible.' Let not, however, such considerations disturb your minds. I have said thus much, because I was unwilling to impose upon your understandings; it is now your part to exercise your reason, and preserve the unmoved confidence of virtue. Such spirits, if indeed they have ever been seen, can have appeared only by the express permission of God, and for some very singular purposes; be assured that there are no beings who act unseen by him; and that, therefore, there are none from whom innocence can ever suffer harm.'

No further sounds disturbed them for that time; and before the morning dawned, weariness insensibly overcame apprehension, and sunk them in repose.

When Ferdinand learned the circumstances relative to the southern side of the castle, his imagination seized with avidity each appearance of mystery, and inspired him with an irresistible desire to penetrate the secrets of his desolate part of the fabric. He very readily consented to watch with his sisters in Julia's apartment; but as his chamber was in a remote part of the castle, there would be some difficulty in passing unobserved to her's. It was agreed, however, that when all was hushed, he should make the attempt. Having thus resolved, Emilia and Julia waited the return of night with restless and fearful impatience.

At length the family retired to rest. The castle clock had struck one, and Julia began to fear that Ferdinand had been discovered, when a knocking was heard at the door of the outer chamber.

Her heart beat with apprehensions, which reason could not justify. Madame rose, and enquiring who was there, was answered by the voice of Ferdinand. The door was cheerfully opened. They drew their chairs round him, and endeavoured to pass the time in conversation; but fear and expectation attracted all their thoughts to one subject, and madame alone preserved her composure. The hour was now come when the sounds had been heard the preceding night, and every ear was given to attention. All, however, remained quiet, and the night passed without any new alarm.

The greater part of several succeeding nights were spent in watching, but no sounds disturbed their silence. Ferdinand, in whose mind the late circumstances had excited a degree of astonishment and curiosity superior to common obstacles, determined, if possible, to gain admittance to those recesses of the castle, which had for so many years been hid from human eye. This, however, was a design which he saw little probability of accomplishing, for the keys of that part of the edifice were in the possession of the marquis, of whose late conduct he judged too well to believe he would suffer the apartments to be explored. He racked his invention for the means of getting access to them, and at length recollected that Julia's chamber formed a part of these buildings, it occurred to him, that according to the mode of building in old times, there might formerly have been a communication between them. This consideration suggested to him the possibility of a concealed door in her apartment, and he determined to survey it on the following night with great care.

CHAPTER III

The castle was buried in sleep when Ferdinand again joined his sisters in madame's apartment. With anxious curiosity they followed him to the chamber. The room was hung with tapestry. Ferdinand carefully sounded the wall which communicated with the southern buildings. From one part of it a sound was returned, which convinced him there was something less solid than stone. He removed the tapestry, and behind it appeared, to his inexpressible satisfaction, a small door. With a hand trembling through eagerness, he undrew the bolts, and was rushing forward, when he perceived that a lock withheld his passage. The keys of madame and his sisters were applied in vain, and he was compelled to submit to disappointment at the very moment when he congratulated himself on success, for he had with him no means of forcing the door.

He stood gazing on the door, and inwardly lamenting, when a low hollow sound was heard from beneath. Emilia and Julia seized his arm; and almost sinking with apprehension, listened in profound silence. A footstep was distinctly heard, as if passing through the apartment below, after which all was still. Ferdinand, fired by this confirmation of the late report, rushed on to the door, and again tried to burst his way, but it resisted all the efforts of his strength. The ladies now rejoiced in that circumstance which they so lately lamented; for the sounds had renewed their terror, and though the night passed without further disturbance, their fears were very little abated.

Ferdinand, whose mind was wholly occupied with wonder, could with difficulty await the return of night. Emilia and Julia were scarcely less impatient. They counted the minutes as they passed; and when the family retired to rest, hastened with palpitating hearts to the apartment of madame. They were soon after joined by Ferdinand, who brought with him tools for cutting away the lock of the door. They paused a few moments in the chamber in fearful silence, but no sound disturbed the stillness of night. Ferdinand applied a knife to the door, and in a short time separated the lock. The door yielded, and disclosed a large and gloomy gallery. He took a light. Emilia and Julia, fearful of remaining in the chamber, resolved to accompany him, and each seizing an arm of madame, they followed in silence. The gallery was in many parts falling to decay, the ceiling was broke, and the window-shutters shattered, which, together with the dampness of the walls, gave the place an air of wild desolation.

They passed lightly on, for their steps ran in whispering echoes through the gallery, and often did Julia cast a fearful glance around.

The gallery terminated in a large old stair-case, which led to a hall below; on the left appeared several doors which seemed to lead to separate apartments. While they hesitated which course to pursue, a light flashed faintly up the stair-case, and in a moment after passed away; at the same time was heard the sound of a distant footstep. Ferdinand drew his sword and sprang forward; his companions, screaming with terror, ran back to madame's apartment.

Ferdinand descended a large vaulted hall; he crossed it towards a low arched door, which was left half open, and through which streamed a ray of light. The door opened upon a narrow winding passage; he entered, and the light retiring, was quickly lost in the windings of the place. Still he went on. The passage grew narrower, and the frequent fragments of loose stone made it now difficult to proceed. A low door closed the avenue, resembling that by which he had entered. He opened it, and discovered a square room, from whence rose a winding stair-case, which led up the south tower of the castle. Ferdinand paused to listen; the sound of steps was ceased, and all was profoundly silent. A door on the right attracted his notice; he tried to open it, but it was fastened. He concluded, therefore, that the person, if indeed a human being it was that bore the light he had seen, had passed up the tower. After a momentary hesitation, he determined to ascend the stair-case, but its ruinous condition made this an adventure of some difficulty. The steps were decayed and broken, and the looseness of the stones rendered a footing very insecure. Impelled by an irresistible curiosity, he was undismayed, and began the ascent. He had not proceeded very far, when the stones of a step which his foot had just quitted, loosened by his weight, gave way; and dragging with them those adjoining, formed a chasm in the stair-case that terrified even Ferdinand, who was left tottering on the suspended half of the steps, in momentary expectation of falling to the bottom with the stone on which he rested. In the terror which this occasioned, he attempted to save himself by catching at a kind of beam which projected over the stairs, when the lamp dropped from his hand, and he was left in total darkness. Terror now usurped the place of every other interest, and he was utterly perplexed how to proceed. He feared to go on, lest the steps above, as infirm as those below, should yield to his weight;—to return was impracticable, for the darkness precluded the possibility of discovering a means. He determined, therefore, to remain in this situation till light should dawn through the narrow grates in the walls, and enable him to contrive some method of letting himself down to the ground.

He had remained here above an hour, when he suddenly heard a voice from below. It seemed to come from the passage leading to the tower, and perceptibly drew nearer. His agitation was now extreme, for he had no power of defending himself, and while he remained in this state of torturing expectation, a blaze of light burst upon the stair-case beneath him. In the succeeding moment he heard his own name sounded from below. His apprehensions instantly vanished, for he distinguished the voices of madame and his sisters.

They had awaited his return in all the horrors of apprehension, till at length all fear for themselves was lost in their concern for him; and they, who so lately had not dared to enter this part of the edifice, now undauntedly searched it in quest of Ferdinand. What were their emotions when they discovered his perilous situation!

The light now enabled him to take a more accurate survey of the place. He perceived that some few stones of the steps which had fallen still remained attached to the wall, but he feared to trust to their support only. He observed, however, that the wall itself was partly decayed, and consequently rugged with the corners of half-worn stones. On these small projections he contrived, with the assistance of the steps already mentioned, to suspend himself, and at length gained the unbroken part of the stairs in safety. It is difficult to determine which individual of the party rejoiced most at this escape. The morning now dawned, and Ferdinand desisted for the present from farther enquiry.

The interest which these mysterious circumstances excited in the mind of Julia, had withdrawn her attention from a subject more dangerous to its peace. The image of Vereza, notwithstanding, would frequently intrude upon her fancy; and, awakening the recollection of happy emotions, would call forth a sigh which all her efforts could not suppress. She loved to indulge the melancholy of her heart in the solitude of the woods. One evening she took her lute to a favorite spot on the seashore, and resigning herself to a pleasing sadness, touched some sweet and plaintive airs. The purple flush of evening was diffused over the heavens. The sun, involved in clouds of splendid and innumerable hues, was setting o'er the distant waters, whose clear bosom glowed with rich reflection. The beauty of the scene, the soothing murmur of the high trees, waved by the light air which overshadowed her, and the soft shelling of the waves that flowed gently in upon the shores, insensibly sunk her mind into a state of repose. She touched the chords of her lute in sweet and wild melody, and sung the following ode:

EVENING

Evening veil'd in dewy shades,
  Slowly sinks upon the main;
See th'empurpled glory fades,
  Beneath her sober, chasten'd reign.

Around her car the pensive Hours,
  In sweet illapses meet the sight,
Crown'd their brows with closing flow'rs
  Rich with chrystal dews of night.

Her hands, the dusky hues arrange
  O'er the fine tints of parting day;
Insensibly the colours change,
  And languish into soft decay.

Wide o'er the waves her shadowy veil she draws.
  As faint they die along the distant shores;
Through the still air I mark each solemn pause,
  Each rising murmur which the wild wave pours.

A browner shadow spreads upon the air,
  And o'er the scene a pensive grandeur throws;
The rocks—the woods a wilder beauty wear,
  And the deep wave in softer music flows;

And now the distant view where vision fails,
  Twilight and grey obscurity pervade;
Tint following tint each dark'ning object veils,
  Till all the landscape sinks into the shade.

Oft from the airy steep of some lone hill,
  While sleeps the scene beneath the purple glow:
And evening lives o'er all serene and still,
  Wrapt let me view the magic world below!

And catch the dying gale that swells remote,
  That steals the sweetness from the shepherd's flute:
The distant torrent's melancholy note
  And the soft warblings of the lover's lute.

Still through the deep'ning gloom of bow'ry shades
  To Fancy's eye fantastic forms appear;
Low whisp'ring echoes steal along the glades
  And thrill the ear with wildly-pleasing fear.

Parent of shades!—of silence!—dewy airs!
  Of solemn musing, and of vision wild!
To thee my soul her pensive tribute bears,

And hails thy gradual step, thy influence mild.

Having ceased to sing, her fingers wandered over the lute in melancholy symphony, and for some moments she remained lost in the sweet sensations which the music and the scenery had inspired. She was awakened from her reverie, by a sigh that stole from among the trees, and directing her eyes whence it came, beheld—Hippolitus! A thousand sweet and mingled emotions pressed upon her heart, yet she scarcely dared to trust the evidence of sight. He advanced, and throwing himself at her feet: 'Suffer me,' said he, in a tremulous voice, 'to disclose to you the sentiments which you have inspired, and to offer you the effusions of a heart filled only with love and admiration.' 'Rise, my lord,' said Julia, moving from her seat with an air of dignity, 'that attitude is neither becoming you to use, or me to suffer. The evening is closing, and Ferdinand will be impatient to see you.'

'Never will I rise, madam,' replied the count, with an impassioned air, 'till'—He was interrupted by the marchioness, who at this moment entered the grove. On observing the position of the count she was retiring. 'Stay, madam,' said Julia, almost sinking under her confusion. 'By no means,' replied the marchioness, in a tone of irony, 'my presence would only interrupt a very agreeable scene. The count, I see, is willing to pay you his earliest respects.' Saying this she disappeared, leaving Julia distressed and offended, and the count provoked at the intrusion. He attempted to renew the subject, but Julia hastily followed the steps of the marchioness, and entered the castle.

The scene she had witnessed, raised in the marchioness a tumult of dreadful emotions. Love, hatred, and jealousy, raged by turns in her heart, and defied all power of controul. Subjected to their alternate violence, she experienced a misery more acute than any she had yet known. Her imagination, invigorated by opposition, heightened to her the graces of Hippolitus; her bosom glowed with more intense passion, and her brain was at length exasperated almost to madness.

In Julia this sudden and unexpected interview excited a mingled emotion of love and vexation, which did not soon subside. At length, however, the delightful consciousness of Vereza's love bore her high above every other sensation; again the scene more brightly glowed, and again her fancy overcame the possibility of evil.

During the evening a tender and timid respect distinguished the behaviour of the count towards Julia, who, contented with the certainty of being loved, resolved to conceal her sentiments till an explanation of his abrupt departure from Mazzini, and subsequent absence, should have dissipated the shadow of mystery which hung over this part of his conduct. She observed that the marchioness pursued her with steady and constant observation, and she carefully avoided affording the count an opportunity of renewing the subject of the preceding interview, which, whenever he approached her, seemed to tremble on his lips.

Night returned, and Ferdinand repaired to the chamber of Julia to pursue his enquiry. Here he had not long remained, when the strange and alarming sounds which had been heard on the preceding night were repeated. The circumstance that now sunk in terror the minds of Emilia and Julia, fired with new wonder that of Ferdinand, who seizing a light, darted through the discovered door, and almost instantly disappeared.

He descended into the same wild hall he had passed on the preceding night. He had scarcely reached the bottom of the stair-case, when a feeble light gleamed across the hall, and his eye caught the glimpse of a figure retiring through the low arched door which led to the south tower. He drew his sword and rushed on. A faint sound died away along the passage, the windings of which prevented his seeing the figure he pursued. Of this, indeed, he had obtained so slight a view, that he scarcely knew whether it bore the impression of a human form. The light quickly disappeared, and he heard the door that opened upon the tower suddenly close. He reached it, and forcing it open, sprang forward; but the place was dark and solitary, and there was no appearance of any person having passed along it. He looked up the tower, and the chasm which the stair-case exhibited, convinced him that no human being could have passed up. He stood silent and amazed; examining the place with an eye of strict enquiry, he perceived a door, which was partly concealed by hanging stairs, and which till now had escaped his notice. Hope invigorated curiosity, but his expectation was quickly disappointed, for this door also was fastened. He tried in vain to force it. He knocked, and a hollow sullen sound ran in echoes through the place, and died away at a distance. It was evident that beyond this door were chambers of considerable extent, but after long and various attempts to reach them, he was obliged to desist, and he quitted the tower as ignorant and more dissatisfied than he had entered it. He returned to the hall, which he now for the first time deliberately surveyed. It was a spacious and desolate apartment, whose lofty roof rose into arches supported by pillars of black marble. The same substance inlaid the floor, and formed the stair-case. The windows were high and gothic. An air of proud sublimity, united with singular wildness, characterized the place, at the extremity of which arose several gothic arches, whose dark shade veiled in obscurity the extent beyond. On the left hand appeared two doors, each of which was fastened, and on the right the grand entrance from the courts. Ferdinand determined to explore the dark recess which terminated his view, and as he traversed the hall, his imagination, affected by the surrounding scene, often multiplied the echoes of his footsteps into uncertain sounds of strange and fearful import.

He reached the arches, and discovered beyond a kind of inner hall, of considerable extent, which was closed at the farther end by a pair of massy folding-doors, heavily ornamented with carving. They were fastened by a lock, and defied his utmost strength.

As he surveyed the place in silent wonder, a sullen groan arose from beneath the spot where he stood. His blood ran cold at the sound, but silence returning, and continuing unbroken, he attributed his alarm to the illusion of a fancy, which terror had impregnated. He made another effort to force the door, when a groan was repeated more hollow, and more dreadful than the first. At this moment all his courage forsook him; he quitted the door, and hastened to the stair-case, which he ascended almost breathless with terror.

He found Madame de Menon and his sisters awaiting his return in the most painful anxiety; and, thus disappointed in all his endeavours to penetrate the secret of these buildings, and fatigued with fruitless search, he resolved to suspend farther enquiry.

When he related the circumstances of his late adventure, the terror of Emilia and Julia was heightened to a degree that overcame every prudent consideration. Their apprehension of the marquis's displeasure was lost in a stronger feeling, and they resolved no longer to remain in apartments which offered only terrific images to their fancy. Madame de Menon almost equally alarmed, and more perplexed, by this combination of strange and unaccountable circumstances, ceased to oppose their design. It was resolved, therefore, that on the following day madame should acquaint the marchioness with such particulars of the late occurrence as their purpose made it necessary she should know, concealing their knowledge of the hidden door, and the incidents immediately dependant on it; and that madame should entreat a change of apartments.

Madame accordingly waited on the marchioness. The marchioness having listened to the account at first with surprise, and afterwards with indifference, condescended to reprove madame for encouraging superstitious belief in the minds of her young charge. She concluded with ridiculing as fanciful the circumstances related, and with refusing, on account of the numerous visitants at the castle, the request preferred to her.

It is true the castle was crowded with visitors; the former apartments of Madame de Menon were the only ones unoccupied, and these were in magnificent preparation for the pleasure of the marchioness, who was unaccustomed to sacrifice her own wishes to the comfort of those around her. She therefore treated lightly the subject, which, seriously attended to, would have endangered her new plan of delight.

But Emilia and Julia were too seriously terrified to obey the scruples of delicacy, or to be easily repulsed. They prevailed on Ferdinand to represent their situation to the marquis.

Meanwhile Hippolitus, who had passed the night in a state of sleepless anxiety, watched, with busy impatience, an opportunity of more fully disclosing to Julia the passion which glowed in his heart. The first moment in which he beheld her, had awakened in him an admiration which had since ripened into a sentiment more tender. He had been prevented formally declaring his passion by the circumstance which so suddenly called him to Naples. This was the dangerous illness of the Marquis de Lomelli, his near and much-valued relation. But it was a task too painful to depart in silence, and he contrived to inform Julia of his sentiments in the air which she heard so sweetly sung beneath her window.

When Hippolitus reached Naples, the marquis was yet living, but expired a few days after his arrival, leaving the count heir to the small possessions which remained from the extravagance of their ancestors.

The business of adjusting his rights had till now detained him from Sicily, whither he came for the sole purpose of declaring his love. Here unexpected obstacles awaited him. The jealous vigilance of the marchioness conspired with the delicacy of Julia, to withhold from him the opportunity he so anxiously sought.

When Ferdinand entered upon the subject of the southern buildings to the marquis, he carefully avoided mentioning the hidden door. The marquis listened for some time to the relation in gloomy silence, but at length assuming an air of displeasure, reprehended Ferdinand for yielding his confidence to those idle alarms, which he said were the suggestions of a timid imagination. 'Alarms,' continued he, 'which will readily find admittance to the weak mind of a woman, but which the firmer nature of man should disdain.—Degenerate boy! Is it thus you reward my care? Do I live to see my son the sport of every idle tale a woman may repeat? Learn to trust reason and your senses, and you will then be worthy of my attention.'

The marquis was retiring, and Ferdinand now perceived it necessary to declare, that he had himself witnessed the sounds he mentioned. 'Pardon me, my lord,' said he, 'in the late instance I have been just to your command—my senses have been the only evidences I have trusted. I have heard those sounds which I cannot doubt.' The marquis appeared shocked. Ferdinand perceived the change, and urged the subject so vigorously, that the marquis, suddenly assuming a look of grave importance, commanded him to attend him in the evening in his closet.

Ferdinand in passing from the marquis met Hippolitus. He was pacing the gallery in much seeming agitation, but observing Ferdinand, he advanced to him. 'I am ill at heart,' said he, in a melancholy tone, 'assist me with your advice. We will step into this apartment, where we can converse without interruption.'

'You are not ignorant,' said he, throwing himself into a chair, 'of the tender sentiments which your sister Julia has inspired. I entreat you by that sacred friendship which has so long united us, to afford me an opportunity of pleading my passion. Her heart, which is so susceptible of other impressions, is, I fear, insensible to love. Procure me, however, the satisfaction of certainty upon a point where the tortures of suspence are surely the most intolerable.'

'Your penetration,' replied Ferdinand, 'has for once forsaken you, else you would now be spared the tortures of which you complain, for you would have discovered what I have long observed, that Julia regards you with a partial eye.'

'Do not,' said Hippolitus, 'make disappointment more terrible by flattery; neither suffer the partiality of friendship to mislead your judgment. Your perceptions are affected by the warmth of your feelings, and because you think I deserve her distinction, you believe I possess it. Alas! you deceive yourself, but not me!'

'The very reverse,' replied Ferdinand; 'tis you who deceive yourself, or rather it is the delicacy of the passion which animates you, and which will ever operate against your clear perception of a truth in which your happiness is so deeply involved. Believe me, I speak not without reason:—she loves you.'

At these words Hippolitus started from his seat, and clasping his hands in fervent joy, 'Enchanting sounds!' cried he, in a voice tenderly impassioned; '*could* I but believe ye!—could I *but* believe ye-this world were paradise!'

During this exclamation, the emotions of Julia, who sat in her closet adjoining, can with difficulty be imagined. A door which opened into it from the apartment where this conversation was held, was only half closed. Agitated with the pleasure this declaration excited, she yet trembled with apprehension lest she should be discovered. She hardly dared to breathe, much less to move across the closet to the door, which opened upon the gallery, whence she might probably have escaped unnoticed, lest the sound of her step should betray her. Compelled, therefore, to remain where she was, she sat in a state of fearful distress, which no colour of language can paint.

'Alas!' resumed Hippolitus, 'I too eagerly admit the possibility of what I wish. If you mean that I should really believe you, confirm your assertion by some proof.'—'Readily,' rejoined Ferdinand.

The heart of Julia beat quick.

'When you was so suddenly called to Naples upon the illness of the Marquis Lomelli, I marked her conduct well, and in that read the sentiments of her heart. On the following morning, I observed in her countenance a restless anxiety which I had never seen before. She watched the entrance of every person with an eager expectation, which was as often succeeded by evident disappointment. At dinner your departure was mentioned:—she spilt the wine she was carrying to her lips, and for the remainder of the day was spiritless and melancholy. I saw her ineffectual struggles to conceal the oppression at her heart. Since that time she has seized every opportunity of withdrawing from company. The gaiety with which she was so lately charmed—charmed her no longer; she became pensive, retired, and I have often heard her singing in some lonely spot, the most moving and tender airs. Your return produced a visible and instantaneous alteration; she has now resumed her gaiety; and the soft confusion of her countenance, whenever you approach, might alone suffice to convince you of the truth of my assertion.'

'O! talk for ever thus!' sighed Hippolitus. 'These words are so sweet, so soothing to my soul, that I could listen till I forgot I had a wish beyond them. Yes!—Ferdinand, these circumstances are not to be doubted, and conviction opens upon my mind a flow of extacy I never knew till now. O! lead me to her, that I may speak the sentiments which swell my heart.'

They arose, when Julia, who with difficulty had supported herself, now impelled by an irresistible fear of instant discovery, rose also, and moved softly towards the gallery. The sound of her step alarmed the count, who, apprehensive lest his conversation had been overheard, was anxious to be satisfied whether any person was in the closet. He rushed in, and discovered Julia! She caught at a chair to support her trembling frame; and overwhelmed with mortifying sensations, sunk into it, and hid her face in her robe. Hippolitus threw himself at her feet, and seizing her hand, pressed it to his lips in expressive silence. Some moments passed before the confusion of either would suffer them to speak. At length recovering his voice, 'Can you, madam,' said he, 'forgive this intrusion, so unintentional? or will it deprive me of that esteem which I have but lately ventured to believe I possessed, and which I value more than existence itself. O! speak my pardon! Let me not believe that a single accident has destroyed my peace for ever.'—'If your peace, sir, depends upon a knowledge of my esteem,' said Julia, in a tremulous voice, 'that peace is already secure. If I wished even to deny the partiality I feel, it would now be useless; and since I no longer wish this, it would also be painful.' Hippolitus could only weep his thanks over the hand he still held. 'Be sensible, however, of the delicacy of my situation,' continued she, rising, 'and suffer me to withdraw.' Saying this she quitted the closet, leaving Hippolitus overcome with this sweet confirmation of his wishes, and Ferdinand not yet recovered from the painful surprize which the discovery of Julia had excited. He was deeply sensible of the confusion he had occasioned her, and knew that apologies would not restore the composure he had so cruelly yet unwarily disturbed.

Ferdinand awaited the hour appointed by the marquis in impatient curiosity. The solemn air which the marquis assumed when he commanded him to attend, had deeply impressed his mind. As the time drew nigh, expectation increased, and every moment seemed to linger into hours. At length he repaired to the closet, where he did not remain long before the marquis entered. The same chilling solemnity marked his manner. He locked the door of the closet, and seating himself, addressed Ferdinand as follows:—

'I am now going to repose in you a confidence which will severely prove the strength of your honour. But before I disclose a secret, hitherto so carefully concealed, and now reluctantly told, you must swear to preserve on this subject an eternal silence. If you doubt the steadiness of your discretion—now declare it, and save yourself from the infamy, and the fatal consequences, which may attend a breach of your oath;—if, on the contrary, you believe yourself capable of a strict integrity—now accept the terms, and receive the secret I offer.' Ferdinand was awed by this exordium—the impatience of curiosity was for a while suspended, and he hesitated whether he should receive the secret upon such terms. At length he signified his consent, and the marquis arising, drew his sword from the scabbard.—'Here,' said he, offering it to Ferdinand, 'seal your vows—swear by this sacred pledge of honor never to repeat what I shall now reveal.' Ferdinand vowed upon the sword, and raising his eyes to heaven, solemnly swore. The marquis then resumed his seat, and proceeded.

'You are now to learn that, about a century ago, this castle was in the possession of Vincent, third marquis of Mazzini, my grandfather. At that time there existed an inveterate hatred between our family and that of della Campo. I shall not now revert to the origin of the animosity, or relate the particulars of the consequent feuds—suffice it to observe, that by the power of our family, the della Campos were unable to preserve their former consequence in Sicily, and they have therefore quitted it for a foreign land to live in unmolested security. To return to my subject.—My grandfather, believing his life endangered by his enemy, planted spies upon him. He employed some of the numerous banditti who sought protection in his service, and after some weeks past in waiting for an opportunity, they seized Henry della Campo, and brought him secretly to this castle. He was for some time confined in a close chamber of the southern buildings, where he expired; by what means I shall forbear to mention. The plan had been so well conducted, and the secrecy so strictly preserved, that every endeavour of his family to trace the means of his disappearance proved ineffectual. Their conjectures, if they fell upon our family, were supported by no proof; and the della Campos are to this day ignorant of the mode of his death. A rumour had prevailed long before the death of my father, that the southern buildings of the castle were haunted. I disbelieved the fact, and treated it accordingly. One night, when every human being of the castle, except myself, was retired to rest, I had such strong and dreadful proofs of the general assertion, that even at this moment I cannot recollect them without horror. Let me, if possible, forget them. From that moment I forsook those buildings; they have ever since been shut up, and the circumstance I have mentioned, is the true reason why I have resided so little at the castle.'

Ferdinand listened to this narrative in silent horror. He remembered the temerity with which he had dared to penetrate those apartments—the light, and figure he had seen—and, above all, his situation in the stair-case of the tower. Every nerve thrilled at the recollection; and the terrors of remembrance almost equalled those of reality.

The marquis permitted his daughters to change their apartments, but he commanded Ferdinand to tell them, that, in granting their request, he consulted their ease only, and was himself by no means convinced of its propriety. They were accordingly reinstated in their former chambers, and the great room only of madame's apartments was reserved for the marchioness, who expressed her discontent to the marquis in terms of mingled censure and lamentation. The marquis privately reproved his daughters, for what he termed the idle fancies of a weak mind; and desired them no more to disturb the peace of the castle with the subject of their late fears. They received this reproof with silent submission—too much pleased with the success of their suit to be susceptible of any emotion but joy.

Ferdinand, reflecting on the late discovery, was shocked to learn, what was now forced upon his belief, that he was the descendant of a murderer. He now knew that innocent blood had been shed in the castle, and that the walls were still the haunt of an unquiet spirit, which seemed to call aloud for retribution on the posterity of him who had disturbed its eternal rest. Hippolitus perceived his dejection, and entreated that he might participate his uneasiness; but Ferdinand, who had hitherto been frank and ingenuous, was now inflexibly reserved. 'Forbear,' said he, 'to urge a discovery of what I am not permitted to reveal; this is the only point upon which I conjure you to be silent, and this even to you, I cannot explain.' Hippolitus was surprized, but pressed the subject no farther.

Julia, though she had been extremely mortified by the circumstances attendant on the discovery of her sentiments to Hippolitus, experienced, after the first shock had subsided, an emotion more pleasing than painful. The late conversation had painted in strong colours the attachment of her lover. His diffidence—his slowness to perceive the effect of his merit—his succeeding rapture, when conviction was at length forced upon his mind; and his conduct upon discovering Julia, proved to her at once the delicacy and the strength of his passion, and she yielded her heart to sensations of pure and unmixed delight. She was roused from this state of visionary happiness, by a summons from the marquis to attend him in the library. A circumstance so unusual surprized her, and she obeyed with trembling curiosity. She found him pacing the room in deep thought, and she had shut the door before he perceived her. The authoritative severity in his countenance alarmed her, and prepared her for a subject of importance. He seated himself by her, and continued a moment silent. At length, steadily observing her, 'I sent for you, my child,' said he, 'to declare the honor which awaits you. The Duke de Luovo has solicited your hand. An alliance so splendid was beyond my expectation. You will receive the distinction with the gratitude it claims, and prepare for the celebration of the nuptials.'

This speech fell like the dart of death upon the heart of Julia. She sat motionless—stupified and deprived of the power of utterance. The marquis observed her consternation; and mistaking its cause, 'I acknowledge,' said he, 'that there is somewhat abrupt in this affair; but the joy occasioned by a distinction so unmerited on your part, ought to overcome the little feminine weakness you might otherwise indulge. Retire and compose yourself; and observe,' continued he, in a stern voice, 'this is no time for finesse.' These words roused Julia from her state of horrid stupefaction. 'O! sir,' said she, throwing herself at his feet, 'forbear to enforce authority upon a point where to obey you would be worse than death; if, indeed, to obey you were possible.'—'Cease,' said the marquis, 'this affectation, and practice what becomes you.'—'Pardon me, my lord,' she replied, 'my distress is, alas! unfeigned. I cannot love the duke.'—'Away!' interrupted the marquis, 'nor tempt my rage with objections thus childish and absurd.'—'Yet hear me, my lord,' said Julia, tears swelling in her eyes, 'and pity the sufferings of a child, who never till this moment has dared to dispute your commands.'

'Nor shall she now,' said the marquis. 'What—when wealth, honor, and distinction, are laid at my feet, shall they be refused, because a foolish girl—a very baby, who knows not good from evil, cries, and says she cannot love! Let me not think of it—My just anger may, perhaps, out-run discretion, and tempt me to chastise your folly.—Attend to what I say—accept the duke, or quit this castle for ever, and wander where you will.' Saying this, he burst away, and Julia, who had hung weeping upon his knees, fell prostrate upon the floor. The violence of the fall completed the effect of her distress, and she fainted. In this state she remained a considerable time. When she recovered her senses, the recollection of her calamity burst upon her mind with a force that almost again overwhelmed her. She at length raised herself from the ground, and moved towards her own apartment, but had scarcely reached the great gallery, when Hippolitus entered it. Her trembling limbs would no longer support her; she caught at a bannister to save herself; and Hippolitus, with all his speed, was scarcely in time to prevent her falling. The pale distress exhibited in her countenance terrified him, and he anxiously enquired concerning it. She could answer him only with her tears, which she found it impossible to suppress; and gently disengaging herself, tottered to her closet. Hippolitus followed her to the door, but desisted from further importunity. He pressed her hand to his lips in tender silence, and withdrew, surprized and alarmed.

Julia, resigning herself to despair, indulged in solitude the excess of her grief. A calamity, so dreadful as the present, had never before presented itself to her imagination. The union proposed would have been hateful to her, even if she had no prior attachment; what then must have been her distress, when she had given her heart to him who deserved all her admiration, and returned all her affection.

The Duke de Luovo was of a character very similar to that of the marquis. The love of power was his ruling passion;—with him no gentle or generous sentiment meliorated the harshness of authority, or directed it to acts of beneficence. He delighted in simple undisguised tyranny. He had been twice married, and the unfortunate women subjected to his power, had fallen victims to the slow but corroding hand of sorrow. He had one son, who some years before had escaped the tyranny of his father, and had not been since heard of. At the late festival the duke had seen Julia; and her beauty made so strong an impression upon him, that he had been induced now to solicit her hand. The marquis, delighted with the prospect of a connection so flattering to his favorite passion, readily granted his consent, and immediately sealed it with a promise.

Julia remained for the rest of the day shut up in her closet, where the tender efforts of Madame and Emilia were exerted to soften her distress. Towards the close of evening Ferdinand entered. Hippolitus, shocked at her absence, had requested him to visit her, to alleviate her affliction, and, if possible, to discover its cause. Ferdinand, who tenderly loved his sister, was alarmed by the words of Hippolitus, and immediately sought her. Her eyes were swelled with weeping, and her countenance was but too expressive of the state of her mind. Ferdinand's distress, when told of his father's conduct, was scarcely less than her own. He had pleased himself with the hope of uniting the sister of his heart with the friend whom he loved. An act of cruel authority now dissolved the fairy dream of happiness which his fancy had formed, and destroyed the peace of those most dear to him. He sat for a long time silent and dejected; at length, starting from his melancholy reverie, he bad Julia good-night, and returned to Hippolitus, who was waiting for him with anxious impatience in the north hall.

Ferdinand dreaded the effect of that despair, which the intelligence he had to communicate would produce in the mind of Hippolitus. He revolved some means of softening the dreadful truth; but Hippolitus, quick to apprehend the evil which love taught him to fear, seized at once upon the reality. 'Tell me all,' said he, in a tone of assumed firmness. 'I am prepared for the worst.' Ferdinand related the decree of the marquis, and Hippolitus soon sunk into an excess of grief which defied, as much as it required, the powers of alleviation.

Julia, at length, retired to her chamber, but the sorrow which occupied her mind withheld the blessings of sleep. Distracted and restless she arose, and gently opened the window of her apartment. The night was still, and not a breath disturbed the surface of the waters. The moon shed a mild radiance over the waves, which in gentle undulations flowed upon the sands. The scene insensibly tranquilized her spirits. A tender and pleasing melancholy diffused itself over her mind; and as she mused, she heard the dashing of distant oars. Presently she perceived upon the light surface of the sea a small boat. The sound of the oars ceased, and a solemn strain of harmony (such as fancy wafts from the abodes of the blessed) stole upon the silence of night. A chorus of voices now swelled upon the air, and died away at a distance. In the strain Julia recollected the midnight hymn to the virgin, and holy enthusiasm filled her heart. The chorus was repeated, accompanied by a solemn striking of oars. A sigh of exstacy stole from her bosom. Silence returned. The divine melody she had heard calmed the tumult of her mind, and she sunk in sweet repose.

She arose in the morning refreshed by light slumbers; but the recollection of her sorrows soon returned with new force, and sickening faintness overcame her. In this situation she received a message from the marquis to attend him instantly. She obeyed, and he bade her prepare to receive the duke, who that morning purposed to visit the castle. He commanded her to attire herself richly, and to welcome him with smiles. Julia submitted in silence. She saw the marquis was inflexibly resolved, and she withdrew to indulge the anguish of her heart, and prepare for this detested interview.

The clock had struck twelve, when a flourish of trumpets announced the approach of the duke. The heart of Julia sunk at the sound, and she threw herself on a sopha, overwhelmed with bitter sensations. Here she was soon disturbed by a message from the marquis. She arose, and tenderly embracing Emilia, their tears for some moments flowed together. At length, summoning all her fortitude, she descended to the hall, where she was met by the marquis. He led her to the saloon in which the duke sat, with whom having conversed a short time, he withdrew. The emotion of Julia at this instant was beyond any thing she had before suffered; but by a sudden and strange exertion of fortitude, which the force of desperate calamity sometimes affords us, but which inferior sorrow toils after in vain, she recovered her composure, and resumed her natural dignity. For a moment she wondered at herself, and she formed the dangerous resolution of throwing herself upon the generosity of the duke, by acknowledging her reluctance to the engagement, and soliciting him to withdraw his suit.

The duke approached her with an air of proud condescension; and taking her hand, placed himself beside her. Having paid some formal and general compliments to her beauty, he proceeded to profess himself her admirer. She listened for some time to his professions, and when he appeared willing to hear her, she addressed him—'I am justly sensible, my lord, of the distinction you offer me, and must lament that respectful gratitude is the only sentiment I can return. Nothing can more strongly prove my confidence in your generosity, than when I confess to you, that parental authority urges me to give my hand whither my heart cannot accompany it.'

She paused—the duke continued silent.—''Tis you only, my lord, who can release me from a situation so distressing; and to your goodness and justice I appeal, certain that necessity will excuse the singularity of my conduct, and that I shall not appeal in vain.'

The duke was embarrassed—a flush of pride overspread his countenance, and he seemed endeavouring to stifle the feelings that swelled his heart. 'I had been prepared, madam,' said he, 'to expect a very different reception, and had certainly no reason to believe that the Duke de Luovo was likely to sue in vain. Since, however, madam, you acknowledge that you have already disposed of your affections, I shall certainly be very willing, if the marquis will release me from our mutual engagements, to resign you to a more favored lover.'

'Pardon me, my lord,' said Julia, blushing, 'suffer me to'—'I am not easily deceived, madam,' interrupted the duke,—'your conduct can be attributed only to the influence of a prior attachment; and though for so young a lady, such a circumstance is somewhat extraordinary, I have certainly no right to arraign your choice. Permit me to wish you a good morning.' He bowed low, and quitted the room. Julia now experienced a new distress; she dreaded the resentment of the marquis, when he should be informed of her conversation with the duke, of whose character she now judged too justly not to repent the confidence she had reposed in him.

The duke, on quitting Julia, went to the marquis, with whom he remained in conversation some hours. When he had left the castle, the marquis sent for his daughter, and poured forth his resentment with all the violence of threats, and all the acrimony of contempt. So severely did he ridicule the idea of her disposing of her heart, and so dreadfully did he denounce vengeance on her disobedience, that she scarcely thought herself safe in his presence. She stood trembling and confused, and heard his reproaches without the power to reply. At length the marquis informed her, that the nuptials would be solemnized on the third day from the present; and as he quitted the room, a flood of tears came to her relief, and saved her from fainting.

Julia passed the remainder of the day in her closet with Emilia. Night returned, but brought her no peace. She sat long after the departure of Emilia; and to beguile recollection, she selected a favorite author, endeavouring to revive those sensations his page had once excited. She opened to a passage, the tender sorrow of which was applicable to her own situation, and her tears flowed wean. Her grief was soon suspended by apprehension. Hitherto a deadly silence had reigned through the castle, interrupted only by the wind, whose low sound crept at intervals through the galleries. She now thought she heard a footstep near her door, but presently all was still, for she believed she had been deceived by the wind. The succeeding moment, however, convinced her of her error, for she distinguished the low whisperings of some persons in the gallery. Her spirits, already weakened by sorrow, deserted her: she was seized with an universal terror, and presently afterwards a low voice called her from without, and the door was opened by Ferdinand.

She shrieked, and fainted. On recovering, she found herself supported by Ferdinand and Hippolitus, who had stolen this moment of silence and security to gain admittance to her presence. Hippolitus came to urge a proposal which despair only could have suggested. 'Fly,' said he, 'from the authority of a father who abuses his power, and assert the liberty of choice, which nature assigned you. Let the desperate situation of my hopes plead excuse for the apparent boldness of this address, and let the man who exists but for you be the means of saving you from destruction. Alas! madam, you are silent, and perhaps I have forfeited, by this proposal, the confidence I so lately flattered myself I possessed. If so, I will submit to my fate in silence, and will to-morrow quit a scene which presents only images of distress to my mind.'

Julia could speak but with her tears. A variety of strong and contending emotions struggled at her breast, and suppressed the power of utterance. Ferdinand seconded the proposal of the count. 'It is unnecessary,' my sister, said he, 'to point out the misery which awaits you here. I love you too well tamely to suffer you to be sacrificed to ambition, and to a passion still more hateful. I now glory in calling Hippolitus my friend—let me ere long receive him as a brother. I can give no stronger testimony of my esteem for his character, than in the wish I now express. Believe me he has a heart worthy of your acceptance—a heart noble and expansive as your own.'—'Ah, cease,' said Julia, 'to dwell upon a character of whose worth I am fully sensible. Your kindness and his merit can never be forgotten by her whose misfortunes you have so generously suffered to interest you.' She paused in silent hesitation. A sense of delicacy made her hesitate upon the decision which her heart so warmly prompted. If she fled with Hippolitus, she would avoid one evil, and encounter another. She would escape the dreadful destiny awaiting her, but must, perhaps, sully the purity of that reputation, which was dearer to her than existence. In a mind like hers, exquisitely susceptible of the pride of honor, this fear was able to counteract every other consideration, and to keep her intentions in a state of painful suspense. She sighed deeply, and continued silent. Hippolitus was alarmed by the calm distress which her countenance exhibited. 'O! Julia,' said he, 'relieve me from this dreadful suspense!—speak to me—explain this silence.' She looked mournfully upon him—her lips moved, but no sounds were uttered. As he repeated his question, she waved her hand, and sunk back in her chair. She had not fainted, but continued some time in a state of stupor not less alarming. The importance of the present question, operating upon her mind, already harassed by distress, had produced a temporary suspension of reason. Hippolitus hung over her in an agony not to be described, and Ferdinand vainly repeated her name. At length uttering a deep sigh, she raised herself, and, like one awakened from a dream, gazed around her. Hippolitus thanked God fervently in his heart. 'Tell me but that you are well,' said he, 'and that I may dare to hope, and we will leave you to repose.'—'My sister,' said Ferdinand, 'consult only your own wishes, and leave the rest to me. Suffer a confidence in me to dissipate the doubts with which you are agitated.'—'Ferdinand,' said Julia, emphatically, 'how shall I express the gratitude your kindness has excited?'—'Your gratitude,' said he, 'will be best shown in consulting your own wishes; for be assured, that whatever procures your happiness, will most effectually establish mine. Do not suffer the prejudices of education to render you miserable. Believe me, that a choice which involves the happiness or misery of your whole life, ought to be decided only by yourself.'

'Let us forbear for the present,' said Hippolitus, 'to urge the subject. Repose is necessary for you,' addressing Julia, 'and I will not suffer a selfish consideration any longer to with-hold you from it.—Grant me but this request—that at this hour to-morrow night, I may return hither to receive my doom.' Julia having consented to receive Hippolitus and Ferdinand, they quitted the closet. In turning into the grand gallery, they were surprised by the appearance of a light, which gleamed upon the wall that terminated their view. It seemed to proceed from a door which opened upon a back stair-case. They pushed on, but it almost instantly disappeared, and upon the stair-case all was still. They then separated, and retired to their apartments, somewhat alarmed by this circumstance, which induced them to suspect that their visit to Julia had been observed.

Julia passed the night in broken slumbers, and anxious consideration. On her present decision hung the crisis of her fate. Her consciousness of the influence of Hippolitus over her heart, made her fear to indulge its predilection, by trusting to her own opinion of its fidelity. She shrunk from the disgraceful idea of an elopement; yet she saw no means of avoiding this, but by rushing upon the fate so dreadful to her imagination.

On the following night, when the inhabitants of the castle were retired to rest, Hippolitus, whose expectation had lengthened the hours into ages, accompanied by Ferdinand, revisited the closet. Julia, who had known no interval of rest since they last left her, received them with much agitation. The vivid glow of health had fled her cheek, and was succeeded by a languid delicacy, less beautiful, but more interesting. To the eager enquiries of Hippolitus, she returned no answer, but faintly smiling through her tears, presented him her hand, and covered her face with her robe. 'I receive it,' cried he, 'as the pledge of my happiness;—yet—yet let your voice ratify the gift.' 'If the present concession does not sink me in your esteem,' said Julia, in a low tone, 'this hand is yours.'—'The concession, my love, (for by that tender name I may now call you) would, if possible, raise you in my esteem; but since that has been long incapable of addition, it can only heighten my opinion of myself, and increase my gratitude to you: gratitude which I will endeavour to shew by an anxious care of your happiness, and by the tender attentions of a whole life. From this blessed moment,' continued he, in a voice of rapture, 'permit me, in thought, to hail you as my wife. From this moment let me banish every vestige of sorrow;—let me dry those tears,' gently pressing her cheek with his lips, 'never to spring again.'—The gratitude and joy which Ferdinand expressed upon this occasion, united with the tenderness of Hippolitus to soothe the agitated spirits of Julia, and she gradually recovered her complacency.

They now arranged their plan of escape; in the execution of which, no time was to be lost, since the nuptials with the duke were to be solemnized on the day after the morrow. Their scheme, whatever it was that should be adopted, they, therefore, resolved to execute on the following night. But when they descended from the first warmth of enterprize, to minuter examination, they soon found the difficulties of the undertaking. The keys of the castle were kept by Robert, the confidential servant of the marquis, who every night deposited them in an iron chest in his chamber. To obtain them by stratagem seemed impossible, and Ferdinand feared to tamper with the honesty of this man, who had been many years in the service of the marquis. Dangerous as was the attempt, no other alternative appeared, and they were therefore compelled to rest all their hopes upon the experiment. It was settled, that if the keys could be procured, Ferdinand and Hippolitus should meet Julia in the closet; that they should convey her to the seashore, from whence a boat, which was to be kept in waiting, would carry them to the opposite coast of Calabria, where the marriage might be solemnized without danger of interruption. But, as it was necessary that Ferdinand should not appear in the affair, it was agreed that he should return to the castle immediately upon the embarkation of his sister. Having thus arranged their plan of operation, they separated till the following night, which was to decide the fate of Hippolitus and Julia.

Julia, whose mind was soothed by the fraternal kindness of Ferdinand, and the tender assurances of Hippolitus, now experienced an interval of repose. At the return of day she awoke refreshed, and tolerably composed. She selected a few clothes which were necessary, and prepared them for her journey. A sentiment of generosity justified her in the reserve she preserved to Emilia and Madame de Menon, whose faithfulness and attachment she could not doubt, but whom she disdained to involve in the disgrace that must fall upon them, should their knowledge of her flight be discovered.

In the mean time the castle was a scene of confusion. The magnificent preparations which were making for the nuptials, engaged all eyes, and busied all hands. The marchioness had the direction of the whole; and the alacrity with which she acquitted herself, testified how much she was pleased with the alliance, and created a suspicion, that it had not been concerted without some exertion of her influence. Thus was Julia designed the joint victim of ambition and illicit love.

The composure of Julia declined with the day, whose hours had crept heavily along. As the night drew on, her anxiety for the success of Ferdinand's negociation with Robert increased to a painful degree. A variety of new emotions pressed at her heart, and subdued her spirits. When she bade Emilia good night, she thought she beheld her for the last time. The ideas of the distance which would separate them, of the dangers she was going to encounter, with a train of wild and fearful anticipations, crouded upon her mind, tears sprang in her eyes, and it was with difficulty she avoided betraying her emotions. Of madame, too, her heart took a tender farewell. At length she heard the marquis retire to his apartment, and the doors belonging to the several chambers of the guests successively close. She marked with trembling attention the gradual change from bustle to quiet, till all was still.

She now held herself in readiness to depart at the moment in which Ferdinand and Hippolitus, for whose steps in the gallery she eagerly listened, should appear. The castle clock struck twelve. The sound seemed to shake the pile. Julia felt it thrill upon her heart. 'I hear you,' sighed she, 'for the last time.' The stillness of death succeeded. She continued to listen; but no sound met her ear. For a considerable time she sat in a state of anxious expectation not to be described. The clock chimed the successive quarters; and her fear rose to each additional sound. At length she heard it strike one. Hollow was that sound, and dreadful to her hopes; for neither Hippolitus nor Ferdinand appeared. She grew faint with fear and disappointment. Her mind, which for two hours had been kept upon the stretch of expectation, now resigned itself to despair. She gently opened the door of her closet, and looked upon the gallery; but all was lonely and silent. It appeared that Robert had refused to be accessary to their scheme; and it was probable that he had betrayed it to the marquis. Overwhelmed with bitter reflections, she threw herself upon the sopha in the first distraction of despair. Suddenly she thought she heard a noise in the gallery; and as she started from her posture to listen to the sound, the door of her closet was gently opened by Ferdinand. 'Come, my love,' said he, 'the keys are ours, and we have not a moment to lose; our delay has been unavoidable; but this is no time for explanation.' Julia, almost fainting, gave her hand to Ferdinand, and Hippolitus, after some short expression of his thankfulness, followed. They passed the door of madame's chamber; and treading the gallery with slow and silent steps, descended to the hall. This they crossed towards a door, after opening which, they were to find their way, through various passages, to a remote part of the castle, where a private door opened upon the walls. Ferdinand carried the several keys. They fastened the hall door after them, and proceeded through a narrow passage terminating in a stair-case.

They descended, and had hardly reached the bottom, when they heard a loud noise at the door above, and presently the voices of several people. Julia scarcely felt the ground she trod on, and Ferdinand flew to unlock a door that obstructed their way. He applied the different keys, and at length found the proper one; but the lock was rusted, and refused to yield. Their distress was not now to be conceived. The noise above increased; and it seemed as if the people were forcing the door. Hippolitus and Ferdinand vainly tried to turn the key. A sudden crash from above convinced them that the door had yielded, when making another desperate effort, the key broke in the lock. Trembling and exhausted, Julia gave herself up for lost. As she hung upon Ferdinand, Hippolitus vainly endeavoured to sooth her—the noise suddenly ceased. They listened, dreading to hear the sounds renewed; but, to their utter astonishment, the silence of the place remained undisturbed. They had now time to breathe, and to consider the possibility of effecting their escape; for from the marquis they had no mercy to hope. Hippolitus, in order to ascertain whether the people had quitted the door above, began to ascend the passage, in which he had not gone many steps when the noise was renewed with increased violence. He instantly retreated; and making a desperate push at the door below, which obstructed their passage, it seemed to yield, and by another effort of Ferdinand, burst open. They had not an instant to lose; for they now heard the steps of persons descending the stairs. The avenue they were in opened into a kind of chamber, whence three passages branched, of which they immediately chose the first. Another door now obstructed their passage; and they were compelled to wait while Ferdinand applied the keys. 'Be quick,' said Julia, 'or we are lost. O! if this lock too is rusted!'—'Hark!' said Ferdinand. They now discovered what apprehension had before prevented them from perceiving, that the sounds of pursuit were ceased, and all again was silent. As this could happen only by the mistake of their pursuers, in taking the wrong *route*, they resolved to preserve their advantage, by concealing the light, which Ferdinand now covered with his cloak. The door was opened, and they passed on; but they were perplexed in the intricacies of the place, and wandered about in vain endeavour to find their way. Often did they pause to listen, and often did fancy give them sounds of fearful import. At length they entered on the passage which Ferdinand knew led directly to a door that opened on the woods. Rejoiced at this certainty, they soon reached the spot which was to give them liberty.

Ferdinand turned the key; the door unclosed, and, to their infinite joy, discovered to them the grey dawn. 'Now, my love,' said Hippolitus, 'you are safe, and I am happy.'—Immediately a loud voice from without exclaimed, 'Take, villain, the reward of your perfidy!' At the same instant Hippolitus received a sword in his body, and uttering a deep sigh, fell to the ground. Julia shrieked and fainted; Ferdinand drawing his sword, advanced towards the assassin, upon whose countenance the light of his lamp then shone, and discovered to him his father! The sword fell from his grasp, and he started back in an agony of horror. He was instantly surrounded, and seized by the servants of the marquis, while the marquis himself denounced vengeance upon his head, and ordered him to be thrown into the dungeon of the castle. At this instant the servants of the count, who were awaiting his arrival on the seashore, hearing the tumult, hastened to the scene, and there beheld their beloved master lifeless and weltering in his blood. They conveyed the bleeding body, with loud lamentations, on board the vessel which had been prepared for him, and immediately set sail for Italy.

Julia, on recovering her senses, found herself in a small room, of which she had no remembrance, with her maid weeping over her. Recollection, when it returned, brought to her mind an energy of grief, which exceeded even all former conceptions of sufferings. Yet her misery was heightened by the intelligence which she now received. She learned that Hippolitus had been borne away lifeless by his people, that Ferdinand was confined in a dungeon by order of the marquis, and that herself was a prisoner in a remote room, from which, on the day after the morrow, she was to be removed to the chapel of the castle, and there sacrificed to the ambition of her father, and the absurd love of the Duke de Luovo.

This accumulation of evil subdued each power of resistance, and reduced Julia to a state little short of distraction. No person was allowed to approach her but her maid, and the servant who brought her food. Emilia, who, though shocked by Julia's apparent want of confidence, severely sympathized in her distress, solicited to see her; but the pain of denial was so sharply aggravated by rebuke, that she dared not again to urge the request.

In the mean time Ferdinand, involved in the gloom of a dungeon, was resigned to the painful recollection of the past, and a horrid anticipation of the future. From the resentment of the marquis, whose passions were wild and terrible, and whose rank gave him an unlimited power of life and death in his own territories, Ferdinand had much to fear. Yet selfish apprehension soon yielded to a more noble sorrow. He mourned the fate of Hippolitus, and the sufferings of Julia. He could attribute the failure of their scheme only to the treachery of Robert, who had, however, met the wishes of Ferdinand with strong apparent sincerity, and generous interest in the cause of Julia. On the night of the intended elopement, he had consigned the keys to Ferdinand, who, immediately on receiving them, went to the apartment of Hippolitus. There they were detained till after the clock had struck one by a low noise, which returned at intervals, and convinced them that some part of the family was not yet retired to rest. This noise was undoubtedly occasioned by the people whom the marquis had employed to watch, and whose vigilance was too faithful to suffer the fugitives to escape. The very caution of Ferdinand defeated its purpose; for it is probable, that had he attempted to quit the castle by the common entrance, he might have escaped. The keys of the grand door, and those of the courts, remaining in the possession of Robert, the marquis was certain of the intended place of their departure; and was thus enabled to defeat their hopes at the very moment when they exulted in their success.

When the marchioness learned the fate of Hippolitus, the resentment of jealous passion yielded to emotions of pity. Revenge was satisfied, and she could now lament the sufferings of a youth whose personal charms had touched her heart as much as his virtues had disappointed her hopes. Still true to passion, and inaccessible to reason, she poured upon the defenceless Julia her anger for that calamity of which she herself was the unwilling cause. By a dextrous adaptation of her powers, she had worked upon the passions of the marquis so as to render him relentless in the pursuit of ambitious purposes, and insatiable in revenging his disappointment. But the effects of her artifices exceeded her intention in exerting them; and when she meant only to sacrifice a rival to her love, she found she had given up its object to revenge.

CHAPTER IV

The nuptial morn, so justly dreaded by Julia, and so impatiently awaited by the marquis, now arrived. The marriage was to be celebrated with a magnificence which demonstrated the joy it occasioned to the marquis. The castle was fitted up in a style of grandeur superior to any thing that had been before seen in it. The neighbouring nobility were invited to an entertainment which was to conclude with a splendid ball and supper, and the gates were to be thrown open to all who chose to partake of the bounty of the marquis. At an early hour the duke, attended by a numerous retinue, entered the castle. Ferdinand heard from his dungeon, where the rigour and the policy of the marquis still confined him, the loud clattering of hoofs in the courtyard above, the rolling of the carriage wheels, and all the tumultuous bustle which the entrance of the duke occasioned. He too well understood the cause of this uproar, and it awakened in him sensations resembling those which the condemned criminal feels, when his ears are assailed by the dreadful sounds that precede his execution. When he was able to think of himself, he wondered by what means the marquis would reconcile his absence to the guests. He, however, knew too well the dissipated character of the Sicilian nobility, to doubt that whatever story should be invented would be very readily believed by them; who, even if they knew the truth, would not suffer a discovery of their knowledge to interrupt the festivity which was offered them.

The marquis and marchioness received the duke in the outer hall, and conducted him to the saloon, where he partook of the refreshments prepared for him, and from thence retired to the chapel. The marquis now withdrew to lead Julia to the altar, and Emilia was ordered to attend at the door of the chapel, in which the priest and a numerous company were already assembled. The marchioness, a prey to the turbulence of succeeding passions, exulted in the near completion of her favorite scheme.—A disappointment, however, was prepared for her, which would at once crush the triumph of her malice and her pride. The marquis, on entering the prison of Julia, found it empty! His astonishment and indignation upon the discovery almost overpowered his reason. Of the servants of the castle, who were immediately summoned, he enquired concerning her escape, with a mixture of fury and sorrow which left them no opportunity to reply. They had, however, no information to give, but that her woman had not appeared during the whole morning. In the prison were found the bridal habiliments which the marchioness herself had sent on the preceding night, together with a letter addressed to Emilia, which contained the following words:

'Adieu, dear Emilia; never more will you see your wretched sister, who flies from the cruel fate now prepared for her, certain that she can never meet one more dreadful.—In happiness or misery—in hope or despair—whatever may be your situation—still remember me with pity and affection. Dear Emilia, adieu!—You will always be the sister of my heart—may you never be the partner of my misfortunes!'

While the marquis was reading this letter, the marchioness, who supposed the delay occasioned by some opposition from Julia, flew to the apartment. By her orders all the habitable parts of the castle were explored, and she herself assisted in the search. At length the intelligence was communicated to the chapel, and the confusion became universal. The priest quitted the altar, and the company returned to the saloon.

The letter, when it was given to Emilia, excited emotions which she found it impossible to disguise, but which did not, however, protect her from a suspicion that she was concerned in the transaction, her knowledge of which this letter appeared intended to conceal.

The marquis immediately dispatched servants upon the fleetest horses of his stables, with directions to take different routs, and to scour every corner of the island in pursuit of the fugitives. When these exertions had somewhat quieted his mind, he began to consider by what means Julia could have effected her escape. She had been confined in a small room in a remote part of the castle, to which no person had been admitted but her own woman and Robert, the confidential servant of the marquis. Even Lisette had not been suffered to enter, unless accompanied by Robert, in whose room, since the night of the fatal discovery, the keys had been regularly deposited. Without them it was impossible she could have escaped: the windows of the apartment being barred and grated, and opening into an inner court, at a prodigious height from the ground. Besides, who could she depend upon for protection—or whither could she intend to fly for concealment?—The associates of her former elopement were utterly unable to assist her even with advice. Ferdinand himself a prisoner, had been deprived of any means of intercourse with her, and Hippolitus had been carried lifeless on board a vessel, which had immediately sailed for Italy.

Robert, to whom the keys had been entrusted, was severely interrogated by the marquis. He persisted in a simple and uniform declaration of his innocence; but as the marquis believed it impossible that Julia could have escaped without his knowledge, he was ordered into imprisonment till he should confess the fact.

The pride of the duke was severely wounded by this elopement, which proved the excess of Julia's aversion, and compleated the disgraceful circumstances of his rejection. The marquis had carefully concealed from him her prior attempt at elopement, and her consequent confinement; but the truth now burst from disguise, and stood revealed with bitter aggravation. The duke, fired with indignation at the duplicity of the marquis, poured forth his resentment in terms of proud and bitter invective; and the marquis, galled by recent disappointment, was in no mood to restrain the impetuosity of his nature. He retorted with acrimony; and the consequence would have been serious, had not the friends of each party interposed for their preservation. The disputants were at length reconciled; it was agreed to pursue Julia with united, and indefatigable search; and that whenever she should be found, the nuptials should be solemnized without further delay. With the character of the duke, this conduct was consistent. His passions, inflamed by disappointment, and strengthened by repulse, now defied the power of obstacle; and those considerations which would have operated with a more delicate mind to overcome its original inclination, served only to encrease the violence of his.

Madame de Menon, who loved Julia with maternal affection, was an interested observer of all that passed at the castle. The cruel fate to which the marquis destined his daughter she had severely lamented, yet she could hardly rejoice to find that this had been avoided by elopement. She trembled for the future safety of her pupil; and her tranquillity, which was thus first disturbed for the welfare of others, she was not soon suffered to recover.

The marchioness had long nourished a secret dislike to Madame de Menon, whose virtues were a silent reproof to her vices. The contrariety of their disposition created in the marchioness an aversion which would have amounted to contempt, had not that dignity of virtue which strongly characterized the manners of madame, compelled the former to fear what she wished to despise. Her conscience whispered her that the dislike was mutual; and she now rejoiced in the opportunity which seemed to offer itself of lowering the proud integrity of madame's character. Pretending, therefore, to believe that she had encouraged Ferdinand to disobey his father's commands, and had been accessary to the elopement, she accused her of these offences, and stimulated the marquis to reprehend her conduct. But the integrity of Madame de Menon was not to be questioned with impunity. Without deigning to answer the imputation, she desired to resign an office of which she was no longer considered worthy, and to quit the castle immediately. This the policy of the marquis would not suffer; and he was compelled to make such ample concessions to madame, as induced her for the present to continue at the castle.

The news of Julia's elopement at length reached the ears of Ferdinand, whose joy at this event was equalled only by his surprize. He lost, for a moment, the sense of his own situation, and thought only of the escape of Julia. But his sorrow soon returned with accumulated force when he recollected that Julia might then perhaps want that assistance which his confinement alone could prevent his affording her.

The servants, who had been sent in pursuit, returned to the castle without any satisfactory information. Week after week elapsed in fruitless search, yet the duke was strenuous in continuing the pursuit. Emissaries were dispatched to Naples, and to the several estates of the Count Vereza, but they returned without any satisfactory information. The count had not been heard of since he quitted Naples for Sicily.

During these enquiries a new subject of disturbance broke out in the castle of Mazzini. On the night so fatal to the hopes of Hippolitus and Julia, when the tumult was subsided, and all was still, a light was observed by a servant as he passed by the window of the great stair-case in the way to his chamber, to glimmer through the casement before noticed in the southern buildings. While he stood observing it, it vanished, and presently reappeared. The former mysterious circumstances relative to these buildings rushed upon his mind; and fired with wonder, he roused some of his fellow servants to come and behold this phenomenon.

As they gazed in silent terror, the light disappeared, and soon after, they saw a small door belonging to the south tower open, and a figure bearing a light issue forth, which gliding along the castle walls, was quickly lost to their view. Overcome with fear they hurried back to their chambers, and revolved all the late wonderful occurrences. They doubted not, that this was the figure formerly seen by the lady Julia. The sudden change of Madame de Menon's apartments had not passed unobserved by the servants, but they now no longer hesitated to what to attribute the removal. They collected each various and uncommon circumstance attendant on this part of the fabric; and, comparing them with the present, their superstitious fears were confirmed, and their terror heightened to such a degree, that many of them resolved to quit the service of the marquis.

The marquis surprized at this sudden desertion, enquired into its cause, and learned the truth. Shocked by this discovery, he yet resolved to prevent, if possible, the ill effects which might be expected from a circulation of the report. To this end it was necessary to quiet the minds of his people, and to prevent their quitting his service. Having severely reprehended them for the idle apprehension they encouraged, he told them that, to prove the fallacy of their surmises, he would lead them over that part of the castle which was the subject of their fears, and ordered them to attend him at the return of night in the north hall. Emilia and Madame de Menon, surprised at this procedure, awaited the issue in silent expectation.

The servants, in obedience to the commands of the marquis, assembled at night in the north hall. The air of desolation which reigned through the south buildings, and the circumstance of their having been for so many years shut up, would naturally tend to inspire awe; but to these people, who firmly believed them to be the haunt of an unquiet spirit, terror was the predominant sentiment.

The marquis now appeared with the keys of these buildings in his hands, and every heart thrilled with wild expectation. He ordered Robert to precede him with a torch, and the rest of the servants following, he passed on. A pair of iron gates were unlocked, and they proceeded through a court, whose pavement was wildly overgrown with long grass, to the great door of the south fabric. Here they met with some difficulty, for the lock, which had not been turned for many years, was rusted.

During this interval, the silence of expectation sealed the lips of all present. At length the lock yielded. That door which had not been passed for so many years, creaked heavily upon its hinges, and disclosed the hall of black marble which Ferdinand had formerly crossed. 'Now,' cried the marquis, in a tone of irony as he entered, 'expect to encounter the ghosts of which you tell me; but if you fail to conquer them, prepare to quit my service. The people who live with me shall at least have courage and ability sufficient to defend me from these spiritual attacks. All I apprehend is, that the enemy will not appear, and in this case your valour will go untried.'

No one dared to answer, but all followed, in silent fear, the marquis, who ascended the great stair-case, and entered the gallery. 'Unlock that door,' said he, pointing to one on the left, 'and we will soon unhouse these ghosts.' Robert applied the key, but his hand shook so violently that he could not turn it. 'Here is a fellow,' cried the marquis, 'fit to encounter a whole legion of spirits. Do you, Anthony, take the key, and try your valour.'

'Please you, my lord,' replied Anthony, 'I never was a good one at unlocking a door in my life, but here is Gregory will do it.'—'No, my lord, an' please you,' said Gregory, 'here is Richard.'—'Stand off,' said the marquis, 'I will shame your cowardice, and do it myself.'

Saying this he turned the key, and was rushing on, but the door refused to yield; it shook under his hands, and seemed as if partially held by some person on the other side. The marquis was surprized, and made several efforts to move it, without effect. He then ordered his servants to burst it open, but, shrinking back with one accord, they cried, 'For God's sake, my lord, go no farther; we are satisfied here are no ghosts, only let us get back.'

'It is now then my turn to be satisfied,' replied the marquis, 'and till I am, not one of you shall stir. Open me that door.'—'My lord!'—'Nay,' said the marquis, assuming a look of stern authority—'dispute not my commands. I am not to be trifled with.'

They now stepped forward, and applied their strength to the door, when a loud and sudden noise burst from within, and resounded through the hollow chambers! The men started back in affright, and were rushing headlong down the stair-case, when the voice of the marquis arrested their flight. They returned, with hearts palpitating with terror. 'Observe what I say,' said the marquis, 'and behave like men. Yonder door,' pointing to one at some distance, 'will lead us through other rooms to this chamber—unlock it therefore, for I will know the cause of these sounds.' Shocked at this determination, the servants again supplicated the marquis to go no farther; and to be obeyed, he was obliged to exert all his authority. The door was opened, and discovered a long narrow passage, into which they descended by a few steps. It led to a gallery that terminated in a back stair-case, where several doors appeared, one of which the marquis unclosed. A spacious chamber appeared beyond, whose walls, decayed and discoloured by the damps, exhibited a melancholy proof of desertion.

They passed on through a long suite of lofty and noble apartments, which were in the same ruinous condition. At length they came to the chamber whence the noise had issued. 'Go first, Robert, with the light,' said the marquis, as they approached the door; 'this is the key.' Robert trembled—but obeyed, and the other servants followed in silence. They stopped a moment at the door to listen, but all was still within. The door was opened, and disclosed a large vaulted chamber, nearly resembling those they had passed, and on looking round, they discovered at once the cause of the alarm.—A part of the decayed roof was fallen in, and the stones and rubbish of the ruin falling against the gallery door, obstructed the passage. It was evident, too, whence the noise which occasioned their terror had arisen; the loose stones which were piled against the door being shook by the effort made to open it, had given way, and rolled to the floor.

After surveying the place, they returned to the back stairs, which they descended, and having pursued the several windings of a long passage, found themselves again in the marble hall. 'Now,' said the marquis, 'what think ye? What evil spirits infest these walls? Henceforth be cautious how ye credit the phantasms of idleness, for ye may not always meet with a master who will condescend to undeceive ye.'—They acknowledged the goodness of the marquis, and professing themselves perfectly conscious of the error of their former suspicions, desired they might search no farther. 'I chuse to leave nothing to your imagination,' replied the marquis, 'lest hereafter it should betray you into a similar error. Follow me, therefore; you shall see the whole of these buildings.' Saying this, he led them to the south tower. They remembered, that from a door of this tower the figure which caused their alarm had issued; and notwithstanding the late assertion of their suspicions being removed, fear still operated powerfully upon their minds, and they would willingly have been excused from farther research. 'Would any of you chuse to explore this tower?' said the marquis, pointing to the broken stair-case; 'for myself, I am mortal, and therefore fear to venture; but you, who hold communion with disembodied spirits, may partake something of their nature; if so, you may pass without apprehension where the ghost has probably passed before.' They shrunk at this reproof, and were silent.

The marquis turning to a door on his right hand, ordered it to be unlocked. It opened upon the country, and the servants knew it to be the same whence the figure had appeared. Having relocked it, 'Lift that trapdoor; we will desend into the vaults,' said the marquis. 'What trapdoor, my Lord?' said Robert, with encreased agitation; 'I see none.' The marquis pointed, and Robert, perceived a door, which lay almost concealed beneath the stones that had fallen from the stair-case above. He began to remove them, when the marquis suddenly turning—'I have already sufficiently indulged your folly,' said he, 'and am weary of this business. If you are capable of receiving conviction from truth, you must now be convinced that these buildings are not the haunt of a supernatural being; and if you are incapable, it would be entirely useless to proceed. You, Robert, may therefore spare yourself the trouble of removing the rubbish; we will quit this part of the fabric.'

The servants joyfully obeyed, and the marquis locking the several doors, returned with the keys to the habitable part of the castle.

Every enquiry after Julia had hitherto proved fruitless; and the imperious nature of the marquis, heightened by the present vexation, became intolerably oppressive to all around him. As the hope of recovering Julia declined, his opinion that Emilia had assisted her to escape strengthened, and he inflicted upon her the severity of his unjust suspicions. She was ordered to confine herself to her apartment till her innocence should be cleared, or her sister discovered. From Madame de Menon she received a faithful sympathy, which was the sole relief of her oppressed heart. Her anxiety concerning Julia daily encreased, and was heightened into the most terrifying apprehensions for her safety. She knew of no person in whom her sister could confide, or of any place where she could find protection; the most deplorable evils were therefore to be expected.

One day, as she was sitting at the window of her apartment, engaged in melancholy reflection, she saw a man riding towards the castle on full speed. Her heart beat with fear and expectation; for his haste made her suspect he brought intelligence of Julia; and she could scarcely refrain from breaking through the command of the marquis, and rushing into the hall to learn something of his errand. She was right in her conjecture; the person she had seen was a spy of the marquis's, and came to inform him that the lady Julia was at that time concealed in a cottage of the forest of Marentino. The marquis, rejoiced at this intelligence, gave the man a liberal reward. He learned also, that she was accompanied by a young cavalier; which circumstance surprized him exceedingly; for he knew of no person except the Count de Vereza with whom she could have entrusted herself, and the count had fallen by his sword! He immediately ordered a party of his people to accompany the messenger to the forest of Marentino, and to suffer neither Julia nor the cavalier to escape them, on pain of death.

When the Duke de Luovo was informed of this discovery, he entreated and obtained permission of the marquis to join in the pursuit. He immediately set out on the expedition, armed, and followed by a number of his servants. He resolved to encounter all hazards, and to practice the most desperate extremes, rather than fail in the object of his enterprize. In a short time he overtook the marquis's people, and they proceeded together with all possible speed. The forest lay several leagues distant from the castle of Mazzini, and the day was closing when they entered upon the borders. The thick foliage of the trees spread a deeper shade around; and they were obliged to proceed with caution. Darkness had long fallen upon the earth when they reached the cottage, to which they were directed by a light that glimmered from afar among the trees. The duke left his people at some distance; and dismounted, and accompanied only by one servant, approached the cottage. When he reached it he stopped, and looking through the window, observed a man and woman in the habit of peasants seated at their supper. They were conversing with earnestness, and the duke, hoping to obtain farther intelligence of Julia, endeavoured to listen to their discourse. They were praising the beauty of a lady, whom the duke did not doubt to be Julia, and the woman spoke much in praise of the cavalier. 'He has a noble heart,' said she; 'and I am sure, by his look, belongs to some great family.'—'Nay,' replied her companion, 'the lady is as good as he. I have been at Palermo, and ought to know what great folks are, and if she is not one of them, never take my word again. Poor thing, how she does take on! It made my heart ache to see her.'

They were some time silent. The duke knocked at the door, and enquired of the man who opened it concerning the lady and cavalier then in his cottage. He was assured there were no other persons in the cottage than those he then saw. The duke persisted in affirming that the persons he enquired for were there concealed; which the man being as resolute in denying, he gave the signal, and his people approached, and surrounded the cottage. The peasants, terrified by this circumstance, confessed that a lady and cavalier, such as the duke described, had been for some time concealed in the cottage; but that they were now departed.

Suspicious of the truth of the latter assertion, the duke ordered his people to search the cottage, and that part of the forest contiguous to it. The search ended in disappointment. The duke, however, resolved to obtain all possible information concerning the fugitives; and assuming, therefore, a stern air, bade the peasant, on pain of instant death, discover all he knew of them.

The man replied, that on a very dark and stormy night, about a week before, two persons had come to the cottage, and desired shelter. That they were unattended; but seemed to be persons of consequence in disguise. That they paid very liberally for what they had; and that they departed from the cottage a few hours before the arrival of the duke.

The duke enquired concerning the course they had taken, and having received information, remounted his horse, and set forward in pursuit. The road lay for several leagues through the forest, and the darkness, and the probability of encountering banditti, made the journey dangerous. About the break of day they quitted the forest, and entered upon a wild and mountainous country, in which they travelled some miles without perceiving a hut, or a human being. No vestige of cultivation appeared, and no sounds reached them but those of their horses feet, and the roaring of the winds through the deep forests that overhung the mountains. The pursuit was uncertain, but the duke resolved to persevere.

They came at length to a cottage, where he repeated his enquiries, and learned to his satisfaction that two persons, such as he described, had stopped there for refreshment about two hours before. He found it now necessary to stop for the same purpose. Bread and milk, the only provisions of the place, were set before him, and his attendants would have been well contented, had there been sufficient of this homely fare to have satisfied their hunger.

Having dispatched an hasty meal, they again set forward in the way pointed out to them as the route of the fugitives. The country assumed a more civilized aspect. Corn, vineyards, olives, and groves of mulberry-trees adorned the hills. The vallies, luxuriant in shade, were frequently embellished by the windings of a lucid stream, and diversified by clusters of half-seen cottages. Here the rising turrets of a monastery appeared above the thick trees with which they were surrounded; and there the savage wilds the travellers had passed, formed a bold and picturesque background to the scene.

To the questions put by the duke to the several persons he met, he received answers that encouraged him to proceed. At noon he halted at a village to refresh himself and his people. He could gain no intelligence of Julia, and was perplexed which way to chuse; but determined at length to pursue the road he was then in, and accordingly again set forward. He travelled several miles without meeting any person who could give the necessary information, and began to despair of success. The lengthened shadows of the mountains, and the fading light gave signals of declining day; when having gained the summit of a high hill, he observed two persons travelling on horseback in the plains below. On one of them he distinguished the habiliments of a woman; and in her air he thought he discovered that of Julia. While he stood attentively surveying them, they looked towards the hill, when, as if urged by a sudden impulse of terror, they set off on full speed over the plains. The duke had no doubt that these were the persons he sought; and he, therefore, ordered some of his people to pursue them, and pushed his horse into a full gallop. Before he reached the plains, the fugitives, winding round an abrupt hill, were lost to his view. The duke continued his course, and his people, who were a considerable way before him, at length reached the hill, behind which the two persons had disappeared. No traces of them were to be seen, and they entered a narrow defile between two ranges of high and savage mountains; on the right of which a rapid stream rolled along, and broke with its deep resounding murmurs the solemn silence of the place. The shades of evening now fell thick, and the scene was soon enveloped in darkness; but to the duke, who was animated by a strong and impetuous passion, these were unimportant circumstances. Although he knew that the wilds of Sicily were frequently infested with banditti, his numbers made him fearless of attack. Not so his attendants, many of whom, as the darkness increased, testified emotions not very honourable to their courage: starting at every bush, and believing it concealed a murderer. They endeavoured to dissuade the duke from proceeding, expressing uncertainty of their being in the right route, and recommending the open plains. But the duke, whose eye had been vigilant to mark the flight of the fugitives, and who was not to be dissuaded from his purpose, quickly repressed their arguments. They continued their course without meeting a single person.

The moon now rose, and afforded them a shadowy imperfect view of the surrounding objects. The prospect was gloomy and vast, and not a human habitation met their eyes. They had now lost every trace of the fugitives, and found themselves bewildered in a wild and savage country. Their only remaining care was to extricate themselves from so forlorn a situation, and they listened at every step with anxious attention for some sound that might discover to them the haunts of men. They listened in vain; the stillness of night was undisturbed but by the wind, which broke at intervals in low and hollow murmurs from among the mountains.

As they proceeded with silent caution, they perceived a light break from among the rocks at some distance. The duke hesitated whether to approach, since it might probably proceed from a party of the banditti with which these mountains were said to be infested. While he hesitated, it disappeared; but he had not advanced many steps when it returned. He now perceived it to issue from the mouth of a cavern, and cast a bright reflection upon the overhanging rocks and shrubs.

He dismounted, and followed by two of his people, leaving the rest at some distance, moved with slow and silent steps towards the cave. As he drew near, he heard the sound of many voices in high carousal. Suddenly the uproar ceased, and the following words were sung by a clear and manly voice:

SONG

Pour the rich libation high;
    The sparkling cup to Bacchus fill;
His joys shall dance in ev'ry eye,
    And chace the forms of future ill!

Quick the magic raptures steal
    O'er the fancy-kindling brain.
Warm the heart with social zeal,
    And song and laughter reign.

Then visions of pleasure shall float on our sight,
    While light bounding our spirits shall flow;
And the god shall impart a fine sense of delight
    Which in vain *sober* mortals would know.

The last verse was repeated in loud chorus. The duke listened with astonishment! Such social merriment amid a scene of such savage wildness, appeared more like enchantment than reality. He would not have hesitated to pronounce this a party of banditti, had not the delicacy of expression preserved in the song appeared unattainable by men of their class.

He had now a full view of the cave; and the moment which convinced him of his error served only to encrease his surprize. He beheld, by the light of a fire, a party of banditti seated within the deepest recess of the cave round a rude kind of table formed in the rock. The table was spread with provisions, and they were regaling themselves with great eagerness and joy. The countenances of the men exhibited a strange mixture of fierceness and sociality; and the duke could almost have imagined he beheld in these robbers a band of the early Romans before knowledge had civilized, or luxury had softened them. But he had not much time for meditation; a sense of his danger bade him fly while to fly was yet in his power. As he turned to depart, he observed two saddle-horses grazing upon the herbage near the mouth of the cave. It instantly occurred to him that they belonged to Julia and her companion. He hesitated, and at length determined to linger awhile, and listen to the conversation of the robbers, hoping from thence to have his doubts resolved. They talked for some time in a strain of high conviviality, and recounted in exultation many of their exploits. They described also the behaviour of several people whom they had robbed, with highly ludicrous allusions, and with much rude humour, while the cave re-echoed with loud bursts of laughter and applause. They were thus engaged in tumultuous merriment, till one of them cursing the scanty plunder of their late adventure, but praising the beauty of a lady, they all lowered their voices together, and seemed as if debating upon a point uncommonly interesting to them. The passions of the duke were roused, and he became certain that it was Julia of whom they had spoken. In the first impulse of feeling he drew his sword; but recollecting the number of his adversaries, restrained his fury. He was turning from the cave with a design of summoning his people, when the light of the fire glittering upon the bright blade of his weapon, caught the eye of one of the banditti. He started from his seat, and his comrades instantly rising in consternation, discovered the duke. They rushed with loud vociferation towards the mouth of the cave. He endeavoured to escape to his people; but two of the banditti mounting the horses which were grazing near, quickly overtook and seized him. His dress and air proclaimed him to be a person of distinction; and, rejoicing in their prospect of plunder, they forced him towards the cave. Here their comrades awaited them; but what were the emotions of the duke, when he discovered in the person of the principal robber his own son! who, to escape the galling severity of his father, had fled from his castle some years before, and had not been heard of since.

He had placed himself at the head of a party of banditti, and, pleased with the liberty which till then he had never tasted, and with the power which his new situation afforded him, he became so much attached to this wild and lawless mode of life, that he determined never to quit it till death should dissolve those ties which now made his rank only oppressive. This event seemed at so great a distance, that he seldom allowed himself to think of it. Whenever it should happen, he had no doubt that he might either resume his rank without danger of discovery, or might justify his present conduct as a frolic which a few acts of generosity would easily excuse. He knew his power would then place him beyond the reach of censure, in a country where the people are accustomed to implicit subordination, and seldom dare to scrutinize the actions of the nobility.

His sensations, however, on discovering his father, were not very pleasing; but proclaiming the duke, he protected him from farther outrage.

With the duke, whose heart was a stranger to the softer affections, indignation usurped the place of parental feeling. His pride was the only passion affected by the discovery; and he had the rashness to express the indignation, which the conduct of his son had excited, in terms of unrestrained invective. The banditti, inflamed by the opprobium with which he loaded their order, threatened instant punishment to his temerity; and the authority of Riccardo could hardly restrain them within the limits of forbearance.

The menaces, and at length entreaties of the duke, to prevail with his son to abandon his present way of life, were equally ineffectual. Secure in his own power, Riccardo laughed at the first, and was insensible to the latter; and his father was compelled to relinquish the attempt. The duke, however, boldly and passionately accused him of having plundered and secreted a lady and cavalier, his friends, at the same time describing Julia, for whose liberation he offered large rewards. Riccardo denied the fact, which so much exasperated the duke, that he drew his sword with an intention of plunging it in the breast of his son. His arm was arrested by the surrounding banditti, who half unsheathed their swords, and stood suspended in an attitude of menace. The fate of the father now hung upon the voice of the son. Riccardo raised his arm, but instantly dropped it, and turned away. The banditti sheathed their weapons, and stepped back.

Riccardo solemnly swearing that he knew nothing of the persons described, the duke at length became convinced of the truth of the assertion, and departing from the cave, rejoined his people. All the impetuous passions of his nature were roused and inflamed by the discovery of his son in a situation so wretchedly disgraceful. Yet it was his pride rather than his virtue that was hurt; and when he wished him dead, it was rather to save himself from disgrace, than his son from the real indignity of vice. He had no means of reclaiming him; to have attempted it by force, would have been at this time the excess of temerity, for his attendants, though numerous, were undisciplined, and would have fallen certain victims to the power of a savage and dexterous banditti.

With thoughts agitated in fierce and agonizing conflict, he pursued his journey; and having lost all trace of Julia, sought only for an habitation which might shelter him from the night, and afford necessary refreshment for himself and his people. With this, however, there appeared little hope of meeting.

CHAPTER V

The night grew stormy. The hollow winds swept over the mountains, and blew bleak and cold around; the clouds were driven swiftly over the face of the moon, and the duke and his people were frequently involved in total darkness. They had travelled on silently and dejectedly for some hours, and were bewildered in the wilds, when they suddenly heard the bell of a monastery chiming for midnight-prayer. Their hearts revived at the sound, which they endeavoured to follow, but they had not gone far, when the gale wafted it away, and they were abandoned to the uncertain guide of their own conjectures.

They had pursued for some time the way which they judged led to the monastery, when the note of the bell returned upon the wind, and discovered to them that they had mistaken their route. After much wandering and difficulty they arrived, overcome with weariness, at the gates of a large and gloomy fabric. The bell had ceased, and all was still. By the moonlight, which through broken clouds now streamed upon the building, they became convinced it was the monastery they had sought, and the duke himself struck loudly upon the gate.

Several minutes elapsed, no person appeared, and he repeated the stroke. A step was presently heard within, the gate was unbarred, and a thin shivering figure presented itself. The duke solicited admission, but was refused, and reprimanded for disturbing the convent at the hour sacred to prayer. He then made known his rank, and bade the friar inform the Superior that he requested shelter from the night. The friar, suspicious of deceit, and apprehensive of robbers, refused with much firmness, and repeated that the convent was engaged in prayer; he had almost closed the gate, when the duke, whom hunger and fatigue made desperate, rushed by him, and passed into the court. It was his intention to present himself to the Superior, and he had not proceeded far when the sound of laughter, and of many voices in loud and mirthful jollity, attracted his steps. It led him through several passages to a door, through the crevices of which light appeared. He paused a moment, and heard within a wild uproar of merriment and song. He was struck with astonishment, and could scarcely credit his senses!

He unclosed the door, and beheld in a large room, well lighted, a company of friars, dressed in the habit of their order, placed round a table, which was profusely spread with wines and fruits. The Superior, whose habit distinguished him from his associates, appeared at the head of the table. He was lifting a large goblet of wine to his lips, and was roaring out, 'Profusion and confusion,' at the moment when the duke entered. His appearance caused a general alarm; that part of the company who were not too much intoxicated, arose from their seats; and the Superior, dropping the goblet from his hands, endeavoured to assume a look of austerity, which his rosy countenance belied. The duke received a reprimand, delivered in the lisping accents of intoxication, and embellished with frequent interjections of hiccup. He made known his quality, his distress, and solicited a night's lodging for himself and his people. When the Superior understood the distinction of his guest, his features relaxed into a smile of joyous welcome; and taking him by the hand, he placed him by his side.

The table was quickly covered with luxurious provisions, and orders were given that the duke's people should be admitted, and taken care of. He was regaled with a variety of the finest wines, and at length, highly elevated by monastic hospitality, he retired to the apartment allotted him, leaving the Superior in a condition which precluded all ceremony.

He departed in the morning, very well pleased with the accommodating principles of monastic religion. He had been told that the enjoyment of the good things of this life was the surest sign of our gratitude to Heaven; and it appeared, that within the walls of a Sicilian monastery, the precept and the practice were equally enforced.

He was now at a loss what course to chuse, for he had no clue to direct him towards the object of his pursuit; but hope still invigorated, and urged him to perseverance. He was not many leagues from the coast; and it occurred to him that the fugitives might make towards it with a design of escaping into Italy. He therefore determined to travel towards the sea and proceed along the shore.

At the house where he stopped to dine, he learned that two persons, such as he described, had halted there about an hour before his arrival, and had set off again in much seeming haste. They had taken the road towards the coast, whence it was obvious to the duke they designed to embark. He stayed not to finish the repast set before him, but instantly remounted to continue the pursuit.

To the enquiries he made of the persons he chanced to meet, favorable answers were returned for a time, but he was at length bewildered in uncertainity, and travelled for some hours in a direction which chance, rather than judgment, prompted him to take.

The falling evening again confused his prospects, and unsettled his hopes. The shades were deepened by thick and heavy clouds that enveloped the horizon, and the deep sounding air foretold a tempest. The thunder now rolled at a distance, and the accumulated clouds grew darker. The duke and his people were on a wild and dreary heath, round which they looked in vain for shelter, the view being terminated on all sides by the same desolate scene. They rode, however, as hard as their horses would carry them; and at length one of the attendants spied on the skirts of the waste a large mansion, towards which they immediately directed their course.

They were overtaken by the storm, and at the moment when they reached the building, a peal of thunder, which seemed to shake the pile, burst over their heads. They now found themselves in a large and ancient mansion, which seemed totally deserted, and was falling to decay. The edifice was distinguished by an air of magnificence, which ill accorded with the surrounding scenery, and which excited some degree of surprize in the mind of the duke, who, however, fully justified the owner in forsaking a spot which presented to the eye only views of rude and desolated nature.

The storm increased with much violence, and threatened to detain the duke a prisoner in his present habitation for the night. The hall, of which he and his people had taken possession, exhibited in every feature marks of ruin and desolation. The marble pavement was in many places broken, the walls were mouldering in decay, and round the high and shattered windows the long grass waved to the lonely gale. Curiosity led him to explore the recesses of the mansion. He quitted the hall, and entered upon a passage which conducted him to a remote part of the edifice. He wandered through the wild and spacious apartments in gloomy meditation, and often paused in wonder at the remains of magnificence which he beheld.

The mansion was irregular and vast, and he was bewildered in its intricacies. In endeavouring to find his way back, he only perplexed himself more, till at length he arrived at a door, which he believed led into the hall he first quitted. On opening it he discovered, by the faint light of the moon, a large place which he scarcely knew whether to think a cloister, a chapel, or a hall. It retired in long perspective, in arches, and terminated in a large iron gate, through which appeared the open country.

The lighting flashed thick and blue around, which, together with the thunder that seemed to rend the wide arch of heaven, and the melancholy aspect of the place, so awed the duke, that he involuntarily called to his people. His voice was answered only by the deep echoes which ran in murmurs through the place, and died away at a distance; and the moon now sinking behind a cloud, left him in total darkness.

He repeated the call more loudly, and at length heard the approach of footsteps. A few moments relieved him from his anxiety, for his people appeared. The storm was yet loud, and the heavy and sulphureous appearance of the atmosphere promised no speedy abatement of it. The duke endeavoured to reconcile himself to pass the night in his present situation, and ordered a fire to be lighted in the place he was in. This with much difficulty was accomplished. He then threw himself on the pavement before it, and tried to endure the abstinence which he had so ill observed in the monastery on the preceding night. But to his great joy his attendants, more provident than himself, had not scrupled to accept a comfortable quantity of provisions which had been offered them at the monastery; and which they now drew forth from a wallet. They were spread upon the pavement; and the duke, after refreshing himself, delivered up the remains to his people. Having ordered them to watch by turns at the gate, he wrapt his cloak round him, and resigned himself to repose.

The night passed without any disturbance. The morning arose fresh and bright; the Heavens exhibited a clear and unclouded concave; even the wild heath, refreshed by the late rains, smiled around, and sent up with the morning gale a stream of fragrance.

The duke quitted the mansion, re-animated by the cheerfulness of morn, and pursued his journey. He could gain no intelligence of the fugitives. About noon he found himself in a beautiful romantic country; and having reached the summit of some wild cliffs, he rested, to view the picturesque imagery of the scene below. A shadowy sequestered dell appeared buried deep among the rocks, and in the bottom was seen a lake, whose clear bosom reflected the impending cliffs, and the beautiful luxuriance of the overhanging shades.

But his attention was quickly called from the beauties of inanimate nature, to objects more interesting; for he observed two persons, whom he instantly recollected to be the same that he had formerly pursued over the plains. They were seated on the margin of the lake, under the shade of some high trees at the foot of the rocks, and seemed partaking of a repast which was spread upon the grass. Two horses were grazing near. In the lady the duke saw the very air and shape of Julia, and his heart bounded at the sight. They were seated with their backs to the cliffs upon which the duke stood, and he therefore surveyed them unobserved. They were now almost within his power, but the difficulty was how to descend the rocks, whose stupendous heights and craggy steeps seemed to render them impassable. He examined them with a scrutinizing eye, and at length espied, where the rock receded, a narrow winding sort of path. He dismounted, and some of his attendants doing the same, followed their lord down the cliffs, treading lightly, lest their steps should betray them. Immediately upon their reaching the bottom, they were perceived by the lady, who fled among the rocks, and was presently pursued by the duke's people. The cavalier had no time to escape, but drew his sword, and defended himself against the furious assault of the duke.

The combat was sustained with much vigour and dexterity on both sides for some minutes, when the duke received the point of his adversary's sword, and fell. The cavalier, endeavouring to escape, was seized by the duke's people, who now appeared with the fair fugitive; but what was the disappointment—the rage of the duke, when in the person of the lady he discovered a stranger! The astonishment was mutual, but the accompanying feelings were, in the different persons, of a very opposite nature. In the duke, astonishment was heightened by vexation, and embittered by disappointment:—in the lady, it was softened by the joy of unexpected deliverance.

This lady was the younger daughter of a Sicilian nobleman, whose avarice, or necessities, had devoted her to a convent. To avoid the threatened fate, she fled with the lover to whom her affections had long been engaged, and whose only fault, even in the eye of her father, was inferiority of birth. They were now on their way to the coast, whence they designed to pass over to Italy, where the church would confirm the bonds which their hearts had already formed. There the friends of the cavalier resided, and with them they expected to find a secure retreat.

The duke, who was not materially wounded, after the first transport of his rage had subsided, suffered them to depart. Relieved from their fears, they joyfully set forward, leaving their late pursuer to the anguish of defeat, and fruitless endeavour. He was remounted on his horse; and having dispatched two of his people in search of a house where he might obtain some relief, he proceeded slowly on his return to the castle of Mazzini.

It was not long ere he recollected a circumstance which, in the first tumult of his disappointment, had escaped him, but which so essentially affected the whole tenour of his hopes, as to make him again irresolute how to proceed. He considered that, although these were the fugitives he had pursued over the plains, they might not be the same who had been secreted in the cottage, and it was therefore possible that Julia might have been the person whom they had for some time followed from thence. This suggestion awakened his hopes, which were however quickly destroyed; for he remembered that the only persons who could have satisfied his doubts, were now gone beyond the power of recall. To pursue Julia, when no traces of her flight remained, was absurd; and he was, therefore, compelled to return to the marquis, as ignorant and more hopeless than he had left him. With much pain he reached the village which his emissaries had discovered, when fortunately he obtained some medical assistance. Here he was obliged by indisposition to rest. The anguish of his mind equalled that of his body. Those impetuous passions which so strongly marked his nature, were roused and exasperated to a degree that operated powerfully upon his constitution, and threatened him with the most alarming consequences. The effect of his wound was heightened by the agitation of his mind; and a fever, which quickly assumed a very serious aspect, co-operated to endanger his life.

CHAPTER VI

The castle of Mazzini was still the scene of dissension and misery. The impatience and astonishment of the marquis being daily increased by the lengthened absence of the duke, he dispatched servants to the forest of Marentino, to enquire the occasion of this circumstance. They returned with intelligence that neither Julia, the duke, nor any of his people were there. He therefore concluded that his daughter had fled the cottage upon information of the approach of the duke, who, he believed, was still engaged in the pursuit. With respect to Ferdinand, who yet pined in sorrow and anxiety in his dungeon, the rigour of the marquis's conduct was unabated. He apprehended that his son, if liberated, would quickly discover the retreat of Julia, and by his advice and assistance confirm her in disobedience.

Ferdinand, in the stillness and solitude of his dungeon, brooded over the late calamity in gloomy ineffectual lamentation. The idea of Hippolitus—of Hippolitus murdered—arose to his imagination in busy intrusion, and subdued the strongest efforts of his fortitude. Julia too, his beloved sister—unprotected—unfriended—might, even at the moment he lamented her, be sinking under sufferings dreadful to humanity. The airy schemes he once formed of future felicity, resulting from the union of two persons so justly dear to him—with the gay visions of past happiness—floated upon his fancy, and the lustre they reflected served only to heighten, by contrast, the obscurity and gloom of his present views. He had, however, a new subject of astonishment, which often withdrew his thoughts from their accustomed object, and substituted a sensation less painful, though scarcely less powerful. One night as he lay ruminating on the past, in melancholy dejection, the stillness of the place was suddenly interrupted by a low and dismal sound. It returned at intervals in hollow sighings, and seemed to come from some person in deep distress. So much did fear operate upon his mind, that he was uncertain whether it arose from within or from without. He looked around his dungeon, but could distinguish no object through the impenetrable darkness. As he listened in deep amazement, the sound was repeated in moans more hollow. Terror now occupied his mind, and disturbed his reason; he started from his posture, and, determined to be satisfied whether any person beside himself was in the dungeon, groped, with arms extended, along the walls. The place was empty; but coming to a particular spot, the sound suddenly arose more distinctly to his ear. He called aloud, and asked who was there; but received no answer. Soon after all was still; and after listening for some time without hearing the sounds renewed, he laid himself down to sleep. On the following day he mentioned to the man who brought him food what he had heard, and enquired concerning the noise. The servant appeared very much terrified, but could give no information that might in the least account for the circumstance, till he mentioned the vicinity of the dungeon to the southern buildings. The dreadful relation formerly given by the marquis instantly recurred to the mind of Ferdinand, who did not hesitate to believe that the moans he heard came from the restless spirit of the murdered Della Campo. At this conviction, horror thrilled his nerves; but he remembered his oath, and was silent. His courage, however, yielded to the idea of passing another night alone in his prison, where, if the vengeful spirit of the murdered should appear, he might even die of the horror which its appearance would inspire.

The mind of Ferdinand was highly superior to the general influence of superstition; but, in the present instance, such strong correlative circumstances appeared, as compelled even incredulity to yield. He had himself heard strange and awful sounds in the forsaken southern buildings; he received from his father a dreadful secret relative to them—a secret in which his honor, nay even his life, was bound up. His father had also confessed, that he had himself there seen appearances which he could never after remember without horror, and which had occasioned him to quit that part of the castle. All these recollections presented to Ferdinand a chain of evidence too powerful to be resisted; and he could not doubt that the spirit of the dead had for once been permitted to revisit the earth, and to call down vengeance on the descendants of the murderer.

This conviction occasioned him a degree of horror, such as no apprehension of mortal powers could have excited; and he determined, if possible, to prevail on Peter to pass the hours of midnight with him in his dungeon. The strictness of Peter's fidelity yielded to the persuasions of Ferdinand, though no bribe could tempt him to incur the resentment of the marquis, by permitting an escape. Ferdinand passed the day in lingering anxious expectation, and the return of night brought Peter to the dungeon. His kindness exposed him to a danger which he had not foreseen; for when seated in the dungeon alone with his prisoner, how easily might that prisoner have conquered him and left him to pay his life to the fury of the marquis. He was preserved by the humanity of Ferdinand, who instantly perceived his advantage, but disdained to involve an innocent man in destruction, and spurned the suggestion from his mind.

Peter, whose friendship was stronger than his courage, trembled with apprehension as the hour drew nigh in which the groans had been heard on the preceding night. He recounted to Ferdinand a variety of terrific circumstances, which existed only in the heated imaginations of his fellow-servants, but which were still admitted by them as facts. Among the rest, he did not omit to mention the light and the figure which had been seen to issue from the south tower on the night of Julia's intended elopement; a circumstance which he embellished with innumerable aggravations of fear and wonder. He concluded with describing the general consternation it had caused, and the consequent behaviour of the marquis, who laughed at the fears of his people, yet condescended to quiet them by a formal review of the buildings whence their terror had originated. He related the adventure of the door which refused to yield, the sounds which arose from within, and the discovery of the fallen roof; but declared that neither he, nor any of his fellow servants, believed the noise or the obstruction proceeded from that, 'because, my lord,' continued he, 'the door seemed to be held only in one place; and as for the noise—O! Lord! I never shall forget what a noise it was!—it was a thousand times louder than what any stones could make.'

Ferdinand listened to this narrative in silent wonder! wonder not occasioned by the adventure described, but by the hardihood and rashness of the marquis, who had thus exposed to the inspection of his people, that dreadful spot which he knew from experience to be the haunt of an injured spirit; a spot which he had hitherto scrupulously concealed from human eye, and human curiosity; and which, for so many years, he had not dared even himself to enter. Peter went on, but was presently interrupted by a hollow moan, which seemed to come from beneath the ground. 'Blessed virgin!' exclaimed he: Ferdinand listened in awful expectation. A groan longer and more dreadful was repeated, when Peter started from his seat, and snatching up the lamp, rushed out of the dungeon. Ferdinand, who was left in total darkness, followed to the door, which the affrighted Peter had not stopped to fasten, but which had closed, and seemed held by a lock that could be opened only on the outside. The sensations of Ferdinand, thus compelled to remain in the dungeon, are not to be imagined. The horrors of the night, whatever they were to be, he was to endure alone. By degrees, however, he seemed to acquire the valour of despair. The sounds were repeated, at intervals, for near an hour, when silence returned, and remained undisturbed during the rest of the night. Ferdinand was alarmed by no appearance, and at length, overcome with anxiety and watching, he sunk to repose.

On the following morning Peter returned to the dungeon, scarcely knowing what to expect, yet expecting something very strange, perhaps the murder, perhaps the supernatural disappearance of his young lord. Full of these wild apprehensions, he dared not venture thither alone, but persuaded some of the servants, to whom he had communicated his terrors, to accompany him to the door. As they passed along he recollected, that in the terror of the preceding night he had forgot to fasten the door, and he now feared that his prisoner had made his escape without a miracle. He hurried to the door; and his surprize was extreme to find it fastened. It instantly struck him that this was the work of a supernatural power, when on calling aloud, he was answered by a voice from within. His absurd fear did not suffer him to recognize the voice of Ferdinand, neither did he suppose that Ferdinand had failed to escape, he, therefore, attributed the voice to the being he had heard on the preceding night; and starting back from the door, fled with his companions to the great hall. There the uproar occasioned by their entrance called together a number of persons, amongst whom was the marquis, who was soon informed of the cause of alarm, with a long history of the circumstances of the foregoing night. At this information, the marquis assumed a very stern look, and severely reprimanded Peter for his imprudence, at the same time reproaching the other servants with their undutifulness in thus disturbing his peace. He reminded them of the condescension he had practised to dissipate their former terrors, and of the result of their examination. He then assured them, that since indulgence had only encouraged intrusion, he would for the future be severe; and concluded with declaring, that the first man who should disturb him with a repetition of such ridiculous apprehensions, or should attempt to disturb the peace of the castle by circulating these idle notions, should be rigorously punished, and banished his dominions. They shrunk back at his reproof, and were silent. 'Bring a torch,' said the marquis, 'and shew me to the dungeon. I will once more condescend to confute you.'

They obeyed, and descended with the marquis, who, arriving at the dungeon, instantly threw open the door, and discovered to the astonished eyes of his attendants—Ferdinand!—He started with surprize at the entrance of his father thus attended. The marquis darted upon him a severe look, which he perfectly comprehended.—'Now,' cried he, turning to his people, 'what do you see? My son, whom I myself placed here, and whose voice, which answered to your calls, you have transformed into unknown sounds. Speak, Ferdinand, and confirm what I say.' Ferdinand did so. 'What dreadful spectre appeared to you last night?' resumed the marquis, looking stedfastly upon him: 'gratify these fellows with a description of it, for they cannot exist without something of the marvellous.' 'None, my lord,' replied Ferdinand, who too well understood the manner of the marquis. "Tis well,' cried the marquis, 'and this is the last time,' turning to his attendants, 'that your folly shall be treated with so much lenity.' He ceased to urge the subject, and forbore to ask Ferdinand even one question before his servants, concerning the nocturnal sounds described by Peter. He quitted the dungeon with eyes steadily bent in anger and suspicion upon Ferdinand. The marquis suspected that the fears of his son had inadvertently betrayed to Peter a part of the secret entrusted to him, and he artfully interrogated Peter with seeming carelessness, concerning the circumstances of the preceding night. From him he drew such answers as honorably acquitted Ferdinand of indiscretion, and relieved himself from tormenting apprehensions.

The following night passed quietly away; neither sound nor appearance disturbed the peace of Ferdinand. The marquis, on the next day, thought proper to soften the severity of his sufferings, and he was removed from his dungeon to a room strongly grated, but exposed to the light of day.

Meanwhile a circumstance occurred which increased the general discord, and threatened Emilia with the loss of her last remaining comfort—the advice and consolation of Madame de Menon. The marchioness, whose passion for the Count de Vereza had at length yielded to absence, and the pressure of present circumstances, now bestowed her smiles upon a young Italian cavalier, a visitor at the castle, who possessed too much of the spirit of gallantry to permit a lady to languish in vain. The marquis, whose mind was occupied with other passions, was insensible to the misconduct of his wife, who at all times had the address to disguise her vices beneath the gloss of virtue and innocent freedom. The intrigue was discovered by madame, who, having one day left a book in the oak parlour, returned thither in search of it. As she opened the door of the apartment, she heard the voice of the cavalier in passionate exclamation; and on entering, discovered him rising in some confusion from the feet of the marchioness, who, darting at madame a look of severity, arose from her seat. Madame, shocked at what she had seen, instantly retired, and buried in her own bosom that secret, the discovery of which would most essentially have poisoned the peace of the marquis. The marchioness, who was a stranger to the generosity of sentiment which actuated Madame de Menon, doubted not that she would seize the moment of retaliation, and expose her conduct where most she dreaded it should be known. The consciousness of guilt tortured her with incessant fear of discovery, and from this period her whole attention was employed to dislodge from the castle the person to whom her character was committed. In this it was not difficult to succeed; for the delicacy of madame's feelings made her quick to perceive, and to withdraw from a treatment unsuitable to the natural dignity of her character. She therefore resolved to depart from the castle; but disdaining to take an advantage even over a successful enemy, she determined to be silent on that subject which would instantly have transferred the triumph from her adversary to herself. When the marquis, on hearing her determination to retire, earnestly enquired for the motive of her conduct, she forbore to acquaint him with the real one, and left him to incertitude and disappointment.

To Emilia this design occasioned a distress which almost subdued the resolution of madame. Her tears and intreaties spoke the artless energy of sorrow. In madame she lost her only friend; and she too well understood the value of that friend, to see her depart without feeling and expressing the deepest distress. From a strong attachment to the memory of the mother, madame had been induced to undertake the education of her daughters, whose engaging dispositions had perpetuated a kind of hereditary affection. Regard for Emilia and Julia had alone for some time detained her at the castle; but this was now succeeded by the influence of considerations too powerful to be resisted. As her income was small, it was her plan to retire to her native place, which was situated in a distant part of the island, and there take up her residence in a convent.

Emilia saw the time of madame's departure approach with increased distress. They left each other with a mutual sorrow, which did honour to their hearts. When her last friend was gone, Emilia wandered through the forsaken apartments, where she had been accustomed to converse with Julia, and to receive consolation and sympathy from her dear instructress, with a kind of anguish known only to those who have experienced a similar situation. Madame pursued her journey with a heavy heart. Separated from the objects of her fondest affections, and from the scenes and occupations for which long habit had formed claims upon her heart, she seemed without interest and without motive for exertion. The world appeared a wide and gloomy desert, where no heart welcomed her with kindness—no countenance brightened into smiles at her approach. It was many years since she quitted Calini—and in the interval, death had swept away the few friends she left there. The future presented a melancholy scene; but she had the retrospect of years spent in honorable endeavour and strict integrity, to cheer her heart and encouraged her hopes.

But her utmost endeavours were unable to express the anxiety with which the uncertain fate of Julia overwhelmed her. Wild and terrific images arose to her imagination. Fancy drew the scene;—she deepened the shades; and the terrific aspect of the objects she presented was heightened by the obscurity which involved them.

[End of Vol. I]

CHAPTER VII

Towards the close of day Madame de Menon arrived at a small village situated among the mountains, where she purposed to pass the night. The evening was remarkably fine, and the romantic beauty of the surrounding scenery invited her to walk. She followed the windings of a stream, which was lost at some distance amongst luxuriant groves of chesnut. The rich colouring of evening glowed through the dark foliage, which spreading a pensive gloom around, offered a scene congenial to the present temper of her mind, and she entered the shades. Her thoughts, affected by the surrounding objects, gradually sunk into a pleasing and complacent melancholy, and she was insensibly led on. She still followed the course of the stream to where the deep shades retired, and the scene again opening to day, yielded to her a view so various and sublime, that she paused in thrilling and delightful wonder. A group of wild and grotesque rocks rose in a semicircular form, and their fantastic shapes exhibited Nature in her most sublime and striking attitudes. Here her vast magnificence elevated the mind of the beholder to enthusiasm. Fancy caught the thrilling sensation, and at her touch the towering steeps became shaded with unreal glooms; the caves more darkly frowned—the projecting cliffs assumed a more terrific aspect, and the wild overhanging shrubs waved to the gale in deeper murmurs. The scene inspired madame with reverential awe, and her thoughts involuntarily rose, 'from Nature up to Nature's God.' The last dying gleams of day tinted the rocks and shone upon the waters, which retired through a rugged channel and were lost afar among the receding cliffs. While she listened to their distant murmur, a voice of liquid and melodious sweetness arose from among the rocks; it sung an air, whose melancholy expression awakened all her attention, and captivated her heart. The tones swelled and died faintly away among the clear, yet languishing echoes which the rocks repeated with an effect like that of enchantment. Madame looked around in search of the sweet warbler, and observed at some distance a peasant girl seated on a small projection of the rock, overshadowed by drooping sycamores. She moved slowly towards the spot, which she had almost reached, when the sound of her steps startled and silenced the syren, who, on perceiving a stranger, arose in an attitude to depart. The voice of madame arrested her, and she approached. Language cannot paint the sensation of madame, when in the disguise of a peasant girl, she distinguished the features of Julia, whose eyes lighted up with sudden recollection, and who sunk into her arms overcome with joy. When their first emotions were subsided, and Julia had received answers to her enquiries concerning Ferdinand and Emilia, she led madame to the place of her concealment. This was a solitary cottage, in a close valley surrounded by mountains, whose cliffs appeared wholly inaccessible to mortal foot. The deep solitude of the scene dissipated at once madame's wonder that Julia had so long remained undiscovered, and excited surprize how she had been able to explore a spot thus deeply sequestered; but madame observed with extreme concern, that the countenance of Julia no longer wore the smile of health and gaiety. Her fine features had received the impressions not only of melancholy, but of grief. Madame sighed as she gazed, and read too plainly the cause of the change. Julia understood that sigh, and answered it with her tears. She pressed the hand of madame in mournful silence to her lips, and her cheeks were suffused with a crimson glow. At length, recovering herself, 'I have much, my dear madam, to tell,' said she, 'and much to explain, 'ere you will admit me again to that esteem of which I was once so justly proud. I had no resource from misery, but in flight; and of that I could not make you a confidant, without meanly involving you in its disgrace.'—'Say no more, my love, on the subject,' replied madame; 'with respect to myself, I admired your conduct, and felt severely for your situation. Rather let me hear by what means you effected your escape, and what has since be fallen you.'—Julia paused a moment, as if to stifle her rising emotion, and then commenced her narrative.

'You are already acquainted with the secret of that night, so fatal to my peace. I recall the remembrance of it with an anguish which I cannot conceal; and why should I wish its concealment, since I mourn for one, whose noble qualities justified all my admiration, and deserved more than my feeble praise can bestow; the idea of whom will be the last to linger in my mind till death shuts up this painful scene.' Her voice trembled, and she paused. After a few moments she resumed her tale. 'I will spare myself the pain of recurring to scenes with which you are not unacquainted, and proceed to those which more immediately attract your interest. Caterina, my faithful servant, you know, attended me in my confinement; to her kindness I owe my escape. She obtained from her lover, a servant in the castle, that assistance which gave me liberty. One night when Carlo, who had been appointed my guard, was asleep, Nicolo crept into his chamber, and stole from him the keys of my prison. He had previously procured a ladder of ropes. O! I can never forget my emotions, when in the dead hour of that night, which was meant to precede the day of my sacrifice, I heard the door of my prison unlock, and found myself half at liberty! My trembling limbs with difficulty supported me as I followed Caterina to the saloon, the windows of which being low and near to the terrace, suited our purpose. To the terrace we easily got, where Nicolo awaited us with the rope-ladder. He fastened it to the ground; and having climbed to the top of the parapet, quickly slided down on the other side. There he held it, while we ascended and descended; and I soon breathed the air of freedom again. But the apprehension of being retaken was still too powerful to permit a full enjoyment of my escape. It was my plan to proceed to the place of my faithful Caterina's nativity, where she had assured me I might find a safe asylum in the cottage of her parents, from whom, as they had never seen me, I might conceal my birth. This place, she said, was entirely unknown to the marquis, who had hired her at Naples only a few months before, without any enquiries concerning her family. She had informed me that the village was many leagues distant from the castle, but that she was very well acquainted with the road. At the foot of the walls we left Nicolo, who returned to the castle to prevent suspicion, but with an intention to leave it at a less dangerous time, and repair to Farrini to his good Caterina. I parted from him with many thanks, and gave him a small diamond cross, which, for that purpose, I had taken from the jewels sent to me for wedding ornaments.'

CHAPTER VIII

'About a quarter of a league from the walls we stopped, and I assumed the habit in which you now see me. My own dress was fastened to some heavy stones, and Caterina threw it into the stream, near the almond grove, whose murmurings you have so often admired. The fatigue and hardship I endured in this journey, performed almost wholly on foot, at any other time would have overcome me; but my mind was so occupied by the danger I was avoiding that these lesser evils were disregarded. We arrived in safety at the cottage, which stood at a little distance from the village of Ferrini, and were received by Caterina's parents with some surprise and more kindness. I soon perceived it would be useless, and even dangerous, to attempt to preserve the character I personated. In the eyes of Caterina's mother I read a degree of surprise and admiration which declared she believed me to be of superior rank; I, therefore, thought it more prudent to win her fidelity by entrusting her with my secret than, by endeavouring to conceal it, leave it to be discovered by her curiosity or discernment. Accordingly, I made known my quality and my distress, and received strong assurances of assistance and attachment. For further security, I removed to this sequestered spot. The cottage we are now in belongs to a sister of Caterina, upon whose faithfulness I have been hitherto fully justified in relying. But I am not even here secure from apprehension, since for several days past horsemen of a suspicious appearance have been observed near Marcy, which is only half a league from hence.'

Here Julia closed her narration, to which madame had listened with a mixture of surprise and pity, which her eyes sufficiently discovered. The last circumstance of the narrative seriously alarmed her. She acquainted Julia with the pursuit which the duke had undertaken; and she did not hesitate to believe it a party of his people whom Julia had described. Madame, therefore, earnestly advised her to quit her present situation, and to accompany her in disguise to the monastery of St Augustin, where she would find a secure retreat; because, even if her place of refuge should be discovered, the superior authority of the church would protect her. Julia accepted the proposal with much joy. As it was necessary that madame should sleep at the village where she had left her servants and horses, it was agreed that at break of day she should return to the cottage, where Julia would await her. Madame took all affectionate leave of Julia, whose heart, in spite of reason, sunk when she saw her depart, though but for the necessary interval of repose.

At the dawn of day madame arose. Her servants, who were hired for the journey, were strangers to Julia: from them, therefore, she had nothing to apprehend. She reached the cottage before sunrise, having left her people at some little distance. Her heart foreboded evil, when, on knocking at the door, no answer was returned. She knocked again, and still all was silent. Through the casement she could discover no object, amidst the grey obscurity of the dawn. She now opened the door, and, to her inexpressible surprise and distress, found the cottage empty. She proceeded to a small inner room, where lay a part of Julia's apparel. The bed had no appearance of having being slept in, and every moment served to heighten and confirm her apprehensions. While she pursued the search, she suddenly heard the trampling of feet at the cottage door, and presently after some people entered. Her fears for Julia now yielded to those for her own safety, and she was undetermined whether to discover herself, or remain in her present situation, when she was relieved from her irresolution by the appearance of Julia.

On the return of the good woman, who had accompanied madame to the village on the preceding night, Julia went to the cottage at Farrini. Her grateful heart would not suffer her to depart without taking leave of her faithful friends, thanking them for their kindness, and informing them of her future prospects. They had prevailed upon her to spend the few intervening hours at this cot, whence she had just risen to meet madame.

They now hastened to the spot where the horses were stationed, and commenced their journey. For some leagues they travelled in silence and thought, over a wild and picturesque country. The landscape was tinted with rich and variegated hues; and the autumnal lights, which streamed upon the hills, produced a spirited and beautiful effect upon the scenery. All the glories of the vintage rose to their view: the purple grapes flushed through the dark green of the surrounding foliage, and the prospect glowed with luxuriance.

They now descended into a deep valley, which appeared more like a scene of airy enchantment than reality. Along the bottom flowed a clear majestic stream, whose banks were adorned with thick groves of orange and citron trees. Julia surveyed the scene in silent complacency, but her eye quickly caught an object which changed with instantaneous shock the tone of her feelings. She observed a party of horsemen winding down the side of a hill behind her. Their uncommon speed alarmed her, and she pushed her horse into a gallop. On looking back Madame de Menon clearly perceived they were in pursuit. Soon after the men suddenly appeared from behind a dark grove within a small distance of them; and, upon their nearer approach, Julia, overcome with fatigue and fear, sunk breathless from her horse. She was saved from the ground by one of the pursuers, who caught her in his arms. Madame, with the rest of the party, were quickly overtaken; and as soon as Julia revived, they were bound, and reconducted to the hill from whence they had descended. Imagination only can paint the anguish of Julia's mind, when she saw herself thus delivered up to the power of her enemy. Madame, in the surrounding troop, discovered none of the marquis's people, and they were therefore evidently in the hands of the duke. After travelling for some hours, they quitted the main road, and turned into a narrow winding dell, overshadowed by high trees, which almost excluded the light. The gloom of the place inspired terrific images. Julia trembled as she entered; and her emotion was heightened, when she perceived at some distance, through the long perspective of the trees, a large ruinous mansion. The gloom of the surrounding shades partly concealed it from her view; but, as she drew near, each forlorn and decaying feature of the fabric was gradually disclosed, and struck upon her heart a horror such as she had never before experienced. The broken battlements, enwreathed with ivy, proclaimed the fallen grandeur of the place, while the shattered vacant window-frames exhibited its desolation, and the high grass that overgrew the threshold seemed to say how long it was since mortal foot had entered. The place appeared fit only for the purposes of violence and destruction: and the unfortunate captives, when they stopped at its gates, felt the full force of its horrors.

They were taken from their horses, and conveyed to an interior part of the building, which, if it had once been a chamber, no longer deserved the name. Here the guard said they were directed to detain them till the arrival of their lord, who had appointed this the place of rendezvous. He was expected to meet them in a few hours, and these were hours of indescribable torture to Julia and madame. From the furious passions of the duke, exasperated by frequent disappointment, Julia had every evil to apprehend; and the loneliness of the spot he had chosen, enabled him to perpetrate any designs, however violent. For the first time, she repented that she had left her father's house. Madame wept over her, but comfort she had none to give. The day closed—the duke did not appear, and the fate of Julia yet hung in perilous uncertainty. At length, from a window of the apartment she was in, she distinguished a glimmering of torches among the trees, and presently after the clattering of hoofs convinced her the duke was approaching. Her heart sunk at the sound; and throwing her arms round madame's neck, she resigned herself to despair. She was soon roused by some men, who came to announce the arrival of their lord. In a few moments the place, which had lately been so silent, echoed with tumult; and a sudden blaze of light illumining the fabric, served to exhibit more forcibly its striking horrors. Julia ran to the window; and, in a sort of court below, perceived a group of men dismounting from their horses. The torches shed a partial light; and while she anxiously looked round for the person of the duke, the whole party entered the mansion. She listened to a confused uproar of voices, which sounded from the room beneath, and soon after it sunk into a low murmur, as if some matter of importance was in agitation. For some moments she sat in lingering terror, when she heard footsteps advancing towards the chamber, and a sudden gleam of torchlight flashed upon the walls.

'Wretched girl! I have at least secured you!' said a cavalier, who now entered the room. He stopped as he perceived Julia; and turning to the men who stood without, 'Are these,' said he, 'the fugitives you have taken?'—'Yes, my lord.'—'Then you have deceived yourselves, and misled me; this is not my daughter.' These words struck the sudden light of truth and joy upon the heart of Julia, whom terror had before rendered almost lifeless; and who had not perceived that the person entering was a stranger. Madame now stepped forward, and an explanation ensued, when it appeared that the stranger was the Marquis Murani, the father of the fair fugitive whom the duke had before mistaken for Julia.

The appearance and the evident flight of Julia had deceived the banditti employed by this nobleman, into a belief that she was the object of their search, and had occasioned her this unnecessary distress. But the joy she now felt, on finding herself thus unexpectedly at liberty, surpassed, if possible, her preceding terrors. The marquis made madame and Julia all the reparation in his power, by offering immediately to reconduct them to the main road, and to guard them to some place of safety for the night. This offer was eagerly and thankfully accepted; and though faint from distress, fatigue, and want of sustenance, they joyfully remounted their horses, and by torchlight quitted the mansion. After some hours travelling they arrived at a small town, where they procured the accommodation so necessary to their support and repose. Here their guides quitted them to continue their search.

They arose with the dawn, and continued their journey, continually terrified with the apprehension of encountering the duke's people. At noon they arrived at Azulia, from whence the monastery, or abbey of St Augustin, was distant only a few miles. Madame wrote to the *Padre Abate*, to whom she was somewhat related, and soon after received an answer very favourable to her wishes. The same evening they repaired to the abbey; where Julia, once more relieved from the fear of pursuit, offered up a prayer of gratitude to heaven, and endeavoured to calm her sorrows by devotion. She was received by the abbot with a sort of paternal affection, and by the nuns with officious kindness. Comforted by these circumstances, and by the tranquil appearance of every thing around her, she retired to rest, and passed the night in peaceful slumbers.

In her present situation she found much novelty to amuse, and much serious matter to interest her mind. Entendered by distress, she easily yielded to the pensive manners of her companions and to the serene uniformity of a monastic life. She loved to wander through the lonely cloisters, and high-arched aisles, whose long perspectives retired in simple grandeur, diffusing a holy calm around. She found much pleasure in the conversation of the nuns, many of whom were uncommonly amiable, and the dignified sweetness of whose manners formed a charm irresistibly attractive. The soft melancholy impressed upon their countenances, pourtrayed the situation of their minds, and excited in Julia a very interesting mixture of pity and esteem. The affectionate appellation of sister, and all that endearing tenderness which they so well know how to display, and of which they so well understand the effect, they bestowed on Julia, in the hope of winning her to become one of their order.

Soothed by the presence of madame, the assiduity of the nuns, and by the stillness and sanctity of the place, her mind gradually recovered a degree of complacency to which it had long been a stranger. But notwithstanding all her efforts, the idea of Hippolitus would at intervals return upon her memory with a force that at once subdued her fortitude, and sunk her in a temporary despair.

Among the holy sisters, Julia distinguished one, the singular fervor of whose devotion, and the pensive air of whose countenance, softened by the languor of illness, attracted her curiosity, and excited a strong degree of pity. The nun, by a sort of sympathy, seemed particularly inclined towards Julia, which she discovered by innumerable acts of kindness, such as the heart can quickly understand and acknowledge, although description can never reach them. In conversation with her, Julia endeavoured, as far as delicacy would permit, to prompt an explanation of that more than common dejection which shaded those features, where beauty, touched by resignation and sublimed by religion, shone forth with mild and lambent lustre.

The Duke de Luovo, after having been detained for some weeks by the fever which his wounds had produced, and his irritated passions had much prolonged, arrived at the castle of Mazzini.

When the marquis saw him return, and recollected the futility of those exertions, by which he had boastingly promised to recover Julia, the violence of his nature spurned the disguise of art, and burst forth in contemptuous impeachment of the valour and discernment of the duke, who soon retorted with equal fury. The consequence might have been fatal, had not the ambition of the marquis subdued the sudden irritation of his inferior passions, and induced him to soften the severity of his accusations, by subsequent concessions. The duke, whose passion for Julia was heightened by the difficulty which opposed it, admitted such concessions as in other circumstances he would have rejected; and thus each, conquered by the predominant passion of the moment, submitted to be the slave of his adversary.

Emilia was at length released from the confinement she had so unjustly suffered. She had now the use of her old apartments, where, solitary and dejected, her hours moved heavily along, embittered by incessant anxiety for Julia, by regret for the lost society of madame. The marchioness, whose pleasures suffered a temporary suspense during the present confusion at the castle, exercised the ill-humoured caprice, which disappointment and lassitude inspired, upon her remaining subject. Emilia was condemned to suffer, and to endure without the privilege of complaining. In reviewing the events of the last few weeks, she saw those most dear to her banished, or imprisoned by the secret influence of a woman, every feature of whose character was exactly opposite to that of the amiable mother she had been appointed to succeed.

The search after Julia still continued, and was still unsuccessful. The astonishment of the marquis increased with his disappointments; for where could Julia, ignorant of the country, and destitute of friends, have possibly found an asylum? He swore with a terrible oath to revenge on her head, whenever she should be found, the trouble and vexation she now caused him. But he agreed with the duke to relinquish for a while the search; till Julia, gaining confidence from the observation of this circumstance, might gradually suppose herself secure from molestation, and thus be induced to emerge from concealment.

CHAPTER IX

Meanwhile Julia, sheltered in the obscure recesses of St Augustin, endeavoured to attain a degree of that tranquillity which so strikingly characterized the scenes around her. The abbey of St Augustin was a large magnificent mass of Gothic architecture, whose gloomy battlements, and majestic towers arose in proud sublimity from amid the darkness of the surrounding shades. It was founded in the twelfth century, and stood a proud monument of monkish superstition and princely magnificence. In the times when Italy was agitated by internal commotions, and persecuted by foreign invaders, this edifice afforded an asylum to many noble Italian emigrants, who here consecrated the rest of their days to religion. At their death they enriched the monastery with the treasures which it had enabled them to secure.

The view of this building revived in the mind of the beholder the memory of past ages. The manners and characters which distinguished them arose to his fancy, and through the long lapse of years he discriminated those customs and manners which formed so striking a contrast to the modes of his own times. The rude manners, the boisterous passions, the daring ambition, and the gross indulgences which formerly characterized the priest, the nobleman, and the sovereign, had now begun to yield to learning—the charms of refined conversation—political intrigue and private artifices. Thus do the scenes of life vary with the predominant passions of mankind, and with the progress of civilization. The dark clouds of prejudice break away before the sun of science, and gradually dissolving, leave the brightening hemisphere to the influence of his beams. But through the present scene appeared only a few scattered rays, which served to shew more forcibly the vast and heavy masses that concealed the form of truth. Here prejudice, not reason, suspended the influence of the passions; and scholastic learning, mysterious philosophy, and crafty sanctity supplied the place of wisdom, simplicity, and pure devotion.

At the abbey, solitude and stillness conspired with the solemn aspect of the pile to impress the mind with religious awe. The dim glass of the high-arched windows, stained with the colouring of monkish fictions, and shaded by the thick trees that environed the edifice, spread around a sacred gloom, which inspired the beholder with congenial feelings.

As Julia mused through the walks, and surveyed this vast monument of barbarous superstition, it brought to her recollection an ode which she often repeated with melancholy pleasure, as the composition of Hippolitus.

SUPERSTITION

AN ODE

High mid Alverna's awful steeps,
    Eternal shades, and silence dwell.
Save, when the gale resounding sweeps,
    Sad strains are faintly heard to swell:

Enthron'd amid the wild impending rocks,
    Involved in clouds, and brooding future woe,
The demon Superstition Nature shocks,
    And waves her sceptre o'er the world below.

Around her throne, amid the mingling glooms,
    Wild—hideous forms are slowly seen to glide,
She bids them fly to shade earth's brightest blooms,
    And spread the blast of Desolation wide.

See! in the darkened air their fiery course!
    The sweeping ruin settles o'er the land,
Terror leads on their steps with madd'ning force,
    And Death and Vengeance close the ghastly band!

        Mark the purple streams that flow!
        Mark the deep empassioned woe!
        Frantic Fury's dying groan!
        Virtue's sigh, and Sorrow's moan!

Wide—wide the phantoms swell the loaded air
With shrieks of anguish—madness and despair!

Cease your ruin! spectres dire!
    Cease your wild terrific sway!
Turn your steps—and check your ire,
    Yield to peace the mourning day!

She wept to the memory of times past, and there was a romantic sadness in her feelings, luxurious and indefinable. Madame behaved to Julia with the tenderest attention, and endeavoured to withdraw her thoughts from their mournful subject by promoting that taste for literature and music, which was so suitable to the powers of her mind.

But an object seriously interesting now obtained that regard, which those of mere amusement failed to attract. Her favorite nun, for whom her love and esteem daily increased, seemed declining under the pressure of a secret grief. Julia was deeply affected with her situation, and though she was not empowered to administer consolation to her sorrows, she endeavoured to mitigate the sufferings of illness. She nursed her with unremitting care, and seemed to seize with avidity the temporary opportunity of escaping from herself. The nun appeared perfectly reconciled to her fate, and exhibited during her illness so much sweetness, patience, and resignation as affected all around her with pity and love. Her angelic mildness, and steady fortitude characterized the beatification of a saint, rather than the death of a mortal. Julia watched every turn of her disorder with the utmost solicitude, and her care was at length rewarded by the amendment of Cornelia. Her health gradually improved, and she attributed this circumstance to the assiduity and tenderness of her young friend, to whom her heart now expanded in warm and unreserved affection. At length Julia ventured to solicit what she had so long and so earnestly wished for, and Cornelia unfolded the history of her sorrows.

'Of the life which your care has prolonged,' said she, 'it is but just that you should know the events; though those events are neither new, or striking, and possess little power of interesting persons unconnected with them. To me they have, however, been unexpectedly dreadful in effect, and my heart assures me, that to you they will not be indifferent.

'I am the unfortunate descendant of an ancient and illustrious Italian family. In early childhood I was deprived of a mother's care, but the tenderness of my surviving parent made her loss, as to my welfare, almost unfelt. Suffer me here to do justice to the character of my noble father. He united in an eminent degree the mild virtues of social life, with the firm unbending qualities of the noble Romans, his ancestors, from whom he was proud to trace his descent. Their merit, indeed, continually dwelt on his tongue, and their actions he was always endeavouring to imitate, as far as was consistent with the character of his times, and with the limited sphere in which he moved. The recollection of his virtue elevates my mind, and fills my heart with a noble pride, which even the cold walls of a monastery have not been able to subdue.

'My father's fortune was unsuitable to his rank. That his son might hereafter be enabled to support the dignity of his family, it was necessary for me to assume the veil. Alas! that heart was unfit to be offered at an heavenly shrine, which was already devoted to an earthly object. My affections had long been engaged by the younger son of a neighbouring nobleman, whose character and accomplishments attracted my early love, and confirmed my latest esteem. Our families were intimate, and our youthful intercourse occasioned an attachment which strengthened and expanded with our years. He solicited me of my father, but there appeared an insuperable barrier to our union. The family of my lover laboured under a circumstance of similar distress with that of my own—it was noble—but poor! My father, who was ignorant of the strength of my affection, and who considered a marriage formed in poverty as destructive to happiness, prohibited his suit.

'Touched with chagrin and disappointment, he immediately entered into the service of his Neapolitan majesty, and sought in the tumultuous scenes of glory, a refuge from the pangs of disappointed passion.

'To me, whose hours moved in one round of full uniformity—who had no pursuit to interest—no variety to animate my drooping spirits—to me the effort of forgetfulness was ineffectual. The loved idea of Angelo still rose upon my fancy, and its powers of captivation, heightened by absence, and, perhaps even by despair, pursued me with incessant grief. I concealed in silence the anguish that preyed upon my heart, and resigned myself a willing victim to monastic austerity. But I was now threatened with a new evil, terrible and unexpected. I was so unfortunate as to attract the admiration of the Marquis Marinelli, and he applied to my father. He was illustrious at once in birth and fortune, and his visits could only be unwelcome to me. Dreadful was the moment in which my father disclosed to me the proposal. My distress, which I vainly endeavoured to command, discovered the exact situation of my heart, and my father was affected.

'After along and awful pause, he generously released me from my sufferings by leaving it to my choice to accept the marquis, or to assume the veil. I fell at his feet, overcome by the noble disinterestedness of his conduct, and instantly accepted the latter.

'This affair removed entirely the disguise with which I had hitherto guarded my heart;—my brother—my generous brother! learned the true state of its affections. He saw the grief which prayed upon my health; he observed it to my father, and he nobly—oh how nobly! to restore my happiness, desired to resign apart of the estate which had already descended to him in right of his mother. Alas! Hippolitus,' continued Cornelia, deeply sighing, 'thy virtues deserved a better fate.'

'Hippolitus!' said Julia, in a tremulous accent, 'Hippolitus, Count de Vereza!'—'The same,' replied the nun, in a tone of surprize. Julia was speechless; tears, however, came to her relief. The astonishment of Cornelia for some moment surpassed expression; at length a gleam of recollection crossed her mind, and she too well understood the scene before her. Julia, after some time revived, when Cornelia tenderly approaching her, 'Do I then embrace my sister!' said she. 'United in sentiment, are we also united in misfortune?' Julia answered with her sighs, and their tears flowed in mournful sympathy together. At length Cornelia resumed her narrative.

'My father, struck with the conduct of Hippolitus, paused upon the offer. The alteration in my health was too obvious to escape his notice; the conflict between pride and parental tenderness, held him for some time in indecision, but the latter finally subdued every opposing feeling, and he yielded his consent to my marriage with Angelo. The sudden transition from grief to joy was almost too much for my feeble frame; judge then what must have been the effect of the dreadful reverse, when the news arrived that Angelo had fallen in a foreign engagement! Let me obliterate, if possible, the impression of sensations so dreadful. The sufferings of my brother, whose generous heart could so finely feel for another's woe, were on this occasion inferior only to my own.

'After the first excess of my grief was subsided, I desired to retire from a world which had tempted me only with illusive visions of happiness, and to remove from those scenes which prompted recollection, and perpetuated my distress. My father applauded my resolution, and I immediately was admited a noviciate into this monastery, with the Superior of which my father had in his youth been acquainted.

'At the expiration of the year I received the veil. Oh! I well remember with what perfect resignation, with what comfortable complacency I took those vows which bound me to a life of retirement, and religious rest.

'The high importance of the moment, the solemnity of the ceremony, the sacred glooms which surrounded me, and the chilling silence that prevailed when I uttered the irrevocable vow—all conspired to impress my imagination, and to raise my views to heaven. When I knelt at the altar, the sacred flame of pure devotion glowed in my heart, and elevated my soul to sublimity. The world and all its recollections faded from my mind, and left it to the influence of a serene and, holy enthusiasm which no words can describe.

'Soon after my noviciation, I had the misfortune to lose my dear father. In the tranquillity of this monastery, however, in the soothing kindness of my companions, and in devotional exercises, my sorrows found relief, and the sting of grief was blunted. My repose was of short continuance. A circumstance occurred that renewed the misery, which, can now never quit me but in the grave, to which I look with no fearful apprehension, but as a refuge from calamity, trusting that the power who has seen good to afflict me, will pardon the imperfectness of my devotion, and the too frequent wandering of my thoughts to the object once so dear to me.'

As she spoke she raised her eyes, which beamed with truth and meek assurance to heaven; and the fine devotional suffusion of her countenance seemed to characterize the beauty of an inspired saint.

'One day, Oh! never shall I forget it, I went as usual to the confessional to acknowledge my sins. I knelt before the father with eyes bent towards the earth, and in a low voice proceeded to confess. I had but one crime to deplore, and that was the too tender remembrance of him for whom I mourned, and whose idea, impressed upon my heart, made it a blemished offering to God.

'I was interrupted in my confession by a sound of deep sobs, and rising my eyes, Oh God, what were my sensations, when in the features of the holy father I discovered Angelo! His image faded like a vision from my sight, and I sunk at his feet. On recovering I found myself on my matrass, attended by a sister, who I discovered by her conversation had no suspicion of the occasion of my disorder. Indisposition confined me to my bed for several days; when I recovered, I saw Angelo no more, and could almost have doubted my senses, and believed that an illusion had crossed my sight, till one day I found in my cell a written paper. I distinguished at the first glance the handwriting of Angelo, that well-known hand which had so often awakened me to other emotions. I trembled at the sight; my beating heart acknowledged the beloved characters; a cold tremor shook my frame, and half breathless I seized the paper. But recollecting myself, I paused—I hesitated: duty at length yielded to the strong temptation, and I read the lines! Oh! those lines prompted by despair, and bathed in my tears! every word they offered gave a new pang to my heart, and swelled its anguish almost beyond endurance. I learned that Angelo, severely wounded in a foreign engagement, had been left for dead upon the field; that his life was saved by the humanity of a common soldier of the enemy, who perceiving signs of existence, conveyed him to a house. Assistance was soon procured, but his wounds exhibited the most alarming symptoms. During several months he languished between life and death, till at length his youth and constitution surmounted the conflict, and he returned to Naples. Here he saw my brother, whose distress and astonishment at beholding him occasioned a relation of past circumstances, and of the vows I had taken in consequence of the report of his death. It is unnecessary to mention the immediate effect of this narration; the final one exhibited a very singular proof of his attachment and despair;—he devoted himself to a monastic life, and chose this abbey for the place of his residence, because it contained the object most dear to his affections. His letter informed me that he had purposely avoided discovering himself, endeavouring to be contented with the opportunities which occurred of silently observing me, till chance had occasioned the foregoing interview.—But that since its effects had been so mutually painful, he would relieve me from the apprehension of a similar distress, by assuring me, that I should see him no more. He was faithful to his promise; from that day I have never seen him, and am even ignorant whether he yet inhabits this asylum; the efforts of religious fortitude, and the just fear of exciting curiosity, having withheld me from enquiry. But the moment of our last interview has been equally fatal to my peace and to my health, and I trust I shall, ere very long, be released from the agonizing ineffectual struggles occasioned by the consciousness of sacred vows imperfectly performed, and by earthly affections not wholly subdued.'

Cornelia ceased, and Julia, who had listened to the narrative in deep attention, at once admired, loved, and pitied her. As the sister of Hippolitus, her heart expanded towards her, and it was now inviolably attached by the fine ties of sympathetic sorrow. Similarity of sentiment and suffering united them in the firmest bonds of friendship; and thus, from reciprocation of thought and feeling, flowed a pure and sweet consolation.

Julia loved to indulge in the mournful pleasure of conversing of Hippolitus, and when thus engaged, the hours crept unheeded by. A thousand questions she repeated concerning him, but to those most interesting to her, she received no consolatory answer. Cornelia, who had heard of the fatal transaction at the castle of Mazzini, deplored with her its too certain consequence.

CHAPTER X

Julia accustomed herself to walk in the fine evenings under the shade of the high trees that environed the abbey. The dewy coolness of the air refreshed her. The innumerable roseate tints which the parting sun-beams reflected on the rocks above, and the fine vermil glow diffused over the romantic scene beneath, softly fading from the eye, as the nightshades fell, excited sensations of a sweet and tranquil nature, and soothed her into a temporary forgetfulness of her sorrows.

The deep solitude of the place subdued her apprehension, and one evening she ventured with Madame de Menon to lengthen her walk. They returned to the abbey without having seen a human being, except a friar of the monastery, who had been to a neighbouring town to order provision. On the following evening they repeated their walk; and, engaged in conversation, rambled to a considerable distance from the abbey. The distant bell of the monastery sounding for vespers, reminded them of the hour, and looking round, they perceived the extremity of the wood. They were returning towards the abbey, when struck by the appearance of some majestic columns which were distinguishable between the trees, they paused. Curiosity tempted them to examine to what edifice pillars of such magnificent architecture could belong, in a scene so rude, and they went on.

There appeared on a point of rock impending over the valley the reliques of a palace, whose beauty time had impaired only to heighten its sublimity. An arch of singular magnificence remained almost entire, beyond which appeared wild cliffs retiring in grand perspective. The sun, which was now setting, threw a trembling lustre upon the ruins, and gave a finishing effect to the scene. They gazed in mute wonder upon the view; but the fast fading light, and the dewy chillness of the air, warned them to return. As Julia gave a last look to the scene, she perceived two men leaning upon a part of the ruin at some distance, in earnest conversation. As they spoke, their looks were so attentively bent on her, that she could have no doubt she was the subject of their discourse. Alarmed at this circumstance, madame and Julia immediately retreated towards the abbey. They walked swiftly through the woods, whose shades, deepened by the gloom of evening, prevented their distinguishing whether they were pursued. They were surprized to observe the distance to which they had strayed from the monastery, whose dark towers were now obscurely seen rising among the trees that closed the perspective. They had almost reached the gates, when on looking back, they perceived the same men slowly advancing, without any appearance of pursuit, but clearly as if observing the place of their retreat.

This incident occasioned Julia much alarm. She could not but believe that the men whom she had seen were spies of the marquis;—if so, her asylum was discovered, and she had every thing to apprehend. Madame now judged it necessary to the safety of Julia, that the *Abate* should be informed of her story, and of the sanctuary she had sought in his monastery, and also that he should be solicited to protect her from parental tyranny. This was a hazardous, but a necessary step, to provide against the certain danger which must ensue, should the marquis, if he demanded his daughter of the *Abate*, be the first to acquaint him with her story. If she acted otherwise, she feared that the *Abate*, in whose generosity she had not confided, and whose pity she had not solicited, would, in the pride of his resentment, deliver her up, and thus would she become a certain victim to the Duke de Luovo.

Julia approved of this communication, though she trembled for the event; and requested madame to plead her cause with the *Abate*. On the following morning, therefore, madame solicited a private audience of the *Abate*; she obtained permission to see him, and Julia, in trembling anxiety, watched her to the door of his apartment. This conference was long, and every moment seemed an hour to Julia, who, in fearful expectation, awaited with Cornelia the sentence which would decide her destiny. She was now the constant companion of Cornelia, whose declining health interested her pity, and strengthened her attachment.

Meanwhile madame developed to the *Abate* the distressful story of Julia. She praised her virtues, commended her accomplishments, and deplored her situation. She described the characters of the marquis and the duke, and concluded with pathetically representing, that Julia had sought in this monastery, a last asylum from injustice and misery, and with entreating that the *Abate* would grant her his pity and protection.

The *Abate* during this discourse preserved a sullen silence; his eyes were bent to the ground, and his aspect was thoughful and solemn. When madame ceased to speak, a pause of profound silence ensued, and she sat in anxious expectation. She endeavoured to anticipate in his countenance the answer preparing, but she derived no comfort from thence. At length raising his head, and awakening from his deep reverie, he told her that her request required deliberation, and that the protection she solicited for Julia, might involve him in serious consequences, since, from a character so determined as the marquis's, much violence might reasonably be expected. 'Should his daughter be refused him,' concluded the *Abate*, 'he may even dare to violate the sanctuary.'

Madame, shocked by the stern indifference of this reply, was a moment silent. The *Abate* went on. 'Whatever I shall determine upon, the young lady has reason to rejoice that she is admitted into this holy house; for I will even now venture to assure her, that if the marquis fails to demand her, she shall be permitted to remain in this sanctuary unmolested. You, Madam, will be sensible of this indulgence, and of the value of the sacrifice I make in granting it; for, in thus concealing a child from her parent, I encourage her in disobedience, and consequently sacrifice my sense of duty, to what may be justly called a weak humanity.'

Madame listened to pompous declamation in silent sorrow and indignation. She made another effort to interest the *Abate* in favor of Julia, but he preserved his stern inflexibility, and repeating that he would deliberate upon the matter, and acquaint her with the result, he arose with great solemnity, and quitted the room.

She now half repented of the confidence she had reposed in him, and of the pity she had solicited, since he discovered a mind incapable of understanding the first, and a temper inaccessible to the influence of the latter. With an heavy heart she returned to Julia, who read in her countenance, at the moment she entered the room, news of no happy import. When madame related the particulars of the conference, Julia presaged from it only misery, and giving herself up for lost—she burst into tears. She severely deplored the confidence she had been induced to yield; for she now saw herself in the power of a man, stern and unfeeling in his nature: and from whom, if he thought it fit to betray her, she had no means of escaping. But she concealed the anguish of her heart; and to console madame, affected to hope where she could only despair.

Several days elapsed, and no answer was returned from the *Abate*. Julia too well understood this silence.

One morning Cornelia entering her room with a disturbed and impatient air, informed her that some emissaries from the marquis were then in the monastery, having enquired at the gate for the *Abate*, with whom, they said, they had business of importance to transact. The *Abate* had granted them immediate audience, and they were now in close conference.

At this intelligence the spirits of Julia forsook her; she trembled, grew pale, and stood fixed in mute despair. Madame, though scarcely less distressed, retained a presence of mind. She understood too justly the character of the Superior to doubt that he would hesitate in delivering Julia to the hands of the marquis. On this moment, therefore, turned the crisis of her fate!—this moment she might escape—the next she was a prisoner. She therefore advised Julia to seize the instant, and fly from the monastery before the conference was concluded, when the gates would most probably be closed upon her, assuring her, at the same time, she would accompany her in flight.

The generous conduct of madame called tears of gratitude into the eyes of Julia, who now awoke from the state of stupefaction which distress had caused. But before she could thank her faithful friend, a nun entered the room with a summons for madame to attend the *Abate* immediately. The distress which this message occasioned can not easily be conceived. Madame advised Julia to escape while she detained the *Abate* in conversation, as it was not probable that he had yet issued orders for her detention. Leaving her to this attempt, with an assurance of following her from the abbey as soon as possible, madame obeyed the summons. The coolness of her fortitude forsook her as she approached the *Abate*'s apartment, and she became less certain as to the occasion of this summons.

The *Abate* was alone. His countenance was pale with anger, and he was pacing the room with slow but agitated steps. The stern authority of his look startled her. 'Read this letter,' said he, stretching forth his hand which held a letter, 'and tell me what that mortal deserves, who dares insult our holy order, and set our sacred prerogative at defiance.' Madame distinguished the handwriting of the marquis, and the words of the Superior threw her into the utmost astonishment. She took the letter. It was dictated by that spirit of proud vindictive rage, which so strongly marked the character of the marquis. Having discovered the retreat of Julia, and believing the monastery afforded her a willing sanctuary from his pursuit, he accused the *Abate* of encouraging his child in open rebellion to his will. He loaded him and his sacred order with opprobrium, and threatened, if she was not immediately resigned to the emissaries in waiting, he would in person lead on a force which should compel the church to yield to the superior authority of the father.

The spirit of the *Abate* was roused by this menace; and Julia obtained from his pride, that protection which neither his principle or his humanity would have granted. 'The man shall tremble,' cried he, 'who dares defy our power, or question our sacred authority. The lady Julia is safe. I will protect her from this proud invader of our rights, and teach him at least to venerate the power he cannot conquer. I have dispatched his emissaries with my answer.'

These words struck sudden joy upon the heart of Madame de Menon, but she instantly recollected, that ere this time Julia had quitted the abbey, and thus the very precaution which was meant to ensure her safety, had probably precipitated her into the hand of her enemy. This thought changed her joy to anguish; and she was hurrying from the apartment in a sort of wild hope, that Julia might not yet be gone, when the stern voice of the *Abate* arrested her. 'Is it thus,' cried he, 'that you receive the knowledge of our generous resolution to protect your friend? Does such condescending kindness merit no thanks—demand no gratitude?' Madame returned in an agony of fear, lest one moment of delay might prove fatal to Julia, if haply she had not yet quitted the monastery. She was conscious of her deficiency in apparent gratitude, and of the strange appearance of her abrupt departure from the *Abate*, for which it was impossible to apologize, without betraying the secret, which would kindle all his resentment. Yet some atonement his present anger demanded, and these circumstances caused her a very painful embarrassment. She formed a hasty excuse; and expressing her sense of his goodness, again attempted to retire, when the *Abate* frowning in deep resentment, his features inflamed with pride, arose from his seat. 'Stay,' said he; 'whence this impatience to fly from the presence of a benefactor?—If my generosity fails to excite gratitude, my resentment shall not fail to inspire awe.—Since the lady Julia is insensible of my condescension, she is unworthy of my protection, and I will resign her to the tyrant who demands her.'

To this speech, in which the offended pride of the *Abate* overcoming all sense of justice, accused and threatened to punish Julia for the fault of her friend, madame listened in dreadful impatience. Every word that detained her struck torture to her heart, but the concluding sentence occasioned new terror, and she started at its purpose. She fell at the feet of the *Abate* in an agony of grief. 'Holy father,' said she, 'punish not Julia for the offence which I only have committed; her heart will bless her generous protector, and for myself, suffer me to assure you that I am fully sensible of your goodness.'

'If this is true,' said the *Abate*, 'arise, and bid the lady Julia attend me.' This command increased the confusion of madame, who had no doubt that her detention had proved fatal to Julia. At length she was suffered to depart, and to her infinite joy found Julia in her own room. Her intention of escaping had yielded, immediately after the departure of madame, to the fear of being discovered by the marquis's people. This fear had been confirmed by the report of Cornelia, who informed her, that at that time several horsemen were waiting at the gates for the return of their companions. This was a dreadful circumstance to Julia, who perceived it was utterly impossible to quit the monastery, without rushing upon certain destruction. She was lamenting her destiny, when madame recited the particulars of the late interview, and delivered the summons of the *Abate*.

They had now to dread the effect of that tender anxiety, which had excited his resentment; and Julia, suddenly elated to joy by his first determination, was as suddenly sunk to despair by his last. She trembled with apprehension of the coming interview, though each moment of delay which her fear solicited, would, by heightening the resentment of the *Abate*, only increase the danger she dreaded.

At length, by a strong effort, she reanimated her spirits, and went to the Abate's closet to receive her sentence. He was seated in his chair, and his frowning aspect chilled her heart. 'Daughter,' said he, 'you have been guilty of heinous crimes. You have dared to dispute—nay openly to rebel, against the lawful authority of your father. You have disobeyed the will of him whose prerogative yields only to ours. You have questioned his right upon a point of all others the most decided—the right of a father to dispose of his child in marriage. You have even fled from his protection—and you have dared—insidiously, and meanly have dared, to screen your disobedience beneath this sacred roof. You have prophaned our sanctuary with your crime. You have brought insult upon our sacred order, and have caused bold and impious defiance of our high prerogative. What punishment is adequate to guilt like this?'

The father paused—his eyes sternly fixed on Julia, who, pale and trembling, could scarcely support herself, and who had no power to reply. 'I will be merciful, and not just,' resumed he,—'I will soften the punishment you deserve, and will only deliver you to your father.' At these dreadful words, Julia bursting into tears, sunk at the feet of the *Abate*, to whom she raised her eyes in supplicating expression, but was unable to speak. He suffered her to remain in this posture. 'Your duplicity,' he resumed, 'is not the least of your offences.—Had you relied upon our generosity for forgiveness and protection, an indulgence might have been granted;—but under the disguise of virtue you concealed your crimes, and your necessities were hid beneath the mask of devotion.'

These false aspersions roused in Julia the spirit of indignant virtue; she arose from her knees with an air of dignity, that struck even the *Abate*. 'Holy father,' said she, 'my heart abhors the crime you mention, and disclaims all union with it. Whatever are my offences, from the sin of hypocrisy I am at least free; and you will pardon me if I remind you, that my confidence has already been such, as fully justifies my claim to the protection I solicit. When I sheltered myself within these walls, it was to be presumed that they would protect me from injustice; and with what other term than injustice would you, Sir, distinguish the conduct of the marquis, if the fear of his power did not overcome the dictates of truth?'

The *Abate* felt the full force of this reproof; but disdaining to appear sensible to it, restrained his resentment. His wounded pride thus exasperated, and all the malignant passions of his nature thus called into action, he was prompted to that cruel surrender which he had never before seriously intended. The offence which Madame de Menon had unintentionally given his haughty spirit urged him to retaliate in punishment. He had, therefore, pleased himself with exciting a terror which he never meant to confirm, and he resolved to be further solicited for that protection which he had already determined to grant. But this reproof of Julia touched him where he was most conscious of defect; and the temporary triumph which he imagined it afforded her, kindled his resentment into flame. He mused in his chair, in a fixed attitude.—She saw in his countenance the deep workings of his mind—she revolved the fate preparing for her, and stood in trembling anxiety to receive her sentence. The *Abate* considered each aggravating circumstance of the marquis's menace, and each sentence of Julia's speech; and his mind experienced that vice is not only inconsistent with virtue, but with itself—for to gratify his malignity, he now discovered that it would be necessary to sacrifice his pride—since it would be impossible to punish the object of the first without denying himself the gratification of the latter. This reflection suspended his mind in a state of torture, and he sat wrapt in gloomy silence.

The spirit which lately animated Julia had vanished with her words—each moment of silence increased her apprehension; the deep brooding of his thoughts confirmed her in the apprehension of evil, and with all the artless eloquence of sorrow she endeavoured to soften him to pity. He listened to her pleadings in sullen stillness. But each instant now cooled the fervour of his resentment to her, and increased his desire of opposing the marquis. At length the predominant feature of his character resumed its original influence, and overcame the workings of subordinate passion. Proud of his religious authority, he determined never to yield the prerogative of the church to that of the father, and resolved to oppose the violence of the marquis with equal force.

He therefore condescended to relieve Julia from her terrors, by assuring her of his protection; but he did this in a manner so ungracious, as almost to destroy the gratitude which the promise demanded. She hastened with the joyful intelligence to Madame de Menon, who wept over her tears of thankfulness.

CHAPTER XI

Near a fortnight had elapsed without producing any appearance of hostility from the marquis, when one night, long after the hour of repose, Julia was awakened by the bell of the monastery. She knew it was not the hour customary for prayer, and she listened to the sounds, which rolled through the deep silence of the fabric, with strong surprise and terror. Presently she heard the doors of several cells creak on their hinges, and the sound of quick footsteps in the passages—and through the crevices of her door she distinguished passing lights. The whispering noise of steps increased, and every person of the monastery seemed to have awakened. Her terror heightened; it occurred to her that the marquis had surrounded the abbey with his people, in the design of forcing her from her retreat; and she arose in haste, with an intention of going to the chamber of Madame de Menon, when she heard a gentle tap at the door. Her enquiry of who was there, was answered in the voice of madame, and her fears were quickly dissipated, for she learned the bell was a summons to attend a dying nun, who was going to the high altar, there to receive extreme unction.

She quitted the chamber with madame. In her way to the church, the gleam of tapers on the walls, and the glimpse which her eye often caught of the friars in their long black habits, descending silently through the narrow winding passages, with the solemn toll of the bell, conspired to kindle imagination, and to impress her heart with sacred awe. But the church exhibited a scene of solemnity, such as she had never before witnessed. Its gloomy aisles were imperfectly seen by the rays of tapers from the high altar, which shed a solitary gleam over the remote parts of the fabric, and produced large masses of light and shade, striking and sublime in their effect.

While she gazed, she heard a distant chanting rise through the aisles; the sounds swelled in low murmurs on the ear, and drew nearer and nearer, till a sudden blaze of light issued from one of the portals, and the procession entered. The organ instantly sounded a high and solemn peal, and the voices rising altogether swelled the sacred strain. In front appeared the *Padre Abate*, with slow and measured steps, bearing the holy cross. Immediately followed a litter, on which lay the dying person covered with a white veil, borne along and surrounded by nuns veiled in white, each carrying in her hand a lighted taper. Last came the friars, two and two, cloathed in black, and each bearing a light.

When they reached the high altar, the bier was rested, and in a few moments the anthem ceased. 'The *Abate* now approached to perform the unction; the veil of the dying nun was lifted—and Julia discovered her beloved Cornelia! Her countenance was already impressed with the image of death, but her eyes brightened with a faint gleam of recollection, when they fixed upon Julia, who felt a cold thrill run through her frame, and leaned for support on madame. Julia now for the first time distinguished the unhappy lover of Cornelia, on whose features was depictured the anguish of his heart, and who hung pale and silent over the bier. The ceremony being finished, the anthem struck up; the bier was lifted, when Cornelia faintly moved her hand, and it was again rested upon the steps of the altar. In a few minutes the music ceased, when lifting her heavy eyes to her lover, with an expression of ineffable tenderness and grief, she attempted to speak, but the sounds died on her closing lips. A faint smile passed over her countenance, and was succeeded by a fine devotional glow; she folded her hands upon her bosom, and with a look of meek resignation, raising towards heaven her eyes, in which now sunk the last sparkles of expiring life—her soul departed in a short deep sigh.

Her lover sinking back, endeavoured to conceal his emotions, but the deep sobs which agitated his breast betrayed his anguish, and the tears of every spectator bedewed the sacred spot where beauty, sense, and innocence expired.

The organ now swelled in mournful harmony; and the voices of the assembly chanted in choral strain, a low and solemn requiem to the spirit of the departed.

Madame hurried Julia, who was almost as lifeless as her departed friend, from the church. A death so sudden heightened the grief which separation would otherwise have occasioned. It was the nature of Cornelia's disorder to wear a changeful but flattering aspect. Though she had long been declining, her decay was so gradual and imperceptible as to lull the apprehensions of her friends into security. It was otherwise with herself; she was conscious of the change, but forbore to afflict them with the knowledge of the truth. The hour of her dissolution was sudden, even to herself; but it was composed, and even happy. In the death of Cornelia, Julia seemed to mourn again that of Hippolitus. Her decease appeared to dissolve the last tie which connected her with his memory.

In one of the friars of the convent, madame was surprized to find the father who had confessed the dying Vincent. His appearance revived the remembrance of the scene she had witnessed at the castle of Mazzini; and the last words of Vincent, combined with the circumstances which had since occurred, renewed all her curiosity and astonishment. But his appearance excited more sensations than those of wonder. She dreaded lest he should be corrupted by the marquis, to whom he was known, and thus be induced to use his interest with the *Abate* for the restoration of Julia.

From the walls of the monastery, Julia now never ventured to stray. In the gloom of evening she sometimes stole into the cloisters, and often lingered at the grave of Cornelia, where she wept for Hippolitus, as well as for her friend. One evening, during vespers, the bell of the convent was suddenly rang out; the *Abate*, whose countenance expressed at once astonishment and displeasure, suspended the service, and quitted the altar. The whole congregation repaired to the hall, where they learned that a friar, retiring to the convent, had seen a troop of armed men advancing through the wood; and not doubting they were the people of the marquis, and were approaching with hostile intention, had thought it necessary to give the alarm. The *Abate* ascended a turret, and thence discovered through the trees a glittering of arms, and in the succeeding moment a band of men issued from a dark part of the wood, into a long avenue which immediately fronted the spot where he stood. The clattering of hoofs was now distinctly heard; and Julia, sinking with terror, distinguished the marquis heading the troops, which, soon after separating in two divisions, surrounded the monastery. The gates were immediately secured; and the *Abate*, descending from the turret, assembled the friars in the hall, where his voice was soon heard above every other part of the tumult. The terror of Julia made her utterly forgetful of the *Padre*'s promise, and she wished to fly for concealment to the deep caverns belonging to the monastery, which wound under the woods. Madame, whose penetration furnished her with a just knowledge of the *Abate*'s character, founded her security on his pride. She therefore dissuaded Julia from attempting to tamper with the honesty of a servant who had the keys of the vaults, and advised her to rely entirely on the effect of the *Abate*'s resentment towards the marquis. While madame endeavoured to soothe her to composure, a message from the *Abate* required her immediate attendance. She obeyed, and he bade her follow him to a room which was directly over the gates of the monastery. From thence she saw her father, accompanied by the Duke de Luovo; and as her spirits died away at the sight, the marquis called furiously to the *Abate* to deliver her instantly into his hands, threatening, if she was detained, to force the gates of the monastery. At this threat the countenance of the *Abate* grew dark: and leading Julia forcibly to the window, from which she had shrunk back, 'Impious menacer!' said he, 'eternal vengeance be upon thee! From this moment we expel thee from all the rights and communities of our church. Arrogant and daring as you are, your threats I defy—Look here,' said he, pointing to Julia, 'and learn that you are in my power; for if you dare to violate these sacred walls, I will proclaim aloud, in the face of day, a secret which shall make your heart's blood run cold; a secret which involves your honour, nay, your very existence. Now triumph and exult in impious menace!' The marquis started involuntarily at this speech, and his features underwent a sudden change, but he endeavoured to recover himself, and to conceal his confusion. He hesitated for a few moments, uncertain how to act—to desist from violence was to confess himself conscious of the threatened secret; yet he dreaded to inflame the resentment of the *Abate*, whose menaces his own heart too surely seconded. At length—'All that you have uttered,' said he, 'I despise as the dastardly subterfuge of monkish cunning. Your new insults add to the desire of recovering my daughter, that of punishing you. I would proceed to instant violence, but that would now be an imperfect revenge. I shall, therefore, withdraw my forces, and appeal to a higher power. Thus shall you be compelled at once to restore my daughter and retract your scandalous impeachment of my honor.' Saying this, the turned his horse from the gates, and his people following him, quickly withdrew, leaving the *Abate* exulting in conquest, and Julia lost in astonishment and doubtful joy. When she recounted to madame the particulars of the conference, she dwelt with emphasis on the threats of the *Abate*; but madame, though her amazement was heightened at every word, very well understood how the secret, whatever it was, had been obtained. The confessor of Vincent she had already observed in the monastery, and there was no doubt that he had disclosed whatever could be collected from the dying words of Vincent. She knew, also, that the secret would never be published, unless as a punishment for immediate violence, it being one of the first principles of monastic duty, to observe a religious secrecy upon all matters entrusted to them in confession.

When the first tumult of Julia's emotions subsided, the joy which the sudden departure of the marquis occasioned yielded to apprehension. He had threatened to appeal to a higher power, who would compel the *Abate* to surrender her. This menace excited a just terror, and there remained no means of avoiding the tyranny of the marquis but by quitting the monastery. She therefore requested an audience of the *Abate*; and having represented the danger of her present situation, she intreated his permission to depart in quest of a safer retreat. The *Abate*, who well knew the marquis was wholly in his power, smiled at the repetition of his menaces, and denied her request, under pretence of his having now become responsible for her to the church. He bade her be comforted, and promised her his protection; but his assurances were given in so distant and haughty a manner, that Julia left him with fears rather increased than subdued. In crossing the hall, she observed a man hastily enter it, from an opposite door. He was not in the habit of the order, but was muffled up in a cloak, and seemed to wish concealment. As she passed he raised his head, and Julia discovered—her father! He darted at her a look of vengeance; but before she had time even to think, as if suddenly recollecting himself, he covered his face, and rushed by her. Her trembling frame could scarcely support her to the apartment of madame, where she sunk speechless upon a chair, and the terror of her look alone spoke the agony of her mind. When she was somewhat recovered, she related what she had seen, and her conversation with the *Abate*. But madame was lost in equal perplexity with herself, when she attempted to account for the marquis's appearance. Why, after his late daring menace, should he come secretly to visit the *Abate*, by whose connivance alone he could have gained admission to the monastery? And what could have influenced the *Abate* to such a conduct? These circumstances, though equally inexplicable, united to confirm a fear of treachery and surrender. To escape from the abbey was now inpracticable, for the gates were constantly guarded; and even was it possible to pass them, certain detection awaited Julia without from the marquis's people, who were stationed in the woods. Thus encompassed with danger, she could only await in the monastery the issue of her destiny.

While she was lamenting with madame her unhappy fate, she was summoned once more to attend the *Abate*. At this moment her spirits entirely forsook her; the crisis of her fate seemed arrived; for she did not doubt that the *Abate* intended to surrender her to the marquis, with whom she supposed he had negotiated the terms of accommodation. It was some time before she could recover composure sufficient to obey the summons; and when she did, every step that bore her towards the *Abate*'s room increased her dread. She paused a moment at the door, 'ere she had courage to open it; the idea of her father's immediate resentment arose to her mind, and she was upon the point of retreating to her chamber, when a sudden step within, near the door, destroyed her hesitation, and she entered the closet. The marquis was not there, and her spirits revived. The flush of triumph was diffused over the features of the *Abate*, though a shade of unappeased resentment yet remained visible. 'Daughter,' said he, 'the intelligence we have to communicate may rejoice you. Your safety now depends solely on yourself. I give your fate into your own hands, and its issue be upon your head.' He paused, and she was suspended in wondering expectation of the coming sentence. 'I here solemnly assure you of my protection, but it is upon one condition only—that you renounce the world, and dedicate your days to God.' Julia listened with a mixture of grief and astonishment. 'Without this concession on your part, I possess not the power, had I even the inclination, to protect you. If you assume the veil, you are safe within the pale of the church from temporal violence. If you neglect or refuse to do this, the marquis may apply to a power from whom I have no appeal, and I shall be compelled at last to resign you.

'But to ensure your safety, should the veil be your choice, we will procure a dispensation from the usual forms of noviciation, and a few days shall confirm your vows.' He ceased to speak; but Julia, agitated with the most cruel distress, knew not what to reply. 'We grant you three days to decide upon this matter,' continued he, 'at the expiration of which, the veil, or the Duke de Luovo, awaits you.' Julia quitted the closet in mute despair, and repaired to madame, who could now scarcely offer her the humble benefit of consolation.

Meanwhile the *Abate* exulted in successful vengeance, and the marquis smarted beneath the stings of disappointment. The menace of the former was too seriously alarming to suffer the marquis to prosecute violent measures; and he had therefore resolved, by opposing avarice to pride, to soothe the power which he could not subdue. But he was unwilling to entrust the *Abate* with a proof of his compliance and his fears by offering a bribe in a letter, and preferred the more humiliating, but safer method, of a private interview. His magnificent offers created a temporary hesitation in the mind of the *Abate*, who, secure of his advantage, shewed at first no disposition to be reconciled, and suffered the marquis to depart in anxious uncertainty. After maturely deliberating upon the proposals, the pride of the *Abate* surmounted his avarice, and he determined to prevail upon Julia effectually to destroy the hopes of the marquis, by consecrating her life to religion. Julia passed the night and the next day in a state of mental torture exceeding all description. The gates of the monastery beset with guards, and the woods surrounded by the marquis's people, made escape impossible. From a marriage with the duke, whose late conduct had confirmed the odious idea which his character had formerly impressed, her heart recoiled in horror, and to be immured for life within the walls of a convent, was a fate little less dreadful. Yet such was the effect of that sacred love she bore the memory of Hippolitus, and such her aversion to the duke, that she soon resolved to adopt the veil. On the following evening she informed the *Abate* of her determination. His heart swelled with secret joy; and even the natural severity of his manner relaxed at the intelligence. He assured her of his approbation and protection, with a degree of kindness which he had never before manifested, and told her the ceremony should be performed on the second day from the present. Her emotion scarcely suffered her to hear his last words. Now that her fate was fixed beyond recall, she almost repented of her choice. Her fancy attached to it a horror not its own; and that evil, which, when offered to her decision, she had accepted with little hesitation, she now paused upon in dubious regret; so apt we are to imagine that the calamity most certain, is also the most intolerable!

When the marquis read the answer of the *Abate*, all the baleful passions of his nature were roused and inflamed to a degree which bordered upon distraction. In the first impulse of his rage, he would have forced the gates of the monastery, and defied the utmost malice of his enemy. But a moment's reflection revived his fear of the threatened secret, and he saw that he was still in the power of the

Superior.

The *Abate* procured the necessary dispensation, and preparations were immediately began for the approaching ceremony. Julia watched the departure of those moments which led to her fate with the calm fortitude of despair. She had no means of escaping from the coming evil, without exposing herself to a worse; she surveyed it therefore with a steady eye, and no longer shrunk from its approach.

On the morning preceding the day of her consecration, she was informed that a stranger enquired for her at the grate. Her mind had been so long accustomed to the vicissitudes of apprehension, that fear was the emotion which now occurred; she suspected, yet scarcely knew why, that the marquis was below, and hesitated whether to descend. A little reflection determined her, and she went to the parlour—where, to her equal joy and surprise, she beheld—Ferdinand!

During the absence of the marquis from his castle, Ferdinand, who had been informed of the discovery of Julia, effected his escape from imprisonment, and had hastened to the monastery in the design of rescuing her. He had passed the woods in disguise, with much difficulty eluding the observation of the marquis's people, who were yet dispersed round the abbey. To the monastery, as he came alone, he had been admitted without difficulty.

When he learned the conditions of the *Abate*'s protection, and that the following day was appointed for the consecration of Julia, he was shocked, and paused in deliberation. A period so short as was this interval, afforded little opportunity for contrivance, and less for hesitation. The night of the present day was the only time that remained for the attempt and execution of a plan of escape, which if it then failed of success, Julia would not only be condemned for life to the walls of a monastery, but would be subjected to whatever punishment the severity of the *Abate*, exasperated by the detection, should think fit to inflict. The danger was desperate, but the occasion was desperate also.

The nobly disinterested conduct of her brother, struck Julia with gratitude and admiration; but despair of success made her now hesitate whether she should accept his offer. She considered that his generosity would most probably involve him in destruction with herself; and she paused in deep deliberation, when Ferdinand informed her of a circumstance which, till now, he had purposely concealed, and which at once dissolved every doubt and every fear. 'Hippolitus,' said Ferdinand, 'yet lives.'—'Lives!' repeated Julia faintly,—'lives, Oh! tell me where—how.'—Her breath refused to aid her, and she sunk in her chair overcome with the strong and various sensations that pressed upon her heart. Ferdinand, whom the grate withheld from assisting her, observed her situation with extreme distress. When she recovered, he informed her that a servant of Hippolitus, sent no doubt by his lord to enquire concerning Julia, had been lately seen by one of the marquis's people in the neighbourhood of the castle. From him it was known that the Count de Vereza was living, but that his life had been despaired of; and he was still confined, by dangerous wounds, in an obscure town on the coast of Italy. The man had steadily refused to mention the place of his lord's abode. Learning that the marquis was then at the abbey of St Augustin, whither he pursued his daughter, the man disappeared from Mazzini, and had not since been heard of.

It was enough for Julia to know that Hippolitus lived; her fears of detection, and her scruples concerning Ferdinand, instantly vanished; she thought only of escape—and the means which had lately appeared so formidable—so difficult in contrivance, and so dangerous in execution, now seemed easy, certain, and almost accomplished.

They consulted on the plan to be adopted, and agreed, that in attempting to bribe a servant of the monastery to their interest, they should incur a danger too imminent, yet it appeared scarcely practicable to succeed in their scheme without risquing this. After much consideration, they determined to entrust their secret to no person but to madame. Ferdinand was to contrive to conceal himself till the dead of night in the church, between which and the monastery were several doors of communication. When the inhabitants of the abbey were sunk in repose, Julia might without difficulty pass to the church, where Ferdinand awaiting her, they might perhaps escape either through an outer door of the fabric, or through a window, for which latter attempt Ferdinand was to provide ropes.

A couple of horses were to be stationed among the rocks beyond the woods, to convey the fugitives to a sea-port, whence they could easily pass over to Italy. Having arranged this plan, they separated in the anxious hope of meeting on the ensuing night.

Madame warmly sympathized with Julia in her present expectations, and was now somewhat relieved from the pressure of that self-reproach, with which the consideration of having withdrawn her young friend from a secure asylum, had long tormented her. In learning that Hippolitus lived, Julia experienced a sudden renovation of life and spirits. From the languid stupefaction which despair had occasioned she revived as from a dream, and her sensations resembled those of a person suddenly awakened from a frightful vision, whose thoughts are yet obscured in the fear and uncertainty which the passing images have impressed on his fancy. She emerged from despair; joy illumined her countenance; yet she doubted the reality of the scene which now opened to her view. The hours rolled heavily along till the evening, when expectation gave way to fear, for she was once more summoned by the *Abate*. He sent for her to administer the usual necessary exhortation on the approaching solemnity; and having detained her a considerable time in tedious and severe discourse, dismissed her with a formal benediction.

CHAPTER XII

The evening now sunk in darkness, and the hour was fast approaching which would decide the fate of Julia. Trembling anxiety subdued every other sensation; and as the minutes passed, her fears increased. At length she heard the gates of the monastery fastened for the night; the bell rang the signal for repose; and the passing footsteps of the nuns told her they were hastening to obey it. After some time, all was silent. Julia did not yet dare to venture forth; she employed the present interval in interesting and affectionate conversation with Madame de Menon, to whom, notwithstanding her situation, her heart bade a sorrowful adieu.

The clock struck twelve, when she arose to depart. Having embraced her faithful friend with tears of mingled grief and anxiety, she took a lamp in her hand, and with cautious, fearful steps, descended through the long winding passages to a private door, which opened into the church of the monastery. The church was gloomy and desolate; and the feeble rays of the lamp she bore, gave only light enough to discover its chilling grandeur. As she passed silently along the aisles, she cast a look of anxious examination around—but Ferdinand was no where to be seen. She paused in timid hesitation, fearful to penetrate the gloomy obscurity which lay before her, yet dreading to return.

As she stood examining the place, vainly looking for Ferdinand, yet fearing to call, lest her voice should betray her, a hollow groan arose from apart of the church very near her. It chilled her heart, and she remained fixed to the spot. She turned her eyes a little to the left, and saw light appear through the chinks of a sepulchre at some distance. The groan was repeated—a low murmuring succeeded, and while she yet gazed, an old man issued from the vault with a lighted taper in his hand. Terror now subdued her, and she utterred an involuntary shriek. In the succeeding moment, a noise was heard in a remote part of the fabric; and Ferdinand rushing forth from his concealment, ran to her assistance. The old man, who appeared to be a friar, and who had been doing penance at the monument of a saint, now approached. His countenance expressed a degree of surprise and terror almost equal to that of Julia's, who knew him to be the confessor of Vincent. Ferdinand seized the father; and laying his hand upon his sword, threatened him with death if he did not instantly swear to conceal for ever his knowledge of what he then saw, and also assist them to escape from the abbey.

'Ungracious boy!' replied the father, in a calm voice, 'desist from this language, nor add to the follies of youth the crime of murdering, or terrifying a defenceless old man. Your violence would urge me to become your enemy, did not previous inclination tempt me to be your friend. I pity the distresses of the lady Julia, to whom I am no stranger, and will cheerfully give her all the assistance in my power.'

At these words Julia revived, and Ferdinand, reproved by the generosity of the father, and conscious of his own inferiority, shrunk back. 'I have no words to thank you,' said he, 'or to entreat your pardon for the impetuosity of my conduct; your knowledge of my situation must plead my excuse.'—'It does,' replied the father, 'but we have no time to lose;—follow me.'

They followed him through the church to the cloisters, at the extremity of which was a small door, which the friar unlocked. It opened upon the woods.

'This path,' said he, 'leads thro' an intricate part of the woods, to the rocks that rise on the right of the abbey; in their recesses you may secrete yourselves till you are prepared for a longer journey. But extinguish your light; it may betray you to the marquis's people, who are dispersed about this spot. Farewell! my children, and God's blessing be upon ye.'

Julia's tears declared her gratitude; she had no time for words. They stepped into the path, and the father closed the door. They were now liberated from the monastery, but danger awaited them without, which it required all their caution to avoid. Ferdinand knew the path which the friar had pointed out to be the same that led to the rocks where his horses were stationed, and he pursued it with quick and silent steps. Julia, whose fears conspired with the gloom of night to magnify and transform every object around her, imagined at each step that she took, she perceived the figures of men, and fancied every whisper of the breeze the sound of pursuit.

They proceeded swiftly, till Julia, breathless and exhausted, could go no farther. They had not rested many minutes, when they heard a rustling among the bushes at some distance, and soon after distinguished a low sound of voices. Ferdinand and Julia instantly renewed their flight, and thought they still heard voices advance upon the wind. This thought was soon confirmed, for the sounds now gained fast upon them, and they distinguished words which served only to heighten their apprehensions, when they reached the extremity of the woods. The moon, which was now up, suddenly emerging from a dark cloud, discovered to them several man in pursuit; and also shewed to the pursuers the course of the fugitives. They endeavoured to gain the rocks where the horses were concealed, and which now appeared in view. These they reached when the pursuers had almost overtaken them—but their horses were gone! Their only remaining chance of escape was to fly into the deep recesses of the rock. They, therefore, entered a winding cave, from whence branched several subterraneous avenues, at the extremity of one of which they stopped. The voices of men now vibrated in tremendous echoes through the various and secret caverns of the place, and the sound of footsteps seemed fast approaching. Julia trembled with terror, and Ferdinand drew his sword, determined to protect her to the last. A confused volley of voices now sounded up that part of the cave were Ferdinand and Julia lay concealed. In a few moments the steps of the pursuers suddenly took a different direction, and the sounds sunk gradually away, and were heard no more. Ferdinand listened attentively for a considerable time, but the stillness of the place remained undisturbed. It was now evident that the men had quitted the rock, and he ventured forth to the mouth of the cave. He surveyed the wilds around, as far as his eye could penetrate, and distinguished no human being; but in the pauses of the wind he still thought he heard a sound of distant voices. As he listened in anxious silence, his eye caught the appearance of a shadow, which moved upon the ground near where he stood. He started back within the cave, but in a few minutes again ventured forth. The shadow remained stationary, but having watched it for some time, Ferdinand saw it glide along till it disappeared behind a point of rock. He had now no doubt that the cave was watched, and that it was one of his late pursuers whose shade he had seen. He returned, therefore, to Julia, and remained near an hour hid in the deepest recess of the rock; when, no sound having interrupted the profound silence of the place, he at length once more ventured to the mouth of the cave. Again he threw a fearful look around, but discerned no human form. The soft moon-beam slept upon the dewy landscape, and the solemn stillness of midnight wrapt the world. Fear heightened to the fugitives the sublimity of the hour. Ferdinand now led Julia forth, and they passed silently along the shelving foot of the rocks.

They continued their way without farther interruption; and among the cliffs, at some distance from the cave, discovered, to their inexpressible joy, their horses, who having broken their fastenings, had strayed thither, and had now laid themselves down to rest. Ferdinand and Julia immediately mounted; and descending to the plains, took the road that led to a small sea-port at some leagues distant, whence they could embark for Italy.

They travelled for some hours through gloomy forests of beech and chesnut; and their way was only faintly illuminated by the moon, which shed a trembling lustre through the dark foliage, and which was seen but at intervals, as the passing clouds yielded to the power of her rays. They reached at length the skirts of the forest. The grey dawn now appeared, and the chill morning air bit shrewdly. It was with inexpressible joy that Julia observed the kindling atmosphere; and soon after the rays of the rising sun touching the tops of the mountains, whose sides were yet involved in dark vapours.

Her fears dissipated with the darkness.—The sun now appeared amid clouds of inconceivable splendour; and unveiled a scene which in other circumstances Julia would have contemplated with rapture. From the side of the hill, down which they were winding, a vale appeared, from whence arose wild and lofty mountains, whose steeps were cloathed with hanging woods, except where here and there a precipice projected its bold and rugged front. Here, a few half-withered trees hung from the crevices of the rock, and gave a picturesque wildness to the object; there, clusters of half-seen cottages, rising from among tufted groves, embellished the green margin of a stream which meandered in the bottom, and bore its waves to the blue and distant main.

The freshness of morning breathed over the scene, and vivified each colour of the landscape. The bright dewdrops hung trembling from the branches of the trees, which at intervals overshadowed the road; and the sprightly music of the birds saluted the rising day. Notwithstanding her anxiety the scene diffused a soft complacency over the mind of Julia.

About noon they reached the port, where Ferdinand was fortunate enough to obtain a small vessel; but the wind was unfavourable, and it was past midnight before it was possible for them to embark.

When the dawn appeared, Julia returned to the deck; and viewed with a sigh of unaccountable regret, the receding coast of Sicily. But she observed, with high admiration, the light gradually spreading through the atmosphere, darting a feeble ray over the surface of the waters, which rolled in solemn soundings upon the distant shores. Fiery beams now marked the clouds, and the east glowed with increasing radiance, till the sun rose at once above the waves, and illuminating them with a flood of splendour, diffused gaiety and gladness around. The bold concave of the heavens, uniting with the vast expanse of the ocean, formed, a *coup d'oeil*, striking and sublime magnificence of the scenery inspired Julia with delight; and her heart dilating with high enthusiasm, she forgot the sorrows which had oppressed her.

The breeze wafted the ship gently along for some hours, when it gradually sunk into a calm. The glassy surface of the waters was not curled by the lightest air, and the vessel floated heavily on the bosom of the deep. Sicily was yet in view, and the present delay agitated Julia with wild apprehension. Towards the close of day a light breeze sprang up, but it blew from Italy, and a train of dark vapours emerged from the verge of the horizon, which gradually accumulating, the heavens became entirely overcast. The evening shut in suddenly; the rising wind, the heavy clouds that loaded the atmosphere, and the thunder which murmured afar off terrified Julia, and threatened a violent storm.

The tempest came on, and the captain vainly sounded for anchorage: it was deep sea, and the vessel drove furiously before the wind. The darkness was interrupted only at intervals, by the broad expanse of vivid lightnings, which quivered upon the waters, and disclosing the horrible gaspings of the waves, served to render the succeeding darkness more awful. The thunder, which burst in tremendous crashes above, the loud roar of the waves below, the noise of the sailors, and the sudden cracks and groanings of the vessel conspired to heighten the tremendous sublimity of the scene.

Far on the rocky shores the surges sound,
The lashing whirlwinds cleave the vast profound;
While high in air, amid the rising storm,
Driving the blast, sits Danger's black'ning form.

Julia lay fainting with terror and sickness in the cabin, and Ferdinand, though almost hopeless himself, was endeavouring to support her, when aloud and dreadful crash was heard from above. It seemed as if the whole vessel had parted. The voices of the sailors now rose together, and all was confusion and uproar. Ferdinand ran up to the deck, and learned that part of the main mast, borne away by the wind, had fallen upon the deck, whence it had rolled overboard.

It was now past midnight, and the storm continued with unabated fury. For four hours the vessel had been driven before the blast; and the captain now declared it was impossible she could weather the tempest much longer, ordered the long boat to be in readiness. His orders were scarcely executed, when the ship bulged upon a reef of rocks, and the impetuous waves rushed into the vessel:—a general groan ensued. Ferdinand flew to save his sister, whom he carried to the boat, which was nearly filled by the captain and most of the crew. The sea ran so high that it appeared impracticable to reach the shore: but the boat had not moved many yards, when the ship went to pieces. The captain now perceived, by the flashes of lightning, a high rocky coast at about the distance of half a mile. The men struggled hard at the oars; but almost as often as they gained the summit of a wave, it dashed them back again, and made their labour of little avail.

After much difficulty and fatigue they reached the coast, where a new danger presented itself. They beheld a wild rocky shore, whose cliffs appeared inaccessible, and which seemed to afford little possibility of landing. A landing, however, was at last affected; and the sailors, after much search, discovered a kind of pathway cut in the rock, which they all ascended in safety.

The dawn now faintly glimmered, and they surveyed the coast, but could discover no human habitation. They imagined they were on the shores of Sicily, but possessed no means of confirming this conjecture. Terror, sickness, and fatigue had subdued the strength and spirits of Julia, and she was obliged to rest upon the rocks.

The storm now suddenly subsided, and the total calm which succeeded to the wild tumult of the winds and waves, produced a striking and sublime effect. The air was hushed in a deathlike stillness, but the waves were yet violently agitated; and by the increasing light, parts of the wreck were seen floating wide upon the face of the deep. Some sailors, who had missed the boat, were also discovered clinging to pieces of the vessel, and making towards the shore. On observing this, their shipmates immediately descended to the boat; and, putting off to sea, rescued them from their perilous situation. When Julia was somewhat reanimated, they proceeded up the country in search of a dwelling.

They had travelled near half a league, when the savage features of the country began to soften, and gradually changed to the picturesque beauty of Sicilian scenery. They now discovered at some distance a villa, seated on a gentle eminence, crowned with woods. It was the first human habitation they had seen since they embarked for Italy; and Julia, who was almost sinking with fatigue, beheld it with delight. The captain and his men hastened towards it to make known their distress, while Ferdinand and Julia slowly followed. They observed the men enter the villa, one of whom quickly returned to acquaint them with the hospitable reception his comrades had received.

Julia with difficulty reached the edifice, at the door of which she was met by a young cavalier, whose pleasing and intelligent countenance immediately interested her in his favor. He welcomed the strangers with a benevolent politeness that dissolved at once every uncomfortable feeling which their situation had excited, and produced an instantaneous easy confidence. Through a light and elegant hall, rising into a dome, supported by pillars of white marble, and adorned with busts, he led them to a magnificent vestibule, which opened upon a lawn. Having seated them at a table spread with refreshments he left them, and they surveyed, with surprise, the beauty of the adjacent scene.

The lawn, which was on each side bounded by hanging woods, descended in gentle declivity to a fine lake, whose smooth surface reflected the surrounding shades. Beyond appeared the distant country, arising on the left into bold romantic mountains, and on the right exhibiting a soft and glowing landscape, whose tranquil beauty formed a striking contrast to the wild sublimity of the opposite craggy heights. The blue and distant ocean terminated the view.

In a short time the cavalier returned, conducting two ladies of a very engaging appearance, whom he presented as his wife and sister. They welcomed Julia with graceful kindness; but fatigue soon obliged her to retire to rest, and a consequent indisposition increased so rapidly, as to render it impracticable for her to quit her present abode on that day. The captain and his men proceeded on their way, leaving Ferdinand and Julia at the villa, where she experienced every kind and tender affection.

The day which was to have devoted Julia to a cloister, was ushered in at the abbey with the usual ceremonies. The church was ornamented, and all the inhabitants of the monastery prepared to attend. The *Padre Abate* now exulted in the success of his scheme, and anticipated, in imagination, the rage and vexation of the marquis, when he should discover that his daughter was lost to him for ever.

The hour of celebration arrived, and he entered the church with a proud firm step, and with a countenance which depictured his inward triumph; he was proceeding to the high altar, when he was told that Julia was no where to be found. Astonishment for awhile suspended other emotions—he yet believed it impossible that she could have effected an escape, and ordered every part of the abbey to be searched—not forgetting the secret caverns belonging to the monastery, which wound beneath the woods. When the search was over, and he became convinced she was fled, the deep workings of his disappointed passions fermented into rage which exceeded all bounds. He denounced the most terrible judgments upon Julia; and calling for Madame de Menon, charged her with having insulted her holy religion, in being accessary to the flight of Julia. Madame endured these reproaches with calm dignity, and preserved a steady silence, but she secretly determined to leave the monastery, and seek in another the repose which she could never hope to find in this.

The report of Julia's disappearance spread rapidly beyond the walls, and soon reached the ears of the marquis, who rejoiced in the circumstance, believing that she must now inevitably fall into his hands.

After his people, in obedience to his orders, had carefully searched the surrounding woods and rocks, he withdrew them from the abbey; and having dispersed them various ways in search of Julia, he returned to the castle of Mazzini. Here new vexation awaited him, for he now first learned that Ferdinand had escaped from confinement.

The mystery of Julia's flight was now dissolved; for it was evident by whose means she had effected it, and the marquis issued orders to his people to secure Ferdinand wherever he should be found.

CHAPTER XIII

Hippolitus, who had languished under a long and dangerous illness occasioned by his wounds, but heightened and prolonged by the distress of his mind, was detained in a small town in the coast of Calabria, and was yet ignorant of the death of Cornelia. He scarcely doubted that Julia was now devoted to the duke, and this thought was at times poison to his heart. After his arrival in Calabria, immediately on the recovery of his senses, he dispatched a servant back to the castle of Mazzini, to gain secret intelligence of what had passed after his departure. The eagerness with which we endeavour to escape from misery, taught him to encourage a remote and romantic hope that Julia yet lived for him. Yet even this hope at length languished into despair, as the time elapsed which should have brought his servant from Sicily. Days and weeks passed away in the utmost anxiety to Hippolitus, for still his emissary did not appear; and at last, concluding that he had been either seized by robbers, or discovered and detained by the marquis, the Count sent off a second emissary to the castle of Mazzini. By him he learned the news of Julia's flight, and his heart dilated with joy; but it was suddenly checked when he heard the marquis had discovered her retreat in the abbey of St Augustin. The wounds which still detained him in confinement, now became intolerable. Julia might yet be lost to him for ever. But even his present state of fear and uncertainty was bliss compared with the anguish of despair, which his mind had long endured.

As soon as he was sufficiently recovered, he quitted Italy for Sicily, in the design of visiting the monastery of St Augustin, where it was possible Julia might yet remain. That he might pass with the secrecy necessary to his plan, and escape the attacks of the marquis, he left his servants in Calabria, and embarked alone.

It was morning when he landed at a small port of Sicily, and proceeded towards the abbey of St Augustin. As he travelled, his imagination revolved the scenes of his early love, the distress of Julia, and the sufferings of Ferdinand, and his heart melted at the retrospect. He considered the probabilities of Julia having found protection from her father in the pity of the *Padre Abate*; and even ventured to indulge himself in a flattering, fond anticipation of the moment when Julia should again be restored to his sight.

He arrived at the monastery, and his grief may easily be imagined, when he was informed of the death of his beloved sister, and of the flight of Julia. He quitted St Augustin's immediately, without even knowing that Madame de Menon was there, and set out for a town at some leagues distance, where he designed to pass the night.

Absorbed in the melancholy reflections which the late intelligence excited, he gave the reins to his horse, and journeyed on unmindful of his way. The evening was far advanced when he discovered that he had taken a wrong direction, and that he was bewildered in a wild and solitary scene. He had wandered too far from the road to hope to regain it, and he had beside no recollection of the objects left behind him. A choice of errors, only, lay before him. The view on his right hand exhibited high and savage mountains, covered with heath and black fir; and the wild desolation of their aspect, together with the dangerous appearance of the path that wound up their sides, and which was the only apparent track they afforded, determined Hippolitus not to attempt their ascent. On his left lay a forest, to which the path he was then in led; its appearance was gloomy, but he preferred it to the mountains; and, since he was uncertain of its extent, there was a possibility that he might pass it, and reach a village before the night was set in. At the worst, the forest would afford him a shelter from the winds; and, however he might be bewildered in its labyrinths, he could ascend a tree, and rest in security till the return of light should afford him an opportunity of extricating himself. Among the mountains there was no possibility of meeting with other shelter than what the habitation of man afforded, and such a shelter there was little probability of finding. Innumerable dangers also threatened him here, from which he would be secure on level ground.

Having determined which way to pursue, he pushed his horse into a gallop, and entered the forest as the last rays of the sun trembled on the mountains. The thick foliage of the trees threw a gloom around, which was every moment deepened by the shades of evening. The path was uninterrupted, and the count continued to follow it till all distinction was confounded in the veil of night. Total darkness now made it impossible for him to pursue his way. He dismounted, and fastening his horse to a tree, climbed among the branches, purposing to remain there till morning.

He had not been long in this situation, when a confused sound of voices from a distance roused his attention. The sound returned at intervals for some time, but without seeming to approach. He descended from the tree, that he might the better judge of the direction whence it came; but before he reached the ground, the noise was ceased, and all was profoundly silent. He continued to listen, but the silence remaining undisturbed, he began to think he had been deceived by the singing of the wind among the leaves; and was preparing to reascend, when he perceived a faint light glimmer through the foliage from afar. The sight revived a hope that he was near some place of human habitation; he therefore unfastened his horse, and led him towards the spot whence the ray issued. The moon was now risen, and threw a checkered gleam over his path sufficient to direct him.

Before he had proceeded far the light disappeared. He continued, however, his way as nearly as he could guess, towards the place whence it had issued; and after much toil, found himself in a spot where the trees formed a circle round a kind of rude lawn. The moonlight discovered to him an edifice which appeared to have been formerly a monastery, but which now exhibited a pile of ruins, whose grandeur, heightened by decay, touched the beholder with reverential awe. Hippolitus paused to gaze upon the scene; the sacred stillness of night increased its effect, and a secret dread, he knew not wherefore, stole upon his heart.

The silence and the character of the place made him doubt whether this was the spot he had been seeking; and as he stood hesitating whether to proceed or to return, he observed a figure standing under an arch-way of the ruin; it carried a light in its hand, and passing silently along, disappeared in a remote part of the building. The courage of Hippolitus for a moment deserted him. An invincible curiosity, however, subdued his terror, and he determined to pursue, if possible, the way the figure had taken.

He passed over loose stones through a sort of court till he came to the archway; here he stopped, for fear returned upon him. Resuming his courage, however, he went on, still endeavouring to follow the way the figure had passed, and suddenly found himself in an enclosed part of the ruin, whose appearance was more wild and desolate than any he had yet seen. Seized with unconquerable apprehension, he was retiring, when the low voice of a distressed person struck his ear. His heart sunk at the sound, his limbs trembled, and he was utterly unable to move.

The sound which appeared to be the last groan of a dying person, was repeated. Hippolitus made a strong effort, and sprang forward, when a light burst upon him from a shattered casement of the building, and at the same instant he heard the voices of men!

He advanced softly to the window, and beheld in a small room, which was less decayed than the rest of the edifice, a group of men, who, from the savageness of their looks, and from their dress, appeared to be banditti. They surrounded a man who lay on the ground wounded, and bathed in blood, and who it was very evident had uttered the groans heard by the count.

The obscurity of the place prevented Hippolitus from distinguishing the features of the dying man. From the blood which covered him, and from the surrounding circumstances, he appeared to be murdered; and the count had no doubt that the men he beheld were the murderers. The horror of the scene entirely overcame him; he stood rooted to the spot, and saw the assassins rifle the pockets of the dying person, who, in a voice scarcely articulate, but which despair seemed to aid, supplicated for mercy. The ruffians answered him only with execrations, and continued their plunder. His groans and his sufferings served only to aggravate their cruelty. They were proceeding to take from him a miniature picture, which was fastened round his neck, and had been hitherto concealed in his bosom; when by a sudden effort he half raised himself from the ground, and attempted to save it from their hands. The effort availed him nothing; a blow from one of the villains laid the unfortunate man on the floor without motion. The horrid barbarity of the act seized the mind of Hippolitus so entirely, that, forgetful of his own situation, he groaned aloud, and started with an instantaneous design of avenging the deed. The noise he made alarmed the banditti, who looking whence it came, discovered the count through the casement. They instantly quitted their prize, and rushed towards the door of the room. He was now returned to a sense of his danger, and endeavoured to escape to the exterior part of the ruin; but terror bewildered his senses, and he mistook his way. Instead of regaining the arch-way, he perplexed himself with fruitless wanderings, and at length found himself only more deeply involved in the secret recesses of the pile.

The steps of his pursuers gained fast upon him, and he continued to perplex himself with vain efforts at escape, till at length, quite exhausted, he sunk on the ground, and endeavoured to resign himself to his fate. He listened with a kind of stern despair, and was surprised to find all silent. On looking round, he perceived by a ray of moonlight, which streamed through a part of the ruin from above, that he was in a sort of vault, which, from the small means he had of judging, he thought was extensive.

In this situation he remained for a considerable time, ruminating on the means of escape, yet scarcely believing escape was possible. If he continued in the vault, he might continue there only to be butchered; but by attempting to rescue himself from the place he was now in, he must rush into the hands of the banditti. Judging it, therefore, the safer way of the two to remain where he was, he endeavoured to await his fate with fortitude, when suddenly the loud voices of the murderers burst upon his ear, and he heard steps advancing quickly towards the spot where he lay.

Despair instantly renewed his vigour; he started from the ground, and throwing round him a look of eager desperation, his eye caught the glimpse of a small door, upon which the moon-beam now fell. He made towards it, and passed it just as the light of a torch gleamed upon the walls of the vault.

He groped his way along a winding passage, and at length came to a flight of steps. Notwithstanding the darkness, he reached the bottom in safety.

He now for the first time stopped to listen—the sounds of pursuit were ceased, and all was silent! Continuing to wander on in effectual endeavours to escape, his hands at length touched cold iron, and he quickly perceived it belonged to a door. The door, however, was fastened, and resisted all his efforts to open it. He was giving up the attempt in despair, when a loud scream from within, followed by a dead and heavy noise, roused all his attention. Silence ensued. He listened for a considerable time at the door, his imagination filled with images of horror, and expecting to hear the sound repeated. He then sought for a decayed part of the door, through which he might discover what was beyond; but he could find none; and after waiting some time without hearing any farther noise, he was quitting the spot, when in passing his arm over the door, it struck against something hard. On examination he perceived, to his extreme surprize, that the key was in the lock. For a moment he hesitated what to do; but curiosity overcame other considerations, and with a trembling hand he turned the key. The door opened into a large and desolate apartment, dimly lighted by a lamp that stood on a table, which was almost the only furniture of the place. The Count had advanced several steps before he perceived an object, which fixed all his attention. This was the figure of a young woman lying on the floor apparently dead. Her face was concealed in her robe; and the long auburn tresses which fell in beautiful luxuriance over her bosom, served to veil a part of the glowing beauty which the disorder of her dress would have revealed.

Pity, surprize, and admiration struggled in the breast of Hippolitus; and while he stood surveying the object which excited these different emotions, he heard a step advancing towards the room. He flew to the door by which he had entered, and was fortunate enough to reach it before the entrance of the persons whose steps he heard. Having turned the key, he stopped at the door to listen to their proceedings. He distinguished the voices of two men, and knew them to be those of the assassins. Presently he heard a piercing skriek, and at the same instant the voices of the ruffians grew loud and violent. One of them exclaimed that the lady was dying, and accused the other of having frightened her to death, swearing, with horrid imprecations, that she was his, and he would defend her to the last drop of his blood. The dispute grew higher; and neither of the ruffians would give up his claim to the unfortunate object of their altercation.

The clashing of swords was soon after heard, together with a violent noise. The screams were repeated, and the oaths and execrations of the disputants redoubled. They seemed to move towards the door, behind which Hippolitus was concealed; suddenly the door was shook with great force, a deep groan followed, and was instantly succeeded by a noise like that of a person whose whole weight falls at once to the ground. For a moment all was silent. Hippolitus had no doubt that one of the ruffians had destroyed the other, and was soon confirmed in the belief—for the survivor triumphed with brutal exultation over his fallen antagonist. The ruffian hastily quitted the room, and Hippolitus soon after heard the distant voices of several persons in loud dispute. The sounds seemed to come from a chamber over the place where he stood; he also heard a trampling of feet from above, and could even distinguish, at intervals, the words of the disputants. From these he gathered enough to learn that the affray which had just happened, and the lady who had been the occasion of it, were the subjects of discourse. The voices frequently rose together, and confounded all distinction.

At length the tumult began to subside, and Hippolitus could distinguish what was said. The ruffians agreed to give up the lady in question to him who had fought for her; and leaving him to his prize, they all went out in quest of farther prey. The situation of the unfortunate lady excited a mixture of pity and indignation in Hippolitus, which for some time entirely occupied him; he revolved the means of extricating her from so deplorable a situation, and in these thoughts almost forgot his own danger. He now heard her sighs; and while his heart melted to the sounds, the farther door of the apartment was thrown open, and the wretch to whom she had been allotted, rushed in. Her screams now redoubled, but they were of no avail with the ruffian who had seized her in his arms; when the count, who was unarmed, insensible to every pulse but that of a generous pity, burst into the room, but became fixed like a statue when he beheld his Julia struggling in the grasp of the ruffian. On discovering Hippolitus, she made a sudden spring, and liberated herself; when, running to him, she sunk lifeless in his arms.

Surprise and fury sparkled in the eyes of the ruffian, and he turned with a savage desperation upon the count; who, relinquishing Julia, snatched up the sword of the dead ruffian, which lay upon the floor, and defended himself. The combat was furious, but Hippolitus laid his antagonist senseless at his feet. He flew to Julia, who now revived, but who for some time could speak only by her tears. The transitions of various and rapid sensations, which her heart experienced, and the strangely mingled emotions of joy and terror that agitated Hippolitus, can only be understood by experience. He raised her from the floor, and endeavoured to soothe her to composure, when she called wildly upon Ferdinand. At his name the count started, and he instantly remembered the dying cavalier, whose countenance the glooms had concealed from his view. His heart thrilled with secret agony, yet he resolved to withhold his terrible conjectures from Julia, of whom he learned that Ferdinand, with herself, had been taken by banditti in the way from the villa which had offered them so hospitable a reception after the shipwreck. They were on the road to a port whence they designed again to embark for Italy, when this misfortune overtook them. Julia added, that Ferdinand had been immediately separated from her; and that, for some hours, she had been confined in the apartment where Hippolitus found her.

The Count with difficulty concealed his terrible apprehensions for Ferdinand, and vainly strove to soften Julia's distress. But there was no time to be lost—they had yet to find a way out of the edifice, and before they could accomplish this, the banditti might return. It was also possible that some of the party were left to watch this their abode during the absence of the rest, and this was another circumstance of reasonable alarm.

After some little consideration, Hippolitus judged it most prudent to seek an outlet through the passage by which he entered; he therefore took the lamp, and led Julia to the door. They entered the avenue, and locking the door after them, sought the flight of steps down which the count had before passed; but having pursued the windings of the avenue a considerable time without finding them, he became certain he had mistaken the way. They, however, found another flight, which they descended and entered upon a passage so very narrow and low, as not to admit of a person walking upright. This passage was closed by a door, which on examination was found to be chiefly of iron. Hippolitus was startled at the sight, but on applying his strength found it gradually yield, when the imprisoned air rushed out, and had nearly extinguished the light. They now entered upon a dark abyss; and the door which moved upon a spring, suddenly closed upon them. On looking round they beheld a large vault; and it is not easy to imagine their horror on discovering they were in a receptacle for the murdered bodies of the unfortunate people who had fallen into the hands of the banditti.

The count could scarcely support the fainting spirits of Julia; he ran to the door, which he endeavoured to open, but the lock was so constructed that it could be moved only on the other side, and all his efforts were useless. He was constrained, therefore, to seek for another door, but could find none. Their situation was the most deplorable that can be imagined; for they were now inclosed in a vault strewn with the dead bodies of the murdered, and must there become the victims of famine, or of the sword. The earth was in several places thrown up, and marked the boundaries of new-made graves. The bodies which remained unburied were probably left either from hurry or negligence, and exhibited a spectacle too shocking for humanity. The sufferings of Hippolitus were increased by those of Julia, who was sinking with horror, and who he endeavoured to support to apart of the vault which fell into a recess—where stood a bench.

They had not been long in this situation, when they heard a noise which approached gradually, and which did not appear to come from the avenue they had passed.

The noise increased, and they could distinguish voices. Hippolitus believed the murderers were returned; that they had traced his retreat, and were coming towards the vault by some way unknown to him. He prepared for the worst—and drawing his sword, resolved to defend Julia to the last. Their apprehension, however, was soon dissipated by a trampling of horses, which sound had occasioned his alarm, and which now seemed to come from a courtyard above, extremely near the vault. He distinctly heard the voices of the banditti, together with the moans and supplications of some person, whom it was evident they were about to plunder. The sound appeared so very near, that Hippolitus was both shocked and surprised; and looking round the vault, he perceived a small grated window placed very high in the wall, which he concluded overlooked the place where the robbers were assembled. He recollected that his light might betray him; and horrible as was the alternative, he was compelled to extinguish it. He now attempted to climb to the grate, through which he might obtain a view of what was passing without. This at length he effected, for the ruggedness of the wall afforded him a footing. He beheld in a ruinous court, which was partially illuminated by the glare of torches, a group of banditti surrounding two persons who were bound on horseback, and who were supplicating for mercy.

One of the robbers exclaiming with an oath that this was a golden night, bade his comrades dispatch, adding he would go to find Paulo and the lady.

The effect which the latter part of this sentence had upon the prisoners in the vault, may be more easily imagined than described. They were now in total darkness in this mansion of the murdered, without means of escape, and in momentary expectation of sharing a fate similar to that of the wretched objects around them. Julia, overcome with distress and terror, sunk on the ground; and Hippolitus, descending from the grate, became insensible of his own danger in his apprehension for her.

In a short time all without was confusion and uproar; the ruffian who had left the court returned with the alarm that the lady was fled, and that Paulo was murdered, The robbers quitting their booty to go in search of the fugitive, and to discover the murderer, dreadful vociferations resounded through every recess of the pile.

The tumult had continued a considerable time, which the prisoners had passed in a state of horrible suspence, when they heard the uproar advancing towards the vault, and soon after a number of voices shouted down the avenue. The sound of steps quickened. Hippolitus again drew his sword, and placed himself opposite the entrance, where he had not stood long, when a violent push was made against the door; it flew open, and a party of men rushed into the vault.

Hippolitus kept his position, protesting he would destroy the first who approached. At the sound of his voice they stopped; but presently advancing, commanded him in the king's name to surrender. He now discovered what his agitation had prevented him from observing sooner, that the men before him were not banditti, but the officers of justice. They had received information of this haunt of villainy from the son of a Sicilian nobleman, who had fallen into the hands of the banditti, and had afterwards escaped from their power.

The officers came attended by a guard, and were every way prepared to prosecute a strenuous search through these horrible recesses.

Hippolitus inquired for Ferdinand, and they all quitted the vault in search of him. In the court, to which they now ascended, the greater part of the banditti were secured by a number of the guard. The count accused the robbers of having secreted his friend, whom he described, and demanded to have liberated.

With one voice they denied the fact, and were resolute in persisting that they knew nothing of the person described. This denial confirmed Hippolitus in his former terrible surmise; that the dying cavalier, whom he had seen, was no other than Ferdinand, and he became furious. He bade the officers prosecute their search, who, leaving a guard over the banditti they had secured, followed him to the room where the late dreadful scene had been acted.

The room was dark and empty; but the traces of blood were visible on the floor; and Julia, though ignorant of the particular apprehension of Hippolitus, almost swooned at the sight. On quitting the room, they wandered for some time among the ruins, without discovering any thing extraordinary, till, in passing under the arch-way by which Hippolitus had first entered the building, their footsteps returned a deep sound, which convinced them that the ground beneath was hollow. On close examination, they perceived by the light of their torch, a trapdoor, which with some difficulty they lifted, and discovered beneath a narrow flight of steps. They all descended into a low winding passage, where they had not been long, when they heard a trampling of horses above, and a loud and sudden uproar.

The officers apprehending that the banditti had overcome the guard, rushed back to the trapdoor, which they had scarcely lifted, when they heard a clashing of swords, and a confusion of unknown voices. Looking onward, they beheld through the arch, in an inner sort of court, a large party of banditti who were just arrived, rescuing their comrades, and contending furiously with the guard.

On observing this, several of the officers sprang forward to the assistance of their friends; and the rest, subdued by cowardice, hurried down the steps, letting the trapdoor fall after them with a thundering noise. They gave notice to Hippolitus of what was passing above, who hurried Julia along the passage in search of some outlet or place of concealment. They could find neither, and had not long pursued the windings of the way, when they heard the trapdoor lifted, and the steps of persons descending. Despair gave strength to Julia, and winged her flight. But they were now stopped by a door which closed the passage, and the sound of distant voices murmured along the walls.

The door was fastened by strong iron bolts, which Hippolitus vainly endeavoured to draw. The voices drew near. After much labour and difficulty the bolts yielded—the door unclosed—and light dawned upon them through the mouth of a cave, into which they now entered. On quitting the cave they found themselves in the forest, and in a short time reached the borders. They now ventured to stop, and looking back perceived no person in pursuit.

CHAPTER XIV

When Julia had rested, they followed the track before them, and in a short time arrived at a village, where they obtained security and refreshment.

But Julia, whose mind was occupied with dreadful anxiety for Ferdinand, became indifferent to all around her. Even the presence of Hippolitus, which but lately would have raised her from misery to joy, failed to soothe her distress. The steady and noble attachment of her brother had sunk deep in her heart, and reflection only aggravated her affliction. Yet the banditti had steadily persisted in affirming that he was not concealed in their recesses; and this circumstance, which threw a deeper shade over the fears of Hippolitus, imparted a glimmering of hope to the mind of Julia.

A more immediate interest at length forced her mind from this sorrowful subject. It was necessary to determine upon some line of conduct, for she was now in an unknown spot, and ignorant of any place of refuge. The count, who trembled at the dangers which environed her, and at the probabilities he saw of her being torn from him for ever, suffered a consideration of them to overcome the dangerous delicacy which at this mournful period required his silence. He entreated her to destroy the possibility of separation, by consenting to become his immediately. He urged that a priest could be easily procured from a neighboring convent, who would confirm the bonds which had so long united their hearts, and who would thus at once arrest the destiny that so long had threatened his hopes.

This proposal, though similar to the one she had before accepted; and though the certain means of rescuing her from the fate she dreaded, she now turned from in sorrow and dejection. She loved Hippolitus with a steady and tender affection, which was still heightened by the gratitude he claimed as her deliverer; but she considered it a prophanation of the memory of that brother who had suffered so much for her sake, to mingle joy with the grief which her uncertainty concerning him occasioned. She softened her refusal with a tender grace, that quickly dissipated the jealous doubt arising in the mind of Hippolitus, and increased his fond admiration of her character.

She desired to retire for a time to some obscure convent, there to await the issue of the event, which at present involved her in perplexity and sorrow.

Hippolitus struggled with his feelings and forbore to press farther the suit on which his happiness, and almost his existence, now depended. He inquired at the village for a neighbouring convent, and was told, that there was none within twelve leagues, but that near the town of Palini, at about that distance, were two. He procured horses; and leaving the officers to return to Palermo for a stronger guard, he, accompanied by Julia, entered on the road to Palini.

Julia was silent and thoughtful; Hippolitus gradually sunk into the same mood, and he often cast a cautious look around as they travelled for some hours along the feet of the mountains. They stopped to dine under the shade of some beach-trees; for, fearful of discovery, Hippolitus had provided against the necessity of entering many inns. Having finished their repast, they pursued their journey; but Hippolitus now began to doubt whether he was in the right direction. Being destitute, however, of the means of certainty upon this point, he followed the road before him, which now wound up the side of a steep hill, whence they descended into a rich valley, where the shepherd's pipe sounded sweetly from afar among the hills. The evening sun shed a mild and mellow lustre over the landscape, and softened each feature with a vermil glow that would have inspired a mind less occupied than Julia's with sensations of congenial tranquillity.

The evening now closed in; and as they were doubtful of the road, and found it would be impossible to reach Palini that night, they took the way to a village, which they perceived at the extremity of the valley.

They had proceeded about half a mile, when they heard a sudden shout of voices echoed from among the hills behind them; and looking back perceived faintly through the dusk a party of men on horseback making towards them. As they drew nearer, the words they spoke were distinguishable, and Julia heard her own name sounded. Shocked at this circumstance, she had now no doubt that she was discovered by a party of her father's people, and she fled with Hippolitus along the valley. The pursuers, however, were almost come up with them, when they reached the mouth of a cavern, into which she ran for concealment. Hippolitus drew his sword; and awaiting his enemies, stood to defend the entrance.

In a few moments Julia heard the clashing of swords. Her heart trembled for Hippolitus; and she was upon the point of returning to resign herself at once to the power of her enemies, and thus avert the danger that threatened him, when she distinguished the loud voice of the duke.

She shrunk involuntarily at the sound, and pursuing the windings of the cavern, fled into its inmost recesses. Here she had not been long when the voices sounded through the cave, and drew near. It was now evident that Hippolitus was conquered, and that her enemies were in search of her. She threw round a look of unutterable anguish, and perceived very near, by a sudden gleam of torchlight, a low and deep recess in the rock. The light which belonged to her pursuers, grew stronger; and she entered the rock on her knees, for the overhanging craggs would not suffer her to pass otherwise; and having gone a few yards, perceived that it was terminated by a door. The door yielded to her touch, and she suddenly found herself in a highly vaulted cavern, which received a feeble light from the moon-beams that streamed through an opening in the rock above.

She closed the door, and paused to listen. The voices grew louder, and more distinct, and at last approached so near, that she distinguished what was said. Above the rest she heard the voice of the duke. 'It is impossible she can have quitted the cavern,' said he, 'and I will not leave it till I have found her. Seek to the left of that rock, while I examine beyond this point.'

These words were sufficient for Julia; she fled from the door across the cavern before her, and having ran a considerable way, without coming to a termination, stopped to breathe. All was now still, and as she looked around, the gloomy obscurity of the place struck upon her fancy all its horrors. She imperfectly surveyed the vastness of the cavern in wild amazement, and feared that she had precipitated herself again into the power of banditti, for whom along this place appeared a fit receptacle. Having listened a long time without hearing a return of voices, she thought to find the door by which she had entered, but the gloom, and vast extent of the cavern, made the endeavour hopeless, and the attempt unsuccessful. Having wandered a considerable time through the void, she gave up the effort, endeavoured to resign herself to her fate, and to compose her distracted thoughts. The remembrance of her former wonderful escape inspired her with confidence in the mercy of God. But Hippolitus and Ferdinand were now both lost to her—lost, perhaps, for ever—and the uncertainty of their fate gave force to fancy, and poignancy to sorrow.

Towards morning grief yielded to nature, and Julia sunk to repose. She was awakened by the sun, whose rays darting obliquely through the opening in the rock, threw a partial light across the cavern. Her senses were yet bewildered by sleep, and she started in affright on beholding her situation; as recollection gradually stole upon her mind, her sorrows returned, and she sickened at the fatal retrospect.

She arose, and renewed her search for an outlet. The light, imperfect as it was, now assisted her, and she found a door, which she perceived was not the one by which she had entered. It was firmly fastened; she discovered, however, the bolts and the lock that held it, and at length unclosed the door. It opened upon a dark passage, which she entered.

She groped along the winding walls for some time, when she perceived the way was obstructed. She now discovered that another door interrupted her progress, and sought for the bolts which might fasten it. These she found; and strengthened by desparation forced them back. The door opened, and she beheld in a small room, which received its feeble light from a window above, the pale and emaciated figure of a woman, seated, with half-closed eyes, in a kind of elbow-chair. On perceiving Julia, she started from her seat, and her countenance expressed a wild surprise. Her features, which were worn by sorrow, still retained the traces of beauty, and in her air was a mild dignity that excited in Julia an involuntary veneration.

She seemed as if about to speak, when fixing her eyes earnestly and steadily upon Julia, she stood for a moment in eager gaze, and suddenly exclaiming, 'My daughter!' fainted away.

The astonishment of Julia would scarcely suffer her to assist the lady who lay senseless on the floor. A multitude of strange imperfect ideas rushed upon her mind, and she was lost in perplexity; but as she examined the features of the stranger; which were now rekindling into life, she thought she discovered the resemblance of Emilia!

The lady breathing a deep sigh, unclosed her eyes; she raised them to Julia, who hung over her in speechless astonishment, and fixing them upon her with a tender earnest expression—they filled with tears. She pressed Julia to her heart, and a few moments of exquisite, unutterable emotion followed. When the lady became more composed, 'Thank heaven!' said she, 'my prayer is granted. I am permitted to embrace one of my children before I die. Tell me what brought you hither. Has the marquis at last relented, and allowed me once more to behold you, or has his death dissolved my wretched bondage?'

Truth now glimmered upon the mind of Julia, but so faintly, that instead of enlightening, it served only to increase her perplexity.

'Is the marquis Mazzini living?' continued the lady. These words were not to be doubted; Julia threw herself at the feet of her mother, and embracing her knees in an energy of joy, answered only in sobs.

The marchioness eagerly inquired after her children, 'Emilia is living,' answered Julia, 'but my dear brother—' 'Tell me,' cried the marchioness, with quickness. An explanation ensued; When she was informed concerning Ferdinand, she sighed deeply, and raising her eyes to heaven, endeavoured to assume a look of pious resignation; but the struggle of maternal feelings was visible in her countenance, and almost overcame her powers of resistance.

Julia gave a short account of the preceding adventures, and of her entrance into the cavern; and found, to her inexpressible surprize, that she was now in a subterranean abode belonging to the southern buildings of the castle of Mazzini! The marchioness was beginning her narrative, when a door was heard to unlock above, and the sound of a footstep followed.

'Fly!' cried the marchioness, 'secret yourself, if possible, for the marquis is coming.' Julia's heart sunk at these words; she paused not a moment, but retired through the door by which she had entered. This she had scarcely done, when another door of the cell was unlocked, and she heard the voice of her father. Its sounds thrilled her with a universal tremour; the dread of discovery so strongly operated upon her mind, that she stood in momentary expectation of seeing the door of the passage unclosed by the marquis; and she was deprived of all power of seeking refuge in the cavern.

At length the marquis, who came with food, quitted the cell, and relocked the door, when Julia stole forth from her hiding-place. The marchioness again embraced, and wept over her daughter. The narrative of her sufferings, upon which she now entered, entirely dissipated the mystery which had so long enveloped the southern buildings of the castle.

'Oh! why,' said the marchioness, 'is it my task to discover to my daughter the vices of her father? In relating my sufferings, I reveal his crimes! It is now about fifteen years, as near as I can guess from the small means I have of judging, since I entered this horrible abode. My sorrows, alas! began not here; they commenced at an earlier period. But it is sufficient to observe, that the passion whence originated all my misfortunes, was discovered by me long before I experienced its most baleful effects.

'Seven years had elapsed since my marriage, when the charms of Maria de Vellorno, a young lady singularly beautiful, inspired the marquis with a passion as violent as it was irregular. I observed, with deep and silent anguish, the cruel indifference of my lord towards me, and the rapid progress of his passion for another. I severely examined my past conduct, which I am thankful to say presented a retrospect of only blameless actions; and I endeavoured, by meek submission, and tender assiduities, to recall that affection which was, alas! gone for ever. My meek submission was considered as a mark of a servile and insensible mind; and my tender assiduities, to which his heart no longer responded, created only disgust, and exalted the proud spirit it was meant to conciliate.

'The secret grief which this change occasioned, consumed my spirits, and preyed upon my constitution, till at length a severe illness threatened my life. I beheld the approach of death with a steady eye, and even welcomed it as the passport to tranquillity; but it was destined that I should linger through new scenes of misery.

'One day, which it appears was the paroxysm of my disorder, I sunk in to a state of total torpidity, in which I lay for several hours. It is impossible to describe my feelings, when, on recovering, I found myself in this hideous abode. For some time I doubted my senses, and afterwards believed that I had quitted this world for another; but I was not long suffered to continue in my error, the appearance of the marquis bringing me to a perfect sense of my situation.

'I now understood that I had been conveyed by his direction to this recess of horror, where it was his will I should remain. My prayers, my supplications, were ineffectual; the hardness of his heart repelled my sorrows back upon myself; and as no entreaties could prevail upon him to inform me where I was, or of his reason for placing me here, I remained for many years ignorant of my vicinity to the castle, and of the motive of my confinement.

'From that fatal day, until very lately, I saw the marquis no more—but was attended by a person who had been for some years dependant upon his bounty, and whom necessity, united to an insensible heart, had doubtless induced to accept this office. He generally brought me a week's provision, at stated intervals, and I remarked that his visits were always in the night.

'Contrary to my expectation, or my wish, nature did that for me which medicine had refused, and I recovered as if to punish with disappointment and anxiety my cruel tyrant. I afterwards learned, that in obedience to the marquis's order, I had been carried to this spot by Vincent during the night, and that I had been buried in effigy at a neighbouring church, with all the pomp of funeral honor due to my rank.'

At the name of Vincent Julia started; the doubtful words he had uttered on his deathbed were now explained—the cloud of mystery which had so long involved the southern buildings broke at once away: and each particular circumstance that had excited her former terror, arose to her view entirely unveiled by the words of the marchioness.—The long and total desertion of this part of the fabric—the light that had appeared through the casement—the figure she had seen issue from the tower—the midnight noises she had heard—were circumstances evidently dependant on the imprisonment of the marchioness; the latter of which incidents were produced either by Vincent, or the marquis, in their attendance upon her.

When she considered the long and dreadful sufferings of her mother, and that she had for many years lived so near her, ignorant of her misery, and even of her existence—she was lost in astonishment and pity.

'My days,' continued the marchioness, 'passed in a dead uniformity, more dreadful than the most acute vicissitudes of misfortune, and which would certainly have subdued my reason, had not those firm principles of religious faith, which I imbibed in early youth, enabled me to withstand the still, but forceful pressure of my calamity.

'The insensible heart of Vincent at length began to soften to my misfortunes. He brought me several articles of comfort, of which I had hitherto been destitute, and answered some questions I put to him concerning my family. To release me from my present situation, however his inclination might befriend me, was not to be expected, since his life would have paid the forfeiture of what would be termed his duty.

'I now first discovered my vicinity to the castle. I learned also, that the marquis had married Maria de Vellorno, with whom he had resided at Naples, but that my daughters were left at Mazzini. This last intelligence awakened in my heart the throbs of warm maternal tenderness, and on my knees I supplicated to see them. So earnestly I entreated, and so solemnly I promised to return quietly to my prison, that, at length, prudence yielded to pity, and Vincent consented to my request.

'On the following day he came to the cell, and informed me my children were going into the woods, and that I might see them from a window near which they would pass. My nerves thrilled at these words, and I could scarcely support myself to the spot I so eagerly sought. He led me through long and intricate passages, as I guessed by the frequent turnings, for my eyes were bound, till I reached a hall of the south buildings. I followed to a room above, where the full light of day once more burst upon my sight, and almost overpowered me. Vincent placed me by a window, which looked towards the woods. Oh! what moments of painful impatience were those in which I awaited your arrival!

'At length you appeared. I saw you—I saw my children—and was neither permitted to clasp them to my heart, or to speak to them! You was leaning on the arm of your sister, and your countenances spoke the sprightly happy innocence of youth.—Alas! you knew not the wretched fate of your mother, who then gazed upon you! Although you were at too great a distance for my weak voice to reach you, with the utmost difficulty I avoided throwing open the window, and endeavouring to discover myself. The remembrance of my solemn promise, and that the life of Vincent would be sacrificed by the act, alone restrained me. I struggled for some time with emotions too powerful for my nature, and fainted away.

'On recovering I called wildly for my children, and went to the window—but you were gone! Not all the entreaties of Vincent could for some time remove me from this station, where I waited in the fond expectation of seeing you again—but you appeared no more! At last I returned to my cell in an ecstasy of grief which I tremble even to remember.

'This interview, so eagerly sought, and so reluctantly granted, proved a source of new misery—instead of calming, it agitated my mind with a restless, wild despair, which bore away my strongest powers of resistance. I raved incessantly of my children, and incessantly solicited to see them again—Vincent, however, had found but too much cause to repent of his first indulgence, to grant me a second.

'About this time a circumstance occurred which promised me a speedy release from calamity. About a week elapsed, and Vincent did not appear. My little stock of provision was exhausted, and I had been two days without food, when I again heard the doors that led to my prison creek on their hinges. An unknown step approached, and in a few minutes the marquis entered my cell! My blood was chilled at the sight, and I closed my eyes as I hoped for the last time. The sound of his voice recalled me. His countenance was dark and sullen, and I perceived that he trembled. He informed me that Vincent was no more, and that henceforward his office he should take upon himself. I forbore to reproach—where reproach would only have produced new sufferings, and withheld supplication where it would have exasperated conscience and inflamed revenge. My knowledge of the marquis's second marriage I concealed.

'He usually attended me when night might best conceal his visits; though these were irregular in their return. Lately, from what motive I cannot guess, he has ceased his nocturnal visits, and comes only in the day.

'Once when midnight increased the darkness of my prison, and seemed to render silence even more awful, touched by the sacred horrors of the hour, I poured forth my distress in loud lamentation. Oh! never can I forget what I felt, when I heard a distant voice answered to my moan! A wild surprize, which was strangely mingled with hope, seized me, and in my first emotion I should have answered the call, had not a recollection crossed me, which destroyed at once every half-raised sensation of joy. I remembered the dreadful vengeance which the marquis had sworn to execute upon me, if I ever, by any means, endeavoured to make known the place of my concealment; and though life had long been a burden to me, I dared not to incur the certainty of being murdered. I also well knew that no person who might discover my situation could effect my enlargement, for I had no relations to deliver me by force; and the marquis, you know, has not only power to imprison, but also the right of life and death in his own domains; I, therefore, forbore to answer the call, though I could not entirely repress my lamentation. I long perplexed myself with endeavouring to account for this strange circumstance, and am to this moment ignorant of its cause.'

Julia remembering that Ferdinand had been confined in a dungeon of the castle, it instantly occurred to her that his prison, and that of the marchioness, were not far distant; and she scrupled not to believe that it was his voice which her mother had heard. She was right in this belief, and it was indeed the marchioness whose groans had formerly caused Ferdinand so much alarm, both in the marble hall of the south buildings, and in his dungeon.

When Julia communicated her opinion, and the marchioness believed that she had heard the voice of her son—her emotion was extreme, and it was some time before she could resume her narration.

'A short time since,' continued the marchioness, 'the marquis brought me a fortnight's provision, and told me that I should probably see him no more till the expiration of that term. His absence at this period you have explained in your account of the transactions at the abbey of St Augustin. How can I ever sufficiently acknowledge the obligations I owe to my dear and invaluable friend Madame de Menon! Oh! that it might be permitted me to testify my gratitude.'

Julia attended to the narrative of her mother in silent astonishment, and gave all the sympathy which sorrow could demand. 'Surely,' cried she, 'the providence on whom you have so firmly relied, and whose inflictions you have supported with a fortitude so noble, has conducted me through a labyrinth of misfortunes to this spot, for the purpose of delivering you! Oh! let us hasten to fly this horrid abode—let us seek to escape through the cavern by which I entered.'

She paused in earnest expectation awaiting a reply. 'Whither can I fly?' said the marchioness, deeply sighing. This question, spoken with the emphasis of despair, affected Julia to tears, and she was for a while silent.

'The marquis,' resumed Julia, 'would not know where to seek you, or if he found you beyond his own domains, would fear to claim you. A convent may afford for the present a safe asylum; and whatever shall happen, surely no fate you may hereafter encounter can be more dreadful than the one you now experience.'

The marchioness assented to the truth of this, yet her broken spirits, the effect of long sorrow and confinement, made her hesitate how to act; and there was a kind of placid despair in her look, which too faithfully depicted her feelings. It was obvious to Julia that the cavern she had passed wound beneath the range of mountains on whose opposite side stood the castle of Mazzini. The hills thus rising formed a screen which must entirely conceal their emergence from the mouth of the cave, and their flight, from those in the castle. She represented these circumstances to her mother, and urged them so forcibly that the lethargy of despair yielded to hope, and the marchioness committed herself to the conduct of her daughter.

'Oh! let me lead you to light and life!' cried Julia with warm enthusiasm. 'Surely heaven can bless me with no greater good than by making me the deliverer of my mother.' They both knelt down; and the marchioness, with that affecting eloquence which true piety inspires, and with that confidence which had supported her through so many miseries, committed herself to the protection of God, and implored his favor on their attempt.

They arose, but as they conversed farther on their plan, Julia recollected that she was destitute of money—the banditti having robbed her of all! The sudden shock produced by this remembrance almost subdued her spirits; never till this moment had she understood the value of money. But she commanded her feelings, and resolved to conceal this circumstance from the marchioness, preferring the chance of any evil they might encounter from without, to the certain misery of this terrible imprisonment.

Having taken what provision the marquis had brought, they quitted the cell, and entered upon the dark passage, along which they passed with cautious steps. Julia came first to the door of the cavern, but who can paint her distress when she found it was fastened! All her efforts to open it were ineffectual.—The door which had closed after her, was held by a spring lock, and could be opened on this side only with a key. When she understood this circumstance, the marchioness, with a placid resignation which seemed to exalt her above humanity, addressed herself again to heaven, and turned back to her cell. Here Julia indulged without reserve, and without scruple, the excess of her grief. The marchioness wept over her. 'Not for myself,' said she, 'do I grieve. I have too long been inured to misfortune to sink under its pressure. This disappointment is intrinsically, perhaps, little—for I had no certain refuge from calamity—and had it even been otherwise, a few years only of suffering would have been spared me. It is for you, Julia, who so much lament my fate; and who in being thus delivered to the power of your father, are sacrificed to the Duke de Luovo—that my heart swells.'

Julia could make no reply, but by pressing to her lips the hand which was held forth to her, she saw all the wretchedness of her situation; and her fearful uncertainty concerning Hippolitus and Ferdinand, formed no inferior part of her affliction.

'If,' resumed the marchioness, 'you prefer imprisonment with your mother, to a marriage with the duke, you may still secret yourself in the passage we have just quitted, and partake of the provision which is brought me.'

'O! talk not, madam, of a marriage with the duke,' said Julia; 'surely any fate is preferable to that. But when I consider that in remaining here, I am condemned only to the sufferings which my mother has so long endured, and that this confinement will enable me to soften, by tender sympathy, the asperity of her misfortunes, I ought to submit to my present situation with complacency, even did a marriage with the duke appear less hateful to me.'

'Excellent girl!' exclaimed the marchioness, clasping Julia to her bosom; 'the sufferings you lament are almost repaid by this proof of your goodness and affection! Alas! that I should have been so long deprived of such a daughter!'

Julia now endeavoured to imitate the fortitude of her mother, and tenderly concealed her anxiety for Ferdinand and Hippolitus, the idea of whom incessantly haunted her imagination. When the marquis brought food to the cell, she retired to the avenue leading to the cavern, and escaped discovery.

CHAPTER XV

The marquis, meanwhile, whose indefatigable search after Julia failed of success, was successively the slave of alternate passions, and he poured forth the spleen of disappointment on his unhappy domestics.

The marchioness, who may now more properly be called Maria de Vellorno, inflamed, by artful insinuations, the passions already irritated, and heightened with cruel triumph his resentment towards Julia and Madame de Menon. She represented, what his feelings too acutely acknowledged,—that by the obstinate disobedience of the first, and the machinations of the last, a priest had been enabled to arrest his authority as a father—to insult the sacred honor of his nobility—and to overturn at once his proudest schemes of power and ambition. She declared it her opinion, that the *Abate* was acquainted with the place of Julia's present retreat, and upbraided the marquis with want of spirit in thus submitting to be outwitted by a priest, and forbearing an appeal to the pope, whose authority would compel the *Abate* to restore Julia.

This reproach stung the very soul of the marquis; he felt all its force, and was at the same time conscious of his inability to obviate it. The effect of his crimes now fell in severe punishment upon his own head. The threatened secret, which was no other than the imprisonment of the marchioness, arrested his arm of vengeance, and compelled him to submit to insult and disappointment. But the reproach of Maria sunk deep in his mind; it fomented his pride into redoubled fury, and he now repelled with disdain the idea of submission.

He revolved the means which might effect his purpose—he saw but one—this was the death of the marchioness.

The commission of one crime often requires the perpetration of another. When once we enter on the ladyrinth of vice, we can seldom return, but are led on, through correspondent mazes, to destruction. To obviate the effect of his first crime, it was now necessary the marquis should commit a second, and conceal the *imprisonment* of the marchioness by her *murder*. Himself the only living witness of her existence, when she was removed, the allegations of the *Padre Abate* would by this means be unsupported by any proof, and he might then boldly appeal to the pope for the restoration of his child.

He mused upon this scheme, and the more he accustomed his mind to contemplate it, the less scrupulous he became. The crime from which he would formerly have shrunk, he now surveyed with a steady eye. The fury of his passions, unaccustomed to resistance, uniting with the force of what ambition termed necessity—urged him to the deed, and he determined upon the murder of his wife. The means of effecting his purpose were easy and various; but as he was not yet so entirely hardened as to be able to view her dying pangs, and embrue his own hands in her blood, he chose to dispatch her by means of poison, which he resolved to mingle in her food.

But a new affliction was preparing for the marquis, which attacked him where he was most vulnerable; and the veil, which had so long overshadowed his reason, was now to be removed. He was informed by Baptista of the infidelity of Maria de Vellorno. In the first emotion of passion, he spurned the informer from his presence, and disdained to believe the circumstance. A little reflection changed the object of his resentment; he recalled the servant, whose faithfulness he had no reason to distrust, and condescended to interrogate him on the subject of his misfortune.

He learned that an intimacy had for some time subsisted between Maria and the Cavalier de Vincini; and that the assignation was usually held at the pavilion on the sea-shore, in an evening. Baptista farther declared, that if the marquis desired a confirmation of his words, he might obtain it by visiting this spot at the hour mentioned.

This information lighted up the wildest passions of his nature; his former sufferings faded away before the stronger influence of the present misfortune, and it seemed as if he had never tasted misery till now. To suspect the wife upon whom he doated with romantic fondness, on whom he had centered all his firmest hopes of happiness, and for whose sake he had committed the crime which embittered even his present moment, and which would involve him in still deeper guilt—to find *her* ungrateful to his love, and a traitoress to his honor—produced a misery more poignant than any his imagination had conceived. He was torn by contending passions, and opposite resolutions:—now he resolved to expiate her guilt with her blood—and now he melted in all the softness of love. Vengeance and honor bade him strike to the heart which had betrayed him, and urged him instantly to the deed—when the idea of her beauty—her winning smiles—her fond endearments stole upon his fancy, and subdued his heart; he almost wept to the idea of injuring her, and in spight of appearances, pronounced her faithful. The succeeding moment plunged him again into uncertainty; his tortures acquired new vigour from cessation, and again he experienced all the phrenzy of despair. He was now resolved to end his doubts by repairing to the pavilion; but again his heart wavered in irresolution how to proceed should his fears be confirmed. In the mean time he determined to watch the behaviour of Maria with severe vigilance. They met at dinner, and he observed her closely, but discovered not the smallest impropriety in her conduct. Her smiles and her beauty again wound their fascinations round his heart, and in the excess of their influence he was almost tempted to repair the injury which his late suspicions had done her, by confessing them at her feet. The appearance of the Cavalier de Vincini, however, renewed his suspicions; his heart throbbed wildly, and with restless impatience he watched the return of evening, which would remove his suspence. Night at length came. He repaired to the pavilion, and secreted himself among the trees that embowered it. Many minutes had not passed, when he heard a sound of low whispering voices steal from among the trees, and footsteps approaching down the alley. He stood almost petrified with terrible sensations, and presently heard some persons enter the pavilion. The marquis now emerged from his hiding-place; a faint light issued from the building. He stole to the window, and beheld within, Maria and the Cavalier de Vincini. Fired at the sight, he drew his sword, and sprang forward. The sound of his step alarmed the cavalier, who, on perceiving the marquis, rushed by him from the pavilion, and disappeared among the woods. The marquis pursued, but could not overtake him; and he returned to the pavilion with an intention of plunging his sword in the heart of Maria, when he discovered her senseless on the ground. Pity now suspended his vengeance; he paused in agonizing gaze upon her, and returned his sword into the scabbard. She revived, but on observing the marquis, screamed and relapsed. He hastened to the castle for assistance, inventing, to conceal his disgrace, some pretence for her sudden illness, and she was conveyed to her chamber. The marquis was now not suffered to doubt her infidelity, but the passion which her conduct abused, her faithlessness could not subdue; he still doated with absurd fondness, and even regretted that uncertainty could no longer flatter him with hope. It seemed as if his desire of her affection increased with his knowledge of the loss of it; and the very circumstance which should have roused his aversion, by a strange perversity of disposition, appeared to heighten his passion, and to make him think it impossible he could exist without her. When the first energy of his indignation was subsided, he determined, therefore, to reprove and to punish, but hereafter to restore her to favor. In this resolution he went to her apartment, and reprehended her falsehood in terms of just indignation. Maria de Vellorno, in whom the late discovery had roused resentment, instead of awakening penitence; and exasperated pride without exciting shame—heard the upbraidings of the marquis with impatience, and replied to them with acrimonious violence. She boldly asserted her innocence, and instantly invented a story, the plausibility of which might have deceived a man who had evidence less certain than his senses to contradict it. She behaved with a haughtiness the most insolent; and when she perceived that the marquis was no longer to be misled, and that her violence failed to accomplish its purpose, she had recourse to tears and supplications. But the artifice was too glaring to succeed; and the marquis quitted her apartment in an agony of resentment. His former fascinations, however, quickly returned, and again held him in suspension between love and vengeance. That the vehemence of his passion, however, might not want an object, he ordered Baptista to discover the retreat of the Cavalier de Vincini on whom he meant to revenge his lost honor. Shame forbade him to employ others in the search. This discovery suspended for a while the operations of the fatal scheme, which had before employed the thoughts of the marquis; but it had only suspended—not destroyed them. The late occurrence had annihilated his domestic happiness; but his pride now rose to rescue him from despair, and he centered all his future hopes upon ambition. In a moment of cool reflection, he considered that he had derived neither happiness or content from the pursuit of dissipated pleasures, to which he had hitherto sacrificed every opposing consideration. He resolved, therefore, to abandon the gay schemes of dissipation which had formerly allured him, and dedicate himself entirely to ambition, in the pursuits and delights of which he hoped to bury all his cares. He therefore became more earnest than ever for the marriage of Julia with the Duke de Luovo, through whose means he designed to involve himself in the interests of the state, and determined to recover her at whatever consequence. He resolved, without further delay, to appeal to the pope; but to do this with safety it was necessary that the marchioness should die; and he returned therefore to the consideration and execution of his diabolical purpose. He mingled a poisonous drug with the food he designed for her; and when night arrived, carried it to the cell. As he unlocked the door, his hand trembled; and when he presented the food, and looked consciously for the last time upon the marchioness, who received it with humble thankfulness, his heart almost relented. His countenance, over which was diffused the paleness of death, expressed the secret movements of his soul, and he gazed upon her with eyes of stiffened horror. Alarmed by his looks, she fell upon her knees to supplicate his pity.

Her attitude recalled his bewildered senses; and endeavouring to assume a tranquil aspect, he bade her rise, and instantly quitted the cell, fearful of the instability of his purpose. His mind was not yet sufficiently hardened by guilt to repel the arrows of conscience, and his imagination responded to her power. As he passed through the long dreary passages from the prison, solemn and mysterious sounds seemed to speak in every murmur of the blast which crept along their windings, and he often started and looked back.

He reached his chamber, and having shut the door, surveyed the room in fearful examination. Ideal forms flitted before his fancy, and for the first time in his life he feared to be alone. Shame only withheld him from calling Baptista. The gloom of the hour, and the death-like silence that prevailed, assisted the horrors of his imagination. He half repented of the deed, yet deemed it now too late to obviate it; and he threw himself on his bed in terrible emotion. His head grew dizzy, and a sudden faintness overcame him; he hesitated, and at length arose to ring for assistance, but found himself unable to stand.

In a few moments he was somewhat revived, and rang his bell; but before any person appeared, he was seized with terrible pains, and staggering to his bed, sunk senseless upon it. Here Baptista, who was the first person that entered his room, found him struggling seemingly in the agonies of death. The whole castle was immediately roused, and the confusion may be more easily imagined than described. Emilia, amid the general alarm, came to her father's room, but the sight of him overcame her, and she was carried from his presence. By the help of proper applications the marquis recovered his senses and his pains had a short cessation.

'I am dying,' said he, in a faultering accent; 'send instantly for the marchioness and my son.'

Ferdinand, in escaping from the hands of the banditti, it was now seen, had fallen into the power of his father. He had been since confined in an apartment of the castle, and was now liberated to obey the summons. The countenance of the marquis exhibited a ghastly image; Ferdinand, when he drew near the bed, suddenly shrunk back, overcome with horror. The marquis now beckoned his attendants to quit the room, and they were preparing to obey, when a violent noise was heard from without; almost in the same instant the door of the apartment was thrown open, and the servant, who had been sent for the marchioness, rushed in. His look alone declared the horror of his mind, for words he had none to utter. He stared wildly, and pointed to the gallery he had quitted. Ferdinand, seized with new terror, rushed the way he pointed to the apartment of the marchioness. A spectacle of horror presented itself. Maria lay on a couch lifeless, and bathed in blood. A poignard, the instrument of her destruction, was on the floor; and it appeared from a letter which was found on the couch beside her, that she had died by her own hand. The paper contained these words:

TO THE MARQUIS DE MAZZINI

Your words have stabbed my heart. No power on earth could restore the peace you have destroyed. I will escape from my torture. When you read this, I shall be no more. But the triumph shall no longer be yours—the draught you have drank was given by the hand of the injured

MARIA DE MAZZINI.

It now appeared that the marquis was poisoned by the vengeance of the woman to whom he had resigned his conscience. The consternation and distress of Ferdinand cannot easily be conceived: he hastened back to his father's chamber, but determined to conceal the dreadful catastrophe of Maria de Vellorno. This precaution, however, was useless; for the servants, in the consternation of terror, had revealed it, and the marquis had fainted.

Returning pains recalled his senses, and the agonies he suffered were too shocking for the beholders. Medical endeavours were applied, but the poison was too powerful for antidote. The marquis's pains at length subsided; the poison had exhausted most of its rage, and he became tolerably easy. He waved his hand for the attendants to leave the room; and beckoning to Ferdinand, whose senses were almost stunned by this accumulation of horror, bade him sit down beside him. 'The hand of death is now upon me,' said he; 'I would employ these last moments in revealing a deed, which is more dreadful to me than all the bodily agonies I suffer. It will be some relief to me to discover it.' Ferdinand grasped the hand of the marquis in speechless terror. 'The retribution of heaven is upon me,' resumed the marquis. 'My punishment is the immediate consequence of my guilt. Heaven has made that woman the instrument of its justice, whom I made the instrument of my crimes;——that woman, for whose sake I forgot conscience, and braved vice—for whom I imprisoned an innocent wife, and afterwards murdered her.'

At these words every nerve of Ferdinand thrilled; he let go the marquis's hand and started back. 'Look not so fiercely on me,' said the marquis, in a hollow voice; 'your eyes strike death to my soul; my conscience needs not this additional pang.'—'My mother!' exclaimed Ferdinand—'my mother! Speak, tell me.'—'I have no breath,' said the marquis. 'Oh!—Take these keys—the south tower—the trapdoor.—'Tis possible—Oh!—'

The marquis made a sudden spring upwards, and fell lifeless on the bed; the attendants were called in, but he was gone for ever. His last words struck with the force of lightning upon the mind of Ferdinand; they seemed to say that his mother might yet exist. He took the keys, and ordering some of the servants to follow, hastened to the southern building; he proceeded to the tower, and the trapdoor beneath the stair-case was lifted. They all descended into a dark passage, which conducted them through several intricacies to the door of the cell. Ferdinand, in trembling horrible expectation, applied the key; the door opened, and he entered; but what was his surprize when he found no person in the cell! He concluded that he had mistaken the place, and quitted it for further search; but having followed the windings of the passage, by which he entered, without discovering any other door, he returned to a more exact examination of the cell. He now observed the door, which led to the cavern, and he entered upon the avenue, but no person was found there and no voice answered to his call. Having reached the door of the cavern, which was fastened, he returned lost in grief, and meditating upon the last words of the marquis. He now thought that he had mistaken their import, and that the words ''tis possible,' were not meant to apply to the life of the marchioness, he concluded, that the murder had been committed at a distant period; and he resolved, therefore, to have the ground of the cell dug up, and the remains of his mother sought for.

When the first violence of the emotions excited by the late scenes was subsided, he enquired concerning Maria de Vellorno.

It appeared that on the day preceding this horrid transaction, the marquis had passed some hours in her apartment; that they were heard in loud dispute;—that the passion of the marquis grew high;—that he upbraided her with her past conduct, and threatened her with a formal separation. When the marquis quitted her, she was heard walking quick through the room, in a passion of tears; she often suddenly stopped in vehement but incoherent exclamation; and at last threw herself on the floor, and was for some time entirely still. Here her woman found her, upon whose entrance she arose hastily, and reproved her for appearing uncalled. After this she remained silent and sullen.

She descended to supper, where the marquis met her alone at table. Little was said during the repast, at the conclusion of which the servants were dismissed; and it was believed that during the interval between supper, and the hour of repose, Maria de Vellorno contrived to mingle poison with the wine of the marquis. How she had procured this poison was never discovered.

She retired early to her chamber; and her woman observing that she appeared much agitated, inquired if she was ill? To this she returned a short answer in the negative, and her woman was soon afterwards dismissed. But she had hardly shut the door of the room when she heard her lady's voice recalling her. She returned, and received some trifling order, and observed that Maria looked uncommonly pale; there was besides a wildness in her eyes which frightened her, but she did not dare to ask any questions. She again quitted the room, and had only reached the extremity of the gallery when her mistress's bell rang. She hastened back, Maria enquired if the marquis was gone to bed, and if all was quiet? Being answered in the affirmative, she replied, 'This is a still hour and a dark one!—Good night!'

Her woman having once more left the room, stopped at the door to listen, but all within remaining silent, she retired to rest.

It is probable that Maria perpetrated the fatal act soon after the dismission of her woman; for when she was found, two hours afterwards, she appeared to have been dead for some time. On examination a wound was discovered on her left side, which had doubtless penetrated to the heart, from the suddenness of her death, and from the effusion of blood which had followed.

These terrible events so deeply affected Emilia that she was confined to her bed by a dangerous illness. Ferdinand struggled against the shock with manly fortitude. But amid all the tumult of the present scenes, his uncertainty concerning Julia, whom he had left in the hands of banditti, and whom he had been withheld from seeking or rescuing, formed, perhaps, the most affecting part of his distress.

The late Marquis de Mazzini, and Maria de Vellorno, were interred with the honor due to their rank in the church of the convent of St Nicolo. Their lives exhibited a boundless indulgence of violent and luxurious passions, and their deaths marked the consequences of such indulgence, and held forth to mankind a singular instance of divine vengeance.

CHAPTER XVI

In turning up the ground of the cell, it was discovered that it communicated with the dungeon in which Ferdinand had been confined, and where he had heard those groans which had occasioned him so much terror.

The story which the marquis formerly related to his son, concerning the southern buildings, it was now evident was fabricated for the purpose of concealing the imprisonment of the marchioness. In the choice of his subject, he certainly discovered some art; for the circumstance related was calculated, by impressing terror, to prevent farther enquiry into the recesses of these buildings. It served, also, to explain, by supernatural evidence, the cause of those sounds, and of that appearance which had been there observed, but which were, in reality, occasioned only by the marquis.

The event of the examination in the cell threw Ferdinand into new perplexity. The marquis had confessed that he poisoned his wife—yet her remains were not to be found; and the place which he signified to be that of her confinement, bore no vestige of her having been there. There appeared no way by which she could have escaped from her prison; for both the door which opened upon the cell, and that which terminated the avenue beyond, were fastened when tried by Ferdinand.

But the young marquis had no time for useless speculation—serious duties called upon him. He believed that Julia was still in the power of banditti; and, on the conclusion of his father's funeral, he set forward himself to Palermo, to give information of the abode of the robbers, and to repair with the officers of justice, accompanied by a party of his own people, to the rescue of his sister. On his arrival at Palermo he was informed, that a banditti, whose retreat had been among the ruins of a monastery, situated in the forest of Marentino, was already discovered; that their abode had been searched, and themselves secured for examples of public justice—but that no captive lady had been found amongst them. This latter intelligence excited in Ferdinand a very serious distress, and he was wholly unable to conjecture her fate. He obtained leave, however, to interrogate those of the robbers, who were imprisoned at Palermo, but could draw from them no satisfactory or certain information.

At length he quitted Palermo for the forest of Marentino, thinking it possible that Julia might be heard of in its neighbourhood. He travelled on in melancholy and dejection, and evening overtook him long before he reached the place of his destination. The night came on heavily in clouds, and a violent storm of wind and rain arose. The road lay through a wild and rocky country, and Ferdinand could obtain no shelter. His attendants offered him their cloaks, but he refused to expose a servant to the hardship he would not himself endure. He travelled for some miles in a heavy rain; and the wind, which howled mournfully among the rocks, and whose solemn pauses were filled by the distant roarings of the sea, heightened the desolation of the scene. At length he discerned, amid the darkness from afar, a red light waving in the wind: it varied with the blast, but never totally disappeared. He pushed his horse into a gallop, and made towards it.

The flame continued to direct his course; and on a nearer approach, he perceived, by the red reflection of its fires, streaming a long radiance upon the waters beneath—a lighthouse situated upon a point of rock which overhung the sea. He knocked for admittance, and the door was opened by an old man, who bade him welcome.

Within appeared a cheerful blazing fire, round which were seated several persons, who seemed like himself to have sought shelter from the tempest of the night. The sight of the fire cheered him, and he advanced towards it, when a sudden scream seized his attention; the company rose up in confusion, and in the same instant he discovered Julia and Hippolitus. The joy of that moment is not to be described, but his attention was quickly called off from his own situation to that of a lady, who during the general transport had fainted. His sensations on learning she was his mother cannot be described.

She revived. 'My son!' said she, in a languid voice, as she pressed him to her heart. 'Great God, I am recompensed! Surely this moment may repay a life of misery!' He could only receive her caresses in silence; but the sudden tears which started in his eyes spoke a language too expressive to be misunderstood.

When the first emotion of the scene was passed, Julia enquired by what means Ferdinand had come to this spot. He answered her generally, and avoided for the present entering upon the affecting subject of the late events at the castle of Mazzini. Julia related the history of her adventures since she parted with her brother. In her narration, it appeared that Hippolitus, who was taken by the Duke de Luovo at the mouth of the cave, had afterwards escaped, and returned to the cavern in search of Julia. The low recess in the rock, through which Julia had passed, he perceived by the light of his flambeau. He penetrated to the cavern beyond, and from thence to the prison of the marchioness. No colour of language can paint the scene which followed; it is sufficient to say that the whole party agreed to quit the cell at the return of night. But this being a night on which it was known the marquis would visit the prison, they agreed to defer their departure till after his appearance, and thus elude the danger to be expected from an early discovery of the escape of the marchioness.

At the sound of footsteps above, Hippolitus and Julia had secreted themselves in the avenue; and immediately on the marquis's departure they all repaired to the cavern, leaving, in the hurry of their flight, untouched the poisonous food he had brought. Having escaped from thence they proceeded to a neighbouring village, where horses were procured to carry them towards Palermo. Here, after a tedious journey, they arrived, in the design of embarking for Italy. Contrary winds had detained them till the day on which Ferdinand left that city, when, apprehensive and weary of delay, they hired a small vessel, and determined to brave the winds. They had soon reason to repent their temerity; for the vessel had not been long at sea when the storm arose, which threw them back upon the shores of Sicily, and brought them to the lighthouse, where they were discovered by Ferdinand.

On the following morning Ferdinand returned with his friends to Palermo, where he first disclosed the late fatal events of the castle. They now settled their future plans; and Ferdinand hastened to the castle of Mazzini to fetch Emilia, and to give orders for the removal of his household to his palace at Naples, where he designed to fix his future residence. The distress of Emilia, whom he found recovered from her indisposition, yielded to joy and wonder, when she heard of the existence of her mother, and the safety of her sister. She departed with Ferdinand for Palermo, where her friends awaited her, and where the joy of the meeting was considerably heightened by the appearance of Madame de Menon, for whom the marchioness had dispatched a messenger to St Augustin's. Madame had quitted the abbey for another convent, to which, however, the messenger was directed. This happy party now embarked for Naples.

From this period the castle of Mazzini, which had been the theatre of a dreadful catastrophe; and whose scenes would have revived in the minds of the chief personages connected with it, painful and shocking reflections—was abandoned.

On their arrival at Naples, Ferdinand presented to the king a clear and satisfactory account of the late events at the castle, in consequence of which the marchioness was confirmed in her rank, and Ferdinand was received as the sixth Marquis de Mazzini.

The marchioness, thus restored to the world, and to happiness, resided with her children in the palace at Naples, where, after time had somewhat mellowed the remembrance of the late calamity, the nuptials of Hippolitus and Julia were celebrated. The recollection of the difficulties they had encountered, and of the distress they had endured for each other, now served only to heighten by contrast the happiness of the present period.

Ferdinand soon after accepted a command in the Neapolitan army; and amidst the many heroes of that warlike and turbulent age, distinguished himself for his valour and ability. The occupations of war engaged his mind, while his heart was solicitous in promoting the happiness of his family.

Madame de Menon, whose generous attachment to the marchioness had been fully proved, found in the restoration of her friend a living witness of her marriage, and thus recovered those estates which had been unjustly withheld from her. But the marchioness and her family, grateful to her friendship, and attached to her virtues, prevailed upon her to spend the remainder of her life at the palace of Mazzini.

Emilia, wholly attached to her family, continued to reside with the marchioness, who saw her race renewed in the children of Hippolitus and Julia. Thus surrounded by her children and friends, and engaged in forming the minds of the infant generation, she seemed to forget that she had ever been otherwise than happy.

* * * * *

Here the manuscript annals conclude. In reviewing this story, we perceive a singular and striking instance of moral retribution. We learn, also, that those who do only THAT WHICH IS RIGHT, endure nothing in misfortune but a trial of their virtue, and from trials well endured derive the surest claim to the protection of heaven.

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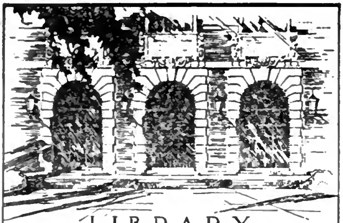

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HUNGER

Fyllis Armstrong
"George Egerton."

KNUT HAMSUN

HUNGER

TRANSLATED FROM THE NORWEGIAN

BY

GEORGE EGERTON

LONDON
LEONARD SMITHERS AND CO
5 OLD BOND STREET W
1899

839.83
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PREFATORY NOTE

TEN years ago a little book on "Intellectual Life in the America of To-day" appeared in Norway. The intense individuality of its (it must be admitted often wrong-headed) point of view aroused interest and curiosity as to its author. It was followed shortly by his first novel "Sult" ("Hunger"). It made a great sensation; was as the flash of some strange meteor, holding perhaps a menace to social life, across the firmament. It met with much adverse criticism; indeed, it demanded some courage in those days to declare oneself an admirer of "that dreadful Hamsun!"

There was something mysterious, challenging—something alike magnetic and repellent, in the man's personality, as in his work; something that invoked opposition. He was an unknown quantity in the society and literature of his country. "Hunger" was followed by a course of lectures, in which he beheaded the literary idols of the day (not a few were amongst his audience),—executed them with an audacious, genial impudence, an irritating self-assurance, that made his addresses the sensation of the year. One book after the other appeared — "Mysterier" (Mysteries), "Pan," "Redaktör Lynge," "Nyjord" (Fresh Soil), "Siesta" (short stories),—and the critics scourged him alternately as *poseur* and *blageur*, poet and genius, creative artist and impudent imitator. Hamsun went his own way, with a genial laugh at his critics, as a schoolboy caught at some trick. This son of the people, this self-taught man, whose art was congenital —a growth of his very innermost being, not a graft from outside — had a superb contempt for everything that was not of aesthetic value in his own eyes. Of one thing he convinced them—that, as stylist, he was second to none in his own country. Consciously or unconsciously, every young writer in Norway owes Hamsun a debt. He introduced an absolutely new note into his native language, established a new scale of word values, pointed to fresh uses for the older one. The effect was startling, as one of his critics aptly said: "Hamsun had brought something 'American' into the language—a lightning smartness, an audacious trick of phrase, a troll-like humour hitherto unknown." In a word, he leavened the heaviness in some marvellous way; it was as if the spirit of Mark Twain had suddenly obsessed the sober discourse of a meeting of serious elders.

Words were gold in his hands, to be tossed about rough as unwashed nuggets, or beaten into a delicate, fantastic filigree; language became a plastic material, capable of expressing the most elusive half-thoughts, the most unrecorded emotions. No translation can give any idea of the magic of his word-treatment; it has to be sacrificed to a bald rendering of the spirit of the original.

Each of his books was attention-compelling, baffling the critics to define his exact place as a writer. Perhaps Hamsun himself was only seeking; as yet a sort of literary freebooter, fighting a place for his individual art through the ranks of conservative prejudice. There was trace of struggle in much of his work; his method was peculiar, and his personality jumped up and down through all his books in many disguises. It tantalised whilst it compelled to laughter, whether as brilliant jester who held all things up to ridicule, or fantastic juggler tossing up the old-world values as if they were jingling balls of no particular worth ; who could pause suddenly, casting aside his motley, to scourge his listeners with a sermon on the "superstitions" of the day, with a truly sardonic humour. No one, no thing escaped him ; he pilloried Gladstone as gaily as Carl Marx ; "Novelist Maupassant" as "Missionary Tolstoy." Sometimes one had to shut the book, with flaming cheeks, as one was met by an episode so coarse, a jest so unseemly, a blasphemy so surprising as only a wanton irresponsible peasant lad could tell it ; but one opened it again to discover an exquisite lyrical word-painting of some mood in nature or emotion in man, that made one's heart warm and one's eyes wet.

Hamsun has proved himself a master at probing into the unexplored crannies in the human soul, the mysterious territory of uncontrollable, half-conscious impulses. He has no consideration for the weak places in humanity ; he is merciless in his exposure of dark places of all that borders on the abnormal, the insane. It takes strong will and sound intellect, and an iron tenacity of purpose to psychologise in Hamsun's manner. Then he is not afraid, and gives rein to every mood. To quote Herr Gerhard Gran—“Knut Hamsun gives the impression of being a downright sportsman in this territory. He hunts through the soul with a kind of jocund eagerness; and if he finds the ‘spraint’ of a troll, he sets after it with the halloo of a hunter. They are precious finds to him, these seemingly irresponsible divagations off the beaten track. And it must be conceded to Hamsun that he is an indefatigable hunter. When he is in full cry he does not quit the scent.”

This year he has completed his fine Trilogy, composed of three distinct plays, dealing with the life and development of one man: “On the Eve of Fortune” (“Ved Rigets Port”), “The Game of Life” (“Livet's Spil”) “Sunset,” (“Aftenrödet”); besides an exquisite love-story, in which his art is at its finest, called “Victoria.” One lays these books down, and says: “Hamsun has served his apprenticeship; he has come into his own; and his own is a distinguished place in the estate of letters.”

It must be remembered that “Hunger” was his first book, and that the style of the original is necessarily sacrificed. None the less it remains a shriek of hunger in all its moods, a psycho-pathological study of the hunger of soul and body, the "art of hungering with beauty." Hamsun is above all *genie-mâle*, and for that one cannot be sufficiently grateful.

GEORGE EGERTON.

HUNGER

PART I

IT was during the time I wandered about and starved in Christiania: Christiania, this singular city, from which no man departs without carrying away the traces of his sojourn there.

. . . . .

I was lying awake in my attic and I heard a clock below strike six. It was already broad daylight, and people had begun to go up and down the stairs. By the door where the wall of the room was papered with old numbers of the *Morgenbladet*, I could distinguish clearly a notice from the Director of Lighthouses, and a little to the left of that an inflated advertisement of Fabian Olsens' new-baked bread.

The instant I opened my eyes I began, from sheer force of habit, to think if I had anything to rejoice over that day. I had been somewhat hard-up lately, and one after the other of my belongings had been taken to my "Uncle." I had grown nervous and irritable. A few times I had kept my bed for the day with vertigo. Now and then, when luck had favoured me, I had managed to get five shillings for a feuilleton from some newspaper or other.

It grew lighter and lighter, and I took to reading the advertisements near the door. I could even make out the grinning lean letters of "winding-sheets to be had at Miss Andersens" on the right of it. That occupied me for a long while. I heard the clock below strike eight as I got up and put on my clothes.

I opened the window and looked out. From where I was standing I had a view of a clothes-line and an open field. Farther away lay the ruins of a burnt-out smithy, which some labourers were busy clearing away. I leant with my elbows resting on the window-frame and gazed into open space. It promised to be a clear day—autumn, that tender, cool time of the year, when all things change their colour, and die, had come to us. The ever-increasing noise in the streets lured me out. The bare room, the floor of which rocked up and down with every step I took across it, seemed like a gaping sinister coffin. There was no proper fastening to the door, either, and no stove. I used to lie on my socks at night to dry them a little by the morning. The only thing I had to divert myself with was a little red rocking-chair, in which I used to sit in the evenings and doze and muse on all manner of things. When it blew hard, and the door below stood open, all kinds of eerie sounds moaned up through the floor and from out the walls, and the *Morgenbladet* near the door was rent in strips a span long.

I stood up and searched through a bundle in the corner by the bed for a bite for breakfast, but finding nothing, went back to the window.

God knows, thought I, if looking for employment will ever again avail me aught. The frequent repulses, half-promises, and curt noes, the cherished, deluded hopes, and fresh endeavours that always resulted in nothing had done my courage to death. As a last resource, I had applied for a place as debt collector, but I was too late, and, besides, I could not have found the fifty shillings demanded as security. There was always something or another in my way. I had even offered to enlist in the Fire Brigade. There we stood and waited in the vestibule, some half-hundred men, thrusting our chests out to give an idea of strength and bravery, whilst an inspector walked up and down and scanned the applicants, felt their arms, and put one question or another to them. Me, he passed by, merely shaking his head, saying I was rejected on account of my sight. I applied again without my glasses, stood there with knitted brows, and made my eyes as sharp as needles, but the man passed me by again with a smile; he had recognised me. And, worse than all, I could no longer apply for a situation in the garb of a respectable man.

How regularly and steadily things had gone down-hill with me for a long time, till, in the end, I was so curiously bared of every conceivable thing. I had not even a comb left, not even a book to read, when things grew all too sad with me. All through the summer, up in the churchyards or parks, where I used to sit and write my articles for the newspapers, I had thought out column after column on the most miscellaneous subjects. Strange ideas, quaint fancies, conceits of my restless brain; in despair I had often chosen the most remote themes, that cost me long hours of intense effort, and never were accepted. When one piece was finished I set to work at another. I was not often discouraged by the editors' "no." I used to tell myself constantly that some day

I was bound to succeed; and really occasionally when I was in luck's way, and I made a hit with something, I could get five shillings for an afternoon's work.

Once again I raised myself from the window, went over to the washing-stand, and sprinkled some water on the shiny knees of my trousers to dull them a little and make them look a trifle newer. Having done this, I pocketed paper and pencil as usual and went out. I stole very quietly down the stairs in order not to attract my landlady's attention (a few days had elapsed since my rent had fallen due, and I had no longer anything wherewith to raise it).

It was nine o'clock. The roll of vehicles and hum of voices filled the air, a mighty morning-choir mingled with the footsteps of the pedestrians and the crack of the hack-drivers' whips. The clamorous traffic everywhere exhilarated me at once, and I began to feel more and more contented. Nothing was farther from my intention than to merely take a morning walk in the open air. What had the air to do with my lungs? I was strong as a giant; could stop a dray with my shoulders. A sweet, unwonted mood, a feeling of lightsome happy-go-luckiness took possession of me. I fell to observing the people I met and who passed me, to reading the placards on the wall, noted even the impression of a glance thrown at me from a passing tram-car, let each bagatelle, each trifling incident that crossed or vanished from my path impress me.

If one only had just a little to eat on such a lightsome day! The sense of the glad morning overwhelmed me; my satisfaction became ill-regulated, and for no definite reason I began to hum joyfully.

At a butcher's stall a woman stood speculating on sausage for dinner. As I passed her she looked up at me. She had but one tooth in the front of her head. I had become so nervous and easily affected in the last few days that the woman's face made a loathsome impression upon me. The long yellow snag looked like a little finger pointing out of her gum, and her gaze was still full of sausage as she turned it upon me. I immediately lost all appetite, and a feeling of nausea came over me. When I reached the market-place I went to the fountain and drank a little. I looked up; the dial marked ten on Our Saviour's tower.

I went on through the streets, listlessly, without troubling myself about anything at all, stopped aimlessly at a corner, turned off into a side street without having any errand there. I simply let myself go, wandered about in the pleasant morning, swinging myself care-free to and fro amongst other happy human beings. The air was clear and bright, and my mind too was without a shadow.

For quite ten minutes I had had an old lame man ahead of me. He carried a bundle in one hand and exerted his whole body, using all his strength in his endeavours to get along speedily. I could hear how he panted from the exertion, and it occurred to me that I might offer to bear his bundle for him, but yet I made no effort to overtake him. Up in Graendsen I met Hans Pauli, who nodded and hurried past me. Why was he in such a hurry? I had not the slightest intention of asking him for a shilling, and, more than that, I intended at the very first opportunity to return him a blanket which I had borrowed from him some weeks before.

Just wait until I could get my foot on the ladder, I would be beholden to no man, not even for a blanket. Perhaps even this very day I might commence an article on the

"Crimes of Futurity," "Freedom of Will," or what not, at any rate, something worth reading, something for which I would at least get ten shillings . . . And at the thought of this article I felt myself fired with a desire to set to work immediately and to draw from the contents of my overflowing brain. I would find a suitable place to write in the park and not rest till I had completed my article.

But the old cripple was still making the same sprawling movements ahead of me up the street. The sight of this infirm creature constantly in front of me, commenced to irritate me—his journey seemed endless; perhaps he had made up his mind to go to exactly the same place as I had, and I must needs have him before my eyes the whole way. In my irritation it seemed to me that he slackened his pace a little at every cross street, as if waiting to see which direction I intended to take, upon which he would again swing his bundle in the air and peg away with all his might to keep ahead of me. I follow and watch this tiresome creature and get more and more exasperated with him, I am conscious that he has, little by little, destroyed my happy mood and dragged the pure beautiful morning down to the level of his own ugliness. He looks like a great sprawling reptile striving with might and main to win a place in the world and reserve the footpath for himself. When we reached the top of the hill I determined to put up with it no longer. I turned to a shop window and stopped in order to give him an opportunity of getting ahead, but when, after a lapse of some minutes, I again walked on there was the man still in front of me—he too had stood stock still,—without stopping to reflect I made three or four furious onward strides, caught him up, and slapped him on the shoulder.

He stopped directly, and we both stared at one another fixedly. "A halfpenny for milk!" he whined, twisting his head askew.

So that was how the wind blew. I felt in my pockets and said: "For milk, eh? Hum-m—money's scarce these times, and I don't really know how much you are in need of it."

"I haven't eaten a morsel since yesterday in Drammen; I haven't got a farthing, nor have I got any work yet!"

"Are you an artisan?"

"Yes; a binder."

"A what?"

"A shoe-binder; for that matter, I can make shoes too."

"Ah, that alters the case," said I, "you wait here for some minutes and I shall go and get a little money for you; just a few pence."

I hurried as fast as I could down Pyle Street, where I knew of a pawnbroker on a second-floor (one, besides, to whom I had never been before). When I got inside the hall I hastily took off my waistcoat, rolled it up, and put it under my arm; after which I went upstairs and knocked at the office door. I bowed on entering, and threw the waistcoat on the counter.

"One-and-six," said the man.

"Yes, yes, thanks," I replied. "If it weren't that it was beginning to be a little tight for me, of course I wouldn't part with it."

I got the money and the ticket, and went back. Considering all things, pawning that waistcoat was a capital notion. I would have money enough over for a plentiful breakfast, and before evening my thesis on the "Crimes of Futurity" would be ready. I began to find existence more alluring; and I hurried back to the man to get rid of him.

"There it is," said I. "I am glad you applied to me first."

The man took the money and scrutinised me closely. At what was he standing there staring? I had a feeling that he particularly examined the knees of my trousers, and his shameless effrontery bored me. Did the scoundrel imagine that I really was as poor as I looked? Had I not as good as begun to write an article for half-a-sovereign? Besides, I had no fear whatever for the future. I had many irons in the fire. What on earth business was it of an utter stranger if I chose to stand him a drink on such a lovely day? The man's look annoyed me, and I made up my mind to give him a good dressing-down before I left him. I threw back my shoulders, and said:

"My good fellow, you have adopted a most unpleasant habit of staring at a man's knees when he gives you a shilling."

He leant his head back against the wall and opened his mouth widely; something was working in that empty pate of his, and he evidently came to the conclusion that I meant to best him in some way, for he handed me back the money. I stamped on the pavement, and, swearing at him, told him to keep it. Did he imagine I was going to all that trouble for nothing? If all came to all, perhaps I owed him this shilling; I had just recollected an old debt; he was standing before an honest man, honourable to his finger-tips—in short, the money was his. Oh, no thanks were needed; it had been a pleasure to me. Good-bye!

I went on. At last I was freed from this work-ridden plague, and I could go my way in peace. I turned down Pyle Street again, and stopped before a grocer's shop. The whole window was filled with eatables, and I decided to go in and get something to take with me.

"A piece of cheese and a French roll," I said, and threw my sixpence on to the counter.

"Bread and cheese for the whole of it?" asked the woman, ironically, without looking up at me.

"For the whole sixpence? Yes," I answer, unruffled.

I took them up, bade the fat old woman good-morning, with the utmost politeness, and sped, full tilt, up Castle Hill to the park.

I found a bench to myself, and began to bite greedily into my provender. It did me good; it was a long time since I had had such a square meal, and, by degrees, I felt the same sated quiet steal over me that one feels after a good long cry. My courage rose mightily. I could no longer be satisfied with writing an article about anything so simple and straight-ahead as the "Crimes of Futurity," that any ass might arrive at, ay, simply deduct from history. I felt capable of a much greater effort than that; I was in a fitting mood to overcome difficulties, and I decided on a treatise, in three sections, on "Philosophical Cognition." This would, naturally, give me an opportunity of crushing pitiably some of Kant's sophistries . . . but, on taking out my writing materials to commence work, I discovered that I no longer owned a pencil: I had forgotten it in the pawn-office. My pencil was lying in my waistcoat pocket.

Good Lord! how everything seems to take a delight in thwarting me to-day! I swore a few times, rose from the seat, and took a couple of turns up and down the path. It was very quiet all around me; down near the Queen's arbour two nursemaids were trundling their perambulators; otherwise, there was not a creature anywhere in sight. I was in a thoroughly embittered temper; I paced up and down before my seat like a maniac. How strangely awry things seemed to go! To think that an article in three sections should be downright stranded by the simple fact of my not having a pennyworth of pencil in my pocket. Supposing I were to return to Pyle Street and ask to get my pencil back? There would be still time to get a good piece finished before the promenading public commenced to fill the parks. So much, too, depended on this treatise on "Philosophical Cognition"—mayhap many human beings' welfare, no one could say; and I told myself it might be of the greatest possible help to many young people. On second thoughts, I would not lay violent hands on Kant; I might easily avoid doing that; I would only need to make an almost imperceptible gliding over when I came to query Time and Space; but I would not answer for Renan, old Parson Renan. . . .

At all events, an article of so-and-so many columns has to be completed. For the unpaid rent, and the landlady's inquiring look in the morning when I met her on the stairs, tormented me the whole day; it rose up and confronted me again and again, even in my pleasant hours, when I had otherwise not a gloomy thought.

I must put an end to it, so I left the park hurriedly to fetch my pencil from the pawnbroker's.

As I arrived at the foot of the hill I overtook two ladies, whom I passed. As I did so, I brushed one of them accidently on the arm. I looked up; she had a full, rather pale, face. But she blushes, and becomes suddenly surprisingly lovely. I know not why she blushes; maybe at some word she hears from a passer-by, maybe only at some lurking thought of her own. Or can it be because I touched her arm? Her high, full bosom heaves violently several times, and she closes her hand tightly about the handle of her parasol. What has come to her?

I stopped, and let her pass ahead again. I could, for the moment, go no farther; the whole thing struck me as being so singular. I was in a tantalising mood, annoyed with myself on account of the pencil incident, and in a high degree disturbed by all the food I had taken on a totally empty stomach. Suddenly my thoughts, as if whimsically inspired, take a singular direction. I feel myself seized with an odd desire to make this lady afraid; to follow her, and annoy her in some way. I overtake her again, pass her by, turn quickly round, and meet her face-to-face in order to be able to observe her well. I stand and gaze into her eyes, and hit, on the spur of the moment, on a name which I have never heard before — a name with a gliding, nervous sound, Ylajali! When she is quite close to me I draw myself up and say impressively:

"You are losing your book, madam!" I could hear my heart beat audibly as I said it.

"My book?" she asks her companion, and she walks on.

My devilment waxed apace, and I followed them. At the same time, I was fully conscious that I was playing a mad prank without being able to stop myself. My disordered condition ran away with me; I was inspired with the craziest notions, which I followed blindly as they came to me. I couldn't help it, no matter how much I told myself that I was playing the fool. I made the most idiotic grimaces behind the lady's back, and coughed frantically as I passed her by. Walking on in this manner — very slowly, and always a few steps in advance—I felt her eyes on my back, and involuntarily put down my head with shame for having caused her annoyance. By degrees, a wonderful feeling stole over me of being far, far away in other places; I had a half-undefined sense that it was not I who was going along over the gravel hanging my head.

A few minutes later, they reached Pascha's book-shop. I had already stopped at the first window, and as they go by I step forward and repeat:

"You are losing your book, madam!"

"No; what book?" she asks, affrightedly. "Can you make out what book it is he is talking about?" and she comes to a stop.

I hug myself with delight at her confusion; the irresolute perplexity in her eyes positively fascinates me. Her mind cannot grasp my short, passionate address. She has no book with her; not a single page of a book, and yet she fumbles in her pockets, looks down repeatedly at her hands, turns her head and scrutinises the streets behind her, exerts her sensitive little brain to the utmost in trying to discover what book it is I am talking about. Her face changes colour, has now one, now another expression, and she is breathing quite audibly—even the very buttons on her gown seem to stare at me, like a row of frightened eyes.

"Don't bother about him!" says her companion, taking her by the arm. "He is drunk; can't you see that the man is drunk?"

Strange as I was at this instant to myself, so absolutely a prey to peculiar invisible inner influences, nothing occurred around me without my observing it. A large, brown dog sprang right across the street towards the shrubbery, and then down towards the Tivoli; he had on a very narrow collar of German silver. Farther up the street a window opened on the second floor, and a servant-maid leant out of it, with her sleeves turned up, and began to clean the panes on the outside. Nothing escaped my notice; I was clear-headed and ready-witted. Everything rushed in upon me with a gleaming distinctness, as if I were suddenly surrounded by a strong light. The ladies before me had each a blue bird's wing in their hats, and a plaid silk ribbon round their necks. It struck me that they were sisters.

They turned, stopped at Cisler's music-shop, and spoke together. I stopped also. Thereupon they both came back, went the same road as they had come, passed me again, and turned the corner of University Street and up towards St Olav's Place. I was all the time as close at their heels as I dared to be. They turned round once, and sent me a half-fearful, half-questioning look, and I saw no resentment nor any trace of a frown in it.

This forbearance with my annoyance shamed me thoroughly and made me lower my eyes. I would no longer be a trouble to them, out of sheer gratitude I would follow them with my gaze, not lose sight of them until they entered some place safely, and disappeared.

Outside No. 2, a large four-storeyed house, they turned again before going in. I leant against a lamp-post near the fountain and listened for their footsteps on the stairs. They died away on the second floor. I advanced from the lamp-post and looked up at the house. Then something odd happened. The curtains above were stirred, and a second after a window opened, a head popped out, and two singular-looking eyes dwelt on me. "Ylajali!" I muttered, half-aloud, and I felt I grew red.

Why does she not call for help, or push over one of those flower-pots and strike me on the head, or send someone down to drive me away? We stand and look into one another's eyes without moving; it lasts a minute. Thoughts dart between the window and the street, and not a word is spoken. She turns round, I feel a wrench in me, a delicate shock through my senses; I see a shoulder that turns, a back that disappears across the floor. That reluctant turning from the window, the accentuation in that movement of the shoulders, was like a nod to me. My blood was sensible of the delicate, dainty greeting, and I felt all at once rarely glad. Then I wheeled round and went down the street.

I dared not look back, and knew not if she had returned to the window. The more I considered this question the more nervous and restless I became. Probably at this very moment she was standing watching closely all my movements. It is by no means comfortable to know that you are being watched from behind your back. I pulled myself together as well as I could and proceeded on my way; my legs began to jerk under me, my gait became unsteady just because I purposely tried to make it look well. In order to appear at ease and indifferent, I flung my arms about, spat out, and threw my head well back—all without avail, for I continually felt the pursuing eyes on my neck, and a cold shiver ran down my back. At length I escaped down a side street, from which I took the road to Pyle Street to get my pencil.

I had no difficulty in recovering it; the man brought me the waistcoat himself, and as he did so, begged me to search through all the pockets. I found also a couple of pawn-tickets which I pocketed as I thanked the obliging little man for his civility. I was more and more taken with him, and grew all of a sudden extremely anxious to make a favourable impression on this person. I took a turn towards the door and then back again to the counter as if I had forgotten something. It struck me that I owed him an explanation, that I ought to elucidate matters a little. I began to hum in order to attract his attention. Then, taking the pencil in my hand, I held it up and said:

"It would never have entered my head to come such a long way for any and every bit of pencil, but with this one it was quite a different matter; there was another reason, a special reason. Insignificant as it looked, this stump of pencil had simply made me what I was in the world, so to say, placed me in life." I said no more. The man had come right over to the counter.

"Indeed!" said he, and he looked inquiringly at me.

"It was with this pencil," I continued, in cold blood, "that I wrote my dissertation on 'Philosophical Cognition,' in three volumes." Had he never heard mention of it?

Well, he did seem to remember having heard the name, rather the title.

"Yes," said I, "that was by me, so it was." So he must really not be astonished that I should be desirous of having the little bit of pencil back again. I valued it far too highly to lose it; why, it was almost as much to me as a little human creature. For the rest I was honestly grateful to him for his civility, and I would bear him in mind for it. Yes, truly, I really would. A promise was a promise; that was the sort of man I was, and he really deserved it. "Good-bye!" I walked to the door with the bearing of one who had it in his power to place a man in a high position, say, in the fire-office. The honest pawnbroker bowed twice profoundly to me as I withdrew. I turned again and repeated my good-bye.

On the stairs I met a woman with a travelling-bag in her hand, who squeezed diffidently against the wall to make room for me, and I voluntarily thrust my hand in my pocket for something to give her, and looked foolish as I found nothing and passed on with my head down. I heard her knock at the office door; there was an alarm over it, and I recognised the jingling sound it gave when any one rapped on the door with their knuckles.

The sun stood in the south; it was about twelve. The whole town began to get on its legs as it approached the fashionable hour for promenading. Bowing and laughing folk walked up and down Carl Johann Street. I stuck my elbows closely to my sides, tried to make myself look small, and slipped unperceived past some acquaintances who had taken up their stand at the corner of University Street to gaze at the passers-by. I wandered up Castle Hill and fell into a reverie.

How gaily and lightly these people I met carried their radiant heads, and swung themselves through life as through a ball-room.

There was no sorrow in a single look I met, no burden on any shoulder, perhaps not even a clouded thought, not a little hidden pain in any of these happy souls. And I, walking in the very midst of these people, young and newly-fledged as I was, had already forgotten the very look of happiness. I hugged these thoughts to myself as I went on, and found that a great injustice had been done me. Why had the last months pressed so strangely hard on me? I failed to recognise my own happy temperament, and I met with the most singular annoyances from all quarters. I could not sit down on a bench by myself or set my foot any place without being assailed by insignificant accidents, miserable details, that forced their way into my imagination and scattered my powers to all the four winds. A dog that dashed by me, a yellow rose in a man's buttonhole, had the power to set my thoughts vibrating and occupy me for a length of time.

What was it that ailed me? Was the hand of the Lord turned against me? But why just against me? Why, for that matter, not just as well against a man in South America? When I considered the matter over, it grew more and more incomprehensible to me that I of all others should be selected as an experiment for a Creator's whims. It was, to say the least of it, a peculiar mode of procedure to pass over a whole world of other humans in order to reach me. Why not select just as well Bookseller Pascha, or Hennechen the steam agent?

As I went my way I sifted this thing, and could not get quit of it. I found the most weighty arguments against the Creator's arbitrariness in letting me pay for all the others' sins. Even after I had found a seat and sat down, the query persisted in occupying me, and prevented me from thinking of aught else. From the day in May when my ill-luck began I could so clearly notice my gradually increasing debility; I had become, as it were, too languid to control or lead myself whither I would go. A swarm of tiny noxious animals had bored a way into my inner man and hollowed me out.

Supposing God Almighty simply intended to annihilate me? I got up and paced backwards and forwards before the seat.

My whole being was at this moment in the highest degree of torture, I had pains in my arms, and could hardly bear to hold them in the usual way. I experienced also great discomfort from my last full meal; I was oversated, and walked backwards and forwards without looking up. The people who came and went around me glided past me like faint gleams. At last my seat was taken up by two men, who lit cigars and began to talk loudly together. I got angry and was on the point of addressing them, but turned on my heel and went right to the other end of the Park, and found another seat. I sat down.

The thought of God began to occupy me. It seemed to me in the highest degree indefensible of Him to interfere every time I sought for a place, and to upset the whole thing, while all the time I was but imploring enough for a daily meal.

I had remarked so plainly that, whenever I had been hungry for any length of time, it was just as if my brains ran quite gently out of my head and left me with a vacuum—my head grew light and far off, I no longer felt its weight on my shoulders, and I had a consciousness that my eyes stared far too widely open when I looked at anything.

I sat there on the seat and pondered over all this, and grew more and more bitter against God for His prolonged inflictions. If He meant to draw me nearer to Him, and make me better by exhausting me and placing obstacle after obstacle in my way, I could assure Him He made a slight mistake. And, almost crying with defiance, I looked up towards Heaven and told Him so mentally, once and for all.

Fragments of the teachings of my childhood ran through my memory. The rhythmical sound of Biblical language sang in my ears, and I talked quite softly to myself, and held my head sneeringly askew. Wherefore should I sorrow for what I eat, for what I drink, or for what I may array this miserable food for worms called my earthly body? Hath not my Heavenly Father provided for me, even as for the sparrow on the house-top, and hath He not in His graciousness pointed towards His lowly servitor. The Lord stuck His finger in the net of my nerves gently—yea, verily, in desultory fashion — and brought slight disorder among the threads. And then the Lord withdrew His finger, and there were fibres and delicate root-like filaments adhering to the finger, and they were the nerve-threads of the filaments. And there was a gaping hole after the finger, which was God's finger, and a wound in my brain in the track of His finger. But when God had touched me with His finger, He let me be, and touched me no more, and let no evil befall me; but let me depart in peace, and let me depart with the gaping hole. And no evil hath befallen me from the God who is the Lord God of all Eternity.

The sound of music was borne up on the wind to me from the Students' Allée. It was therefore past two o'clock. I took out my writing materials to try to write something, and at the same time my book of shaving-tickets* fell out of my pocket. I opened it, and counted the tickets; there were six. "The Lord be praised," I exclaimed involuntarily; "I can still get shaved for a couple of weeks, and look a little decent"; and I immediately fell into a better frame of mind on account of this little property which still remained to me. I smoothed the leaves out carefully, and put the book safely into my pocket.

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* Issued by the barbers at cheaper rates, as few men in Norway shave themselves.

But write I could not. After a few lines nothing seemed to occur to me; my thoughts ran in other directions, and I could not pull myself together enough for any special exertion. Everything influenced and distracted me; everything I saw made a fresh impression on me. Flies and tiny mosquitoes stick fast to the paper and disturb me. I blow at them to get rid of them—blow harder and harder; to no purpose, the little pests throw themselves on their backs, make themselves heavy, and fight against me until their slender legs bend. They are not to be moved from the spot; they find something to hook on to, set their heels against a comma or an unevenness in the paper, or stand immovably still until they themselves think fit to go their way.

These insects continued to busy me for a long time, and I crossed my legs to observe them at leisure. All at once a couple of high clarionet notes wavered up to me from the bandstand, and gave my thoughts a new impulse.

Despondent at not being able to put my article together, I replaced the paper in my pocket, and leant back in the seat. At this instant my head is so clear that I can follow the most delicate train of thought without tiring. As I lie in this position, and let my eyes glide down my breast and along my legs, I notice the jerking movement my foot makes each time my pulse beats. I half rise and look down at my feet, and I experience at this moment a fantastic and singular feeling that I have never felt before—a delicate, wonderful shock through my nerves, as if sparks of cold light quivered through them—it was as if in catching sight of my shoes I had met with a kind old acquaintance, or got back a part of myself that had been riven loose. A feeling of recognition trembles through my senses; the tears well up in my eyes, and I have a feeling as if my shoes are a soft, murmuring strain rising towards me. "Weakness!" I cried harshly to myself, and I clenched my fists and I repeated "Weakness!" I laughed at myself, for this ridiculous feeling, made fun of myself, with a perfect consciousness of doing so, talked very severely and sensibly, and closed my eyes very tightly to get rid of the tears.

As if I had never seen my shoes before, I set myself to study their looks, their characteristics, and, when I stir my foot, their shape and their worn uppers. I discover that their creases and white seams give them expression — impart a physiognomy to them. Something of my own nature had gone over into these shoes; they affected me, like a ghost of my other I—a breathing portion of my very self.

I sat and toyed with these fancies a long time, perhaps an entire hour. A little, old man came and took up the other end of the seat; as he seated himself he panted after his walk, and muttered:

"Ay, ay, ay, ay, ay, ay, ay, ay, ay, ay; very true!"

As soon as I heard his voice, I felt as if a wind had swept through my head. I let shoes be shoes, and it seemed to me that the distracted phase of mind I had just experienced dated from a long-vanished period, maybe a year or two back, and was about to be quietly effaced from my memory. I began to observe the old fellow.

Did this little man concern me in any way? Not in the least, not in the very slightest degree! Only that he held a newspaper in his hand, an old number (with the advertisement sheet on the outside), in which something or other seemed to be rolled up; my curiosity was aroused, and I could not take my eyes away from this paper. The insane idea entered my head that it might be a quite peculiar newspaper—unique of its kind. My curiosity increased, and I began to move backwards and forwards on the seat. It might contain deeds, dangerous documents stolen from some archives or other; something floated before me about a secret treaty—a conspiracy.

The man sat quietly, and pondered. Why did he not carry his newspaper as every other person carries a paper, with its name out? What species of cunning lurked under that? He did not seem either to like letting his package out of his hands, not for anything in the world; perhaps he did not even dare trust it into his own pocket. I could stake my life there was something at the bottom of that package—I considered a bit. Just the fact of finding it so impossible to penetrate this mysterious affair distracted me with curiosity. I searched my pockets for something to offer the man in order to enter into conversation with him, took hold of my shaving-book, but put it back again. Suddenly it entered my head to be utterly audacious; I slapped my empty breast-pocket, and said:

"May I offer you a cigarette?"

"Thank you!" The man did not smoke; he had to give it up to spare his eyes; he was nearly blind. Thank you very much all the same. Was it long since his eyes got bad? In that case, perhaps, he could not read either, not even a paper?

No, not even the newspaper, more's the pity. The man looked at me; his weak eyes were each covered with a film which gave them a glassy appearance; his gaze grew bleary, and made a disgusting impression on me.

"You are a stranger here?" he said.

"Yes." Could he not even read the name of the paper he held in his hand?

"Barely." For that matter, he could hear directly that I was a stranger. There was something in my accent which told him. It did not need much; he could hear so well. At night, when everyone slept, he could hear people in the next room breathing. . . .

"What I was going to say was, 'where do you live?'"

On the spur of the moment a lie stood, ready-made, in my head. I lied involuntarily, without any object, without any *arrière pensée*, and I answered—

"St Olav's Place, No. 2."

"Really?" He knew every stone in St Olav's Place. There was a fountain, some lamp-posts, a few trees; he remembered all of it. "What number do you live in?"

Desirous to put an end to this, I got up. But my notion about the newspaper had driven me to my wits' end; I resolved to clear the thing up, at no matter what cost.

"When you cannot read the paper, why ——"

"In No. 2, I think you said," continued the man, without noticing my disturbance. "There was a time I knew every person in No. 2; what is your landlord's name?"

I quickly found a name to get rid of him; invented one on the spur of the moment, and blurted it out to stop my tormentor.

"Happolati!" said I.

"Happolati, ay!" nodded the man; and he never missed a syllable in this difficult name.

I looked at him with amazement; there he sat, gravely, with a considering air. Before I had well given utterance to the stupid name which jumped into my head the man had accommodated himself to it, and pretended to have heard it before.

In the meantime, he had laid his package on the seat, and I felt my curiosity quiver through my nerves. I noticed there were a few grease spots on the paper.

"Isn't he a sea-faring man, your landlord?" queried he, and there was not a trace of suppressed irony in his voice; "I seem to remember he was."

"Sea-faring man? Excuse me, it must be the brother you know; this man is namely J. A. Happolati, the agent."

I thought this would finish him; but he willingly fell in with everything I said. If I had found a name like Barrabas Rosebud it would not have roused his suspicions.

"He is an able man, I have heard?" he said, feeling his way.

"Oh, a clever fellow!" answered I; "a thorough business head; agent for every possible thing going. Cranberries from China; feathers and down from Russia; hides, pulp, writing-ink——"

"He, he! the devil he is?" interrupted the old chap, highly excited.

This began to get interesting. The situation ran away with me, and one lie after another engendered in my head. I sat down again, forgot the newspaper, and the remarkable documents, grew lively, and cut short the old fellow's talk.

The little goblin's unsuspecting simplicity made me foolhardy; I would stuff him recklessly full of lies; rout him out o' field grandly, and stop his mouth from sheer amazement.

Had he heard of the electric psalm-book that Happolati had invented?

"What? Elec——"

"With electric letters that could give light in the dark! a perfectly extraordinary enterprise. A million crowns to be put in circulation; foundries and printing-presses at work, and shoals of regular mechanics to be employed; I had heard as many as seven hundred men."

"Ay, isn't it just what I say?" drawled out the man, calmly.

He said no more, he believed every word I related, and for all that, he was not taken aback. This disappointed me a little; I had expected to see him utterly bewildered by my inventions.

I searched my brain for a couple of desperate lies, went the whole hog, hinted that Happolati had been Minister of State for nine years in

Persia. "You perhaps have no conception of what it means to be Minister of State in Persia?" I asked. It was more than king here, or about the same as Sultan, if he knew what that meant, but Happolati had managed the whole thing, and was never at a loss. And I related about his daughter Ylajali, a fairy, a princess, who had three hundred slaves, and who reclined on a couch of yellow roses. She was the loveliest creature I had ever seen; I had, may the Lord strike me, never seen her match for looks in my life!

"So—o; was she so lovely?" remarked the old fellow, with an absent air, as he gazed at the ground.

"Lovely? She was beauteous, she was sinfully fascinating. Eyes like raw silk, arms of amber! Just one glance from her was as seductive as a kiss; and when she called me, her voice darted like a wine-ray right into my soul's phosphor. And why shouldn't she be so beautiful?" Did he imagine she was a messenger or something in the fire brigade? She was simply a Heaven's wonder, I could just inform him, a fairy tale.

"Yes, to be sure!" said he, not a little bewildered. His quiet bored me; I was excited by the sound of my own voice and spoke in utter seriousness; the stolen archives, treaties with some foreign power or other, no longer occupied my thoughts; the little flat bundle of paper lay on the seat between us, and I had no longer the smallest desire to examine it or see what it contained. I was entirely absorbed in stories of my own which floated in singular visions across my mental eye. The blood flew to my head, and I roared with laughter.

At this moment the little man seemed about to go. He stretched himself, and in order not to break off too abruptly, added: "He is said to own much property, this Happolati?"

How dared this bleary-eyed, disgusting old man toss about the rare name I had invented as if it were a common name stuck up over every huckster-shop in the town? He never stumbled over a letter or forgot a syllable. The name had bitten fast in his brain and struck root on the instant. I got annoyed; an inward exasperation surged up in me against this creature whom nothing had the power to disturb and nothing render suspicious.

I therefore replied shortly, "I know nothing about that! I know absolutely nothing whatever about that! Let me inform you once for all that his name is Johann Arendt Happolati, if you go by his own initials."

"Johann Arendt Happolati!" repeated the man, a little astonished at my vehemence; and with that he grew silent.

"You should see his wife!" I said, beside myself. "A fatter creature . . . Eh? what? Perhaps you don't even believe she is really fat?"

Well, indeed he did not see his way to deny that such a man might perhaps have a rather stout wife. The old fellow answered quite gently and meekly to each of my assertions, and sought for words as if he feared to offend and perhaps make me furious.

"Hell and fire, man! Do you imagine that I am sitting here stuffing you chock-full of lies?" I roared furiously. "Perhaps you don't even believe that a man of the name of Happolati exists! I never saw your match for obstinacy and malice in any old man. What the devil ails you? Perhaps, too, into the bargain, you have been all this while thinking to yourself I am a poverty-stricken fellow, sitting here in my Sunday-best without even a case full of cigarettes in my pocket. Let me tell you such treatment as yours is a thing I am not accustomed to, and I won't endure it, the Lord strike me dead if I will—neither from you nor anyone else, do you know that?"

The man had risen with his mouth agape; he stood tongue-tied and listened to my outbreak until the end. Then he snatched his parcel from off the seat and went, ay, nearly ran, down the path, with the short, tottering steps of an old man.

I leant back and looked at the retreating figure that seemed to shrink at each step as it passed away. I do not know from where the impression came, but it appeared to me that I had never in my life seen a more vile back than this one, and I did not regret that I had abused the creature before he left me.

The day began to decline, the sun sank, it commenced to rustle lightly in the trees around, and the nursemaids who sat in groups near the parallel bars made ready to wheel their perambulators home. I was calmed and in good spirits. The excitement I had just laboured under quieted down little by little, and I grew weaker, more languid, and began to feel drowsy. Neither did the quantity of bread I had eaten cause me any longer any particular distress. I leant against the back of the seat in the best of humours, closed my eyes, and got more and more sleepy. I dozed, and was just on the point of falling asleep, when a park-keeper put his hand on my shoulder and said:

"You must not sit here and go to sleep!"

"No?" I said, and sprang immediately up, my unfortunate position rising all at once vividly before my eyes. I must do something; find some way or another out of it. To look for situations had been of no avail to me. Even the recommendations I showed had grown a little old, and were written by people all too little known to be of much use; besides that, constant refusals all through the summer had somewhat disheartened me. At all events, my rent was due, and I must raise the wind for that; the rest would have to wait a little.

Quite involuntarily I had got paper and pencil into my hand again, and I sat and wrote mechanically the date, 1848, in each corner. If only now one single effervescing thought would grip me powerfully, and put words into my mouth. Why, I had known hours when I could write a long piece, without the least exertion, and turn it off capitally, too.

I am sitting on the seat, and I write, scores of times, 1848. I write this date criss-cross, in all possible fashions, and wait until a workable idea shall occur to me. A swarm of loose thoughts flutter about in my head. The feeling of declining day makes me downcast, sentimental; autumn is here, and has already begun to hush everything into sleep and torpor. The flies and insects have received their first warning. Up in the trees and down in the fields the sounds of struggling life can be heard rustling, murmuring, restless; labouring not to perish. The down-trodden existence of the whole insect world is astir for yet a little while. They poke their yellow heads up from the turf, lift their legs, feel their way with long feelers and then collapse suddenly, roll over, and turn their bellies in the air.

Every growing thing has received its peculiar impress: the delicately blown breath of the first cold. The stubbles straggle wanly sunwards, and the falling leaves rustle to the earth, with a sound as of errant silkworms.

It is the reign of Autumn, the height of the

Carnival of Decay, the roses have got inflammation in their blushes, an uncanny hectic tinge, through their soft damask.

I felt myself like a creeping thing on the verge of destruction, gripped by ruin in the midst of a whole world ready for lethargic sleep. I rose, oppressed by weird terrors, and took some furious strides down the path. "No!" I cried out, clutching both my hands; "there must be an end to this," and I reseated myself, grasped the pencil, and set seriously to work at an article.

There was no possible use in giving way, with the unpaid rent staring me straight in the face.

Slowly, quite slowly, my thoughts collected. I paid attention to them, and wrote quietly and well; wrote a couple of pages as an introduction. It would serve as a beginning to anything. A description of travel, a political leader, just as I thought fit—it was a perfectly splendid commencement for something or anything. So I took to seeking for some particular subject to handle, a person or a thing, that I might grapple with, and I could find nothing. Along with this fruitless exertion, disorder began to hold its sway again in my thoughts. I felt how my brain positively snapped and my head emptied, until it sat at last, light, buoyant, and void on my shoulders. I was conscious of the gaping vacuum in my skull with every fibre of my being. I seemed to myself to be hollowed out from top and toe.

In my pain I cried: "Lord, my God and Father!" and repeated this cry many times at a stretch, without adding one word more.

The wind soughed through the trees; a storm was brewing. I sat a while longer, and gazed at my paper, lost in thought, then folded it up and put it slowly into my pocket. It got chilly; and I no longer owned a waistcoat. I buttoned my coat right up to my throat and thrust my hands in my pockets; thereupon I rose and went on.

If I had only succeeded this time, just this once! Twice my landlady had asked me with her eyes for payment, and I was obliged to hang my head and slink past her with a shamefaced air. I could not do it again: the very next time I met those eyes I would give warning and account for myself honestly. Well, any way, things could not last long at this rate.

On coming to the exit of the park I saw

the old chap I had put to flight. The mysterious newspaper parcel lay opened on the seat next him, filled with different sorts of victuals, of which he ate as he sat. I immediately wanted to go over and ask pardon for my conduct, but the sight of his food repelled me. The decrepit fingers looked like ten claws as they clutched loathsomely at the greasy bread and butter; I felt qualmish, and passed by without addressing him. He did not recognise me; his eyes stared at me, dry as horn, and his face did not move a muscle.

And so I went on my way.

As customary, I halted before every newspaper placard I came to, to read the announcements of situations vacant, and was lucky enough to find one that I might try for.

A grocer in Groenlandsleret wanted a man every week for a couple of hours' book-keeping; remuneration according to agreement. I noted my man's address, and prayed to God in silence for this place. I would demand less than any one else for my work; sixpence was ample, or perhaps fivepence. That would not matter in the least.

On going home, a slip of paper from my landlady lay on my table, in which she begged me to pay my rent in advance, or else move as soon as I could. I must not be offended, it was absolutely a necessary request. Friendlily Mrs Gundersen.

I wrote an application to Christy the grocer, No. 13 Groenlandsleret, put it in an envelope, and took it to the pillar at the corner. Then I returned to my room and sat down in the rocking-chair to think, whilst the darkness grew closer and closer. Sitting up late began to be difficult now.

I woke very early in the morning. It was still quite dark as I opened my eyes, and it was not till long after that I heard five strokes of the clock down-stairs. I turned round to doze again, but sleep had flown. I grew more and more wakeful, and lay and thought of a thousand things.

Suddenly a few good sentences fitted for a sketch or story strike me, delicate linguistic hits of which I have never before found the equal. I lie and repeat these words over to myself, and find that they are capital. Little by little others come and fit themselves to the preceding ones. I grow keenly wakeful. I get up and snatch paper and pencil from the table behind my bed. It was as if a vein had burst in me; one word follows another, and they fit themselves together harmoniously with telling effect. Scene piles on scene, actions and speeches bubble up in my brain, and a wonderful sense of pleasure empowers me. I write as one possessed, and fill page after page without a moment's pause.

Thoughts come so swiftly to me and continue to flow so richly that I miss a number of telling bits, that I cannot set down quickly enough, although I work with all my might. They continue to invade me; I am full of my subject, and every word I write is inspired.

This strange period lasts — lasts such a blessedly long time before it comes to an end. I have fifteen—twenty written pages lying on my knees before me, when at last I cease and lay my pencil aside. So sure as there is any worth in these pages, so sure am I saved. I jump out of bed and dress myself. It grows lighter. I can half distinguish the lighthouse director's announcement down near the door, and near the window it is already so light that I could, in case of necessity, see to write. I set to work immediately to make a fair copy of what I have written.

An intense, peculiar exhalation of light and colour emanates from these fantasies of mine. I start with surprise as I note one good thing after another, and tell myself that this is the best thing I have ever read. My head swims with a sense of satisfaction; delight inflates me; I grow grandiose.

I weigh my writing in my hand, and value it, at a loose guess, for five shillings on the spot.

It could never enter any one's head to chaffer about five shillings; on the contrary, getting it for half-a-sovereign might be considered dirt-cheap, considering the quality of the thing.

I had no intention of turning off such special work gratis. As far as I was aware, one did not pick up stories of that kind on the wayside, and I decided on half-a-sovereign.

The room brightened and brightened. I threw a glance towards the door, and could distinguish without particular trouble the skeleton-like letters of Miss Andersen's winding-sheet advertisement to the right of it. It was also a good while since the clock had struck seven.

I rose and came to a standstill in the middle of the floor. Everything well considered, Mrs Gundersen's warning came rather opportunely.

This was, properly speaking, no fit room for me; there were only common enough green curtains at the windows, and neither were there any pegs too many on the wall. The poor little rocking-chair over in the corner was in reality a mere attempt at a rocking-chair; with the smallest sense of humour, one might easily split one's sides with laughter at it. It was far too low for a grown man, and besides that, one needed, so to speak, the aid of a boot-jack to get out of it. To cut it short, the room was not adapted for the pursuit of things intellectual, and I did not intend to keep it any longer. On no account would I keep it. I had held my peace, and endured and lived far too long in such a den.

Buoyed up by hope and satisfaction, constantly occupied with my remarkable sketch, which I drew forth every moment from my pocket and re-read, I determined to set seriously to work with my flitting. I took out my bundle, a red handkerchief that contained a few clean collars and some crumpled newspapers, in which I had occasionally carried home bread. I rolled my blanket up and pocketed my reserve of white writing-paper. Then I ransacked every corner to assure myself that I had left nothing behind, and as I could not find anything, went over to the window and looked out.

The morning was gloomy and wet; there was no one about at the burnt-out smithy, and the clothes-line down in the yard stretched tightly from wall to wall shrunken by the wet. It was all familiar to me, so I stepped back from the window, took the blanket under my arm, and made a low bow to the lighthouse director's announcement, bowed again to Miss Andersen's winding-sheet advertisement, and opened the door. Suddenly the thought of my landlady struck me; she really ought to be informed of my leaving, so that she could see she had had an honest soul to deal with.

I wanted also to thank her in writing for the few days' overtime in which I occupied the room. The certainty that I was now saved for some time to come increased so strongly in me that I even promised her five shillings. I would call in some day when passing by.

Besides that, I wanted to prove to her what an upright sort of person her roof had sheltered.

I left the note behind me on the table.

Once again I stopped at the door and turned round, the buoyant feeling of having risen once again to the surface charmed me, and made me feel grateful towards God and all creation, and I knelt down at the bedside and thanked God aloud for His great goodness to me that morning.

I knew it; ah! I knew that the rapture of inspiration I had just felt and noted down was a miraculous heaven-brew in my spirit in answer to my yesterday's cry for aid.

"It was God! It was God!" I cried to myself, and I wept for enthusiasm over my own words; now and then I had to stop and listen if any one was on the stairs. At last I rose up and prepared to go. I stole noiselessly down each flight and reached the door unseen.

The streets were glistening from the rain which had fallen in the early morning. The sky hung damp and heavy over the town, and there was no glint of sunlight visible. I wondered what the day would bring forth? I went as usual in the direction of the Town Hall, and saw that it was half-past eight. I had yet a few hours to walk about; there was no use in going to the newspaper office before ten, perhaps eleven. I must lounge about so long, and think, in the meantime, over some expedient to raise breakfast. For that matter,

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I had no fear of going to bed hungry that day; those times were over, God be praised! That was a thing of the past, an evil dream. Henceforth, Excelsior!

But, in the meanwhile, the green blanket was a trouble to me. Neither could I well make myself conspicuous by carrying such a thing about right under people's eyes. What would anyone think of me? And as I went on I tried to think of a place where I could have it kept till later on. It occurred to me that I might go into Semb's and get it wrapped up in paper; not only would it look better, but I need no longer be ashamed of carrying it.

I entered the shop, and stated my errand to one of the shop boys.

He looked first at the blanket, then at me. It struck me that he shrugged his shoulders to himself a little contemptuously as he took it; this annoyed me.

"Young man," I cried, "do be a little careful! There are two costly glass vases in that; the parcel has to go to Smyrna."

This had a famous effect. The fellow apologised with every movement he made for not having guessed that there was something out of the common in this blanket. When he had finished packing it up I thanked him with the air of a man who had sent precious goods to Smyrna before now. He held the door open for me, and bowed twice as I left.

I began to wander about amongst the people in the market place, kept from choice near the woman who had potted plants for sale. The heavy crimson roses—the leaves of which glowed blood-like and moist in the damp morning—made me envious, and tempted me sinfully to snatch one, and I inquired the price of them merely as an excuse to approach as near to them as possible.

If I had any money over I would buy one, no matter how things went; indeed, I might well save a little now and then out of my way of living to balance things again.

It was ten o'clock, and I went up to the newspaper office. "Scissors" is running through a lot of old papers. The editor has not come yet. On being asked my business, I deliver my weighty manuscript, lead him to suppose that it is something of more than uncommon importance, and impress upon his memory gravely that he is to give it into the editor's own hands as soon as he arrives.

I would myself call later on in the day for an answer.

"All right," replied "Scissors," and busied himself again with his papers.

It seemed to me that he treated the matter somewhat too coolly; but I said nothing, only nodded rather carelessly to him, and left.

I had now time on hand! If it would only clear up! It was perfectly wretched weather, without either wind or freshness. Ladies carried their umbrellas, to be on the safe side, and the woollen caps of the men looked limp and depressing.

I took another turn across the market and looked at the vegetables and roses. I feel a hand on my shoulder and turn round—"Missy" bids me good-morning! "Good-morning!" I say in return, a little questioningly. I never cared particularly for "Missy."

He looks inquisitively at the large bran-new parcel under my arm, and asks:

"What have you got there?"

"Oh, I have been down to Semb and got some cloth for a suit," I reply, in a careless tone. "I didn't think I could rub on any longer; there's such a thing as treating oneself too shabbily."

He looks at me with an amazed start.

"By the way, how are you getting on?" he asks it slowly.

"Oh, beyond all expectation!"

"Then you have got something to do now?"

"Something to do?" I answer and seem surprised. "Rather! Why, I am book-keeper at Christensen's—a wholesale house."

"Oh, indeed!" he remarks and draws back a little.

"Well, God knows I am the first to be pleased at your success. If only you don't let people beg the money from you that you earn. Good-day!"

A second after he wheels round and comes back and, pointing with his cane to my parcel, says:

"I would recommend my tailor to you for the suit of clothes. You won't find a better tailor than Isaksen—just say I sent you, that's all!"

This was really rather more than I could swallow. What did he want to poke his nose in my affairs for? Was it any concern of his which tailor I employed? The sight of this empty-headed dandified "masher" embittered me, and I reminded him rather brutally of ten shillings he had borrowed from me. But before he could reply I regretted that I had asked for it. I got ashamed and avoided meeting his eyes, and, as a lady came by just then, I stepped hastily aside to let her pass, and seized the opportunity to proceed on my way.

What should I do with myself whilst I waited? I could not visit a café with empty pockets, and I knew of no acquaintance that I could call on at this time of day. I wended my way instinctively up town, killed a good deal of time between the market-place and Graendsen, read the *Aftenpost*, which was newly pasted up on the board outside the office, took a turn down Karl Johann, wheeled round and went straight on to Our Saviour's Cemetery, where I found a quiet seat on the slope near the Mortuary Chapel.

I sat there in complete quietness, dozed in the damp air, mused, half-slept and shivered.

And time passed. Now, was it certain that the story really was a little masterpiece of inspired art? God knows if it might not have its faults here and there. All things well weighed, it was not certain that it would be accepted; no, simply not even accepted. It was perhaps mediocre enough in its way, perhaps downright worthless. What security had I that it was not already at this moment lying in the waste-paper basket? . . . My confidence was shaken. I sprang up and stormed out of the graveyard.

Down in Akersgaden I peeped into a shop window, and saw that it was only a little past noon. There was no use in looking up the editor before four. The fate of my story filled me with gloomy forebodings; the more I thought about it the more absurd it seemed to me that I could have written anything useable with such suddenness, half-asleep, with my brain full of fever and dreams. Of course I had deceived myself and been happy all through the long morning for nothing! . . . Of course! . . . I rushed with hurried strides up Ullavoldsveien, past St Han's Hill, until I came to the open fields; on through the narrow quaint lanes in Sagene, past waste plots and small tilled fields, and found myself at last on a country road, the end of which I could not see.

Here I halted and decided to turn.

I was warm from the walk, and returned slowly and very downcast. I met two hay-carts. The drivers were lying flat upon the top of their loads, and sang. Both were bareheaded, and both had round, care-free faces. I passed them and thought to myself that they were sure to accost me, sure to fling some taunt or other at me, play me some trick; and as I got near enough, one of them called out and asked what I had under my arm?

"A blanket!"

"What o'clock is it?" he asked then.

"I don't know rightly; about three, I think!"

Whereupon they both laughed and drove on. I felt at the same moment the lash of a whip curl round one of my ears, and my hat was jerked off. They couldn't let me pass without playing me a trick. I raised my hand to my head more or less confusedly, picked my hat out of the ditch, and continued my way. Down at St Han's Hill I met a man who told me it was past four. Past four! already past four! I mended my pace, nearly ran down to the town, turned off towards the news office. Perhaps the editor had been there hours ago, and had left the office by now. I ran, jostled against folk, stumbled, knocked against cars, left everybody behind me, competed with the very horses, struggled like a madman to arrive there in time. I wrenched through the door, took the stairs in four bounds, and knocked.

No answer.

"He has left, he has left," I think. I try the door which is open, knock once again, and enter. The editor is sitting at his table, his face towards the window, pen in hand, about to write. When he hears my breathless greeting he turns half round, steals a quick look at me, shakes his head, and says:

"Oh, I haven't found time to read your sketch yet."

I am so delighted, because in that case he has not rejected it, that I answer:

"Oh, pray, sir, don't mention it. I quite understand—there is no hurry; in a few days, perhaps——"

"Yes, I shall see; besides, I have your address."

I forget to inform him that I no longer had an address, and the interview is over. I bow myself out, and leave. Hope flames up again in me; as yet, nothing is lost—on the contrary, I might, for that matter, yet win all. And my brain began to spin a romance about a great council in Heaven, in which it had just been resolved that I should win—ay, triumphantly win ten shillings for a story.

If I only had some place in which to take refuge for the night! I consider where I can stow myself away, and am so absorbed in this query that I come to a standstill in the middle of the street. I forget where I am, and pose like a solitary beacon on a rock in mid-sea, whilst the tides rush and roar about it.

A newspaper boy offers me *The Viking*.

"It's real good value, sir!"

I look up, and start; I am outside Semb's shop again. I quickly turn to the right-about, holding the parcel in front of me, and hurry down Kirkegaden, ashamed and afraid that anyone might have seen me from the window. I pass by Ingebret's and the theatre, turn round by the box-office, and go towards the sea, near the fortress. I find a seat once more, and begin to consider afresh.

Where in the world shall I find a shelter for the night?

Was there a hole to be found where I could creep in and hide myself till morning. My pride forbade my returning to my lodging—besides, it could never really occur to me to go back on my word; I rejected this thought with great scorn, and I smiled superciliously as I thought of the little red rocking-chair.

By some association of ideas, I find myself suddenly transported to a large, double room I once occupied in Haegdehaugen. I could see a tray on the table, filled with great slices of bread-and-butter. The vision changed; it was transformed into beef—a seductive piece of beef—a snow-white napkin, bread in plenty, a silver fork. The door opened; enter my landlady, offering me more tea. . . .

Visions; senseless dreams! I tell myself that were I to get food now my head would become dizzy once more, fever would fill my brain, and I would have to fight again against many mad fancies. I could not stomach food, my inclination did not lie that way; that was peculiar to me—an idiosyncrasy of mine.

Maybe as night drew on a way could be found to procure shelter. There was no hurry; at the worst, I could seek a place out in the woods. I had the entire environs of the city at my disposal; as yet, there was no degree of cold worth speaking of in the weather.

And outside there the sea rocked in drowsy rest; ships and clumsy, broad-nosed prams ploughed graves in its bluish surface, and scattered rays to the right and left, and glided on, whilst the smoke rolled up in downy masses from the chimney-stacks, and the stroke of the engine pistons pierced the clammy air with a dull sound. There was no sun and no wind; the trees behind me were almost wet, and the seat upon which I sat was cold and damp.

Time went. I settled down to doze, waxed tired, and a little shiver ran down my back. A while after I felt that my eyelids began to droop, and I let them droop. . . .

When I awoke it was dark all around me. I started up, bewildered and freezing. I seized my parcel, and commenced to walk. I went faster and faster in order to get warm, slapped my arms, chafed my legs—which by now I could hardly feel under me—and thus reached the watch-house of the fire brigade. It was nine o'clock; I had been asleep for several hours.

Whatever shall I do with myself? I must go to some place. I stand there and stare up at the watch-house, and query if it would not be possible to succeed in getting into one of the passages if I were to watch for a moment when the watchman's back was turned. I ascend the steps, and prepare to open a conversation with the man. He lifts his axe in salute, and waits for what I may have to say. The uplifted axe, with its edge turned against me, darts like a cold slash through my nerves. I stand dumb with terror before this armed man, and draw involuntarily back. I say nothing, only glide farther and farther away from him. To save appearances I draw my hand over my forehead, as if I had forgotten something or other, and slink away. When I reached the pavement again I felt as much saved as if I had just escaped a great peril, and I hurried away.

Cold and famished, more and more miserable in spirit, I flew up Carl Johann. I began to swear out aloud, troubling myself not a whit as to whether anyone heard me or not. Arrived at Parliament House, just near the first trees, I suddenly, by some association of ideas, bethought myself of a young artist I knew, a stripling I had once saved from an assault in the Tivoli, and upon whom I had called later on. I snap my fingers gleefully, and wend my way to Tordenskjiolds Street, find the door, on which is fastened a card with C. Zacharias Bartel on it, and knock.

He came out himself, and smelt so fearfully of ale and tobacco that it was horrible.

"Good-evening!" I say.

"Good-evening! is that you? Now, why the deuce do you come so late? It doesn't look at all its best by lamplight. I have added a hayrick to it since, and have made a few other alterations. You must see it by daylight; there is no use our trying to see it now!"

"Let me have a look at it now, all the same," said I; though, for that matter, I did not in the least remember what picture he was talking about.

"Absolutely impossible," he replied; "the whole thing will look yellow; and, besides, there's another thing"—and he came towards me, whispering: "I have a little girl inside this evening, so it's clearly impracticable."

"Oh, in that case, of course there's no question about it."

I drew back, said good-night, and went away.

So there was no way out of it but to seek some place out in the woods. If only the fields were not so damp. I patted my blanket, and felt more and more at home at the thought of sleeping out. I had worried myself so long trying to find a shelter in town that I was wearied and bored with the whole affair. It would be a positive pleasure to get to rest, to resign myself; so I loaf down the street without a thought in my head. At a place in Haegdehaugen I halted outside a provision shop where some food was displayed in the window. A cat lay there and slept beside a round French roll. There was a basin of lard and several basins of meal in the background. I stood a while and gazed at these eatables; but as I had no money wherewith to buy, I turned quickly away and continued my tramp. I went very slowly, passed by Majorstuen, went on, always on—it seemed to me for hours,—and came at length to Bogstad's wood.

I turned off the road here, and sat down to rest. Then I began to look about for a place to suit me, to gather together heather and juniper leaves, and make up a bed on a little declivity where it was a bit dry. I opened the parcel and took out the blanket; I was tired and exhausted with the long walk, and lay down at once. I turned and twisted many times before I could get settled. My ear pained me a little—it was slightly swollen from the whip-lash—and I could not lie on it. I pulled off my shoes and put them under my head, with the paper from Semb on top.

And the great spirit of darkness spread a shroud over me . . . everything was silent—everything. But up in the heights soughed the everlasting song, the voice of the air, the distant, toneless humming which is never silent. I listened so long to this ceaseless faint murmur that it began to bewilder me; it was surely a symphony from the rolling spheres above. Stars that intone a song. . . .

"I am damned if it is, though," I exclaimed; and I laughed aloud to collect my wits. "They're night-owls hooting in Canaan!"

I rose again, pulled on my shoes, and wandered about in the gloom, only to lay down once more. I fought and wrestled with anger and fear until nearly dawn, then fell asleep at last.

. . . .

It was broad daylight when I opened my eyes, and I had a feeling that it was going on towards noon.

I pulled on my shoes, packed up the blanket again, and set out for town. There was no sun to be seen to-day either; I shivered like a dog, my feet were benumbed, and water commenced to run from my eyes, as if they could not bear the daylight.

It was three o'clock. Hunger began to assail me downright in earnest. I was faint, and now and again I had to retch furtively. I swung round by the Dampkökken,* read the bill of fare, and shrugged my shoulders in a way to attract attention, as if corned beef or salt pork was not meet food for me. After that I went towards the railway station.

A singular sense of confusion suddenly darted through my head. I stumbled on, determined not to heed it; but I grew worse and worse, and was forced at last to sit down on a step. My whole being underwent a change, as if something had slid aside in my inner self, or as if a curtain or tissue of my brain was rent in two.

I was not unconscious; I felt that my ear was gathering a little, and, as an acquaintance passed by, I recognised him at once and got up and bowed.

What sort of fresh, painful perception was this that was being added to the rest? Was it a consequence of sleeping in the sodden fields, or did it arise from my not having had any breakfast yet? Looking the whole thing squarely in the face, there was no meaning in living on in this manner, by Christ's holy pains, there wasn't. I failed to see either how

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* Steam cooking-kitchen and famous cheap eating-house.

I had made myself deserving of this special persecution; and it suddenly entered my head that I might just as well turn rogue at once and go to my "Uncle's" with the blanket. I could pawn it for a shilling, and get three full meals, and so keep myself going until I thought of something else. 'Tis true I would have to swindle Hans Pauli. I was already on my way to the pawn-shop, but stopped outside the door, shook my head irresolutely, then turned back. The farther away I got the more gladsome, ay, delighted I became, that I had conquered this strong temptation. The consciousness that I was yet pure and honourable rose to my head, filled me with a splendid sense of having principle, character, of being a shining white beacon in a muddy, human sea amidst floating wreck.

Pawn another man's property for the sake of a meal, eat and drink one's self to perdition, brand one's soul with the first little sear, set the first black mark against one's honour, call one's self a blackguard to one's own face, and needs must cast one's eyes down before one's self? Never! never! It could never have been my serious intention—it had really never seriously taken hold of me; in fact, I could not be answerable for every loose, fleeting, desultory thought, particularly with such a headache as I had, and nearly killed carrying a blanket, too, that belonged to another fellow.

There would surely be some way or another of getting help when the right time came! Now, there was the grocer in Groenlandsleret. Had I importuned him every hour in the day since I sent in my application? Had I rung the bell early and late, and been turned away? Why, I had not even applied personally to him or sought an answer! It did not follow, surely, that it must needs be an absolutely vain attempt.

Maybe I had luck with me this time. Luck often took such a devious course, and I started for Groenlandsleret.

The last spasm that had darted through my head had exhausted me a little, and I walked very slowly and thought over what I would say to him.

Perhaps he was a good soul; if the whim seized him he might pay me for my work a shilling in advance, even without my asking for it. People of that sort had sometimes the most capital ideas.

I stole into a doorway and blackened the knees of my trousers with spittle to try and make them look a little respectable, left the parcel behind me in a dark corner at the back of a chest, and entered the little shop.

A man is standing pasting together bags made of old newspaper.

"I would like to see Mr Christie," I said.

"That's me!" replied the man.

"Indeed!" Well my name was so-and-so. I had taken the liberty of sending him an application. I did not know if it had been of any use.

He repeated my name a couple of times and commenced to laugh.

"Well now, you shall see," he said, taking my letter out of his breast-pocket, "if you will just be good enough to see how you deal with dates, sir. You dated your letter 1848," and the man roared with laughter.

"Yes, that was rather a mistake," I said abashed—a distraction, a want of thought; I admitted it.

"You see I must have a man who, as a matter of fact, makes no mistakes in figures," said he. "I regret it, your handwriting is clear, and I like your letter, too, but——"

I waited a while; this could not possibly be the man's final say. He busied himself again with the bags.

"Yes, it was a pity," I said; "really an awful pity, but of course it would not occur again; and, after all, surely this little error could not have rendered me quite unfit to keep books?"

"No, I didn't say that," he answered, "but in the meantime it had so much weight with me that I decided at once upon another man."

"So the place is filled?"

"Yes."

"A—h well, then there's nothing more to be said about it!"

"No! I'm sorry, but——"

"Good-evening!" said I.

Fury welled up in me, blazing with brutal strength. I fetched my parcel from the entry, set my teeth together, jostled against the peaceful folk on the footpath, and never once asked their pardon.

As one man stopped and set me to rights rather sharply for my behaviour, I turned round and screamed a single meaningless word in his ear, clenched my fist right under his nose, and stumbled on, hardened by a blind rage that I could not control.

He called a policeman, and I desired nothing better than to have one between my hands just for one moment. I slackened my pace intentionally in order to give him an opportunity of overtaking me; but he did not come. Was there now any reason whatever that absolutely every one of one's most earnest and most persevering efforts should fail? Why, too, had I written 1848? In what way did that infernal date concern me? Here I was going about starving, so that my entrails wriggle together in me like worms, and it was, as far as I knew, not decreed in the book of fate that anything in the shape of food would turn up later on in the day.

I was becoming mentally and physically more and more prostrate; I was letting myself down each day to less and less honest actions, so that I lied on each day without blushing, cheated poor people out of their rent, struggled with the meanest thoughts of making away with other men's blankets—all without remorse or prick of conscience.

Foul places began to gather in my inner being, black spores which spread more and more. And up in Heaven God Almighty sat and kept a watchful eye on me, and took heed that my destruction proceeded in accordance with all the rules of art, uniformly and gradually, without a break in the measure.

But in the abysses of hell the angriest devils bristled with rage because it lasted such a long time until I committed a mortal sin, an unpardonable offence for which God in His justice must cast me—down. . . .

I quickened my pace, hurried faster and faster, turned suddenly to the left and found myself, excited and angry, in a light ornate doorway. I did not pause, not for one second, but the whole peculiar ornamentation of the entrance struck on my perception in a flash; every detail of the decoration and the tiling of the floor stood clear on my mental vision as I sprang up the stairs. I rang violently on the second floor. Why should I stop exactly on the second floor? And why just seize hold of this bell which was some little way from the stairs?

A young lady in a grey gown with black trimming came out and opened the door. She looked for a moment in astonishment at me, then shook her head and said:

"No, we have not got anything to-day," and she made a feint to close the door.

What induced me to thrust myself in this creature's way? She took me without further ado for a beggar.

I got cool and collected at once. I raised my hat, made a respectful bow, and, as if I had not caught her words, said, with the utmost politeness:

"I hope you will excuse me, madam, for ringing so hard, the bell was new to me. Is it not here that an invalid gentleman lives who has advertised for a man to wheel him about in a chair?"

She stood awhile and digested this mendacious invention, and seemed to be irresolute in her summing up of my person.

"No!" she said at length; "no, there is no invalid gentleman living here."

"Not really? An elderly gentleman—two hours a day—sixpence an hour?"

"No!"

"Ah! in that case, I again ask pardon," said I. "It is perhaps on the first floor. I only wanted, in any case, to recommend a man I know, in whom I am interested; my name is Wedel-Jarlsberg,* and I bowed again and drew back. The young lady blushed crimson, and in her embarrassment could not stir from the spot, but stood and stared after me as I descended the stairs.

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* The last family bearing title of nobility in Norway.

My calm had returned to me, and my head was clear. The lady's saying that she had nothing for me to-day had acted upon me like an icy shower. So it had gone so far with me that any one might point at me, and say to himself, "There goes a beggar—one of those people who get their food handed out to them at folk's back-doors!"

I halted outside an eating-house in Möller Street, and sniffed the fresh smell of meat roasting inside; my hand was already upon the door-handle, and I was on the point of entering, without any fixed purpose, when I bethought myself in time, and left the spot. On reaching the market, and seeking for a place to rest for a little, I found all the benches occupied, and I sought in vain all round outside the church for a quiet seat, where I could sit down.

Naturally. I told myself, gloomily—naturally, naturally; and I commenced to walk again. I took a turn round the fountain at the corner of the bazaar, and swallowed a mouthful of water. On again, dragging one foot after the other;

stopped for a long time before each shop window ; halted, and watched every vehicle that drove by. I felt a scorching heat in my head, and something pulsated strangely in my temples. The water I had drunk disagreed with me fearfully, and I retched, stopping here and there to escape being noticed in the open street. In this manner I came up to Our Saviour's Cemetery.

I sat down here, with my elbows on my knees and my head in my hands. In this cramped position I was more at ease, and I no longer felt the little gnawing in my chest.

A stone-cutter lay on his stomach on a large slab of granite, at the side of me, and cut inscriptions. He had blue spectacles on, and reminded me of an acquaintance of mine whom I had almost forgotten.

If I could only knock all shame on the head and apply to him. Tell him the truth right out, that things were getting awfully tight with me now ; ay, that I found it hard enough to keep alive. I could give him my shaving-tickets.

Zounds ! my shaving - tickets ; tickets for nearly a shilling. I search nervously for this precious treasure. As I do not find them quickly enough, I spring to my feet and search, in a sweat of fear. I discover them at last in the bottom of my breast-pocket, together with other papers—some clean, some written on—of no value.

I count these six tickets over many times, backwards and forwards; I had not much use for them; it might pass for a whim—a notion of mine—that I no longer cared to get shaved.

I was saved to the extent of sixpence—a white sixpence, of Kongsberg silver. The bank closed at six; I could watch for my man outside the Opland Café between seven and eight.

I sat, and was for a long time pleased with this thought. Time went. The wind blew lustily through the chestnut trees around me, and the day declined.

After all, was it not rather petty to come slinking up with six shaving-tickets to a young gentleman holding a good position in a bank? Perhaps he had already a book, maybe two, quite full of spick and span tickets, a contrast to the crumpled ones I held.

Who could tell? I felt in all my pockets for anything else I could let go with them, but found nothing. If I could only offer him my tie? I could well do without it if I buttoned my coat tightly up, which, by the way, I was already obliged to do, as I had no waistcoat. I untied it—it was a large overlapping bow which hid half my chest,—brushed it carefully, and folded it up in a piece of clean white writing-paper, together with the tickets. Then I left the churchyard and took the road leading to the Opland.

It was seven by the Town Hall clock. I walked up and down hard by the café, kept close to the iron railings, and kept a sharp watch on all who went in and came out of the door. At last, about eight o'clock, I saw the young fellow, fresh, elegantly dressed, coming up the hill and across to the café door. My heart fluttered like a little bird in my breast as I caught sight of him, and I blurted out, without even a greeting:

"Sixpence, old friend!" I said, putting on cheek; "here is the worth of it," and I thrust the little packet into his hand.

"Haven't got it," he exclaimed. "God knows if I have!" and he turned his purse inside out right before my eyes. "I was out last night and got totally cleared out! You must believe me, I literally haven't got it."

"No, no, my dear fellow; I suppose it is so," I answered, and I took his word for it. There was, indeed, no reason why he should lie about such a trifling matter. It struck me, too, that his blue eyes were moist whilst he ransacked his pockets and found nothing. I drew back. "Excuse me," I said; "it was only just that I was a bit hard up." I was already a piece down the street, when he called after me about the little packet. "Keep it! keep it," I answered; "you are welcome to it. There are only a few trifles in it—a bagatelle; about all I own in the world," and I became so touched at my own words, they sounded so pathetic in the twilight, and I fell a-weeping. . . .

The wind freshened, the clouds chased madly across the heavens, and it grew cooler and cooler as it got darker. I walked, and cried as I walked, down the whole street; felt more and more commiseration with myself, and repeated, time after time, a few words, an ejaculation, which called forth fresh tears whenever they were on the point of ceasing: "Lord God, I feel so wretched! Lord God, I feel so wretched!"

An hour passed; passed with such strange slowness, such weariness. I spent a long time in Market Street; sat on steps, stole into doorways, and when any one approached, stood and stared absently into the shops where people bustled about with wares or money. At last I found myself a sheltered place, behind a deal hoarding, between the church and the bazaar.

No; I couldn't go out into the wood again this evening. Things must take their course. I had not strength enough to go, and it was such an endless way there. I would kill the night as best I could, and remain where I was; if it got all too cold, well, I could walk round the church. I would not in any case worry myself any more about that, and I leant back and dozed.

The noise around me diminished; the shops closed. The steps of the pedestrians sounded more and more rarely, and in all the windows about the lights went out. I opened my eyes, and became aware of a figure standing in front of me. The flash of shining buttons told me it was a policeman, though I could not see the man's face.

"Good-night," he said.

"Good-night," I answered, and got afraid.

"Where do you live?" he queried.

I name, from habit and without thought, my old address, the little attic.

He stood for a while.

"Have I done anything wrong?" I asked, anxiously.

"No, not at all!" he replied; "but you had perhaps better be getting home now; it's cold lying here."

"Ay, that's true; I feel it is a little chilly." I said good-night, and instinctively took the road to my old abode. If I only set about it carefully, I might be able to get upstairs without being heard; there were eight steps in all, and only the two top ones creaked under my tread. Down at the door I took off my shoes, and ascended. It was quiet everywhere. I could hear the slow tick-tack of a clock, and a child crying a little. After that I heard nothing. I found my door, lifted the latch as I was accustomed to do, entered the room, and shut the door noiselessly after me.

Everything was as I had left it. The curtains were pulled aside from the windows, and the bed stood empty. I caught a glimpse of a note lying on the table; perhaps it was my note to the landlady—she might never have been up here since I went away.

I fumbled with my hands over the white spot, and felt, to my astonishment, that it was a letter. I take it over to the window, examine as well as it is possible in the dark the badly-written letters of the address, and make out at least my own name. Ah, I thought, an answer from my landlady, forbidding me to enter the room again if I were for sneaking back.

Slowly, quite slowly I left the room, carrying my shoes in one hand, the letter in the other, and the blanket under my arm. I draw myself up, set my teeth as I tread on the creaking steps, get happily down the stairs, and stand once more at the door. I put on my shoes, take my time with the laces, sit a while quietly after I'm ready, and stare vacantly before me, holding the letter in my hand. Then I get up and go.

The flickering ray of a gas lamp gleams up the street. I make straight for the light, lean my parcel against the lamp-post and open the letter. All this with the utmost deliberation. A stream of light, as it were, darts through my breast, and I hear that I give a little cry—a meaningless sound of joy. The letter was from the editor. My story was accepted—

had been set in type immediately, straight off! A few slight alterations. . . . A couple of errors in writing amended. . . . Worked out with talent . . . be printed to-morrow . . . half-a-sovereign.

I laughed and cried, took to jumping and running down the street, stopped, slapped my thighs, swore loudly and solemnly into space at nothing in particular. And time went.

All through the night until the bright dawn I "jodled" about the streets and repeated—"Worked out with talent—therefore a little masterpiece—a stroke of genius—and half-a-sovereign."

PART II

A FEW weeks later I was out one evening.

Once more I had sat out in a churchyard and worked at an article for one of the newspapers. But whilst I was struggling with it eight o'clock struck, and darkness closed in, and time for shutting the gates.

I was hungry — very hungry. The ten shillings had, worse luck, lasted all too short. It was now two, ay, nearly three days since I had eaten anything, and I felt somewhat faint; holding the pencil even had taxed me a little. I had half a penknife and a bunch of keys in my pocket, but not a farthing.

When the churchyard gate shut I meant to have gone straight home, but, from an instinctive dread of my room—a vacant tinker's workshop, where all was dark and barren, and which, in fact, I had got permission to occupy for the present—I stumbled on, passed, not caring where I went, the Town Hall, right to the sea, and over to a seat near the railway bridge.

At this moment not a sad thought troubled me. I forgot my distress, and felt calmed by the view of the sea, which lay peaceful and lovely in the murkiness. For old habit's sake I would please myself by reading through the bit I had just written, and which seemed to my suffering head the best thing I had ever done.

I took my manuscript out of my pocket to try and decipher it, held it close up to my eyes, and ran through it, one line after the other. At last I got tired, and put the papers back in my pocket. Everything was still. The sea stretched away in pearly blueness, and little birds flitted noiselessly by me from place to place.

A policeman patrols in the distance; otherwise there is not a soul visible, and the whole harbour is hushed in quiet.

I count my belongings once more—half a penknife, a bunch of keys, but not a farthing. Suddenly I dive into my pocket and take the papers out again. It was a mechanical movement, an unconscious nervous twitch. I selected a white unwritten page, and — God knows where I got the notion from—but I made a cornet, closed it carefully, so that it looked as if it were filled with something, and threw it far out on to the pavement. The breeze blew it onward a little, and then it lay still.

By this time hunger had begun to assail me in earnest. I sat and looked at the white paper cornet, which seemed as if it might be bursting with shining silver pieces, and incited myself to believe that it really did contain something. I sat and coaxed myself quite audibly to guess the sum ; if I guessed aright, it was to be mine.

I imagined the tiny, pretty penny bits at the bottom and the thick fluted shillings on top—a whole paper cornet full of money! I sat and gazed at it with wide opened eyes, and urged myself to go and steal it.

Then I hear the constable cough. What puts it into my head to do the same? I rise up from the seat and repeat the cough three times so that he may hear it. Won't he jump at the cornet when he comes. I sat and laughed at this trick, rubbed my hands with glee, and swore with rollicking recklessness. What a disappointment he will get, the dog! Wouldn't this piece of villainy make him inclined to sink into hell's hottest pool of torment! I was drunk with starvation; my hunger had made me tipsy.

A few minutes later the policeman comes by, clinking his iron heels on the pavement, peering on all sides. He takes his time; he has the whole night before him; he does not notice the paper bag—not till he comes quite close to it. Then he stops and stares at it. It looks so white and so full as it lies there; perhaps a little sum—what? A little sum of silver money? . . . and he picks it up. Hum . . . it is light—very light; maybe an expensive feather; some hat trimming. . . . He opened it carefully with his big hands, and looked in. I laughed, laughed, slapped my thighs, and laughed like a maniac. And not a sound issued from my throat; my laughter was hushed and feverish to the intensity of tears.

Clink, clink again over the paving-stones, and the policeman took a turn towards the landing-stage. I sat there, with tears in my eyes, and hiccoughed for breath, quite beside myself with feverish merriment. I commenced to talk aloud, related to myself all about the cornet, imitated the poor policeman's movements, peeped into my hollow hand, and repeated over and over again to myself, "He coughed as he threw it away—he coughed as he threw it away." I added new words to these, gave them additional point, changed the whole sentence, and made it catching and piquant. He coughed once—Kheu heu!

I exhausted myself in weaving variations on these words, and the evening was far advanced before my mirth ceased. Then a drowsy quiet overcame me; a pleasant languor which I did not attempt to resist. The darkness had intensified, and a slight breeze furrowed the pearl-blue sea. The ships, the masts of which I could see outlined against the sky, looked with their black hulls like voiceless monsters that bristled and lay in wait for me. I had no pain—my hunger had taken the edge off it. In its stead I felt pleasantly empty, untouched by everything around me, and glad not to be noticed by any one. I put my feet up on the seat and leant back. Thus I could best appreciate the well-being of perfect isolation. There was not a cloud on my mind, not a feeling of discomfort, and, so far as my thought reached, I had not a whim, not a desire unsatisfied. I lay with open eyes, in a state of utter absence of mind. I felt myself charmed away. Moreover, not a sound disturbed me.

Soft darkness had hidden the whole world from my sight, and buried me in ideal rest. Only the lonely, crooning voice of silence strikes in monotones on my ear, and the dark monsters out there will draw me to them when night comes, and they will bear me far across the sea, through strange lands where no man dwells, and they will bear me to Princess Ylajali's palace, where an undreamt of grandeur awaits me, greater than that of any other man. And she herself will be sitting in a dazzling hall where all is of amethyst, on a throne of yellow roses, and will stretch out her hands to me when I alight; will smile and call as I approach and kneel: "Welcome, welcome, knight, to me and my land! I have waited twenty summers for you, and called for you on all bright nights. And when you sorrowed I have wept here, and when you slept I have breathed sweet dreams in you!" . . . And the fair one clasps my hand and, holding it, leads me through long corridors where great crowds of people cry, "Hurrah!" through bright gardens where three hundred tender maidens laugh and play; and through another hall where all is of emerald; and here the sun shines.

In the corridors and galleries choirs of musicians march by, and rills of perfume are wafted towards me.

I clasp her hand in mine; I feel the wild witchery of enchantment shiver through my blood, and I fold my arms around her, and she whispers, "Not here; come yet farther!" and we enter a crimson room, where all is of ruby, a foaming glory, in which I faint.

Then I feel her arms encircle me; her breath fans my face with a whispered "Welcome, loved one! Kiss me . . . more . . . more. . . ."

I see from my seat stars shooting before my eyes, and my thoughts are swept away in a hurricane of light. . . .

I had fallen asleep where I lay, and was awakened by the policeman. There I sat, recalled mercilessly to life and misery. My first feeling was of stupid amazement at finding myself in the open air; but this was quickly replaced by a bitter despondency. I was near crying with sorrow at being still alive. It had rained whilst I slept, and my clothes were soaked through and through, and I felt a damp cold in my limbs.

The darkness was denser; it was with

difficulty that I could distinguish the policeman's face in front of me.

"So, that's right," he said; "get up now."

I got up at once; if he had commanded me to lie down again I would have obeyed too. I was fearfully dejected, and utterly without strength; added to that, I was almost instantly aware of the pangs of hunger again.

"Hold on there!" the policeman shouted after me; "why, you're walking off without your hat, you Juggins! So—h there; now, go on."

"I indeed thought there was something—something I had forgotten," I stammered, absently. "Thanks, good-night!" and I stumbled away.

If one only had a little bread to eat; one of those delicious little brown loaves that one could bite into as one walked along the street; and as I went on I thought over the particular sort of brown bread that would be so unspeakably good to munch. I was bitterly hungry; wished myself dead and buried; I got maudlin, and wept.

There never was any end to my misery. Suddenly I stopped in the street, stamped on the pavement, and cursed loudly. What was it he called me? A "Juggins"? I would just show him what calling me a "Juggins" means. I turned round and ran back. I felt red-hot with anger. Down the street I stumbled, and fell, but I paid no heed to it, jumped up again, and ran on. But by the time I reached the railway station I had become so tired that I did not feel able to proceed all the way to the landing-stage; besides, my anger had cooled down with the run. At length I pulled up and drew breath. Was it not, after all, a matter of perfect indifference to me what such a policeman said? Yes; but one couldn't stand everything. Right enough, I interrupted myself; but he knew no better. And I found this argument satisfactory. I repeated twice to myself, "He knew no better"; and with that I returned again.

"Good Lord!" thought I, wrathfully, "what things you do take into your head: running about like a madman through the soaking wet streets on dark nights." My hunger was now tormenting me excruciatingly, and gave me no rest. Again and again I swallowed saliva to try and satisfy myself a little; I fancied it helped.

I had been pinched, too, for food for ever so many weeks before this last period set in, and my strength had diminished considerably of late. When I had been lucky enough to raise five shillings by some manœuvre or another they only lasted any time with difficulty; not long enough for me to be restored to health before a new hunger period set in and reduced me again. My back and shoulders caused me the worst trouble. I could stop the little gnawing I had in my chest by coughing hard, or bending well forward as I walked, but I had no remedy for back and shoulders. Whatever was the reason that things would not brighten up for me? Was I not just as much entitled to live as anyone else? for example, as Bookseller Pascha or Steam Agent Hennechen? Had I not two shoulders like a giant, and two strong hands to work with? and had I not, in sooth, even applied for a place as wood-chopper in Möllergaden in order to earn my daily bread? Was I lazy? Had I not applied for situations, attended lectures, written articles, and worked day and night like a man possessed? Had I not lived like a miser, eaten bread and milk when I had plenty, bread alone when I had little, and starved when I had nothing? Did I live in an hotel? Had I a suite of rooms on the first floor? Why, I am living in a loft over a tinker's workshop, a loft already forsaken by God and man last winter, because the snow blew in. So I could not understand the whole thing; not a bit of it.

I slouched on, and dwelt upon all this, and there was not as much as a spark of bitterness or malice or envy in my mind.

I halted at a paint-shop and gazed into the window. I tried to read the labels on a couple of the tins, but it was too dark. Vexed with myself over this new whim, and excited—almost angry at not being able to make out what these tins held,—I rapped twice sharply on the window and went on.

Up the street I saw a policeman. I quickened my pace, went close up to him, and said, without the slightest provocation, "It is ten o'clock."

"No, it's two," he answered, amazed.

"No, it's ten," I persisted; "it is ten o'clock!" and, groaning with anger, I stepped yet a pace or two nearer, clenched my fist, and said, "Listen, do you know what, it's ten o'clock!"

He stood and considered a while, summed up my appearance, stared aghast at me, and at last said, quite gently, "In any case, it's about time ye were getting home. Would ye like me to go with ye a bit?"

I was completely disarmed by this man's unexpected friendliness. I felt that tears sprang up to my eyes, and I hastened to reply:

"No, thank you! I have only been out a little too late in a café. Thank you very much all the same!"

He saluted with his hand to his helmet as I turned away. His friendliness had overwhelmed me, and I cried weakly, because I had not even a little coin to give him.

I halted, and looked after him as he went slowly on his way. I struck my forehead, and, in measure, as he disappeared from my sight, I cried more violently.

I railed at myself for my poverty, called myself abusive names, invented furious designations—rich, rough nuggets—in a vein of abuse with which I overwhelmed myself. I kept on at this until I was nearly home. On coming to the door I discovered I had dropped my keys.

"Oh, of course," I muttered to myself, "why shouldn't I lose my keys? Here I am, living in a yard where there is a stable underneath and a tinker's workshop up above. The door is locked at night, and no one, no one can open it; therefore, why should I not lose my keys?

"I am as wet as a dog—a little hungry—oh, just ever such a little hungry, and slightly, ay, absurdly tired about my knees; therefore, why should I not lose them?

"Why, for that matter, had not the whole house flitted out to Aker by the time I came home and wished to enter it?" . . . and I laughed to myself, hardened by hunger and exhaustion.

I could hear the horses stamp in the stables, and I could see my window above, but I could not open the door, and I could not get in.

It had begun to rain again, and I felt the water soak through to my shoulders. At the Town Hall I was seized by a bright idea. I would ask the policeman to open the door. I applied at once to a constable, and earnestly begged him to accompany me and let me in, if he could.

Yes, if he could, yes! But he couldn't; he had no key. The police keys were not there; they were kept in the Detective Department.

What was I to do then?

Well, I could go to an hotel and get a bed! But I really couldn't go to an hotel and get a bed; I had no money, I had been out—in a café . . . he knew . . .

We stood a while on the Town Hall steps. He considered and examined my personal appearance. The rain fell in torrents outside.

"Well then, you must go to the guard-house and report yourself as homeless!" said he.

Homeless? I hadn't thought of that. Yes, by Jove, that was a capital idea; and I thanked the constable on the spot for the suggestion. Could I simply go in and say I was homeless?

"Just that." . . .

. . . .

"Your name?" inquired the guard.

"Tangen—Andreas Tangen!"

I don't know why I lied; my thoughts fluttered about disconnectedly and inspired me with many singular whims, more than I knew what to do with. I hit upon this out-of-the-way name on the spur of the moment, and blurted it out without any calculation. I lied without any occasion for doing so.

"Occupation?"

This was driving me into a corner with a vengeance. Occupation! what was my occupation? I thought first of turning myself into a tinker—but I dared not; firstly, I had given myself a name that was not common to every and any tinker — besides, I wore *pince-nez*. It suddenly entered my head to be foolhardy. I took a step forward and said firmly, almost solemnly:

"A journalist."

The guard gave a start before he wrote it down, whilst I stood as important as a homeless Cabinet Minister before the barrier. It roused no suspicions. The guard understood quite well why I hesitated a little before answering. What did it look like to see a journalist in the night guard-house without a roof over his head?

"On what paper, Herr Tangen?"

"*Morgenbladet!*" said I. "I have been out a little too late this evening, more's the shame!"

"Oh, we won't mention that," he interrupted, with a smile; "when young people are out . . . we understand!"

Turning to a policeman, he said, as he rose and bowed politely to me, "Show this gentleman up to the reserved section. Good-night!"

I felt ice run down my back at my own

boldness, and I clenched my hands to steady myself a bit. If I only hadn't dragged in the *Morgenbladet.* I knew Friele could show his teeth when he liked, and I was reminded of that by the grinding of the key turning in the lock.

"The gas will burn for ten minutes," remarked the policeman at the door.

"And then does it go out?"

"Then it goes out!"

I sat on the bed and listened to the turning of the key. The bright cell had a friendly air; I felt comfortably and well sheltered; and listened with pleasure to the rain outside—I couldn't wish myself anything better than such a cosy cell. My contentment increased. Sitting on the bed, hat in hand, and with eyes fastened on the gas jet over in the wall, I gave myself up to thinking over the minutes of my first interview with the police. This was the first time, and how hadn't I fooled them? "Journalist!—Tangen! if you please! and then *Morgenbladet!*" Didn't I appeal straight to his heart with *Morgenbladet?* "We won't mention that! Eh? Sat in state in the Stiftsgaarden till two o'clock; forgot door-key and a pocket-book with a thousand kroner at home. Show this gentleman up to the reserved section!" . . .

All at once out goes the gas with a strange suddenness, without diminishing or flickering.

I sit in the deepest darkness; I cannot see my hand, nor the white walls—nothing. There was nothing for it but to go to bed, and I undressed.

But I was not tired from want of sleep, and it would not come to me. I lay a while gazing into the darkness, this dense mass of gloom that had no bottom—my thoughts could not fathom it.

It seemed beyond all measure dense to me, and I felt its presence oppress me. I closed my eyes, commenced to sing half under my breath, and tossed to and fro, in order to distract myself, but to no purpose. The darkness had taken possession of my thoughts and left me not a moment in peace. Supposing I were myself to be absorbed in darkness; made one with it?

I raise myself up in bed and fling out my arms. My nervous condition has got the upper hand of me, and nothing availed, no matter how much I tried to work against it. There I sat, a prey to the most singular fantasies, listening to myself crooning lullabies, sweating with the exertion of striving to hush myself to rest. I peered into the gloom, and I never in all the days of my life felt such darkness. There was no doubt that I found myself here, in face of a peculiar kind of darkness; a desperate element to which no one had hitherto paid attention. The most ludicrous thoughts busied me, and everything made me afraid.

A little hole in the wall at the head of my bed occupies me greatly—a nail hole. I find the marks in the wall—I feel it, blow into it, and try to guess its depth. That was no innocent hole—not at all. It was a downright intricate and mysterious hole, which I must guard against! Possessed by the thought of this hole, entirely beside myself with curiosity and fear, I get out of bed and seize hold of my half penknife in order to gauge its depth, and convince myself that it does not reach right into the next wall.

I lay down once more to try and fall asleep, but in reality to wrestle again with the darkness. The rain had ceased outside, and I could not hear a sound. I continued for a long time to listen for footsteps in the street, and got no peace until I heard a pedestrian go by—to judge from the sound, a constable. Suddenly I snap my fingers many times and laugh: "That was the very deuce! Ha—ha!" I imagined I had discovered a new word. I rise up in bed and say, "It is not in the language; I have discovered it. 'Kuboa.' It has letters as a word has. By the benign God, man, you have discovered a word! . . . 'Kuboa' . . . a word of profound import."

I sit with open eyes, amazed at my own find, and laugh for joy. Then I begin to whisper; some one might spy on me, and I intended to keep my discovery secret. I entered into the joyous frenzy of hunger. I was empty and free from pain, and I gave free rein to my thoughts.

In all calmness I revolve things in my mind. With the most singular jerks in my chain of ideas I seek to explain the meaning of my new word. There was no occasion for it to mean either God or the Tivoli;* and who said that it was to signify cattle show? I clench my hands fiercely, and repeat once again, "Who said that it was to signify cattle show?" No; on second thoughts, it was not absolutely necessary that it should mean padlock, or sunrise. It was not difficult to find a meaning for such a word as this. I would wait and see. In the meantime I could sleep on it.

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* Theatre of Varieties, etc., and Garden in Christiania.

I lie there on the stretcher-bed and laugh slily, but say nothing; give vent to no opinion one way or the other. Some minutes pass over, and I wax nervous; this new word torments me unceasingly, returns again and again, takes up my thoughts, and makes me serious. I had fully formed an opinion as to what it should *not* signify, but had come to no conclusion as to what it should signify. "That is quite a matter of detail," I said aloud to myself, and I clutched my arm and reiterated: "That is quite a matter of detail." The word was found, God be praised! and that was the principal thing. But ideas worry me without end and hinder me from falling asleep. Nothing seemed good enough to me for this unusually rare word. At length I sit up in bed again, grasp my head in both hands, and say, "No! it is just this, it is impossible to let it signify emigration or tobacco factory. If it could have meant anything like that I would have decided upon it long since and taken the consequences." No; in reality the word is fitted to signify something psychical, a feeling, a state. Could I not apprehend it? and I reflect profoundly in order to find something psychical. Then it seems to me that someone is interposing, interrupting my confab. I answer angrily, "Beg pardon! Your match in idiotcy is not to be found; no, sir! Knitting cotton? Ah! go to hell!" Well, really I had to laugh. Might I ask why should I be forced to let it signify knitting cotton, when I had a special dislike to its signifying knitting cotton? I had discovered the word myself, so, for that matter, I was perfectly within my right in letting it signify whatsoever I pleased. As far as I was aware, I had not yet expressed an opinion as to . . .

But my brain got more and more confused. At last I sprang out of bed to look for the water-tap. I was not thirsty, but my head was in a fever, and I felt an instinctive longing for water. When I had drunk some I got into bed again, and determined with all my might to settle to sleep. I closed my eyes and forced myself to keep quiet. I lay thus for some minutes without making a movement. I sweated and felt my blood jerk violently through my veins. No, it was really too delicious the way he thought to find money in the paper cornet! He only coughed once, too! I wonder if he is pacing up and down there yet! Sitting on my bench? the pearly blue sea . . . the ships . . .

I opened my eyes; how could I keep them shut when I could not sleep? The same darkness brooded over me; the same unfathomable black eternity which my thoughts strove against and could not understand. I made the most despairing efforts to find a word black enough to characterise this darkness; a word so horribly black that it would darken my lips if I named it. Lord! how dark it was! and I am carried back in thought to the sea and the dark monsters that lay in wait for me. They would draw me to them, and clutch me tightly and bear me away by land and sea, through dark realms that no soul has seen. I feel myself on board, drawn through waters, hovering in clouds, sinking—sinking.

I give a hoarse cry of terror, clutch the bed tightly—I had made such a perilous journey, whizzing down through space like a bolt. Oh, did I not feel that I was saved as

I struck my hands against the wooden frame! "This is the way one dies!" said I to myself. "Now you will die!" and I lay for a while and thought over that I was to die.

Then I start up in bed and ask severely, "If I found the word, am I not absolutely within my right to decide myself what it is to signify?" . . I could hear myself that I was raving; I could hear it now whilst I was talking. My madness was a delirium of weakness and prostration, but I was not out of my senses. All at once the thought darted through my brain that I was insane. Seized with terror, I spring out of bed again, I stagger to the door, which I try to open, fling myself against it a couple of times to burst it, strike my head against the wall, bewail loudly, bite my fingers, cry and curse . . .

All was quiet; only my own voice echoed from the walls. I had fallen to the floor, incapable of stumbling about the cell any longer.

Lying there I catch a glimpse, high up, straight before my eyes, of a greyish square in the wall, a suggestion of white, a presage—it must be of daylight. I felt it must be daylight, felt it through every pore in my body. Oh, did I not draw a breath of delighted relief! I flung myself flat on the floor and cried for very joy over this blessed glimpse of light, sobbed for very gratitude, blew a kiss to the window, and conducted myself like a maniac. And at this moment I was perfectly conscious of what I was doing. All my dejection had vanished; all despair and pain had ceased, and I had at this moment, at least as far as my thought reached, not a wish unfulfilled. I sat up on the floor, folded my hands, and waited patiently for the dawn.

What a night this had been!

That they had not heard any noise! I thought with astonishment. But then I was in the reserved section, high above all the prisoners. A homeless Cabinet Minister, if I might say so.

Still in the best of humours, with eyes turned towards the lighter, ever lighter square in the wall, I amused myself acting Cabinet Minister; called myself Von Tangen, and clothed my speech in a dress of red-tape. My fancies had not ceased, but I was far less nervous. If I only had not been thoughtless enough to leave my pocket-book at home! Might I not have the honour of assisting his Right Honourable the Prime Minister to bed? And in all seriousness, and with much ceremony I went over to the stretcher and lay down.

By this it was so light that I could distinguish in some degree the outlines of the cell and, little by little, the heavy handle of the door. This diverted me; the monotonous darkness so irritating in its impenetrability that it prevented me from seeing myself was broken; my blood flowed more quietly; I soon felt my eyes close.

I was aroused by a couple of knocks on my door. I jumped up in all haste, and clad myself hurriedly; my clothes were still wet through from last night.

"You'll report yourself downstairs to the officer on duty," said the constable.

Were there more formalities to be gone through, then? I thought with fear.

Below I entered a large room, where thirty or forty people sat, all homeless. They were called up one by one by the registering clerk, and one by one they received a ticket for breakfast. The officer on duty repeated constantly to the policeman at his side, "Did he get a ticket? Don't forget to give them tickets; they look as if they want a meal!"

And I stood and looked at these tickets, and wished I had one.

"Andreas Tangen—journalist."

I advanced and bowed.

"But, my dear fellow, how did you come here?"

I explained the whole state of the case, repeated the same story as last night, lied without winking, lied with frankness—had been out rather late, worse luck . . . café . . . lost door-key . . .

"Yes," he said, and he smiled; "that's the way! Did you sleep well then?"

I answered, "Like a Cabinet Minister—like a Cabinet Minister!"

"I am glad to hear it," he said, and he stood up. "Good-morning."

And I went!

A ticket! a ticket for me too! I have not eaten for more than three long days and nights. A loaf! But no one offered me a ticket, and I dared not demand one. It would have roused suspicion at once. They would begin to poke their noses into my private affairs, and discover who I really was; they might arrest me for false pretences; and so, with elevated head, the carriage of a millionaire, and hands thrust under my coat-tails, I stride out of the guard-house.

The sun shone warmly, early as it was. It was ten o'clock, and the traffic in Young's Market was in full swing. Which way should I take? I slapped my pockets and felt for my manuscript. At eleven I would try and see the editor. I stand a while on the balustrade, and watch the bustle under me. Meanwhile, my clothes commenced to steam. Hunger put in its appearance afresh, gnawed at my breast, clutched me, and gave small, sharp stabs that caused me pain.

Had I not a friend—an acquaintance whom I could apply to? I ransack my memory to find a man good for a penny piece, and fail to find him.

Well, it was a lovely day, anyway! Sunlight bright and warm surrounded me. The sky stretched away like a beautiful sea over the Lier mountains.

Without knowing it, I was on my way home. I hungered sorely. I found a chip of wood in the street to chew—that helped a bit. To think that I hadn't thought of that sooner!

The door was open; the stable-boy bade me good-morning as usual.

"Fine weather," said he.

"Yes," I replied. That was all I found to say. Could I ask for the loan of a shilling? He would be sure to lend it willingly if he could; besides that, I had written a letter for him once.

He stood and turned something over in his mind before he ventured on saying it.

"Fine weather! Ahem! I ought to pay my landlady to-day; you wouldn't be so kind as to lend me five shillings, would you? Only for a few days, sir. You did me a service once before, so you did."

"No; I really can't do it, Jens Olaj," I answered. "Not now—perhaps later on, maybe in the afternooon," and I staggered up the stairs to my room.

I flung myself on my bed, and laughed. How confoundedly lucky it was that he had forestalled me; my self-respect was saved. Five shillings! God bless you, man, you might just as well have asked me for five shares in the Dampkökken, or an estate out in Aker.

And the thought of these five shillings made me laugh louder and louder. Wasn't I a devil of a fellow, eh? Five shillings! My mirth increased, and I gave way to it. Ugh! what a shocking smell of cooking there was here—a downright disgustingly strong smell of chops for dinner, phew! and I flung open the window to let out this beastly smell. "Waiter, a plate of beef!" Turning to the table—this miserable table that I was forced to support with my knees when I wrote—I bowed profoundly, and said:

"May I ask will you take a glass of wine? No? I am Tangen — Tangen, the Cabinet Minister. I—more's the pity — I was out a little late . . . the door-key." Once more my thoughts ran without rein in intricate paths. I was continually conscious that I talked at random, and yet I gave utterance to no word without hearing and understanding it. I said to myself, "Now you are talking at random again," and yet I could not help myself. It was as if one were lying awake, and yet talking in one's sleep.

My head was light, without pain and without pressure, and my mood was unshadowed. It sailed away with me, and I made no effort.

"Come in! Yes, only come right in! As

you see, everything is of ruby—Ylajali, Ylajali! that swelling crimson silken divan! Ah, how passionately she breathes. Kiss me—loved one—more—more! Your arms are like pale amber, your mouth blushes. . . . Waiter, I asked for a plate of beef!"

The sun gleamed in through the window, and I could hear the horses below chewing oats. I sat and mumbled over my chip gaily, glad at heart as a child.

I kept all the time feeling for my manuscript. It wasn't really in my thoughts, but instinct told me it was there—'twas in my blood to remember it, and I took it out.

It had got wet, and I spread it out in the sun to dry; then I took to wandering up and down the room. How depressing everything looked! Small scraps of tin shavings were trodden into the floor; there was not a chair to sit upon, not even a nail in the bare walls. Everything had been brought to my "Uncle's," and consumed. A few sheets of paper lying on the table, covered with thick dust, were my sole possession; the old green blanket on the bed was lent to me by Hans Pauli some months ago. . . . Hans Pauli! I snap my fingers. Hans Pauli

Pettersen shall help me! He would certainly be very angry that I had not appealed to him at once. I put on my hat in haste, gather up the manuscript, thrust it into my pocket, and hurry downstairs.

"Listen, Jens Olaj!" I called into the stable, "I am nearly certain I can help you in the afternoon."

Arrived at the Town Hall I saw that it was past eleven, and I determined on going to the editor at once. I stopped outside the office door to see if my sheets were paged rightly, smoothed them carefully out, put them back in my pocket, and knocked. My heart beat audibly as I entered.

"Scissors" is there as usual. I inquire timorously for the editor. No answer. The man sits and probes for minor items of news amongst the provincial papers.

I repeat my question, and advance a little farther.

"The editor has not come yet!" said "Scissors" at length, without looking up.

How soon would he come?

"Couldn't say—couldn't say at all!"

How long would the office be open?

To this I received no answer, so I was

forced to leave. "Scissors" had not once looked up at me during all this scene; he had heard my voice, and recognised me by it. You are in such bad odour here, thought I, that he doesn't even take the trouble to answer you. I wonder if that is an order of the editor's. I had, 'tis true enough, right from the day my celebrated story was accepted for ten shillings, overwhelmed him with work, rushed to his door nearly every day with unsuitable things that he was obliged to peruse only to return them to me. Perhaps he wished to put an end to this—take stringent measures. . . . I took the road to Homandsbyen.

Hans Pauli Pettersen was a peasant-farmer's son, a student, living in the attic of a five-storeyed house; therefore, Hans Pauli Pettersen was a poor man. But if he had a shilling he wouldn't stint it. I would get it just as sure as if I already held it in my hand. And I rejoiced the whole time, as I went, over the shilling, and felt confident I would get it.

When I got to the street door it was closed and I had to ring.

"I want to see Student Pettersen," I said, and was about to step inside. "I know his room."

"Student Pettersen," repeats the girl. "Was it he who had the attic?" He had moved.

Well, she didn't know the address; but he had asked his letters to be sent to Hermansen in Tolbodgaden, and she mentioned the number.

I go, full of trust and hope, all the way to Tolbodgaden to ask Hans Pauli's address; being my last chance, I must turn it to account. On the way I came to a newly-built house, where a couple of joiners stood planing outside. I picked up a few satiny shavings from the heap, stuck one in my mouth, and the other in my pocket for by-and-by, and continued my journey.

I groaned with hunger. I had seen a marvellously large penny loaf at a baker's—the largest I could possibly get for the price.

"I come to find out Student Pettersen's address!"

"Bernt Akers Street, No. 10, in the attic." Was I going out there? Well, would I perhaps be kind enough to take out a couple of letters that had come for him?

I trudge up town again, along the same road, pass by the joiners — who are sitting with their cans between their knees, eating their good warm dinner from the Dampkökken —pass the bakers, where the loaf is still in its place, and at length reach Bernt Akers Street, half dead with fatigue. The door is open, and I mount all the weary stairs to the attic. I take the letters out of my pocket in order to put Hans Pauli into a good humour on the moment of my entrance.

He would be certain not to refuse to give me a helping hand when I explained how things were with me; no, certainly not; Hans Pauli had such a big heart—I had always said that of him. . . . I discovered his card fastened to the door—"H. P. Pettersen, Theological Student, 'gone home.'"

I sat down without more ado—sat down on the bare floor, dulled with fatigue, fairly beaten with exhaustion. I mechanically mutter, a couple of times, "Gone home — gone home!" then I keep perfectly quiet. There was not a tear in my eyes; I had not a thought, not a feeling of any kind. I sat and stared, with wide-open eyes, at the letters, without coming to any conclusion. Ten minutes went over—perhaps twenty or more. I sat stolidly on the one spot, and did not move a finger. This numb feeling of drowsiness was almost like a brief slumber. I hear someone come up the stairs.

"It was Student Pettersen, I . . . I have two letters for him."

"He has gone home," replies the woman; "but he will return after the holidays. I could take the letters if you like!"

"Yes, thanks! that was all right," said I. "He could get them then when he came back; they might contain matters of importance. Good-morning."

When I got outside, I came to a standstill and said loudly in the open street, as I clenched my hands: "I will tell you one thing, my good Lord God, you are a bungler!" and I nod furiously, with set teeth, up to the clouds; "I will be hanged if you are not a bungler."

Then I took a few strides, and stopped again. Suddenly, changing my attitude, I fold my hands, hold my head on one side, and ask, with an unctuous, sanctimonious tone of voice: "Hast thou appealed also to him, my child?" It did not sound right!

With a large H, I say, with an H as big as a cathedral! once again, "Hast thou invoked Him, my child?" and I incline my head, and I make my voice whine, and answer, No!

That didn't sound right either.

You can't play the hypocrite, you idiot! Yes, you should say, I have invoked God my Father! and you must set your words to the most piteous tune you have ever heard in your life. So—o! Once again! Come, that was better! But you must sigh like a horse down with the colic. So—o! that 's right. Thus I go, drilling myself in hypocrisy; stamp impatiently in the street when I fail to succeed; rail at myself for being such a blockhead, whilst the astonished passers-by turn round and stare at me.

I chewed uninterruptedly at my shaving, and proceeded, as steadily as I could, along the street. Before I realised it, I was at the railway square. The clock on Our Saviour's pointed to half-past one. I stood for a bit and considered. A faint sweat forced itself out on my face, and trickled down my eyelids. Accompany me down to the bridge, said I to myself—that is to say, if you have spare time! —and I made a bow to myself, and turned towards the railway bridge near the wharf.

The ships lay there, and the sea rocked in the sunshine. There was bustle and movement everywhere, shrieking steam-whistles, quay porters with cases on their shoulders, lively "shanties" coming from the prams. An old woman, a vendor of cakes, sits near me, and bends her brown nose down over her wares. The little table before her is sinfully full of nice things, and I turn away with distaste. She is filling the whole quay with her smell of cakes—phew! up with the windows!

I accosted a gentleman sitting at my side, and represented forcibly to him the nuisance of having cake-sellers here, cake-sellers there. . . . Eh? Yes; but he must really admit that. . . . But the good man smelt a rat, and did not give me time to finish speaking, for he got up and left. I rose, too, and followed him, firmly determined to convince him of his mistake.

"If it was only out of consideration for sanitary conditions," said I; and I slapped him on the shoulders.

"Excuse me, I am a stranger here, and know nothing of the sanitary conditions," he replied, and stared at me with positive fear.

Oh, that alters the case! if he was a stranger. . . . Could I not render him a service in any way? show him about? Really not? because it would be a pleasure to me, and it would cost him nothing. . . .

But the man wanted absolutely to get rid of me, and he sheered off, in all haste, to the other side of the street.

I returned to the bench and sat down. I was fearfully disturbed, and the big street organ that had begun to grind a tune a little farther away made me still worse—a regular metallic music, a fragment of Weber, to which a little girl is singing a mournful strain. The flute-like sorrowfulness of the organ thrills through my blood; my nerves vibrate in responsive echo. A moment later, and I fall back on the seat, whimpering and crooning in time to it.

Oh, what strange freaks one's thoughts are guilty of when one is starving. I feel myself lifted up by these notes, dissolved in tones, and I float out, I feel so clearly. How I float out, soaring high above the mountains, dancing through zones of light! . . .

"A halfpenny," whines the little organ-girl, reaching forth her little tin plate; "only a halfpenny."

"Yes," I said, unthinkingly, and I sprang to my feet and ransacked all my pockets. But the child thinks I only want to make fun of her, and she goes away at once without saying a word.

This dumb forbearance was too much for me. If she had abused me, it would have been more endurable. I was stung with pain, and recalled her.

"I don't possess a farthing; but I will remember you later on, maybe to-morrow. What is your name? Yes, that is a pretty name; I won't forget it. Till to-morrow, then. . . ."

But I understood quite well that she did not believe me, although she never said one word; and I cried with despair because this little street wench would not believe in me.

Once again I called her back, tore open my coat, and was about to give her my waistcoat. "I will make up to you for it," said I; "wait only a moment" . . . and lo! I had no waistcoat.

What in the world made me look for it? Weeks had gone by since it was in my possession. What was the matter with me, anyway? The astonished child waited no longer, but withdrew fearsomely, and I was compelled to let her go. People throng round me and laugh aloud, and a policeman thrusts his way through to me, and wants to know what is the row.

"Nothing!" I reply, "nothing at all; I only wanted to give the little girl over there my waistcoat . . . for her father . . . you needn't stand there and laugh at that . . . I have only to go home and put on another."

"No disturbance in the street," says the constable; "so, march," and he gives me a shove on.

"Is them your papers?" he calls after me.

"Yes, by Jove! my newspaper leader; many important papers? How ever could I be so careless?" I snatch up my manuscript, convince myself that it is lying in order, and go, without stopping a second or looking about me, towards the editor's office.

It was now four by the clock of Our Saviour's Church. The office is shut. I steal noiselessly down the stairs, frightened as a thief, and stand irresolutely outside the door. What should I do now? I lean up against the wall, stare down at the stones, and consider. A pin is lying glistening at my feet; I stoop and pick it up. Supposing I were to cut the buttons off my coat, how much could I get for them? Perhaps it would be no use, though buttons are buttons; but yet, I look and examine them, and find them as good as new—that was a lucky idea all the same; I could cut them off with my penknife and take them to the pawn-office. The hope of being able to sell these five buttons cheered me immediately, and I cried, "See, see; it will all come right!" My delight got the upper hand of me, and I at once set to to cut off the buttons one by one. Whilst thus occupied, I held the following hushed soliloquy:—

Yes, you see one has become a little impoverished; a momentary embarrassment . . . worn out, do you say? You must not make slips when you speak. I would like to see the person who wears out less buttons than I do, I can tell you? I always go with my coat open; it is a habit of mine, an idiosyncrasy. . . . No, no; of course, if you *won't*, well! But I must have a penny for them, at the least. . . . No indeed! who said you were obliged to do it? You can hold your tongue, and leave me in peace. . . . Yes, well, you can fetch a policeman, can't you? I'll wait here whilst you are out looking for him, and I won't steal anything from you. Well, good-day! Good-day! My name, by the way, is Tangen; have been out a little late. . . .

Some one comes up the stairs. I am

recalled at once to reality. I recognise "Scissors," and put the buttons carefully into my pocket. He attempts to pass; doesn't even acknowledge my nod; is suddenly intently busied with his nails. I stop him, and inquire for the editor.

"Not in, do you hear."

"You lie," I said, and, with a cheek that fairly amazed myself, I continued, "I must have a word with him; it is a necessary errand—communications from the Stiftsgaarden.*

"Well, can't you tell me what it is, then?"

"Tell you?" and I looked "Scissors" up and down. This had the desired effect. He accompanied me at once, and opened the door. My heart was in my mouth now; I set my teeth, to try and revive my courage, knocked, and entered the editor's private office.

"Good-day! Is it you?" he asked, kindly; "sit down."

If he had shown me the door it would have been almost as acceptable. I felt as if I were on the point of crying, and said:

"I beg you will excuse . . ."

"Pray, sit down," he repeated. And I sat down, and explained that I again had an article which I was extremely anxious to get into his paper. I had taken such pains with it; it had cost me much effort.

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* Dwelling of the civil governor of a Stift or diocese.

"I will read it," said he, and he took it. "Everything you write is certain to cost you effort, but you are far too impetuous; if you could only be a little more sober. There's too much fever. In the meantime, I will read it," and he turned to the table again.

There I sat. Dared I ask for a shilling? explain to him why there was always fever? He would be sure to aid me; it was not the first time.

I stood up. Hum! But the last time I was with him he had complained about money, and had sent a messenger out to scrape some together for me. Maybe it might be the same case now. No; it should not occur! Could I not see then that he was sitting at work?

Was there otherwise anything? he inquired.

"No," I answered, and I compelled my voice to sound steady. "About how soon shall I call in again?"

"Oh, any time you are passing—in a couple of days or so."

I could not get my request over my lips. This man's friendliness seemed to me beyond bounds, and I ought to know how to appreciate it. Rather die of hunger! I went. Not even when I was outside the door, and felt once more the pangs of hunger, did I repent having left the office without having asked for that shilling. I took the other shaving out of my pocket and stuck it into my mouth. It helped. Why hadn't I done so before? "You ought to be ashamed of yourself," I said aloud. "Could it really have entered your head to ask the man for a shilling and put him to inconvenience again?" and I got downright angry with myself for the effrontery of which I had almost been guilty. "That is, by God! the shabbiest thing I ever heard," said I, "to rush at a man and nearly tear the eyes out of his head just because you happen to need a shilling, you miserable dog! So—o, march! quicker! quicker! you big thumping lout; I'll teach you." I commenced to run to punish myself, left one street after the other behind me at a bound, goaded myself on with suppressed cries, and shrieked dumbly and furiously at myself whenever I was about to halt. Thus I arrived a long way up Pyle Street, when at last I stood still, almost ready to cry with vexation at not being able to run any farther. I was trembling over my whole body, and I flung myself down on a step. "No; stop!" I said, and, in order to torture myself rightly, I arose again, and forced myself to keep standing. I jeered at myself, and hugged myself with pleasure at the spectacle of my own exhaustion. At length, after the lapse of a few moments, I gave myself, with a nod, permission to be seated, though, even then, I chose the most uncomfortable place on the steps.

Lord! how delicious it was to rest! I dried the sweat off my face, and drew great refreshing breaths. How had I not run! But I was not sorry; I had richly deserved it. Why did I want to ask for that shilling? Now I could see the consequences, and I began to talk mildly to myself, dealing out admonitions as a mother might have done. I grew more and more moved, and tired and weak as I was, I fell a-crying. A quiet, heart-felt cry; an inner sobbing without a tear.

I sat for the space of a quarter of an hour, or more, in the same place. People came and went, and no one molested me. Little children played about around me, and a small bird sang on a tree on the other side of the street.

A policeman came towards me. "Why do you sit here?" said he.

"Why do I sit here?" I replied; "for pleasure."

"I have been watching you for the last half-hour. You've sat here now half-an-hour."

"About that," I replied; "anything more?"

I got up in a temper and walked on. Arrived at the market-place, I stopped and gazed down the street. For pleasure. Now, was that an answer to give? For weariness, you should have replied, and made your voice whining. You are a booby; you will never learn to dissemble. From exhaustion, and you should have gasped like a horse.

When I got to the fire look-out, I halted afresh, seized by a new idea. I snapped my fingers, burst into a loud laugh that confounded the passers-by, and said: "Now you shall just go to Levion the parson. You shall, as sure as death—ay, just for a try. What have you got to lose by it? and it is such glorious weather!"

I entered Pascha's book-shop, found Pastor Levion's address in the directory, and started for it.

Now for it! said I. Play no pranks. Conscience, did you say? No rubbish, if you please. You are too poor to support a conscience. You are hungry; you have come on important business—the first thing needful. But you shall hold your head askew, and set your words to a sing-song. You won't! What? Well then, I won't go a step farther. Do you hear that? Indeed, you are in a sorely tempted condition, fighting with the powers of darkness and great voiceless monsters at night, so that it is a horror to think of; you hunger and thirst for wine and milk, and don't get them. It has gone so far with you. Here you stand and haven't as much as a halfpenny to bless yourself with. But you believe in grace, the Lord be praised; you haven't yet lost your faith; and then you must clasp your hands together, and look a very Satan of a fellow for believing in grace. As far as Mammon was concerned, why, you hated Mammon with all its pomps in any form. Now it's quite another thing with a psalm-book—a souvenir to the extent of a few shillings. . . . I stopped at the pastor's door, and read, "Office hours, 12 to 4."

Mind, no fudge, I said; now we'll go ahead in earnest! So hang your head a little more, and I rang at the private entrance.

"I want to see the pastor," said I to the maid; but it was not possible for me to get in God's name yet awhile.

"He has gone out."

Gone out, gone out! That destroyed my whole plan; scattered all I had intended to say to the four winds. What had I gained then by the long walk? There I stood.

"Was it anything particular?" questioned the maid.

"Not at all," I replied, "not at all." It was only just that it was such glorious God's weather that I thought I would come out and make a call.

There I stood, and there she stood. I purposely thrust out my chest to attract her attention to the pin that held my coat together. I implored her with a look to see what I had come for, but the poor creature didn't understand it at all.

Lovely God's weather. Was not the mistress at home either?

Yes; but she had gout, and lay on a sofa without being able to move herself. . . . Perhaps I would leave a message or something?

No, not at all; I only just took walks like this now and again, just for exercise; it was so wholesome after dinner. . . . I set out on the road back—what would gossiping longer lead to? Besides, I commenced to feel dizzy. There was no mistake about it; I was about to break down in earnest. Office hours from 12 to 4. I had knocked at the door an hour too late. The time of grace was over. I sat down on one of the benches near the church in the market. Lord! how black things began to look for me now! I did not cry; I was too utterly tired, worn to the last degree. I sat there without trying to arrive at any conclusion, sad, motionless, and starving. My chest was much inflamed; it smarted most strangely and sorely—nor would chewing shavings help me much longer. My jaws were tired of that barren work, and I let them rest. I simply gave up. A brown orange-peel, too, I had found in the street, and which I had at once commenced to chew, had given me nausea. I was ill—the veins swelled up bluely on my wrists. What was it I had really sought after? Run about the whole live-long day for a shilling, that would but keep life in me for a few hours longer. Considering all, was it not a matter of indifference if the inevitable took place one day earlier or one day later? If I had conducted myself like an ordinary being I should have gone home long ago, and laid myself down to rest, and given in. My mind was clear for a moment. Now I was to die. It was in the time of the fall, and all things were hushed to sleep. I had tried every means, exhausted every resource of which I knew. I fondled this thought sentimentally, and each time I still hoped for a possible succour I whispered repudiatingly: "You fool, you have already begun to die."

I ought to write a couple of letters, make all ready—prepare myself. I would wash myself carefully, and tidy my bed nicely. I would lay my head upon the sheets of white paper, the cleanest things I had left, and the green blanket. I . . . The green blanket! Like a shot I was wide awake. The blood mounted to my head, and I got violent palpitation of the heart. I arise from the seat, and start to walk. Life stirs again in all my fibres, and time after time I repeat disconnectedly, "The green blanket—the green blanket." I go faster and faster, as if it is a case of fetching something, and stand after a little time in my tinker's workshop. Without pausing a moment, or wavering in my resolution, I go over to the bed, and roll up Hans Pauli's blanket. It was a strange thing if this bright idea of mine couldn't save me. I rose infinitely superior to the stupid scruples which sprang up in me—half inward cries about a certain stain on my honour. I bade good-bye to the whole of them. I was no hero—no virtuous idiot. I had my senses left.

So I took the blanket under my arm and went to No 5 Stener's Street. I knocked, and entered the big, strange room for the first time. The bell on the door above my head gave a lot of violent jerks. A man enters from a side room, chewing, his mouth is full of food, and stands behind the counter.

"Eh, lend me sixpence on my eye-glasses?" said I. "I shall release them in a couple of days, without fail—eh?"

"No! they're steel, aren't they?"

"Yes."

"No; can't do it."

"Ah, no, I suppose you can't. Well, it was really at best only a joke. Well, I have a blanket with me for which, properly speaking, I have no longer any use, and it struck me that you might take it off my hands."

"I have—more's the pity—a whole store full of bed-clothes," he replied; and when I had opened it he just cast one glance over it and said, "No, excuse me, but I haven't any use for that, either."

"I wanted to show you the worst side first," said I; "it's much better on the other side."

"Ay, ay; it's no good. I wouldn't own it; and you wouldn't raise a penny on it anywhere."

"No, it's clear it isn't worth anything," I said; "but I thought it might go with another old blanket at an auction."

"Well, no; it's no use."

"Three pence?" said I.

"No; I won't have it all, man! I wouldn't have it in the house!" I took it under my arm and went home.

I acted as if nothing had passed, spread it over the bed again, smoothed it well out, as was my custom, and tried to wipe away every trace of my late action. I could not possibly have been in my right mind at the moment when I came to the conclusion to commit this rascally trick. The more I thought over it the more unreasonable it seemed to me. It must have been an attack of weakness; some relaxation in my inner self that had surprised me when off my guard. Neither had I fallen straight into the trap. I had half felt that I was going the wrong road, and I expressly offered my glasses first, and I rejoiced greatly that I had not had the opportunity of carrying into effect this fault which would have sullied the last hours I had to live.

I wandered out into the city again. I let myself sink upon one of the seats by Our Saviour's Church; dozed with my head on my breast, apathetic after my last excitement, sick and famished with hunger. And time went by.

I should have to sit out this hour, too. It was a little lighter outside than in the house, and it seemed to me that my chest did not pain quite so badly out in the open air. I should get home, too, soon enough—and I dozed, and thought, and suffered fearfully.

I had found a little pebble; I wiped it clean on my coat sleeve and put it into my mouth so that I might have something to mumble. Otherwise I did not stir, and didn't even wink an eyelid. People came and went; the noise of cars, the tramp of hoofs, and chatter of tongues filled the air. I might try with the buttons. Of course there would be no use in trying; and besides, I was now in a rather bad way; but when I came to consider the matter closely, I would be obliged, as it were, to pass in the direction of my "Uncle's" as I went home. At last I got up, dragging myself slowly to my feet, and reeled down the streets. It began to burn over my eyebrows—fever was setting in, and I hurried as fast as I could. Once more I passed the baker's shop where the little loaf lay. "Well, we must stop here!" I said, with affected decision. But supposing I were to go in and beg for a bit of bread? Surely that was a fleeting thought, a flash; it could never really have occurred to me seriously. "Fie!" I whispered to myself, and shook my head, and held on my way. In Rebslager a pair of lovers stood in a doorway and talked together softly; a little farther up a girl popped her head out of a window. I walked so slowly and thoughtfully, that I looked as if I might be deep in meditation on nothing in particular, and the wench came out into the street. "How is the world treating you, old fellow? Eh, what, are you ill? Nay, the Lord preserve us, what a face!" and she drew away frightened. I pulled up at once: What's amiss with my face? Had I really begun to die? I felt over my cheeks with my hand; thin—naturally, I was thin—my cheeks were like two hollowed bowls; but Lord . . . I reeled along again, but again came to a standstill; I must be quite inconceivably thin. Who knows but that my eyes were sinking right into my head? How did I look in reality? It was the very deuce that one must let oneself turn into a living deformity for sheer hunger's sake. Once more I was seized by fury, a last flaring up, a final spasm. "Preserve me, what a face. Eh?" Here I was, with a head that couldn't be matched in the whole country, with a pair of fists that, by the Lord, could grind a navvy into finest dust, and yet I went and hungered myself into a deformity, right in the town of Christiania. Was there any rhyme or reason in that? I had sat in saddle, toiled day and night like a carrier's horse.

I had read my eyes out of their sockets, had starved the brains out of my head, and what the devil had I gained by it? Even a street hussy prayed God to deliver her from the sight of me. Well, now, there should be a stop to it. Do you understand that? Stop it shall, or the devil take a worse hold of me.

With steadily increasing fury, grinding my teeth under the consciousness of my impotence, with tears and oaths I raged on, without looking at the people who passed me by. I commenced once more to martyr myself, ran my forehead against lamp-posts on purpose, dug my nails deep into my palms, bit my tongue with frenzy when it didn't articulate clearly, and laughed insanely each time it hurt much.

Yes; but what shall I do? I asked myself at last, and I stamped many times on the pavement and repeated, What shall I do? A gentleman just going by remarks, with a smile, "You ought to go and ask to be locked up." I looked after him. One of our well-known lady's doctors, nicknamed "The Duke." Not even he understood my real condition—a man I knew; whose hand I had shaken. I grew quiet. Locked up? Yes, I was mad; he was right. I felt madness in my blood; felt its darting pain through my brain. So that was to be the end of me! Yes, yes; and I resume my wearisome painful walk. There was the haven in which I was to find rest.

Suddenly I stop again. But not locked up!

I say, not that; and I grew almost hoarse with fear. I implored grace for myself; begged to the wind and weather not to be locked up. I should have to be brought to the guard-house again, imprisoned in a dark cell which had not a spark of light in it. Not that! There must be other channels yet open that I had not tried, and I would try them. I would be so earnestly painstaking; would take good time for it, and go indefatigably round from house to house. For example, there was Cisler the music-seller; I hadn't been to him at all. Some remedy would turn up! . . . Thus I stumbled on, and talked until I brought myself to weep with emotion. Cisler! Was that perchance a hint from on high? His name had struck me for no reason, and he lived so far away; but I would look him up all the same, go slowly, and rest between times. I knew the place well; I had been there often, when times were good had bought much music from him. Should I ask him for sixpence? Perhaps that might make him feel uncomfortable. I would ask for a shilling. I went into the shop, and asked for the chief. They showed me into his office; there he sat—handsome, well-dressed in the latest style—running down some accounts. I stammered through an excuse, and set forth my errand. Compelled by need to apply to him . . . it should not be very long till I could pay it back . . . when I got paid for my newspaper article . . . He would confer such a great benefit on me. . . . Even as I was speaking he turned about to his desk, and resumed his work. When I had finished, he glanced sideways at me, shook his handsome head, and said, "No"; simply "no"—no explanation—not another word.

My knees trembled fearfully, and I supported myself against the little polished barrier. I must try once more. Why should just his name have occurred to me as I stood far away from there in Vaterland? Something in my left side jerked a couple of times, and I broke out into a sweat. I said I was really awfully run down, and rather ill, worse luck. It would certainly be no longer than a few days when I could repay it. If he would be so kind?

"My dear fellow, why do you come to me?" he queried; "you are a perfect stranger off the street to me; go to the paper where you are known."

"But only for this evening," said I; "the office is already shut up, and I am very hungry."

He shook his head persistently; kept on shaking it after I had seized the handle of the door. "Good-evening," I said. It was not any hint from on high, thought I, and I smiled bitterly. If it came to that, I could give as good a hint as that myself. I dragged on one block after the other; now and then I rested on a step. If only I could escape being locked up. The terror of that cell pursued me all the time; left me no peace. Whenever I caught sight of a policeman in my path I staggered into a side street to avoid meeting him. Now, then, we will count a hundred steps, and try our luck again! There must be a remedy sometime. . . .

It was a little yarn-shop—a place in which I had never before set foot; a solitary man behind the counter (there was an office beyond, with a china plate on the door) was arranging things on the shelves and counter. I waited till the last customer had left the shop—a young lady with dimples. How happy she looked! I was not backward in trying to make an impression with the pin holding my coat together. I turned, and my chest heaved.

"Do you wish for anything?" queried the shopman.

"Is the chief in?" I asked.

"He is gone for a mountain tour in Jotunhejmen," he replied. Was it anything very particular, eh?

"It concerns a couple of pence for food," I said, and I tried to smile. "I am hungry, and haven't a fraction."

"Then you're just about as rich as I am," he remarked, and began to tidy some packages of wool.

"Ah, don't turn me away—not now!" I said on the moment, with a cold feeling over my whole body. "I am really nearly dead with hunger; it is now many days since I have eaten anything."

With perfect gravity, without saying a word, he began to turn his pockets inside out, one by one. Would I not believe him, upon his word? What?

"Only a halfpenny," said I, "and you shall have a penny back in a couple of days."

"My dear man, do you want me to steal out of the till?" he queried, impatiently.

"Yes," said I. "Yes; take a halfpenny out of the till."

"It won't be I that will do that," he observed;

adding, "and let me tell you, at the same time, I've had about enough of this."

I tore myself out, sick with hunger, and boiling with shame. I had turned myself into a dog for the sake of a miserable bone, and I had not got it. Nay, now there must be an end of this! It had really gone all too far with me. I had held myself up for many years, stood erect through so many hard hours, and now, all at once, I had sunk to the lowest form of begging. This one day had coarsened my whole mind, bespattered my soul with shamelessness. I had not been too abashed to stand and whine in the pettiest huckster's shop, and what had it availed me?

But was I not then without the veriest atom of bread to put inside my mouth? I had succeeded in rendering myself a thing loathsome to myself. Yes, yes; but it must come to an end. Presently they would lock the outer door at home? I must hurry unless I wished to lie in the guard-house again.

This gave me strength. Lie in that cell again I would not. With body bent forward, and my hands pressed hard against my left ribs to deaden the stings a little, I struggled on, keeping my eyes fastened upon the paving-stones that I might not be forced to bow to possible acquaintances, and hastened to the fire look-out. God be praised! it was only seven o'clock by the dial on Our Saviour's; I had three hours yet before the door would be locked. What a fright I had been in!

Well, there was not a stone left unturned. I had done all I could. To think that I really could not succeed once in a whole day! If I told it no one could believe it; if I were to write it down they would say I had invented it. Not in a single place! Well, well, there is no help for it. Before all, don't go and get pathetic again. Bah! how disgusting! I can assure you, it makes me have a loathing for you. If all hope is over, why, there is an end of it. Couldn't I, for that matter, steal a handful of oats in the stable. A streak of light—a ray—yet I knew the stable was shut.

I took my ease, and crept home at a slow, snail's pace. I felt thirsty, luckily for the first time through the whole day, and I went and sought about for a place where I could get a drink. I was a long distance away from the bazaar, and I would not ask at a private house. Perhaps, though, I could wait till I got home; it would take a quarter of an hour. It was not at all so certain that I could keep down a draught of water, either; my stomach no longer suffered in any way—I even felt nausea at the spittle I swallowed. But the buttons! I had not tried the buttons at all yet. There I stood, stock-still, and commenced to smile. Maybe there was a remedy, in spite of all! I wasn't totally doomed. I should certainly get a penny for them; to-morrow I might raise another some place or other, and Thursday I might be paid for my newspaper article. I should just see it would come out all right. To think that I could really go and forget the buttons. I took them out of my pocket, and inspected them as I walked on again. My eyes grew dazed with joy. I did not see the street; I simply went on. Didn't I know exactly the big pawn-shop—my refuge in the dark evenings, with my blood-sucking friend? One by one my possessions had vanished there—my little things from home—my last book. I liked to go there on auction days, to look on, and rejoice each time my books seemed likely to fall into good hands. Magelsen, the actor, had my watch; I was almost proud of that. A diary, in which I had written my first small poetical attempt, had been bought by an acquaintance, and my topcoat had found a haven with a photographer, to be used in the studio. So there was no cause to grumble about any of them. I held my buttons ready in my hand; "Uncle" is sitting at his desk, writing. "I am not in a hurry," I say, afraid of disturbing him, and making him impatient at my application. My voice sounded so curiously hollow I hardly recognised it again, and my heart beat like a sledge-hammer.

He came smilingly over to me, as was his wont, laid both his hands flat on the counter, and looked at my face without saying anything. Yes, I had brought something of which I would ask him if he could make any use; something which is only in my way at home, assure you of it—are quite an annoyance—some buttons. Well, what then? what was there about the buttons? and he thrusts his eyes down close to my hand. Couldn't he give me a couple of halfpence for them?—whatever he thought himself—quite according to his own judgment. "For the buttons?"—and "Uncle" stares astonishedly at me—"for these buttons?" Only for a cigar or whatever he liked himself; I was just passing, and thought I would look in.

Upon this, the old pawnbroker burst out laughing, and returned to his desk without saying a word. There I stood; I had not hoped for much, yet, all the same, I had thought of a possibility of being helped. This laughter was my death-warrant. It couldn't, I suppose, be of any use trying with my eyeglasses either? Of course, I would let my glasses go in with them; that was a matter of course, said I, and I took them off. Only a penny, or, if he wished, a halfpenny.

"You know quite well I can't lend you anything on your glasses," said "Uncle"; "I told you that once before."

"But I want a stamp," I said, dully. "I can't even send off the letters I have written; a penny or a halfpenny stamp, just as you will."

"Oh, God help you, go your way!" he replied, and motioned me off with his hands.

Yes, yes; well, it must be so, I said to myself. Mechanically I put on my glasses again, took the buttons in my hand, and, turning away, bade him good-night, and closed the door after me as usual. Well, now, there was nothing more to be done! To think he would not take them at any price, I muttered. They are almost new buttons; I can't understand it.

Whilst I stood, lost in thought, a man passed by and entered the office. He had given me a little shove in his hurry. We both made excuses, and I turned round and looked after him.

"What! is that you?" he said, suddenly, when half-way up the steps. He came back, and I recognised him. "God bless me, man, what on earth do you look like? What were you doing in there?"

"Oh, I had business. You are going in too, I see."

"Yes; what were you in with?"

My knees trembled; I supported myself against the wall, and stretched out my hand with the buttons in it.

"What the deuce!" he cried. "No; this is really going too far."

"Good-night!" said I, and was about to go; I felt the tears choking my breast.

"No; wait a minute," he said.

What was I to wait for? Was he not himself on the road to my "Uncle," bringing, perhaps, his engagement ring — had been hungry, perhaps, for several days—owed his landlady.

"Yes," I replied ; "if you will be out soon. . . ."

"Of course," he broke in, seizing hold of my arm ; "but I may as well tell you I don't believe you. You are such an idiot, that it's better you come in along with me."

I understood what he meant, suddenly felt a little spark of pride, and answered :

"I can't ; I promised to be in Bernt Akers Street at half-past seven, and . . ."

"Half-past seven, quite so ; but it's eight now. Here I am, standing with the watch in my hand that I'm going to pawn. So, in with you, you hungry sinner ! I'll get you five shillings, anyhow," and he pushed me in.

PART III

A WEEK passed in glory and gladness.

I had got over the worst this time, too. I had had food every day, and my courage rose, and I thrust one iron after the other into the fire.

I was working at three or four articles, that plundered my poor brain of every spark, every thought that rose in it; and yet I fancied that I wrote with more facility than before.

The last article with which I had raced about so much, and upon which I had built such hopes, had already been returned to me by the editor; and, angry and wounded as I was, I had destroyed it immediately, without even re-reading it again. In future, I would try another paper in order to open up more fields for my work.

Supposing that writing were to fail, and the worst were to come to the worst, I still had the ships to take to. The *Nun* lay alongside the wharf, ready to sail, and I might, perhaps, work my way out to Archangel, or wherever else she might be bound; there was no lack of openings on many sides. The last crisis had dealt rather roughly with me. My hair fell out in masses, and I was much troubled with headaches, particularly in the morning, and my nervousness died a hard death. I sat and wrote during the day with my hands bound up in rags, simply because I could not endure the touch of my own breath upon them. If Jens Olaj banged the stable door underneath me, or if a dog came into the yard and commenced to bark, it thrilled through my very marrow like icy stabs piercing me from every side. I was pretty well played out.

Day after day I strove at my work, begrudging myself the short time it took to swallow my food before I sat down again to write. At this time both the bed and the little rickety table were strewn over with notes and written pages, upon which I worked turn about, added any new ideas which might have occurred to me during the day, erased, or quickened here and there the dull points by a word full of colour—fagged, and toiled at sentence after sentence, with the greatest pains. One afternoon, one of my articles being at length finished, I thrust it, contented and happy, into my pocket, and betook myself to the "commandor." It was high time I made some arrangement towards getting a little money again; I had only a few pence left.

The "commandor" requested me to sit down for a moment; he would be disengaged immediately, and he continued writing.

I looked about the little office—busts, prints, cuttings, and an enormous paper-basket, that looked as if it might swallow a man, bones and all. I felt sad at heart at the sight of this monstrous chasm, this dragon's mouth, that always stood open, always ready to receive rejected work, newly crushed hopes.

"What day of the month is it?" queried the "commandor" from the table.

"The 28th," I reply, pleased that I can be of service to him, "the 28th," and he continues writing. At last he encloses a couple of letters in their envelopes, tosses some papers into the basket, and lays down his pen. Then he swings round on his chair, and looks at me. Observing that I am still standing near the door, he makes a half-serious, half-playful motion with his hand, and points to a chair.

I turn aside, so that he may not see that I have no waistcoat on, when I open my coat to take the manuscript out of my pocket.

"It is only a little character sketch of Correggio," I say; "but perhaps it is, worse luck, not written in such a way that . . ."

He takes the papers out of my hand, and commences to go through them. His face is turned towards me.

And so it is thus he looks at close quarters, this man, whose name I had already heard in my earliest youth, and whose paper had exercised the greatest influence upon me as the years advanced? His hair is curly, and his beautiful brown eyes are a little restless. He has a habit of tweaking his nose now and then. No Scotch minister could look milder than this truculent writer, whose pen always left bleeding scars wherever it attacked. A peculiar feeling of awe and admiration comes over me in the presence of this man. The tears are on the point of coming to my eyes, and I advanced a step to tell him how heartily I appreciated him, for all he had taught me, and to beg him not to hurt me; I was only a poor bungling wretch, who had had a sorry enough time of it as it was. . . .

He looked up, and placed my manuscript

slowly together, whilst he sat and considered. To make it easier for him to give me a refusal, I stretch out my hand a little, and say:

"Ah, well, of course, it is not of any use to you," and I smile to give him the impression that I take it easily.

"Everything has to be of such a popular nature to be of any use to us," he replies; "you know the kind of public we have. But can't you try and write something a little more commonplace, or hit upon something that people understand better?"

His forbearance astonishes me. I understand that my article is rejected, and yet I could not have received a prettier refusal. Not to take up his time any longer, I reply:

"Oh yes, I daresay I can."

I go towards the door. Hem — he must pray forgive me for having taken up his time with this . . . I bow, and turn the door handle.

"If you need it," he says, "you are welcome to draw a little in advance; you can write for it, you know."

Now, as he had just seen that I was not capable of writing, this offer humiliated me somewhat, and I answered:

"No, thanks; I can pull through yet a while, thanking you very much, all the same. Good-day!"

"Good-day!" replies the "commandor," turning at the same time to his desk again.

He had none the less treated me with undeserved kindness, and I was grateful to him for it—and I would know how to appreciate it too. I made a resolution not to return to him until I could take something with me, that satisfied me perfectly; something that would astonish the "commandor" a bit, and make him order me to be paid half-a-sovereign without a moment's hesitation. I went home, and tackled my writing once more.

During the following evenings, as soon as it got near eight o'clock and the gas was lit, the following thing happened regularly to me.

As I come out of my room to take a walk in the streets after the labour and troubles of the day, a lady, dressed in black, stands under the lamp-post exactly opposite my door.

She turns her face towards me and follows me with her eyes when I pass her by—I remark that she always has the same dress on, always the same thick veil that conceals her face and falls over her breast, and that she carries in her hand a small umbrella with an ivory ring in the handle. This was already the third evening I had seen her there, always in the same place. As soon as I have passed her by she turns slowly and goes down the street away from me. My nervous brain vibrated with curiosity, and I became at once possessed by the unreasonable feeling that I was the object of her visit. At last I was almost on the point of addressing her, of asking her if she was looking for anyone, if she needed my assistance in any way, or if I might accompany her home. Badly dressed, as I unfortunately was, I might protect her through the dark streets; but I had an undefined fear that it perhaps might cost me something; a glass of wine, or a drive, and I had no money left at all. My distressingly empty pockets acted in a far too depressing way upon me, and I had not even the courage to scrutinise her sharply as I passed her by. Hunger had once more taken up its abode in my breast, and I had not tasted food since yesterday evening. This, 'tis true, was not a long period; I had often been able to hold out for a couple of days at a time, but latterly I had commenced to fall off seriously; I could not go hungry one quarter as well as I used to do. A single day made me feel dazed, and I suffered from perpetual retching the moment I tasted water. Added to this was the fact that I lay and shivered all night, lay fully dressed as I stood and walked in the daytime, lay blue with the cold, lay and froze every night with fits of icy shivering, and grew stiff during my sleep. The old blanket could not keep out the draughts, and I woke in the mornings with my nose stopped by the sharp outside frosty air which forced its way into the dilapidated room.

I go down the street and think over what I am to do to keep myself alive until I get my next article finished. If I only had a candle I would try to fag on through the night; it would only take a couple of hours if I once warmed to my work, and then to-morrow I could call on the "commandor."

I go without further ado into the Opland Café and look for my young acquaintance in the bank, in order to procure a penny for a candle. I passed unhindered through all the rooms; I passed a dozen tables at which men sat chatting, eating, and drinking; I passed into the back of the café, ay, even into the red alcove, without succeeding in finding my man.

Crestfallen and annoyed I dragged myself out again into the street and took the direction to the Palace.

Wasn't it now the very hottest eternal devil existing to think that my hardships never would come to an end! Taking long, furious strides, with the collar of my coat hunched savagely up round my ears, and my hands thrust in my breeches pockets, I strode along, cursing my unlucky stars the whole way. Not one real untroubled hour in seven or eight months, not the common food necessary to hold body and soul together for the space of one short week, before want stared me in the face again. Here I had, into the bargain gone and kept straight and honourable all through my misery—Ha, ha! straight and honourable to the heart's core. God preserve me, what a fool I had been! And I commenced to tell myself how I had even gone about conscience-stricken because I had once brought Hans Pauli's blanket to the pawnbroker's. I laughed sarcastically at my delicate rectitude, spat contemptuously in the street, and could not find words half strong enough to mock myself for my stupidity. Let it only happen now! Were I to find at this moment a schoolgirl's savings or a poor widow's only penny, I would snatch it up and pocket it; steal it deliberately, and sleep the whole night through like a top. I had not suffered so unspeakably much for nothing—my patience was gone—I was prepared to do anything.

I walked round the palace three, perhaps four, times, then came to the conclusion that I would go home, took yet one little turn in the park and went back down Carl Johann. It was now about eleven. The streets were fairly dark, and people roamed about in all directions, quiet pairs and noisy groups mixed with one another. The great hour had commenced, the pairing time when the mystic traffic is in full swing—and the hour of merry adventures sets in. Rustling petticoats, one or two still short, sensual laughter, heaving bosoms, passionate, panting breaths, and far down near the Grand Hotel a voice calling "Emma!" The whole street was a swamp, from which hot vapours exuded.

I feel involuntarily in my pockets for a few shillings. The passion that thrills through the movements of every one of the passers-by, the dim light of the gas lamps, the quiet pregnant night, all commence to affect me — this air, that is laden with whispers, embraces, trembling admissions, concessions, half-uttered words and suppressed cries. A number of cats are declaring their love with loud yells in Blomquist's doorway. And I did not possess even a florin! It was a misery, a wretchedness without parallel to be so impoverished. What humiliation, too; what disgrace! I began again to think about the poor widow's last mite, that I would have stolen a schoolboy's cap or handkerchief, or a beggar's wallet, that I would have brought to a rag-dealer without more ado, and caroused with the proceeds.

In order to console myself—to indemnify myself in some measure—I take to picking all possible faults in the people who glide by. I shrug my shoulders contemptuously, and look slightingly at them according as they pass. These easily-pleased, confectionery-eating students, who fancy they are sowing their wild oats in truly Continental style if they tickle a sempstress under the ribs! These young bucks, bank clerks, merchants, flâneurs—who would not disdain a sailor's wife; blowsy Molls, ready to fall down in the first doorway for a glass of beer! What sirens! The place at their side still warm from the last night's embrace of a watchman or a stable-boy! The throne always vacant, always open to newcomers! Pray, mount!

I spat far out over the pavement, without troubling if it hit anyone. I felt enraged; filled with contempt for these people who scraped acquaintanceship with one another, and paired off right before my eyes. I lifted my head, and felt in myself the blessing of being able to keep my own sty clean. At Stortingsplads (Parliament Place) I met a girl who looked fixedly at me as I came close to her.

"Good-night!" said I.

"Good-night!" She stopped.

Hum! was she out walking so late? Did not a young lady run rather a risk in being in Carl Johann at this time of night? Really not? Yes; but was she never spoken to, molested, I meant; to speak plainly, asked to go along home with anyone?

She stared at me with astonishment, scanned my face closely, to see what I really meant by this, then thrust her hand suddenly under my arm, and said:

"Yes, and we went too!"

I walked on with her. But when we had gone a few paces past the car-stand I came to a standstill, freed my arm, and said:

"Listen, my dear, I don't own a farthing!" and with that I went on.

At first she would not believe me; but after she had searched all my pockets, and found nothing, she got vexed, tossed her head, and called me a dry cod.

"Good-night!" said I.

"Wait a minute," she called; "are those eye-glasses that you've got gold?"

"No."

"Then go to blazes with you!" and I went.

A few seconds after she came running behind me, and called out to me:

"You can come with me all the same!"

I felt humiliated by this offer from an unfortunate street wench, and I said "No." Besides, it was growing late at night, and I was due at a place. Neither could she afford to make sacrifices of that kind.

"Yes; but now I will have you come with me."

"But I won't go with you in this way."

"Oh, naturally; you are going with some one else."

"No," I answered.

But I was conscious that I stood in a sorry plight in face of this unique street jade, and I made up my mind to save appearances at least.

"What is your name?" I inquired. "Mary, eh? Well, listen to me now, Mary!" and I set about explaining my behaviour. The girl grew more and more astonished in measure as I proceeded. Had she then believed that I, too, was one of those who went about the street at night and ran after little girls? Did she really think so badly of me? Had I perhaps said anything rude to her from the beginning? Did one behave as I had done when one was actuated by any bad motive? Briefly, in so many words, I had accosted her, and accompanied her those few paces, to see how far she would go on with it. For the rest, my name was So-and-so—Pastor So-and-so. "Good-night; depart, and sin no more!" With these words I left her.

I rubbed my hands with delight over my happy notion, and soliloquised aloud, "What a joy there is in going about doing good actions." Perhaps I had given this fallen creature an upward impulse for her whole life; saved her, once for all, from destruction, and she would appreciate it when she came to think over it; remember me yet in her hour of death with thankful heart. Ah! in truth, it paid to be honourable, upright, and righteous!

My spirits were effervescing. I felt fresh and courageous enough to face anything that might turn up. If I only had a candle, I might perhaps complete my article. I walked on, jingling my new door-key in my hand; hummed, and whistled, and speculated as to means of procuring a candle. There was no other way out of it. I would have to take my writing materials with me into the street, under a lamp-post. I opened the door, and went up to get my papers. When I descended once more I locked the door from the outside, and planted myself under the light. All around was quiet; I heard only the heavy clanking footstep of a constable down in Tærgade, and far away in the direction of St Han's Hill a dog barked. There was nothing to disturb me. I pulled my coat collar up round my ears, and commenced to think with all my might.

It would be such an extraordinary help to me if I were lucky enough to find a suitable winding up for this little essay. I had stuck just at a rather difficult point in it, where there ought to be a quite imperceptible transition to something fresh, then a subdued gliding finale, a prolonged murmur, ending at last in a climax as bold and as startling as a shot, or the sound of a mountain avalanche—full stop. But the words would not come to me. I read over the whole piece from the commencement; read every sentence aloud, and yet failed absolutely to crystallise my thoughts, in order to produce this scintillating climax. And into the bargain, whilst I was standing labouring away at this, the constable came and, planting himself a little distance away from me, spoilt my whole mood. Now, what concern was it of his if I stood and strove for a striking climax to an article for the *Commandor?* Lord, how utterly impossible it was for me to keep my head above water, no matter how much I tried! I stayed there for the space of an hour. The constable went his way. The cold began to get too intense for me to keep still. Disheartened and despondent over this abortive effort, I opened the door again, and went up to my room.

It was cold up there, and I could barely see my window for the intense darkness. I felt my way towards the bed, pulled off my shoes, and set about warming my feet between my hands. Then I lay down, as I had done for a long time now, with all my clothes on.

The following morning I sat up in bed as soon as it got light, and set to work at the essay once more. I sat thus till noon; I had succeeded by then in getting ten, perhaps twenty, lines down, and still I had not found an ending.

I rose, put on my shoes, and began to walk up and down the floor to try and warm myself. I looked out; there was rime on the window; it was snowing. Down in the yard a thick layer of snow covered the paving-stones and the top of the pump. I bustled about the room, took aimless turns to and fro, scratched the wall with my nail, leant my head carefully against the door for a while, tapped with my forefinger on the floor, and then listened attentively, all without any object, but quietly and pensively as if it were some matter of importance in which I was engaged; and all the while I murmured aloud, time upon time, so that I could hear my own voice.

But, great God, surely this is madness! and yet I kept on just as before. After a long time, perhaps a couple of hours, I pulled myself sharply together, bit my lips, and manned myself as well as I could. There must be an end to this! I found a splinter to chew, and set myself resolutely to write again.

A couple of short sentences formed themselves with much trouble, a score of poor words which I tortured forth with might and main to try and advance a little. Then I stopped, my head was barren; I was incapable of more. And, as I could positively not go on, I set myself to gaze with wide open eyes at these last words, this unfinished sheet of paper; I stared at these strange, shaky letters that bristled up from the paper like small hairy creeping things, till at last I could neither make head nor tail of any of it. I thought on nothing.

Time went; I heard the traffic in the street, the rattle of cars and tramp of hoofs. Jens Olaj's voice ascended towards me from the stables as he chid the horses. I was perfectly stunned. I sat and moistened my lips a little, but otherwise made no effort to do anything: my chest was in a pitiful state. The dusk closed in; I sank more and more together, grew weary, and lay down on the bed again. In order to warm my fingers a little I stroked them through my hair backwards and forwards and crosswise. Small loose tufts came away, flakes that got between my fingers, and scattered over the pillow. I did not think anything about it just then; it was as if it did not concern me. I had hair enough left, anyway. I tried afresh to shake myself out of this strange daze that enveloped my whole being like a mist. I sat up, struck my knees with my flat hands, laughed as hard as my sore chest permitted me—only to collapse again. Nought availed; I was dying helplessly, with my eyes wide open—staring straight up at the roof. At length I stuck my forefinger in my mouth, and took to sucking it. Something stirred in my brain, a thought that bored its way in there—a stark-mad notion.

Supposing I were to take a bite? And without a moment's reflection, I shut my eyes, and clenched my teeth on it.

I sprang up. At last I was thoroughly awake. A little blood trickled from it, and I licked it as it came. It didn't hurt very much, neither was the wound large, but I was brought at one bound to my senses. I shook my head, went to the window, where I found a rag, and wound it round the sore place.

As I stood and busied myself with this, my eyes filled with tears; I cried softly to myself. This poor thin finger looked so utterly pitiable. God in Heaven! what a pass it had come to now with me! The gloom grew closer. It was, maybe, not impossible that I might work up my finale through the course of the evening, if I only had a candle. My head was clear once more. Thoughts came and went as usual, and I did not suffer particularly; I did not even feel hunger so badly as some hours previously. I could hold out well till the next day. Perhaps I might be able to get a candle on credit, if I applied to the provision shop and explained my situation—I was so well known in there; in the good old days, when I had the means to do it, I used to buy many a loaf there. There was no doubt I could raise a candle on the strength of my honest name; and for the first time for ages I took to brushing my clothes a little, got rid as well as the darkness allowed me of the loose hairs on my collar, and felt my way down the stairs.

When I got outside in the street it occurred to me that I might perhaps rather ask for a loaf. I grew irresolute, and stopped to consider. "On no account," I replied to myself at last; I was unfortunately not in a condition to bear food. It would only be a repetition of the same old story—visions, and presentiments, and mad notions. My article would never get finished, and it was a question of going to the "Commandor" before he had time to forget me. On no account whatever! and I decided upon the candle. With that I entered the shop.

A woman is standing at the counter making purchases; several small parcels in different sorts of paper are lying in front of her. The shopman, who knows me, and knows what I usually buy, leaves the woman, and packs without much ado a loaf in a piece of paper and shoves it over to me.

"No, thank you, it was really a candle I wanted this evening," I say. I say it very quietly and humbly, in order not to vex him and spoil my chance of getting what I want.

My answer confuses him; he turns quite cross at my unexpected words; it was the first time I had ever demanded anything but a loaf from him.

"Well then, you must wait a while," he says at last, and busies himself with the woman's parcels again.

She receives her wares and pays for them—gives him a florin, out of which she gets the change, and goes out. Now the shop-boy and I are alone. He says:

"So it was a candle you wanted, eh!" He tears open a package, and takes one out for me. He looks at me, and I look at him; I can't get my request over my lips.

"Oh yes, that's true; you paid, though!" he says suddenly. He simply asserts that I had paid. I heard every word, and he begins to count some silver out of the till, coin after coin, shining stout pieces. He gives me back change for a crown.

"Much obliged," he says.

Now I stand and look at these pieces of money for a second. I am conscious something is wrong somewhere. I do not reflect; do not think about anything at all—I am simply struck of a heap by all this wealth which is lying glittering before my eyes—and I gather up the money mechanically.

I stand outside the counter, stupid with amazement, dumb, paralysed. I take a stride towards the door, and stop again. I turn my eyes upon a certain spot in the wall, where a little bell is suspended to a leather collar, and underneath this a bundle of string, and I stand and stare at these things.

The shop-boy is struck by the idea that I want to have a chat as I take my time so leisurely, and says, as he tidies a lot of wrapping-papers strewn over the counter:

"It looks as if we were going to have winter now!"

"Humph! Yes," I reply; "it looks as if we were going to have winter in earnest now; it looks like it," and a while after, I add: "Ah, well, it is none too soon."

I could hear myself speak, but each word I uttered struck my ear as if it were coming from another person. I spoke absolutely unwittingly, involuntarily, without being conscious of myself.

"Oh, do you think so?" says the boy.

I thrust the hand with the money into my pocket, turned the door-handle, and left. I could hear that I said good-night, and that the shop-boy replied to me.

I had gone a few paces away from the shop when the shop-door was torn open, and the boy called after me. I turned round without any astonishment, without a trace of fear; I only collected the money into my hand, and prepared to give it back.

"Beg pardon, you've forgotten your candle," says the boy.

"Ah, thanks," I answer quietly. "Thanks, thanks"; and I strolled on, down the street, bearing it in my hand.

My first sensible thought referred to the money. I went over to a lamp-post, counted it, weighed it in my hand, and smiled. So, in spite of all, I was helped — extraordinarily, grandly, incredibly helped—helped for a long, long time; and I thrust my hand with the money into my pocket, and walked on.

Outside an eating-house in Grand Street I stopped, and turned over in my mind, calmly and quietly, if I should venture so soon to take a little refreshment. I could hear the rattle of knives and plates inside, and the sound of meat being pounded. The temptation was too strong for me—I entered.

"A helping of beef," I say.

"One beef!" calls the waitress down through the door of the lift.

I sat down by myself at a little table next to the door, and prepared to wait. It was somewhat dark where I was sitting, and I felt tolerably well concealed, and set myself to have a serious think. Every now and then the waitress glanced over at me inquiringly. My first downright dishonesty was accomplished—my first theft. Compared to this, all my earlier escapades were as nothing—my first great fall. . . . Well and good! There was no help for it. For that matter, it was open to me to settle it with the shopkeeper later on, on a more opportune occasion. It need not go any farther with me. Besides that, I had not taken upon myself to live more honourably than all the other folk; there was no contract that . . .

"Do you think that beef will soon be here?"

"Yes; immediately"; the waitress opens the trap-door, and looks down into the kitchen.

But suppose the affair did crop up some day? If the shop-boy were to get suspicious and begin to think over the transaction about the bread, and the florin of which the woman got the change? It was not impossible that he would discover it some day, perhaps the next time I went there. Well, then, Lord! . . . I shrugged my shoulders unobserved.

"If you please," says the waitress, kindly, placing the beef on the table, "wouldn't you rather go to another compartment, it 's so dark here?"

"No, thanks; just let me be here," I reply; her kindliness touches me at once. I pay for the beef on the spot, put whatever change remains into her hand, close her fingers over it. She smiles, and I say in fun, with the tears near my ears, "There, you 're to have the balance to buy yourself a farm. . . . Ah, you 're very welcome to it."

I commenced to eat, got more and more greedy as I did so, swallowed whole pieces without chewing them, enjoyed myself in an animal-like way at every mouthful, and tore at the meat like a cannibal.

The waitress came over to me again.

"Will you have anything to drink?" she asks, bending down a little towards me. I looked at her. She spoke very low, almost shyly, and dropped her eyes. "I mean a glass of ale, or whatever you like best . . . from me . . . without . . . that is, if you will . . ."

"No; many thanks," I answer. "Not now; I shall come back another time."

She drew back, and sat down at the desk. I could only see her head. What a singular creature!

When finished, I made at once for the door. I felt nausea already. The waitress got up. I was afraid to go near the light—afraid to show myself too plainly to the young girl, who never for a moment suspected the depth of my misery; so I wished her a hasty good-night, bowed to her, and left.

The food commenced to take effect. I suffered much from it, and could not keep it down for any length of time. I had to empty my mouth a little at every dark corner I came to. I struggled to master this nausea which threatened to hollow me out anew, clenched my hands, and tried to fight it down; stamped on the pavement, and gulped down furiously whatever sought to come up. All in vain. I sprang at last into a doorway, doubled up, head foremost, blinded with the water which gushed from my eyes, and vomited once more. I was seized with bitterness, and wept as I went along the street. . . . I cursed the cruel powers, whoever they might be, that persecuted me so, consigned them to hell's damnation and eternal torments for their petty persecution. There was but little chivalry in fate, really little enough chivalry; one was forced to admit that.

I went over to a man staring into a shop-window, and asked him in great haste what, according to his opinion, should one give a man who had been starving for a long time. It was a matter of life and death, I said; he couldn't even keep beef down.

"I have heard say that milk is a good thing — hot milk," answered the man, astonished. "Who is it, by the way, you are asking for?"

"Thanks, thanks," I say; "that idea of hot milk might not be half a bad notion"; and I go.

I entered the first café I came to going along, and asked for some boiled milk. I got the milk, drank it down, hot as it was, swallowed it greedily, every drop, paid for it, and went out again. I took the road home.

Now something singular happened. Outside my door, leaning against the lamp-post, and right under the glare of it, stands a person of whom I get a glimpse from a long distance—it is the lady dressed in black again. The same black-clad lady of the other evenings. There could be no mistake about it; she had turned up at the same spot for the fourth time. She is standing perfectly motionless. I find this so peculiar that I involuntarily slacken my pace. At this moment my thoughts are in good working order, but I am much excited; my nerves are irritated by my last meal. I pass her by as usual; am almost at the door and on the point of entering. There I stop. All of a sudden an inspiration seizes me. Without rendering myself any account of it, I turn round and go straight up to the lady, look her in the face, and bow.

"Good-evening."

"Good-evening," she answers.

Excuse me, was she looking for anything? I had noticed her before; could I be of assistance to her in any way? begged pardon, by-the-way, so earnestly for inquiring.

Yes; she didn't quite know. . . .

No one lived inside that door besides three or four horses and myself; it was, for that matter, only a stable and a tinker's workshop. . . . She was certainly on a wrong track if she was seeking anyone there.

At this she turns her head away, and says: "I am not seeking for anybody. I am only standing here; it was really only a whim. I" . . . she stops.

Indeed, really, she only stood there, just stood there, evening after evening, just for a whim's sake!

That was a little odd. I stood and pondered over it, and it perplexed me more and more. I made up my mind to be daring; I jingled my money in my pocket, and asked her, without further ado, to come and have a glass of wine some place or another . . . in consideration that winter had come, ha, ha! . . . it needn't take very long . . . but perhaps she would scarcely. . . .

Ah, no, thanks; she couldn't well do that. No! she couldn't do that; but would I be so kind as to accompany her a little way? She . . . it was rather dark to go home now, and she was rather nervous about going up Carl Johann after it got so late.

We moved on; she walked at my right side. A strange, beautiful feeling empowered me; the certainty of being near a young girl. I looked at her the whole way along. The scent of her hair; the warmth that irradiated from her body; the perfume of woman that accompanied her; the sweet breath every time she turned her face towards me—everything penetrated in an ungovernable way through all my senses. So far, I just caught a glimpse of a full, rather pale, face behind the veil, and a high bosom that curved out against her cape.

The thought of all the hidden beauty which I surmised lay sheltered under the cloak and veil bewildered me, making me idiotically happy without any reasonable grounds. I could not endure it any longer; I touched her with my hand, passed my fingers over her shoulder, and smiled imbecilely.

"How queer you are," said I.

"Am I, really; in what way?"

Well, in the first place, simply, she had a habit of standing outside a stable door, evening after evening, without any object whatever, just for a whim's sake. . . .

Oh, well, she might have her reason for doing so; besides, she liked staying up late at night; it was a thing she had always had a great fancy for. Did I care about going to bed before twelve?

I? If there was anything in the world I hated it was to go to bed before twelve o'clock at night.

Ah, there, you see! She, too, was just the same; she took this little tour in the evenings when she had nothing to lose by doing so. She lived up in St Olav's Place.

"Ylajali," I cried.

"I beg pardon?"

"I only said 'Ylajali' . . . it's all right. Continue . . ."

She lived up in St Olav's Place, lonely enough, together with her mother, to whom one couldn't talk because she was so deaf. Was there anything odd in her liking to get out for a little?

"No, not at all," I replied.

"No? well, what then?"

I could hear by her voice that she was smiling.

Hadn't she a sister?

Yes; an older sister. But, by-the-way, how did I know that? She had gone to Hamburg.

"Lately?"

"Yes; five weeks ago." From where did I learn that she had a sister?

I didn't learn it at all; I only asked.

We kept silence. A man passes us, with a pair of shoes under his arm; otherwise, the street is empty as far as we can see. Over at the Tivoli a long row of coloured lamps are burning. It no longer snows; the sky is clear.

"Gracious! don't you freeze without an overcoat?" inquires the lady, suddenly looking at me.

Should I tell her why I had no overcoat; make my sorry condition known at once, and frighten her away? As well first as last. Still, it was delightful to walk here at her side and keep her in ignorance yet a while longer. So I lied. I answered:

"No, not at all"; and, in order to change the subject, I asked, "Have you seen the menagerie in the Tivoli?"

"No," she answered; "is there really anything to see?"

Suppose she were to take it into her head to wish to go there? Into that blaze of light, with the crowd of people. Why, she would be filled with shame; I would drive her out again, with my shabby clothes, and lean face; perhaps she might even notice that I had no waistcoat on. . . .

"Ah, no; there is sure to be nothing worth seeing!"

And a lot of happy ideas occurred to me, of which I at once made use; a few sparse words, fragments left in my dessicated brain. What could one expect from such a small menagerie? On the whole, it did not interest me in the least to see animals in cages. These animals know that one is standing staring at them; they feel hundreds of inquisitive looks upon them; are conscious of them. No; I would prefer to see animals that didn't know one observed them; shy creatures that nestle in their lair, and lie with sluggish green eyes, and lick their claws, and muse, eh?

Yes; I was certainly right in that.

It was only animals in all their peculiar fearfulness and peculiar savagery that possessed a charm. The soundless, stealthy tread in the total darkness of night; the hidden monsters of the woods; the shrieks of a bird flying past; the wind, the smell of blood, the rumbling in space; in short, the reigning spirit of the kingdom of savage creatures hovering over savagery . . . the unconscious poetry! . . . But I was afraid this bored her. The consciousness of my great poverty seized me anew, and crushed me. If I had only been in any way well-enough dressed to have given her the pleasure of this little tour in the Tivoli! I could not make out this creature, who could find pleasure in letting herself be accompanied up the whole of Carl Johann Street by a half-naked beggar. What, in the name of God, was she thinking of? And why was I walking there, giving myself airs, and smiling idiotically at nothing? Had I any reasonable cause, either, for letting myself be worried into a long walk by this dainty, silken-clad bird? Mayhap it did not cost me an effort? Did I not feel the ice of death go right into my heart at even the gentlest puff of wind that blew against us? Was not madness running riot in my brain, just for lack of food for many months at a stretch? Yet she hindered me from going home to get even a little milk into my parched mouth; a spoonful of sweet milk, that I might perhaps be able to keep down. Why didn't she turn her back on me, and let me go to the deuce? . . .

I became distracted; my despair reduced me to the last extremity. I said:

"Considering all things, you ought not to walk with me. I disgrace you right under everyone's eyes, if only with my clothes. Yes, it is positively true; I mean it."

She starts, looks up quickly at me, and is silent; then she exclaims suddenly:

"Indeed, though!" More she doesn't say.

"What do you mean by that?" I queried.

"Ugh, no; you make me feel ashamed. . . . We have not got very far now"; and she walked on a little faster.

We turned up University Street, and could already see the lights in St Olav's Place. Then she commenced to walk slowly again.

"I have no wish to be indiscreet," I say; "but won't you tell me your name before we part? and won't you, just for one second, lift up your veil so that I can see you? I would be really so grateful."

A pause. I walked on in expectation.

"You have seen me before," she replies.

"Ylajali," I say again.

"Beg pardon. You followed me once for half-a-day, almost right home. Were you tipsy that time?"

I could hear again that she smiled.

"Yes," I said. "Yes, worse luck, I was tipsy that time."

"That was horrid of you!"

And I admitted contritely that it was horrid of me.

We reached the fountains; we stop and look up at the many lighted windows of No. 2.

"Now, you mustn't come any farther with me," she says. "Thank you for coming so far."

I bowed; I daren't say anything; I took off my hat and stood bareheaded. I wonder if she will give me her hand.

"Why don't you ask me to go back a little way with you?" she asks, in a low voice, looking down at the toe of her shoe.

"Great Heavens!" I reply, beside myself, "Great Heavens, if you only would!"

"Yes; but only a little way."

And we turned round.

I was fearfully confused. I absolutely did not know if I were on my head or my heels. This creature upset all my chain of reasoning; turned it topsy-turvy. I was bewitched and extraordinarily happy. It seemed to me as if I were being dragged enchantingly to destruction. She had expressly willed to go back; it wasn't my notion, it was her own desire. I walk on and look at her, and get more and more bold. She encourages me, draws me to her by each word she speaks. I forget for a moment my poverty, my humble position, my whole miserable condition. I feel my blood course madly through my whole body, as in the old days before I caved in, and resolved to feel my way by a little ruse.

"By-the-way, it wasn't you I followed that time," said I. "It was your sister."

"Was it my sister?" she questions, in the highest degree amazed. She stands still, looks up at me, and positively waits for an answer. She puts the question in all sober earnest.

"Yes," I replied. "Hum—m, that is to say, it was the younger of the two ladies who went on in front of me."

"The youngest, eh? eh? a-a-ha!" she laughed out all at once, loudly, heartily, like a child. "Oh, how sly you are; you only said that just to get me to raise my veil, didn't you? Ah, I thought so; but you may just wait till you are blue first . . . just for punishment."

We began to laugh and jest; we talked incessantly all the time. I do not know what I said, I was so happy. She told me that she had seen me once before, a long time ago, in the theatre. I had then comrades with me, and I behaved like a madman; I must certainly have been tipsy that time too, more 's the shame.

Why did she think that?

Oh, I had laughed so.

"Really, a-ah yes; I used to laugh a lot in those days."

"But now not any more?"

"Oh yes; now too. It is a splendid thing to exist sometimes."

We reached Carl Johann. She said: "Now we won't go any farther," and we returned through University Street. When we arrived at the fountain once more I slackened my pace a little; I knew that I could not go any farther with her.

"Well, now you must turn back here," she said, and stopped.

"Yes, I suppose I must."

But a second after she thought I might as well go as far as the door with her. Gracious me, there couldn't be anything wrong in that, could there?

"No," I replied.

But when we were standing at the door all my misery confronted me clearly. How was one to keep up one's courage when one was so broken down? Here I stood before a young lady, dirty, ragged, torn, disfigured by hunger, unwashed, and only half-clad; it was enough to make one sink into the earth. I shrank into myself, bent my head involuntarily, and said:

"May I not meet you any more then?"

I had no hope of being permitted to see her again. I almost wished for a sharp No, that would pull me together a bit and render me callous.

"Yes," she whispered softly, almost inaudibly.

"When?"

"I don't know."

A pause. . . .

"Won't you be so kind as to lift your veil, only just for a minute," I asked. "So that I can see whom I have been talking to. Just for one moment, for indeed I must see whom I have been talking to."

Another pause. . . .

"You can meet me outside here on Tuesday evening," she said. "Will you?"

"Yes, dear lady, if I have permission to."

"At eight o'clock."

"Very well."

I stroked down her cloak with my hand, merely to have an excuse for touching her. It was a delight to me to be so near her.

"And you mustn't think all too badly of me," she added; she was smiling again.

"No."

Suddenly she made a resolute movement and drew her veil up over her forehead; we stood and gazed at one another for a second.

"Ylajali!" I cried. She stretched herself up, flung her arms round my neck and kissed me right on the mouth—only once, swiftly, bewilderingly swiftly, right on the mouth. I could feel how her bosom heaved; she was breathing violently. She wrenched herself suddenly out of my clasp, called a good-night, breathlessly, whisperingly, and turned and ran up the stairs without a word more. . . .

The hall door shut.

. . . .

It snowed still more the next day, a heavy snow mingled with rain; great wet flakes that fell to earth and were turned to mud. The air was raw and icy. I woke somewhat late, with my head in a strange state of confusion, my heart intoxicated from the foregone evening by the agitation of that delightful meeting. In my rapture (I had lain a while awake and fancied Ylajali at my side) I spread out my arms and embraced myself and kissed the air. At length I dragged myself out of bed and procured a fresh cup of milk, and straight on top of that a plate of beef. I was no longer hungry, but my nerves were in a highly-strung condition.

I went off to the clothes-shop in the bazaar. It occurred to me that I might pick up a second-hand waistcoat cheaply, something to put on under my coat; it didn't matter what.

I went up the steps to the bazaar and took hold of one and began to examine it.

While I was thus engaged an acquaintance came by, he nodded and called up to me. I let the waistcoat hang and went down to him. He was a designer, and was on the way to his office.

"Come with me and have a glass of beer," he said. "But hurry up, I haven't much time. . . . What lady was that you were walking with yesterday evening?"

"Listen here now," said I, jealous of his bare thought. "Supposing it was my *fiancée*."

"By Jove!" he exclaimed.

"Yes; it was all settled yesterday evening."

This nonplussed him completely. He believed me implicitly. I lied in the most accomplished manner to get rid of him. We ordered the beer, drank it, and left.

"Well, good-bye! Oh, listen," he said suddenly. "I owe you a few shillings. It is a shame, too, that I haven't paid you long ago, but now you shall have them during the next few days."

"Yes, thanks," I replied; but I knew that he would never pay me back the few shillings. The beer, I am sorry to say, went almost immediately to my head. The thought of the previous evening's adventure overwhelmed me —made me delirious. Supposing she were not to meet me on Tuesday! Supposing she were to begin to think things over, to get suspicious . . . get suspicious of what? . . . My thoughts gave a jerk and dwelt upon the money. I grew afraid; deadly afraid of myself. The theft rushed in upon me in all its details. I saw the little shop, the counter, my lean hands as I seized the money, and I pictured to myself the line of action the police would adopt when they would come to arrest me. Irons on my hands and feet; no, only on my hands; perhaps only on one hand. The dock, the clerk taking down the evidence, the scratch of his pen—perhaps he might take a new one for the occasion—his look, his threatening look. There, Herr Tangen, to the cell, the eternally dark . . .

Humph! I clenched my hands tightly to try and summon courage, walked faster and faster, and came to the market-place. There I sat down.

Now, no child's play. How in the wide world could anyone prove that I had stolen? Besides, the huckster's boy dare not give an alarm, even if it should occur to him some day how it had all happened. He valued his situation far too dearly for that. No noise, no scenes, may I beg!

But all the same, this money weighed in my pocket sinfully, and gave me no peace. I began to question myself, and I became clearly convinced that I had been happier before, during the period in which I had suffered in all honour. And Ylajali? Had I, too, not polluted her with the touch of my sinful hands? Lord, O Lord my God, Ylajali! I felt as drunk as a bat, jumped up suddenly, and went straight over to the cake woman who was sitting near the chemist's under the sign of the elephant. I might even yet lift myself above dishonour; it was far from being too late; I would show the whole world that I was capable of doing so.

On the way over I got the money in readiness, held every farthing of it in my hand, bent down over the old woman's table as if I wanted something, and clapped the money without further ado into her hands. I spoke not a word, turned on my heel, and went my way.

What a wonderful savour there was in feeling oneself an honest man once more!

My empty pockets troubled me no longer; it was simply a delightful feeling to me to be cleaned out. When I weighed the whole matter thoroughly, this money had in reality cost me much secret anguish; I had really thought about it with dread and shuddering time upon time. I was no hardened soul; my honourable nature rebelled against such a low action. God be praised, I had raised myself in my own estimation again! "Do as I have done!" I said to myself, looking across the thronged market-place—"only just do as I have done!" I had gladdened a poor old cake vendor to such good purpose that she was perfectly dumfounded. To-night her children wouldn't go hungry to bed. . . . I buoyed myself up with these reflections and considered that I had behaved in a most exemplary manner. God be praised! The money was out of my hands now!

Tipsy and nervous, I wandered down the street, and swelled with satisfaction. The joy of being able to meet Ylajali cleanly and honourably, and of feeling I could look her in the face, ran away with me. I was not conscious of any pain. My head was clear and buoyant; it was as if it were a head of mere light that rested and gleamed on my shoulders. I felt inclined to play the wildest pranks, to do something astounding, to set the whole town in a ferment. All up through Graendsen I conducted myself like a madman. There was a buzzing in my ears, and intoxication ran riot in my brains. The whim seized me to go and tell my age to a commissionaire, who, by-the-way, had not addressed a word to me; to take hold of his hands, and gaze impressively in his face, and leave him again, without any explanation. I distinguished every nuance in the voice and laughter of the passers-by, observed some little birds that hopped before me in the street, took to studying the expression of the paving-stones, and discovered all sorts of tokens and signs in them. Thus occupied, I arrive at length at Parliament Place. I stand all at once stock-still, and look at the droskes; the drivers are wandering about, chatting and laughing. The horses hang their heads and cower in the bitter weather. "Go ahead!" I say, giving myself a dig with my elbow. I went hurriedly over to the first vehicle, and got in. "Ullevoldsveien, No. 37," I called out, and we rolled off.

On the way the driver looked round, stooped and peeped several times into the trap, where I sat, sheltered underneath the hood. Had he, too, grown suspicious? There was no doubt of it; my miserable attire had attracted his attention.

"I want to meet a man," I called to him, in order to be beforehand with him, and I explained gravely that I must really meet this man. We stop outside 37, and I jump out, spring up the stairs right to the third storey, seize a bell, and pull it. It gives six or seven fearful peals inside.

A maid comes out and opens the door. I notice that she has round, gold drops in her ears, and black stuff buttons on her grey bodice. She looks at me with a frightened air.

I inquire for Kierulf—Joachim Kierulf, if I might add further—a wool-dealer; in short, not a man one could make a mistake about. . . .

The girl shook her head. "No Kierulf lives here," said she.

She stared at me, and held the door ready to close it. She made no effort to find the man for me. She really looked as if she knew the person I inquired for, if she would only take the trouble to reflect a bit. The lazy jade! I got vexed, turned my back on her, and ran downstairs again.

"He wasn't there," I called to the driver.

"Wasn't he there?"

"No. Drive to Tomtegaden, No. 11." I was in a state of the most violent excitement, and imparted something of the same feeling to the driver. He evidently thought it was a matter of life and death, and he drove on, without further ado. He whipped up the horse sharply.

"What's the man's name?" he inquired, turning round on the box.

"Kierulf, a dealer in wool—Kierulf."

And the driver, too, thought this was a man one would not be likely to make any mistake about.

"Didn't he generally wear a light morning-coat?"

"What!" I cried; "a light morning-coat? Are you mad? Do you think it is a tea-cup I am inquiring about?" This light morning-coat came most inopportunely; it spoilt the whole man for me, such as I had fancied him.

"What was it you said he was called?—Kierulf?"

"Of course," I replied. "Is there anything wonderful in that? The name doesn't disgrace anyone."

"Hasn't he red hair?"

Well, it was quite possible that he had red hair, and now that the driver mentioned the matter, I was suddenly convinced that he was right. I felt grateful to the poor driver, and hastened to inform him that he had hit the man off to a T—he really was just as he described him,—and I remarked, in addition, that it would be a phenomenon to see such a man without red hair.

"It must be him I drove a couple of times," said the driver; "he had a knobbed stick."

This brought the man vividly before me, and I said, "Ha, ha! I suppose no one has ever yet seen the man without a knobbed stick in his hand, of that you can be certain, quite certain."

Yes, it was clear that it was the same man he had driven. He recognised him—and he drove so that the horse's shoes struck sparks as they touched the stones.

All through this phase of excitement I had not for one second lost my presence of mind. We pass a policeman, and I notice his number is 69. This number struck me with such vivid clearness that it penetrated like a splint into my brain—69—accurately 69. I wouldn't forget it.

I leant back in the vehicle, a prey to the wildest fancies; crouched under the hood so that no one could see me. I moved my lips and commenced to talk idiotically to myself. Madness rages through my brain, and I let it rage. I am fully conscious that I am succumbing to influences over which I have no control. I begin to laugh, silently, passionately, without a trace of cause, still merry and intoxicated from the couple of glasses of ale I have drunk. Little by little my excitement abates, my calm returns more and more to me. I feel the cold in my sore finger, and I stick it down inside my collar to warm it a little. At length we reach Tomtegaden. The driver pulls up.

I alight, without any haste, absently, listlessly, with my head heavy. I go through a gateway and come into a yard across which I pass. I come to a door which I open and pass through; I find myself in a lobby, a sort of anteroom, with two windows. There are two boxes in it, one on top of the other, in one corner, and against the wall an old, painted sofa-bed over which a rug is spread. To the right, in the next room, I hear voices and the cry of a child, and above me, on the second floor, the sound of an iron plate being hammered. All this I notice the moment as I enter.

I step quietly across the room to the opposite door, without any haste, without any thought of flight; open it, too, and come out in Vognmansgaden. I look up at the house through which I have passed. "Refreshment and lodgings for travellers."

It is not my intention to escape, to steal away from the driver who is waiting for me. I go very coolly down Vognmansgaden, without fear, and without being conscious of doing any wrong. Kierulf, this dealer in wool, who has spooked in my brain so long—this creature in whose existence I believed, and whom it was of vital importance that I should meet—had vanished from my memory; was wiped out with many other mad whims which came and went in turns. I recalled him no longer, except as a reminiscence—a phantom.

In measure, as I walked on, I became more and more sober; felt languid and weary, and dragged my legs after me. The snow still fell in great moist flakes. At last I reached Gronland; far out, near the church, I sat down to rest on a seat. All the passers-by looked at me with much astonishment. I fell a-thinking.

Thou good God, what a miserable plight I have come to! I was so heartily tired and weary of all my miserable life that I did not find it worth the trouble of fighting any longer to preserve it. Adversity had gained the upper hand; it had been too strong for me. I had become so strangely poverty-stricken and broken, a mere shadow of what I once had been; my shoulders were sunken right down on one side, and I had contracted a habit of stooping forward fearfully as I walked, in order to spare my chest what little I could. I had examined my body a few days ago, one noon up in my room, and I had stood and cried over it the whole time. I had worn the same shirt for many weeks, and it was quite stiff with stale sweat, and had chafed my skin. A little blood and water ran out of the sore place; it did not hurt much, but it was very tiresome to have this tender place in the middle of my stomach.

I had no remedy for it, and it wouldn't heal of its own accord. I washed it, dried it carefully, and put on the same shirt. There was no help for it, it . . .

I sit there on the bench and ponder over all this, and am sad enough. I loathe myself. My very hands seem distasteful to me; the loose, almost coarse, expression of the backs of them pains me, disgusts me. I feel myself rudely affected by the sight of my lean fingers. I hate the whole of my gaunt, shrunken body, and shrink from bearing it, from feeling it envelop me. Lord, if the whole thing would come to an end now, I would heartily, gladly die!

Completely worsted, soiled, defiled, and debased in my own estimation, I rose mechanically and commenced to turn my steps homewards. On the way I passed a door, upon which the following was to be read on a plate—"Winding-sheets to be had at Miss Andersen's, door to the right." Old memories! I muttered, as my thoughts flew back to my former room in Hammersborg. The little rocking-chair, the newspapers near the door, the lighthouse director's announcement, and Fabian Olsen, the baker's new-baked bread.

Ah yes; times were better with me then than now; one night I had written a tale for ten shillings, now I couldn't write anything. My head grew light as soon as ever I attempted it. Yes, I would put an end to it now; and I went on and on.

As I got nearer and nearer to the provision shop, I had the half-conscious feeling of approaching a danger, but I determined to stick to my purpose; I would give myself up. I ran quickly up the steps. At the door I met a little girl who was carrying a cup in her hands, and I slipped past her and opened the door. The shop boy and I stand face to face alone for the second time.

"Well!" he exclaims; "fearfully bad weather now, isn't it?" What did this going round the bush signify? Why didn't he seize me at once? I got furious, and cried:

"Oh, I haven't come to prate about the weather."

This violent preliminary takes him aback; his little huckster brain fails him. It has never even occurred to him that I have cheated him of five shillings.

"Don't you know, then, that I have swindled you?" I query impatiently, and I breathe quickly with the excitement; I tremble and am ready to use force if he doesn't come to the point.

But the poor man has no misgivings.

Well, bless my soul, what stupid creatures one has to mix with in this world! I abuse him, explain to him every detail as to how it had all happened, show him where the fact was accomplished, where the money had lain; how I had gathered it up in my hand and closed my fingers over it—and he takes it all in and does nothing. He shifts uneasily from one foot to the other, listens for footsteps in the next room, make signs to hush me, to try and make me speak lower, and says at last:

"It was a mean enough thing of you to do!"

"No; hold on," I explained in my desire to contradict him—to aggravate him. It wasn't quite so mean as he imagined it to be, in his huckster head. Naturally, I didn't keep the money; that could never have entered my head. I, for my part, scorned to derive any benefit from it—that was opposed to my thoroughly honest nature.

"What did you do with it, then?"

"I gave it away to a poor old woman—every farthing of it." He must understand that that was the sort of person I was; I didn't forget the poor so. . . .

He stands and thinks over this a while, becomes manifestly very dubious as to how far I am an honest man or not. At last he says:

"Oughtn't you rather to have brought it back again?"

"Now, listen here," I reply; "I didn't want to get you into trouble in any way; but that is the thanks one gets for being generous. Here I stand and explain the whole thing to you, and you simply, instead of being ashamed as a dog, make no effort to settle the dispute with me. Therefore I wash my hands of you, and as for the rest, I say, 'The devil take you!' Good-day."

I left, slamming the door behind me. But when I got home to my room, into the melancholy hole, wet through from the soft snow, trembling in my knees from the day's wanderings, I dismounted instantly from my high horse, and sank together once more.

I regretted my attack upon the poor shop-boy, wept, clutched myself by the throat to punish myself for my miserable trick, and behaved like a lunatic. He had naturally been in the most deadly terror for the sake of his situation; he had not dared to make any fuss about the five shillings that were lost to the business, and I had taken advantage of his fear, had tortured him with my violent address, stabbed him with every loud word that I had roared out. And the master himself had perhaps been sitting inside the inner room, almost within an ace of feeling called upon to come out and inquire what was the row. No, there was no longer any limit to the low things I might be tempted to do.

Well, why hadn't I been locked up? then it would have come to an end. I would almost have stretched out my wrists for the handcuffs. I would not have offered the slightest resistance; on the contrary, I would have assisted them. Lord of Heaven and Earth! one day of my life for one happy second again! My whole life for a mess of lentils! Hear me only this once! . . .

I laid down in the wet clothes I had on, with a vague idea that I might die during the night. And I used my last strength to tidy up my bed a little, so that it might appear a little orderly about me in the morning. I folded my hands and chose my position.

All at once I remember Ylajali. To think that I could have forgotten her the entire evening through! And light forces its way ever so faintly into my spirit again—a little ray of sunshine that makes me so blessedly warm; and gradually more sun comes, a rare, silken, balmy light that caresses me with soothing loveliness. And the sun grows stronger and stronger, burns sharply in my temples, seethes fiercely and glowingly in my emaciated brain. And at last, a maddening pyre of rays flames up before my eyes; a heaven and earth in conflagration, men and beasts of fire, mountains of fire, devils of fire, an abyss, a wilderness, a hurricane, a universe in brazen ignition, a smoking, smouldering day of doom!

And I saw and heard no more. . . .

. . . . .

I woke in a sweat the next morning, moist all over, my whole body bathed in dampness. The fever had laid violent hands on me. At first I had no clear idea of what had happened to me; I looked about me in amazement, felt a complete transformation of my being, absolutely failed to recognise myself again. I felt along my own arms and down my legs, was struck with astonishment that the window was where it was, and not in the opposite wall; and I could hear the tramp of the horses' feet in the yard below as if it came from above me. I felt rather sick, too—qualmish.

My hair clung wet and cold about my forehead. I raised myself on my elbow and looked at the pillow; damp hair lay on it, too, in patches. My feet had swelled up in my shoes during the night, but they caused me no pain, only I could not move my toes much, they were too stiff.

As the afternoon closed in, and it had already begun to grow a little dusk, I got up out of bed and commenced to move about the room a little. I felt my way with short, careful steps, taking care to keep my balance and spare my feet as much as possible. I did not suffer much, and I did not cry; neither was I, taking all into consideration, sad. On the contrary, I was blissfully content. It did not strike me just then that anything could be otherwise than it was.

Then I went out.

The only thing that troubled me a little, in spite of the nausea that the thought of food inspired in me, was hunger. I commenced to be sensible of a shameless appetite again; a ravenous lust of food, which grew steadily worse and worse. It gnawed unmercifully in my breast; carrying on a silent, mysterious work in there. It was as if a score of diminutive gnome-like insects set their heads on one side and gnawed for a little, then laid their heads on the other side and gnawed a little more, then lay quite still for a moment's space, and then began afresh, boring noiselessly in, and without any haste, and left empty spaces everywhere after them as they went on. . . .

I was not ill, but faint; I broke into a sweat. I thought of going to the market-place to rest a while, but the way was long and wearisome; at last I had almost reached it. I stood at the corner of the market and Market Street; the sweat ran down into my eyes and blinded me, and I had just stopped in order to wipe it away a little. I did not notice the place I was standing in; in fact, I did not think about it; the noise around me was something frightful.

Suddenly a call rings out, a cold, sharp warning. I hear this cry—hear it quite well, and I start nervously to one side, stepping as quickly as my bad foot allows me to. A monster of a bread-van brushes past me, and the wheel grazes my coat; I might perhaps have been a little quicker if I had exerted myself. Well, there was no help for it; one foot pained me, a couple of toes were crunched. I felt that they, as it were, curled up in my shoes.

The driver reins in his horse with all his might. He turns round on the van and inquires in a fright how it fares with me. Oh! it might have been worse, far worse. . . . It was perhaps not so dangerous. . . . I didn't think any bones were broken. Oh, pray . . .

I rushed over as quickly as I could to a seat; all these people who stopped and stared at me abashed me. After all, it was no mortal blow; comparatively speaking, I had got off luckily enough, as misfortune was bound to come in my way. The worst thing was that my shoe was crushed to pieces; the sole was torn loose at the toe. I held up my foot, and saw blood inside the gap. Well, it wasn't intentional on either side; it was not the man's purpose to make things worse for me than they were; he looked much concerned about it. It was quite certain that if I had begged him for a piece of bread out of his cart he would have given it to me. He would certainly have given it to me gladly God bless him in return, wherever he is! . . .

I was terribly hungry, and I did not know what to do with myself and my shameless appetite. I writhed from side to side on the seat, and bowed my chest right down to my knees; I was almost distracted. When it got dark I jogged along to the Town Hall—God knows how I got there—and sat on the edge of the balustrade. I tore a pocket out of my coat and took to chewing it; not with any defined object, but with dour mien and unseeing eyes, staring straight into space. I could hear a group of little children playing around near me, and perceive, in an instinctive sort of way, some pedestrian pass me by; otherwise, I observed nothing.

All at once, it enters my head to go to one of the meat bazaars underneath me, and beg a piece of raw meat. I go straight along the balustrade to the other side of the bazaar buildings, and descend the steps. When I had nearly reached the stalls on the lower floor, I called up the archway leading to the stairs, and made a threatening backward gesture, as if I were talking to a dog up there, and boldly addressed the first butcher I met.

"Ah, will you be kind enough to give me a bone for my dog?" I said; "only a bone. There needn't be anything on it; it's just to give him something to carry in his mouth."

I got the bone, a capital little bone, on which there still remained a morsel of meat, and hid it under my coat. I thanked the man so heartily that he looked at me in amazement.

"Oh, no need of thanks," said he.

"Oh yes; don't say that," I mumbled; "it is kindly done of you," and I ascended the steps again.

My heart was throbbing violently in my breast. I sneaked into one of the passages, where the forges are, as far in as I could go, and stopped outside a dilapidated door leading to a back-yard. There was no light to be seen anywhere, only blessed darkness all around me; and I began to gnaw at the bone.

It had no taste; a rank smell of blood oozed from it, and I was forced to vomit almost immediately. I tried anew. If I could only keep it down, it would, in spite of all, have some effect. It was simply a matter of forcing it to remain down there. But I vomited again. I grew wild, bit angrily into the meat, tore off a morsel, and gulped it down by sheer strength of will; and yet it was of no use. Just as soon as the little fragments of meat became warm in my stomach up they came again, worse luck. I clenched my hands in frenzy, burst into tears from sheer helplessness, and gnawed away as one possessed. I cried, so that the bone got wet and dirty with my tears, vomited, cursed and groaned again, cried as if my heart would break, and vomited anew. I consigned all the powers that be to the lowermost torture in the loudest voice.

Quiet—not a soul about—no light, no noise; I am in a state of the most fearful excitement; I breathe hardly and audibly, and I cry, with gnashing teeth, each time that the morsel of meat, which might satisfy me a little, comes up. As I find that, in spite of all my efforts, it avails me nought, I cast the bone at the door. I am filled with the most impotent hate; shriek, and menace with my fists towards Heaven; yell God's name hoarsely, and bend my fingers like claws, with ill-suppressed fury. . . .

I tell you, you Heaven's Holy Baal, you don't exist; but that, if you did, I would curse you so that your Heaven would quiver with the fire of hell! I tell you, I have offered you my service, and you repulsed me; and I turn my back on you for all eternity, because you did not know your time of visitation! I tell you that I am about to die, and yet I mock you! You Heaven God and Apis! with death staring me in the face—I tell you, I would rather be a bondsman in hell than a freedman in your mansions! I tell you, I am filled with a blissful contempt for your divine paltriness; and I choose the abyss of destruction for a perpetual resort, where the devils Judas and Pharaoh are cast down!

I tell you your Heaven is full of the kingdom of the earth's most crass-headed idiots and poverty-stricken in spirit! I tell you, you have filled your Heaven with the grossest and most cherished harlots from here below, who have bent their knees piteously before you at their hour of death! I tell you, you have used force against me, and you know not, you omniscient nullity, that I never bend in opposition! I tell you, all my life, every cell in my body, every power of my soul, gasps to mock you,

you Gracious Monster on High. I tell you, I would, if I could, breathe it into every human soul, every flower, every leaf, every dewdrop in the garden! I tell you, I would scoff you on the day of doom, and curse the teeth out of my mouth for the sake of your Deity's boundless miserableness! I tell you, from this hour I renounce all thy works and all thy pomps! I will execrate my thought if it dwell on you again, and tear out my lips if they even utter your name! I tell you, if you exist, my last word in life or in death—I bid you farewell, for all time and eternity—I bid you farewell with heart and reins. I bid you the last irrevocable farewell, and I am silent, and turn my back on you and go my way. . . . Quiet.

I tremble with excitement and exhaustion, and stand on the same spot, still whispering oaths and abusive epithets, hiccoughing after the violent crying fit, broken down and apathetic after my frenzied outburst of rage. I stand there for maybe an hour, hiccough and whisper, and hold on to the door. Then I hear voices—a conversation between two men who are coming down the passage. I slink away from the door, drag myself along the walls of the houses, and come out again into the light streets. As I jog along Young's Hill my brain begins to work in a most peculiar direction. It occurs to me that the wretched hovels down at the corner of the market-place, the stores for loose materials, the old booths for second-hand clothes, are really a disgrace to the place—they spoilt the whole appearance of the market, and were a blot on the town. Fie! away with the rubbish! And I turned over in my mind as I walked on what it would cost to remove the Geographical Survey down there—that handsome building which had always attracted me so much each time I passed it. It would perhaps not be possible to undertake a removal of that kind under two or three hundred pounds. A pretty sum—three hundred pounds! One must admit, a tidy enough little sum for pocket-money! Ha, ha! just to make a start with, eh? and I nodded my head, and conceded that it was a tidy enough bit of pocket-money to make a start with. I was still trembling over my whole body, and hiccoughed now and then violently after my cry. I had a feeling that there was not much life left in me—that I was really singing my last verse. It was almost a matter of indifference to me;

it did not trouble me in the least. On the contrary, I wended my way down town, down to the wharf, farther and farther away from my room. I would, for that matter, have willingly laid myself down flat in the street to die. My sufferings were rendering me more and more callous. My sore foot throbbed violently; I had a sensation as if the pain was creeping up through my whole leg. But not even that caused me any particular distress; I had endured worse sensations.

In this manner, I reached the railway wharf. There was no traffic, no noise—only here and there a person to be seen, a labourer or sailor slinking round with their hands in their pockets. I took notice of a lame man, who looked sharply at me as we passed one another. I stopped him instinctively, touched my hat, and inquired if he knew if the *Nun* had sailed. Someway, I couldn't help snapping my fingers right under the man's nose, and saying, "Ay, by Jove, the *Nun*; yes, the *Nun*!" which I had totally forgotten. All the same, the thought of her had been smouldering in me. I had carried it about unconsciously.

Yes, bless me, the *Nun* had sailed.

He couldn't tell me where she had sailed to?

The man reflects, stands on his long leg, keeps the other up in the air; it dangles a little.

"No," he replies. "Do you know what cargo she was taking in here?"

"No," I answer. But by this time I had already lost interest in the *Nun*, and I asked the man how far it might be to Holmestrand, reckoned in good old geographical miles.

"To Holmestrand? I should think . . ."

"Or to Vœblungsnaess?"

"What was I going to say? I should think to Holmestrand . . ."

"Oh, never mind; I have just remembered it," I interrupted him again. "You wouldn't perhaps be so kind as to give me a small bit of tobacco—only just a tiny scrap?"

I received the tobacco, thanked the man heartily, and went on. I made no use of the tobacco; I put it into my pocket. He still kept his eye on me—perhaps I had aroused his suspicions in some way or another. Whether I stood still or walked on, I felt his suspicious look following me. I had no mind to be persecuted by this creature. I turn round, and, dragging myself back to him, say:

"Binder"—only this one word, "Binder!"

no more. I looked fixedly at him as I say it, indeed I was conscious of staring fearfully at him. It was as if I saw him with my entire body instead of only with my eyes. I stare for a little while after I give utterance to this word, and then I jog along again to the railway square. The man does not utter a syllable, he only keeps his gaze fixed upon me.

"Binder!" I stood suddenly still. Yes, wasn't that just what I had a feeling of the moment I met the old chap; a feeling that I had met him before! One bright morning up in Graendsen, when I pawned my waistcoat. It seemed to me an eternity since that day.

Whilst I stand and ponder over this, I lean and support myself against a house wall at the corner of the railway square and Harbour Street. Suddenly, I start quickly and make an effort to crawl away. As I do not succeed in it, I stare case-hardened ahead of me and fling all shame to the winds. There is no help for it. I am standing face to face with the "Commandor." I get devil-may-care—brazen. I take yet a step farther from the wall in order to make him notice me. I do not do it to awake his compassion, but to mortify myself, place myself, as it were, on the pillory. I could have flung myself down in the street and begged him to walk over me, tread on my face. I don't even bid him good-evening.

Perhaps the "Commandor" guesses that something is amiss with me. He slackens his pace a little, and I say, in order to stop him, "I would have called upon you long ago with something, but nothing has come yet!"

"Indeed?" he replies in an interrogative tone. "You haven't got it finished, then?"

"No, it didn't get finished."

My eyes by this time are filled with tears at his friendliness, and I cough with a bitter effort to regain my composure. The "Commandor" tweaks his nose and looks at me.

"Have you anything to live on in the meantime?" he questions.

"No," I reply. "I haven't that either; I haven't eaten anything to-day, but . . ."

"The Lord preserve you, man, it will never do for you to go and starve yourself to death," he exclaims, feeling in his pocket.

This causes a feeling of shame to awake in me, and I stagger over to the wall and hold on to it. I see him finger in his purse, and he hands me half-a-sovereign.

He makes no fuss about it, simply gives me half-a-sovereign, reiterating at the same time that it would never do to let me starve to death. I stammered an objection and did not take it all at once. It is shameful of me to . . . it was really too much. . . .

"Hurry up," he says, looking at his watch. "I have been waiting for the train; I hear it coming now."

I took the money; I was dumb with joy, and never said a word; I didn't even thank him once.

"It isn't worth while feeling put out about it," said the "Commandor" at last. "I know you can write for it."

And so off he went.

When he had gone a few steps, I remembered all at once that I had not thanked him for this great assistance. I tried to overtake him, but could not get on quickly enough; my legs failed me, and I came near tumbling on my face. He went farther and farther away from me. I gave up the attempt; thought of calling after him, but dared not; and when after all I did muster up courage enough and called once or twice, he was already at too great a distance, and my voice had become too weak.

I was left standing on the pavement, gazing after him. I wept quietly and silently. "I never saw the like!" I said to myself. "He gave me half-a-sovereign." I walked back and placed myself where he had stood, imitated all his movements, held the half-sovereign up to my moistened eyes, inspected it on both sides, and began to swear—to swear at the top of my voice, that there was no manner of doubt that what I held in my hand was half-a-sovereign. An hour after, maybe—a very long hour, for it had grown very silent all around me—I stood, singularly enough, outside No. 11, Tomtegaden. After I had stood and collected my wits for a moment and wondered thereat, I went through the door for the second time, right into the "Entertainment and lodgings for travellers." Here I asked for shelter, and was immediately supplied with a bed.

. . . .

Tuesday.

Sunshine and quiet—a strangely bright day. The snow had disappeared. There was life and joy, and glad faces, smiles, and laughter everywhere. The fountains threw up sprays of water in jets, golden-tinted from the sunlight, azure from the sky. . . .

At noon I left my lodgings in Tomtegaden, where I still lived and found fairly comfortable, and set out for town. I was in the merriest humour, and lazied about the whole afternoon through the most frequented streets and looked at the people. Even before seven o'clock I took a turn up St Olav's Place and took a furtive look up at the window of No. 2. In an hour I would see her. I went about the whole time in a state of tremulous, delicious dread. What would happen? What should I say when she came down the stairs? Good-evening? or only smile? I concluded to let it rest with the smile. Of course I would bow profoundly to her.

I stole away, a little ashamed to be there so early, wandered up Carl Johann for a while, and kept my eyes on University Street. When the clocks struck eight I walked once more towards St Olav's Place. On the way it struck me that perhaps I might arrive a few minutes too late, and I quickened my pace as much as I could. My foot was very sore, otherwise nothing ailed me.

I took up my place at the fountain and drew breath. I stood there a long while and gazed up at the window of No. 2, but she did not come. Well, I would wait; I was in no hurry. She might be delayed, and I waited on. It couldn't well be that I had dreamt the whole thing! Had my first meeting with her only existed in imagination the night I lay in delirium? I began in perplexity to think over it, and wasn't at all sure.

"Hem!" came from behind me. I heard this, and I also heard light steps near me, but I did not turn round, I only stared up at the wide staircase before me.

"Good-evening," came then. I forget to smile; I don't even take off my hat at first, I am so taken aback to see her come this way.

"Have you been waiting long?" she asks. She is breathing a little quickly after her walk.

"No, not at all; I only came a little while ago," I reply. "And besides, would it matter if I had waited long? I expected, by-the-way, that you would come from another direction."

"I accompanied mamma to some people. Mamma is spending the evening with them."

"Oh, indeed," I say.

We had begun to walk on involuntarily. A policeman is standing at the corner, looking at us.

"But, after all, where are we going to?" she asks, and stops.

"Wherever you wish; only where *you* wish."

"Ugh, yes! but it's such a bore to have to decide oneself."

A pause.

Then I say, merely for the sake of saying something:

"I see it's dark up in your windows."

"Yes, it is," she replies gaily; "the servant has an evening off, too, so I am all alone at home."

We both stand and look up at the windows of No. 2 as if neither of us had seen them before.

"Can't we go up to your place, then?" I say; "I shall sit down at the door the whole time if you like."

But then I trembled with emotion, and regretted greatly that I had perhaps been too forward. Supposing she were to get angry, and leave me. Suppose I were never to see her again. Ah, that miserable attire of mine! I waited despairingly for her reply.

"You shall certainly not sit down by the door," she says. She says it right down tenderly, and says accurately these words: "You shall certainly not sit down by the door."

We went up.

Out on the lobby, where it was dark, she took hold of my hand, and led me on. There was no necessity for my being so quiet, she said, I could very well talk. We entered. Whilst she lit the candle—it was not a lamp she lit, but a candle—whilst she lit the candle, she said, with a little laugh:

"But now you mustn't look at me. Ugh! I am so ashamed, but I will never do it again."

"What will you never do again?"

"I will never . . . ugh . . . no . . . good gracious . . . I will never kiss you again!"

"Won't you?" I said, and we both laughed. I stretched out my arms to her, and she glided away; slipped round to the other side of the table. We stood a while and gazed at one another; the candle stood right between us.

"Try and catch me," she said; and with much laughter I tried to seize hold of her. Whilst she sprang about, she loosened her veil, and took off her hat; her sparkling eyes hung on mine, and watched my movements. I made a fresh sortie, and tripped on the carpet and fell, my sore foot refusing to bear me up any longer. I rose in extreme confusion.

"Lord, how red you did get!" she said. "Well, it was awfully awkward of you."

"Yes, it was," I agreed, and we began the chase afresh.

"It seems to me you limp."

"Yes; perhaps I do—just a little—only just a little, for that matter."

"Last time you had a sore finger, now you have got a sore foot; it is awful the number of afflictions you have."

"Ah, yes. I was run over slightly, a few days ago."

"Run over! Tipsy again? Why, good Heavens! what a life you lead, young man!" and she threatened me with her forefinger, and tried to appear grave. "Well, let us sit down, then; no, not down there by the door; you are far too reserved! Come here—you there, and I here—so, that's it . . . ugh, it's such a bore with reticent people! One has to say and do everything oneself; one gets no help to do anything. Now, for example, you might just as well put your arm over the back of my chair; you could easily have thought of that much out of your own head, couldn't you? But if I say anything like that, you open your eyes as wide as if you couldn't believe what was being said. Yes, it is really true; I have noticed it several times; you are doing it now, too; but you needn't try to persuade me that you are always so modest; it is only when you don't dare to be otherwise than quiet. You were daring enough the day you were tipsy—when you followed me straight home and worried me with your witticisms. 'You are losing your book, madam; you are quite certainly losing your book, madam!' Ha, ha, ha! it was really shameless of you."

I sat dejectedly and looked at her; my heart beat violently, my blood raced quickly through my veins, there was a singular sense of enjoyment in it!

"Why don't you say something?"

"What a darling you are," I cried. "I am simply sitting here getting thoroughly fascinated by you—here this very moment thoroughly fascinated. . . . There is no help for it. . . . You are the most extraordinary creature that

. . . sometimes your eyes gleam so, that I never saw their match; they look like flowers . . . eh? No, well no, perhaps not like flowers, either, but . . . I am so desperately in love with you, and it is so preposterous . . . for, great Scott! there is naturally not an atom of chance for me. . . . What is your name? Now, you really must tell me what you are called."

"No; what is *your* name? Gracious, I was nearly forgetting that again! I thought about it all yesterday, that I meant to ask you—yes, that is to say, not *all* yesterday, but——"

"Do you know what I named you? I named you Ylajali. How do you like that? It has a gliding sound. . . ."

"Ylajali?"

"Yes."

"Is that a foreign language?"

"Humph—no, it isn't that either!"

"Well, it isn't ugly!"

After a long discussion we told one another our names. She seated herself close to my side on the sofa, and shoved the chair away with her foot, and we began to chatter afresh.

"You are shaved this evening, too," she said; "look on the whole a little better than the last time—that is to say, only just a scrap better. Don't imagine . . . no; the last time you were really shabby, and you had a dirty rag round your finger into the bargain; and in that state you absolutely wanted me to go to some place, and take wine with you—thanks, not me!"

"So it was, after all, because of my miserable appearance that you would not go with me?" I said.

"No," she replied and looked down. "No; God knows it wasn't. I didn't even think about it."

"Listen," said I; "you are evidently sitting here labouring under the delusion that I can dress and live exactly as I choose, aren't you? And that is just what I can't do; I am very, very poor."

She looked at me. "Are you?" she queried.

"Yes, worse luck, I am."

After an interval.

"Well, gracious, so am I, too," she said, with a cheerful movement of her head.

Everyone of her words intoxicated me, fell on my heart like drops of wine. She enchanted me with the trick she had of putting her head a little on one side, and listening when I said anything, and I could feel her breath brush my face.

"Do you know," I said, "that . . . but, now, you mustn't get angry—when I went to bed last night I settled this arm for you . . . so . . . as if you lay on it . . . and then I went to sleep."

"Did you? That was lovely!" A pause. "But of course it could only be from a distance that you would venture to do such a thing, for otherwise . . ."

"Don't you believe I could do it otherwise?"

"No, I don't believe it."

"Ah, from me you may expect everything," I said, and I put my arm around her waist.

"Can I?" was all she said.

It annoyed me, almost wounded me, that she should look upon me as being so utterly inoffensive. I braced myself up, steeled my heart, and seized her hand; but she withdrew it softly, and moved a little away from me. That just put an end to my courage again; I felt ashamed, and looked out through the window. I was, in spite of all, in far too wretched a condition; I must, above all, not try to imagine myself anyone in particular. It would have been another matter if I had met her during the time that I still looked like a respectable human being—in my old, well-off days when I had sufficient to make an appearance; and I felt fearfully downcast!

"There now, one can see!" she said, "now one can just see one can snub you with just the tiniest frown—make you look sheepish by just moving a little away from you" . . . she laughed, tantalisingly, roguishly, with tightly-closed eyes, as if she could not stand being looked at, either.

"Well, upon my soul!" I blurted out, "now you shall just see," and I flung my arms violently around her shoulder. I was mortified. Was the girl out of her senses? Did she think I was totally inexperienced! Ha! Then I would, by the living . . . No one should say of me that I was backward on that score. The creature was possessed by the devil himself! If it were only a matter of going at it, well . . .

She sat quite quietly, and still kept her eyes closed; neither of us spoke. I crushed her fiercely to me, pressed her body greedily against my breast, and she spoke never a word. I heard her heart's beat, both hers and mine; they sounded like hurrying hoof-beats.

I kissed her.

I no longer knew myself. I uttered some nonsense, that she laughed at, whispered pet names into her mouth, caressed her cheek, kissed her many times. I undid a couple of buttons in her bodice and I caught a glimpse of her breasts inside—white rounded breasts, that peeped out like two sweet wonders behind her linen.

"May I see?" I say, and I try to undo more buttons to make the opening wider, but my movements are too rough, I make no way with the lower buttons; besides, the bodice tightened there.

"May I just see a little . . . a little?"

She winds her arms about my neck, quite slowly, tenderly, the breath of her pink quivering nostrils fans me right in the face; with one hand she begins herself to undo the buttons one by one. She laughs embarrassedly, laughs shortly, and looks up at me several times, to see if I notice that she is afraid. She loosens strings, unclasps her stays, is fascinated and frightened—and I finger with my clumsy hands at these buttons and strings. . . .

To divert my attention from what she is doing, she strokes down my shoulders with her left hand, and says, "What a lot of loose hair there is."

"Yes," I reply, and I try to penetrate into her breast with my mouth. She is lying at this moment with completely loosened clothes. Suddenly, as if she changes her mind, as if she thinks she has gone too far, she covers herself again and rises up a little, and, to hide her confusion at the state of her clothes, she begins to remark anew on the mass of loose hair that covers my shoulders.

"What can be the reason that your hair falls out so?"

"Don't know."

"Ah, of course, because you drink too much, and perhaps . . . fie, I won't say it. You ought to be ashamed. No, I wouldn't have believed that of you! To think that you, who are so young, already should lose your hair! Now, do please just tell me what sort of way you really spend you life—I am certain it is dreadful! But only the truth, do you hear; no evasions. Anyway, I shall see by you if you hide anything—there, tell now!"

"Yes; but let me kiss you on your breast first, then."

"Are you mad? Well, begin now."

"No, dear; do give me leave, now, to do that first."

"Humph, no; not first; . . . maybe afterwards. . . . I want to hear what kind of a man you are. . . . Ah, I am sure it is dreadful."

It hurt me that she should believe the worst of me; I was afraid of thrusting her away entirely, and I could not endure the misgivings she had as to my way of life. I would clear myself in her eyes, make myself worthy of her, show her that she was sitting at the side of a person almost angelically disposed. Why, bless me, I could count my falls up to date on my fingers. I related—related all—and I only related truth. I made out nothing any worse than it was; it was not my intention to rouse her compassion. I told her also that I had stolen five shillings one evening.

She sat and listened, with open mouth, pale, frightened, her shining eyes completely bewildered. I desired to make it good again, to disperse the sad impression I had made, and I pulled myself up.

"Well, it is all over now!" I said; "there can be no talk of such a thing happening again; I am saved now. . . ."

But she was much dispirited, "The Lord preserve me!" was all she said, then kept silent. She repeated this at short intervals, and kept silent after each "the Lord preserve me."

I began to jest, caught hold of her, tried to tickle her, lifted her up to my breast. She had buttoned up her frock again. This irritated me not a little—indeed, downright hurt me. Why should she button up her frock again? Was I more unworthy in her eyes now, than if I had myself been instrumental in causing the falling out of my hair? Would she have thought more of me if I had made myself out to be a *roué*? . . . No nonsense now; . . . it was just a matter of going at it; and if it was only just a matter of going at it, so, by the living . . . I laid her down—simply laid her down on the sofa. She struggled quite feebly, by-the-way, and looked astonished.

"No; . . . what do you want?" she queried.

"What do I want?"

Ha! she asked me what I wanted. Go at it was what I wanted—go right at it. It was not only from a distance that I was able to go at it. That was not the sort and condition of man I was—I would have to prove I was not the sort of fellow to be trifled with, and not to be snubbed by a frown. No, no, forsooth; I had never yet gone forth from such an affair as this without having effected my purpose . . . and I went at it.

"No! . . . no, but . . . ?"

"Yes, rather; that was just my intention."

"No; do listen!" she cried, and she added these hurtful words, "I can't be sure that you are not insane!"

I checked myself involuntarily, and I said: "You don't mean that!"

"Indeed, God knows I do! you look so strangely. And the forenoon you followed me—after all, you weren't tipsy that time?"

"No; but I wasn't hungry then, either; I had just eaten. . . . "

"Yes; but that made it so much the worse."

"Would you rather I had been tipsy?"

"Yes . . . ugh . . . I am afraid of you! Lord, can't you let me be now!"

I considered a moment. No, I couldn't let her be. No damned nonsense late in the evening on a sofa. "Off with that petticoat!" Ha, what odd excuses one could hit upon in such a moment, as if I didn't know it was just half-coyness, mock modesty all the time.

I would indeed be green! "There, be quiet! No bosh! Live king and country!"

She fought and struggled against me with unusual strength—far too strongly to only do so from coyness. I happened, as if inadvertently, to knock over the light, so that it went out. She made a despairing struggle—gave vent at last to a little whimper.

"No, not that—oh, not that! If you like, you may rather kiss me on my breast, oh, dear, kind . . . "

I stopped instantly. Her words sounded so terrified, so helpless, I was struck to the heart. She meant to offer me a compensation by giving me leave to kiss her breast! How charming, how charmingly naïve. I could have fallen down and knelt before her.

"But, dear pretty one," I said, completely bewildered, "I don't understand . . . I really can't conceive what sort of a game this is . . . "

She rose, lit the candle again with trembling hands. I leant back on the sofa and did nothing. What would happen now? I was in reality very ill at ease.

She cast a look over at the clock on the wall, and started.

"Ugh, the girl will soon come now!" she

said; this was the first thing she said. I took the hint, and rose. She took up her jacket as if to put it on, bethought herself, and let it lie, and went over to the fireplace. So that it should not appear as if she had shown me the door, I said:

"Was your father in the army?" and at the same time I prepared to leave.

"Yes; he was an officer. How did you know?"

"I didn't know; it just came into my head."

"That was odd."

"Ah, yes; there were some places I came to where I got a kind of presentiment. Ha, ha!—a part of my insanity, eh?"

She looked quickly up, but didn't answer. I felt I worried her with my presence, and determined to make short work of it. I went towards the door. Would she not kiss me any more now? not even give me her hand? I stood and waited.

"Are you going now, then?" she said, and yet she remained quietly standing over near the fireplace.

I did not reply. I stood humbly in confusion, and looked at her without saying anything. Why hadn't she left me in peace, when nothing was to come of it? What was the matter with her now? It didn't seem to put her out that I stood prepared to leave. She was all at once completely lost to me, and I searched for something to say to her in farewell—a weighty, cutting word that would strike her, and perhaps impress her a little. And in the face of my first resolve, hurt as I was, instead of being proud and cold, disturbed and offended, I began right off to talk of trifles. The telling word would not come; I conducted myself in an exceedingly aimless fashion. Why couldn't she just as well tell me plainly and straightly to go my way? I queried. Yes, indeed, why not? There was no need of feeling embarrassed about it. Instead of reminding me that the girl would soon come home, she could have simply said as follows: "Now you must run, for I must go and fetch my mother, and I won't have your escort through the street." So it was not that she had been thinking about? Ah, yes; it was that all the same she had thought about; I understood that at once. It did not require much to put me on the right track; only, just the way she had taken up her jacket, and left it down again, had convinced me immediately. As I said before, I had presentiments; and it was not altogether insanity that was at the root of it. . . .

"But, great heavens! do forgive me for that word! It slipped out of my mouth," she cried; but yet she stood quite quietly, and did not come over to me.

I was inflexible, and went on. I stood there and prattled, with the painful consciousness that I bored her, that not one of my words went home, and all the same I did not cease.

At bottom one might be a fairly sensitive nature, even if one were not insane, I ventured to say. There were natures that fed on trifles, and died just for one hard word's sake; and I implied that I had such a nature. The fact was, that my poverty had in that degree sharpened certain powers in me, so that they caused me unpleasantness. Yes, I assure you honestly, unpleasantness; worse luck! But this had also its advantages. It helped me in certain situations in life. The poor intelligent man is a far nicer observer than the rich intelligent man. The poor man looks about him at every step he takes, listens suspiciously to every word he hears from the people he meets, every step he takes affords in this way a task for his thoughts and feelings — an occupation. He is quick of hearing, and sensitive; he is an experienced man, his soul bears the sears of the fire. . . .

And I talked a long time over these sears my soul had. But the longer I talked, the more troubled she grew. At last she muttered, "My God!" a couple of times in despair, and wrung her hands. I could see well that I tormented her, and I had no wish to torment her—but did it, all the same. At last, being of the opinion that I had succeeded in telling her in rude enough terms the essentials of what I had to say, I was touched by her heart-stricken expression. I cried:

"Now I am going, now I am going. Can't you see that I already have my hand on the handle of the door? Good-bye, good-bye," I say. "You might answer me when I say good-bye twice, and stand on the point of going. I don't even ask to meet you again, for it would torment you. But tell me, why didn't you leave me in peace? What had I done to you? I didn't get in your way, now, did I? Why did you turn away from me all at once, as if you didn't know me any longer? You have plucked me now so thoroughly bare, made me even more wretched than I ever was at any time before; but, indeed, I am not insane. You know well, if you think it over, that nothing is the matter with me now. Come over, then, and give me your hand—or give me leave to go to you, will you? I won't do you any harm; I will only kneel before you, only for a minute—kneel down on the floor before you, only for a minute, may I? No, no; there, I am not to do it then, I see. You are getting afraid. I *will* not, I *will not* do it; do you hear? Lord, why do you get so terrified? I am standing quite still; I am not moving. I would have knelt down on the carpet for a moment—just there, upon that patch of red, at your feet; but you got frightened—I could see it at once in your eyes that you got frightened, that was why I stood still. I didn't move a step when I asked you might I, did I? I stood just as immovable as I stand now when I point out the place to you where I would have knelt before you, over there on the crimson rose in the carpet. I don't even point with my finger. I don't point at all; I let it be, not to frighten you. I only nod and look over at it, like this! and you know perfectly well which rose I mean, but you won't let me kneel there. You are afraid of me, and dare not come near to me. I cannot conceive how you could have the heart to call me insane. It isn't true; you don't believe it, either, any longer? It was once in the summer, a long time ago, I was mad; I worked too hard, and forgot to go to dine at the right hour, when I had too much to think about. That happened day after day. I ought to have remembered it; but I went on forgetting it—by God in Heaven, it is true! God keep me from ever coming alive from this spot if I lie. There, you can see, you do me an injustice. It was not out of need I did it; I can get credit, much credit, at Ingebret's or Gravesen's. I often, too, had a good deal of money in my pocket, and did not buy food, all the same, because I forgot it. Do you hear? You don't say anything; you don't answer; you don't stir a bit from the fire; you just stand and wait for me to go. . . ."

She came hurriedly over to me, and stretched out her hand. I looked at her, full of mistrust. Did she do it with any true heartiness, or did she only do it to get rid of me? She wound her arms round my neck; she had tears in her eyes; I only stood and looked at her. She offered her mouth; I couldn't believe in her; it was quite certain she was making a sacrifice as a means of putting an end to all this.

She said something; it sounded to me like, "I am fond of you, in spite of all." She said it very lowly and indistinctly; maybe I did not hear aright. She may not have said just those words; but she cast herself impetuously against my breast, clasped both her arms about my neck for a little while, stretched even up a bit on her toes to get a good hold, and stood so for perhaps a whole minute. I was afraid that she was forcing herself to show me this tenderness, and I only said:

"What a darling you are now!"

More I didn't say. I crushed her in my arms, stepped back, rushed to the door, and went out backwards. She remained in there, behind me.

PART IV

WINTER had set in—a raw, wet winter, almost without snow. A foggy, dark, and everlasting night, without a single blast of fresh wind the whole week through. The gas was lighted almost all the day in the streets, and yet people jostled one another in the fog. Every sound, the clang of the church bells, the jingling of the harness of the droske horses, the people's voices, the beat of the hoofs, everything, sounded choked and jangling through the close air, that penetrated and muffled everything.

Week followed week, and the weather was, and remained, still the same.

And I stayed steadily down in Vaterland. I grew more and more closely bound to this inn, this lodging-house for travellers, where I had found shelter, in spite of my starving condition. My money was exhausted long since; and yet I continued to come and go in this place as if I had a right to it, and was at home there. The landlady had, as yet, said nothing; but it worried me all the same that I could not pay her. In this way three weeks went by. I had already, many days ago, taken to writing again; but I could not succeed in putting anything together that satisfied me. I had no longer any luck, although I was very painstaking, and strove early and late; no matter what I attempted, it was useless. Good fortune had flown; and I exerted myself in vain.

It was in a room on the second floor, the best guest-room, that I sat and made these attempts. I had been undisturbed up there since the first evening when I had money and was able to settle for what I got. All the time I was buoyed up by the hope of at last succeeding in getting together an article on some subject or another, so that I could pay for my room, and for whatever else I owed. That was the reason I worked on so persistently. I had, in particular, commenced a piece from which I expected great things—an allegory about a fire—a profound thought upon which I intended to expend all my energy, and bring it to the "Commandor" in payment. The "Commandor" should see that he had helped a talent this time. I had no doubt but that he would eventually see that; it only was a matter of waiting till the spirit moved me; and why shouldn't the spirit move me? Why should it not come over me even now, at a very early date? There was no longer anything the matter with me. My landlady gave me a little food every day, some bread and butter, mornings and evenings, and my nervousness had almost flown. I no longer used cloths round my hands when I wrote; and I could stare down into the street from my window on the second floor without getting giddy. I was much better in every way, and it was becoming a matter of astonishment to me that I had not already finished my allegory. I couldn't understand why it was. . . .

But a day came when I was at last to get a clear idea of how weak I had really become; with what incapacity my dull brain acted. Namely, on this day my landlady came up to me with a reckoning which she asked me to look over. There must be something wrong in this reckoning, she said; it didn't agree with her own book; but she had not been able to find out the mistake.

I set to work to add up. My landlady sat right opposite and looked at me. I totted up these score of figures first once down, and found the total right; then once up again, and arrived at the same result. I looked at the woman sitting opposite me, waiting on my words. I noticed at the same time that she was pregnant; it did not escape my attention, and yet I did not stare in any way scrutinisingly at her.

"The total is right," said I.

"No; go over each figure now," she answered. "I am sure it can't be so much; I am positive of it."

And I commenced to check each line — 2 loaves at 2½d., 1 lamp chimney, 3d., soap, 4d., butter, 5d. . . . It did not require any particularly shrewd head to run up these rows of figures—this little huckster account in which nothing very complex occurred. I tried honestly to find the error that the woman spoke about, but couldn't succeed. After I had muddled about with these figures for some minutes I felt that, unfortunately, everything commenced to dance about in my head; I could no longer distinguish debit or credit; I mixed the whole thing up. Finally, I came to a dead stop at the following entry—"3. $\frac{5}{16}$ths of a pound of cheese at 9d." My brain failed me completely; I stared stupidly down at the cheese, and got no farther.

"It is really too confoundedly crabbed writing," I exclaimed, in despair. "Why, God bless me, here is $\frac{5}{16}$ths of a pound of cheese entered—ha, ha! did anyone ever hear the like? Yes, look here; you can see for yourself."

"Yes," she said; "it is often put down like that; it is a kind of Dutch cheese. Yes, that is all right—five-sixteenths is in this case five ounces."

"Yes, yes; I understand that well enough," I interrupted, although in truth I understand nothing more whatever.

I tried once more to get this little account right, that I could have totted up in a second some months ago. I sweated fearfully, and thought over these enigmatical figures with all my might, and I blinked my eyes reflectingly, as if I was studying this matter sharply, but I had to give it up. These five ounces of cheese finished me completely; it was as if something snapped within my forehead. But yet, to give the impression that I still worked out my calculation, I moved my lips and muttered a number aloud, all the while sliding farther and farther down the reckoning as if I were steadily coming to a result. She sat and waited. At last I said:

"Well, now, I have gone through it from first to last, and there is really no mistake, as far as I can see."

"Isn't there?" replied the woman, "isn't there really?" But I saw well that she did not believe me, and she seemed all at once to throw a dash of contempt into her words, a slightly careless tone that I had never heard from her before. She remarked that perhaps I was not accustomed to reckon in sixteenths; she mentioned also that she must only apply to some one who had a knowledge of sixteenths, to get the account properly revised. She said all this, not in any hurtful way to make me feel ashamed, but thoughtfully and seriously. When she got as far as the door, she said, without looking at me:

"Excuse me for taking up your time then."

Off she went.

A moment after, the door opened again, and she re-entered. She could hardly have gone much farther than the stairs before she had turned back.

"That 's true," said she; "you mustn't take it amiss; but there is a little owing to me from you now, isn't there? Wasn't it three weeks yesterday since you came?" Yes, I thought it was. "It isn't so easy to keep things going with such a big family, so that I can't give lodging on credit, more's the . . ."

I stopped her. "I am working at an article that I think I told you about before," said I, "and as soon as ever that is finished, you shall have your money; you can make yourself quite easy. . . ."

"Yes; but you'll never get that article finished, though."

"Do you think that? Maybe the spirit will move me to-morrow, or perhaps already, to-night; it isn't at all impossible but that it may move me some time to-night, and then my article will be completed in a quarter of an hour at the outside. You see, it isn't with my work as with other people's; I can't sit down and get a certain amount finished in a day. I have just to wait for the right moment, and no one can tell the day or hour when the spirit may move one—it must have its own time. . . ."

My landlady went, but her confidence in me was evidently much shaken.

As soon as I was left alone I jumped up and tore my hair in despair. No, in spite of all, there was really no salvation for me—no salvation! My brain was bankrupt! Had I then really turned into a complete dolt since I could not even add up the price of a piece of Dutch cheese? But could it be possible I had lost my senses when I could stand and put such questions to myself? Had not I, into the bargain, right in the midst of my efforts with the reckoning, made the lucid observation that my landlady was in the family way? I had no reason for knowing it, no one had told me anything about it, neither had it occurred to me gratuitously. I sat and saw it with my own eyes, and I understood it at once, right at a despairing moment where I sat and added up sixteenths. How could I explain this to myself?

I went to the window and gazed out; it looked out into Vognmandsgade. Some children were playing down on the pavement; poorly dressed children in the middle of a poor street. They tossed an empty bottle between them and screamed shrilly. A load of furniture rolled slowly by; it must belong to some dislodged family, forced to change residence between "flitting time."* This struck me at once. Bed-clothes and furniture were heaped on the float, moth-eaten beds and chests of drawers, red-painted chairs with three legs, mats, old iron, and tin-ware. A little girl—a mere child, a downright ugly youngster, with a running cold in her nose—sat up on top of the load, and held fast with her poor little blue hands in order not to tumble off. She sat on a heap of frightfully stained mattresses, that children must have lain on, and looked down at the urchins who were tossing the empty bottle to one another. . . .

I stood gazing at all this; I had no difficulty in apprehending everything that passed before me. Whilst I stood there at the window and observed this, I could hear my landlady's servant singing in the kitchen right alongside of my room. I knew the air she was singing, and I listened to hear if she would sing false, and I said to myself that an idiot could not have done all this. I was, God be praised, as right in my senses as any man.

Suddenly, I saw two of the children down in the street fire up and begin to abuse one another. Two little boys; I recognised one of them; he was my landlady's son. I open the window to hear what they are saying to one another, and immediately a flock of children crowded together under my window, and looked wistfully up. What did they expect? That something would be thrown down? Withered flowers, bones, cigar ends, or one thing or another, that they could amuse themselves with? They looked up with their frost-pinched faces and unspeakably wistful eyes. In the meantime, the two small foes continued to revile one another.

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* In Norway, 14th of March and October.

Words like great buzzing noxious insects swarm out of their childish mouths; frightful nicknames, thieves' slang, sailors' oaths, that they perhaps had learnt down on the wharf; and they are both so engaged that they do not notice my landlady, who rushes out to see what is going on.

"Yes," explains her son, "he catched me by the throat; I couldn't breathe for ever so long," and turning upon the little man who is the cause of the quarrel, and who is standing grinning maliciously at him, he gets perfectly furious, and yells, "Go to hell, Chaldean ass that you are! To think such vermin as you should catch folk by the throat. I will, may the Lord . . ."

And the mother, this pregnant woman, who dominates the whole street with her size, answers the ten-year-old child, as she seizes him by the arm and tries to drag him in:

"Sh—sh. Hold your jaw! I just like to hear the way you swear, too, as if you had been in a brothel for years. Now, in with you."

"No, I won't."

"Yes, you will."

"No, I won't."

I stand up in the window and see that the mother's temper is rising; this disagreeable scene excites me frightfully. I can't endure it any longer. I call down to the boy to come up to me for a minute; I call twice, just to distract them—to change the scene. The last time I call very loudly, and the mother turns round flurriedly and looks up at me. She regains her self-possession at once, looks insolently at me, nay, downright maliciously, and enters the house with a chiding remark to her offspring. She talks loudly, so that I may hear it, and says to him, "Fie, you ought to be ashamed of yourself to let people see how naughty you are."

Of all this that I stood there and observed not one thing, not even one little accessory detail, was lost on me; my attention was acutely keen; I absorbed carefully every little thing as I stood and thought out my own thought, about each thing according as it occurred. So it was impossible that there could be anything the matter with my brain. How could there, in this case, be anything the matter with it?

Listen; do you know what, said I all at once to myself, that you have been worrying yourself long enough about your brain, giving yourself no end of worry in this matter? Now, there must be an end to this tomfoolery. Is it a sign of insanity to notice and apprehend everything as accurately as you do? You make me almost laugh at you, I reply. To my mind it is not without its humorous side, if I am any judge of such a case. Why, it happens to every man that he once in a way sticks fast, and that, too, just with the simplest question. It is of no significance, it is often a pure accident. As I have remarked before, I am on the point of having a good laugh at your expense. As far as that huckster account is concerned, that paltry five-sixteenths of beggar-man's cheese, I can happily dub it so. Ha, ha! —a cheese with cloves and pepper in it; upon my word, a cheese in which, to put the matter plainly, one could breed maggots. As far as that ridiculous cheese is concerned, it might happen to the cleverest fellow in the world to be puzzled over it! Why, the smell of the cheese was enough to finish a man; . . . and I made the greatest fun of this and all other Dutch cheeses. . . . No; set me to reckon up something really eatable, said I—set me, if you like, at five-sixteenths of good dairy butter. That is another matter.

I laughed feverishly at my own whim, and found it peculiarly diverting. There was positively no longer anything the matter with me. I was in good form—was, so to say, still in the best of form; I had a level head, nothing was wanting there, God be praised and thanked! My mirth rose in measure as I paced the floor and communed with myself. I laughed aloud, and felt amazingly glad. Besides, it really seemed, too, as if I only needed this little happy hour, this moment of airy rapture, without a care on any side, to get my head into working order once more.

I seated myself at the table, and set to work at my allegory; it progressed swimmingly, better than it had done for a long time; not very fast, 'tis true, but it seemed to me that what I did was altogether first-rate. I worked, too, for the space of an hour without getting tired.

I am sitting working at a most crucial point in this Allegory of a Conflagration in a Book-shop. It appears to me so momentous a point, that all the rest I have written counted as nothing in comparison. I was, namely, just about to weave in, in a downright profound way, this thought. It was not books that were burning, it was brains, human brains; and I intended to make a perfect Bartholomew's night of these burning brains.

Suddenly my door was flung open with a jerk and in much haste; my landlady came sailing in. She came straight over to the middle of the room, she did not even pause on the threshold.

I gave a little hoarse cry; it was just as if I had received a blow.

"What?" said she, "I thought you said something. We have got a traveller, and we must have this room for him. You will have to sleep downstairs with us to-night. Yes;

you can have a bed to yourself there too." And before she got my answer, she began, without further ceremony, to bundle my papers together on the table, and put the whole of them into a state of dire confusion.

My happy mood was blown to the winds; I stood up at once, in anger and despair. I let her tidy the table, and said nothing, never uttered a syllable. She thrust all the papers into my hand.

There was nothing else for me to do. I was forced to leave the room. And so this precious moment was spoilt also. I met the new traveller already on the stairs: a young man with great blue anchors tatooed on the backs of his hands. A quay porter followed him, bearing a sea-chest on his shoulders. He was evidently a sailor, a casual traveller for the night; he would therefore not occupy my room for any lengthened period. Perhaps, too, I might be lucky to-morrow when the man had left, and have one of my moments again; I only needed an inspiration for five minutes, and my essay on the conflagration would be completed. Well, I should have to submit to fate.

I had not been inside the family rooms

before, this one common room in which they all lived, both day and night—the husband, wife, wife's father, and four children. The servant lived in the kitchen, where she also slept at night. I approached the door with much repugnance, and knocked. No one answered, yet I heard voices inside.

The husband did not speak as I stepped in, did not acknowledge my nod even, merely glanced at me carelessly, as if I were no concern of his. Besides, he was sitting playing cards with a person I had seen down on the quays, with the by-name of "Pane o' glass." An infant lay and prattled to itself over in the bed, and an old man, the landlady's father, sat doubled together on a settle-bed, and bent his head down over his hands as if his chest or stomach pained him. His hair was almost white, and he looked in his crouching position like a poke-necked reptile that sat cocking its ears at something.

"I come, worse luck, to beg for house-room down here to-night," I said to the man.

"Did my wife say so?" he inquired.

"Yes; a new lodger came to my room."

To this the man made no reply, but proceeded to finger the cards. There this man sat, day after day, and played cards with anybody who happened to come in—played for nothing, only just to kill time, and have something in hand. He never did anything else, only moved just as much as his lazy limbs felt inclined, whilst his wife bustled up and down stairs, was occupied on all sides, and took care to draw customers to the house. She had put herself in connection with quay-porters and dock-men, to whom she paid a certain sum for every new lodger they brought her, and she often gave them, in addition, a shelter for the night. This time it was "Pane o' glass" that had just brought along the new lodger.

A couple of the children came in — two little girls, with thin, freckled, gutter-snipe faces; their clothes were positively wretched. A while after the landlady herself entered. I asked her where she intended to put me up for the night, and she replied that I could lie in here together with the others, or out in the ante-room on the sofa, as I thought fit. Whilst she answered me she fussed about the room and busied herself with different things that she set in order, and she never once looked at me.

My spirits were crushed by her reply.

I stood down near the door, and made myself small, tried to make it appear as if I were quite content all the same to change my room for another for one night's sake. I put on a friendly face on purpose not to irritate her and perhaps be hustled right out of the house.

"Ah, yes," I said, "there is sure to be some way!" and then held my tongue.

She still bustled about the room.

"For that matter, I may as well just tell you that I can't afford to give people credit for their board and lodging," said she, "and I told you that before, too."

"Yes; but, my dear woman, it is only for these few days, until I get my article finished," I answered, "and I will willingly give you an extra five shillings—willingly."

But she had evidently no faith in my article, I could see that; and I could not afford to be proud, and leave the house, just for a slight mortification; I knew what awaited me if I went out.

. . . .

A few days passed over.

I still associated with the family below, for it was too cold in the ante-room where there was no stove. I slept, too, at night on the floor of the room.

The strange sailor continued to lodge in my room, and did not seem like moving very quickly. At noon, too, my landlady came in and related how he had paid her a month in advance, and, besides, he was going to take his first-mate's examination before leaving, that was why he was staying in town. I stood and listened to this, and understood that my room was lost to me for ever.

I went out to the ante-room, and sat down. If I were lucky enough to get anything written, it would have perforce to be here where it was quiet. It was no longer the allegory that occupied me; I had got a new idea, a perfectly splendid plot; I would compose a one-act drama—"The Sign of the Cross." Subject taken from the Middle Ages. I had especially thought out everything in connection with the principal characters: a magnificently fanatical harlot who had sinned in the temple, not from weakness or desire, but for hate against heaven; sinned right at the foot of the altar, with the altar-cloth under her head, just out of delicious contempt for heaven.

I grew more and more obsessed by this creation as the hours went on. She stood at last, palpably, vividly embodied before my eyes, and was exactly as I wished her to appear. Her body was to be deformed and repulsive, tall, very lean, and rather dark; and, when she walked, her long limbs should gleam through her draperies at every stride she took. She was also to have large outstanding ears. Curtly, she was nothing for the eye to dwell upon, barely endurable to look at. What interested me in her was her wonderful shamelessness, the desperately full measure of calculated sin which she had committed. She really occupied me too much, my brain was absolutely inflated by this singular monstrosity of a creature, and I worked for two hours, without a pause, at my drama. When I had finished half-a-score of pages, perhaps twelve, often with much effort, at times with long intervals, in which I wrote in vain and had to tear the page in two, I had become tired, quite stiff with cold and fatigue, and I arose and went out into the street. For the last half-hour, too, I had been disturbed by the crying of the children inside the family room, so that I could not, in any case, have written any more just then. So I took a long time up over Drammensveien, and stayed away till the evening, pondering incessantly, as I walked along, as to how I would continue my drama. Before I came home in the evening of this day, the following happened:

I stood outside a shoemaker's shop far down in Carl Johann Street, almost at the railway square. God knows why I stood just outside this shoemaker's shop. I looked into the window as I stood there, but did not, by the way, remember that I needed shoes then; my thoughts were far away in other parts of the world. A swarm of people talking together passed behind my back, and I heard nothing of what was said. Then a voice greeted me loudly:

"Good-evening."

It was "Missy" who bade me good-evening! I answered at random, I looked at him, too, for a while, before I recognised him.

"Well, how are you getting along?" he inquired.

"Oh, always well . . . as usual."

"By the way, tell me," said he, "are you, then, still with Christie?"

"Christie?"

"I thought you once said you were bookkeeper at Christie's?"

"Ah, yes. No; that is done with. It was impossible to get along with that fellow; that came to an end very quickly of its own accord."

"Why so?"

"Well, I happened to make a mis-entry one day, and so—"

"A false entry, eh?"

False entry! There stood "Missy," and asked me straight in the face if I had done this thing. He even asked eagerly, and evidently with much interest. I looked at him, felt deeply insulted, and made no reply.

"Yes, well, Lord! that might happen to the best fellow," he said, as if to console me. He still believed I had made a false entry designedly.

"What is it that, 'Yes, well, Lord! indeed might happen to the best fellow'?" I inquired. "To do that. Listen, my good man. Do you stand there and really believe that I could for a moment be guilty of such a mean trick as that? I!"

"But, my dear fellow, I thought I heard you distinctly say that."

"No; I said that I had made a mis-entry once, a bagatelle; if you want to know, a false date on a letter, a single stroke of the pen wrong—that was my whole crime. No, God be praised, I can tell right from wrong yet a while. How would it fare with me if I were, into the bargain, to sully my honour? It is simply my sense of honour that keeps me afloat now. But it is strong enough too; at least, it has kept me up to date."

I threw back my head, turned away from "Missy," and looked down the street. My eyes rested on a red dress that came towards us; on a woman at a man's side. If I had not had this conversation with "Missy," I would not have been hurt by his coarse suspicion, and I would not have given this toss of my head, as I turned away in offence; and so perhaps this red dress would have passed me without my having noticed it. And at bottom what did it concern me? What was it to me if it were the dress of the Hon. Miss Nagel, the lady-in-waiting? "Missy" stood and talked, and tried to make good his mistake again. I did not listen to him at all; I stood the whole time and stared at the red dress that was coming nearer up the street, and a stir thrilled through my breast, a gliding delicate dart, I whispered in thought without moving my lips:

"Ylajali!"

Now "Missy" turned round also and noticed the two—the lady and the man with her,—raised his hat to them, and followed them with his eyes. I did not raise my hat, or perhaps I did unconsciously. The red dress glided up Carl Johann, and disappeared.

"Who was it was with her?" asked "Missy."

"The Duke, didn't you see? The so-called 'Duke.' Did you know the lady?"

"Yes, in a sort of way. Didn't *you* know her?"

"No," I replied.

"It appears to me you saluted profoundly enough."

"Did I?"

"Ha, ha! perhaps you didn't," said "Missy." "Well, that is odd. Why, it was only at you she looked, too, the whole time."

"When did you get to know her?" I asked.

He did not really know her. It dated from an evening in autumn. It was late; they were three jovial souls together, they came out late from the Grand, and met this being going along alone past Cammermeyers, and they addressed her. At first she answered rebuffingly; but one of the jovial spirits, a man who neither feared fire nor water, asked her right to her face if he might not have the civilised enjoyment of accompanying her home? He would, by the Lord, not hurt a hair on her head, as the saying goes—only go with her to her door, reassure himself that she reached home in safety, otherwise he could not rest all night. He talked incessantly as they went along, hit upon one thing or another, dubbed himself Waldemar Atterdag, and represented himself as a photographer. At last she was obliged to laugh at this merry soul who refused to be rebuffed by her coldness, and it finally ended by his going with her.

"Indeed, did it? and what came of it?" I inquired; and I held my breath for his reply.

"Came of it? Oh, stop there; there is a lady in question."

We both kept silent a moment, both "Missy" and I.

"Well, I'm hanged, was that 'the Duke'? So that's what he looks like," he added, reflectively. "Well, if she is in contact with that fellow; well, then, I wouldn't like to answer for her."

I still kept silent. Yes, of course "the Duke" would make the pace with her. Well, what odds? How did it concern me? I bade her good-day with all her wiles: a good-day I bade her; and I tried to console myself by thinking the worst thoughts about her; took a downright pleasure in dragging her through the mire. It only annoyed me to think that I had doffed my hat to the pair, if I really had done so. Why should I raise my hat to such people? I did not care for her any longer, certainly not; she was no longer in the very slightest degree lovely to me; she had fallen off. Ah, the devil knows how soiled I found her! It might easily have been the case that it was only me she looked at; I was not in the least astounded at that; it might be regret that began to stir in her. But that was no reason for me to go and lower myself and salute, like a fool, especially when she had become so seriously besmirched of late. "The Duke" was welcome to her; I wish him joy! The day might come when I would just take into my head to pass her haughtily by without glancing once towards her. Ay, it might happen that I would venture to do this, even if she were to gaze straight into my eyes, and have a blood-red gown on into the bargain. It might very easily happen! Ha, ha! that would be a triumph. If I knew myself aright, I was quite capable of completing my drama during the course of the night, and, before eight days had flown, I would have brought this young lady to her knees—with all her charms, ha, ha! with all her charms. . . .

"Good-bye," I muttered, shortly; but "Missy" held me back. He queried:

"But what do you do all day now?"

"Do? I write, naturally. What else should I do? Is it not that I live by? For the moment, I am working at a great drama, 'The Sign of the Cross.' Theme taken from the Middle Ages."

"By Jove!" exclaimed "Missy," seriously. "Well, if you succeed with that, why . . ."

"I have no great anxiety on that score," I replied. "In eight days' time or so, I think you and all the other folks will have heard a little more of me."

With that I left him.

When I got home I applied at once to my landlady, and requested a lamp. It was of the utmost importance to me to get this lamp; I would not go to bed to-night; my drama was raging in my brain, and I hoped so surely to be able to write a good portion of it before morning. I put forward my request very humbly to her, as I had noticed that she made a dissatisfied face on my re-entering the sitting-room. I said that I had almost completed a remarkable drama, only a couple of scenes were wanting; and I hinted that it might be produced in some theatre or another, in no time. If she would only just render me this great service now. . . .

But madam had no lamp. She considered a bit, but could not call to mind that she had a lamp in any place. If I liked to wait until after twelve o'clock, I might perhaps get the kitchen lamp. Why didn't I buy myself a candle?

I held my tongue. I hadn't a farthing to buy a candle, and she knew that right well. Of course I was foiled again! The servant-girl sat inside with us—simply sat in the sitting-room, and was not in the kitchen at all; so that the lamp up there was not even lit. And I stood and thought over this, but said no more. Suddenly the girl remarked to me:

" I thought I saw you come out of the palace a while ago ; were you at a dinner party ? " and she laughed loudly at this jest.

I sat down, took out my papers, and attempted to write something here, in the meantime. I held the paper on my knees, and gazed persistently at the floor to avoid being distracted by anything ; but it helped not a whit ; nothing helped me ; I got no farther. The landlady's two little girls came in and made a row with a cat—a queer, sick cat that had scarcely a hair on it ; they blew into its eyes until water sprang out of them and trickled down its nose. The landlord and a couple of others sat at a table and played *cent et un.* The wife alone was busy as ever, and sat and sewed at some garment. She saw well that I could not write anything in the midst of all this disturbance ; but she troubled herself no more about me ; she even smiled when the servant-girl asked me if I had been out to dine. The whole household had become hostile towards me. It was as if I had only needed the disgrace of being obliged to resign my room to a stranger to be treated as a man of no account. Even the servant, a little, brown-eyed street-wench, with a big fringe over her forehead, and a perfectly flat bosom, poked fun at me in the evening when I got my ration of bread and butter. She inquired perpetually where, then, was I in the habit of dining, as she had never seen me picking my teeth outside the Grand? It was clear that she was aware of my wretched circumstances, and took a pleasure in letting me know of it.

I fall suddenly into thought over all this, and am not able to find a solitary speech for my drama. Time upon time I seek in vain; a strange buzzing begins inside my head, and I give it up. I thrust the papers into my pocket, and look up. The girl is sitting straight opposite me. I look at her—look at her narrow back and drooping shoulders, that are not yet fully developed. What business was it of hers to fly at me? Even supposing I did come out of the palace, what then? Did it harm her in any way? She had laughed insolently in the past few days at me, when I was a bit awkward and stumbled on the stairs, or caught fast on a nail and tore my coat. It was no later than yesterday that she gathered up my rough copy, that I had thrown aside in the ante-room—stolen these rejected fragments of my drama, and read them aloud in the room here; made fun of them in everyone's hearing, just to amuse herself at my expense. I had never molested her in any way, and could not recall that I had ever asked her to do me a service. On the contrary, I made up my bed on the floor in the ante-room myself, in order not to give her any trouble with it. She made fun of me, too, because my hair fell out. Hair lay and floated about in the basin I washed in in the mornings, and she made merry over it. Then my shoes, too, had grown rather shabby of late, particularly the one that had been run over by the bread-van, and she found subject for jesting in them. "God bless you and your shoes!" said she, looking at them; "they are as wide as a dog's house." And she was right; they were trodden out. But then I couldn't procure myself any others just at present.

Whilst I sit and call all this to mind, and marvel over the evident malice of the servant, the little girls have begun to tease the old man over in the bed; they are jumping around him, fully bent on this diversion. They both found a straw, which they poked into his ears. I looked on at this for a while, and refrained from interfering. The old fellow did not move a finger to defend himself; he only looked at his tormentors with furious eyes each time they prodded him, and jerked his head to escape when the straws were already in his ears. I got more and more irritated at this sight, and could not keep my eyes away from it. The father looked up from his cards, and laughed at the youngsters; he also drew the attention of his comrades at play to what was going on. Why didn't the old fellow move? Why didn't he fling the children aside with his arms? I took a stride, and approached the bed.

"Let them alone! let them alone! he is paralysed," called the landlord.

And out of fear to be shown the door for the night, simply out of fear of rousing the man's displeasure by interfering with this scene, I stepped back silently to my old place and kept myself quiet. Why should I risk my lodging and my portion of bread and butter by poking my nose into the family squabbles? No idiotic pranks for the sake of a half-dying old man, and I stood and felt as delightfully hard as a flint.

The little urchins did not cease their

plaguing; it amused them that the old chap could not hold his head quiet, and they aimed at his eyes and nostrils. He stared at them with a ludicrous expression; he said nothing, and could not stir his arms. Suddenly he raised the upper part of his body a little and spat in the face of one of the little girls, drew himself up again and spat at the other, but did not reach her. I stood and looked on, saw that the landlord flung the cards on the table at which he sat, and sprang over towards the bed. His face was flushed, and he shouted:

"Will you sit and spit right into people's eyes, you old boar?"

"But, good Lord, he got no peace from them!" I cried, beside myself.

But all the time I stood in fear of being turned out, and I certainly did not utter my protest with any particular force; I only trembled over my whole body with irritation. He turned towards me, and said:

"Eh, listen to him, then. What the devil is it to you? You just keep your tongue in your jaw, you—just mark what I tell you, 'twill serve you best."

But now the wife's voice made itself heard, and the house was filled with scolding and railing.

"May God help me, but I think you are mad or possessed, the whole pack of you!" she shrieked. "If you want to stay in here you'll have to be quiet, both of you! Humph! it isn't enough that one is to keep open house and food for vermin, but one is to have sparring and rowing and the devil's own to-do in the sitting-room as well. But I won't have any more of it, not if I know it. Sh—h! Hold your tongues, you brats there, and wipe your noses, too; if you don't, I'll come and do it. I never saw the like of such people. Here they walk in out of the street, without even a penny to buy flea-powder, and begin to kick up rows in the middle of the night and quarrel with the people who own the house. I don't mean to have any more of it, do you understand that? and you can go your way, everyone who doesn't belong home here. I am going to have peace in my own quarters, I am."

I said nothing, I never opened my mouth once. I sat down again next the door and listened to the noise. They all screamed together, even the children, and the girl who wanted to explain how the whole disturbance commenced. If I only kept quiet, it would all blow over sometime; it would surely not come to the worst if I only did not utter a word; and what word after all could I have to say? Was it not perhaps winter outside, and far advanced into the night, besides? Was that a time to strike a blow, and show one could hold one's own? No folly now! . . . So I sat still and made no attempt to leave the house; I never even blushed at keeping silent, never felt ashamed, although I had almost been shown the door. I stared coolly, case-hardened, at the wall where Christ hung in an oleograph, and held my tongue obstinately during all the landlady's attack.

"Well, if it is me you want to get quit of, ma'am, there will be nothing in the way as far as I am concerned," said one of the card-players as he stood up. The other card-players rose as well.

"No, I didn't mean you—nor you either," replied the landlady to them. "If there's any need to, I will show well enough who I mean, if there's the least need to, if I know myself rightly. Oh, it will be shown quick enough who it is. . . ."

She talked with pauses, gave me these thrusts at short intervals, and spun it out to make it clearer and clearer that it was me she meant. "Quiet," said I to myself; "only keep quiet!" She had not asked me to go—not expressly, not in plain words. Just no putting on side on my part—no untimely pride! Brave it out! . . . That was really most singular green hair on that Christ in the oleograph. It was not too unlike green grass, or expressed with exquisite exactitude thick meadow grass. Ha! a perfectly correct remark—unusually thick meadow grass. . . . A train of fleeting ideas darts at this moment through my head. From green grass to the text, Each life is like unto grass that is kindled; from that to the Day of Judgment, when all will be consumed; then a little detour down to the earthquake in Lisbon, about which something floated before me in reference to a brass Spanish spitoon and an ebony pen handle that I had seen down at Ylajali's. Ah, yes, all was transitory, just like grass that was kindled. It all ended in four planks and a winding-sheet. "Winding-sheets to be had from Miss Andersen's, on the right of the door." . . . And all this was tossed about in my head during the despairing moment when my landlady was about to thrust me from her door.

"He doesn't hear," she yelled. "I tell you, you'll quit this house. Now you know it! I believe, God blast me, that the man is mad, I do! Now, out you go, on the blessed spot, and so no more chat about it."

I looked towards the door, not in order to leave—no, certainly not in order to leave. An audacious notion seized me—if there had been a key in the door, I would have turned it and locked myself in along with the rest to escape going. I had a perfectly hysterical dread of going out into the streets again.

But there was no key in the door.

Then, suddenly my landlord's voice mingled with that of his wife, I stood still with amazement. The same man who had threatened me a while ago took my part, strangely enough, now. He said:

"No, it won't do to turn folk out at night; do you know one can be punished for doing that?"

"I didn't know if there was a punishment for that; I couldn't say, but perhaps it was so," and the wife bethought herself quickly, grew quiet, and spoke no more.

She placed two pieces of bread and butter before me for supper, but I did not touch them, just out of gratitude to the man; so I pretended that I had had a little food in town.

When at length I took myself off to the ante-room to go to bed, she came out after me, stopped on the threshold, and said loudly, whilst her unsightly figure seemed to strut out towards me:

"But this is the last night you sleep here, so now you know it."

"Yes, yes," I replied.

There would perhaps be some way of finding a shelter to-morrow, if I tried hard for it. I would surely be able to find some hiding-place. For the time being I would rejoice that I was not obliged to go out to-night.

I slept till between five and six in the morning—it was not yet light when I awoke—but all the same I got up at once. I had lain in all my clothes on account of the cold, and had no dressing to do. When I had drunk a little cold water and opened the door quietly, I went out directly, for I was afraid to face my landlady again.

A couple of policemen who had been on watch all night were the only living beings

I saw in the street. A while after, some men began to extinguish the lamps. I wandered about without aim or end, reached Kirkegade and the road down towards the fortress. Cold and still sleepy, weak in the knees and back after my long walk, and very hungry, I sat down on a seat and dozed for a long time. For three weeks I had lived exclusively on the bread and butter that my landlady had given me morning and evening. Now it was twenty-four hours since I had had my last meal. Hunger began to gnaw badly at me again; I must seek a help for it right quickly. With this thought I fell asleep again upon the seat. . . .

I was aroused by the sound of people speaking near me, and when I had collected myself a little, I saw that it was broad day, and that everyone was up and about. I got up and walked away. The sun burst over the heights, the sky was pale and tender, and in my delight over the lovely morning, after the many dark gloomy weeks, I forgot all cares, and it seemed to me as if I had fared worse on other occasions. I clapped myself on the chest and sang a little snatch for myself. My voice sounded so wretched, downright exhausted it sounded, and I moved myself to tears with it. This magnificent day, the white heavens swimming in light, had far too mighty an effect upon me, and I burst into loud weeping.

"What is the matter with you?" inquired a man. I did not answer, but hurried away, hiding my face from all men. I reached the bridge. A large barque with the Russian flag lay and discharged coal. I read her name, *Copégoro*, on her side. It distracted me for a time to watch what took place on board this foreign ship. She must be almost discharged; she lay with IX foot visible on her side, in spite of all the ballast she had already taken in, and there was a hollow boom through the whole ship whenever the coal-heavers stamped on the deck with their heavy boots.

The sun, the light, and the salt breath from the sea, all this busy, merry life pulled me together a bit, and caused my blood to run lustily. Suddenly it entered my head that I could work at a few scenes of my drama whilst I sat here, and I took my papers out of my pocket.

I tried to place a speech into a monk's mouth—a speech that ought to swell with pride and intolerance, but it was of no use; so I skipped over the monk and tried to work out an oration—the Deemster's oration to the violator of the Temple,—and I wrote half-a-page of this oration, upon which I stopped. The right local colour would not tinge my words, the bustle about me, the shanties, the noise of the gangways, and the ceaseless rattle of the iron chains, fitted in so little with the atmosphere of the musty air of the dim Middle Ages, that was to envelop my drama as with a mist.

I bundled my papers together and got up.

All the same, I had got into a happy vein—a grand vein,—and I felt convinced that I could effect something if all went well.

If I only had a place to go to. I thought over it—stopped right there in the street and pondered, but I could not bring to mind a single quiet spot in the town where I could seat myself for an hour. There was no other way open; I would have to go back to the lodging-house in Vaterland. I shrank at the thought of it, and I told myself all the while that it would not do. I went ahead all the same, and approached nearer and nearer to the forbidden spot. Of course it was wretched.

I admitted to myself that it was degrading—downright degrading, but there was no help for it. I was not in the least proud; I dared make the assertion roundly, that I was one of the least arrogant beings up to date. I went ahead.

I pulled up at the door and weighed it over once more. Yes, no matter what the result was, I would have to dare it. After all said and done, what a bagatelle to make such a fuss about. For the first, it was only a matter of a couple of hours; for the second, the Lord forbid that I should ever seek refuge in such a house again. I entered the yard. Even whilst I was crossing the uneven stones I was irresolute, and almost turned round at the very door. I clenched my teeth. No! no pride! At the worst I could excuse myself by saying I had come to say good-bye, to make a proper adieu, and come to a clear understanding about my debt to the house.

I opened the door of the long room. I entered and stood stock-still when I got inside. Right in front of me, only a few paces away, stood the landlord himself. He was without hat or coat, and was peeping through the keyhole into the family room. He made a sign, a warning sign with his hand to me to keep quiet, and peeped again through the hole.

"Come here," he whispered. I approached on tip-toe.

"Look there," he said, and laughed with a quiet, eager laugh. "Peep in! Hi, hi! there they are! Look at the old chap! Can you see the old chap?"

In the bed under the Christ in oleograph I saw two figures, the landlady and the strange sailor: her legs gleamed whitely against the dark coverlid, and in bed against the wall sat her father, the paralysed old man, and looked on, bending over his hands, crouched together as always, without being able to move.

I turned round towards my landlord. He had the greatest trouble to keep himself from laughing out loudly.

"Did you see the old chap?" he whispered. "Ah Lord! did you see the old chap? He is sitting looking on," and he placed himself once more before the keyhole.

I went over to the window, and sat down. This sight had brought all my thoughts into merciless disorder, and put an end to my bright mood. Well, what concern was it of mine? When the husband himself agreed to it, ay, even found his greatest diversion in it, there was no reason why I should take it to heart. And as far as the old fellow was concerned, well, the old fellow was, once for all, an old fellow, and no more. Perhaps he didn't even notice it. Maybe that he just sat and dozed. God knows, he may have been dead; it would not surprise me in the least if he were dead; I would have no scruples of conscience on this score.

I took forth my papers once more, and determined to thrust all irrelevant impressions aside. I had left off right in the middle of a sentence in the inquisitor's address—"Thus dictate God and the law to me, thus dictates also the counsel of my wise men, thus dictate I and my own conscience . . ." I looked out of the window to think over what his conscience should dictate to him. A little row reached me from the room inside. Well, it was no affair of mine, anyway. Besides, the old chap was surely dead—died perhaps this morning about four; it was therefore entirely and totally indifferent to me what noise arose. Why the devil should I sit thinking about it? Keep quiet now! "Thus dictate I and my own conscience . . ." But everything conspired against me; the man over at the keyhole did not stand quiet a second. I could now and then hear his stifled laughter, and see how he shook. Outside in the street, too, something was taking place that disturbed me. A little lad sat and amused himself in the sun on the opposite side of the pavement. He was happy and in fear of no danger—just sat and knotted together a lot of paper streamers, and injured no one. Suddenly he jumps up and begins to curse; he goes backwards to the middle of the street and catches sight of a man, a grown-up man, with a red beard, who is leaning out of an open window in the second storey, and who spat down on his head. The little chap cried with rage, and swore impatiently up at the window; and the man laughed in his face. Perhaps five minutes passed in this way. I turned aside to avoid seeing the little lad's tears.

"Thus dictate I and my own conscience . . ." I found it impossible to get any farther. At last everything began to get confused; it seemed to me that even that which I had already written was unfit to use, ay, that the whole idea was contemptible rubbish. How could one possibly talk of conscience in the Middle Ages? Conscience was first invented by Dancing-master Shakespeare, consequently my whole address was wrong. Was there, then, nothing of value in these pages? I ran through them anew, and solved my doubt at once. I discovered grand pieces—downright lengthy pieces of remarkable merit—and once again the intoxicating desire to set to work again darted through my breast—the desire to finish my drama.

I got up and went to the door, without paying any attention to my landlord's furious signs to go out quietly; I walked out of the room firmly, and with my mind made up. I went upstairs to the second floor, and entered my former room. The man was not there, and what was to hinder me from sitting here for a moment? I would not touch one of his things. I wouldn't even once use his table; I would just seat myself on a chair near the door, and be happy. I spread the papers hurriedly out on my knees. Things went splendidly for a few minutes. Retort upon retort stood ready in my head, and I wrote uninterruptedly. I filled one page after the other, dashed ahead over stock and stone, chuckled softly in ecstacy over my happy vein, and was scarcely conscious of myself.

The only sound I heard in this moment was my own merry chuckle.

A singularly happy idea had just struck me about a church bell—a church bell that was to peal out at a certain point in my drama. All was going ahead with overwhelming rapidity. Then I hear a step on the stairs. I tremble, and am almost beside myself; sit ready to bolt, timorous, watchful, full of fear at everything, and excited by hunger. I listen nervously, just hold the pencil still in my hand, and listen. I cannot write a word more. The door opens, and the pair from below enter.

Even before I had time to make an excuse for what I had done, the landlady calls out, as if struck of a heap with amazement:

"Well, God bless and save us, if he isn't sitting here again!"

"Excuse me," I said, and I would have added more, but got no farther; the landlady flung open the door, as far as it would go, and shrieked:

"If you don't go out, now, may God blast me, but I'll fetch the police!"

I got up.

"I only wanted to say good-bye to you," I murmured; "and I had to wait for you. I didn't touch anything; I only just sat here on the chair. . . ."

"Yes, yes; there was no harm in that," said the man. "What the devil does it matter? Let the man alone; he——"

By this time I had reached the end of the stairs. All at once I got furious with this fat, swollen woman, who followed close to my heels to get rid of me quickly, and I stood quiet a moment with the worst abusive epithets on my tongue ready to sling at her. But I bethought myself in time, and held my peace, if only out of gratitude to the stranger man, who followed her, and would have to hear them. She trod close on my heels, railing incessantly, and my anger increased with every step I took.

We reached the yard below. I walked very slowly, still debating whether I would not have it out with her. I was at this moment completely blinded with rage, and I searched for the worst word—an expression that would strike her dead on the spot, like a kick in her stomach. A commissionaire passes me at the entrance. He touches his hat; I take no notice; he applies to her; and I hear that he inquires for me, but I do not turn round.

A couple of steps outside the door he overtakes and stops me. He hands me an envelope. I tear it open, roughly and unwillingly. It contains half-a-sovereign—no note, not a word. I look at the man, and ask:

"What tomfoolery is this? Who is the letter from?"

"Oh, that I can't say!" he replies; "but it was a lady who gave it to me."

I stood still. The commissionaire left.

I put the coin into the envelope again, crumple it up, coin and envelope, wheel round and go straight towards the landlady, who is still keeping an eye on me from the doorway, and throw it in her face. I said nothing; I uttered no syllable—only noticed that she was examining the crumpled paper as I left her. . . . Ha! that is what one might call comporting oneself with dignity. Not to say a word, not to mention the contents, but crumple together, with perfect calmness, a large piece of money, and fling it straight in the face of one's persecutor! One might call that making one's exit with dignity. That was the way to treat such beasts! . . .

When I got to the corner of Tomtegaden and the railway place, the street commenced suddenly to swim round before my eyes; it buzzed vacantly in my head, and I staggered up against the wall of a house. I could simply go no farther, couldn't even straighten myself from the cramped position I was in. As I fell up against it, so I remained standing, and I felt that I was beginning to lose my senses. My insane anger had augmented this attack of exhaustion. I lifted my foot, and stamped on the pavement. I also tried several other things to try and regain my strength: I clenched my teeth, wrinkled my brows, and rolled my eyes despairingly; it helped a little. My thoughts grew more lucid. It was clear to me that I was about to succumb. I stretched out my hands, and pushed myself back from the wall. The street still danced wildly round me. I began to hiccough with rage, and I wrestled from my very inmost soul with my misery; made a right gallant effort not to sink down. It was not my intention to collapse; no, I would die standing. A dray rolls slowly by, and I notice there are potatoes in it; but out of sheer fury and stubbornness, I take it into my head to assert that they are not potatoes, but cabbages, and I swore frightful oaths that they were cabbages. I heard quite well what I was saying, and I swore this lie wittingly; repeating, time after time, just to have the vicious satisfaction of perjuring myself. I got intoxicated with the thought of this matchless sin of mine. I raised three fingers in the air, and swore, with trembling lips, in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, that they were cabbages.

Time went. I let myself sink down on the steps near me, and dried the sweat from my brow and throat, drew a couple of long breaths, and forced myself into calmness. The sun slid down; it declined towards the afternoon. I began once more to brood over my condition. My hunger was really something disgraceful, and, in a few hours more, night would be here again. The question was, to think of a remedy while there was yet time. My thoughts flew again to the lodging-house from which I had been hunted away. I could on no account return there; but yet one could not help thinking about it. Properly speaking, the woman was acting quite within her rights in turning me out. How could I expect to get lodging with anyone when I could not pay for it? Besides, she had occasionally given me a little food; even yesterday evening, after

I had annoyed her, she offered me some bread and butter. She offered it to me out of sheer good nature, because she knew I needed it, so I had no cause to complain. I began, even whilst I sat there on the step, to ask her pardon in my own mind for my behaviour. Particularly, I regretted bitterly that I had shown myself ungrateful to her at the last, and thrown half-a-sovereign in her face. . . .

Half-a-sovereign! I gave a whistle. The letter the messenger brought me, where did it come from? It was only this instant I thought clearly over this, and I divined at once how the whole thing hung together. I grew sick with pain and shame. I whispered "Ylajali" a few times, with hoarse voice, and flung back my head. Was it not I who, no later than yesterday, had decided to pass her proudly by if I met her, to treat her with the greatest indifference? Instead of that, I had only aroused her compassion, and coaxed an alms from her. No, no, no; there would never be an end to my degradation! Not even in her presence could I maintain a decent position. I sank, simply sank, on all sides—every way I turned; sank to my knees, sank to my waist, dived under in ignominy, never to rise again

—never! This was the climax! To accept half-a-sovereign in alms without being able to fling it back to the secret donor; scramble for half-pence whenever the chance offered, and keep them, use them for lodging money, in spite of one's own intense inner aversion. . . .

Could I not regain the half-sovereign in some way or another? To go back to the landlady and try to get it from her would be of no use. There must be some way, if I were to consider — if I were only to exert myself right well, and consider it over. It was not, in this case, great God, sufficient to consider in just an ordinary way! I must consider so that it penetrated my whole sentient being; consider and find some way to procure this half-sovereign. And I set to, to consider the answer to this problem.

It might be about four o'clock; in a few hours' time I could perhaps meet the manager of the theatre; if only I had my drama completed.

I take out my MSS. there where I am sitting, and resolve, with might and main, to finish the last few scenes. I think until I sweat, and re-read from the beginning, but make no progress. No bosh! I say—no obstinacy, now!

and I write away at my drama—write down everything that strikes me, just to get finished quickly and be able to go away. I tried to persuade myself that a new supreme moment had seized me; I lied right royally to myself, deceived myself knowingly, and wrote on, as if I had no need to seek for words.

That is capital! That is really a find! whispered I, interpolatingly; only just write it down! Halt! they sound questionable; they contrast rather strongly with the speeches in the first scenes; not a trace of the Middle Ages shone through the monk's words. I break my pencil between my teeth, jump to my feet, tear my manuscript in two, tear each page in two, fling my hat down in the street and trample upon it. I am lost! I whisper to myself. Ladies and gentlemen, I am lost! I utter no more than these few words as long as I stand there, and tramp upon my hat.

A policeman is standing a few steps away, watching me. He is standing in the middle of the street, and he only pays attention to me. As I lift my head, our eyes meet. Maybe he has been standing there for a long time watching me. I pick up my hat, put it on, and go over to him.

"Do you know what o'clock it is?" I ask.

He pauses a bit as he hauls out his watch, and never takes his eyes off me the whole time.

"About four," he replies.

"Accurately," I say, "about four, perfectly accurate. You know your business, and I'll bear you in mind." Thereupon I left him. He looked utterly amazed at me, stood and looked at me, with gaping mouth, still holding his watch in his hand.

When I got in front of the Royal Hotel I turned round and looked back. He was still standing in the same position, following me with his eyes.

Ha, ha! That is the way to treat the brutes! With the most refined effrontery! That impresses the brutes—puts the fear of God into them. . . . I was peculiarly satisfied with myself, and began to sing a little strain. Every nerve was tense with excitement. Without feeling any more pain, without even being conscious of discomfort of any kind, I walked, light as a feather, across the whole market, turned round at the stalls, and came to a halt—sat down on a bench near Our Saviour's Church. Might it not just as well be a matter of indifference whether I returned the half-sovereign or not? When once I received it, it was mine; and there was evidently no want where it came from. Besides, I was obliged to take it when it was sent expressly to me; there could be no object in letting the messenger keep it. It wouldn't do, either, to send it back—a whole half-sovereign that had been sent to me. So there was positively no help for it.

I tried to watch the bustle about me in the market, and distract myself with indifferent things, but I did not succeed; the half-sovereign still busied my thoughts. At last I clenched my fists and got angry. It would hurt her if I were to send it back. Why, then, should I do so? Always ready to consider myself too good for everything—to toss my head and say, No, thanks! I saw now what it led to. I was out in the street again. Even when I had the opportunity I couldn't keep my good warm lodging. No; I must needs be proud, jump up at the first word, and show I wasn't the man to stand trifling, chuck half-sovereigns right and left, and go my way. . . . I took myself sharply to task for having left my lodging and brought myself into the most distressful circumstances.

As for the rest, I consigned the whole affair to the keeping of the yellowest of devils. I hadn't begged for the half-sovereign, and I had barely had it in my hand, but gave it away at once—paid it away to utterly strange people whom I would never see again. That was the sort of man I was; I always paid out to the last doit whatever I owed. If I knew Ylajali aright, neither did she regret that she had sent me the money, therefore why did I sit there working myself into a rage? To put it plainly, the least she could do was to send me half-a-sovereign now and then. The poor girl was indeed in love with me—ha! perhaps even fatally in love with me; . . . and I sat and puffed myself up with this notion. There was no doubt that she was in love with me, the poor girl.

It struck five o'clock! Again I sank under the weight of my prolonged nervous excitement. The hollow whirring in my head made itself felt anew. I stared straight ahead, kept my eyes fixed, and gazed at the chemist's under the sign of the elephant.

Hunger was waging a fierce battle in me at this moment, and I was suffering greatly. Whilst I sit thus and look out into space, a figure becomes little by little clear to my fixed stare. At last I can distinguish it perfectly plainly, and I recognise it. It is that of the cake-vendor who sits habitually near the chemist's under the sign of the elephant. I give a start, sit half-upright on the seat, and begin to consider. Yes, it was quite correct—the same woman before the same table on the same spot! I whistle a few times and snap my fingers, rise from my seat, and make for the chemist's. No nonsense at all! What the devil was it to me if it was the wages of sin, or well-earned Norwegian huckster pieces of silver from Kongsberg? I wasn't going to be abused; one might die of too much pride. . . .

I go on to the corner, take stock of the woman, and come to a standstill before her. I smile, nod as to an acquaintance, and shape my words as if it were a foregone conclusion that I would return sometime.

"Good-day," say I; "perhaps you don't recognise me again."

"No," she replied slowly, and looks at me.

I smile still more, as if this were only an excellent joke of hers, this pretending not to know me again, and say:

"Don't you recollect that I gave you a lot of silver once? I did not say anything on the occasion in question; as far as I can call to mind, I did not; it is not my way to do so. When one has honest folk to deal with, it is unnecessary to make an agreement, so to say, draw up a contract for every trifle. Ha, ha! Yes, it was I who gave you the money!"

"No, then, now; was it you? Yes, I remember you, now that I come to think over it. . . ."

I wanted to prevent her from thanking me for the money, so I say, therefore, hastily, whilst I cast my eye over the table in search of something to eat:

"Yes; I've come now to get the cakes."

She did not seem to take this in.

"The cakes," I reiterate; "I've come now to get them—at any rate, the first instalment; I don't need all of them to-day."

"You've come to get them?"

"Yes; of course I've come to get them," I reply, and I laugh boisterously, as if it ought to have been self-evident to her from the outset that I came for that purpose. I take, too, a cake up from the table, a sort of white roll that I commenced to eat.

When the woman sees this, she stirs uneasily inside her bundle of clothes, makes an involuntary movement as if to protect her wares, and gives me to understand that she had not expected me to return to rob her of them.

"Really not?" I say, "indeed, really not?" She certainly was an extraordinary woman. Had she, then, at any time, had the experience that someone came and gave her a heap of shillings to take care of, without that person returning and demanding them again? No; just look at that now! Did she perhaps run away with the idea that it was stolen money, since I slung it at her in that manner? No; she didn't think that either. Well, that at least was a good thing—really a good thing. It was, if I might so say, kind of her, in spite of all, to still consider me an honest man. Ha, ha! yes, indeed, she really was good!

But why did I give her the money, then? The woman was exasperated, and called out loudly about it. I explained why I had given her the money, explained it temperately and with emphasis. It was my custom to act in this manner, because I had such a belief in everyone's goodness. Always when anyone offered me an agreement, a receipt, I only shook my head and said: No, thank you! God knows I did.

But still the woman failed to comprehend it. I had recourse to other expedients—spoke sharply, and bade a truce to all nonsense. Had it never happened to her before that anyone had paid her in advance in this manner? I inquired — I meant, of course, people who could afford it — for example, any of the consuls? Never! Well, I could not be expected to suffer because it happened to be a strange mode of procedure to her. It was a common practice abroad. She had perhaps never been outside the boundaries of her own country? No? Just look at that now! In that case, she could of course have no opinion on the subject; . . . and I took several more cakes from the table.

She grumbled angrily, refused obstinately to give up any more of her stores from off the table, even snatched a piece of cake out of my hand and put it back into its place. I got enraged, banged the table, and threatened to call the police. I wished to be lenient with her, I said. Were I to take all that was lawfully mine, I would clear her whole stand, because it was a big sum of money that I had given to her. But I had no intention of taking so much, I wanted in reality only half the value of the money, and I would, into the bargain, never come back to trouble her again. Might God preserve me from it, seeing that that was the sort of creature she was. . . . At length she shoved some cakes towards me, four or five, at an exorbitant price, the highest possible price she could think of, and bade me take them and begone. I wrangled still with her, persisted that she had at least cheated me to the extent of a shilling, besides robbing me with her exorbitant prices. "Do you know there is a penalty for such rascally trickery," said I; "God help you, you might get penal servitude for life, you old fool!" She flung another cake to me, and, with almost gnashing teeth, begged me to go.

And I left her.

Ha! a match for this dishonest cake-vendor was not to be found. The whole time, whilst I walked to and fro in the market-place and ate my cakes, I talked loudly about this creature and her shamelessness, repeated to myself what we both had said to one another, and it seemed to me that I had come out of this affair with flying colours, leaving her nowhere. I ate my cakes in face of everybody, and talked this over to myself.

The cakes disappeared one by one; they seemed to go no way; no matter how I ate I was still greedily hungry. Lord, to think they were of no help! I was so ravenous that I was even about to devour the last little cake that I had decided to spare, right from the beginning, to put it aside, in fact, for the little chap down in Vognmandsgade—the little lad who played with the paper streamers. I thought of him continually—couldn't forget his face as he jumped and swore. He had turned round towards the window when the man spat down on him, and he had just looked up to see if I was laughing at him. God knows if I should meet him now, even if I went down that way.

I exerted myself greatly to try and reach Vognmandsgade, passed quickly by the spot where I had torn my drama into tatters, and where some scraps of paper still lay about; avoided the policeman whom I had amazed by my behaviour, and reached the steps upon which the laddie had been sitting.

He was not there. The street was almost deserted—dusk was gathering in, and I could not see him anywhere. Perhaps he had gone in. I laid the cake down, stood it upright against the door, knocked hard, and hurried away directly. He is sure to find it, I said to myself; the first thing he will do when he comes out will be to find it. And my eyes grew moist with pleasure at the thought of the little chap finding the cake.

I reached the terminus again.

Now I no longer felt hungry, only the sweet stuff I had eaten began to cause me discomfort. The wildest thoughts, too, surged up anew in my head.

Supposing I were in all secretness to cut the hawser mooring of one of those ships? Supposing I were to suddenly yell out "Fire"? I walk farther down the wharf, find a packing-case and sit upon it, fold my hands, and am conscious that my head is growing more and more confused. I do not stir; I simply make no effort whatever to keep up any longer. I just sit there and stare at the *Copégoro*, the barque flying the Russian flag.

I catch a glimpse of a man at the rail; the red lantern slung at the port shines down upon his head, and I get up and talk over to him. I had no object in talking, as I did not expect to get a reply, either. I said:

"Do you sail to-night, Captain?"

"Yes; in a short time," answered the man. He spoke Swedish.

"Hem, I suppose you wouldn't happen to need a man?"

I was at this instant utterly indifferent as to whether I was met by a refusal or not; it was all the same to me what reply the man gave me, so I stood and waited for it.

"Well, no," he replied; "unless it chanced to be a young fellow."

"A young fellow!" I pulled myself together, took off my glasses furtively and thrust them into my pocket, stepped up the gangway, and strode on deck.

"I have no experience," said I; "but I can do anything I am put to. Where are you bound for?"

"We are in ballast for Leith, to fetch coal for Cadiz."

"All right," said I, forcing myself upon the man; "it's all the same to me where I go; I am prepared to do my work."

"Have you never sailed before?" he asked.

"No; but as I tell you, put me to a task, and I'll do it. I am used to a little of all sorts."

He bethought himself again.

I had already taken keenly into my head that I was to sail this voyage, and I began to dread being hounded on shore again.

"What do you think about it, Captain?" I asked at last. "I can really do anything that turns up. What am I saying? I would be a poor sort of chap if I couldn't do a little more than just what I was put to. I can take two watches at a stretch, if it comes to that. It would only do me good, and I could hold out all the same."

"All right, have a try at it. If it doesn't work, well, we can part in England."

"Of course," I reply in my delight, and I repeated over again that we could part in England if it didn't work.

And he set me to work. . . .

Out in the fjord I dragged myself up once, wet with fever and exhaustion, and gazed landwards, and bade farewell for the present to the town—to Christiania, where the windows gleamed so brightly in all the homes.

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IN WHICH THE AUTHOR OF THIS SINGULAR WORK INFORMS THE READER HOW HE ACQUIRED THE CERTAINTY THAT THE OPERA GHOST REALLY EXISTED

THE Opera ghost really existed. He was not, as was long believed, a creature of the imagination of the artists, the superstition of the managers, or a product of the absurd and impressionable brains of the young ladies of the ballet, their mothers, the box-keepers, the cloak-room attendants or the concierge. Yes, he existed in flesh and blood, although he assumed the complete appearance of a real phantom; that is to say, of a spectral shade.

When I began to ransack the archives of the National Academy of Music I was at once struck by the surprising coincidences between the phenomena ascribed to the "ghost" and the most extraordinary and fantastic tragedy that ever excited the Paris upper classes; and I soon conceived the idea that this tragedy might reasonably be explained by the phenomena in question. The events do not date more than thirty years back; and it would not be difficult to find at the present day, in the foyer of the ballet, old men of the highest respectability, men upon whose word one could absolutely rely, who would remember as though they happened yesterday the mysterious and dramatic conditions that attended the kidnapping of Christine Daaé, the disappearance of the Vicomte de Chagny and the death of his elder brother, Count Philippe, whose body was found on the bank of the lake that exists in the lower cellars of the Opera on the Rue-Scribe side. But none of those witnesses had until that day thought that there was any reason for connecting the more or less legendary figure of the Opera ghost with that terrible story.

The truth was slow to enter my mind, puzzled by an inquiry that at every moment was complicated by events which, at first sight, might be looked upon as superhuman; and more than once I was within an ace of abandoning a task in which I was exhausting myself in the hopeless pursuit of a vain image. At last, I received the proof that my presentiments had not deceived me, and I was rewarded for all my efforts on the day when I acquired the certainty that the Opera ghost was more than a mere shade.

On that day, I had spent long hours over *The Memoirs of a Manager,* the light and frivolous work of the too-skeptical Moncharmin, who, during his term at the Opera, understood nothing of the mysterious behavior of the ghost and who was making all the fun of it that he could at the very moment when he became the first victim of the curious financial operation that went on inside the "magic envelope."

I had just left the library in despair, when I met the delightful acting-manager of our National Academy, who stood chatting on a landing with a lively and well-groomed little old man, to whom he introduced me gaily. The acting-manager knew all about my investigations and how eagerly and unsuccessfully I had been trying to discover the whereabouts of the examining magistrate in the famous Chagny case, M. Faure. Nobody knew what had become of him, alive or dead; and here he was back from Canada, where he had spent fifteen years, and the first thing he had done, on his return to Paris, was to come to the secretarial offices at the Opera and ask for a free seat. The little old man was M. Faure himself.

We spent a good part of the evening together and he told me the whole Chagny case as he had understood it at the time. He was bound to conclude in favor of the madness of the viscount and the accidental death of the elder brother, for lack of evidence to the contrary; but he was nevertheless persuaded that a terrible tragedy had taken place between the two brothers in connection with Christine Daaé. He could not tell me what became of Christine or the viscount. When I mentioned the ghost, he only laughed. He, too, had been told of the curious manifestations that seemed to point to the existence of an abnormal being, residing in one of the most mysterious corners of the Opera, and he knew the story of the envelope; but he had never seen anything in it worthy of his attention as magistrate in charge of the Chagny case, and it was as much as he had done to listen to the evidence of a witness who appeared of his own accord and declared that he had often met the ghost. This witness was none other than the man whom all Paris called the "Persian" and who was well-known to every subscriber to the Opera. The magistrate took him for a visionary.

I was immensely interested by this story of the Persian. I wanted, if there were still time, to find this valuable and eccentric witness. My luck began to improve and I discovered him in his little flat in the Rue de Rivoli, where he had lived ever since and where he died five months after my visit. I was at first inclined to be suspicious; but when the Persian had told me, with child-like candor, all that he knew about the ghost and had handed me the proofs of the ghost's existence—including the strange correspondence of Christine Daaé—to do as I pleased with, I was no longer able to doubt. No, the ghost was not a myth!

I have, I know, been told that this correspondence may have been forged from first to last by a man whose imagination had certainly been fed on the most seductive tales; but fortunately I discovered some of Christine's writing outside the famous bundle of letters and, on a comparison between the two, all my doubts were removed. I also went into the past history of the Persian and found that he was an upright man, incapable of inventing a story that might have defeated the ends of justice.

This, moreover, was the opinion of the more serious people who, at one time or other, were mixed up in the Chagny case, who were friends of the Chagny family, to whom I showed all my documents and set forth all my inferences. In this connection, I should like to print a few lines which I received from General D——— :

SIR:

I can not urge you too strongly to publish the results of your inquiry. I remember perfectly that, a few weeks before the disappearance of that great singer, Christine Daaé, and the tragedy which threw the whole of the Faubourg Saint-Germain into mourning, there was a great deal of talk, in the foyer of the ballet, on the subject of the "ghost;" and I believe that it only ceased to be discussed in consequence of the later affair that excited us all so greatly. But, if it be possible—as, after hearing you, I believe—to explain the tragedy through the ghost, then I beg you, sir, to talk to us about the ghost again. Mysterious though the ghost may at first appear, he will always be more easily explained than the dismal story in which malevolent people have tried to picture two brothers killing each other who had worshiped each other all their lives.

Believe me, etc.

Lastly, with my bundle of papers in hand, I once more went over the ghost's vast domain, the huge building which he had made his kingdom. All that my eyes saw, all that my mind perceived, corroborated the Persian's documents precisely; and a wonderful discovery crowned my labors in a very definite fashion. It will be remembered that, later, when digging in the substructure of the Opera, before burying the phonographic records of the artist's voice, the workmen laid bare a corpse. Well, I was at once able to prove that this corpse was that of the Opera ghost. I made the acting-manager put this proof to the test with his own hand; and it is now a matter of supreme indifference to me if the papers pretend that the body was that of a victim of the Commune.

The wretches who were massacred, under the Commune, in the cellars of the Opera, were not buried on this side; I will tell where their skeletons can be found in a spot not very far from that immense crypt which was stocked during the siege with all sorts of provisions. I came upon this track just when I was looking for the remains of the Opera ghost, which I should never have discovered but for the unheard-of chance described above.

But we will return to the corpse and what ought to be done with it. For the present, I must conclude this very necessary introduction by thanking M. Mifroid (who was the commissary of police called in for the first investigations after the disappearance of Christine Daaé), M. Rémy, the late secretary, M. Mercier, the late acting-manager, M. Gabriel, the late chorus-master, and more particularly Mme. la Baronne de Castelot-Barbezac, who was once the "little Meg" of the story (and who is not ashamed of it), the most charming star of our admirable *corps de ballet,* the eldest daughter of the worthy Mme. Giry, now deceased, who had charge of the ghost's private box. All these were of the greatest assistance to me; and, thanks to them, I shall be able to reproduce those hours of sheer love and terror, in their smallest details, before the reader's eyes.

And I should be ungrateful indeed if I omitted, while standing on the threshold of this dreadful and veracious story, to thank the present management of the Opera, which has so kindly assisted me in all my inquiries, and M. Messager in particular, together with M. Gabion, the acting-manager, and that most amiable of men, the architect intrusted with the preservation of the building, who did not hesitate to lend me the works of Charles Garnier, although he was almost sure that I would never return them to him. Lastly, I must pay a public tribute to the generosity of my friend and former collaborator, M. J. Le Croze, who allowed me to dip into his splendid theatrical library and to borrow the rarest editions of books by which he set great store.

GASTON LEROUX.

CHAPTER I

IS IT THE GHOST?

IT was the evening on which MM. Debienne and Poligny, the managers of the Opera, were giving a last gala performance to mark their retirement. Suddenly the dressing-room of La Sorelli, one of the principal dancers, was invaded by half-a-dozen young ladies of the ballet, who had come up from the stage after "dancing" *Polyeucte*. They rushed in amid great confusion, some giving vent to forced and unnatural laughter, others to cries of terror. Sorelli, who wished to be alone for a moment to "run through" the speech which she was to make to the resigning managers, looked around angrily at the mad and tumultuous crowd. It was little Jammes—the girl with the tip-tilted nose, the forget-me-not eyes, the rose-red cheeks and the lily-white neck and shoulders—who gave the explanation in a trembling voice:

"It's the ghost!" And she locked the door.

Sorelli's dressing-room was fitted up with official, commonplace elegance. A pier-glass, a sofa, a dressing-table and a cupboard or two provided the necessary furniture. On the walls hung a few engravings, relics of the mother, who had known the glories of the old Opera in the Rue le Peletier; portraits of

Vestris, Gardel, Dupont, Bigottini. But the room seemed a palace to the brats of the *corps de ballet,* who were lodged in common dressing-rooms where they spent their time singing, quarreling, smacking the dressers and hair-dressers and buying one another glasses of *cassis,* beer, or even *rhum*, until the call-boy's bell rang.

Sorelli was very superstitious. She shuddered when she heard little Jammes speak of the ghost, called her a "silly little fool" and then, as she was the first to believe in ghosts in general, and the Opera ghost in particular, at once asked for details:

"Have you seen him?"

"As plainly as I see you now!" said little Jammes, whose legs were giving way beneath her, and she dropped with a moan into a chair.

Thereupon little Giry—the girl with eyes black as sloes, hair black as ink, a swarthy complexion and a poor little skin stretched over poor little bones—little Giry added:

"If that's the ghost, he's very ugly!"

"Oh, yes!' cried the chorus of ballet-girls.

And they all began to talk together. The ghost had appeared to them in the shape of a gentleman in dress-clothes, who had suddenly stood before them in the passage, without their knowing where he came from. He seemed to have come straight through the wall.

"Pooh!" said one of them, who had more or less kept her head. "You see the ghost everywhere!"

And it was true. For several months, there had been nothing discussed at the Opera but this ghost in dress-clothes who stalked about the building, from top to bottom, like a shadow, who spoke to nobody, to whom nobody dared speak and who vanished as soon as he was seen, no one knowing how or where. As became a real ghost, he made no noise in walking. People began by laughing and making fun of this specter dressed like a man of fashion or an undertaker; but the ghost legend soon swelled to enormous proportions among the *corps de ballet*. All the girls pretended to have met this supernatural being more or less often. And those who laughed the loudest were not the most at ease. When he did not show himself, he betrayed his presence or his passing by accident, comic or serious, for which the general superstition held him responsible. Had any one met with a fall, or suffered a practical joke at the hands of one of the other girls, or lost a powder-puff, it was at once the fault of the ghost, of the Opera ghost.

After all, who had seen him? You meet so many men in dress-clothes at the Opera who are not ghosts. But this dress-suit had a peculiarity of its own. It covered a skeleton. At least, so the ballet-girls said. And, of course, it had a death's head.

Was all this serious? The truth is that the idea of the skeleton came from the description of the ghost given by Joseph Buquet, the chief scene-shifter, who had really seen the ghost. He had run up against the ghost on the little staircase, by the footlights, which leads to "the cellars." He had seen him for a second—for the ghost had fled—and to any one who cared to listen to him he said:

"He is extraordinarily thin and his dress-coat hangs on a skeleton frame. His eyes are so deep that you can hardly see the fixed pupils. You just see two big black holes, as in a dead man's skull. His skin, which is stretched across his bones like a drumhead, is not white, but a nasty yellow. His nose is so little worth talking about that you can't see it side-face; and *the absence* of that nose is a horrible thing *to look at.* All the hair he has is three or four long dark locks on his forehead and behind his ears."

This chief scene-shifter was a serious, sober, steady man, very slow at imagining things. His words were received with interest and amazement; and soon there were other people to say that they too had met a man in dress-clothes with a death's head on his shoulders. Sensible men who had wind of the story began by saying that Joseph Buquet had been the victim of a joke played by one of his assistants. And then, one after the other, there came a series of incidents so curious and so inexplicable that the very shrewdest people began to feel uneasy.

For instance, a fireman is a brave fellow! He fears nothing, least of all fire! Well, the fireman in question, who had gone to make a round of inspection in the cellars and who, it seems, had ventured a little farther than usual, suddenly reappeared on the stage, pale, scared, trembling, with his eyes starting out of his head, and practically fainted in the arms of the proud mother of little Jammes.* And why? Because he had seen coming toward him, *at the level of his head, but without a body attached to it, a head of fire!* And, as I said, a fireman is not afraid of fire.

The fireman's name was Pampin.

The *corps de ballet* was flung into consternation. At first sight, this fiery head in no way corresponded with Joseph Buquet's description of the ghost. But the young ladies soon persuaded themselves that the ghost had several heads, which he changed about as he pleased. And, of course, they at once imagined that they were in the greatest danger. Once a fireman did not hesitate to faint, leaders and front-row and back-row girls alike had plenty of excuses for the fright that made them quicken their pace when passing some dark corner or ill-lighted corridor. Sorelli herself, on the day after the adventure of the fireman, placed a horse-shoe on the table in front of the stage-door-keeper's box, which every one who entered the Opera otherwise than as a spectator must touch before setting foot on the first tread of the staircase. This horse-shoe was not invented by me—any more than any other part of this story, alas!—and may still be seen on the table in the passage outside the stage-door-keeper's box, when you enter the Opera through the court known as the Cour de l'Administration.

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*I have the anecdote, which is quite authentic, from M. Pedro Gailhard himself, the late manager of the Opera.

To return to the evening in question.

"It's the ghost!" little Jammes had cried.

An agonizing silence now reigned in the dressing-room. Nothing was heard but the hard breathing of the girls. At last, Jammes, flinging herself upon the farthest corner of the wall, with every mark of real terror on her face, whispered:

"Listen!"

Everybody seemed to hear a rustling outside the door. There was no sound of footsteps. It was like light silk sliding over the panel. Then it stopped.

Sorelli tried to show more pluck than the others. She went up to the door and, in a quavering voice, asked:

"Who's there?"

But nobody answered. Then feeling all eyes upon her, watching her last movement, she made an effort to show courage, and said very loudly:

"Is there any one behind the door?"

"Oh, yes, yes! Of course there is!" cried that little dried plum of a Meg Giry, heroically holding Sorelli back by her gauze skirt. "Whatever you do, don't open the door! Oh, Lord, don't open the door!"

But Sorelli, armed with a dagger that never left her, turned the key and drew back the door, while the ballet-girls retreated to the inner dressing-room and Meg Giry sighed:

"Mother! Mother!"

Sorelli looked into the passage bravely. It was empty; a gas-flame, in its glass prison, cast a red and suspicious light into the surrounding darkness, without succeeding in dispelling it. And the dancer slammed the door again, with a deep sigh.

"No," she said, "there is no one there."

"Still, we saw him!" Jammes declared, returning with timid little steps to her place beside Sorelli. "He must be somewhere prowling about. I shan't go back to dress. We had better all go down to the foyer together, at once, for the 'speech,' and we will come up again together."

And the child reverently touched the little coral finger-ring which she wore as a charm against bad luck, while Sorelli, stealthily, with the tip of her pink right thumb-nail, made a St. Andrew's cross on the wooden ring which adorned the fourth finger of her left hand. She said to the little ballet-girls:

"Come, children, pull yourselves together! I dare say no one has ever seen the ghost."

"Yes, yes, we saw him—we saw him just now!" cried the girls. "He had his death's head and his dress-coat, just as when he appeared to Joseph Buquet!"

"And Gabriel saw him too!" said Jammes. "Only yesterday! Yesterday afternoon—in broad daylight——"

"Gabriel, the chorus-master?"

"Why, yes, didn't you know?"

"And he was wearing his dress-clothes, in broad daylight?"

"Who? Gabriel?"

"Why, no, the ghost!"

"Certainly! Gabriel told me so himself. That's what he knew him by. Gabriel was in the stage-manager's office. Suddenly the door opened and the Persian entered. You know the Persian has the evil eye——"

"Oh, yes!" answered the little ballet-girls in chorus, warding off ill-luck by pointing their forefinger and little finger at the absent Persian, while their second and third fingers were bent on the palm and held down by the thumb.

"And you know how superstitious Gabriel is," continued Jammes. "However, he is always polite. When he meets the Persian, he just puts his hand in his pocket and touches his keys. Well, the moment the Persian appeared in the doorway, Gabriel gave one jump from his chair to the lock of the cupboard, so as to touch iron! In doing so, he tore a whole skirt of his overcoat on a nail. Hurrying to get out of the room, he banged his forehead against a hat-peg and gave himself a huge bump; then, suddenly stepping back, he skinned his arm on the screen, near the piano; he tried to lean on the piano, but the lid fell on his hands and crushed his fingers; he rushed out of the office like a madman, slipped on the staircase and came down the whole of the first flight on his back. I was just passing with mother. We picked him up. He was covered with bruises and his face was all over blood. We were frightened out of our lives, but, all at once, he began to thank Providence that he had got off so cheaply. Then he told us what had frightened him. He had seen the ghost behind the Persian, *the ghost with the death's head,* just like Joseph Buquet's description!"

Jammes had told her story ever so quickly, as though the ghost were at her heels, and was quite out of breath at the finish. A silence followed, while Sorelli polished her nails in great excitement. It was broken by little Giry, who said:

"Joseph Buquet would do better to hold his tongue."

"Why should he hold his tongue?" asked somebody.

"That's mother's opinion," replied Meg, lowering her voice and looking all about her as though fearing lest other ears than those present might overhear.

"And why is it your mother's opinion?"

"Hush! Mother says the ghost doesn't like being talked about."

"And why does your mother say so?"

"Because—because—nothing——"

This reticence exasperated the curiosity of the young ladies, who crowded round little Giry, begging her to explain herself. They were there, side by side, leaning forward simultaneously in one movement of entreaty and fear, communicating their terror to one another, taking a keen pleasure in feeling their blood freeze in their veins.

"I swore not to tell!" gasped Meg.

But they left her no peace and promised to keep the secret, until Meg, burning to say all she knew, began, with her eyes fixed on the door:

"Well, it's because of the private box."

"What private box?"

"The ghost's box!"

"Has the ghost a box? Oh, do tell us, do tell us!"

"Not so loud!" said Meg. "It's Box Five, you know, the box on the grand tier, next to the stage-box, on the left."

"Oh, nonsense!"

"I tell you it is. Mother has charge of it. But you swear you won't say a word?"

"Of course, of course."

"Well, that's the ghost's box. No one has had it for over a month, except the ghost, and orders have been given at the box-office that it must never be sold."

"And does the ghost really come there?"

"Yes."

"Then somebody does come?"

"Why, no! The ghost comes, but there is nobody there."

The little ballet-girls exchanged glances. If the ghost came to the box, he must be seen, because he wore a dress-coat and a death's head. This was what they tried to make Meg understand, but she replied:

"That's just it! The ghost is not seen. And he has no dress-coat and no head! All that talk about his death's head and his head of fire is nonsense! There's nothing in it. You only hear him when he is in the box. Mother has never seen him, but she has heard him. Mother knows, because she gives him his program."

Sorelli interfered.

"Giry, child, you're getting at us!"

Thereupon little Giry began to cry.

"I ought to have held my tongue—if mother ever came to know! But I was quite right, Joseph Buquet had no business to talk of things that don't concern him—it will bring him bad luck—mother was saying so last night——"

There was a sound of hurried and heavy footsteps in the passage and a breathless voice cried:

"Cecile! Cecile! Are you there?"

"It's mother's voice," said Jammes. "What's the matter?"

She opened the door. A respectable lady, built on the lines of a Pomeranian grenadier, burst into the dressing-room and dropped groaning into a vacant arm-chair. Her eyes rolled madly in her brick-dust colored face.

"How awful!" she said. "How awful!"

"What? What?"

"Joseph Buquet——"

"What about him?"

"Joseph Buquet is dead!"

The room became filled with exclamations, with astonished outcries, with scared requests for explanations.

"Yes, he was found hanging in the third-floor cellar!"

"It's the ghost!" little Giry blurted, as though in spite of herself; but she at once corrected herself, with her hands pressed to her mouth: "No, no!—I didn't say it!—I didn't say it!——"

All around her, her panic-stricken companions repeated under their breaths:

"Yes—it must be the ghost!"

Sorelli was very pale.

"I shall never be able to recite my speech," she said.

Ma Jammes gave her opinion, while she emptied a glass of liqueur that happened to be standing on a table; the ghost must have something to do with it.

The truth is that no one ever knew how Joseph Buquet met his death. The verdict at the inquest was "natural suicide." In his *Memoirs of a Manager,* M. Moncharmin, one of the joint managers who succeeded MM. Debienne and Poligny, describes the incident as follows:

> "A grievous accident spoiled the little party which MM. Debienne and Poligny gave to celebrate their retirement. I was in the manager's office, when Mercier, the acting-manager, suddenly came darting in. He seemed half mad and told me that the body of a scene-shifter had been found hanging in the third cellar under the stage, between a farm-house and a scene from the *Roi de Lahore.* I shouted:
>
> "'Come and cut him down!'
>
> "By the time I had rushed down the staircase and the Jacob's ladder, the man was no longer hanging from his rope!"

So this is an event which M. Moncharmin thinks natural. A man hangs at the end of a rope; they go to cut him down; the rope has disappeared. Oh, M. Moncharmin found a very simple explanation! Listen to him:

> "It was just after the ballet; and leaders and dancing-girls lost no time in taking their precautions against the evil eye."

There you are! Picture the *corps de ballet* scuttling down the Jacob's ladder and dividing the suicide's rope among themselves in less time than it takes to write! When, on the other hand, I think of the exact spot where the body was discovered—the third cellar underneath the stage—I imagine that *somebody* must have been interested in seeing that the rope disappeared after it had effected its purpose; and time will show if I am wrong.

The horrid news soon spread all over the Opera, where Joseph Buquet was very popular. The dressing-rooms emptied and the ballet-girls, crowding around Sorelli like timid sheep around their shepherdess, made for the foyer through the ill-lit passages and staircases, trotting as fast as their little pink legs could carry them.

CHAPTER II

THE NEW MARGARITA

ON the first landing, Sorelli ran against the Comte de Chagny, who was coming up-stairs. The count, who was generally so calm, seemed greatly excited.

"I was just going to you," he said, taking off his hat. "Oh, Sorelli, what an evening! And Christine Daaé: what a triumph!"

"Impossible!" said Meg Giry. "Six months ago, she used to sing like a *crock!* But do let us get by, my dear count," continues the brat, with a saucy curtsey. "We are going to inquire after a poor man who was found hanging by the neck."

Just then the acting-manager came fussing past and stopped when he heard this remark.

"What!" he exclaimed roughly. "Have you girls heard already? Well, please forget about it for to-night—and above all don't let M. Debienne and M. Poligny hear; it would upset them too much on their last day."

They all went on to the foyer of the ballet, which was already full of people. The Comte de Chagny was right; no gala performance ever equalled this one. All the great composers of the day had conducted their own works in turns. Faure and Krauss had sung; and, on that evening, Christine Daaé had revealed her true self, for the first time, to the astonished and enthusiastic audience. Gounod had conducted the *Funeral March of a Marionnette;* Reyer, his beautiful overture to *Siguar;* Saint Saëns, the *Danse Macabre* and a *Rêverie Orientale;* Massenet, an unpublished Hungarian march; Guiraud, his *Carnaval;* Delibes, the *Valse lente* from *Sylvia* and the *Pizzicati* from *Coppelia.* Mlle. Krauss had sung the bolero in the *Vespri Siciliani;* and Mlle. Denise Bloch the drinking song in *Lucrezia Borgia.*

But the real triumph was reserved for Christine Daaé, who had begun by singing a few passages from *Romeo and Juliet.* It was the first time that the young artist sang in this work of Gounod, which had not been transferred to the Opera and which was revived at the Opéra Comique after it had been produced at the old Theatre Lyrique by Mme. Carvalho. Those who heard her say that her voice, in these passages, was seraphic; but this was nothing to the superhuman notes that she gave forth in the prison scene and the final trio in *Faust,* which she sang in the place of La Carlotta, who was ill. No one had ever heard or seen anything like it.

Daaé revealed a new Margarita that night, a Margarita of a splendor, a radiance hitherto unsuspected. The whole house went mad, rising to its feet, shouting, cheering, clapping, while Christine sobbed and fainted in the arms of her fellow-singers and had to be carried to her dressing-room. A few subscribers, however, protested. Why had so great a treasure been kept from them all that time? Till then, Christine Daaé had played a good Siebel to Carlotta's rather too splendidly material Margarita. And it had needed Carlotta's incomprehensible and inexcusable absence from this gala night for the little Daaé, at a moment's warning, to show all that she could do in a part of the program reserved for the Spanish diva! Well, what the subscribers wanted to know was, why had Debienne and Poligny applied to Daaé, when Carlotta was taken ill? Did they know of her hidden genius? And, if they knew of it, why had they kept it hidden? And why had she kept it hidden? Oddly enough, she was not known to have a professor of singing at that moment. She had often said she meant to practise alone for the future. The whole thing was a mystery.

The Comte de Chagny, standing up in his box, listened to all this frenzy and took part in it by loudly applauding. Philippe Georges Marie Comte de Chagny was just forty-one years of age. He was a great aristocrat and a good-looking man, above middle height and with attractive features, in spite of his hard forehead and his rather cold eyes. He was exquisitely polite to the women and a little haughty to the men, who did not always forgive him for his successes in society. He had an excellent heart and an irreproachable conscience. On the death of old Count Philibert, he became the head of one of the oldest and most distinguished families in France, whose arms dated back to the fourteenth century. The Chagnys owned a great deal of property; and, when the old count, who was a widower, died, it was no easy task for Philippe to accept the management of so large an estate. His two sisters and his brother, Raoul, would not hear of a division and waived their claim to their shares, leaving themselves entirely in Philippe's hands, as though the right of primogeniture had never ceased to exist. When the two sisters married, on the same day, they received their portion from their brother, not as a thing rightfully belonging to them, but as a dowry for which they thanked him.

The Comtesse de Chagny, *née* de Moerogis de La Martyniere, had died in giving birth to Raoul, who was born twenty years after his elder brother. At the time of the old count's death, Raoul was twelve years of age. Philippe busied himself actively with the youngster's education. He was admirably assisted in this work first by his sisters and afterward by an old aunt, the widow of a naval officer, who lived at Brest and gave young Raoul a taste for the sea. The lad entered the *Borda* training-ship, finished his course with honors and quietly made his trip round the world. Thanks to powerful influence, he had just been appointed a member of the official expedition on board the *Requin,* which was to be sent to the Arctic Circle in search of the survivors of the D'Artoi's expedition, of whom nothing had been heard for three years. Meanwhile, he was enjoying a long furlough which would not be over for six months; and already the dowagers of the Faubourg Saint-Germain were pitying the handsome and apparently delicate stripling for the hard work in store for him.

The shyness of the sailor-lad—I was almost saying his innocence—was remarkable. He seemed to have but just left the women's apron-strings. As a matter of fact, petted as he was by his two sisters and his old aunt, he had retained from this purely feminine education manners that were almost candid and stamped with a charm that nothing had yet been able to sully. He was a little over twenty-one years of age and looked eighteen. He had a small, fair mustache, beautiful blue eyes and a complexion like a girl's.

Philippe spoiled Raoul. To begin with, he was very proud of him and pleased to foresee a glorious career for his junior in the navy in which one of their ancestors, the famous Chagny de La Roche, had held the rank of admiral. He took advantage of the young man's leave of absence to show him Paris, with all its luxurious and artistic delights. The count considered that, at Raoul's age, it is not good to be too good. Philippe himself had a character that was very well-balanced in work and pleasure alike; his demeanor was always faultless; and he was incapable of setting his brother a bad example. He took him with him wherever he went. He even introduced him to the foyer of the ballet. I know that the count was said to be "on terms" with Sorelli. But it could hardly be reckoned as a crime for this nobleman, a bachelor, with plenty of leisure, especially since his sisters were settled, to come and spend an hour or two after dinner in the company of a dancer, who, though not so very, very witty, had the finest eyes that ever were seen! And, besides, there are places where a true Parisian, when he has the rank of the Comte de Chagny, is bound to show himself; and at that time the foyer of the ballet at the Opera was one of those places.

Lastly, Philippe would perhaps not have taken his brother behind the scenes of the Opera if Raoul had not been the first to ask him, repeatedly renewing his request with a gentle obstinacy which the count remembered at a later date.

On that evening, Philippe, after applauding the Daaé, turned to Raoul and saw that he was quite pale.

"Don't you see," said Raoul, "that the woman's fainting?"

"You look like fainting yourself," said the count. "What's the matter?"

But Raoul had recovered himself and was standing up.

"Let's go and see," he said, "she never sang like that before."

The count gave his brother a curious smiling glance and seemed quite pleased. They were soon at the door leading from the house to the stage. Numbers of subscribers were slowly making their way through. Raoul tore his gloves without knowing what he was doing and Philippe had much too kind a heart to laugh at him for his impatience. But he now understood why Raoul was absent-minded when spoken to and why he always tried to turn every conversation to the subject of the Opera.

They reached the stage and pushed through the crowd of gentlemen, scene-shifters, supers and chorus-girls, Raoul leading the way, feeling that his heart no longer belonged to him, his face set with passion, while Count Philippe followed him with difficulty and continued to smile. At the back of the stage, Raoul had to stop before the inrush of the little troop of ballet-girls who blocked the passage which he was trying to enter. More than one chaffing phrase darted from little made-up lips, to which he did not reply; and at last he was able to pass, and dived into the semi-darkness of a corridor ringing with the name of "Daaé! Daaé!" The count was surprised to find that Raoul knew the way. He had never taken him to Christine's himself and came to the conclusion that Raoul must have gone there alone while the count stayed talking in the foyer with Sorelli, who often asked him to wait until it was her time to "go on" and sometimes handed him the little gaiters in which she ran down from her dressing-room to preserve the spotlessness of her satin dancing-shoes and her flesh-colored tights. Sorelli had an excuse; she had lost her mother.

Postponing his usual visit to Sorelli for a few minutes, the count followed his brother down the passage that led to Daaé's dressing-room and saw that it had never been so crammed as on that evening, when the whole house seemed excited by her success and also by her fainting fit. For the girl had not yet come to;

and the doctor of the theater had just arrived at the moment when Raoul entered at his heels. Christine, therefore, received the first aid of the one, while opening her eyes in the arms of the other. The count and many more remained crowding in the doorway.

"Don't you think, Doctor, that those gentlemen had better clear the room?" asked Raoul coolly. "There's no breathing here."

"You're quite right," said the doctor.

And he sent every one away, except Raoul and the maid, who looked at Raoul with eyes of the most undisguised astonishment. She had never seen him before and yet dared not question him; and the doctor imagined that the young man was only acting as he did because he had the right to. The viscount, therefore, remained in the room watching Christine as she slowly returned to life, while even the joint managers, Debienne and Poligny, who had come to offer their sympathy and congratulations, found themselves thrust into the passage among the crowd of dandies. The Comte de Chagny, who was one of those standing outside, laughed:

"Oh, the rogue, the rogue!" And he added, under his breath: "Those youngsters with their school-girl airs! So he's a Chagny after all!"

He turned to go to Sorelli's dressing-room, but met her on the way, with her little troop of trembling ballet-girls, as we have seen.

Meanwhile, Christine Daaé uttered a deep sigh, which was answered by a groan. She turned her head, saw Raoul and started. She looked at the doctor, on whom she bestowed a smile, then at her maid, then at Raoul again.

"Monsieur," she said, in a voice not much above a whisper, "who are you?"

"Mademoiselle," replied the young man, kneeling on one knee and pressing a fervent kiss on the diva's hand, *"I am the little boy who went into the sea to rescue your scarf."*

Christine again looked at the doctor and the maid; and all three began to laugh.

Raoul turned very red and stood up.

"Mademoiselle," he said, "since you are pleased not to recognize me, I should like to say something to you in private, something very important."

"When I am better, do you mind?" And her voice shook. "You have been very good."

"Yes, you must go," said the doctor, with his pleasantest smile. "Leave me to attend to mademoiselle."

"I am not ill now," said Christine suddenly, with strange and unexpected energy.

She rose and passed her hand over her eyelids.

"Thank you, Doctor. I should like to be alone. Please go away, all of you. Leave me. I feel very restless this evening."

The doctor tried to make a short protest, but, perceiving the girl's evident agitation, he thought the best remedy was not to thwart her. And he went away, saying to Raoul, outside:

"She is not herself to-night. She is usually so gentle."

Then he said good night and Raoul was left alone. The whole of this part of the theater was now deserted. The farewell ceremony was no doubt taking place in the foyer of the ballet. Raoul thought that Daaé might go to it and he waited in the silent solitude, even hiding in the favoring shadow of a doorway. He felt a terrible pain at his heart and it was of this that he wanted to speak to Daaé without delay.

Suddenly the dressing-room door opened and the maid came out by herself, carrying bundles. He stopped her and asked how her mistress was. The woman laughed and said that she was quite well, but that he must not disturb her, for she wished to be left alone. And she passed on. One idea alone filled Raoul's burning brain: of course, Daaé wished to be left alone *for him!* Had he not told her that he wanted to speak to her privately?

Hardly breathing, he went up to the dressing-room and, with his ear to the door to catch her reply, prepared to knock. But his hand dropped. He had heard *a man's voice* in the dressing-room, saying, in a curiously masterful tone:

"Christine, you must love me!"

And Christine's voice, infinitely sad and trembling, as though accompanied by tears, replied:

"How can you talk like that? *When I sing only for you!*"

Raoul leaned against the panel to ease his pain. His heart, which had seemed gone for ever, returned to his breast and was throbbing loudly. The whole passage echoed with its beating and Raoul's ears were deafened. Surely, if his heart continued to make such a noise, they would hear it inside, they would open the door and the young man would be turned away in disgrace. What a position for a Chagny! To be caught listening behind a door! He took his heart in his two hands to make it stop.

The man's voice spoke again:

"Are you very tired?"

"Oh, to-night I gave you my soul and I am dead!" Christine replied.

"Your soul is a beautiful thing, child," replied the grave man's voice, "and I thank you. No emperor ever received so fair a gift. *The angels wept to-night.*"

Raoul heard nothing after that. Nevertheless, he did not go away, but, as though he feared lest he should be caught, he returned to his dark corner, determined to wait for the man to leave the room. At one and the same time, he had learned what love meant, and hatred. He knew that he loved. He wanted to know whom he hated. To his great astonishment, the door opened and Christine Daaé appeared, wrapped in furs, with her face hidden in a lace veil, alone. She closed the door behind her, but Raoul observed that she did not lock it. She passed him. He did not even follow her with his eyes, for his eyes were fixed on the door, which did not open again.

When the passage was once more deserted, he crossed it, opened the door of the dressing-room, went in and shut the door. He found himself in absolute darkness. The gas had been turned out.

"There is some one here!" said Raoul, with his back against the closed door, in a quivering voice. "What are you hiding for?"

All was darkness and silence. Raoul heard only the sound of his own breathing. He quite failed to see that the indiscretion of his conduct was exceeding all bounds.

"You shan't leave this until I let you!" he exclaimed. "If you don't answer, you are a coward! But I'll expose you!"

And he struck a match. The blaze lit up the room. There was no one in the room! Raoul, first turning the key in the door, lit the gas-jets. He went into the dressing-closet, opened the cupboards, hunted about, felt the walls with his moist hands. Nothing!

"Look here!" he said, aloud. "Am I going mad?"

He stood for ten minutes listening to the gas flaring in the silence of the empty room; lover though he was, he did not even think of stealing a ribbon that would have given him the perfume of the woman he loved. He went out, not knowing what he was doing nor where he was going. At a given moment in his wayward progress, an icy draft struck him in the face. He found himself at the bottom of a staircase, down which, behind him, a procession of workmen were carrying a sort of stretcher, covered with a white sheet.

"Which is the way out, please?" he asked of one of the men.

"Straight in front of you, the door is open. But let us pass."

Pointing to the stretcher, he asked mechanically:

"What's that?"

The workmen answered:

" 'That' is Joseph Buquet, who was found in the third cellar, hanging between a farm-house and a scene from the *Roi de Lahore.*"

He took off his hat, fell back to make room for the procession and went out.

CHAPTER III

THE MYSTERIOUS REASON

DURING this time, the farewell ceremony was taking place. I have already said that this magnificent function was being given on the occasion of the retirement of M. Debienne and M. Poligny, who had determined to "die game," as we say nowadays. They had been assisted in the realization of their ideal, though melancholy, program by all that counted in the social and artistic world of Paris. All these people met, after the performance, in the foyer of the ballet, where Sorelli waited for the arrival of the retiring managers with a glass of champagne in her hand and a little prepared speech at the tip of her tongue. Behind her, the members of the *corps de ballet,* young and old, discussed the events of the day in whispers or exchanged discreet signals with their friends, a noisy crowd of whom surrounded the supper-tables arranged along the slanting floor.

A few of the dancers had already changed into ordinary dress; but most of them wore their skirts of gossamer gauze; and all had thought it the right thing to put on a special face for the occasion: all, that is, except little Jammes, whose fifteen summers —happy age!—seemed already to have forgotten the ghost and the death of Joseph Buquet. She never ceased to laugh and chatter, to hop about and play practical jokes, until MM. Debienne and Poligny appeared on the steps of the foyer, when she was severely called to order by the impatient Sorelli.

Everybody remarked that the retiring managers looked cheerful, as is the Paris way. None will ever be a true Parisian who has not learned to wear a mask of gaiety over his sorrows and one of sadness, boredom or indifference over his inward joy. You know that one of your friends is in trouble; do not try to console him: he will tell you that he is already comforted; but, should he have met with good fortune, be careful how you congratulate him: he thinks it so natural that he is surprised that you should speak of it. In Paris, our lives are one masked ball; and the foyer of the ballet is the last place in which two men so "knowing" as M. Debienne and M. Poligny would have made the mistake of betraying their grief, however genuine it might be. And they were already smiling rather too broadly upon Sorelli, who had begun to recite her speech, when an exclamation from that little madcap of a Jammes broke the smile of the managers so brutally that the expression of distress and dismay that lay beneath it became apparent to all eyes:

"The Opera ghost!"

Jammes yelled these words in a tone of unspeakable terror; and her finger pointed, among the crowd of dandies, to a face so pallid, so lugubrious and so ugly, with two such deep black cavities under the straddling eyebrows, that the death's head in question immediately scored a huge success.

"The Opera ghost! The Opera ghost!"

Everybody laughed and pushed his neighbor and wanted to offer the Opera ghost a drink, but he was gone. He had slipped through the crowd; and the others vainly hunted for him, while two old gentlemen tried to calm little Jammes and while little Giry stood screaming like a peacock.

Sorelli was furious; she had not been able to finish her speech; the managers had kissed her, thanked her and run away as fast as the ghost himself. No one was surprised at this, for it was known that they were to go through the same ceremony on the floor above, in the foyer of the singers, and that finally they were themselves to receive their personal friends, for the last time, in the great lobby outside the managers' office, where a regular supper would be served.

Here they found the new managers, M. Armand Moncharmin and M. Firmin Richard, whom they hardly knew; nevertheless, they were lavish in protestations of friendship and received a thousand flattering compliments in reply, so that those of the guests who had feared that they had a rather tedious evening in store for them at once put on brighter faces. The supper was almost gay and a particularly clever speech of the representative of the government, mingling the glories of the past with the successes of the future, caused the greatest cordiality to prevail.

The retiring managers had already handed over to their successors the two tiny master-keys which opened all the doors—thousands of doors—of the Opera house. And those little keys, the object of general curiosity, were being passed from hand to hand, when the attention of some of the guests was diverted by their discovery, at the end of the table, of that strange, wan and fantastic face, with the hollow eyes, which had already appeared in the foyer of the ballet and been greeted by little Jammes' exclamation:

"The Opera ghost!"

There sat the ghost, as natural as could be, except that he neither ate nor drank. Those who began by looking at him with a smile ended by turning away their heads, for the sight of him at once provoked the most funereal thoughts. No one repeated the joke of the foyer, no one exclaimed:

"There's the Opera ghost!"

He himself did not speak a word and his very neighbors could not have stated at what precise moment he had sat down between them; but every one felt that if the dead did ever come and sit at the table of the living, they could not cut a more ghastly figure. The friends of Firmin Richard and Armand Moncharmin thought that this lean and skinny guest was an acquaintance of Debienne's or Poligny's, while Debienne's and Poligny's friends believed that the cadaverous individual belonged to Firmin Richard and Armand Moncharmin's party.

The result was that no request was made for an explanation; no unpleasant remark; no joke in bad taste, which might have offended this visitor from the tomb. A few of those present who knew the story of the ghost and the description of him given by the chief scene-shifter—they did not know of Joseph Buquet's death—thought, in their own minds, that the man at the end of the table might easily have passed for him; and yet, according to the story, the ghost had no nose and the person in question had. But M. Moncharmin declares, in his *Memoirs,* that the guest's nose was transparent: "long, thin and transparent" are his exact words. I, for my part, will add that this might very well apply to a false nose. M. Moncharmin may have taken for transparency what was only shininess. Everybody knows that orthopædic science provides beautiful false noses for those who have lost their noses naturally or as the result of an operation.

Did the ghost really take a seat at the managers' supper-table that night, uninvited? And can we be sure that the figure was that of the Opera ghost himself? Who would venture to assert as much? I mention the incident, not because I wish for a second to make the reader believe—or even to try to make him believe—that the ghost was capable of such a sublime piece of impudence; but because, after all, the thing is impossible.

M. Armand Moncharmin, in chapter eleven of his *Memoirs,* says:

"When I think of this first evening, I can not separate the secret confided to us by MM. Debienne and Poligny in their office from the presence at our supper of that *ghostly* person whom none of us knew."

What happened was this: MM. Debienne and Poligny, sitting at the center of the table, had not seen the man with the death's head. Suddenly he began to speak.

"The ballet-girls are right," he said. "The death of that poor Buquet is perhaps not so natural as people think."

Debienne and Poligny gave a start.

"Is Buquet dead?" they cried.

"Yes," replied the man, or the shadow of a man, quietly. "He was found, this evening, hanging in the third cellar, between a farm-house and a scene from the *Roi de Lahore*."

The two managers, or rather ex-managers, at once rose and stared strangely at the speaker. They were more excited than they need have been, that is to say, more excited than any one need be by the announcement of the suicide of a chief scene-shifter. They looked at each other. They had both turned whiter than the table-cloth. At last, Debienne made a sign to MM. Richard and Moncharmin; Poligny muttered a few words of excuse to the guests; and all four went into the managers' office. I leave M. Moncharmin to complete the story. In his *Memoirs*, he says:

"MM. Debienne and Poligny seemed to grow more and more excited, and they appeared to have something very difficult to tell us. First, they asked us if we knew the man, sitting at the end of the table, who had told them of the death of Joseph Buquet;

and, when we answered in the negative, they looked still more concerned. They took the master-keys from our hands, stared at them for a moment and advised us to have new locks made, with the greatest secrecy, for the rooms, closets and presses that we might wish to have hermetically closed. They said this so funnily that we began to laugh and to ask if there were thieves at the Opera. They replied that there was something worse, which was the *ghost*. We began to laugh again, feeling sure that they were indulging in some joke that was intended to crown our little entertainment. Then, at their request, we became 'serious,' resolving to humor them and to enter into the spirit of the game. They told us that they never would have spoken to us of the ghost, if they had not received formal orders from the ghost himself to ask us to be pleasant to him and to grant any request that he might make. However, in their relief at leaving a domain where that tyrannical shade held sway, they had hesitated until the last moment to tell us this curious story, which our skeptical minds were certainly not prepared to entertain. But the announcement of the death of Joseph Buquet had served them as a brutal reminder that, whenever they had disregarded the ghost's wishes, some fantastic or disastrous event had brought them to a sense of their dependence.

"During these unexpected utterances made in a tone of the most secret and important confidence, I looked at Richard. Richard, in his student days, had acquired a great reputation for practical joking, and he seemed to relish the dish which was being served up to him in his turn. He did not miss a morsel of it, though the seasoning was a little gruesome because of the death of Buquet. He nodded his head sadly, while the others spoke, and his features assumed the air of a man who bitterly regretted having taken over the Opera, now that he knew that there was a ghost mixed up in the business. I could think of nothing better than to give him a servile imitation of this attitude of despair. However, in spite of all our efforts, we could not, at the finish, help bursting out laughing in the faces of MM. Debienne and Poligny, who, seeing us pass straight from the gloomiest state of mind to one of the most insolent merriment, acted as though they thought that we had gone mad.

"The joke became a little tedious; and Richard asked half-seriously and half in jest:

" 'But, after all, what does this ghost of yours want?'

"M. Poligny went to his desk and returned with a copy of the memorandum-book. The memorandum-book begins with the well-known words saying that 'the management of the Opera shall give to the performance of the National Academy of Music the splendor that becomes the first lyric stage in France' and ends with Clause 98, which says that the privilege can be withdrawn if the manager infringes the conditions stipulated in the memorandum-book. This is followed by the conditions, which are four in number.

"The copy produced by M. Poligny was written in black ink and exactly similar to that in our possession, except that, at the end, it contained a paragraph in red ink and in a queer, labored handwriting, as though it had been produced by dipping the heads of matches into the ink, the writing of a child that has never got beyond the down-strokes and has not learned to join its letters. This paragraph ran, word for word, as follows:

" '5. Or if the manager, in any month, delay for more than a fortnight the payment of the allowance which he shall make to the Opera ghost, an allowance of twenty thousand francs a month, say two hundred and forty thousand francs a year.'

"M. Poligny pointed with a hesitating finger to this last clause, which we certainly did not expect.

" 'Is this all? Does he not want anything else?' asked Richard, with the greatest coolness.

" 'Yes, he does,' replied Poligny.

"And he turned over the pages of the memorandum-book until he came to the clause specifying the days on which certain private boxes were to be reserved for the free use of the president of the republic, the ministers and so on. At the end of this clause, a line had been added, also in red ink:

" 'Box Five on the grand tier shall be placed at the disposal of the Opera ghost for every performance.'

"When we saw this, there was nothing else for us to do but to rise from our chairs, shake our two predecessors warmly by the hand and congratulate them on thinking of this charming little joke, which proved that the old French sense of humor was never likely to become extinct. Richard added that he now understood why MM. Debienne and Poligny were retiring from the management of the National Academy of Music. Business was impossible with so unreasonable a ghost.

" 'Certainly, two hundred and forty thousand francs are not be picked up for the asking,' said M. Poligny, without moving a muscle of his face. 'And have you considered what the loss over Box Five meant to us? We did not sell it once; and not only that, but we had to return the subscription: why, it's awful! We really can't work to keep ghosts! We prefer to go away!'

" 'Yes,' echoed M. Debienne, 'we prefer to go away. Let us go.'

"And he stood up. Richard said: 'But, after all all, it seems to me that you were much too kind to the ghost. If I had such a troublesome ghost as that, I should not hesitate to have him arrested——'

" 'But how? Where?' they cried, in chorus. 'We have never seen him!'

" 'But when he comes to his box?'

" 'We have never seen him in his box.'

" 'Then sell it.'

" 'Sell the Opera ghost's box! Well, gentlemen, try it.'

"Thereupon we all four left the office. Richard and I had 'never laughed so much in our lives.' "

CHAPTER IV

BOX FIVE

ARMAND Moncharmin wrote such voluminous *Memoirs* during the fairly long period of his co-management that we may well ask if he ever found time to attend to the affairs of the Opera otherwise than by telling what went on there. M. Moncharmin did not know a note of music, but he called the minister of education and fine arts by his Christian name, had dabbled a little in society journalism and enjoyed a considerable private income. Lastly, he was a charming fellow and showed that he was not lacking in intelligence, for, as soon as he made up his mind to be a sleeping partner in the Opera, he selected the best possible active manager and went straight to Firmin Richard.

Firmin Richard was a very distinguished composer, who had published a number of successful pieces of all kinds and who liked nearly every form of music and every sort of musician. Clearly, therefore, it was the duty of every sort of musician to like M. Firmin Richard. The only things to be said against him were that he was rather masterful in his ways and endowed with a very hasty temper.

The first few days which the partners spent at the Opera were given over to the delight of finding themselves the head of so magnificent an enterprise; and they had forgotten all about that curious, fantastic story of the ghost, when an incident occurred that proved to them that the joke—if joke it were—was not over. M. Firmin Richard reached his office that morning at eleven o'clock. His secretary, M. Rémy, showed him half a dozen letters which he had not opened because they were marked "private." One of the letters had at once attracted Richard's attention not only because the envelope was addressed in red ink, but because he seemed to have seen the writing before. He soon rememberd that it was the red handwriting in which the memorandum-book had been so curiously completed. He recognized the clumsy childish hand. He opened the letter and read:

DEAR MR. MANAGER:

I am sorry to have to trouble you at a time when you must be so very busy, renewing important engagements, signing fresh ones and generally displaying your excellent taste. I know what you have done for Carlotta, Sorelli and little Jammes and for a few others whose admirable qualities of talent or genius you have suspected.

Of course, when I use these words, I do not mean to apply them to La Carlotta, who sings like a squirt and who ought never to have been allowed to leave the Ambassadeurs and the Café Jacquin; nor to La Sorelli, who owes her success mainly to the coachbuilders; nor to little Jammes, who dances like a calf in a field. And I am not speaking of Christine Daaé either, though her genius is certain, whereas your jealousy prevents her from creating any important part. When all is said, you are free to conduct your little business as you think best, are you not?

All the same, I should like to take advantage of the fact that you have not yet turned Christine Daaé out of doors by hearing her this evening in the part of Siebel, as that of Margarita has been forbidden her since her triumph of the other evening; and I will ask you not to dispose of my box to-day nor on the *following days,* for I can not end this letter without telling you how disagreeably surprised I have been once or twice, to hear, on arriving at the Opera, that my box had been sold, at the box-office, by your orders.

I did not protest, first, because I dislike scandal, and, second, because I thought that your predecessors, MM. Debienne and Poligny, who were always charming to me, had neglected, before leaving, to mention my little fads to you. I have now received a reply from those gentlemen to my letter asking for an explanation, and this reply proves that you know all about my *memorandum-book* and, consequently, that you are treating me with outrageous contempt. *If you wish to live in peace, you must not begin by taking away my private box.*

Believe me to be, dear Mr. Manager, without prejudice to these little observations,

Your Most Humble and Obedient Servant,

OPERA GHOST.

The letter was accompanied by a cutting from the agony-column of the *Revue Théâtrale,* which ran:

O. G.—There is no excuse for R. and M. We told them and left your memorandum-book in their hands. Kind regards.

M. Firmin Richard had hardly finished reading this letter when M. Armand Moncharmin entered, carrying one exactly similar. They looked at each other and burst out laughing.

"They are keeping up the joke," said M. Richard, "but I don't call it funny."

"What does it all mean?" asked M. Moncharmin. "Do they imagine that, because they have been managers of the Opera, we are going to let them have a box for an indefinite period?"

"I am not in the mood to let myself be laughed at long," said Firmin Richard.

"It's harmless enough," observed Armand Moncharmin. "What is it they really want? A box for to-night?"

M. Firmin Richard told his secretary to send Box Five on the grand tier to MM. Debienne and Poligny, if it was not sold. It was not. It was sent off to them. Debienne lived at the corner of the Rue Scribe and the Boulevard des Capucines; Poligny, in the Rue Auber. O. Ghost's two letters had been posted at the Boulevard des Capucines post-office, as Moncharmin remarked after examining the envelopes.

"You see!" said Richard.

They shrugged their shoulders and regretted that two men of that age should amuse themselves with such childish tricks.

"They might have been civil, for all that!" said Moncharmin. "Did you notice how they treat us with regard to Carlotta, Sorelli and Little Jammes?"

"Why, my dear fellow, these two are mad with jealousy! To think that they went to the expense of an advertisement in the *Revue Théâtrale!* Have they nothing better to do?"

"By the way," said Moncharmin, "they seem to be greatly interested in that little Christine Daaé!"

"You know as well as I do that she has the reputation of being quite good," said Richard.

"Reputations are easily obtained," replied Moncharmin. "Haven't I a reputation for knowing all about music? And I don't know one key from another."

"Don't be afraid: you never had that reputation," Richard declared.

Thereupon he ordered the artists to be shown in, who, for the last two hours, had been walking up and down outside the door behind which fame and fortune—or dismissal—awaited them.

The whole day was spent in discussing, negotiating, signing or cancelling contracts; and the two overworked managers went to bed early, without so much as casting a glance at Box Five to see whether M. Debienne and M. Poligny were enjoying the performance.

Next morning, the managers received a card of thanks from the ghost:

DEAR MR. MANAGER:

Thanks. Charming evening. Daaé exquisite. Choruses want waking up. Carlotta a splendid commonplace instrument. Will write you soon for the 240,000 francs, or 233,424 fr. 70 c., to be correct. MM. Debienne and Poligny have sent me the 6,575 fr. 30 c. representing the first ten days of my allowance for the current year; their privileges finished on the evening of the tenth inst.

Kind regards.

O. G.

On the other hand, there was a letter from MM. Debienne and Poligny:

GENTLEMEN:

We are much obliged for your kind thought of us, but you will easily understand that the prospect of again hearing *Faust,* pleasant though it is to ex-managers of the Opera, can not make us forget that we have no right to occupy Box Five on the grand tier, which is the exclusive property of *him* of whom we spoke to you when we went through the memorandum-book with you for the last time. See Clause 98, final paragraph.

Accept, gentlemen, etc.

"Oh, those fellows are beginning to annoy me!" shouted Firmin Richard, snatching up the letter.

And that evening Box Five was sold.

The next morning, MM. Richard and Moncharmin, on reaching their office, found an inspector's report relating to an incident that had happened, the night before, in Box Five. I give the essential part of the report:

I was obliged to call in a municipal guard twice, this evening, to clear Box Five on the grand tier, once at the beginning and once in the middle of the second act. The occupants, who arrived as the curtain rose on the second act, created a regular scandal by their laughter and their ridiculous observations. There were cries of "Hush!" all around them and the whole house was beginning to protest, when the box-keeper came to fetch me. I entered the box and said what I thought necessary. The people did not seem to me to be in their right mind; and they made stupid remarks. I said that, if the noise was repeated, I should be compelled to clear the box. The moment I left, I heard the laughing again, with fresh protests from the house. I returned with a municipal guard, who turned them out. They protested, still laughing, saying they would not go unless they had their money back. At last, they became quiet and I allowed them to enter the box again. The laughter at once recommenced; and, this time, I had them turned out definitely.

"Send for the inspector," said Richard to his secretary, who had already read the report and marked it with blue pencil.

M. Rémy, the secretary, had foreseen the order and called the inspector at once.

"Tell us what happened," said Richard bluntly.

The inspector began to splutter and referred to the report.

"Well, but what were those people laughing at?" asked Moncharmin.

"They must have been dining, sir, and seemed more inclined to lark about than to listen to good music. The moment they entered the box, they came out again and called the box-keeper, who asked them what they wanted. They said, 'Look in the box: there's no one there, is there?' 'No,' said the woman. 'Well,' said they, 'when we went in, we heard a voice saying *that the box was taken!*' "

M. Moncharmin could not help smiling as he looked at M. Richard; but M. Richard did not smile. He himself had done too much in that way in his time not to recognize, in the inspector's story, all the marks of one of those practical jokes which begin by amusing and end by enraging the victims. The inspector, to curry favor with M. Moncharmin, who was smiling, thought it best to give a smile too. A most unfortunate smile! M. Richard glared at his subordinate, who thenceforth made it his business to display a face of utter consternation.

"However, when the people arrived," roared Richard, "there was no one in the box, was there?"

"Not a soul, sir, not a soul! Nor in the box on the right, nor in the box on the left: not a soul, sir, I swear! The box-keeper told it me often enough, which proves that it was all a joke."

"Oh, you agree, do you?" said Richard. "You agree! It's a joke! And you think it funny, no doubt?"

"I think it in very bad taste, sir."

"And what did the box-keeper say?"

"Oh, she just said that it was the Opera ghost. That's all she said!"

And the inspector grinned. But he soon found that he had made a mistake in grinning, for the words had no sooner left his mouth than M. Richard, from gloomy, became furious.

"Send for the box-keeper!" he shouted. "Send for her! This minute! This minute! And bring her in to me here! And turn all those people out!"

The inspector tried to protest, but Richard closed his mouth with an angry order to hold his tongue. Then, when the wretched man's lips seemed shut for ever, the manager commanded him to open them once more.

"Who is this 'Opera ghost?' " he snarled.

But the inspector was by this time incapable of speaking a word. He managed to convey, by a despairing gesture, that he knew nothing about it, or rather that he did not wish to know.

"Have you ever seen him, have you seen the Opera ghost?"

The inspector, by means of a vigorous shake of the head, denied ever having seen the ghost in question.

"Very well!" said M. Richard coldly.

The inspector's eyes started out of his head, as though to ask why the manager had uttered that ominous "Very well!"

"Because I'm going to settle the account of any one who has not seen him!" explained the manager. "As he seems to be everywhere, I can't have people telling me that they see him nowhere. I like people to work for me when I employ them!"

Having said this, M. Richard paid no attention to the inspector and discussed various matters of business with his acting-manager, who had entered the room meanwhile. The inspector thought he could go and was gently—oh, so gently!—sidling toward the door, when M. Richard nailed the man to the floor with a thundering:

"Stay where you are!"

M. Rémy had sent for the box-keeper to the Rue de Provence, close to the Opera, where she was engaged as a porteress. She soon made her appearance.

"What's your name?"

"Mame Giry. You know me well enough, sir; I'm the mother of little Giry, little Meg, what!"

This was said in so rough and solemn a tone that, for a moment, M. Richard was impressed. He looked at Mame Giry, in her faded shawl, her worn shoes, her old taffeta dress and dingy bonnet. It was quite evident from the manager's attitude, that he either did not know or could not remember having met Mame Giry, nor even little Giry, nor even "little Meg!" But Mame Giry's pride was so great that the celebrated box-keeper imagined that everybody knew her.

"Never heard of her!" the manager declared. "But that's no reason, Mame Giry, why I shouldn't ask you what happened last night to make you and the inspector call in a municipal guard . . ."

"I was just wanting to see you, sir, and talk to you about it, so that you mightn't have the same unpleasantness as M. Debienne and M. Poligny. They wouldn't listen to me either, at first."

"I'm not asking you about all that. I'm asking what happened last night."

Mame Giry turned purple with indignation. Never had she been spoken to like that. She rose as though to go, gathering up the folds of her skirt and waving the feathers of her dingy bonnet with dignity, but, changing her mind, she sat down again and said, in a haughty voice:

"I'll tell you what happened. The ghost was annoyed again!"

Thereupon, as M. Richard was on the point of bursting out, M. Moncharmin interfered and conducted the interrogatory, whence it appeared that Mame Giry thought it quite natural that a voice should be heard to say that a box was taken, when there was nobody in the box. She was unable to explain this phenomenon, which was not new to her, except by the intervention of the ghost. Nobody could see the ghost in his box, but everybody could hear him. She had often heard him; and they could believe her, for she always spoke the truth. They could ask M. Debienne and M. Poligny, and anybody who knew her; and also M. Isidore Saack, who had had a leg broken by the ghost!

"Indeed!" said Moncharmin, interrupting her. "Did the ghost break poor Isidore Saack's leg?"

Mame Giry opened her eyes with astonishment at such ignorance. However, she consented to enlighten those two poor innocents. The thing had happened in M. Debienne and M. Poligny's time, also in Box Five and also during a performance of *Faust*. Mame Giry coughed, cleared her throat—it sounded as though she were preparing to sing the whole of Gounod's score—and began:

"It was like this, sir. That night, M. Maniera and his lady, the jewelers in the Rue Mogador, were sitting in the front of the box, with their great friend,

M. Isidore Saack, sitting behind Mme. Maniera. Mephistopheles was singing"—Mame Giry here burst into song herself—" 'Catarina, while you play at sleeping,' and then M. Maniera heard a voice in his right ear (his wife was on his left) saying, 'Ha, ha! Julie's not playing at sleeping!' His wife happened to be called Julie. So. M. Maniera turns to the right to see who was talking to him like that. Nobody there! He rubs his ear and asks himself if he's dreaming. Then Mephistopheles went on with his serenade. . . . But, perhaps I'm boring you gentlemen?"

"No, no, go on."

"You are too good, gentlemen," with a smirk. "Well, then, Mephistopheles went on with his serenade"—Mame Giry, burst into song again—" 'Saint, unclose thy portals holy and accord the bliss, to a mortal bending lowly, of a pardon-kiss.' And then M. Maniera again hears the voice in his right ear, saying, this time, 'Ha, ha! Julie wouldn't mind according a kiss to Isidore!' Then he turns round again, but, this time, to the left; and what do you think he sees? Isidore, who had taken his lady's hand and was covering it with kisses through the little round place in the glove—like this, gentlemen"—rapturously kissing the bit of palm left bare in the middle of her thread gloves. "Then they had a lively time between them! Bang! Bang! M. Maniera, who was big and strong, like you, M. Richard, gave two blows to M. Isidore Saack, who was small and weak like M. Moncharmin, saving his presence. There was a great uproar. People in the house shouted, 'That will do! Stop them! He'll kill him!' Then, at last, M. Isidore Saack managed to run away."

"Then the ghost had not broken his leg?" asked M. Moncharmin, a little vexed that his figure had made so little impression on Mame Giry.

"He did break it for him, sir," replied Mame Giry haughtily. "He broke it for him on the grand staircase, which he ran down too fast, sir, and it will be long before the poor gentleman will be able to go up it again!"

"Did the ghost tell you what he said in M. Maniera's right ear?" asked M. Moncharmin, with a gravity which he thought exceedingly humorous.

"No, sir, it was M. Maniera himself. So——"

"But you have spoken to the ghost, my good lady?"

"As I'm speaking to you now, my good sir!" Mame Giry replied.

"And, when the ghost speaks to you, what does he say?"

"Well, he tells me to bring him a footstool!"

This time, Richard burst out laughing, as did Moncharmin and Rémy, the secretary. Only the inspector, warned by experience, was careful not to laugh, while Mame Giry ventured to adopt an attitude that was positively threatening.

"Instead of laughing," she cried indignantly, "you'd do better to do as M. Poligny did, who found out for himself."

"Found out about what?" asked Moncharmin, who had never been so much amused in his life.

"About the ghost, of course! . . . Look here . . ."

She suddenly calmed herself, feeling that this was a solemn moment in her life:

"Look here," she repeated. "They were playing *La Juive.* M. Poligny thought he would watch the performance from the ghost's box. . . . Well, when Léopold cries, 'Let us fly!'—you know—and Eléazer stops them and says, 'Whither go ye?' . . well, M. Poligny—I was watching him from the back of the next box, which was empty—M. Poligny got up and walked out quite stiffly, like a statue, and before I had time to ask him, 'Whither go ye?' like Eléazer, he was down the staircase, but without breaking his leg. . . ."

"Still, that doesn't let us know how the Opera ghost came to ask you for a footstool," insisted M. Moncharmin.

"Well, from that evening, no one tried to take the ghost's private box from him. The manager gave orders that he was to have it at each performance. And, whenever he came, he asked me for a footstool."

"Tut, tut! A ghost asking for a footstool! Then this ghost of yours is a woman?"

"No, the ghost is a man."

"How do you know?"

"He has a man's voice, oh, such a lovely man's voice! This is what happens: When he comes to the opera, it's usually in the middle of the first act. He gives three little taps on the door of Box Five. The first time I heard those three taps, when I knew there was no one in the box, you can think how puzzled I was! I opened the door, listened, looked; nobody! And then I heard a voice say, 'Mame Jules'—my poor husband's name was Jules—'a footstool, please.' Saving your presence, gentlemen, it made me feel all-overish like. But the voice went on, 'Don't be frightened, Mame Jules, I'm the Opera ghost!' And the voice was so soft and kind that I hardly felt frightened. *The voice was sitting in the corner chair, on the right, in the front row.*"

"Was there any one in the box on the right of Box Five?" asked Moncharmin.

"No; Box Seven, and Box Three, the one on the left, were both empty. The curtain had only just gone up."

"And what did you do?"

"Well, I brought the footstool. Of course, it wasn't for himself he wanted it, but for his lady! But I never heard her nor saw her."

"Eh? What? So now the ghost is married!" The eyes of the two managers traveled from Mame Giry to the inspector, who, standing behind the box-keeper, was waving his arms to attract their attention. He tapped his forehead with a distressful forefinger, to convey his opinion that the widow Jules Giry was most certainly mad, a piece of pantomime which confirmed M. Richard in his determination to get rid of an inspector who kept a lunatic in his service. Meanwhile, the worthy lady went on about her ghost, now painting his generosity:

"At the end of the performance, he always gives me two francs, sometimes five, sometimes even ten, when he has been many days without coming. Only, since people have begun to annoy him again, he gives me nothing at all. . . ."

"Excuse me, my good woman," said Moncharmin, while Mame Giry tossed the feathers in her dingy hat at this persistent familiarity, "excuse me, how does the ghost manage to give you your two francs?"

"Why, he leaves them on the little shelf in the box, of course. I find them with the program, which I always give him. Some evenings, I find flowers in the box, a rose that must have dropped from his lady's bodice . . . for he brings a lady with him sometimes; one day, they left a fan behind them."

"Oh, the ghost left a fan, did he? And what did you do with it?"

"Well, I brought it back to the box next night."

Here the inspector's voice was raised.

"You've broken the rules; I shall have to fine you, Mame Giry."

"Hold your tongue, you fool!" muttered M. Firmin Richard.

"You brought back the fan. And then?"

"Well, then, they took it away with them, sir; it was not there at the end of the performance; and in its place they left me a box of English sweets, which I'm very fond of. That's one of the ghost's pretty thoughts."

"That will do, Mame Giry. You can go."

When Mame Giry had bowed herself out, with the dignity that never deserted her, the manager told the inspector that they had decided to dispense with that old madwoman's services; and, when he had gone in his turn, they instructed the acting-manager to make up the inspector's accounts. Left alone, the managers told each other of the idea which they both had in mind, which was that they should look into that little matter of Box Five themselves.

CHAPTER V

THE ENCHANTED VIOLIN

CHRISTINE DAAE, owing to intrigues to which I will return later, did not immediately continue her triumph at the Opera. After the famous gala night, she sang once at the Duchess de Zurich's; but this was the last occasion on which she was heard in private. She refused, without plausible excuse, to appear at a charity concert to which she had promised her assistance. She acted throughout as though she were no longer the mistress of her own destiny and as though she feared a fresh triumph.

She knew that the Comte de Chagny, to please his brother, had done his best on her behalf with M. Richard; and she wrote to thank him and also to ask him to cease speaking in her favor. Her reason for this curious attitude was never known. Some pretended that it was due to overweening pride; others spoke of her heavenly modesty. But people on the stage are not so modest as all that; and I think that I shall not be far from the truth if I ascribe her action simply to fear. Yes, I believe that Christine Daaé was frightened by what had happened to her. I have a letter of Christine's (it forms part of the Persian's collection), relating to this period, which suggests a feeling of absolute dismay:

"I don't know myself when I sing," writes the poor child.

She showed herself nowhere; and the Vicomte de Chagny tried in vain to meet her. He wrote to her, asking to call upon her, but despaired of receiving a reply when, one morning, she sent him the following note:

MONSIEUR:

I have not forgotten the little boy who went into the sea to rescue my scarf. I feel that I must write to you to-day, when I am going to Perros, in fulfilment of a sacred duty. To-morrow is the anniversary of the death of my poor father, whom you knew and who was very fond of you. He is buried there, with his violin, in the graveyard of the little church, at the bottom of the slope where we used to play as children, beside the road where, when we were a little bigger, we said good-by for the last time.

The Vicomte de Chagny hurriedly consulted a railway guide, dressed as quickly as he could, wrote a few lines for his valet to take to his brother and jumped into a cab which brought him to the Gare Montparnasse just in time to miss the morning train. He spent a dismal day in town and did not recover his spirits until the evening, when he was seated in his compartment in the Brittany express. He read Christine's note over and over again, smelling its perfume, recalling the sweet pictures of his childhood, and spent the rest of that tedious night journey in feverish dreams that began and ended with Christine Daaé. Day was breaking when he alighted at

Lannion. He hurried to the diligence for Perros-Guirec. He was the only passenger. He questioned the driver and learned that, on the evening of the previous day, a young lady who looked like a Parisian had gone to Perros and put up at the inn known as the Setting Sun.

The nearer he drew to her, the more fondly he remembered the story of the little Swedish singer. Most of the details are still unknown to the public.

There was once, in a little market-town not far from Upsala, a peasant who lived there with his family, digging the earth during the week and singing in the choir on Sundays. This peasant had a little daughter to whom he taught the musical alphabet before she knew how to read. Daaé's father was a great musician, perhaps without knowing it. Not a fiddler throughout the length and breadth of Scandinavia played as he did. His reputation was widespread and he was always invited to set the couples dancing at weddings and other festivals. His wife died when Christine was entering upon her sixth year. Then the father, who cared only for his daughter and his music, sold his patch of ground and went to Upsala in search of fame and fortune. He found nothing but poverty.

He returned to the country, wandering from fair to fair, strumming his Scandinavian melodies, while his child, who never left his side, listened to him in esctasy or sang to his playing. One day, at Ljimby Fair, Professor Valérius heard them and took them to Gothenburg. He maintained that the father was the first violinist in the world and that the daughter had the making of a great artist. Her education and instruction were provided for. She made rapid progress and charmed everybody with her prettiness, her grace of manner and her genuine eagerness to please.

When Valérius and his wife went to settle in France, they took Daaé and Christine with them. "Mamma" Valérius treated Christine as her daughter. As for Daaé, he began to pine away with homesickness. He never went out of doors in Paris, but lived in a sort of dream which he kept up with his violin. For hours at a time, he remained locked up in his bedroom with his daughter, fiddling and singing, very, very softly. Sometimes Mamma Valérius would come and listen behind the door, wipe away a tear and go down-stairs again on tiptoe, sighing for her Scandinavian skies.

Daaé seemed not to recover his strength until the summer, when the whole family went to stay at Perros-Guirec, in a far-away corner of Brittany, where the sea was of the same color as in his own country. Often he would play his saddest tunes on the beach and pretend that the sea stopped its roaring to listen to them. And then he induced Mamma Valérius to indulge a queer whim of his. At the time of the "pardons," or Breton pilgrimages, the village festival and dances, he went off with his fiddle, as in the old days, and was allowed to take his daughter with him for a week. They gave the smallest hamlets music to last them for a year and slept at night in a barn, refusing a bed at the inn, lying close together on the straw, as when they were so poor in Sweden. At the same time, they were very neatly dressed, made no collection, refused the halfpence offered them; and the people around could not understand the conduct of this rustic fiddler, who tramped the roads with that pretty child who sang like an angel from Heaven. They followed them from village to village.

One day, a little boy, who was out with his governess, made her take a longer walk than he intended, for he could not tear himself from the little girl whose pure, sweet voice seemed to bind him to her. They came to the shore of an inlet which is still called Trestraou, but which now, I believe, harbors a casino or something of the sort. At that time, there was nothing but sky and sea and a stretch of golden beach. Only, there was also a high wind, which blew Christine's scarf out to sea. Christine gave a cry and put out her arms, but the scarf was already far on the waves. Then she heard a voice say:

"It's all right, I'll go and fetch your scarf out of the sea."

And she saw a little boy running fast, in spite of the outcries and the indignant protests of a worthy lady in black. The little boy ran into the sea, dressed as he was, and brought her back her scarf. Boy and scarf were both soaked through. The lady in black made a great fuss, but Christine laughed merrily and kissed the little boy, who was none other than the Vicomte Raoul de Chagny, staying at Lannion with his aunt.

During the season, they saw each other and played together almost every day. At the aunt's request, seconded by Professor Valérius, Daaé consented to give the young viscount some violin lessons. In this way, Raoul learned to love the same airs that had charmed Christine's childhood. They also both had the same calm and dreamy little cast of mind. They delighted in stories, in old Breton legends; and their favorite sport was to go and ask for them at the cottage-doors, like beggars:

"Ma'am . . ." or, "Kind gentleman . . . have you a little story to tell us, please?"

And it seldom happened that they did not have one "given" them; for nearly every old Breton grandame has, at least once in her life, seen the "korrigans" dance by moonlight on the heather.

But their great treat was, in the twilight, in the great silence of the evening, after the sun had set in the sea, when Daaé came and sat down by them on the roadside and, in a low voice, as though fearing lest he should frighten the ghosts whom he evoked, told them the legends of the land of the North. And, the moment he stopped, the children would ask for more.

There was one story that began:

"A king sat in a little boat on one of those deep, still lakes that open like a bright eye in the midst of the Norwegian mountains . . ."

And another:

"Little Lotte thought of everything and nothing. Her hair was golden as the sun's rays and her soul as clear and blue as her eyes. She wheedled her mother, was kind to her doll, took great care of her frock and her little red shoes and her fiddle, but most of all loved, when she went to sleep, to hear the Angel of Music."

While the old man told this story, Raoul looked at Christine's blue eyes and golden hair; and Christine thought that Lotte was very lucky to hear the Angel of Music when she went to sleep. The Angel of Music played a part in all Daddy Daaé's tales; and he maintained that every great musician, every great artist received a visit from the Angel at least once in his life. Sometimes the Angel leans over their cradle, as happened to Lotte, and that is how there are little prodigies who play the fiddle at six better than men at fifty, which, you must admit, is very wonderful. Sometimes, the Angel comes much later, because the children are naughty and won't learn their lessons or practise their scales. And, sometimes, he does not come at all, because the children have a bad heart or a bad conscience.

No one ever sees the Angel; but he is heard by those who are meant to hear him. He often comes when they least expect him, when they are sad and disheartened. Then their ears suddenly perceive celestial harmonies, a divine voice, which they remember all their lives. Persons who are visited by the Angel quiver with a thrill unknown to the rest of mankind. And they can not touch an instrument, or open their mouths to sing, without producing sounds that put all other human sounds to shame. Then people who do not know that the Angel has visited those persons say that they have genius.

Little Christine asked her father if he had heard the Angel of Music. But Daddy Daaé shook his head sadly; and then his eyes lit up, as he said:

"You will hear him one day, my child! When I am in Heaven, I will send him to you!"

Daddy was beginning to cough at that time.

Three years later, Raoul and Christine met again at Perros. Professor Valérius was dead, but his widow remained in France with Daddy Daaé and his daughter, who continued to play the violin and sing, wrapping in their dream of harmony their kind patroness, who seemed henceforth to live on music alone. The young man, as he now was, had come to Perros on the chance of finding them and went straight to the house in which they used to stay. He first saw the old man; and then Christine entered, carrying the tea-tray. She flushed at the sight of Raoul, who went up to her and kissed her. She asked him a few questions, performed her duties as hostess prettily, took up the tray again and left the room. Then she ran into the garden and took refuge on a bench, a prey to feelings that stirred her young heart for the first time. Raoul followed her and they talked till the evening, very shyly. They were quite changed, cautious as two diplomatists, and told each other things that had nothing to do with their budding sentiments. When they took leave of each other by the roadside, Raoul, pressing a kiss on Christine's trembling hand, said:

"Mademoiselle, I shall never forget you!"

And he went away regretting his words, for he knew that Christine could not be the wife of the Vicomte de Chagny.

As for Christine, she tried not to think of him and devoted herself wholly to her art. She made wonderful progress and those who heard her prophesied that she would be the greatest singer in the world. Meanwhile, the father died; and, suddenly, she seemed to have lost, with him, her voice, her soul and her genius. She retained just, but only just, enough of this to enter the *conservatoire,* where she did not distinguish herself at all, attending the classes without enthusiasm and taking a prize only to please old Mamma Valérius, with whom she continued to live.

The first time that Raoul saw Christine at the Opera, he was charmed by the girl's beauty and by the sweet images of the past which it evoked, but was rather surprised at the negative side of her art. He returned to listen to her. He followed her in the wings. He waited for her behind a Jacob's ladder. He tried to attract her attention. More than once, he walked after her to the door of her box, but she did not see him. She seemed, for that matter, to see nobody. She was all indifference. Raoul suffered, for she was very beautiful and he was shy and dared not confess his love, even to himself. And then came the lightning-flash of the gala performance:

the heavens torn asunder and an angel's voice heard upon earth for the delight of mankind and the utter capture of his heart.

And then . . . and then there was that man's voice behind the door—"You must love me!"—and no one in the room. . . .

Why did she laugh when he reminded her of the incident of the scarf? Why did she not recognize him? And why had she written to him? . . .

Perros was reached at last. Raoul walked into the smoky sitting-room of the Setting Sun and at once saw Christine standing before him, smiling and showing no astonishment.

"So you have come," she said. "I felt that I should find you here, when I came back from mass. Some one told me so, at the church."

"Who?" asked Raoul, taking her little hand in his.

"Why, my poor father, who is dead."

There was a silence; and then Raoul asked:

"Did your father tell you that I love you, Christine, and that I can not live without you?"

Christine blushed to the eyes and turned away her head. In a trembling voice, she said:

"Me? You are dreaming, my friend!"

And she burst out laughing, to put herself in countenance.

"Don't laugh, Christine; I am quite serious," Raoul answered.

And she replied gravely: "I did not make you come to tell me such things as that."

"You 'made me come,' Christine; you knew that your letter would not leave me indignant and that I should hasten to Perros. How can you have thought that, if you did not think I loved you?"

"I thought you would remember our games here, as children, in which my father so often joined. I really don't know what I thought. . . . Perhaps I was wrong to write to you. . . . This anniversary and your sudden appearance in my room at the Opera, the other evening, reminded me of the time long past and made me write to you as the little girl that I then was. . . ."

There was something in Christine's attitude that seemed to Raoul not natural. He did not feel any hostility in her; far from it: the distressed affection shining in her eyes told him that. But why was this affection distressed? That was what he wished to know and what was irritating him.

"When you saw me in your dressing-room, was that the first time you noticed me, Christine?"

She was incapable of lying.

"No," she said, "I had seen you several times in your brother's box. And also on the stage."

"I thought so!" said Raoul, compressing his lips. "But then why, when you saw me in your room, at your feet, reminding you that I had rescued your scarf from the sea, why did you answer as though you did not know me and also why did you laugh?"

The tone of these questions was so rough that Christine stared at Raoul without replying. The young man himself was aghast at the sudden quarrel which he had dared to raise at the very moment when he had resolved to speak words of gentleness, love and submission to Christine. A husband, a lover with all rights, would talk no differently to a wife, a mistress who had offended him. But he had gone too far and saw no other way out of the ridiculous position than to behave odiously.

"You don't answer!" he said angrily and unhappily. "Well, I will answer for you. It was because there was some one in the room who was in your way, Christine, some one that you did not wish to know that you could be interested in any one else!"

"If any one was in my way, my friend," Christine broke in coldly, "if any one was in my way, that evening, it was yourself, since I told you to leave the room!"

"Yes, so that you might remain with the other!"

"What are you saying, monsieur?" asked the girl excitedly. "And to what other do you refer?"

"To the man to whom you said, 'I sing only for you! . . . to-night I gave you my soul and I am dead!' "

Christine seized Raoul's arm and clutched it with a strength which no one would have suspected in so frail a creature.

"Then you were listening behind the door?"

"Yes, because I love you . . . And I heard everything. . . ."

"You heard what?"

And the young girl, becoming strangely calm, released Raoul's arm.

"He said to you, 'Christine, you must love me!' "

At these words, a deathly pallor spread over Christine's face, dark rings formed round her eyes, she staggered and seemed on the point of swooning. Raoul darted forward, with arms outstretched, but Christine had overcome her passing faintness and said, in a low voice:

"Go on! Go on! Tell me all you heard!"

At an utter loss to understand, Raoul answered: "I heard him reply, when you said you had given him your soul, 'Your soul is a beautiful thing, child, and I thank you. No emperor ever received so fair a gift. The angels wept to-night.'"

Christine carried her hand to her heart, a prey to indescribable emotion. Her eyes stared before her like a madwoman's. Raoul was terror-stricken. But suddenly Christine's eyes moistened and two great tears trickled, like two pearls, down her ivory cheeks.

"Christine!"

"Raoul!"

The young man tried to take her in his arms, but she escaped and fled in great disorder.

While Christine remained locked in her room, Raoul was at his wit's end what to do. He refused to breakfast. He was terribly concerned and bitterly grieved to see the hours, which he had hoped to find so sweet, slip past without the presence of the young Swedish girl. Why did she not come to roam with him through the country where they had so many memories in common? He heard that she had had a mass said, that morning, for the repose of her father's soul and spent a long time praying in the little church and on the fiddler's tomb. Then, as she seemed to have nothing more to do at Perros and, in fact, was doing nothing there, why did she not go back to Paris at once?

Raoul walked away, dejectedly, to the graveyard in which the church stood and was indeed alone among the tombs, reading the inscriptions; but, when he turned behind the apse, he was suddenly struck by the dazzling note of the flowers that straggled over the white ground. They were marvelous red roses that had blossomed in the morning, in the snow, giving a glimpse of life among the dead, for death was all around him. It also, like the flowers, issued from the ground, which had flung back a number of its corpses. Skeletons and skulls by the hundred were heaped against the wall of the church, held in position by a wire that left the whole gruesome stack visible. Dead men's bones, arranged in rows, like bricks, to form the first course upon which the walls of the sacristy had been built. The door of the sacristy opened in the middle of that bony structure, as is often seen in old Breton churches.

Raoul said a prayer for Daaé and then, painfully impressed by all those eternal smiles on the mouths of skulls, he climbed the slope and sat down on the edge of the heath overlooking the sea. The wind fell with the evening. Raoul was surrounded by icy darkness, but he did not feel the cold. It was here, he remembered, that he used to come with little Christine to see the Korrigans dance at the rising of the moon. He had never seen any, though his eyes were good, whereas Christine, who was a little short-sighted, pretended that she had seen many. He smiled at the thought and then suddenly gave a start. A voice behind him said:

"Do you think the Korrigans will come this evening?"

It was Christine. He tried to speak. She put her gloved hand on his mouth.

"Listen, Raoul. I have decided to tell you something serious, very serious. . . . Do you remember the legend of the Angel of Music?"

"I do indeed," he said. "I believe it was here that your father first told it to us."

"And it was here that he said, 'When I am in Heaven, my child, I will send him to you.' Well, Raoul, my father is in Heaven, and I have been visited by the Angel of Music."

"I have no doubt of it," replied the young man gravely, for it seemed to him that his friend, in obedience to a pious thought, was connecting the memory of her father with the brilliancy of her last triumph.

Christine appeared astonished at the Vicomte de Chagny's coolness:

"How do you understand it?" she asked, bringing her pale face so close to his that he might have thought that Christine was going to give him a kiss; but she only wanted to read his eyes in spite of the dark.

"I understand," he said, "that no human being can sing as you sang the other evening without the intervention of some miracle. No professor on earth can teach you such accents as those. You have heard the Angel of Music, Christine."

"Yes," she said solemnly, *"in my dressing-room.* That is where he comes to give me my lessons daily."

"In your dressing-room?" he echoed stupidly.

"Yes, that is where I have heard him; and I have not been the only one to hear him."

"Who else heard him, Christine?"

"You, my friend."

"I? I heard the Angel of Music?"

"Yes, the other evening, it was he who was talking when you were listening behind the door. It was he who said, 'You must love me.' But I then thought that I was the only one to hear his voice. Imagine my astonishment when you told me, this morning, that you could hear him too."

Raoul burst out laughing. The first rays of the moon came and shrouded the two young people in their light. Christine turned on Raoul with a hostile air. Her eyes, usually so gentle, flashed fire.

"What are you laughing at? *You* think you heard a man's voice, I suppose?"

"Well! . . ." replied the young man, whose ideas began to grow confused in the face of Christine's determined attitude.

"It's you, Raoul, who say that? You, an old playfellow of my own! A friend of my father's! But you have changed since those days. What are you thinking of? I am an honest girl, M. le Vicomte de Chagny, and I don't lock myself up in my dressing-room with men's voices. If you had opened the door, you would have seen that there was nobody in the room!"

"That's true! I did open the door, when you were gone, and I found no one in the room."

"So you see! . . . Well?"

The viscount summoned up all his courage.

"Well, Christine, I think that somebody is making game of you."

She gave a cry and ran away. He ran after her, but, in a tone of fierce anger, she called out: "Leave me! Leave me!" And she disappeared.

Raoul returned to the inn feeling very weary, very low-spirited and very sad. He was told that Christine had gone to her bedroom saying that she would not be down to dinner. Raoul dined alone, in a very gloomy mood. Then he went to his room and tried to read, went to bed and tried to sleep. There was no sound in the next room.

The hours passed slowly. It was about half-past eleven when he distinctly heard some one moving, with a light, stealthy step, in the room next to his. Then Christine had not gone to bed! Without troubling for a reason, Raoul dressed, taking care not to make a sound, and waited. Waited for what? How could he tell? But his heart thumped in his chest when he heard Christine's door turn slowly on its hinges. Where could she be going, at this hour, when every one was fast asleep at Perros? Softly opening the door, he saw Christine's white form, in the moonlight, slipping along the passage. She went down the stairs and he leaned over the baluster above her.

Suddenly he heard two voices in rapid conversation. He caught one sentence: "Don't lose the key."

It was the landlady's voice. The door facing the sea was opened and locked again. Then all was still.

Raoul ran back to his room and threw back the window. Christine's white form stood on the deserted quay.

The first floor of the Setting Sun was at no great height and a tree growing against the wall held out its branches to Raoul's impatient arms and enabled him to climb down unknown to the landlady. Her amazement, therefore, was all the greater when, the next morning, the young man was brought back to her half frozen, more dead than alive, and when she learned that he had been found stretched at full length on the steps of the high altar of the little church. She ran at once to tell Christine, who hurried down and, with the help of the landlady, did her best to revive him. He soon opened his eyes and was not long in recovering when he saw his friend's charming face leaning over him.

A few weeks later, when the tragedy at the Opera compelled the intervention of the public prosecutor, M. Mifroid, the commissary of police, examined the Vicomte de Chagny touching the events of the night at Perros. I quote the questions and answers as given in the official report pp. 150 *et seq.:*

Q. "Did Mlle. Daaé not see you come down from your room by the curious road which you selected?"

R. "No, monsieur, no, although, when walking behind her, I took no pains to deaden the sound of my footsteps. In fact, I was anxious that she should turn round and see me. I realized that I had no excuse for following her and that this way of spying on her was unworthy of me. But she seemed not to hear me and acted exactly as though I were not there. She quietly left the quay and then suddenly walked quickly up the road. The church-clock had struck a quarter to twelve and I thought that this must have made her hurry, for she began almost to run and continued hastening until she came to the church."

Q. "Was the gate open?"

R. "Yes, monsieur, and this surprised me, but did not seem to surprise Mlle. Daaé."

Q. "Was there no one in the churchyard?"

R. "I did not see any one; and, if there had been, I must have seen him. The moon was shining on the snow and made the night quite light."

Q. "Was it possible for any one to hide behind the tombstones?"

R. "No, monsieur. They were quite small, poor tombstones, partly hidden under the snow, with their crosses just above the level of the ground. The only shadows were those of the crosses and ourselves. The church stood out quite brightly. I never saw so clear a night. It was very fine and very cold and one could see everything."

Q. "Are you at all superstitious?"

R. "No, monsieur, I am a practising Catholic."

Q. "In what condition of mind were you?"

R. "Very healthy and peaceful, I assure you. Mlle. Daaé's curious action in going out at that hour had worried me at first; but, as soon as I saw her go to the churchyard, I thought that she meant to fulfil some pious duty on her father's grave and I considered this so natural that I recovered all my calmness. I was only surprised that she had not heard me walking behind her, for my footsteps were quite audible on the hard snow. But she must have been taken up with her intentions and I resolved not to disturb her. Shc knelt down by her father's grave, made the sign of the cross and began to pray. At that moment, it struck midnight. At the last stroke, I saw Mlle. Daaé life her eyes to the sky and stretch out her arms as though in ecstasy. I was wondering what the reason could be, when I myself raised my head and everything within me seemed drawn toward the invisible, *which was playing the most perfect music!* Christine and I knew that music; we had heard it as children. But it had never been executed with such divine art, even by M. Daaé. I remembered all that Christine had told me of the Angel of Music. The air was *The Resurrection of Lazarus,* which old M. Daaé used to play to us in his hours of melancholy and of faith. If Christine's Angel had existed, he could not have played better, that night, on the late musician's violin. When the music stopped, I seemed to hear a noise from the skulls in the heap of bones; it was as though they were chuckling and I could not help shuddering."

Q. "Did it not occur to you that the musician might be hiding behind that very heap of bones?"

R. "It was the one thought that did occur to me, monsieur, so much so that I omitted to follow Mlle. Daaé, when she stood up and walked slowly to the gate. She was so much absorbed just then that I am not surprised that she did not see me."

Q. "Then what happened that you were found in the morning lying half-dead on the steps of the high altar?"

R. "First a skull rolled to my feet . . . then another . . . then another . . . It was as if I were the mark of that ghastly game of bowls. And I had an idea that false step must have destroyed the balance of the structure behind which our musician was concealed. This surmise seemed to be confirmed when I saw a shadow suddenly glide along the sacristy wall. I ran up. The shadow had already pushed open the door and entered the church. But I was quicker than the shadow and caught hold of a corner of its cloak. At that moment, we were just in front of the high altar; and the moonbeams fell straight upon us through the stained-glass windows of the apse. As I did not let go of the cloak, the shadow turned round; and I saw a terrible death's head, which darted a look at me from a pair of scorching eyes. I felt as if I were face to face with Satan; and, in the presence of this unearthly apparition, my heart gave way, my courage failed me . . . and I remember nothing more until I recovered consciousness at the Setting Sun."

CHAPTER VI

A VISIT TO BOX FIVE

WE left M. Firmin Richard and M. Armand Moncharmin at the moment when they were deciding "to look into that little matter of Box Five."

Leaving behind them the broad staircase which leads from the lobby outside the managers' offices to the stage and its dependencies, they crossed the stage, went out by the subscribers' door and entered the house through the first little passage on the left. Then they made their way through the front rows of stalls and looked at Box Five on the grand tier. They could not see it well, because it was half in darkness and because great covers were flung over the red velvet of the ledges of all the boxes.

They were almost alone in the huge, gloomy house; and a great silence surrounded them. It was the time when most of the stage-hands go out for a drink. The staff had left the boards for the moment, leaving a scene half set. A few rays of light, a wan, sinister light, that seemed to have been stolen from an expiring luminary, fell through some opening or other upon an old tower that raised its pasteboard battlements on the stage; everything, in this deceptive light, adopted a fantastic shape. In the orchestra stalls, the drugget covering them looked like an angry sea, whose glaucous waves had been suddenly rendered stationary by a secret order from the storm phantom, who, as everybody knows, is called Adamastor. MM. Moncharmin and Richard were the shipwrecked mariners amid this motionless turmoil of a calico sea. They made for the left boxes, plowing their way like sailors who leave their ship and try to struggle to the shore. The eight great polished columns stood up in the dusk like so many huge piles supporting the threatening, crumbling, big-bellied cliffs whose layers were represented by the circular, parallel, waving lines of the balconies of the grand, first and second tiers of boxes. At the top, right on top of the cliff, lost in M. Lenepveu's copper ceiling, figures grinned and grimaced, laughed and jeered at MM. Richard and Moncharmin's distress. And yet these figures were usually very serious. Their names were Isis, Amphitrite, Hebe, Pandora, Psyche, Thetis, Pomona, Daphne, Clytie, Galatea and Arethusa. Yes, Arethusa herself and Pandora, whom we all know by her box, looked down upon the two new managers of the Opera, who ended by clutching at some piece of wreckage and from there stared silently at Box Five on the grand tier.

I have said that they were distressed. At least, I presume so. M. Moncharmin, in any case, admits that he was impressed. To quote his own words, in his *Memoirs:*

"This moonshine about the Opera ghost in which, since we first took over the duties of MM. Poligny and Debienne, we had been so nicely steeped"—Moncharmin's style is not always irreproachable—

"had no doubt ended by blinding my imaginative and also my visual faculties. It may be that the exceptional surroundings in which we found ourselves, in the midst of an incredible silence, impressed us to an unusual extent. It may be that we were the sport of a kind of hallucination brought about by the semi-darkness of the theater and the partial gloom that filled Box Five. At any rate, I saw and Richard also saw a shape in the box. Richard said nothing, nor I either. But we spontaneously seized each other's hand. We stood like that for some minutes, without moving, with our eyes fixed on the same point; but the figure had disappeared. Then we went out and, in the lobby, communicated our impressions to each other and talked about 'the shape.' The misfortune was that my shape was not in the least like Richard's. I had seen a thing like a death's head resting on the ledge of the box, whereas Richard saw the shape of an old woman who looked like Mame Giry. We soon discovered that we had really been the victims of an illusion, whereupon, without further delay and laughing like madmen, we ran to Box Five on the grand tier, went inside and found no shape of any kind."

Box Five is just like all the other grand tier boxes. There is nothing to distinguish it from any of the others. M. Moncharmin and M. Richard, ostensibly highly amused and laughing at each other, moved the furniture of the box, lifted the cloths and the chairs and particularly examined the arm-chair in which "the man's voice" used to sit. But they saw that it was a respectable arm-chair, with no magic about it. Altogether, the box was the most ordinary box in the world, with its red hangings, its chairs, its carpet and its ledge covered in red velvet. After feeling the carpet in the most serious manner possible, and discovering nothing more here or anywhere else, they went down to the corresponding box on the pit tier below. In Box Five on the pit tier, which is just inside the first exit from the stalls on the left, they found nothing worth mentioning either.

"Those people are all making fools of us!" Firmin Richard ended by exclaiming. "It will be *Faust* on Saturday: let us both see the performance from Box Five on the grand tier!"

CHAPTER VII

FAUST AND WHAT FOLLOWED

ON the Saturday morning, on reaching their office, the joint managers found a letter from O. G. worded in these terms:

MY DEAR MANAGERS:

So it is to be war between us?

If you still care for peace, here is my ultimatum. It consists of the four following conditions:

1. You must give me back my private box; and I wish it to be at my free disposal from henceforward.
2. The part of Margarita shall be sung this evening by Christine Daaé. Never mind about Carlotta; she will be ill.
3. I absolutely insist upon the good and loyal services of Mme. Giry, my box-keeper, whom you will reinstate in her functions forthwith.
4. Let me know by a letter handed to Mme. Giry, who will see that it reaches me, that you accept, as your predecessors did, the conditions in my memorandum-book relating to my monthly allowance. I will inform you later how you are to pay it to me.

If you refuse, you will give *Faust* to-night in a house with a curse upon it.

Take my advice and be warned in time.

O. G.

"Look here, I'm getting sick of him, sick of him!" shouted Richard, bringing his fists down on his office-table.

Just then, Mercier, the acting-manager, entered.

"Lachenel would like to see one of you gentlemen," he said. "He says that his business is urgent and he seems quite upset."

"Who's Lachenel?" asked Richard.

"He's your stud-groom."

"What do you mean? My stud-groom?"

"Yes, sir," explained Mercier, "there are several grooms at the Opera and M. Lachenel is at the head of them."

"And what does this groom do?"

"He has the chief management of the stable."

"What stable?"

"Why, yours, sir, the stable of the Opera."

"Is there a stable at the Opera? Upon my word, I didn't know. Where is it?"

"In the cellars, on the Rotunda side. It's a very important department; we have twelve horses."

"Twelve horses! And what for, in Heaven's name?"

"Why, we want trained horses for the processions in the *Juive,* the *Profeta* and so on; horses 'used to the boards.' It is the grooms' business to teach them. M. Lachenel is very clever at it. He used to manage Franconi's stables."

"Very well . . . . but what does he want?"

"I don't know; I never saw him in such a state."

"He can come in."

M. Lachenel came in, carrying a riding-whip, with which he struck his right boot in an irritable manner.

"Good morning, M. Lachenel," said Richard, somewhat impressed. "To what do we owe the honor of your visit?"

"Mr. Manager, I have come to ask you to get rid of the whole stable."

"What, you want to get rid of our horses?"

"I'm not talking of the horses, but of the stablemen."

"How many stablemen have you, M. Lachenel?"

"Six."

"Six stablemen! That's at least two too many."

"These are 'places,' " Mercier interposed, "created and forced upon us by the under-secretary for fine arts. They are filled by protégées of the government and, if I may venture to . . ."

"I don't care a hang for the government!" roared Richard. "We don't need more than four stablemen for twelve horses."

"Eleven," said the head riding-master, correcting him.

"Twelve," repeated Richard.

"Eleven," repeated Lachenel.

"Oh, the acting-manager told me that you had twelve horses!"

"I did have twelve, but I have only eleven since César was stolen."

And M. Lachenel gave himself a great smack on the boot with his whip.

"Has César been stolen?" cried the acting-manager. "César, the white horse in the *Profeta?*"

"There are not two Césars," said the stud-groom dryly. "I was ten years at Franconi's and I have seen plenty of horses in my time. Well, there are not two Césars. And he's been stolen."

"How?"

"I don't know. Nobody knows. That's why I have come to ask you to sack the whole stable."

"What do your stablemen say?"

"All sorts of nonsense. Some of them accuse the supers. Others pretend that it's the acting-manager's doorkeeper . . . . . ."

"My doorkeeper? I'll answer for him as I would for myself!" protested Mercier.

"But, after all, M. Lachenel," cried Richard, "you must have some idea."

"Yes, I have," M. Lachenel declared. "I have an idea and I'll tell you what it is. There's no doubt about it in my mind." He walked up to the two managers and whispered. "It's the ghost who did the trick!"

Richard gave a jump.

"What, you too! You too!"

"How do you mean, I too? Isn't it natural, after what I saw?"

"What did you see?"

"I saw, as clearly as I now see you, a black shadow riding a white horse that was as like César as two peas!"

"And did you run after them?"

"I did and I shouted, but they were too fast for me and disappeared in the darkness of the underground gallery."

M. Richard rose. "That will do, M. Lachenel.

You can go. . . .. We will lodge a complaint against *the ghost.*"

"And sack my stable?"

"Oh, of course! Good morning."

M. Lachenel bowed and withdrew. Richard foamed at the mouth.

"Settle that idiot's account at once, please."

"He is a friend of the government representative's!" Mercier ventured to say.

"And he takes his vermouth at Tortoni's with Lagréné, Scholl and Pertuiset, the lion-hunter," added Moncharmin. "We shall have the whole press against us! He'll tell the story of the ghost; and everybody will be laughing at our expense! We may as well be dead as ridiculous!"

"All right, say no more about it."

At that moment the door opened. It must have been deserted by its usual Cerberus, for Mame Giry entered without ceremony, holding a letter in her hand, and said hurriedly:

"I beg your pardon, excuse me, gentlemen, but I had a letter this morning from the Opera ghost. He told me to come to you, that you had something to . . ."

She did not complete the sentence. She saw Firmin Richard's face; and it was a terrible sight. He seemed ready to burst. He said nothing, he could not speak. But suddenly he acted. First, his left arm seized upon the quaint person of Mame Giry and made her describe so unexpected a semicircle that she uttered a despairing cry. Next, his right foot imprinted its sole on the black taffeta of a skirt which certainly had never before undergone a similar outrage in a similar place. The thing happened so quickly that Mame Giry, when in the passage, was still quite bewildered and seemed not to understand. But, suddenly, she understood; and the Opera rang with her indignant yells, her violent protests and threats.

About the same time, Carlotta, who had a small house of her own in the Rue du Faubourg St.-Honoré, rang for her maid, who brought her letters to her bed. Among them was an anonymous missive, written in red ink, in a hesitating, clumsy hand, which ran:

> If you appear to-night, you must be prepared for a great misfortune at the moment when you open your mouth to sing . . . a misfortune worse than death.

The letter took away Carlotta's appetite for breakfast. She pushed back her chocolate, sat up in bed and thought hard. It was not the first letter of the kind which she had received, but she never had one couched in such threatening terms.

She thought herself, at that time, the victim of a thousand jealous attempts and went about saying that she had a secret enemy who had sworn to ruin her. She pretended that a wicked plot was being hatched against her, a cabal which would come to a head one of those days; but she added that she was not the woman to be intimidated.

The truth is that, if there was a cabal, it was led by Carlotta herself against poor Christine, who had no suspicion of it. Carlotta had never forgiven Christine for the triumph which she had achieved when taking her place at a moment's notice. When Carlotta heard of the astounding reception bestowed upon her understudy, she was at once cured of an incipient attack of bronchitis and a bad fit of sulking against the management and lost the slightest inclination to shirk her duties. From that time, she worked with all her might to "smother" her rival, enlisting the services of influential friends to persuade the managers not to give Christine an opportunity for a fresh triumph. Certain newspapers which had begun to extol the talent of Christine now interested themselves only in the fame of Carlotta. Lastly, in the theater itself, the celebrated, but heartless and soulless diva made the most scandalous remarks about Christine and tried to cause her endless minor unpleasantnesses.

When Carlotta had finished thinking over the threat contained in the strange letter, she got up.

"We shall see," she said, adding a few oaths in her native Spanish with a very determined air.

The first thing she saw, when looking out of her window, was a hearse. She was very superstitious; and the hearse and the letter convinced her that she was running the most serious dangers that evening. She collected all her supporters, told them that she was threatened at that evening's performance with a plot organized by Christine Daaé and declared that they must play a trick upon that chit by filling the house with her, Carlotta's, admirers. She had no lack of them, had she? She relied upon them to hold themselves prepared for any eventuality and to silence the adversaries, if, as she feared, they created a disturbance.

M. Richard's private secretary called to ask after the diva's health and returned with the assurance that she was perfectly well and that, "were she dying," she would sing the part of Margarita that evening. The secretary urged her, in his chief's name, to commit no imprudence, to stay at home all day and to be careful of drafts; and Carlotta could not help, after he had gone, comparing this unusual and unexpected advice with the threats contained in the letter.

It was five o'clock when the post brought a second anonymous letter in the same hand as the first. It was short and said simply:

> You have a bad cold. If you are wise, you will see that it is madness to try to sing to-night.

Carlotta sneered, shrugged her handsome shoulders and sang two or three notes to reassure herself.

Her friends were faithful to their promise. They were all at the Opera that night, but looked round in vain for the fierce conspirators whom they were instructed to suppress. The only unusual thing was the presence of M. Richard and M. Moncharmin in Box Five. Carlotta's friends thought that, perhaps, the managers had wind, on their side, of the proposed disturbance and that they had determined to be in the house, so as to stop it then and there; but this was unjustifiable supposition, as the reader knows. M. Richard and M. Moncharmin were thinking of nothing but their ghost.

"Vain! In vain do I call, through my vigil weary,
On creation and its Lord!
Never reply will break the silence dreary!
No sign! No single word!"

The famous baritone, Carolus Fonta, had hardly finished Doctor Faust's first appeal to the powers of darkness, when M. Firmin Richard, who was sitting in the ghost's own chair, the front chair on the right, leaned over to his partner and asked him chaffingly:

"Well, has the ghost whispered a word in your ear yet?"

"Wait, don't be in such a hurry," replied M. Armand Moncharmin, in the same gay tone. "The performance has only begun and you know that the ghost does not usually come until the middle of the first act."

The first act passed without incident, which did not surprise Carlotta's friends, because Margarita does not sing in this act. As for the managers, they looked at each other, when the curtain fell.

"That's one!" said Moncharmin.

"Yes, the ghost is late," said Firmin Richard.

"It's not a bad house," said Moncharmin, "for 'a house with a curse on it.'"

M. Richard smiled and pointed to a fat, rather vulgar woman, dressed in black, sitting in a stall in the middle of the auditorium with a man in a broadcloth frock-coat on either side of her.

"Who on earth are 'those?' " asked Moncharmin.

" 'Those,' my dear fellow, are my concierge, her husband and her brother."

"Did you give them their tickets?"

"I did. . . . My concierge had never been to the Opera—this is the first time—and, as she is now going to come every night, I wanted her to have a good seat, before spending her time showing other people to theirs."

Moncharmin asked what he meant and Richard answered that he had persuaded his concierge, in whom he had the greatest confidence, to come and take Mame Giry's place. Yes, he would like to see if, with that woman instead of the old lunatic, Box Five would continue to astonish the natives?

"By the way," said Moncharmin, "you know that Mother Giry is going to lodge a complaint against you."

"With whom? The ghost?"

The ghost! Moncharmin had almost forgotten him. However, that mysterious person did nothing to bring himself to the memory of the managers; and they were just saying so to each other for the second time, when the door of the box suddenly opened to admit the startled stage-manager.

"What's the matter?" they both asked, amazed at seeing him there at such a time.

"It seems there's a plot got up by Christine Daaé's friends against Carlotta. Carlotta's furious."

"What on earth . . .?" said Richard, knitting his brows.

But the curtain rose on the kermess scene and Richard made a sign to the stage-manager to go away. When the two were alone again, Moncharmin leaned over to Richard:

"Then Daaé has friends?" he asked.

"Yes, she has."

"Whom?"

Richard glanced across at a box on the grand tier containing no one but two men.

"The Comte de Chagny?"

"Yes, he spoke to me in her favor with such warmth that, if I had not known him to be Sorelli's friend . . ."

"Really? Really?" said Moncharmin. "And who is that pale young man beside him?"

"That's his brother, the viscount."

"He ought to be in his bed. He looks ill."

The stage rang with gay song:

"Red or white liquor,
Coarse or fine!
What can it matter,
So we have wine?"

Students, citizens, soldiers, girls and matrons whirled light-heartedly before the inn with the figure of Bacchus for a sign. Siebel made her entrance. Christine Daaé looked charming in her boy's clothes; and Carlotta's partisans expected to hear her greeted with an ovation which would have enlightened them as to the intentions of her friends. But nothing happened.

On the other hand, when Margarita crossed the stage and sang the only two lines allotted her in this second act:

"No, my lord, not a lady am I, nor yet a beauty,
And do not need an arm to help me on my way,"

Carlotta was received with enthusiastic applause. It was so unexpected and so uncalled for that those who knew nothing about the rumors looked at one another and asked what was happening. And this act also was finished without incident.

Then everybody said: "Of course, it will be during the next act."

Some, who seemed to be better informed than the rest, declared that the "row" would begin with the ballad of the *King of Thule* and rushed to the subscribers' entrance to warn Carlotta. The managers left the box during the entr'acte to find out more about the cabal of which the stage-manager had spoken; but they soon returned to their seats, shrugging their shoulders and treating the whole affair as silly.

The first thing they saw, on entering the box, was a box of English sweets on the little shelf of the ledge. Who had put it there? They asked the box-keepers, but none of them knew. Then they went back to the shelf and, next to the box of sweets, found an opera glass. They looked at each other. They had no inclination to laugh. All that Mme. Giry had told them returned to their memory . . . and then . . . and then . . . they seemed to feel a curious sort of draft around them. . . . They sat down in silence.

The scene represented Margarita's garden:

"Gentle flow'rs in the dew,
Be message from me . . ."

As she sang these first two lines, with her bunch of roses and lilacs in her hand, Christine, raising her head, saw the Vicomte de Chagny in his box; and, from that moment, her voice seemed less sure, less crystal-clear than usual. Something seemed to deaden and dull her singing. . . .

"What a queer girl she is!" said one of Carlotta's friends in the stalls, almost aloud. "The other day she was divine; and to-night she's simply bleating. She has no experience, no training."

"Gentle flow'rs, lie ye there
And tell her from me . . ."

The viscount put his head under his hands and wept. The count, behind him, viciously gnawed his mustache, shrugged his shoulders and frowned. For him, usually so cold and correct, to betray his inner feelings like that, by outward signs, the count must be very angry. He was. He had seen his brother return from a rapid and mysterious journey in an alarming state of health. The explanation that followed was unsatisfactory and the count asked Christine Daaé for an appointment. She had the audacity to reply that she could not see either him or his brother. . . .

"Would she but deign to hear me
And with one smile to cheer me . . ."

"The little baggage!" growled the count.

And he wondered what she wanted. What she was hoping for. . . . She was a virtuous girl, she was said to have no friend, no protector of any sort. . . . That angel from the North must be very artful!

Raoul, behind the curtain of his hands that veiled his boyish tears, thought only of the letter which he received on his return to Paris, where Christine, fleeing from Perros like a thief in the night, had arrived before him:

MY DEAR LITTLE PLAYFELLOW:

You must have the courage not to see me again, not to speak of me again. If you love me just a little, do this for me, for me who will never forget you, my dear Raoul. My life depends upon it. Your life depends upon it.

YOUR LITTLE CHRISTINE.

Thunders of applause. Carlotta made her entrance.

"I wish I could but know who was he
That addressed me,
If he was noble, or, at least, what his name
is . . . . "

When Margarita had finished singing the ballad of the *King of Thule,* she was loudly cheered and again when she came to the end of the jewel song:

"Ah, the joy of past compare
These jewels bright to wear! . . . ."

Thenceforth, certain of herself, certain of her friends in the house, certain of her voice and her success, fearing nothing, Carlotta flung herself into her part without restraint of modesty. . . . She was no longer Margarita, she was Carmen. She was applauded all the more; and her début with Faust seemed about to bring her a new success, when suddenly . . . a terrible thing happened.

Faust had knelt on one knee:

"Let me gaze on the form below me,
While from yonder ether blue
Look how the star of eve, bright and tender, lingers o'er me,
To love thy beauty too!"

And Margarita replied:

"Oh, how strange!
Like a spell does the evening bind me!
And a deep languid charm
I feel without alarm
With its melody enwind me
And all my heart subdue."

At that moment, at that identical moment, the terrible thing happened. . . . Carlotta croaked like a toad:

"Co-ack!"

There was consternation on Carlotta's face and consternation on the faces of all the audience. The two managers in their box could not suppress an exclamation of horror. Every one felt that the thing was not natural, that there was witchcraft behind it. That toad smelt of brimstone. Poor, wretched, despairing, crushed Carlotta!

The uproar in the house was indescribable. If the thing had happened to any one but Carlotta, she would have been hooted. But everybody knew how perfect an instrument her voice was; and there was no display of anger, but only of horror and dismay, the sort of dismay which men would have felt if they had witnessed the catastrophe that broke the arms of the Venus de Milo. . . . And even then they would have seen . . . and understood . . .

But here that toad was incomprehensible! So much so that, after some seconds spent in asking herself if she had really heard that note, that sound, that infernal noise issue from her throat, she tried to persuade herself that it was not so, that she was the victim of an illusion, an illusion of the ear, and not of an act of treachery on the part of her voice. . . .

Meanwhile, in Box Five, Moncharmin and Richard had turned very pale. This extraordinary and inexplicable incident filled them with a dread which was the more mysterious inasmuch as for some little while, they had fallen within the direct influence of the ghost.

They had felt his breath. Moncharmin's hair stood on end. Richard wiped the perspiration from his forehead. Yes, the ghost was there, around them, behind them, beside them; they felt his presence without seeing him, they heard his breath, close, close, close to them! . . . They were sure that there were three people in the box. . . . They trembled. . . . They thought of running away. . . . They dared not. . . . They dared not make a movement or exchange a word that would have told the ghost that they knew that he was there! . . . What was going to happen?

This happened.

"Co-ack!"

Their joint exclamation of horror was heard all over the house. *They felt that they were smarting under the ghost's attacks.* Leaning over the ledge of their box, they stared at Carlotta as though they did not recognize her. That infernal girl must have given the signal for some catastrophe. Ah, they were waiting for the catastrophe! The ghost had told them it would come! The house had a curse upon it! The two managers gasped and panted under the weight of the catastrophe. Richard's stifled voice was heard calling to Carlotta:

"Well, go on!"

No, Carlotta did not go on. . . . Bravely, heroically, she started afresh on the fatal line at the end of which the toad had appeared.

An awful silence succeeded the uproar. Carlotta's voice alone once more filled the resounding house:

"I feel without alarm . . . ."

The audience also felt, but not without alarm. . .

"I feel without alarm . . .
I feel without alarm—co-ack!
With its melody enwind me—co-ack!
And all my heart sub—co-ack!"

The toad also had started afresh!

The house broke into a wild tumult. The two managers collapsed in their chairs and dared not even turn round; they had not the strength; the ghost was chuckling behind their backs! And, at last, they distinctly heard his voice in their right ears, the impossible voice, the mouthless voice, saying:

"*She is singing to-night to bring the chandelier down!*"

With one accord, they raised their eyes to the ceiling and uttered a terrible cry. The chandelier, the immense mass of the chandelier was slipping down, coming toward them, at the call of that fiendish voice. Released from its hook, it plunged from the ceiling and came smashing into the middle of the stalls, amid a thousand shouts of terror. A wild rush for the doors followed.

The papers of the day state that there were numbers wounded and one killed. The chandelier had crashed down upon the head of the wretched woman who had come to the Opera for the first time in her life, the one whom M. Richard had appointed to succeed Mame Giry, the ghost's box-keeper, in her functions! She died on the spot and, the next morning, a newspaper appeared with this heading:

TWO HUNDRED KILOS ON THE HEAD OF A CONCIERGE

That was her sole epitaph!

CHAPTER VIII

THE MYSTERIOUS BROUGHAM

THAT tragic evening was bad for everybody. Carlotta fell ill. As for Christine Daaé, she disappeared after the performance. A fortnight elapsed during which she was seen neither at the Opera nor outside.

Raoul, of course, was the first to be astonished at the prima donna's absence. He wrote to her at Mme. Valérius' flat and received no reply. His grief increased and he ended by being seriously alarmed at never seeing her name on the program. *Faust* was played without her.

One afternoon he went to the managers' office to ask the reason of Christine's disappearance. He found them both looking extremely worried. Their own friends did not recognize them: they had lost all their gaiety and spirits. They were seen crossing the stage with hanging heads, care-worn brows, pale cheeks, as though pursued by some abominable thought or a prey to some persistent sport of fate.

The fall of the chandelier had involved them in no little responsibility; but it was difficult to make them speak about it. The inquest had ended in a verdict of accidental death, caused by the wear and tear of the chains by which the chandelier was hung from the ceiling; but it was the duty of both the old and the new managers to have discovered this wear and tear and to have remedied it in time. And I feel bound to say that MM. Richard and Moncharmin at this time appeared so changed, so absent-minded, so mysterious, so incomprehensible that many of the subscribers thought that some event even more horrible than the fall of the chandelier must have affected their state of mind.

In their daily intercourse, they showed themselves very impatient, except with Mme. Giry, who had been reinstated in her functions. And their reception of the Vicomte de Chagny, when he came to ask about Christine, was anything but cordial. They merely told him that she was taking a holiday. He asked how long the holiday was for, and they replied curtly that it was for an unlimited period, as Mlle. Daaé had requested leave of absence for reasons of health.

"Then she is ill!" he cried. "What is the matter with her?"

"We don't know."

"Didn't you send the doctor of the Opera to see her?"

"No, she did not ask for him; and, as we trust her, we took her word."

Raoul left the building a prey to the gloomiest thoughts. He resolved, come what might, to go and inquire of Mamma Valérius. He remembered the strong phrases in Christine's letter, forbidding him to make any attempt to see her. But what he had seen at Perros, what he had heard behind the dressing-room door, his conversation with Christine at the edge of the moor made him suspect some machination which, devilish though it might be, was none the less human. The girl's highly strung imagination, her affectionate and credulous mind, the primitive education which had surrounded her childhood with a circle of legends, the constant brooding over her dead father and, above all, the state of sublime ecstasy into which music threw her from the moment that this art was made manifest to her in certain exceptional conditions, as in the churchyard at Perros; all this seemed to him to constitute a moral ground only too favorable for the malevolent designs of some mysterious and unscrupulous person. Of whom was Christine Daaé the victim? This was the very reasonable question which Raoul put to himself as he hurried off to Mamma Valérius.

He trembled as he rang at a little flat in the Rue Notre-Dame-des-Victoires. The door was opened by the maid whom he had seen coming out of Christine's dressing-room one evening. He asked if he could speak to Mme. Valérius. He was told that she was ill in bed and was not receiving visitors.

"Take in my card, please," he said.

The maid soon returned and showed him into a small and scantily furnished drawing-room, in which portraits of Professor Valérius and old Daaé hung on opposite walls.

"Madame begs *monsieur le vicomte* to excuse her," said the servant. "She can only see him in her bedroom, because she can no longer stand on her poor legs."

Five minutes later, Raoul was ushered into an ill-lit room where he at once recognized the good, kind face of Christine's benefactress in the semi-darkness of an alcove. Mamma Valérius' hair was now quite white, but her eyes had grown no older; never, on the contrary, had their expression been so bright, so pure, so child-like.

"M. de Chagny!" she cried gaily, putting out both her hands to her visitor. "Ah, it's Heaven that sends you here! . . . We can talk of *her*."

This last sentence sounded very gloomily in the young man's ears. He at once asked:

"Madame . . . where is Christine?"

And the old lady replied calmly:

"She is with her good genius!"

"What good genius?" exclaimed poor Raoul.

"Why, the Angel of Music!"

The viscount dropped into a chair. Really? Christine was with the Angel of Music? And there lay Mamma Valérius in bed, smiling to him and putting her finger to her lips, to warn him to be silent! And she added:

"You must not tell anybody!"

"You can rely on me," said Raoul.

He hardly knew what he was saying, for his ideas about Christine, already greatly confused, were becoming more and more entangled; and it seemed as if everything was beginning to turn around him, around the room, around that extraordinary good lady with the white hair and forget-me-not eyes.

"I know! I know I can!" she said, with a happy laugh. "But why don't you come near me, as you used to do when you were a little boy? Give me your hands, as when you brought me the story of little Lotte, which Daddy Daaé had told you. I am very fond of you, M. Raoul, you know. And so is Christine too!"

"She is fond of me!" sighed the young man. He found a difficulty in collecting his thoughts and bringing them to bear on Mamma Valérius' "good genius," on the Angel of Music of whom Christine had spoken to him so strangely, on the death's head which he had seen in a sort of nightmare on the high altar at Perros and also on the Opera ghost, whose fame had come to his ears one evening when he was standing behind the scenes, within hearing of a group of scene-shifters who were repeating the ghastly description which the hanged man, Joseph Buquet, had given of the ghost before his mysterious death.

He asked in a low voice: "What makes you think that Christine is fond of me, madame?"

"She used to speak of you every day."

"Really? . . . And what did she tell you?"

"She told me that you had made her a proposal!"

And the good old lady began laughing whole-heartedly. Raoul sprang from his chair, flushing to the temples, suffering agonies.

"What's this? Where are you going? . . . Sit down again at once, will you? . . . Do you think I will let you go like that? . . . If you're angry with me for laughing, I beg your pardon . . After all, what has happened isn't your fault. . .

Didn't you know? . . . Did you think that Christine was free? . . ."

"Is Christine engaged to be married?" the wretched Raoul asked, in a choking voice.

"Why no! Why no! . . . You know as well as I do that Christine couldn't marry, even if she wanted to! . . ."

"But I don't know anything about it! . . . And why can't Christine marry?"

"Because of the Angel of Music, of course! . ."

"I don't follow . . ."

"Yes, he forbids her to! . . ."

"He forbids her! . . . The Angel of Music forbids her to marry! . . ."

"Oh, he forbids her . . . without forbidding her. It's like this: he tells her that, if she got married, she would never hear him again. That's all! . . . And that he would go away for ever! . . So, you understand, she can't let the Angel of Music go. It's quite natural."

"Yes, yes," echoed Raoul submissively, "it's quite natural."

"Besides, I thought Christine had told you all that, when she met you at Perros, where she went with her good genius."

"Oh, she went to Perros with her good genius, did she?"

"That is to say, he arranged to meet her down there, in Perros churchyard, at Daaé's grave. He promised to play her *The Resurrection of Lazarus* on her father's violin!"

Raoul de Chagny rose and, with a very authoritative air, pronounced these peremptory words:

"Madame, you will have the goodness to tell me where that genius lives."

The old lady did not seem surprised at this indiscreet command. She raised her eyes and said:

"In Heaven!"

Such simplicity baffled him. He did not know what to say in the presence of this candid and perfect faith in a genius who came down nightly from Heaven to haunt the dressing-rooms at the Opera.

He now realized the possible state of mind of a girl brought up between a superstitious fiddler and a visionary old lady and he shuddered when he thought of the consequences of it all.

"Is Christine still a good girl?" he asked suddenly, in spite of himself.

"I swear it, as I hope to be saved!" exclaimed the old woman, who, this time, seemed to be incensed. "And, if you doubt it, sir, I don't know what you are here for!"

Raoul tore at his gloves.

"How long has she known this 'genius?' "

"About three months. . . . Yes, it's quite three months since he began to give her lessons."

The viscount threw up his arms with a gesture of despair.

"The genius gives her lessons! . . . And where, pray?"

"Now that she has gone away with him, I can't say; but, up to a fortnight ago, it was in Christine's dressing-room. It would be impossible in this little flat. The whole house would hear them. Whereas, at the Opera, at eight o'clock in the morning, there is no one about, do you see!"

"Yes, I see! I see!" cried the viscount.

And he hurriedly took leave of Mme. Valérius, who asked herself if the young nobleman was not a little off his head.

He walked home to his brother's house in a pitiful state. He could have struck himself, banged his head against the walls! To think that he had believed in her innocence, in her purity! The Angel of Music! He knew him now! He saw him! It was beyond a doubt some unspeakable tenor, a good-looking jackanapes, who mouthed and simpered as he sang! He thought himself as absurd and as wretched as could be. Oh, what a miserable, little, insignificant, silly young man was M. le Vicomte de Chagny! thought Raoul furiously. And she, what a bold and damnable sly creature!

His brother was waiting for him and Raoul fell into his arms, like a child. The count consoled him, without asking for explanations; and Raoul would certainly have long hesitated before telling him the story of the Angel of Music. His brother suggested taking him out to dinner. Overcome as he was with despair, Raoul would probably have refused any invitation that evening, if the count had not, as an inducement, told him that the lady of his thoughts had been seen, the night before, in company of the other sex in the Bois. At first, the viscount refused to believe; but he received such exact details that he ceased protesting. She had been seen, it appeared, driving in a brougham, with the window down. She seemed to be slowly taking in the icy night air. There was a glorious moon shining. She was recognized beyond a doubt. As for her companion, only his shadowy outline was distinguished leaning back in the dark. The carriage was going at a walking pace in a lonely drive behind the grand stand at Longchamp.

Raoul dressed in frantic haste, prepared to forget his distress by flinging himself, as people say, into "the vortex of pleasure." Alas, he was a very sorry guest and, leaving his brother early, found himself, by ten o'clock in the evening, in a cab, behind the Longchamp race-course.

It was bitterly cold. The road seemed deserted and very bright under the moonlight. He told the driver to wait for him patiently at the corner of a near turning and, hiding himself as well as he could, stood stamping his feet to keep warm. He had been indulging in this healthy exercise for half an hour or so, when a carriage turned the corner of the road and came quietly in his direction, at a walking pace.

As it approached, he saw that a woman was leaning her head from the window. And, suddenly, the moon shed a pale gleam over her features.

"Christine!"

The sacred name of his love had sprung from his heart and his lips. He could not keep it back. . . . He would have given anything to withdraw it, for that name, proclaimed in the stillness of the night, had acted as though it were the preconcerted signal for a furious rush on the part of the whole turn-out, which dashed past him before he could put into execution his plan of leaping at the horses' heads. The carriage window had been closed and the girl's face had disappeared. And the brougham, behind which he was now running, was no more than a black spot on the white road.

He called out again: "Christine!"

No reply. And he stopped in the midst of the silence.

With a lack-luster eye, he stared down that cold, desolate road and into the pale, dead night. Nothing was colder than his heart, nothing half so dead: he had loved an angel and now he despised a woman!

Raoul, how that little fairy of the North has trifled with you! Was it really, was it really necessary to have so fresh and young a face, a forehead so shy and always ready to cover itself with the pink blush of modesty in order to pass in the lonely night, in a carriage and pair, accompanied by a mysterious lover? Surely there should be some limit to hypocrisy and lying! . . .

She had passed without answering his cry. . . . And he was thinking of dying; and he was twenty years old! . . .

His valet found him in the morning sitting on his bed. He had not undressed and the servant feared, at the sight of his face, that some disaster had occurred. Raoul snatched his letters from the man's hands. He had recognized Christine's paper and hand-writing. She said:

DEAR:

Go to the masked ball at the Opera on the night after to-morrow. At twelve o'clock, be in the little room behind the chimney-place of the big crush-room. Stand near the door that leads to the Rotunda. Don't mention this appointment to any one on earth. Wear a white domino and be carefully masked. As you love me, do not let yourself be recognized.

CHRISTINE.

CHAPTER IX

AT THE MASKED BALL

THE envelope was covered with mud and unstamped. It bore the words "To be handed to M. le Vicomte Raoul de Chagny," with the address in pencil. It must have been flung out in the hope that a passer-by would pick up the note and deliver it, which was what happened. The note had been picked up on the pavement of the Place de l'Opera.

Raoul read it over again with fevered eyes. No more was needed to revive his hope. The somber picture which he had for a moment imagined of a Christine forgetting her duty to herself made way for his original conception of an unfortunate, innocent child, the victim of imprudence and exaggerated sensibility. To what extent, at this time, was she really a victim? Whose prisoner was she? Into what whirlpool had she been dragged? He asked himself these questions with a cruel anguish; but even this pain seemed endurable beside the frenzy into which he was thrown at the thought of a lying and deceitful Christine. What had happened? What influence had she undergone? What monster had carried her off and by what means? . . .

By what means indeed but that of music? He knew Christine's story. After her father's death, she acquired a distaste of everything in life, including her art. She went through the *conservatoire* like a poor soulless singing-machine. And, suddenly, she awoke as though through the intervention of a god. The Angel of Music appeared upon the scene! She sang Margarita in *Faust* and triumphed! . . .

The Angel of Music! . . . For three months the Angel of Music had been giving Christine lessons. . . . Ah, he was a punctual singing-master! . . . And now he was taking her for drives in the Bois! . . .

Raoul's fingers clutched at his flesh, above his jealous heart. In his inexperience, he now asked himself with terror what game the girl was playing? Up to what point could an opera-singer make a fool of a good-natured young man, quite new to love? O misery! . . .

Thus did Raoul's thoughts fly from one extreme to the other. He no longer knew whether to pity Christine or to curse her; and he pitied and cursed her turn and turn about. At all events, he bought a white domino.

The hour of the appointment came at last. With his face in a mask trimmed with long, thick lace, looking like a pierrot in his white wrap, the viscount thought himself very ridiculous. Men of the world do not go to the Opera ball in fancy-dress! It was absurd. One thought, however, consoled the viscount: he would certainly never be recognized!

This ball was an exceptional affair, given some time before Shrovetide, in honor of the anniversary of the birth of a famous draftsman; and it was expected to be much gayer, noisier, more Bohemian than the ordinary masked ball. Numbers of artists had arranged to go, accompanied by a whole cohort of models and pupils, who, by midnight, began to create a tremendous din. Raoul climbed the grand staircase at five minutes to twelve, did not linger to look at the motley dresses displayed all the way up the marble steps, one of the richest settings in the world, allowed no facetious mask to draw him into a war of wits, replied to no jests and shook off the bold familiarity of a number of couples who had already become a trifle too gay. Crossing the big crush-room and escaping from a mad whirl of dancers in which he was caught for a moment, he at last entered the room mentioned in Christine's letter. He found it crammed; for this small space was the point where all those who were going to supper in the Rotunda crossed those who were returning from taking a glass of champagne. The fun, here, waxed fast and furious.

Raoul leaned against a door-post and waited. He did not wait long. A black domino passed and gave a quick squeeze to the tips of his fingers. He understood that it was she and followed her:

"Is that you, Christine?" he asked, between his teeth.

The black domino turned round promptly and raised her finger to her lips, no doubt to warn him not to mention her name again. Raoul continued to follow her in silence.

He was afraid of losing her, after meeting her again in such strange circumstances. His grudge against her was gone. He no longer doubted that she had "nothing to reproach herself with," however peculiar and inexplicable her conduct might seem. He was ready to make any display of clemency, forgiveness or cowardice. He was in love. And, no doubt, he would soon receive a very natural explanation of her curious absence.

The black domino turned back from time to time to see if the white domino was still following.

As Raoul once more passed through the great crush-room, this time in the wake of his guide, he could not help noticing a group crowding round a person whose disguise, eccentric air and gruesome appearance were causing a sensation. It was a man dressed all in scarlet, with a huge hat and feathers on the top of a wonderful death's head. From his shoulders hung an immense red-velvet cloak, which trailed along the floor like a king's train; and on this cloak was embroidered, in gold letters, which every one read and repeated aloud, "Don't touch me! I am Red Death stalking abroad!"

Then one, greatly daring, did try to touch him . . . but a skeleton hand shot out of a crimson sleeve and violently seized the rash one's wrist; and he, feeling the clutch of the knucklebones, the furious grasp of Death, uttered a cry of pain and terror. When Red Death released him at last, he ran away like a very madman, pursued by the jeers of the bystanders.

It was at this moment that Raoul passed in front of the funereal masquerader, who had just happened to turn in his direction. And he nearly exclaimed:

"The death's head of Perros-Guirec!"

He had recognized him! . . . He wanted to dart forward, forgetting Christine; but the black domino, who also seemed a prey to some strange excitement, caught him by the arm and dragged him from the crush-room, far from the mad crowd through which Red Death was stalking. . . .

The black domino kept on turning back and, apparently, on two occasions saw something that startled her, for she hurried her pace and Raoul's as though they were being pursued.

They went up two floors. Here, the stairs and corridors were almost deserted. The black domino opened the door of a private box and beckoned to the white domino to follow her. Then Christine, whom he recognized by the sound of her voice, closed the door behind them and warned him, in a whisper, to remain at the back of the box and on no account to show himself. Raoul took off his mask. Christine kept hers on. And, when Raoul was about to ask her to remove it, he was surprised to see her put her ear to the partition and listen eagerly for a sound outside. Then she opened the door ajar, looked out into the corridor and, in a low voice, said:

"He must have gone up higher." Suddenly she exclaimed: "He is coming down again!"

She tried to close the door, but Raoul prevented her; for he had seen, on the top step of the staircase that led to the floor above, *a red foot,* followed by another . . . and slowly, majestically, the whole scarlet dress of Red Death met his eyes. And he once more saw the death's head of Perros-Guirec.

"It's he!" he exclaimed. "This time, he shall not escape me! . . ."

But Christian had slammed the door at the moment when Raoul was on the point of rushing out. He tried to push her aside.

"Whom do you mean by 'he'?" she asked, in a changed voice. "Who shall not escape you?"

Raoul tried to overcome the girl's resistance by force, but she repelled him with a strength which he would not have suspected in her. He understood, or thought he understood, and at once lost his temper.

"Who?" he repeated angrily. "Why, he, the man who hides behind that hideous mask of death! . . . The evil genius of the churchyard at Perros! . . . Red Death! . . . In a word, madam, your friend . . . your Angel of Music! . . . But I shall snatch off his mask, as I shall snatch off my own; and, this time, we shall look each other in the face, he and I, with no veil and no lies between us; and I shall know whom you love and who loves you!"

He burst into a mad laugh, while Christine gave a disconsolate moan behind her velvet mask. With a tragic gesture, she flung out her two arms, which fixed a barrier of white flesh against the door.

"In the name of our love, Raoul, you shall not pass! . . ."

He stopped. What had she said? . . . In the name of their love? . . . Never before had she confessed that she loved him. And yet she had had opportunities enough. . . . Pooh, her only object was to gain a few seconds! . . . She wished to give the Red Death time to escape. . . And, in accents of childish hatred, he said:

"You lie, madam, for you do not love me and you have never loved me! What a poor fellow I must be to let you mock and flout me as you have done! Why did you give me every reason for hope, at Perros . . . for honest hope, madam, for I am an honest man and I believed you to be an honest woman, when your only intention was to deceive me! Alas, you have deceived us all! You have taken a shameful advantage of the candid affection of your benefactress herself, who continues to believe in your sincerity while you go about the Opera ball with Red Death! . . . I despise you! . . ."

And he burst into tears. She allowed him to insult her. She thought of but one thing, to keep him from leaving the box.

"You will beg my pardon, one day, for all those ugly words, Raoul, and when you do I shall forgive you!"

He shook his head. "No, no, you have driven me mad! When I think that I had only one object in life: to give my name to an opera wench!"

"Raoul! . . . How can you?"

"I shall die of shame!"

"No, dear, live!" said Christine's grave and changed voice. "And . . . good-by. Good-by, Raoul . . ."

The boy stepped forward, staggering as he went. He risked one more sarcasm:

"Oh, you must let me come and applaud you from time to time!"

"I shall never sing again, Raoul! . . ."

"Really?" he replied, still more satirically. "So he is taking you off the stage: I congratulate you! . . . But we shall meet in the Bois, one of these evenings!"

"Not in the Bois nor anywhere, Raoul: you shall not see me again . . ."

"May one ask at least to what darkness you are returning? . . . For what hell are you leaving, mysterious lady . . . or for what paradise?"

"I came to tell you, dear, but I can't tell you now . . . you would not believe me! You have lost faith in me, Raoul; it is finished!"

She spoke in such a despairing voice that the lad began to feel remorse for his cruelty.

"But look here!" he cried. "Can't you tell me what all this means! . . . You are free, there is no one to interfere with you. . . . You go about Paris. . . . You put on a domino to come to the ball. . . . Why do you not go home? . . . What have you been doing this past fortnight? . . . What is this tale about the Angel of Music, which you have been telling Mamma Valérius? Some one may have taken you in, played upon your innocence. I was a witness of it myself, at Perros . . but you know what to believe now! You seem to me quite sensible, Christine. You know what you are doing. . . . And meanwhile Mamma Valérius lies waiting for you at home and appealing to your 'good genius!' . . . Explain yourself, Christine, I beg of you! Any one might have been deceived as I was. What is this farce?"

Christine simply took off her mask and said: "Dear, it is a tragedy!"

Raoul now saw her face and could not restrain an exclamation of surprise and terror. The fresh complexion of former days was gone. A mortal pallor covered those features, which he had known so charming and so gentle, and sorrow had furrowed them with pitiless lines and traced dark and unspeakably sad shadows under her eyes.

"My dearest! My dearest!" he moaned, holding out his arms. "You promised to forgive me . . ."

"Perhaps! . . . Some day, perhaps!" she said, resuming her mask; and she went away, forbidding him, with a gesture, to follow her.

He tried to disobey her; but she turned round and repeated her gesture of farewell with such authority that he dared not move a step.

He watched her till she was out of sight. Then he also went down among the crowd, hardly knowing what he was doing, with throbbing temples and an aching heart; and, as he crossed the dancing-floor, he asked if anybody had seen Red Death. Yes, every one had seen Red Death; but Raoul could not find him; and, at two o'clock in the morning, he turned down the passage, behind the scenes, that led to Christine Daaé's dressing-room.

His footsteps took him to that room where he had first known suffering. He tapped at the door. There was no answer. He entered, as he had entered when he looked everywhere for "the man's voice." The room was empty. A gas-jet was burning, turned down low. He saw some writing-paper on a little desk. He thought of writing to Christine, but he heard steps in the passage. He had only time to hide in the inner room, which was separated from the dressing-room by a curtain.

Christine entered, took off her mask with a weary movement and flung it on the table. She sighed and let her pretty head fall into her two hands. What was she thinking of? Of Raoul? No, for Raoul heard her murmur: "Poor Erik!"

At first, he thought he must be mistaken. To begin with, he was persuaded that, if any one was to be pitied, it was he, Raoul. It would have been quite natural if she had said, "Poor Raoul," after what had happened between them. But, shaking her head, she repeated: "Poor Erik!"

What had this Erik to do with Christine's sighs and why was she pitying Erik when Raoul was so unhappy? MINE

Christine began to write, deliberately, calmly and so placidly that Raoul, who was still trembling from the effects of the tragedy that separated them, was painfully impressed.

"What coolness!" he said to himself.

She wrote on, filling two, three, four sheets. Suddenly, she raised her head and hid the sheets in her bodice. . . . She seemed to be listening. . . Raoul also listened. . . Whence came that strange sound, that distant rhythm? . . . A faint singing seemed to issue from the walls . . . yes, it was as though the walls themselves were singing! . . . The song became plainer . . . the words were now distinguishable . . . he heard a voice, a very beautiful, very soft, very captivating voice . . . but, for all its softness, it remained a male voice. . . The voice came nearer and nearer . . . it came through the wall . . it approached . . . and now the voice was *in the room,* in front of Christine. Christine rose and addressed the voice, as though speaking to some one:

"Here I am, Erik," she said. "I am ready. But you are late."

Raoul, peeping from behind the curtain, could not believe his eyes, which showed him nothing. Christine's face lit up. A smile of happiness appeared upon her bloodless lips, a smile like that of sick people when they receive the first hope of recovery.

The voice without a body went on singing; and certainly Raoul had never in his life heard anything more absolutely and heroically sweet, more gloriously insidious, more delicate, more powerful, in short, more irresistibly triumphant. He listened to it in a fever and he now began to understand how Christine Daaé was able to appear one evening, before the stupefied audience, with accents of a beauty hitherto unknown, of a superhuman exaltation, while doubtless still under the influence of the mysterious and invisible master.

The voice was singing the Wedding-night Song from *Romeo and Juliet.* Raoul saw Christine stretch out her arms to the voice as she had done, in Perros churchyard, to the invisible violin playing *The Resurrection of Lazarus.* And nothing could describe the passion with which the voice sang:

"Fate links thee to me for ever and a day!"

The strains went through Raoul's heart. Struggling against the charm that seemed to deprive him of all his will and all his energy and of almost all his lucidity at the moment when he needed them most, he succeeded in drawing back the curtain that hid him and he walked to where Christine stood. She herself was moving to the back of the room, the whole wall of which was occupied by a great mirror that reflected her image, but not his, for he was just behind her and entirely covered by her.

"Fate links thee to me for ever and a day!"

Christine walked toward her image in the glass and the image came toward her. The two Christines—the real one and the reflection—ended by touching; and Raoul put out his arms to clasp the two in one embrace. But, by a sort of dazzling miracle that sent him staggering, Raoul was suddenly flung back, while an icy blast swept over his face;

he saw, not two, but four, eight, twenty Christines spinning round him, laughing at him and fleeing so swiftly that he could not touch one of them. At last, everything stood still again; and he saw himself in the glass. But Christine had disappeared.

He rushed up to the glass. He struck at the walls. Nobody! And meanwhile the room still echoed with a distant passionate singing:

"Fate links thee to me for ever and a day!"

Which way, which way had Christine gone? . . . Which way would she return? . . .

Would she return? Alas, had she not declared to him that everything was finished? And was the voice not repeating:

"Fate links thee to me for ever and a day!"

To me? To whom?

Then, worn out, beaten, empty-brained, he sat down on the chair which Christine had just left. Like her, he let his head fall into his hands. When he raised it, the tears were streaming down his young cheeks, real, heavy tears like those which jealous children shed, tears that wept for a sorrow which was in no way fanciful, but which is common to all the lovers on earth and which he expressed aloud:

"Who is this Erik?" he said.

CHAPTER X

FORGET THE NAME OF THE MAN'S VOICE

THE day after Christine had vanished before his eyes in a sort of dazzlement that still made him doubt the evidence of his senses, M. le Vicomte de Chagny called to inquire at Mamma Valérius'. He came upon a charming picture. Christine herself was seated by the bedside of the old lady, who was sitting up against the pillows, knitting. The pink and white had returned to the young girl's cheeks. The dark rings round her eyes had disappeared. Raoul no longer recognized the tragic face of the day before. If the veil of melancholy over those adorable features had not still appeared to the young man as the last trace of the weird drama in whose toils that mysterious child was struggling, he could have believed that Christine was not its heroine at all.

She rose, without showing any emotion, and offered him her hand. But Raoul's stupefaction was so great that he stood there dumfounded, without a gesture, without a word.

"Well, M. de Chagny," exclaimed Mamma Valérius, "don't you know our Christine? Her good genius has sent her back to us!"

"Mamma!" the girl broke in promptly, while a deep blush mantled to her eyes. "I thought, mamma, that there was to be no more question of that! . .

You know there is no such thing as the Angel of Music!"

"But, child, he gave you lessons for three months!"

"Mamma, I have promised to explain everything to you one of these days; and I hope to do so . . . but you have promised me, until that day, to be silent and to ask me no more questions whatever!"

"Provided that you promised never to leave me again! But have you promised that, Christine?"

"Mamma, all this can not interest M. de Chagny."

"On the contrary, mademoiselle," said the young man, in a voice which he tried to make firm and brave, but which still trembled, "anything that concerns you interests me to an extent which perhaps you will one day understand. I do not deny that my surprise equals my pleasure at finding you with your adopted mother and that, after what happened between us yesterday, after what you said and what I was able to guess, I hardly expected to see you here so soon. I should be the first to delight at your return, if you were not so bent on preserving a secrecy that may be fatal to you . . . and I have been your friend too long not to be alarmed, with Mme. Valérius, at a disastrous adventure which will remain dangerous so long as we have not unraveled its threads and of which you will certainly end by being the victim, Christine."

At these words, Mamma Valérius tossed about in her bed.

"What does this mean?" she cried. "Is Christine

"Yes, madame," said Raoul courageously, notwithstanding the signs which Christine made to him.

"My God!" exclaimed the good, simple old woman, gasping for breath. "You must tell me everything, Christine! Why did you try to reassure me? And what danger is it, M. de Chagny?"

"An impostor is abusing her good faith."

"Is the Angel of Music an impostor?"

"She told you herself that there is no Angel of Music."

"But then what is it, in Heaven's name? You will be the death of me!"

"There is a terrible mystery around us, madame, around you, around Christine, a mystery much more to be feared than any number of ghosts or genii!"

Mamma Valérius turned a terrified face to Christine, who had already run to her adopted mother and was holding her in her arms.

"Don't believe him, mummy, don't believe him," she repeated.

"Then tell me that you will never leave me again," implored the widow.

Christine was silent and Raoul resumed.

"That is what you must promise, Christine. It is the only thing that can reassure your mother and me. We will undertake not to ask you a single question about the past, if you promise us to remain under our protection in future."

"That is an undertaking which I have not asked of you and a promise which I refuse to make you!" said the young girl haughtily. "I am mistress of my own actions, M. de Chagny: you have no right to control them, and I will beg you to desist henceforth. As to what I have done during the last fortnight, there is only one man in the world who has the right to demand an account of me: my husband! Well, I have no husband and I never mean to marry!"

She threw out her hands to emphasize her words and Raoul turned pale, not only because of the words which he had heard, but because he had caught sight of a plain gold ring on Christine's finger.

"You have no husband and yet you wear a wedding-ring.

He tried to seize her hand, but she swiftly drew it back.

"That's a present!" she said, blushing once more and vainly striving to hide her embarrassment.

"Christine! As you have no husband, that ring can only have been given by one who hopes to make you his wife! Why deceive us further? Why torture me still more? That ring is a promise; and that promise has been accepted!"

"That's what I said!" exclaimed the old lady.

"And what did she answer, madame?"

"What I chose," said Christine, driven to exasperation. "Don't you think, monsieur, that this cross-examination has lasted long enough? As far as I am concerned . . ."

Raoul was afraid to let her finish her speech. He interrupted her:

"I beg your pardon for speaking as I did, mademoiselle. You know the good intentions that make me meddle, just now, in matters which, you no doubt think, have nothing to do with me. But allow me to tell you what I have seen—and I have seen more than you suspect, Christine—or what I thought I saw, for, to tell you the truth, I have sometimes been inclined to doubt the evidence of my eyes."

"Well, what did you see, sir, or think you saw?"

"I saw your ecstasy *at the sound of the voice*, Christine: the voice that came from the wall or the next room to yours . . . yes, *your ecstasy*! And that is what makes me alarmed on your behalf. You are under a very dangerous spell. And yet it seems that you are aware of the imposture, because you say to-day *that there is no Angel of Music!* In that case, Christine, why did you follow him that time? Why did you stand up, with radiant features, as though you were really hearing angels? . . . Ah, it is a very dangerous voice, Christine, for I myself, when I heard it, was so much fascinated by it that you vanished before my eyes without my seeing which way you passed! Christine, Christine, in the name of Heaven, in the name of your father who is in Heaven now and who loved you so dearly and who loved me too, Christine, tell us, tell your benefactress and me, to whom does that voice belong? If you do, we will save you in spite of yourself. Come, Christine, the name of the man! The name of the man who had the audacity to put a ring on your finger!"

"M. de Chagny," the girl declared coldly, "you shall never know!"

Thereupon, seeing the hostility with which her ward had addressed the viscount, Mamma Valérius suddenly took Christine's part.

"And, if she does love that man, *monsieur le vicomte,* even then it is no business of yours!"

"Alas, madame," Raoul humbly replied, unable to restrain his tears, "alas, I believe that Christine really does love him! . . . But it is not only that which drives me to despair; for what I am not certain of, madame, is that the man whom Christine loves is worthy of her love!"

"It is for me to be the judge of that, monsieur!" said Christine, looking Raoul angrily in the face.

"When a man," continued Raoul, "adopts such romantic methods to entice a young girl's affections . . ."

"The man must be either a villain, or the girl a fool: is that it?"

"Christine!"

"Raoul, why do you condemn a man whom you have never seen, whom no one knows and about whom you yourself know nothing?"

"Yes, Christine. . . . Yes. . . . I at least know the name that you thought to keep from me for ever. . . . The name of your Angel of Music, mademoiselle, is Erik!"

Christine at once betrayed herself. She turned as white as a sheet and stammered:

"Who told you?"

"You yourself!"

"How do you mean?"

"By pitying him the other night, the night of the masked ball. When you went to your dressing-room, did you not say, 'Poor Erik?' Well, Christine, there was a poor Raoul who overheard you."

"This is the second time that you have listened behind the door, M. de Chagny!"

"I was not behind the door . . . I was in the dressing-room, in the inner room, mademoiselle."

"Oh, unhappy man!" moaned the girl, showing every sign of unspeakable terror. "Unhappy man! Do you want to be killed?"

"Perhaps."

Raoul uttered this "perhaps" with so much love and despair in his voice that Christine could not keep back a sob. She took his hands and looked at him with all the pure affection of which she was capable:

"Raoul," she said, "forget *the man's voice* and do not even remember its name. . . You must never try to fathom the mystery of *the man's voice*."

"Is the mystery so very terrible?"

"There is no more awful mystery on this earth. Swear to me that you will make no attempt to find out," she insisted. "Swear to me that you will never come to my dressing-room, unless I send for you."

"Then you promise to send for me sometimes, Christine?"

"I promise."

"When?"

"To-morrow."

"Then I swear to do as you ask."

He kissed her hands and went away, cursing Erik and resolving to be patient.

CHAPTER XI

ABOVE THE TRAP-DOORS

THE next day, he saw her at the Opera. She was still wearing the plain gold ring. She was gentle and kind to him. She talked to him of the plans which he was forming, of his future, of his career.

He told her that the date of the Polar expedition had been put forward and that he would leave France in three weeks, or a month at latest. She suggested, almost gaily, that he must look upon the voyage with delight, as a stage toward his coming fame. And when he replied that fame without love was no attraction in his eyes, she treated him as a child whose sorrows were only short-lived.

"How can you speak so lightly of such serious things?" he asked. "Perhaps we shall never see each other again! I may die during that expedition."

"Or I," she said simply.

She no longer smiled or jested. She seemed to be thinking of some new thing that had entered her mind for the first time. Her eyes were all aglow with it.

"What are you thinking of, Christine?"

"I am thinking that we shall not see each other again . . ."

"And does that make you so radiant?"

"And that, in a month, we shall have to say good-by for ever!"

"Unless, Christine, we pledge our faith and wait for each other for ever."

She put her hand on his mouth.

"Hush, Raoul! . . . You know there is no question of that . . . And we shall never be married: that is understood!"

She seemed suddenly almost unable to contain an overpowering gaiety. She clapped her hands with childish glee. Raoul stared at her in amazement.

"But . . . but," she continued, holding out her two hands to Raoul, or rather giving them to him, as though she had suddenly resolved to make him a present of them, "but if we can not be married, we can . . . we can be engaged! Nobody will know but ourselves, Raoul. There have been plenty of secret marriages: why not a secret engagement? . . . We are engaged, dear, for a month! In a month, you will go away, and I can be happy at the thought of that month all my life long!"

She was enchanted with her inspiration. Then she became serious again.

"This," she said, *"is a happiness that will harm no one."*

Raoul jumped at the idea. He bowed to Christine and said:

"Mademoiselle, I have the honor to ask for your hand."

"Why, you have both of them already, my dear betrothed! . . . Oh, Raoul, how happy we shall be! . . . We must play at being engaged all day long."

It was the prettiest game in the world and they enjoyed it like the children that they were. Oh, the wonderful speeches they made to each other and the eternal vows they exchanged! They played at hearts as other children might play at ball; only, as it was really their two hearts that they flung to and fro, they had to be very, very handy to catch them, each time, without hurting them.

One day, about a week after the game began, Raoul's heart was badly hurt and he stopped playing and uttered these wild words:

"I shan't go to the North Pole!"

Christine, who, in her innocence, had not dreamed of such a possibility, suddenly discovered the danger of the game and reproached herself bitterly. She did not say a word in reply to Raoul's remark and went straight home.

This happened in the afternoon, in the singer's dressing-room, where they met every day and where they amused themselves by dining on three biscuits, two glasses of port and a bunch of violets. In the evening, she did not sing; and he did not receive his usual letter, though they had arranged to write to each other daily during that month. The next morning, he ran off to Mamma Valérius, who told him that Christine had gone away for two days. She had left at five o'clock the day before.

Raoul was distracted. He hated Mamma Valérius for giving him such news as that with such stupefying calmness. He tried to sound her, but the old lady obviously knew nothing.

Christine returned on the following day. She returned in triumph. She renewed her extraordinary success of the gala performance. Since the adventure of the "toad," Carlotta had not been able to appear on the stage. The terror of a fresh "co-ack" filled her heart and deprived her of all her power of singing; and the theater that had witnessed her incomprehensible disgrace had become odious to her. She contrived to cancel her contract. Daaé was offered the vacant place for the time. She received thunders of applause in the *Juive*.

The viscount, who, of course, was present, was the only one to suffer on hearing the thousand echoes of this fresh triumph; for Christine still wore her plain gold ring. A distant voice whispered in the young man's ear:

"She is wearing the ring again to-night; and you did not give it to her. She gave her soul again to-night and did not give it to you. . . . If she will not tell you what she has been doing the past two days . . . you must go and ask Erik!"

He ran behind the scenes and placed himself in her way. She saw him for her eyes were looking for him. She said:

"Quick! Quick! . . . Come!"

And she dragged him to her dressing-room.

Raoul at once threw himself on his knees before her. He swore to her that he would go and he entreated her never again to withhold a single hour of the ideal happiness which she had promised him. She let her tears flow. They kissed like a despairing brother and sister who have been smitten with a common loss and who meet to mourn a dead parent.

Suddenly, she snatched herself from the young man's soft and timid embrace, seemed to listen to something, and, with a quick gesture, pointed to the door. When he was on the threshold, she said, in so low a voice that the viscount guessed rather than heard her words:

"To-morrow, my dear betrothed! And be happy, Raoul: I sang for you to-night!"

He returned the next day. But those two days of absence had broken the charm of their delightful make-believe. They looked at each other, in the dressing-room, with their sad eyes, without exchanging a word. Raoul had to restrain himself not to cry out:

"I am jealous! I am jealous! I am jealous!"

But she heard him all the same. Then she said:

"Come for a walk, dear. The air will do you good."

Raoul thought that she would propose a stroll in the country, far from that building which he detested as a prison whose jailer he could feel walking within the walls . . . the jailer Erik. . . . But she took him to the stage and made him sit on the wooden curb of a well, in the doubtful peace and coolness of a first scene set for the evening's performance.

On another day, she wandered with him, hand in hand, along the deserted paths of a garden whose creepers had been cut out by a decorator's skilful hands. It was as though the real sky, the real flowers, the real earth were forbidden her for all time and she condemned to breathe no other air than that of the theater. An occasional fireman passed, watching over their melancholy idyll from afar. And she would drag him up above the clouds, in the magnificent disorder of the grid, where she loved to make him giddy by running in front of him along the frail bridges, among the thousands of ropes fastened to the pulleys, the windlasses, the rollers, in the midst of a regular forest of yards and masts. If he hesitated, she said, with an adorable pout of her lips:

"You, a sailor!"

And then they returned to *terra firma,* that is to say, to some passage that led them to the little girls' dancing-school, where brats between six and ten were practising their steps, in the hope of becoming great dancers one day, "covered with diamonds. . . ." Meanwhile, Christine gave them sweets instead.

She took him to the wardrobe and property-rooms, took him all over her empire, which was artificial, but immense, covering seventeen stories from the ground-floor to the roof and inhabited by an army of subjects. She moved among them like a popular queen, encouraging them in their labors, sitting down in the workshops, giving words of advice to the workmen whose hands hesitated to cut into the rich stuffs that were to clothe heroes. There were inhabitants of that country who practised every trade. There were cobblers, there were goldsmiths. All had learned to know her and to love her, for she always interested herself in all their troubles and all their little hobbies.

She knew unsuspected corners that were secretly occupied by little old couples. She knocked at their door and introduced Raoul to them as a Prince Charming who had asked for her hand; and the two of them, sitting on some worm-eaten "property," would listen to the legends of the Opera, even as, in their childhood, they had listened to the old Breton tales. Those old people remembered nothing outside the Opera. They had lived there for years without number. Past managements had forgotten them; palace revolutions had taken no notice of them; the history of France had run its course unknown to them; and nobody recollected their existence.

The precious days sped in this way; and Raoul and Christine, by affecting excessive interest in outside matters, strove awkwardly to hide from each other the one thought of their hearts. One fact was certain, that Christine, who until then had shown herself the stronger of the two, became suddenly inexpressibly nervous. When on their expeditions, she would start running without reason or else suddenly stop; and her hand, turning ice-cold in a moment, would hold the young man back. Sometimes her eyes seemed to pursue imaginary shadows. She cried, "This way," and "This way," and "This way," laughing a breathless laugh that often ended in tears. Then Raoul tried to speak, to question her, in spite of his promises.

But, even before he had worded his question, she answered feverishly:

"Nothing . . . I swear it is nothing."

Once, when they were passing before an open trap-door on the stage, Raoul stopped over the dark cavity.

"You have shown me over the upper part of your empire, Christine, but there are strange stories told of the lower part. Shall we go down?"

She caught him in her arms, as though she feared to see him disappear down the black hole, and, in a trembling voice, whispered:

"Never! . . . I will not have you go there! . . . Besides, it's not mine . . . *everything that is underground belongs to him!*"

Raoul looked her in the eyes and said roughly:

"So he lives down there, does he?"

"I never said so. . . . Who told you a thing like that? Come away! I sometimes wonder if you are quite sane, Raoul. . . . You always take things in such an impossible way. . . . Come along! Come!"

And she literally dragged him away, for he was obstinate and wanted to remain by the trap-door; that hole attracted him.

Suddenly, the trap-door was closed and so quickly that they did not even see the hand that worked it; and they remained quite dazed.

"Perhaps *he* was there," Raoul said, at last.

She shrugged her shoulders, but did not seem easy.

"No, no, it was the 'trap-door-shutters.' They must do something, you know. . . . They open and shut the trap-doors without any particular reason. . . . It's like the 'door-shutters:' they must spend their time somehow."

"But suppose it were *he,* Christine?"

"No, no! He has shut himself up, he is working."

"Oh, really! He's working, is he?"

"Yes, he can't open and shut the trap-doors and work at the same time." She shivered.

"What is he working at?"

"Oh, something terrible! . . . But it's all the better for us. . . . When he's working at that, he sees nothing; he does not eat, drink, or breathe for days and nights at a time . . . he becomes a living dead man and has no time to amuse himself with the trap-doors."

She shivered again. She was still holding him in her arms. Then she sighed and said, in her turn:

"Suppose it were *he!*"

"Are you afraid of him?"

"No, no, of course not," she said.

For all that, on the next day and the following days, Christine was careful to avoid the trap-doors. Her agitation only increased as the hours passed. At last, one afternoon, she arrived very late, with her face so desperately pale and her eyes so desperately red, that Raoul resolved to go to all lengths, including that which he foreshadowed when he blurted out that he would not go on the North Pole expedition unless she first told him the secret of the man's voice.

"Hush! Hush, in Heaven's name! Suppose *he* heard you, you unfortunate Raoul!"

And Christine's eyes stared wildly at everything around her.

"I will remove you from his power, Christine, I swear it. And you shall not think of him any more."

"Is it possible?"

She allowed herself this doubt, which was an encouragement, while dragging the young man up to the topmost floor of the theater, far, very far from the trap-doors.

"I shall hide you in some unknown corner of the world, where *he* can not come to look for you. You will be safe; and then I shall go away . . . as you have sworn never to marry."

Christine seized Raoul's hands and squeezed them with incredible rapture. But, suddenly becoming alarmed again, she turned away her head.

"Higher!" was all she said. "Higher still!"

And she dragged him up toward the summit.

He had a difficulty in following her. They were soon under the very roof, in the maze of timber-work. They slipped through the buttresses, the rafters, the joists; they ran from beam to beam as they might have run from tree to tree in a forest.

And, despite the care which she took to look behind her at every moment, she failed to see a shadow which followed her like her own shadow, which stopped when she stopped, which started again when she did and which made no more noise than a well-conducted shadow should. As for Raoul, he saw nothing either; for, when he had Christine in front of him, nothing interested him that happened behind.

CHAPTER XII

APOLLO'S LYRE

IN this way, they reached the roof. Christine tripped over it as lightly as a swallow. Their eyes swept the empty space between the three domes and the triangular pediment. She breathed freely over Paris, the whole valley of which was seen at work below. She called Raoul to come quite close to her and they walked side by side along the zinc streets, in the leaden avenues; they looked at their twin shapes in the huge tanks, full of stagnant water, where, in the hot weather, the little boys of the ballet, a score or so, learn to swim and dive.

The shadow had followed behind them, clinging to their steps; and the two children little suspected its presence when they at last sat down, trustingly, under the mighty protection of Apollo, who, with a great bronze gesture, lifted his huge lyre to the heart of a crimson sky.

It was a gorgeous spring evening. Clouds, which had just received their gossamer robe of gold and purple from the setting sun, drifted slowly by; and Christine said to Raoul:

"Soon we shall go farther and faster than the clouds, to the end of the world, and then you will leave me, Raoul. But, if, when the moment comes for you to take me away, I refuse to go with you—well you must carry me off by force!"

"Are you afraid that you will change your mind, Christine?"

"I don't know," she said, shaking her head in an odd fashion. "He is a demon!" And she shivered and nestled in his arms with a moan. "I am afraid now of going back to live with him . . . in the ground!"

"What compels you to go back, Christine?"

"If I do not go back to him, terrible misfortunes may happen! . . . But I can't do it, I can't do it! . . . I know one ought to be sorry for people who live underground. . . . But he is too horrible! And yet the time is at hand; I have only a day left; and, if I do not go, he will come and fetch me with his voice. And he will drag me with him, underground, and go on his knees before me, with his death's head. And he will tell me that he loves me! And he will cry! Oh, those tears, Raoul, those tears in the two black eye-sockets of the death's head! I can not see those tears flow again!"

She wrung her hands in anguish, while Raoul pressed her to his heart.

"No, no, you shall never again hear him tell you that he loves you! You shall not see his tears! Let us fly, Christine, let us fly at once!"

And he tried to drag her away, then and there. But she stopped him.

"No, no," she said, shaking her head sadly. "Not now! . . . It would be too cruel . . . let him hear me sing to-morrow evening . . . and then we will go away. You must come and fetch me in my dressing-room at midnight exactly. He will then be waiting for me in the dining-room by the lake . . . we shall be free and you shall take me away. . . . You must promise me that, Raoul, even if I refuse; for I feel that, if I go back this time, I shall perhaps never return."

And she gave a sigh to which it seemed to her that another sigh, behind her, replied.

"Didn't you hear?"

Her teeth chattered.

"No," said Raoul, "I heard nothing."

"It is too terrible," she confessed, "to be always trembling like this! . . . And yet we run no danger here; we are at home, in the sky, in the open air, in the light. The sun is flaming; and night-birds can not bear to look at the sun. I have never seen *him* by daylight . . . it must be awful! . . . Oh, the first time I saw him! . . . I thought that he was going to die."

"Why?" asked Raoul, really frightened at the aspect which this strange confidence was taking.

"Because I had seen him!"

This time, Raoul and Christine turned round at the same time:

"There is some one in pain," said Raoul. "Perhaps some one has been hurt. Did you hear?"

"I can't say," Christine confessed. "Even when he is not there, my ears are full of his sighs. Still, if you heard . . ."

They stood up and looked around them. They were quite alone on the immense lead roof. They sat down again and Raoul said:

"Tell me how you saw him first."

"I had heard him for three months without seeing him. The first time I heard it, I thought, as you did, that that adorable voice was singing in another room. I went out and looked everywhere; but, as you know, Raoul, my dressing-room is very much by itself; and I could not find the voice outside my room, whereas it went on steadily inside. And it not only sang, but it spoke to me and answered my questions, like a real man's voice, with this difference, that it was as beautiful as the voice of an angel. I had never got the Angel of Music whom my poor father had promised to send me as soon as he was dead. I really think that Mamma Valérius was a little bit to blame. I told her about it; and she at once said, 'It must be the Angel; at any rate, you can do no harm by asking him.' I did so; and the man's voice replied that, yes, it was the Angel's voice, the voice which I was expecting and which my father had promised me. From that time onward, the voice and I became great friends. It asked leave to give me lessons every day. I agreed and never failed to keep the appointment which it gave me in my dressing-room. You have no idea, though you have heard the voice, of what those lessons were like."

"No, I have no idea," said Raoul. "What was your accompaniment?"

"We were accompanied by a music which I do not know: it was behind the wall and wonderfully accurate. The voice seemed to understand mine exactly, to know precisely where my father had left off teaching me. In a few weeks' time, I hardly knew myself when I sang. I was even frightened. I seemed to dread a sort of witchcraft behind it; but Mamma Valérius reassured me. She said that she knew I was much too simple a girl to give the devil a hold on me. . . . My progress, by the voice's own order, was kept a secret between the voice, Mamma Valérius and myself. It was a curious thing, but, outside the dressing-room, I sang with my ordinary, every-day voice and nobody noticed anything. I did all that the voice asked. It said, 'Wait and see: we shall astonish Paris!' And I waited and lived on in a sort of ecstatic dream. It was then that I saw you for the first time one evening, in the house. I was so glad that I never thought of concealing my delight when I reached my dressing-room. Unfortunately, the voice was there before me and soon noticed, by my air, that something had happened. It asked what was the matter and I saw no reason for keeping our story secret or concealing the place which you filled in my heart. Then the voice was silent. I called to it, but it did not reply; I begged and entreated, but in vain. I was terrified lest it had gone for good. I wish to Heaven it had, dear! . . . That night, I went home in a desperate condition. I told Mamma Valérius, who said, 'Why, of course, the voice is jealous!' And that, dear, first revealed to me that I loved you."

letter that brought you to Perros. How could I have been so beguiled? How was it, when I saw the personal, the selfish point of view of the voice, that I did not suspect some impostor? Alas, I was no longer mistress of myself: I had become his thing!"

"But, after all," cried Raoul, "you soon came to know the truth! Why did you not at once rid yourself of that abominable nightmare?"

"Know the truth, Raoul? Rid myself of that nightmare? But, my poor boy, I was not caught in the nightmare until the day when I learned the truth! . . . Pity me, Raoul, pity me! . . . You remember the terrible evening when Carlotta thought that she had been turned into a toad on the stage and when the house was suddenly plunged in darkness through the chandelier crashing to the floor? There were killed and wounded that night and the whole theater rang with terrified screams. My first thought was for you and the voice. I was at once easy, where you were concerned, for I had seen you in your brother's box and I knew that you were not in danger. But the voice had told me that it would be at the performance and I was really afraid for it, just as if it had been an ordinary person who was capable of dying. I thought to myself, 'The chandelier may have come down upon the voice.' I was then on the stage and was nearly running into the house, to look for the voice among the killed and wounded, when I thought that, if the voice was safe, it would be sure to be in my dressing-room and I rushed to my room. The voice was not there. I locked my door and, with tears in my eyes, besought it, if it were still alive, to manifest itself to me. The voice did not reply, but suddenly I heard a long, beautiful wail which I knew well. It is the plaint of Lazarus when, at the sound of the Redeemer's voice, he begins to open his eyes and see the light of day. It was the music which you and I, Raoul, heard at Perros. And then the voice began to sing the leading phrase, "Come! And believe in me! Whoso believes in me shall live! Walk! Whoso hath believed in me shall never die! . . .' I can not tell you the effect which that music had upon me. It seemed to command me, personally, to come, to stand up and come to it. It retreated and I followed. 'Come! And believe in me!' I believed in it, I came. . . . I came and—this was the extraordinary thing—my dressing-room, as I moved, seemed to lengthen out . . . to lengthen out. . . . Evidently, it must have been an effect of mirrors . . . for I had the mirror in front of me . . . And, suddenly, I was outside the room without knowing how!"

"What! Without knowing how? Christine, Christine, you must really stop dreaming!"

"I was not dreaming, dear, I was outside my room without knowing how. You, who saw me disappear from my room one evening, may be able to explain it; but I can not. I can only tell you that, suddenly, there was no mirror before me and no dressing-room. I was in a dark passage, I was frightened and I cried out. It was quite dark, but for a faint red glimmer at a distant corner of the wall. I cried out. My voice was the only sound, for the singing and the violin had stopped. And, suddenly, a hand was laid on mine . . . or rather a stone-cold, bony thing that seized my wrist and did not let go. I cried out again. An arm took me round the waist and supported me. I struggled for a little while and then gave up the attempt. I was dragged toward the little red light and then I saw that I was in the hands of a man wrapped in a large cloak and wearing a mask that hid his whole face. I made one last effort; my limbs stiffened, my mouth opened to scream, but a hand closed it, a hand which I felt on my lips, on my skin . . . a hand that smelt of death. Then I fainted away.

"When I opened my eyes, we were still surrounded by darkness. A lantern, standing on the ground, showed a bubbling well. The water splashing from the well disappeared, almost at once, under the floor on which I was lying, with my head on the knee of the man in the black cloak and the black mask. He was bathing my temples and his hands smelt of death. I tried to push them away and asked, 'Who are you? Where is the voice?' His only answer was a sigh. Suddenly, a hot breath passed over my face and I perceived a white shape, beside the man's black shape, in the darkness. The black shape lifted me on to the white shape, a glad neighing greeted my astounded ears and I murmured, 'César!' The animal quivered. Raoul, I was lying half back on a saddle and I had recognized the white horse out of the *Profeta,* which I had so often fed with sugar and sweets. I remembered that, one evening, there was a rumor in the theater that the horse had disappeared and that it had been stolen by the Opera ghost. I believed in the voice, but had never believed in the ghost. Now, however, I began to wonder, with a shiver, whether I was the ghost's prisoner. I called upon the voice to help me, for I should never have imagined that the voice and the ghost were one. You have heard about the Opera ghost, have you not, Raoul?"

"Yes, but tell me what happened when you were on the white horse of the *Profeta?*"

"I made no movement and let myself go. The black shape held me up, and I made no effort to escape. A curious feeling of peacefulness came over me and I thought that I must be under the influence of some cordial. I had the full command of my senses; and my eyes became used to the darkness, which was lit, here and there, by fitful gleams. I calculated that we were in a narrow circular gallery, probably running all round the Opera, which is immense, underground. I had once been down into those cellars, but had stopped at the third floor, though there were two lower still, large enough to hold a town. But the figures of which I caught sight had made me run away. There are demons down there, quite black, standing in front of boilers, and they wield shovels and pitchforks and poke up fires and stir up flames and, if you come too near them, they frighten you by suddenly opening the red mouths of their furnaces. . . . Well, while César was quietly carrying me on his back, I saw those black demons in the distance, looking quite small, in front of the red fires of their furnaces: they came into sight, disappeared and came into sight again, as we went on our winding way. At last, they disappeared altogether. The shape was still holding me up and César walked on, unled and sure-footed. I could not tell you, even approximately, how long this ride lasted; I only know that we seemed to turn and turn and often went down a spiral stair into the very heart of the earth. Even then, it may be that my head was turning, but I don't think so: no, my mind was quite clear. At last, César raised his nostrils, sniffed the air and quickened his pace a little. I felt a moistness in the air and César stopped. The darkness had lifted. A sort of bluey light surrounded us. We were on the edge of a lake, whose leaden waters stretched into the distance, into the darkness; but the blue light lit up the bank and I saw a little boat fastened to an iron ring on the wharf!"

"A boat!"

"Yes, but I knew that all that existed and that there was nothing supernatural about that underground lake and boat. But think of the exceptional conditions in which I arrived upon that shore! I don't know whether the effects of the cordial had worn off when the man's shape lifted me into the boat, but my terror began all over again. My gruesome escort must have noticed it, for he sent César back and I heard his hoofs trampling up a staircase while the man jumped into the boat, untied the rope that held it and seized the oars. He rowed with a quick, powerful stroke; and his eyes, under the mask, never left me. We slipped across the noiseless water in the bluey light which I told you of; then we were in the dark again and we touched shore. And I was once more taken up in the man's arms. I cried aloud. And then, suddenly, I was silent, dazed by the light. . . . Yes, a dazzling light in the midst of which I had been put down. I sprang to my feet. I was in the middle of a drawing-room that seemed to me to be decorated, adorned and furnished with nothing but flowers, flowers both magnificent and stupid, because of the silk ribbons that tied them to baskets, like those which they sell in the shops on the boulevards. They were much too civilized flowers, like those which I used to find in my dressing-room after a first night. And, in the midst of all these flowers, stood the black shape of the man in the mask, with arms crossed, and he said, 'Don't be afraid, Christine; you are in no danger.' *It was the voice!*

"My anger equaled my amazement. I rushed at the mask and tried to snatch it away, so as to see the face of the voice. The man said, 'You are in no danger, so long as you do not touch the mask.' And, taking me gently by the wrists, he forced me into a chair and then went down on his knees before me and said nothing more! His humility gave me back some of my courage; and the light restored me to the realities of life. However extraordinary the adventure might be, I was now surrounded by mortal, visible, tangible things. The furniture, the hangings, the candles, the vases and the very flowers in their baskets, of which I could almost have told whence they came and what they cost, were bound to confine my imagination to the limits of a drawing-room quite as commonplace as any that, at least, had the excuse of not being in the cellars of the Opera. I had, no doubt, to do with a terrible, eccentric person, who, in some mysterious fashion, had succeeded in taking up his abode there, under the Opera house, five stories below the level of the ground. And the voice, the voice which I had recognized under the mask, was on its knees before me, *was a man!* And I began to cry. . . . The man, still kneeling, must have understood the cause of my tears, for he said, 'It is true, Christine! . . . I am not an Angel, nor a genius, nor a ghost . . . I am Erik!' "

Christine's narrative was again interrupted. An echo behind them seemed to repeat the word after her.

"Erik!"

What echo? . . . They both turned round and saw that night had fallen. Raoul made a movement as though to rise, but Christine kept him beside her.

"Don't go," she said. "I want you to know everything *here!*"

"But why here, Christine? I am afraid of your catching cold."

"We have nothing to fear except the trap-doors, dear, and here we are miles away from the trap-doors . . . and I am not allowed to see you outside the theater. This is not the time to annoy him. We must not arouse his suspicion."

"Christine! Christine! Something tells me that we are wrong to wait till to-morrow evening and that we ought to fly at once."

"I tell you that, if he does not hear me sing to-morrow, it will cause him infinite pain."

"It is difficult not to cause him pain and yet to escape from him for good."

"You are right in that, Raoul, for certainly he will die of my flight." And she added in a dull voice, "But then it counts both ways . . . for we risk his killing us."

"Does he love you so much?"

"He would commit murder for me."

"But one can find out where he lives. One can go in search of him. Now that we know that Erik is not a ghost, one can speak to him and force him to answer!"

Christine shook her head.

"No, no! There is nothing to be done with Erik . . . except to run away!"

"Then why, when you were able to run away, did you go back to him?"

"Because I had to. And you will understand that when I tell you how I left him."

"Oh, I hate him!" cried Raoul. "And you, Christine, tell me, do you hate him too?"

"No," said Christine simply.

"No, of course not. . . . Why, you love him! Your fear, your terror, all of that is just love and love of the most exquisite kind, the kind which people do not admit even to themselves," said Raoul bitterly. "The kind that gives you a thrill, when you think of it. . . . Picture it: a man who lives in a palace underground!" And he gave a leer.

"Then you want me to go back there?" said the young girl cruelly. "Take care, Raoul; I have told you: I should never return!"

There was an appalling silence between the three of them: the two who spoke and the shadow that listened, behind them.

"Before answering that," said Raoul, at last, speaking very slowly, "I should like to know with what feeling he inspires you, since you do not hate him."

"With horror!" she said. "That is the terrible thing about it. He fills me with horror and I do not hate him. How can I hate him, Raoul? Think of Erik at my feet, in the house on the lake, underground. He accuses himself, he curses himself, he implores my forgiveness! . . . He confesses his cheat. He loves me! He lays at my feet an immense and tragic love. . . . He has carried me off for love! . . . He has imprisoned me with him, underground, for love! . . . But he respects me: he crawls, he moans, he weeps! . . . And, when I stood up, Raoul, and told him that I could only despise him if he did not, then and there, give me my liberty . . . he offered it . . . he offered to show me the mysterious road . . .

Only . . . only he rose too . . . and I was made to remember that, though he was not an angel, nor a ghost, nor a genius, he remained the voice . . . for he sang. And I listened . . . and stayed! . . . That night, we did not exchange another word. He sang me to sleep.

"When I woke up, I was alone, lying on a sofa in a simply furnished little bedroom, with an ordinary mahogany bedstead, lit by a lamp standing on the marble top of an old Louis-Philippe chest of drawers. I soon discovered that I was a prisoner and that the only outlet from my room led to a very comfortable bath-room. On returning to the bedroom, I saw on the chest of drawers a note, in red ink, which said, 'My dear Christine, you need have no concern as to your fate. You have no better nor more respectful friend in the world than myself. You are alone, at present, in this home which is yours. I am going out shopping to fetch you all the things that you can need.' I felt sure that I had fallen into the hands of a madman. I ran round my little apartment, looking for a way of escape which I could not find. I upbraided myself for my absurd superstition, which had caused me to fall into the trap. I felt inclined to laugh and to cry at the same time.

"This was the state of mind in which Erik found me. After giving three taps on the wall, he walked in quietly through a door which I had not noticed and which he left open. He had his arms full of boxes and parcels and arranged them on the bed, in a leisurely fashion, while I overwhelmed him with abuse and called upon him to take off his mask, if it covered the face of an honest man. He replied serenely, 'You shall never see Erik's face.' And he reproached me with not having finished dressing at that time of day: he was good enough to tell me that it was two o'clock in the afternoon. He said he would give me half an hour and, while he spoke, wound up my watch and set it for me. After which, he asked me to come to the dining-room, where a nice lunch was waiting for us.

"I was very angry, slammed the door in his face and went to the bath-room. . . . When I came out again, feeling greatly refreshed, Erik said that he loved me, but that he would never tell me so except when I allowed him and that the rest of the time would be devoted to music. 'What do you mean by the rest of the time?' I asked. 'Five days,' he said, with decision. I asked him if I should then be free and he said, 'You will be free, Christine, for, when those five days are past, you will have learned not to see me; and then, from time to time, you will come to see your poor Erik!' He pointed to a chair opposite him, at a small table, and I sat down, feeling greatly perturbed. However, I ate a few prawns and the wing of a chicken and drank half a glass of tokay, which he had himself, he told me, brought from the Königsberg cellars. Erik did not eat or drink. I asked him what his nationality was and if that name of Erik did not point to his Scandinavian origin. He said that he had no name and no country and that he had taken the name of Erik by accident.

"After lunch, he rose and gave me the tips of his fingers, saying he would like to show me over his flat; but I snatched away my hand and gave a cry. What I had touched was cold and, at the same time, bony; and I remembered that his hands smelt of death. 'Oh, forgive me!' he moaned. And he opened a door before me. 'This is my bedroom, if you care to see it. It is rather curious.' His manners, his words, his attitude gave me confidence and I went in without hesitation. I felt as if I were entering the room of a dead person. The walls were all hung with black, but, instead of the white trimmings that usually set off that funereal upholstery, there was an enormous stave of music with the notes of the *Dies Iræ,* many times repeated. In the middle of the room was a canopy, from which hung curtains of red brocaded stuff, and, under the canopy, an open coffin. 'That is where I sleep,' said Erik. 'One has to get used to everything in life, even to eternity.' The sight upset me so much that I turned away my head.

"Then I saw the keyboard of an organ which filled one whole side of the walls. On the desk was a music-book covered with red notes. I asked leave to look at it and read, *'Don Juan Triumphant.'* 'Yes,' he said, 'I compose sometimes. I began that work twenty years ago. When I have finished, I shall take it away with me in that coffin and never wake up again.' 'You must work at it as seldom as you can,' I said. He replied, 'I sometimes work at it for fourteen days and nights together, during which I live on music only, and then I rest for years at a time.' 'Will you play me something out of your *Don Juan Triumphant?*' I asked, thinking to please him. 'You must never ask me that,' he said, in a gloomy voice. 'I will play you Mozart, if you like, which will only make you weep; but my *Don Juan,* Christine, burns; and yet he is not struck by fire from Heaven.' Thereupon we returned to the drawing-room. I noticed that there was no mirror in the whole apartment. I was going to remark upon this, but Erik had already sat down to the piano. He said, 'You see, Christine, there is some music that is so terrible that it consumes all those who approach it. Fortunately, you have not come to that music yet, for you would lose all your pretty coloring and nobody would know you when you returned to Paris. Let us sing something from the Opera, Christine Daaé.' He spoke these last words as though he were flinging an insult at me."

"What did you do?"

"I had no time to think about the meaning he put into his words. We at once began the duet in *Othello* and already the catastrophe was upon us. I sang *Desdemona* with a despair, a terror which I had never displayed before. As for him, his voice thundered forth his revengeful soul at every note. Love, jealousy, hatred, burst out around us in harrowing cries. Erik's black mask made me think of the natural mask of the Moor of Venice. He was Othello himself. Suddenly, I felt a need to see beneath the mask. I wanted to know the *face* of the voice, and, with a movement which I was utterly unable to control, swiftly my fingers tore away the mask. Oh, horror, horror, horror!"

Christine stopped, at the thought of the vision that had scared her, while the echoes of the night, which had repeated the name of Erik, now thrice moaned the cry:

"Horror! . . . Horror! . . . Horror!"

Raoul and Christine, clasping each other closely, raised their eyes to the stars that shone in a clear and peaceful sky. Raoul said:

"Strange, Christine, that this calm, soft night should be so full of plaintive sounds. One would think that it was sorrowing with us."

"When you know the secret, Raoul, your ears, like mine, will be full of lamentations."

She took Raoul's protecting hands in hers and, with a long shiver, continued:

"Yes, if I lived to be a hundred, I should always hear the superhuman cry of grief and rage which he uttered when the terrible sight appeared before my eyes. . . . Raoul, you have seen death's heads, when they have been dried and withered by the centuries, and, perhaps, if you were not the victim of a nightmare, you saw *his* death's head at Perros. And then you saw Red Death stalking about at the last masked ball. But all those death's heads were motionless and their dumb horror was not alive. But imagine, if you can, Red Death's mask suddenly coming to life in order to express, with the four black holes of its eyes, its nose, and its mouth, the extreme anger, the mighty fury of a demon; *and not a ray of light from the sockets,* for, as I learned later, you can not see his blazing eyes except in the dark.

"I fell back against the wall and he came up to me, grinding his teeth, and, as I fell upon my knees, he hissed mad, incoherent words and curses at me. Leaning over me, he cried, 'Look! You want to see! See! Feast your eyes, glut your soul on my cursed ugliness! Look at Erik's face! Now you know the face of the voice! You were not content to hear me, eh? You wanted to know what I looked like! Oh, you women are so inquisitive! Well, are you satisfied? I'm a very good-looking fellow, eh? . . . When a woman has seen me, as you have, she belongs to me. She loves me for ever. I am a kind of Don Juan, you know!' And, drawing himself up to his full height, with his hand on his hip, wagging the hideous thing that was his head on his shoulders, he roared, 'Look at me! *I am Don Juan triumphant!*' And, when I turned away my head and begged for mercy, he drew it to him, brutally, twisting his dead fingers into my hair."

"Enough! Enough!" cried Raoul. "I will kill him. In Heaven's name, Christine, tell me where the dining-room on the lake is! I must kill him!"

"Oh, be quiet, Raoul, if you want to know!"

"Yes, I want to know how and why you went back; I must know! . . . But, in any case, I will kill him!"

"Oh, Raoul, listen, listen! . . . He dragged me by my hair and then . . . and then . . . Oh, it is too horrible!"

"Well, what? Out with it!" exclaimed Raoul fiercely. "Out with it, quick!"

"Then he hissed at me. 'Ah, I frighten you, do I? . . . I dare say! . . . Perhaps you think that I have another mask, eh, and that this . . . this . . . my head is a mask? Well,' he roared, 'tear it off as you did the other! Come! Come along! I insist! Your hands! Your hands! Give me your hands!' And he seized my hands and dug them into his awful face. He tore his flesh with my nails, tore his terrible dead flesh with my nails! . . . 'Know,' he shouted, while his throat throbbed and panted like a furnace, 'know that I am built up of death from head to foot and that it is a corpse that loves you and adores you and will never, never leave you! . . . Look, I am not laughing now, I am crying, crying for you, Christine, who have torn off my mask and who therefore can never leave me again! . . . As long as you thought me handsome, you could have come back, I know you would have come back . . . but, now that you know my hideousness, you would run away for good. . . . So I shall keep you here! . . . Why did you want to see me? Oh, mad Christine, who wanted to see me! . . . When my own father never saw me and when my mother, so as not to see me, made me a present of my first mask!'

"He had let go of me at last and was dragging himself about on the floor, uttering terrible sobs. And then he crawled away like a snake, went into his room, closed the door and left me alone to my reflections. Presently I heard the sound of the organ; and then I began to understand Erik's contemptuous phrase when he spoke about Opera music. What I now heard was utterly different from what I had heard up to then. His *Don Juan Triumphant* (for I had not a doubt but that he had rushed to his masterpiece to forget the horror of the moment) seemed to me at first one long, awful, magnificent sob. But, little by little, it expressed every emotion, every suffering of which mankind is capable. It intoxicated me; and I opened the door that separated us. Erik rose, as I entered, *but dared not turn in my direction.* 'Erik,' I cried, 'show me your face without fear! I swear that you are the most unhappy and sublime of men; and, if ever again I shiver when I look at you, it will be because I am thinking of the splendor of your genius!' Then Erik turned round, for he believed me, and I also had faith in myself. He fell at my feet, with words of love . . . . with words of love in his dead mouth . . . and the music had ceased . . . . He kissed the hem of my dress and did not see that I closed my eyes.

"What more can I tell you, dear? You now know the tragedy. It went on for a fortnight—a fortnight during which I lied to him. My lies were as hideous as the monster who inspired them; but they were the price of my liberty. I burned his mask; and I managed so well that, even when he was not singing, he tried to catch my eye, like a dog sitting by its master. He was my faithful slave and paid me endless little attentions. Gradually, I gave him such confidence that he ventured to take me walking on the banks of the lake and to row me in the boat on its leaden waters; toward the end of my captivity he let me out through the gates that closed the underground passages in the Rue Scribe. Here a carriage awaited us and took us to the Bois. The night when we met you was nearly fatal to me, for he is terribly jealous of you and I had to tell him that you were soon going away. . . . Then, at last, after a fortnight of that horrible captivity, during which I was filled with pity, enthusiasm, despair and horror by turns, he believed me when I said, *'I will come back!'* "

"And you went back, Christine," groaned Raoul.

"Yes, dear, and I must tell you that it was not his frightful threats when setting me free that helped me to keep my word, but the harrowing sob which he gave on the threshold of the tomb. . . . That sob attached me to the unfortunate man more than I myself suspected when saying good-by to him. Poor Erik! Poor Erik!"

"Christine," said Raoul, rising, "you tell me that you love me; but you had recovered your liberty hardly a few hours before you returned to Erik! Remember the masked ball!"

"Yes; and do you remember those hours which I passed with you, Raoul . . . to the great danger of both of us?"

"I doubted your love for me, during those hours."

"Do you doubt it still, Raoul? . . . Then know that each of my visits to Erik increased my horror of him; for each of those visits, instead of calming him, as I hoped, made him mad with love! . . . And I am so frightened, so frightened! . . ."

"You are frightened . . . but do you love me? If Erik were good-looking, would you love me, Christine?"

She rose in her turn, put her two trembling arms round the young man's neck and said:

"Oh, my betrothed of a day, if I did not love you, I would not give you my lips! Take them, for the first time and the last."

He kissed her lips; but the night that surrounded them was rent asunder, they fled as at the approach of a storm and their eyes, filled with dread of Erik, showed them, before they disappeared, high up above them, an immense night-bird that stared at them with its blazing eyes and seemed to cling to the string of Apollo's lyre.

CHAPTER XIII

A MASTER-STROKE OF THE TRAP-DOOR LOVER

RAOUL and Christine ran, eager to escape from the roof and the blazing eyes that showed only in the dark; and they did not stop before they came to the eighth floor on the way down.

There was no performance at the Opera that night and the passages were empty. Suddenly, a queer-looking form stood before them and blocked the road:

"No, not this way!"

And the form pointed to another passage by which they were to reach the wings. Raoul wanted to stop and ask for an explanation. But the form, which wore a sort of long frock-coat and a pointed cap, said:

"Quick! Go away quickly!"

Christine was already dragging Raoul, compelling him to start running again.

"But who is he? Who is that man?" he asked.

Christine replied: "It's the Persian."

"What's he doing here?"

"Nobody knows. He is always in the Opera."

"You are making me run away, for the first time in my life. If we really saw Erik, what I ought to have done was to nail him to Apollo's lyre, just as we nail the owls to the walls of our Breton farms; and there would have been no more question of him."

"My dear Raoul, you would first have had to climb up to Apollo's lyre: that is no easy matter."

"The blazing eyes were there!"

"Oh, you are getting like me now, seeing him everywhere! What I took for blazing eyes was probably a couple of stars shining through the strings of the lyre."

And Christine went down another floor, with Raoul following her.

"As you have quite made up your mind to go, Christine, I assure you it would be better to go at once. Why wait for to-morrow? He may have heard us to-night."

"No, no, he is working, I tell you, at his *Don Juan Triumphant* and not thinking of us."

"You're so sure of that you keep on looking behind you!"

"Come to my dressing-room."

"Hadn't we better meet outside the Opera?"

"Never, till we go away for good! It would bring us bad luck, if I did not keep my word. I promised him to see you only here."

"It's a good thing for me that he allowed you even that. Do you know," said Raoul bitterly, "that it was very plucky of you to let us play at being engaged?"

"Why, my dear, he knows all about it! He said, 'I trust you, Christine. M. de Chagny is in love with you and is going abroad. Before he goes, I want him to be as happy as I am.' Are people so unhappy when they love?"

"Yes, Christine, when they love and are not sure of being loved."

They came to Christine's dressing-room.

"Why do you think that you are safer in this room than on the stage?" asked Raoul. "You heard him through the walls here, therefore he can certainly hear us."

"No. He gave me his word not to be behind the walls of my dressing-room again and I believe Erik's word. This room and my bedroom on the lake are for me, exclusively, and not to be approached by him."

"How can you have gone from this room into that dark passage, Christine? Suppose we try to repeat your movements; shall we?"

"It is dangerous, dear, for the glass might carry me off again; and, instead of running away, I should be obliged to go to the end of the secret passage to the lake and there call Erik."

"Would he hear you?"

"Erik will hear me wherever I call him. He told me so. He is a very curious genius. You must not think, Raoul, that he is simply a man who amuses himself by living underground. He does things that no other man could do; he knows things which nobody in the world knows."

"Take care, Christine, you are making a ghost of him again!"

"No, he is not a ghost; he is a man of Heaven and earth, that is all."

"A man of Heaven and earth . . . that is all!

A nice way to speak of him! . . . And are you still resolved to run away from him?"

"Yes, to-morrow."

"To-morrow, you will have no resolve left!"

"Then, Raoul, you must run away with me in spite of myself; is that understood?"

"I shall be here at twelve to-morrow night; I shall keep my promise, whatever happens. You say that, after listening to the performance, he is to wait for you in the dining-room on the lake?"

"Yes."

"And how are you to reach him, if you don't know how to go out by the glass?"

"Why, by going straight to the edge of the lake."

Christine opened a box, took out an enormous key and showed it to Raoul.

"What's that?" he asked.

"The key of the gate to the underground passage in the Rue Scribe."

"I understand, Christine. It leads straight to the lake. Give it to me, Christine, will you?"

"Never!" she said. "That would be treacherous!"

Suddenly Christine changed color. A mortal pallor overspread her features.

"Oh heavens!" she cried. "Erik! Erik! Have pity on me!"

"Hold your tongue!" said Raoul. "You told me he could hear you!"

But the singer's attitude became more and more inexplicable. She wrung her fingers, repeating, with a distraught air:

"Oh, Heaven! Oh, Heaven!"

"But what is it? What is it?" Raoul implored.

"The ring . . . the gold ring he gave me."

"Oh, so Erik gave you that ring!"

"You know he did, Raoul! But what you don't know is that, when he gave it to me, he said, 'I give you back your liberty, Christine, on condition that this ring is always on your finger. As long as you keep it, you will be protected against all danger and Erik will remain your friend. But woe to you if you ever part with it, for Erik will have his revenge!' . . . My dear, my dear, the ring is gone! . . Woe to us both!"

They both looked for the ring, but could not find it. Christine refused to be pacified.

"It was while I gave you that kiss, up above, under Apollo's lyre," she said. "The ring must have slipped from my finger and dropped into the street! We can never find it. And what misfortunes are in store for us now! Oh, to run away!"

"Let us run away at once," Raoul insisted, once more.

She hesitated. He thought that she was going to say yes. . . . Then her bright pupils became dimmed and she said:

"No! To-morrow!"

And she left him hurriedly, still wringing and rubbing her fingers, as though she hoped to bring the ring back like that.

Raoul went home, greatly perturbed at all that he had heard.

"If I don't save her from the hands of that humbug," he said, aloud, as he went to bed, "she is lost. But I shall save her."

He put out his lamp and felt a need to insult Erik in the dark. Thrice over, he shouted:

"Humbug! . . . Humbug! . . . Humbug!"

But, suddenly, he raised himself on his elbow. A cold sweat poured from his temples. Two eyes, like blazing coals, had appeared at the foot of his bed. They stared at him fixedly, terribly, in the darkness of the night.

Raoul was no coward; and yet he trembled. He put out a groping, hesitating hand toward the table by his bedside. He found the matches and lit his candle. The eyes disappeared.

Still uneasy in his mind, he thought to himself:

"She told me that *his* eyes only showed in the dark. His eyes have disappeared in the light, but *he* may be there still."

And he rose, hunted about, went round the room. He looked under his bed, like a child. Then he thought himself absurd, got into bed again and blew out the candle. The eyes reappeared.

He sat up and stared back at them with all the courage he possessed. Then he cried:

"Is that you, Erik? Man, genius, or ghost, is it you?"

He reflected: "If it's he, he's on the balcony!"

Then he ran to the chest of drawers and groped for his revolver. He opened the balcony window, looked out, saw nothing and closed the window again. He went back to bed, shivering, for the night was cold, and put the revolver on the table within his reach.

The eyes were still there, at the foot of the bed. Were they between the bed and the window-pane or behind the pane, that is to say, on the balcony? That was what Raoul wanted to know. He also wanted to know if those eyes belonged to a human being. . . . He wanted to know everything.

Then, patiently, calmly, he seized his revolver and took aim. He aimed a little above the two eyes. Surely, if they were eyes and if above those two eyes there was a forehead and if Raoul was not too clumsy . . .

The shot made a terrible din amid the silence of the slumbering house. And, while footsteps came hurrying along the passages, Raoul sat up with outstretched arm, ready to fire again, if need be.

This time, the two eyes had disappeared.

Servants appeared, carrying lights; Count Philippe, terribly anxious:

"What is it?"

"I think I have been dreaming," replied the young man. "I fired at two stars that kept me from sleeping."

"You're raving! Are you ill? For God's sake, tell me, Raoul: what happened?"

And the count seized hold of the revolver.

"No, no, I'm not raving. . . . Besides, we shall soon see . . ."

He got out of bed, put on a dressing-gown and slippers, took a light from the hands of a servant and, opening the window, stepped out on the balcony.

The count saw that the window had been pierced by a bullet at a man's height. Raoul was leaning over the balcony with his candle:

"Aha!" he said. "Blood! . . . Blood! . . . . . Here, there, more blood! . . . That's a good thing! A ghost who bleeds is less dangerous!" he grinned.

"Raoul! Raoul! Raoul!"

The count was shaking him as though he were trying to waken a sleep-walker.

"But, my dear brother, I'm not asleep!" Raoul protested impatiently. "You can see the blood for yourself. I thought I had been dreaming and firing at two stars. It was Erik's eyes . . . and here is his blood! . . . After all, perhaps I was wrong to shoot; and Christine is quite capable of never forgiving me. . . . All this would not have happened if I had drawn the curtains before going to bed."

"Raoul, have you suddenly gone mad? Wake up!"

"What, still? You would do better to help me find Erik . . . for, after all, a ghost who bleeds can always be found."

The count's valet said:

"That is so, sir; there is blood on the balcony."

The other man-servant brought a lamp, by the light of which they examined the balcony carefully. The marks of blood followed the rail till they reached a gutter-spout; then they went up the gutter-spout.

"My dear fellow," said Count Philippe, "you have fired at a cat."

"The misfortune is," said Raoul, with a grin, "that it's quite possible. With Erik, you never know. Is it Erik? Is it the cat? Is it the ghost? No, with Erik, you can't tell!"

Raoul went on making this strange sort of remarks which corresponded so intimately and logically with the preoccupation of his brain and which, at the same time, tended to persuade many people that his mind was unhinged. The count himself was seized with this idea; and, later, the examining magistrate, on receiving the report of the commissary of police, came to the same conclusion.

"Who is Erik?" asked the count, pressing his brother's hand.

"He is my rival. And, if he's not dead, it's a pity."

He dismissed the servants with a wave of the hand and the two Chagnys were left alone. But the men were not out of earshot before the count's valet heard Raoul say, distinctly and emphatically:

"I shall carry off Christine Daaé to-night."

This phrase was afterward repeated to M. Faure, the examining-magistrate. But no one ever knew exactly what passed between the two brothers at this interview. The servants declared that this was not their first quarrel. Their voices penetrated the wall; and it was always an actress called Christine Daaé that was in question.

At breakfast—the early morning breakfast, which the count took in his study—Philippe sent for his brother. Raoul arrived silent and gloomy. The scene was a very short one. Philippe handed his brother a copy of the *Epoque* and said:

"Read that!"

The viscount read:

"The latest news in the Faubourg is that there is a promise of marriage between Mlle. Christine Daaé, the opera-singer, and M. le Vicomte Raoul de Chagny. If the gossips are to be credited, Count Philippe has sworn that, for the first time on record, the Chagnys shall not keep their promise. But, as love is all-powerful, at the Opera as—and even more than—elsewhere, we wonder how Count Philippe intends to prevent the viscount, his brother, from leading the new Margarita to the altar. The two brothers are said to adore each other; but the count is curiously mistaken if he imagines that brotherly love will triumph over love pure and simple."

"You see, Raoul," said the count, "you are making us ridiculous! That little girl has turned your head with her ghost-stories."

The viscount had evidently repeated Christine's narrative to his brother, during the night. All that he now said was:

"Good-by, Philippe."

"Have you quite made up your mind? You are going to-night? With her?"

No reply.

"Surely you will not do anything so foolish? I *shall* know how to prevent you!"

"Good-by, Philippe," said the viscount again and left the room.

This scene was described to the examining-magistrate by the count himself, who did not see Raoul again until that evening, at the Opera, a few minutes before Christine's disappearance.

Raoul, in fact, devoted the whole day to his preparations for the flight. The horses, the carriage, the coachman, the provisions, the luggage, the money required for the journey, the road to be taken (he had resolved not to go by train, so as to throw the ghost off the scent) : all this had to be settled and provided for; and it occupied him until nine o'clock at night.

At nine o'clock, a sort of traveling-barouche with the curtains of its windows close-down, took its place in the rank on the Rotunda side. It was drawn by two powerful horses driven by a coachman whose face was almost concealed in the long folds of a muffler. In front of this traveling-carriage were three broughams, belonging respectively to Carlotta, who had suddenly returned to Paris, to Sorelli and, at the head of the rank, to Comte Philippe de Chagny. No one left the barouche. The coachman remained on his box, and the three other coachmen remained on theirs.

A shadow in a long black cloak and a soft black felt hat passed along the pavement between the Rotunda and the carriages, examined the barouche carefully, went up to the horses and the coachman and then moved away without saying a word. The magistrate afterward believed that this shadow was that of the Vicomte Raoul de Chagny; but I do not agree, seeing that that evening, as every evening, the Vicomte de Chagny was wearing a tall hat, which hat, besides, was subsequently found. I am more inclined to think that the shadow was that of the ghost, who knew all about the whole affair, as the reader will soon perceive.

They were giving *Faust,* as it happened, before a splendid house. The Faubourg was magnificently represented; and the paragraph in that morning's *Epoque* had already produced its effect, for all eyes were turned to the box in which Count Philippe sat alone, apparently in a very indifferent and careless frame of mind. The feminine element in the brilliant audience seemed curiously puzzled; and the viscount's absence gave rise to any amount of whispering behind the fans. Christine Daaé met with a rather cold reception. That special audience could not forgive her for aiming so high.

The singer noticed this unfavorable attitude of a portion of the house and was confused by it.

The regular frequenters of the Opera, who pretended to know the truth about the viscount's love-story, exchanged significant smiles at certain passages in Margarita's part; and they made a show of turning and looking at Philippe de Chagny's box when Christine sang:

"I wish I could but know who was he
That addressed me,
If he was noble, or, at least, what his name is."

The count sat with his chin on his hand and seemed to pay no attention to these manifestations. He kept his eyes fixed on the stage; but his thoughts appeared to be far away.

Christine lost her self-assurance more and more. She trembled. She felt on the verge of a breakdown. . . . Carolus Fonta wondered if she was ill, if she could keep the stage until the end of the Garden Act. In the front of the house, people remembered the catastrophe that had befallen Carlotta at the end of that act and the historic "co-ack" which had momentarily interrupted her career in Paris.

Just then, Carlotta made her entrance in a box facing the stage, a sensational entrance. Poor Christine raised her eyes upon this fresh subject of excitement. She recognized her rival. She thought she saw a sneer on her lips. That saved her. She forgot everything, in order to triumph once more.

From that moment the prima donna sang with all her heart and soul. She tried to surpass all that she had done till then; and she succeeded. In the last act when she began the invocation to the angels, she made all the members of the audience feel as though they too had wings.

In the center of the amphitheater a man stood up and remained standing, facing the singer. It was Raoul.

"Holy angel, in Heaven blessed . . ."

And Christine, her arms outstretched, her throat filled with music, the glory of her hair falling over her bare shoulders, uttered the divine cry:

"My spirit longs with thee to rest!"

It was at that moment that the stage was suddenly plunged in darkness. It happened so quickly that the spectators hardly had time to utter a sound of stupefaction, for the gas at once lit up the stage again. But Christine Daaé was no longer there!

What had become of her? What was that miracle? All exchanged glances without understanding, and the excitement at once reached its height. Nor was the tension any less great on the stage itself. Men rushed from the wings to the spot where Christine had been singing that very instant. The performance was interrupted amid the greatest disorder.

Where had Christine gone? What witchcraft had snatched her away before the eyes of thousands of enthusiastic onlookers and from the arms of Carolus Fonta himself? It was as though the angels had really carried her up "to rest."

Raoul, still standing up in the amphitheater, had uttered a cry. Count Philippe had sprung to his feet in his box. People looked at the stage, at the count, at Raoul, and wondered if this curious event was connected in any way with the paragraph in that morning's paper. But Raoul hurriedly left his seat, the count disappeared from his box and, while the curtain was lowered, the subscribers rushed to the door that led behind the scenes. The rest of the audience waited amid an indescribable hubbub. Every one spoke at once. Every one tried to suggest an explanation of the extraordinary incident.

At last, the curtain rose slowly and Carolus Fonta stepped to the conductor's desk and, in a sad and serious voice, said:

"Ladies and gentlemen, an unprecedented event has taken place and thrown us into a state of the greatest alarm. Our sister-artist, Christine Daaé, has disappeared before our eyes and nobody can tell us how!"

CHAPTER XIV

THE SINGULAR ATTITUDE OF A SAFETY-PIN

BEHIND the curtain, there was an indescribable crowd. Artists, scene-shifters, dancers, supers, choristers, subscribers were all asking questions, shouting and hustling one another.

"What became of her?"

"She's run away."

"With the Vicomte de Chagny, of course!"

"No, with the count!"

"Ah, here's Carlotta! Carlotta did the trick!"

"No, it was the ghost!"

And a few laughed, especially as a careful examination of the trap-doors and boards had put the idea of an accident out of the question.

Amid this noisy throng, three men stood talking in a low voice and with despairing gestures. They were Gabriel, the chorus-master; Mercier, the acting-manager; and Rémy, the secretary. They retired to a corner of the lobby by which the stage communicates with the wide passage leading to the foyer of the ballet. Here they stood and argued behind some enormous "properties."

"I knocked at the door," said Rémy. "They did not answer. Perhaps they are not in the office. In any case, it's impossible to find out, for they took the keys with them."

"They" were obviously the managers, who had given orders, during the last entr'acte, that they were not to be disturbed on any pretext whatever. They were not in to anybody.

"All the same," exclaimed Gabriel, "a singer isn't run away with, from the middle of the stage, every day!"

"Did you shout that to them?" asked Mercier, impatiently.

"I'll go back again," said Rémy, and disappeared at a run.

Thereupon the stage-manager arrived.

"Well, M. Mercier, are you coming? What are you two doing here? You're wanted, Mr. Acting-Manager."

"I refuse to know or to do anything before the commissary arrives," declared Mercier. "I have sent for Mifroid. We shall see when he comes!"

"And I tell you that you ought to go down to the organ at once."

"Not before the commissary comes."

"I've been down to the organ myself already."

"Ah! And what did you see?"

"Well, I saw nobody! Do you hear—nobody!"

"What do you want me to do down there for?"

"You're right!" said the stage-manager, frantically pushing his hands through his rebellious hair. "You're right! But there might be some one at the organ who could tell us how the stage came to be suddenly darkened. Now Mauclair is nowhere to be found. Do you understand that?"

Mauclair was the gas-man, who dispensed day and night at will on the stage of the Opera.

"Mauclair is not to be found!" repeated Mercier, taken aback. "Well, what about his assistants?"

"There's no Mauclair and no assistants! No one at the lights, I tell you! You can imagine," roared the stage-manager, "that that little girl must have been carried off by somebody else: she didn't run away by herself! It was a calculated stroke and we have to find out about it. . . . And what are the managers doing all this time? . . . I gave orders that no one was to go down to the lights and I posted a fireman in front of the gas-man's box beside the organ. Wasn't that right?"

"Yes, yes, quite right, quite right. And now let's wait for the commissary."

The stage-manager walked away, shrugging his shoulders, fuming, muttering insults at those milksops who remained quietly squatting in a corner while the whole theater was topsyturvy.

Gabriel and Mercier were not so quiet as all that. Only they had received an order that paralyzed them. The managers were not to be disturbed on any account. Rémy had violated that order and met with no success.

At that moment he returned from his new expedition, wearing a curiously startled air.

"Well, have you seen them?" asked Mercier.

"Moncharmin opened the door at last. His eyes were starting out of his head. I thought he meant to strike me. I could not get a word in; and what do you think he shouted at me? 'Have you a safety-pin?' 'No!' 'Well, then, clear out!' I tried to tell him that an unheard-of thing had happened on the stage, but he roared, 'A safety-pin! Give me a safety-pin at once!' A boy heard him—he was bellowing like a bull—ran up with a safety-pin and gave it to him; whereupon Moncharmin slammed the door in my face, and there you are!"

"And couldn't you have said, 'Christine Daaé.'"

"I should like to have seen you in my place. He was foaming at the mouth. He thought of nothing but his safety-pin. I believe, if they hadn't brought him one on the spot, he would have fallen down in a fit! . . Oh, all this isn't natural; and our managers are going mad! . . Besides, it can't go on like this! I'm not used to being treated in that fashion!"

Suddenly Gabriel whispered:

"It's another trick of O. G.'s."

Rémy gave a grin, Mercier a sigh and seemed about to speak . . . but, meeting Gabriel's eye, said nothing.

However, Mercier felt his responsibility increased as the minutes passed without the managers' appearing; and, at last, he could stand it no longer.

"Look here, I'll go and hunt them out myself!"

Gabriel, turning very gloomy and serious, stopped him.

"Be careful what you're doing, Mercier! If they're staying in their office, it's probably because they have to! O. G. has more than one trick in his bag!"

But Mercier shook his head.

"That's their lookout! I'm going! If people had listened to me, the police would have known everything long ago!"

And he went.

"What's everything?" asked Rémy. "What was there to tell the police? Why don't you answer, Gabriel? . . . Ah, so you know something! Well, you would do better to tell me, too, if you don't want me to shout out that you are all going mad! . . . Yes, that's what you are: mad!"

Gabriel put on a stupid look and pretended not to understand the private secretary's unseemly outburst.

"What 'something' am I supposed to know?" he said. "I don't know what you mean."

Rémy began to lose his temper.

"This evening, Richard and Moncharmin were behaving like lunatics, here, between the acts."

"I never noticed it," growled Gabriel, very much annoyed.

"Then you're the only one! . . . Do you think that I didn't see them? . . . And that M. Parabise, the manager of the Crédit Central, noticed nothing? . . . And that M. de La Borderie, the ambassador, has no eyes to see with? . . . Why, all the subscribers were pointing at our managers!"

"But what were our managers doing?" asked Gabriel, putting on his most innocent air.

"What were they doing? You know better than any one what they were doing! . . . You were there! . . . And you were watching them, you and Mercier! . . . And you were the only two who didn't laugh. . . ."

"I don't understand!"

Gabriel raised his arms and dropped them to his sides again, which gesture was meant to convey that the question did not interest him in the least. Rémy continued:

"What is the sense of this new mania of theirs? *Why won't they have any one come near them now?*"

"What? *Won't they have any one come near them?*"

"*And they won't let any one touch them!*"

"Really? Have you noticed *that they won't let any one touch them?* That is certainly odd!"

"Oh, so you admit it! And high time, too! And *then, they walk backward!*"

"*Backward!* You have seen our managers *walk backward?* Why, I thought that only crabs walked backward!"

"Don't laugh, Gabriel; don't laugh!"

"I'm not laughing," protested Gabriel, looking as solemn as a judge.

"Perhaps you can tell me this, Gabriel, as you're an intimate friend of the management: When I went up to M. Richard, outside the foyer, during the Garden interval, with my hand out before me, why did M. Moncharmin hurriedly whisper to me, 'Go away! Go away! Whatever you do, don't touch

'M. le directeur!' Am I supposed to have an infectious disease?"

"It's incredible!"

"And, a little later, when M. de La Borderie went up to M. Richard, didn't you see M. Moncharmin fling himself between them and hear him exclaim, *'M. l'ambassadeur,* I entreat you not to touch *M. le directeur'?"*

"It's terrible! . . . And what was Richard doing meanwhile?"

"What was he doing? Why, you saw him! He turned about, *bowed in front of him, though there was nobody in front of him,* and withdrew *backward."*

"Backward?"

"And Moncharmin, behind Richard, also turned about; that is, he described a semicircle behind Richard and also *walked backward!* . . . And they went *like that* to the staircase leading to the managers' office: *backward, backward, backward!* . . . Well, if they are not mad, will you explain what it means?"

"Perhaps they were practising a figure in the ballet," suggested Gabriel, without much conviction in his voice.

The secretary was furious at this wretched joke, made at so dramatic a moment. He knit his brows and contracted his lips. Then he put his mouth to Gabriel's ear:

"Don't be so sly, Gabriel. There are things going on for which you and Mercier are partly responsible."

"What do you mean?" asked Gabriel.

"Christine Daaé is not the only one who suddenly disappeared to-night."

"Oh, nonsense!"

"There's no nonsense about it. Perhaps you can tell me why, when Mother Giry came down to the foyer just now, Mercier took her by the hand and hurried her away with him?"

"Really?" said Gabriel, "I never saw it."

"You did see it, Gabriel, for you went with Mercier and Mother Giry to Mercier's office. Since then, you and Mercier have been seen, but no one has seen Mother Giry."

"Do you think we've eaten her?"

"No, but you've locked her up in the office; and any one passing the office can hear her yelling, 'Oh, the scoundrels! Oh, the scoundrels!"

At this point of this singular conversation, Mercier arrived, all out of breath.

"There!" he said, in a gloomy voice. "It's worse than ever! . . . . I shouted, 'It's a serious matter! Open the door! It's I, Mercier.' I heard footsteps. The door opened and Moncharmin appeared. He was very pale. He said, 'What do you want?' I answered, 'Some one has run away with Christine Daaé.' What do you think he said? 'And a good job, too!' And he shut the door, after putting this in my hand."

Mercier opened his hand; Rémy and Gabriel looked.

"The safety-pin!" cried Rémy.

"Strange! Strange!" muttered Gabriel, who could not help shivering.

Suddenly a voice made them all three turn round.

"I beg your pardon, gentlemen. Could you tell me where Christine Daaé is?"

In spite of the seriousness of the circumstances, the absurdity of the question would have made them roar with laughter, if they had not caught sight of a face so sorrow-stricken that they were at once seized with pity. It was the Vicomte Raoul de Chagny.

CHAPTER XV

CHRISTINE! CHRISTINE!

RAOUL'S first thought, after Christine Daaé's fantastic disappearance, was to accuse Erik. He no longer doubted the almost supernatural powers of the Angel of Music, in this domain of the Opera in which he had set up his empire. And Raoul rushed on the stage, in a mad fit of love and despair.

"Christine! Christine!" he moaned, calling to her as he felt that she must be calling to him from the depths of that dark pit to which the monster had carried her. "Christine! Christine!"

And he seemed to hear the girl's screams through the frail boards that separated him from her. He bent forward, he listened, . . . he wandered over the stage like a madman. Ah, to descend, to descend into that pit of darkness every entrance to which was closed to him, . . . for the stairs that led below the stage were forbidden to one and all that night!

"Christine! Christine! . . ."

People pushed him aside, laughing. They made fun of him. They thought the poor lover's brain was gone!

By what mad road, through what passages of mystery and darkness known to him alone had Erik dragged that pure-souled child to the awful haunt, with the Louis-Philippe room, opening out on the lake?

"Christine! Christine! . . . Why don't you answer? . . . Are you alive? . . ."

Hideous thoughts flashed through Raoul's congested brain. Of course, Erik must have discovered their secret, must have known that Christine had played him false. What a vengeance would be his!

And Raoul thought again of the yellow stars that had come, the night before, and roamed over his balcony. Why had he not put them out for good? There were some men's eyes that dilated in the darkness and shone like stars or like cats' eyes. Certainly Albinos, who seemed to have rabbits' eyes by day, had cats' eyes at night: everybody knew that! . . . Yes, yes, he had undoubtedly fired at Erik. Why had he not killed him? The monster had fled up the gutter-spout like a cat or a convict who—everybody knew that also—would scale the very skies, with the help of a gutter-spout. . . . No doubt Erik was at that time contemplating some decisive step against Raoul, but he had been wounded and had escaped to turn against poor Christine instead.

Such were the cruel thoughts that haunted Raoul as he ran to the singer's dressing-room.

"Christine! Christine!"

Bitter tears scorched the boy's eyelids as he saw scattered over the furniture the clothes which his beautiful bride was to have worn at the hour of their flight. Oh, why had she refused to leave earlier? Why had she toyed with the threatening catastrophe? Why toyed with the monster's heart? Why, in a final access of pity, had she insisted on flinging, as a last sop to that demon's soul, her divine song:

"Holy angel, in Heaven blessed,
My spirit longs with thee to rest!"

Raoul, his throat filled with sobs, oaths and insults, fumbled awkwardly at the great mirror that had opened one night, before his eyes, to let Christine pass to the murky dwelling below. He pushed, pressed, groped about, but the glass apparently obeyed no one but Erik. . . . Perhaps actions were not enough with a glass of the kind? Perhaps he was expected to utter certain words? When he was a little boy, he had heard that there were things that obeyed the spoken word!

Suddenly, Raoul remembered something about a gate opening into the Rue Scribe, an underground passage running straight to the Rue Scribe from the lake. . . . Yes, Christine had told him about that. . . . And, when he found that the key was no longer in the box, he nevertheless ran to the Rue Scribe.

Outside, in the street, he passed his trembling hands over the huge stones, felt for outlets . . . met with iron bars . . . were those they? . . . Or these? . . . Or could it be that air-hole? . . . He plunged his useless eyes through the bars. . . . How dark it was in there! . . . He listened. . . . All was silence! . . . He went round the building . . . and came to bigger bars, immense gates! . . . It was the entrance to the Cour de l'Administration.

Raoul rushed into the doorkeeper's lodge.

"I beg your pardon, madame, could you tell me where to find a gate or door, made of bars, iron bars, opening into the Rue Scribe . . . and leading to the lake? . . . You know the lake I mean? . . . Yes, the underground lake . . . under the Opera."

"Yes, sir, I know there is a lake under the Opera, but I don't know which door leads to it. I have never been there!"

"And the Rue Scribe, madame, the Rue Scribe? Have you never been to the Rue Scribe?"

The woman laughed, screamed with laughter! Raoul darted away, roaring with anger, ran up-stairs, four stairs at a time, down-stairs, rushed through the whole of the business side of the opera-house, found himself once more in the light of the stage.

He stopped, with his heart thumping in his chest: suppose Christine Daaé had been found? He saw a group of men and asked:

"I beg your pardon, gentlemen. Could you tell me where Christine Daaé is?"

And somebody laughed.

At the same moment the stage buzzed with a new sound and, amid a crowd of men in evening-dress, all talking and gesticulating together, appeared a man who seemed very calm and displayed a pleasant face, all pink and chubby-cheeked, crowned with curly hair and lit up by a pair of wonderfully serene blue eyes.

Mercier, the acting-manager, called the Vicomte de Chagny's attention to him and said:

"This is the gentleman to whom you should put your question, monsieur. Let me introduce M. Mifroid, the commissary of police."

"Ah, M. le Vicomte de Chagny! Delighted to meet you, monsieur," said the commissary. "Would you mind coming with me? . . . And now where are the managers? . . . Where are the managers? . . ."

Mercier did not answer, and Rémy, the secretary, volunteered the information that the managers were locked up in their office and that they knew nothing as yet of what had happened.

"You don't mean to say so! Let us go up to the office!"

And M. Mifroid, followed by an ever-increasing crowd, turned toward the business side of the building. Mercier took advantage of the confusion to slip a key into Gabriel's hand:

"This is all going very badly," he whispered. "You had better let Mother Giry out."

And Gabriel moved away.

They soon came to the managers' door. Mercier stormed in vain: the door remained closed.

"Open in the name of the law!" commanded M. Mifroid, in a loud and rather anxious voice.

At last the door was opened. All rushed in to the office, on the commissary's heels.

Raoul was the last to enter. As he was about to follow the rest into the room, a hand was laid on his shoulder and he heard these words spoken in his ear:

"Erik's secrets concern no one but himself!"

He turned around, with a stifled exclamation. The hand that was laid on his shoulder was now placed on the lips of a person with an ebony skin, with eyes of jade and with an astrakhan cap on his head: the Persian!

The stranger kept up the gesture that recommended discretion and then, at the moment when the astonished viscount was about to ask the reason of his mysterious intervention, bowed and disappeared.

CHAPTER XVI

MME. GIRY'S ASTOUNDING REVELATIONS AS TO HER PERSONAL RELATIONS WITH THE OPERA GHOST

BEFORE following the commissary into the manager's office I must describe certain extraordinary occurrences that took place in that office which Rémy and Mercier had vainly tried to enter and into which MM. Richard and Moncharmin had locked themselves with an object which the reader does not yet know, but which it is my duty, as an historian, to reveal without further postponement.

I have had occasion to say that the managers' mood had undergone a disagreeable change for some time past and to convey the fact that this change was due not only to the fall of the chandelier on the famous night of the gala performance.

The reader must know that the ghost had calmly been paid his first twenty thousand francs. Oh, there had been wailing and gnashing of teeth, indeed! And yet the thing had happened as simply as could be.

One morning, the managers found on their table an envelope addressed to "Monsieur O. G. (private)" and accompanied by a note from O. G. himself:

> The time has come to carry out the clause in the memorandum-book. Please put twenty notes of a thousand francs each into this envelope, seal it with your own seal and hand it to Mme. Giry, who will do what is necessary.

The managers did not hesitate; without wasting time in asking how these confounded communications came to be delivered in an office which they were careful to keep locked, they seized this opportunity of laying hands on the mysterious blackmailer. And, after telling the whole story, under the promise of secrecy, to Gabriel and Mercier, they put the twenty thousand francs into the envelope and without asking for explanations, handed it to Mme. Giry, who had been reinstated in her functions. The box-keeper displayed no astonishment. I need hardly say that she was well watched. She went straight to the ghost's box and placed the precious envelope on the little shelf attached to the ledge. The two managers, as well as Gabriel and Mercier, were hidden in such a way that they did not lose sight of the envelope for a second during the performance and even afterward, for, as the envelope had not moved, those who watched it did not move either; and Mme. Giry went away while the managers, Gabriel and Mercier were still there. At last, they became tired of waiting and opened the envelope, after ascertaining that the seals had not been broken.

At first sight, Richard and Moncharmin thought that the notes were still there; but soon they perceived that they were not the same. The twenty real notes were gone and had been replaced by twenty notes of the "Bank of St. Farce"!*

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*Flash notes drawn on the "Bank of St. Farce" in France correspond with those drawn on the "Bank of Engraving" in England.—Translator's Note.

The managers' rage and fright were unmistakable. Moncharmin wanted to send for the commissary of police, but Richard objected. He no doubt had a plan, for he said:

"Don't let us make ourselves ridiculous! All Paris would laugh at us. O. G. has won the first game: we will win the second."

He was thinking of the next month's allowance.

Nevertheless, they had been so absolutely tricked that they were bound to suffer a certain dejection. And, upon my word, it was not difficult to understand. We must not forget that the managers had an idea at the back of their minds, all the time, that this strange incident might be an unpleasant practical joke on the part of their predecessors and that it would not do to divulge it prematurely. On the other hand, Moncharmin was sometimes troubled with a suspicion of Richard himself, who occasionally took fanciful whims into his head. And so they were content to await events, while keeping an eye on Mother Giry. Richard would not have her spoken to.

"If she is a confederate," he said, "the notes are gone long ago. But, in my opinion, she is merely an idiot."

"She's not the only idiot in this business," said Moncharmin pensively.

"Well, who could have thought it?" moaned Richard. "But don't be afraid . . . next time, I shall have taken my precautions."

The next time fell on the same day that beheld the disappearance of Christine Daaé. In the morning, a note from the ghost reminded them that the money was due. It read:

> Do just as you did last time. It went very well. Put the twenty thousand in the envelope and hand it to our excellent Mme. Giry.

And the note was accompanied by the usual envelope. They had only to insert the notes.

This was done about half an hour before the curtain rose on the first act of *Faust*. Richard showed the envelope to Moncharmin. Then he counted the twenty thousand-franc notes in front of him and put the notes into the envelope, but without closing it.

"And now," he said, "let's have Mother Giry in."

The old woman was sent for. She entered with a sweeping courtesy. She still wore her black taffeta dress, the color of which was rapidly turning to rust and lilac, to say nothing of the dingy bonnet. She seemed in a good temper. She at once said:

"Good evening, gentlemen! It's for the envelope, I suppose?"

"Yes, Mme. Giry," said Richard, most amiably. "For the envelope . . . and something else besides."

"At your service, M. Richard, at your service. And what is the something else, please?"

"First of all, Mme. Giry, I have a little question to put to you."

"By all means, M. Richard: Mme. Giry is here to answer you."

"Are you still on good terms with the ghost?"

"Couldn't be better, sir; couldn't be better."

"Ah, we are delighted. . . . Look here, Mme. Giry," said Richard, in the tone of making an important confidence. "We may just as well tell you, among ourselves . . . you're no fool!"

"Why, sir," exclaimed the box-keeper, stopping the pleasant nodding of the black feathers in her dingy bonnet, "I assure you no one has ever doubted that!"

"We are quite agreed and we shall soon understand one another. The story of the ghost is all humbug, isn't it? . . . Well, still between ourselves, . . . it has lasted long enough."

Mme. Giry looked at the managers as though they were talking Chinese. She walked up to Richard's table and asked, rather anxiously:

"What do you mean? I don't understand."

"Oh, you understand quite well. In any case, you've got to understand. . . . And, first of all, tell us his name."

"Whose name?"

"The name of the man whose accomplice you are, Mme. Giry!"

"I am the ghost's accomplice? I? . . . His accomplice in what, pray?"

"You do all he wants."

"Oh! He's not very troublesome, you know."

"And does he still tip you?"

"I mustn't complain."

"How much does he give you for bringing him that envelope?"

"Ten francs."

"You poor thing! That's not much, is it?

"Why?"

"I'll tell you that presently, Mme. Giry. Just now we should like to know for what extraordinary reason you have given yourself body and soul, to this ghost . . . Mme. Giry's friendship and devotion are not to be bought for five francs or ten francs."

"That's true enough. . . . And I can tell you the reason, sir. There's no disgrace about it. . . on the contrary."

"We're quite sure of that, Mme. Giry!"

"Well, it's like this . . . only the ghost doesn't like me to talk about his business."

"Indeed?" sneered Richard.

"But this is a matter that concerns myself alone. . . . Well, it was in Box Five one evening, I found a letter addressed to myself, a sort of note written in red ink. I needn't read the letter to you, sir; I know it by heart, and I shall never forget it if I live to be a hundred!"

And Mme. Giry, drawing herself up, recited the letter with touching eloquence:

MADAM:

1825. Mlle. Ménétrier, leader of the ballet, became Marquise de Cussy.

1832. Mlle. Marie Taglioni, a dancer, became Comtesse Gilbert des Voisins.

1846. La Sota, a dancer, married a brother of the King of Spain.

1847. Lola Montes, a dancer, became the morganatic wife of King Louis of Bavaria and was created Countess of Landsfeld.

1848. Mlle. Maria, a dancer, became Baronne d'Herneville.

1870. Thérèsa Hessier, a dancer, married Dom Fernando, brother to the King of Portugal.

Richard and Moncharmin listened to the old woman, who, as she proceeded with the enumeration of these glorious nuptials, swelled out, took courage and, at last, in a voice bursting with pride, flung out the last sentence of the prophetic letter:

1885. Meg Giry, Empress!

Exhausted by this supreme effort, the box-keeper fell into a chair, saying:

"Gentlemen, the letter was signed, 'Opera Ghost.' I had heard much of the ghost, but only half believed in him. From the day when he declared that my little Meg, the flesh of my flesh, the fruit of my womb, would be empress, I believed in him altogether."

And really it was not necessary to make a long study of Mme. Giry's excited features to understand what could be got out of that fine intellect with the two words "ghost" and "empress."

But who pulled the strings of that extraordinary puppet? That was the question.

"You have never seen him; he speaks to you and you believe all he says?" asked Moncharmin.

"Yes. To begin with, I owe it to him that my little Meg was promoted to be the leader of a row. I said to the ghost, 'If she is to be empress in 1885, there is no time to lose; she must become a leader at once.' He said, 'Look upon it as done.' And he had only a word to say to M. Poligny and the thing was done."

"So you see that M. Poligny saw him!"

"No, not any more than I did; but he heard him. The ghost said a word in his ear, you know, on the evening when he left Box Five, looking so dreadfully pale."

Moncharmin heaved a sigh. "What a business!" he groaned.

"Ah!" said Mme. Giry. "I always thought there were secrets between the ghost and M. Poligny. Anything that the ghost asked M. Poligny to do M. Poligny did. M. Poligny could refuse the ghost nothing."

"You hear, Richard: Poligny could refuse the ghost nothing."

"Yes, yes, I hear!" said Richard. "M. Poligny is a friend of the ghost; and, as Mme. Giry is a friend of M. Poligny, there we are! . . . But I don't care a hang about M. Poligny," he added roughly. "The only person whose fate really interests me is Mme. Giry. . . . Mme. Giry, do you know what is in this envelope?"

"Why, of course not," she said.

"Well, look."

Mme. Giry looked into the envelope with a lack-luster eye, which soon recovered its brilliancy.

"Thousand-franc notes!" she cried.

"Yes, Mme. Giry, thousand-franc notes! And you knew it!"

"I, sir? I? . . . I swear . . ."

"Don't swear, Mme. Giry! . . . And now I will tell you the second reason why I sent for you. Mme. Giry, I am going to have you arrested."

The two black feathers on the dingy bonnet, which usually affected the attitude of two notes of interrogation, changed into two notes of exclamation; as for the bonnet itself, it swayed in menace on the old lady's tempestuous chignon. Surprise, indignation, protest and dismay were furthermore displayed by little Meg's mother in a sort of extravagant movement of offended virtue, half bound, half slide, that brought her right under the nose of M. Richard, who could not help pushing back his chair.

"Have me arrested!"

The mouth that spoke those words seemed to spit the three teeth that were left to it into Richard's face.

M. Richard behaved like a hero. He retreated no farther. His threatening forefinger seemed already to be pointing out the keeper of Box Five to the absent magistrates.

"I am going to have you arrested, Mme. Giry, as a thief!"

"Say that again!"

And Mme. Giry caught Mr. Manager Richard a mighty box on the ear, before Mr. Manager Moncharmin had time to intervene. But it was not the withered hand of the angry old beldame that fell on the managerial ear, but the envelope itself, the cause of all the trouble, the magic envelope that opened with the blow, scattering the bank-notes, which escaped in a fantastic whirl of giant butterflies.

The two managers gave a shout, and the same thought made them both go on their knees, feverishly picking up and hurriedly examining the precious scraps of paper.

"Are they still genuine, Moncharmin?"

"Are they still genuine, Richard?"

"Yes, they are still genuine!"

Above their heads, Mame Giry's three teeth were clashing in a noisy contest, full of hideous interjections. But all that could be clearly distinguished was this *Leit-motif:*

"I, a thief! . . . I, a thief, I?"

She choked with rage. She shouted:

"I never heard of such a thing!"

And, suddenly, she darted up to Richard again.

"In any case," she yelped, "you, M. Richard, ought to know better than I where the twenty thousand francs went to!"

"I?" asked Richard, astounded. "And how should I know?"

Moncharmin, looking severe and dissatisfied, at once insisted that the good lady should explain herself.

"What does this mean, Mme. Giry?" he asked. "And why do you say that M. Richard ought to know better than you where the twenty-thousand francs went to?"

As for Richard, who felt himself turning red under Moncharmin's eyes, he took Mme. Giry by the wrist and shook it violently. In a voice growling and rolling like thunder, he roared:

"Why should I know better than you where the twenty-thousand francs went to? Why? Answer me!"

"Because they went into your pocket!" gasped the old woman, looking at him as if he were the devil incarnate.

Richard would have rushed upon Mme. Giry, if Moncharmin had not stayed his avenging hand and hastened to ask her, more gently:

"How can you suspect my partner, M. Richard, of putting twenty-thousand francs in his pocket?"

"I never said that," declared Mame Giry, "seeing that it was myself who put the twenty-thousand francs into M. Richard's pocket." And she added, under her voice, "There! It's out! . . . And may the ghost forgive me!"

Richard began bellowing anew, but Moncharmin authoritatively ordered him to be silent.

"Allow me! Allow me! Let the woman explain herself. Let me question her." And he added: "It is really astonishing that you should take up such a tone! . . . We are on the verge of clearing up the whole mystery. And you're in a rage! . . . You're wrong to behave like that. . . I'm enjoying myself immensely."

Mame Giry, like the martyr that she was, raised her head, her face beaming with faith in her own innocence.

"You tell me there were twenty-thousand francs in the envelope which I put into M. Richard's pocket; but I tell you again that I knew nothing about it. . . Nor M. Richard either, for that matter!"

"Aha!" said Richard, suddenly assuming a swaggering air which Moncharmin did not like. "I knew nothing either! You put twenty-thousand francs in my pocket and I knew nothing either! I am very glad to hear it, Mme. Giry!"

"Yes," the terrible dame agreed, "yes, it's true. We neither of us knew anything. But you, you must have ended by finding out!"

Richard would certainly have swallowed Mame Giry alive, if Moncharmin had not been there! But Moncharmin protected her. He resumed his questions:

"What sort of envelope did you put in M. Richard's pocket? It was not the one which we gave you, the one which you took to Box Five before our eyes; and yet that was the one which contained the twenty-thousand francs."

"I beg your pardon. The envelope which *M. le directeur* gave me was the one which I slipped into *M. le directeur's* pocket," explained Mame Giry. "The one which I took to the ghost's box was another envelope, just like it, which the ghost gave me beforehand and which I hid up my sleeve."

So saying, Mame Giry took from her sleeve an envelope ready prepared and similarly addressed to that containing the twenty-thousand francs. The managers took it from her. They examined it and saw that it was fastened with seals stamped with their own managerial seal. They opened it. It contained twenty Bank of St. Farce notes like those which had so much astounded them the month before.

"How simple!" said Richard.

"How simple!" repeated Moncharmin. And he continued with his eyes fixed upon Mame Giry, as though trying to hypnotize her.

"So it was the ghost who gave you this envelope and told you to substitute it for the one which we gave you? And it was the ghost who told you to put the other into M. Richard's pocket?"

"Yes, it was the ghost."

"Then would you mind giving us a specimen of your little talents? Here is the envelope. Act as though we knew nothing."

"As you please, gentlemen."

Mame Giry took the envelope with the twenty notes inside it and made for the door. She was on the point of going out when the two managers rushed at her:

"Oh, no! Oh, no! We're not going to be 'done' a second time! Once bitten, twice shy!"

"I beg your pardon, gentlemen," said the old woman, in self-excuse, "you told me to act as though you knew nothing. . . . . Well, if you knew nothing, I should go away with your envelope!"

"And then how would you slip it into my pocket?" argued Richard, whom Moncharmin fixed with his left eye, while keeping his right on Mame Giry: a proceeding likely to strain his sight, but Moncharmin was prepared to go to any length to discover the truth.

"I am to slip it into your pocket when you least expect it, sir. You know that I always take a little turn behind the scenes, in the course of the evening, and I often go with my daughter to the ballet-foyer, which I am entitled to do, as her mother; I bring her her shoes, when the ballet is about to begin . . . . in fact, I come and go as I please. . . . The subscribers come and go too. . . . So do you, sir. . . . There are lots of people about. . . I go behind you and slip the envelope into the tail-pocket of your dress-coat. . . . There's no witchcraft about that!"

"No witchcraft!" growled Richard, rolling his eyes like Jupiter Tonans. "No witchcraft! Why, I've just caught you in a lie, you old witch!"

Mame Giry bristled, with her three teeth sticking out of her mouth.

"And why, may I ask?"

"Because I spent that evening watching Box Five and the sham envelope which you put there. I did not go to the ballet-foyer for a second."

"No, sir, and I did not give you the envelope that evening, but at the next performance . . . on the evening when the under-secretary of state for fine arts . . ."

At these words, M. Richard suddenly interrupted Mame Giry:

"Yes, that's true, I remember now! The under-secretary went behind the scenes. He asked for me.

I went down to the ballet-foyer for a moment. I was on the foyer steps. . . . The under-secretary and his chief clerk were in the foyer itself. . . . I suddenly turned around . . . you had passed behind me, Mme. Giry. . . . You seemed to push against me. . . . Oh, I can see you still, I can see you still!"

"Yes, that's it, sir, that's it. I had just finished my little business. That pocket of yours, sir, is very handy!"

And Mame Giry once more suited the action to the word. She passed behind M. Richard and, so nimbly that Moncharmin himself was impressed by it, slipped the envelope into the pocket of one of the tails of M. Richard's dress-coat.

"Of course!" exclaimed Richard, looking a little pale. "It's very clever of O. G. The problem which he had to solve was this: how to do away with any dangerous intermediary between the man who gives the twenty-thousand francs and the man who receives it. And by far the best thing he could hit upon was to come and take the money from my pocket without my noticing it, as I myself did not know that it was there. It's wonderful!"

"Oh, wonderful, no doubt!" Moncharmin agreed. "Only, you forget, Richard, that I provided ten-thousand francs of the twenty and that nobody put anything in my pocket!"

CHAPTER XVII

THE SAFETY-PIN AGAIN

MONCHARMIN'S last phrase so clearly expressed the suspicion in which he now held his partner that it was bound to cause a stormy explanation, at the end of which it was agreed that Richard should yield to all Moncharmin's wishes, with the object of helping him to discover the miscreant who was victimizing them.

This brings us to the interval after the Garden Act, with the strange conduct observed by M. Rémy and those curious lapses from the dignity that might be expected of the managers. It was arranged between Richard and Moncharmin, first, that Richard should repeat the exact movements which he had made on the night of the disappearance of the first twenty-thousand francs; and, second, that Moncharmin should not for an instant lose sight of Richard's coat-tail pocket, into which Mame Giry was to slip the twenty-thousand francs.

M. Richard went and placed himself at the identical spot where he had stood when he bowed to the under-secretary for fine arts. M. Moncharmin took up his position a few steps behind him.

Mame Giry passed, rubbed up against M. Richard, got rid of her twenty-thousand francs in the manager's coat-tail pocket and disappeared. . . . Or rather she was conjured away. In accordance with the instructions received from Moncharmin a few minutes earlier, Mercier took the good lady to the acting-manager's office and turned the key on her, thus making it impossible for her to communicate with her ghost.

Meanwhile, M. Richard was bending and bowing and scraping and walking backward, just as if he had that high and mighty minister, the under-secretary for fine arts, before him. Only, though these marks of politeness would have created no astonishment if the under-secretary of state had really been in front of M. Richard, they caused an easily comprehensible amazement to the spectators of this very natural but quite inexplicable scene when M. Richard had nobody in front of him.

M. Richard bowed . . . to nobody; bent his back . . . before nobody; and walked backward . . . before nobody. . . . And, a few steps behind him, M. Moncharmin did the same thing that he was doing, in addition to pushing away M. Rémy and begging M. de La Borderie, the ambassador, and the manager of the Crédit Central "not to touch *M. le directeur.*"

Moncharmin, who had his own ideas, did not want Richard to come to him presently, when the twenty-thousand francs were gone, and say:

"Perhaps it was the ambassador . . . or the manager of the Crédit Central . . . or Rémy."

The more so as, at the time of the first scene, as

Richard himself admitted, Richard had met nobody in that part of the theater after Mame Giry had brushed up against him. . . .

Having begun by walking backward in order to bow, Richard continued to do so from prudence, until he reached the passage leading to the offices of the management. In this way, he was constantly watched by Moncharmin from behind and himself kept an eye on any one approaching from the front. Once more, this novel method of walking behind the scenes, adopted by the managers of our National Academy of Music, attracted attention; but the managers themselves thought of nothing but their twenty-thousand francs.

On reaching the half-dark passage, Richard said to Moncharmin, in a low voice:

"I am sure that nobody has touched me. . . . You had now better keep at some distance from me and watch me till I come to door of the office: it is better not to arouse suspicion and we can see anything that happens."

But Moncharmin replied. "No, Richard, no! You walk ahead and I'll walk immediately behind you! I won't leave you by a step!"

"But, in that case," exclaimed Richard, "they will never steal our twenty-thousand francs!"

"I should hope not, indeed!" declared Moncharmin.

"Then what we are doing is absurd!"

"We are doing exactly what we did last time. . . . Last time, I joined you as you were leaving the stage and followed close behind you down this passage."

"That's true!" sighed Richard, shaking his head and passively obeying Moncharmin.

Two minutes later, the joint managers locked themselves into their office. Moncharmin himself put the key in his pocket:

"We remained locked up like this, last time," he said, "until you left the Opera to go home."

"That's so. No one came and disturbed us, I suppose?"

"No one."

"Then," said Richard, who was trying to collect his memory, "then I must certainly have been robbed on my way home from the Opera."

"No," said Moncharmin in a drier tone than ever, "no, that's impossible. For I dropped you in my cab. The twenty-thousand francs disappeared at your place: there's not a shadow of a doubt about that."

"It's incredible!" protested Richard. "I am sure of my servants . . . and if one of them had done it, he would have disappeared since."

Moncharmin shrugged his shoulders, as though to say that he did not wish to enter into details, and Richard began to think that Moncharmin was treating him in a very insupportable fashion.

"Moncharmin, I've had enough of this!"

"Richard, I've had too much of it!"

"Do you dare to suspect me?"

"Yes, of a silly joke."

"One doesn't joke with twenty-thousand francs."

"That's what I think," declared Moncharmin, unfolding a newspaper and ostentatiously studying its contents.

"What are you doing?" asked Richard. "Are you going to read the paper next?"

"Yes, Richard, until I take you home."

"Like last time?"

"Yes, like last time."

Richard snatched the paper from Moncharmin's hands. Moncharmin stood up, more irritated than ever, and found himself faced by an exasperated Richard, who, crossing his arms on his chest, said:

"Look here, I'm thinking of this, *I'm thinking of what I might think* if, like last time, after my spending the evening alone with you, you brought me home and if, at the moment of parting, I perceived that twenty-thousand francs had disappeared from my coat-pocket . . . like last time."

"And what might you think?" asked Moncharmin, crimson with rage.

"I might think that, as you hadn't left me by a foot's breadth and as, by your own wish, you were the only one to approach me, like last time, I might think that, if that twenty-thousand francs was no longer in my pocket, it stood a very good chance of being in yours!"

Moncharmin leaped up at the suggestion.

"Oh!" he shouted. "A safety-pin!"

"What do you want a safety-pin for?"

"To fasten you up with! . . . A safety-pin! . . . A safety-pin!"

"You want to fasten me with a safety-pin?"

"Yes, to fasten you to the twenty-thousand francs! Then, whether it's here, or on the drive from here to your place, or at your place, you will feel the hand that pulls at your pocket and you will see if it's mine! Oh, so you're suspecting me now, are you? A safety-pin!"

And that was the moment when Moncharmin opened the door on the passage and shouted:

"A safety-pin! . . . somebody give me a safety-pin!"

And we also know how, at the same moment, Rémy, who had no safety-pin, was received by Moncharmin, while a boy procured the pin so eagerly longed for. And what happened was this: Moncharmin first locked the door again. Then he knelt down behind Richard's back.

"I hope," he said, "that the notes are still there?"

"So do I," said Richard.

"The real ones?" asked Moncharmin, resolved not to be "had" this time.

"Look for yourself," said Richard. "I refuse to touch them."

Moncharmin took the envelope from Richard's pocket and drew out the bank-notes with a trembling hand, for, this time, in order frequently to make sure of the presence of the notes, he had not sealed the envelope nor even fastened it. He felt reassured on finding that they were all there and quite genuine. He put them back in the tail-pocket and pinned them with great care. Then he sat down behind Richard's coat-tails and kept his eyes fixed on them, while Richard, sitting at his writing-table, did not stir.

"A little patience, Richard," said Moncharmin. "We have only a few minutes to wait. . . . The clock will soon strike twelve. Last time, we left at the last stroke of twelve."

"Oh, I shall have all the patience necessary!"

The time passed, slow, heavy, mysterious, stifling. Richard tried to laugh.

"I shall end by believing in the omnipotence of the ghost," he said. "Just now, don't you find something uncomfortable, disquieting, alarming in the atmosphere of this room?"

"You're quite right," said Moncharmin, who was really impressed.

"The ghost!" continued Richard, in a low voice, as though fearing lest he should be overheard by invisible ears. "The ghost! Suppose, all the same, it were a ghost who puts the magic envelopes on the table . . . who talks in Box Five . . . who killed Joseph Buquet . . . who unhooked the chandelier . . . and who robs us! For, after all, after all, after all, there is no one here except you and me, and, if the notes disappear and neither you nor I have anything to do with it, well, we shall have to believe in the ghost . . . in the ghost."

At that moment, the clock on the mantlepiece gave its warning click and the first stroke of twelve struck.

The two managers shuddered. The perspiration streamed from their foreheads. The twelfth stroke sounded strangely in their ears.

When the clock stopped, they gave a sigh and rose from their chairs.

"I think we can go now," said Moncharmin.

"I think so," Richard agreed.

"Before we go, do you mind if I look in your pocket?"

"But, of course, Moncharmin, *you must!* . . . Well?" he asked, as Moncharmin was feeling at the pocket.

"Well, I can feel the pin."

"Of course, as you said, we can't be robbed without noticing it."

But Moncharmin, whose hands were still fumbling, bellowed:

"I can feel the pin, but I can't feel the notes!"

"Come, no joking, Moncharmin! . . . This isn't the time for it."

"Well, feel for yourself."

Richard tore off his coat. The two managers turned the pocket inside out. *The pocket was empty.* And the curious thing was that the pin remained, stuck in the same place.

Richard and Moncharmin turned pale. There was no longer any doubt about the witchcraft.

"The ghost!" muttered Moncharmin.

But Richard suddenly sprang upon his partner.

"No one but you has touched my pocket! Give me back my twenty-thousand francs! . . . Give me back my twenty-thousand francs! . . ."

"On my soul," sighed Moncharmin, who was ready to swoon, "on my soul, I swear that I haven't got it!"

Then somebody knocked at the door. Moncharmin opened it automatically, seemed hardly to recognize Mercier, his business-manager, exchanged a few words with him, without knowing what he was saying and, with an unconscious movement, put the safety-pin, for which he had no further use, into the hands of his bewildered subordinate. . . .

CHAPTER XVIII

THE COMMISSARY, THE VISCOUNT AND THE PERSIAN

THE first words of the commissary of police, on entering the managers' office, were to ask after the missing prima donna.

"Is Christine Daaé here?"

"Christine Daaé here?" echoed Richard. "No. Why?"

As for Moncharmin, he had not the strength left to utter a word.

Richard repeated, for the commissary and the compact crowd which had followed him into the office observed an impressive silence.

"Why do you ask if Christine Daaé is here, *M. le commissaire?*"

"Because she has to be found," declared the commissary of police solemnly.

"What do you mean, she has to be found? Has she disappeared?"

"In the middle of the performance!"

"In the middle of the performance? This is extraordinary!"

"Isn't it? And what is quite as extraordinary is that you should first learn it from me!"

"Yes," said Richard, taking his head in his hands and muttering. "What is this new business? Oh, it's enough to make a man send in his resignation!"

And he pulled a few hairs out of his mustache without even knowing what he was doing.

"So she . . . so she disappeared in the middle of the performance?" he repeated.

"Yes, she was carried off in the Prison Act, at the moment when she was invoking the aid of the angels; but I doubt if she was carried off by an angel."

"And I am sure that she was!"

Everybody looked round. A young man, pale and trembling with excitement, repeated:

"I am sure of it!"

"Sure of what?" asked Mifroid.

"That Christine Daaé was carried off by an angel, *M. le commissaire,* and I can tell you his name."

"Aha, M. le Vicomte de Chagny! So you maintain that Christine Daaé was carried off by an angel: an angel of the Opera, no doubt?"

"Yes, monsieur, by an angel of the Opera; and I will tell you where he lives . . . when we are alone."

"You are right, monsieur."

And the commissary of police, inviting Raoul to take a chair, cleared the room of all the rest, excepting the managers.

Then Raoul spoke:

"*M. le commissaire,* the angel is called Erik, he lives in the Opera and he is the Angel of Music!"

"The Angel of Music! Really! That is very curious! . . . The Angel of Music!" And, turning to the managers, M. Mifroid asked, "Have you an Angel of Music on the premises, gentlemen?"

Richard and Moncharmin shook their heads, without even speaking.

"Oh," said the viscount, "those gentlemen have heard of the Opera ghost. Well, I am in a position to state that the Opera ghost and the Angel of Music are one and the same person; and his real name is Erik."

M. Mifroid rose and looked at Raoul attentively.

"I beg your pardon, monsieur, but is it your intention to make fun of the law? And, if not, what is all this about the Opera ghost?"

"I say that these gentlemen have heard of him."

"Gentlemen, it appears that you know the Opera ghost?"

Richard rose, with the remaining hairs of his mustache in his hand.

"No, M. Commissary, no, we do not know him, but we wish that we did, for this very evening he has robbed us of twenty-thousand francs!"

And Richard turned a terrible look on Moncharmin, which seemed to say:

"Give me back the twenty-thousand francs, or I'll tell the whole story."

Moncharmin understood what he meant, for, with a distracted gesture, he said:

"Oh, tell everything and have done with it!"

As for Mifroid, he looked at the managers and at Raoul by turns and wondered whether he had strayed into a lunatic asylum. He passed his hand through his hair.

"A ghost," he said, "who, on the same evening, carries off an opera-singer and steals twenty-thousand francs is a ghost who must have his hands very full! If you don't mind, we will take the questions in order. The singer first, the twenty-thousand francs after. Come, M. de Chagny, let us try to talk seriously. You believe that Mlle. Christine Daaé has been carried off by an individual called Erik. Do you know this person? Have you seen him?"

"Yes."

"Where?"

"In a churchyard."

M. Mifroid gave a start, began to scrutinize Raoul again and said:

"Of course! . . . That's where ghosts usually hang out! . . . And what were you doing in that churchyard?"

"Monsieur," said Raoul, "I can quite understand how absurd my replies must seem to you. But I beg you to believe that I am in full possession of my faculties. The safety of the person dearest to me in the world is at stake. I should like to convince you in a few words, for time is pressing and every minute is valuable. Unfortunately, if I do not tell you the strangest story that ever was from the beginning, you will not believe me. I will tell you all I know about the Opera ghost, M. Commissary. Alas, I do not know much! . . ."

"Never mind, go on, go on!" exclaimed Richard and Moncharmin, suddenly greatly interested.

Unfortunately for their hopes of learning some detail that could put them on the track of their hoaxer, they were soon compelled to accept the fact that M. Raoul de Chagny had completely lost his head. All that story about Perros-Guirec, death's heads and enchanted violins, could only have taken birth in the disordered brain of a youth mad with love. It was evident, also, that Mr. Commissary Mifroid shared their view; and the magistrate would certainly have cut short the incoherent narrative if circumstances had not taken it upon themselves to interrupt it.

The door opened and a man entered, curiously dressed in an enormous frock-coat and a tall hat, at once shabby and shiny, that came down to his ears. He went up to the commissary and spoke to him in a whisper. It was doubtless a detective come to deliver an important communication.

During this conversation, M. Mifroid did not take his eyes off Raoul. At last, addressing him, he said:

"Monsieur, we have talked enough about the ghost. We will now talk about yourself a little, if you have no objection: you were to carry off Mlle. Christine Daaé to-night?"

"Yes, *M. le commissaire.*"

"After the performance?"

"Yes, *M. le commissaire.*"

"All your arrangements were made?"

"Yes, *M. le commissaire.*"

"The carriage that brought you was to take you both away. . . . There were fresh horses in readiness at every stage. . . ."

"That is true, *M. le commissaire.*"

"And nevertheless your carriage is still outside the Rotunda awaiting your orders, is it not?"

"Yes, *M. le commissaire.*"

"Did you know that there were three other carriages there, in addition to yours?"

"I did not pay the least attention."

"They were the carriages of Mlle. Sorelli, which could not find room in the Cour de l'Administration; of Carlotta; and of your brother, M. le Comte de Chagny. . . ."

"Very likely. . . ."

"What is certain is that, though your carriage and Sorelli's and Carlotta's are still there, by the Rotunda pavement, M. le Comte de Chagny's carriage is gone."

"This has nothing to say to . . ."

"I beg your pardon. Was not M. le Comte opposed to your marriage with Mlle. Daaé?"

"That is a matter that only concerns the family."

"You have answered my question: he was opposed to it . . . and that was why you were carrying Christine Daaé out of your brother's reach. . . . Well, M. de Chagny, allow me to inform you that your brother has been smarter than you! It is he who has carried off Christine Daaé!"

"Oh, impossible!" moaned Raoul, pressing his hand to his heart. "Are you sure?"

"Immediately after the artist's disappearance, which was procured by means which we have still to ascertain, he flung into his carriage, which drove right across Paris at a furious pace."

"Across Paris?" asked poor Raoul, in a hoarse voice. "What do you mean by across Paris?"

"Across Paris and out of Paris . . . by the Brussels road."

"Oh," cried the young man, "I shall catch them!" And he rushed out of the office.

"And bring her back to us!" cried the commissary gaily. . . . "Ah, that's a trick worth two of the Angel of Music's!"

And, turning to his audience, M. Mifroid delivered a little lecture on police methods.

"I don't know for a moment whether M. le Comte de Chagny has really carried Christine Daaé off or not . . . but I want to know and I believe that, at this moment, no one is more anxious to inform us than his brother. . . . And now he is flying in pursuit of him! He is my chief auxiliary! This, gentlemen, is the art of the police, which is believed to be so complicated and which, nevertheless, appears so simple as soon as you see that it consists in getting your work done by people who have nothing to do with the police."

But M. le Commissaire de Police Mifroid would not have been quite so satisfied with himself if he had known that the rush of his rapid emissary was stopped at the entrance to the very first corridor. A tall figure blocked Raoul's way.

"Where are you going so fast, M. de Chagny?" asked a voice.

Raoul impatiently raised his eyes and recognized the astrakhan cap of an hour ago. He stopped:

"It's you!" he cried, in a feverish voice. "You, who know Erik's secrets and don't want me to speak of them. Who are you?"

"You know who I am! . . . I am the Persian!"

CHAPTER XIX

THE VISCOUNT AND THE PERSIAN

RAOUL now remembered that his brother had once shown him that mysterious person, of whom nothing was known except that he was a Persian and that he lived in a little old-fashioned flat in the Rue de Rivoli.

The man with the ebony skin, the eyes of jade and the astrakhan cap bent over Raoul.

"I hope, M. de Chagny," he said, "that you have not betrayed Erik's secret?"

"And why should I hesitate to betray that monster, sir?" Raoul rejoined haughtily, trying to shake off the intruder. "Is he your friend, by any chance?"

"I hope that you said nothing about Erik, sir, because Erik's secret is also Christine Daaé's and to talk about one is to talk about the other!"

"Oh, sir," said Raoul, becoming more and more impatient, "you seem to know about many things that interest me; and yet I have no time to listen to you!"

"Once more, M. de Chagny, where are you going so fast?"

"Can not you guess? To Christine Daaé's assistance. . . ."

"Then, sir, stay here, for Christine Daaé is here!"

"With Erik?"

"With Erik."

"How do you know?"

"I was at the performance and no one in the world but Erik could contrive an abduction like that! . . . Oh," he said, with a deep sigh, "I recognized the monster's touch! . . ."

"You know him then?"

The Persian did not reply, but heaved a fresh sigh.

"Sir," said Raoul, "I do not know what your intentions are, but can you do anything to help me? I mean, to help Christine Daaé?"

"I think so, M. de Chagny, and that is why I spoke to you."

"What can you do?"

"Try to take you to her . . . and to him."

"If you can do me that service, sir, my life is yours! . . . One word more: the commissary of police tells me that Christine Daaé has been carried off by my brother, Count Philippe."

"Oh, M. de Chagny, I don't believe a word of it."

"It's not possible, is it?"

"I don't know if it is possible or not; but there are ways and ways of carrying people off; and M. le Comte Philippe has never, as far as I know, had anything to do with witchcraft."

"Your arguments are convincing, sir, and I am a fool! . . . Oh, let us make haste! I place myself entirely in your hands! . . . How should I not believe you, when you are the only one to believe me . . . when you are the only one not to smile when Erik's name is mentioned?"

And the young man impetuously seized the Persian's hands. They were ice-cold.

"Silence!" said the Persian, stopping and listening to the distant sounds of the theater. "We must not mention that name here. Let us say 'he' and 'him;' then there will be less danger of attracting his attention."

"Do you think he is near us?"

"It is quite possible, sir, if he is not, at this moment, with his victim, *in the house on the lake.*"

"Ah, so you know that house too?"

"If he is not there, he may be here, in this wall, in this floor, in this ceiling! . . . Come!"

And the Persian, asking Raoul to deaden the sound of his footsteps, led him down passages which Raoul had never seen before, even at the time when Christine used to take him for walks through that labyrinth.

"If only Darius has come!" said the Persian.

"Who is Darius?"

"Darius? My servant."

They were now in the center of a real deserted square, an immense apartment ill-lit by a small lamp. The Persian stopped Raoul and, in the softest of whispers, asked:

"What did you say to the commissary?"

"I said that Christine Daaé's abductor was the Angel of Music, *alias* the Opera ghost, and that the real name was . . ."

"Hush! . . . And did he believe you?"

"No."

"He attached no importance to what you said?"

"No."

"He took you for a bit of a madman?"

"Yes."

"So much the better!" sighed the Persian.

And they continued their road. After going up and down several staircases which Raoul had never seen before, the two men found themselves in front of a door which the Persian opened with a master-key. The Persian and Raoul were both, of course, in dress-clothes; but, whereas Raoul had a tall hat, the Persian wore the astrakhan cap which I have already mentioned. It was an infringement of the rule which insists upon the tall hat behind the scenes; but in France foreigners are allowed every license: the Englishman his traveling-cap, the Persian his cap of astrakhan.

"Sir," said the Persian, "your tall hat will be in your way: you would do well to leave it in the dressing-room."

"What dressing-room?" asked Raoul.

"Christine Daaé's."

And the Persian, letting Raoul through the door which he had just opened, showed him the actress' room opposite.

They were at the end of the passage the whole length of which Raoul had been accustomed to traverse before knocking at Christine's door.

"How well you know the Opera, sir!"

"Not so well as 'he' does!" said the Persian modestly.

And he pushed the young man into Christine's dressing-room, which was as Raoul had left it a few minutes earlier.

Closing the door, the Persian went to a very thin partition that separated the dressing-room from a big lumber-room next to it. He listened and then coughed loudly.

There was a sound of some one stirring in the lumber-room; and, a few seconds later, a finger tapped at the door.

"Come in," said the Persian.

A man entered, also wearing an astrakhan cap and dressed in a long overcoat. He bowed and took a richly carved case from under his coat, put it on the dressing-table, bowed once again and went to the door.

"Did no one see you come in, Darius?"

"No, master."

"Let no one see you go out."

The servant glanced down the passage and swiftly disappeared.

The Persian opened the case. It contained a pair of long pistols.

"When Christine Daaé was carried off, sir, I sent word to my servant to bring me these pistols. I have had them a long time and they can be relied upon."

"Do you mean to fight a duel?" asked the young man.

"It will certainly be a duel which we shall have to fight," said the other, examining the priming of his pistols. "And what a duel!" Handing one of the pistols to Raoul, he added, "In this duel, we shall be two to one; but you must be prepared for everything, for we shall be fighting the most terrible adversary that you can imagine. But you love Christine Daaé, do you not?"

"I worship the ground she stands on! But you, sir, who do not love her, tell me why I find you ready to risk your life for her! You must certainly hate Erik!"

"No, sir," said the Persian sadly, "I do not hate him. If I hated him, he would long ago have ceased doing harm."

"Has he done you harm?"

"I have forgiven him the harm which he has done me."

"I do not understand you. You treat him as a monster, you speak of his crime, he has done you harm and I find in you the same inexplicable pity that drove me to despair when I saw it in Christine!"

The Persian did not reply. He fetched a stool and set it against the wall facing the great mirror that filled the whole of the wall-space opposite. Then he climbed on the stool and, with his nose to the wallpaper, seemed to be looking for something.

"Ah," he said, after a long search, "I have it!"

And, raising his finger above his head, he pressed against a corner in the pattern of the paper. Then he turned round and jumped off the stool:

"In half a minute," he said, "we shall be *on his road!*" and crossing the whole length of the dressing-room he felt the great mirror.

"No, it is not yielding yet," he muttered.

"Oh, are we going out by the mirror?" asked Raoul. "Like Christine Daaé."

"So you knew that Christine Daaé went out by that mirror?"

"She did so before my eyes, sir! I was hidden behind the curtain of the inner room and I saw her vanish not by the glass, but in the glass!"

"And what did you do?"

"I thought it was an aberration of my senses, a mad dream. . . ."

"Or some new fancy of the ghost's!" chuckled the Persian. "Ah, M. de Chagny," he continued, still with his hand on the mirror, "would that we had to do with a ghost! We could then leave our pistols in their case. . . . Put down your hat, please . . . there . . . and now cover your shirt-front as much as you can with your coat . . . as I am doing. . . . Bring the lapels forward . . . turn up the collar. . . . We must make ourselves as invisible as possible. . . ."

Bearing against the mirror, after a short silence, he said:

"It takes some time to release the counterbalance, when you press on the spring from the inside of the room. It is different when you are behind the wall and can act directly on the counterbalance. Then the mirror turns at once and is moved with incredible rapidity."

"What counterbalance?" asked Raoul.

"Why, the counterbalance that lifts the whole of this wall on to its pivot. You surely don't expect it to move of itself, by enchantment! If you watch, you will see the mirror first rise an inch or two and then shift an inch or two from left to right. It will then be on a pivot and will swing round."

"It's not turning!" said Raoul impatiently.

"Oh, wait! You have time enough to be impatient, sir! The mechanism has obviously become rusty, or else the spring isn't working. . . . Unless it is something else," added the Persian anxiously.

"What?"

"He may simply have cut the cord of the counterbalance and blocked the whole apparatus."

"Why should he? He does not know that we are coming this way!"

"I dare say he suspects it, for he knows that I understand the system."

"It's not turning! . . . And Christine, sir, Christine?"

The Persian said coldly:

"We shall do all that it is humanly possible to do! . . . But he may stop us at the first step! . . . He commands the walls, the doors and the trap-doors. In my country, he was known by a name which means the 'trap-door lover.' "

"But why do these walls obey him alone? He did not build them!"

"Yes, sir, that is just what he did!"

Raoul looked at him in amazement; but the Persian made a sign to him to be silent and pointed to the glass. . . . There was a sort of shivering reflection. Their image was troubled as in a rippling sheet of water and then all became stationary again.

"You see, sir, that it is not turning! Let us take another road!"

"To-night, there is no other!" declared the Persian, in a singularly mournful voice. "And now, look out! And be ready to fire."

He himself raised his pistol opposite the glass. Raoul imitated his movement. With his free arm, the Persian drew the young man to his chest and, suddenly, the mirror turned, in a blinding daze of cross-lights: it turned like one of those revolving doors which have lately been fixed to the entrances of most restaurants, it turned, carrying Raoul and the Persian with it and suddenly hurling them from the full light into the deepest darkness.

CHAPTER XX

IN THE CELLARS OF THE OPERA

"YOUR hand high, ready to fire!" repeated Raoul's companion quickly.

The wall, behind them, having completed the circle which it described upon itself, closed again; and the two men stood motionless for a moment, holding their breath.

At last, the Persian decided to make a movement; and Raoul heard him slip on his knees and feel for something in the dark with his groping hands. Suddenly, the darkness was made visible by a small dark lantern and Raoul instinctively stepped backward as though to escape the scrutiny of a secret enemy. But he soon perceived that the light belonged to the Persian, whose movements he was closely observing. The little red disk was turned in every direction and Raoul saw that the floor, the walls and the ceiling were all formed of planking. It must have been the ordinary road taken by Erik to reach Christine's dressing-room and impose upon her innocence. And Raoul, remembering the Persian's remark, thought that it had been mysteriously constructed by the ghost himself. Later, he learned that Erik had found, all prepared for him, a secret passage, long known to himself alone and contrived at the time of the Paris Commune to allow the jailers to convey their prisoners straight to the dungeons that had been constructed for them in the cellars; for the Federates had occupied the opera-house immediately after the eighteenth of March and had made a starting-place right at the top for their Mongolfier balloons, which carried their incendiary proclamations to the departments, and a state prison right at the bottom.

The Persian went on his knees and put his lantern on the ground. He seemed to be working at the floor; and suddenly he turned off his light. Then Raoul heard a faint click and saw a very pale luminous square in the floor of the passage. It was as though a window had opened on the Opera cellars, which were still lit. Raoul no longer saw the Persian, but he suddenly felt him by his side and heard him whisper:

"Follow me and do all that I do."

Raoul turned to the luminous aperture. Then he saw the Persian, who was still on his knees, hang by his hands from the rim of the opening, with his pistol between his teeth, and slide into the cellar below.

Curiously enough, the viscount had absolute confidence in the Persian, though he knew nothing about him. His emotion when speaking of the "monster" struck him as sincere; and, if the Persian had cherished any sinister designs against him, he would not have armed him with his own hands. Besides, Raoul must reach Christine at all costs. He therefore went on his knees also and hung from the trap with both hands.

"Let go!" said a voice.

And he dropped into the arms of the Persian, who told him to lie down flat, closed the trap-door above him and crouched down beside him. Raoul tried to ask a question, but the Persian's hand was on his mouth and he heard a voice which he recognized as that of the commissary of police.

Raoul and the Persian were completely hidden behind a wooden partition. Near them, a small staircase led to a little room in which the commissary appeared to be walking up and down, asking questions. The faint light was just enough to enable Raoul to distinguish the shape of things around him. And he could not restrain a dull cry: there were three corpses there.

The first lay on the narrow landing of the little staircase; the two others had rolled to the bottom of the staircase. Raoul could have touched one of the two poor wretches by passing his fingers through the partition.

"Silence!" whispered the Persian.

He too had seen the bodies and he gave one word in explanation:

"He!"

The commissary's voice was now heard more distinctly. He was asking for information about the system of lighting, which the stage-manager supplied. The commissary therefore must be in the "organ" or its immediate neighborhood.

Contrary to what one might think, especially in connection with an opera-house, the "organ" is not a musical instrument. At that time, electricity was employed only for a very few scenic effects and for the bells. The immense building and the stage itself were still lit by gas; hydrogen was used to regulate and modify the lighting of a scene; and this was done by means of a special apparatus which, because of the multiplicity of its pipes, was known as the "organ." A box beside the prompter's box was reserved for the chief gas-man, who from there gave his orders to his assistants and saw that they were executed. Mauclair stayed in this box during all the performances.

But now Mauclair was not in his box and his assistants not in their places.

"Mauclair! Mauclair!"

The stage-manager's voice echoed through the cellars. But Mauclair did not reply.

I have said that a door opened on a little staircase that led to the second cellar. The commissary pushed it, but it resisted.

"I say," he said to the stage-manager, "I can't open this door: is it always so difficult?"

The stage-manager forced it open with his shoulder. He saw that, at the same time, he was pushing a human body and he could not keep back an exclamation, for he recognized the body at once:

"Mauclair! Poor devil! He is dead!"

But Mr. Commissary Mifroid, whom nothing surprised, was stooping over that big body.

"No," he said, "he is dead-drunk, which is not quite the same thing."

"It's the first time, if so," said the stage-manager.

"Then some one has given him a narcotic. That is quite possible."

Mifroid went down a few steps and said:

"Look!"

By the light of a little red lantern, at the foot of the stairs, they saw two other bodies. The stage-manager recognized Mauclair's assistants. Mifroid went down and listened to their breathing.

"They are sound asleep," he said. "Very curious business! Some person unknown must have interfered with the gas-man and his staff . . . and that person unknown was obviously working on behalf of the kidnapper. . . . But what a funny idea to kidnap a performer on the stage! . . . Send for the doctor of the theater, please." And Mifroid repeated, "Curious, decidedly curious business!"

Then he turned to the little room, addressing the people whom Raoul and the Persian were unable to see from where they lay.

"What do you say to all this, gentlemen? You are the only ones who have not given your views. And yet you must have an opinion of some sort."

Thereupon, Raoul and the Persian saw the startled faces of the joint managers appear above the landing—and they heard Moncharmin's excited voice:

"There are things happening here, Mr. Commissary, which we are unable to explain."

And the two faces disappeared.

"Thank you for the information, gentlemen," said Mifroid, with a jeer.

But the stage-manager, holding his chin in the hollow of his right hand, which is the attitude of profound thought, said:

"'It is not the first time that Mauclair has fallen asleep in the theater. I remember finding him, one evening, snoring in his little recess, with his snuff-box beside him."

"Is that long ago?" asked M. Mifroid, carefully wiping his eye-glasses.

"No, not so very long ago. . . . Wait a bit! . . . It was the night . . . of course, yes . . . It was the night when Carlotta—you know, Mr. Commissary—gave her famous 'co-ack'!"

"Really? The night when Carlotta gave her famous 'co-ack'?"

And M. Mifroid, replacing his gleaming glasses on his nose, fixed the stage-manager with a contemplative stare.

"So Mauclair takes snuff, does he?" he asked carelessly.

"Yes, Mr. Commissary. . . . Look, there is his snuff-box on that little shelf. . . . Oh, he's a great snuff-taker!"

"So am I," said Mifroid and put the snuff-box in his pocket.

Raoul and the Persian, themselves unobserved, watched the removal of the three bodies by a number of scene-shifters, who were followed by the commissary and all the people with him. Their steps were heard for a few minutes on the stage above. When they were alone the Persian made a sign to Raoul to stand up. Raoul did so; but, as he did not lift his hand in front of his eyes, ready to fire, the Persian told him to resume that attitude and to continue it, whatever happened.

"But it tires the hand unnecessarily," whispered Raoul. "If I do fire, I shan't be sure of my aim."

"Then shift your pistol to the other hand," said the Persian.

"I can't shoot with my left hand."

Thereupon, the Persian made this queer reply, which was certainly not calculated to throw light into the young man's flurried brain:

"It's not a question of shooting with the right hand or the left; it's a question of holding one of your hands as though you were going to pull the trigger of a pistol with your arm bent. As for the pistol itself, when all is said, you can put that in your pocket!" And he added, "Let this be clearly understood, or I will answer for nothing. It is a matter of life and death. And now, silence and follow me!"

The cellars of the Opera are enormous and they are five in number. Raoul followed the Persian and wondered what he would have done without his companion in that extraordinary labyrinth. They went down to the third cellar; and their progress was still lit by some distant lamp.

The lower they went, the more precautions the Persian seemed to take. He kept on turning to Raoul to see if he was holding his arm properly, showing him how he himself carried his hand as if always ready to fire, though the pistol was in his pocket.

Suddenly, a loud voice made them stop. Some one above them shouted:

"All the door-shutters on the stage! The commissary of police wants them!"

Steps were heard and shadows glided through the darkness. The Persian drew Raoul behind a set piece. They saw passing before and above them old men bent by age and the past burden of opera-scenery. Some could hardly drag themselves along; others, from habit, with stooping bodies and outstretched hands, looked for doors to shut.

They were the door-shutters, the old, worn-out scene-shifters, on whom a charitable management had taken pity, giving them the job of shutting doors above and below the stage. They went about incessantly, from top to bottom of the building, shutting the doors; and they were also called "The draft-expellers," at least at that time, for I have little doubt that by now they are all dead. Drafts are very bad for the voice, wherever they may come from.*

The Persian and Raoul welcomed this incident, which relieved them of inconvenient witnesses, for some of those door-shutters, having nothing else to do or nowhere to lay their heads, stayed at the Opera, from idleness or necessity, and spent the night there.

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*M. Pedro Gailhard has himself told me that he created a few additional posts as door-shutters for old stage-carpenters whom he was unwilling to dismiss from the service of the Opera.

The two men might have stumbled over them, waking them up and provoking a request for explanations. For the moment, M. Mifroid's inquiry saved them from any such unpleasant encounters.

But they were not left to enjoy their solitude for long. Other shades now came down by the same way by which the door-shutters had gone up. Each of these shades carried a little lantern and moved it about, above, below and all around, as though looking for something or somebody.

"Hang it!" muttered the Persian. "I don't know what they are looking for, but they might easily find us. . . . Let us get away, quick! . . . Your hand up, sir, ready to fire! . . . Bend your arm . . . more . . . that's it! . . . Hand at the level of your eye, as though you were fighting a duel and waiting for the word to fire! . . . Oh, leave your pistol in your pocket. Quick, come along, down-stairs. Level of your eye! Question of life or death! . . . Here, this way, these stairs!" They reached the fifth cellar. "Oh, what a duel, sir, what a duel!"

Once in the fifth cellar, the Persian drew breath. He seemed to enjoy a rather greater sense of security than he had displayed when they both stopped in the third; but he never altered the attitude of his hand. And Raoul, remembering the Persian's observation—"I know these pistols can be relied upon"—was more and more astonished, wondering why any one should be so gratified at being able to rely upon a pistol which he did not intend to use!

But the Persian left him no time for reflection. Telling Raoul to stay where he was, he ran up a few steps of the staircase which they had just left and then returned.

"How stupid of us!" he whispered. "We shall soon have seen the end of those men with their lanterns. It is the firemen going their rounds."*

The two men waited five minutes longer. Then the Persian took Raoul up the stairs again; but suddenly he stopped him with a gesture. Something moved in the darkness before them.

"Flat on your stomach!" whispered the Persian.

The two men lay flat on the floor.

They were only just in time. A shade, this time carrying no light, just a shade in the shade, passed. It passed close to them, near enough to touch them.

They felt the warmth of its cloak upon them. For they could distinguish the shade sufficiently to see that it wore a cloak which shrouded it from head to foot. On its head it had a soft felt hat. . . .

It moved away, drawing its feet against the walls and sometimes giving a kick into a corner.

"Whew!" said the Persian. "We've had a narrow escape; that shade knows me and has twice taken me to the managers' office."

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*In those days, it was still part of the firemen's duty to watch over the safety of the Opera house outside the performances; but this service has since been suppressed. I asked M. Pedro Gailhard the reason, and he replied:

"It was because the management was afraid that, in their utter inexperience of the cellars of the Opera, the firemen might set fire to the building!"

"Is it some one belonging to the theater police?" asked Raoul.

"It's some one much worse than that!" replied the Persian, without giving any further explanation.*

"It's not . . . *he?*"

"He? . . . If he does not come behind us, we shall always see his yellow eyes! . . . That is more or less our safeguard to-night. . . . But he may come from behind, stealing up; and we are dead men if we do not keep our hands as though about to fire, at the level of our eyes, in front!"

The Persian had hardly finished speaking, when a fantastic face came in sight . . . a whole fiery face, not only two yellow eyes!

Yes, a head of fire came toward them, at a man's height, but with no body attached to it. The face shed fire, looked in the darkness like a flame shaped as a man's face.

"Oh," said the Persian, between his teeth. "I have never seen this before! . . . Pampin was not mad, after all: he had seen it! . . . What can that flame be? It is not *he,* but he may have sent it! . . . Take care! . . . Take care! . . . Your hand at the level of your eyes, in Heaven's name, at the level of your eyes! . . . I know most of his tricks . . . but not this one. . . . Come, let us run. . . . it is safer. Hand at the level of your eyes!"

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*Like the Persian, I can give no further explanation touching the apparition of this shade. Whereas, in this historic narrative, everything else will be normally explained, however abnormal the course of events may seem, I can not give the reader expressly to understand what the Persian meant by the words, "It is some one much worse than that!" The reader must try to guess for himself, for I promised M. Pedro Gailhard, the former manager of the Opera, to keep his secret regarding the extremely interesting and useful personality of the wandering, cloaked shade which, while condemning itself to live in the cellars of the Opera, rendered such immense services to those who, on gala evenings, for instance, venture to stray away from the stage. I am speaking of state services; and, upon my word of honor, I can say no more.

And they fled down the long passage that opened before them.

After a few seconds, that seemed to them like long minutes, they stopped.

"He doesn't often come this way," said the Persian. "This side has nothing to do with him. This side does not lead to the lake nor to the house on the lake. . . . But perhaps he knows that we are at his heels . . . although I promised him to leave him alone and never to meddle in his business again!"

So saying, he turned his head and Raoul also turned his head; and they again saw the head of fire behind their two heads. It had followed them. And it must have run also, and perhaps faster than they, for it seemed to be nearer to them.

At the same time, they began to perceive a certain noise of which they could not guess the nature. They simply noticed that the sound seemed to move and to approach with the fiery face. It was a noise as though thousands of nails had been scraped against a blackboard, the perfectly unendurable noise that is sometimes made by a little stone inside the chalk that grates on the blackboard.

They continued to retreat, but the fiery face came on, came on, gaining on them. They could see its features clearly now. The eyes were round and staring, the nose a little crooked and the mouth large, with a hanging lower lip, very like the eyes, nose and lip of the moon, when the moon is quite red, bright red.

How did that red moon manage to glide through the darkness, at a man's height, with nothing to support it, at least apparently? And how did it go so fast, so straight ahead, with such staring, staring eyes? And what was that scratching, scraping, grating sound which it brought with it?

The Persian and Raoul could retreat no farther and flattened themselves against the wall, not knowing what was going to happen because of that incomprehensible head of fire, and especially now, because of the more intense, swarming, living, "numerous" sound, for the sound was certainly made up of hundreds of little sounds that moved in the darkness, under the fiery face.

And the fiery face came on . . . with its noise . . . came level with them! . . .

And the two companions, flat against their wall, felt their hair stand on end with horror, for they now knew what the thousand noises meant. They came in a troop, hustled along in the shadow by innumerable little hurried waves, swifter than the waves that rush over the sands at high tide, little night-waves foaming under the moon, under the fiery head that was like a moon. And the little waves passed between their legs, climbing up their legs, irresistibly, and Raoul and the Persian could no longer restrain their cries of horror, dismay and pain. Nor could they continue to hold their hands at the level of their eyes: their hands went down to their legs to push back the waves, which were full of little legs and nails and claws and teeth.

Yes, Raoul and the Persian were ready to faint, like Pampin the fireman. But the head of fire turned round in answer to their cries, and spoke to them:

"Don't move! Don't move! . . . Whatever you do, don't come after me! . . . I am the rat-catcher! . . . Let me pass, with my rats! . . ."

And the head of fire disappeared, vanished in the darkness, while the passage in front of it lit up, as the result of the change which the rat-catcher had made in his dark lantern. Before, so as not to scare the rats in front of him, he had turned his dark lantern on himself, lighting up his own head; now, to hasten their flight, he lit the dark space in front of him. And he jumped along, dragging with him the waves of scratching rats, all the thousand sounds.

Raoul and the Persian breathed again, though still trembling.

"I ought to have remembered that Erik talked to me about the rat-catcher," said the Persian. "But he never told me that he looked like that . . . and it's funny that I should never have met him before. . . . Of course, Erik never comes to this part!"

"Are we very far from the lake, sir?" asked Raoul. "When shall we get there? . . . Take me to the lake, oh, take me to the lake! . . . When we are at the lake, we will call out! . . . Christine will hear us! . . . And *he* will hear us, too! . . . And, as you know him, we shall talk to him!"

"Baby!" said the Persian. "We shall never enter the house on the lake by the lake! . . . I myself have never landed on the other bank . . . the bank on which the house stands. . . . You have to cross the lake first . . . and it is well guarded! . . . I fear that more than one of those men—old scene-shifters, old door-shutters—who have never been seen again were simply tempted to cross the lake. . . . It is terrible. . . . I myself would have been nearly killed there . . . if the monster had not recognized me in time! . . . One piece of advice, sir; never go near the lake. . . . And, above all, shut your ears if you hear the voice singing under the water, the siren's voice!"

"But then, what are we here for?" asked Raoul, in a transport of fever, impatience and rage. "If you can do nothing for Christine, at least let me die for her!"

The Persian tried to calm the young man.

"We have only one means of saving Christine Daaé, believe me, which is to enter the house unperceived by the monster."

"And is there any hope of that, sir?"

"Ah, if I had not that hope, I would not have come to fetch you!"

"And how can one enter the house on the lake without crossing the lake?"

"From the third cellar, from which we were so unluckily driven away. We will go back there now. . . . I will tell you," said the Persian, with a sudden change in his voice, "I will tell you the exact place, sir: it is between a set piece and a discarded scene from *Roi de Lahore,* exactly at the spot where Joseph Buquet died. . . . Come, sir, take courage and follow me! And hold your hand at the level of your eyes! . . . But where are we?"

The Persian lit his lamp again and flung its rays down two enormous corridors that crossed each other at right angles.

"We must be," he said, "in the part used more particularly for the waterworks. I see no fire coming from the furnaces."

He went in front of Raoul, seeking his road, stopping abruptly when he was afraid of meeting some waterman. Then they had to protect themselves against the glow of a sort of underground forge, which the men were extinguishing, and at which Raoul recognized the demons whom Christine had seen at the time of her first captivity.

In this way, they gradually arrived beneath the huge cellars below the stage. They must at this time have been at the very bottom of the "tub" and at an extremely great depth, when we remember that the earth was dug out at fifty feet below the water that lay under the whole of that part of Paris.*

The Persian touched a partition-wall and said:

"If I am not mistaken, this is a wall that might easily belong to the house on the lake."

He was striking a partition-wall of the "tub," and perhaps it would be as well for the reader to know how the bottom and the partition-walls of the tub were built. In order to prevent the water surrounding the building-operations from remaining in immediate contact with the walls supporting the whole of the theatrical machinery, the architect was obliged to build a double case in every direction. The work of constructing this double case took a whole year. It was the wall of the first inner case that the Persian struck when speaking to Raoul of the house on the lake. To any one understanding the architecture of the edifice, the Persian's action would seem to indicate that Erik's mysterious house had been built in the double case, formed of a thick wall constructed as an embankment or dam, then of a brick wall, a tremendous layer of cement and another wall several yards in thickness.

At the Persian's words, Raoul flung himself against the wall and listened eagerly. But he heard nothing . . . nothing . . . . except distant steps sounding on the floor of the upper portions of the theater.

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*All the water had to be exhausted, in the building of the Opera. To give an idea of the amount of water that was pumped up, I can tell the reader that it represented the area of the court-yard of the Louvre and a height half as deep again as the towers of Notre Dame. And nevertheless the engineers had to leave a lake.

The Persian darkened his lantern again.

"Look out!" he said. "Keep your hand up! And silence! For we shall try another way of getting in."

And he led him to the little staircase by which they had come down lately.

They went up, stopping at each step, peering into the darkness and the silence, till they came to the third cellar. Here the Persian motioned to Raoul to go on his knees; and, in this way, crawling on both knees and one hand—for the other hand was held in the position indicated—they reached the end wall.

Against this wall stood a large discarded scene from the *Roi de Lahore*. Close to this scene was a set piece. Between the scene and the set piece there was just room for a body . . . for a body which one day was found hanging there. The body of Joseph Buquet.

The Persian, still kneeling, stopped and listened. For a moment, he seemed to hesitate and looked at Raoul; then he turned his eyes upward, toward the second cellar, which sent down the faint glimmer of a lantern, through a cranny between two boards. This glimmer seemed to trouble the Persian.

At last, he tossed his head and made up his mind to act. He slipped between the set piece and the scene from the *Roi de Lahore,* with Raoul close upon his heels. With his free hand, the Persian felt the wall. Raoul saw him bear heavily upon the wall, just as he had pressed against the wall in Christine's dressing-room. Then a stone gave way, leaving a hole in the wall.

This time, the Persian took his pistol from his pocket and made a sign to Raoul to do as he did. He cocked the pistol.

And, resolutely, still on his knees, he wiggled through the hole in the wall. Raoul, who had wished to pass first, had to be content to follow him.

The hole was very narrow. The Persian stopped almost at once. Raoul heard him feeling the stones around him. Then the Persian took out his dark lantern again, stooped forward, examined something beneath him and immediately extinguished his lantern. Raoul heard him say, in a whisper:

"We shall have to drop a few yards, without making a noise; take off your boots."

The Persian handed his own shoes to Raoul.

"Put them outside the wall," he said. "We shall find them there when we leave."*

He crawled a little farther on his knees, then turned right round and said:

"I am going to hang by my hands from the edge of the stone and let myself drop *into his house.* You must do exactly the same. Do not be afraid. I will catch you in my arms."

Raoul soon heard a dull sound, evidently produced by the fall of the Persian, and then dropped down.

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*These two pairs of boots, which were placed, according to the Persian's papers, just between the set piece and the scene from the *Roi de Lahore*, on the spot where Joseph Buquet was found hanging, were never discovered. They must have been taken by some stage-carpenter or "door-shutter."

He felt himself clasped in the Persian's arms.

"Hush!" said the Persian.

And they stood motionless, listening.

The darkness was thick around them, the silence heavy and terrible.

Then the Persian began to make play with the dark lantern again, turning the rays over their heads, looking for the hole through which they had come, and failing to find it:

"Oh!" he said. "The stone has closed of itself!"

And the light of the lantern swept down the wall and over the floor.

The Persian stooped and picked up something, a sort of cord, which he examined for a second and flung away with horror.

"The Punjab lasso!" he muttered.

"What is it?" asked Raoul.

The Persian shivered. "It might very well be the rope by which the man was hanged, and which was looked for so long."

And, suddenly seized with fresh anxiety, he moved the little red disk of his lantern over the walls. In this way, he lit up a curious thing: the trunk of a tree, which seemed still quite alive, with its leaves; and the branches of that tree ran right up the walls and disappeared in the ceiling.

Because of the smallness of the luminous disk, it was difficult at first to make out the appearance of things: they saw a corner of a branch . . . and a leaf . . . and another leaf . . . and, next to it, nothing at all, nothing but the ray of light that seemed to reflect itself. . . . Raoul passed his hand over that nothing, over that reflection.

"Hullo!" he said. "The wall is a looking-glass!"

"Yes, a looking-glass!" said the Persian, in a tone of deep emotion. And, passing the hand that held the pistol over his moist forehead, he added, "We have dropped into the torture-chamber!"

What the Persian knew of this torture-chamber and what there befell him and his companion shall be told in his own words, as set down in a manuscript which he left behind him, and which I copy *verbatim.*

CHAPTER XXI

INTERESTING AND INSTRUCTIVE VICISSITUDES OF A PERSIAN IN THE CELLARS OF THE OPERA

The Persian's Narrative

IT WAS the first time that I entered the house on the lake. I had often begged the "trap-door lover," as we used to call Erik in my country, to open its mysterious doors to me. He always refused. I made very many attempts, but in vain, to obtain admittance. Watch him as I might, after I first learned that he had taken up his permanent abode at the Opera, the darkness was always too thick to enable me to see how he worked the door in the wall on the lake. One day, when I thought myself alone, I stepped into the boat and rowed toward that part of the wall through which I had seen Erik disappear. It was then that I came into contact with the siren who guarded the approach and whose charm was very nearly fatal to me.

I had no sooner put off from the bank than the silence amid which I floated on the water was disturbed by a sort of whispered singing that hovered all around me. It was half breath, half music; it rose softly from the waters of the lake; and I was surrounded by it through I knew not what artifice. It followed me, moved with me and was so soft that it did not alarm me. On the contrary, in my longing to approach the source of that sweet and enticing harmony, I leaned out of my little boat over the water, for there was no doubt in my mind that the singing came from the water itself. By this time, I was alone in the boat in the middle of the lake; the voice —for it was now distinctly a voice—was beside me, on the water. I leaned over, leaned still farther. The lake was perfectly calm, and a moonbeam that passed through the air hole in the Rue Scribe showed me absolutely nothing on its surface, which was smooth and black as ink. I shook my ears to get rid of a possible humming; but I soon had to accept the fact that there was no humming in the ears so harmonious as the singing whisper that followed and now attracted me.

Had I been inclined to superstition, I should have certainly thought that I had to do with some siren whose business it was to confound the traveler who should venture on the waters of the house on the lake. Fortunately, I come from a country where we are too fond of fantastic things not to know them through and through; and I had no doubt but that I was face to face with some new invention of Erik's. But this invention was so perfect that, as I leaned out of the boat, I was impelled less by a desire to discover its trick than to enjoy its charm; and I leaned out, leaned out until I almost overturned the boat.

Suddenly, two monstrous arms issued from the bosom of the waters and seized me by the neck, dragging me down to the depths with irresistible force.

I should certainly have been lost, if I had not had time to give a cry by which Erik knew me. For it was he; and, instead of drowning me, as was certainly his first intention, he swam with me and laid me gently on the bank:

"How imprudent you are!" he said, as he stood before me, dripping with water. "Why try to enter my house? I never invited you! I don't want you there, nor anybody! Did you save my life only to make it unbearable to me? However great the service you rendered him, Erik may end by forgetting it; and you know that nothing can restrain Erik, not even Erik himself."

He spoke, but I had now no other wish than to know what I already called the trick of the siren. He satisfied my curiosity, for Erik, who is a real monster—I have seen him at work in Persia, alas—is also, in certain respects, a regular child, vain and self-conceited, and there is nothing he loves so much, after astonishing people, as to prove all the really miraculous ingenuity of his mind.

He laughed and showed me a long reed.

"It's the silliest trick you ever saw," he said, "but it's very useful for breathing and singing in the water. I learned it from the Tonkin pirates, who are able to remain hidden for hours in the beds of the rivers." *

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*An official report from Tonkin, received in Paris at the end of July, 1909, relates how the famous pirate chief De Tham was tracked, together with his men, by our soldiers; and how all of them succeeded in escaping, thanks to this trick of the reeds.

I spoke to him severely.

"It's a trick that nearly killed me!" I said. "And it may have been fatal to others! You know what you promised me, Erik? No more murders!"

"Have I really committed murders?" he asked, putting on his most amiable air.

"Wretched man!" I cried. "Have you forgotten the rosy hours of Mazenderan?"

"Yes," he replied, in a sadder tone, "I prefer to forget them. I used to make the little sultana laugh, though!"

"All that belongs to the past," I declared; "but there is the present . . . and you are responsible to me for the present, because, if I had wished, there would have been none at all for you. Remember that, Erik: I saved your life!"

And I took advantage of the turn of conversation to speak to him of something that had long been on my mind:

"Erik," I asked, "Erik, swear that . . ."

"What?" he retorted. "You know I never keep my oaths. Oaths are made to catch gulls with."

"Tell me . . . you can tell me, at any rate. . . ."

"Well?"

"Well, the chandelier . . . the chandelier, Erik? . . ."

"What about the chandelier?"

"You know what I mean."

"Oh," he sniggered, "I don't mind telling you about the chandelier! . . . *It wasn't I!* . . . The chandelier was very old and worn."

When Erik laughed, he was more terrible than ever. He jumped into the boat, chuckling so horribly that I could not help trembling.

"Very old and worn, my dear daroga!* Very old and worn, the chandelier! . . . It fell of itself! . . . It came down with a smash! . . . And now, daroga, take my advice and go and dry yourself, or you'll catch a cold in the head! . . . And never get into my boat again. . . . And, whatever you do, don't try to enter my house: I'm not always there . . . daroga! And I should be sorry to have to dedicate my Requiem Mass to you!"

So saying, swinging to and fro, like a monkey, and still chuckling, he pushed off and soon disappeared in the darkness of the lake.

From that day, I gave up all thought of penetrating into his house by the lake. That entrance was obviously too well guarded, especially since he had learned that I knew about it. But I felt that there must be another entrance, for I had often seen Erik disappear in the third cellar, when I was watching him, though I could not imagine how.

Ever since I had discovered Erik installed in the Opera, I lived in a perpetual terror of his horrible fancies, not in so far as I was concerned, but I dreaded

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**Daroga* is Persian for chief of police.

everything for others.* And whenever some accident, some fatal event happened, I always thought to myself, "I should not be surprised if that were Erik," even as others used to say, "It's the ghost!" How often have I not heard people utter that phrase with a smile! Poor devils! If they had known that the ghost existed in the flesh, I swear they would not have laughed!

Although Erik announced to me very solemnly that he had changed and that he had become the most virtuous of men *since he was loved for himself*—a sentence that, at first, perplexed me most terribly—I could not help shuddering when I thought of the monster. His horrible, unparalleled and repulsive ugliness put him without the pale of humanity; and it often seemed to me that, for this reason, he no longer believed that he had any duty toward the human race. The way in which he spoke of his love-affairs only increased my alarm, for I foresaw the cause of fresh and more hideous tragedies in this event to which he alluded so boastfully.

On the other hand, I soon discovered the curious moral traffic established between the monster and Christine Daaé. Hiding in the lumber-room next to the young prima donna's dressing-room, I listened to wonderful musical displays that evidently flung Christine into marvelous ecstasy; but, all the same, I would never have thought that Erik's voice—which was loud as thunder or soft as angels' voices, at will—could have made her forget his ugliness. I understood all when I learned that Christine had not yet seen him! I had occasion to go to the dressing-room and, remembering the lessons he had once given me, I had no difficulty in discovering the trick that made the wall with the mirror swing round and I ascertained the means—of hollow bricks and so on—by which he made his voice carry to Christine as though she heard it close beside her. In this way also I discovered the road that led to the well and the dungeon—the Communists' dungeon—and also the trap-door that enabled Erik to go straight to the cellars below the stage.

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*The Persian might easily have admitted that Erik's fate also interested himself, for he was well aware that, if the government of Teheran had learned that Erik was still alive, it would have been all up with the modest pension of the erstwhile daroga. It is only fair, however, to add that the Persian had a noble and generous heart; and I do not doubt for a moment that the catastrophes which he feared for others greatly occupied his mind. His conduct, throughout this business, proves it and is above all praise.

A few days later, what was not my amazement to learn by my own eyes and ears that Erik and Christine Daaé saw each other and to catch the monster stooping over the little well, in the Communists' road and sprinkling the forehead of Christine Daaé, who had fainted. A white horse, the horse out of the *Profeta,* which had disappeared from the stables under the Opera, was standing quietly beside them. I showed myself. It was terrible. I saw sparks fly from those yellow eyes and, before I had time to say a word, I received a blow on the head that stunned me.

When I came to myself, Erik, Christine and the white horse had disappeared. I felt sure that the poor girl was a prisoner in the house on the lake. Without hesitation, I resolved to return to the bank, notwithstanding the attendant danger. For twenty-four hours, I lay in wait for the monster to appear; for I felt that he must go out, driven by the need of obtaining provisions. And, in this connection, I may say, that, when he went out in the streets or ventured to show himself in public, he wore a pasteboard nose, with a mustache attached to it, instead of his own horrible hole of a nose. This did not quite take away his corpse-like air, but it made him almost, I say almost, endurable to look at.

I therefore watched on the bank of the lake and, weary of long waiting, was beginning to think that he had gone through the other door, the door in the third cellar, when I heard a slight splashing in the dark, I saw the two yellow eyes shining like candles and soon the boat touched shore. Erik jumped out and walked up to me:

"You've been here for twenty-four hours," he said, "and you're annoying me. I tell you, all this will end very badly. And you will have brought it upon yourself; for I have been extraordinarily patient with you. You think you are following me, you great booby, whereas it's I who am following you; and I know all that you know about me, here. I spared you yesterday, in *my Communists' road;* but I warn you, seriously, don't let me catch you there again! Upon my word, you don't seem able to take a hint!"

He was so furious that I did not think, for the moment, of interrupting him. After puffing and blowing like a walrus, he put his horrible thought into words:

"Yes, you must learn, once and for all—once and for all, I say—to take a hint! I tell you that, with your recklessness—for you have already been twice arrested by the shade in the felt hat, who did not know what you were doing in the cellars and took you to the managers, who looked upon you as an eccentric Persian interested in stage mechanism and life behind the scenes: I know all about it, I was there, in the office; you know I am everywhere—well, I tell you that, with your recklessness, they will end by wondering what you are after here . . . and they will end by knowing that you are after Erik . . . and then they will be after Erik themselves and they will discover the house on the lake. . . . If they do, it will be a bad lookout for you, old chap, a bad lookout! . . . I won't answer for anything."

Again he puffed and blew like a walrus.

"I won't answer for anything! . . . If Erik's secrets cease to be Erik's secrets, *it will be a bad lookout for a goodly number of the human race!* That's all I have to tell you, and unless you are a great booby, it ought to be enough for you . . . except that you don't know how to take a hint."

He had sat down on the stern of his boat and was kicking his heels against the planks, waiting to hear what I had to answer. I simply said:

"It's not Erik that I'm after here!"

"Who then?"

"You know as well as I do: it's Christine Daaé," I answered.

He retorted: "I have every right to see her in my own house. I am loved for my own sake."

"That's not true," I said. "You have carried her off and are keeping her locked up."

"Listen," he said. "Will you promise never to meddle with my affairs again, if I prove to you that I am loved for my own sake?"

"Yes, I promise you," I replied, without hesitation, for I felt convinced that for such a monster the proof was impossible.

"Well, then, it's quite simple. . . . Christine Daaé shall leave this as she pleases and come back again! . . . Yes, come back again, because she wishes . . . come back of herself, because she loves me for myself! . . ."

"Oh, I doubt if she will come back! . . . But it is your duty to let her go."

"My duty, you great booby! . . . It is my wish . . . my wish to let her go; and she will come back again . . . for she loves me! . . . All this will end in a marriage . . . a marriage at the Madeleine, you great booby! Do you believe me now? When I tell you that my nuptial mass is written . . . wait till you hear the *Kyrie*. . . ."

He beat time with his heels on the planks of the boat and sang:

"Kyrie! . . . Kyrie! . . . Kyrie

eleison! . . . Wait till you hear, wait till you hear that mass."

"Look here," I said. "I shall believe you if I see Christine Daaé come out of the house on the lake and go back to it of her own accord."

"And you won't meddle any more in my affairs?"

"No."

"Very well, you shall see that to-night. Come to the masked ball. Christine and I will go and have a look round. Then you can hide in the lumber-room and you shall see Christine, who will have gone to her dressing-room, delighted to come back by the Communists' road. . . . And, now, be off, for I must go and do some shopping!"

To my intense astonishment, things happened as he had announced. Christine Daaé left the house on the lake and returned to it several times, without, apparently, being forced to do so. It was very difficult for me to clear my mind of Erik. However, I resolved to be extremely prudent, and did not make the mistake of returning to the shore of the lake, or of going by the Communists' road. But the idea of the secret entrance in the third cellar haunted me, and I repeatedly went and waited for hours behind a scene from the *Roi de Lahore,* which had been left there for some reason or other. At last my patience was rewarded. One day, I saw the monster come toward me, on his knees. I was certain that he could not see me. He passed between the scene behind which I stood and a set piece, went to the wall and pressed on a spring that moved a stone and afforded him an ingress. He passed through this, and the stone closed behind him.

I waited for at least thirty minutes and then pressed the spring in my turn. Everything happened as with Erik. But I was careful not to go through the hole myself, for I knew that Erik was inside. On the other hand, the idea that I might be caught by Erik suddenly made me think of the death of Joseph Buquet. I did not wish to jeopardize the advantages of so great a discovery which might be useful to many people, "to a goodly number of the human race," in Erik's words; and I left the cellars of the Opera after carefully replacing the stone.

I continued to be greatly interested in the relations between Erik and Christine Daaé, not from any morbid curiosity, but because of the terrible thought which obsessed my mind that Erik was capable of anything, if he once discovered that he was not loved for his own sake, as he imagined. I continued to wander, very cautiously, about the Opera and soon learned the truth about the monster's dreary love-affair.

He filled Christine's mind, through the terror with which he inspired her, but the dear child's heart belonged wholly to the Vicomte Raoul de Chagny. While they played about, like an innocent engaged couple, on the upper floors of the Opera, to avoid the monster, they little suspected that some one was watching over them. I was prepared to do anything: to kill the monster, if necessary, and explain to the police afterward. But Erik did not show himself; and I felt none the more comfortable for that.

I must explain my whole plan. I thought that the monster, being driven from his house by jealousy, would thus enable me to enter it, without danger, through the passage in the third cellar. It was important, for everybody's sake, that I should know exactly what was inside. One day, tired of waiting for an opportunity, I moved the stone and at once heard an astounding music: the monster was working at his *Don Juan Triumphant,* with every door in his house wide open. I knew that this was the work of his life. I was careful not to stir and remained prudently in my dark hole.

He stopped playing, for a moment, and began walking about his place, like a madman. And he said aloud, at the top of his voice:

"It must be finished *first!* Quite finished!"

This speech was not calculated to reassure me and, when the music recommenced, I closed the stone very softly.

On the day of the abduction of Christine Daaé, I did not come to the theater until rather late in the evening, trembling lest I should hear bad news. I had spent a horrible day, for, after reading in a morning paper the announcement of a forthcoming marriage between Christine and the Vicomte de Chagny, I wondered whether, after all, I should not do better to denounce the monster. But reason returned to me, and I was persuaded that this action could only precipitate a possible catastrophe.

When my cab set me down before the Opera, I was really almost astonished to see it still standing! But I am something of a fatalist, like all good Orientals, and I entered ready for anything.

Christine Daaé's abduction in the Prison Act, which naturally surprised everybody, found me prepared. I was quite certain that she had been juggled away by Erik, that prince of conjurers. And I thought positively that this was the end of Christine and perhaps of everybody, so much so that I thought of advising all these people who were staying on at the theater to make good their escape. I felt, however, that they would be sure to look upon me as mad and I refrained.

On the other hand, I resolved to act without further delay, as far as I was concerned. The chances were in my favor that Erik, at that moment, was thinking only of his captive. This was the moment to enter his house through the third cellar; and I resolved to take with me that poor little desperate viscount, who, at the first suggestion, accepted, with an amount of confidence in myself that touched me profoundly. I had sent my servant for my pistols. I gave one to the viscount and advised him to hold himself ready to fire, for, after all, Erik might be waiting for us behind the wall. We were to go by the Communists' road and through the trap-door.

Seeing my pistols, the little viscount asked me if we were going to fight a duel. I said:

"Yes; and what a duel!"

But, of course, I had no time to explain anything to him. The little viscount is a brave fellow, but he knew hardly anything about his adversary; and it was so much the better. My great fear was that he was already somewhere near us, preparing the Punjab lasso. No one knows better than he how to throw the Punjab lasso, for he is the king of stranglers even as he is the prince of conjurors. When he had finished making the little sultana laugh, at the time of the "rosy hours of Mazenderan," she herself used to ask him to amuse her by giving her a thrill. It was then that he introduced the sport of the Punjab lasso.

He had lived in India and acquired an incredible skill in the art of strangulation. He would make them lock him into a courtyard to which they brought a warrior—usually, a man condemned to death—armed with a long pike and broadsword. Erik had only his lasso; and it was always just when the warrior thought that he was going to fell Erik with a tremendous blow that we heard the lasso whistle through the air. With a turn of the wrist, Erik tightened the noose round his adversary's neck and, in this fashion, dragged him before the little sultana and her women, who sat looking from a window and applauding. The little sultana herself learned to wield the Punjab lasso and killed several of her women and even of the friends who visited her. But I prefer to drop this terrible subject of the rosy hours of Mazenderan. I have mentioned it only to explain why, on arriving with the Vicomte de Chagny in the cellars of the Opera, I was bound to protect my companion against the ever-threatening danger of death by strangling. My pistols could serve no purpose, for Erik was not likely to show himself; but Erik could always strangle us. I had no time to explain all this to the viscount; besides, there was nothing to be gained by complicating the position. I simply told M. de Chagny to keep his hand at the level of his eyes, with the arm bent, as though waiting for the command to fire. With his victim in this attitude, it is impossible even for the most expert strangler to throw the lasso with advantage. It catches you not only round the neck, but also round the arm or hand. This enables you easily to unloose the lasso, which then becomes harmless.

After avoiding the commissary of police, a number of door-shutters and the firemen, after meeting the rat-catcher and passing the man in the felt hat unperceived, the viscount and I arrived without obstacle in the third cellar, between the set piece and the scene from the *Roi de Lahore*. I worked the stone, and we jumped into the house which Erik had built himself in the double case of the foundation-walls of the Opera. And this was the easiest thing in the world for him to do, because Erik was one of the chief contractors under Philippe Garnier, the architect of the Opera, and continued to work by himself when the works were officially suspended, during the war, the siege of Paris and the Commune.

I knew my Erik too well to feel at all comfortable on jumping into his house. I knew what he had made of a certain palace at Mazenderan. From being the most honest building conceivable, he soon turned it into a house of the very devil, where you could not utter a word but it was overheard or repeated by an echo. With his trap-doors the monster was responsible for endless tragedies of all kinds. He hit upon astonishing inventions. Of these, the most curious, horrible and dangerous was the so-called torture-chamber. Except in special cases, when the little sultana amused herself by inflicting suffering upon some unoffending citizen, no one was let into it but wretches condemned to death. And, even then, when these had "had enough," they were always at liberty to put an end to themselves with a Punjab lasso or bowstring, left for their use at the foot of an iron tree.

My alarm, therefore, was great when I saw that the room into which M. le Vicomte de Chagny and I had dropped was an exact copy of the torture-chamber of the rosy hours of Mazenderan. At our feet, I found the Punjab lasso which I had been dreading all the evening. I was convinced that this rope had already done duty for Joseph Buquet, who, like myself, must have caught Erik one evening working the stone in the third cellar. He probably tried it in his turn, fell into the torture-chamber and only left it hanged. I can well imagine Erik dragging the body, in order to get rid of it, to the scene from the *Roi de Lahore,* and hanging it there as an example, or to increase the superstitious terror that was to help him in guarding the approaches to his lair! Then, upon reflection, Erik went back to fetch the Punjab lasso, which is very curiously made out of catgut, and which might have set an examining magistrate thinking. This explains the disappearance of the rope.

And now I discovered the lasso, at our feet, in the torture-chamber! . . . I am no coward, but a cold sweat covered my forehead as I moved the little red disk of my lantern over the walls.

M. de Chagny noticed it and asked:

"What is the matter, sir?"

I made him a violent sign to be silent.

CHAPTER XXII

IN THE TORTURE CHAMBER

The Persian's Narrative Continued

WE were in the middle of a little six-cornered room, the sides of which were covered with mirrors from top to bottom. In the corners, we could clearly see the "joins" in the glasses, the segments intended to turn on their gear; yes, I recognized them and I recognized the iron tree in the corner, at the bottom of one of those segments . . . the iron tree, with its iron branch, for the hanged men.

I seized my companion's arm: the Vicomte de Chagny was all a-quiver, eager to shout to his betrothed that he was bringing her help. I feared that he would not be able to contain himself.

Suddenly, we heard a noise on our left. It sounded at first like a door opening and shutting in the next room; and then there was a dull moan. I clutched M. de Chagny's arm more firmly still; and then we distinctly heard these words:

"You must make your choice! The wedding mass or the requiem mass!"

I recognized the voice of the monster.

There was another moan, followed by a long silence.

I was persuaded by now that the monster was unaware of our presence in his house, for otherwise he would certainly have managed not to let us hear him. He would only have had to close the little invisible window through which the torture-lovers look down into the torture-chamber. Besides, I was certain that, if he had known of our presence, the tortures would have begun at once.

The important thing was not to let him know; and I dreaded nothing so much as the impulsiveness of the Vicomte de Chagny, who wanted to rush through the walls to Christine Daaé, whose moans we continued to hear at intervals.

"The requiem mass is not at all gay," Erik's voice resumed, "whereas the wedding mass—you can take my word for it—is magnificent! You must take a resolution and know your own mind! I can't go on living like this, like a mole in a burrow! *Don Juan Triumphant* is finished; and now I want to live like everybody else. I want to have a wife like everybody else and to take her out on Sundays. I have invented a mask that makes me look like anybody. People will not even turn round in the streets. You will be the happiest of women. And we will sing, all by ourselves, till we swoon away with delight. You are crying! You are afraid of me! And yet I am not really wicked. Love me and you shall see! All I wanted was to be loved for myself. If you loved me I should be as gentle as a lamb; and you could do anything with me that you pleased."

Soon the moans that accompanied this sort of love's litany increased and increased. I have never heard anything more despairing; and M. de Chagny and I recognized that this terrible lamentation came from Erik himself. Christine seemed to be standing dumb with horror, without the strength to cry out, while the monster was on his knees before her.

Three times over, Erik fiercely bewailed his fate:

"You don't love me! You don't love me! You don't love me!"

And then, more gently:

"Why do you cry? You know it gives me pain to see you cry!"

A silence.

Each silence gave us fresh hope. We said to ourselves:

"Perhaps he has left Christine behind the wall."

And we thought only of the possibility of warning Christine Daaé of our presence, unknown to the monster. We were unable to leave the torture-chamber now, unless Christine opened the door to us; and it was only on this condition that we could hope to help her, for we did not even know where the door might be.

Suddenly, the silence in the next room was disturbed by the ringing of an electric bell. There was a bound on the other side of the wall and Erik's voice of thunder:

"Somebody ringing! Walk in, please!"

A sinister chuckle.

"Who has come bothering now? Wait for me here. . . . *I am going to tell the siren to open the door."*

Steps moved away, a door closed. I had no time to think of the fresh horror that was preparing; I forgot that the monster was only going out perhaps to perpetrate a fresh crime; I understood but one thing: Christine was alone behind the wall!

The Vicomte de Chagny was already calling to her:

"Christine! Christine!"

As we could hear what was said in the next room, there was no reason why my companion should not be heard in his turn. Nevertheless, the viscount had to repeat his cry time after time.

At last, a faint voice reached us.

"I am dreaming!" it said.

"Christine, Christine, it is I, Raoul!"

A silence.

"But answer me, Christine! . . . . In Heaven's name, if you are alone, answer me!"

Then Christine's voice whispered Raoul's name.

"Yes! Yes! It is I! It is not a dream! . . . Christine, trust me! . . . We are here to save you . . . but be prudent! When you hear the monster, warn us!"

Then Christine gave way to fear. She trembled lest Erik should discover where Raoul was hidden; she told us in a few hurried words that Erik had gone quite mad with love and that he had decided *to kill everybody and himself with everybody* if she did not consent to become his wife. He had given her till eleven o'clock the next evening for reflection. It was the last respite. She must choose, as he said, between the wedding mass and the requiem.

And Erik had then uttered a phrase which Christine did not quite understand:

"Yes or no! If your answer is no, everybody will be dead *and buried!*"

But I understood the sentence perfectly, for it corresponded in a terrible manner with my own dreadful thought.

"Can you tell us where Erik is?" I asked.

She replied that he must have left the house.

"Could you make sure?"

"No. I am fastened. I can not stir a limb."

When we heard this, M. de Chagny and I gave a yell of fury. Our safety, the safety of all three of us, depended on the girl's liberty of movement.

"But where are you?" asked Christine. "There are only two doors in my room, the Louis-Philippe room of which I told you, Raoul; a door through which Erik comes and goes, and another which he has never opened before me and which he has forbidden me ever to go through, because he says it is the most dangerous of the doors, the door of the torture-chamber!"

"Christine, that is where we are!"

"You are in the torture-chamber?"

"Yes, but we can not see the door."

"Oh, if I could only drag myself so far! I would knock at the door and that would tell you where it is."

"Is it a door with a lock to it?" I asked.

"Yes, with a lock."

"Mademoiselle," I said, "it is absolutely necessary that you should open that door to us!"

"But how?" asked the poor girl tearfully.

We heard her straining, trying to free herself from the bonds that held her.

"I know where the key is," she said, in a voice that seemed exhausted by the effort she had made. "But I am fastened so tight. . . . Oh, the wretch!"

And she gave a sob.

"Where is the key?" I asked, signing to M. de Chagny not to speak and to leave the business to me, for we had not a moment to lose.

"In the next room, near the organ, with another little bronze key, which he also forbade me to touch. They are both in a little leather bag which he calls the bag of life and death. . . . Raoul! Raoul! Fly! Everything is mysterious and terrible here, and Erik will soon have gone quite mad, and you are in the torture-chamber! . . . Go back by the way you came. There must be a reason why the room is called by that name!"

"Christine," said the young man. "we will go from here together or die together!"

"We must keep cool," I whispered. "Why has he fastened you, mademoiselle? You can't escape from his house; and he knows it!"

"I tried to commit suicide! The monster went out last night, after carrying me here fainting and half chloroformed. He was going *to his banker,* so he said! . . . When he returned he found me with my face covered with blood. . . . I had tried to kill myself by striking my forehead against the walls."

"Christine!" groaned Raoul; and he began to sob.

"Then he bound me. . . . I am not allowed to die until eleven o'clock to-morrow evening."

"Mademoiselle," I declared, "the monster bound you . . . and he shall unbind you. You have only to play the necessary part! Remember that he loves you!"

"Alas!" we heard. "Am I likely to forget it!"

"Remember it and smile to him . . . entreat him . . . tell him that your bonds hurt you."

But Christine Daaé said:

"Hush! . . . I hear something in the wall on the lake! . . . It is he! . . . Go away! Go away! Go away!"

"We could not go away, even if we wanted to," I said, as impressively as I could. "We can not leave this! And we are in the torture-chamber!"

"Hush!" whispered Christine again.

Heavy steps sounded slowly behind the wall, then stopped and made the floor creak once more. Next came a tremendous sigh, followed by a cry of horror from Christine, and we heard Erik's voice:

"I beg your pardon for letting you see a face like this! What a state I am in, am I not? It's *the other one's fault!* Why did he ring? Do *I* ask people who pass to tell me the time? He will never ask anybody the time again! It is the siren's fault."

Another sigh, deeper, more tremendous still, came from the abysmal depths of a soul.

"Why did you cry out, Christine?"

"Because I am in pain, Erik."

"I thought I had frightened you."

"Erik, unloose my bonds. . . . Am I not your prisoner?"

"You will try to kill yourself again."

"You have given me till eleven o'clock to-morrow evening, Erik."

The footsteps dragged along the floor again.

"After all, as we are to die together . . . and I am just as eager as you . . . yes, I have had enough of this life, you know. . . . Wait, don't move, I will release you. . . . You have only one word to say: '*No!*' And it will at once be over *with everybody!* . . . You are right, you are right; why wait till eleven o'clock to-morrow evening? True, it would have been grander, finer. . . . But that is childish nonsense. . . . We should only think of ourselves in this life, of our own death . . . the rest doesn't matter. . . . *You're looking at me because I am all wet?* . . . Oh, my dear, it's raining cats and dogs outside! . . . Apart from that, Christine, I think I am subject to hallucinations. . . . You know, the man who rang at the siren's door just now—go and look if he's ringing at the bottom of the lake-well, he was rather like. . . . There, turn round . . . are you glad? You're free now. . . . Oh, my poor Christine, look at your wrists: tell me, have I hurt them? . . . That alone deserves death. . . . Talking of death, *I must sing his requiem!*"

Hearing these terrible remarks, I received an awful presentiment . . . I too had once rung at the monster's door . . . and, without knowing it, must have set some warning current in motion. . . . And I remembered the two arms that had emerged from the inky waters. . . . What poor wretch had strayed to that shore this time? Who was 'the other one,' the one whose requiem we now heard sung?

Erik sang like the god of thunder, sang a *Dies Iræ* that enveloped us as in a storm. The elements seemed to rage around us. Suddenly, the organ and the voice ceased so suddenly that M. de Chagny sprang back, on the other side of the wall, with emotion. And the voice, changed and transformed, distinctly grated out these metallic syllables:

"What have you done with my bag?"

CHAPTER XXIII

THE TORTURES BEGIN

The Persian's Narrative Continued

THE voice repeated angrily: "What have you done with my bag? So it was to take my bag that you asked me to release you!"

We heard hurried steps, Christine running back to the Louis-Philippe room, as though to seek shelter on the other side of our wall.

"What are you running away for?" asked the furious voice, which had followed her. "Give me back my bag, will you? Don't you know that it is the bag of life and death?"

"Listen to me, Erik," sighed the girl. "As it is settled that we are to live together . . . what difference can it make to you?"

"You know there are only two keys in it," said the monster. "What do you want to do?"

"I want to look at this room which I have never seen and which you have always kept from me. . . . It's woman's curiosity!" she said, in a tone which she tried to render playful.

But the trick was too childish for Erik to be taken in by it.

"I don't like curious women," he retorted, "and you had better remember the story of *Blue-Beard* and be careful. . . . Come, give me back my bag! . . . Give me back my bag! . . . Leave the key alone, will you, you inquisitive little thing?"

And he chuckled, while Christine gave a cry of pain. Erik had evidently recovered the bag from her.

At that moment, the viscount could not help uttering an exclamation of impotent rage.

"Why, what's that?" said the monster. "Did you hear, Christine?"

"No, no," replied the poor girl. "I heard nothing."

"I thought I heard a cry."

"A cry! Are you going mad, Erik? Whom do you expect to give a cry, in this house? . . . I cried out, because you hurt me! I heard nothing."

"I don't like the way you said that! . . . You're trembling. . . . You're quite excited. . . . You're lying! . . . That was a cry, there was a cry! . . . There is some one in the torture-chamber! . . . Ah, I understand now!"

"There is no one there, Erik!"

"I understand!"

"No one!"

"The man you want to marry, perhaps!"

"I don't want to marry anybody, you know I don't."

Another nasty chuckle.

"Well, it won't take long to find out. Christine, my love, we need not open the door to see what is happening in the torture-chamber. Would you like to see? Would you like to see? Look here! If there is some one, if there is really some one there, you will see the invisible window light up at the top, near the ceiling. We need only draw the black curtain and put out the light in here. There, that's it. . . . Let's put out the light! You're not afraid of the dark, when you're with your little husband!"

Then we heard Christine's voice of anguish:

"No! . . . I'm frightened! . . . I tell you, I'm afraid of the dark! . . . I don't care about that room now. . . . You're always frightening me, like a child, with your torture-chamber! . . . And so I became inquisitive. . . . But I don't care about it now . . . not a bit . . . not a bit!"

And that which I feared above all things began, *automatically*. We were suddenly flooded with light! Yes, on our side of the wall, everything seemed aglow. The Vicomte de Chagny was so much taken aback that he staggered. And the angry voice roared:

"I told you there was some one! Do you see the window now? The lighted window, right up there? The man behind the wall can't see it! But you shall go up the folding steps: that is what they are there for! . . . You have often asked me to tell you; and now you know! . . . They are there to give a peep into the torture-chamber . . . you inquisitive little thing!"

"What tortures? . . . Who is being tortured? . . . Erik, Erik, say you are only trying to frighten me! . . . Say it, if you love me, Erik! . . . There are no tortures, are there?"

"Go and look at the little window, dear!"

I do not know if the viscount heard the girl's swooning voice, for he was too much occupied by the astounding spectacle that now appeared before his distracted gaze. As for me, I had seen that sight too often, through the little window, at the time of the rosy hours of Mazenderan; and I cared only for what was being said next door, seeking for a hint how to act, what resolution to take.

"Go and peep through the little window! Tell me what he looks like!"

We heard the steps being dragged against the wall.

"Up with you! . . . No! . . . No, I will go up myself, dear!"

"Oh, very well, I will go up. Let me go!"

"Oh, my darling, my darling! . . . How sweet of you! . . . How nice of you to save me the exertion at my age! . . . Tell me what he looks like!"

At that moment, we distinctly heard these words above our heads:

"There is no one there, dear!"

"No one? . . . Are you sure there is no one?"

"Why, of course not . . . no one!"

"Well, that's all right! . . . What's the matter, Christine? You're not going to faint, are you . . . as there is no one there? . . . Here . . . come down . . . there! . . . Pull yourself together . . . as there is no one there! . . . *But how do you like the landscape?*"

"Oh, very much!"

"There, that's better! . . . You're better now, are you not? . . . That's all right, you're better! . . . No excitement! . . . And what a funny house, isn't it, with landscapes like that in it?"

"Yes, it's like the Musée Grévin. . . . But, I say, Erik . . . there are no tortures in there! . . . What a fright you gave me!"

"Why . . . as there is no one there?"

"Did you design that room? It's very handsome. You're a great artist, Erik."

"Yes, a great artist, in my own line."

"But tell me, Erik, why did you call that room the torture-chamber?"

"Oh, it's very simple. First of all, what did you see?"

"I saw a forest."

"And what is in a forest?"

"Trees."

"And what is in a tree?"

"Birds."

"Did you see any birds?"

"No, I did not see any birds."

"Well, what did you see? Think! You saw

branches! And what are the branches?" asked the terrible voice. *"There's a gibbet!* That is why I call my wood the torture-chamber! . . . You see, it's all a joke. I never express myself like other people. But I am very tired of it! . . . I'm sick and tired of having a forest and a torture-chamber in my house and of living like a mountebank, in a house with a false bottom! . . . I'm tired of it! I want to have a nice, quiet flat, with ordinary doors and windows and a wife inside it, like anybody else! A wife whom I could love and take out on Sundays and keep amused on week-days. . . Here, shall I show you some card-tricks? That will help us to pass a few minutes, while waiting for eleven o'clock to-morrow evening. . . . My dear little Christine! . . . Are you listening to me? . . . Tell me you love me! . . . No, you don't love me . . . but no matter, you will! . . . Once, you could not look at my mask because you knew what was behind. . . . And now you don't mind looking at it and you forget what is behind! . . . One can get used to everything . . . if one wishes. . . . Plenty of young people who did not care for each other before marriage have adored each other since! Oh, I don't know what I am talking about! But you would have lots of fun with me. For instance, I am the greatest ventriloquist that ever lived, I am the first ventriloquist in the world! . . . You're laughing. . . . Perhaps you don't believe me? Listen."

The wretch, who really was the first ventriloquist in the world, was only trying to divert the child's attention from the torture-chamber; but it was a stupid scheme, for Christine thought of nothing but us! She repeatedly besought him, in the gentlest tones which she could assume:

"Put out the light in the little window! . . . Erik, do put out the light in the little window!"

For she saw that this light, which appeared so suddenly and of which the monster had spoken in so threatening a voice, must mean something terrible. One thing must have pacified her for a moment; and that was seeing the two of us, behind the wall, in the midst of that resplendent light, alive and well. But she would certainly have felt much easier if the light had been put out.

Meantime, the other had already begun to play the ventriloquist. He said:

"Here, I raise my mask a little. . . . Oh, only a little! . . . You see my lips, such lips as I have? They're not moving! . . . My mouth is closed—such mouth as I have—and yet you hear my voice. . . . Where will you have it? In your left ear? In your right ear? In the table? In those little ebony boxes on the mantelpiece? . . . Listen, dear, it's in the little box on the right of the mantelpiece: what does it say? *'Shall I turn the scorpion?'* . . . And now, crack! What does it say in the little box on the left? *'Shall I turn the grasshopper?'* . . . And now, crack! Here it is in the little leather bag. . . . What does it say? *'I am the little bag of life and death!'* . . . And now, crack! It is in Carlotta's throat, in Carlotta's golden throat, in Carlotta's crystal throat, as I live! What does it say? It says, 'It's I, Mr. Toad, it's I singing! *I feel without alarm—co-ack—with its melody enwind me—co-ack!'* . . . And now, crack! It is on a chair in the ghost's box and it says, *'Madame Carlotta is singing to-night to bring the chandelier down!'* . . . And now, crack! Aha! Where is Erik's voice now? Listen, Christine, darling! Listen! It is behind the door of the torture-chamber! Listen! It's myself in the torture-chamber! And what do I say? I say, 'Woe to them that have a nose, a real nose, and come to look round the torture-chamber! Aha, aha, aha!"

Oh, the ventriloquist's terrible voice! It was everywhere, everywhere. It passed through the little invisible window, through the walls. It ran around us, between us. Erik was there, speaking to us! We made a movement as though to fling ourselves upon him. But, already, swifter, more fleeting than the voice of the echo, Erik's voice had leaped back behind the wall!

Soon we heard nothing more at all, for this is what happened:

"Erik! Erik!" said Christine's voice. "You tire me with your voice. Don't go on, Erik! Isn't it very hot here?"

"Oh, yes," replied Erik's voice, "the heat is unendurable!"

"But what does this mean? . . . The wall is really getting quite hot! . . . The wall is burning! . . ."

"I'll tell you, Christine, dear: it is because of the forest next door."

"Well, what has that to do with it? The forest?"

"Why, didn't you see that it was an African forest?"

And the monster laughed so loudly and hideously that we could no longer distinguish Christine's supplicating cries! The Vicomte de Chagny shouted and banged against the walls like a madman. I could not restrain him. But we heard nothing except the monster's laughter, and the monster himself can have heard nothing else. And then there was the sound of a body falling on the floor and being dragged along and a door slammed and then nothing, nothing more around us save the scorching silence of the south in the heart of a tropical forest!

CHAPTER XXIV

"BARRELS! . . . BARRELS! . . . ANY BARRELS TO SELL?"

The Persian's Narrative Continued

I HAVE said that the room in which M. le Vicomte de Chagny and I were imprisoned was a regular hexagon, lined entirely with mirrors. Plenty of these rooms have been seen since, mainly at exhibitions: they are called "palaces of illusion," or some such name. But the invention belongs entirely to Erik, who built the first room of this kind under my eyes, at the time of the rosy hours of Mazenderan. A decorative object, such as a column, for instance, was placed in one of the corners and immediately produced a hall of a thousand columns; for, thanks to the mirrors, the real room was multiplied by six hexagonal rooms, each of which, in its turn, was multiplied indefinitely. But the little sultana soon tired of this infantile illusion, whereupon Erik altered his invention into a "torture-chamber." For the architectural motive placed in one corner, he substituted an iron tree. This tree, with its painted leaves, was absolutely true to life and was made of iron so as to resist all the attacks of the "patient" who was locked into the torture-chamber. We shall see how the scene thus obtained was twice altered instantaneously into two successive other scenes, by means of the automatic rotation of the drums or rollers in the corners. These were divided into three sections, fitting into the angles of the mirrors and each supporting a decorative scheme that came into sight as the roller revolved upon its axis.

The walls of this strange room gave the patient nothing to lay hold of, because, apart from the solid decorative object, they were simply furnished with mirrors, thick enough to withstand any onslaught of the victim, who was flung into the chamber empty-handed and barefoot.

There was no furniture. The ceiling was capable of being lit up. An ingenious system of electric heating, which has since been imitated, allowed the temperature of the walls and room to be increased at will.

I am giving all these details of a perfectly natural invention, producing, with a few painted branches, the supernatural illusion of an equatorial forest blazing under the tropical sun, so that no one may doubt the present balance of my brain or feel entitled to say that I am mad or lying or that I take him for a fool.*

I now return to the facts where I left them. When the ceiling lit up and the forest became visible around us, the viscount's stupefaction was immense. That impenetrable forest, with its innumerable trunks and branches, threw him into a terrible state of consternation. He passed his hands over his forehead, as though to drive away a dream; his eyes blinked; and, for a moment, he forgot to listen.

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*It is very natural that, at the time when the Persian was writing, he should take so many precautions against any spirit of incredulity on the part of those who were likely to read his narrative. Nowadays, when we have all seen this sort of room, his precautions would be superfluous.

I have already said that the sight of the forest did not surprise me at all; and therefore I listened for the two of us to what was happening next door. Lastly, my attention was especially attracted, not so much to the scene, as to the mirrors that produced it. These mirrors were broken in parts. Yes, they were marked and scratched; they had been "starred," in spite of their solidity; and this proved to me that the torture-chamber in which we now were *had already served a purpose.*

Yes, some wretch, whose feet were not bare like those of the victims of the rosy hours of Mazenderan, had certainly fallen into this "mortal illusion" and, mad with rage, had kicked against those mirrors which, nevertheless, continued to reflect his agony. And the branch of the tree on which he had put an end to his own sufferings was arranged in such a way that, before dying, he had seen, for his last consolation, a thousand men writhing in his company.

Yes, Joseph Buquet had undoubtedly been through all this! Were we to die as he had done? I did not think so, for I knew that we had a few hours before us and that I could employ them to better purpose than Joseph Buquet was able to do. After all, I was thoroughly acquainted with most of Erik's "tricks;" and now or never was the time to turn my knowledge to account.

To begin with, I gave up every idea of returning to the passage that had brought us to that accursed chamber. I did not trouble about the possibility of working the inside stone that closed the passage; and this for the simple reason that to do so was out of the question. We had dropped from too great a height into the torture-chamber; there was no furniture to help us reach that passage; not even the branch of the iron tree, not even each other's shoulders were of any avail.

There was only one possible outlet, that opening into the Louis-Philippe room in which Erik and Christine Daaé were. But, though this outlet looked like an ordinary door on Christine's side, it was absolutely invisible to us. We must therefore try to open it without even knowing where it was.

When I was quite sure that there was no hope for us from Christine Daaé's side, when I had heard the monster dragging the poor girl from the Louis-Philippe room *lest she should interfere with our tortures,* I resolved to set to work without delay.

But I had first to calm M. de Chagny, who was already walking about like a madman, uttering incoherent cries. The snatches of conversation which he had caught between Christine and the monster had contributed not a little to drive him beside himself: add to that the shock of the magic forest and the scorching heat which was beginning to make the prespiration stream down his temples and you will have no difficulty in understanding his state of mind. He shouted Christine's name, brandished his pistol, knocked his forehead against the glass in his endeavors to run down the glades of the illusive forest. In short, the torture was beginning to work its spell upon a brain unprepared for it.

I did my best to induce the poor viscount to listen to reason. I made him touch the mirrors and the iron tree and the branches and explained to him, by optical laws, all the luminous imagery by which we were surrounded and of which we need not allow ourselves to be the victims, like ordinary, ignorant people.

"We are in a room, a little room; that is what you must keep saying to yourself. And we shall leave the room as soon as we have found the door."

And I promised him that, if he let me act, without disturbing me by shouting and walking up and down, I would discover the trick of the door in less than an hour's time.

Then he lay flat on the floor, as one does in a wood, and declared that he would wait until I found the door of the forest, as there was nothing better to do! And he added that, from where he was, "the view was splendid!" The torture was working, in spite of all that I had said.

Myself, forgetting the forest, I tackled a glass panel and began to finger it in every direction, hunting for the weak point on which to press in order to turn the door in accordance with Erik's system of pivots. This weak point might be a mere speck on the glass, no larger than a pea, under which the spring lay hidden. I hunted and hunted. I felt as high as my hands could reach. Erik was about the same height as myself and I thought that he would not have placed the spring higher than suited his stature.

While groping over the successive panels with the greatest care, I endeavored not to lose a minute, for I was feeling more and more overcome with the heat and we were literally roasting in that blazing forest.

I had been working like this for half an hour and had finished three panels, when, as ill-luck would have it, I turned round on hearing a muttered exclamation from the viscount.

"I am stifling," he said. "All those mirrors are sending out an infernal heat! Do you think you will find that spring soon? If you are much longer about it, we shall be roasted alive!"

I was not sorry to hear him talk like this. He had not said a word of the forest and I hoped that my companion's reason would hold out some time longer against the torture. But he added:

"What consoles me is that the monster has given Christine until eleven to-morrow evening. If we can't get out of here and go to her assistance, at least we shall be dead before her! Then Erik's mass can serve for all of us!"

And he gulped down a breath of hot air that nearly made him faint.

As I had not the same desperate reasons as M. le Vicomte for accepting death, I returned, after giving him a word of encouragement, to my panel, but I had made the mistake of taking a few steps while speaking and, in the tangle of the illusive forest, I was no longer able to find my panel for certain! I had to begin all over again, at random, feeling, fumbling, groping.

Now the fever laid hold of me in my turn . . . for I found nothing, absolutely nothing. In the next room, all was silence. We were quite lost in the forest, without an outlet, a compass, a guide or anything. Oh, I knew what awaited us if nobody came to our aid . . . or if I did not find the spring! But, look as I might, I found nothing but branches, beautiful branches that stood straight up before me, or spread gracefully over my head. But they gave no shade. And this was natural enough, as we were in an equatorial forest, with the sun right above our heads, an African forest.

M. de Chagny and I had repeatedly taken off our coats and put them on again, finding at one time that they made us feel still hotter and at another that they protected us against the heat. I was still making a moral resistance, but M. de Chagny seemed to me quite "gone." He pretended that he had been walking in that forest for three days and nights, without stopping, looking for Christine Daaé! From time to time, he thought he saw her behind the trunk of a tree, or gliding between the branches; and he called to her with words of supplication that brought the tears to my eyes. And then, at last:

"Oh, how thirsty I am!" he cried, in delirious accents.

I too was thirsty. My throat was on fire. And, yet, squatting on the floor, I went on hunting, hunting, hunting for the spring of the invisible door . . . especially as it was dangerous to remain in the forest as evening drew nigh. Already the shades of night were beginning to surround us. It had happened very quickly: night falls quickly in tropical countries . . suddenly, with hardly any twilight.

Now night, in the forests of the equator, is always dangerous, particularly when, like ourselves, one has not the materials for a fire to keep off the beasts of prey. I did indeed try for a moment to break off the branches, which I would have lit with my dark lantern, but I knocked myself also against the mirrors and remembered, in time, that we had only images of branches to do with.

The heat did not go with the daylight; on the contrary, it was now still hotter under the blue rays of the moon. I urged the viscount to hold our weapons ready to fire and not to stray from camp, while I went on looking for my spring.

Suddenly, we heard a lion roaring a few yards away.

"Oh," whispered the viscount, "he is quite close! . . . Don't you see him? . . . There . . . through the trees . . . in that thicket! . . . If he roars again, I will fire! . . ."

And the roaring began again, louder than before. And the viscount fired, but I do not think that he hit the lion; only, he smashed a mirror, as I perceived the next morning, at daybreak. We must have covered a good distance during the night, for we suddenly found ourselves on the edge of the desert, an immense desert of sand, stones and rocks. It was really not worth while leaving the forest to come upon the desert. Tired out, I flung myself down beside the viscount, for I had had enough of looking for springs which I could not find.

I was quite surprised—and I said so to the viscount—that we had encountered no other dangerous animals during the night. Usually, after the lion came the leopard and sometimes the buzz of the tsetse fly. These were easily obtained effects; and I explained to M. de Chagny that Erik imitated the roar of a lion on a long tabour or timbrel, with an ass's skin at one end. Over this skin he tied a string of catgut, which was fastened at the middle to another similar string passing through the whole length of the tabour. Erik had only to rub this string with a glove smeared with resin and, according to the manner in which he rubbed it, he imitated to perfection the voice of the lion or the leopard, or even the buzzing of the tsetse fly.

The idea that Erik was probably in the room beside us, working his trick, made me suddenly resolve to enter into a parley with him, for we must obviously give up all thought of taking him by surprise. And by this time he must be quite aware who were the occupants of his torture-chamber. I called him: "Erik! Erik!"

I shouted as loudly as I could across the desert, but there was no answer to my voice. All around us lay the silence and the bare immensity of that stony desert. What was to become of us in the midst of that awful solitude?

We were beginning literally to die of heat, hunger and thirst . . . of thirst especially. At last, I saw M. de Chagny raise himself on his elbow and point to a spot on the horizon. He had discovered an oasis!

Yes, far in the distance was an oasis . . . an oasis with limpid water, which reflected the iron trees! . . . Tush, it was the scene of the mirage. . . . I recognized it at once . . . the worst of the three! . . . No one had been able to fight against it . . . no one. . . . I did my utmost to keep my head *and not to hope for water,* because I knew that, if a man hoped for water, the water that reflected the iron tree, and if, after hoping for water, he struck against the mirror, then there was only one thing for him to do: to hang himself on the iron tree!

So I cried to M. de Chagny:

"It's the mirage! . . . It's the mirage! . . . Don't believe in the water! . . . It's another trick of the mirrors! . . ."

Then he flatly told me to shut up, with my tricks of the mirrors, my springs, my revolving doors and my palaces of illusions! He angrily declared that

I must be either blind or mad to imagine that all that water flowing over there, among those splendid, numberless trees, was not real water! . . . And the desert was real! . . . And so was the forest! . . . And it was no use trying to take him in . . . he was an old, experienced traveler . . . he had been all over the place!

And he dragged himself along, saying: "Water! Water!"

And his mouth was open, as though he were drinking.

And my mouth was open too, as though I were drinking.

For we not only saw the water, but *we heard it!* . . . We heard it flow, we heard it ripple! . . . Do you understand that word "ripple?" . . . *It is a sound which you hear with your tongue!* . . . You put your tongue out of your mouth to listen to it better!

Lastly—and this was the most pitiless torture of all—we heard the rain and it was not raining! This was an infernal invention. . . . Oh, I knew well enough how Erik obtained it! He filled with little stones a very long and narrow box, broken up inside with wooden and metal projections. The stones, in falling, struck against these projections and rebounded from one to another; and the result was a series of pattering sounds that exactly imitated a rainstorm.

Ah, you should have seen us putting out our tongues and dragging ourselves toward the rippling river-bank! Our eyes and ears were full of water, but our tongues were hard and dry as horn!

When we reached the mirror, M. de Chagny licked it . . . and I also licked the glass.

It was burning hot!

Then we rolled on the floor with a hoarse cry of despair. M. de Chagny put the one pistol that was still loaded to his temple; and I stared at the Punjab lasso at the foot of the iron tree. I knew why the iron tree had returned, in this third change of scene! . . . The iron tree was waiting for me! . . .

But, as I stared at the Punjab lasso, I saw a thing that made me start so violently that M. de Chagny delayed his attempt at suicide. I took his arm. And then I caught the pistol from him . . . and then I dragged myself on my knees toward what I had seen.

I had discovered, near the Punjab lasso, in a groove in the floor, a black-headed nail of which I knew the use. At last I had discovered the spring! I felt the nail. . . . I lifted a radiant face to M. de Chagny. . . . The black-headed nail yielded to my pressure. . . .

And then. . . .

And then we saw not a door opened in the wall, but a cellar-flap released in the floor. Cool air came up to us from the black hole below. We stooped over that square of darkness as though over a limpid well. With our chins in the cool shade, we drank it in.

And we bent lower and lower over the trap-door.

What could there be in that cellar which opened before us? Water? Water to drink?

I thrust my arm into the darkness and came upon a stone and another stone . . . a staircase . . . a dark staircase leading into the cellar. The viscount wanted to fling himself down the hole; but I, fearing a new trick of the monster's, stopped him, turned on my dark lantern and went down first.

The staircase was a winding one and led down into pitchy darkness. But oh, how deliciously cool were the darkness and the stairs? The lake could not be far away.

We soon reached the bottom. Our eyes were beginning to accustom themselves to the dark, to distinguish shapes around us . . . circular shapes . . . on which I turned the light of my lantern.

Barrels!

We were in Erik's cellar: it was here that he must keep his wine and perhaps his drinking-water. I knew that Erik was a great lover of good wine. Ah, there was plenty to drink here!

M. de Chagny patted the round shapes and kept on saying:

"Barrels! Barrels! . . . What a lot of barrels! . . ."

Indeed, there was quite a number of them, symmetrically arranged in two rows, one on either side of us. They were small barrels and I thought that Erik must have selected them of that size to facilitate their carriage to the house on the lake.

We examined them successively, to see if one of them had not a funnel, showing that it had been tapped at some time or another. But all the barrels were hermetically closed.

Then, after half lifting one to make sure it was full, we went on our knees and, with the blade of a small knife which I carried, I prepared to stave in the bung-hole.

At that moment, I seemed to hear, coming from very far, a sort of monotonous chant which I knew well, from often hearing it in the streets of Paris:

"Barrels! . . . Barrels! . . . Any barrels to sell? . . ."

My hand desisted from its work. M. de Chagny had also heard. He said:

"That's funny! It sounds as if the barrel were singing!"

The song was renewed, farther away:

"Barrels! . . . Barrels! . . . Any barrels to sell? . . ."

"Oh, I swear," said the viscount, "that the tune dies away in the barrel! . . ."

We stood up and went to look behind the barrel.

"It's inside," said M. de Chagny, "it's inside!"

But we heard nothing there and were driven to accuse the bad condition of our senses. And we returned to the bung-hole. M. de Chagny put his two hands together underneath it and, with a last effort, I burst the bung.

"What's this?" cried the viscount. "This isn't water!"

The viscount put his two full hands close to my lantern. . . . I stooped to look . . . and at once threw away the lantern with such violence that it broke and went out, leaving us in utter darkness.

What I had seen in M. de Chagny's hands . . . was gun-powder!

CHAPTER XXV

THE SCORPION OR THE GRASSHOPPER: WHICH?

The Persian's Narrative Concluded

THE discovery flung us into a state of alarm that made us forget all our past and present sufferings. We now knew all that the monster meant to convey when he said to Christine Daaé:

"Yes or no! If your answer is no, everybody will be dead *and buried!*"

Yes, buried under the ruins of the Paris Grand Opera!

The monster had given her until eleven o'clock in the evening. He had chosen his time well. There would be many people, many "members of the human race," up there, in the resplendent theater. What finer retinue could be expected for his funeral? He would go down to the tomb escorted by the whitest shoulders in the world, decked with the richest jewels.

Eleven o'clock to-morrow evening!

We were all to be blown up in the middle of the performance . . . if Christine Daaé said no!

Eleven o'clock to-morrow evening! . . .

And what else could Christine say but no? Would she not prefer to espouse death itself rather than that living corpse? She did not know that on her acceptance or refusal depended the awful fate of many members of the human race!

Eleven o'clock to-morrow evening!

And we dragged ourselves through the darkness, feeling our way to the stone steps, for the light in the trap-door overhead that led to the room of mirrors was now extinguished; and we repeated to ourselves:

"Eleven o'clock to-morrow evening!"

At last, I found the staircase. But, suddenly I drew myself up on the first step, for a terrible thought had come to my mind:

"What is the time?"

Ah, what was the time? . . . For, after all, eleven o'clock to-morrow evening might be now, might be this very moment! Who could tell us the time? We seemed to have been imprisoned in that hell for days and days . . . for years . . . since the beginning of the world. Perhaps we should be blown up then and there! Ah, a sound! A crack!

"Did you hear that? . . . There, in the corner . . . good heavens! . . . Like a sound of machinery! . . . Again! . . . Oh, for a light! . . . Perhaps it's the machinery that is to blow everything up! . . . I tell you, a cracking sound: are you deaf?"

M. de Chagny and I began to yell like madmen. Fear spurred us on. We rushed up the treads of the staircase, stumbling as we went, anything to escape the dark, to return to the mortal light of the room of mirrors!

We found the trap-door still open, but it was now as dark in the room of mirrors as in the cellar which we had left. We dragged ourselves along the floor of the torture-chamber, the floor that separated us from the powder-magazine. What was the time? We shouted, we called: M. de Chagny to Christine, I to Erik. I reminded him that I had saved his life. But no answer, save that of our despair, of our madness: what was the time? We argued, we tried to calculate the time which we had spent there, but we were incapable of reasoning. If only we could see the face of a watch! . . . Mine had stopped, but M. de Chagny's was still going. . . . He told me that he had wound it up before dressing for the Opera. . . . We had not a match upon us. . . . And yet we must know. . . . M. de Chagny broke the glass of his watch and felt the two hands. . . . He questioned the hands of the watch with his finger-tips, going by the position of the ring of the watch. . . . Judging by the space between the hands, he thought it might be just eleven o'clock!

But perhaps it was not the eleven o'clock of which we stood in dread. Perhaps we had still twelve hours before us!

Suddenly, I exclaimed: "Hush!"

I seemed to hear footsteps in the next room. Some one tapped against the wall. Christine Daaé's voice said:

"Raoul! Raoul!"

We were now all talking at once, on either side of the wall. Christine sobbed; she was not sure that she would find M. de Chagny alive. The monster had been terrible, it seemed, had done nothing but rave, waiting for her to give him the "yes" which she refused. And yet she had promised him that "yes," if he would take her to the torture-chamber. But he had obstinately declined, and had uttered hideous threats against all the members of the human race! At last, after hours and hours of that hell, he had that moment gone out, leaving her alone to reflect for the last time.

"Hours and hours? What is the time now? What is the time, Christine?"

"It is eleven o'clock! Eleven o'clock, all but five minutes!"

"But which eleven o'clock?"

"The eleven o'clock that is to decide life or death! . . . He told me so just before he went. . . . He is terrible. . . . He is quite mad: he tore off his mask and his yellow eyes shot flames! . . . He did nothing but laugh! . . . He said, 'I give you five minutes to spare your blushes! Here,' he said, taking a key from the little bag of life and death, 'here is the little bronze key that opens the two ebony caskets on the mantelpiece in the Louis-Philippe room. . . . In one of the caskets, you will find a scorpion, in the other, a grasshopper, both very cleverly imitated in Japanese bronze: they will say yes or no for you. If you turn the scorpion round, that will mean to me, when I return, that you have said yes. The grasshopper will mean no.'

And he laughed like a drunken demon. I did nothing but beg and entreat him to give me the key of the torture-chamber, promising to be his wife if he granted me that request. . . . But he told me that there was no future need for that key and that he was going to throw it into the lake! . . . And he again laughed like a drunken demon and left me. Oh, his last words were, 'The grasshopper! Be careful of the grasshopper! A grasshopper does not only turn: it hops! It hops! And it hops jolly high!' "

The five minutes had nearly elapsed and the scorpion and the grasshopper were scratching at my brain. Nevertheless, I had sufficient lucidity left to understand that, if the grasshopper were turned, it would hop . . . and with it many members of the human race! There was no doubt but that the grasshopper controlled an electric current intended to blow up the powder-magazine!

M. de Chagny, who seemed to have recovered all his moral force from hearing Christine's voice, explained to her, in a few hurried words, the situation in which we and all the Opera were. He told her to turn the scorpion at once.

There was a pause.

"Christine," I cried, "where are you?"

"By the scorpion."

"Don't touch it!"

The idea had come to me—for I knew my Erik—that the monster had perhaps deceived the girl once more. Perhaps it was the scorpion that would blow everything up. After all, why wasn't he there? The five minutes were long past . . . and he was not back. . . . Perhaps he had taken shelter and was waiting for the explosion! . . . Why had he not returned? . . . He could not really expect Christine ever to consent to become his voluntary prey! . . . Why had he not returned?

"Don't touch the scorpion!" I said.

"Here he comes!" cried Christine. "I hear him! Here he is!"

We heard his steps approaching the Louis-Philippe room. He came up to Christine, but did not speak. Then I raised my voice:

"Erik! It is I! Do you know me?"

With extraordinary calmness, he at once replied:

"So you are not dead in there? Well, then, see that you keep quiet."

I tried to speak, but he said coldly:

"Not a word, daroga, or I shall blow everything up." And he added, "The honor rests with mademoiselle. . . . Mademoiselle has not touched the scorpion"—how deliberately he spoke!—"mademoiselle has not touched the grasshopper"—with that composure!—"but it is not too late to do the right thing. There, I open the caskets without a key, for I am a trap-door lover and I open and shut what I please and as I please. I open the little ebony caskets: mademoiselle, look at the little dears inside. Aren't they pretty? If you turn the grasshopper, mademoiselle, we shall all be blown up. There is enough gun-powder under our feet to blow up a whole quarter of Paris. If you turn the scorpion, mademoiselle, all that powder will be soaked and drowned. Mademoiselle, to celebrate our wedding, you shall make a very handsome present to a few hundred Parisians who are at this moment applauding a poor masterpiece of Meyerbeer's . . . you shall make them a present of their lives. . . . For, with your own fair hands, you shall turn the scorpion. . . . And merrily, merrily, we will be married!"

A pause; and then:

"If, in two minutes, mademoiselle, you have not turned the scorpion, I shall turn the grasshopper . . . and the grasshopper, I tell you, *hops jolly high!*"

The terrible silence began anew. The Vicomte de Chagny, realizing that there was nothing left to do but pray, went down on his knees and prayed. As for me, my blood beat so fiercely that I had to take my heart in both hands, lest it should burst. At last, we heard Erik's voice:

"The two minutes are past. . . . Good-by, mademoiselle. . . . Hop, grasshopper! . . ."

"Erik," cried Christine, "do you swear to me, monster, do you swear to me that the scorpion is the one to turn? . . ."

"Yes, to hop at our wedding."

"Ah, you see! You said, to hop!"

"At our wedding, ingenuous child! . . . The scorpion opens the ball. . . . But that will do!

. . . You won't have the scorpion? Then I turn the grasshopper!"

"Erik!"

"Enough!"

I was crying out in concert with Christine. M. de Chagny was still on his knees, praying.

"Erik! I have turned the scorpion!"

Oh, the second through which we passed!

Waiting! Waiting to find ourselves in fragments, amid the roar and the ruins!

Feeling something crack beneath our feet, hearing an appalling hiss through the open trap-door, a hiss like the first sound of a rocket!

It came softly, at first, then louder, then very loud. But it was not the hiss of fire. It was more like the hiss of water. And now it became a gurgling sound: "Guggle! Guggle!"

We rushed to the trap-door. All our thirst, which vanished when the terror came, now returned with the lapping of the water.

The water rose in the cellar, above the barrels, the powder-barrels—"Barrels! . . . Barrels! Any barrels to sell?"—and we went down to it with parched throats. It rose to our chins, to our mouths. And we drank. We stood on the floor of the cellar and drank. And we went up the stairs again in the dark, step by step, went up with the water.

The water came out of the cellar with us and spread over the floor of the room. If this went on, the whole house on the lake would be swamped. The floor of the torture-chamber had itself become a regular little lake, in which our feet splashed. Surely there was water enough now! Erik must turn off the tap!

"Erik! Erik! That is water enough for the gunpowder! Turn off the tap! Turn off the scorpion!"

But Erik did not reply. We heard nothing but the water rising: it was half-way to our waists!

"Christine!" cried M. de Chagny. "Christine! The water is up to our knees!"

But Christine did not reply. . . . . We heard nothing but the water rising.

No one, no one in the next room, no one to turn the tap, no one to turn the scorpion!

We were all alone, in the dark, with the dark water that seized us and clasped us and froze us!

"Erik! Erik!"

"Christine! Christine!"

By this time, we had lost our foothold and were spinning round in the water, carried away by an irresistible whirl, for the water turned with us and dashed us against the dark mirror, which thrust us back again; and our throats, raised above the whirlpool, roared aloud.

Were we to die here, drowned in the torture-chamber? I had never seen that. Erik, at the time of the rosy hours of Mazenderan, had never shown me that, through the little invisible window.

"Erik! Erik!" I cried. "I saved your life! Remember! . . . You were sentenced to death! But for me, you would be dead now! . . . Erik!"

We whirled around in the water like so much wreckage. But, suddenly, my straying hands seized the trunk of the iron tree! I called M. de Chagny, and we both hung to the branch of the iron tree.

And the water rose still higher.

"Oh! Oh! Can you remember? How much space is there between the branch of the tree and the dome-shaped ceiling? Do try to remember! . . . After all, the water may stop, it must find its level! . . . There, I think it is stopping! . . . No, no, oh, horrible! . . . Swim! Swim for your life!"

Our arms became entangled in the effort of swimming; we choked; we fought in the dark water; already we could hardly breathe the dark air above the dark water, the air which escaped, which we could hear escaping through some vent-hole or other.

"Oh, let us turn and turn and turn until we find the air hole and then glue our mouths to it!"

But I lost my strength; I tried to lay hold of the walls! Oh, how those glass walls slipped from under my groping fingers! . . . We whirled round again! . . . We began to sink! . . . One last effort! . . . A last cry:

"Erik! . . . Christine! . . ."

"Guggle, guggle, guggle!" in our ears. "Guggle! Guggle!" At the bottom of the dark water, our ears went, "Guggle! Guggle!"

And, before losing consciousness entirely, I seemed to hear, between two guggles:

"Barrels! Barrels! Any barrels to sell?"

CHAPTER XXVI

THE END OF THE GHOST'S LOVE STORY

THE previous chapter marks the conclusion of the written narrative which the Persian left behind him.

Notwithstanding the horrors of a situation which seemed definitely to abandon them to their deaths, M. de Chagny and his companion were saved by the sublime devotion of Christine Daaé. And I had the rest of the story from the lips of the daroga himself.

When I went to see him, he was still living in his little flat in the Rue de Rivoli, opposite the Tuileries. He was very ill, and it required all my ardor as an historian pledged to the truth to persuade him to live the incredible tragedy over again for my benefit. His faithful old servant Darius showed me in to him. The daroga received me at a window overlooking the garden of the Tuileries. He still had his magnificent eyes, but his poor face looked very worn. He had shaved the whole of his head, which was usually covered with an astrakhan cap; he was dressed in a long, plain coat and amused himself by unconsciously twisting his thumbs inside the sleeves; but his mind was quite clear, and he told me his story with perfect lucidity.

It seems that, when he opened his eyes, the daroga found himself lying on a bed. M. de Chagny was on a sofa, beside the wardrobe. An angel and a devil were watching over them.

After the deceptions and illusions of the torture-chamber, the precision of the details of that quiet little middle-class room seemed to have been invented for the express purpose of puzzling the mind of the mortal rash enough to stray into that abode of living nightmare. The wooden bedstead, the waxed mahogany chairs, the chest of drawers, those brasses, the little square antimacassars carefully placed on the backs of the chairs, the clock on the mantelpiece and the harmless-looking ebony caskets at either end, lastly, the whatnot filled with shells, with red pincushions, with mother-of-pearl boats and an enormous ostrich-egg, the whole discreetly lighted by a shaded lamp standing on a small round table: this collection of ugly, peaceable, reasonable furniture, *at the bottom of the Opera cellars,* bewildered the imagination more than all the late fantastic happenings.

And the figure of the masked man seemed all the more formidable in this old-fashioned, neat and trim little frame. It bent down over the Persian and said, in his ear:

"Are you better, daroga? . . . You are looking at my furniture? . . . It is all that I have left of my poor unhappy mother."

Christine Daaé did not say a word: she moved about noiselessly, like a sister of charity, who had taken a vow of silence. She brought a cup of cordial, or of hot tea, he did not remember which. The man in the mask took it from her hands and gave it to the Persian. M. de Chagny was still sleeping.

Erik poured a drop of rum into the daroga's cup and, pointing to the viscount, said:

"He came to himself long before we knew if you were still alive, daroga. He is quite well. He is asleep. We must not wake him."

Erik left the room for a moment, and the Persian raised himself on his elbow, looked around him and saw Christine Daaé sitting by the fireside. He spoke to her, called her, but he was still very weak and fell back on his pillow. Christine came to him, laid her hand on his forehead and went away again. And the Persian remembered that, as she went, she did not give a glance at M. de Chagny, who, it is true, was sleeping peacefully; and she sat down again in her chair by the chimney-corner, silent as a sister of charity who had taken a vow of silence.

Erik returned with some little bottles which he placed on the mantelpiece. And, again in a whisper, so as not to wake M. de Chagny, he said to the Persian, after sitting down and feeling his pulse:

"You are now saved, both of you. And soon I shall take you up to the surface of the earth, *to please my wife.*"

Thereupon he rose, without any further explanation, and disappeared once more.

The Persian now looked at Christine's quiet profile under the lamp. She was reading a tiny book, with gilt edges, like a religious book. There are editions of *The Imitation* that look like that. The Persian still had in his ears the natural tone in which the other had said, "to please my wife." Very gently, he called her again; but Christine was wrapped up in her book and did not hear him.

Erik returned, mixed the daroga a draft and advised him not to speak to "his wife" again nor to any one, *because it might be very dangerous to everybody's health.*

Eventually, the Persian fell asleep, like M. de Chagny, and did not wake until he was in his own room, nursed by his faithful Darius, who told him that, on the night before, he was found propped against the door of his flat, where he had been brought by a stranger, who rang the bell before going away.

As soon as the daroga recovered his strength and his wits, he sent to Count Philippe's house to inquire after the viscount's health. The answer was that the young man had not been seen and that Count Philippe was dead. His body was found on the bank of the Opera lake, on the Rue-Scribe side. The Persian remembered the requiem mass which he had heard from behind the wall of the torture-chamber, and had no doubt concerning the crime and the criminal. Knowing Erik as he did, he easily reconstructed the tragedy. Thinking that his brother had run away with Christine Daaé, Philippe had dashed in pursuit of him along the Brussels Road, where he knew that everything was prepared for the elopement. Failing to find the pair, he hurried back to the Opera, remembered Raoul's strange confidence about his fantastic rival and learned that the viscount had made every effort to enter the cellars of the theater and that he had disappeared, leaving his hat in the prima donna's dressing-room beside an empty pistol-case. And the count, who no longer entertained any doubt of his brother's madness, in his turn darted into that infernal underground maze. This was enough, in the Persian's eyes, to explain the discovery of the Comte de Chagny's corpse on the shore of the lake, where the siren, Erik's siren, kept watch.

The Persian did not hesitate. He determined to inform the police. Now the case was in the hands of an examining-magistrate called Faure, an incredulous, commonplace, superficial sort of person, (I write as I think), with a mind utterly unprepared to receive a confidence of this kind. M. Faure took down the daroga's depositions and proceeded to treat him as a madman.

Despairing of ever obtaining a hearing, the Persian sat down to write. As the police did not want his evidence, perhaps the press would be glad of it; and he had just written the last line of the narrative I have quoted in the preceding chapters, when Darius announced the visit of a stranger who refused his name, who would not show his face and declared simply that he did not intend to leave the place until he had spoken to the daroga.

The Persian at once felt who his singular visitor was and ordered him to be shown in. The daroga was right. It was the ghost, it was Erik!

He looked extremely weak and leaned against the wall, as though he were afraid of falling. Taking off his hat, he revealed a forehead white as wax. The rest of the horrible face was hidden by the mask.

The Persian rose to his feet as Erik entered.

"Murderer of Count Philippe, what have you done with his brother and Christine Daaé?"

Erik staggered under this direct attack, kept silent for a moment, dragged himself to a chair and heaved a deep sigh. Then, speaking in short phrases and gasping for breath between the words:

"Daroga, don't talk to me . . . about Count Philippe. . . . He was dead . . . by the time . . . I left my house . . . he was dead . . . when . . . the siren sang. . . . It was an . . . accident . . . a sad . . . a very sad . . . accident. He fell very awkwardly . . . but simply and naturally . . . into the lake! . . ."

"You lie!" shouted the Persian.

Erik bowed his head and said:

"I have not come here . . . to talk about Count Philippe . . . but to tell you that . . . I am going . . . to die. . . ."

"Where are Raoul de Chagny and Christine Daaé?"

"I am going to die. . . ."

"Raoul de Chagny and Christine Daaé?"

"Of love . . . daroga . . . I am dying . . . of love. . . . That is how it is. . . . I loved her so! . . . And I love her still . . . daroga . . . and I am dying of love for her, I . . . I tell you! . . . If you knew how beautiful she was . . . when she let me kiss her . . . alive. . . . It was the first . . . time, daroga, the first . . . time I ever kissed a woman. . . . Yes, alive. . . . I kissed her alive . . . and she looked as beautiful as if she had been dead! . . ."

The Persian shook Erik by the arm:

"Will you tell me if she is alive or dead."

"Why do you shake me like that?" asked Erik, making an effort to speak more connectedly. "I tell you that I am going to die. . . . Yes, I kissed her alive. . . ."

"And now she is dead?"

"I tell you I kissed her just like that, on her forehead . . . and she did not draw back her forehead from my lips! . . . Oh, she is a good girl! . . . As to her being dead, I don't think so; but it has nothing to do with me. . . . No, no, she is not dead! And no one shall touch a hair of her head! She is a good, honest girl, and she saved your life, daroga, at a moment when I would not have given twopence for your Persian skin. As a matter of fact, nobody bothered about you. Why were you there with that little chap? You would have died as well as he! My word, how she entreated me for her little chap! But I told her that, as she had turned the scorpion, she had, through that very fact, and of her own free will, become engaged to me and that she did not need to have two men engaged to her, which was true enough.

"As for you, you did not exist, you had ceased to exist, I tell you, and you were going to die with the other! . . . Only, mark me, daroga, when you were yelling like the devil, because of the water, Christine came to me with her beautiful blue eyes wide open, and swore to me, as she hoped to be saved, that she consented to be *my living wife!* . . . Until then, in the depths of her eyes, daroga, I had always seen my dead wife; it was the first time I saw *my living wife* there. She was sincere, as she hoped to be saved. She would not kill herself. It was a bargain. . . . Half a minute later, all the water was back in the lake; and I had a hard job with you, daroga, for, upon my honor, I thought you were done for! . . . However! . . . There you were! . . . It was understood that I was to take you both up to the surface of the earth. When, at last, I cleared the Louis-Philippe room of you, I came back alone. . . ."

"What have you done with the Vicomte de Chagny?" asked the Persian, interrupting him.

"Ah, you see, daroga, I couldn't carry *him* up like that, at once. . . . He was a hostage. . . . But I could not keep him in the house on the lake either, because of Christine; so I locked him up comfortably, I chained him up nicely—a whiff of the Mazenderan scent had left him as limp as a rag—in the Communists' dungeon, which is in the most deserted and remote part of the Opera, below the fifth cellar, where no one ever comes, and where no one ever hears you. Then I came back to Christine. She was waiting for me. . . ."

Erik here rose solemnly. Then he continued, but, as he spoke, he was overcome by all his former emotion and began to tremble like a leaf:

"Yes, she was waiting for me . . . waiting for me erect and alive, a real, living bride . . . as she hoped to be saved. . . . And, when I . . . came forward, more timid than . . . a little child, she did not run away . . . no, no . . . she stayed . . she waited for me. . . . I even believe . . . daroga . . . that she put out her forehead . . . a little . . . oh, not much . . . just a little . . . like a living bride. . . . And . . . and . . . I . . . kissed her! . . . I! . . . I! . . I! . . . And she did not die! . . . Oh, how good it is, daroga, to kiss somebody on the forehead! . . . You can't tell! . . . But I! I! . . . My mother, daroga, my poor, unhappy mother would never . . . let me kiss her. . . . She used to run away . . . and throw me my mask! . . . Nor any other woman . . . ever, ever! . . . Ah, you can understand, my happiness was so great, I cried. And I fell at her feet, crying . . . and I kissed her feet . . . her little feet . . . crying. You're crying, too, daroga . . . and she cried also . . . the angel cried! . . ."

Erik sobbed aloud and the Persian himself could not retain his tears in the presence of that masked man, who, with his shoulders shaking and his hands clutched at his chest, was moaning with pain and love by turns.

"Yes, daroga . . . I felt her tears flow on my forehead . . . on mine, mine! . . . They were soft . . . they were sweet! . . . They trickled under my mask . . . they mingled with my tears in my eyes . . . they flowed between my lips. . . . Listen, daroga, listen to what I did. . . . I tore off my mask so as not to lose one of her tears . . . and she did not run away! . . . And she did not die! . . . She remained alive, weeping over me, with me. We cried together! I have tasted all the happiness the world can offer!"

And Erik fell into a chair, choking for breath:

"Ah, I am not going to die yet . . . presently I shall . . . but let me cry! . . . Listen, daroga . . . listen to this. . . . While I was at her feet . . . I heard her say, 'Poor, unhappy Erik!' . . . *And she took my hand!* . . . I had become no more, you know, than a poor dog ready to die for her. . . . I mean it, daroga! . . . I held in my hand a ring, a plain gold ring which I had given her . . . which she had lost . . . and which I had found again . . . a wedding-ring, you know. . . . I slipped it into her little hand and said, 'There! . . . Take it! . . . Take it for you . . . and him! . . . It shall be my wedding-present . . . a present from your poor, unhappy Erik. . . . . I know you love the boy . . . don't cry any more!' . . . She asked me, in a very soft voice, what I meant. . . . Then I made her understand that, where she was concerned, I was only a poor dog, ready to die for her . . . but that she could marry the young man when she pleased, because she had cried with me and mingled her tears with mine! . . ."

Erik's emotion was so great that he had to tell the Persian not to look at him, for he was choking and must take off his mask. The daroga went to the window and opened it. His heart was full of pity, but he took care to keep his eyes fixed on the trees in the Tuileries gardens, lest he should see the monster's face.

"I went and released the young man," Erik continued, "and told him to come with me to Christine. . . . They kissed before me in the Louis-Philippe room. . . . Christine had my ring. . . . I made Christine swear to come back, one night, when I was dead, crossing the lake from the Rue-Scribe side, and bury me in the greatest secrecy with the gold ring, which she was to wear until that moment. . . . I told her where she would find my body and what to do with it. . . . Then Christine kissed me, for the first time, herself, here, on the forehead—don't look, daroga!—here, on the forehead . . . on my forehead, mine—don't look, daroga!—and they went off together. . . . Christine had stopped crying. . . . I alone cried. . . . Daroga, daroga, if Christine keeps her promise, she will come back soon! . . ."

The Persian asked him no questions. He was quite reassured as to the fate of Raoul Chagny and Christine Daaé; no one could have doubted the word of the weeping Erik that night.

The monster resumed his mask and collected his strength to leave the daroga. He told him that, when he felt his end to be very near at hand, he would send him, in gratitude for the kindness which the Persian had once shown him, that which he held dearest in the world: all Christine Daaé's papers, which she had written for Raoul's benefit and left with Erik, together with a few objects belonging to her, such as a pair of gloves, a shoe-buckle and two pocket-handkerchiefs. In reply to the Persian's questions, Erik told him that the two young people, as soon as they found themselves free, had resolved to go and look for a priest in some lonely spot where they could hide their happiness and that, with this object in view, they had started from "the northern railway station of the world." Lastly, Erik relied on the Persian, as soon as he received the promised relics and papers, to inform the young couple of his death and to advertise it in the *Epoque*.

That was all. The Persian saw Erik to the door of his flat, and Darius helped him down to the street. A cab was waiting for him. Erik stepped in; and the Persian, who had gone back to the window, heard him say to the driver:

"Go to the Opera."

And the cab drove off into the night.

The Persian had seen the poor, unfortunate Erik for the last time. Three weeks later, the *Epoque* published this advertisement:

"Erik is dead."

EPILOGUE.

I HAVE now told the singular, but veracious story of the Opera ghost. As I declared on the first page of this work, it is no longer possible to deny that Erik really lived. There are to-day so many proofs of his existence within the reach of everybody that we can follow Erik's actions logically through the whole tragedy of the Chagnys.

There is no need to repeat here how greatly the case excited the capital. The kidnapping of the artist, the death of the Comte de Chagny under such exceptional conditions, the disappearance of his brother, the drugging of the gas-man at the Opera and of his two assistants: what tragedies, what passions, what crimes had surrounded the idyll of Raoul and the sweet and charming Christine! . . . What had become of that wonderful, mysterious artist of whom the world was never, never to hear again? . . . She was represented as the victim of a rivalry between the two brothers; and nobody suspected what had really happened, nobody understood that, as Raoul and Christine had both disappeared, both had withdrawn far from the world to enjoy a happiness which they would not have cared to make public after the inexplicable death of Count Philippe. . . . They took the train one day from "the northern railway station of the world."

. . . Possibly, I too shall take the train at that station, one day, and go and seek around thy lakes, O Norway, O silent Scandinavia, for the perhaps still living traces of Raoul and Christine and also of Mamma Valérius, who disappeared at the same time! . . . Possibly, some day, I shall hear the lonely echoes of the North repeat the singing of her who knew the Angel of Music! . . .

Long after the case was pigeonholed by the unintelligent care of M. le Juge d'Instruction Faure, the newspapers made efforts, at intervals, to fathom the mystery. One evening paper alone, which knew all the gossip of the theaters, said:

"We recognize the touch of the Opera ghost."

And even that was written by way of irony.

The Persian alone knew the whole truth and held the main proofs, which came to him with the pious relics promised by the ghost. It fell to my lot to complete those proofs with the aid of the daroga himself. Day by day, I kept him informed of the progress of my inquiries; and he directed them. He had not been to the Opera for years and years, but he had preserved the most accurate recollection of the building, and there was no better guide than he possible to help me discover its most secret recesses. He also told me where to gather further information, whom to ask; and he sent me to call on M. Poligny, at a moment when the poor man was nearly drawing his last breath. I had no idea that he was so very ill, and I shall never forget the effect which my questions about the ghost produced upon him. He looked at me as if I were the devil and answered only in a few incoherent sentences, which showed, however—and that was the main thing—the extent of the perturbation which O. G., in his time, had brought into that already very restless life (for M. Poligny was what people call a man of pleasure).

When I came and told the Persian of the poor result of my visit to M. Poligny, the daroga gave a faint smile and said:

"Poligny never knew how far that extraordinary blackguard of an Erik humbugged him."—The Persian, by the way, spoke of Erik sometimes as a demigod and sometimes as the lowest of the low—"Poligny was superstitious and Erik knew it. Erik knew most things about the public and private affairs of the Opera. When M. Poligny heard a mysterious voice tell him, in Box Five, of the manner in which he used to spend his time and abuse his partner's confidence, he did not wait to hear any more. Thinking at first that it was a voice from Heaven, he believed himself damned; and then, when the voice began to ask for money, he saw that he was being victimized by a shrewd blackmailer to whom Debienne himself had fallen a prey. Both of them, already tired of management for various reasons, went away without trying to investigate further into the personality of that curious O. G., who had forced such a singular memorandum-book upon them. They bequeathed the whole mystery to their successors and heaved a sigh of relief when they were rid of a business that had puzzled them without amusing them in the least."

I then spoke of the two successors and expressed my surprise that, in his *Memoirs of a Manager,* M. Moncharmin should describe the Opera ghost's behavior at such length in the first part of the book and hardly mention it at all in the second. In reply to this, the Persian, who knew the *Memoirs* as thoroughly as if he had written them himself, observed that I should find the explanation of the whole business if I would just recollect the few lines which Moncharmin devotes to the ghost in the second part aforesaid. I quote these lines, which are particularly interesting because they describe the very simple manner in which the famous incident of the twenty-thousand francs was closed:

"As for O. G., some of whose curious tricks I have related in the first part of my Memoirs, I will only say that he redeemed by one spontaneous fine action all the worry which he had caused my dear friend and partner and, I am bound to say, myself. He felt, no doubt, that there are limits to a joke, especially when it is so expensive and when the commissary of police has been informed, for, at the moment when we had made an appointment in our office with M. Mifroid to tell him the whole story, a few days after the disappearance of Christine Daaé, we found, on Richard's table, a large envelope, inscribed, in red ink, *"With O. G.'s compliments."* It contained the large sum of money which he had succeeded in playfully extracting, for the time being, from the treasury. Richard was at once of the opinion that we must be content with that and drop the business. I agreed with Richard. All's well that ends well. What do you say, O. G.?"

Of course, Moncharmin, especially after the money had been restored, continued to believe that he had, for a short while, been the butt of Richard's sense of humor, whereas Richard, on his side, was convinced that Moncharmin had amused himself by inventing the whole of the affair of the Opera ghost, in order to revenge himself for a few jokes.

I asked the Persian to tell me by what trick the ghost had taken twenty-thousand francs from Richard's pocket in spite of the safety-pin. He replied that he had not gone into this little detail, but that, if I myself cared to make an investigation on the spot, I should certainly find the solution to the riddle in the managers' office by remembering that Erik had not been nicknamed the trap-door lover for nothing. I promised the Persian to do so as soon as I had time, and I may as well tell the reader at once that the results of my investigation were perfectly satisfactory; and I hardly believed that I should ever discover so many undeniable proofs of the authenticity of the feats ascribed to the ghost.

The Persian's manuscript, Christine Daaé's papers, the statements made to me by the people who used to work under MM. Richard and Moncharmin, by little Meg herself (the worthy Madame Giry, I am sorry to say, is no more) and by Sorelli, who is now living in retirement at Louveciennes: all the documents relating to the existence of the ghost, which I propose to deposit in the archives of the Opera, have been checked and confirmed by a number of important discoveries of which I am justly proud. I have not been able to find the house on the lake, Erik having blocked up all the secret entrances.* On the other hand, I have discovered the secret passage of the Communists, the planking of which is falling to pieces in parts, and also the trapdoor through which Raoul and the Persian penetrated into the cellars of the opera-house. In the Communists' dungeon, I noticed numbers of initials traced on the walls by the unfortunate people confined in it; and among these were an "R" and a "C." R. C.: Raoul de Chagny. The letters are there to this day.

If the reader will visit the Opera one morning and ask leave to stroll where he pleases, without being accompanied by a stupid guide, let him go to Box Five and knock with his fist or stick on the enormous column that separates this from the stage-box. He will find that the column sounds hollow. After that, do not be astonished by the suggestion that it was occupied by the voice of the ghost: there is room inside the column for two men. If you are surprised that, when the various incidents occurred, no one turned round to look at the column, you must remember that it presented the appearance of solid marble, and that

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*Even so, I am convinced that it would be easy to reach it by draining the lake, as I have repeatedly requested the Ministry of Fine Arts to do. I was speaking about it to M. Dujardin-Beaumetz, the under-secretary for fine arts, only forty-eight hours before the publication of this book. Who knows but that the score of *Don Juan Triumphant* might yet be discovered in the house on the lake?

the voice contained in it seemed rather to come from the opposite side, for, as we have seen, the ghost was an expert ventriloquist. The column was elaborately carved and decorated with the sculptor's chisel; and I do not despair of one day discovering the ornament that could be raised or lowered at will, so as to admit of the ghost's mysterious correspondence with Mame Giry and of his generosity.

However, all these discoveries are nothing, to my mind, compared with that which I was able to make, in the presence of the acting-manager, in the managers' office, within a couple of inches from the desk-chair, and which consisted of a trap-door, the width of a board in the flooring and the length of a man's fore-arm and no longer; a trap-door that falls back like the lid of a box; a trap-door through which I can see a hand come and dexterously fumble at the pocket of a swallow-tail coat.

That is the way the forty-thousand francs went! . . . . And that also is the way by which, through some trick or other, they were returned.

Speaking about this to the Persian, I said:

"So we may take it, as the forty-thousand francs were returned, that Erik was simply amusing himself with that memorandum-book of his?"

"Don't you believe it!" he replied. "Erik wanted money. Thinking himself without the pale of humanity, he was restrained by no scruples and he employed his extraordinary gifts of dexterity and imagination, which he had received by way of compensation for his extraordinary uglinesss, to prey upon his fellow-men. His reason for restoring the forty-thousand francs, of his own accord, was that he no longer wanted it. He had relinquished his marriage with Christine Daaé. He had relinquished everything above the surface of the earth."

According to the Persian's account, Erik was born in a small town not far from Rouen. He was the son of a master-mason. He ran away at an early age from his father's house, where his ugliness was a subject of horror and terror to his parents. For a time, he frequented the fairs, where a showman exhibited him as the "living corpse." He seems to have crossed the whole of Europe, from fair to fair, and to have completed his strange education as an artist and magician at the very fountain-head of art and magic, among the Gipsies. A period of Erik's life remained quite obscure. He was seen at the fair of Nijni-Novgorod, where he displayed himself in all his hideous glory. He already sang as nobody on this earth had ever sung before; he practised ventriloquism and gave displays of legerdemain so extraordinary that the caravans returning to Asia talked about it during the whole length of their journey. In this way, his reputation penetrated the walls of the palace at Mazenderan, where the little sultana, the favorite of the Shah-in-Shah, was boring herself to death. A dealer in furs, returning to Samarkand from Nijni-Novgorod, told of the marvels which he had seen performed in Erik's tent. The trader was summoned to the palace and the daroga of Mazenderan was told to question him. Next the daroga was instructed to go and find Erik. He brought him to Persia, where for some months Erik's will was law. He was guilty of not a few horrors, for he seemed not to know the difference between good and evil. He took part calmly in a number of political assassinations; and he turned his diabolical inventive powers against the Emir of Afghanistan, who was at war with the Persian empire. The Shah took a liking to him.

This was the time of the rosy hours of Mazenderan, of which the daroga's narrative has given us a glimpse. Erik had very original ideas on the subject of architecture and thought out a palace much as a conjuror contrives a trick-casket. The Shah ordered him to construct an edifice of this kind. Erik did so; and the building appears to have been so ingenious that His Majesty was able to move about in it unseen and to disappear without a possibility of the trick's being discovered. When the Shah-in-Shah found himself the possessor of this gem, he ordered Erik's yellow eyes to be put out. But he reflected that, even when blind, Erik would still be able to build so remarkable a house for another sovereign; and also that, as long as Erik was alive, some one would know the secret of the wonderful palace. Erik's death was decided upon, together with that of all the laborers who had worked under his orders. The execution of this abominable decree devolved upon the daroga of Mazenderan. Erik had shown him some slight services and procured him many a hearty laugh. He saved Erik by providing him with the means of escape, but nearly paid with his head for his generous indulgence.

Fortunately for the daroga, a corpse, half-eaten by the birds of prey, was found on the shore of the Caspian Sea, and was taken for Erik's body, because the daroga's friends had dressed the remains in clothing that belonged to Erik. The daroga was let off with the loss of the imperial favor, the confiscation of his property and an order of perpetual banishment. As a member of the Royal House, however, he continued to receive a monthly pension of a few hundred francs from the Persian treasury; and on this he came to live in Paris.

As for Erik, he went to Asia Minor and thence to Constantinople, where he entered the Sultan's employment. In explanation of the services which he was able to render a monarch haunted by perpetual terrors, I need only say that it was Erik who constructed all the famous trap-doors and secret chambers and mysterious strong-boxes which were found at Yildiz-Kiosk after the last Turkish revolution. He also invented those automata, dressed like the Sultan and resembling the Sultan in all respects,* which made people believe that the Commander of the Faithful was awake at one place, when, in reality, he was asleep elsewhere.

Of course, he had to leave the Sultan's service for the same reasons that made him fly from Persia: he

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*See the interview of the special correspondent of the *Matin,* with Mohammed-Ali Bey, on the day after the entry of the Salonika troops into Constantinople.

knew too much. Then, tired of his adventurous, formidable and monstrous life, he longed to be some one "like everybody else." And he became a contractor, like any ordinary contractor, building ordinary houses with ordinary bricks. He tendered for part of the foundations in the Opera. His estimate was accepted. When he found himself in the cellars of the enormous playhouse, his artistic, fantastic, wizard nature resumed the upper hand. Besides, was he not as ugly as ever? He dreamed of creating for his own use a dwelling unknown to the rest of the earth, where he could hide from men's eyes for all time.

The reader knows and guesses the rest. It is all in keeping with this incredible and yet veracious story. Poor, unhappy Erik! Shall we pity him? Shall we curse him? He asked only to be "some one," like everybody else. But he was too ugly! And he had to hide his genius *or use it to play tricks with,* when, with an ordinary face, he would have been one of the most distinguished of mankind! He had a heart that could have held the empire of the world; and, in the end, he had to content himself with a cellar. Ah, yes, we must needs pity the Opera ghost.

I have prayed over his mortal remains, that God might show him mercy notwithstanding his crimes. Yes, I am sure, quite sure that I prayed beside his body, the other day, when they took it from the spot where they were burying the phonographic records. It was his skeleton. I did not recognize it by the ugliness of the head, for all men are ugly when they have been dead as long as that, but by the plain gold ring which he wore and which Christine Daaé had certainly slipped on his finger, when she came to bury him in accordance with her promise.

The skeleton was lying near the little well, in the place where the Angel of Music first held Christine Daaé fainting in his trembling arms, on the night when he carried her down to the cellars of the opera-house.

And, now, what do they mean to do with that skeleton? Surely they will not bury it in the common grave! . . . I say that the place of the skeleton of the Opera ghost is in the archives of the National Academy of Music. It is no ordinary skeleton.

THE END

THE PARIS OPERA HOUSE

THE PARIS OPERA HOUSE

The Scene of Gaston Leroux's Novel, "The Phantom of the Opera"

THAT Mr. Leroux has used, for the scene of his story, the Paris Opera House as it really is and has not created a building out of his imagination, is shown by this interesting description of it taken from an article which appeared in *Scribner's Magazine* in 1879, a short time after the building was completed:

"The new Opera House, commenced under the Empire and finished under the Republic, is the most complete building of the kind in the world and in many respects the most beautiful. No European capital possesses an opera house so comprehensive in plan and execution, and none can boast an edifice equally vast and splendid.

"The site of the Opera House was chosen in 1861. It was determined to lay the foundation exceptionally deep and strong. It was well known that water would be met with, but it was impossible to foresee at what depth or in what quantity it would be found. Exceptional depth also was necessary, as the stage arrangements were to be such as to admit a scene fifty feet high to be lowered on its frame. It was therefore necessary to lay a foundation in a soil soaked with water which should be sufficiently solid to sustain a weight of 22,000,000 pounds, and at the same time to be perfectly dry, as the cellars were intended for the storage of scenery and properties. While the work was in progress, the excavation was kept free from water by means of eight pumps, worked by steam power, and in operation, without interruption, day and night, from March second to October thirteenth. The floor of the cellar was covered with a layer of concrete, then with two coats of cement, another layer of concrete and a coat of bitumen. The wall includes an outer wall built as a coffer-dam, a brick wall, a coat of cement, and a wall proper, a little over a yard thick. After all this was done the whole was filled with water, in order that the fluid, by penetrating into the most minute interstices, might deposit a sediment which would close them more surely and perfectly than it would be possible to do by hand. Twelve years elapsed before the completion of the building, and during that time it was demonstrated that the precautions taken secured absolute impermeability and solidity.

"The events of 1870 interrupted work just as it was about to be prosecuted most vigorously, and the new Opera House was put to new and unexpected uses. During the siege, it was converted into a vast military storehouse and filled with a heterogeneous mass of goods. After the siege the building fell into the hands of the Commune and the roof was turned into a balloon station. The damage done, however, was slight.

"The fine stone employed in the construction was brought from quarries in Sweden, Scotland, Italy, Algeria, Finland, Spain, Belgium and France. While work on the exterior was in progress, the building was covered in by a wooden shell, rendered transparent by thousands of small panes of glass. In 1867 a swarm of men, supplied with hammers and axes, stripped the house of its habit, and showed in all its splendor the great structure. No picture can do justice to the rich colors of the edifice or to the harmonious tone resulting from the skilful use of many diverse materials. The effect of the frontage is completed by the cupola of the auditorium, topped with a cap of bronze sparingly adorned with gilding. Farther on, on a level with the towers of Notre-Dame, is the gable end of the roof of the stage, a 'Pegasus', by M. Lequesne, rising at either end of the roof, and a bronze group by M. Millet, representing 'Apollo lifting his golden lyre', commanding the apex. Apollo, it may here be mentioned, is useful as well as ornamental, for his lyre is tipped with a metal point which does duty as a lightning-rod, and conducts the fluid to the body and down the nether limbs of the god.

"The spectator, having climbed ten steps and left behind him a gateway, reaches a vestibule in which are statues of Lully, Rameau, Gluck, and Handel. Ten steps of green Swedish marble lead to a second vestibule for ticket-sellers. Visitors who enter by the pavilion reserved for carriages pass through a hallway where ticket offices are situated. The larger number of the audience, before entering the auditorium, traverse a large circular vestibule located exactly beneath it. The ceiling of this portion of the building is upheld by sixteen fluted columns of Jura stone, with white marble capitals, forming a portico. Here servants are to await their masters, and spectators may remain until their carriages are summoned. The third entrance, which is quite distinct from the others, is reserved for the Executive. The section of the building set aside for the use of the Emperor Napoleon was to have included an antechamber for the bodyguards; a salon for the aides-de-camp; a large salon and a smaller one for the Empress; hat and cloak rooms, etc. Moreover, there were to be in close proximity to the entrance, stables for three coaches, for the outriders' horses, and for the twenty-one horsemen acting as an escort; a station for a squad of infantry of thirty-one men and ten *cent-gardes,* and a stable for the horses of the latter; and, besides, a salon for fifteen or twenty domestics. Thus arrangements had to be made to accommodate in this part of the building about one hundred persons, fifty horses, and half-a-dozen carriages. The fall of the Empire suggested some changes, but ample provision still exists for emergencies.

"Its novel conception, perfect fitness, and rare splendor of material, make the grand stairway unquestionably one of the most remarkable features of the building. It presents to the spectator, who has just passed through the subscribers' pavilion, a gorgeous picture. From this point he beholds the ceiling formed by the central landing; this and the columns sustaining it, built of Echaillon stone, are honeycombed with arabesques and heavy with ornaments; the steps are of white marble, and antique red marble balusters rest on green marble sockets and support a balustrade of onyx. To the right and to the left of this landing are stairways to the floor, on a plane with the first row of boxes. On this floor stand thirty monolith columns of Sarrancolin marble, with white marble bases and capitals. Pilasters of peach-blossom and violet stone are against the corresponding walls. More than fifty blocks had to be extracted from the quarry to find thirty perfect monoliths.

"The *foyer de la danse* has particular interest for the habitués of the Opera. It is a place of reunion to which subscribers to three performances a week are admitted between the acts in accordance with a usage established in 1870. Three immense looking-glasses cover the back wall of the *foyer*, and a chandelier with one hundred and seven burners supplies it with light. The paintings include twenty oval medallions, in which are portrayed the twenty *danseuses* of most celebrity since the opera has existed in France, and four panels by M. Boulanger, typifying 'The War Dance', 'The Rustic Dance', 'The Dance of Love' and 'The Bacchic Dance.' While the ladies of the ballet receive their admirers in this *foyer*, they can practise their steps. Velvet-cushioned bars have to this end been secured at convenient points, and the floor has been given the same slope as that of the stage, so that the labor expended may be thoroughly profitable to the performance. The singers' *foyer,* on the same floor, is a much less lively resort than the *foyer de la danse,* as vocalists rarely leave their dressing-rooms before they are summoned to the stage. Thirty panels with portraits of the artists of repute in the annals of the Opera adorn this *foyer.*

"Some estimate . . . may be arrived at by sitting before the *concierge* an hour or so before the representation commences. First appear the stage carpenters, who are always seventy, and sometimes, when *L'Africaine,* for example, with its ship scene, is the opera, one hundred and ten strong. Then come stage upholsterers, whose sole duty is to lay carpets, hang curtains, etc.; gas-men, and a squad of firemen. *Claqueurs,* call-boys, property-men, dressers, *coiffeurs,* supernumeraries, and artists, follow. The supernumeraries number about one hundred; some are hired by the year, but the 'masses' are generally recruited at the last minute and are generally working-men who seek to add to their meagre earnings. There are about a hundred choristers, and about eighty musicians.

"Next we behold equeries, whose horses are hoisted on the stage by means of an elevator; electricians who manage the light-producing batteries; *hydrauliciens* to take charge of the water-works in ballets like *La Source;* artificers who prepare the conflagration in *Le Profeta;* florists who make ready Margarita's garden, and a host of minor employees. This personnel is provided for as follows: Eighty dressing-rooms are reserved for the artists, each including a small antechamber, the dressing-room proper, and a little closet. Besides these apartments, the Opera has a dressing-room for sixty male, and another for fifty female choristers; a third for thirty-four male dancers; four dressing-rooms for twenty female dancers of different grades; a dressing-room for one hundred and ninety supernumeraries, etc."

A few figures taken from the article will suggest the enormous capacity and the perfect convenience of the house. "There are 2,531 doors and 7,593 keys; 14 furnaces and 450 grates heat the house; the gas-pipes if connected would form a pipe almost 16 miles long; 9 reservoirs, and two tanks hold 22,222 gallons of water and distribute their contents through 22,829 2-5 feet of piping; 538 persons have places assigned wherein to change their attire. The musicians have a *foyer* with 100 closets for their instruments."

The author remarks of his visit to the Opera House that it "was almost as bewildering as it was agreeable. Giant stairways and colossal halls, huge frescoes and enormous mirrors, gold and marble, satin and velvet, met the eye at every turn."

In a recent letter Mr. André Castaigne, whose remarkable pictures illustrate the text, speaks of a river or lake under the Opera House and mentions the fact that there are now also three metropolitan railway tunnels, one on top of the other.

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ANN WARD RADCLIFFE

GASTON DE BLONDEVILLE

INTRODUCTION

"Well! now are we in Arden," said an English traveller to his companion, as they passed between Coventry and Warwick, over ground, which his dear Shakspeare had made classic. As he uttered this exclamation of Rosalind, he looked forward with somewhat of the surprise and curiosity, which she may be supposed to have felt, and with an enthusiasm all his own, on beholding the very scene, into which the imagination of the poet had so often transported him with a faint degree of its own rapture. He was not, it appears, one of those critics, who think that the Arden of Shakspeare, lay in France. But he looked in vain for the thick and gloomy woods, which, in a former age, were the home of the doubtful fugitive, and so much the terror of the traveller, that it had been found necessary, on this very road, to clear the ground, for a breadth of six acres on each side, in order to protect the wayfaring part of his Majesty's liege subjects.

Now, albeit the landscape was still wild and woody, he could not any where espy a forest scene of dignity sufficient to call up before his fancy the exiled duke and his court, at their hunter-feast, beneath the twilight of the boughs; nor a single beech, under the grandeur of whose shade the melancholy Jaques, might "lose and neglect the creeping hours of time," while he sadly sympathized with the poor stag, that, escaped from the pursuit of man, came to drop his tears into the running brook, and to die in quiet. Not even a grove appeared, through whose deep vista the traveller might fancy that he caught, in the gayer light, a glimpse of the wandering Rosalind and her companions, the wearied princess and the motley fool, or of the figure of Orlando, leaning against an oak, and listening to her song: he could not even catch the last faint echo of that song, in a scene so different from the one his fancy had represented to him for the forest of Arden.

"Alas!" said he, "that enchanting vision is no more found, except in the very heart of a populous city, and then neither by the glimmering of the dawn, nor by the glow of evening, but by the paltry light of stage-lamps. Yet there, surrounded by a noisy multitude, whose cat-calls often piped instead of the black-bird, I have found myself transported into the wildest region of poetry and solitude; while here, on the very spot where Shakspeare drew, I am suddenly let down from the full glow of my holiday-feelings into the plain reality of this work-a-day world."

Here ensued a conversation on illusions of the imagination and on the various powers of exciting them, shown by English poets, especially by Shakspeare and Milton, which it is unnecessary to repeat in this place. Such was its length, that Mr. Simpson's part in it had gradually become less and less active, while Willoughton's increased earnestness had rendered him less and less sensible of the deficiency of replies. At last, on his asking, rather peremptorily, whether his friend did not recollect some fine effects of the towers of Windsor Castle upon the imagination, Mr. Simpson, fortunately concealing how nearly he had approached to a nap, answered, "No, no; I do not recollect any thing of what you tell me; but you were talking a little while ago of Hamlet and towers; now, if you want towers that would do honour to Hamlet, go to Warwick Castle, and if we reach it, as we hope, this night, you can walk from the inn while supper is preparing, and you will find, on the terrace or platform before the gates, towers frowning and majestic enough. If the moon is up, you will see them to perfection, and, as you are so fond of ghosts, you can hardly fail to make an assignation with one there." "I shall delight in the advantage," replied Willoughton, laughing: "Though I am not so fond of ghosts in general, as you seem to think. It is only for a few of particular excellence, that I feel a friendship; for them, indeed, I am willing to own even an affection."

Willoughton, not receiving a rejoinder, observed, that his friend had fallen again into his nap; and he returned to the busy thoughts, to which his first view of this land of Arden, the ground of Shakspeare, had led. Sunk in reverie, he was no longer in the living scene, but ranging over worlds of his own, till a jolt of the carriage awoke his companion; who, shaking his head, and looking out of the window, with the sudden alertness of one who thinks he has been losing time, now supposed himself bound to brush up his thoughts and to talk to his friend.

Willoughton could well have spared the interruption, till a remark, delivered with an air of self-satisfaction, touched the string that recalled him willingly to the present scene.

"There now is an oak," said Simpson, "that may have been of Elizabeth's time, by the hollowness of its vast trunk and the state of its branches."

"Ay, long before her time," said his companion, "and perhaps Shakspeare's eyes have dwelt on it; perhaps he has rested under its shade: — O! we are coming now to something like the Forest of Arden: see how finely the woods rise in the distance, and what a rich gleam the western sun throws along the ground, beyond those low-hung boughs on our left."

As the travellers advanced upon Kenilworth-chace, the country assumed a more forest-like appearance, and a new train of ideas engaged Willoughton, on approaching the venerable ruins of the once magnificent castle, at one period its prison, and at another, the *plaisance* of royalty, where Edward the II. groaned under the traitorous power of Mortimer, and his abandoned Queen; and where the crafty Leicester entertained Elizabeth, with princely splendour. The domain of this castle, with its parks and chaces, included a circuit of nearly twenty miles; and when a survey of it was taken in the reign of James the I., on its forfeiture by the voluntary exile and contempt of Sir Robert Dudley, the son of Leicester and of his first wife, the Lady Sheffield, — the woods alone were valued at twenty thousand pounds, according to Dugdale, who observes of the castle and its territory, that "the like, both for strength, state, and pleasure, was not within the realm of England."

Recollections of the long and varied history of this castle, crowded upon the mind of Willoughton, and he looked out, with impatience, for a glimpse of its stately towers in the distance, and then of its mouldering gateways, in the sun gleam, beneath the woods that now rose round him with majestic shade. Here, at least, was a mass and pomp of foliage worthy of the noble ruin he was approaching and of the memory of Arden; and, when he first caught a view of the grey walls and turrets overtopping the woods, lighted up by the evening sun, whose long beams, slanting now under the boughs, touched with a golden flush the bending trunk of many an old beech standing deep within the shade, he uttered a note of admiration and curiosity that discomposed Mr. Simpson, who immediately directed the postilion to make his way to the nearest gate.

Soon afterwards they found themselves in a valley, whose woody slopes excluded all distant prospect, and confined their attention to the venerable relique, which seemed to characterise, with its own quiet gloom, the surrounding landscape. They observed the several fine and detached masses of the castle rising on a lone rock in the centre of this secluded little valley; and, as they drove towards the only entrance of the area of these deserted courts, near the square-turreted gateway, which Leicester built for the grand approach to the castle, the impatience of Willoughton became tempered with a gentle and luxurious melancholy, and he forgot even Shakspeare, while he was influenced by somewhat of the poet's feelings.

But a sense of real life broke in upon him even in this scene of solemn grandeur, and it required somewhat of the patience of a philosopher to endure, in the full glow of his present enthusiasm, the clamorous impetuosity of idle children, who, on the first sound of wheels, were seen running to assail the strangers from every cottage on the neighbouring banks. The visions of quiet solitude and of venerable antiquity were, in an instant, dispersed; the chaise was surrounded, and the travellers, having alighted, made their way with difficulty to the little gate, that led through a garden beside Leicester's ruined tower into the area that was once the lower court of the castle, followed by a noisy troop, whom neither money, nor command, could for some time disperse.

The tower — the gateway being now closed up, — was no longer accessible to curiosity, nor could gratify it by any traits of the customs of former times. No warder's bench lurked within the gloom, nor portcullis hung in the arch. The warden's chamber for those, who, by military tenure, kept guard on certain nights of the year, was transformed into a light parlour, and the whole building changed into a modern habitation. From the green and broken square, anciently the lower courtyard, the travellers looked up to the noble mass of ruins that yet stand proudly on their rocky knoll, and form three irregular sides of what was once the inner and grand court.

On the fourth side, which separated the upper from the lower court, are now no vestiges, save in the inequality of the ground where their foundations stood, and where the walls, fallen from above, may lie buried under the turf and briers, that now cover the spot.

On the left, the shattered walls of that lofty pile, built by Leicester, and still called by his name, advance proudly to the edge of the eminence that overlooked the lower court, hung with the richest drapery of ivy; on the right, stands the strong square tower, called Cæsar's, which, though the most ancient part of the castle, appears fresher and less injured by time, than parts that were raised some ages later. This was the keep, or citadel, of the castle; and the prodigious thickness of the walls appears through the three arches in front, proportioned and shaped like some which may yet be seen in aqueducts near Rome; the walls here show a depth of fifteen or sixteen feet. The stone, of which this noble tower is built, is of closer texture and of a greyer hue, than that in any other part of the building; and this hue harmonizes beautifully with the ivy towers, which overshadow its arches and door-cases, and with the ashlings and elder crowning its summit, which highly overtops every relique of this once magnificent abode of princes.

“It should seem,” said Willoughton, “that no human force could lay low walls of such strength as these; yet, as one side of the tower is destroyed, while the other three remain nearly entire, it must have been assailed by some power more sudden and partial than that of time.”

“Yes, Sir, yes,” said a man, who had been standing by, observing the strangers with attentive curiosity, “that part was pulled down by Cromwell's soldiers, and, if they had had more time on their side, they would have pulled it all down; as it was, they did a mort of mischief.”

Willoughton turned to look at his informer, and saw a tall, thin man, who appeared to be a villager, and who, without waiting for encouragement, proceeded: “I have heard say, they destroyed all that stood between Cæsar's and John O'Gaunt's tower there, at the end of the great hall, and a deal on the other side of the court, between the Whitehall and Lord Leicester's buildings.”

“Are those walls before us the remains of the great hall?” inquired Mr. Simpson, pointing to a picturesque mass of ruins, standing on the third side of the upper court and seen in perspective between the other two.

“Yes, Sir,” said the man, “that there was the great banqueting-hall where” —

“Leicester entertained Queen Elizabeth,” observed Willoughton. “How beautifully the ivy falls over those light Gothic window-mullions and that arched doorway, so appropriately and elegantly sculptured with vine-leaves! The sun now slopes its rays through the arch, as if purposely to show the beauty of its proportion and the grace of the vine that entwines it.”

“Ay,” said Mr. Simpson, “many a pitcher of wine and many a baron of beef have been carried under that arch by the King's yeomen, when Henry the Third kept his court here.”

“I doubt whether by yeomen,” replied Willoughton, “for, though yeomen of the household are mentioned, about this time, yeomen of the guard, a part of whose office it afterwards became to carry certain dishes to the King's table, do not occur till the reign of Henry the Seventh. However, it is probable, that, before the appointment of the latter, yeomen of the household might perform this business on state occasions, and in that very hall may have stood before the long tables, in double row, with wine ewers in their hands.”

“Those were times worth living in,” observed Mr. Simpson.

“Ay, those were jolly times! Sir,” said the stranger man; “it's lonely and sad enough in that old hall now; nothing but briers and ivy. Why, there is an ivy tree now against that old wall there, partly as old as the wall itself. Look, Sir, it is as grey, and almost as sapless as the stone it crawls upon, though the trunk is such a size, and hardly shows a green leaf, spring or summer.”

The travellers made their way among the briers to take a nearer view of it; and, if verdant festoons of younger plants had charmed them, Willoughton, at least, was no less affected by the withered sinews and grey locks of this most forlorn and aged tree, which had itself become a ruin, while adorning another. He climbed over hillocks of briers and weeds, which now covered the ruins of walls, fallen into this courtyard, and he looked down into the area of the great hall, through a doorway which had once led from it by a vestibule towards the white-hall, of which latter hardly a vestige remains, and to King Henry's lodgings. Here he distinguished the upper end of that magnificent banqueting-room, the very spot where the *deis*, or high table, had stood, which had feasted kings and princes, its lords, or visitors; where Henry the Third had sitten, where John O'Gaunt had caroused, and where Elizabeth had received the homage of Leicester.

At one end of this platform were still the remains of the large bay-window, opening upon the grand-court, where the cupboard had stood, and the golden plate was piled; at the other end, a windowed recess bowed out towards the spot, where there had been a lake, and to woods, that still flourished. This also, on state occasions, had probably held a plate-board, or cupboard, and, on others, had been occupied as a pleasant seat, commanding the finest views of the park.

The four walls only of this noble hall marked its former grandeur, not a fragment of either roof, or floor, remaining; the ground, upon which Willoughton immediately looked, having been the foundation of a chamber, or hall, for domestic and inferior guests, under the great one, which was eighty-six feet in length, and forty-five in width.

Those walls, where gorgeous tapestry had hung, showed only the remains of doorways and of beautiful gothic windows, that had admitted the light of the same sun, which at this moment sent the last gleam of another day upon Willoughton, and warned him, that another portion of his life too was departing.

The melancholy scene around him spoke, with the simplicity of truth, the brevity and nothingness of this life. Those walls seemed to say— "Generations have beheld us and passed away, as you now behold us, and shall pass away. They have thought of the generations before their time, as you now think of *them,* and as future ones shall think of you. The voices, that revelled beneath us, the pomp of power, the magnificence of wealth, the grace of beauty, the joy of hope, the interests of high passion and of low pursuits have passed from this scene for ever; yet we remain, the spectres of departed years and shall remain, feeble as we are, when you, who now gaze upon us, shall have ceased to be in this world!"

"Why, here is a stone bench yet in this old window," said Mr. Simpson; "and a pleasant window it is still. This homely bench has outlived all the trappings of the castle, though, I dare say, it was little valued in their time!"

"You see, Sir," said the old man, "it belongs to the wall itself; else it would have been carried off long ago."

Willoughton turned at the now repeated voice of this stranger, whose intrusion he did not entirely like, though his knowledge of the castle might be useful, and his conduct did not appear to be ill-meant. To an inquiry, whether he lived in the neighbourhood, he answered, "Hard by, Sir, in Kenilworth. I saw you was a stranger, Sir, and thought you might like to know a little about the castle here; and, unless you hap to light on such a one as me, you may go away as wise as you came — for, you will know nothing. No offence, I hope, Sir."

"No, no; no offence at all;" replied Willoughton; "and since you are so well acquainted with this spot, let me hear a little of what you know of it."

"Ay, let us hear what you have to say," said Mr. Simpson.

Willoughton, turning as he heard this, perceived his friend seated in the recess he had before noticed. Much remained of the beautiful stone-work of this bay-window, and it now showed itself upon the glowing west, where the sun had just descended, behind the dark woods of the valley. He advanced into it, and looking out upon the scenery, was interested by the stillness and solemnity that began to prevail over it. At some distance down the steep bank on which the castle stands, he could distinguish fragments of the walls that once surrounded it, with here and there some remains of a tower, or a banqueting-house. The ground below seemed marshy, but pasture of a better green stretched up the opposite slopes, and mingled with the woods, that, on every side, shut out the world! This valley seemed the home of a composed melancholy.

"But where," said Willoughton, "is the noble lake that, in Leicester's time, surrounded this castle, on which, as you may have heard, Queen Elizabeth was welcomed with pageants and so much flattery?"

"Ay, where is it?" echoed Mr. Simpson, looking at the old man with an air that seemed to say, "Now we have some use for you, and will put you to the test."

But Willoughton, without giving him time to reply, proceeded: —

"I am doomed to disappointment in Arden. For many miles, I could not discover any thing like a forest-shade, that might have sheltered a banished court, or favourite; and here not a wave of the lake, that delighted a festive one, and which might have supplied me with a floating island, moving to the sound of invisible music, or to the shells of surrounding tritons and sea-nymphs. Nay, I cannot even catch a gleam of the torches, which, on such an occasion, might have thrown their light on the woods and towers of the castle, and have quivered on the waters over which they passed."

"No, sir," said the old man, "it would be a hard matter to find any thing of all that now. Cromwell's people would have knocked all that o' the head, when they drained off the water, if such things had been there then."

"Cromwell's people again! However it is as well to remember them. What had the venerable scenes of Kenilworth to do with politics, or freedom? But thus it is; if even the leaders in political agitations have a better taste themselves than to destroy, for the mere sake of destruction, they let the envy and malice of their followers rage away against whatsoever is beautiful, or grand."

So said Willoughton to his friend, who smiled, as he perceived that the indignant admirer of antiquity had allowed himself to speak of a military operation, as though it had been a popular commotion.

"Where went the line of the lake, my man of Kenilworth?" asked Simpson.

"Why, Sir, it flowed round two sides of the castle, as I have heard say; it went from the tilt-yard, all along the valley here, for half a mile, and spread out at the foot of these banks, — as wide as to the woods yonder, on the hill side."

"What a noble sheet of water," exclaimed Willoughton, "with lawns and woods sloping to its margin and reflected on its surface!"

"Yes, Sir, all that on the opposite side was a deer-park then, as I've heard from the account of some book, except that low ground further on, and that was pasture for cattle."

"For cattle!" exclaimed Mr. Simpson,— "how they would poach such ground as that!"

"But what a beautiful picture they helped to make from the castle windows here," said Willoughton; "when, on a summer's noon, they lay under those shades, or stood in the cool waters of the lake."

"Ay," said Mr. Simpson, "to such as did not value the land."

"It was just opposite the Pleasant, yonder," said the aged historian.

"The *Pleasant!*"

"Yes, Sir; if you look this way, I will tell you where it stood: — it was a banqueting-house on the lake."

"O! the *Plaisance!*"

"It stood on the walls there, down in the valley, to the right of John O'Gaunt's tower here, and not far from the Swan Tower; but it is so dusk now you can hardly see where I mean."

Willoughton inquired where the Swan Tower stood.

"Further off, a good way, Sir; but there is nothing of it to be seen now. It stood at the corner of the garden-wall, just where the lake came up; but there is nothing to be seen of that garden either now, Sir, though we know the place where it was. Queen Elizabeth used to take great delight in the banqueting-house, as I've heard."

"It was pleasantly seated;" observed Willoughton.

"Yes, Sir; but there was rare feasting and music, too, I reckon. She used to be fond of sitting in this very window, too!"

"How do you know all this, my friend?"

"Why, Sir, the place is called Queen Elizabeth's turret, to this day, because she took such a fancy to it; and it was pleasant enough to be sure, for it overlooked the widest part of the lake; — this bench had velvet trappings enough then, I warrant."

"I have no pleasure in remembering Elizabeth;" said Willoughton, as he turned to look for his friend.

"No! — not in remembering the wisest princess that ever reigned?" said Mr. Simpson.

"No: her wisdom partook too much of craft, and her policy of treachery; and her cruelty to poor Mary is a bloody hand in her escutcheon, that will for ever haunt the memory of her."

"You are too ardent," observed Mr. Simpson; "much may be said on her conduct on that head."

"She inspires me only with aversion and horror," replied Willoughton.

"She gives other people the horrors, too," said the villager.

"How do you mean, friend?"

"There are strange stories told, Sir, if one could but believe them; — there are old men now in the parish, who say they have seen her about the castle here, dressed in a great ruff about her neck, just as she is in her picture; they knew her by that."

Here Mr. Simpson, giving Willoughton a look of sly congratulation, on his having met with a person of taste seemingly so congenial with his own, burst forth into a laugh, or rather a shout, that made every echo of the ruin vocal, his friend smile, and the old man stare; who, somewhat gravely, proceeded —

"They say, too, she has been seen sitting there, in that very window, when there was but just light enough to see her by."

"A ghost in a ruff and farthingale!" exclaimed Mr. Simpson, in exultation;— "that is, surely, the very perfection of propriety in the ghost-costume;" and again the roar of laughter rolled round every turret of the castle.

"Why does that strike you as so absurd?" asked Willoughton; "this is only a ghost representing the familiar image of the person when alive. Can it be more ridiculous than the Scotch plaid for the supernatural being, whom we call a witch? And yet, when you and I used to discuss the taste of ghost-dresses, you did not object to that appearance; but justified it, as one with which popular superstition was familiar."

"Yes," replied Simpson; "but though the ruff and farthingale accompany our idea of Queen Elizabeth, it is of her, as a living character, not in that of her apparition."

"And yet," rejoined Willoughton; "if you remain in this ruin, half an hour longer, till you can scarcely distinguish the walls, you will feel less inclined to laugh at Queen Elizabeth's ghost in a ruff and farthingale."

"Perhaps I might," said Mr. Simpson, "if you had not let me so much into the secret of effect in these cases. Yet I question whether it would have been possible for Elizabeth's picture, arrayed in that ridiculous court-dress, supposing it actually to appear, to extort from me any thing but laughter."

"They say, Sir," said the aged man, "that she looked solemn and stern enough as she sat in that window, just where you do now, leaning her head upon her hand, or something that looked like one. She sat quite still, for some time, and old Taylor sat quite still looking at her, for he could not move; — but when she rose up and turned round, and made a motion with her hand — thus — as much as to say, 'Go about your business!' he thought he should have dropped, and would have gone fast enough if he could."

"Ay," said Mr. Simpson; "there was the characteristical in manner, as well as in dress. This must be a true history!"

"Well, friend," said Willoughton, "and what followed?"

"Why, Sir, then she went down this steep place you now stand upon, into the hall there, where *he* could not have gone, in broad daylight, without risk of his neck; she sank down, as it were, and he lost her awhile, it was so dark; but presently he saw her, all on a sudden, standing in that doorway there, — and I can almost guess I see her there now."

"You are a silly old man," said Mr. Simpson; and he looked immediately to the door.

"You would not like," said Willoughton, smiling, "to inquire minutely into the difference between purposely avoiding to look, and purposely looking in the midst of this story;" but — turning to the old man— "what next?"

"Why, Sir, she stood in the arch some time with a very stern look; but I never rightly understood what became of her. Old Taylor said she passed away like a cloud; but then afterwards he was not sure but he saw her again, in a minute or two, in this very window."

"And have you never been fortunate enough," said Mr. Simpson, "to see any of those sights?"

"No, Sir, no; I hope I have no need of them; though, if I was that way given, I might have thought *I* saw things too sometimes. Once by Mortimer's tower, down in the tilt-yard, I as good as thought I saw a man standing with a mask on his face, in a moonlight night, with a drawn sword in his hand."

"That tower," remarked Willoughton, "was doubtless named after Mortimer, the paramour of the infamous Isabel?"

"They say, Sir, some king was once shut up there."

"Ay, Edward the Second, for a short time."

"And they will tell you a power of stories of what was to be seen about that tower, before it was pulled down, and after too; but I don't believe a word of them. People are always conjuring up strange tales when they have nothing better to do. I have got an old book at home full of them, enough to make one's hair stand on end, if one could but make it all thoroughly out. I showed it to Mr. Timothy, the schoolmaster, and he could hardly make it out neither; but he said it was no matter, for it was full of nothing but nonsense. He read me some of it, and I could not get it out of my head again for a week."

"Ay, it met with a thriving soil," said Mr. Simpson, "it's well you got the nonsense out of your head at all. But how happened you to buy a book in a language you could not read?"

"I did not buy it, Sir; and, as to the language, I could understand that well enough, but I could not read the letters; and Timothy himself bungled at the spelling."

Willoughton inquired where this book was met with; and whether he could have a sight of it?

“Why, Sir, it was dug out of the ground, where an old chapel once stood, belonging to the Priory hard by.”

“O! I remember,” said Willoughton; “there was formerly a monastery of Black Canons at Kenilworth, founded by Geoffrey de Clinton, lord chamberlain to the first King Henry, and the founder of this same castle too: but go on.”

“The place is used for a burial-ground still,” resumed the old villager; “and it happened, that as Guy, our sexton, was one day going to dig a grave there, he lighted upon the coffin, or the chest, or whatever it was, that held many things besides this strange book.”

“Indeed!” said Willoughton, eagerly; “let us hear a little about this.”

“We shall not get to Warwick to-night,” said Mr. Simpson, gravely.

“Why, Sir, it was one day last autumn, — no, I believe it was as late as November; I remember it had rained hard all morning; but whether it was October or November, I cannot be sure.”

“That, I should suppose, does not much signify,” said Mr. Simpson.

“Come, now,” said Willoughton, “do let him be as circumstantial as he pleases.”

“Willingly, willingly, only remember, we are not to sleep at Kenilworth.”

“Well, Sir, I cannot be sure exactly of the time, only it had been a dismal day; but the rain was over, when old Guy came running to me in as great a fright as ever I saw a man, and said he had found something in the ground, he could not tell what, but he never felt any thing so heavy in his life; he could not move it, and desired I would go and help him to raise it; and he stared, as if he was out of his wits. When I heard it was so heavy, I thought we might as well have my son to help us, for he was a stout lad. Guy did not much like this, I saw, for he was thinking he should find a treasure, and Guy was always a close one, and for getting as much as he could; it was only two years before he got his money raised for tolling; and there is not one in the parish has liked him since. However, I got my son to go with me, and we set to work, without saying a word to any one; and it was so near dark that nobody was likely to see us in that lonely place.”

“Well! but if it had been treasure, it would have belonged to the Lord of the Manor,” said Mr. Simpson.

“Yes, Sir, I know that well enough; but you shall hear. We raised it out of the ground at last, and what should it be but an old oak chest. It was so large, a man might have lain down in it at full length; but what helped to make it so heavy was the iron bands that held it together, and three great iron locks, that fastened it. Now, as the place where it was dug up was the east end of the church, Guy took it into his head it contained church plate, that had been put there, in troublesome times, by the monks of the priory. If you had but seen him! He thought his fortune was made; he threw away his spade, and cut a caper as high as a wall. I thought myself there must be something worth looking at o’the inside, but by this time it was so dark we could hardly see what we were about; so I sent my son home for the lantern, and then we tried with old Guy’s crow to get the lid open. We got it off at last; and what do you think, Sir, we found? Why, nothing but old parchments; some with seals dangling to them, and some old books, dropping to pieces with the worms, though the leaves were thick enough, too: at the bottom of the chest was a great heap of dust.”

“Did you find nothing else?” asked Mr. Simpson, fixing his eyes on him.

“No, Sir, nothing else,” said the old man, with a little hesitation; “nothing else, except an old staff, with a large head; and there was a little silver on that and on a book I have at home.”

Mr. Simpson inquired what had made the chest so weighty.

“Why, Sir, it was made of solid oak, six inches thick, I warrant, and had a great deal of iron about it. I took a fancy to that book, though I could not read it, for I could not make out the letters; but there is some pretty pictures on the leaves, and the colours are as fresh as if they were just painted; and some of the great letters are done all over with gold as bright as the sun.”

“A manuscript, illuminated probably by some monk of the priory,” said Willoughton; “can I see it?”

“Yes, Sir,” replied the old man, “I have it at home; but what made me wonder most was to see it look so fresh, after it had lain all that time in the ground; to be sure it was well wrapped up in parchment, and the trunk was thick enough, for that matter; but some of the other books dropped to pieces as soon as the air came to them.”

Willoughton asked what had been done with the parchments; adding, to his companion, that they were probably the leiger-book and some other muniments of the Priory, hidden when the terrors of Henry the Eighth first prevailed in the monasteries, and afterwards pretended to be lost, first from some hope of their future utility, and then from a fear of avowing their concealment.

“When Guy,” resumed the old man, “found what sort of treasure he had gotten, he was ready to throw himself into the old chest, to be put under ground with it again; but I said there was no need of that; so we took out some of the best of the books, but none of the others had pictures; and Guy took the old staff, and then we did lay the trunk in the earth again.”

Willoughton made many inquiries concerning the parchments with the seals, and the seals themselves, and whether his informant could find again the spot where they were deposited.

“Come, come,” said Mr. Simpson; “let us leave this place; it is almost dark.”

The old man said he thought he could find the spot; but that would be of no use; for it had lain so deep in the ground, that there had been depth over it for graves, and it was now beneath them.

Willoughton, shocked at this circumstance, said no more on the subject; but the old man proceeded.

“Among other things in the book, Sir, is a view of this old hall. I should never have found it out myself; for it was no more like what it is now than nothing: but Timothy Crabb, our schoolmaster, knew it at once by this very window, too — and by a doorway in the wall, yonder.”

“How does it appear in the drawing?” asked Willoughton.

“Why, Sir, — but you shall see the book, if you like. The hall had a high roof, like a church there, and a gallery ran all along the bottom of it, and such a chimney!” —

“Ay! like the remains of what we see here now, I suppose,” said Mr. Simpson.

“No, Sir, as different as can be.”

“O! perhaps,” turning to Willoughton, “it was such an one as we saw at Penshurst; a raised hearth, with irons to hold wood, in the middle of the hall.”

"No; that style," observed Willoughton, "was of later date than chimneys in English halls. It came in, I apprehend, with the castellated mansion, of which style is Penshurst, the more ancient part of the building at least. In the hall of the older castle, a chimney sloped back from the line of the wall into the thickness of it, and let the smoke through a loop above. Thus, the raised hearth, on which the wood-fire blazed, projected into the chamber, and was sometimes overhung by a canopy of stone-work supported by pillars, that gave it a resemblance to a gothic porch, such as adorn some of our finest cathedrals."

"Yes, Sir, this in the book looks like something like a church porch without the sides, the top comes so far over the hearth. Then all down the hall are rows of tables, with gentlefolk and ladies sitting at them, and— "

"I must see this manuscript," interrupted Willoughton; "it appears to be a curious one."

"Come," said Mr. Simpson, "it is already so dark, we can hardly see our way hence. There is scarce a gleam of light left on the horizon."

"No, Sir, but the moon is rising yonder, and some gentry have a fancy to see this place by moonlight."

"O! we have seen enough of it."

"I recommend you," said Willoughton, "to avoid looking, just at this moment, towards the door at the bottom of the hall, lest you should see the stately form of Elizabeth in the archway; I had a glimpse of something like her just now; nay, I am not quite sure that I did not see the grave physiognomy of Leicester, under his small black velvet cap and feather."

"We shall not get to Warwick to-night," said Mr. Simpson, fretfully. "They talk of the patience of a painful antiquary; think what the patience of his friend must be."

"I have not the honour to deserve the former title," said Willoughton.

"Between us, we approach to it; the painful part of it, you will allow, belongs to me."

"In the old sense of the word," said Willoughton, "you do not claim it; and, as to the new one, your jests recompense you for your pain: I have all possible inclination to deserve the title, in its best sense; at least by cherishing those inquiries, which make us intimate with the characters and habits of our fellow creatures in past ages, which show them to us in their halls, their ceremonies, their tournaments, their banquets, their domestic usages and even in their monastic retirement. These picturesque visions, in which the imagination so much delights, and every discovery, however remote, awaken a peculiar kind of interest and of sentiment no less delightful, which render antiquity, of all studies, the least liable to the epithet of dry, though dull and dry people so liberally bestow it. Antiquity is one of the favourite regions of poetry."

"Nay," said Mr. Simpson, "your woods and your meadows are the region for that. Who ever thought of looking for a muse in an old castle? But come, let us remember, that we are on the road for Warwick."

"Before we go, my friend here must show me his old manuscript; and I must see this fine ruin by moonlight."

"By moonlight!" exclaimed Simpson; "would you really stay for so romantic a purpose? We have seen it already by sun-light, and almost by no light at all?"

"The moon is rising, now, Sir," said the old man, "and by the time the gentleman has seen the book it will be risen high enough to give you light on your journey."

"Meanwhile, the horses will have no objection to a little corn," remarked Willoughton; "nor the postilion to a little ale, if this good man will direct him where to get it."

Mr. Simpson having added, that he too should like a little Warwickshire ale, the old man replied, "The ale they sell is not much to brag on; but, if you please, gentlemen, I will direct the lad where he and the horses may rest themselves, and, if you will step with me, you can taste some of my home-brewed, and see the book at the same time."

The travellers assented, and their conductor, after having directed the postilion to a house, accompanied them to his cottage, where he produced the desired manuscript. It was written on vellum, and richly illuminated, and purported to be an account of what passed at Kenilworth, when Henry the Third there kept the feast of Saint Michael, and of some wonderful accident that there befel.

"There is a title-page written almost in the form of a triangle," said Willoughton, "and that about as closely as if it were printed. The date, which forms the apex of the reversed triangle, I cannot wholly make out, but it is twelve hundred and something."

At the heads of chapters and sometimes on the broad margins, there were made drawings of parts of Kenilworth Castle, as it had appeared in the time of Henry probably, with some of the scenes which had there passed, and sometimes with single portraits of the chief persons engaged in them. These gave vivid ideas of the customs and manners of that period, and were traced, with more knowledge of perspective and more attention to proportion, than Willoughton expected. Among them was a procession of knights and ladies, led by numerous harpers, returning from the tilt-yard to the great hall, which showed a high sloping roof, while the windows below, at a considerable elevation from the ground, had round-headed arches, instead of pointed ones. The doorway, leading into it, accorded with the place where one still appears; but the arch was differently constructed, and the receding mouldings seemed to have been ornamented with chevron work, or zigzag, instead of the elegant vine now sculptured there, which latter he had no hesitation in assigning to the time of Leicester.

Another drawing gave an inside view of the hall, as mentioned by the old man. The roof was of great height, open to the rafters, and with pendent beams below, formed into arches, ornamented with inverted pinnacles, nicely carved. Another drawing gave the inside of a chapel, of which there are no longer any remains at Kenilworth.

The original style of the building appeared very ancient, but this was mixed with one more light and elegant, like that of the pointed arches of the windows; and Willoughton conjectured this improvement to have been made by Henry the Third, who is known to have repaired the chapel of the castle for his own use, during his occasional residence there.

There was a representation of a marriage ceremony in celebration at the altar, where a numerous assemblage of dignified persons were arranged in state. A king was giving the hand of the bride to a young man, who was decorated with many military insignia, but who was so far from receiving the gift with joy, that he appeared to be struck with consternation, while the lady, by her attitude, seemed to be fainting.

In the margin was a portrait of a king robed and wearing a crown of gold, which seemed intended for Henry the Third, to whose statue in brass, in his monument in Westminster Abbey, it bore a considerable resemblance.

At the head of another chapter was an inside view of a tower, where a man was sitting alone near a lamp. In the background a face appeared at the grate. The same chamber was represented afterwards, with a man stretched upon a low pallet, but whether asleep, or dead, was not expressed by the drawing. The lamp had gone out, and, instead of a face at the grate, the moon appeared through a window beyond, and threw a pale light on the couch.

Another drawing gave a view of a chapel, or hall; Willoughton was not certain which: there was, however, something like an altar at the farthest end, near which stood a figure alone, the face concealed in a vizor, the left arm, uplifted, held a shield, the right a lance, but the feet were in a position of rest, though another figure near a door was departing, as if with the fear of being pursued, his hands outstretched, and his face turned back over his shoulder. There, too, the moon appeared through a window, and the light fell upon the lifted shield.

While Willoughton was musing what this could mean, the old man, looking upon the leaf, said, “Timothy Crabb, Sir, maintains this is a picture of the Priory-Chapel, he is sure, as it stood formerly. I should never have found it out myself, there is so little left of the chapel; but Tim makes it all out fine enough.”

“Does he tell you what that figure means?”

“Not as I remember, Sir; but the book tells that, I reckon.”

Willoughton turned over the leaves near the drawing; the language, the orthography and the characters were all so ancient, that he hesitated much. What he did make out, however, fixed his attention so deeply, that his friend lost the small remains of his patience, and declared he would set off without him. Willoughton then told his humble host, that, if he was willing to part with the manuscript, he was disposed to give him his own price for it.

“Why, Sir, I like to look at the pictures sometimes, and the gold is so bright it is a pleasure to see it; but the book for other matters is not of much value to me, though it may be to other people, seeing as I can’t make it out; and, for that matter, if I could, I do not know any good it would do; for, what Tim did read made me as foolish almost as old John, and afraid to go near the castle, for some time, after dark, though I was always counted a little more sensible than some. But I see no good in such things, not I.”

“You are a sensible fellow,” said Mr. Simpson, “and I wish my friend here had a little less curiosity, and a little more such wit as yours. And now, Harry, do leave the book and come away.”

“No, I shall first console myself for the mortification of your compliments. What shall I give you for the book, my friend?”

“Why, Sir, I don’t know, I am sure; I don’t know the value of such things. Tim Crabb said it might be worth its weight in gold for aught he knew; but I leave it, Sir, to your generosity.”

“It is well you do not leave it to mine,” said Mr. Simpson, “for I should make a low reckoning of it.”

The sum Willoughton offered accorded with his own estimation of so curious a relick, rather than with the expectation of his host, who heard it with exclamations of thankfulness; while Mr. Simpson expressed not merely surprise but reprehension, and the vulgar proverb of “Fools and their money— “ was nearly audible on his lips.

“What other books did you find in the same place?” asked Willoughton.

“Ah! bless you, Sir,” replied the ancient villager, “I wish I had a score of them.”

“Well you may, my friend, if they would fetch you such a price as this!” was the ready remark of Mr. Simpson.

“It is his honour’s own generosity, Sir, and I suppose he thinks the book worth the money, or he would not give it.”

“Come, Harry,” continued Simpson, “here has been folly enough for once; let us be gone.”

“You are sure you have no other book like this?” inquired Willoughton.

“There is another or two, that do still hold together, I think,” said the old man; “They have got no pictures; but then they have the same kind of letters, that cannot be understood.” — He went for them.

“You will tempt the man to steal the parish-register, and offer it to you as a curious relick,” said Mr. Simpson; “and indeed it will deserve your money better than this.”

The old man returned with a small quarto, printed in black letter and bound in real boards, which had been guarded at the corners with brass; the marks of clasps remained on it and those of a lozenge in the centre of each board.

“Though this is of later date, much later date, than the manuscript,” said Willoughton, “I see it is one of the earliest books that came from the press in England. It appears also by its contents, to have been intended to assist the purposes of the monks of that dark age.”

“A Boke of Sprites!” exclaimed Simpson, with a shout of exultation: “a boke of sprites, with the signs they may be known by, and divers rules to keep you from harm: the like was never known before!”

“Excellent! excellent!” said Willoughton; “and here is another black-letter volume. Well, friend, without looking further, what shall I give you for them?”

“This is past endurance!” said Mr. Simpson; “my patience is out!”

“O Sir! I will give you these into the bargain,” said the old man, smiling; an offer which Willoughton would not accept, who paid the old man what he thought they were worth. Mr. Simpson, then taking his friend by the arm, desired his host to direct them to the chaise.

“I must see the ruin by moonlight,” said Willoughton; “but I will not detain you many minutes.”

“No, no; you will see the towers of Warwick by moonlight; which will be much finer.”

“My good friend here,” said Willoughton, “will order the chaise round to the gate where it set us down; and, by the time it arrives, I shall have seen what I wish to see.”

“Be it so,” said Mr. Simpson, with an air of resignation; “one is sure of you when a journey is to be begun; but never when one would end, or hasten it. I have not forgotten our midnight rambles about Stonehenge! Doubtless we were the first human beings, who had appeared there, at such an hour, for many centuries; and what astonished me afterwards, more than any thing I saw, was, that I myself should have been conjured there at such an unseasonable hour; I, whose brain never hatched any of those ‘high and unimaginable fantasies,’ as your poet Gray calls them, which distract the heads of some of his readers.”

“Ay! those shadows of the moon at full,” said Willoughton laughing, as they walked towards the ruin, his friend remonstrating with him on the imprudence of this passion for antiquities and on his credulity. “And can you really hold,” said he, “that these books were found in the manner related; and that any of them, especially the ‘Boke of Sprites,’ ever belonged to the library of the priory?”

“It does not seem probable,” replied Willoughton, “that the old man should have invented the story he has related of the discovery of them; but, be that as it may, the books themselves announce their own genuine antiquity. The manuscript is laboriously illuminated, and it is well known, that such works were chiefly performed by the inhabitants of monasteries. The Boke of Sprites even was likely to have served the purposes of the monks. We know that the libraries of monasteries contained a most heterogenous assemblage: Ovid, the Romance of Charlemagne, Guy of Warwick, and the Rimes of Robin Hood, have been found on the shelf with Homilies, and other books; which, although they might be tinged with the corruptions of the Papal school, ought not to have had such companions. You may recollect, that Warton, in the interesting sketches of ancient manners which he gives in his *History of English Poetry*, mentions this very fully; and that, among others, the library of Peterborough contained ‘Amys and Amdion,’ ‘Sir Tristram Merlin’s Prophecies,’ and the ‘Destruction of Troy:’ and books of this sort were not only copied, but often invented by the monks, sometimes for their amusement, sometimes for worse purposes.”

“One of the old books you have relates to their castle, I think,” said Mr. Simpson, looking up at the shadowy masses; which, shown thus faintly by the rising moon, seemed more majestic than before.

“Yes, and I perceive,” continued Willoughton, “that even you feel a curiosity to know what may have passed so many ages back, on the spot we now stand upon.”

“Why,” acknowledged Simpson, “when one looks up at the very walls now crumbling into ruin, that were once so magnificent, and that inclosed beings with passions as warm as our own — beings, who have so long since vanished from the earth, one cannot help wishing to know a little of their history and of the scenes they witnessed; but, for your legend, I fear to trust it.”

“It speaks of the times of Henry the Third,” said Willoughton, “those were lawless enough to permit many adventures; and, if the citizens of London were then robbed in the streets even at noonday, what could travellers in the forest of Arden expect? But this Manuscript seems to tell of princely feasts given in the castle, and of adventures passing in the presence of the Court.”

“Ay, if one could but believe them.”

“A great part of the castle,” pursued Willoughton, “which then existed, is now gone; and much that we look at, stands in its place; but that noble hall, and Cæsar’s tower and several other towers, such as those where the moonlight falls, beheld the very court of Henry the Third, ay, and Montfort, on whom he had bestowed Kenilworth, and who added ingratitude to treason, by holding the fortress against his benefactor and liege lord.”

They stood for some minutes in silence, looking up at the ruin and listening, as the breeze rushed by, to the shivering of the ivy, that overhung it, — all the shining leaves trembling in the moonlight. The pauses of solemn stillness, that followed these sighings of the air among the old branches, were very solemn, and the sound itself — so still, uncertain, and sudden, Willoughton could have fancied to have been the warning murmurs of one, who, in his mortal state, had lived within these walls, and now haunted the scene where it had once revelled, or, perhaps, suffered. It seemed like a voice imperfectly uttering forth some dark prophecy, and telling of the illusion of life and the certainty of death. To Willoughton’s recollection this spectacle of the remains of ages past, now glimmering under the soft shadows of moonlight, brought those touching lines of Beattie —

Hail, awful scenes, that calm the troubled breast,
And woo the weary to profound repose,
Can passion’s wildest uproar lull to rest,
And whisper comfort to the man of woes.

Willoughton stood so wrapt, that he heard not his friend’s inquiry, whether he meant to pass a night at Kenilworth, as a sequel to a former one at Stonehenge; nor was he immediately aware of the nearer approach of his aged conductor, who said, in a tone somewhat tremulous, “You are now on the very spot, Sir, where Mortimer’s tower stood; it was the main entrance to the castle, when there was a lake, and it opened from the tilt-yard, that ran along the end of the water into the lower court: you see, Sir, it was quite on the opposite side of the castle from Lord Leicester’s great gate.”

Willoughton surveyed the place, but not a vestige of the building remained. “Here then,” said he, “the unhappy Edward the Second was, for a while, imprisoned, before he was removed to Corfe and Berkeley Castles, his last abodes.”

“If you please, Sir,” said the man, “the chaise is at the gate; and, if you will take my advice, you will not stay here long, for I cannot say I like it myself; I shall begin to think I see that strange figure again, and I had rather not.”

“Well, let us go,” said Mr. Simpson, “or I shall begin to fancy something of the same sort, too. What did you say, it had a mask on its face?”

“Yes, Sir, and a drawn sword in its hand; but I don’t like the place, Sir, let us go.”

“Ay, ay,” said Mr. Simpson, “let us go; we — we — we shall not get to Warwick to-night.”

A laugh from his friend, which he too well understood, both vexed and ashamed him. “I did not think it possible,” said he, “that I could have yielded to the contagion of this folly thus; remember, however, it is not Elizabeth in her ruff and farthingale, that I fear, nor any thing else distinctly.”

Willoughton laughed again triumphantly. “Better and better; your feelings are true to my arguments, in spite of your own. I desire no farther proof of the effects of time and circumstances — of solitude and obscurity on the imagination.”

As they passed by Cæsar’s tower, and inquired where the line of the castle-ditch had been traced, he observed, that probably the chief entrance had at first been over a drawbridge to that tower, though now no sign of it could be distinguished.

When the travellers were once more seated in the chaise, Mr. Simpson betook himself to sleep; while, on their journey of four miles through the checkered moonlight of woody lanes to Warwick, Willoughton did not lament the silence of his friend, which left him to the quiet musings of his own mind, and to the peace of nature, reposing under this soft and beautiful shade. The air was so still that scarcely a leaf trembled of the lofty boughs that overshadowed the road; and when the postilion stopped to make some alteration of the harness, the breathing of the horses alone, was heard through all this scene of night.

There is a peace of the spirits, which has surely somewhat holy in it. Such is the calmness which the view of a midsummer-dawn communicates, or that of moonlight on woods and green plains; and such Willoughton experienced during this short ride, till he drew near Warwick, when the beautiful towers of Saint Mary's appeared on the right, and the more lofty and distant ones of the castle on the left of the perspective; and these awakened the stronger interest of expectation.

Having reached the inn, and Mr. Simpson, late as it was, having ordered a good supper, they walked out to take a view of the castle. Finding that, at this hour, they could not gain admittance by the porter's gate, they went to the bridge over the Avon, on the outside of the town, and thence had a fine retrospect of the castle, with all its towers crowning the high, woody bank of that peaceful and classic stream. One vast, round tower of most warlike air, looking down upon the precipice, delighted Willoughton more than any other. A part of the edifice, repaired and adorned in the time of James the First, containing the state rooms, which run in a long line upon the steep, was not in harmony with this tower, and gave very different ideas of the character and manners of the respective ages to which they belonged. The moonlight touched this tower with a fine solemnity, and fell on the tops of the dark cedars and other trees, that clothe the precipice, as it glanced to Shakspeare's stream below, where it rested in all its silver radiance, as if pleased to claim it for its home.

Willoughton leaned over the bridge, and looked upon the scene in silence. The brightness of the river, the dark, clear shade of the woods, reflected on its margin and rising with majesty up the steep, with the grey towers, in softened light, crowning all, formed a harmony of tints and of objects such as he had not often seen, and which recalled to him that state of holy peace he had so lately experienced.

Amidst the stillness of this scene, there arose a strain, as if commanded by Shakspeare's wand, and to which his words might have been applied. "O! it came o'er mine ear, like the sweet south, that breathes upon a bank of violets." It was the music of French-horns, sweetened by distance and by the water, over which it passed, accompanied by a few voices addressing the river and celebrating the bard in the wellknown song of Garrick and Arne,— "Thou soft-flowing Avon!"

Nothing could exceed the beauty of some of the cadences, prolonged by the deep, mellow tones of the horns, or of the chorus, and of the close, that gave these words: —

The fairies by moonlight dance round the green bed,
For, hallow'd the turf is, that pillows his head.

They brought tears into the eyes of Willoughton, and drew from him a deep sigh long after silence had returned.

Mr. Simpson looked about to discover whence this charming tribute to the memory of the loved poet came, and perceived two little boats stealing along the margin of the stream, under shadow of the bank that rose to the castle. The white awning of the first betrayed it to his eye, before it emerged on the moonlight; and now the measured trampling of the oars told its departing course upon the waters, till once again that chorus died along the air, and then the steps of the oars were heard no more.

The travellers remained for some moments, as if spell-bound, in thoughtful silence; and they left this enchanting scene, and returned to their inn, without having uttered a word. This was an unusual mood with Mr. Simpson; he had caught it from his companion, rather than from the scene; and now, on the entrance of supper, he rejoiced to get rid of it, and to return to the more substantial pleasures of this world.

Willoughton, when he had retired to his chamber, and had, as was his custom, looked out upon the night, now overcast with gloomy clouds, sat down to examine his manuscripts, instead of seeking repose. Bound up with that of the "Trew Chronique," was another, entitled "A Trew Historie of two Mynstrells, that came by night to the Priory of Saint Margaret, and what they disclosed, and what one in the convent by his art, proved them to bee." This "Trew Historie" was more difficult to be deciphered than the "Trew Chronique," and Willoughton left it for the present, and took the "Boke of Sprites."

As he turned over the leaves, curious to see the thraldom of superstition to which the people of a remote age were liable, he often smiled at the artless absurdities he discovered, the clumsy inventions practised upon the fears of the ignorant by the venality of the monks. Yet he sometimes found his attention seized, in spite of himself, by the marvellous narratives before him; till, at length, he began to feel that he was alone, to recollect that it was past midnight, to observe that all around him was still as death; and gradually to think he might as well lay aside the "Boke of Sprites" till daylight should return and the world again sound busily around him.

He did so, and again took the "Trew Chronique," desirous of ending his long day, with some new traits of an age so distant from his own and of the style, in which they might be shadowed forth. The mere spelling did not render this so difficult, as the character in which it was written, with its abundance of abbreviations and contractions.

The following is a modernized copy, which he afterwards wrote out for the amusement of a friend, who was fond of the subjects it touched upon, but had not industry enough to work his way through the obstructions of the original. In this copy, while Willoughton endeavoured to preserve somewhat of the air of the old style, without its dryness, he was often compelled to regret, that much of the effect of the story was lost, with the simplicity, brevity and quaintness of the ancient manner. However, he often retained the old words, where they did not seem to form too glaring a contrast with the modern style, and, now and then, somewhat of the quaintness of the original, the title of which ran thus: —

A Boke,

Contenynge a trew chronique of what passed at
Killingworth, in Ardenn, when Our Soveren
Lord, the Kynge, kept ther his fest of
Senzt Michel; with ye marveylous

accident, that ther befel, at the solempnissazion of the marriage
of Gaston de Blondeville.
With divers things, curious to be known,
thereunto purtayning. With an
account of the
grete Turney,
ther held
in the
yere
MCCLVI.
Changed out of the Norman tongue
By Grymbald, Monk of Senzt Marie
Priori in Killingworth.

THE FIRST DAY.

At the head of this chapter was a drawing, of the King and Queen, with their train, passing under the towers of Kenilworth. Near the King rode a young knight of a very spirited air; in one hand he held his cap, bending towards the King, who seemed to be speaking to him, and with the other he reined in his fiery courser. At some distance, was a man pressing through the crowd, with eager gesticulation and a wild countenance, towards the King. The royal banner, on the tower above, was tinged by the setting sun, and the arms and caps of the soldiers on the battlement there glistened with the rays. The cap of one of these, who, as if to obtain a longer view of the King, appeared to have stretched too far forward, was falling on the multitude below; some of whom were laughing.

It was at the feast of Saint Michel, that King Henry, the third of his name, with his Queen and sundrie of the nobles of the realm and a marvellous train of estates and gentils, came to keep court in Ardenn, at his castle of Kenilworth. The day was drawing to an end ere they arrived: and it was a goodly sight to see this noble company coming over the forest, till then so lonesome; and the last light of this day's sun glittering upon the helmets and lances of the King's guard; likewise on the gorgeous apparelling of their horses and trumpets, with their banners unrolled, that went before his grace; also on the litters of the Queen, covered with cloth of gold and with tapestry of rich colours, brought from her own land beyond the sea.

This noble train, with all the spearmen attendant on the King, was like unto a little army covering the paths and tracks, for many miles, as they wound amongst the woods of Ardenn; or like unto some mighty river, that flowing along, appears, where the shades open, in shining bends upon the plain, and is lost again as they enter beneath the gloom; but yet may you judge of their course throughout all the prospect. Like as you may the broken lines of the great aqueduct, stretching over the plains of our dear father of Rome; which, as we perceive its distant points athwart those solitudes, we connect in our minds into one great whole, grander in its sweep than it might have shown when it stood complete.

There went before the King a hundred archers in pairs, sumptuously apparelled, and having the feathers of their arrows stained with green; the horns sounded before them through the woods: then fifty demi-lancemen, two abreast; then fifty pikemen; then trumpets, with their banners also displayed; then officers at arms, in their surcoats, the serjeants with their maces. In the midst was borne up the royal banner, by six of the standard-bearers: the pipes of it were of silver, and were slided along the banner-staff; which was held with horn in a girdle of white leather, embroidered, worn by the King's chief standard-bearer.

The King's Highness came riding on a noble grey, widely encompassed about with pikemen, and attended by divers nobles of the realm and by knights and gentils, without number. His Highness wore that day a cloak of purple velvet, lined with yellow satin, and furred with martin and ermine; on his head was a cap of black velvet, bearing a sable plume. His countenance was goodly and gracious, and he often turned and spoke to those about him.

On his right hand, rode the young Prince Edward, holding in his fiery charger, yet looking as though he would fain spur him to the top of his speed. Next to him rode the Archbishop of York. On the King's left, was his brother, the Earl of Cornwall. The Bishop of Coventry would have been there, but he was then lying sick on his bed; but the Prior and divers of the monks attended on the King.

First amongst the knights, that waited on his grace, was Gaston de Blondeville, a young Provençal; whom King Henry had raised, for some daring exploits in his dominions beyond the sea, to be a knight of his household. He was of comely person and gallant air; and managed his proud charger with such easy grace, as a lady might, with silken bandage, guide a fawn. He wore a cloak of pale olive, lined and guarded with rose colour; his cap was of velvet like to it, and he wore his feathers in the French fashion: for he was of the Queen's country, and had all the gaiety of her nation in his countenance and 'haviour.

Yet were there some in the court, men of English ground, who liked him not; it may be, because he was a stranger in our land, or that he bore a proud defiance in his eye, or that they envied him his favour with the King.

Some way before the Queen, went fifty of the foresters of Ardenn clothed in green, sounding their horns. She was in her litter, tapestried with cloth of gold, and she was compassed all about with her ladies and her nobles and esquires. Her litter was borne by two brave coursers, right richly trapped with velvet, and led by pages apparelled in sumptuous liveries; other pages, in 'broidered doublets, went beside her, or following. Then came her master of the horses, leading her palfrey, very richly appointed, the bridle and breast-chain studded with jewels, followed by another of her palfreys, led by a page. Her Highness was adorned in a close gown of velvet, 'broidered about with pearls, and bearing upon her head a great hood of black velvet, richly sewed with large pearls. Following her Highness, came her ladies and gentlewomen mounted on fair palfreys, richly appointed and apparelled; a goodly company.

Then came her Highness's chariot empty, drawn by six horses, led by pages in jackets of scarlet damask, with the English crown 'broidered on their backs. They bore in their caps a white feather; dropping aside, in the manner of France, whereat the people murmured, and well they might; for such a sight of strangers, from her own land, the like was never seen! But the Queen bore herself so graciously towards the people, smiling upon them with her comely countenance, that she won away their discontent. Other gentlewomen of her court followed her car, mounted on palfreys.

Next came Eleanor, the widowed Countess of Pembroke, the King's sister, now Countess of Leicester, in her litter, with a sumptuous train: and then Cincia, the Countess of Cornwall, the sister of the Queen, right freshly apparelled, and sumptuously attended by noble dames and gentils; and a sight of people followed, in the different liveries of their masters.

Before the Queen, went her *Mynstrells of Music*; who, when they came nigh to Kenilworth, began to blow upon their pipes, and to strum their stringed instruments with most sweet noise — so that the bells of a village there, which were rung for mirth, could not be heard so far.

Amongst the damsels attending the Queen, none were so fair as the lady Isabel, daughter of the Earl of Arundel, and the lady Barbara, daughter of the Earl of Huntingdon; who followed her Highness, on white palfreys. Ychon of them was beautiful beyond thought: the lady Isabel was the more stately and carried a higher brow; but Lady Barbara's smiles were blyther than the morn.

Soon as the towers of Kenilworth showed themselves upon the West, which, if it had not been for the glowing spears of those on the battlements, would hardly have been known from the dark wood-tops, — soon as they appeared, some half-score of the foresters rode forward with their bugles, to give sign of the King's approach; but were straight sounded back by the trumpets, which blew up a blast, that filled the forest, and echoed to the very castle walls, ere the proud trumpeters would stop.

Then his Highness courteously commanded, that those who had come forth so many miles, to welcome him on his way, should be appointed to proclaim him at the gates. They waited not for second bidding; but, tuning up so clear and sweet, set spurs to their hobbies, and flew swiftly as the arrows from their own bows.

All the way hence to Kenilworth was lined with other troops of foresters in green; who, at certain distances, saluted the King, as he passed, with their bugles, in spite of the trumpets, that charged so loud and shrill their minet-flourishes: and they followed in the Queen's train. The King's pikemen and lancemen going after of all.

At the first sound of the bugles before the gate, you might see the great banner of England raised upon the keep of Kenilworth. Then, the chief wardour of the castle appeared upon the turret; though he stayed not long there, but went down to join his lord, in their service at the gate. The archers behind the battlements stood in order; other bow-men and the lancemen ranged themselves behind the tower-walls, and the trumpets there answered the summons, with a blast, that shook the forest, and made the fair waters of the valley tremble; roughening the portraiture of towers and woods, which had seemed to sleep upon their surface, as in a glass of chrystal.

Then the Lord Constable, coming down from the keep, followed by a posse of his officers, took to horse and went out to meet the King. As he turned out of the gate, he met the Prior of Saint Mary's, with the twelve canons, and a long train processioning, all in full ceremony, bearing precious reliques, to welcome his Highness; after them came the priest and sundry of the parish-church, singing.

The press of people, from all the country about, was so thick, that hardly could the monks make way among them. The castellan, a man proud and jealous of his high place, was not well pleased, that they should try to present themselves to the King, before himself; but they were soon right glad to follow in his train, for straight as he appeared, the crowd was forced back, and they passed, without difficulty, in that wise, full three furlongs.

The castellan, coming in presence of his Highness, leaped from his horse, and, on his knee, presented him the keys of the castle, on a rich plate; the which his Highness readily delivered to him again, with a gracious speech, bearing, that they were well in his custody. Then, the Prior and canons of Saint Mary's showed themselves in procession, with banners, and chaunting sweet anthems, and his Highness looked kindly on them; after which they went on to the Queen, and, paying duty, attended her to the castle. But my Lord Constable, remounting his horse, rode bareheaded before his Highness, to the very gates.

Immediately before the King, was borne his sword of justice, by the Lord Hubert de Lacey; where, on the sheath, you might behold, in letters of rubies, these words, "Truth and Right." As he passed all the people cried out, "King Henry, King Henry, long live King Henry! and blessings on your sweet-favoured visage!"

Then, they threw forth on the air, for joy, among other tokens, corn and flour; so that many of the nobles of the realm, nay, some of the King's guard, liked it not, for the flour-dust, falling on their garments, disguised them like unto grinders of corn: but they held their peace, as needs must, passing on in solemn stateliness.

Before the castle-gates, a great show of the King's bow-men were drawn out to receive him, and the courts within were lined, and every tower and battlement was thronged with his soldiers. There, too, were the foresters ready at the gates, who, on the King's approach tuned up their merry bugles, with might and main; as though one breath sounded through the whole of them. But, when the heralds passed under the towers, their trumpets took their revenge, for they gave many blasts, that made every court within shake for joy; and showed more like a triumph of war than a flourish of festival. They on the ramparts now seemed to take the hint, and joined them with such warrior-sounds of fierce disdain, that the clear bugle seemed but as a shepherd-pipe beneath them, and, for a season, was not heard at all.

Certes, the noise of the trumpets and cornets, the clanging of bells, the trampling of horses over the bridge, the striking of swords upon shields, with, ever and anon, the shouts of the multitude, astounded cattle and fowl in the woods, far and wide. Old wives and they that might not leave their homes for sickness could hear the mingled uproar; and could know as surely, when the King reached Kenilworth, as those, who had journeyed thither to behold him. And many an outlaw in the forest, who feared to show his face among the crowd, lay hearkening in his den, or stalked under the old oaks, while he watched the minutes of the coming twilight, and reckoned on the booty he should seize from careless travellers, returning, at night, to distant towns.

Some too there were, who, in the pathless holds of this forest, heard the far-off voice of joyance and society, with bitter grief; finding out, too late, they were not made for that lonesomeness of heart their thoughtless vices had condemned them to. Alas! for such, let them shrive and betake themselves, as penitents, to holy cloister.

When the Queen's litter came near the gates of the castle, her minstrels of music sang with most sweet glee, and the bugles saluted her as she passed into the barbican, or first tower of defence; but, soon as she appeared on the drawbridge, the trumpets from the ramparts blew up a flourish, and then the minstrels stopped, though they had not finished their fit. And they did well; for hardly could there be heard the trampling of the horses' hoofs upon the bridge, nor the distant music in the courts before the King. The walls and turrets, thronged with faces, seemed to be alive, and to shout, as with one voice, "Queen Eleanor! Queen Eleanor! long live Queen Eleanor!" — but some few were heard to shout, "Away with the foreigners! — away with all foreigners!" which the good Queen seemed not to hear, though she guessed in her heart what they said; and many a noble knight and lady near her knew well. She, with unchanged countenance, showed only sweet smiles to those numberless eyes, darting from the walls and battlements, all turned upon her litter, as it passed over the bridge, glittering in the last beams of this day's sun, and then entered beneath that deep and dark archway of the great tower, leading into the base court.

Beyond, in the sunshine, could be seen the King's Highness, preceded by the Lord Constable, and having the Archbishop on his right and Prince Edward on his left, passing forward to the upper court; where, on the steps, stood the marshals of the hall, the stewards, the esquires of the household, with many officers of the castle, waiting to receive him, some with chains of gold on their necks: the royal banner waving over all. They stood so thick, looking over one another's shoulders, face above face, on the steps there, that they seemed like a rampart of heads; while, below them, in the same court, the lancemen and yeomen of the household stood waiting to receive the Queen.

And truly it was a pleasureful sight, to behold that vision of light appearing beyond the deep portal, under which stood, on either hand, the wardours in their niches, to the number of eight; so dim, they showed like shadows more than substance, albeit, they did not lack of that. And a more delightful sight it was to behold the Queen and all her train, winding through that dark arch into the beams beyond; the rich trappings of steeds and men, their breastplates and spears and steel caps, all glancing in the setting sun. There, too, you might see, through the higher bars of the portcullis, the windows of the great chamber hung out with tapestry of silk and cloth of gold.

But that, which caused some surprise to those who watched without, was a sudden turmoil, that appeared around the King in the court, just as the Queen's litter was advancing forth of the archway. A man was seen forcing himself among the guards, towards his Highness, who turned his face backwards in the sun, as if to see what was going on; and seemed to rein in his steed, while he held forth his right arm to Sir Gaston de Blondeville, who, with cap in hand, leaned forward on his courser, as if receiving some command. The while, the heads and spears of soldiers gathered round, moving in tumultuous hurry, rising and falling incessantly, like unto those stormy white tops coming on over a darkened sea.

On a sudden, the King disappeared: some thought he had fallen from his steed, struck by the hand of the stranger; and then, such was the throng of people beyond the portal to get forward for more certainty, that hardly could the Queen's guard keep them back, till his Highness was seen ascending the steps of the high court.

At last, out of the midst of the confusion a shield was seen raised upon the traversed spears of six soldiers, and borne towards the outer gate, having upon it a man stretched, as if dead. But at the great portal the soldiers stopped, and drew aside to make way for the Queen; his Highness, meanwhile, with his nobles and young knight, had withdrawn into the state apartments.

When her Highness was gone by, they brought the man upon the shield into the free air without the walls, and lowered their burden on the grass; but the tumult of the people was so great, (they suspecting that he had attempted the King's life) that the soldiers with their spears had much ado to save him from their fury, or to keep a little space open around him.

He was a man of goodly appearance, that lay there, seeming without life. Anon, he began to stir himself, and in a little while opened his eyes; the which, when the people saw it, redoubled their fury; and they demanded, that he should be had to prison, for "he has assailed the life of our good King!" With that they made such a roaring, that the shouts of the soldiers, who wanted to set them right, could not be heard, the women brawling louder than all of them together.

Thus it went for some time: and then, the noise being hushed, they found out the man was innocent of what they had suspected.

When the stranger had recovered himself a little, he stared wildly; and, raising himself up, he looked round him, as if examining the countenance of every one, whom curiosity or anger had made to bend over him. And so he looked again and again, till they asked him, if he thought he saw the countenance of any one there, whom he knew. Then he fetched a deep sigh, and said, "I as surely saw him as I now breathe, but he is not here."

Divers present then asked him, of whom he spoke, but he only muttered to himself, "I could not be deceived; it is impossible for me ever to forget him." Then he shook from limb to limb, and was nigh going off into a swoon again. The people, meanwhile, pressed upon the soldiers to know what all this meant; and curiosity and pity began to take the place of rage.

The tale went, that, as King Henry had approached the entrance of the second court, this man, who had passed the portal amongst the King's horses, at the risk of his life, came beside him, and, having fixed his eyes with the greatest attention upon a knight of the King's household, cried out, "Justice! most noble Henry." Then, as if unable to utter something he would have spoken, he fell down in strong convulsions, and was nigh being trampled to death. His Highness, seeing the condition of the man, had commanded he should be taken forth of the court, and aid administered to him; and this was all the soldiers could tell.

There were some amongst the crowd who thought they had seen him before, and questioned him of his name, and wherefore he had presumed to approach the King in such manner; to all which he would nothing answer; but seemed heavy at heart, and as if his very sadness would not let him speak; only these words he uttered, once or more,— "It was he himself! I should have known him at Cairo!"

Some still said they had seen the poor man before; naithless he proved to be a stranger in Kenilworth. When he could walk, he was led back to the little hostel, where he had taken up his lodging, and there he remained closely hid from the eyes of every one, all that night.

THE SECOND DAY.

At the head of this chapter was a view of the tilt-yard, at the end of the great lake, with the towers of Kenilworth above. — In the lists were two armed knights, on foot, each poising his spear at the other. They were cased in complete steel; their visors closed, each bearing on his helmet his plume and crest. There was somewhat very impressive in the station and in the whole appearance of these armoured figures. Each stood with his right foot advanced; the right arm, holding the spear, was raised high, displaying at once the strength and grace of an accomplished warrior. At the end and along one side of the tilt-yard, were galleries hung with tapestry, where sat the Queen and her ladies, and the King and his nobles, waiting to behold the encounter. The opposite sides were open to the lake, the woods, and the castle.

In the morn, next after the King came to Kenilworth, there was tilting in the great yard of the castle, at which his Highness, with the Queen and her court, were present. This was the day of Turney; but, although this noble company made a goodly show, they were not apparelled with that splendour they showed on the chief day, as will be hereafter rehearsed.

Among the ladies of the court, none surpassed for beauty the lady Barbara, daughter of the Earl of Huntingdon and a favourite damsel of the Queen; her the King intended to bestow in marriage, during his sojourn in Ardenn. She was innocent and graceful, as the fawns that bound in our forest, and excelled in all the accomplishments of the court. She had fixed her heart on Sir Gaston de Blondeville, a young knight of the King's household, who had entreated her of her father in vain; for, though he was of a good family, it was a foreign one, being of the Queen's country, and he had little besides the favour of his master to depend on. The youth was of a comely person and gallant bearing; well practised in all martial exercises of war, of which he had given some proof in exploits, and had latterly so much displayed himself in a fierce adventure against some of King Henry's rebellious subjects, beyond sea, that his Highness had incontinently advanced him to be one of his own knights. Moreover, the King, on hearing of his ill-faring suit, had taken that matter into his special cognizance; and the King knew so well how to command the earl, that he consented to give his daughter to the knight, and his Highness determined the marriage should be solemnized forthwith.

But, on this very first day, after his arrival, his spirit was ruffled by a strange accident. As his Highness was returning from the Tilt-yard, accompanied by the Queen, and attended by the whole court, his harpers playing before him, a stranger came forth of the crowd, and falling at his feet, called out boldly for justice. Many there present knew him for the man who, the night before, had showed such striking signs of a disturbed mind; and now, noting his unseemly vehemence, they stopped and asked for what offence he demanded justice. The King, too, remembered him; and listening what he should say, the man, observing that, addressed his looks and his voice eagerly to him, and exclaimed, that he demanded justice upon robbers and murderers who infested the highways of his kingdom with more violence and frequency than was ever known before, so that none of his peaceable subjects were safe from them.

The King, seeing the wildness of his look and the strangeness of his gesture, guessed the man was not rightly himself; yet he commanded him forthwith into the castle, there to wait, till he should speak with him, or order some others to do so; and the procession passed on.

Meanwhile, the King determined not to leave this matter, till he should have seen something more about it, with his own discernment. He went speedily into the white hall, which was the court of justice, keeping only a few of his nobles and other attendants, where he summoned the stranger before him, and had question put to him, who he was and of what particular grievance he had to complain.

The man answered, that his name was Hugh Woodreeve, a merchant of Bristol: and then he told his story — that, three years before, travelling with a very large sum of money in his possession, and, being in company with three other travellers, two of them merchants of good repute, and the other a kinsman of his own, they were attacked in the forest of Ardenn, when about two miles from Kenilworth, and robbed of nearly all they carried. They did not part with it quietly, it was so much. His kinsman, however, was the only one of the party that had good arms; he had served in the wars, and he now manfully resisted the ruffians, who directed most of their vengeance to him; he was murdered on the spot; for the rest of his company, they escaped with some hurts. No one of the robbers was killed, but two or three were wounded.

Here the merchant stopped and seemed ready to sink. His Highness, having declared his indignation at this villany, assured the merchant, that justice should be done upon the guilty, if they could be found, and asked whether he could swear to them, if he should see them again. The stranger straight replied, that he could truly swear to the murderer, and that he had seen him in the very court, nay, that he saw him at that very instant, standing even beside the King's chair.

King Henry, struck with astonishment, fixed his eyes sternly on the stranger, for a moment, and then looked at those around him. On his right hand, was his son, Prince Edward, and, on his left, his young favourite, Gaston de Blondeville, upon whom all eyes were fastened; for to him the answer pertayned, and to him the accuser pointed, with a look of horror, which convinced every one present, except his Highness, he did indeed believe he saw before him the murderer of his friend, whether his fancy deceived him, or not. For the King himself, he inclined to think the accuser was either disordered in his mind, or that, from some unknown cause, he was the enemy of Sir Gaston; and his Highness knew well of the unreasonable and deadly abhorrence, in which many of his subjects of Britain held some of those strangers from France, who had risen into favour.

At the boldness of this accusation, Sir Gaston stood, at first, like one stricken with dismay; then, moving his hand towards his sword, he said, "but for the presence of the King, my master, I should soon avenge me for so foul a slander."

To which the merchant, now much more tranquil than he had been, said, "The same reason must restrain all; but I do not need it: I would not set my life against that of an assassin! I ask for justice from his Highness."

At these words, Sir Gaston was hardly withheld from his accuser. King Henry commanded silence: and, as soon as all noise had ceased, he turned with a severe countenance to the stranger, and said, "Know you not, that he, whom you accuse is a knight of my household, advanced to honour for his valour?"

“Yea, noble King Henry,” replied the merchant, “I have heard so; but, I repeat, he is the man who killed my kinsman! I never can forget that face: if I had met him in a distant land, I should have seized him for the murderer!”

The King, more fully convinced of the unsoundness of his mind, said, “Your passion has deceived you; thus far I am willing to pardon you; if you go farther, you must be taught what it is to dishonour a gentleman and a knight.”

Upon this, the merchant fell at the King’s feet; and, with uplifted hands, again cried out for justice! Henry, hardly less astonished at the resolution of the man, than that one of his household should be thus accused, (although he might have bethought him of the law he had himself found it expedient to make heretofore at Kenilworth, respecting robberies then committed in a very extraordinary manner on the highways) — King Henry, though astonished, began to doubt. He fixed a look, in which there was somewhat of inquiry, upon Sir Gaston, whose visage was pale, though his eye was fierce; but who may say, whether fear or anger maketh some men pale?

The King held it to be the last; a momentary doubt had entered his mind; but he promptly dismissed it. His Highness was commanding, that the stranger should be removed; and, for the present, confined in the castle; when Prince Edward, who, young as he was, had closely observed all that had passed, craved humbly of the King, his father, to suffer the merchant to be further questioned; and the King consented thereto.

Then the man was asked, whether he could tell the year and the month, when the robbery he spoke of had been committed. He was ready enough with his answers, and said it was on the eighteenth of October, in the year twelve hundred and fifty-three, and on the chase; that he was sure of the time, because it was within three days of that, when he should have paid to a goldsmith the most part of the money, whereof he was robbed. Upon this, the King seemed to consider awhile, for he knew, that, about that time, a camp lay in the neighbourhood of Warwick and on the edge of the forest, and that Sir Gaston was there, he being then serving as esquire to Sir Pierse Mallory.

At the last words of the merchant, Sir Gaston moved towards the King, as though he would privily say something; but his Highness reproved him with a frown; and asked the merchant at what hour the robbery was committed, and what were the array and appearance of the robbers?

The knight interrupting the reply, then said aloud, “Sire! I entreat you, be mindful of the condition of disgrace, in which I must stand, if you seem to give countenance to this scandalous accusation. I know not, that I shall be able to breathe, if it be thought, that your Highness could, for one minute, think it possible I could have committed so foul a deed.”

King Henry, looking kindly upon him said, “It is right you should be cleared with those, who know you not so well as I do; and chiefly with those, who love not men of your country; and, therefore, would I examine this witless charge to the uttermost.” His Highness then made all his questions over again.

The merchant considered awhile, and somewhat of his boldness seemed to forsake him: he then answered, “the number of the robbers was three; they were most of them tall in stature; they wore cloaks about them, and had masks on their faces.”

“Masks?” said the King.

“Masks!” murmured the courtiers, with one voice.

The King, daunting the accuser with the anger of his countenance, said, “You could swear to this knight, as one of the robbers, and yet you say, he had a mask on his face! I suspect you now for an impostor more than for a moody man. If it prove so, tremble! for I swear by my sword you shall not escape. I give you one more warning, to stop before you totally plunge into your ruin.”

At these words, delivered with vehemence, the paleness left Sir Gaston’s face, and he made a profound obeisance, showing his gratitude to the King. The accuser, dismayed, could not immediately find his voice, as it seemed. Haply, he could not so speedily send back his thoughts to the rest of his story. Incontinently, the most of the assemblage began to look ychon in other’s face.

By-and-bye, the merchant said, that in the struggle between his companions and the robbers, two of the vizors fell off, and so he saw plainly the faces of the robbers, and he perfectly remembered the face of the knight. His Highness, without telling his thoughts on this, which many there present scrupled not to hold an after-invention of the accuser, commanded him to begin his tale anew, and to tell, one by one, every particular he could bring to mind of the alleged adventure; but before he began, Sir Gaston, surveying him, asked whether, about four years back, he was not at Embrun, in the Dauphine.

Denying, that he had been at that place, the accuser then renewed his story, which purported, that he and his companions were travelling, about the close of day, through the forest, or chase, of Kenilworth, when they were attacked by robbers. He was bidden to repeat the number of them and of his company, which he did, without varying his tale. The King asked how long after sun-set it was when the assault began? which he could not readily tell; but said it was so nearly dark, that hardly could he see the figures of the robbers under the shade of the woods, from which they burst: the merchant paused a moment —

“Go on,” said the King, impatiently: —

“But I could, afterwards, see them plainly enough by a torch I took from my companions, who had lighted it, at a smith’s in a village by the way-side; an iron-smith’s.”

The King asked him if he knew the name of this village, but he knew it not; and whether he should know the smith again? and he answered, he thought he should. Then he was ordered to proceed with his story:

“My kinsman,” said he, “was the only one of us, who was well-armed; and a braver spirit never lived. He fought with his sword that man, who now stands beside your Highness; it was a trusty weapon, and had done him good service in Syria, where he had it for booty, after a skirmish, as I heard. When my kinsman first made up to that man, I followed him with the torch, and to aid him, as I might, with an oaken staff I had in my hand; but I received a blow upon the arm, that held the torch, which was knocked to the ground, and the vizor of the man fell also, that very man, who now presses behind your Highness’s chair. The torch was not extinguished, and, by its light, I plainly saw that same countenance, that now glares upon me so vengefully. I saw it while he aimed the blow, which penetrated the head of my unfortunate kinsman, Reginald de Folville.”

The merchant paused, seemingly overcome by the remembrance of this event, while Sir Gaston exclaimed,— “Was it Reginald de Folville? He was esquire to a knight of Saint John, and was then at Lydda: so much for the truth of your story in that main point.”

At the first words of Sir Gaston, the King and the courtiers had turned their faces upon him; but though his words were so strong and sufficient, they beheld in his countenance paleness and consternation. But he soon recovered; and, asking pardon of his Highness for the emotion with which he had spoken, accounted for it by saying, that Reginald de Folville had been his earliest friend.

"Your father's friend, you must surely mean," said the merchant; "for he was at the wars at a time, that would have made that possible. You must have been a child, when he went there."

"I *was* then a child," said Sir Gaston, averting his eyes from the stranger; "and I must ever remember the kindness he showed me after the death of my father; I owe him much. He went from Provence to Syria; I heard he fell in battle there. Sure I am he never returned: he died in battle there."

"He died in the forest of Ardenn," said the merchant with solemnity, "and lies buried in the priory of Saint Mary here. He died by your hand: that is his very sword by your side; I remember it now."

The audacity of this assertion struck all present and none more than the King himself. His Highness desired to examine the sword, and asked the merchant why he had not sooner challenged it; to which he answered nothing. Sir Gaston, as he delivered it on his knee to the King, said— "If I know my accuser, which I think I do, he is no stranger to this weapon: he knows well that I usually wear it; but it never belonged to Reginald de Folville. My liege, it was my father's sword; he won it in the plains of Palestine."

The King examined it with attention. It was of eastern shape and finely wrought. In the hilt were a few jewels. Prince Edward, as he leaned over it, pointed out to his father a motto in an unknown tongue; and then, at some distance below it, a date, with the Roman letters, H. A., remarking, that probably these letters alluded to some exploit achieved in the year noted. The King addressed himself to Sir Gaston for the meaning of the motto and of these letters; but he knew not their meaning, and said they were as when his father won the sword from his enemy.

Then the King addressed the merchant with the same question, observing, that, as the sword seemed to be familiar to him, he probably had been told the signification of the letters on it. With that, the merchant was hastily advancing to receive it of one, to whom his Highness had delivered it; when he suddenly drew back, covered his eyes with his hand, and stood immovable. Those near almost expected to see him fall, as he had done before in the castle court on the night last past. Sir Gaston, at the same time, stepping forward, presumed to take it, and to deliver it again to the King, with these words:— "Your Highness will not tempt the villany of this man by putting him in possession of the sword he falsely claims."

But the merchant claimed it not; nor could he even endure to look upon it. Heavy sighs burst from him, while with eyes still covered with his hands, he said,— "That was the sword, with which the villain murdered him; and can I endure to take it in my hand, and to look upon the blade, on which his life blood flowed?" and he groaned more piteously than before.

There were some in the hall, who instantly thought this sorrow of the merchant was a mimickry, and asked how it could happen, that his kinsman was killed by his own weapon; to which, soon as he could recollect his thoughts, he made answer, that the robber, on wrenching the sword from his friend, struck him his death-wound with it. The King, returning the sword to the young knight, bade him keep it forthcoming till he should demand it of him again, and then said to the stranger these or such-like words: —

"You, a man unknown to me and to mine, and without a name, except as far as you have declared one, have dared to come into my court, and to accuse to me one of my own servants, a gentleman and a knight, of a crime most foul and incredible. You have related your story, and I have waited patiently for some evidence, that the murderer of your kinsman, if, in truth, he were ever destroyed by violence, was Sir Gaston de Blondeville. I find none, except your story. And in this you have not scrupled to affirm, that you would have seized him for the murderer, even in a distant land, though you also say, that your knowledge of his countenance was obtained only from the sudden (and, therefore, the uncertain) light of a torch lying on the ground, at a moment, when the danger you were yourself exposed to, might, it may be readily believed, have prevented you from closely observing any face whatsoever. You must be held unworthy of credit; and I commit you into safe custody, till it shall be discovered who you are, and who those are, who urged you to this base accusation."

When his Highness had ended, they were going to convey away the merchant from his presence, but he craved leave to speak, and it was granted.

"My liege," said he, "at any other than that moment of horror, I might have seen the face of this stranger, without remembering it the next; but the impression made, at that moment, will remain with me, as long as the strong feelings, which then struck me, shall return with the recollection of my kinsman's fate. On seeing the same face, I was seized with the same horror; your Highness's people can be witnesses, that yester-eve, when I saw that knight, I fell into convulsions, and was carried senseless from your presence."

His Highness, remembering what had happened, and, on inquiry, finding, that this was the very man, who had then fallen senseless, perceived, that the merchant had not spoken this untruly. He asked again whether he was known to any person in Kenilworth, also whether either of the merchants, travelling in his company, at the period of the alleged murder, was at hand. The accuser stood, for a while, bewildered, and then repeating, that he was a stranger, having only passed through the place, a few times, on his way to or from Coventry, said, that of his two companions one was dead, and the other following his merchandize, in a distant land.

"Then," said the King, "it appears you cannot bring any evidence of the truth of your story; even so far, as that a robbery was actually committed. Your accusation of this knight is, therefore, likely to be impelled either by malice, or by some other bad motive. If it shall prove so, dread the punishment that awaits you."

"My liege," said Sir Gaston, "I think I know the man, and also his motive. He wronged my father at Embrun; and now his malice, — but this story is connected with family circumstances, that should only be divulged to your Highness; and, if you will suffer me to unfold them in private, I shall prove, not mine innocence only — for of that your Highness does not doubt — but that man's former and present guilt."

At these words, the stranger fell again on his knees, and besought aloud justice on "a villain."

The King looked long upon him and upon Sir Gaston, and sat pondering awhile. He then turned to the merchant, and, bidding him rise, asked him, a second time, if he were not known to any one person in Kenilworth? and received for answer, "Only as a traveller."

"An adventure as remarkable as that you have related," pursued his Highness, "must have been known here at the time it happened, and must be remembered now. It is strange, if there be none who can recollect you also."

"My lord," observed Prince Edward, "he said his friend was buried here in the priory. If so, the prior must know him and his strange history."

"Said he so?" quoth the King; and, turning to the stranger, he inquired how it happened, that he was not known to the prior? and who it was that commanded the burial of his kinsman.

The merchant said, he had himself ordered it, and had conversed with a monk and even with the Prior himself.

"Then you are known to the Prior, at least," said the King; "he will surely recollect your story: let him be sent for. It is strange you should have said you were unknown: you are either guilty of falsehood, or your senses are unsettled."

The stranger raised his hand to his head and sighed. "I recollect the Prior," said he, "but he may not remember me."

"We shall see!" said the King, calmly, as he rose from his chair: "If you are innocent, fear not! if you are guilty, you will lose your life, in seeking that of an innocent man."

As his Highness left the hall, he looked somewhat sternly upon the accuser, and commanded, that he should be held in close custody, while more inquiry should be made. He then ordered Sir Gaston to attend him in his privy-chamber, and so departed forth of the hall, leaving the accuser speechless and dismayed.

As the merchant was led through this court of the castle to the tower, where was his prison, the lady Barbara, sitting in her bower-window above, saw the passing crowd, and inquired the occasion of it; but none would inform her. While she gazed with curiosity, she observed Sir Gaston going to the King's privy-chamber; he looked not at her window, but went his way with a hurried step, and with such a countenance as she had never witnessed in him, till this time. At length, word was brought to my lady, her mother, of what had passed before his Highness. The Earl, her father, was promptly filled with disgust; and thought the occurrence would be sufficient to prevent the marriage, which neither his English heart, nor his pride of ancient blood, had suffered him to approve. His daughter, the lady Barbara, was differently minded; she would not believe him she loved capable of even a dishonourable action, much less of so foul a one; and, assured of his innocence, she would have thrown herself at the King's feet, had that seemed always, as it did at first, proper, to urge his Highness to clear Sir Gaston instantly from the suspicion.

But truly the King needed no advocate for Sir Gaston de Blondeville; and so she thought, at last. His Highness's own inclination was sufficient; and so angered was his generous spirit by what he held to be not only a false, but a malicious accusation, that he had determined after proof of this, to give a signal warning by the accuser's doom; and this not only to prevent other false accusations proceeding from private motives, but to reprove and caution those of his subjects, who had a public prejudice against strangers, and were too likely to delight in the ruin of such especially as had risen to honours.

The King, therefore, willingly gave audience privately to the young knight, that he might explain to him the circumstances, which should assure him of his innocence. What Sir Gaston told his Highness was never assuredly known; some reports went on one side of the matter, some on the other: there was not one witness of what passed. Who then might know, unless they could guess by the countenances, and by what passed, when the hearing was over? But, if they had gone by no other guide, they would have been all for the knight, since he had made the King quite convinced; and moreover, the Earl of Huntingdon was summoned to the closet, where the King promised him the honour of the young knight would always remain unsullied in his opinion; and so commanded, that the marriage with the lady Barbara should be solemnized, as had been before appointed, on the day next following.

The Earl besought, nay, as some say, dared to remonstrate, that the marriage should be postponed till the stranger should have been lawfully convicted of falsehood; but his Highness said, "Nay; lest it should seem that the accusation was probable enough to require such delay. It is already wellknown, as a matter agreed upon, that the nuptials are to be held on the morrow, the preparations are nearly all made, and they are public. It is necessary for the honour of Sir Gaston de Blondeville, that the appointment should be kept. If you are not convinced, still you will not be required to make disavowal of any thought you may have; for I myself will lead your daughter to the porch, and will so, by my presence and by this act of parental kindness, show my estimation both of the fair bride and of him who shall become your son. Farther proof of my regard shall not be wanting hereafter."

His Highness was peremptory, and the Earl, swayed by his master's positive opinion, and, it may be, by that promise of regard hereafter, at last obeyed.

While these things were passing in the King's chamber, the unhappy merchant was taken to a turret of the castle, called Cæsar's Tower; and there, with nothing but a pallet and the bare walls, was left to think of his jeopardy. What his thoughts were I know not; but he was heard sorely to sigh and groan, and with good reason; for, if he knew himself perjured, he knew also, that he should find no mercy from the King; and, if innocent, he could expect little justice against so great a favourite. But, whatever were his meditations, they held not till night, for he was called and led forth of the tower into the presence of the King; and, before even-song, the Prior of Saint Mary's was in attendance upon his Highness. He was not an aged man, yet was he a stern one. When he was asked whether ever before he had seen the merchant, he answered resolutely, that he had no knowledge of him. The same question being put to the merchant, touching his knowledge of the Prior, he returned a like answer.

At this seeming self-contradiction, the King could scarcely command his anger, till it was discovered, that a Prior of Saint Mary's had died, since the time when the murder was alleged to have been committed, and that it must needs be he, whom the merchant meant.

"But, where is the monk, with whom you consulted?" asked the King; can you tell his name?"

"His name was Ewdwyn," replied the merchant.

"He died yesternight!" said the Prior.

At this there was a pause, and a dead silence throughout the chamber. Sir Gaston looked darkly on his accuser; his accuser directed his eyes to the King and then on high; but, in a short minute, he fell down, as though he were a dying man. The King, touched at his sufferings, commanded him from his chamber, that aid might be administered unto him. And then, that he might know whether this accusation of Sir Gaston were through malice, or mistake — for now pity inclined him to think the last — and also, that Sir Gaston might have mistaken, when he took this for the man, of whose deeds at Embrun he had talked; that he might know the truth on all this, he ordered the Prior to make inquiry in his community, whether the body of any person known to have been murdered in the forest of Ardenn, three years before, had been deposited in the chapel, or in the cemetery of the convent. Like wise, he commanded the Prior to have inquiry made in Kenilworth, whether any person remembered such an accident, or any house had received the dead body. And this he ordered, that it might always be seen he had desired to have justice done towards the wretched merchant, as well as for Sir

Gaston de Blondeville.

This being appointed, the King departed to his great chamber, there to keep his state; the Prior to his convent, to resume his spiritual musings; the accused lover to his mistress; and the merchant was conveyed to his prison tower.

The King kept state, that night, with the Earl of Cornwall, the Archbishop of York, the Bishop of Winchester, the Bishop of Lincoln, Henry de Wernham, his chaplain, who also had the custody of the Great Seal, the Earl of Norfolk, the Earl of Hereford and a number of other nobles of the realm; but the Queen kept her state apart.

The King's great chamber was marvellous to behold. There were twenty-five wax-lights held by esquires of the household, all in the King's livery, gentils as they were; also twenty-five wax torches were fixed high up over the tapestry. The walls were, that night, gorgeous with the story of Troy-town in ancient tapestries; there you might see the flames burning and the towers falling, and old King Priam, with beard as white as snow, his crown upon his head, and his Queen Hecuba tearing her dishevelled locks for grief. And there was that renowned son, who carried off his aged father, with his little child holding by his garment, and his wife following, all disconsolate. This was a piteous sight to see pourtrayed; but that it were nothing save a heathen story.

The floor of that chamber was not strewed either with rushes or with litter of any sort, but was laid in little checquers of divers colours; and, where his Highness sat, under his cloth of state, was spread a silken carpet of full crimson, fringed about with gold, as likewise his chair and canopy of estate. But the finest sight was the cupboards, piled up with plates and cups of gold and silver, in readiness for the King, when he should take his voide. These were in that great Oriel, which his Highness had newly made in this chamber, before the bay; and which was closed about with painted glass from the highest cupboard to the arched roof, where hung a silver lamp, that made the whole glow with its light.

There were, that night, playing in the chamber, the King's twelve minstrels, all clothed, for his honour and dignity, in sumptuous livery, with their virger to order their pipyngs and blowings. There were, besides, the children of the chapel singing, at times, from the brown gallery; so that, the doors being open, you might have heard them through all that side of the castle; and those, who sat afar off in the great hall, needed none other music.

There also was Maister Henry, the versifier, whose ballad of the Giant of Cornwall was this night rehearsed to the harp by Richard, the King's harper, as was his famous Chronicle of Charlemagne, which lasted, till his Highness was well nigh weary, when he jocularly called out, having tasted of his golden cup, that Henry should have a butt of wine with his wages, if he would shorten his ballads by one-half. Maister Henry, who was a Frenchman, took this in good part, and, having especial care ever after to make his ballads nigher to too short than too long, became, in time, a notable rhymer. But let those do so who can. Some are famous one way, some another; for mine own part, I must be circumstantial, or else nothing, as this "Trew Chronique" in due time must show. That night, the King played at "Checkere" with the Earl of Norfolk, on a board laid with jasper and chrystal, the check-men being of the same. Some said the kings and queens were of ebony, studded over with jewels, but of this I know not.

But, the finest sight of all was the going of the chamberlain to the cupboard, accompanied of three nobles of the highest estate in the realm, that were there present, (save the King's family) to receive the King's cup and spice-plates; and then the bringing up of the voide before his Highness. And, first, the usher, having assembled the King's sewers, their towels about their necks, with the four esquires of the body and the knights and esquires of the household, to the number of seventeen; these, with divers other officers, being met at the cupboard, the Chamberlain took the King's towel, and, having kissed it, as the custom is, delivered it to the Earl of Norfolk, he being of the highest estate, who reverently received the same, and laid it safely upon his shoulder. Then, the said chamberlain gave the gold spice-plates covered to the Earl of Hereford; and then the King's cup of massive gold, covered also, to the Earl of Warwick. At the same time were given to the knights of the household the Archbishop's spice-plate and cup, covered also, to be carried up, by the space of one minute after the King's.

And, certes, it was a goodly sight to see all these nobles and gentils marching up the great chamber (the minstrels playing the while), compassed about with esquires, bearing great lights to the number of thirteen, especial care being taken, as the manner all times has been at the voide, that the lights were odd in number.

First, then, went the usher, with his torch and rod, making passage; the chamberlain, with his chain and wand of office; then the five esquires, of the body, bearing wax-lights before the Earl of Norfolk, with the towel; then, three esquires about the Lord of Hereford, bearing the spice-plates; then, other three before the Lord Warwick, bearing the King's cup covered; then followed one knight of the household, bearing a single torch; so making up altogether the just number of lights. Amongst them went four knights of the household, well renowned for bravery and noble bearing, with the Archbishop's spice-plate and cup.

When this array drew near to the King, he, standing up under his cloth of estate, which was rolled up high, with the young Prince Edward on one hand and the Archbishop on the other, the Chamberlain taking the covers from off the spice-plates, gave assaye unto the Earl of Gloucester. The King, before he took his spice, made a beck to the Archbishop, that he should take his first; and the knights having advanced, as they well knew would be seemly, the Archbishop forthwith obeyed.

But, when the Chamberlain uncovered the cup, all the minstrels in the chamber blew up louder than ever, and so held on till his Highness took the ypocras, so that every roof in the castle rung with joy.

The King and Archbishop being served, his Highness's cup and spice-plates were again covered, but not so the Archbishop's. Then were the spice and cup carried to Prince Edward and the Earl of Cornwall, by the knights; to the bishops by the esquires of the household, and to the other estates by the esquires also. Which being done, his Highness forthwith departed for "all night," the trumpets blowing before him. Then, were three healths drank, one to the King, one to the Queen, and one to the Prince Edward; after which it were not meet, that the assemblage should remain, and straight the great chamber was avoyded of all there present.

The Queen, that night, sat in her bower with all her ladies. There were mynstrelsy and dancing to the harp and viol. The Lady Barbara was the marveil of all, that beheld her moving to the sound of viols like unto some sprite, rather than to a poor mortal. Prince Edward danced with her a round, and the Queen often honoured her with her pleasing speech. Sir Gaston, though he beheld her, showed not his wonted joy. He stood apart looking on, and, when her Highness spoke to him, he seemed nigh to senseless of the honour.

The dancing being ended, Pierre, a Norman and the Queen's chief minstrel, apparelled in the guise of his country, sang some of his ballads on the harp, in his own tongue, which, albeit, they were not esteemed like unto Maister Henry's, yet did they not displease. The first tuning was in words which have been thus rendered into English by one, who had learned much of the new speech, not then familiar, except with some few.

THE BRIDAL.

Lightly, lightly, bounded the roe,
The hind o'er the forest was fleeing;
The small birds tuned on every bough,
In sun and shade their gleeing.

And purple cups, and silver bells
From the green leaves were peeping;
The wild-rose smiled in the mossy dells:
Nought but the thorn was weeping.

And so bright in the sun its tears did shine,
They showed like tears of pleasure;
And the airs of May, through the budding spray,
Breathed joyance, without measure.

For this was Isabel's bridal morn
Who loved each bud and flower,
The wild-wood shade, the mountain head,
The deep vale's mead and bower.

And now was her festival gaily kept
By hagled brook and fountain,
From the low green bank, where the violet slept,
To the blue hill-top and mountain.

And lightly, lightly, bounded the roe,
His footstep wing'd with pleasure,
And small birds sang from every bough,
Welcomes beyond all measure.

At the end of this ballad, the minstrel rang out his harp in full joyance; and then, falling note by note, he dropped into a faltering murmur, as of deep sorrow, and so continued for some space, till those who heard him, perceived the witch of melancholy stealing upon them.

The Queen, deeming such strain unsuitable to the time, commanded him to change the measure, and sound forth one more gay, a lay of Provence, her native land, whither she knew he had been for his learning; but he, enthralled by the magic of his own mood, loving not to be commanded, still hung his head over the harp, listening to that pleasure-full melancholy and heeding nothing but its sweet sound.

At last, being made to know fully her Highness's will, he sang the song of a Troubadour; for, though he loved best the ditties of Normandy, his own land, there was scarce one of Provence, which he had not gained; and the Queen did not let him forget them, so often did she command those, which she affected best. And now he sang forth to his harp a "roundel" in the Provençal tongue, made by a knight of the "Order of Fine Eyes." They, who then heard him, would have thought he loved any thing less than melancholy, so light and debonnaire was the music he rang out; and many could hardly keep their steps from dancing to that gallant measure. But it lasted not long; for, making a pause and looking wistfully at the Lady Barbara, he struck forth, on a sudden, some of his deepest tones, with a wild yet solemn grace, such as brought tears into the eyes of many a fair lady, and darted dread into the heart of one there present. It seemed as if the shadows of prophecy were moving over the strings, and calling from them some strange and fearful story yet to be. And then again did the harper's voice steal trembling forth, as do the moon's beams, when pale clouds pass over, saddening, but not fully obscuring their brightness: yet might every one hear plainly all his words. Here it is done into English by the same hand; but the verses be not all divided into equal numbers: —

I.

O'er the high western wolds afar,
Glimmer'd some lights of yesterday;
And there, one bright, but trembling star

Among the streaky shadows lay,
The traveller’s lonely warning.
But soon the winds, that sing day’s dirge,
Did o’er that star the shadows urge,
And hung the night with mourning!

II.

“What steps on the waste are beating?”
He listened not long on the ground,
‘Ere he fearfully heard a sound,
As of trampling hoofs retreating:
And a dismal cry and a foot draw nigh;
“Stand ho!” ‘twas an armed man passed by:
But he spoke no sound of greeting,
And seemed like a death-shade fleeting.

III.

O’er the lone mountains riding,
He gallop’d by gloomsome ways.
Where night-mists were abiding,
Round the witch of evil days:
Her name is written on the wind,
That speaks in cliffs and caves confin’d.
List there when the waning moon goes down,
And thou’lt hear the call her spirits own;
But as they pass, hold a chrystal glass,
Or thou’lt sorely rue the wild witch-tone.

IV.

O’er the lone mountains riding,
From a distant land he came,
No step his dark step guiding;
But he thought he saw a flame,
That bright, or dim, would sport awhile;
Then vanish, as in very guile;
He heard, as he passed, the witch-name sound;
And his startled steed, at a single bound,
Bore him away from that evil ground.

V.

But o’er the mountains pacing
As fast as he can flee,
Strange steps his steps are tracing,
And a shape he cannot see;
And, though he flee away, so prest,
Whether to north, or south or west,
Toward the past, or coming day,
(So dim the night he may not say)
Still oft by fits did ghastly gleam,
A corpse-light, all unknown to him.

VI.

He followed the light o’er deserts wide,
Down in deep glens, where wild becks wail;
He followed by darkened forest side;

He followed with dread, though link’d in mail;
Till it stayed before an iron gate,
Where battled turrets kept their state,
O’er towers so high and massy strong,
They seemed to giant-king belong.

VII.

Sir Adomar looked him all around:
Turret on turret hung on high,
Shaping black lines on the dim sky;
Sir Adomar looked him all around;
Nought, save this castle, could he spy,
Though, heavily clanged a death-bell’s sound;
And in each pause of the shuddering blast,
Moans were heard as of one from ‘neath the ground!

VIII.

He struck on the gate with his good sword:
“Ho! wardour, ho!” but never a word
Return’d the wardour from within.
“The storm is loud, the night is dark,
I hear from the woods the dog-wolf bark.
Up, wardour, up! it were a sin
To turn a traveller from your tower,
At such a lone and dreary hour;
A Saracen would let me in!”

IX.

The wardour was watching through the loop,
How many were of the stranger’s troop.
He had left his torch in the cullis’ bar,
And it let down a light on the lonely night,
That showed him harnessed, as for war.
His coat was mail, his helm was steel;
His visor did his look reveal;
Yet o’er his brow it cast a shade,
That made the wardour more afraid,
Than did the crimsoned plume above,
Or the mighty grasp of his iron glove.
He would not let the stranger in,
Till one, awakened by the din —
One whom the wardour need obey —
Seeing a lonely knight stand there,
Bade the wardour nought to fear:
He feared still, but he said not Nay:
Yet he would not ope the portal gate
To an unknown knight, without his state;
For neither squire, nor page, he saw:
He bade him then to the postern draw.

X.

The knight dismounted at the call;
The porter let him through the wall;
He turned the weary steed to stall,
And led the knight to the lordly hall.
I’ the lordly hall, so wide and dim,

One drowsy squire awaited him.
The ashy wood lay, white and cold,
On the raised hearth, where late was told,
With fiery eye and accent loud,
The deed of martial prowess proud;
Where late was told, in whispers low,
Some tale of terror and of woe,
The while each listener bent his head,
Nor lost a word the trouveur said:
Till fear crept o’er each nerve and vein,
That late had swell’d to martial strain;
And shadows crept along the wall,
Such as the sinful soul appal:
Till each, who heard, look’d round with dread,
And saw some phantom of the dead.

XI.

Now silent was the hearth and lone,
Save that a stag-hound slumber’d there.
The tables in disorder were,
With relics of the evening fare;
The household to their rest were gone,
And now no light was seen but one.
The light that led the stranger on;
That show’d above steel armour gleaming,
And many a dusky banner streaming,
From the black rafters of the roof,
In the night-wind, far aloof,
Like to some flitting phantom seeming;
And, stalking o’er the rushy floor,
It showed the knight where steps of gore
Had stain’d its green, with foot-prints red.
And the stag-hound, as the knight passed by,
Sent forth a mournful fearful cry.

XII.

The drowsy squire the stranger led;
(The wardour to his post was sped.)
They traversed the hall in silent march:
At the end was a door in a mitred arch.
The knight stood before that mitred door,
And gazed on a warrior shape above,
That seem’d to watch the passage o’er.
In his altered look strange passions strove!
The armoured shape leaned on its sword,
And downward bent its steely face,
As jealous who below might pace,
Or about to speak the challenge-word;
And it seemed the very form of one,
The knight perforce must look upon.

XIII.

Thus, while he stood in wonder-trance,
The squire upheld the torch on high,
Viewing the guest with watchful eye;
And marvelling what strange mischance
So check’d his step, and fix’d his glance: —
“Sir knight, why gaze you on that steel?

It is a baron's good and bold;
Had he been here, no welcome cold
Would he have shown a stranger-knight,
Who trusted to his towers at night."

XIV.

The spell of fant'sie loos'd awhile,
The knight return'd a grateful smile,
With thanks for this so courteous style;
And, then with thoughtful accent said,
While yet he stood, that shape before.
"The armour some resemblance had
To that of a dear friend no more!
A friend!" — he paus'd,— "a friend long dead!"
This, while he said, his colour fled.
The squire seem'd not to note his pain,
But, with fair speech, began again
Excuse to make for slender fare,
That it was night, and, not aware
Of honour'd guest approaching there,
The menials to their rest had gone;
A chamber should be fitted soon.
His squire and page should welcom'd be;
Right well he longed that squire to see.

XV.

The wearied knight a gesture made,
And looked his thanks, but nothing said;
Save that, for rest alone he prayed.
He sighed, as through that guarded arch,
And vaulted gloom, he held his march;
And there, before his doubting sight,
Glided again a pale sad light,
Full often he had seen with fear,
Yet more he felt to meet it here.
Then came they to an iron door,
And the knight beheld that flame no more.
It opened to a second hall,
Where warriors frowned upon the wall;
And ladies smiled in portraiture,
With downcast eye and look demure.
An umbered flash the red torch threw,
Athwart each warrior's steadfast brow;
And hardly might the gleam declare
A baron grim from lady fair.

XVI.

There is no need that I should tell,
What hasty fare the stranger took;
Nor how the squire, with silent look,
Watched, wondering, what had him befell;
So strangely gleamed his hollow eyes,
From forth the lifted beaver's shade
So wan his lips, like one that dies,
So few the words and thanks he paid!

XVII.

Though round the hall his looks would steal,
Not well did torch or lamp reveal
The portraiture of warriors grim,
Or noble dames hung there so dim;
Their frowns and smiles were lost to him,
But once, when that he turned his head
Where the fix'd torch a gleaming shed,
A sable form, ill seen at most,
Went gliding up a stair, on high,
Passed through an open gallery,
And through a doorway there was lost,
That seemed to lead to antient rooms,
Such as where silence dwells, and glooms.
The knight, he felt a sudden chill.
Though nought he said of what had sped;
But the spicy draught he deeply quaff'd,
Whenever the page his cup did fill.
And from his spirits chaced the ill.

XVIII.

The night-cheer o'er, the page led on
The stranger to his resting-place.
He led the way, that form had gone:
On the high stair he stood a space,
Waiting the knight's reluctant pace,
Then, with mute reverence, marshalled him
Through many a gallery, long and dim,
Where helmets watched, in order grim;
Through many a chamber, wide and lorn,
Where wint'ry damps had half withdrawn
The storied paintings on the wall.
Electra, o'er her brother's urn,
There bent the head, and seemed to mourn;
There, too, as meet in room and hall,
Troy's tale and Hector's piteous fall:
Here Priam's Court, in purple and pall,
Its golden splendour now had lost;
But Helen, on the rampart stood,
And pointed to the Grecian host,
Outstretching to the briny flood.
Here Hector's wife sat in her bower,
Waiting her lord's returning hour;
And 'broidering 'midst her maiden train,
While her infant played with silken skein.
There — but it boots not that I say,
What stories once, in long array,
Lived on those walls, now ghastly clay.

XIX.

The knight would oft, as he strode by,
Cast on their shade a searching eye;
And pause, as list'ning some drear sound,
That rose within the glimmering bound:
And start, as though some fearful sight
Passed along this gloom of night;
But, at a lesser winding stair,
(The long drawn chambers ended there,)
When to that narrow stair he drew,
He thought a robe of mourning hue

Went fleeting up that winding way;
No glimpse had he of shape or ray;
No foot he heard the stair ascend.
Yet still that seeming garment passed,
As though some fiend, with evil haste,
Did up that lonely tower wend.

XX.

The knight, he stood on the step below —
“Whither, my young page, dost thou go?
Who dwells within this lonely tower,
Passing with speed, in sable weed —
Passing with speed, at this dead hour?”
“Nobody, save the raven-crow,
Dwells within this lonely tower;
And here, Sir knight, is your resting-bower!”
“But in this tower I may not rest,
Till I know who that stair has pressed;
Did you not see that black weed wave?”
“Yes, knight, I saw the raven’s wing,
Glint up that wall with sudden spring:
And hark! you now may hear him crave!”

XXI.

“It is not courteous, that my bower
Should be within this ruin’d tower!”
“But see, knight, ‘tis not in decay;
The storm hath blown a bar away,
And the raven through the loop doth stray;
His nest is wet on the battlement grey:
Your chamber is a stately room,
Hung round with work of choicest loom;
And erst it was the resting-place
Of our dear Lady Baroness,
Before she went to stranger-land.
My lord yet strays on foreign strand.
The chamber has another stair,
Leading to many chambers fair;
But no step goes by night so far,
Since my lord baron went to war.”

XXII.

The page stept on with torch before,
Far as that stately chamber’s door.
“Page! lift that light — fain would I know,
Whither that second flight doth go?”
“It goes to a battlement up on high,
And to a turret perching by.”
“Doth none keep watch on that turret high?”
“None, but the raven with his cry!
Your rest, Sir knight, he will not break;
To traitors only doth he speak.
They say he scents the new spilt blood.”
Upon the stair the raven stood!
He turn’d his dark eye on the knight,
And, screaming, upward winged his flight.
The wondering page looked back with fright,
And met the stranger’s fiery glance;

Then, hardly daring to advance,
Lingered he at that chamber-door;
“On,” said the knight, “with torch before!”
Scarce was the page the threshold o’er,
When check he made, and pale he turn’d;
Dim and more dim the torch-flame burn’d.
The knight look’d on, but nothing saw,
That might explain this sudden awe.

XXIII.

A spacious chamber there was spread,
And, for his rest, a stately bed;
Fresh rushes on the floor were strewn;
Faint on the arras’d walls were shown
The heroes of some antient story,
Now faded, like their mortal glory.
Another form, as dark as doom,
Stood within that chamber’s gloom,
Unseen by those who entered there.
His cause of dread the page thus said:
“Methought I saw, within that chair,
The baron’s self, my very lord;
I saw it, on a true man’s word:
I saw my lord return’d from far,
Arrayed, as he went forth to war!
He fixed his very eyes on me,
But looked not, as he wont to look.
Yet now no living shape I see,
And know that here he could not be;
For, long since, he these walls forsook:
Yet is it strange such visions pale,
Should o’er my waking sight prevail.”

XXIV

“Whose are these antient walls, I pray?”
The sullen stranger ‘gan to say:
“Sir, know you not these towers and halls
Watch where the foaming Conway falls?
Who should these walls and towers own?
And the wide woods and forest round,
Even to Snowdon’s utmost bound,
Save the brave lord of Eglamore?”
The knight explained his ignorance,
He was a wanderer late from France.
The page surveyed him o’er again;
He thought the wily knight did feign:
A deadly hue was on his cheek;
His looks spoke more than words may speak.
Yet to the page, though much it told,
He read not all it might unfold.

XXV

The knight perceived his doubting thought,
And drew a badge forth from his breast;
Some noble Order's golden crest,
Upon a field of silver wrought.
"This badge," he said, "with blood was bought."
He turn'd with haughty frown away.
The page did not more doubt betray;
But service offered to undo
His casque and linked harness true;
But the stranger gravely said him Nay,
And refused that night to disarray.

XXVI.

Wondering, yet fearing to demand,
Why to these towers from distant land,
The knight had come, without his train,
Pondered the youth his doubts again;
Again, as though his thoughts he read,
The knight look'd sternly down and said,
"My squire and my foot-page I missed
At night-fall, when the woods betwixt.
But they perchance may shelter find,
From this bitter-blowing wind,
In the deep hollow of some hill,
Till the dawn break, and the storm be still."

XXVII.

"But the wolf bays in the blast afar;
Sir knight, how may they scape such war?
I hear him now — he nearer howls!
Mercy! mercy! save their souls!"
"Hark!" said the knight, and stood aghast;
It was no wolf-howl in the blast;
It was a blood-hound's dreadful bay,
The stranger heard, with such dismay —
The blood-hound at the tower below;
That over pathless hill and dale,
Had tracked a murderer in the gale,
And came to claim his master's foe.
While listening to the lengthen'd yell,
The stranger seemed to hear his knell.
"A blood-hound loose, and at this hour!
Your rest, sir knight, had ill been kept;
Nor one within these gates had slept,
Had I been in my distant tower."
The page he lighted a lamp on high;
The stranger stifled scarce a sigh,
That heavily for utterance pressed.
He heard the page's steps descend,
And go where the long chambers bend,
Down to the halls, and th' outer walls.
The page knew not the chance he ran;
He was marked with the blood of a murder'd man!

XXVIII.

The knight, he listened in silent dread,
Till now, the blood-hound’s voice was stilled;
But soon a low voice near him sped,
That every nerve with horror thrilled.
He looked the way that lone voice came,
And saw, by the lamp’s tall spiring flame,
A portraiture on the wall beneath,
Of noble dame, that seemed to breathe.
Robed in sable weeds was she:
The gleam fell on that lady’s brow;
There, written dimly, you might see,
The characters of hopeless woe.

XXIX.

Soon as that lady’s face he saw,
All other dread his heart forsook;
He gazed with fixt and frenzied awe,
And vainly tried away to look:
For to his fearful sight it seemed,
As though her eyes on his were bent;
And, where the pale flame wavering gleamed,
As if her varying cheek were blent
With lights and shades of death;
While round her lips a grim smile drew,
And the rose paled that on them blew;
And, with faint lingering breath,
“Prepare,” she said, “thy hour is nigh!
Unpitying, thou hast seen me die;
Unpitied be thy mortal sigh!”

XXX.

He heard the words — the words alone;
He heard not that deep solemn groan;
He heard not the clang of the ‘larum bell,
Nor from the gates that horn-blast swell;
Nor heard the many-trampling hoofs,
Nor voices calling in the gale,
And ringing round the castle roofs,
Till they made the ‘battled raven quail;
Nor heard the funeral shriek, that broke
Through every hall and lofty tower;
He heard alone the words she spoke.

XXXI.

Nor saw he in the court below,
By the torches’ umbered glow,
Borne upon his bleeding bier,
With wounds unclosed and open eyes,
A warrior stretched in death draw near;
Nor heard the loud and louder cries,
This piteous sight of horror drew
From every friend and vassal true.
But he knew that voice at his chamber-door.
And straight the witch-veil of glamour
Falls, and his wonder-trance is o’er.
He hears his summons in that sound;
It is the bark of the true blood-hound.

True to his murdered lord is he;
He has traced the steps he could not see —
Traced them o'er darkened miles and miles.,
O'er glen and mountain, wood and moor,
Through all their swift and winding wiles,
Till he stopped before his master's door,
And bayed the murderer in his bower.

XXXII.
The castle gates were strait unbarred,
And he sprang before his bleeding lord;
He passed the page unheeded by,
And tracked the stranger's steps on high;
Till at the door, that closed him in,
Loud and dread became his din.
The doors are burst, and the spectre-light
Betrayeth the form of the blood-tracked knight:
He was armed all over in coat of mail,
But nothing did steel that night avail;
He fell a torn corpse, beside that chair,
Whereunto the page did late appear,
By the dark glamour-art revealed,
His murdered lord with lance and shield.
The *murderer* fell, and his death-wound found
In the terrible fangs of the true blood-hound.

Here the voice of the minstrel ceased; and, after striking a few notes of his harp, full and deep, he rested with a look of sorrow. His eyes dwelt on the Lady Barbara — but she heeded him not; but sat with head inclined, as if still listening to his dismal tale. There followed a dread silence in the room, as of expectation of that which was to follow. Some there were, who said the ditty was already ended; yet they would fain have heard something of the pitiful history of that unhappy lady, whose portraiture was in the tower-chamber, and would have known what was the guilty motive of the knight against the Lord of Eglamore; and how it chanced he came so unwittingly to his castle. Others there were then present, who, having noticed the young Gaston de Blondeville to be ill at ease, the while the minstrel sung, and being, perchance, already moved by the merchant's strange accusation, scrupled not to think the story touched him nearly; and that Pierre rested, not because his ditty was at an end, or from weariness; but that he doubted whether it would be well to proceed to the second part.

However this may be, he needed not have stayed his strain, for Sir Gaston was no longer in the chamber. Whether Pierre knew this or not, he began once more to strike upon the harp; when, on a sudden, the King's trumpets were heard blowing up near the stair; and anon, his Highness entered the bower, it being almost time that he should go to his rest for "all-night."

There was no more harping; Pierre tuning not up his second fit; and belike, if his Highness had been there at first, he would have bidden him to shorten his ballad by one-half.

The King looked about for Sir Gaston; and, espying him not, asked wherefore he was not there; but, before any answer could be given, the knight had returned, and now approached his Highness. He was then commanded to dance a round with the Lady Barbara, and he obeyed; but many there noted the sadness on his brow, though his steps were light and gay.

A more pleasureful sight could not be than the Queen's bower, as it was at that time, where she sat in estate, under a cloth of gold, her ladies standing about her chair, and her maidens on either hand, below the steps of her throne; and two young damsels of surpassing beauty and richly bedight, sitting on the first step, at her feet; the same, that were used so to sit, when her Highness kept state in the great hall at festivals.

Behind them, half encircling the throne, stood twenty household esquires, holding great wax torches, right richly beseen in the King's livery, and proud to wear it, gentils as they were, as I said before, and of ancient families in the countries from whence they came.

The arched roof was curiously wrought in that fashion, which King Henry had newly brought into favour; and, besides these lights, a great crystal lamp, that hung from the roof, shone over the chamber and upon the goodly assemblage, as they looked upon the Lady Barbara, passing so winningly in the dance. That night, the Earl of Richmond bore the Queen's spice-plate, and Sir Philip de Kinton her cup.

When the Lady Barbara had ended her dance, the Queen called her to her chair; and, making her take of the sweetmeats from her own plate, spoke commendable words to her, as did his Highness King Henry. Then the Queen, turning to the Lady Gloucester, took from her hands a girdle, richly beset with jewels, and, clasping it on the Lady Barbara, kissed her, and bade her wear it ever, for her sake and for her honour. Her Highness then stretched out her hand to Sir Gaston, who, kneeling, put it to his lips. "May you, Sir knight," said her Highness, "as well deserve this lady, as she deserves this token of my regard!"

Then, the King said many gracious things, and seemed so merry of heart, that he made all around him gladsome; till, the Voide being ended, he went forth with the Queen, the trumpets blowing before them; and the chamber was then speedily avoided for all night.

While these things were passing in the chambers of estate, there were divers wassailings and merriments making in other places of the castle. In the great hall were feasting and revelling, but not of estate. There were tumblers and jugglers and morrice-dancers and mimicks and mummers, with pipings and blowings, that made the roofs ring.

The monks at the priory heard them afar, while at the last even-song, and long after; and well I wote, that had it not been the King's castle, there had been some rebuke, as indeed due, for such noise made. The Prior in his chamber sat alone; listening, I guess, in gloomy mood to the revelry; and, all that night, only Edmund the monk and mass Peter with him: he came not forth to midnight-song.

But now I must return, and so must ye that hear, or read, to the castle. In the hall there was a dancer on stilts, playing the while on a recorder; there were dancers on one leg, and dancers upon the head; but that which most rejoiced many of the beholders, were the disguisings and the quaint antics of the mummers. There came a whole troop, some wearing the heads of asses, some of bulls, some of calves, some of cats, who brayed and kicked, bellowed and tossed, scratched and mewed, to the very life. Others, like stags and hares, hounds and apes, kept not so pertinently to their pretended natures, but marched on with solemn state, as much as might be, hand in hand, as if they had been loving friends and neighbours; yet each with a dagger stuck in his girdle. And others again, with fools' girdles and bells hanging to them; tossing their heads, and cutting such strange capers, to the noise of pipes and drums, as made the sides of many to shake with laughter, and roused up every hawk on perch there to shake his bells in concert.

But all this was child's play, though it was often done before the worshipfullest estates, in comparison of the sayer's art; which, when he could be heard between whiles, when the loud revelry paused and held breath, was marvellous to hear: and, as soon as those mad-heads caught the words of that tale-teller, sooth to say, they soon were still and hushed, as though no living soul but he breathed there; listening to his dismal tradey, with tears in their eyes, or quaking for fear of the strange things he told them. He, the while, with solemn visage, showing as though he himself believed all the marvels he related, and not showing roguish smiles, as some do, kept on always to the far end of his long tale: though some learned clerks would oft-times comment to their neighbours upon his marvels, as if he had purported lofty matter worth their notice, and did not merely strive to while an idle tide away.

In other parts of the castle were those gentils and honest gentlewomen, that, misliking the loud revelry of the hall, drew together in chambers apart; and delighted themselves with histories of times past, the sad hopes of lovers, or the deeds of brave knights, or otherwise in singing and harping, after their own manner.

In the lower hall too was feasting, and the mirth did not stop short of the "Kuchane," so that every man to the lowest degree was joyous; and each chamber and tower rung with song, or laughter, save the prison tower of the poor merchant. He, as he lay on his pallet-bed, heard those sounds of music and jollity, in confused uproar rising through the courts, while his heart was stricken with fear and sadness; for, whether he were right or not in believing Sir Gaston to be the murderer of his friend, it is certain, that he had seen his friend murdered, and that too, as he had said, in the woods of Ardenn.

He was, at this time, far from his home and friends, and had been travelling, over these parts a lonesome stranger, along the foss-way from Lincoln, southward; having been on his merchandize into the north seas, and having landed on the eastern coast. Coming again to that place, where, a few years back, he had buried his friend, the remembrance of him broke out in fresh grief; and, hearing that the King was coming to keep festival in Kenilworth, he resolved to break the matter to him; as well as to adventure to tell him, the times were such it was no longer safe to journey in any part of his kingdom.

The most audacious robberies, certes, were then committed at noonday with impunity; nay, the very thieves themselves feared not to be seen walking about, little attempt being made to seize them, or, in any wise, to suppress these scandalous outrages. Not only then did the sad fall of his friend, but also the fearful condition of the living, urge the merchant to make the truth known to the king.

With this design he had rested at Kenilworth, but not at the house where he had formerly suffered such affliction; and, on the King's arrival, had gone forth in the crowd to behold him, though he had not intended to present his petition in that time of turmoil. But, when he saw near his Highness, riding as it were in the top of favour, the very man, whom he thought to be the slayer of his kinsman; when he beheld that look, which he felt to dart into his heart, and to revive there all the horror he had felt at the aspect of the murderer, at the moment when his friend had been stricken down — then it was, that, overcome by the strength of his feelings, he dropped down senseless in the castle court, as hath been related.

And now, what had he gained by his courageous demand of justice? Suspicion, contempt, fear, grief, a prison, and, perhaps, death. Yet did he not repent the effort he had made, so honest was his grief for the fate of his kinsman; so much was his mind possessed with the notion, that he had accused his very murderer; so confident was he that he was performing a duty; and, what is more, so sure was he, that to perform his duty in this world is the wisest, the most truly cunning thing a man can contrive to do. Whether his suspicions concerning the knight were just or not; these, his conclusions touching his own conduct, none but fools, or villains, — that is, none but fools — will deny.

Thus he lay on his pallet, alike deprived of sleep by the jollity of others and by his own grievous reflections. A lamp burned beside him, but it served only to show the forlornness of his condition, in this high and distant tower. Sometimes, he would rise and look through his grated window upon the inner court of the castle, listening there awhile to the distant minstrelsy and to the confusion of numberless voices, footsteps and closing doors, that rose from many a chamber below. Anon, a torch-bearer would pass the court, a page, perhaps, or a yeoman; and would show the gloomy towers above and the steps of the guest he led at their feet. But, this passed, nothing could the prisoner see, save here and there, a lamp burning through a casement of glass (and a goodly show there was of such windows now in this castle) like stars through a clouded sky; but mostly the glorious beams of the great hall, that struck through the windows and lighted the air above. Once he heard the trumpets blow, and thought the King was coming forth, and once he fancied he saw, in the person of one who followed a torch-bearer, Sir Gaston himself. Then turned he from the casement, looked no more, and fell upon his pallet.

At last, every distant sound grew fainter; the noise of the dancers ceased; then the minstrelsy sunk low; the voices of the hall revellers became few; he heard less frequently the doors opened and shut; and then he heard the fastening of bolts and bars: and, afar off, the castle gates closed for the night; and soon all grew still, as though no living creature inhabited there.

And thus it kept, until the wayte piped his second watch in all the courts. Then the stranger arose, and, looking again through his grate, saw him well, by the light his groom carried, piping the hour. And, when the man had finished his saye, he went round the court, his boy-groom holding up the torch, while he tried every door, and found that all was safe. By this light too, he perceived the wardour's men on guard; but no living being else was seen. The windows of the great hall were dark; and, the torch being gone, nothing glimmered through the night, save one great star, which wizards say is evil. It stayed, at this hour, right over King Henry's lodgings; but for whom it watched, who was there that might tell? The prisoner knew the star, and all that was thought of it, and he betook him to his pallet groaning heavily.

He had not long been there, when, as he thought, a voice near him spoke his name. Now, there was a small grate looked out from his chamber upon the stair; and thence the voice seemed to come. The prisoner, raising himself from his pallet, turned, and saw there the figure of a man passing away. He kept his eyes fixed, for some space, upon the grate, but the figure appeared no more, and he sunk again on his pallet.

The voice, faint and passing as it was, had thrilled him with dread. Whose it was, wherefore it had called him by a name known but to few, and had then passed away, without communing with him, he tried in vain to understand; yet seemed it not wholly new to him.

THE THIRD DAY. I.

Here was a drawing of the inside of the great hall, with the King and Queen holding festival. In the background was a sketch, of what seemed to be a pageant acted there; and yet the spectators appeared to be looking on, with an interest too serious for so trifling a performance. In the margin, also, was drawn, the chapel before mentioned, with a marriage ceremony at the porch.

On the morrow, the Prior of Saint Mary's was with the King, before the esquire-barber had clipped his dread Highness's beard, or the rushes had been strewed on the chapel-floor for the bridal company, or even the ox-chine, the manchets and the pitchers of wine had been delivered out from the kuchane and the buttery-hatch, for the breakfasts of the King and Queen and their lords and ladies. He told his Highness, that no person of the name of Reginald de Folville was on the burial lists of the Priory; nor was there any inhabitant of that house, or of Kenilworth, yet discovered, who remembered that name, connected with the extraordinary circumstances that had been related. It was, however, notorious, that robberies had frequently been committed in the woods and chases of Kenilworth, where many close and dark thickets were the home of outlaws; and that no single person, and few small companies, could travel in safety through any part of the forest of Ardenn. He remarked, that, if the merchant had suffered there the outrage he had alleged, it was extraordinary he should now venture to travel over the same ground without guide, or companion, to lessen his danger; for, it had appeared from himself, that he was travelling without either.

It was no less extraordinary, that, if the calamitous adventure, related by the merchant, had occurred so near to Kenilworth, and so few years back, it should not be generally known and still remembered there. From all these circumstances, and particularly from that of the name of Reginald de Folville not being found in the cemetery-book of the Priory, and from the absence of every other memorial of such a person, save in the charge itself, the Prior scrupled not to insist, that the stranger, now in confinement, was an impostor, falsely calling himself a merchant; who, for his own private ends, sought the ruin and the life of Sir Gaston de Blondeville.

His Highness seemed well satisfied that it should be so; and, in his indignation against the accuser, declared, that his life should be forfeited, for the crime of having sought another's. He called for Sir Gaston; and, having acquainted him with the result of the Prior's inquiries, assured him, that his honour should be cleared from suspicion, and his accuser openly condemned: and his Highness told him, that, since he would soon be unable to serve him as a knight of his household, such being batchelors only, as well as that all the world might have proof of his spotless honour, he would place him amongst the nobles of his land.

So saying, his Highness bade him to his intended bride, and to hail her Baroness of Blondeville; also to warn her to be ready for the appointed ceremony of her marriage, by then two hours were past: and forthwith his Highness departed the chamber.

The Earl, her father, when he heard of what had passed, in the presence of the King, and of the new dignity conferred on Sir Gaston, was well contented to receive the young Baron for his son; but the lady, her mother, whose tenderness, being more than her ambition, made her fearful of contrary tidings, was not yet completely assured, that this would be a happy union for her child. The Lady Barbara herself, however, nothing doubting the worth of her suitor, loved him not the less for having been accused, nor the better for having been raised to new dignity; nevertheless, she took the distinction in good part, rejoicing, that it should thus appear he had not fallen in the esteem of his Highness, the King.

She was now in her bower, already attired for the bridal, attended by her six maidens, the daughters of some of the first nobles of the realm. And, although this be not a gay history, chronicling the vanities of women, yet will we here report all that we heard of this lady, in so far as her appearance may tell what might be seen in the King's court, at this time. She wore on her hair a string of pearls of great value and a necklace of the same, given her by the young Baron. Her robe, white as the lawn of the Archbishop, was confined by the precious girdle, given to her by the Queen; and over all she wore the veil of a sister, and pity it was, that so fair a vestal should be relinquished to this world, instead of being retained in the community, which had once looked to have her their own. But I say not now more of her appearance, at this time.

King Henry, during his visits to Kenilworth, had newly repaired and adorned the chapel of the castle, and there the marriage was to be solemnized. By his command, the walls had been painted with the story of King Edward, the Confessor, giving the ring off his finger to a poor stranger. The floor was strewed with rushes and oak leaves, and with such sweet flowers as the season afforded, from the woods and the gardens. The lights were all a-blaze, so that they overcame the perpetual tomb lights of Geoffrey de Clinton, the founder of the castle, interred in the chapel here.

When the trumpets had sounded, there went forth in procession, first, the Queen and her court, her ladies pacing before her, two and two, according to their rank, preceded by her minstrels and the officers of her household. Next before her Highness went the bride, her six maidens strewing flowers before her, and Maria, the famous French poetess, who was then at the Queen's court, playing on her harp. Amongst the ladies encompassing her Highness, were the Countesses of Cornwall and Pembroke, (the latter then become Countess of Montfort) and the lady mother of the bride.

When these nobles and gentils had been let at the gates of the precinct of the priory, by a part of the choir, and by two of the secular clergy, and had been led to the porch of the chapel, they were more fully received beneath it by others of the clergy, repeating what is appointed to be there said; and were led into the chapel by those, who had received them, and so were they placed, every one according to their rank, unless when the Queen made any especial choice. Then, the King's trumpets blew up, and his Highness approached, accompanied of Prince Edward and the Earl of Cornwall, and attended by the knights of his Highness's body, the knights of his household, and a countless train of nobles — the young Baron conspicuous among them all, for that graceful and gallant air, for which those of his nation were renowned. The cloud, that was over him yesterday, had passed, and his countenance was joyous as the day.

And next to this young lord in grace, and high above in dignity, was the Archbishop himself: of lofty stature and of venerable and commanding aspect, he passed with slow and stately steps, preceded by bishops and others of the church, his purple train borne up by two pages, and his own virger making due place for him and his part of the procession. Meanwhile, those of the clergy and of the choir, who had received the Queen, had returned to the precinct-gate, whence, with due sentences, uttered before the whole company, but ‘specially before the bridegroom, they led him to the porch, where the banns were fully proclaimed.

I hold it not meet to speak here, with greater pourtrayment, of the more solemn ceremonies in the chapel itself, only that, when the Archbishop came to the lowest step, he stayed there some time, with landed head in silence, the bishops having passed to their places; and then the minstrels and the children of the chapel began an anthem, which ended not till the Archbishop, the King, the bride and bridegroom, had advanced to their proper places, and, the bride’s veil having been thrown back, the Archbishop, on the special command of the King, began to read what is appointed.

There was that day in the chapel, among the crowd, by some unknown hap, a stranger, who seemed to observe, with more attention than the greater part, all that passed, yet did he never ask a question, nor speak to any one there. He was seen in different parts, although the press of people was so great, it was difficult for any one to change his station. At last, having reached the sepulchre of Geoffrey de Clinton, he leaned among the tomb-lights there, and moved no more. There was in his countenance a touching solemnity, while he watched the progress of the ceremony, which was noticed by many present; for, in his whole demeanour there was something, though it was difficult to explain what, that drew away the attention of many from the sight they came to witness, and that was pity, for it was such a sight as is seldom seen.

King Henry, of goodly stature and of comely countenance, was in a robe of dark blue velvet; and with the dignity of his carriage there was mixed an air of good humour, that made all men feel at ease in his presence. His son, Prince Edward, it was remarked, had a sterner look than had his father. Many, who knew, that the King’s heart was good, in many respects, lamented his weaknesses, and that his passions too often carried him away. He now appeared in his state and well able to enjoy it; but the Archbishop, with his firm, composed, and solemn countenance and lofty figure, made all other dignity appear as nothing. He was like some oak of our forest, whose grey top has braved the storms of centuries, and whose mighty branches still afford shelter to the storm-beset traveller, and to the plants and flowers at his feet. The Lady Barbara was the lily there; the Baron de Blondeville, a young beech, growing at hand, with all its glossy branches and light foliage, spreading forth in graceful beauty. What pity, if the lightning should sere those green leaves, and destroy its promise!

When the Archbishop asked, who gave away the maiden, his Highness advancing, graciously delivered her to the Baron, who bending one knee, received her of the King; but, as he rose up, his countenance showed not joy, or love — it showed consternation. His eyes had glanced on the tomb of Geoffrey de Clinton, and were now rivetted, where the stranger stood. The stranger, as he still leaned amidst the torches there, seemed, however, unmoved by the dismayed looks of the bridegroom; his gloomy sternness was unshaken. But the emotion of the Baron increased: his looks became deadly pale, and he could no longer repeat the words, that were necessary in the ceremony. All eyes were soon directed upon him, and then upon the Lady Barbara, who fell into a swoon, and would have sunk on the ground, had not the King’s arm sustained her. Her maidens, and some of the Queen’s ladies hastened to her assistance; but, though almost every one in the chapel looked upon her with pity and care, the Baron regarded her not, nor seemed to know what had happened to her. His attention was still fixed upon the tomb, whither, too, directed by his looks, all other eyes now turned; but they perceived only the extended marble image of the dead one within, and the torches burning round it. The stranger was no longer there. The hasty surprise of the King, the calm displeasure of the archbishop, the severe curiosity of the young Prince Edward, the distress of the lady mother, and the wonder of all, where this might end, may not be told.

His Highness, inquiring of those about him whence this confusion had arisen, was answered, there was a stranger in the chapel, who seemed to be known only to the Baron, and it was surely the sight of him, which had occasioned this disorder. Then, the King commanded, that the doors should be shut, and search made for this unknown person, whom he suspected to be some secret colleague of the young Baron’s accuser, come hither purposely to interrupt the ceremony; and he commanded also, that the service should proceed, as soon as the parties affected should recover their presence of mind. Many there thought the King too hasty in this, and the Archbishop himself testified no willingness to proceed.

The Baron did not long remain in his apparent torpor, but, on his recovery, he seemed like one awakened from a dream: he looked round with fear and surprise; and, fixing his eyes again on the tomb, he was well nigh relapsing, though nothing there was seen, save the marble image and the torchlights around it. The King spoke graciously to him, and, when the baron heard his voice, he made most humble gesture before his Highness, and craved his pardon for the disturbance he had created.

“You must ask pardon of this lady,” said the King, showing to him the bride, who was now nearly reviving; “for it is she only who has suffered.”

Then, the young Baron seemed, for the first time, to know fully what had happened, and he hung over her with sadness and anxiety; yet divers of the courtiers thought he felt more for himself than for her, and of this number were those, who envied him the new honour he had attained.

When the bride had recovered, her lady-mother would have withdrawn her from the chapel, and she herself wished to go away from the great observance that had been drawn towards her; but the Baron, addressing himself to the King, besought his Highness to interfere on his behalf, and not to suffer, that the vain impulse of a momentary and wandering feeling, which had, at times, come over him even from his childhood, should be taken in so serious a part. The Baron having knelt to the King, as he said this (and once before he did the same, but I did not note it on these leaves) the Archbishop could ill conceal his just displeasure, that the Baron should do reverence in that place to any human being; and the King said the Archbishop was right; and, making the Baron instantly rise, asked what had caused his dismay, and whom he had seen, that should have caused it.

Then the Baron answered, that he had seen one like unto his dead father; but he now knew it to have been only an apparition, suggested in his own mind; and he repeated, that to such like delusions he had been subject from his young-hood.

This was not said so lowly, as that the lady Huntingdon heard it not; and she thought, that such a state of mind was a sufficient reason for withholding her daughter from the marriage: and the Earl, her father, taking up the objection, had begun to repeat it, — but he was soon silenced; for his Highness said, peremptorily, that, because of consent duly given, he had resolved to be present at the marriage, with his court; and it were not to be allowed, that a momentary infirmity of one of the parties, who instantly afterwards desired to have the ceremony renewed, should be sufficient for rendering all the preparations, which had been so great and so public, bootless. And his Highness commanded progress forthwith.

Yet the Archbishop had some private discourse with the King; and it seemed as though he were recommending delay, at least till that stranger had been questioned, whose appearance, he privately believed, had thus disturbed the Baron de Blondeville, notwithstanding the tale he had told. The lady Barbara herself was questioned, as to the cause of the distress she had betrayed; but she answered only, that it was the sudden alteration in the Baron, that caused her spirits to fail.

When those, who had been ordered to search the chapel, were called upon, they declared, that no where could they find the stranger who had been seen, neither within the doors, nor in court, nor in chamber. Then, the King, without further delay, commanded, that the service should proceed; and it did proceed accordingly, and was concluded, without farther let, or hinderance.

So the King and Queen returned from the chapel to the great chamber, in due state and order, and the court dispersed for that day, until the evening, when there was to be a grand banquet, to honour these nuptials.

All that day, the young Baroness seemed grave and thoughtful; the lady, her mother, was not a whit more joyed; although the Earl, recollecting the honour the King had newly conferred on the bridegroom, and beholding, in his mind, other benefits likely to follow, seemed now again to be well contented with this marriage. But the Baron carried himself thoughtfully, for one in his circumstances; and some, who observed him closely, thought there was still a tale to be told, which he liked not to have known; and others, who envied him less his new title, held that this humour was but the remains of that, which had seized upon him in the chapel, and that it was the recollection of this and of the confusion he had there occasioned, which preyed upon his spirits. However this might be, he seemed desirous of shaking off that mood, and to appear at the banquet with the gaiety, which the time invited.

Surely the preparations for this feast were magnificent, though they came not nigh what had been made on some former marriages, such as that given at Westminster, when Richard, the King’s brother, wedded Cincia, daughter of the Count de Provence, and sister to the Queen, when three thousand dishes were served up at the wedding dinner; nor is it to be thought this was like unto that one afterwards at York, when King Henry gave his daughter Margaret in marriage to Alexander, the young King of Scotland; and my Lord Archbishop gave, for his share of the feast, sixty pasture oxen, which were clean consumed at that entertainment; but, nevertheless, this at Kenilworth was a right noble and princely banquet; and thus it was.

The King, that night, with the Queen, kept state in the great hall, which was thereunto, by command of his Highness, hanged about with that suit of tapestry, which setteth forth the story of our famous King Richard, Cœur de Lion, his deeds in Palestine; and be it remembered, that King Henry loved nothing better than to see on his walls the noble achievements of his ancestors and others, as the Queen’s chamber here at Kenilworth showeth, where he had caused to be pictured forth, Merlin, King of Britain, and his three sons; the sailing of William from Normandy; the submission of Griffin ap Conan to Henry the First, and several other things.

This tapestry in the great hall was placed on all sides under the windows, down to the floor, except at the bottom of the hall, where the great gallery ran; and there the carved screens beneath were sufficient to hide the buttery-hatch, on the other side of the passage, and the doors leading down to the kuchanes. It hung on all sides, save here, and where the great chimney stood, which was guarded by a projecting stone-work, of curious carving, and like unto a canopy, or open porch. The wood, that was consumed within, was laid this night on andirons of solid silver, bossed.

On the top of this seeming porch, stood figures of armed knights, as large as life, such as were in the gallery before-mentioned. That gallery was covered with weapons and with complete suits of armour; some, with helmet and feet fastened against the wall, and others standing upright, like to living warriors, armed at all points; but doubtless, these last were well held up by some artful contrivance. Five figures, thus appointed, stood in the front of the gallery, as if watching who should enter from the screens beneath. Amongst these was one shape of black steel, larger than the rest and higher by the head; said to have been the very harness worn by the King’s great uncle, Richard the Lion, in some battle in Palestine: and the very sight of it was enough to daunt with fear those unused to a field of war.

Certes, it was like to that worn by this king in the very tapestry, wherewith the hall was this night, in good part, adorned; and where he was shown fighting in all his glory. It has been said, the young prince was much moved at the sight of the daring deeds there pictured forth, and of that armour — but not with terror, rather with noble pride, to emulate such greatness; and that he was by this and such like things, often before his eyes, prompted to what he afterwards achieved; but of this I cannot say. The keys of this gallery of arms were kept in the care of the lord constable of the castle, so that no person might enter it, without his special leave.

In the back wall was a window, opening from the King’s chamber, that looked over the gallery into the hall below; and where his Highness used sometimes to divert himself, with observing what was passing at the different tables there and with the games and sports, passing amongst his household and followers. He needed only to draw aside a curtain in that chamber, to see all that was doing in the hall below; and there, at eventide, he might remain unseen, if it so pleased him; for the gallery received light only from the lamps in the arches high above.

The minstrel’s gallery was this; never was it so at Kenilworth; nor in any great hall of prince or peer where state was duly kept. Their gallery was on the opposite to the great chimney, and nearer to the dais, where they sat all joyfully clothed in the King’s livery.

At the upper end of the hall, raised by several steps above the rest of the flooring was that dais, where stood the high tables. The King was under a canopy of crimson velvet, fringed about with gold; the Queen’s was on the same platform, with a canopy of the like form and stuff; but the canopy was lower by the valance.

A carpet of crimson silk was spread under the tables, and down the steps of the dais; below this, the floor of the hall was strewed with fresh rushes, on which were laid wood-flowers in plenty. In the bay-windows, at the end of the platform, or dais, a princely cupboard was set forth, stage above stage, of nine or ten heights, till they reached the bottom of the glass casements there; piled up with gold and silver cups and dishes and with basins of solid-gold, some set with precious stones, and others highly wrought.

From the arched roof of these two bays hung lamps, that showed all their brightness, and illuminated the roial window above, and also the slender columns, that reached to the roof; and the curious fretwork of leaves and flowers spreading there; which had been newly done by command of King Henry, who loved such vanities, and had brought this new fashion out of Normandy. He had put such roial windows, perchance better painted, in his new church at Salisbury.

Those, who now beheld the pomp he displayed and his vast retinue, wherever he kept his court, might say, with the venerable monk of St. Albans, on occasion of the marriage of the Scottish King Alexander with this King Henry’s daughter; “If I were to describe the grandeur of this festival, the number of the noble guests, the splendor and various changes of their dresses, the abundance of the tables and variety of the sports provided; those, who were absent, would think I was inventing.” There, Matthew, the good monk, tells us yet more of the Archbishop of York on that occasion, who expended four thousand marks in entertaining the courts of both kings and in every kind of munificence to the poor and sick. The kings, Matthew further tells us, entertained by turns their whole courts, “so that,” as he adds, “the theatrical vanity of this world might show to all, as much as it could of its short and transitory gladness.” And vanity it was, as those of Saint Albans knew to their cost and sorely complained of, when the King went so often to the Abbey there.

But what would such have said, had they lived now, in our King Richard’s days; who, the second of his name, is first in every kind of new extravagance, the like of which was never seen afore, and what it may end in, there is no one that dare yet say.

But now, to go back to the past King Henry; he proved himself, according to the account in the Norman tongue, which I have seen, not only an excellent “meat-giver” here at Kenilworth, but a sumptuous bestower of many pleasures and a patron of every kind of mimickry, such as painting, carving, music and versifying, as this hall at Kenilworth fully displayed, on this very night. Before the feast began, it was a goodly sight to behold the serjeants at arms and the ushers, bearing the piles of gold and silver cups and the spice-plates to the boards; and the ceremony of laying forth the sur-nap on the King’s table, in readiness for him to wash, which was thus: —

The King’s sewer having laid the end of the sur-nap and a towel on the board, and the usher having fastened his wand to them, drew them to the other end of the table; and then kneeling down, the sewer at the other end kneeling likewise, they stretched the sur-nap smooth. Then the usher, laying up the end of the towel on the board, rose and did reverence before the King’s chair, with his wand, as though his Highness had already been there. And, when he had kneeled down and amended the towel, he did reverence again in like manner.

On either side of the hall reaching from the steps of the dais (for in this hall was only one dais) to the screens at the end, were ranges of tables, appointed for different ranks and degrees of the Court: and it were goodly to see these nobles and gentils ranged in their places by the marshal of the hall. At one table, on the right, next below the dais, were those of the King’s blood, who sat not at his board. Opposite, on the other line, sat the noble dames, all together.

Next below the King’s board, sat the bishops and the abbots, each at their own table; then, the King’s high officers of estate, such as attended not on his person; there were, besides, the four Barons of the Exchequer, assessors, and several other great servants of his courts of justice, which always followed him, wherever he might choose to keep the high festivals of the year, and to administer the laws of the realm.

Other tables were set apart for other ranks of nobles, not of blood; their wives and daughters sitting apart from them. Thus every table was filled, each with its respective rank, magnificently attired; the nobles in velvet and cloth of gold, the dames sparkling with jewels and bearing plumes on their hair; the bishops in their ‘broidered copes and golden mitres, and the great officers of state in their own peculiar habits, with their golden chains.

But the table of the knights-banneret was that which made all, save the ladies’ boards, look pale and dull. They wore their ‘broidered mantles over a kind of cuirass, each with a sash of crimson beneath, thrown over the shoulder and falling down to the sword. On their heads they had each a small cap of velvet, with a gallant plume of feathers depending on each side, which it was the King’s pleasure they should wear, even in his presence. On the wall above, were the shield and of each knight, their banners waving over them. At the bottom of the hall was the esquires’ table, were sat nineteen of them, arrayed in the King’s livery. Every table had its own officers of service, as marshal-sewer, conveyers, almoner and butler, appointed according to the rank of the guests.

Now, the trumpets without having given warning, the King and Queen entered by a door leading from the state-chambers; attended by the young Prince Edward, the Archbishop, the Earl and Countess of Cornwall, the Lady Pembroke and Montfort, the Earl and Countess of Huntingdon, the bride and bridegroom, all the knights of the household then at the court, arrayed in their velvet gowns, the esquires of the body; the kings at arms, heralds and pursuivants, going before in their coats, — two sergeants at arms appearing to make way. Next before the King, went the lord mareschal of the hall and his eight knights.

Thus, their Highnesses came in, with a brave noise of trumpets, and took their seats at the high tables. And immediately entered from the door, forty yeomen, each bearing a torch, who took their stations down the middle of the hall, between the tables, in two lines. Ten esquires of the household, most richly bedight in the King’s livery, who had marched before his Highness, with the four esquires of the body, stood in a half-circle; each bearing a large wax-light, at the back of the dais, near the high tables: — while other ten, with lights, took their stations, in two divisions, at the foot of the steps of the dais; but leaving an open space, that all guests might have sight of the princely board.

There, clusters of lights in golden candlesticks, showed the massive plate and the marvellous devices of the banquet, with the magnificent attire of those who graced it; and these lights, together with the numerous torches below, and the lamps depending from the points of every inverted pinnacle of the roof on high, cast such a blaze of splendour, not only on the banquet beneath, but on every painted window above, as made the hall as grand a spectacle, well nigh, for those without, as for those within; only that the guests could not be seen, by reason that the windows were so high above them.

Some travellers that night, coming from afar, through the woods, espying the blaze, wondered what it might mean. And some poor pilgrims, travelling from the shrine of Saint Hugh, at Lincoln, seeing through the darkness such painted light afar off in the valley, took it for some delusion, raised by evil wizards for their destruction; and they ventured not forward, till they had, after due observation, some assurance of the mortal reality. Presently, as they advanced, they distinguished better the gorgeous colouring of the windows, which they knew to be of the new manner, called roial, and then the towers above, though these were pale in the moonlight, and then they heard the sound of minstrelsy within; and so, coming to the priory-gate, they asked shelter and had it: for, though they were told, that the King kept his court, and, at that time, banqueted in the castle, they chose to take refuge in the quiet of our cloister, rather than to ask for any part, or sight, of such doings. But, to come back to the King’s feast, of which much and marvellous is yet to be told.

At the King’s table sat, on his right hand, the Archbishop of York; beyond him sat the young Prince Edward; and, on the left, the Earl of Cornwall. But, just before his Highness came to his place and sat, the Archbishop, as highest of estate, delivered unto him the napkin; and the young Baron, for his honour, was allowed, on that night, to bear the golden basin and ewer for the King to wash;

although there were so many of higher estate in the hall. At the same time, was brought another golden basin to the Archbishop, who seemed to wait till the King should have washed: but his Highness made a beck, that he should wash; and he did so. When the King washed, straight five esquires gathered round him, and stood with their lights, till he had made an end.

This ceremony done, they withdrew to their places, and the Baron took his behind the King's chair, who spoke merrily to him, while he served; and the Baron had recovered his good looks, and wore his gown of azure, broidered with silver, with as good a grace as any one in court. He was, most certain, of a brave figure, and of countenance, that, for high spirit, seemed to challenge comparison with every man he looked upon, which made him many secret enemies.

At the Queen's board, sat the Countesses of Cornwall and Montfort, and the young Baroness de Blondeville, and none other. A golden ewer, set thick with rubies, stood beside her Highness; and a basin of the same, with damask-water, strewed with fresh pulled lavender, was held to her to wash by one of her maidens, who duly sat at her feet under the board, the young Baroness bearing the napkin. Which done, two of her Highness's maidens, who waited behind her chair, delivered them to the Queen's pages.

And now entered the hall, Norroy, King of Arms, heralds and poursuivants attending, all in their coats; the Lord Mareschal with his eight knights, and the steward, treasurer, and comptroller, walking before the first dish for the King's board; which was carried by the King's chief sewer, wearing his neck towel; his carver, Harpingham, wearing the same, surrounded by esquires, of the household bearing wax-lights, and followed by serjeants at arms and esquires and pages. But, when these had reached the middle of the hall, they all stood still, and made reverence to the King; the lord steward, with his wand; the carver with his great knife, and the sewer with his dish in his hand: and again, at the foot of the dais, they all stopped short, and bowed before him, the trumpets sounding the while.

Would you know what this first dish was? It was a warner of shields of boar, in armour, with mustard, served with malmsey. When the warner was ended, the first course, and so was every other, was brought up by seven sewers, with like state and with due taking of assaye of the King's meat, and with divers other ceremonies too tedious to relate.

Only amongst the dishes were frumentie, with venison; frumentie roial, with a dragon for a suttletie; browst of Almayne, potage of gourdis, and felettes in galentine.At the Queen's table, amongst many other dishes and suttleties of curious invention, were these — tench in jelly; great custard planted for a suttletie; petynel, peronsew with his segue; goos in hochepot and browet tuskay.

There was, also, for an honour to the young Baroness, a special suttletie, presenting the Queen's bower, with her ladies ranged round, and the lady Barbara, receiving on her knee the jewels, which her Highness had given to her the night before; there too, was presented Pierre, the minstrel, playing on his very harp. The Baron de Blondeville had leave from the King to quit his chair, for a time, to visit the bride; and, when he showed this suttletie to her, she smiled; but it was the first time she had smiled this night.

There was another suttletie of archers in the forest hunting the hart, with foresters in green blowing their horns and the whole court following. In this, too, was the Lady Barbara, mounted on a milk-white palfry, her hair bound up in a beauteous net; but not of gold and pearls, as it was this night, nor wore she a mantle of white cloth like that she now had on. At a distance, within the shadow of the trees, stood an aged man alone, wringing his hands; but what this might mean none knew.

In the hall below, every table was abundantly served with dainties, according to the rank of those who sat there; and all were contented, as well they might be.

The King talked graciously and often to the Baron de Blondeville, and sometimes would send him with a dish of dainties from his own board to the Baroness; nothing doubting, that he would like the errand. And, when the Earl of Norfolk brought his Highness his cup, he drank to her; but the trumpets blew up too soon, so that what he said was heard not; but he bowed, and thrice waved to her his hand, the which, soon as the young Baroness saw, she rose up and curtsied low three times, to the great pleasure of all, who beheld her sweet grace and modesty. Many there were in the hall, who cried out, "May she be happy!"

The King had given back the cup into the hands of the Lord Norfolk, and was resting him in his chair; when he saw the curtain drawn back of that window, which opened from his own chamber upon the gallery of arms, and a person standing there. While his Highness marvelled by what means any one could have admittance into that chamber, the keys being in the custody of the Lord Constable, the window was unfolded, and the person, advancing into the gallery, came forward to the front; and there stood still, and with great seeming confidence, beside the armour of Richard the Lion.

Although the light, that fell there from the roof, was not so strong that his Highness, at such distance, could distinguish the countenance of this person, yet, by the grey gleam reflected there, he seemed to be clothed in steel, with helmet on his head: and so like was he to the form of King Richard, that, had not his Highness seen him advance, and the real shape of motionless armour standing by, he would have thought this but a figure for show, like the others there. The King, no less surprized by the strangeness of this appearance, than displeased by the boldness which had thus openly defied his command, respecting that chamber, ordered an esquire to repair to the Lord Constable, who was himself in the hall; and learn whom he had admitted there. The Baron, who stood by, looking whither the King looked, on a sudden changed countenance; and his Highness again observed that stupor and dismay, which he had noticed in the morning, beginning to fix his eyes and to spread over every feature. The King spoke sharply to him, to rouse him, as was supposed, from his trance; but without effect, for he stood fixed and stiffened, like to a marble statue, yet with looks bent on the gallery, where the stranger stood.

Then, the King gave a beck that none should notice his condition; hoping he might recover himself, before the Queen and the young Baroness should observe him. When the Archbishop perceived that person standing in the gallery, he was observed to make the holy sign; and, when he looked at the Baron and saw his amazement, he repeated it: — it was said his Highness asked him why he did so; but that he answered not, save by a look of solemn reverence and by bowing of the head. That stranger, though the King fixed his eyes on him with displeasure, moved not; but his Highness, though unable to distinguish his features in that obscure situation, thought the intruder likely to be one not obscure, if known, but one who expected to remain unknown in a place so far from what was now passing; and his Highness resolved, that he should not escape detection.

With the esquire messenger, came up the hall the constable of the castle, to attend the King's pleasure. His Highness turned to chide him for not having better observed his command, respecting his own chamber; and enquired who the stranger was, that had intruded there. With astonishment, the constable declared the keys of that chamber and gallery had not been out of his keeping, and that he had not admitted any one thither.

"Nay," said the King, "thine eyes may contradict thy tongue; look there, and thou wilt see one less willing to keep council against thee than thyself." The constable looked to the gallery, but, perceiving only the known figures of armour there, he stood silent and amazed. Then his Highness, seeing the stranger was gone, said, "I let this pass. Thy friend has seen thee, and profited by the warning. Be more heedful in future. Go now to thy place."

The constable did reverence, and departed, marvelling much at the King's words and well resolved to enquire further into this matter. And now the Baron, not having been spoken to for some space, began to recover himself, like one awaking from sleep, and happily before those at the Queen's table knew what happened. The King made a sign, that none should speak, and then, accosting him with his wonted graciousness, bade him go to the table appointed for his rank, and refresh himself there. The young Prince Edward looked on him with curiosity, but without pity; and spoke not to him. Meanwhile, the Baron gazed around with strange visage, as if he knew not well where he was, but in a short space bowed to the King, and withdrew. While this passed, the Archbishop was noted to look often towards the Queen's table; but he said nought.

The constable, the while, was making busy enquiry, who had been in the gallery of arms, but no one knew any thing of the matter; so he went himself to examine the doors, the key in his hand. The outer door, that led to the King's chamber, was fast. He unlocked it, and, leaving a guard there, went forward with lights through the whole range to the gallery chamber, and there examined the window door, that opened towards the hall; which also was fastened, as he had left it.

Much marvelling, he went out into the gallery, and tried a door, at the end, that opened upon a stair, and found it not only locked, but bolted within, so that if any one had entered this way, he could not have gone out by the same. The constable had ordered the outer-door to be guarded, as I said, while search was made through the gallery and the whole range of rooms; but this was to no purpose, not any thing living being found there. And now he began to think, that his Highness had tasted too often of the golden cup, and mistaken one of the armour-shapes in front of the gallery for a living knight, or other warlike person. However, he took care to make the doors secure, and forthwith he departed.

And now, when the second course was on its way to the King's table, the steward entered the hall, and called out loudly three times, "Wassel! wassel! wassel!" and, incontinently, the cup-bearers went round to the different boards; and all of the Court, standing up and leaning towards the high table, drank the King's health. Then, the verger of the minstrels giving them the beck, they all at once set up their pipyngs and blowings, with such a brave noise, that the castle might have been taken by storm, before those in the hall could have heard the thump of a single war-wolf.

There were trumpets and clarions and citolles and tabarets and makerers and fithols; besides the King's five harpers, all beating, or blowing, or thrumming together. They were heard afar off in the woods; and many an outlaw lay on watch that night, for those, who might be travelling from the castle homewards. The brethren of the priory liked not the noise, and the Prior, I guess, would have liked it as little, but that he was amongst those in the hall, sitting at the table of the abbots. The poor prisoner in the tower heard the revelry, and to him it was sad indeed.

It were making a cook's book to tell what dainties there were at the second course: these must suffice, for this little history: — There were joly amber potage; jiggots of venison, stopped with cloves; lamprey, with galentine, marchpagne; fritter-dolphin; leche-florentine; with divers suttleties of castles and dragons and voyages at sea; and cities in the King's dominions, beyond the seas; and a full tournament, showing knights on horseback, riding their rounds, and ladies freshly apparelled, in the galleries, looking at them. At the King's board, was a suttletie presenting his court of justice such as it was already prepared in this castle, against the feast of Saint Michael. There was his Highness, sitting in judgment, and all his great officers, sitting round on the benches.

At the Queen's table, was a suttletie with ballads, the which, as yet, I have not [spoken of]. It was of three stages: the first presented Sir Gaston, at some former time, mounted on a courser in a field of war, and this alluded to some valorous exploit performed in France; the second stage showed him kneeling before the King, who laid his sword on him, and rewarded him with knighthood; the third stage showed him in his Baron's robes, receiving from the King the hand of the lady Barbara. There might you see every particular of the ceremony, as it had appeared that morning to the very life. There, too, was the tomb of Geoffrey de Clinton; but the stranger, which had appeared there, was not mimicked. — While the Baroness looked upon this, with most serious countenance, suddenly she fetched a deep sigh, and fell from her seat like one dead. The Queen's maids and the bride's maids thronged about her, but none could tell the cause of this her sudden discomfiture. Though some readily guessed it was a recollection of what had happened to the Baron, that morn; others in the hall affirmed, that they had just heard a voice speak these words: "Three tokens of death!"

But the lady Barbara herself, when she recovered, feigned her swooning was from the heat of the hall and the noise of the music; and, in trowth, this last was enough to make a stronger one than her to faint; and how the Prior sat it, who used always to cry out upon loud doings at feasts, was the wonder of many: but, that night, he seemed as joyously given as any there; yet held he himself with all proper ceremony, and remained always at the abbot's board, saying little, unless to those near to him. The lady Baroness, at the Queen's command, was led forth awhile for fresher air.

There entered the hall, about this time, a jongleur, or glee-man, with harp in hand, clad in a cloak of grey, and took his seat at the lower end. His sandals were stained with marks of many a mile's travel; and he sat awhile wearied and breathless. Those, who saw him, supposed that he had been to Warwick Castle, there to exercise his art, as so many others of his craft did; that, having heard the lord of that domain was here, keeping festival at Kenilworth, and knowing a jongleur to be always welcome at such seasons, he had posted hither, with all speed, not waiting even to amend his guise. Yet, marvelled they how he had gained admittance, in plight so ill becoming a King's presence; but there was that in his look and stature, that agreed as little with his apparelling, as that did with the King's high presence; and which checked the questions they would have put to him. A page, seeing his weary look, offered him wine and meat; but he, with gesture that spoke as much as words, refused the gift, but accepted the good will.

And now, the second course and a third being ended, came the heralds into the hall; and, with loud proclaimings, called out, three times, "Largesse for the King, the Queen, the Earl of Cornwall, and the Baron de Blondeville!" shaking, the while, their great cup on high. And first they cried it before the King, at the foot of the dais, next in the middle of the hall, and last at the lower end. And, in their officious zeal to exalt those, who yielded most to them, they made the Earl of Cornwall King of the Romans; but this was yet to be, which well they wot, also how wishful their lord, King Henry, was to gain this dignity for his brother, and how much he had employed his power and treasure therefore.

The King, as he heard that title given, fixed an eye of correction on him, that spoke it; yet was he not displeased with him in his heart, and he sent one to command, that he should again cry “Largesse” for the Earl, and so remedy the mistake, which was straight done accordingly.

And now the minstrels came down from their gallery, and sat altogether, at the board’s end, at the bottom of the hall, eating of the feast and partaking of the largesse-cup; there to remain, till the disguisings should enter. And it was a brave sight to see them all apparelled in the King’s livery, guarded and laced with gold; their virger, more glorious than the rest, still directing all their doings. They eyed the stranger glee-man askance, and asked him not to their board, wondering why he came thither, where was no need of him, as they thought, and viewing his apparel with contempt and himself with disdain, as treading upon the skirts of their greatness, he being no better than a wandering minstrel. He seemed to read their thoughts, and his proud looks did somewhat daunt them; yet did his ruffled spirit take refuge with his harp and gain strength from it; for, he soon struck forth sounds so strong and clear, as rung up to the arched roof, and filled all the hall with sudden wonder. Maister Pierre himself could not exceed him in force and spirit, and amongst the whole five of the King’s harpers was not one, who might not have bowed before him. Soon, the hum of busy tongues, that had often filled the hall with noise as of the murmuring tides, so that the whole band of minstrels might hardly at times be heard, (yet seemed not one tongue louder than another) — soon that hum was husht and still, — and the sound of that harp alone rose up out of the silence, and spread its sweetness over all the air. Every face was turned, with deep attention, one way, in search of the minstrel, and every head was hung aside.

Observing this, he quickly changed his measure to one more wild and abrupt, and his eyes seemed to send forth sparks of fire, while he sang, with full and clear voice, parts of the famous lay of Richard Cœur de Lion, as

“Him followed many an English knight,”

and other lines. Prince Edward, the while, seemed to lose not a word he sung. When he came to the words,

“By the blood upon the grass
Men might see where Richard was,”

the glee-man could not end them before the Prince, forgetting where he was, and, with fiery eyes, as if inspirited by them, stood like a conqueror on his field. The glee-man proceeded.

“As snow ligges on the mountains,
Behelied were hills and plains
With hauberk bright and helm clear
Of trompers and of tabourer;
To hear the noise it was wonder:
As though the earth above and under
Should fallen; so fared the sound!”

When the harper had ended, the King asked who played; and, being told a wandering glee-man, drawn hither by the fame of the festival, his Highness ordered he should be taken care of and well supplied with banqueting.

And now, supper being ended, damask-water was brought for the King and Queen and the Archbishop to wash with. After, the esquires of the household taking the royal boards, with all their suttleties, and the yeomen making off with those below in the hall, the place was cleared for dancing and disguisings. Then the Bishops, though not my Lord of York, nor yet the Bishop confessor attendant on the King, held it time to depart; the abbots also; and, with due homage to his Highness, forthwith avoided; but not the Prior; he remained in the hall.

It was then, that the King’s Highness sent his presents to the bride’s-groom; being a rich cupboard of plate, the chief wonder whereof was a great cup of solid gold, standing on an eagle’s foot. On the cover rose the head of a bird, whose eyes were of emeralds, and with his stooping beak he held the ring, which was set with rubies, as though by pulling the ring he would lift up the lid; his wings, half-folded, formed the two handles. Great store was set by the King upon the workmanship of this cup, he having himself ordered the device of the eagle, and, as some said, to show thereby how he would encourage the aspirings of the young Baron. Besides this, were six spice-plates and six great bowls of silver chased and two basins and ewers of the same. There were also six great silver pots for wine, vine leaves set with emeralds twining round them, the grapes being of purple amethyst so cunningly enwrought, you would have thought you could pluck them. Many other things there were of this cupboard, too tedious to relate.

To the young Baroness, who was revered, and had now returned to the hall, the Queen sent a set of golden baskets for sweetmeats and perfumes, wrought, as was said, by a Frenchman, and of so seemly a fashion, the like had never been seen before, but which made some to murmur, that her Highness liked only the workmanship of her own country. For this, the Baroness, led by her lord, advanced nearer to the Queen, and thanked her, with most sweet thanks; and then he his-self paid homage to the King for his princely gift, as doubtless he should have done before, but, perchance, his bride detained him to uphold her in thanking the Queen, before so great a company. Having done this, he took his station by the chair, his Highness often turning to him, with merry speech, to drive away the gloom, that yet, at whiles, hung upon his brow.

Presently, the tuning of many instruments without the hall was heard, and the sound of the bugle drawing nigh and nigher, till suddenly the skreens were drawn away, and there entered, at the bottom of the hall, a mountain moving on unseen wheels, piled up with green trees of every shade, which rose to a height of forty feet, or more, and spread itself on every side. On the steeps of this mountain, stags — for so they seemed — were bounding from rock to rock, and foresters in green, with their dogs, were hunting them to the sound of bugles, concealed amongst the woods.

These were all lords and men of honour, in goodly disguisings, so that you would have taken them for foresters and bucks, as they climbed up and down certain steps this mountain, at the risk of their necks, and all for sport, and to please the King's Highness by their agility. And a pleasureful sight, ywis, it was to see them all running together, lords and knights and hounds and men of honour, as who should be first in his Highness's favour. All acquitted themselves to the very top of excellence; for, they had been well taught in the knowledge of hunting, which is now called "the mysterie of the forests."

Amongst them was Sir William de Mowbray, who, being somewhat of the fattest, was often fain to stop, and blowed so hard, that, had but a hunter's horn been clapped to his mouth, it would have tuned up as high as the best of them. There was also the young Lord de Lomene, a foreign-man, as light as the flame of a waxen morter, and he, stepping falsely, rolled down the side of the mountain from stair to stair, till he settled on the floor of the hall, never the worse for his forced performance, where he was received with a chorus of laughter and plaudits from the whole Court.

But anon the sound of the other instruments was heard, and another pageant entered. This was a goodly disguising of ladies, to the number of twelve, all freshly apparelled in silks of Italy, and shut up in a lantern. Around this lantern were windows covered with lawn; and within, amongst these ladies and women of honour, were forty wax lights, so that they might be seen and known, through all their disguisings, by every one in the court. Thus, these ladies of the lantern came on sweetly singing, like unto a cage full of birds, and playing on lutes and dulcymers, claricords, claricimballs and such-like instruments, with so pleasing noise, the like to it was never before heard, till they reached the upper end of the hall. There, ere they grounded, they were turned round, before the King and Queen, that all the goodly machine might be beholden.

Then, the rehersed, disguised Lords and men of honour, descending from their mountain (the lantern standing aside), danced awhile together by themselves deliberately and seemlyly, playing, all the time, upon recorders and regalls and tabors, in harmony with the music in the lantern, which might be called "light of love"; and, at certain times, tuning up, with most brave noise, and singing "Hayle, comely King, the cause of all our mirth!" And, presently, these ladies and women of honour, making a beck, that they wished to be let out of their lantern, the lords and men of honour hastened to open the door and to let them out, and help them down, and then they all fell deliberately to dancing, and gravely disporting together, in a most seemly sort, full curiously, and with most wonderful countenance. The while, the mountain and the lantern vanished together out of the hall.

When this pleasant company of estates and gentils had ended their sports, and had dispersed to their seats round the hall, there was a ceasing of the minstrels; and, forthwith the voide entered, with the heralds blowing up before it. Then came two score and more of lords and knights and men of honour, some bearing golden spice-plates, others bowls of silver gilt, others golden cups; followed by esquires and pages, bearing great silver pots of wine, to fill up the rehersed cups, as often as they were empty.

And now the King stood up, and spoke right cheerly to divers about him, who had not approached him before, and, amongst others, to the Prior of St. Mary's, he being still in the hall, although it was past midnight, and those of his house were rising to keep the first watch of matin. His Highness was yet speaking to him, when my Lord Archbishop, who stood deliberately on the King's right hand, was seen to make the holy sign. Those, who observed this, marvelled, and the King, gravely accosting him, asked why, twice this night, he had made this sign. But the Archbishop, as before, answered not, save by a look of awe and reverence.

The King, turning his eyes, saw, standing firmly at the foot of the dais, one, whom he took to be the same person he had already seen, this night, in the gallery of arms; and this he judged, not by his face, for his Highness had not then distinguished it, nor could he now fully see it, shaded, as it was, by his visor; but by his singular figure, arrayed in complete armour. It seemed, however, as if his melancholy eyes were fixed upon the King. He stood motionless, and spoke not to any near him, nor did those near seem to regard him. For a moment, his Highness's attention was rivetted on the object before him. He then sent an esquire to learn who it was, that had come thus unusually accoutred for a festive hall; but ere the messenger had left the King, the stranger had disappeared in the crowd.

And now, while the King and the Archbishop seemed severally to be pondering their thoughts, a solemn air of music was heard, without the hall, and the approach of another pageant withdrew his Highness's attention, who enquired why this had not appeared before the voide, but finished by supposing, that it was some mysterie of the men of Coventry intended to surprise him. He, therefore, graciously took to his chair again, listening to the sad and sweet harmony that advanced, while he ruminated on the late extraordinary occurrences; for, indeed, the quiet mournfulness of these sounds promoted the musing of melancholy thoughts.

At last, the pageant entered, and there appeared in the hall the presentation of a seashore, with high white cliffs, so cunningly mimicked, that it was the marvel of all, who beheld. There seemed the very waves, flushed with the setting sun and bickering in the light, as also breaking with gentle noise upon the strand; and a ship riding at anchor near, with a little boat lying on the beach, as if waiting to carry some one away. Now, the absence of certain evil sprites from this pageant, would have been enough to convince his Highness, that this was no mysterie of the men of Coventry, without the beautiful deception of the scene here played forth, — and he marvelled.

Then there came in, the music playing sadly, a knight and a lady, with two little children following. The knight took them up tenderly, and pointed to the ship, and kissed them. The while, the lady wept sorely, and hung upon the knight, who tried to comfort her, and, pointing to the ensign on his shield, which showed that he was prepared for the Holy Land, he knelt down, and raised his hands on high. She knelt beside him, and then the babes, lifting up their little hands, knelt too; the music, the while, playing solemnly and sweet. Then they rose up, and the knight again kissed the children, and held the lady to his heart. After which, mariners came in, and, launching the boat, the knight departed for the ship. But the lady stood weeping on that seashore, and motioning with her hand, till he reached the vessel, and it sailed away.

But still she stood, while it vanished in that gloomsome mist, which now seemed rise from the ocean, and to stain all that glorious west, where late the day had been. Then, seeing the bark no more, she turned away, and wept piteously, leading her little babes, and so she departed.

Then the seashore was gone all at once out of the hall, and the music changing to warlike strains of trump and clarion, straight there appeared, as if by very magic itself, a field of battle, with knights and banners, on one side bearing the holy sign. Nor was there wanting St. George for England, the English lion, with many other true-hearted ensigns. On the other hand, were shown Saracens, with their crescents, glittering, as if the sun shone on them. At a distance, on the slopes of the hills, lay tents, with palms and cedars overtopping them. Nearer, on the low sea-bank, was a city of Palestine, with walls and mighty gates and domes and pinnacles. Within that sea-bay, too, ships rode at anchor. The tide was bright as amber, save where a sultry mist seemed to sit on the horizon, as if brooding a coming storm. Nay, such was the cunning of the scene, that you might sometimes think you heard that muttering thunder, which growls by fits so sullenly from far, before a tempest.

The King could not but marvel; and seeing this pageant was so different from those mysteries he had beheld played heretofore by the men of Coventry, and from any pageant he had yet seen enacted by English joculator, he asked what jongleur from the east now played forth his art; for the like of deception and device he had never seen before. His Highness then bethought him it might be that stranger glee-man, who had, this night, come into his hall, and he meditated a due reward for his invention and for his loyalty, which he doubted not would lead him to display here some noble exploit in Palestine of Richard the Lion, whose deeds he had in part already sung.

“Who is there,” said King Henry, “would not think that show were living truth? The light is on the hill, as if the sun shone there.”

While he spoke, there rose from behind the hill a line of spears and crescents as of a vast army of Saracens coming down upon the Franks. As they came on, you might perceive their helms and brazen visors, till they spread down all the hill unto the tents of the Franks. Then might you faintly hear the clash of cymbals, the dread bray of Saracen-horns and, ever and anon, the thump of tabours. And now the fight began between the armies; and King Henry joyed to see Prince Edward watching all that was here enacting; he seemed to have King Richard’s heart in very trowth.

When the fight began, which was fought as if for very life and soul, the Franks fought with bows, swords, spears, iron-maces and battle-axes; the Saracens with spears and scymiters chiefly. Presently was seen the knight, who had set sail in the ship, fighting hard with two Saracens. There were few in the hall, that night, who, when they saw him so hard driven, did not think of the poor lady and her little children, whom he had left behind, and wish him victory for their sakes, as well as for his holy cause. These Saracens wore frightful masks of brass, and laid about them with so great strength, that it seemed the knight must fall. He broke his spear, and then he fought with battle-axe, and was nigh being overthrown, when another knight attacked the Saracens; and the first, having now but one enemy left, went off the field fighting with him manfully.

And so the battle held on, near to a besieged city; the Saracens, who were in it, sending forth wild fyre, called fyre-grekys, most like in shape to dragons and other dreadful beasts. Those, who beheld this, wondered at the surpassing cunning of the jongleur, and began to think he was one of those from the East, who practised arts of delusion; for, some such they were. There were even wooden towers set up, without the walls, by the Franks, that played their darts into the ramparts like unto hail. There were also mangenelles, which cast stones, and the famous mate-griffon, invented by Richard the Lion; yet still no where was he seen in this pageant, so it was guessed this showed not a battle of his time, though it was fought where he had conquered. Presently, there came a pell-mell of Knights and Saracens, hand to hand, and, amongst them, that same knight, who had first appeared departing from his own land. He was again hard beset, but he brought down his nearest enemy to the ground, and the others then betook them elsewhere. He disarmed him, and held his wrested sword over his head. The foe begged his life, which the knight granted, but kept the sword, and with its aid, rescued a brother-knight from an enemy, and then departed.

Soon, flames involved the city; then thick clouds of smoke involved the whole in darkness; the shouts and trumpets sunk faint and fainter, and then were heard no more, and that glorious sight was gone for ever, no one saw how! Attention still pursued the sounds, and there was yet in the hall deep silence, when other notes than those of war began to breathe, notes of such sweet and lively joy, as thrilled the hearts of all, who heard them.

As they drew nigher, there came into the hall that rehersed seashore, with that rehersed ship upon the waves, and you might discern the pilot at the helm, and the sea-boys in their places; and straight that knight was landed. He kneeled, then with both hands held his shield on high, and looked up to the heavens; then he kissed the strand, the music playing all the while so solemn and soft, that not only many fair eyes, but many manly ones too, shed tears. Then the knight rose up, and departed, and the scene disappeared.

And now other sounds were heard, but of what instruments none knew. They were grave and sad, with sometimes dreary pauses, that made many to shake. Then a forest appeared, with gloomy woods, and no sunshine seen, save one gleam, which showed travellers coming on, as if to some towers, the tops of which were seen over the woods; and many in the hall said these looked like the towers of Kenilworth; others said they were different. It was now, when the light was failing on these towers, that a torch carried by one of the travellers began to cast its gleam beneath the boughs, and showed them to be three horsemen well appointed, one of whom appeared to be the very knight from Palestine; who the others were none knew; but the King viewed them with close attention, and with seeming displeasure; and now not one word was spoken in the hall, and every eye was watching what would befall next.

Anon there came out from the wood three men armed, and with masks upon their faces, who soon came up with the travellers and attacked them. These defended themselves as well as they could; but the knight being armed, it was he who fought well nigh for all. Now many stood up in the hall, and a murmur and confused noise ran through it, for they guessed in their hearts what this meant.

The Knight had his helmet on, but the visor was open, and thus was his face exposed; on his helmet stood a raven for his crest, with open beak and wings half-spread. He fought manfully with the stoutest of the robbers, whose mask falling down to the ground, it was too plain, that his countenance was the likeness of one then living in the hall and standing by the King’s chair. On this, every one in the hall, not excepting the Ladies, stood up, some looking eagerly to the high board, and others to the pageant, while his Highness spake not, but sat as if sternly determined to watch this extraordinary delusion to the end; nor did he once look towards any one, who stood near him.

The end soon came; for the robber, wresting in a great struggle a sword from the Knight, plunged it through his open visor, and he fell from his horse, a dead man. Then was there a universal groan throughout the hall. The robber departed, with the sword in his hand,

and darkness fell over the whole scene, which appeared no more.

Now, the King rose impatiently from his chair, with looks of anger, and was about to inquire who had invented this deception, when he perceived before him again, standing on the steps of the dais, that very figure, clad in arms, which had before appeared there; and he knew it for the likeness of that murdered Knight, whose fate he had just witnessed. There stood the raven on his helm, and there too, within its shade, appeared a countenance of deadly paleness, shrunk and fixed somewhat angrily upon the King. His Highness, for a while, stood petrified and with eyes amazed, as if he saw something that might not, with any endeavour, be understood; he seemed to strive for speech, and at last faintly uttered, “Who art thou, and what is thy errand?”

Then, the Knight, pointing with his sword to the Baron de Blondeville, who stood, trance-bound, beside the King’s chair, his eyes glared, and a terrible frown came over his face. The Archbishop made the holy sign, as he had already done, this night before, when the King had seen nothing strange near him; and then stood with arms extended on high.

The figure still pointed with his sword to the Baron. Again, the King vainly demanded of the stranger, who he was? and, receiving no answer, gave order that he should be seized.

Then it was, that the Prior of St. Mary’s, having approached the King, suddenly stepped forward to arrest the stranger; though such service pertained not much to him; but he might have spared his pains; for, where he would have seized upon the stranger, he eluded his grasp, and stood afar off in the hall; and the Prior, struck with dismay, attempted not to pursue him. Then, his Highness, in great disorder, commanded, that all the doors should be shut, that he, who practised this delusion on the sight, might be discovered.

And forthwith, his Highness was obeyed; but the stranger glee-man, who was the person suspected, was no longer to be found. A murmur went in the hall, that he was an Arabian jongleur — for, wondrous arts and deceptions those from the East were known to practise; and he was sought for without the hall, in many parts of the castle; but no where could he be seen, or heard of; nor could Maister Henry, the versifier, be found in the hall, whom the King called for, thinking he might know something of this jongleur, or how that strange mysterie, which had been shown forth, was brought about. Hearing this, the King was much moved; and commanding that the search should be continued, he left the hall by a private passage, leading to his own chambers, followed by the Queen and her ladies; the young Baroness being among them, who went off to her Highness’s bower.

The King, attended, by his especial order, only of the Archbishop, the Bishop confessor, the Prior of St. Mary’s and the Baron de Blondeville, withdrew to his privy-chamber. When there, and the door closed, the Baron fell on his knee, and besought his Highness not to deliver him over unto the malice and envy of his enemies, who had invented this device to work his ruin. His Highness answered, the devices of his enemies should cause their own ruin, and that soon.

Now came to the chamber, Maister Henry amazed and trembling; for he was one, who rejoiced so much in good fortune, that he could bear other as ill as any man: and the King’s frown was now upon him. His Highness asked, whether he knew aught of the jongleur, who had been that night in the hall, or of the mysterie, that had heen there enacted; for, in his heart, the King suspected, that Henry knew something of the matter.

Maister Henry, confounded by the King’s angry looks, knew not well what he answered; which confirming the suspicions against him, his Highness hastily said, that if it should be found he had assisted in devising that delusion, which being an insult to the Baron, whom he favoured, was one also to himself, he should sorely repent his misconduct; nor should he go entirely free, if he had obtained an entrance into the hall for that jongleur; and forthwith his Highness commanded him to depart to his chamber, there to remain, till called forth by his order.

Now it was that Maister Henry better found his speech, and it was to protest his innocence of that device; and his ignorance, touching the jongleur, who had that night appeared in the hall, there to practise the glamour-art; but this availed him little in the present mood of his Highness, till he entreated, that the master of the revels and the marshal of the hall should be called into his presence, and questioned, as to what they knew of the conducting of that pageant. The King consented, and they were called accordingly; the marshal being still busy in the hall, helping there to the finding out of the stranger, but in vain. This he now made known to the King, and scrupled not to say, he believed the whole to be the work of magic, worked by that jongleur and by the prisoner then in a tower of this castle.

The master of the revels said the same, for that he had no hand in that mysterie; nor had he seen any preparations made for it; nor did any one in the hall know in what way it had entered. Then he took his Highness to witness, how it was possible, so marvellous a pageant, showing so many changes, and such a multitude of people, could have been completed, without long pains and trouble; and therefore, how it could have been effected, unless by the glamour-art; but no preparation for this had been seen by any; nor knew he or any one how the different changes had entered the hall. The jongleur had sitten there the while, playing on his harp, but he had drawn from it sounds of many different instruments, that sometimes had seemed close where he sat; and at others far off in the hall; the music, that had been heard there, was not of the King’s minstrels!

On this, the Prior of St. Mary’s came forward, and, having craved leave to speak, which was granted, told the King he doubted not, that the whole deception had been wrought by the King’s enemies, with certain spells of magic, such as were sometimes resorted to, in desperate cases, and in this it was not the Baron’s downfall alone that they meditated, but the deliverance of their partner in guilt: the merchant now in jeopardy. Of such unlawful arts of magic, the Prior added, that his Highness himself had once proof, when the precious ring, that was to render him invincible in battle, was conjured away from under the bolts and locks of his casket, (those remaining unbroken,) and was conveyed away by the Earl of Kent, as his Highness had declared, and given to his dire enemy, Llewellyn of Wales, then in arms against him.

The King seemed struck with this, but not well pleased with the choice of this time for remembering an occurrence, which, it is true, he had himself in council asserted to be supernatural; and had even urged, amongst other matters, in accusation of the loyalty of that lord. His Highness seemed not well to know how he should take this speech of the Prior, and he cast upon him an eye of doubt, but he said nought.

“My liege,” added the Prior, “when I saw the astoundment, that came over the Baron de Blondeville, this morn in the chapel, I guessed it was a spell that fixed him. When I saw him in the hall, this night, twice in the same state, I held more surely it was so; but, when I beheld that marvellous delusion of the pageant, for who could suppose such surpassing scenes were wrought by hands — when

I beheld, that, I was convinced, in very truth, that magic was at work! and so I doubt not was my Lord Archbishop, by his gestures."

The King, assenting in his mind to this latter assertion, having observed, as before rehersed, the gesture of the Archbishop, turned towards him, and asked why he made that sacred sign? To which the Archbishop answered, he had used it to protect his Highness and all around from the evil, that he perceived was near him. At these words the countenances of the Baron and of the Prior brightened. Further the King inquired, why twice in the hall, when he had asked the same question, the Archbishop had returned no answer? To this, the Archbishop again made no reply; but bent his head with that look, both solemn and submissive, which he had before put on: till, being further urged, he replied, he "had not dared to answer!" on which the King showed surprise and displeasure; but then seemed, on a sudden, to restrain the expression of either.

The Prior said, the Archbishop had done well; but the Archbishop showed no pleasure at this, and deigned not to turn an eye on the Prior.

"Did you," said the King, "think your answer would endanger you?"

"My liege, I knew I should be endangered by it."

"How! when I commanded?" said the King; "but you feared the force of magic?"

"No! my liege."

The King looked again astonished, and the Prior curious. "Whence then was your danger?" said his Highness.

"From the malice of an evil sprite, my liege!" answered the Archbishop.

At this, the Prior, with a sarcastic countenance, said, "Perhaps, my Lord Archbishop has not told the whole: I have heard it said, — I speak it with submission, for I mean not to throw slander, — I have heard it said he doubts of witchcraft, if so he may doubt of magic!"

On this, the Archbishop, turning loftily to him that spoke, said, "The Archbishop of York comes not to the King's court to make confession to the Prior of St. Mary's!"

Then the King, seeing the weighty displeasure of my Lord of York and the rising anger of the Prior, interposed, and put an end to further question between them; but the Archbishop's eyes were sternly fixed upon the Prior's, which fell beneath them. He then craved a private hearing of the King, for tomorrow, and departed; leaving the Prior angry and confused, but not dismayed; for, soon as he was gone, he said in a low voice, which yet might be heard by the King, " so depart from me all prejudice and callousness of heart."

To which the Baron said, "Such is my wish too."

The King, convinced, by this time, of the innocence of Maister Henry, the versifier, ordered with kind words that he should be dismissed, and then, commanding all present to avoid the chamber, save the Baron de Blondeville, and the Prior of Saint Mary's, remained in close council with them, though it were past midnight.

Meanwhile, the whole company below the hall remained close shut up, while the search was yet going on in the chambers and gallery above, for those, who might have been concerned in this marvellous deception. There were the marshal, the steward, the constable of the castle, and other great officers attending, to look after the little ones; but none of them could find either the supposed knight, or the glee-man. There were divers sayings and reports went forth on this matter, as, indeed, you must expect, without my telling; but most present held this strange; accident was brought about with magic, and that by the inveterate malice of the Baron de Blondeville's accuser and his secret friends. Some few there were who remarked, that by this same power of magic, did he possess it, the prisoner had done better to release himself from prison bond, but these were soon put to silence by others; and, whatever was thought, nothing more was said.

And so ended the festival in hall, this night, every one departing to his lodging in the castle, or to his home in his own or his friend's castle, or mansion, with his own thoughts on the strange accident, that had befallen.

And, whatever might pass that night in this hall, raised up by beings of another region, nothing was known of it by those of this; for none would venture thither; and none, save the poor prisoner in his tower, would even look down from the chamber upon the windows of that hall. And so that place was in darkness and in silence, which so lately had been illuminated, had echoed with song and laugh, and was animated with the pomp of beauty and of a court — emblem of life and death!

The darkness of the hall was observed the merchant from his turret lattice, for, he had watched much there this light, led thither by the sound of minstrelsy, and by a longing of his spirit to hover over the haunt of beings like unto himself. In the misery of his solitude, his heart would often change, and, like unto one tossing on a fever bed, who continually shifts his limbs in the hope of a little ease, so he went from his pallet to his window to escape from his own thoughts, and from his window to his pallet to avoid those sounds of joy and revelry, at which his heart sometimes sickened, when he remembered his wife and children, yet ignorant of his condition and his dead friend, whose cruel assassin was now his own dangerous enemy. Thus, he passed the hours, which to most in the castle had gone by with joy and abundance; he alone being ignorant of those marvellous appearances, which the Prior had not scrupled to say were raised by his art.

And so strongly did the Prior urge to the King, this night, the danger to be dreaded not by the Baron only, but by his Highness, from the powerful malice of the agents of the prisoner, acting by his art, if he were suffered to live, that the King resolved to have the matter fully inquired into tomorrow, in open court, his-self, sitting on the bench. But the Prior and the Baron, who had overheard the Archbishop's entreaty for a hearing, and feared he might unsettle the King's resolution, urged the matter still further, and representing the danger of waiting a jury-trial, dared to hint at sentence by other modes. The Baron even finished by saying, that not a moment of his life was safe, while his malicious accuser lived.

Whether the King fully understood, or no, what they meant by the words "other modes," he did not fall into their plan, but repeated, that on the morrow, a Jury should be summoned.

They then spoke plainly of trial by ordeal, but his Highness instantly rejected it. It was indeed over bold of them to propose such trial, knowing, as the Prior must know, that King Henry had shown his abhorrence of it, even in the first year of his reign, when he had abolished that cruel instrument of fraudulent oppression. And his Highness seemed not now well pleased; for, he straight dismissed them both, for this night.

Forth they went of the King's chamber together, and withdrew to consult further on this affair. It is plain the Baron had by some means gained the Prior, who was no true son of the church, to his interest. It was agreed between them, that he should lose no time in gaining admittance to the prisoner, for his own purposes, which might be done, under pretence of confessing him; and that before he left the castle, this night. Having fully settled their plot, they quitted the chamber, and were returning to the great staircase through the brown gallery, now left of every one, who had rejoiced there, that day, when the Baron made a sudden stop, and, taking a torch from the hands of one of the silver images, which lighted that gallery, shook it on high.

The Prior, turning to inquire wherefore this was done, saw standing beside them, that same armed knight, who had appeared in the hall! While the Baron stood with eyes fixed upon this stranger, a wound in the forehead opened, and distilled three drops of blood, which fell unnoticed on the Baron's robe.

The Prior had well nigh sunk to the ground, but recovered himself enough to utter faintly, after some solemn words,— "Who art thou?" The knight frowned upon him, but spake not; and presently disappeared, leaving the dismayed companions almost senseless.

They, however, left the gallery together; but, when they had reached the head of the stairs, the sound of cheerful voices was heard in an antechamber, and the Baron, encouraged by them, turned thither. But those, who talked, were only pages in waiting on some lord of the court, and they were still speaking of the marvellous occurrence in the great hall, that night, when the Baron appeared. Standing aside to let him pass, they wondered at his wild looks, as he went on to an inner chamber, where their masters sat.

The Prior, having also taken a light from one of the silver warriors, that held torches over the great staircase, descended alone, and was passing through the upper court of the castle, when, finding himself approaching one of the King's guard, on watch, he immediately extinguished the torch, and passed the man without it; but, whether he took his way to the prison-tower, or to the castle-gate, his further course was unknown; for, he was no more seen, that night.

THE THIRD DAY. II.

Here was a drawing of a castle seated loftily on a rock, hung with thick wood, and having many towers on the precipice. In the margin was a portrait of an Archbishop, in his pontifical robes, probably designed for the Archbishop of York.

On the morn next following the day of festival, my Lord of York had long speech of the King, and it was supposed, amongst other things, that he had been arguing against the truth of magic; for he was suspected of divers notions of that sort; it was also thought, that he had given no very favourable opinion of that same Prior of Saint Mary's. However this might be, his Highness, when he came forth of his chamber, was noticed to be thoughtful, and somewhat sad, and, though the summons for a jury was that day issued, his Highness seemed willing to let that matter rest awhile.

Instead of sitting in court of justice and on the judgment-seat, as he had sitten at Winchester, his Highness went hunting the stag in the forest, to his own contentment and to the great joy of his courtiers. And, ywis, this was a better chace, through these deep glades, and woods, than that upon the wooden mountain in the great hall; and more sweet and cheerily did the bugles sound along the valleys and upon the open hills than through the roofs and galleries of Kenilworth. There went with the King all of estate in the court (save the bishops) with the foresters of Ardenn, and also a train of gentils and gallants, to the number of many hundreds, and a great throng of people on foot.

The forest was covered with them, for miles, and nothing but the sound of bugles and other joyous instruments was heard through these deep shades, where quietness had dwelt, day and night, for so long a time before. Others there were, I guess, besides the beasts, lay hid in those pathless shades, listening to the revel rout afar off, and trembling too for very life, as it drew near; for, the forest was so wild and wide, spreading out on all sides and touching divers countries, that it was one of the chief hiding places for outlaws and desperate men in the whole realm of England, as those dwelling in the bordering towns knew to their cost. Many went wandering there, whom the world little thought of; and, who, had they been seen, could hardly have been guessed to belong to it, they had become so rude and uncouth in their seeming.

In the chase the King 'spied the towers of the Lord of Warwick, high over the woods, and that pleasant river of Avon, flowing beneath. The Earl, who was of his company, besought his Highness to repair thither, and to refresh himself in his castle; to which the King gave consent, that he might judge of it; his Highness being a great esteemer of the builder's art, and proficient in it, as his Abbey of Saint Peter, then rearing at Westminster, and the cathedral at Salisbury fully show; so he rode towards that castle; but, when he had mounted up the rock, he stopped before the great gates, in admiration of those warlike towers and hanging battlements, that rose so proudly over him. Then, he passed under the gateway into a court, surrounded by those towers, which all know to be of such vast strength, the bugles echoing through every arch and battlement, till he reached that pleasant side, where the turrets hang upon the precipice, that overlooks the Avon river.

As far as eye could reach, even in furthest west, to the broad hills of Gloucester, all the country, stretching below, was wood, or forest-pasture, with here and there the tops of spires and towers, whose convents and villages were so hidden in boughs, that, but for those little signs, you could not have guessed there were any goodly people dwelling in all that space. The King was well pleased with all that he saw at this castle, as he had been before; but with nothing so much as with that broad and majestic round tower, standing guard, as it were, at the south-east end of the castle, with pending battlements, where, all night long, town-men marched around, and where, but high above, in that little turret, the warder keeps his watch.

Here Willoughton laid down the manuscript, and went to a window of his chamber, looking towards Warwick castle, that he might behold under the moonlight the very towers here mentioned. He easily distinguished the one here pointed out, and, although that called the Record Tower, at the other extremity of the eastern front, was admirable for beauty of proportion, he had many reasons for preferring the other; of which reasons there were two, first, that it was more ancient and had existed, at the time the manuscript referred to; secondly, that it wore an aspect of severer grandeur, and that by its singular construction, it showed forth much of the watch-and-ward habits and warlike foresights of that age. Willoughton thought he could never be weary of looking at it, under this shadowy moonlight; and already he fancied he could perceive half-armed men, on guard, pacing the battlement, and the warder's fire blazing on the summit and contending with the moonlight. The watch-signal too he heard; for, what else could be that, which passed on the wind, and which seemed to him so solemn, yet wild and so different from any thing heard in these "piping times of peace" and luxury. Curiosity, as to the tale he was reading, brought him back, at last, to the manuscript and to King Henry.

King Henry stood long at a window of that side of the castle, which overhangs the Avon, and there he beheld, with delight, the great cedars growing on a steep rock over the river, on whose outspreading tops he looked down, as on a carpet of dark velvet, varied with silver. Certain, that castle of Warwick has a more pleasant scite, than this of Kenilworth; for, there your eye was carried, far and wide, over woods to the hills of other countries; where at Kenilworth, you see only the woods of its own valley, with the lake shining below them. Yet there were, who better liked the quiet shade of those majestic woods, that seemed to shut out all the world, save when the King brought it hither, than the more free and lightsome prospect from the walls of Warwick; but, for mine own part, it was not so with me.

When that his Highness had tasted a manchet and had taken a cup of the fragrant Burgundy wine, of which my Lord of Warwick had good store, he hunted back to Kenilworth, followed by some of Warwick, whom he knew not of.

That night, the King kept his estate in the great chamber, with the Queen and all her Court. There were the King's minstrels and there again was Pierre, the Queen's harper, who, by command from his Highness, sang forth a lay, made by Maria, the French Poetess, who was now at the Court, as aforesaid. She had presented her book to the King, full of marvelous histories, right pleasureful to hear, although they were not all true, nathless she had said to the contrary in the preamble to her book. The lay, played forth this night, was that of "Guildeluce and Gualadun," or, as some call it, "The lay of Eledire." This was a Knight of Bretagne famous for his high qualities, loved and honoured by his Sovereign, but envied and hated by many in the Court, who, gaining the ear of their Prince, at length persuaded him to banish him they conspired against from the Court and his country, leaving behind him a beautiful and excellent wife, whom they contrived to prevent from accompanying him.

It was said by many, in King Henry's Court, that he commanded this lay to be sung, as a lesson to the enemies of the young Baron, that he suspected them of malice. Others said the example of Guildeluce might be a warning also to the young Baroness; for, they thought that of the two Guildeluce was the greater hero, as you shall hear. This wise and valourous Knight, Sir Eledire, after vowing everlasting truth to his unhappy wife, set sail for England, there to seek adventures; and soon he found them. After achieving wonders, with the help of the ten knights he carried with him, in aid of a Prince of this country, he finished his exploit by falling in love with that King's daughter, contrary to all his former reputation, and setting his passion to fight with his duty, which had hitherto been sworn friends. There was a long contest, but unfortunately his passion conquered. Then, being recalled by his own Sovereign, who could not go on without him, having lost by his absence a great part of his territory, he carries off the young Princess, and returns to his affectionate Wife, estranged yet woe begone. The young Princess, who was as good as she was beautiful, soon as she heard the Knight had a wife, swooned away, and, not satisfied with that, died outright. The Knight goes nearly mad, and his distressed wife, to whom no one had told the whole truth, goes to a hermitage in a wood, to find out the secret cause of his distraction. There she sees the corpse of the beautiful Princess, and all jealousy and anger are lost, in compassion for her piteous fate.

Presently, the Princess by a charm is brought to life again; and what does this excellent wife, but determine to found a nunnery, and resign her beloved husband to the beautiful Princess. But the Knight, her husband, would not be outdone in generosity, and what does he do, but build that very nunnery to receive her, and, having thus rewarded that excellent wife, he marries the beautiful Princess, without further fighting between affection and conscience.

Whether the young Baroness might be inclined, if tried, to profit by the example of this excellent wife is not known; but most surely some ladies would not; for, they scrupled not to take pains to say, that this was one of those lays of Maria, which were not true. They would not give it credence for a moment.

This lay, although we have here cut it short, rivalled Maister Henry's ballad for wearisome length; but the sweet thrumming of Pierre made the King endure it better; when it was well ended, there was great dancing amongst the ladies, and his Highness commanded the Baron de Blondeville to dance with the Lady Barbara, and they went a solemn round together, to the joy of all that beheld them. You would have thought by his looks the young Baron had utterly forgotten what he had seen in hall and gallery, the night before; for, none in the court seemed more proud, or high in spirit, than he, or danced with a better grace.

The Archbishop of York was at the King's right hand, the whole even; but the Prior of Saint Mary's came not near the castle, all that night. Nothing happened to disturb the festival there; but at the priory was a strange accident.

It was before the first watch of matins, that a lay-brother went into the priory church to trim the lights, when, behold! the place, instead of being well lighted, was in total darkness, save that a gleam from the moon came in through the windows. Eadwyn could hardly trust his sight; for, never in man's memory, had the tapers there ceased to burn. But, yet he stood amazed, he noticed something shining near the East end, as a person stood there; and, the moon, soon after, coming out more brightly, he perceived the gleaming of steel; it was an armoured man standing still near a window, or rather under it.

Eadwyn had heard of what had passed, the night before, in the castle-hall; and he instantly became convinced this was the same appearance, which had caused so much marvel there. While yet he looked the figure pointed downward to the ground, near its own feet; but Eadwyn dared not to look again, but fled, as fast as age would permit him, to alarm the whole brotherhood.

Straight, they all flocked together to the church, failing not to bless themselves by the way; but, when they came there, the lights were burning as usual, and nothing new was to be seen in the place! Yet Eadwyn persisted in his say, and, pointing out the spot, where the supposed knight had stood, it was found to be over a gravestone, without a name — so antient did it seem. The monks pored upon the stone; but, if a name had ever been there, not a letter could now be traced; and, if any present did guess whose bones were laid beneath, not one did choose to say.

The disturbance, caused by this strange accident, soon reaching the ears of the Prior, he forthwith came to the church, and, seeing the brethren in such number over this grave, it was noticed he looked more stern than ever; but, when they told what brother Eadwyn had related, he made light of the matter, and said, that his health must be looked to, for that infirmity of mind foretold infirmity of body. Then, he ordered him straight to his cell, there to diet on bread and water, for seven days.

Thus he ended the matter for this night, and in less than seven days did brother Eadwyn, poor man, end his sentence, for, he died on the fourth day, being of above three-score and ten years, and of spare habit, having never been in much in the Prior's favour. As he was proceeding to his cell, the prior failed not to foretell from what he called the distemper of the brain, that his end was approaching; but all, who heard him, took not this matter, as he willed. He ended by warning the brethren not to go by night into the church, save at usual times, when all assembled, lest the folly of Eadwyn might disturb their minds with strange dreamings. Some, who heard him, smiled in secret, notwithstanding their grave deportment, and others, with wonder and trembling, promised to obey.

THE FOURTH DAY.

Here was a drawing of a forest, with a long cavalcade and procession, in other modes of the Court, winding under the shades. In the distance, where the light fell, tents appeared in a pleasant glade, and thence seemed advancing a body of Archers.

King Henry having commanded, that his court of justice should open, on the morrow, in the Whitehall, in the castle, to administer the laws of his realm, summoned, this day, a court of pleasure, to attend him in the forest. The Archbishop was not of his train. Early in the morning, he had departed on his way to Coventry, a short journey from this castle, to visit the Bishop, Roger de Wesham, who there lay sick, at Saint Mary's. And this he did not only in kindness towards him, but for certain more private reasons. Since his discourse with the King, his Highness had seemed willing to move more deliberately in this business of the Baron, and to sift it to the bottom, that the foul slander, as he held it to be, which had been thrown upon his favoured servant, might be exposed, as well as that his life might in future be shielded from the evil arts of sorcery, if such should appear to have been practised by his accuser, in the hall of banquet.

His Highness guessed not, that other than just means might be resorted to against the merchant's life, while he remained in prison, friendless and a stranger, as he was, in this place; much less suspected he, that, in his own court of justice a verdict might be given against an innocent man. A jury had been summoned in this matter, and had been ordered to be in readiness, however suddenly called upon to meet in court. And there the matter rested, his Highness, meaning to keep up this festival with princely diversions, having gone forth, with the Queen and all his court, to divert himself in the chase of Kenilworth and forest of Ardenn.

The Queen was in her litter, hung with purple velvet, broidered with gold, drawn by milk-white steeds richly harnessed; six esquires riding before her; with divers of her Court, and six pages running beside her, and compassed all about, with noble ladies and officers of her state. Chiefest among the ladies, for gracefulness, went the Baroness de Blondeville, on a white palfrey. A palfrey of the like, led by two pages, followed the Queen, for her Highness to ride, when she should so mind. The Countesses of Cornwall and Pembroke-Montfort were likewise in their litters, gorgeously apparelled, with a press of noble dames compassing about and pages and footmen.

Before the King rode the Lord Warden of this forest, attended by the Verderer and other guardians of the vert and venison, with fifty archers, clothed in green, moving in pairs, and sounding by turns their bugles, with right merry glee. First began the four nearest his Highness, and, when they took breath, eight struck up, further on; then again six sounded, and so the music rose and fell throughout the line with most sweet changes. The sound roused up the stags in the forest, and many a one afar off was seen to bound athwart the avenues from shade to shade. But the King came not to hunt, this day, nor would he let an arrow be levelled at any he saw, though this might have been done, without fear of hitting; for they flitted from gloom to gloom, like a sunbeam among clouds, and hardly could you tell when they had passed.

But that, which most delighted the Queen's ladies in these wild woods was to see the nimble squirrels climbing among the boughs, and springing from branch to branch, so full of happy life it was a pleasure to behold. And some, when they had gained the topmost boughs, would quietly sit, cracking the chesnuts and securely looking, with their full, quick eyes, on the company below.

There, I fear, were some, overborne by their own evil passions and galled by the consciousness of them, who might look up to those poor animals, with momentary envy. And doubtless many, who had not these painful reasons for choice, thought it were better so to live amongst these woodlands, in blessed ease and sprightly health, than confined in the golden trammels of a court, where every feeling was checked, that it might move only to certain steps of order, and nature was so nearly forgotten, that, if perchance she did appear, she was pitied and reproved for a child of ignorance, and straight altered after their own fashion. And there were few, who, when they came abroad amongst the hills and forests and the free air and the open sunshine, and heard the joy of birds, and saw the playful grace and glee of animals, there were few, who felt not their spirits dance, although they knew not it was in sympathy with free and guileless nature, which, if they never more could resume it, yet could they never, even in spite of themselves, entirely cease to love.

This noble company had not gone many miles under these forest shades, ere their horns were answered by others, afar off, that made every hill and dell to ring; yet feared they not what this might mean, nor made halt to inquire. Presently, coming where the woods opened, they espied in a green lane a demi-circle of tents, and on the hills beyond a body of archers — outlaws they seemed to be — three hundred at the least, drawn up in battle-array, as if ready to meet them. The noble company nothing daunted, still advanced, and the King ordered his bugles to sound a parley; the which was no sooner done, than all the echoes of those hills answered with horns, and straight the captain of the band came down upon that little plain, attended by twelve of his archers and by two pages, one leading a brace of milk-white greyhounds, in a chain of steel, the other bearing his bow and arrow. These approached the King, cap in hand, and then, dismounting from their hobbies, the captain, who was no other than the King's bowman of this forest, taking his bow and arrow from the page, fell on one knee, and presented them to his Highness.

The King, having shot off the arrow, graciously returned the bow, with a purse of gold, and bade him rise, which he refused to do, until his Highness, and the Queen should grant his petition, which was, that they would repair to the tents, and there rest; while his archers sought to entertain them with their bows. This granted, the bow-bearer rose, and, leading those snowlike greyhounds, whose necks were bound with collars of ebony inlaid with silver, presented them to the King, as lord of this forest. But they were the Queen and her ladies, who best welcomed those delicate animals, admiring their slender forms and dainty coats, white as the ermine on their own mantles.

Forthwith, their Highnesses, with this noble company, repaired to the tents, where they found venison ready prepared for them, with other game, such as these woods afforded, and wines and fruits of Autumn, all set forth on boards dressed out with oaken boughs, so that every table seemed a bower. The rustic seats of the King and Queen were raised on turf, not carpeted with tapestry, but strewed with flowers, and, for their canopies of estate, they had arching branches of chesnut, wreathed with sweet woodbine. The wine was brought in beechen cups, carved from that noble tree, that stretched forth its mighty branches over the King's tent, and then sent out its spray, so lightly and so proudly, above the flag of England waving there. Also, instead of damask water in golden ewers, water, clear as crystal was brought in beechen cups, and in hunters' horns, bound with silver, from the wild brook, that ran among the rocks, and that made, in its lonely course, still music under the green shadows.

It was a goodly sight to behold the tents ranged beneath the trees on the short sward, filled with fresh ladies and other noble company; and the King's tent, where attended the Lord Warder and all the officers of the forest, in their peculiar habits of ceremony — encompassed by his archers in green, with lords and knights in hunting habits, and with esquires and pages in his Highness's livery, glittering with divers colours. The place of every one was so well ordered, that there seemed not any crowd; each rank being set forth to the eye in due degree of beauty and proportion, one beyond another. And first, between the tents, stood the King's demi-lances, and the archers, who had run before him; behind these were the King's horsemen, and others of his train. Somewhat apart stood the Queen's litter, having her cloth of estate over it, with her richly caparisoned palfrey, and pages in waiting; near it were the sumpter-litters of her sister, and of the Countess of Pembroke-Montfort, with coursers, squires and grooms, countless. But the chief sight was the tents circling this pleasant green, all filled with estates and gentils, freshly apparelled, and with banquet-boards so gaily decked, and the lofty trees of beech and oak that overtopped them all.

On the hills, opposite to the demi-circle of these tents, were drawn out the three hundred foresters, who feigned to be outlaws of the forest, presenting Robin Hood and his company.

And, when the King and Queen had refreshed themselves, the Lord Warden of Ardenne, his-self, who had withdrawn from banquet, came riding up to the tent, blowing the ivory horn, which was hung about his neck with a chain of silver, and which was the sign of the charter, by which he held his office, and having done homage, asked, if it so pleased his Highness, to see his archers shoot; to which a gracious answer being given, the Warden gave signal to the bow-bearer, who straight made sign to his men, and the whole troop shot off their arrows, which had whistles in the head, with so loud a noise as amazed and rejoiced the hearts of all present, and roused the stags from their coverts, and sent the birds from their leafy homes in flights, athwart the sky.

Then, were many noble bows drawn to shoot at the deer, as they scudded away under the shades; but the Queen benevolently said, "Nay; shall our delight in these pleasant woods, be the cause of suffering to their innocent tenants! Let every beast and bird be free and happy now, as we are." And his Highness said it should be so this day, and forbade them to shoot. A fence had been fixed, as was the worthless way, and the game was to have been driven into it, and there shot at by her Highness and the ladies of her court. For this purpose, also, there had been prepared arrows, plumed with peacock's feathers, and having heads of bright silver; and now, that a better sport might not be lost, hazel wands were set up, at due distance; from which were suspended garlands of roses, roses of Provence, the Queen's country, for such they seemed, whether the work of nature or of cunning skill; and at these garlands the ladies of her Highness practised for prizes, which the Queen distributed, who, naithless that this adventure had seemed to fall out by accident, was well aware of all that was to happen, and came prepared for it.

His Highness's sister, the Lady Pembroke-Montfort, won a golden arrow, and young Baroness de Blondeville a silver bugle; which the Baron, her lord, tuned up in most sweet triumph of her victory.

After these feats, the archers of Robin Hood practised with their bows, the hazel-wands having been removed to more than treble the distance; and they played off such cunning skill, as made marvel all those, who had before prided themselves in their own performances. Often were the rosy garlands scraped by their darts; or the hazel-wands that held them, shivered. A sheaf of silver arrows and a bow were the prize of the Lord Warden, the captain of the band, who was also wellknown to be the best bow-man. After they had ended this sport, they went through divers courses and devices on horseback, feigning a battle, and sounding their bugles, and hiding in the woods; and then coming back, in pursuit of one another, to the great delight of the whole court; and to none more than to the Prior of Saint Mary's, who was in the King's train; for he joyed in sports of the forest more than well became one of his calling.

And no sooner was this ended, than there was heard from that woody brow, behind the tents, a sound of sweet minstrelsy, of tabours and flutes and viols and other joyous instruments, the which signal was well understood of many present. Straight, the King and Queen, with the chief nobles and gentils of their courts, departed thither-ward, whence the sound came, leaving the rest and the archers of the forest, to make merry in the tents.

Having gone up, beneath the woods, their Highnesses came at last to that lofty brow, where the minstrels were assembled, which overlooked the country, far and near, except where the forest-oaks now and then interrupted the prospect. There might you see, as you looked down under their dark branches, the towers of Kenilworth far off in the sun; and, beyond them, all that wide forest-region, reaching to the Charnwood-hills in Leicestershire; so distant, they seemed blue as the air above them, and none here would have guessed what ancient woods were on their steep sides, dark even as these oaks, which stretched their boughs athwart that lightsome blue.

But neither the lofty spire of the Abbey church of Leicester, Saint Mary de Pratis, nor the town could be spied; for they lay low at the feet of these hills. On another side, you had but to look down, where you could find an alley in the woods, to behold the Castle of Warwick proudly overtopping the vale, and seeming the very lord of those plains, that spread out on all sides, even to the hills of Gloucester, which his Highness had noted from that castle's walls. Some said you might perceive the stately tower of Gloucester Abbey; but of this I know not; for, my eyes could never make it out; yet it might be seen by others, which had not pored so many midnights by the blunt light of tapers; for, this makes things of day, if they be far off, invisible to eyes so used.

I do remember me, when Robert of Gloucester vaunted of his Abbey, Saint Mary de Pratis, at Leicester, he said from topmost spire you might see beyond a hill of Ardenn; but I believed him not, taking it for a triumph over our Priory, which he said was so darkly closed in forests, it seemed more like a cell of penance than a good prior's house. And when I asked him how often in the princely castle, that stood nigh his Abbey, King Henry had kept his court, he was put to silence, though he might have remembered that our good King did, at his Abbey, first receive the crown he wore. From this hill, too, you might espy the town of Coventry, with Saint Mary's, and the convent spires of that village of Eaton, called of the nuns, Nuneaton. Certes, was a pleasant brow; for, wherever the woods opened, these wide prospects spread; yet, turning from them, you seemed hid in boughs and lonesome wilds, where neither town nor castle could be seen, nor any pomp, save that blessed one of these shades; nor any living thing, but what they bred.

And here, where the oaks stretched round a green plat, leaving only a little opening towards those blue forest hills of Charnwood, here was a noble tent prepared for King Henry and his court; there was none other on this spot; but seats were cut in the turf around, under the boughs for such as were not of estate; and there, too, sat the minstrel, tuning up with merry glee, opposite to the King's tent, where the woods parted.

When this noble company had rested awhile, and had taken leche lardys and wine, and had spied out from this summit all, which those, who knew the country, pointed out to them, the Countess of Cornwall went forth of the King's tent; and, according to the pleasant fashion of her country, danced on the green-sward under the trees, with the Lord Simon de Montfort. She moved with a noble grace, as was reported by those present; first, in a bass-dance; and then, springing up with lighter grace, she ended with a measure that showed off all the gaiety of her own land, and so much rejoiced the heart of the Queen, her sister, that, but for her dignity, she would have danced also. I guess it brought back to her mind the festivals of her father's court, in that pleasant land of Southern France, called Provence, where they love to sport in the open air, nigh the shade of woods, and will pass a summer's day to the sound of flutes and viols; their banquets being of fruit, fresh gathered from the orange-trees and the vines, and being laid forth on the grass, beside some windling brook.

And it was to pleasure the Queen, with a banquet like to what she had been 'customed to in her own country, that King Henry had thus come forth into these forest-shades. This was a day, that suited well his purpose; it was a calm, sunshine day, when the air, so balmy soft, showed every near object as if nought but crystal interposed — and every thing distant — hills, water, sky, as it were dressed in azure; it was surely a blue day, such as is seldom seen in our Island prospect, save in the parting month of autumn, though often in that pleasant part of France, where these diversions seem devised to make the most of the climate.

When that the Countess of Cornwall had ended her dance, the Queen invited several foreign noble lords and ladies, visitors from her own land, to dance divers rounds of their own country. Amongst these the Baron de Blondeville figured; and truly, when he led off the dance most joyed in by the villagers on the banks of the Rhone, none did so lightly bound, nor throw up his cap in the air, with gayer face than he. As for the young Baroness, who could trip more blythely, or more delicately express every joyful feeling than she showed here, this day?

Lightly as the willow-spray,
Dancing to the airs of May.

And thus this noble company disported themselves, until the day was far spent; and then set they forth in state and order for Kenilworth, the whole troop of forest-archers attending the King to the gates of the castle, whence they departed not till after due regale, nor till the sun had well nigh gone down. As they went, his Highness's command was conveyed to them, that they should attend him to hawk on the river of Avon in the forest, and should there partake his banquet.

THE FIFTH DAY AND NIGHT.

Over this Chapter was a drawing of the poor Merchant's prison-chamber; it was night; for, a lamp burned beside the pallet, on which he lay stretched. A face appeared dimly, behind the grating in the back wall.

This day, the King's Court of Justice was opened in the White Hall of Kenilworth, and divers matters adjudged there; but the cause of the merchant came not on. It hath been already related, that Henry was inclined to move more deliberately in this matter than he had first been; but there were some about him who were desirous to urge it to a conclusion, before the return of the Archbishop of York from Coventry: and for this they had weighty reasons of their own. It has been shown, that the Archbishop inclined somewhat to the cause of the poor merchant, and that he was no friend to the Prior of Saint Mary's. Now, neither the Prior, nor the Baron de Blondeville, augured well to themselves from the Archbishop, seeing the manner in which he had held himself towards them; and they sought, by all means, to have the prisoner disposed of, before the return of that powerful and intrepid prelate.

This day, the Prior came to the castle; and, after a private conference with the Baron, in which they settled their plot, the Prior craved hearing of the King, and set forth somewhat of the strange appearance at the Priory, on a late night; but he told only as much of the truth of that adventure as suited himself, and added to it as much falsehood as he dared. Having then declared the whole to be some new artifice, practised by the secret friends of the merchant, he besought the King to relieve the Baron from the unseen dangers, made to impend over him by the malice of his enemies, and which, he said, would not cease so long as his accuser remained unpunished; for that the accusation was a guilty one he had no doubt. To this entreaty the Baron joined his, that the King would end this matter, as might seem right to his Highness, pleading that his peace and honour were alike in jeopardy, during every hour of this season, in which he had looked only for joy and gladness; since, however fully and highly he was honoured by his Highness's favour, and however he his-self might seem, in the face of the court, to bear the slander, neither he, nor any one of those most dearly connected with him, had known one moment of real comfort, since the accusation was first made.

The truth of this King Henry admitted; yet was he firm in refusing to hasten unduly the trial of the merchant; and they, suspecting that his motive for this was chiefly to have the Archbishop present when it should come on, urged their petitions, till his Highness's visible displeasure put an end to further hearing. And thus the business rested for this time: the Prior departing for his chamber, and the Baron to prepare himself to attend the King, in the great chamber, where his Highness was to keep state. There was rehearsed before the King a Servantois, composed by Maister Denis Pyramus, setting forth divers brave deeds of chivalry. Nothing extraordinary happened this night; and the Court broke up at the usual time, every one seemingly well contented and at peace. But, what human being may look into the secrets of the heart? many, that lay beneath this roof, from King down to serving-man, were pressed with heavy cares, each in his way, but none more heavily than the Baron de Blondeville.

Now every one was gone to his own chamber, for all night, and the Wayte, with his groom bearing the torch, was going his second round, when a person passed athwart the upper court, who answered not the watchword. Both the old man and his boy saw this person beside them; but he was gone, before the challenge was repeated; and he was so muffled up in his garment, they could distinguish neither shape, nor feature. But they had marked the way he went, and they followed his steps, which led them to that great tower, still called of Cæsar, which was the keep; on it pended the prison-turret of the merchant. Marvelling who might go there at this hour so privily, they tried the door of entrance, but found it fast, and then the bars of the tower windows, and they too were safe. The great gate of the Portcullis, where the wardours kept guard, opened not into this court, but over the ditch, on the other side of the tower; or the wayte would have speedily given the alarm, for he thought all was not right.

He guessed he had mistaken the way this person had gone; but, stepping back and looking up at the tower, his boy spied a light passing by a casement, on high, which he knew led up a staircase to the prison-chamber. So the old man suspected some plot was going forward for the liberty of him confined there, and he gave an alarm at the door beneath; presently on which, he heard the keeper's voice within; who, being asked whether any one had just entered the tower, answered "No;" and, being then asked whether any one had passed up the staircase with a light, he said he knew not, others were dwelling in the place, besides himself. The wayte told what he had seen in the court, and that he suspected some one had entered the tower with a false key; to which the keeper answered, that could not have been without his hearing; and bade him go on his watch-way, and, if his sight had not deceived him, he would find, perchance, the person he suspected lurking within the court, in the porch, perhaps, of the great hall, or under the archway of the white tower. Though the old man thought all was not right, he went his way, and searched the places noted and every other corner of the court; but he found no one. The more marvelling, he determined to look well to the prison-tower, and, if any one came forth of it, to seize him, if he might be strong enough.

And so, having sung out his second round, for this night, he concealed his torch, within a buttress-nook, where it lay smouldering; and then, with his boy, he took his station in the front of King Henry's lodging, which was opposite to Cæsar's tower. Little did his groom-boy help him; for, he was soon asleep and snoring loudly enough to bid any one lurking in the court to beware of his master; the torch itself could not more surely have betrayed their station; but the aged man, who could better wake than slumber, sat still and watchful on the bench, within that porch, often silencing, though it were but for a minute, his drowsy companion. Still and watchful did he sit in that gloomy porch below; but there was one as still and wakeful in the tower above, lying on his pallet, full of grievous care and dread of what might happen.

This poor merchant, when he knew of what he was accused, saw, that his destruction was appointed, and that the Baron de Blondeville, to save himself, had contrived this pretence of delusions and evil arts practised by him. He had been told to prepare himself for trial "on the morrow;" and he suspected not that he was deceived, or that there could be any motive for deceiving him, in that respect. The King, as before said, had steadily refused to have the merchant tried on the morrow; who, notwithstanding, had been bidden to hold himself in readiness for that day. And to that morrow he now looked with dread and despair; for, how would he defend himself from that terrible shadow, which he heard his enemies designed to raise up against him? how strike a phantom, which, though armed with the deadly weapons of malice, was invulnerable as the air — the phantom of sorcery? Thus, he foresaw that his sentence was passed: and, when he thought of his distant home, his wife and children, who, ignorant of his wretched state, were now expecting him with fond impatience, from a foreign land, and whom he must never more behold; — when he thought of this, he was little able to meditate what he should say, or do, when he should be confronted with his enemies. Thus he passed several hours.

At last, when he considered the virtuous motive, which had led him into this jeopardy, and the wickedness of his accusers, pious confidence began to possess his mind; indignation struggled with his grief, and his apprehensions vanished. In these moments, he believed himself capable of rousing conviction in the minds of the judges, by the strength and eloquence of indignation alone. He forgot, that it had hitherto failed him with King Henry; but such courageous hope rose and fell with his sorrow, giving place to deep despondency and weakness, whenever be thought much of his wife and children.

The suddenness of his first appeal to King Henry prevented him from perceiving the danger of accusing the favourite of a prince; nor considered he his own helplessness, though he was in this place a friendless stranger: he felt only a generous sorrow for his murdered kinsman; he balanced not the difficulties with the justice of his purpose. And, truly, his peril arose not from any indifference of the King to do what was right, but from the want of steadiness in his mind, and from that misdirected kindness of heart, which made even a suspicion of guilt in one he had esteemed and trusted so painful, that conviction of it seemed not to be endured. It is wellknown, that a weak mind, rather than have such a suffering, will turn aside, and take shelter in willing credulity to its first opinion; a strong one, meeting the worst at once, will proceed straight forward, and, freeing itself from an uncertainty, will do both that, which is just towards others, and, in the end, best for its own ease. Which of these ways King Henry took will be more fully set forth hereafter.

Such thoughts as these had not occurred to the poor merchant, when most he needed them; but now, in the stillness of his prison, he considered of many things, which, amidst the interests of busy life, he would have passed unheeded. And much and often he pondered on what he should say, on the morrow — the day, as he supposed, of his trial — endeavouring to prepare himself for the questions, that might be asked him. Importuned with such thoughts, he was resting on his pallet, a lamp burning above him; when, without any previous sound even of a step, he heard the key turn in the door of his chamber, and with such cautious gentleness, as if some person tried by stealth to enter. He lay still, listening to what might follow; but the door opened not, there being a bolt within, that secured the prisoner from nightly intrusion. Of this, the person without knew not; for the key was still moved in the lock; and this showed to the prisoner it was not the keeper, who sought to enter. With a dread of some nigh evil, he looked round, and saw, through the grate opening on the passage, light, that seemed to come from the stair; and, while he watched, behold a hand came through the grate, and tried to reach the bolt, which held the door within.

The poor merchant shuddered, when he saw those bony fingers stretched forth, with no weak impulse, to force back the bolt; and he started, when there came a face behind the grate, and he knew it to be the Prior's of Saint Mary's. His hand could not push back the bolt; and seeing, that the prisoner was now awake and watchful, he called to him by name, and desired him to unfasten the chamber. The prisoner demanded who came, at that unseasonable hour, and what he wanted; on which the Prior told his name, and that he came to confess him and prepare him for his trial, on the morrow. When the merchant observed, that the hour was extraordinary for such a duty, he was answered, "it is never too late for a good work;" and was desired to open the door, without further speaking.

But the prisoner, misliking the visage of this Prior, whom he had noted, on a former occasion, and fearing some concealed mischief, still delayed to comply, saying, that for his trial he was as much prepared, as an innocent conscience could prepare him. On this, the Prior was angry, and said he came by the King's order, whose chamber he had just left, and, in his name, demanded entrance.

"If so," answered the prisoner, "I marvel the keeper is not with you. Why come you alone, and at this dead hour? I beseech you let me go on with my night's sleep, which will best prepare me for the morrow's trial."

"The King's order is sufficient for my appearance alone," said the Prior. "I require not the keeper's attendance at a confession; and, for his key, it is already in my hand; therefore, delay no longer, draw that unlawful bolt." The merchant said again he had no confession to make, and that, even if he had ought to tell, he could tell it through the grate, and there only would he answer, this night.

"You know not," said the Prior, "the good you are refusing; let me in, and you may hear that you expect not. Why should you suppose I come to you as an enemy?"

"Father," said the prisoner, "I have desired rest; and, in so saying, why should you suspect I take you for an enemy. I have never injured you, and am even a stranger to you; if, therefore, I ought to fear admitting you to this chamber, you best can tell why. But I crave rest; this is the reason for it, and well may I marvel you have chosen such a time wherein to visit me; and, yet more, why you come alone, without witness."

"Come nearer to the grate," said the Prior, "and I will tell you." The prisoner raised himself from his pallet and advanced. "Come nearer," said the Prior; to which the poor man, astonished at this eagerness, replied, that, where he stood, he could well hear even the lowest speech.

"Others, too, may hear. What I would say, is to yourself alone."

"And what inducement can you have to confide any thing to me — a prisoner, without help, without council, without comfort, other than that of a good conscience? Since, then, I cannot administer to myself, what can I administer to you, that you should seek my confidence?"

"You may find, perhaps," said the Prior, "that you are neither without council nor help, if you will listen to me;" and again he bade the merchant draw nearer; on whose doing so, he asked him, if he wished for liberty? On this the prisoner smiled contemptuously.

"I hear the first matin-bell," said he; it calls you — you had done better to be in your place than to have come hither, at an hour, to tempt me by such a question."

"I begin to think so too," answered the Prior, "since you are so obstinately bent against yourself; but open the door, and I will convince you I am your friend."

"You must convince me of that, before I unfasten this door."

What other arguments the Prior might use are unknown, but they answered his purpose so far, that the poor prisoner, at last, gave up his fears, and admitted him to the chamber. Having thus entered, the Prior fastened the door again, and, holding up the lamp to examine whether any one was concealed in the room, the full light fell upon his forehead, and showed a deep scar, that seemed to remain from a sword wound.

While the merchant stood observing his face, under this peculiar light, the scar suddenly engrossed his attention; and he thought he had seen the same countenance, at some former period of his life. He had little time for recollection; but he thought this was at an inn, between Tarnworth and the Chase, as he was travelling with his kinsman from Worcester; the latter having landed at Milford, on his return from beyond the sea: but the recollection was indistinct; and he checked the fear, which was beginning to return upon him.

The Prior, after his survey of the chamber, met one glance of the scrutinizing eyes, that were directed upon him, and immediately withdrew his own; and, sitting down on the low pallet, he thus addressed his prisoner:— "Now shall you know me for your friend; for, here I tell you, that, if you wish to escape this night the trial that threatens you, I have in my power the means of assisting you; and am ready to use them, on one condition!"

The prisoner, surprised and distrusting the motive of this offer, answered, "You said but now, that you came hither by the King's order! Is it also by his order, that you bring me this offer of escape? He has only to will my freedom! and I shall go forth from these walls without any contrivance, or secret methods of my own."

"Yes: and then you may, without further let, or hindrance, again sound forth your accusations against an innocent man! It is on one condition only, that his Highness consents to your escape. As to your going openly forth, with his known consent, free of punishment for your accusation against the Baron de Blondeville, that cannot be, and he preserve his honour: liberty, granted to you on such terms, would be the Baron's condemnation. This you must acknowledge. There is but one way, that can secure both his honour and your safety — only one!"

"Name it!" said the merchant.

"It is, that you set your name to this paper, containing a recantation of all, of which you have accused the Baron before the King; and that you leave it behind you ere you take your secret flight, in sure testimony of his innocence."

The prisoner, rising up with indignation, exclaimed, "Never! I was witness to the crime, of which I have accused him, and never will I cease to demand justice for it! Nor will I believe King Henry would, in this way, shelter a man, whose honour he would fear to bring to trial!"

While he said this, the countenance of the Prior darkened; and, after a short silence, he replied slowly: "I cannot doubt your knowledge of the crime; but I as little doubt the innocence of him you have accused. You err not as to the deed, but as to the criminal; and your crime lies in this, that you have rashly, and with unmeet confidence, charged a man with a dreadful offence, whom, even if he were guilty, you could have small means of knowing to be so. Your obstinacy, too, in persisting in this charge, when you have found who the accused is, takes away from you all claim to mercy; and, understand from me, that, on your trial tomorrow, you are not likely to find any. At this hour, tomorrow night, if you shall be then still amongst the living, you will remember, in despair, the opportunity, now offered you and now passing away.

Scarcely had the Prior ended, when the bell of Saint Mary's sounded, and his visage altered, while he faintly uttered the latter words. He was mute awhile, and then he said, "If you have resolved to proceed with this denunciation, I must leave you: if you doubt, mercy is still open to you; but no time is to be lost — I must be gone!"

"Could I doubt, for an instant, as to the person of the murderer," said the agitated prisoner, "I should, indeed, be infamous, in accusing the Baron de Blondeville, and equally foolish in hesitating to accept your offer; but my memory is faithful; I never can forget the countenance of him, who murdered my kinsman, in my sight."

"It is extraordinary your memory should have received so false an impression, if, indeed, you speak according to your conviction; it is extraordinary, that, considering the short opportunity you had observing the robber's face, you should be so confident in that impression; you saw him only for a moment, and then by a torch lying on the ground. A light, so placed, might give a false appearance to any countenance." He ceased, and the merchant remained thoughtful and silent.

"It is extraordinary, too," said the Prior, "that, recollecting so clearly, the countenance of one of the robbers, you should have no remembrance of the others."

"I saw not the faces of the others. You were present, when I related this matter to the King; can you have forgotten, that I said the other robbers were masked during the whole outrage?"

"I recollect you said so. And you say so now again? You are sure they were masked?" said the Prior.

"Yes, I am sure," replied the merchant.

"Yet is it strange, that the man, who committed the murder, should be the only man of the four, who exposed his face."

"The four! I saw but three," said Woodreeve, eagerly. He looked at the Prior, who was, for a moment, silent. "You must remember, I told the King, the assassin's *visor* fell off in the struggle with my brave kinsman."

At this close recollection of the very manner of the deed, the prisoner was much moved; he groaned heavily, and threw himself again on the pallet, saying, "Talk no more of this cruel transaction, I beseech you; it goes to my heart." His visitor made no answer, and the merchant remained for a short time, with his face hid in his hands, as if in an ecstasy of grief. When he raised himself and turned, he found the Prior standing close beside him, with an expression, which he did not, at the moment, understand.

"I must begone," said the intruder; "you will repent that you have neglected the opportunity; another will certainly not occur; and you deserve not that it should, since you can persist, on such slight grounds, in accusing a stranger of what would affect his life. I know the Baron de Blondeville to be innocent."

Woodreeve was struck both with the emphasis and with the tone, in which this was uttered; it was not the usual voice of the Prior; yet did it seem the natural one, and not wholly unknown to him. Looking earnestly upon him, he said, "Who is with me?"

His visitor, turning quickly at the question, answered not the scrutiny of the merchant's eye, but scornfully asked, "Know you not the Prior of Saint Mary's?"

"I did know a Prior of St. Mary's;" said the other sadly, "you are not he. Moreover, your speech was but now changed, I knew it not for yours; not for the same I had heard a few minutes before, though it seemed not unknown to me."

“That is strange; but your observance of my voice, seems to be about as certain as your recollection of the Baron de Blondeville’s features; and I should not much marvel, if you were to denounce it as a party in the same adventure. But I must leave you, and shall add nothing more, since you had rather remain a prisoner, with death before your eyes, than doubt the correctness of your memory, or recant from an error, when in so doing, you might save the life of yourself, or, perhaps, of an innocent man. Call not that a love of justice, which is blind vengeance in its blackest shape.”

There was something in these latter words, that now struck the harassed mind of the prisoner, with a force, which had not accompanied any similar exhortation from his adviser; a dreadful possibility was once more placed before him, and the moment was passing, in which by acknowledging that possibility, he might put an end to the fearful alternative, in which he stood, of losing his own life, or taking that of another.

“What if there be one possibility,” said he to himself, “out of thousands, that I have accused an innocent person!” and he shuddered with horror.

The Prior instantly perceived the hesitation of his mind, and he waited awhile, that it might end in further doubts, which he knew would be stronger, if his now readier listener should forget them to have proceeded from his promptings, and should mistake them for his own. When he thought they had taken some hold, he threw out hints and argument to confirm his apprehensions; and this with so much success, that the merchant was no longer sufficiently confident in his own recollection, to adhere to a purpose so surrounded with danger, either to his life, or, what was truly more important, and what he always held to be more important — to his conscience. But, although this shade of distrust might influence him, to desist from a further prosecution of the Baron de Blondeville, he was not persuaded to sign the recantation proposed to him, nor any recantation whatsoever. On this point, every suggestion made to him, touching his own security, or advantage, was vain; at this moment, he held it just possible the Baron might be innocent, and, therefore, was he willing to desist from his accusation; but he also thought it far more probable, that he was guilty, and, therefore, would he not affirm that he was innocent.

The Prior, feigning more satisfaction he felt, as to the progress of his suggestions, said, “You think the Baron guiltless; your recantation must therefore follow, when you have had a few minutes further consideration. Else where would be the love of justice, of which you have said so much?”

“I only doubt of his guilt,” said the respondent in this dispute, “and that carries me no farther than a relinquishment of the prosecution.”

“But you certainly do not doubt, that this must be insufficient to satisfy his honour. He has been publicly accused, and it is necessary, that he should be as publickly cleared. It is also necessary” — here the speaker delivered himself with greater emphasis— “it is also necessary, that his accuser, if he be obstinate, should be punished for his attempt. Think you that punishment is likely to be slight? If you remain here, certain destruction awaits you; if you go away, and leave behind this recantation of your error, you will save your own life, and testify so far to the Baron’s innocence, as to render a pursuit of you unnecessary to his reputation.”

“I knew not,” said Woodreeve, “that you were so warmly my friend, as you profess yourself to be; you seem as anxious for my welfare, after I may leave this place, as for the Baron’s reputation.”

The Prior liked not this remark. “I know not,” said he, “why I should be thus anxious, since you are so distrustful of my goodwill, although there be mixed with my wish to save your life, a desire, that you should restore the reputation of an innocent man. I marvel you should hesitate to accept my kindness.”

The merchant still refused to sign a recantation, which went so much beyond his own conviction. “My flight, without this,” said he, “would afford sufficient is presumption of my doubt, and even that is rather a stronger word than ought to applied to my mere admission of a possibility.”

The parties remained for a while in silence, one considering whether he should waive the recantation he had so strongly insisted upon, the other, whether he should trust himself with such a companion, even if he no longer required it. He feared some treachery in the proposal; the offer of an escape might be made, only with a design to draw him into a virtual acknowledgment of guilty motives for his charge, the more certainly to accomplish his destruction. “Suppose I were on the outside of the castle walls,” said he, “how may I proceed, when beyond them, since I have neither horse, nor friend, to expedite me?”

“You consent, then, to sign this?”

“No,” replied the merchant, lifting up his head, with a resolute and indignant countenance. “If you insist on such a condition, here, I entreat you, conclude your visit, and leave me to my rest.”

The Prior now yielded. “There is a place, without the town,” said he, “where you may lie hidden, till the dawn, or, if you fear not to traverse the woods by night, a horse and guide are in readiness for you. I am sufficiently your friend to help you, without insisting on further conditions.”

Still, the prisoner hesitated. He knew no previous goodwill of his adviser towards him, that could account for so much preparation for his safety; he liked not to trust him, with such an opportunity to ruin him. But, while he thus feared treachery, on one hand, he saw destruction threatening him, on the other; if he trusted to the present offer, he might perish; he awaited a doubtful contest with enemies so powerful, and so greatly inflamed by revenge, he felt little hope for his life. To declare in court, his mere admission, that the Baron might be innocent, would not be sufficient for his own release; further his conscience would not let him go, and yet it was apparent, that he should be pressed to go further, and should be treated as a criminal, if he refused; nothing would be sufficient to his own safety, which was not so to the Baron’s views; his admission would be attributed only to fear, and it was not fear in him, which his adversaries wished to prove. After he had weighed these thoughts in his mind, he told the Prior he was ready to depart.

While he yet spoke, he heard the bell of Saint Mary’s strike, for the third time; the Prior heard it too; and he stood still and thoughtful. Then, starting from his mood, he said, “Your determination is, perhaps, too late; let us begone.”

On being asked why he feared this, he answered, “That bell was to serve as the third signal.” On being asked for what purpose it was to serve as a signal, he replied, without explaining, that it concerned the escape, adding, “Not a moment is to be lost; while we are talking, your opportunity is fleeing;” and he arose and unlocked the chamber-door.

“Are you sure of the keeper?” said Woodreeve, “and how are we to pass the castle gates?”

"There is no time for answers; follow in silence." They left the chamber; a light was burning on the head of the stair, which the Prior, as he descended, took up in his hand. The merchant perceived no one on the stair, save his conductor; but he looked fearfully at every doorway he passed, expecting each moment, to see someone on the watch, ready to start out upon him.

Having descended two flights only, the Prior turned into a chamber on the left, making sign for the merchant to follow; who, fearing he was not leading him forth of the tower, stood still on the stair, and pointed downward, as though he would go that way only. But, the Prior still beckoning, and retiring with the light, he could not but follow into what appeared to a stateroom of this tower, and which did in truth belong to the constable of the castle, though not then used by him. Woodreeve marvelled, wherefore he was led to this chamber, which, for height and greatness, nearly equalled any at Kenilworth, and which, though scant of furniture, was yet hung with ancient arras, that fell from under the high windows down to the very floor.

The Prior again beckoning him, he passed on, without inquiring, fearing lest the sound of his voice might call forth some one, who should have been on watch. This chamber led into another, separated, as was a third, by a wall, which, though lofty, did not reach the roof, except by a row of round arches, that appeared above the arras, and rose to a vast height, making the whole extent of these three large chambers visible on high, like unto the aisle-roof of a church, though the partition walls concealed it below.

On the top of these walls, stood many figures of armour, beneath the arches and piles of arms, which none could reach, save those acquainted with the secret ways of the chambers. These shapes exhibited every device of harness known — of plain steel, of brass, or coat of mail; with helms and visors of divers sorts; some to lie flat before the face, leaving only an opening for the eyes above; others hiding the eyes, yet allowing sight and the passage of breath through the iron bars of the projecting visor, and some with beaver down, as if there were a visage behind too ghastly to be exposed. These were the state rooms of the great tower, or keep of Cæsar; but although assigned as the habitation of the Constable, they were never used by him, except in time of siege, they were so cold and comfortless. Hung they were with like arras from the line of the windows and arches, down to the floor, but they showed little sign of the living beside.

The merchant, coming to the third chamber and seeing no sign of an outlet beyond, liked it not; and, halting at the door, made signal for the Prior to return; but he, waving the lamp over his head, noticed this only by a gesture to come on. As he did so, his companion could almost have believed some evil sprite was before him, so dark and strange he looked under that gloomy light. When the Prior had reached the end of this chamber, he stood still, till Woodreeve came up; and then, checking all further question, he put the lamp into his hand, and, lifting up the arras, unfastened a door behind it; beyond which appeared an arch made in the solid wall, of twelve or fourteen feet thickness.

Several steps led up to a stone landing-place and to a loop beyond; where, in time of siege, two archers could stand, shoot forth their arrows, unseen of the enemy without. And there were many of the like in these chambers; but the arras hid them from those, who might be guests.

Woodreeve, marvelling why the Prior had led him thither, looked forward into the depth of this arch; and there saw, by the dim light, a figure stand: which, for aught that then appeared, might be a mere bowman, ready to shoot; till the Prior, snatching the lamp from the merchant, who had no power either to resist, or to flee, held it forward at arm's length, and it gleamed upon the armour of one, who seemed appointed like a knight.

Instantly, the lamp shook in the hand of the Prior, and Woodreeve wondered not less to see his visage change to deadly pale, than at the shape before him, till its harness of a knight seemed to remind him of his dead kinsman. The Prior, recovering from his ecstasy, said, "'Tis but the armour of the Lord Constable, which used to stand in this recess; 'tis strange I should have forgotten this: come on; you have nothing to fear!"

But the merchant thought not so; and liked not being brought hither, whence, as it seemed, they could go no further; but in this he was mistaken. A key having been applied by his conductor to a door in the side of the archway, it opened upon a passage, made in the thickness of the wall, which led to many secret places of this tower, and elsewhere, unknown to few, save the Lord Constable and the wardour: how the Prior came to be acquainted with it, may appear hereafter.

The wind, that poured through this door, had extinguished the lamp, had not Woodreeve let fall the arras; and, when he found himself inclosed in this arch, he lamented his attempt; and still more when he saw the Prior standing darkly, at the foot of a narrow staircase, looking up it, and beckoning him to come on. His heart failed him, and he demanded whither he was to be led, saying he would go no further, till he should receive an answer to that question. The Prior spoke in a low voice, as if he feared to be heard, a precaution, which seemed to be unnecessary here, and said, "Within the thickness of these walls, there are galleries, which lead to many points; you will presently find yourself at the foot of the tower."

"How can that be," said his companion, "when the stairs do not descend, but rise?"

"Come on, and you shall see; but first let me secure this door." The Prior stepped back; and, as he locked it, hung the key to his girdle. As he flung back his weeds to do this, Woodreeve thought he saw the glitter of steel within. Other keys might hang there; but he almost thought he saw a poniard, and he doubted whether it were safer to attempt going back to his prison, or to proceed, without betraying his suspicions. His conductor left him little time to meditate; for, taking again the lamp, he went up the stair, bidding him tread lightly, and speak not.

It was a short flight of steps, ending in a narrow passage, where once and again a loop supplied the place of windows. Now, there were within these walls of the grand story, galleries, that ran round the chambers, below the windows, which were made for secret communication to distant parts of the castle; and, for means of security and escape, in times of siege; some led up to the battlements; others down to the donjon and to subterraneous avenues; but whither these went finally there were few that could tell. The Prior was acquainted with them all, and, when the King's court was not at Kenilworth, he could, had he been rebelliously inclined, have surprized the ten knights, who kept garrison here, and have delivered the castle unto an enemy. But his treachery took not so wide a compass.

Woodreeve followed through this gallery in watchful silence, and, at the end of it, saw the Prior make halt, where the wall fell into a recess, as if a turret were at that corner of this tower. On coming up, he perceived in the floor a large opening, or well, such as is found in the strong holds of many castles, and is used, when great balls of solid stone or balistas, catapultas, and other engines of war are to be drawn up, for defence, during the siege.

The Prior bent over it with the lamp, eyeing the depth; and, while Woodreeve did the same, he saw, far down within, a flash of light, which showed him a high and narrow arch at the bottom. A stronger flash made him look up to the lamp his conductor held, supposing it might have come from that; but his eyes settled not on the lamp, but on the looks of the Prior, which were fixed in dark watchfulness; and again the countenance struck him as having been seen by him, under other circumstances than any, which had lately occurred at Kenilworth.

He stepped hastily back from the opening; his conductor stepped back also; and he heard, at the same moment, a voice say, "Wardour, mind the hour!"

The merchant's heart sunk at the sound, which seemed to him the same he had heard, this night before, in his prison, and he looked again at the Prior; but his lips were motionless; and, when he had made a sign for silence, and had beckoned the merchant forward, he turned quickly this angle of the tower into a gallery like that they had left. It ended in another turret, but here appeared a narrow stair, leading, on one hand, up to the battlement, and, on the other, descending; it was so narrow as to admit only one in front, and so steeply winding, that he, who followed, could hardly keep in view him, who went before.

It ended in a small chamber, where the Prior again made a stand, and, giving the lamp to his companion, he drew the bolts of a strong oaken door, so thickly barred and studded with iron, that the weight of it could hardly have been moved by the Prior alone. Here the spirits of Woodreeve revived; for, this seemed by its strength to be a door of outer defence, and he willingly assisted to force it back. His disappointment was great, when he perceived, that it opened only on a straight and steep flight of steps. Again, he questioned his conductor, who, once more, bade him be patient. The steps led to another door, which opened to a covered gallery, or passage, judged by the merchant to pass under the castle-foss, and, when they came to a third strong door, and ascended a short flight of steps, he doubted not the Prior was leading him forth of a salley-port, beyond the ditch.

At the top of these steps, a fourth door appeared; this was so stoutly fastened with bolts and bars, that together they could scarce undo them. And sorely was Woodreeve daunted, when, instead of finding it opening to liberty and fresh air, he saw beyond it only a narrow and dismal chamber, more like to a prison than even that he had left. His loud remonstrances alarmed the Prior, who again besought him, as he wished for freedom, to be circumspect and silent.

"We have passed," said he, "along the castle wall, through that covered gallery, which leads from the Constable's chambers to the gate of entrance into the bass-court, and may be within hearing of the wardours. Four knights below keep castle guard, to night, within the great portal, the King being here, at Kenilworth. You have, perchance, already betrayed yourself; but wait here, while I go on and examine, whether the way be clear; if you hear me speaking loud, retire into the covered passage, and bar the iron door; but be not heard the while; if all be still, stay here, till I return."

Woodreeve eagerly desired to follow, his heart misgiving him of treachery, and because also, that he even shuddered at the thought of being left alone in this dreary place, without a light; for the only lamp they carried the Prior must take to light his own steps. But his conductor objected, that, their way now lying near the ground, it was unsafe for them to go further together, till he should have made sure, that the wardours were aloof. To this the merchant remarked with some surprize, that this did not agree with the assurance he had given him, that he had safe means of escape, for, it now appeared that, although their passage lay so near to where the wardours, or others watched, it seemed not that he had secured the goodwill of any one to help them. A keen sarcastic smile was on the countenance of the Prior, which, certain, the poor merchant did not read aright.

"If you have deceived me already, how can I resolve to proceed further with you? you said you had prepared a horse and guide, without the walls."

"Hush," said the Prior, "you are delivering us both to destruction; speak not; be confident and patient; you will soon have reason to find that your distrust has been folly. I will return immediately, unless I am seen. If you hear my voice, remember the retreat, that remains for you, and that you secure the door without noise; I shall find means of extricating you another way. You know you are not to expect me to call to you; it will be sufficient if you hear me speaking loudly."

Having said this, he laid his finger on his lips, and then, shading the lamp by his garment, left the chamber by a narrow passage, and was speedily out of sight. Woodreeve, awed by the darkness of this lone spot, tried, notwithstanding the injunction he had received, to follow his steps; but no sound of them could he hear; a little ray from the lamp alone giving him a faint glimpse through that passage into a lofty chamber, where he just discovered the light vanishing through a distant doorway, with the Prior's shadow beside it. And here Woodreeve made halt, lest he should not be able, in this darkness, to find his way back to the covered passage, should the signal for retreat be sounded, and lest his following steps should be heard of the Prior, who his-self moved so stilly, as though he had meant to observe whether he was followed, or not.

The merchant listened attentively, but heard no sound: he watched a considerable while on this spot, without perceiving any sign of the Prior's return. His heart again failed him, and again he trusted, that he, who was guiltless of any crime, and whom pity for a murdered kinsman had exposed to this danger, would not be left to be destroyed by any artifice of man. Still the Prior did not return, nor was his voice heard in any direction. Now, taking his way towards the door, through which he had seen him depart, he determined to know the worst, and either to make one desperate effort to escape, or resign himself into the hands of any guard he could find. The chamber was so spacious, that hardly could he find his way through it, but that, as he advanced, he perceived a glimmering of light, which led him to the very door, where his conductor had disappeared. Here he saw the rays shoot athwart another room, through the arch of an opposite door. Listening and hearing no sound, he advanced cautiously, that he might observe, without entering that further chamber, what was passing within it.

It was a large and lofty chamber, having no window, save one, but many loops in the walls, which were dimly seen by the slanting light from a lamp near the high roof. On the opposite side, were large grooves and pullies of extraordinary strength, such as he had never seen before, and could not now comprehend the use of; but, in the present temper of his mind, he readily assigned for them some terrible purpose; in which conjecture he was not mistaken. Near them were a row of large iron spikes and many bars, that covered the wall to a great height; and he then understood this to be the portcullis room. But what surprized him was, to see light springing up through the floor, at regular distances, by small apertures; for, he knew not that there were used the machicollations, for pouring down melted lead and hot sand on the heads of enemies, who might have forced the first gates, or even the portcullis itself; and that this glimmering came from the watch-lights of the guard in the portal beneath. Still, he neither saw, nor heard, any living person in this chamber; till, venturing a little within the door, he observed, at the farther end, a torch, gleaming through a passage, and the Prior himself standing in the archway, between two men, who lay along on stone benches in the wall.

He bent over one for awhile, and then over the other, as if communicating some to them; and Woodreeve, suspecting that he was betrayed to those, who would not scruple to dispatch him, stood rooted by terror to the spot, and saw the Prior advance alone towards the door, where he watched. He was presently observed of him, and the looks of his conductor, on discovering him, seemed to express dismay; but this soon passed from them, and, putting himself back, within the door, he said, “All is right; follow me through that passage; but step lightly and speak not, for your life.”

“For my life,” answered the merchant, imprudently, “will I not follow you thither, where two men are lying in wait; I have seen them.”

“Then you have seen the wardours of this cullis-chamber in their niches, keeping guard; and good guard will they keep; they will not wake of one while; their liquor has been such as I wished.”

This seemed so probable an explanation, that Woodreeve received it for truth; yet was he surprized, that so great preparation had been made for his escape, and he asked how it were possible to be certain this sleep was not feigned, and who had prepared their drink. The Prior answered, with sarcastic smile, “Four knights do service in the portal below; there is one among them, who has spared not to make these inferior wardours merry.”

He then checked further question, saying, “Come, let us pass; time speeds; this moment we may use, the next, perhaps, we may not.” Without more words, the merchant followed him through the portcullis-chamber, and, drawing nigh the place of guard, did, in trowth, perceive the two wardours fast asleep in the niches, where they usually kept watch. But, hardly had he entered the gateway, when one of them began to move himself on the bench, and cried out, “Down with the portcullis, they are coming over the bridge;” and, stretching forth his arm, he had nigh knocked the lamp from the Prior’s hand, and the merchant, as he passed, was touched.

They stayed not to see whether he had waked himself, but, turning into a little projection of the passage, went down a round stair. And now approached the greatest danger of discovery; for, this led down into a room that opened under the great portal, where the wardours of that place usually sat. There were stone seats within the wall appointed for them, where they watched out the night in all seasons, save of the bleakest weather of winter, and then they sat by fire in the guard-chamber, which was in the opposite tower opening under the gateway. But those, who, this night, kept castle-guard under the great portal, being there on knight’s service and unused, save for a certain season, to be from their beds, at this time, minded not to watch within the niches; and, the drawbridge being securely up, they sat in that guard-room, there beguiling the time with dice, or they contented themselves with now and then a turn under the great arch, to see that others did their duty; and then reposed themselves.

When the merchant saw whither that stair led, he asked how they were to pass, unseen, through the portal, where the wardours watched, and received for answer, they were not to go out to that portal, secured by gates, as well as by guards and by the raised drawbridge, but by a secret way in the tower-room below. Now, hardly had the Prior spoken, when, on coming near to the bottom stair, he checked his steps, and stood still and watchful; for, he saw the door of that room standing ajar, which he had reason to hope would have been shut and even fastened at this hour; and, presently after, a wardour was seen passing there, by a light hanging in the archway.

Darkening his lamp with his garment, he stood, fearing to venture forward, lest his steps should discover him, ere he could get through that room. He also feared, that the noise of raising the trap, by which he would depart, must be heard, even if he should get safely through the room. Before the passing of many minutes, the Knight, watching there, began to sing an old Norman song, the burden of which was taken up in chorus by his comrades dicing in the guard-room beyond, making a kind of hoarse music, which was soon joined by the sound of a single clarion, repeating a few notes in an under tone, both solemn and terrific to the poor merchant, who thought it was some signal of alarm.

But his conductor, who knew it to be only a sign for changing the guard at some post without the gates, took courage at the noise, and, boldly stepping forward, shut the door that led to the portal, and drew the gate within. Yet, ere he could find the trap, the Knight, who had heard a bolt drawn, was calling and then striking heavily at the door. Finding no answer, he ordered a clarion to be sounded in the portal for a call to the wardours, of the portcullis chamber above, and to gather those below to inquire into this matter.

And now was Woodreeve most fearful, lest those sleeping wardours above should by these loud soundings be roused from their trance: and hardly could he hold the lamp to the ground, while the Prior searched for the trap, which lay hid in the corner; there, having found a grated opening on the floor, Woodreeve pointed that out for the trap, little guessing he stood over the Castle dungeon, where condemned criminals were kept, and where he might yet be laid. It was of great depth, and what little and glimmering light it ever had was received through this opening, by which also food was let down to the wretched prisoner.

Undismayed by the noise without, now that he had secured the door, the Prior continued to search coolly for the trap, knowing, perchance, better than his companion, that the wardours would not soon wake, and that amongst the knights below, was one, who was enough the friend of the Baron de Blondeville and his cause to manage his unthinking comrades, till they should be willing to suppose the alarm had proceeded from some mistaken cause. Had the merchant been also aware of this, he might have thought himself safe; yet might he have erred, when thus secure, and have found that his worst enemy stood close beside him.

The Prior having, at length, found the trap, applied the key, and, with his companion’s aid, lifted the door. Beneath, appeared a steep and narrow stair, and now again, when Woodreeve, after such long toil and so many changes of anxiety, looked down into this dark abyss, his distrust of his companion returned with new force; he pointed to the fearful descent, and urged, that, even if it could lead them without the walls, they must be unable to get over the foss, which was broad and full of deep water. A thundering sound upon the portal door and a loud blast of the clarion silenced this remonstrance, and prevented the Prior’s reply. He thought the sleep of the wardours above must needs be the sleep of death, if it fled not at the noise: so thought some under the archway, and they redoubled their blows and their hallooings; but as yet to no purpose.

The Prior the while, having found it no very difficult matter to thrust, as it were, his harassed companion down the opening, lowered and secured the trap and followed down the steps. As Woodreeve now stood with the lamp, at the bottom of them, the light it cast upward to the Prior gave a ghastly hue to his visage, which again brought back his former faint recollection of having seen him, at some other period, and under circumstances of danger. It was by such an upward, darting light, that he had seen the murderer of his kinsman, at the moment when the visor fell off; and he now almost thought he saw before him that very murderer.

The suspicion was far from being strong, the mixed expression of terror and firmness, with which he fixed his eyes upon him, did not escape the Prior. With less firmness than usual, he almost started and threw a keen and frowning glance upon his companion. Dark and thronging thoughts cast their shadows upon his countenance. But recovering, by degrees, his usual aspect, he stood awhile at the foot of the stair, listening for the sound above. It had ceased, and all within and without this gloomy vault, was still.

He knew not, whether to understand, that the noise had brought down the wardours from their sleep, and that the portal was opened, or that the Baron's friend, who watched there with the rest, had succeeded in quieting their suspicions. The thickness of the trap, and the depth of the vault, in which he stood, would prevent him from hearing their footsteps, even if they were trampling over his head; but should this be so, and should those knights, who were strangers to the secret ways of the castle, have discovered the trapdoor, he trusted to the strength of its inward fastenings for a sufficient time of security. Woodreeve stood, the while, silent from terror and expectation, and hardly did he know whether it were better for him to be o'ertaken by those above, or to proceed with his murky conductor. "What, if he has brought me into the depth of this vault only to destroy me?" thought he. Then he considered, that hardly would any one, after the alarm which had been given above, hazard himself by so atrocious a deed, and his spirits, in some deal, returned.

But he demanded again, and with more resolute tone, whither they were going, and was answered, "To a sally-port."

"But how are we to pass the ditch? Is there a boat then waiting for us?"

"Come on," answered the Prior, sharply.

Woodreeve followed, without further question, yet misliked he the manner of his conductor more than ever. Nor had he failed to observe, that, unless at intervals, when reproof was to be conveyed, or hope raised, no eyes met his, so bent were those of the Prior towards the ground. They passed on through other vaults, and, whether it were the bad air there, or apprehension of what might follow, Woodreeve felt himself so faint, that hardly could he drag his steps along. Soon they came to a round chamber, whose roof, supported by a central pillar, rose in vaultings, that terminated in corbeils of lions' heads, upon a cornice of noble simplicity. The place seemed intended for a hall of some sort, but the merchant, who looked round it with surprise, could perceive no windows; there were two arched doors opposite to each other, and to one of these the Prior led. Having gone up a few steps, he undrew the strong fastenings, and unclosed it, Woodreeve hastily following him, for he once more felt the fresh air breathe upon his face. His conductor pressed forward, but suddenly checked himself, and drew back; he had nearly fallen into the foss below.

"I have mistaken the way," said he, "this is a sally-port long disused, and the steps from it are removed."

He had in trowth mistaken this for a sally-port, that had led under the rampart, and the castle ditch; but, this entrance having been considered as an inlet dangerous in times of siege, the steps had been taken down, and the door strongly secured. For the hall, it had once been a principal entrance to a tower on the walls, although it lay under a lofty flight of covered steps, that led obliquely to a larger portal, guarded by strong doors, one of which was of iron.

Woodreeve, breathing awhile the fresh air from without, recovered strength and courage; he almost blamed himself for his want of patience, and for having failed to allow, that an escape from a castle so spacious as this of Kenilworth, and so fully occupied and inhabited, as it now was, could not be made, except by many devious and tedious ways. But he did not long enjoy this free air; the Prior suddenly closed the door, made the bars fast, and then, turning away, began to examine the wall, at a little distance, where he applied a key to a door, not seen till the lamp was held close to it; thence a steep stair descended, as if into another vault. They stepped upon it, and the Prior bade Woodreeve go first, while he locked the door; but here again distrust returned to the still baffled prisoner, for he perceived that this door was greatly different from that of the sally-port; so much so that he marvelled how one could be mistaken for the other; and he stopped, fearful of what might follow.

Yet had no apparent purpose been answered if the error were wilful; and, if Prior had an ill-meaning, so far as to intend him bodily harm, in their lonely track, he seemed to have missed an opportunity fitted for his purpose, since it would been easy to push him into the dark moat below. This thought encouraged him now to proceed; but he would not have been so soon consoled, had he known as much as his conductor knew. He asked, however, whither this second flight would lead them, and was answered, "Beyond the walls, where you shall soon find yourself at liberty; if you like not to proceed, return and deliver yourself up to justice."

The merchant followed him down a very long flight of steps, ending in a passage, which he supposed lay under the foss. Here the air was so changed by an unwholesome vapour, that it was painful to breathe it; and the lamp burned so dimly, at times, that he feared it would expire. The Prior often stopped to nurse the flame, and once, as he lifted the lamp high, and it revived, his garment flew back, and Woodreeve now saw, beyond all possibility of doubt, a dagger at his girdle.

His eyes were fixed upon it, till his conductor saw that he observed it; and then, laying his hand upon the hilt, he said, "In times like these, every one should be somewhat armed."

But now another object had seized the attention of the merchant, and he stood in horror. In drawing forth the dagger, his companion had turned aside his vesture, and, behold! a chain of gold hung about his neck, which from its ponderous but highly wrought ornaments, Woodreeve instantly thought was the very chain worn by his kinsman, at the time of his death, and he doubted not, that in the Prior he saw one of his assassins. A sort of amulet box was suspended to the chain, but of that he had no recollection.

At this conviction, he lost all presence of mind, so that he foresaw not how much he might hasten his peril, and lessen his chance, if there were any, of finally avoiding it, in betraying his thoughts to the Prior, whose revenge might be accomplished in such a place, without danger, as it appeared, from any human means of discovery.

He seized the lamp, and, holding it close to the chain, cried out, "It is the same — there are the very links, that shape — the initials of his name."

"Of whose name?" said the Prior eagerly, and as he spoke, Woodreeve recollected the voice of the very robber, to whom he had delivered up his own treasure. The Prior, still without having changed his voice, repeated the question.

"Of my unfortunate kinsman," answered Woodreeve; "I now know you."

Instantly, the discovered ruffian, without one word, drew the dagger from the imperfect grasp, which Woodreeve had of it; and upraised his hand with a fierce and deadly intention, but the blow descended not; the poignard fell from his hand, and his eyes seemed fixed upon some object beyond.

The poor merchant, who, for an instant, had been motionless and confounded with terror, seeing this, gathered courage, and turned to discover what held his enemy in this trance; but nothing could he perceive, save the dusky avenue. Then, losing not another moment, he fled, with the lamp, along that unknown way; but he had neglected to seize the dagger, which had fallen on the ground, and might easily have been made a weapon for himself.

He followed the avenue, till his breath failed, and he was compelled to stop; but, soon thinking he heard steps behind him, he again went on, and, flying for very life, hope and fear supplied him with strength. He had now gone a great length of way, without having discovered any thing like an outlet, and he rested again for breath, to revive his failing lamp. He listened and, though he heard no footsteps in pursuit, he remembered the soundless steps, with which his treacherous conductor had, this night, passed along several chambers, and he was not convinced, that he was distant, though unheard. The intenseness, with which he listened for any remote, or lone sound, seemed to sharpen his sense of hearing, like as the seaman's sight discovers things so small and distant, as are unseen of others.

Thus, now while Woodreeve listened, he thought he heard — not footsteps, but, a little strain of music so faint and fleeting it was more like the moonlight shadow of a fleecy cloud, that glides along the hills, and fades ere you can say it is, than any certain truth. It served, however, at first, to revive his hopes; he judged it came from without the castle walls; but then perhaps, from soldiers on their watch, and, if so, his deliverance could not be nigh. Still, as his only hope lay that way, he hastened forward, and presently he again thought he heard music. He stopped and no longer doubted this; the sound was nearer, and he gradually distinguished a faint, solemn swell of voices and instruments. As he advanced, they sunk and were lost awhile; and then a high and long continued strain of many mingling voices was heard. Soon after, it sunk away, at a distance, and he heard it no more.

But now he fancied steps were coming behind him, and, quickening his own, he came to a bend of the avenue, and espied a door, which seemed to close its dreary length. Three massive bars secured it, but there was also a lock. While he stood before it, and looked back on the long sloping avenue, almost as far as his lifted lamp could throw its blunted rays, he heard no sound of either step, or breath, from within, or from without that door; nor saw the Prior advancing through that dim way behind him.

The bolts gave way to Woodreeve's returned strength, and even the lock did not long resist. Already, he thought he felt the fresh air from without the castle walls; but, opening the door, he stepped not out upon a platform of grass, or under the boughs of the free forest; he stepped upon a little winding stair, that went up a turret, as he verily believed, of another tower, some outpost of the castle. At this, his heart sunk nigh to fainting; for how should he escape detection from those, who guarded it, and whose voices he now thought he heard singing, in dreary chorus, on their night-watch.

Having considered, a moment, to little purpose, for he had no choice but to go on, he went up the stair, and came to another door. He listened for awhile, but all within was still, and he undrew the bolt that held it, and would have stepped forward, but was baffled by what he thought a curtain, that hung before it. In this he deceived himself. It was the tapestry of a chamber. Perceiving this, he stopped again, before he lifted it, to consider how best he might disclose himself, if any one within; but, all being silent, he ventured to lift the arras, and found himself in a great arched chamber. A lamp was burning near a reading-desk; but no person appeared, and he looked round, with a mixture of terror and curiosity, still holding up the arras, with one hand, and with the other his lamp, to survey the limits of the room; and he still kept one foot on the threshold-step, as ready to retreat, on the first alarm.

At length, perceiving that he was indeed alone in this chamber, he let the hangings drop, and ventured forward, in search of an outlet, through which to escape; but he saw none. The walls were covered with tapestry, which concealed whatsoever doors might be within them, and presented in colours various good deeds. A large oriel-window of fretted stone-work rose in sharp arches, closed with glass, stained in a mosaic of divers rich colours, like unto those in the great church of the city of Cologne in Germany. This window showed also the emblazoned arms of Geoffrey de Clinton, with many a golden rule in scrowl-work and labels on the glass.

All this Woodreeve espied, while, with his lamp in hand, he searched around for some outlet, to depart by. It seemeth not expedient to set down here all the objects he saw in this chamber; suffice it to say it was an oratory, and the histories on the tapestry and all the garniture were such as are meet for such a place. On a table lay divers folios well bossed with silver; among them was Matthew of Westminster and the Golden Legend. An armchair, with purple cushions, stood by the reading-desk, on which lay open a copy of the venerable Bede, and a Missal beside it, freshly illuminated.

At all he saw his mind misgave him, this was some chamber, not of the castle, but of the Priory; and, if so, whither could he turn, to flee from destruction. His eye again glancing round the walls, he observed a part of the tapestry inclosed in a kind of frame-work, different from any other part of the arras; and, hoping there might be a door behind this, he was advancing towards it, when he heard a rustling sound in another part of the chamber; and, turning, beheld the arras lifted, and the Prior himself standing under the same arch, through which he had entered.

His countenance was livid and malicious, and he held in his hand the dagger which he had dropped in the avenue.

Hardly did Woodreeve cast a look behind him; but, rushing towards that frame-work, he found it held a door, which opened upon a vaulted passage of the Priory, ending in a cloister. As he fled, he turned to see whether his pursuer advanced, and observed him standing at the great door of the chamber, making sign for his return; as if, after having let that dagger and that murderer's look be seen, it were possible to lure him back again.

It was Woodreeve's aim, should he be unable to get out of the monastery, to take refuge at the altar; and, with this intent, he proceeded hastily along the cloister, which opened, as he expected, into the chapel; and thence he soon heard the sound of voices and instruments; for the monks were now chanting the last matin, and he recollected the strain he had heard in the avenue. But, ere he could reach sanctuary, the Prior's steps were heard, along the cloister, and his voice calling loudly for help, and saying his life was in danger from a prisoner escaped of the castle; and, commanding, that they should stop him, ere he reached shelter. The monks, engaged as they were, at this hour, in service, heard not the alarm; till a lay brother, coming forth of the dormitory, raised a cry, which brought out from their cells a few sick brothers, who now joined in the cry, which those at matins presently heard.

Woodreeve, however, pursued his course; and opening a folding-door at the end of the cloister, found himself in the chancel, and gained the sanctuary, ere his pursuers reached him, or the amazed brethren there could understand they were to stop his way.

By this time the service had ceased, and all was confusion; the Prior pressing forward to seize the poor merchant, even at the altar-steps; and the monks flocking round him, to prevent sacrilege, and to learn the motive for his attempting to commit it. Scarcely was he kept back by the monks from offering violence to Woodreeve, who was still breathless and fainting, from the thought of peril so hardly escaped, though he turned, and in some sort, faced his enemy.

But, before he was calm enough to speak, the Prior began his say: he asserted, that, while he was sitting in the great chamber, studying, a secret door of the room opened, and he saw this stranger enter. He knew him to be the man imprisoned in the castle, for having falsely accused the Baron de Blondeville, and whose trial for unlawful arts of magic, designed to delude the eyes and minds of the whole court, by a false presentment of the crime imputed to the Baron, and thereby to prejudice the King against him, to his utter ruin, was shortly to come on in the castle-hall. How he had escaped from prison he knew not, nor how he had reached the Priory; where, perchance, he had come undesignedly. On perceiving him quietly sitting at his reading-desk, the prisoner, possessed either by despair, or by desire of vengeance, for the part he had taken against him in the King's presence, drew forth a dagger; and, having vainly made a blow at him, fled, as they witnessed: "And here behold the instrument of his intended crime," said the Prior, "turned aside from my breast by my own hand. I found it on the floor of my chamber." And he held up the poniard.

Astonished and confounded by these audacious falsehoods, Woodreeve stood aghast, and his very looks would have condemned him, with the greater part of the brotherhood, could they even have questioned the truth of their Prior; who, however, was little loved amongst them. With one voice they cried out against the stranger, so that he almost gave himself up for lost; but, when his enemy said, that no place ought to protect such a criminal, they all at once stood up against violation of sanctuary, as became them; and marvelled, that he showed so little reverence for so high a privilege. Then the Prior, forgetful of what became his office, said that his life was yet in danger, unless the prisoner could be dislodged from the monastery; for, although the law of sanctuary could protect him, it could not restrain him; and, as the doors of the church could not be locked, he might come forth, at some convenient hour; and not only escape from the monastery, but, on his way, accomplish the very crime he had meditated.

The monks made answer, that the doors of the church should be watched, but that they never could consent to afford a precedent for violation of sanctuary; and much they were astonished, that their superior his-self, who ought to be the first to maintain this right, should wish to renounce it. But they excused him, seeing his terror of the evil he had just escaped. Then, the Prior perceiving he was betraying his own cause, and turning those against it, of whose goodwill he should hereafter have much need, gave up that point, but threatened sentence of exclusion against any one of the community, who should relieve the stranger's hunger. And was he nearly condemned to a lingering death more miserable than any, which the common law of the land could have pronounced against him, since it was improbable, that any of the villagers should venture to brave the anger of the Prior.

Adversity had now well nigh persuaded Woodreeve, that, however just his cause, it would avail him nothing, where the criminal had such powerful support; and he forbore, at this time, to increase his difficulties, by accusing the Prior as an accomplice of the Baron de Blondeville. He spoke only to make a solemn denial of the charge against himself, adding, that, if the brethren would send to the castle for a guard, he would instantly relinquish the privilege of sanctuary, and deliver himself up to the King's officers, but to no other. This pleased not his enemy, who dreaded the tale he might unfold; and, however strange that might appear and hard to be believed, he knew, that in those lawless times, there had been instances of rapine, committed by wicked intruders like himself into the fold, and, therefore might some parts of the history be not wholly discredited; the more especially as the Lord Archbishop seemed to be not wholly his friend. So, he resolved to take his cause into his own hands, and to attempt that by poison, which he had failed to perpetrate by steel, when the merchant, as has been related, had imprudently made a charge against him in so lonely a place.

For, it is not to be guessed, that the Prior, in leading him forth from prison, had, at first, any other motive than to turn him loose and let him make his way to a distant part of the country, where he would be so well contented by having saved his life, as never again to hazard it, by endangering that of the Baron. However this might be, he now, in his folly and wickedness, as wickedness leads on to wickedness, and blinds its followers, judged it necessary for his own life, that the merchant should perish, and that, before he could have an opportunity of communicating with the King's officers. But to accomplish this it would be necessary to practise somewhat of the cunning dexterity, which with him supplied the place of wisdom, and which he was well content to mistake for it.

He, therefore, feigned to relax somewhat of his severity; and, saying the criminal should be allowed bread and water, while he remained in sanctuary, was so departing. But Woodreeve, now remembering the golden chain, worn by the Prior, and considering how helping it must be to his own cause to have that matter known, which might never be, if not now, wished to devise some means of making him show it to the brethren, before he had taken the precaution of laying it aside, if indeed he had not already done so. Yet, to mention this chain, without putting him on his guard to conceal it, were not possible. That was however done for him, which he had not the art to compass.

When the Prior was departing from the Church, Woodreeve, again appealing to the brethren, bade them bear witness, that he utterly and solemnly denied all attempt or intention, to commit the crime now alleged against him, and that he could, at a proper time and place, unravel the mystery of his appearance there; "Look at me, who am scarcely of middle age," said he, "and at the Prior, who, though large, is past his prime, and say, whether, if I had attempted his life, his arm alone could have withstood me."

"I say not, that I escaped by my own strength," replied the Prior, "I wear a charm, which protects me against evil sprites, whether instigating human beings, or acting as shadows."

"If so," said Woodreeve, "why do you fear me, that you, but now, refused to grant me sanctuary, lest I should step forth from this place, and aim at your life. It cannot be credited; you have no such charm."

"You are a deceiver," said the Prior; "here is your falsehood proved," and he drew forth the amulet, suspended by the chain, but, in an instant, withdrew it, perceiving whither fear and anger were leading him. On seeing again this memorial of his dead kinsman, Woodreeve was so much disturbed, that he had almost slipped off the place of sanctuary, as he reached towards it.

But, checking his steps, he cried out, "Wretch, whence had you that chain? Would it had been annexed to any real charm of defence, when my poor kinsman wore it in the forest of Ardenn! He would now, perchance, be alive to claim it."

The brethren looked on Woodreeve, with surprize and displeasure, while no one, save the Prior, understood fully those words; and his countenance, nathless all his art and boldness, fell when he heard them. "Venerable brethren," continued the merchant, "mark well that chain; for hereafter it may unfold a tale which ye guess not of."

Upon this so pressing a call, they thronged round their superior, entreating, indeed, to see the amulet, but wishing chiefly to see the chain attached to it; and the Prior, who saw their motive beneath their pretence, was aware, that he could not resist them, without giving irremediable strength to their suspicions.

As they looked on it, Woodreeve said, "You will observe, above what he calls a charm, three golden letters, being part of the chain itself, and also three jewels, the middle one of great value; the others are rubies."

The monks then ventured to examine it further, and found it was as he said.

"In the clasp of that chain," said the merchant, "is a painting, the likeness of a noble lady, my unfortunate kinsman's wife; it was drawn by a Florentine, a famous illuminator."

"We see nothing of that," answered the brethren. "There is no such thing."

While the Prior now exclaimed eagerly, "Mark his falsehood."

But Woodreeve, addressing himself to the brethren, told them there was a secret spring; and, instructing them how to find it, said they would then behold a fair and unhappy lady. They did as he directed, when, a golden plate of that noble clasp flying up, they beheld, not the portrait of a lady, but that of a knight in armour, whose look was mild and full of thoughtful sadness. On seeing this, they cried, that he knew not the chain; for that it showed only the semblance of a knight. Hearing this, the merchant stretched forth his hand impatiently, and descended two steps of the sanctuary to examine the portrait, ere he well knew what he was doing. Then he entreated them, that they would allow him to see it; for, it was surely the likeness of his deceased friend; but they all assented to the Prior, that it must not be so entrusted.

At last, however, two of them yielded so far to his loud and earnest entreaties, that they held up to him the picture, beyond his reach, but where he could yet distinguish the features by the strong light of the tapers. On viewing that wellknown countenance, tears stood in his eyes, and his looks alone might have convinced many, he had indeed spoken the truth, touching that chain, though he hisself was amazed by the portrait, having never seen it before. The Prior failed not to make his advantage of this unexpected circumstance; but, while he was yet triumphing, the merchant bade the brethren press once more that golden plate, as he directed, when a lid on the reverse side opened, and behold! a lady's countenance, meek and fair, with lifted eyes, and like unto some blessed saint.

They all at once exclaimed, "it is here," and passed the chain from one to another, some looking with wondrous dread, upon the prisoner, and some again on the Prior, who stood darkly watching, and they cried out, "How may this be!"

Then the Prior, with looks of derision, said, "Can ye ask that question, knowing as ye do, that the man before ye is about to be tried in the King's Court for practice of unlawful magic? It avails not, that he has been prevented from touching that chain with his hand; he has exercised a stranger power upon it, than if he had touched it. Those paintings were not there before; the chain has long been mine, as most of ye know. I bought it, before I was of this house."

"And thus it may well be," said one of the monks, "for this is not so marvellous, as those delusions conjured up in the castle-hall." And they blessed themselves and delivered up the chain to the Prior, who received it, with secret triumph.

"You now behold the charm which has preserved my life from the attempt of that ruffian," said he, pointing to Woodreeve; "and will no more doubt, why his strength failed, when he assailed me."

Too late, the prisoner then perceived, that, in compelling his enemy to produce this chain, he had brought out an argument against himself. The monks had not refused their assent to their Prior's assertion; and, if there were any amongst them, who compared what he had asserted of the protecting virtues of this charm, against the malice of the poor merchant, with what he said of the magical influence of the man upon this very chain, even while it was in his own hands, they did not dare to point forth the contradiction. The Prior, still dreading lest the prisoner should throw himself into the hands of the King's guard, as he had offered, now determined, in order to deter him from so doing, to make further use of his over-sight; and, holding up the chain, he called out, "When you shall have surrendered yourself up to justice, here is an evidence, that shall convict you of unlawful arts, if others fail. This picture, which you have conveyed hither by secret magic, shall be more than a living witness against you."

The latter words of the Prior were resounded, it might be by an echo of the aisles: "more than a living witness against you."

The brethren looked round, and Woodreeve listened. There were some among them, who fancied they heard a moaning from the ground underneath, between them and the north wall; others took it for the wind murmuring in the vaults near; but none of them spoke his thoughts. It might be the hollow blast, that sounds, at fits, before a tempest; for a storm came, soon after, which shook the walls. However this might be, Woodreeve shuddered often as he heard it; and, looking round him, recollections rushed suddenly on his mind, that filled it with dismay. He examined eagerly the spot he stood on, and found, that he had indeed taken sanctuary near the grave of his unfortunate kinsman, though no name now appeared on it.

On this discovery, the blood rushed back to his heart, and he was nigh to falling into the like convulsions he had suffered under, when first he saw the Baron de Blondeville, beside the King. On recovering, he knelt down on the grave, raising his hands and eyes, and so continued, for some time. Then, rising and turning to the Prior, who seemed little affected by any thing that had passed, he calmly said, that he was willing to deliver himself up to the King's officers, soon as they could be brought hither. To this the Prior answered he would send early on the morrow; but, as not even the King's officers might enter that place of sanctuary, to take him thence, he must come forth of himself, ere he could surrender to them. Woodreeve, fearing treachery on the way, liked not this; and so the Prior had foreseen, who for his own purposes, further said, that the officers should wait for him, at the outer gate of the Priory, that so all the world might bear witness the church had not betrayed him to the secular power.

"And, when the world shall bear witness, that my surrender is voluntary," said Woodreeve, in order to daunt the Prior from his purpose; "then will it judge me innocent by that act alone."

So resolute a reply convinced his enemy he had no time to lose in effecting whatever wrong he might intend to perpetrate, in pursuance of his wretched policy; and he now departed, meditating on the means of accomplishing it.

Leaving a guard of monks behind at the entrance of the chancel, he gave sign to Wischard, a brother, whom he had long favoured, to follow him to the great chamber. How to compass the death of the prisoner, in so short a space by any poison, that should not betray itself, and bring suspicion on its inventor, he knew not. Sometimes, he thought it were better to give him his liberty to flee away; and so he would have done, could he have been certain the liberty would be so used; but he was rather certain, from what had lately passed, that this would be otherwise; that the prisoner would urge his offer of an escape, as evidence against him, on a charge of having been an accomplice in the murder; and that other things might come to light, which would be more easily proved than the guilt of the Baron alone.

With these doubts and fears upon his mind, he remained in the arched chamber, in close consultation with Wischard, till all in the Priory were at rest, save the poor merchant on his kinsman's grave, and those monks who watched him there.

THE SIXTH DAY.

At the head of this chapter was an illuminated drawing of the inside of the White Hall, with the King's court assembled. The King was in a chair, but without a cloth of estate over it; and near him was his high Justicier, who sat on the same platform, in his robes of office. On the steps, near the King's chair, stood a youth, with an observing countenance, intended, no doubt, for Prince Edward; also at the footstool knelt a young man, with a spirited air, offering a chain to the King, who seemed to gaze on him, with amazement and terror. Throughout the hall appeared general consternation; many of the Bishops and Barons stood up, and leaned forward, as if to view what was passing near the King's chair.

Early on the morrow, the Prior of Saint Mary's was at the Castle, in close conference with the Baron de Blondeville, and awaiting a hearing of the King. And, when they had obtained this, having already settled their plot, they set forth, in their own way, so much of the adventure of the night before at the Priory, as they thought necessary to win the King's consent, that the trial of the merchant should be had, on this very day. His Highness had designed to defer it awhile, both because the argument of the Archbishop had taken some hold of him, and because he thought it not for the honour of the Baron de Blondeville, that this matter should seem to be held of such importance as that, just at this time, it must be further inquired into.

But now, being sore pressed upon by those about him — and it was ever his weakness to be ruled by those nearest at hand rather than by fixed principles either of his own, or of those wiser in council than himself — being sore pressed by the false representations of the wily Prior, he yielded his consent, that the Jury already warned should be summoned to attend in Court, this day, the trial of the poor stranger for divers practices of magical delusion and of the black art, in the great hall. Should they fail to substantiate this head of charge, the Prior had another in the tale he had already told the King of the merchant's pretended attempt upon his life, and his evil practices upon the golden chain.

As matter connected with this charge, he also told his Highness, that the merchant had escaped from the Castle to the Priory, where he then was and where he might be secured; for that he, trusting to his own arts, yet unable to elude the vigilance of the brethren placed there, had audaciously declared he would resign himself to the King's officers, and throw himself upon justice. The Prior failed not to point out, that there was a daring artfulness in this giving out, and to caution his Highness against the seeming consciousness of innocence, which it was meant to imply. And thus the King seeing, that each day brought forth some new danger, plotted, as it appeared, by the merchant, against the peace and even the lives of his quiet subjects, commanded, without further hesitation, that his trial should commence, on this very day; and his Highness determined to be present his-self in Court, the while.

The Court had indeed already met in the White Hall, and divers small causes had been tried there, the preceding day; many other remained to be settled, during this time of the King's keeping court, at Kenilworth; but it was resolved, that the charge against the merchant should be inquired into immediately on the meeting of the court, which was now beginning to assemble. Notice of this was speedily given there, and the jury and witnesses, being all nigh at hand, were easily brought together.

Meanwhile, a guard was despatched to the Priory gate, there to await the surrender of the merchant. Nor was it without extreme anxiety and fear, that he, on receiving their summons, stepped from the sanctuary, and passed along the passages and chambers to the outer gate, where he gave himself up to justice, and was soon after again a prisoner in the turret. A night of watchfulness and terror had ill prepared him for the approaching trial; but he endeavoured to support, with the consciousness of innocence and with a recollection of his just motives, the burden of calumny and danger now laid upon him, and to meet, with calmness, the malice of his enemies.

Nathless, so haggard and wan were his looks, when he came before the Court, and beheld his chief accuser, the Baron de Blondeville, that many there scrupled not to say he was guilty even before he was tried. And, as ignorance is always a child, so were there many nobles then in the hall, who, profiting nothing by their years, did hold that magic could be wrought by such as fully applied themselves unto it, and that it had been practised in the banquet-hall by this poor stranger, or by those in league with him. And, as vanity never grows old, but changes its shape only with the stages of a man's life, so many an aged Baron, now sitting in the King's court, who, in his youth, had valued himself for a handsome person, gorgeously apparelled, and, in his maturer years, for the number of his vassals and the abundance of his castle-banquets — many such a Baron, now in his age, as freshly priding himself on sagacity, such as no arts could baffle, came hither, fortified against the evidence, to abide by his first opinion.

There sat in the White Hall, that day, many bishops and barons of the realm, such as usually composed the King's court, when he wore his crown and held the high festivals of the year. These seldom had been kept at Kenilworth, but, when his Highness was not at his palace at Westminster, either Winchester, or Windsor, Salisbury, Gloucester, York, or other great cities of the realm were the scenes of them. At such times, not only was justice administered to his subjects, but the great councils of the realm were held, and laws were made. Then also were honours dispensed; the King making some knights, others barons, as it so pleased him, and the opportunity required. There too, sometimes, were contracted, or solemnized, such marriages of his own family, or of his nobles, as he countenanced; and often was it said of King Henry, that he bestowed upon strangers, favourites in his court, the richest heiresses of his kingdom.

At these high festivals of the year, he was in trowth a sovereign, wearing his crown, sitting on his throne, and swaying all the princely power of his sceptre. Then he received homage of his tenants in chief, knights and other; levied fines, and with the help of his justicier, barons and prelates, managed his revenues. How far his Highness was governed by their council, when he was so hard upon the golden citizens of London, who, in his reign paid in fines for his favour, twenty thousand pounds, I know not. But, never did he practise such cruel means of extortion as did his father, King John.

At such times, too, were decided trials by combat; and among the gorgeous spectacles, then held forth, tilt and tournament surpassed.

But to come back again unto this festival of Kenilworth. The King sat not, this day, upon his throne in court, but upon a chair, beside his justicier, whom he wished to do his part there. He meant not his-self to speak sentence upon the prisoner, as at Westminster he had done upon Peter de Rivallis, his treasurer, whom he sent from open court to the tower of London, by his own word of command. Amongst other of the King's chief officers, who this day kept state in court, were the Earl of Hereford, Lord Constable of England; the Earl of Norfolk, Lord Mareschal of England; Simon de Montfort, Earl of Leicester, the King's Seneschal; the High Chamberlain; the Chancellor, and the Treasurer. The Archbishop of York was not there; being, as the Baron de Blondeville and the Prior of Saint Mary's well knew, yet at Coventry; and, therefore, had they so hurried forward this business.

It was suspected, that the Baron and friend had taken special means, that the jury, chosen for this trial, might be such as were likely men to serve their views; and they feared not, that the King would now do as he had formerly done at Winchester. There, as is well known, the merchants of Brabant, having accused to his Highness some of his household of having robbed them, the thieves, on being brought to trial, were acquitted by the jury; who, though wealthy men, were proved to be in league with the offenders; on which, the King, without scruple, commanded them to prison; and caused another jury to be summoned, who found them guilty of that they had been charged with. But the Baron trusted enough in the King's kindness not to fear he would do the like now.

What passed in the merchant's mind, while now in court, waiting his trial, may not be told, within compass; save that he resolved, when opportunity should come, boldly to charge the Prior with possessing the golden chain, worn by his kinsman when he fell, and of having been an accomplice in that foul deed.

For, well he now remembered, where he had first seen his face and heard his voice. This was at a little hostel, where he and his companions had rested them awhile, a few hours before the robbery. There, in the settle, beside the blazing logs, sat that same Prior, drinking mead. He wore not then the garments of the church, which he should never have put on, but the livery of war; and the merchant had taken him for a common follower of some knight, so coarse and worn were the clothes beneath his hauberk. When they were departing, he asked which road they went, feigning to be fearful, in those times, of passing alone through the forest: and, having learned their way, said his was different, and bade them well to Kenilworth, ere night should come on.

Afterwards, during the perpetration of the crime, the merchant, who discerned not his person, nor his features, through the disguise he had taken, soon as he spoke, recollected the voice; and, within a short time, he had recognized both voice and features in the same man; though the countenance was so changed and bloated, and the present voice so artificial, that this recollection had not come, but by accident. The present dress of the Prior, too, and his station had gone to retard this. But now, when tones and countenance had been partly recollected, and that golden chain was seen on the same individual, Woodreeve was not suffered to doubt, that the Prior of Saint Mary's was one of those, who had robbed him. Nor was that so wonderful in times, when lawless violence had almost overrun the whole land; and when the King, as has been seen, found it necessary to commit to prison twelve householders of Hampshire, for having leagued with thieves in his own household!

But to come back, once more, to what passed this day, in the Court. It were tedious to tell of all this — of the names of such as assisted in the judgment, or of the forms and ceremonies, observed during the trial; though these were curious to behold, and in themselves most grave and princely. Nevertheless, some things shall be related, which more nearly concerned the prisoner, and which struck many persons with marvellous dread. We vouch not for the truth of all here told; we only repeat what others have said and their selves credited; but in these days what is there of strange and wonderful, which does not pass as current as the coin of the land; and what will they not tell in hall, or chamber, seated by night over blazing logs, as if their greatest pleasure were to fear?

Some, who tell the story, say they were witnesses in court of what passed there, and that the marvels brought about, were through the arts of that same joculator, who came into the banquet-hall, before the visions there shown, and who, they scrupled not to say, was one of those magicians, from the East, who were well known to have raised strange delusions in many a hall here in England. But this man was not seen in court, that day, nor had he been seen, any where, either in the castle, or town, since that memorable night of the festival, though strict search had been made for him.

The accusation against Woodreeve ran thus. It charged him with having raised up certain delusions, by means of unlawful arts of witchcraft, or of magic, to the end of persuading the King and his nobles, that the charge of a dreadful crime, imputed by the prisoner to the Baron de Blondeville, was true. And it farther alleged, that he had by witchcraft acted upon the person of the Baron, causing, at divers times, a suspicion of all his faculties, and, as it were, binding up his whole soul in a trance, so that he could neither speak, nor see, nor move. There were, it was affirmed, hundreds in the court, who had seen the marvellous pageant, which had appeared on the night of the great banquet, and not one could tell how it came thither, or by whom it was invented. They were many also, who had seen the Baron's condition, both in chapel and hall.

And it seemed plain enough, that all this was the work of evil sprite, in league with an artful man. Who this might be, whether the poor merchant, or that strange minstrel, that had entered the hall of festival, who was there, that might tell? Many and divers were the opinions and sayings upon this affair; but, though all thought the delusion supernatural, none held the merchant to be guilty of it. Nay, there were not wanting those, who willingly credited, that the Baron was guilty of all, which the vision seemed to accuse him of; yet none dared hint such thought, knowing the place he held in the King's favour. And, perchance, this very high favour, shown forth by the new title granted to him, did incline many, though the cause was unknown of themselves, to judge the worst of him.

Now, when all the proceedings were finished, the jury thought the same as the many, that, though there had been evil practices, there was nothing to show that the prisoner knew ought of them; and so they said by their verdict. But when all looked to him to remark his joy, they saw his countenance still anxious and fearful. The trowth is, he dreaded the Prior, more than any other enemy, and that he would pursue him far more artfully than the Baron had done.

The King was much disturbed at the verdict given, and the Baron would have been more so, had he not trusted to the further measures of his friend.

But now it was, that the poor merchant, finding himself detained and seeing the peril in wait for him, accused the Prior of Saint Mary's, of having been one of the robbers, confederates of the Baron de Blondeville, affirming that he his-self had seen on his neck a chain, which had been taken from his murdered friend.

By the King and most present, this accusation was considered as the effort of desperate man; and it took away from him all pity, and turned their hearts against him. Others there were, who judged less hardly of him, and these suspected, that his brain was disordered by the fits he was subject to have at times, and would have had him withdrawn from the judge, and taken in hand by the physician.

But the Prior had already delivered in an accusation against him, not only of having practised magical arts, but of having forcibly attempted his life; and the court must do their duty. So, a new jury having been called, this second trial of Woodreeve began, at the especial petition of the Prior and by command of the King. The Baron remained in court, and some observed he seemed as earnest in the Prior's cause as he had been in his own.

This latter charge having been fully stated, the first witness examined was the prison-keeper of Cæsar's tower, and the jury scrupled not to hear his say, though he must condemn himself of want of vigilance, at least, if he did not accuse the prisoner of arts superior to human resistance. This man said, that he had secured the prison-chamber, at the usual hour, and that, during the night, all had remained so still, you might have heard a leaf stir, save, that, at the second watch-piping, the wayte had called out to him, that some one had entered the tower; when he, finding the strong door fastened, as he had left it, and not having before heard any noise, knew this could not have been, and so had told the wayte. On the morrow, going as usual to the prison-chamber, he found that door secure, as he had made it, but when he undid it — the merchant was no longer within! He could account for his disappearance by no mortal means; and so he ended his say.

Then the knights, on service at the great portal, were questioned, and their answers were partly to the same purpose. One of them, indeed, said he had heard a noise from the room over the dungeon, soon after the wayte had piped the third watch; but, on trying the door, he found it fast, and so thought no more of it. And now it cannot be doubted, that the knight, who was the secret friend of the Baron de Blondeville, had tampered with his companions, or, in some way, had deceived them, since they could thus slightly treat that, which had caused a clarion to be sounded. But, they could truly say, as they did, that they had seen no one go forth of the gates, or move any where, save their own men. And, knowing that they had been too bountiful of wine to those of the portcullis chamber, they might dislike, and avoid to say anything, that would lead to a discovery of the condition of those drowsy guards.

These wardours of the portcullis room being questioned, touching the fastening of the tower-door, one of them took that matter upon himself; for, though none of them knew what had happened, yet did they, for their own credit, conceal their ignorance, save he, who said, that he thought one came in the night and gave him a blow; but he knew not how he got away, nor any thing more about his assailant! "You were slumbering on your post, Carle," said his examiner; but this he stoutly denied, to the admiration of the poor prisoner, who knew the whole party had been in such deep sleep, that he had heard them snorting two chambers off. For this the Prior had his-self accounted, as before rehearsed; but he allowed not himself to smile.

Next were called the wayte and his groom; and the old man deposed he had seen some one pass through the upper court, as he was going the second round, so closely muffled up, he knew not who was, and the person had passed by so quickly, that, though he pursued his steps, yet could he never see him after. He thought he had gone to Cæsar's tower; on giving an alarm there, he found he had mistaken, the keeper having declared he had seen no one enter. Afterwards, he had searched the upper court, and questioned those on guard there, but they had neither seen nor heard any thing. Still, not being satisfied that all was right, he had taken his station in the porch opposite to the great tower, and there watched out the night, save when he had piped his rounds; but he had not seen any one come forth of the tower, nor any persons but the guard, the whole night long. This testimony of the wayte the guard confirmed.

During these narratives of the witnesses, the Prior kept an unconcerned countenance, and none present suspected him of being that unknown person; while many thought the prisoner his-self was the man, on his way out of the castle, and that the wayte had mistaken the course he took.

When the sentinels of the ramparts and posterns were questioned, all were found to agree, that no living thing had been seen, or heard, from wall or battlement, to pass forth of the Castle, during that night. Then were most of the persons present confirmed in their suspicion, that the merchant possessed some secret art, by which he had conveyed himself from the Castle into the Priory. It signified not to their apprehension, that such art, if he had possessed it, might have conveyed him clean away from his enemies; they troubled not themselves to think so far; or, perchance, they guessed there were certain limits and boundaries to the power of magic. But, whether the limit here drawn is consistent with the end designed, who was there, that could judge?

After these witnesses, the Prior his-self came forward and repeated his own tale, at length, such as he had already related it to the King. And he brought several of his monks and others of the convent, as evidence, that the prisoner had, in the midst of the night, fled from the great chamber of the Priory to the church, and there sought refuge at the sanctuary, as if he dreaded punishment for some crime. They dwelt on the disorder and emotion he had betrayed, the seeming consciousness of guilt, and the boldness and desperation, with which he had accused the Prior of having unlawfully possessed himself of the golden chain, which he, this day in Court, had made the subject of accusation against him. This chain, they said, pertained to an amulet, which had preserved their Prior's life from the dagger of the assassin; on which chain the prisoner had, though standing apart at the sanctuary, so wrought, it being then in the hands of certain brethren of the house, as to cause a painting to appear, that was not there before.

While this tale was telling, the Archbishop of York, who was just returned from his visit to the Bishop of Coventry, then lying in grievous sickness, had entered the Court, and taken his proper place. He it was, who inquired, whether this golden chain were at hand; on which the high justicier ordered it should be produced. Then, the Prior, who pretended a wish to show it, drew it forth from his neck, and, it was carried to the King, who examined it, looking long on the painting of that fair dame, the widow of the unfortunate knight. Close within the rim of that picture was drawn a little face, like unto a cherub looking up, in peace, to the Lady, who seemed to smile upon him, in tender affection. The Archbishop, when he perused the picture, was wonderly struck both with the resemblance to the shadow he had seen in the hall, and with that of the fair dame, which had been there presented in the pageant.

The King, looking again upon the picture, acknowledged the likeness, and then summoning the Baron to his side, showed him the portrait, and put the chain into his hands; who, having received it on his knee, rose up, and withdrew to a window, the better to examine it. Thither followed him the eyes of the Archbishop and the Prior, but each with different interest and motive for watchfulness. My Lord of York observed the chain to tremble in its holder's hand, and believed, that Woodreeve had spoken the truth.

The Prior saw, that the countenance of his associate was altered, and hoped that he would be resolute, during the whole trial; each was contented, in his own way, and awaited calmly what might follow. But, when the Baron had gazed awhile, he became agitated. He seemed to shrink, and, averting his face from the object he contemplated, he held it nearly at arm's length. Then, he looked again, drawing the portrait nearer to his sight, and then, again withdrew it, while a livid paleness overspread his countenance, and he seemed hardly able to support himself.

Then, as if regaining all his courage, he left the window; but, instead of returning the portrait to the King, he was conveying it to the Prior, when my Lord Archbishop cried out, "My Lord, his Highness, hath not yet done with that chain; give it into the hands, from which you received it."

The Baron stopped; he seemed to be angered, and, half turning with a haughty mien and frowning look, he answered, "I obey no command but the King's."

On this the King, graciously smiling, said, "I desire it of you."

The Baron, immediately advancing to the state chair, dropped his knee, and presented the chain; on receiving which and looking again upon the picture, his Highness spoke with surprise to the Baron, who bowed, with a disclaiming gesture, and said a few words, which none nigh could hear; while Prince Edward, who stood on the steps, below the King's chair, viewed him with a suspicious eye; for, young as he was, he had observed that in him, which he liked not. And now he saw with wonder, the earnestness, with which his father looked upon the picture; for he knew not, that it showed the likeness of the knight, who had appeared in the banquet-hall.

Unknowingly, the Baron had touched the spring, which disclosed this portrait, and had shut up that of the unhappy widow. Prince Edward looked again on the Baron, thinking he had wrought some change in the picture, leading to mischief and designed against the prisoner, to whose cause his heart secretly inclined him. From all that he had seen before, and on this day, he judged him to be innocent of evil intention; and he had not failed to tell the King, his father, privately all his thoughts.

But his Highness, whose understanding was often baffled by his humours and by the arts of cunning men, thought not with his son in this matter; and, he moreover, suspected this change in the painting to be wrought by the merchant, or his agents, as the Prior had before affirmed; or by some new art of magic. Still his sight dwelt on that portrait, whose look of quiet sadness so much remembered him of that, which the knight in the pageant had shown, when departing from his family and his native shore. After long perusing the portrait, the King lifted his eyes from it and beheld! once more before him, the form of that very knight, such as had appeared on the steps of the dais.

It was in truth the very image of this shadowed forth here in miniature; the same armour, worn in the same way, with vizor up, and the eyes showing that same solemn and resigned look, save that they were now fixed, somewhat sternly on the King. It seemed as if his Highness only perceived this person, while he sat motionless, and, for some moments, silent.

Then he rose hastily, and commanded, that the stranger should be secured! Vain command. Those, who heard it, perceived not for whom it was designed; but looked upon each other with wonder and amazement: and many there were near him, who feared his Highness was stricken with sudden distemper. Whether the Archbishop saw aught, or only suspected the cause is not known; but he was observed to make that holy gesture, which formerly he had used in the greater hall. The King, with some anger, repeated his command! but he whom he would have seized, no more appeared.

For awhile, his Highness seemed struck with dismay; he sat and covered his eyes with his hand, reclining him in his chair, Then, imputing this appearance to the same art as the former, dread gave way to indignation against the prisoner; and he resolved to have immediate justice done; not only in punishment of past offences, but to put an end to those deceits and mischiefs, from which it seemed, that even his-self was not secured. Sometimes, too, he doubted whether this man might not be an agent of his bitter enemy, Lewellyn of Wales; by whose evil arts he had, as he deemed, been formerly robbed of that precious ring, which was to render him invincible in war. If this were so, the prisoner added to the guilt of being a spy and a traitor, that of feigned agitations and sorrow, touching a deed never committed.

Order being given that the trial should immediately proceed, the Baron de Blondeville, who, while this image had remained before the King, was busied in another part of the hall, and thus escaped its influence, advanced to the chair, and received again the chain, with intent to deliver it to the Prior. Now, that which follows, was reported of many present in the court, with what truth I know not; but it is here faithfully related.

No sooner had the Baron received into his hand that golden chain, than the eyes of all near were fixed upon his robe. It was the same he wore on the night of the banquet, and on which, when passing from the King's chamber, through the brown gallery with the Prior, and meeting there the marvellous stranger, three drops of blood had fallen. These had been partly erased, but they were now not unnoticed, though none knew whence they came.

No sooner had he received this chain of the deceased knight, then each little drop began to spread, till that side of his garment became covered, as it were, with crimson, seeming to maintain the notion, that is gone forth, that after some prolonged presence of the murderer, the blood of the deceased will become fresh again, wherever it may be found, as if newly shed.

The King, 'tis said, beheld this in silence, not knowing what it might mean, though guessing it to be some new device of sorcery. The Prior remained in his place, with downward look; while the prisoner, in his, lifted up his hands to Heaven.

My Lord Archbishop rose and turned himself to his Highness as though he would address him; but he did not. Prince Edward's looks were bent steadily upon the Baron, as were also most of those, that composed the King's court, but no one spoke, each awaiting for what another might first say. There was a general confusion and amazement in the hall.

The Baron his-self stood looking down upon his garment, with the chain trembling in his hand. How long he might have continued standing there none knew, had not the King's voice recalled him from his trance, and bade him deliver the chain to the secretary at the table, there to remain, till the trial should conclude. He obeyed with looks, that seemed to say this command foretold some diminution of favour; and, after his having delivered it, behold a new marvel; for that great crimson stain began to separate into three parts, and then to lessen and fade away, till it wholly disappeared, leaving his robe bright and rich as before.

Then there was a general tumult and outcry in the court, of, "justice, justice! the prisoner hath spoken the truth! The chain of the deceased hath borne witness against the Baron, the Baron de Blondeville."

At these words, the Baron seemed to recover all his spirit; he threw a glance of indignation round the court, and then, walking firmly up to the King, did homage, and remained on his knee, ready to plead for protection, when the tumult should subside. Again my Lord, the Archbishop, turned towards his Highness, calmly awaiting the return of silence. The Prior also stood up, and was haranguing, with vehement gesticulation, though no one could hear a single word he uttered. But the poor merchant, having seen this second marvellous sign in his favour, testified no presumptuous joy; he had sunk down, overcome with humble gratitude, unable either to speak, or to shed a tear.

In vain the King raised his arm on high, and his chief justicier stood up, with stern countenance, to restore order; each individual spectator followed the promptings of his own thoughts, and uttered them without scruple, though scarcely any one could be heard. And thus it went, for some time, till divers of the crowd, without the hall, hearing that something extraordinary was passing within, pressed forward to the court, so that those sitting there became afraid for their lives, and the King's guards were called upon to do their duty, which they at last performed, with no small difficulty.

At this so flagrant a breach of good 'haviour in the King's court and in his very presence, his Highness was much moved, and he willingly attributed it to the malignant passions of pride and jealousy directed against the Baron de Blondeville, who was doubly obnoxious, as being a stranger by birth and exalted by favour. So his Highness became more warmly attached to his cause than before, and more resolute to protect him against the united force of his enemies. Silence being at last restored, his Highness bade the Baron de Blondeville "Rise, and fear not; for justice shall overtake the guilty." The Archbishop liked not the King's frown, as he spoke these words, and he sat down disdainfully, without uttering what was in his mind.

Not so the Prior of Saint Mary's, who had been impatiently watching for the moment, when he might be heard, and who now boldly cried out, "My Lord Archbishop, will you now credit the truth that is before you? Will you now deny the power of sorcery? Here, in the very court, this false accuser has unwarily betrayed his guilt; here, in the face of justice, exercising his art, with a view to deprive the Baron de Blondeville both of honour and of life, he has made evident the truth of my accusation against himself. You yourself, have now witnessed, that a spell is in that chain, which his presence has put in movement, and you can no longer question what I have related of yesternight, or of his motive for exercising his infamous art. He has caused these paintings to appear in the chain, that he may claim it for his deceased kinsman's, who, he pretends, was murdered, that by this circumstance he may prove the extravagant and ridiculous charge he has fabricated against me. By the same arts of sorcery, exercised upon the Baron's robe, he would confirm the other slander he has uttered — that against the Baron de Blondeville; and, by connecting this second marvel with the first, he would fain make it appear, that the Baron and myself were confederated in the same crime. But, in so doing, he has proved nothing but the force of his spells and of his malice, and has turned them unwittingly against himself alone, since his Highness cannot be deceived. My Lord Archbishop, will you now deny the power of sorcery?"

When he had ceased, the Archbishop rose with calm and dignified countenance, as of one, who holds the balance in his own hands; and, without deigning to notice the Prior, he called upon the justicier to put an end to this irregular proceeding, and to make the trial go on. It was only in submission to the King, that this disorderly interruption had been permitted by the High Justicier, his Highness having given him a sign, that the Prior should be heard; but now he willingly resumed his duty. However, the words of the Prior had not been in vain; for, they took effect upon the minds of many in the court, to the prejudice of the poor merchant, and to confirmation of both charges against him, that of sorcery, and that of attempted assassination. And thus it seemed, that the very marvel, which at first made against the Baron, being now warped and twisted by the so crafty Prior, was likely to end in the prisoner's ruin.

Then, the merchant his-self was examined; but the truth which he told, of the Prior having come to him and offered him liberty, appeared less plausible than his accuser's falsehood. That he should have hesitated to accept the freedom thus offered, few could credit; yet the testimony of the wayte, seemed to support Woodreeve's story, which, had he been suffered to proceed, would have been further proved by his account of the many secret ways, through which he was conducted, and which were so little known, that by hardly any other means than those of experience, could he have been made acquainted with them. But, when he began to tell of that door in the Constable's great chamber, which led into those passages of the walls and so, by covert windings, down into the portcullis room, and to those hidden vaults below, he was suddenly checked in his story. Those, who willed not, that these secrets, and, partly, safeguards of the castle, should be made public, denied that there were such; and, feigning to be weary of so long-winding a tale, they brought it to a speedy conclusion, by commanding the prisoner to be less tedious and to account for his appearance in the Prior's chamber, which surely was not in the castle, but in the Priory. Now, how could he fully do so, but by tracing out all his steps thither? And this he was forbidden to do; and he could not but see, that he should be resolutely contradicted by those, who, if they had no concert with his enemies, fancied they were required by duty to tell a falsehood — as if any duty to man could require that! Being then, forbidden to take this course, he only related, that, having followed the Prior into a subterraneous way under the castle-ditch, hoping it would lead him to the forest, his life had been threatened by the Prior, on his discovering and claiming that very golden chain, which had been shown this day in court. He further told, that, having escaped from the uplifted dagger, he had fled along that avenue, which brought him to the Prior's chamber, whence he had again been compelled to fly from pursuit, which had scarcely permitted him even the rights of sanctuary.

While the prisoner was telling this part of his story, the most profound silence reigned throughout that hall, where lately not one voice could be heard from another; nay, hardly the trumpet of the King's guard, amidst the stormy multitude. Many, while they listened, found themselves inclining to the merchant's cause; and some would entirely believe, that he had spoken only the truth.

Amongst the latter, were the young Prince Edward and the venerable Archbishop — ingenuous youth and discerning age. Always, indeed, had the conscientious sagacity of the Archbishop inclined him to Woodreeve's cause; and what he had heard formerly and lately at Coventry, respecting the Prior, confirmed his opinion. He knew also enough of the ways, employed by some in those times to procure riches, to be incredulous of the strange history of this Prior, whose unaccountable wealth had procured for him his present rank from the Pope's legate.

Others present there were, who, though but too well acquainted with the lawless and desperate manners of those days, yet refused to acknowledge, that a man of the Prior's office and rank could be guilty of the crime. Amongst those, who inclined to the prisoner, were some of the jury; when now there came into court, one Aaron, a Jew of Lincoln. He came in not by accident; but, as some shrewdly guessed, was sent by those, who, knowing the man, and his way of trade, designed to make him an instrument on this occasion.

The business, that first brought him to Kenilworth, was to pay the Queen that usual surplus of a King's fine, called "Aurum Reginæ." This man had been heavily fined; and, as it is said, for having falsified a charter. However this might be, he had now to pay, to the Queen alone, about six hundred marks; in present payment for which sum, her Highness took of him a transfer of a deed, by which this Jew held in pawn of John Vavasour, the manor of Hazlewood, which that ancient family had held of the de Percies, even in the Conqueror's reign. The deed, thus rescued by the Queen from the Jew, who had withheld it, that he might extort for it an exorbitant sum, was by her returned to the same John, on his paying to her the rehersed sum of six hundred marks. But this circumstance is here related only, that it may appear what sort of person this Jew was, on whose word might probably depend the life of an innocent man. Now, this Aaron, when he came into the hall, and was produced as a witness, desired to see that same golden chain, worn of the Prior and sworn to of the merchant, as having been about the neck of his deceased kinsman, at the time of the murder.

On this, the Prior, looking hardly at the Jew, feigned to remember him, saying, as he delivered up the chain, "You should know it well; for, if I err not, it was of you that I purchased it. I was then returning from a pilgrimage to the shrine of Saint Hugh, at Lincoln."

"You are right," quoth the Jew; "this chain, I remember me, I sold to you for fifty marks of gold, some five or six years back. You were not then Prior of Saint Mary's, but a brother of Coventry."

"Behold!" said the Prior, "one who can bear testimony against the false story of the prisoner. Let an oath be administered unto him."

"He is a Jew!" cried out a voice; "his oath may not be taken."

"The *law* is against it," said another; "but who may prevent his word being credited?"

The Prior then demanded of him whether he remembered any paintings concealed in the chain? and the Jew replied, that there were no paintings, when he sold it to him; but to the chain itself he could swear, if he were permitted to do so. He had bought it of a goldsmith of London, then living in Chepe; it was of fine gold, and of the best workmanship; for that citizen of London had in his workshop one Giocondi, a Florentine, who was famous for such things; and by him was it made. With those fine paintings, he should have valued the whole at not less than one hundred marks.

Here again was a contention, whether the oath of a Jew could be received; some saying the law was against it; others, that, when King John's reign ended, that law had ceased. And thus it went, for some time, till the King, rising from his chair, commanded that an oath should be administered, and this was done, after the Archbishop had obtained of the court, that the oath to be taken of the Jew should not be such as we swear. Then the Archbishop, turning towards the Prior, demanded of what house in Coventry he had been a brother, and at what time he had purchased the chain.

"At the time of my pilgrimage to Saint Hugh, of Lincoln," answered the Prior; "then I purchased that chain of Aaron."

"Of what house where you a brother?" repeated the Archbishop sternly.

"Of Saint Nicholas."

"Of what order."— "Of the benedictine."

"I know not of any house at Coventry, that is both of that name and order," observed the Archbishop.

"I said not I was of Coventry," replied the Prior.

"Your *friend* has said so," urged the Archbishop, "and till now, you have not contradicted him."

"The Jew is mistaken," said the Prior; "I know not that he is my friend; if he were so, in trowth, he would have been better acquainted with my former abode."

"Answer, without further evasion," said Archbishop, "and tell to what town and brotherhood you belonged at the time of your pilgrimage."

"I was then of the Priory of Saint Nicholas, in Exeter."

"Your's was a long pilgrimage," said Archbishop, fixing his eyes attentively upon the Prior.

My Lord Bishop said not more, but listened constantly to the further evidence of this Aaron, which went hard against the merchant, touching the matter of the chain, and when one, who pleaded for the Prior, drew up each particular of the prisoner's tale, such as he had his-self related it, many improbable circumstances appeared on the face of it. To those unacquainted with his enemies' true history and character, there seemed to be little motive for his attempt to lead away Woodreeve from his prison, to give him liberty, if that were in trowth the end he had in view, when he was said to have conducted him from the tower; and, if that were not his end, and he had designed to prevent any discovery of his own former guilt, by the assassination of the merchant, why, said they, did he pass over the opportunity, afforded by that avenue described by the prisoner himself, as so secret and remote. To these persons there appeared neither cause sufficient to have urged the Prior to draw forth a poniard with intent to kill, nor, having done so, any motive to restrain his hand, in a place so convenient to his purpose.

For Woodreeve, when he related that the Prior appeared horror-struck at the moment of aiming the dagger, had not explained the cause of this, nor did he his-self know it, though by it his life had been saved. Neither, if he had known and related it, would they, in all likelihood, have heeded him; but it was afterwards supposed, that the Prior, at that dangerous moment, had been awed by the appearance of the deceased knight.

These considerations, together with the evidence of the Jew, at last determined the jury against the poor merchant, who was adjudged guilty of having attempted the life of the Prior and of having practised arts of sorcery, which, it was supposed, had been made visible this day, in open court.

On this verdict, many made known their satisfaction, and approached the Baron de Blondeville, and the Prior, with joyful words. But there was not one to shed a tear with the prisoner, or who dared to show him any sign of sympathy.

My Lord Archbishop seemed much disposed to do so; for, his countenance expressed grave displeasure, when all was joy around him. Even the smiles of the King could not move him to any show of accordance. It became plain he thought the condemned person innocent; and, perhaps, he suspected, that the witnesses and even the jury had been unduly practised with; but of this he spoke nothing.

Prince Edward, too, seemed not well pleased with this transaction; for, his eyes were sometimes sternly fixed on the Prior, and even on the Baron himself, whose heart was now at ease, who stood on the steps of the King’s chair, cap in hand, discoursed to by his Highness.

But there was one present in the court, though unseen, whose joy did equal his. This was the Lady-baroness, his fair bride, who, from a gallery on high, concealed from view by a lattice-work, had anxiously watched all, which passed in court, and now, that the honour of her lord was rescued from what she had been taught to think was but the malice of a secret enemy, she had nearly sunk under the tumult of the contrary feelings of joy for one, and pity for the unhappy instrument of the other.

Woodreeve, weighed down with grief and despair, was led back to his prison through a curious and busy crowd, too many of them willing to see him suffer death without delay, eager for some new spectacle. But his sentence was postponed, during the King’s pleasure, who, well contented with the verdict, meant not that the dreadful infliction should take place, till after his own departure from Kenilworth; and thus the court broke up; Woodreeve to his prison-tower, there to await his fate; the Prior to his home, secretly to exult in the success of his wicked wiles, and to plot new ones; the Archbishop to his chamber, there to meditate alone; the Baron, to rejoice with the unsuspecting Lady Barbara; the King to refresh himself, and the whole Court to talk over what had passed; and to prepare them for the diversions and merriment appointed for the approaching evening, unsuitable as they were, at this time.

The merchant, when he had once more taken possession of his solitary turret, desired means wherewith to send a letter to his wife — for he could write — that she, now at distance, and in daily expectation of his return, might be somewhat prepared for his fate. But, even this poor request was denied him, under pretence, that it was feared he might work, with unlawful characters in the black art, further evil against those he had accused, or those, who had the custody of him.

While the trial had been proceeding in the White Hall, the Queen, with many noble ladies attending, went into the Hall of Banquet, to view the shields of the knights, candidates for prizes in a tournament, which had been appointed for the morrow; and there a strange accident happened. The shields were hung in array, round this gorgeous hall, and the banner of each knight waved over his shield. An officer of arms attended, who called aloud to whom each shield belonged, with the name and full titles of the owner; that, if any lady had cause of complaint, against any knight-candidate, she might touch his shield; and, without aid of words, this action was sufficient to cause that shield to be taken from its place; that, if, on inquiry, there were reason to suppose him guilty of any ‘haviour derogatory to the honour of chivalry, his name might be erased from amongst those of the candidates, and himself adjudged unworthy to break a lance on the field.

There was now in the hall a great display of shields; for, besides the many nobles and knights of the realm of England, who had entered their names for the lists, there were knights, drawn hither from all quarters; some from France, some from Scotland, and some from Germany. Amidst this show of shields, which had been here for some days, and which had not been disturbed by the late trial, three spaces on the walls betrayed, that three knights had been already accused. To many, who looked upon these vacancies, the blanks there seemed to plead for those whose shields had been condemned; when, perhaps, their enemies could not have proved aught against them, had they been accused in any other manner. The Baron de Blondeville’s was not one of these proscribed shields.

Now, it happened, during this visit of very many ladies, that one amongst them went from shield to shield, examining the bearings in each, without awaiting the due progress of the herald, in his course of explanation, around the walls. Looking deliberately at every shield, she stood still before several, and seemed to meditate. Meanwhile, the singularity of her conduct and appearance drew the attention of many persons. She was not habited in the fashion of the court, or in any dress of ceremony, but wore a mourning robe and a veil, that flowed to her feet, but this had been lifted, while she was examining the shields, and even now partly betrayed her face. She was not of the court, nor was she known of any of those, who gave attention to her; yet had she an air of distinction and of graceful ease, with, as some thought a foreign aspect; and each, who knew her not, supposed she was known of some other, and had good right be there; perhaps, the sister of one of the foreign knights.

Her beauty was faded, yet seemed she young, and she had a look of sorrow and of wildness, too, that touched the hearts of many, that beheld her. By her own thoughts she was so much enwrapt, that she observed not how much she was noticed, though indeed little was said, her Highness the Queen being present.

When the herald came to the shield of the Baron de Blondeville, which was blazoned high, with all his new honours, he called forth loudly his name and titles. Then, on a sudden, this lady seemed to know where she was and what she came there for. With grave air, yet confident, walking up the hall, she stayed her steps before his shield, and examined it deliberately, the herald somewhat lingering the while. Having so stood, some little space, she bent her head, and, covering her eyes with her veil, she seemed to weep.

Then, lifting up her veil she stepped towards the shield, and touched it, looking at the herald, as she did so; but she spoke not one word. And this was sufficient, as the custom went. Immediately, the officer at arms advanced, to take down the shield from the wall, which he did not without some difficulty.

The Queen, seeing what was done, and that it was the Baron de Blondeville’s shield, that was displaced, inquired who was the lady, that had caused its disgrace. But no one could tell, and she had already left the hall, well contented with what had been done. Then her Highness, blaming the herald for his speed, commanded, that the steps of this fair accuser should followed, and her name and rank declared, that it might appear now whether her act were worthy to take so much effect, and, afterwards whether she had just cause of grief and complaint. And, until these things, or some of them, should be known, she bade the herald replace the shield on the wall.

So the Lord-Marshall of England, who was attending upon her Highness, was then compelled to speak; and he said, with submission, that might not be done; the laws of chivalry forbidding, unless by especial command of the King. So her Highness let that pass, well knowing, that the King would order the shield to be replaced, except insurmountable cause should appear against it. And then, having viewed the remaining shields, she, with all that company of noble ladies, withdrew.

But this accident caused much marvelling in the court, many thinking it was occasioned by some new offence of the Baron, and that a great deal yet remained to be told against him; others, that the unknown lady was the widow of the Knight, who, it was said, had been slain by him; and that she had not gone away, so far, or so fast, but that her name might be easily learned by the heralds, if they were more fully ordered to discover it. Others, who held the Baron innocent, said this was only some new device of his enemies; and that, if any such female had really appeared in the hall, she had doubtless got out of the reach of discovery, into some sufficient, though near concealment. The King, soon as he heard the report of this adventure, commanded, that strict search should be made for the lady-accuser and that, meanwhile, the Baron's shield should be restored to its place, unstained by suspicion; there to remain until the morrow's tournament, or until surer cause should appear for removing it. This night, his Highness kept state, not in the hall, but in the great chamber; my Lord, the Archbishop, being ever at his right hand, whose gravity seemed not to yield, for one moment, to all the mirth around him. In trowth, he was not a man to be capable of festive enjoyment, when a fellowcreature had been recently condemned to wretchedness, had he even thought him guilty; but he thought not so. On all that passed, he looked with equal eye, and said little, answering only when his Highness spoke to him. Some thought he looked with displeasure on that extravagant pomp, which was here displayed in every thing, at a time, when the King had little in his coffers, and knew not well how to fill them. With this King Henry it was ever so, on the score of money; good as he was, on many other points, he ever lived for the present hour, and suffered the next to shift for itself. His brother, my Lord of Cornwall, did otherwise; he took good care to gather up some of what he saw so bountifully scattered; and to keep it safe for his own purposes in time to come. He had both cooler heart and head than King Henry; who spared neither trouble nor money, to advance him to the height, which he had obtained for him, and had caused him to be chosen King of the Romans, although he had once nearly raised a rebellion, with no better motive than that he wished to possess the manor of Berkhamstead; and so no more of such matters. Only those, who attributed the Archbishop's more than wonted gravity, to the wasteful magnificence, which was then displaying itself before him, did not reach the whole course of his so thoughtful mood. It was, above all, the weakness of the King, which subjected him to the sway of designing men, and to be drawn aside from the administration of justice, that alarmed and grieved the Archbishop. And, this day, he thought he had beheld in him a striking instance of blindness to the cause of the oppressed. He knew, better than any one, the efforts he had made to warn the King against the Prior of St. Mary's; and to persuade him, it was quite as possible the Baron de Blondeville should be guilty of one crime, as the prisoner of another; so that his Highness should listen, without prejudice, to what appeared on either side; but he could not so persuade. Now, before the Archbishop had left Kenilworth for Coventry, the King had been so far influenced by his advice, that he had promised to postpone the intended trial of the merchant, till some further light should be thrown upon so extraordinary an accusation, and one made with astonishing hardihood; and it was chiefly to obtain this information from the Bishop of Coventry, that his good brother went so hastily thither; but it was of a bootless hope. The Bishop and the Prior there knew little of the character, or the former history of the Prior of Kenilworth; what they could communicate, confirmed the former suspicions of the Archbishop. This day, when the trial was ended, he despatched a messenger to the Prior of Saint Nicholas, in Exeter, to learn whether he knew aught of the Prior of Saint Mary's; and whether the Prior had spoken the truth, when he said, that he had been a brother of the Benedictine Priory, of that name, in that city. Yet the great distance to be travelled through difficult roads, made it doubted whether his messenger would return, during any delay, which he might have sufficient influence to obtain of the King, in counteraction to that of the Baron de Blondeville and the Prior; who, for their own supposed security, might be urging, unceasingly, for speedy sentence upon their accuser. If the Archbishop, on this night, looked sad in this courtly chamber, so did not the Baron de Blondeville. He had now regained all the gaiety of his nation and age; and danced a measure to the joyance of all present; the Queen and her ladies declaring their admiration to the Baroness. Then, was there solemn dancing of many lords and noble dames; the King's five harpers playing the while. Prince Edward, with the Baroness de Blondeville, performed a bass-dance, to the noise of the harps only. And then, finding himself oppressed with his mantle, which was of velvet, thickly embroidered, and besides heavily guarded with gold lace, he impatiently threw it off, and danced a round right merrily in his jacket, to the sound of the recorders, and to the great diversion of the King and Queen. Which dance being ended, the Prince brought his fair partner in his hand, up to the Queen, who said many gracious things to her; and, certes, for either high or solemn dancing, there was none that excelled her. After the dancing, Richard, the King's minstrel, sang to the harp one of Maister Henry's best ballads, which were so bright and cheering, raising up the spirits and the laughter of all present; and this, if it flowed not from the famous Helicon, certes, it might be supposed to have come thence, and all held that it well deserved the butt of sack, which his Highness had lately bestowed upon him. There was not any banqueting, or late wassailling, this night in the hall; for, on the morrow was to be the great tournament, and the most sumptuous feasting yet given; and every one was willing to prepare for it by taking an early rest. And thus, after Ypocras, and wafers had been served, with the usual state, the King and Queen avoided the Great Chamber, for that night, followed by a goodly train of estates and gentils. Each departed to his own bower; some to think on what had passed this day; others to forget that such a day had been; and others again, to watch for that, which was to come; since joy, or the hope of it, often makes the young as wakeful, as habitual care doth the aged; and many there were, whom delightsome expectation of the finery and pomp they should display, or behold, tomorrow, kept sleepless, till the wayte had piped the third watch and longer, Knights and esquires, lovers and ladies, country folk, serving-men and waiting-women, many a one; and all impatiently looked for the coming hour; but specially the young knights thought how they should triumph, in all the pride of prowess, before their courted fair ones; and doubted not, that the happiness of their whole lives depended upon the coming day. And thus the prompt feelings of youth gave shape and colour and consequence to small circumstances, wrought into visions of their own imagination; all vivid and expansive now, but which would be dim and cold and contracted, as their sun should decline. But woe to him, who would have taught them to detect these bright illusions, which belong to youth, as do the golden lights and songs of joy to morning! Woe to him, who would have set before their eyes the severe form of experience, and have reduced the gaieties of their boundless hope to the many checquered scene of real existence! All in its season, comes the noontide ray, and melts the beauteous visions of the morning; all in its season, comes the evening ray, when lengthened shadows fall on the long landscape — when the purple cloud loses its golden edge, and the world below sinks into shade, which leads again to the bright tints of dawn — to the brighter, oh! how much brighter tints of a cloudless and limitless dawn! Are we, who would derange this order, and cast the hue of twilight before the morning or the noontide sun, better sighted than the Wisdom and the Beneficence which have ordained it otherwise? We may watch and regulate — to do this is our duty; and let us neither omit it by careless and total indulgence, nor spare our vigilance by total proscription; — gradually we may prepare the mind for the great truths, that time will cast over the thousand hues of hope and joyance; and gradually a sense of the vanity and nothingness of this fleeting part of an eternal existence, instead of being a melancholy, will be a complacent perception, more than reconciling us to the shortness of its imperfect joys and deeply consoling us for its sorrows.

THE SEVENTH DAY.

Here was a drawing of a field of tournament, bordering on the lake, beyond which appeared the towers and lake of Kenilworth. A procession of knights, before a lady, drawn in a stately car, was moving round the field, trumpeters on horseback going before them, and dancing figures following. On the opposite side of the lawn, other knights appeared at a barrier, on whom seemed directed the chief attention of the company in the numerous tents and galleries around; who stood up, and leaned over one another, in their eagerness to view what was passing, or approaching.

Below, on the margin, stood a King crowned, in his robes, designed for King Henry; for it bore resemblance to his image in brass, placed on his monument in the Abbey of Saint Peter, called the West Minster.

But, before rehersing the events of this day, let us not forget the night, which the merchant passed in his prison. There, when all noise in the castle had ceased, and sleep, as he thought, rested on every eye save his own, it was said he heard, at first, sounds of the most mournful warning, and, afterwards, others so sweet passed by his turret, as seemed to remember him, that not for any crime was he condemned, but for the grief and generous indignation, which had urged him to point out the murderer of his friend and kinsman. It seemed as if the image of that friend stood before him, not wounded, and with face of wretchedness, such as of late his memory had been haunted with, but with a look of heavenly peace and kindness. Woodreeve knew this image was only in his fancy; yet, as the sounds went by, it seemed to stand more clearly there, and to smile on him with so benign a feeling, as imparted hope and comfort to his heart. He wept, but not in suffering sorrow; his tears were now such as hush the mind in deepest stillness, and strengthen and refresh it, like as the dew of heaven the withered herb.

The day of this great tournay, to which the King had invited lords and gentils far and wide, was now come; and all was bustle and expectation in the castle and country round. It was a pleasant day to behold, and most fresh and sweet was the forest-air to those, who came prancing through it, and delightsome were those shades of green and red and orange-tawney, that over canopied the way, and seemed in stately mournfulness to bid farewell to summer. The redbreast, piping his lonely song amongst the leaves, seemed to have stolen their livery, and hardly could he be distinguished from the beechen bough, on which he sat. Thus stood the beech, the elm and chesnut, the slender ash, and lordly plane. Not so, with mark of past prime, stood the oak; warrior of winter — he yet stretched forth his mighty limbs, clad in strong verdure, to defy frost and storm, and, when he should doff it, to brave, in his crimson surcoat, even old Yule, when, with shrill whistle on the sharp north, he should come to scatter snows on his tawney crest.

It were most soothing now to melancholize under these shades, and think on many things in air and earth, real and unreal, that fly the lightsome noon; and thus might you ruminate, till time should bring you to the verge of your part in it, without your perceiving, that he was carrying you on your way, all reckless of its better use; so stilly would it move beneath this quiet gloom. But those, who passed through the forest-tracks this day, went with the swift foot of hope and high spirits; they came not to melancholize: and a greater number of coursers, palfries, hobbies, and other steeds never, ywis, tramped on the ground of Ardenn.

Ever since the first dawn, you might espy them passing among the woods from towns, and villages and hamlets and monasteries, whither they had gathered over-night; and now drawing on towards Kenilworth, and the castle, where, over the great gate, hung the helmet of invitation to all courteous knights, a summons not slighted by any, whether courteous and knightly, or humbly and civilly curious, or rude and forward.

It was in a fair meadow, which some call a plain, below the castle, on the opposite side of the moat, that this tournament was appointed; as a place where the Queen and her ladies might behold it from the castle, if the autumn weather should forbid them to be present: but all that great space was prepared and set forth at the sides, with tents, and stages, and galleries, as if nought might keep them away; the whole hung with arras, or cloth of gold. These you might see from the towers and walls of the castle; nay, from the bay-window of the great hall, standing like a little town of palaces and castles; for so were many of the tents, fashioned the midst of the woods, which rose up on all sides, around them, save where the lake spread its broad light to the foot of the Swan Tower and the rampart-walls: and, certes, it was a noble sight to see those pavilions ranged around the open meadow, all amongst the green shades, with vanes and banners glittering in the sun, spreading to the very edge of the water, which there lay, smooth and bright as polished silver, and giving back this glorious vision.

And then again, to those in the field the castle itself was a goodly sight, with all its towers and battlements thronged with faces; the great banner of England, waving on the Keep, and overtopping even the forest-trees behind; the whole pictured forth on those sleeping waters, as if falling into the blue deep below. Every parapet, or tower, or rampart, where foot could stand, or arm could cling, was clothed with living forms, and every window and little grate was full of watching eyes, and showed shoulder beyond shoulder, and head crowding over head, looking towards the field, with an eagerness, that made all below, who had seen them, turn their eyes the same way, and feel yet a stronger eagerness for the spectacle they were expecting. Even behind the loop-holes there were faces; some of them, I ween, such as had never looked out there before; the darts of these warriors not being in their hands, but in their eyes.

Those in the castle could hear the trumpets blow up amain, and see the heralds on their great horses riding about the place of contest, before the knights appeared; and could clearly discern the different tents, and make out to whom each belonged. The King's pavilion of scarlet cloth of gold was raised on a platform, above every other, and stood in the centre of that half-circle, formed by the rest. The platform was covered with silken carpets; and there, in front of the pavilion, but just within the canopy, were placed two state-chairs for their Highnesses. The curtains were drawn up in large folds, held up with golden ropes; and within them were showed seat above seat, filled with ladies of the court, gorgeously apparelled, awaiting the royal train: and below, on either hand, were ranged esquires and pages in the King's livery. Over this tent played the royal banner; and the vanes showed the King's crest, glittering almost as high.

On the right of this was the pavilion of the young Prince Edward; but his was raised only by a few steps above the turf. It was of green and white silk, not in any feigned fashion, but in that, which belongeth to tents in war; and it had a golden lion on the top for a vane. On the left of the King's pavilion, raised only one step from the turf, was that appointed for the great officers of state, when they were dismissed from standing about his Highness's chair; and for other nobles of the realm, with whom were some bishops, but not in their state, though the King were present; and some abbots, also not in their state. Near this was the tent of the Baron de Blondeville, of white and azure, having for the crest an armed hand with a javelin poised in it, ready to strike at a shield.

It were tedious to tell of all the different pavilions and galleries, adorned with velvets and rich tapestries, that spread so gloriously round this fair meadow; or of the ladies, so sumptuously arrayed, that appeared within, delighting the hearts of all who beheld them.

But the tent of the challengers, whose chief was William de Fortibus, Earl of Aumerle, standing at the eastern barrier; and that of the defenders, whose leader was the Lord Simon de Montfort, nigh the western barrier, deserve notice. The Earl of Aumerle's was shaped like a castle, beset with gilded turrets and bastions, the entrance gate showing a lofty arch, hung round with goodly trappings of purple velvet, 'broidered and fringed with gold; and having within, hangings and seats of the same. But my Lord of Montfort's outdid this glittering pomp; his tent was in shape of a princely palace, yet with walls and towers, approaching in some sort to a castle. The entrance was into a bannered hall, with stately crimson and gold beneath the banners; and of crimson and gold were the seats and cushions. Figures in armour stood round that hall, as though he would assert himself a warrior and a prince; and truly King Henry needed such, if he might find them true to him.

The lists were forty feet wide, and they ran nearly the whole length of the field. On the outside of them was a raised space to keep off the crowd, which was guarded by knights and their esquires, in armour, but bearing no weapons; and so, too, were the barriers guarded. These knights, as well as all the attendants of the combatants, had taken an oath not to assist either by word, look, or gesture, any of the combatants, not even when wounded and unhorsed, except as the Marshal of the Field should allow; but this oath was not on pain of death, as at trial by combat, in law.

The eastern barrier was for the entrance of the challengers, with the lady-prize; the western was for the defenders. At these points of the field were the greatest press and throng of the people; amongst whom, to wile away their time of waiting, ran many stories of the deeds of some of the knights expected.

Anon, the heralds, who were riding about the place of war, drew aside to the barriers, and their trumpets blew up aloud for a long space, summoning the lords and knights, challengers and defenders, to the field, in manner of war, with such a stiring sound, that no man could abide in the castle, that thought he could get one foot into the field of tournay; but all ran speedily thither, not one allowing, in spite of eye-sight, that it was impossible to find the smallest space, not already filled. And then many, that had been on the walls, would fain have been back there again, for scarcely a glimpse could they get of the field; the fencing, the pikemen, and the horsemen being so deep around it, that the nearest to them had but a sorry peep. And, as for the stages and galleries, raised up for those, who came first, or who had some favour, they had been filled for hours, some having taken their seats there at sunrise.

Presently, the heralds were answered by the King's trumpets afar, which drew near and nearer, until they came into the plain, and took their station before the King's pavilion, still blowing up, with their banners displayed. There, rode two King's at arms, Garter and Clarencieux: then was every eye turned thither in expectation of what might follow; and presently came into their tent the King and Queen, with a long train of nobles, and ladies, and took their seats on the chairs prepared for them, standing a little out on the platform.

His Highness, this day, wore armour, and was attended by the four esquires of the body. His helmet, with the vizor open, was circled with a crown, surmounted by crescent, encompassing a blazing star.

The Queen was in purple and palle, and on her head she wore a crown of jewels. The Lady Cornwall, her sister, was ceremoniously apparelled with a coronet of pearls; as was the Lady Pembroke-Montfort, her sister, whose lord was, this day, to enter the lists. All the ladies present were ceremoniously attired, with fillets in their hair, or garlands, each according to her rank. And amongst those who stood by the Queen's chair, none looked more lovely than the young Baroness de Blondeville; her head was circled with costly pearls, and she wore a thin scarf of silver azure, drawn over her breast, the colour of her lord's banner.

Soon as the King and Queen were placed, the trumpets at the barriers sounded a charge, and a great many of nobles and knights entered the field. Amongst them was the young Prince Edward; for he liked not to ride alone, in the order that had been settled for him, but came in pesle-mesle with the rest, and so busy with his mettlesome steed, that he noticed not the observance which, nathless all the hurly-burly, was paid to him by those, who rode near him.

Cased in complete armour and mounted on a brave charger, he came, accompanied by his brother Edmund, a noble youngster, apparelled in mail, to witness the disport, though not to share it; sorely against his will was Prince Edward restrained from trying to break a lance this day. His heart beat high for martial deeds. The King and the Queen joyed to see him sit his horse as manfully, as did any knight in the field; and the Queen, although it was by her especial command that he forbore to try his skill with others of his age, looked on him, with even more delight than his father. In him she might have foreseen the corrector of such insults as were afterwards given to her by the citizens of London, when, by hurling of stones at her from the bridge, as she was flying by water from the tower, almost for her very life, they stayed her for a time, from her purpose of repairing to the palace at Sheen. And in him too she might have foreseen the queller of rebellion, the corrector of abuses, the restorer of general order, the enactor of wise laws, the administrator of justice, the mighty ruler, who, by his wisdom and vigorous perseverance, bound up the wounds of his country, strengthened its sinews, and pruned away its exuberant vices, which the tyranny and weakness of King John had by turns provoked and encouraged; and which the incapacity of Henry had suffered to engraft themselves on and to encumber almost every useful institution.

This young Prince, in whose character yet lay hid the virtues which were hereafter to restore the kingdom, now came into the field with high spirits; and, having paid his duty before the King's pavilion, took his station. Perchance, it was with remembrance of his delight in this tournay, that, in after-times, when he his-self was King, he caused that magnificent feast of chivalry to be enacted here, which brought a hundred knights and as many ladies to give more fame to Kenilworth, for, they trooped to that festival from all parts, even from over sea, to witness its splendours and to increase them: yet did he not, I ween, delight so much in that, as in this present, now before his eyes, when all was new to them and wore the gloss of his own youth.

Soon after Prince Edward had so placed himself, the Baron de Blondeville appeared; and none came on with a more gallant air, (the white plume depending aside his cap to show the easy sway, with which he adapted himself to the curvetings of his managed horse,) or rose on his stirrups with more courageous grace than he; and the whispers and smiles of the ladies seemed to say this: the young Baroness, proud of his affection, and of his distinction, looked on, with beating heart and with tearful smile. Having paid reverence to the King and Queen, his banner was bowed also before his bride, and he saluted her with a homage, that seemed to say he was ambitious only to prove himself worthy of her love.

In this magnificent show, it was a question, which most excelled in gorgeous array, or seemed most proudly conscious, the knights, the ladies, or the coursers.

And now the trumpets, without the barriers, sounded a charge; for the challengers drew nigh the field, and were answered by others already there. Then it was, that neither Prince Edward nor his steed could longer endure restraint, so that both set off full tilt, coursing the plain, round and round, with most courageous bearing, the latter prancing, curveting, bounding, to the great joy of all, who beheld him, save the Queen. Her Highness, though herself of good courage and well skilled, for her sex, to manage her horse, feared he would be thrown headlong from his charger, while he rejoiced, with firm hand and steady eye, to urge, to watch and to command the strength and spirit of the noble animal.

A loud murmur of applause ran from tent to tent and from tower to tower, afar; and then might it be said the warlike people began to feel for their Prince the affection and respect, which hereafter assisted him to rule them. Where this curveting would have ended, none knew, for, the Prince was nothing weary, had not the appearance of the challengers at the barrier checked his career, when he turned slowly towards the King’s tent, sitting his charger with a proud negligence, as he looked back on the approaching knights.

Now, the Lord Mareschal of the field, the Earl of Norfolk, richly apparelled in arms, and with his truncheon in his hand, riding a brave horse, right bravely trapped, and attended by his king at arms, heralds and poursuivants, rode up to the eastern barrier, and, in the King’s name, demanded of the champion, abiding there, completely armed, whence he came, who he was, and the cause of the grief that brought him hither thus clad in steel.

To which he made answer, his herald, with his banner, standing at his side. “I am William de Fortibus, Earl of Aumerle;” and then he delivered his challenge, engrossed on embossed vellum, in which he defied to arms any one, who should deny the peerless beauty of his lady-love. Then the Lord Mareschal made him undo his vizor, that it might appear he had rightly called himself; which being done, the knights, his aids, did the same. Then was administered to the champion and all his followers the oath, that they came not armed with any spell, or word, or other instrument of magic, but with lawful arms only. After which, the knights of the Lord Mareschal and those, who guarded the lists, took oath also, not to assist either champion, during single combat, by word, look, or gesture.

This ended, the Earl of Hereford, High Constable of England, who stood by with his staff of office, ordered the barrier to be thrown open; and forthwith the herald of the champion, attended by his poursuivants, to the number of four, entered the lists, the herald bearing his banner, and standing aside, where he proclaimed, with potent voice, the name and titles of his lord, and whereupon he came hither in array.

Having done this, he threw down the gauntlet, and advanced to the tree of honour, where he placed the written words of the challenge on a bough, and where also were suspended the shielded arms of all the knights, who, this day, meant to run their course of chivalry on the field. Then straight the Earl of Aumerle and his followers were admitted to the field, bearing up the King’s flag, nearly in the state and order as here set down. First, came, in solemn march, eight trumpeters, four abreast, blowing up amain, in their yellow tabards and high caps, their banner rolls displayed; then cornets, drums and clarioners, in warlike fashion. Then came twelve knights armed, two and two, on foot. Next came the banner of the King’s Highness, carried by a knight completely armed, and borne up by four other knights armed, but bareheaded, each having his two shield-knaves (now called by most, shield-bearers, or esquires) beside him, carrying his spear, shield and helmet. Then followed eight knights, appointed like the first, each with his two knaves, bearing his helmet and shield; then forty yeomen, in doublets of scarlet and gold, bearing their partizans upright, their coats broidered with a golden lion and the King’s crown above, surmounted with a crescent and blazing star. Then followed two score of demi-lances, four and four.

Next came four trumpeters on horseback, blowing up; then four esquires; then a herald at arms; then the banner of the Lord Mareschal, borne high by a knight armed, four esquires walking beside it. Then appeared the Lord Mareschal his-self in complete harness, mounted on a barbed steed, right nobly and gorgeously trapped, with crimson velvet, embossed with gold and the shielded arms of his lord; esquires and pages going beside and following.

Then came, in separate order, the champion’s five knights, his aids, armed cap-a-pé, mounted on goodly coursers, richly trapped, each having his banner borne before him, and four trumpeters blowing up; also with esquires and pages in his livery.

The Earl was cased in gorgeous armour, bossed with silver and laid in with gold. His helmet bore a scarlet plume and, for his crest, a winged griffin of solid gold, as were the bars of his vizor. The head-piece and breastplate of his steed were bossed in like manner, as was the shaffroone and crivet for the neck; and the high pummels of his saddle were also edged with gold. Over this lord was borne by four esquires on horseback, wearing his livery, a silken canopy, the colours of his tent, fringed also with gold and surmounted by his crest, in silver.

And now were heard sounds of sweet minstrelsy, and, immediately following the champion, came the minstrels and the lady-prize, seated in a chair, covered with crimson cloth of gold of Florence, having a canopy of crimson silk, bearing a white plume, which played upon the air, and drawn by four milk-white harts, for so they seemed. Each was led by a page apparelled in rose-coloured silk, striped with gold, and holding in his hand his cap of velvet, wreathed with roses, and laced with gold. Their buskins were all of swan-down white as snow. These milk-white harts had their horns tipped with gold and hung with roses, with chainlets of the same round their necks. The reins were of crimson silk, studded with gold and precious stones, as were the traces. Within this so sumptuous car sat the Lady Aveline de Bohun, daughter of the Lord Constable, the Earl of Hereford. She was beautiful as morning, rising from the sea; her look was peace and joy. She wore a robe of palest silver, and her hair was coronetted with eglantine, in bloom, and with pearls, that night might have scattered. In front of the crimson canopy above her, beamed a diamond star of purest splendour. Four knights walked beside her car. And thus she came on to the sound of dulcimers and harps, with her maidens playing on timbrels and lutes and sweet bells. Ever and anon they stepped dancing-wise, tossing the tabors on high and turning with so sweet a grace, as was the marvel and delight of the whole court; although many present liked them not the better, for that they were of the Queen’s country. Still, as this lady passed, welcome, peace, and joy, spread around her: she was called the Lady of the Morning Star.

Then followed a goodly train of esquires, and gallant youngsters, in shining trim, bearing the livery of this Earl, to the number of twenty-five, riding on noble steeds; their trappings glittering in the sun, and tinkling with silver bells, that made merriment as they advanced. After them forty of the Lord Aumerle's yeomen, on foot, appeared in his livery, with his badge in silver, on their sleeves.

And thus, with proud paces, these processions passed on the field of tournament, till they reached the King's tent; and then they halted and did homage. So fair and pleasant a show was never seen before in woods of Ardenn. The crowds on the castle-walls beheld the whole order of it, and better than many that were nearer; yet were they not contented; and often, as the shouts of the people mingled with the clangour of the trumpets, they bemoaned themselves, that they were so far off. Yet those on the level of the field beheld not half of the show at once. Three times that gorgeous train moved round the field, to the sound of trumpets and other brave instruments; never failing, each time, their homage at the King's tent. From the very topmost turrets, those there perched, could see this processioning; the sun glittering on the armour of the knights, and glancing on their crests and helmets and on the heads of their spears, as they moved.

They could see, when the procession had the third time reached the King's pavilion, that it rested to deliver up the lady-prize unto the fair company there assembled, to remain in safe custody, till the end of the tournay. They could perceive her approach the Queen, who turned graciously towards her, and that then she retired amongst the crowd of ladies, behind her Highness's chair. This done, they saw the Lord Mareschal, with four knights, advancing towards the centre of the field, in front of the grand pavilion, there to plant the King's great banner; but they could not see every one of the ceremonies, that attended this, nor hear the chaunt of the minstrels, which accompanied each part of them, though they caught the swelling strain of the louder minstrelsy; and on every charge of the trumpets and every shout of joy, did they set up fresh lamentation.

"If I was but in that tree," said one, "how much nearer I should be." "Why do not you see," said another, "the branches are so full already they can scarcely bear up the people? they will break presently, and tumble them into the lake." "But look," said another, "if there is not the roof of the Swan Tower, with neither man, woman, nor child, upon it. Oh! if I was but there, I could see and hear every thing; I will try for it." "You may as well stay, where you are," observed a fourth; "you may be sure, if the roof could be reached, it would have been full of people long ago."

Then would come a loud blast of the trumpets and a great huzza, but nobody could tell what it was about. "Why this is worse than seeing nothing at all, to be tantalized in this way," says one. Then another spies out some friend, at a distance in a valuable place, as he thinks, and hallooes out with might and main, "Can you make any room for me in that tree? Do my good Hodge. If you cannot, speak to Ralph for me; he will, I know." Straight, some score of faces are turned at his shout, but his friend maketh not out that he is spoken to; all hear him but his friend; till another shout comes amain on the wind: "Hodge o' the Chase-side, I say, can you make any room for me?" and then a dismal "No!" silences the non-content, and makes those laugh, whom he would have left behind; and thus they went on murmuring, and wasting what pleasure they might have had, because they could not have all, just like their betters; for thus it is in life, that we often employ our wits only to turn good to evil.

Those below, at the castle-windows, ladies and gentlewomen, who could not get places in the tents, or on the galleries in the field, murmured too; but not so much for that they could not see every thing there, though that seemed to be their grief, but that they could not their-selves be seen, dressed as they were in apparel, which they had gotten from Coventry, long before. They saw plainly enough knights, esquires and pages, prancing, or pacing, about the field, in all their splendour; and lady-aunts and lady-cousins in the galleries, in all their sheen and joyance, and fain would they have shared with them. Some too there were, who spied out their knights looking towards the windows, yet were they unable, for the crowd there, to make themselves distinguished; and some few there were who, often as he, that each esteemed, advanced, in glorious seeming, shrunk back, with timid glance, fearing lest they should be noticed.

Above them all, perched in his prison-turret, was the poor merchant, looking upon this splendid field, with different eyes from every other that beheld it. Too little interest had he in what was passing there, to view it with curiosity. No vanity had he to make him feel the jealousy of rivalship, or the fretfulness of disappointment, where all around was pomp and pride, or mortification, or joy, from another's triumph; or aught but sense of his own misery and fond remembrance of his home. The weight of grievous evils left him no leisure to feel the presence of small ones. How blessed would he have thought himself, were it possible for him to have considered, as disappointments and causes of murmur, any of those trifling circumstances, which now prevented the peace and joy of hundreds, possessing here health and liberty and prosperous estate, now looking on the same spot with himself!

He had been lying on his pallet, thinking on his hard fate and on that of his friend, when first he heard the trumpets blow up, and the hum of many voices from walls and battlements and tents below; and, judging this to be some pageant pertaining to the marriage festivities of his triumphant enemy, he had no heart to witness it. But anon, this noise of trumpets, with the heavy trampling of hoofs on the field and the loud ringing of the harness, and, at times, the shouts of the multitude roused him from his weighty sorrows; and, looking through his little grate, he, perched so high in air, like a poor bird shut up in prison-cage, looked down upon that field of warlike seeming and princely magnificence.

There he beheld the King's dreaded person, on whose single word life, or death, depended, sitting calmly in his estate, and right glad of heart, thoughtless of the suffering he now inflicted, or reckless of it, having persuaded his weak and willing mind it was just. There, too, he could distinguish the Baron de Blondeville, caressed and honoured by his Sovereign, admired by the court and loved by his fair bride. Then, as the memory of all that had passed in the woods beyond, returned to Woodreeve, his very heart bled, while he beheld, as he too well believed, the guilty author of his woe, standing amongst honourable men and gallant combatants, attended by a noble train, and ready to achieve the fame of noble deeds in arms.

Now, the challenger and his five knights, directed by the Lord Constable and Lord Mareschal, having planted the King's banner in the centre of the field, the Earl of Norfolk delivered unto each his lance, and they withdrew to the Tree of Honour, standing on a little hillock, raised near the King's pavilion and bearing on its boughs the shields of all the knights, who offered themselves, this day, for the lists. There they pointed to the words of the challenge, which having done, they retired in procession to the eastern barrier, where their tent and the empty car of the lady-prize stood, there to await the appearance of the defenders. And not long did they wait, ere they heard the trumpets sounding without the western barrier, which were well answered by those within, and straight appeared the chief defender, with his five knights, all clad in white-harness. These, having passed through the same ceremonies, as had been already performed by the challengers, and a herald having proclaimed the name of their chief in the field, having hung his words of defiance on the tree of honour, and taken up the gauntlet of the champion, their procession entered.

And here it were tedious to set down all the particular splendours and doings of it; but some things may be told, both to be a record of certain remarkable appearances and also to show some traces of the characters of the chief persons, who played their part in this pageant.

The chief of the defenders, as has already been rehersed, was the Lord Simon de Montfort, the same whom the King's Highness had created Earl of Leicester, and on whom he had bestowed his widowed sister, the Countess of Pembroke, with this his stately castle and wide domain of Kenilworth; how worthily it needs not for this history to declare, since it is known to all, that he armed this very fortress against his King and benefactor. He, this day, wore on his scarf the Lady Pembroke's colour, and he was in truth her champion; his five knights were Sir Stephen de Segrave, Sir John de Plesset, Sir William de Cantalupe, Sir Robert de Grendon, and Sir Osbert d'Abrissecourt, a foreign man.

And, first of these, after heralds at arms, duely appointed, esquires and pages in pairs, and, after his raised banner, all in form and order much like to the procession of the challengers, came Sir Stephen de Segrave. He was on a stately charger, trapped with flame-coloured velvet, bossed with his arms and hung round with little lions, in silver, such being his crest; his horse white and heavy, with broad chest, whose head-stalls and bridles were studded with precious stones. The lion on his helmet was rampant, and his plume and scarf of flame colour. Four esquires walked beside him, followed by four pages; leading spare coursers. Then came twenty-five gentlemen, clad in the colour of his scarf and having also flame-coloured plumes in their caps. Fifty of his yeomen, apparelled in the same hue, but of different fashion, followed; and a crowd of his servants closed his pageant. He was of lofty stature and surpassing strength, and moved upon the field with looks of sullen pride. Some present augured not well from this, and indeed his pride was so plain, that King Henry liked it not.

Next came Sir John de Plesset, Earl of Warwick, of most graceful person and demeanour, though he was a stranger, being Earl of Warwick only by right of his wife, who was sole heiress of that house and by the King's courtesy. He was mounted on a noble roan, whose breastplate was chased with silver; and he was most gallantly caparisoned. His plume and scarf were of rose-colour, and the crest on his helmet was a leopard. He came attended by a brave show of esquires and gallants, with a train of fifty yeomen, besides forty servants, all in his livery of the colour of his scarf, and making a most stately show.

Then came Gaston, the young Baron de Blondeville, who had changed his cap for a helmet, and was duely caparisoned, as a knight; for, his shield, which the King had caused to be replaced in the hall, had not again been challenged, nor had any one made complaint to the Lord Mareschal against him. He rode so fiery a charger as hardly might be restrained, within the pace of dignity; yet, being curbed with his hand, he moved with proud and stately steps, well suited to his lord and master, who kept his seat, with gracious ease and looks of happy triumph, knowing he was admired of all, who saw him. His banner was well carried before him. Four esquires were at his side, and four pages, leading spare steeds, followed. Twenty-four gentlemen succeeded, and a goodly train of yeomen and servants, all in his livery of light blue and silver, brought up the rear. His plume and scarf were of azure, but not of the fullest hue, and his train of pages and servants, in the gallant fashion of their apparel, were outdone by none.

When he came opposite to the King's pavilion and paid his homage, his courser, whether he was frightened at aught he saw, or that he gloried in the loud noise of the King's trumpets, or that he was secretly goaded for the purpose, began to curvet and play off such high tricks, as terrified the Lady Baroness sitting there. But, after he had gone through certain paces and high threatenings, the Baron the while commanding him with unmoved countenance, he fell into a gentle mood, and followed, with due order, in this pageant chivalry.

And now came a knight in most curious device, riding upon what seemed to be a red dragon, conducted by one personating a giant, as he might well do, who bore in his hand a spear of immense size, which incontinently he applied to the dragon's throat, which forthwith sent forth fire and smoke, to the great diversion and delight of all beholders. Following him, a page led his courser richly caparisoned, and he was compassed all about with brave gallants and followers. This was no other than Sir William de Mowbray, who at all times, was fond of mirth, and certes, he caused much; for, on his displaying himself, tents and walls and battlements and turrets, nay, the very trees, up to topmost bough, sent forth peals of joy and laughter. He was much beloved of the crowd, and well liked in the court, none envying him.

Next came Sir Hugh de Bois, mounted on an iron grey. His plume and scarf were of orange colour, and he was not wholly wanting in esquires and servants to fill up his estate; yet was he far from being on a par with the rest, his means being much smaller. So, I say not more of his appearance, seeing he made not much, when compared with others, on that day; only this I will add, he was of a most compassionate and honest nature; and might have vied with the rest, if he would have pressed harder upon his dependants, or would have mortgaged his lands, as so many did, to the Jews.

Next and last, came the chief of the defenders, the Lord Simon de Montfort, in his estate, under a fair pavilion of silk, with turrets and battlements shaped like unto a castle, his banner flying over all. This was carried along by six stout men; but it appeared to be borne by a multitude of his servants, in purple jerkins of silk, laced with gold. His charger, trapped in purpled velvet, bossed with his arms in gold, was led by pages; and its frontlet and breastplate were so brightly burnished, that, as the sun shone on them, the splendour cast around him was enough to dazzle, if it could not daunt, any knight, his adversary. And this was made ground of complaint against him by his first adversary in the lists; so that, when he began to place himself for combat, he was commanded by the Lord Mareschal not to advance against the sun; but, in the changes and shiftings of the struggle, this command availed but little. Squires and gallants and pages followed almost without number.

Of kingly purple were the Lord Simon's plume and scarf; and his golden helmet seemed one blaze of light. He bore himself with a most lofty carriage; looking as though he thought none, but the King's Highness, might compare with him, and hardly that either. Not more audacious, I guess, could he have looked, when, in after-times, he traitorously gave his Sovereign Lord the lie, in the field at Evesham! and there paid with his life for his ingratitude and rebellion.

Little weened King Henry now, when he saw before him this knight, arrayed in the pomp of chivalry, that he beheld one, who would hereafter turn his arms against him, excite his subjects into rebellion, and lead him prisoner through his own kingdom, until his life and liberty should be rescued by his brave son, Edward, here beside him. Little weened his Highness of this, or he would not have raised him to highest honour; bestowing upon him that sister, who had withdrawn herself to convent-life, and taken the veil, but not yet the ring, that would have wedded her to it; else not even the Pope his-self might have sent her dispensation. Happier had she been in her peaceful cloister than living in the world, with so proud, yet base a spirit, that could walk in arms against the Sovereign, who had lavished favours on him with so lavish hand. Yet were there some near his Highness's chair, who, from what they saw this day, could guess something of what high favours might work in him; the venerable Archbishop was one of these.

The defenders having passed in solemn pomp, three times, round the field, paying, each time, due homage at the King's pavilion, their chief received from the Lord Mareschal his lance, which had been duly measured with that of the chief challenger, and his shield from the Tree of Honour; and then the defenders withdrew to the western barrier, and took station before their own tent, till the summons of war should sound.

They waited not much, ere the trumpets blew up a charge loud and long, which set the hoofs of every steed in motion to prance and curvet, with proud impatience for the onset, so that hardly could the knights, whose turn was not yet come, rein in their arched necks. Then the Lord Constable of England, and the Lord Mareschal rode gravely round the lists, to see that all was right and in due order; and examined again the lances of the two chiefs, who, upon the second charge of the trumpets, advanced each from his station, near the barriers, and, each crying out aloud the word of combat given him by his lady, they ran together furiously.

The Lord Simon first brake his lance upon the Earl of Aumerle, shivering it into splinters, and with the blow making the Earl stagger on his courser. It was the marvel of all, that he fell not; but, adroitly recovering himself, he passed the sword-guard of the Lord Simon, and struck him on the chest, with a force, that made his armour flash fire, shivered his own lance into a thousand pieces, and had nigh brought his enemy, both man and horse, to the ground. Then the trumpets sounded, for victory, the cries of the people cheered him, and a murmuring sound of many voices rose from the King's pavilion.

A second round was run by these chiefs with lances duly delivered to them, while tumultuous shoutings from the more distant spectators on the castle walls and towers and on the trees encouraged them, those nearer being kept in order by the laws of the field, which forbade any to make sign by word, or deed, during the time of combat. But the knights, who, in armour, kept the lists, found it no easy task to preserve silence there; for, as the fate of the battle swayed, so was the clamour of hope, or joy, ever ready to break forth; and it was well these knights carried not arms, lest they might have been provoked to turn them against the unruly people around them. Those afar off, on the walls, being beyond the reach of the laws, seemed to shout forth in very bravado, as if to revenge themselves by liberty of voice, for that which was denied them of a better view. And how incessantly they did peal forth, sending out all the signs they could to either combatants, and calling loudly a "Fortibus," or a "Montfort," followed by hooting, or applause, just as their humours chanced!

The combat of these chiefs lasted, till each had broken on the other several lances, but was at last decided, in favour of William de Fortibus, who unhorsed the Lord Simon and broke his shield.

Then was victory proclaimed by the heralds, to strains of minstrelsy, the name and titles of the victor being repeated, on every pause of the music, with these words, "Renown to heroes and to the sons of heroes." Immediately there rose from the lists cries of joyous triumph, and the woods resounded, far and wide, with the multitude of voices proclaiming the conqueror's name and "Renown to heroes." Convents, buried in the wilds of the forest, opened their gates, and let forth the startled monks, to listen to "Renown to heroes." Never had they heard such sounds, till then. Travellers from far, journeying through the forest and hearing such sounds of joy and triumph, where they expected only lonesome silence, or the joy of birds, looked round, on all sides, under the boughs; but, seeing nothing, save the sun-light, and the farther woods, that close them in, they feared this might be some witchery to deceive them. Coming, perchance, to village, or hamlet, of the forest, they ask what mean these sounds, of aged men, or little children, the only inhabitants left there, and whose opposite extremes of life alike disabled them from following to Kenilworth. And then, having learned somewhat near the truth, the travellers urge their weary hobbies over deep roads, at the risk of their necks, that they may come in for a glimpse of the spectacle of chivalry. So they leave behind these lonesome cottagers to the quietness, which (ah! ungrateful man!) they now think dreary, and would fain exchange for the many pains of another entrance into crowded life; the distant shouts tantalize the curiosity of the young, and bring back the regrets of the aged; the old man reflecting on his long-past youth, and the child anticipating his, when he shall no longer be left at home, while his elder brothers go to fairs and to Kings' tournaments.

These shoutings of the multitude and the clamour of "Renown to heroes," recalled to his prison-bars the poor merchant, who, on sight of the Baron de Blondeville, prancing in procession amongst the defenders, had, in the bitterness of his heart, withdrawn and thrown himself on his pallet, there to calm his throbbing spirit. Returned to the barred window, he there beheld that, which he could not well understand, not having witnessed the combat. This was William de Fortibus courteously returning his lance to the Lord de Montfort, together with the golden chain of his mistress, which he had worn on his shield in combat; at which rose up fresh shoutings of applause, but both were received by the vanquished with a very ill grace; and his countess might rejoice that she was not known to have bestowed this chain upon a conquered knight.

This ended, the chiefs withdrew, each to his own tent, and then advanced four knights, two of each party, and ran their courses together. They combated with strong spears, of great breadth, and ran with most courageous skill, to the wonder of all beholders. It were hard to say, until the very last, which of the four most excelled; but then, at last, one knight of each party bore away the prize, worn on the helmet, or shield, of his adversary, to whom it had been given by the lady of his love.

Next advanced to single combat the Baron de Blondeville and Sir Robert de Grendon. On sight of the Baron, Woodreeve turned from his grate, and his heart sickened to behold the assassin appear before the whole court and the multitude of the people, arrayed for triumph, or, at least, for honour. Yet might it not be so; for, the triumph, and even the honour might attend his adversary. It was, however, long before such possibility occurred to Woodreeve; soon as it did, he resolved to abide the sight of the contest, yet were his fears much stronger than his hopes.

And now the trumpets blew up the field, and the onset began. They fought with spears, and such was the shock of the first encounter, that both knights were nearly unhorsed. At the second course, the Baron brake his spear on his opponent. At the third course, Sir Robert shivered his on the Baron's shield. Then, they ran with lances, or long spears, and the shock, with which they met, brought both combatants to the ground. The Baron quickly recovered himself, and, as some thought, made a blow at his adversary, ere he was fully risen. On this, there was a great outcry, and the Lord Mareschal rode up, and stood before the King's tent, but said nought. Then, the King commanded, that the combat should proceed. On this, there was a murmur of discontent; but, each knight being now remounted, it did accordingly proceed. Some said Sir Robert had received the Baron's blow on his head; others said it had missed him; Woodreeve now, as he watched, thought he sat not steadily on his courser.

However this might be, his horse tournayed, and passed with him along the lists, to meet the Baron, like unto a glance of lightning. The Baron, now well prepared to meet him, sustained the shock, and the combat was renewed with such force, as though it were but just begun. It lasted not long. Sir Robert seemed to support himself with difficulty, and sometimes almost to stagger on his steed; and, at the last course, he sank beneath the Baron's blow, and fell to the earth. Then he was borne away to his tent, and his armour unbraced, and the tale went, that he had been hurt unfairly.

The Baron, having snatched from the shield of his enemy his mistress's pledge of favour, a tress of her hair, bore it triumphantly on the point of his lance unto the King's tent, where sat with the Queen the Lady Baroness, his wife, and presented it to her. Then their Highnesses said many gracious things to the victor, and many noble ladies there assembled testified their joy no less. Then was his name proclaimed, as victor, by the heralds, and his song of triumph chaunted round the King's banner.

The poor merchant, from his turret, seeing how matters went, and that nought but applause and honour seemed to follow the steps of him, who, in justice, deserved only shame and punishment, felt as if his last hope was gone. His pang of sorrow was at the uttermost. He turned from his grate, sickening even at the pleasant light of the sun, and once more he threw himself upon his pallet.

But why do the trumpets now blow up so loud a charge, so shrill and dread, that all, which went before, was sleep and silence in comparison of it? No shoutings mingled with this charge, nor was any other sound heard contending with it in the vault of the sky, where it rolled alone. So long it lasted, that it roused the prisoner again from his pallet, and recalled him to the window.

Thence beheld he, in the field below, not among the combatants, but among the spectators there, an extraordinary turmoil, and a sort of solemn, or fearful, curiosity, very different from that which they had before showed. Their faces were all turned one way, that was towards the place whence the sounds came, which was not from the heralds at arms. In all the tents the company were standing up, but none there, or in spots more exposed to his view, seemed satisfied, that they knew what was going forward. On the place of combat, the prisoner saw only the Lord Mareschal and the Constable of England riding about, and the heralds gathering at the barriers, to answer the summons (of which it seemed there would not, for a long time, be an end), and the knights, who kept the lists, watching for one to enter.

At last, Woodreeve saw, at the eastern barrier, a knight enter, armed cap-a-pé, mounted on a black charger. There, the Mareschal, who was ready, demanded in the most urgent terms, who he was, whom he came to challenge, and what was his cause of grief? What was answered, those only, who stood nigh the barrier, might know; but the stranger's herald was seen to raise a banner before the Mareschal's eyes, that he stood gazing on, like one amazed! while the knights of the barriers drew eagerly round him; when the Lord Mareschal again demanded, why he came? The knight his-self made a sign in the air with his lance, and held it raised; and, during the wonderment, which this spread around, a herald, not waiting for order, but moved by his own notions and fears, administered to him the oath, that he came not armed with any unlawful weapons, or means of harm; after which, the stranger-knight dropped the lance into its rest.

The Mareschal seemed still to marvel and to be at a loss, how he should proceed; but then, recollecting himself, he advanced close to the knight, as is the custom, to unclasp his visor, that it might appear he had spoken the truth, as to who he was: but he, drawing back, his-self unclosed it. What face the Mareschal discovered within, the prisoner, from his turret, could not know; but he saw both the Mareschal and the Lord Constable turn aside their steeds, and the knights of the barrier step back; while a tumultuous noise arose amongst the pikemen behind the barrier, as if they expected the stranger would attempt to retreat, and they intended to oppose him.

But he showed, that he meditated not any such thing; for, swift as an arrow from a bow, he cleared the barrier; and, having done so, moved upon the field of war gloomily and sullen, like unto a thundercloud, spreading terror as he passed. All the multitude of voices was hushed around him, and the air was so still, that nothing was heard but the sound of his charger's steps; and, sometimes, the unknown trumpets sending their clangour to roll away amongst the woods.

His banner was borne highly before him, in good state, and with ceremony of demeanour; but what it displayed the prisoner could not, at his height, discern; neither could he see the face, nor the crest, of the stranger. As he advanced, a murmuring ran through the crowd, mingled with faint shrieks; but, when he was present, an interval of hushed silence followed; as if suspense and wonder held the breath of every gazer. Slowly, but strait and with due steps, as showed an accomplished knight, the stranger rode up to the King's pavilion, and there stayed his horse, yet making no sign nor gesture, nor having even his banner lowered by his herald. Immediately Woodreeve perceived a rising up, and some confusion in the pavilion; the King motioned with his arm; the Archbishop made a sign in the air; some of the nobles, who stood round his Highness's chair, pressed forward — others drew back; and those behind, seemed to move to and fro in disorder.

The Queen and her attendants appeared no less agitated; her Highness turned away her face from the stranger-knight; all her ladies on the seats behind, rose up, and some so eagerly leaned forward, that they had nigh overbalanced themselves, and fallen down to the platform. The Baron de Blondeville, who, after his course and triumph, still rested, beside the pavilion, sat fixed on his courser, with his arm holding his spear on high.

Those on the field saw upon the knight's banner the image of a murder; they saw, too, upon his black helmet, a wing of fire, for a crest; but what his face was they knew not; for his visor was now closed; and his eyes only appeared above the flat bars of it; and they, it was said by many of the beholders, gleamed like flame. Some went so far as to say, though they saw too little to warrant such guess, he was the same who had appeared in the banquet hall; others thought not so, and eagerly denied it.

On the banner was a motto, which greatly disturbed the King; for, soon as he saw it, he called for the Lord Mareschal and the Lord Constable, and his own trumpets sounded a summons. My lords, the Mareschal and Constable, were still at the eastern barrier, the confusion there having detained them, and very great it was, though no one, at the distance of the King's tent, knew the cause of it, not a foot having stirred from that barrier of all, who witnessed the first turmoil, on the approach of this so strange an intruder.

Every one there was either too busy, or too curious, to run to spread the half-known news. Some, who had been thrust aside after their first glimpse, said the Mareschal had fallen off his charger; others, that he was dead; and others again, that he was held in thraldom of the Lord Constable, and the knights at the barrier; which last was but an unlikely tale. But let this pass; whatever the cause was, there he was at the time; when the stranger-knight, advancing a few steps nearer to the King's pavilion, did make somewhat of an obeisance, and then held up, far as his arm could reach, before his Highness, a sword of strange shape, unknown in our tournays; which, as some nigh affirmed, bore on the scabbard, in characters of fire, the word "Justice!"

Whether this were so or not, on sight of that sword, the King was sore disturbed; and straight commanded his Lord Chamberlain, who stood close behind his chair, to ask of the knight his name and style, and why he approached in so extraordinary a way.

The knight made none other answer than by pointing with the same sword to the Baron de Blondeville. Then, the King guessing him to be that secret enemy of the Baron, who had appeared in the festal hall, and that he was in league with the prisoner; nay, suspecting he might possibly be that man his-self, escaped by his supposed potent arts, disguised also by them, and instigated with designs against the life of the Baron de Blondeville, promptly despatched a messenger to the Lord Constable, with orders to secure the stranger; and he also privately sent one to know, whether the merchant was safe in his prison? and again bade his trumpets sound a summons for the Mareschal of the field!

For the merchant, King Henry might have spared his page the trouble, and his-self have seen, with little pains, if he had leaned that way, the poor man's face through the grate of the turret-window, looking upon what was passing, in this place of now-disturbed pomp, and knowing less about it, than did his Highness, little as that was; and, for the Mareschal, he was now leaving the barrier and slowly advancing over the place of war, like one faint, and hardly able to support himself on his steed. Two knights of the barrier followed his steps, hardly less in dismay.

Meantime, the stranger-knight, having remained awhile, pointing with that sword to the Baron de Blondeville, who, sitting on his courser, upheld his spear seemingly without power to launch it, if he had been so permitted, or to advance a single step; — the stranger-knight, this having passed, withdrew a few paces: yet he fled not, because of the approach of the Mareschal and the Lord Constable, who gave orders that he should be seized; but stood in the place, to which he had slowly receded, with his lance couched and his shield lifted, as if he defied all attack.

No one of those, who heard the command, had approached him; whether they were withheld by fear, or by reverence; and, when the Lord Constable his-self indignantly rode forward, demanding why he thus unlawfully intruded upon the sports, and disturbed them, with intent to turn that, which was designed for recreation, into revengeful and malicious war, he received no answer; but saw the stranger suddenly in a distant part of the field, in the same attitude of defiance.

Then was the King's anger changed into an ecstasy of amazement; and, turning to address himself to the Archbishop, who was at his right hand, he beheld, in the solemn tranquillity of his countenance an image rather of death, than of life. It seemed to bear the reflexion of some awful truth! while his eyes were directed to some object, which so engrossed his attention, that he appeared to be insensible, not only of the King's words, but of his presence! His Highness, on then looking for that which caused such deep interest, beheld again the stranger-knight, on his charger, before the pavilion, with the sword again raised: where, as many say, appeared that word, "Justice!" in letters of blood, and now also the name of Gaston de Blondeville!

Then the knight's visor flew open, and his Highness beheld the very countenance he had seen in the banquet-hall; that countenance looked upon the King more sternly than before; the eyes were not, as then, dim and melancholy, but seemed to shoot forth fire; and the stranger pointed again with his sword to the Baron de Blondeville, who wore one, that resembled it in the hilt, though not in the shape, and who now, after having sitten so long motionless on his charger, dropped his spear; he seemed to totter in his saddle, his head leaned aside, and, in the next moment, he swayed, and fell to the ground, a dead weight. The clash had drawn all eyes towards him, when his terrified steed, running wildly along the lists, conveyed to the distant spectators, some knowledge of the truth. His two esquires, and others who were near, hastened to his assistance, and a general consternation ensued.

The King, who had not observed his fall, and understood not rightly the occasion of it, seeing his fiery courser fleeing over the place of war, guessed he had taken fright, and thrown his master; meanwhile the Lord Mareschal had ridden forward to secure the stranger.

With confusion and almost palsying terror, the Queen and her ladies had witnessed the truth. Some swooned; others, who were the least overcome, endeavoured to convey away the Baroness de Blondeville, who had sunk down, and was senseless; others, on recovering from their first sensations, pressed forward to learn what might further happen; and others retreated, wishing to avoid all further view of so distressing a spectacle. Those farther off, on the castle-walls and windows, who beheld this uttermost turmoil and consternation, wished only for wings, that they might fly forward into the midst of it; for, the vexation they had suffered from their ill-satisfied curiosity and their imperfect view of those pageants and courtly imitations of war, was nothing in comparison to that caused by this glimpse of truth.

The fall of the Baron had been seen by the prisoner from his turret; and immediately he heard shrieks and the busy hum of mingled voices loud and deep: he saw the charger flee, and somewhat of the confusion in the King's pavilion; he observed the Lords Mareschal and Constable riding at full speed towards it, and that the armed knight, who had stood alone before the King, was no longer there, yet he had not observed, which way he had departed, nor his herald.

Now saw he his Highness rise up, and turn to leave the tent; while his esquires and pages raised the Baron on a kind of bier, and carried him from the field.

Then, the Queen and her ladies, supported by divers of the lords, departed as speedily as might be. The Earl Mareschal continued to ride about the field; as did many of the knights, that those, who guarded it, might not think their duty at an end; a double guard was placed at the barriers, and all was hurry, examination, and suspicion. His Highness, when he had understood the Baron's condition, conceiving that he had swooned in consequence of having seen and of having been viewed by that extraordinary personage, whose presence had before dismayed him, sent his physician to assist him; and commanded, that strict search should be made for the person who had caused such repeated consternation.

But, when he learned the whole truth, and that the Baron's life was irrecoverably lost, his grief and horror were unspeakable. He broke up the present field, and with all his court, save such as were left to assist in guarding the barriers, while search for the stranger was going on within them, quitted the scene, and withdrew to his privy-chamber, with the Archbishop and a few of those whom chiefly he trusted.

That honest Prelate failed not, on this occasion, to give sincere and wholesome council; which, though his Highness little liked it, he was observed not to speak against, at first, save that he said his thought, that this was no mortal business, but a deed of sorcery; to which the Archbishop answered, he thought not this was an act of sorcery; it might be otherwise accounted for, when an innocent man was in so great peril, and justice was to be brought on a guilty one, against whom other means might not prevail, before judges unfortunately prejudiced in his favour.

At this so bold avowal of his opinion of the deceased Baron, whom now the King most sorely grieved for, and charge implied of injustice in himself, his Highness became angry, and answered sharply. The words of the Archbishop had fallen upon his wounded mind, as boiling oil upon a wounded body, exasperating it almost to madness. When he had departed, one craved admission, who better knew how to turn the passions of this Prince to his own account.

This was the Prior of Saint Mary's, who, having learned the fate of the unhappy Baron, came hither to provoke immediate vengeance on the poor prisoner, and to ensure, as he hoped, his own safety; and, for that purpose, he had recourse to his old subject of sorcery. And he seemed so deeply to sympathize with the King in grief for this sudden death of the Baron, that his Highness listened to all he said, and was inclined to do whatsoever he entreated. The Prior urged, that, if speedily justice had been done upon the merchant, the Baron's life had probably been spared; and were justice long deferred, another innocent life, it were not unlikely, might fall under his mischievous arts; nay, that the life of the King himself might be assailed. He reminded his Highness, that he had both urged and dreaded the probability of what had happened, when he supplicated, that his false accuser might be punished, without delay; nay, that the unfortunate Baron had his-self urged this, and, if his entreaty had been attended to, he had, in all likelihood, been now living.

On this, the sorrow of the King redoubled; he seemed to accuse himself as a cause of his favourite's death; and, before the Prior left the chamber, he had promised to sign a warrant for the prisoner's death, bidding, that he should be told to prepare himself against the morrow. Then the Prior departed, grieving less for the Baron's fate, than rejoicing that his enemy would soon be destroyed.

On learning this fatal resolution of the King, the Archbishop again claimed hearing; for, he was of his Highness's council; and he tried by every argument to counteract the pernicious advice that had been given. He could now no longer conceal his suspicion of the Prior; and he entreated for a delay, at least, of the sentence, hoping that his messenger might, in the mean time, bring from Exeter some certain intelligence, on the subject of his suspicions. But the misled King, accusing himself bitterly for former delay, as the cause of the Baron's cruel end, and having been moreover prejudiced by the Baron, for his own purposes, with a notion of some pretended cause of the Archbishop's dislike of the Prior, refused now to listen either to remonstrance, or to entreaty.

Sorrow and remorse, arising from a misapprehension of the truth, alone seemed to occupy the King, who now, with the intention, as he persuaded himself, of preventing further evil, was about to execute an act of injustice and stern cruelty. And thus it is, if kingly power pertain to a weak head, not carefully warned by early instructions against the dangers, which must beset all power, whether public or private, whether in Prince or subject; for, the passions are the helm, whereon designing men seize to steer into action, as they wish. And thus was pity now about to be made the instrument of cruelty.

Prince Edward, though young, saw this matter more clearly than did his father; and he entreated for the poor merchant; nay, he even dared to express his opinion that he had used no unworthy arts. But the King was yet obdurate; and he bade the Prince remember that precious ring, which was to render him invincible in battle, how it had been conveyed away from his secured cabinet to his enemy Llwellyn of Wales, who had triumphed accordingly.

On this, the countenance of the Prince showed fiery red, and indignation sparkled in his eyes. "Give me an army," said the Prince, "that I may fight your enemies, and prove that ring to be not invincible." The King turned his eyes upon his noble son; and, for the ardour of his spirit, forgave him his importunity.

The Archbishop's brow relaxed, and his look dwelt long upon the Prince, with high benignity; while the young Prince cast down his eyes, which had met those of the Prelate, and he felt, that to deserve such dignified approbation, he could encounter worse enemies, than he had spoken of.

The King now dismissed his suitors, even his son, and abandoned himself to grief and to ill-placed remorse. But what was grief, like his, compared with that of the distracted Baroness de Blondeville? who, innocent herself, had loved and honoured the Baron for such as her imagination painted him, not for what, in truth, he was. But what, had he lived, must she hereafter have known him for? She must have known him for the perpetrator of that lawless and wicked act, of which he was accused, and moreover for the cruel destroyer of domestic faith and happiness.

A tale was yet to tell, that would have abolished her peace for ever, and which that unknown and unhappy lady, who in the castle-hall challenged his shield and then departed, could have sadly related. The person of that lady was here a stranger, but somewhat of her story had gone forth, and was partly understood by divers at the court, amongst others by Pierre, the Queen's minstrel, who, in her bower, had darkly told it on his harp, enwrapping and disguising truth with fiction. There the Baron de Blondeville had heard it, and he alone knew how to separate one from the other; he had heard it, and with such consternation, that he stayed not in the bower to inquire how Pierre drew the line between them.

On that same night, there had been also in the Queen's presence one distantly related to the most unhappy character in the minstrel's lay, and whom the guilty Baron then suspected of having prompted it. He burned to tell him so; but he dared not, since that would have brought to light a truth, which would have ruined and disgraced him, for ever. Whether this suspicion were just, or not, is uncertain; but he bore deep rancour in his heart against that supposed suggester of the truth, and, on the first opportunity, determined to act, as if he had full proof that insult was intended.

And, this very day, he had done so, when, in the field of contest, he had encountered Sir Robert de Grendon, and had cunningly given him that dangerous wound, which had felled him to the ground. Those in the court, who knew the lady's mournful history and her relationship, though distant, to Sir Robert, questioned whether, even on his part, the encounter with the Baron was wholly accidental.

Nay, some suspected, that he had forborne to appear formally as her champion, only because he knew, that the King would then forbid the combat, and that he should be laid in jeopardy, like unto the poor merchant; wherefore, they said, he had concerted with his kinswoman her challenging of the Baron's shield. All this well might be, but nothing certain was known on the subject, nor has it come to light, to this day. Sir Robert, however, was so sorely stricken by the Baron, that the King's physicians long thought his life in danger.

The poor lady, his kinswoman, pined and died hereafter of grief and remorse for her own former misconduct. With such a husband as the Baron de Blondeville, how then could his unfortunate wife have known happiness? But he died ere she knew him!

Woodreeve, who, from his prison-window, had seen the Baron fall from his charger, and had beheld him afterwards borne away from the field, knew not yet the whole truth; but this sudden reverse, appearing like a judgment on the crimes of his enemy, had filled the poor merchant with hope, yet with a kind of solemn astonishment, — a sort of tranquil awe, which fixed him in earnest gaze at his grate, till all the multitude of the people round the grand plain, in gallery, tent, or on tree, on coursers, on hobbies, or on battlements, had dispersed and vanished away, like cloudy freckles before the morning breeze. And thus was this tournay so soon broken up, to the sad discomfiture of those who had come from distant parts, many a weary mile, to behold it. Many, who had been up with the dawn, and had endured hunger and uneasiness for hours — neither the King's castle, nor the villages round, having wherewithal to supply the wants of the vast multitudes here assembled — were now compelled to return home, with curiosity as little satisfied as their appetites, unable to tell the real conclusion of the festival. They did, however, carry with them a vague knowledge of a spectacle more marvellous than that they came to behold; and widely did they spread it into distant towns and other shires; some to the heaths of Lincoln, some up the pleasant hills of Leicestershire, some to the forests of Nottingham, and some to the high regions of Derby.

THE SEVENTH NIGHT.

Here was miniatured a stately chamber, in part richly illuminated. Under a canopy, was a long sleeping-couch, but no person appeared there. In another part of this spacious room, where the light prevailed less, sat one, who leaned thoughtfully on a table, his hand covering his eyes; another figure stood near, but so obscurely drawn, that for what designed could not be certainly known. Images, holding lamps, were pictured in the chamber.

That same night, King Henry signed the death warrant of the merchant; and he gave notice, that, on the morrow, he would depart for his palace of Woodstock. And that same night, as was said, the prisoner thought he heard again his death-warning; the same song of peace passed by his turret, as at this hour of the evening before. Others there were, also, about the castle, who, that night, heard strange sounds, and witnessed more than they could well understand.

Amongst these, were the wardours of a postern, near the north walls, who reported they heard grievings, and, more than once, saw some one pass, almost within reach of their spikes. When they spoke the watchword, it answered not, and, when they raised their spears, it fled. The same appearance, though not the same moanings, was heard of those, who kept guard on the east ramparts; and the groom wayte, it was said, as he sat within the porch of King Henry's lodgings, on a sudden, saw some one standing still before it. He had not heard a step, but, on raising his head, perceived that figure. It was suspected he had been slumbering, and had dreamed of the strange accident, which had befallen the day before. But, whether this appearance were a reality, or only an impression of his fear, certain it is, that, being on watch alone, for his master had never piped the first hour, since the night of his alarm, he had not courage now to speak, or even to step forward, till the object of his terror had passed away. Then, he came forth of the porch to little purpose; for, all without was still and lonesome, and nothing to be distinguished, save the huge shadowy towers around the court, and the stars twinkling bright above them.

But he also heard, at times, a strain of mournful music, and thought it was a requiem in the chapel. Remembering the late strange occurrence in this very court, as he had paced his round there, he began to think this was in very truth the Prior of Saint Mary, come again on some secret errand of mischief; and straight he wended to the keepers door, in Cæsar's tower, to give alarm.

But no one heard him there, the keeper being, at that very time, in the King's hall, waiting his command. Then he went to call the ancient wayte, his master, who was sleeping out his sleep in his own lodge; and, by the time he came back with his groom, this unknown person was no where to be found. If these men, in the midst of the castle, were confounded with fearful thoughts, the poor prisoner above, distant, forlorn and distressed was no less so; for, as he lay, in watchfulness and sorrow, ruminating on the extraordinary occurrence in the field of Tournament, suddenly he thought a voice, without his door, called upon his name. He would not turn at the sound, fearful of beholding behind his grate the dim visage of the Prior of Saint Mary, as he had seen it on a former night. He knew that malignity alone could lead him hither; and, dreading even the sound of his voice, he drew his cloak over his head, and covered himself close, hardly daring, at the moment, either to see, or hear.

A loud knocking, and then a call roused him, and, at last, he heard his name spoken; when, instantly turning at the sound, he perceived, behind the grate, not the dark countenance of the Prior, nor the stern one of his keeper, but that of his beloved and unhappy wife. Hardly daring to trust his senses, he held the lamp nearer, before he became convinced it was her very self. Without question, or one word of endearment, she called tremulously upon him to save himself by flight; and, repeating his name with hurrying fear, entreated him to unfasten the door on his side, telling him that means were provided for his escape, but that he had not an instant to lose, ere the keeper might return.

Then, almost swooning with apprehension, she undrew the outer bolts, and was so much exhausted by the effort, that she clung to the bars of the grate for support. Woodreeve did not now, as on a former night, hesitate to undraw the inner bolts: no; with the eagerness of hope and joy, on this unlooked for meeting and intelligence, he forced back the bolts, and expected, such was the enchantment of his elation, that the door would open. He had forgotten, that the keeper's key, or the Prior's, was necessary to unfasten it.

With this recollection despair returned, for, all his strength was not sufficient to force the lock. When he had ceased his efforts, and had somewhat calmed the distress of his wife, he inquired by what means she had heard of his situation; for the messenger he had despatched, he well knew, could not, in so short a time, have reached her. He asked, also, how she had gained admittance to his prison. To these questions, she answered, that she had received a former letter, mentioning the time of his landing at Hull, while, with her sister, living in Gloucestershire; and had written by the carrier, to tell him she would abide there, till he should pass thither on his way home. While there awaiting him, she had heard of what had passed at Kenilworth, from one who being at Warwick, when the King took wassel there, had returned almost in his train to witness the festivals at the castle.

There, hearing the name of the prisoner, whose extraordinary accusation of the Baron de Blondeville had become known over the whole forest and county, he had relinquished the expectation of fine sights, that he might hasten to acquaint her with her husband's danger; and it was by his contrivance, that she had gained admittance, and had hoped to effect an escape; that, for two nights, they had walked about the castle; and, when all was still, she had sung aloud, in the hope, that he might hear her voice, and know that she was near him. He now doubted not, that he had heard this, when he thought he listened to a warning of his death.

She was then proceeding to give him some particulars of the plan for his escape, when they heard footsteps ascending the stair. She made no attempt to conceal herself; for, since all hope for her husband was gone, she had nothing more to dread, and she awaited the expected appearance of the keeper, with indifference.

The keeper — for it was he — came on, with lamp in one hand, and a parchment in the other; and, seeing a stranger at the chamber-door, he surlily demanded who she was, and what she wanted. Her answers told part of the truth; on which he seemed somewhat softened, not refusing her admittance to the prison-chamber of her husband. Then, the poor prisoner saw enter it, at the same time, his beloved wife, and the keeper bearing his death-warrant! Happily for her, she saw not this; she saw only her husband, and ran into his arms, and wept upon his breast. What he then suffered, who saw not only the evil prepared for himself, but for her, none may tell.

When Woodreeve could recollect himself, he made sign to the keeper, to conceal that dreadful instrument from his wife, and to withdraw awhile, that he might prepare her for what was to come. This man so far respected the misery he witnessed, as to yield, and leave the chamber. Then, Woodreeve, calling forth all his fortitude to bear him with composure through the relation of his adventures since he had landed on English shore, led her, step by step, to the knowledge of all that had passed. But, when he came to relate the manner of his trial, and all that had happened during it, all his endeavours to prepare her for the sad result were of no avail to his distressed wife; who, before he could come to his sentence, was gone beyond hearing, having swooned, as if dead, by his side.

The keeper, who was brought up to the chamber by the cries of Woodreeve for help, was moved at what he beheld, and aid was administered, which slowly brought her back to consciousness. Soon as it did, they conveyed her out of that chamber, while the keeper showed to the prisoner his death-warrant, which gave order for his execution early on the morrow. It were vain and cruel to dwell upon the misery of this innocent man, thus brought into jeopardy by the repeated crimes of others. How to break the unhappy message to his poor wife he knew not: yet know it she soon must; and he thought it were better she should know his sentence from his own mouth than from any other. So lately met, after long absence, and now to part for ever! He desired the keeper to bring her to the chamber, soon as he thought she had recovered strength enough to hear, without destructive suffering, the truth he must unfold. And here a dark veil of misery falls upon a scene of pangs, too acute, too searching, to be made known.

And to many others in the castle was this night dreadful! To the young Lady Baroness, and to the King himself! How changed, indeed, was the whole appearance of this castle, from that it wore on yester-eve; where, if the inhabitants were wakeful, it was only from the restlessness of joy, and preparation for the grand festival of the morrow! Where were now the mirth and music, with which these walls had rung? where the feast, the dance, that had made every minute pass so quickly to the poor mortals, whose hours were fleeting away beneath these princely roofs? All was changed to grief and silence. The footsteps only of attendants were heard along the halls and galleries; no voice spoke there; it seemed, indeed, as if every one were fearful of speaking. When, perchance, the door of a chamber was opened, no burst of merriment or song came forth, no harp sounded, no hum of voices. The impression of this whole change may be best signified by conceiving what one might feel on another change, on a smaller scale; that in one hall, for instance, of this same edifice, which should have been lately deserted of its splendid guests, where the few lights still burning might serve but to show its lonely grandeur, while one heavy step proceeds about the tables to extinguish these; and then the long sound of the closed door denotes the vastness and the emptiness of all that space.

Now of the King's condition and the things, that befell, on this night, there go divers tales. The truth were difficult to hit, because of the closeness, that guards a King from eye and ear, within his private chambers. Yet there be occasions, when the strangeness of occurrences, that seem not of this world's ordering, surprize and thus overcome the fidelity of servants, nay even the prudence of others, most concerned in them, and they speak of many things, which, at less pressing times, they would keep safe locked, within their secret thought, to feed alone their own fear and wonder. Thus might it be, on this night. There went forth many strange tales. This, which followeth, was much received at the time. Nay there were strong witnesses of some parts of it in the attending pages, and even in words dropped by the King himself, to warrant the passing of the story. But, be this as it may, I tell but what was told, in the Court itself.

It was said then, that King Henry, after signing the death warrant of Woodreeve, dismissed every one from his presence, and retired to his chamber for all night. There, he would hardly endure the necessary presence of his pages, while he underwent the usual ceremonies of his wardrobe. No sooner had they divested him of his mantle and surcoat, and helped him with his night-robe, than he would permit no further intrusion upon his melancholy and vexing thoughts. Full of sadness was he and of self-reproach, it may be believed, for the premature death of one he had loved and esteemed, and for whose fall he blamed himself, since, had he not so long delayed to execute, what he called justice on the merchant, whom he was still willing to think a false accuser, the Baron, he held, would be still alive.

He sat thus ruminating, while all was still around him; and what he heard afar was not likely to change the temper of his mind — sad and solemn music it was, mingled as he thought, with lamentation. He listened, and distinguished a choral chant of voices, faintly rise and fall. It was the dirge, which was performed in the chapel for the departed Baron de Blondeville, in that very chapel, where, so few days before, his nuptials had been solemnized, in the King's presence, and where strains of joy, and hope and benediction had lately ascended.

Now, ever and anon, the trumpet groaned, and, in dismal and interrupted strain was sung, "Darkness is my bed — the worm is my sister. I am covered with the mist of death, nor may the sight of man behold me."

The King went to an oriel-window, that looked towards the chapel, and heard the chant of the choristers swell with these words, "Eternal rest give unto him!" And then the faint response concluded with, "Rest in peace!" Then, the instruments sunk low into a murmur, and the voices were no more heard.

Now, the tale goes, that, when his Highness distinguished these words of the requiem, he was overcome with the sad thoughts they brought forth, and he sat down in his chair, and even wept, leaning his arm upon a table, without noticing what lay there. When the King took his hand from his eyes, he beheld a sword — the very sword worn by the Baron de Blondeville, and which Woodreeve had claimed, as the weapon of his murdered kinsman; the same, of which a resemblance had this day been raised up before the King, by the stranger knight, in the field of tournament, who had there pointed it, with deadly power, against the Baron.

On seeing this, his Highness was greatly amazed, marvelling how, and with what intent it had been conveyed. While yet he gazed, the blade became dull and cloudy, and large spots of rust began to appear, which turned to a bloody hue. Then his Highness, terrified by what he saw, and thinking it the work of sorcery, looked towards the ante-room, where lay the esquires of the body, with intent to call them, and perceived some one, as he thought, passing along his chamber. The silver images, which had held lights, stood not there, and a gloom, nigh to darkness, spread through this spacious chamber, save just where some one seemed to watch. To that side the King directed his voice, and then rose up to learn the truth. Now, the hangings of this chamber were storied with the famous siege of Aeon, where the first King Richard performed such valourous deeds, and the light so fell on that King on horseback, that to the King Henry he seemed to be verily riding out of the arras, and the sword he held to be gleaming to and fro.

This was but a passing phantasie of the King's own mind, as was afterwards declared: but that, which followed, was said to be no deceit of his fancy.

He had risen to discover whether any person was in his chamber, where there had been that appearance of some one passing; he saw a gleam of light, like unto the glistening of Richard's sword, yet neither substance, nor shape, there. Again and nearer, that light appeared, and did not vanish immediately as before; and, before it faded, it assumed a form and countenance; and the King again perceived before him the stranger-knight. Having now lost all power to summon to him those who watched without, his Highness only heard these words, "The worm is my sister!"

The King gasping in breathless terror, said, "What art thou? Wherefore art thou come?"

The voice answered, "Give me rest — the worm is my sister. The mist of death is on me!"

The King again said, "Wherefore dost thou come?" to which the phantom answered, " Give me rest!"

"How may that be?"

"Release an innocent man."

"How may I know him to be such?" said the King.

"By the sword of justice, that lies before thee. A knight-hospitaller was slain by that sword; it has, this day, slain his slayer, Gaston de Blondeville. The Prior of St. Mary's was his accomplice. Punish the guilty. Release the innocent. Give me rest!"

The King, as was said, had now sufficiently recovered from his surprize, to demand proof of the Prior's guilt, on which the vision answered, "I will call up one, who may no more deceive."

It is said, that the King's courage here failed, and he called out, "Forbear!"

"Recall your warrant, then," demanded the spectre solemnly, "ere it be too late to save an innocent man."

At that moment the matin bell sounded. "My time is short," said the vision; "if he perish for my sake, he shall not fall alone. Be warned!"

While these words still vibrated on his ear, the King again heard the chant from the chapel, and knew that they were performing the second requiem.

"I am summoned," said the vision; "My bed is in darkness; the worm is my sister. Yet my hope — — "

The King, on looking up, saw only the dim countenance of the knight; his form had disappeared; in the next moment, the face too had passed away. But who may speak the horror of the King, when, in its place he beheld that of the Baron, but as in death; an expression of solemnity and suffering overspread his visage; and the King heard the words, "My guilt was my doom; I shall behold you no more. The prisoner is innocent. The Prior of St. Mary's is gone to his account. Be warned!"

At these words cold drops stood on the King's forehead, and his eyes remained, fixed on the vacant air, where the countenance of the Baron had just appeared. At the same instant, these words of the distant requiem rose on his ear, "I go unto the dark lane; that is covered with the mist of death, — a land of misery and darkness, where is the shadow of death and no order. The eye of man may no more behold me."

Then the King lost all recollection; his ear was closed against every sound. How long he remained thus none knew; only it was yet early morning, when the esquires, sleeping in the ante-room, were roused by his summons. Then, his Highness despatched one to the constable of the castle, with command to attend him in his chamber, another to St. Mary's, to know how it fared with the Prior, and yet another to bring the Earl of Cornwall to him. For my Lord Archbishop, the King as he believed of himself, wished not to disturb the repose due to his age; but in truth he liked not to see him; for he had spoken truths, which his Highness now too heavily feared it had been his duty to listen to.

The messenger, despatched to the Priory, had no sooner passed the castle-ditch, and gotten on the outside of the great portal, than he espied carts, drawn up under the walls, in waiting, to carry away the poor merchant, ere those in the castle could behold the sad sight of his removal for the dreadful purpose, that had been determined upon. He spied, too, under the gloomy dawn, the whole of that dismal assemblage silently watching to take away their prey. The page rued the jury's sentence on the prisoner, and he went on his way, with heavy heart; for the merchant was pitied of many.

When he reached the Priory, the brethren were at matins; and he was told the Prior was in his chamber. Marvelling, as they did, at the King's early message, one delayed, as little as might be, before he went to acquaint the Prior with it. He struck upon his chamber-door; and, receiving no answer, he went within, and the Prior was found, as had been foresaid; he was lifeless in his bed, stretched grim in death.

He, who beheld him thus, descended the stair, with all speed, to acquaint the brethren then assembled, with what had happened, and found them in consternation great as his own, though from a different cause.

The tapers were dying away, and the only light, that glimmered strongly on the walls, came from a spot, where stood the armed figure of a knight hospitaller. His shield threw a deeper gloom around it on the tombs and even on the tapers of the monks. He pointed with his sword to the ground he stood on, and exclaimed mournfully, "A murdered knight hospitaller lies below; search for his bones, and save an innocent man from death!"

The figure stood for a moment; and, as it raised its shield, the flame thereon flashed, within the hollow helmet, and showed the stern, yet mournful countenance of the knight, such as it had appeared before the King.

Then sunk the figure with the flame, into the earth.

For a while, the brethren stood in utter silence and amazement; then they began to look upon one another, and to ask what this meant; and, even while they did so, a thrilling voice groaned from beneath. Then, without further hesitation, they sent for him whose office it was to dig graves, that search might straight be made, where that sound had seemed to be heard. Such of the monks as, in this tumult of fear and wonder, had time to understand, that their Prior was said to be dead, now hastened to his chamber to learn the truth — others remained in the church.

Some of these dared to approach the spot, where the spectre had appeared; and found it to be over that nameless grave, near to which the poor merchant had found refuge; and where their deceased brother, Eadwyn, had borne witness to a supernatural appearance.

When the lay-brother, the digger of the graves, came, who had not long been in office, he pored over the stone, marvelling that one so little ancient should have neither name, nor date, nor inscription of any kind, on his tomb. There were some standing by and observing, who, if they had been so minded, could have told, that it had not been always thus: but they held their peace.

On raising that stone and turning up the earth beneath, a coffin appeared, bearing this inscription: —

“Reginald de Folville, Knight Hospitaller of St. John, slain in a wood of Ardenn, rests here!”

There was neither taper, nor visible flame of any kind, over the grave, yet was this distinctly shown, by a strong light. The coffin-lid, which was of stone, like the receptacle, and was cut in shape of the head and helmet, being removed, there lay exposed to view the figure of the dead knight, in the armour in which he was slain, and such as had but now appeared on the grave; the shield was on his breast; but no sword was at his side. At this spectacle, some of the brethren shrunk, overcome with so sad a sight; others pressed forward, and bent over the grave with intense curiosity.

The features of the knight were entire, though shrunk and changed in death. They were of a noble cast, and bore the very countenance of the apparition. On the forehead appeared the death-wound. While yet they looked, the appearance of the knight began to change, and the countenance to shrink and fade away. Some said this was only an effect of the living air upon mortal features so long shut up in death; others said not so, but that it was, like all the rest, to bring truth to light and administer justice to an innocent man. Then the coffin lid was replaced, and that awful spectacle of mortality was hidden from view, for all time. During this, still music was heard in the air, like unto a requiem, hymning some blessed spirit.

The brethren, while they listened, were hushed in holy peace; some knelt over the grave; others stood, with hands and eyes lifted up, as if following the sound with their attention; and others, drawing the cowl over their eyes, bent their heads and wept in silence. Without the church, the old oaks, swaying in the wind, mingled in high and solemn harmony with the lessening chorus, till their murmur alone remained. Those, who had heard that soothing strain, long stood, as listening, still rapt in the quietude it had breathed forth, till, at length, their peace was enlivened into cheering hope.

The grave-digger, who had withdrawn to some distance, was the first to recover himself, and the sound of his footsteps drew back to present life the thoughts of the holy men around him.

Then, they recollected the death of their Prior, and that the King’s messenger was yet waiting for the tidings, which his Highness, by his extraordinary anxiety, appeared to have foreknown. One of them returned to the castle with the esquire, who, when he came near the gates, looking anxiously to see, whether the poor merchant was yet gone to his doom, perceived, that the carts, with the whole mournful apparatus of death, were already departed. On perceiving this, he struck his hands together, in sorrow and despair, with a force of action, which drew the observation of his companion, who soon learned the occasion of his honest emotion, and suffered with him.

How much more would each have suffered, could he have witnessed all, that had passed within the prison-chamber, while those marvels were passing in court, and Priory, as already told! How much more could they have seen all the struggles of Woodreeve, for composure and resignation, and, yet harder task! his endeavours to prepare and reconcile his wife to calmer sorrow. Of late, she had refused to allow it possible, that her husband could thus unjustly and ignominiously perish in the cause of humanity; and she would have forced her way to the King’s presence, there to have pleaded the truth, nothing doubting she could have convinced him of his mistake, had not bars and bolts withheld her. For the arguments of her husband, on this subject, they were as nothing with her, in this state of desperation. And thus passed the heavy hours of this night to those poor sufferers, till the keeper came to bid Woodreeve prepare for death, the guard being then in waiting to carry him away. Then, the poor prisoner perceived, what until this moment, he had been unconscious of, that hope, in spite of reason, had lingered at his heart; for, now only was it, that he felt the full pang of despair.

And, when he heard the summons afar off, that deep and dismal bell, he stood trembling with horror, unconscious where he was — unconscious even that his wife lay senseless on his pallet! Again it called, that hollow murmuring death-sound! He heard not the footsteps ascending the stair, nor the bars of his prison withdrawn; that shuddering sound alone crept on his ear.

He perceived, however, the keeper standing now not in the room, but near the door; and he began to recover his recollection, like one, who has been stunned by a blow; yet was there a gloomy and dreadful stillness at his heart and over all around him. He turned to his wife, and leaned over her, without shedding a tear, or uttering a groan. She was pallid, as a corpse; his own cheek was of the same hue; yet he called not for help.

The keeper advanced into the room; others, as if from respect for misery, waited without, at the door. Perceiving the condition of the poor woman, he sent off some one for assistance; and, taking Woodreeve by the arm, he looked upon him, as if he wished, yet feared, to speak. But the prisoner saw not this; for, he raised not up his eyes. Then, the keeper shook him by the arm and spoke; but he heard not the words; he only answered, that he was ready; and then, turning to give one long, last look to his poor wife, he found his eyes could not well distinguish her.

He groaned heavily, and was departing; but still the keeper told him, and, in a voice less rugged than usual said, “Read this paper.”

“I cannot see the letters,” answered the prisoner; “my sight is gone; and it is also useless to read my death-warrant.”

“Can you endure to hear it read?” said the keeper.

“Why not?” replied the merchant; “What have I to fear, in this world?”

“Have you nothing to hope?”

On this the prisoner lifted up his countenance; his sight began to return, and he looked at the keeper; his soul was trembling in his eyes.

Then the keeper ventured to call out “Respite!” — and instantly the whole aspect of Woodreeve was lighted up, like one called back from death.

But this spirit was short lived; in the next instant he called out, “My wife! my wife!” and bent over her in an agony of woe. “Is no help to be had?” cried he. “She is gone! your respite comes too late.” But, while he so spoke, one, who had been sent for a restorative, returned, and, after long application, she revived.

Then Woodreeve, when his first joy had subsided, began to consider this was a respite, not a release, and that his sufferings, perhaps, were not ended, but postponed. This respite, which now began to be viewed by him with doubt, had well nigh destroyed his wife with sudden joy; to her mind it brought, not merely hope, but certainty of life for her husband. A convulsion followed, and she was, for a short time, in as much danger as before. Hardly had she recovered from this, when an order came from the constable to give Woodreeve his liberty and a chamber in the castle better suited for him. Assured of this, he drew his cloak over his eyes, and stood, for some time, weeping in silence, save that his sobs were audible; then he raised his hands and eyes to Heaven, and bowed his head. His wife remained weeping on his garment, till he took her to his heart, and then they left that prison-chamber, hand in hand together.

When the King had heard of the Prior's death, he was struck with marvellous dread, and with conviction of his falsehood and of the merchant's innocence. He bitterly repented of the favourable opinion he had so long adhered to, respecting the Baron de Blondeville, and of the weak credulity, with which he had listened to the artful suggestions of that false Prior, rather than to the arguments and to the strong conviction of the Archbishop of York. But the former went with his passions, the latter against them; and he helped to deceive himself. Yet, when he did find out his error, he was warm and generous in counteracting it; and, now that he was assured how unjustly the poor merchant had been made to suffer, he loaded him with present kindness, and prepared to repay him hereafter by certain grants and privileges, that made Woodreeve the most wealthy merchant of his guild.

Nor did his Highness forget the forlorn widow and children of the deceased knight, whom he fostered and nobly supported. The miniature of that knight and the golden chain he had worn he returned to his family; and the Jew, who had forsworn himself, at the instigation of the Baron, was punished with heavy fine and imprisonment, the fine being amongst the King's gifts to Woodreeve. But, though his Highness found it now his chief delight to do kindness to the merchant and to the family of his unfortunate kinsman, yet could he not endure to behold him, nathless the expectations of most in the court.

And now that the Prior was dead, many things came out, concerning him, which had not been suspected. He was of birth so low, that no one could learn whence he had sprung; but it appeared, that, not many years before, he had been in arms, and in the class of a follower of Sir Gaston de Blondeville, one of the retainers, whom the latter was obliged to produce, on receiving his gilt spurs.

He was conjectured to have come with him from Gascony; for, he spoke that tongue, and had all the craft and soaring vanity of that people; but he was not born there; he had no foreign sound in his discourse. How he came by his wealth in those lawless times, and the use he made of it to procure him power, may be easily guessed. And it appeared this was well suspected by my Lord of York, who had never looked upon him with a favourable eye, and had constantly endeavoured to counteract his pernicious influence.

When, hereafter, his messenger returned from Exeter, it appeared, that none in that neighbourhood had ever known the Prior of Saint Mary's, such as he had described himself to be. The arts too, practised by this Prior with certain of the brethren, who remembered the interment of Reginald de Folville — and with certain people of Kenilworth, who recollected his story, were now all exposed. Those, who, from education and station, might not have been suspected of such baseness, were now brought to truth, and were fain to hide their heads for shame. The Prior's memory was thus condemned to detestation. Be it remembered, he was no true son of the church.

THE EIGHTH DAY.

Here was a drawing, divided into two compartments. In one, was presented an Archbishop, kissing the hand of a crowned King; in another, was the sole portraiture of a Prince; who, from his mantle, and the feathers embroidered on it, appeared to be a Prince of Wales.

On this day, the merchant and his wife departed from Kenilworth, where they had suffered such extremes of good and evil. They departed, carrying with them joy and blessings. But it was not till they had gone a good distance through the forest, that they felt themselves fully at liberty. Then, as they looked back, and saw afar off the grey towers of the castle, above the tawny woods, nay, that very prison-turret, perched over all, which Woodreeve had never expected to leave, but for death, their hearts overflowed with thankfulness, and tears of joy fell fast. Yet, turned they suddenly from view of it, and then went forward, even faster than before. After leaving these woods of Ardenn, they journeyed homewards in peace.

And many others departed from the King's court homeward, on this day; especially, my Lord Archbishop took solemn leave of his Highness, who gave him all due honours, for his wise counsel, regretting also, that he had not sooner followed it. The Archbishop, pleased with the release of Woodreeve and with the bounties since bestowed upon him, bowed himself, with willing homage, to his lord the King, and bade farewell to the young Prince Edward, with affectionate respect and with lofty hopes of what he might hereafter prove himself.

And, this day, left Kenilworth, the unhappy lady, Baroness de Blondeville, conveyed away by her noble parents to their own castle, there to pass in quiet shade this season of affliction. And those, who have mourned with her in this chronicle of her sad story, may haply like to look into the glass of her futurity. There, may they see many dark years of grief and sadness, passed within her father's towers; but onward they will see the gleam of hope and joy striking athwart her path, and further still, the calm sunshine of happiness settling on her home, where she is married to a nobleman right worthy of her. And here we veil this mirror of futurity, and come back to the passing time.

And, on this very day, the King his-self, who now loathed Kenilworth, broke up the court, and departed in all state with the Queen, for his palace, at Woodstock. The eventful days and hours of a very short period had wrought great change in the King's mind, and in the views and hopes of many in his train. Some had profited in wisdom by what they had experienced, or witnessed; others had suffered truth to glide before their eyes, without attention enough to derive one lesson from it.

And now, the King and all his court passing away under the battlements of this stately castle, in the pomp and order, with which, eight days before, they had approached it, his trumpets sounded their last to these towers, which echoed back the farewell; and then they were left to solitude and silence. This was the last gleam of courtly splendour, that lighted up the walls of Kenilworth, in this King's reign. And now the fading woods strewed yellow leaves on the long cavalcade, that wound below, whispering a moral to departing greatness; and their high tops, rustling in the blast, seemed to sigh over those, who were leaving them for ever to their own quietness.

The King's banner still waved on the Keep, till his Highness had reached the end of the furthest avenue, the last spot, from which he could look back on the castle, standing, with all its solid masses of tower and bastion, amidst the rich and varied hues of autumn. While he gazed, a cloud overcast it, and then a gliding light showed every battlement and turret, wall and bastion, window and loop distinctly in succession, nay, the very grate and spikes of the portcullis, hanging in the arch of the great portal, under which his train had passed.

Just as his Highness turned into the close woods, his banner on the Keep bowed homage, and then was lowered to be no more raised till long in after years, when the King's camp lay in Ardenn, and Prince Edward planted the royal ensign over the sons of the rebel Montfort, and restored Kenilworth to his sovereign lord and father.

This vision of the living world, which had so suddenly appeared in these wild solitudes, which had, in so short period, carried the joy and mourning of human passions, beneath these shades of Ardenn; which had banqueted and striven, had hoped and feared, had plotted and punished, had fretted and triumphed, had shown the extremes of princely grandeur, and of domestic misery, of deep villany and generous humanity, of supernatural power and mortal weakness, of human craft and of controlling, overpowering justice — this vision was now all vanished as in air, to be no more seen, or traced here, peace and silence closing over the towers where it had been.

The halls, where late the banquet revelled, or the sceptre of justice threatened, now echoed only to the straying steps of ancient menials. In the courts so lately filled with princely pomp and tumult, where the hurrying foot passed incessantly to and fro; where the many sounding hoof trampled, and the hum of voices rose, all was now so still, that, when the solitary sentinel ceased his measured pace, you might hear only the shivering of the ivy, or the distant echo to the closing door of some deserted chamber, murmuring through empty galleries, which, of late, to have looked upon would have filled you with marvel of the high dames and gaudy gentils passing through them. These courts now spoke only at certain hours, when the watchword went its round, or a single trumpet of the garrison called together the few armed tenants, stationed at gate, or rampart, and the guard was changed.

Thus quickly passed away this courtly vision from these woods of Ardenn. And so from before every eye departs the vision of this life, whether it appear in lonesome forest, in busy city, in camp, or court, — where may be pressed within the compass of a few short days, the agitating passions, with all their varying shades and combinations, the numerous events and wise experience, that make up years of ordinary life and the seeming ages of a cloistered one; for there, pale moment, lingering after moment, like rain-drop following drop, keeps melancholy chime with chants too formally repeated to leave, except on very few, the due impression of their meaning, and with slow returning vigils. Yet even here life is still a fleeting vision! As such it fades, whether in court or convent, nor leaves a gleam behind — save of the light of good works! And thus endeth this Trew Chronique.

And thus endeth this Trew Chronique.

CONCLUSION

Willoughton, long before he had finished this “Trew Chronique,” had some doubts, as to its origin. With the enthusiasm of an antiquary, he was willing to suppose it a real manuscript of the monks, in spite of some contradictory circumstances. The illuminations it exhibited, with the many abbreviations and quaintnesses in the writing, only a few of which, however, he has preserved in this, his translation, and those few but here and there, where they seem to have gained admission, by their accordance with the matter then in narration, these traits justified, in some degree, his willing opinion.

Perhaps, one better versed in antiquities would have found out, that several of the ceremonies of the court here exhibited, were more certainly those of the fourth Edward, than of the third Henry, or the second Richard, and would have assigned the manuscript to a later period than that of the title, or than that afterwards alluded to in the book, whether written by monk or layman. And though that same title said this chronicle was translated from the Norman tongue, by Grymbald, a monk of Saint Mary’s Priory, it said nothing of its having been composed by one; and the manuscript itself seemed to bear evidence against such a supposition, by the way in which some of the reigning superstitions of Henry the Third’s time and of the monastic life in general were spoken of. He must have been a very bold man, at that period, who had dared to utter even from under a cowl, a doubt, concerning the practice of magic, or witchcraft. It is, however, to be acknowledged, that, on some other points, his notions were not unworthy of a monk of the thirteenth century, that is, if he really credited all the supposed incidents of the hall, and of several other parts of the castle. The way, in which he speaks of the melancholy monotony and other privations of a cloister, seem to come from heart-felt experience; yet, if it had been so, he might not have ventured thus to have expressed his feelings.

But at whatsoever period this “Trew Chronique” had been written, or by whomsoever, Willoughton was so willing to think he had met with a specimen of elder times, that he refused to dwell on the evidence, which went against its stated origin, or to doubt the old man’s story of the way in which it had been found; and he was about to enter upon another of these marvellous histories, entitled “A trew historie of two Mynstrells, that came by night to the commandary of Saint John Hospitalier, at Dalby sur les Wouldes, and what they there discovered.”

But, behold! the beams of another day springing on the darkness! On drawing aside a window-curtain, he perceived the dawn upon the horizon; and, who ever yet beheld those first pure tints of light upon the darkness, more touching, more eloquent to the soul, than even the glorious sunrise, and turned abruptly from them? The towers of Warwick castle soon began to show themselves on the east, their mighty shadows raised up against the increasing light in peace and stillness. The morning-star alone rode bright above them, trembling on the edge of a soft purple cloud, that streaked the dawn.

The heart of Willoughton was deeply aFFected by the almost holy serenity, the silent course of order and benevolence, that he witnessed in these first minutes of another day; he looked up to Heaven, and breathed a prayer of blissful gratitude and adoration; and then departed to his rest.

“Tomorrow to fresh fields and pastures new.”